

**Creating Homelessness. The Emergence and Reproduction of
Exclusion in Post-Socialist Romania**

By
Dumitrita Holdis

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisors:
Prof Prem Kumar Rajaram
Prof Violetta Zentai

Budapest, Hungary

2009

Abstract

This research paper inquires into the mechanism of exclusion of the homeless population and its proliferation due to macro-structural economic and institutional elements that play-out in the local context of Cluj-Napoca. The empirical data is based on a research that has been done in 2008 in the “Ruchama Night Shelter” and the followed by another research in 2009 that focused on post-socialist policy regime in Romania. The later research was complemented by a map of institutional practices of the local authorities and their responses to extreme urban poverty. The paper aims at showing how economic restructuring lead to the emergence of homelessness in Romania and how homelessness is not only a problem emerging from poverty itself, but also how it is being reproduced by an inefficient policy regime and the lack of a proficient national strategy for social inclusion. Moreover, the paper will point out how in the context of certain economic determinants and institutional structure local actors can deepen the already existent patterns of exclusion.

Key words: homelessness, exclusion, inclusion strategy, economic restructuring, policy regime, Cluj, Romania.

Table of Content

Introduction	3
1. Topic and Context	3
2. Conceptual and Methodological Framework.....	5
3. Main Assumptions.....	6
Chapter 1. Homelessness between “underclass” and “exclusion”.....	8
1. Defining Homelessness	8
2. Exclusion and the Underclass	9
Chapter 2. Economic Restructuring, Policy and the Emergence of Homelessness.....	16
1. The Socialist Past	16
2. Economic Transition.....	18
3. Current Anti-Poverty Strategies	21
Chapter 3. Local Actors and their Role in Reproducing Exclusion Patterns	25
1. A Map of Local Institutions	26
2. The Prison Fellowship Foundation	27
3. The “Christian Center for Street Children and Adults”.....	28
4. The “Ruchama Night Shelter”	30
5. Institutional Trade-Off.....	32
6. Double Exclusion.....	35
Conclusion.....	37
References	39
Documents.....	42

Introduction

“Life is complex and it has many aspects”

Pavel Puiut in “*Filantropica*” (2002), by Nae Caranfil

1. *Topic and Context*

The present thesis is an endeavor that joins up several interests all revolving around poverty, the poor, the social processes and actors that play a role in its proliferation and management. As this may appear like a monumental task, I must quickly mention that this mission was restricted to humanly achievable boundaries that will be sketched out in the present chapter. The research inquires into the mechanism of extreme urban poverty will be focused on the homeless population, as this is one of the groups most excluded both economically and socially. Firstly, I will establish the temporal and spatial delimitations of the research, discussing their particularities and relevance. Secondly, I will carry on with a presentation of the social phenomena and processes that were analyzed, the actors that are involved in shaping these structures and the conceptual and methodological framework used in the study. And finally, I will end by outlining the research questions and the hypothesis tested during the study, the results and their relevance for policy development and further research.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the elements that helped shape the responses of the Romanian welfare system to the emergence of extreme poverty, after the collapse of the communist regime, and how these responses are playing out in the specific local context of Cluj-Napoca. Alongside being one of the former communist countries that were facing the biggest economic hardships (OECD Report, 1993) in the 1990's, Romania was also aspiring to become a member of the European Union. The blend between the inherited social problems and the local context, the economic

and institutional restructuring that followed the '89 Revolution and the layer of international macro-structures molding the path of Romania's development, reveals a case-study that could surface relevant implications for the whole region and beyond.

The emphasis on Cluj will expose how all of the conditions mentioned above play out in a local context that has its own peculiarities. Cluj came to be a success story, after more than a decade of being ruled by a mayor who was promoting economic protectionist measures that slowed down the city's growth. After 2002, the free-market started blossoming in Cluj and giving birth to new shopping malls, commercial centers, new residential areas and foreign investors hurrying to be part of the competition. While the fairy tale was unraveling, around 750 homeless people were permanently living in the streets or having only temporary housing, according to AMTRAS (2004)¹. Why they did not benefit from the success story will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

The period held under scrutiny is one of deep structural transformation starting with the transition from a self entitled communist state lead through totalitarian practices to a multi-party system based on democratic elections and a shift from a centrally planned economy to a market-based economic system. Although, the departure point of the inquiry is 1989, the year of the Revolution, a rapid glimpse over the socialist period will help shed some light on the post-socialist directions taken by institutional and policy development. The first decade of the 1990's witnessed the turmoil of a rusty machine undergoing heavy restoration. The following decade opened the contemplation upon the "European path" that was set forth by an increasing interest in the European Union.

¹ In Dan, A-N and Dan, M. 2005. *Persoanele fara adapost din Romania- o estimare a numarului acestora*. Calitatea Vietii, XVI, nr 1-2.

2. Conceptual and Methodological Framework

The empirical data on which this paper sets its foundations were gathered in two stages. The first stage started in February 2008 and ended in May 2009 and it was a research focused on the survival strategies of the homeless people from the “Ruchama” Night Shelter in Cluj Napoca. I conducted then 7 interviews with residents of the center and other 3 homeless street people who were refused by the center and were living in the street. I also visited the center during this period and tried to observe its inner mechanism, the interactions between the residents and the staff, their daily routine and problems. This first research allowed me to get familiar with the conditions at the center, with some of the residents and their lives and with the foundation that was managing it and the social workers working there. I extended the research in 2009 to the relation between the foundation and the local authorities and I changed the focus from the survival strategies of the homeless to the institutional responses to their problems. I analyzed the Joint Inclusion Memorandum that Romania signed in 2005 and the afferent laws that were passed starting from 2006. I proceeded then in mapping out the web of welfare institutions in Cluj and their collaboration. However, the main actor sustaining the homeless is the same foundation that manages the night shelter I was researching in 2008. Along with the night shelter, the foundation offers its services through another center for homeless adults and children. I conducted 6 interviews with current and former social workers from both centers and one with a policy annalist and professor, who is familiar with the poverty measures of the Romanian state and the local context of Cluj. The interviews conducted with the social workers were aiming to give more insight on the practices of the foundation, and they were focused on the selection criteria for the residents, the daily routine of the social workers and the residents, the services the two centers offer and their relation with the local authorities and the state's legislation. I consulted the information I got from these sources with a policy annalist that contributed with information regarding the institutional web of the city. All

the interviewees will remain anonymous in order to protect their privacy. The few names that will be mentioned have been altered for the same reasons.

The conceptual tools with which these phenomena will be looked at and interpreted revolve around a debate that started in the United States concerning the ethnically or racially homogeneous poor and in the American inner cities. The “underclass” debate was brought to Eastern Europe and discusses in relation to the Roma population. Ladany and Szenelyi (2006) argue that the features of an “underclass” can be attributed to the Roma population because they face similar economic and social exclusion, stigma and spatial segregation as the American “underclass” groups. Stewart (2002) is criticizing the analysis of Roma groups only in terms of the “underclass” theories, stating that the level of exclusion is not uniform and cannot be attributed to all Roma groups. Hence, he proposes the term “exclusion” which can be both social and economic, but also adding the classificatory struggles to define the excluded groups. Exclusion in this approach is an ongoing process in which there is a constant struggle to define who is in and who is out. I will define in the 1st chapter of this thesis the homeless as an excluded group that in the local context of Cluj, can take characteristics of an “underclass” for some of its members.

