

KATALIN FEHÉR<sup>1</sup>

ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF A FORMER WORKER'S COLONY  
SYMBOLIC AND SOCIAL BOUNDARIES IN THE MAKING

DOI: 10.18030/SOCIO.HU.2016EN.22

ABSTRACT

The study analyses a segregated neighbourhood's microcommunity embedded in a former industrial middle-sized town. Symbolic boundaries are constructed to differentiate people, spaces and social practices and to create categories and classifications for them, while social boundaries are the objectified and realized differentiations. Studying symbolic and social boundaries made by the residents of a former workers' colony allows us to describe the dynamically changing relations within a socially and ethnically mixed poor neighbourhood, paying attention to those conditional factors of local structural, political and cultural context that determine the uniqueness of this location. Established and outsider groups are maintaining symbolic boundaries rooted in social boundaries, while ethnic boundaries are symbolically drawn between Roma and non-Roma residents of the colony.

**Key words:** symbolic boundaries, social boundaries, exclusion, Roma settlement, poor neighbourhood

---

<sup>1</sup> CERS HAS Institute for Regional Studies, Junior Research Fellow. Corvinus University of Budapest, Doctoral School of Sociology, PhD student.

KATALIN FEHÉR

ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF A FORMER WORKER'S COLONY  
SYMBOLIC AND SOCIAL BOUNDARIES IN THE MAKING

---

Béke is a former workers' colony in the post-industrial North-Hungarian middle-sized town, Kormos<sup>1</sup>. Residents are drawing boundaries between people, spaces, and social practices in order to create classificatory categories for themselves and for others, to interpret reality from their own position. Studying social and symbolic boundaries in a spatially clearly delineated, dynamically changing, socially and ethnically mixed neighbourhood provides an opportunity to describe those differentiations that residents construct to position themselves within this transforming environment. The boundary making processes are analysed in the light of the structural conditions of the residents, the diverging livelihood strategies and the relatively rich social capital that the population of the neighbourhood holds. Differentiations represented by symbolic boundaries are also describing the struggle for scarce resources – such as housing, livelihood – and the symbolic domination and social exclusion in the transforming neighbourhood. In Béke the main boundaries are drawn between the relative categories of established and outsider and Roma and non-Roma residents, while these differentiations are grasped from various aspects in the local narratives. Within this context individuals are drawing symbolic boundaries that can be negotiated into realized social boundaries in the long term, or can reflect existing or social boundaries already dissolved.

After a theoretical introduction on the contextual approach of neighbourhoods and the processes of social and symbolic boundaries construction the study opens with the short social history of the Béke colony. The present-day livelihood strategies and the social capital of the neighbourhood are presented to give an overview of the living conditions of the neighbourhood and specify its unique context embedded historically, socially and culturally. Subsequently boundaries are scrutinized from different aspects: the spatial and external symbolic boundaries of Béke give way to established inhabitants versus outsider relations and symbolic ethnic boundaries that are understood symbolically and socially.

ON SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES AS CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Loic Wacquant defined the *ghetto as a spatially based institution* of ethnoracial closure and control, and positioned his relational approach in contrast to those who defined ghetto simply as a low-income neighbourhood. Conversely, the ghetto is strongly rooted in its historical meaning and racial character and the mechanisms of its constructing processes. The ghetto is defined by its structural components: the stigma that is attached to the place, the constraints that tie residents to the locality, spatial confinement established by the impermeable boundaries of the place, and institutional parallelism. The ghetto maintains a parallel institutional system, which substitutes the majority's system, but often in an incomplete and inappropriate way. While

---

<sup>1</sup> The name of the town and the segregated area as well as the interviewees are anonymized in the paper.

all ghettos are segregated, they are not necessarily poor neighbourhoods, and are distinguished from ethnic neighbourhoods or enclaves. For the dominant groups of racial domination ghettos are places to confine, control and isolate the subordinate groups, while to the subordinate it can be a protective place. At the same time ghettos also provide opportunity to exploit and extract the maximum profit possible from the excluded groups (Wacquant 2012, 1997).

