'Parity of Participation' and the Politics of Needs Interpretation: Engagement with Roma Migrants in Manchester

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Abstract

Service providers in Western welfare states have to engage with an increasingly differentiated citizenry. The arrival of new migrant communities triggers debates, negotiations and struggles over the needs of these communities and how service providers can engage with them. In this paper, we look at these processes of developing local social inclusion policies that target migrant communities through the perspective of Nancy Fraser's 'politics of need interpretation'. More specifically, we analyse Roma engagement strategies in Manchester. We do so by reconstructing how the presence of Romanian Roma emerged as a public issue leading to various engagement strategies and how different actors competed over the interpretation of the needs of the Roma community and the best ways to respond to them. We use Fraser's notion of 'parity of participation' to draw attention to the position of the Roma community itself in the process of interpreting needs.

Introduction

Today's ethnically and culturally diverse societies are often depicted in public debates as a challenge to service providers (cf. Dean, 2015; Schrooten *et al.*, 2016). Generally, the pressure to re-think and re-organise service provision and access to it, for example by providing translation and interpreting services or considering special cultural practices, arises when newly arrived migrant communities are numerically significant and clearly noticeable to service providers and the public authorities that oversee and fund them. Such situations trigger debates,

negotiation, and sometimes arguments about the legitimacy and interpretation of communities' needs.

In the case of the Roma, however, governmental bodies are often quick to react with targeted measures, even when the groups are not numerically significant. Over the past centuries, the Roma have been subjected to targeted policies and at times even been enslaved, persecuted or deported (Matras, 2015). Since the early 1990s, the presence of Roma migrants in Western European countries triggered heated public debates, which often centred on their impact on the welfare state and community cohesion (see Matras, 2000; Nacu, 2012; Clark, 2014). Beyond the focus on specific needs, such debates often reveal general suspicion toward the Roma as well as dilemmas in conceptualising Romani identity (see Matras, 2013; Marushiakova and Popov, 2015). Roma migration therefore offers a so-called 'extreme case' (Flyvbjerg, 2006) to examine how governmental bodies and service providers take measures to protect social cohesion and confront marginalisation. It also highlights the political dimension of adapting social service provision to 'new' groups.

In this paper we examine the strategies adopted by a local authority and its partners to improve the inclusion of Roma migrants. The apparent conflict between different strategies raises questions about how to assess different social inclusion schemes and policies. Much like poverty reduction or development, migrant inclusion initiatives tend to flag 'participation' or 'engagement' and claim to pursue the 'empowerment' or 'emancipation' of excluded communities. However, these 'warmly persuasive and fulsomely positive' words are not neutral and can be filled with 'very different meanings' (Cornwall and Brock, 2005: 1043, 1056).

In this paper we examine how needs are defined and legitimised and the role of the Roma themselves as the target population. We draw on the analytical framework put forward by the feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser (1989) on the politics of needs interpretation, especially on her notion of 'parity of participation'. On that basis we reflect on the position of policy subjects in the process of naming and claiming social needs. We then explore the merits of this approach through an empirical analysis of Roma engagement strategies in Manchester, UK.

Social services and the politics of needs interpretation

Fraser is well known for her reformulation of social justice in terms of economic redistribution, cultural recognition and political representation[1]. However, we are more concerned here with her older work on the 'politics of need interpretation' (Fraser, 1989: chapters 7 and 8) to analyse the political-discursive dimension of social service reform. According to Fraser (1989: 161), 'in late capitalist welfare societies, talk about needs is an important species of political discourse' which mediates claims for policy reform. Needs are not pre-given, nor should we take

public discourses that authorise certain social needs at face value. The definition of needs is instead negotiated and debated; it is this 'interpretative justification' that captures Fraser's interest (1989: 146). She distinguishes three moments within the process of politicising needs by actors with unequal discursive power. The first 'moment'[2] is concerned with the struggles aimed at giving public legitimacy to a certain need, i.e. mobilising support for the idea that a public rather than merely individual responsibility exists for a particular need (cf. Newman and Clarke, 2009 on 'publicness'). The second moment revolves around the question of who defines and interprets the need that has received public legitimacy. The third moment encompasses struggles and debates about how this need can be addressed and which resources should be allocated for that purpose.