3. Main Assumptions

The first hypothesis of the research is that post-socialist economic restructuring led to the birth of a phenomenon almost inexistent in the socialist era: the appearance of street homeless people. The conditions that facilitated the emergence of homelessness will be discussed in detail in the 2nd Chapter of the present paper. Moreover, it will be shown how the transition from a centrally planned economy (cumulated with extensive housing projects and a strong dependency to the socialist state) to a market oriented economy created vulnerable groups to exclusion within the system. In order to respond to the

situation of crisis some of the population was confronting the Romanian state initially adopted system-stabilizing measures like slowing down the privatization process, keeping the rates of unemployment low and offering a series of social safety like unemployment funds, social aid for the poorly paid employees and so on. The following stage involved a series of measures that aimed at improving the states efficiency in dealing with poverty and aligning Romania to the EU-states' strategies and solutions to the phenomenon of exclusion. Thus, the policy regime suffered some changes in the post-socialist period, firstly by trying to deal with a situation of crisis, and afterwards by trying to adapt the policy system to European approaches and standards of efficiency imposed by the EU entry process. The second assumption of the research is that the post-socialist policy regime, instead of fighting social and economic exclusion, lead to its reproduction. The mechanism of the reproduction of patterns of exclusion due to inefficient implementation of inclusion strategies will also be presented in the 4th chapter. The final chapter of the thesis will address more the local context in which the national inclusion strategies are being played out in relation to the local actors involved in the fight against poverty. I will show how on the context of the economic determinants and the institutional structure mentioned above, the patterns of excluding homeless people from social and economic life are being deepened or reproduced.

Chapter 1. Homelessness between “underclass” and “exclusion”

1. *Defining Homelessness*

Categories and paradigms provide criteria for choosing problems and implicitly choosing solutions. They not only determine the entities contained in a universe, but also the entities excluded from that universe. On a more abstract level, they also determine what those entities “ought to be”. In a way, paradigms attribute responsibility and shape the policy agenda. The practices regarding the poor can be understood in a multitude of ways that emerge from the meaning we attribute to our problems and the tools we use to analyze them. I will portray in this chapter my understanding of homelessness which I analyzed as a group suffering from extreme deprivation, and both social and economic exclusion. I will use for analyzing this phenomena the concept of “exclusion” as understood by Michael Stewart (2002), along with discussing it in relation to the concept of “underclass” as proposed by Ladany and Szelenyi (2008). Although, the two approaches have been historically used to analyze ethnic groups in the United States (Myrdal, 1963; Wilson, 1980, 1987, 1993; Wacquant, 1992) the concept was used in Europe in researches concerning ethnic enclaves (Wacquant, 2008; Ladany and Szelenyi, 2006) and extreme deprivation. I will show how in the Romanian context the homeless as a group is not only an excluded group, but one that takes some features of an underclass, a concept which will be discussed later in this chapter. The class analysis will bring in the discussion a view of homelessness as a systemic problem that should be taken care of by addressing the dysfunctions of the system.

The definitions of homelessness vary greatly in time because definitions of housing changed over the last century. What was considered decent and appropriate housing before the Second World War may not be acceptable nowadays. Knowing who the homeless are and what is determining their

characteristics is essential for policies that can prevent homelessness, for deciding what type of support and help homeless people require, as well as determining which is the population under the risk of becoming homeless. The issue of properly defining a problem in order to solve it goes down to defining homelessness as well. There is disagreement about the root factors that cause homelessness like housing shortages, acute poverty, physical and psychical disabilities, unemployment, economic structural change and so on. These factors cannot cause all by themselves the great number of homeless people. Homelessness is the result of the convergence of multiple factors and it cannot be reduced to one.

The residential dimension is obviously of the essence in discussing about the homeless. They are by definition without a home or as Rossi (1989a: 48) puts it “those who sleep in shelters provided for homeless persons or in places, private or public, not intended as dwellings”. The residential dimension is the most visible. What lies underneath are the social ties that reveal other aspects of the life of a homeless like the relation with the family (which could represent an alternative to life on the street), the social relationships they develop with peers in the street and the outcome of these relations. On a not so personal level, social relations are also the ones they have with institutions and organizations. This aspect is dependent on several factors as their social position before ending up in the street, the amount of time spent in the street, their personal characteristics, their needs and expectations.

2. Exclusion and the Underclass

The concept of class in social policy used as an analytical tool could reflect to what extent class inequalities are reproduced through policy (Mooney, 2000). The economic roots of exclusion in the case of homelessness can be described in terms of inherited poverty, limited access to jobs and social

benefits, low income, material resources necessary for a decent living push for a conceptual framework that includes a perspective on class relations, division between classes, and reproduction of class inequalities through policy. However, in the case of the underclass the stigma and the social isolation that is associated with the group give it a dimension that surpasses the economic aspect and introduces a debate about the fashion in which the category is defined and the actions implied by a particular classification.

The three main characteristics of the underclass as defined by Ladany and Szelenyi (2006) are: a spatial isolation of a group in ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods, inherited poverty from one generation to another and a moral stigma attributed to the group (laziness, unworthiness, high crime rate, welfare dependency, inability to contribute to the wellbeing of the society). The authors identify the causes for underclass formation in the structural changes deriving from the transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist process of production and from an economy based on re-distribution to a free market economy. The type of exclusion the underclass suffers from is a multi-dimensional process in their view that is distinct from exclusion during other historical periods.

The issues that rose around the underclass debate were mostly concerned with moral categories, impact of welfare on work motivation and the limits and social obligations of the underclass (Katz, 1993). The underclass was situated outside the mainstream society and its central institutions, because they were considered to reject its underlying norms and values. By putting these groups in the exterior of society, not only guaranteed them the “outsiderhood” stigma but also guaranteed the internal cohesion of the society (Morris, 1996). The main classification that has been made was the worthy/unworthy distinction. This distinction arose in contrast with the idea of social citizenship that proclaimed social inclusion for all. The concept of citizenship is formed by three elements: the civil, the political and the social element. It should guarantee individual freedom, the right to exercise political power and the right to live as a civilized being according to the standards of society (Marshall, 1950). However, citizens were required to be able or at least to be willing to work. When individuals

did not have this ability, their status as citizens changed into an alternative status of protected or assisted individuals (Marshall, 1950). Idleness was associated with crime and poverty. As a result, the undeserving poor were the ones perceived as not willing to work, thus reluctant to help themselves.

In this line of thought, the welfare programs were only encouraging a lifestyle came to be known as the “cultures of poverty” (Lewis, 1959). Poverty was seen to be a lifestyle passed from generation to generation and a pathological behavior that leads to the incapacity to integrate in society and its larger institutions. The ultimate result of this lifestyle is in Lewis’ view the emergence of an autonomous existence of the poor from social situations that caused in the first place their condition and incapacity to adapt to mainstream institutions. The elimination of these circumstances would not determine a change in the lifestyle of the poor. Thus, the welfare programs became the social culprits that maintained the phenomenon.

Later, some scholars drew upon Lewis’ concept and developed a more radical approach to the welfare programs and welfare state in general. These heirs of the “culture of poverty” concept on the one hand, and the rational choice theory on the other depicted the poor as rational actors that make cost-profit analysis when choosing between having a poorly paid job and social welfare (Murray, 1990). By offering a cozy alternative to the labor market, social welfare programs not only enhanced poverty and created welfare-dependence, but also contributed to the creation of a state-dependent leisure class of poor.