Mario Small is arguing against this institutionalist approach of the ghetto which assumes the approximate uniformity of ghettos in a decontextualized way, therefore it supposes universal social mechanisms and the uniformity of these neighbourhoods' effect on residents. Small especially calls attention against the homogenizing view of ghettos, partly argued on the base of the Chicago-centred US urban research tradition. The *conditional approach* does not lose interest in systematic understanding of poor neighbourhoods: it states that context matters; there are intermediary, contextual factors that shape the outcome of different neighbourhoods and this approach is committed to the recognition of these important differences of neighbourhoods and also to the systematic research of neighbourhoods (Small 2008, 2004). Such intermediary factors can be diverse. Mario Small himself builds his study on Villa Victoria, Boston, on the understanding of such factors: the case describes how social isolation in a distinguished neighbourhood is dependent on many local supra-individual factors e.g. the availability of resources, the quality of the neighbourhood's boundaries, the local ethnic and class composition and the cohort-characteristics of the neighbourhood. Besides the neighbourhood-level conditional factors, there are some that can be active at the individual level, such as the age, employment status, individual life history (immigrant status in the case of Villa Victoria) and the narrative frames which can also represent the affect toward the neighbourhood (Small 2004).

Studying symbolic and social boundaries is a tool to conceptualize the hierarchies and group relations through the culturally constructed social categorization schemes that individuals and groups apply (Small et al. 2010, Small–Newman 2001). The construction of *symbolic boundaries* is the conceptual differentiation of social actors, which allows the individuals and groups to differentiate between people, spaces and social practices and to create categories and classifications for them. This is a socially applied tool to struggle over the understandings and interpretations of reality and to acquire status and resources. Groups of individuals are drawing symbolic lines between themselves and others thus they accumulate their own identity or they are able to concretize a new institution through boundary making. In contrast with symbolic boundaries, *social boundaries* are the objectified and realized differentiation of groups that allows the unequal redistribution of scarce resources. Social boundaries are materialized by stable behavioural patterns and these boundaries are widely agreed. Thus symbolic boundaries often normalize and enforce social boundaries as social differences, class distinctions, etc. Symbolic boundaries are necessary but not sufficient conditions for objective, social boundaries. Symbolic boundaries are applied to contest and reframe the meaning of social boundaries, they are able to substitute or support social boundaries even after their dissolution (Lamont–Molnár 2002). During the *boundary making process* (or boundary work) we can see the construction of inequalities between groups and therefore the process they compete for the acquisition of scarce resources, the legitimacy and institutionalization of their social and spatial position (Small 2004, Small–Newman 2001). The study of symbolic boundaries provides a great opportunity to scrutinize the dynamic relations among individuals and groups not through

the research of their internal qualities but through the boundaries created and used by them (Small–Newman 2001).

This conceptual classification is especially apparent and important is the case of redistributive and welfare policies since they directly affect the resources different groups are able to acquire (Small et al. 2010). In the case of Kormos the analysis of symbolic boundaries applied by institutions (Fehér 2015) sheds light on those boundaries the experts of the social providers and the developmental projects are drawing along worthiness and between racialized, classed others, positioned in space (in different colonies and settlements). Over the institutionalized boundaries it is also essential to analyse such categories among individuals, because it reveals how much residents of a segregated, poor neighbourhood consider themselves to be part of the mainstream society and what kind of inner differentiations form due to the struggle for resources such as housing in the colony and more symbolically for the affiliation and symbolic domination of the neighbourhood, and the normalization of social transformations. Béke colony could be seen as an 'exceptional' case of the ghetto because of the great changes in the social position and composition of the neighbourhood and the rapid transformation of what it means to 'live in the Béke colony' for the residents. The analysis of boundary making process deepens the understanding of the dynamic social processes that characterize the diverse society of Béke colony. It reveals the symbolic boundaries that are able to materialize thus to contribute to social exclusion and residential segregation, and to reproduce social distance and spatial disaffiliation.

The case study of Béke colony is based on a qualitative empirical research carried out in a segregated and stigmatized neighbourhood of the former industrial middle-sized town, Kormos. It builds on the sociological fieldwork conducted in the colony. The methodology fits into the framework of community studies that aims to reveal specific sections of the community's microworld through collective and individual interviews, and field observations. The study partly leans on the background knowledge gathered by interviews with local key informants and experts (leaders of the local government, social and educational providers, minority and church representatives). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 randomly selected local residents living in Béke colony, in several cases the discussion involved more than one household member. They were asked about their family, work and housing history and their reflections on the changing status of their block, the colony, their situation within Béke and the town, and the local social and ethnic relations. Field observations were made during the interviews (which were conducted in varied localities, in the intimate sphere of the household, in the gardens or in the central playground), in the local small shop or during a walk around. The team visited the colony at diverse times of the day and the week (during the day, early at night-time, weekend, etc.).<sup>2</sup>

### THE HISTORY OF BÉKE AND THE SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The conditional approach emphasizes the heterogeneity of ghettos and poor neighbourhoods. Their difference is rooted in their distinct social history and in the divergence of social capital that the individual residents and the community hold, which have an effect on the isolation of the neighbourhood. The following

---

<sup>2</sup> The interviews were gathered in the framework of *Social and ethnic boundaries* (OTKA 101299). Participants of the fieldwork were: Szilvia Rézműves, Dezső Szegedi, Zsuzsanna Vidra, András Vígvári, Tünde Virág and Katalin Fehér.

chapter gives an overview of these unique qualities, supported by the diverging present-day livelihood strategies that are determining the changing status of the neighbourhood.