Fraser further distinguishes three ideal-typical discourses that are involved in need politics. An oppositional discourse promotes a need that is hitherto sealed into the domestic, economic or professional sphere to an open public debate. Fraser's labelling of this discourse is very much wedded to her involvement in second wave feminism (see Fraser, 2013); she regards public discourses that politicise private needs as inherently progressive and democratising (understood as opposing social domination). As we will show, developing a public discourse on the perceived needs of a particular social group may have the opposite effect. We therefore broaden the term to include all discourses that make an issue (or a needs claim) visible and public. The second type of discourse involves re-privatisation and aims to de-legitimise need claims made public and to refer them back to the domestic, economic or professional sphere, with or without incorporating new arguments and interpretations in the process. The third discourse, the expert discourse, uses 'professional jargon' and knowledge in order to translate politicised needs into 'administrable needs', objects of bureaucratic state intervention. The legitimacy of this 'expert status' is of particular interest to our discussion: research on public participation has often emphasised how contentious the distinction is between 'laymen' and 'experts' (or between 'authenticity' and 'expertise'), and how it can potentially stand in contradiction to declared policy aims of democratisation and emancipation (see Davies *et al.*, 2007; Newman and Clarke, 2009).

Recognising the crucial importance of power relations, Fraser (1989: 164–65) emphasises that different groups dispose of different 'sociocultural means of interpretation and communication' to engage in the discursive struggles of needs politics. Such means include, amongst others, narratives and conventions on group identities and deviancy, vocabularies that instantiate 'organized idioms' like administrative or therapeutic vocabularies, 'paradigms of argumentation' like the shine of objectivity around numbers and science, and established relations with influential institutions, networks and representatives. Such means are both plural (a heterogeneous, 'polyglot' field of possibilities) and stratified (i.e. their distribution reflects 'patterns of dominance and subordination'). In Fraser's view

the emancipation of excluded groups implies a redistribution of sociocultural means of communication and interpretation.

Fraser (2003) later proposed the notion of 'parity of participation'. A corollary to the analytical framework of the politics of needs interpretation, it captures the position of different groups, especially those whose needs are under discussion, in public debates. For the authors, this derives from the principle that all adult members of society must be in a position (i.e. have the opportunity) to interact with one another as peers, and constitutes 'a radical democratic interpretation of equal autonomy' (Fraser, in Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 229). The concept draws attention to the welfare state's paternalist potential, i.e. tendencies among service professionals to define the needs of target populations without taking into account the target group's capacity to voice their own needs (cf. Davies *et al.*, 2014).

The Roma's relationship with welfare institutions is an interesting case, since public discussions of Roma needs and identity are characterised by a noticeable absence of mandated Roma representatives (Matras, 2013). Indeed, a growing number of ('expert') actors make claims on behalf of the Roma, while the Roma themselves remain underrepresented in many key positions and platforms with little control over their public image (McGarry, 2014). Cases have been described in which NGOs and social workers 'colonise' needs interpretations on behalf of the Roma (Trehan, 2001; Timmer, 2010; Matras *et al.,* 2015). Fraser's framework is therefore useful for our investigation. While it does not prescribe which actors or discourses have legitimacy or responsibility to intervene in the process of needs interpretation, the notion of 'parity of participation' offers a tool to ground the analysis in a normative concern for equality and autonomy.

Local social inclusion schemes that pursue 'participatory parity' are thus concerned with how reforms and social work support individuals' and groups' opportunities to reshape societal structures and value patterns (Davies *et al.*, 2014). It is true that larger 'structures' like welfare and fiscal policies 'are largely dependent on top-down, political commitment and are therefore far from the marginalized groups' reach' (Kostadinova, 2011: 164). However, at a more immediate level, parity of participation demands that marginalised groups have the opportunity and means of interpretation and communication to name and claim their needs as being potentially different from those that underpin social interventions and welfare reforms. Expressions of needs imply that claims are put forward as to what is required in order to participate in and contribute to society. In contemporary welfare societies, needs discourses and the 'politics of needs interpretation' mediate entitlements to support, as well as distribution of responsibility and allocation of resources and social rights (cf. Fraser, 1989; Dean, 2015).

We propose to apply this approach to an 'extreme case'. According to Flyvjbjerg, 'extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied' (Flyvjberg, 2006: 13). Extreme cases are those that often give rise to tensions and conflicting

views that are more clearly articulated and might therefore be considered more dramatic. While we would not necessarily subscribe to the label 'extreme', the case of Roma immigrants from Romania in Manchester is exceptional in that it triggered an unusual response from the local authority and public services, as we shall describe below.