The “cultures of poverty” theories were strongly criticized, especially by scholars who preferred economic and structural factors as an explanatory schema for poverty. The cultural approach failed to give a relevant explanation on how macro-structural processes influence or determine personal choice or what are the relations between institutions, social structures and subcultures. The argument is tautological in itself because what it does in the end is explain how a pathological/deviant behavior (the poor classes’ lifestyle) leads to pathological/deviant behavior (outsiderhood, criminality and so on). However, the most harmful legacy of this approach is the ideological support that it provided for the

“war on poverty” by placing the blame for poverty on the poor.

It was shown how structural changes like the influence of organizations or privileged access to resources could determine values, attitudes, different types of lifestyle; how the social environment make people feel marginal and loose confidence or become socially isolated (Wilson, 1987). However, even in this explanation the emphasis remains on the structural and economic factors, which come prior to the cultural factors. In the '80 social scientists like Katz came to see the underclass problems emerging not only from poverty itself but also from the interaction between ideology and politics, that ultimately created the representations of this category (Katz, 1989). In the larger scheme of things “poverty discourse only highlights the social construction of difference” (Katz, 1989:5). By granting the poor arbitrarily selected traits through verbal distinctions, we assume that those traits are inherent qualities of these people. Elements of power, convenience and morality intervened in defining the line between normality and deviance. Discourse became at this point central in analyzing the social construction of a category. The way in which the traits of the poor are classified and reified reflects the ideologies and politics behind the poverty discourse. As Katz (1989) puts it, what we do or do not do about poverty is a mix of ideology and politics as much as a problem that emerges from poverty itself.

The alternative to this model is the concept of exclusion as proposed by Stewart (2002) that is broad enough to include the social and the economic exclusion of the underclass concept and adding to that an interest in the classificatory struggles to define the excluded groups. Exclusion in this paradigm is an ongoing process in which there is a constant struggle to define who is in and who is out. Stewart, criticizes the use of the “underclass” concept in describing post-socialist deprivation, and especially in researches relating to the Roma. He also argues that the characteristics of the “underclass” are not fully attained by the Roma. The concept, borrowed from the western societies, describes a group segregated from the society (spatially and socially) that does not have many chances of getting out of its precarious situation, mainly because it is being refused access to the resources the other privileged members of the society have. This may hold true for some Roma groups. However, it can be disputed

for others. The lack of nuanced distinctions is evident in policy and measures promoted by post-socialist states to tackle this population's problems. State institutions show ignorance of distinct social and working patterns of the Romany. Thus, the state has an ultimate say in creating this category and building policy based on it. Needless to say, this has an impact on the coping strategies or solutions of the Roma population.

Thus, if both Ladany/Szelenyi and Stewart (as the majority of the literature on underclass) is used to analyze ethnic groups why is the concept of "underclass" useful for a research on homelessness? Are the homeless just an extremely excluded group, both economically and socially or does it take characteristics of an underclass group? The homeless as other "underclass" groups (the Roma, the racial and ethnic minorities in the United States) are a historically contingent category, meaning that it emerged due to macro-structural changes (economic and institutional) in a particular historical context, like the collapse of the socialist regime in Romania with all its due consequences, for example. The restructuring of industry, the high rate of unemployment, the restitution of nationalized buildings and the lack of extended social housing projects are few of many factors that caused the emergence of homelessness in Romania. Although, the homeless are not an ethnically homogeneous group historically discriminated-against, the stigma that accompanies them is similar to that of the "underclass" groups. This was confirmed not only by interviews with the homeless and the social workers, but also from institutional practices that will be discussed in Chapter 4 and 5 of this paper.

In terms of the spatial segregation the "underclass" groups are suffering from, it is a bit far fetched to argue that we can find an equivalent when it comes to the homeless. The ghetto, the banlieu, the Roma villages are ethnic and economic enclaves that have their own identities, while the homeless are a more heterogeneous, with an increased mobility and very instable inner-group ties. However, a type of spatial segregation can be identified if only considering the placement of night shelters or social canteens. I would be careful in extrapolating this to other cases, nevertheless in Cluj both centers dealing with the homeless are situated in the outskirts of the city, in one of its poorest neighborhoods.

In addition, the regular actions of the police to “clean” the public areas of the city from beggars or the vagrants (in many occasions they are also homeless), who are then taken to the police station or the shelters, reinforce the stigma of homeless and of the spaces with which they are associated.

As Stewart was careful to use the term “underclass” for the Roma, I would be careful to use it for the homeless. As Stewart pointed out, for some Roma groups it fits, and for others it does not. Like Michael Stewart, I will also argue that for some homeless in Cluj it does not fit. It is true that they are economically and socially excluded to a certain degree. Their access to resources is limited, however it does exist. Some of them benefit from institutional support and keep minor jobs, some are just temporarily homeless, and some even succeed in getting out of the street. However, in the particular historical, economic and institutional background of Cluj, we might be witnessing the emergence of a group that takes most of the features of an “underclass” and especially the one Michael Stewart dubbed as one of the essential ones “absence of relation with others” (2002:138). While the concept of “exclusion” might suffice to a certain extent for this analysis, the concept of “underclass” will point out the characteristic features of the most excluded of them.

Thus, I have chosen to understand extreme poverty not only as an economically derived problem, but also one that results from and leads to changes in the social and the political sphere, representing largely an “exclusion from access to a minimum of resources held to be vital” (Mingione, 1996:11). The resources mentioned in this definition, include financial capital that would insure basic needs (such as food, housing, clothing), but also social resources that would guarantee integration in the community. Mingione’s (1996) definition for poverty also has the advantage of emphasizing that a multi-layered type of exclusion consist of exclusion from the labor market, education, health-care, housing, and security, all of these being what he identifies as part of a citizen’s primary rights. This approach pictures a very complex phenomenon that touches several groups each of them having different needs that would not be acknowledged by a generalized policy strategy that in the end would only reproduce exclusion.

To a certain extent Mingione's fears are legitimate, when he envisions a totalizing policy regime that does not recognize the convolution of poverty, the multitude of facets it may have and the large number of groups with specific needs that suffer from it. However, the lack of a proper strategy that gives coherence to measures fighting against poverty encompasses several risks. Having several actors (both governmental and non-governmental) that propose solutions and take action for particular problems, like the problem of homelessness in Cluj for example, does have its benefits in terms of diversity of resources, actions and results. However, if not managed so that it organizes a space for dialog and collaboration, then it might lead to an inefficient system that does not succeed in mobilizing all of its resources to tackle a problem. As Mingione rightfully points out, poverty is a problem that affects a group's or an individual's life in numerous ways, from the economic to the social and personal level. I will show in the following chapter that an inefficient (almost to the point it becomes absent) national strategy against poverty reinforces the patterns of exclusion it should fight against.

Chapter 2. Economic Restructuring, Policy and the Emergence of Homelessness

In this chapter I will discuss the emergence of extreme poverty in Romania after the collapse of the communist regime and its proliferation in the post-socialist period. I will demonstrate how economic restructuring came with huge social costs including the materialization of homelessness and how the Romanian post-socialist policy regime lead to the reproduction of patterns of exclusion of the homeless. This chapter will set the background for the discussion on the categories with which the Romanian legislation is working with and the effects of these categories on the fight against poverty and the promotion of social inclusion.