### The short social history of Béke colony

Kormos is a former industrial town in Northern Hungary with a shrinking population over 30.000 people. Its history is closely related to the forced industrialisation and artificial boost of the town. Its rapid development already started in the beginning of the 20th century, but was fastened along the industrial expansion of the socialist era. In this sense the history of Kormos is not exceptional but at least unique: the economic and social policy of the state socialist system deeply determined its development and social structure, which was followed by a steady degradation during the postsocialist transition.

The centre was the original small town of Kormos which were joined by small neighbouring villages and a fragmented system of newly built colonies at the time when the metallurgic factory was still expanding continuously from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The outer parts of the settlement are frequently lying in the locally typical long-running valleys thus they do not form a cohesive urban fabric. The immensely hierarchical settlement structure of Kormos that solidified in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century accurately reflected the individual positions in the local society and in the factory hierarchy (Szabó 1938, Valuch 2010). The highly separated social and employment groups maintained their spatial distance and the difference in the location of their everyday activities also during the years of socialism. The long prosperous years of the factory attracted many from around the country. Masses of people had arrived in several waves, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then in the 1920s and finally the last great wave was due to the reorganization of the agricultural sector in the 1950s. One of the social boundaries of the hierarchical local society had been running between the diverging lifestyles and attitudes of multigenerational worker families and the 'villagers' from the joined communities, and later the new workers coming from a peasant milieu (Valuch 2010). The population of the town was steadily growing until the beginning of the 1980s, increasing fivefold the number of inhabitants in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the factory intended to localize the workers and to establish multigenerational worker dynasties. The unusually strong social provision of the factory (Nagy 2012, 2011) decreased after the Second World War. The forced industrialisation were relying on the existing infrastructure as much as possible without new development – regarding housing, food supply, education and culture as well, causing severe housing and food shortage (Valuch 2010). Both the population of Kormos and Béke colony developed due to *selective migration*. The status of the Béke colony has changed in parallel with the development of the town, the completion of new residential areas and the population exchange induced by moving out. This exchange has attributed to the mass moving of the better-off population to the centre into the new block houses with all the modern convenience during the 1970–80s. At the same time more substandard colonies in precarious condition were demolished and the former tenants found their new home in Béke. Housing was allocated in accordance of the residents' social position which was defined by their function in the social hierarchy of the factory.

The Béke colony was built in the beginning of the 1920s as one of the last workers' colony of Kormos for middle-ranked skilled factory workers, foremen and small functionaries with two or more children. The society of the Béke colony represents the mix of the former workers' diverse spatial origins. The pleasant environment of the colony was markedly a great housing opportunity partially because of the lack of alternatives. During the years of the functioning factory, the personal relations of Béke colony were structured by the *unity of the workplace and residence*. It interweaved the family and community life and its central position affected also those who were not employed by the factory. In the life story of the oldest residents the socialist organisation of work and culture dominantly appears, they had often met their future partners in worker meetings and factory events. Besides the factory work and the 'elite' housing, the oldest residents of the Béke colony talk about *poverty* and the constraining ways of obtaining income. The population was forced to partially rely on self-supply. The poverty and rationing was natural part of life: some were gardening to sell their produce, others kept animals in the colony. Some maintained their agricultural background, and worked the land over the weekends and during holidays. While workers gradually lost their engagement in agriculture, their knowledge still paid off in their small garden plots in Béke.

*'But that time it was really-really chic to live here, because Béke was wonderful and everybody wanted to come here to live. But those who already lived here were mooning away to the apartment houses. We were happy to get in here, we had a small garden, a small plot.'* (Family 22)

### Diverging social positions in the colony – present-day livelihood strategies

According to the conditional approach of poor neighbourhoods the social isolation is not evident in every place, however the relation of isolation, resources in the neighbourhood and the social capital in a broad sense are also contextual. While a high resource prevalence and 'institutional completeness' of a neighbourhood can indicate the closing down of a place by limiting the opportunities to interact with other social strata, strengthening bonding and weakening bridging social capital (Putnam 2000), it can also happen the other way. The use of resources depends on how people perceive and use these resources and the neighbourhood as well (Small 2004).