Method

The present study emerged from the collaboration between two different research projects, MigRom and ImPRovE. As part of MigRom, Leggio and Matras were engaged in an ethnography of Romanian Roma migration to Manchester, UK. MigRom was set up in 2013 as a European research consortium involving five universities, a Roma NGO (the 'European Roma and Travellers Forum', with consultative status at the Council of Europe), and Manchester City Council, as full partners. The relationship between the University of Manchester, the lead partner on the consortium, and Manchester City Council, emerged in 2009 when the University's Romani Project was approached by the City Council with a request for information on the local Roma community and recommendations for an Engagement Strategy (see Matras *et al.* 2009). While MigRom's main objective was academic research, its goals also included a pilot engagement scheme to:

introduce measures for capacity-building within the community, provisions for advice and support services and the creation of a consultation forum that will allow Roma migrants to take part in planning and decision-making processes affecting their community. (Project description)[3]

Its research programme also included as one of its aims:

To assess policy measures targeting migrant Roma communities in an integrated way that takes into consideration both the articulated views and needs of the Roma migrants and the position of the local authority. (Project objectives)[4]

Leggio, Matras and two Roma colleagues who ran the advice and support services engaged in a long-term ethnography among Roma migrants from Romania between 2009–15, looking at their experiences, motivations, ambitions and strategies for inclusion. The team also analysed documents produced by other policy actors engaging with the Roma (Manchester City Council; International New Arrivals, Supplementary Schools and Travellers (INA) team within Manchester City Council; the third sector agency BHA for Equality) covering the same period of time. The MigRom team thus took on roles akin to what Bernard (2012: 313–14) defines as *observing participants,* or insiders in the development and implementation of the policies that they were studying. The descriptive part of the study draws on this research (for further details see below)[5].

As part of ImPRovE, Cools and Oosterlynck investigated cases of local social innovation and welfare restructuring in the fields of employment, housing and Roma inclusion in Belgium and England. Their research focused on the potential

of innovative (knowledge) partnerships to transform societal relationships, and on the actual meaning of 'empowerment' in these initiatives (Kazepov *et al.*, 2013). From this perspective they took an interest in the Manchester-MigRom case. After analysing relevant policy documents, academic reports, and newspaper articles, Cools used a semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended questions to interview 11 key actors involved in Roma engagement between January and March 2015, including officers of Manchester City Council Regeneration (1) and INA teams (4), members of BHA (2) and the entire MigRom Project team (4). Cools and Oosterlynck's report[6] was distributed to all interviewees and feedback was received from them, in one case in the form of a follow-up interview. The present paper draws on the theoretical approach to processes of need politics and social service reform adopted by Cools and Oosterlynck (see above).

This paper thus takes a two-tier approach. It draws on MigRom Project's research while also analysing the impact that the project's activities had on discussions within the local authority and its partner organisations. We address the apparent issues of 'positionality' and objectivity that flow from the authors' direct involvement in the process, through techniques known as 'decentering' and 'recentering' (Breuer and Roth, 2003). Actors with different viewpoints are invited to scrutinise the research and the researchers' involvement (decentering) and then use these comments to inform reflection and discussion about their own objectivity, 'positionality' and interventions (recentering). This reflexive strategy (Finlay and Gough, 2003) rests on the collaboration between co-authors who were directly involved in the MigRom research, and those who were not part of it but who carried out an independent analysis of the MigRom project as a case study, and received feedback on their report directly from the actors, before writing this collaborative article.

The emergence of a public concern

Between early 2009 and early 2015 two episodes of 'politics of needs interpretation' led to the emergence and development of Manchester City Council's 'Roma Strategy'. The first episode shows how this strategy came about and how a body of knowledge was collected and used to mediate between the community of Roma migrants and service providers in Manchester. The second episode revolves around the question of whether issues of safeguarding of young girls and notions of 'early marriage' should be addressed as a specific 'Roma problem'. We will show how different strands of Roma engagement in Manchester crystallised into alliances of actors each claiming to have relevant expertise. We address the question of whether local social policy in general, and specific social interventions that target the Roma in particular, enable or impede 'participatory parity'.