1. The Socialist Past

In December 1989, Romania was witnessing the collapse of a regime that ruled the country for more than forty years. It was one of the few countries that had violent demonstrations that culminated with the execution of the Ceausescu couple on the 25th of December 1989. However, the transformation would take longer and was more painful than anybody imagined at that point. Part of the transition period meant the restructuring of the economy and the conversion from a centrally planned economy to a market oriented economy. Yet, Verdery (1996) argues that the centrally planned economy was not that planned and controlled in the first place. What she argues disrupted the socialist economic system's planned economy was its inefficiency and the space this inefficiency left for opposition from within. Thus, due to the states problems in procuring raw materials for the enterprises, the targets could not be achieved. Verdery identifies this as a "shortage economy" where the state's authority is also undermined by tactics such as the bargaining of the managers and the manipulation of stocks for personal gain.

The shortage was also evident in the fact that the work force was a scarce resource. Managers

often employed more people than they needed in order to achieve the targets, thus on the one hand reinforcing the state's "zero unemployment" strategy and on the other empowering the employees who were aware of the status they had. This cumulated with the socialist state's role as a distributor of goods and services enforced the dependency of the citizens on the state. Though, the paternalist role of the socialist state had its benefits, the fact that it was an inefficient state led to the deep economic crisis the population had to go through after the collapse of the regime. One must not forget, that Romania had an economy that heavily relied on industrial output, where 75% of the products were producer goods (energy, raw material, heavy industrial equipment and so on) and where 49% of the production relied on big firms with 3000 employees or more (OECD Report, 1993). When these enterprises were cut from the financial support the state was providing they plummeted in bankruptcy taking with them thousands of employees.

The policy regime during the socialist administration was also respecting the logic of distribution the state was applying to the economic system. Social policy during communism had several principles that guided the implementation of support measures for the population. In the 1960s pensions, health-care and sickness insurance were universally provided (Cerami,2009).The ideals set by policy makers had an ideological ground that stated the primacy of the collective over the individual and the primacy of the state over local priorities coherent with the logic of central planning. The benefits offered to the population had a universal character that assured social protection to everyone as long as they had the status of citizen based on full employment (Cerami, 2007). However, the communist regime was an authoritarian regime with a weak civil society and solutions that were provided by the state (Roth et al, 2006, Magyary et al, 2001)

Thus, the economic system and the policy regime in the social era were at a first sight more inclusive than their market-based counterparts. However, the cleavages between the elite ruling class and the working class were huge in terms of access to resources, economic capital and primary civil rights. Ironically, the socialist society was breeding inequalities in the disadvantage of its most valuable

ideological source, the working class. Moreover, as it was portrayed in the precedent paragraphs the system in itself was inefficient and it was not sustainable. This was already very obvious in the 1980's Romania, where it was getting harder and harder to find the most basic consumer goods, where the industry was not competitive enough to pay for its expenses, and where the mortality rate was among the highest in Europe. Most of the population was working in heavy industry enterprises and in agriculture, living in state owned houses and benefiting from universalistic, but poorly funded and inefficient social services. When the system collapsed the population who took the hardest hit were the workers. Their vulnerability to a systemic change was built for decades. And as we shall see further the new system was about to subject them too even more hardship than they expected.

2. Economic Transition

As opposed to Poland and Hungary, in Romania there were no preexisting policy reforms that have facilitate the path to a market oriented economy and a more liberal political system. According to an OECD Report from 1993, after the collapse of the communist regime, Romania was facing a deep structural crisis characterized by social and political instability (reflected perfectly by the resignation of the prime-minister in 1991, due to the miners' violent demonstrations in the capital) , a decline in the industry, an increase in the unemployment from 0 to 9%, an annual inflation rate of 150-200% (in the 1990-1993 period), and a fall in GDP by a cumulative 28.7% in 1991-1992, worsened by a fall in the real wages by almost 50%. In order to tackle with these problems the goal of the government was set on restoring the living standards by meeting the basic needs of the population during the transition, protecting their jobs, gradually implementing the privatization and decentralization of industry and proceeding to redirect energy from the industry to the population and to give back the land to the peasants. Some new benefits were introduced like public health-care funds, unemployment benefits, social benefits, childcare allowance (that was formerly universal but became conditioned by school

attendance after 1993). Just after the land privatization started in 1991, housing became mostly private, resulting in little housing policy and state building industry (Dawidson, 2004).²

The labor structure started to change due to the increase of unemployment, and of the employment in the private sectors, decrease of people working in agriculture and in the industry, the appearance of a new managerial class, and a decrease in the formerly valued class, the skilled manual workers. The employment structure also suffered changes that resulted in bigger wage gaps (generational, educational, occupational and gendered), cumulated with a rise in living expenses lead to an increase in inequality between the higher and the lower classes. The new unemployed benefited from funding 270 days and another 18 months with a workfare component and means tested element. Social safety nets collapsed during the transition and no longer supported the crash of the economy, having modest funds for social aid and limited coverage. The social aid funds were extended in 1996 but still could not cover the rising living expenses (Magyary, 2001). The “National Solidarity Fund” started in 1999, was founded to help people in extreme conditions (like the people not eligible for unemployment benefits or people with an income lower than 50% of the minimum wage). Low allocation from the GDP for social expenditures cumulated with a decrease in pensions worsened the situation of the elderly, the disabled, and families with children (Magyary et al, 2001). Until 1993, public rents stayed at their 1989 level, while private rents priced more than the average monthly income.

Families with many children also suffered from a decrease in living standards and access to education and health-care (Popescu et al, 2007). Special training (either practical or theoretical) for teachers who had to handle problems of the poor children and the children with special needs were not assured by the educational system. Without any social workers in the school system, the typical problems of this particular category are often ignored or redirected to other institutions. The

² Public housing projects were reduced from 91% in 1989 to less than 10% in the following years (Joint Inclusion Memorandum, 2005)

institutional care of children or elderly with special needs was favored to helping the family financially or by helping them to develop the skills they would need to integrate a person with disabilities. The budget for health-care services is at a low level. Although it increased a bit since 1989, it was reduced in real value due to the reduction of the GDP (Popescu and Rat, 2008). Once more, the old and new measures introduced created a web of intermingled and interdependent networks as depicted here: “Social security in Romania depends on a combination of universal benefits (state child-care allowance), insurance-based benefits (pensions, unemployment benefit, health care, and maternity benefit), and means tested safety-net provisions (social aid benefit, complementary family allowance, and support allowance for single parent families)” (Roth et al, 2006:99). After 1996 and especially after 2000 the social policies became more liberal and universal benefits diminished (Roth et al, 2006).

This somber description of the first 15 years of the post-socialist era prepares the field for a better understanding of the more recent past of the Romanian welfare system. System stabilizing capacity of political institutions and the societal integration capacity were put to a challenge. The welfare responses of the state to these class based risks, life-course risks, and intergenerational risks suffered a shift from universalistic to status maintenance operations, driven by a liberal path. Practically, the welfare responses of the Romanian state were focused on the privatization of provisions, individualization of risks, monetarization of access, privatization of healthcare, and on reducing unemployment benefits (Cerami, 2009). The unemployed, the elderly, the people with disabilities and the families with many children appear to be the most vulnerable groups to poverty. The economic transformation left many of them without a stable income, or with an income that valued less than half of its former value. The social safety nets were collapsing due to insufficient funds and bad management. The state was trying to respond to a situation of crisis, coming up with solutions for the “transition”. However, what the state was not facing was the fact that these social problems were not only “transitional”, but they were systemic problems, problems emerging from the market system itself. Although, the former regime's problems were the preamble for disaster, the new system did not fix the

old ones and even more reinforced them.