The population of the Béke colony can show off important social capital, resources and relations, networks that mark the social position of the neighbourhood within Kormos. While the former colony provided guaranteed residence status to factory workers leading to a relatively homogenous population, the selective migration and changing economic structures ever since induced a more heterogeneous, mixed population with diverging social positions in the colony.

The oldest cohort that had all been attached to the factory, now rely on pension – which is a relatively stable, abundant source of livelihood. They are among the better-off families of the colony now; however, those who went on disability or pre-retirement are in a more difficult situation financially.

The present middle-aged cohort of Béke still had some engagement in the factory work – even though they were working in the factory of Kormos for a short-term period, at a very young age. Later some were seeking similar positions countrywide and were moving around assembly lines and worker hostels, but finally they

returned to their hometown. Some of the colony residents are employed in *public work*, which is a relatively advantageous position. There is strong selection among the high number of the unskilled unemployed, but everyone has to leave the system periodically to become entitled to social assistance. The income from public work – even in the special cases when two adults are employed – is still very low to provide for a family, and it is still temporary.

Longer-term, seasonal agricultural work (*'alföldezés'* in the local slang, originating from the geographical location of the Great Plain) is also common among the colony's residents. Seasonal commuter contract labour was already characteristic in this part of Northern Hungary in the 1930s, and it was replaced by a new quality of seasonal work in the 1970s (Nemcsik 1976). Although after the transition the backflow from industry to agriculture did not become a dominant strategy (Alabán 2012), this seasonal mobility pattern still persists. The work is generally difficult and testing, meaning 10–14 hours of daily work and crowded, low quality accommodation. Typically more household members take to the road together. There are a number of residents of Béke colony who are engaged in the *organization of the agricultural seasonal work*: they are foremen or runners for the entrepreneur. Some entrepreneurs have had their own brigade for decades and being a foreman is an inherited, longer-term and stable position in the family. These one-week-long or even longer work periods lasting throughout the early spring to late autumn provide important, but seasonally fluctuating sources of income for the families – especially when more family members leave together. In some cases seasonal work is interrupted because of the longer-term income of public work, in other cases people decide to give up public work for a better temporary earning – although the difference of the two works' intensity is enormous. The expenditure structures of the households are seasonally fluctuating, the winter heating period and the drop in the casual labour and public work opportunities causes difficulty. The debt accumulated by the families in this period is repaid in the 'abundant' summer.

There are some who have specialized in different types of acquiring and passing on activity<sup>3</sup>. Collecting scrap metal (*'vasazás'*) was an important livelihood strategy for some years after the gradual closing down of the metallurgy factory. The acquirer in a higher hierarchical position bought up, transported, and sold the metal collected by the poorest in places where they could exchange it for a better price. While scrap metal collecting has diminished, several of the colony families mentioned it as an important livelihood strategy in the 1990s. There are families who are temporarily engaged or even organize similar types of acquiring and passing on activities. One family lives on collecting medicinal herbs and sometimes snails; they also employ locals to help the picking. To maintain the common livelihood the whole family cooperates tightly – more generations act together in work, provision for the family and balance the seasonal income with outer sources.

More families of the younger cohorts live on the *family allowances* for dependent children. Others have *declared work*, typically with unstable, short-term contracts for instance as cleaner, kitchen helper or gardener. The only local unskilled assembly work is preceded by strongly selective admission process. Furthermore we can find rare examples of better-off residents who work in local shops or small businesses.

---

<sup>3</sup> Havas (1982) identified the survival of the 'acquiring and passing on activity' as a conversion strategy of the traditional occupation and lifestyle of Roma communities during state socialism.

The present conditions of those households that are *sliding down and sinking into poverty* – those who do not rely on wages and salaries – are most often preceded by a family tragedy or an exceptional event, like divorce and serious health problems or they have weaker social networks or advocacy skills. Every family has some kind of administrative ‘burden’, they have lost their entitlement to different kinds of assistance rooted in administrative error, lack of knowledge that greatly adheres to the struggle for existence. These families are relying on their kinship helping relations and on each other by providing smaller loans and support. Their new poverty is sharpened by hopelessness and inability, which they can feel stronger in the last decades.