Roma migrants from Eastern Europe began to settle in Manchester in the mid-1990s[7]. Public services (mainly in the education sector) were aware of their

presence in the city but the City Council did not coordinate any targeted approach. Coordinated institutional engagement with Roma migrants in Manchester began in 2009, targeting a very specific, relatively small community of mostly Pentecostal Roma originating from Țăndărei in South-Eastern Romania. They had settled in a small cluster of streets in and around the Gorton South area of the city, some arriving as early as 2000 but most of them, however, after Romania's accession to the EU in 2007 (MigRom, 2015). At the time, the community comprised around 300–400 individuals, some two-thirds of them children. The focus of Manchester's Roma Strategy on this rather small group of Roma migrants allows us to examine the factors that trigger a view of the Roma as a 'problem' and a challenge to local policy and service provision. It shows us how the needs of a group are interpreted and how a variety of actors assume an active role in the process of needs interpretation.

Issues of safety, security and of public image triggered Manchester City Council's interest in this particular Roma community. The local police had recorded isolated acts of violence against Romani homes in the spring of 2009, and there was a serious concern about an escalation of ethnic violence. At the same time, public opinion and the views of some local politicians may have also been influenced by national press coverage of the London Metropolitan Police's Operation Golf which investigated allegations of child trafficking specifically by Roma from Țăndărei. In the spring of 2009 a petition was submitted by an opposition councillor to Manchester City Council on behalf of a small group of residents, accusing the Roma of littering, truancy, anti-social and criminal behaviour. This led to the setting up of a 'Roma Strategy Group', consisting of middle-level management from various services and chaired by the City Council's Deputy Chief Executive. There was no precedent for such explicit coordination of a policy to address a particular ethnic group.

Supported by a representative of the local opposition party, residents thus effectively used pre-existing narratives on the Roma as a 'deviant' group, and their procedural knowledge of local politics (a petition and questions to councillors) to develop an oppositional discourse that opened the first episode of needs interpretation by turning a hitherto 'hidden' issue into a matter of public concern. However, contrasting with Fraser's canonical approach, bringing the issue to the public was not instigated by a marginalised group asking for equal opportunities but rather by those demanding action to contain and control a newly arrived population. Manchester City Council, however, did not take all the complaints at face value. For over a year its Roma Strategy Group engaged in a process that involved formulating problems, targets, indicators and desired outcomes with a view toward ultimately embedding engagement with the Roma community into the city's regular, mainstream procedures. To that end, it elicited 'expert discourses' from front-line officers as well as from academics in order to counter residents' discourses and to de-politicise their mode of presentation.

The Roma Strategy Group flagged a variety of issues for investigation and engagement. On the one hand, its minutes reflect a wish to contain and control the Roma population:[8]

[we] need to understand the transient nature of the Roma community and the impact on children. Families move and we lose track of them [. . .]. We need to establish a process whereby other services can link their intelligence with children's services. (RSG 21/09/2009)

They also show a desire to change the Roma's alleged behaviour, in particular in relation to work ethics:

The issue of benefits policy remains a major concern both in terms of continuing inward migration and risks to community cohesion. [We] need to consider whether the self-employment being declared can be considered genuine work. (RSG 22/01/2010)

Minutes also flagged favourable reactions by residents to supposedly 'heavy-handed' initiatives such as a police raid (in the first quote) and a door-to-door campaign to collect council tax specifically from the Roma (in the second):

No evidence of crime or child trafficking found [. . .] there was a positive response [to the police raid] from the host community; however, some anxiety was expressed by the Roma community. (RSG 22/01/2010)
Non-Roma families were happy to see the [tax collection] operation taking place. (RSG 20/02/2010)

On the other hand, the minutes demonstrate an effort to ensure equal access and the Roma's active engagement with services:

Local schools may be a way of disseminating information to Roma families, as might be Roma residents if they can be employed through M4 [City Council translation and interpreting service]. (RSG, 21/09/2009)

The City Council was also conscious of the need to actively counteract negative perceptions among residents:

53 Roma households have been identified [. . .]. If overcrowding is not an issue within the Roma community, this needs to be appropriately communicated back to the wider public. (RSG 21/09/09)

The City Council had thus accepted the fact that the presence of Roma migrants in Manchester had become a matter of public concern and public discussion, but it drew on its various means of interpretation and communication to re-frame the issue. The City's approach, involving a variety of agencies, was flagged as an effort to ensure, in the expert discourse of City Council officers, 'community cohesion'; this became the official interpretation of the overarching need shared both by the Roma and other residents in the area. The Roma Strategy Group continued to collect information on the community by asking for reports from specialised services. At the same time City Council officers held regular public meetings with residents to reassure them that their concerns were being addressed. From our observations and conversations with the officers

involved we know that no Roma were invited to attend these meetings (Interview: Regeneration). The Roma (who at that point lacked policy representatives and experience with relevant procedures) thus remained outside the debates that were initiated by others.