3. Current Anti-Poverty Strategies

In 2001, the Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family started the implementation of an institutional restructuring based on the principle of decentralization, giving local authorities more authority and responsibility in establishing the rights for social aid and for providing financial support and services, but also in developing social assistance programs and strategies. Social assistance as defined by the Romanian Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection³ is formed by both the institutions and measures by which the state, the local authorities and the civil society assure the prevention, the limitation and the elimination of temporary or permanent situations that could generate the marginalization and social exclusion of some people. Thus, the state identifies as the main objective of social assistance the protection of those people who due to some economic, social, physical or psychic factors cannot assure their social needs and cannot develop their own skills in order to participate actively in society. The social aid system developed after 1990 is described as being fragmentary and constituted around the economic crisis without having clearly defined goals. These two issues along with the fast decentralization that took place after 1997 generated institutional incoherency, inefficiency, low surveillance capacity, all coming with great social costs.

The state's strategies range from creating new institutions to passing new legislation, from identifying phenomena and groups to prescribing lines of action and objectives on what concerns these groups. The welfare institution that was designed to orchestrate the implementation of these objectives was *The Local Directorate for Social Assistance* that is subordinated to the recently founded *Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Commission*. This later institution is responsible with coordinating the implementation of new inclusion strategies by the local authorities. The "Joint Inclusion

³ The Ministry changed its name from The Ministry of Labor Social Solidarity and Family in 2001 to the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection in 2009.

Memorandum” (JIM) was signed by Romania in 2005 and The National Plan for Inclusion adopted in 2006, which includes a series of anti-poverty laws.

In what concerns homelessness, the document bases its assumptions and recommendations on a study ordered in 2004 and conducted by the Research Institute for the Quality of Life⁴. The homeless are defined here as people who “live in the street, under bridges or other locations”. Their number was estimated at around 11 000- 14 000 people, of which only 2000 were sheltered in the 60 centers available in the whole country (only 24 districts from a total of 42 have centers). A number of causes for the increase in the number of homeless people are listed as follows: financial difficulties caused by economic restructuring during the transition; restitution of nationalized houses cumulated with an inappropriate response of the state which did not come up with a social housing project; the increase in the number of frauds that resulted in many people losing their houses; the increase in the number of people unable to afford to buy a house (young people from poor families and young people coming from care institutions are frequently mentioned). The solutions planned in the document are the elaboration of a national strategy to promote social inclusion in collaboration with local institutions and NGOs, the elaboration of emergency and social housing projects, and a focus on prevention mechanism for evacuations.

After these very basic guidelines were set, the Government Decision no 197 from 2006 was passed, where the authorities identify several vulnerable categories most exposed to the risk of poverty and then propose a series of measures to counter-attack the situation. The five major vulnerable groups identified by the authorities are the elderly, people with disabilities, the homeless, the Roma and the victims of domestic violence. The political discourse oriented towards this problem is characterized by a claim to reduce poverty within the next ten years by a series of measures that should improve social inclusion. The section dedicated to the homeless, asserts the goals of the program as being the integration of the homeless population in societal structures by enhancing their access to services and

⁴ Institutul pentru Cercetarea Calitatii Vietii

preventing abuse and violence. Concretely, the measures proposed include the building of emergency and social centers, inclusion in the labor market by facilitating the access to the educational system and to special training courses, limiting these groups' dependency on state institutions and encouraging the individuals own participation in the development of these solutions. However, the difference between social and emergency centers rests unclear. Te expected results of the strategy is the construction of around 50 such centers in Bucharest and other cities that would be able to offer minimal living conditions for around 10 000 homeless people by 2010, with total funding of 36 500 RON (around 9000 EUR) from state funds.

The amount of funding for these programs of national interest, as they are called, is surprisingly low. Conform to the principle of decentralization and partnership the rest of the funding expected to come from local budgets. Until this point any official document that should attest the program's efficiency was not made public. The Commission that should supervise its implementation is responsible to give annual reports, according to one of the members that I have interviewed. However, as she further stated, all the meetings of the Commission are closed to the public, and they have only started to give quarterly reports this year. Again, these were not published until the point this research was conducted.

The documents discussed above are clearly constructed in relation to social exclusion and social inclusion. They have a multidimensional view of poverty, which includes a longitudinal and relational understanding of the processes that lead to the phenomenon. The new inclusion strategies promote partnership between the larger institutional structures, the local authorities and the civil society represented by NGOs. However, they are based on the principle of decentralization, meaning that the local has more leverage in taking decisions and planning action, while the state has more of a surveillance role. This, as it will be showed in the next chapter, is a very inefficient partnership when the members of the surveillance organism are the same with the members of the local authorities, the local authorities do not have particular interests in promoting the National Strategy and transfer its

duties to non-governmental organizations that promote their own interests, and when the funding for the programs are far from being sufficient to achieve their goals.

Moreover, the internal logic and the construction of the strategy itself it is faulty. Fairclough (2005), states about the inclusion strategies of the EU that they would be utopian if applied to the Romanian context. He adds that an integrationist approach (Levitas, 1998), as he defines the Romanian version, is based on employment as the best strategy for integration, life-long learning, acquisition of skills, policy to prevent life-crises, and thus exclusion. The danger lays in the construction of excluded groups as marginal, not endemic and in not mentioning the growing inequalities among the “included”. Thus, the inclusion strategies are more likely temporary solutions for situations of crisis. If poverty is an endemic problem in Romania, it would make more sense to fix the system, rather than trying to integrate people in a broken one.

Chapter 3. Local Actors and their Role in Reproducing Exclusion Patterns

The concluding chapter of this paper will focus on explaining how local actors contribute to the processes of exclusion existent in the economic and institutional context described in the previous chapter. After describing the economic transformations that unfolded in Romania during the post-socialist period, I showed how the policy regime did not respond effectively to these transformations and thus aggravated the social costs that came with the economic restructuring. Moreover, the reforms undertaken by the state to match the European approaches to exclusion practically reduced the role of the state in handling extreme poverty and transformed a so-called strategy in a sum of solutions that do not respond to a systemic problem. While the state formally coordinates the national strategy through a national commission, in practice the local authorities have more power in setting the local agenda that could be detrimental to the national one, as it is the case in Cluj. If so far the analysis touched the macro-structures that frame the discussion about exclusion, from now on my attention will focus on the local playground of these structures. In the following pages I will show how the problem of homelessness was transferred in Cluj to a foundation that does provide a lot of support to a part of the homeless population, but it does so while excluding others. The organization promotes its own interests and although it uses the discourses on inclusion/exclusion promoted by the anti-national strategy, the predominant discourses are religious ones, coherent with the values its leaders share. This paper does not aim at criticizing the practices and the principles of this organization per se. Its main aim is to describe the outcome of an incoherent and inefficient policy regime, that allows space for the development of these kind of solutions to problems that should be recognized and treated as endemic problems.