*‘We had such a difficult life, for sure. We do not know who to turn to, where to go, we do not know our rights, because if we go somewhere, they destroy us. (...) Because we have ethnic discrimination, we go in somewhere I just got a stroke, we are looked down, talked to in an off-hand manner, this is also a disadvantage for us, but our age as well, we are already old. They say that we don’t need “these young women”, like me. And think how it feels like, I burst into tears.’ (Family 6)*

### Social capital in the neighbourhood of Béke and narrative framing

After describing different livelihood strategies we can see that Béke is not a closed neighbourhood despite its clear physical boundaries and despite the generally stigmatized external perception: many social relations connect residents to other parts of the town and to other social strata. Many are living on low, fluctuating, less stable income but these works also need social relations to maintain and the necessary connections are only partially rooted in Béke (like seasonal works and acquiring and passing on activities). While the connections within the neighbourhood are important – as many stress their good and helping neighbour and kinship relations – many report friends outside of their residence, ethnicity and also class.

The higher social capital is also seen in the relatively strong self-interest enforcement and self-conscious use of different institutions. We could see examples of serious trade-union work. Another was exercising their rights wittingly: a father turned to the Equal Treatment Authority because his child was subject to preventive delousing treatment, while no others were. The factory-past and the decades of informal or seasonal strategies of earning income define a different quality of exclusion. Many still maintain a rights- and community-conscious approach partly owing to their past, making them more able to succeed in requesting help and in office administration. Others are members or functionaries in voluntary leisure associations (e.g. pigeon-breeding, fishing or cycling clubs).

The Béke Association was a socialist example for local cultural self-organization. The enthusiasm and personal relations of the old members made the association work in the past. The undead organization has since been revived by the urban developmental project in the colony. Former members are the oldest residents of the colony, but younger cohorts are also represented in the actual leadership. One old member of the association is still in her former position. As a young person she was the leader of the factory’s cultural organization, and she has not lost her ability to organize and be active.

*‘As a crazy old fool I am still on to make them do something. Because we have to do something, if nobody does, everything stays the same, the “Döbrögi method” that we have plenty of time for that... but rather we should do something. If this small group can live on... But this is really hard, it is harder for me to*



*study others, and I don't know what to think, will it be good or not. For my part I try to do it to be good.'*  
(Family 22)

The new members did not inevitably find their place and position in the association believing that the work they have put in would repay. Longer-term goals that exceed the activities that seem logical at first – charity donation or outdoor cooking – were not targeted yet. These activities and relations function as bridging social capital that could be seen as counter examples for the vulnerability of the Béke population, which is living in new poverty. Among the poorest families many find a stable point they can rely on in religion. *'If I were not Christian, if I were not in my Lord, I say, as a believer, maybe I would have already gone insane.'* (Family 1) The Pentecostal congregation operates since the 1980s in Kormos, Roma believers primarily assemble in small house churches outside of the main community. The congregation is built up through kinship and friendship relations, and it attracts many by its colourful occasions full of music and singing. For a while the leader of the Roma congregation was a Béke colony resident, with his resignation the size of the community diminished, but many – mostly from the poorest strata of Béke – still remained regular members.

*'In this time, in these lean times that we live in, we have already learned what it is to suffer privation, because we fast as well. So while others feel scarcity, that he is hungry, he is ill, we have learned that when we don't have it, it is fasting. And really, we drink a glass of water and we are stronger than when we eat. The Lord leads us to it so we have already learned survival. That's why I say that we are on a survival training on the planet.'* (Family 6)

Studies on the social networks of poor Roma families show that if a nuclear family is backed up by an extended kinship network, then the general lack of resources still hinders the prevention of the nuclear family sliding down. Moreover, kinship ties (bonding social capital) of poor families are used in a selective way: families only identify within the functioning and helping relations (Messing and Molnár 2011, Virág 2008). For these poor families every helping connection means a lot, especially the bridging connections, when they cannot lean on their bonding social capital. Just as the religious community strengthens these individuals to get through the everyday, the soft elements of the developmental programme, e.g. women's group or the basic competence training for public workers is important for them. The training was a delightful experience due to the kindness and good intentions of the teachers; on the other hand they could use their acquired knowledge without getting an off-hand manner during official administration. This relation exhibits the contrast to other groups of the colony with more stable livelihood and stronger social network, who evaluate these programs as a burden and misappreciate it because of their uselessness or the inability to identify with it.

These relations help to maintain a neighbourhood characterized by relatively high social capital, which in this case – without the institutional completeness of the neighbourhood – contributes to keep neighbourhood boundaries looser, penetrable from the outside as well as the inside. Strong and relatively diverse relations are bridging Béke with other parts of the town. However several people described the closing social network of Béke as more and more young people are staying within the colony's networks and therefore marrying in place.