This changed gradually when the City Council, following the recommendations made in the University report (Matras *et al.*, 2009), embarked on a targeted engagement strategy with the Roma community in early 2010. Initiatives were taken to encourage the Roma to attend neighbourhood events and to access local youth activities, and steps were taken to assist Roma parents in the school registration process and to enforce equal access by signalling to schools that denying Roma school places was not acceptable. The City Council also drew on government funds for the inclusion of Eastern European migrants to introduce a temporary outreach programme that specifically targeted the Roma community from Romania. That work was outsourced to a voluntary sector organisation, the Black Health Agency or 'BHA for Equality'. Drawing on close links and some personnel overlap with the City Council's own International New Arrivals team within the education department, the BHA also launched an intervention in local schools to raise awareness of the Roma. In due course it was to receive additional grants for this programme from Manchester City Council as well as from the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme. The joint projects produced a series of public events, face-to-face and written reports to City Council committees, school induction materials and teacher training packages, as well as published reports and appraisals commissioned from academics (for details see Matras *et al.*, 2015; MigRom, 2015: 32ff.).

The first episode thus illustrates how needs were politicised and carried into the public domain. This triggered an institutional response in an effort to identify needs more systematically, drawing on a variety of information sources. The process gave rise to a bundle of expert discourses, with various actors involved in the process and a growing body of written documents crystallising into a narrative on the Roma and their needs. While the ambition was to see the Roma participating as peers, it was recognised that the way to achieve this was to capacitate a number of actors to mediate between the Roma community and institutions. The process of identifying and supporting bridging figures and community representatives was accompanied by a debate on whether the Roma must modify their own behaviour in order to benefit from equal access to services (as documented by the RSG quotes), whether they require particular skills and empowerment to do so, or whether the delivery mode of services requires some modification in order to accommodate the Roma. The core issue was thus the balance between maintaining dedicated intervention that targeted the Roma specifically, and the ambition to apply mainstream procedures to the Roma. We will see in the discussion of the second episode how a split emerged within the expert discourses regarding the role of mediation and its contribution to

participatory parity, and how this split continued to be framed through a debate on identifying needs.

Two strands of Roma engagement

In its evaluation of the Roma Strategy (Mills and Wilson, 2013), Manchester City Council offered an overall positive assessment of its interventions. It flagged that many of the tensions were the result of perception and that, where progress could be measured, indicators of success had been met. The move to downscale and abandon the Roma Strategy, which the report announced, was primarily justified by the view that the strategy had served its purpose by alleviating tensions and showing that mainstream services were able to engage with the Roma. However, this coincided with the introduction of austerity measures after 2010, which had significant consequences for local authority budgets (cf. Lupton *et al.*, 2015). According to some of the actors involved, the effort to ensure that the Roma used mainstream services was partly motivated by a need to discontinue dedicated support for budget reasons (Interview: INA). A further response to austerity was to rely more on self-organisation. As residents were expected to make more use of online services, communities who were unable to communicate specific needs risked missing out on participatory opportunities:

Today [Roma] have to organize some of these support and advice services themselves . . . the landscape has changed. (Interview: Regeneration)

By the end of 2011, cuts and changes in budget allocation to schools threatened the scope of INA-BHA activities:

So far school budgets have been protected in this country, (. . .) [but] it's been quite hard for charities and other organisations to maintain their work. (. . .) The schools now have those responsibilities themselves and our approach is very much about trying to support in the mainstream. So we no longer have the same capacity to go out and work directly with families (. . .) We very much have to work with other teams in the council. (. . .) Our role is much more advisory. (Interview: INA)

The team began to flag the expertise that it had developed on the Roma in an attempt to secure the continuation of funding. The 2012 BHA report to Manchester City Council said:

Any reduction in funding or stopping funding altogether will have a disproportionate impact on INA and therefore race. (Report to: Citizenship and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11/01/2012, p. 112)

The INA-BHA partnership developed a discourse arguing that the Roma have distinct support needs arising from their culture which require a dedicated and targeted intervention. As part of a project funded by an EU grant, the team drafted a special 'Admissions and Induction Protocol for Roma Children'.[9] It proposed that schools should record, among other information, Roma pupils'

readiness for learning, whether they wear their uniform regularly and whether the pupil 'knows that words convey meaning' (Murphy, 2013: 69). In an effort to raise awareness among teachers of (alleged) Roma-particular behaviour, their reports alluded to the Roma's supposed inability to sit still and to listen without talking, and to distinct memorising skills and a tendency to 'negotiate the world without need for reading and writing' (*ibid.*: 34). To consolidate their expert role in alleviating these supposed needs of the Roma community the team sought support from academic researchers who were commissioned to assess and validate their interventions (see Lever, 2012; Scullion and Brown, 2013).