1. A Map of Local Institutions

When it comes to handling the homelessness problem the institutional offer of Cluj varies from state structures in charge with the supervision of national strategies and programs, local authorities responsible with proposing solutions and a foundation that implements most of the programs dedicated to helping the homeless. Due to the principles of decentralization and partnership on which the new social assistance strategies were built since 2001, the local authorities of Cluj-Napoca had been benefiting from extended leverage in deciding how will they fight poverty and how will they promote social inclusion, what funds will be invested in these actions and who would be the beneficiaries. In a schema of hierarchies and duties the *Local Council* would be designed as the head that directly takes these decisions in the district of Cluj. However, the instrument of implementation is the *Local Directorate for Social Assistance*, meaning that this later organism needs the formal agreement of the Local Council for its activities along with approving their budget. The local subdivision of the *Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Commission* has a function of supervision and coordination of the projects, so as to conform to the logic and expected goals written in the Joint Inclusion Memorandum. While the Local Directorate for Social Assistance is subordinated to the other two organisms, the Local Council is theoretically bound to respect the national inclusion strategy enforced by the Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Commission. In practice, the members of the Commission are either local counselors, members of the Directorate and representatives of local NGOs. The Council does not interfere with the Directorate's projects, however it does establish its budget every year. In what concerns homelessness the main institutional actor is the Prison Fellowship Foundation. Thus, the Commission that should be supervising a national strategy is formed by members of local institutions that promote their own interests. In one of the interviews I took with one member of the Commission,

who is also an employee of the Prison Fellowship Foundation I asked about the usual activities and topics that are debated during the meetings. My informant described the sessions as consisting of discussions about each organization's project and their results. When I opened the point of the national strategy to promote social inclusion and how these projects relate to it, my informant confessed that she is not familiar with it. This was particularly striking coming from a member of a Commission specially created to supervise the implementation of the strategy. The institutional landscape looks very fragmented coming from these accounts. Even if institutions can be proved to be efficient individually, the environment of incoherency in goals and expected outcomes is a first sign of an inexistent national strategy to fight poverty and promote social inclusion.

2. The Prison Fellowship Foundation

The Prison Fellowship Foundation it is a non-governmental organization that started its activity in 1993 in Romania. The main branch was founded in the United States by a former councilor of Richard Nixon, involved in the Watergate scandal. After spending some time in prison due to his involvement in the scandal, he decided to dedicate his life to helping inmates deal with prison life and improve their chances after getting out. The Romanian branch was born after its current director Constantin Asavoai met him and they both decided to start up this collaboration. In the beginning the foundation was involved only in prison-related projects (hence the name), however the Romanian branch expanded its activities to homelessness in 2001. The foundation kept acting in prisons too but it is focused on counseling inmates who do not have a place to stay after getting out. Assistants from the Ruchama Night Shelter visit occasionally prisoners and they propose a place in the shelter. This is to prevent them from ending up in the street. The Foundation currently manages six centers in collaboration with the Town Hall, which shelter homeless adults, children, former inmates, and single

mothers. According to their statistics they host around 600 beneficiaries. The only two centers that are actively working with adult homeless people are the “Ruchama Night Shelter” and the “Christian Centre for the Homeless Street People and Children”. Both are situated in Iris, the poorest neighborhood in Cluj-Napoca.

The foundation is not affiliated institutionally to any Church and it is funded from public money, financed by the Town Hall or from private sponsorships. However, the internal discourse of the organization and some of the documents they were willing to provide show a clear inclination towards Christian Orthodox values. The director is a member of the National Assembly of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which welcomes two non-clerical members from every county. Constantin Asavoaiie is one of them in Cluj. The former and the current social worker from the “Ruchama” Night Shelter have studies in theology and two of the coordinators are priests. Moreover, in the document by which the foundation presents itself (and which was provided by Mister Asavoaiie) the organization states its commitment to help prisoners to “*discover God and His forgiveness*”.

3. The “Christian Center for Street Children and Adults”

The “Christian Center for Street Children and Adults” is a multi-functional center that hosts both children and adults. As this research is concerned with homeless adults I would discuss their activities relating to this population. The center host a number of 40 adults coming from other institutions which for some reason or another could not host them anymore. The most common “exchange” takes place between care-institutions for street children or orphans, the other centers the Foundation is administrating, or penitential institutions. Very few of them actually come from the street. The center offers accommodation, three meals a day, counseling from both a psychologist and a social worker, support in finding a job or handling administrative problems with the local authorities (getting an ID,

applying for social aid, enrollment in courses and so on). In return, the beneficiaries have to respect the rules of the center. Although, I have inquired both the social worker and the psychologist regarding the “house-rules” they were reticent in giving me the complete list and then accepted to summarize them.

The selection process starts with an interview taken with either the psychologist or the social worker, depending on who is available at the time the homeless person arrives at the center. According to the center’s social worker an eligible candidates should be between 18 and 45 years old, in good physical and psychological shape, and have the potential to get integrated in the society. When I asked about the criteria that would make a person a good candidate for social inclusion I was answered that this is “obvious” when they enter the room. The social worker stated that the appearance of the person is the first indicator, if he or s/he is young enough, if s/he is clean, if s/he is articulate, and has a respectful attitude. Then the interviewee is questioned about his life history, family, and causes of loosing their house, former employment, diplomas and skills. After this procedure, the social worker discusses her verdict with the director and a decision are being taken. The people who are refused are being re-directed to the night shelter, if any places are available there. If they cannot offer accommodation in any of the centers the candidate is simply sent back in the street. If the candidate succeeds in getting a place in the center he or she must sign a one-year renewable contract by which s/he agrees to respect the rules of the center in order to benefit from its services.

The beneficiary now accepted in the center must start to look for a job immediately. S/he will be assisted in writing a CV or letters asking for jobs, having telephone conversations with future employers, or will be directed to the job banks the center is familiar with. If the beneficiary does not have any source of income, s/he will benefit from free accommodation and meals. After securing a permanent source of income the beneficiary contributes with 100 RON/month (around 30 EUR) for rent and s/he has to start an economy fund. The economy fund is managed by the center and the monthly sum saved is decided together with the resident according to his/her income and needs. The entire amount saved is recovered after the resident terminates the contract with the center. The other

obligations that the residents have include a set of chores mostly in the kitchen (washing dishes, helping out with the cooking), participating to counseling sessions (in group and individual) and respecting the curfew. They are also not allowed to leave the center for extended periods (more than 1 day) without permission.

4. The “Ruchama Night Shelter”

According to the shelter’s procedure of selection the residents should be:

“The residents must have between 18- 70 years old to be admitted to the center. They come from disintegrated families and they do not have any chance to be reintegrated in that family. Their parents usually are people with problems and they cannot assure moral, educational and financial support. They do not have any other contacts or means that could assure social reinsertion. They do not have the abilities to manage on their own. They present the potential to develop these abilities and finally to succeed in having an independent life and to be reinserted in society”.

The population living at the Ruchama Night Shelter is everything but homogeneous. We can find here people from all the age groups and backgrounds, from a sixty year old former philosophy high-school teacher to young people who have been raised in the street. As several of the residents declared during the interviews the center is known in the street. There are several meeting points for the homeless in Cluj-Napoca like the train station, the city center, parks, and social canteens. These focal points are vital for getting surviving tips from other more experienced people of the street. The homeless who end up at the Ruchama Night Shelter arrive there either on their own directed by other homeless people, either they are brought by the police who find them in the street or they are re-directed from other institutions (like prisons, retirement homes and so on). The shelter has good

relations with the Local Police Department. The police assure the security at the shelter in exchange for hosting defendants during their investigation. The shelter is also an option for the police officers who occasionally take homeless persons off the street. This is the least used trajectory of the road to the shelter. These actions of the police department are rare and usually they have as target street children, not adults. However, in some particular cases this has happened especially with the old and the sick people. Some of the homeless have passed through several institutions before ending up in the night shelter. If for some persons, the shelter is the way off the street, for others is the last stop before ending up there once again

Based on the research I conducted in 2008, I would say that the most striking difference between the residences is obvious in terms of their usage of the shelter. Some of them are permanent residents; others are just transiting the center for several days to several months. To illustrate this I will quote a part of the notes I took during my visits between February and May, 2008.