*'Everybody is together here, they make friends together and almost everybody is together, in pairs.'* (Family 15)

This tendency will strengthen the density of kinship ties within the neighbourhood and close down outward relations. This could act as a negative, dissuasive force, which hinders individual welfare that strengthens social isolation if the community becomes inward looking (Messing–Molnár 2011).

Small (2002) described the community participation in Villa Victoria and he concluded that local participation is fundamentally connected to the narrative framing of the neighbourhood, and structural constraints are only strengthening or weakening the formed tendencies. In the case of Béke colony it is clearly visible that different groups and cohorts (coming in different waves of moving in) frame the colony differently. In the 1960s and -70s it was a privilege to live in Béke, which contributed to the community activity in the cohort. Whereas the younger cohorts do not link positive connotations to the colony in relation to their own life experiences here, even those who moved in with an upward-mobility aim deprecate it. It supports Small's observations that both older and younger cohorts talk about a steady everyday poverty in the description of the present and past settlement, which indicates that the decrease in community participation may not only be related to the objective structural conditions of the colony but to its narrative framing as well. The transformation of the colony's interpretation by the changing cohorts and symbolic boundaries drawn by them modified the framing and thus the agency (e.g. participation in project programmes, association activity) of the local population. However we cannot restrict the interpretation to the cultural dimension (framing) as objective degradation of the colony has happened as well, and the postsocialist transition has diminished the opportunities of the local residents (including two vulnerable groups: skilled and unskilled workers and the Roma minority).

Not only participation, but moving in and out of the colony could also be the individual response of agency to the different narrative framing. The young woman who formerly reported on Béke being stigmatized comes from an established, 'native' Roma family of the colony. She could interiorize the positive framing of the oldest cohort that could have changed her attitude and agency herself.

*'The old ones say that they do not want to leave for their old age, but this was really beautiful, there was no such stealing. There was a time when I woke up not having a street door, the rubbishbin could not have been left outside. Now there are people we do not know, because everybody used to know each other. There are young girls who come here – from where, which direction? Sometimes we look at each other with the old ladies where that slum boy comes from, such a big black one, we have never seen him, and how he comes here.'* (Family 9)

Despite her 'native' background and her knowledge on Béke in a positive frame, she decided to leave the colony behind. In her case the framing, as a cultural interpretation of reality could not change the direction of the agency in contrast to the participatory activity observed in Villa Victoria.

#### SPATIAL, SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL

During the process how residents position themselves within the neighbourhood and within the town, they automatically turn to the construction of boundaries as schemes of social categorization that are revealing the symbolic cultural basis for group divisions. Residents and outsiders can draw different boundaries to a neighbourhood and attach different meanings to it. The clearly delineated Béke colony is described differently

from the inside and from the outside. While from the outside symbolic, social and spatial boundaries are identical, the residents draw different boundaries within the neighbourhood. Under the social transformation of a former workers' colony symbolic boundaries became loose and changing as well. Studying symbolic boundaries supports the understanding of the dynamic relation in the micro community, how the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are drawn and constructed. The gradual transformation of the colony creates an opportunity to the residents to change their relative position and create new symbolic boundaries and reinforce and alter them with social boundaries in the long term. While symbolic boundaries between established and outsider residents are also maintained social boundaries, the ethnic boundaries drawn are maintained in a symbolic way and are under the process of normalization and reinforcement to become social boundary in the long term.

### Spatial and external symbolic boundaries – the stigma of Béke

One of the important boundaries constructed and maintained systematically are the territorial boundaries of the Béke colony. As indicated in the description of the colony's historical formation, we could see that Béke has traditionally sharp and fixed boundaries. Its borders are precise and only one side of the roughly rectangular area communicates with other residential areas. The clearly separated, identical-looking structure of the nearly 100 year-old houses has remained almost untouched.

A small centre is detectable in the middle of the colony: a playground in the place of a demolished building, lying beside a community space, both created a couple of years ago in the framework of the developmental projects. Even though this micro-centre is in the centre of events, the community space is barely used in a frequent or spontaneous way. Whereas the central playground and the small shop and bar behind the colony are much more popular.