In January 2013, BHA applied successfully for a grant from Manchester City Council in order to carry out a consultation with young Romanian Roma, aiming to:

develop protocols [. . .] which will identify and track hard to reach girls [. . .] share information regarding 'at risk' young people in relation to criminal activity, school drop-out.[10]

We might interpret this position as explicitly opposed to the City Council's policy of mainstreaming and downscaling dedicated interventions. Once again, a discourse of turning the Roma into an issue of public concern emerged, now from within a municipal service and resorting to commissioned expert discourse, thus triggering a new round of needs interpretation.

In its interim project report to the City Council, from June 2014, the BHA claimed: 'early marriage is a rite of passage that individuals from within the Roma community are required to partake'. It concluded by stating: 'Roma in the UK and on continental Europe have developed a deep-rooted mistrust of outsiders, limiting forms of interaction and engagement with social care providers'. It then recommended that the BHA's remit and funding for the intervention should be extended in order to draw on the expertise and 'trusting relationships' that the BHA team has established in its own work with the Roma[11]. Similar to other cases of Roma inclusion initiatives, BHA presents its relationship with community members as a means of interpretation that supports their expert position (cf. Timmer, 2010), allowing them to define needs (second moment) and gain designated recourses (third moment) without much struggle.

At the same time, a different discourse and policy focus was being strengthened with City Council involvement. In 2013, the MigRom consortium was launched, funded by the EU's Seventh Framework Programme. Coordinated by the University of Manchester, it also included Manchester City Council as a full partner. MigRom funding offered the City Council an opportunity to work towards strengthening a more self-reliant Romani community[12] while other Roma engagement strategies were being downscaled or mainstreamed (Interview: Regeneration).

In September 2013 the project launched its weekly advice sessions run by two Roma employed by the University of Manchester as outreach workers.[13] In order

to forward its idea of a consultation forum, the project invited other young Roma to act as an informal 'Roma Leadership Group'. In the summer of 2014 the group initiated a series of meetings with local councillors to discuss their positions on issues of concern to the Roma community.[14] The MigRom Project also made City Council minutes and BHA reports on Roma-related interventions accessible to the group[15] and encouraged its members to put questions to City Council officials about the way in which the Roma were depicted in these documents, especially in relation to the presentation of safeguarding issues and early marriage. The researchers' concern that the narrative proposed by BHA and its partners INA was potentially stigmatising, that it did not rest on evidence, and that there was no justification for a targeted intervention, resonated well with the young Roma. They complained to councillors and City Council officers about the way in which their community was being portrayed and asked to be involved directly in any future discussions about their community.

The Roma leadership group thus drew on means of interpretation and communication presented by MigRom as well as their own 'authentic' experience to engage in the second episode of need interpretation politics, putting institutionalised assumptions on Roma culture to public debate (as a struggle about the public legitimacy of certain needs, or Fraser's 'first moment') while putting themselves forward as actors who should be involved in defining needs (Fraser's 'second moment'). MigRom scholars and Regeneration partners (interviews) regarded this as a process though which community members were able to familiarise themselves with policy representatives, discourses, and procedures, as a way of acquiring 'resilience capital'. After a series of informal meetings over a period of several months, the Roma leadership group was given an opportunity to raise its concerns more formally at a meeting with councillors and City Council officers at Manchester Town Hall in December 2014, where a promise was made to consult the community about future reports.[16] In June 2015, Manchester City Council released a new report on its Roma Engagement in which it acknowledged that some statements made in earlier reports had not been evidenced and declared that no unsubstantiated information would be included in any future reports. It also promised to turn to the newly formed Roma community initiative, 'Roma Voices of Manchester', a continuation of the informal Roma Leadership Group, as a channel of communication with the Romani community.[17]