“Some of the persons staying at the shelter have been living there for more than six months, others since it has opened three years ago. They represent roughly one quarter of the shelters population and it is the group that has the highest age average. These individuals rarely leave the shelter mainly because of their age and disabilities and are the most dependent on the shelters services. Most of them spend occasionally some time in the hospital and they benefit from social aid (for old age or disabilities). They are also provided with three meals a day by the shelter. [...] The temporary residents are the people who spent between one night and several months at the center. They come and go; they present the highest level of independence from the institution. They usually use it only as a place to sleep, and especially in the winter. Most of the time they spend in the street and they have the highest levels of alcohol consumption. This is the main reason they do not stay at the center for longer periods. Among them, we can find

people from all over the country. They are the most mobile group. Some of them reappear at the center from time to time, others stay for several months and then they disappear. Their number varies and it is dependent on the number of free beds. During the winter, some of them sleep in the hall for several nights, but they always leave in the morning because they are not fed at the shelter and they have to go out and try to come up with money for food and alcohol. Even those who stay for several weeks or months rarely spend the day at the shelter for the same reasons. [...] The ex-convicts form the biggest and the most problematic group of the shelter and it is formed exclusively by adult men. They are very hard to approach and reluctant to giving interviews, so most of the information I gathered comes from secondary sources (the two assistants and the other residents) and from observations. Most of these individuals are fairly mobile. Some of them have regular jobs, day-jobs or engage in other types of activities outside the shelter. All of them have an ID but they do not benefit from any form of social aid. The shelter does not provide food for them. A great part are in town during the day and come back only for the night. Sometimes they are gone for several days. For those without a permanent job the period spent in the center alternate with periods when they disappear. They rarely mix with the other residents and they are reluctant to collaboration with the assistants.”

5. Institutional Trade-Off

In terms of material conditions, services, staff and residents the two centers differ very much. One of them is indeed a night shelter and it is supposed to serve other purposes than the “Christian Center”. However, the shelter does accommodate people for longer periods of time. It is not only used

as an emergency roof, but as a home. The conditions at the center are far from being proper for a decent living. Even at a first sight the difference between the two is striking. While the “Christian Center” is clean and warm, it has colorful walls decorated by children, a cleaning staff, a kitchen, social workers and a psychologist that coordinated (at the point I was conducting the research) several projects that would help their residents integrate easier, the night shelter looks like an abandoned building. It is gray, old looking building much more isolated spatially, that is poorly heated during the winter. From the interviews I took with the current social worker, and the two previous ones I can describe their tasks as administrative business and surveillance. Most of their activities revolve around intermediating communication with local authorities (for lost ID, social aid benefits, health-care) and enforcing the rules of the shelter. These are much more lenient than the ones from the “Christian Center”. The basic rules state that the residents should not carry weapons, should not drink or consume drugs, they should not have conflicts or steal from one another.

The types of residents they accommodate are again very much different. The “Christian Center” selects its beneficiaries carefully, through an interview. Most of the homeless who end up there have spend very few time in the street (if any) and they are considered to have potential of re-insertion. The ones who do not pass the “integration-test” are sent to the night shelter and most of them are forgotten there. Again, starting from the notes I took in 2008, I will describe the trajectory of a few residents of the night shelter and compare it with their situation after I went back in 2009.

“This was the case for Eni⁵, a young woman of 23 years who suffers from a “mild form of schizophrenia”, as one of the assistants told me. The police took her off the streets this winter. She was a heavy drug consumer and she had a very violent behavior. She did not have any ID so the police took her at the “Christian Center for the Street Children and Adults”. There she started to take medicine for her illness and her behavior improved

⁵ The names of my interviewees were changed in order to protect their privacy

visibly, but she was still posing problems to other residents. She was sent to the Ruchama Shelter. She takes her pills regularly when the assistants are there, but during weekends, she is not taking care off. Usually, it is then when she has violent episodes. Her place is obviously not in a shelter for the homeless people, but in a psychiatric institution. When I last visited the shelter the procedures to put here in a center for people with psychical disabilities were initiated. After one month, when I met M. Iosif in the street she was still there. Eni is not the only one there with a mental illness. The two most severe cases are those of Monica and Fanfan. The police found them in the street and they have been living at the centre for two years in the case of Monica, and roughly one year in the case of Fanfan. They do not have any ID, they do not speak and they cannot take care of themselves. They are not seeing any doctor and they do not have access to professional help. Because they do not have any ID, they do not receive any help from the state. The Ruchama Shelter was the only shelter that accepted them.”

Eni was in her 20s when I first met her in February, 2008. She was just moved from the “Christian Center”, where she was accepted in the children's ward in the beginning , even if she was not under-aged. Due to her mental illness she created problems and sometimes had violent outbursts so she was sent to the night shelter where her condition worsened. The procedures to relocate her started in the spring of 2008 and were finalized after one year. She is now admitted in a mental-health institute near Cluj. Fanfan's and Monica's cases are just the way I left them. They still do not have any ID, although all of the social workers made some efforts to push the police in hurrying up a procedure that is stalled for almost two years now. They are still at the night shelter, and because they do not even exist for the Romanian state, nothing can be done to relocate them or assure any type of aid.

6. Double Exclusion

The homeless people from Cluj, are faced with several options when it comes to surviving their condition. According to the origin of their problem, the trajectory of their journey in the street and personal biography of each of them, their ties with the institutions are being shaped. If they end up homeless when old but with a pension they might have a chance to stay in a retirement home. If they are young and have at least a modest education and some skills they might get a place in a social center that provides the material and professional resources necessary to access the labor market. If they are unskilled, if they have mental disabilities, poor social skills most probably they will stay in the street or in the best case in a night shelter or a mental-health asylum. The homelessness problem is very much treated as a fragmented problem in Cluj. Cases are being treated individually and the responses they get are responses for situations of crisis. After people end up in a state of extreme deprivation they might or might not get some support.

The state responses to homelessness do not unite in a coherent efficient strategy. In Cluj, the *Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Commission* is formed by members of the organizations it should be supervising. The conflict of interests inside the Commission should be a fairly relevant issue to investigate, along with a more detailed map of institutional networks in Cluj. Thus, the local authorities pass the responsibility to a non-governmental organization that applies its own criteria for choosing solutions. The principle of partnership and decentralization is rightfully implemented and translated into a transfer of responsibility from the state to the civil society. What is the outcome of this transfer in Cluj? A series of practices that favor some groups to others. The criteria of selection for proper help are ironically the potential of integration one individual has. As it was shown earlier the people who poses some skills and are more easily employable are given a chance for social inclusion. The ones most socially and economically deprived are being excluded even more. The two centers coordinated by the Prison Fellowship Foundation seem like two facets of an inclusion experiment. One offers

proper housing, counseling and access to resources for a carefully selected group. The other offers a cold roof over the heads of the rejects. Needless to say the “Christian Center” is more of a success story, even though further research is needed to support this statement. However, from the interviews I gathered so far it seems that the social workers from the “Christian Center” had more success stories to tell about people who left the center, found a job and are now living in their own homes, than the social workers from the “Ruchama Night Shelter” who were very pessimistic about the chances of their residents to ever get out of the shelter. Moreover, from the homeless people I have met in the spring of 2008 in the night shelter, one is in a mental-health institution, one is dead, and the rest are still there.