The orderly structure of the colony's building up 'loses its steady balance' due to the varying physical condition of the houses. The part that lies closer to the centre is better preserved and the gardens are also neater there. The mental map of the residents contains these fine distinctions as they talk about better and worse parts of the colony, and the people who live in the different houses. The routes that lead dwellers in their everyday practices are defined by these mental maps. The descendants of 'native' factory workers, who are the better-off tenants, are drawing a strong boundary between themselves and the colony. They avoid the centre now and leave the colony in the shortest way towards the city.

From the town's external position spatial boundaries are identical with the social and symbolic boundaries maintained. On the one hand the neighbourhood became stigmatized and labelled and it appears in the local narratives as a 'Gypsy ghetto' or a homogeneously deteriorating colony. As a consequence residents meet prejudices in the most evident discriminatory situations, for instance on the labour or housing market.

*'My life has changed; I want to start over. I have found a good tenancy; I want to get rid of Béke. But truly speaking, when I work, I do not see much. But it is enough for me. Unfortunately it has reached the name, you say that you live in Béke and it is embarrassing. Everybody looks down on it. I live in a relatively good location in Béke, I do not have those people around me... – but it is also in my decision that I want to avoid Béke. (...) We go out and then: so you live in Béke, aren't you scared? They are like this,*

*why should I be scared. It is not a good neighbourhood, but that's it, there are such people everywhere, unfortunately.'* (Family 9)

Even those who do not face the discriminatory strategies directly, perceive the decreasing status of their colony. However most of the residents reflect on the inner processes and boundaries and not on those created by the outer non-Béke population. The inner opinion whether Béke colony is a 'Gipsy colony' or not is divided along the own individual position and the symbolic boundaries applied by the residents.

*'It is good to live here. We are a lot here, but apart from this, its name slowly will be Gipsy colony. I was just walking around yesterday; there are still Hungarians. Not one, not two, but there are! Even youngsters.'* (Family 2)

On the other hand from the town's point of view Béke is an important colony: the aim of Kormos is to rehabilitate Béke and integrate it into the urban fabric in the long term. Its particular position is due to the fact that the colony seems socially 'retrievable' and it represents architectural value. Albeit residents face strong prejudice and even discrimination in connection with their dwelling place, the general attitude that Béke was not 'given up' just like many other segregated neighbourhoods surely affects the residents' interpretation of the colony.

*'Béke colony is an exceptional segregated neighbourhood, which is fully embedded into the urban fabric, consequently it is surrounded by an integrated residential area. It is the town's duty to protect and rebuild it. The flats cannot be renovated anyhow; the original state must be reconstructed, which is not low budget.'* (Social expert 1)

A couple of years ago urban rehabilitation and settlement development programs were introduced in Béke colony. Two complex settlement upgrading programmes were implemented subsequently and aimed to strengthen the integration of the Béke colony's population. The projects combined soft social programmes (community events, development of human and health provision, training and education, promotion of wider employment and capacity building) with infrastructural investment (renovation of buildings, creation of a community space). It is partially the unique spatial set that motivates the redrawing of social boundaries in the framework of urban development programmes by changing the structural position and the symbolic boundaries of the colony.

*'It is bad until we get to know them'*

#### **Symbolic and social boundaries between the established and outsiders**

The boundary making process of different groups is strongly related to the history of the colony and the gradual changes in the social status of the newcomers. Due to these processes we cannot only see symbolic, but realized social boundaries, which are interconnected and strengthened by the different experiences of distinct cohorts. In the case of the established-outsider relation the social and symbolic boundaries are closely interlinked and cannot be separated.

The *established-outsider* figurations first applied by Elias and Scotson (1994) are able to describe the main social and symbolic boundary maintained in the colony. The theory of the established and outsiders de-

notes the power differentials between independent groups as the most important differentiation descriptive for diverse social relations and situations. Besides the power differential these relations are often characterized by the intersection of racial and class differences, which is expressed by the narrative interpretation of the figuration (May 2004).

The *established* or 'natives' are those families who have lived in the colony for decades and are keen to distinguish themselves from the latecomer outsiders. They moved in as young factory workers, and now they are already pensioners or close to the retiring age. The boundary maintained by the 'natives' is partly on the grounds of their common experience about the previous social relations in the colony, which is interconnected with the shared cohort. However not only one cohort differentiates themselves from the latecomers, but the group is planted on strong kinship ties of multigenerational colony-based families. The category encompasses their children who grew up here, also started a family and maintain separate households in the colony – they also identify with the neighbourhood and classify themselves as established.