Arguably, the demand that Manchester City Council should abandon discussions of culture and targeted interventions amounted to an attempt to dispute the legitimacy of institutionalised needs interpretation in regard to these issues and to 're-privatise' or return such issues to the domestic sphere (seemingly at odds with Fraser's perspective on the oppositional discourse). The young Roma spokespersons argued that Roma culture, like any culture, is subject to constant change from within and that generalising statements achieve more harm than

good and threaten to damage the image of the community, especially since there was no evidence for the assertions made (based on its research in the community, the MigRom Project disputed BHA's claim that the Roma community had a 'disproportionate rate of teenage pregnancies'; see MigRom 2015; MigRom 2014). If the Roma have the same rights as all citizens, they should be subjected to the same safeguarding procedures. For their part, BHA continued to argue that it had real indications that safeguarding was a problem in the Roma community and that while early marriage was not a 'Roma problem' per se, it was not illegitimate to investigate the issue in the Roma community (Interview: BHA).

The ensuing debate, which revolved around who was best placed to define needs and the concrete ways in which these would be addressed, might be regarded as the emergence of two competing alliances of actors, both developing strategies that aim to empower the Roma, and both claiming expert status and trust relationships with community members. On the one hand, the alliance of INA and BHA continued the strand of engagement that treated the Roma as passive subjects in the politics of need interpretation and policy development. They drew arguments in favour of their approach from their experience in education, health and safeguarding with the Roma and other minorities (Interview: BHA). To strengthen its position, this alliance mobilised an expert discourse, drawing on their own work and commissioning academics to support their positions (for a critical analysis see Matras *et al.,* 2015). They described their approach to outreach as 'assertive' (Interview: INA, BHA), implicitly suggesting that the Roma would not engage with services without dedicated and pro-active interventions. This view of the Roma as passive subjects can also be inferred from the fact that the Roma were only employed in BHA's safeguarding intervention as interpreters. Just as they were not involved in the identification and assessment of needs in preparation of BHA's application, their input remained limited during the BHA project itself.

On the other hand, Manchester City Council's Regeneration and Equality teams aimed at mainstreaming the Roma access to services and encouraging self-reliance. Through their involvement in the MigRom project they engaged in a continuous dialogue with members of the Roma community, particularly those members that host the weekly advice sessions and those involved in the leadership group. They were thus able to claim legitimacy for their approach as an enterprise to which the Roma contributed as active partners. As a research project, MigRom treated expert discourses as a point of departure rather than as a validation. Social interventions were then put in place as a way of testing the validity of the expert discourse. MigRom's approach was to put the Roma in a position from which they could develop their own voice. Due in part to its internationally recognised expertise on Roma culture, MigRom's alliance was in a position to argue against essentialist approaches to the Roma community and its culture and to challenge the City Council's contradictory commitment to support both strands at the same time and to partake in both alliances. With

a direct dialogue between the two alliances proving difficult to arrange, the City Council's representative on MigRom argued:

The best way to reconcile these two strands is by strengthening self-organisation and representation of the Roma community, with less active involvement of these different organisations (Interview: Regeneration).

Conclusion

In this article, we analysed how the development of social inclusion policies targeting a particular migrant community is moulded through politics of need interpretation. The dynamics of local policy development among governmental bodies and service providers responding to Roma migration in Manchester, present us with an 'extreme case' to study the interpretative struggles that are implicit in social service reform. They triggered debate and mobilised resources and actors. The case thus demonstrates how policy interventions were built on contestable claims about the nature of the Roma community and its needs. It also shows how the Roma community and other actors were involved in the process of identifying, naming and claiming needs.

Through a 'meaning oriented' analytical framework we critically assessed the discussions about 'emancipatory' social work strategies for marginalised groups. Drawing on Fraser's different types of discourses and 'moments' in the politics of needs interpretation, and analysing how different actors use the sociocultural means of interpretation and communication at their disposal to develop need discourses, we have shown how Roma migrants evolved as a public concern in Manchester and how local Roma policy fragmented into 'two strands', each supported by actors within the local authority and expert discourses. In terms of thresholds to 'participatory parity', the tension between the two alliances arose around issues of cultural misrepresentations, lack of political representation in the Roma community and the different roles played by experts. We showed how the combination of a 'politics of needs' perspective with the concept of 'parity of participation' allows a critical appreciation and comparison of different projects that claim legitimacy through their expert discourses and their relations with the target population and authorities.