Conclusion

The homeless, as visible and colorful as they might be in the urban settings they seem to vanish from concrete actions, extensive research and national strategies from Romania. Their existence is acknowledged in several documents, however they are not known, thus not discussed in detail. The homeless seem to have come with the change, with the market, with freedom and modernization. The “Joint Inclusion Memorandum” and the National Plan for Inclusion identify as the main causes for homelessness unemployment, restitution of nationalized houses, and the increase in frauds. All are problems of the transition to a new system. We have some prices to pay. However, we are facing a whole different issue if the new system creates the problem and the price keeps inflating, reproducing itself. And we need new approaches for systemic problems. Not looking at them as a problem of the system is turning a blind eye on them. The homeless become homeless and this process of becoming should be the root of all actions.

This is precisely the final goal of this paper: to see the homeless not simply as an excluded group, but one that becomes excluded. Exclusion is a process that develops in time and in certain conditions. The levels and the types of exclusion vary from social to economic to both, from extreme segregation to some form of contact with other groups. However, exclusion always comes with stigma or with a blind eye. I chose the “underclass” versus the “exclusion” debate in order to underline these differences among the homeless people. If we look at them as an “underclass” we see them outside the mainstream societal structures, not being able to access the resources that would allow them to integrate. They have been set aside and they are forbidden. Indeed some of them suffer from this type of extreme deprivation and some of the residents of the “Ruchama Night Shelter” fit the criteria. Others are in a situation of economic and social exclusion that has more of a temporary character. They are being helped, and they learn how to enter and make use of the institutional frame, the labor market,

the educational system and the health care system. The stigma of poverty and homelessness stays and the struggle for recognition begins. If they are fit for integration or not is being decided for them and the category in which they will be put, will be decisive for their life chances. The “Christian Center for Street Children and Adults” manages the exclusion game by deciding who is in and who is out.

How is it possible that a non-governmental organization is allowed to take such decisions? As I have shown in the previous two chapters such decisions are being taken by a foundation because there is not any other organism that would take them. The surveillance organism that the Anti-Poverty Commission should be is formed from the ones it should be surveying. The state is simply not looking. And the state does not even have the eyes to look. The welfare system is being built now on principles of decentralization and in partnership with local authorities and the civil society. In Cluj decentralization meant fading away and partnership meant a transfer of responsibility.

Now, how do we fix it? In order to answer this question properly further research is needed firstly inside the system. The “vulnerable groups” identified by the state should have an equivalent in “candidates for potential exclusion”. The fight against poverty should be a fight against the causes of poverty. And if the causes are among the “included” groups than a more careful inquiry in the processes of downward mobility and exposure to risks that lead to poverty should preoccupy the authorities. Secondly, the dialog or the lack of dialog between the structures of the state and the local institutional structures needs a deeper understanding. And finally, the mechanisms of negotiations between local institutions and local interest would shed some light on the processes of distribution of local resources for the chosen local problems. Insights in the above mentioned mechanism would complement this research and considerably improve its limits.

References

- Cerami, A. and Stanescu, S. (2009), 'Welfare State Transformations in Bulgaria and Romania', in Cerami, Alfio and Vanhuysse, Pieter (eds), *Post-Communist Welfare Pathways. Theorizing Social Policy Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.
- Cerami, A. (2007) *Social Change and Welfare State Developments in CEE and Russia*, at <http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/8479/>
- Dawidson, K. (2004) 'Conflicts of Interest in the Restitution and Privatisation of Housing since the Fall of Socialism: The Case of Central Timisoare City: A problem of Democracy?', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol 56, no 1, pp 119-141.
- Fairclough, N. (2005), *Critical discourse analysis in trans-disciplinary research on social change: transition, re-scaling, poverty and social inclusion*. Retrieved on www.ling.lanccs.ac.uk
- Katz, M. (1993). *The Underclass Debate: Views from History*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Katz, M. (1989). *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare*, New York: Pantheon Books.
- Ladany, J and Szelenyi, I. (2006). *Patterns of exclusion: constructing Gypsy ethnicity and the making of an underclass in transitional societies of Europe*, East European Monographs.
- Lewis, Oscar (1996 (1966)). *The Culture of Poverty* in G. Gmelch and W. Zenner, eds. *Urban Life*, Waveland Press.
- Levitas R. (1998). *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour*, New York, Macmillan
- Magyary, N, Magyary-Vincze E, Popescu L., and Rotariu R, (2001). 'The Social Construction of Romanian Poverty: The Impact of Ethnic and Gender Distinctions' in Emigh R. and Szelenyi I., 'Poverty, Ethnicity and Gender in Eastern Europe during the Market Transition', Westport,

Praeger Publishers.

Marshall, T. H (1950). *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays*, Cambridge University Press.

Marris, R. (1997). *How to Save the Underclass*, St. Martin's Press.

Mingione, E. (1996). *Urban poverty and the underclass: a reader*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers

Mooney, G. (2000), *Class and Social Policy in Rethinking Social Policy*/ Edited by Clarke, J., SAGE, 2000

Myrdal, G. (1963). *Challenge to Affluence*, New York, Random House.

Morris, L. (1994). *Dangerous Classes: The Underclass and Social Citizenship*, London: Routledge.

Popescu L. and Rat C., (2008), *Quasi-Marketisation and Security in the Public Health Care System: The case of the North-Western Region of Romania*, Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, Sociologia, LIII 3.

Popescu L., Rat C and Rebeleanu A.(2007) *Self- Assessed Health Status and Satisfaction with Health Care Services in the New Member States of the European*, Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, Sociologia, LII 2.

Roth-Szamokozy M., Popescu L., Rat C., (2006) '*Children and Social Policy in Romania*', Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, Sociologia, LI 2.

Snow, D. and Anderson, L.1993. *Down on their Luck: a study of homeless street people*, Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Verdery, Katherine (1996). *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stewart, Michael (2002), *Deprivation, the Roma, and the Underclass in Postsocialism: ideals, ideologies and practice in Eurasia* / Edited by C. M. Hann London : Routledge, 2002

Wacquant, L. (2008). *Urban outcasts: a comparative sociology of advanced marginality*, Cambridge, Polity

Wilson, W. J. (1980), *The declining significance of race: blacks and changing American institutions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press

Wilson, W. J. (1987), *The truly disadvantaged : the inner city, the underclass, and public policy*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press

Wilson, W. J (1993), *The Ghetto underclass: social science perspectives*, Newbury Park, Ca. Sage Publications

Documents

- Government Decision 1827/2005

<http://www.mmuncii.ro/pub/imagemanager/images/file/Legislatie/HOTARARI-DE-GUVERN/HG1827-2005.pdf>

- Government Decision 1217 /2006

<http://www.mmuncii.ro/pub/imagemanager/images/file/Legislatie/HOTARARI-DE-GUVERN/HG1217-2006.pdf>

- Government Decision 197/2007

<http://sas.mmssf.ro/compendiumLegislativ.php?id=269>

- The Joint Inclusion Memorandum for Romania

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/jim_ro_en.pdf

- Unicef (2006) TransMonee Database, Florence, Unicef Innocenti Research Centre.

- Unicef (2008) TransMonee Database, Florence, Unicef Innocenti Research Centre.

- <http://www.primariaclujnapoca.ro/acte-necesare/acte61.aspx>

- <http://www.cjcluj.ro/hotararea-nr-146-20-iulie-2005/>