In contrast with Fraser's 'ideal' typology we found that oppositional discourses (such as residents demanding interventions that target the Roma) are not necessarily democratising or progressive in Fraser's own terms of going against processes of domination; and, indeed, that they can even reinforce forms of domination (in this case established residents vis-à-vis newcomers). In the same way, re-privatisation discourses (such as those demanding that Manchester City Council should abandon Roma-specific interventions) do not necessarily reproduce patterns of domination, as Fraser suggests on the basis of her feminist reflections on 'runaway needs'. We therefore conclude that the framework can

be used to analyse very different proposals and dynamics of policy reform, and that the nature of the ideal type public discourse that politicises certain needs is perhaps better characterised as 'making public' rather than as 'oppositional' as Fraser had framed them.

This case illustrates that adapting social services to new societal challenges cannot be understood narrowly as a merely technocratic exercise of experts interpreting and addressing the needs of a target population, but that it often involves a range of different actors, including the target population itself, in a politicised process of needs interpretation. Indeed, addressing new needs and opening up established service organisations to new groups is not only a matter of more efficient material redistribution, but is intertwined with cultural recognition and political representation. This brings up the issue of parity of participation in the naming, interpreting, and addressing of needs, especially by the group that is being targeted by these engagement strategies, and by those who join the process through their proclaimed expert position. The Manchester case highlights a tension between treating migrant groups as equals, and trying to empower them to participate as equals, which was apparent in both alliances. It appears that such tensions are unavoidable and best dealt with by explicitly discussing the meaning of empowerment with target group members, and through a strong commitment to parity of participation through a redistribution of sociocultural means of interpretation and communication. In Manchester this was realised by opening up networks and (professional) positions to target group members, by supporting them to get acquainted with established policy and administrative vocabularies and allowing them to partake in need identification and introduce alternative arguments and narratives into the mainstream debates and institutions.

Categorical policies that claim to capacitate communities can help to dissolve thresholds to participatory parity, but they also risk reproducing perceived differences and culturally essentialist perceptions that impede genuine autonomy. The categorisation on which service provision and engagement strategies are based has a real impact on the structuring of social relations and the reproduction of inequality. Putting time limits on such interventions, supporting self-representation and favouring knowledge alliances that include representatives of authorities and deprived groups as equal partners in a dialogical process, are key ingredients for realising parity of participation through local social inclusion strategies.

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Notes

1 Most use of Fraser's work in Romani studies (e.g. Kostadinova 2011; McGarry 2012) makes reference to the interrelations between politics of cultural recognition and economic redistribution (see Fraser and Honneth 2003).

2 The word 'moment' refers here to three different but interrelated dimensions of this process that may overlap in time.

3 http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/strategy.html. Last accessed 01/04/2017.

4 http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/objectives.html. Last accessed 01/04/2017.

5 see also http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Yr2report_Mcr.pdf

6 http://improve-research.eu/?wpdmact=process&did=MTA1LmhvdGxpbms. Last accessed 01/04/2017

7 No official numbers for the total population of Roma in Manchester are available. the Romani Project is aware of Roma from backgrounds as diverse as Latvian, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian and Romanian. It is estimated that some 2000–3000 Roma live in Manchester.

8 Quotes refer to the archive minutes of Roma Strategy Group, by date. Access was obtained through Manchester City Council's web portal and direct request to the City Council.

9 http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/results_projects/documents/roma_compendium_en.pdf. Last accessed 01/04/2017.

10 http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/BHA_equalities_application%20Jan%202013.pdf. Last accessed 01/04/2017.

11 BHA Final Report authored by Jennifer Davies and Julie Davies; received from Manchester City Council Equalities Team on 27.06.2014. The document is available here: http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/BHA%20FINAL%20REPORT%20Jun%202014.pdf. Last accessed 01/04/2017.

12 At that time, Manchester City Council was also concerned that the Roma would turn towards employment benefits when restrictions on employment would be lifted in January 2014. Continuing the engagement was a way to monitor and, if necessary, address this. In February 2015 it became clear that these concerns were ungrounded (I: Regeneration).

13 http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/MigRom%20Briefing%20June%202015.pdf. Last accessed 01/04/2017.

14 http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/Yr2report_Mcr.pdf. Last accessed 01/04/2017.

15 For MigRom's critique of the BHA intervention see http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/BHA.html. Last accessed 28/08/2015.

16 http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Consultation-Forum.pdf. Last accessed 01/04/2017.

17 http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/5._Roma_engagement_ report.pdf. Last accessed 01/04/2017.

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