The oldest cohort, who traditionally shared their workplace and dwelling place as well, mostly came from distant settlements leaving behind their families and social networks. Real strong connections were established among them during the decades of cohabitation. They describe their earlier lively years as full of visits, card game nights, collective bacon frying and other feasts, *'as if we would be a family'*. *'When my man got grievously ill, I could count on all the neighbours.'* (Family 11) The fact that mostly men were working in the factory while their wives stayed home with the children and took care of the animals further strengthened the neighbourhood relations. Friends could enter each other's garden without permission if they needed any vegetable. There is an example that a family exchanged their flat just to be direct neighbours with their friend. The oldest cohort still keeps the closeness of their relationship, thus they not only demonstrate the differentiation of their cohort, but also their common perspective on the colony. Bartha (2010) directs attention to the changes in the social relations of former workers: even though it was due to an artificial equalizing policy, the quality of relations in the working and dwelling place was much closer and more intense in the socialist era than after the transition when individualization and loneliness dominate the relations among growing social differences. These different qualities infiltrate the relational characteristics of the Béke's different cohorts.

The boundary between established and outsiders are strongly linked to differences in *mobility* and housing ownership. The privately owned flats are the minority of the colony's houses, however they are owned by the established older cohort. They did not foresee the devaluation of the colony and the town and it was important for them to purchase a privately owned housing, they were motivated also because of their previous positive experience with Béke. They undertook to acquire and renovate their housing over their financial strength. *'I knew if we do something it is ours.'* (Family 12) The open purchasing option was suspended after a couple of years. As an outcome those in private housing became soil-bound, preventing their migration from Béke. The rising maintenance costs of the aging house in parallel with housing overspending aggravated their situation. Many would give their property back to the local government now if there were such a possibility.

Many of the resident who consider themselves natives connect the coming of the 'outsiders' or 'strangers' to the local government's loose *housing policy*. Before the transition it was the factory that decid-

ed the selection of tenants, and many would expect the same from the property management office of the local government. Now flats are rented on auctions but those who apply for housing in Béke generally do not have cash reserves, thereby some collect the money from members of the extended family while others get into usury or save money from their seasonal labour. Previously lifestyle was closely controlled: officials were checking hygiene regularly, 'whether the pot is clean', etc. Some are nostalgic about that, as they express that strong control would really change the reputation of Béke. In their narrative the problem is not rooted in the non-paying of the rent – which is caused by the lack of jobs – but about the lack of 'clean and normal' people.

*'You could not move into the apartment until the block had signed it. They did not allow it. They had to sign that yes, they approve that I move in. It should be solved like that. Not like now, randomly, let's see the dough, let's put it down, nobody cares about the papers, they do not look after anything, and then they can't find them! They do not pay the rent for years, ruin and smash the flat. Well, what does Béke look like, honestly?'* (Family 1)

The established project their own housing burden on outsiders: they see that flats of the newly arrived tenants – mostly Roma – are better renovated, and they are in a favourable position in the auctions anyway because the great extended families help them out – and poor non Roma are at a disadvantage: they are not able to bid. We can see, that the outsider position in many cases becomes pronouncedly *ethnicized*, which brings us to another important symbolic boundary between the Roma and non-Roma residents of Béke. Mobility and housing differences are materialized social boundaries that describe objectified, resource-based differentiations of social groups, which also align with (partly ethnicized) symbolic differentiation.

Those who rely on symbolic boundaries constructed between the established and outsiders describe the neighbourhood of Béke colony as something fundamentally *changed and deteriorated*, due to the arrival of 'outsiders'. Some still uses the old names of the colonies to symbolically emphasize the changed quality of the formerly different places. Along the context of this symbolic boundary the narrators emphasize the process of deterioration and the sharp contrast between the previous and present times, without and with the outsiders.

*'But this is already demolished, where I used to live my pigsty was more beautiful. Why was it left to be spoiled?! (...) It was left to be a wreck that I am ashamed of the place where I live. I do not live on Béke, one of the worst places in Kormos! This became a demolished place I don't know what! We need a fence, we need a latch, and we need everything. (...) When we still had the old ones, when we came, it was flowery. We can say that was the real Béke.'* (Family 7)

Many describe the recent local changes in the light of the changing conditions of *taking care of children*. They emphasize the behaviour of the children as something fundamentally different than their previous experience: they are not able to allow their children to play outside, they have to pay much more attention and this closer lookout causes difficulties for the families.

*'My oldest son never goes out. They easily pick a quarrel, or they swear, he does not like it.'* (Family 3)

*'It is too mixed. Because of the children, children are different now. It is not the adults, I do not care them even I heard a lot of things what is going on in Béke. But it's rather the children. We always have to be around the children, to avoid problems, bullying, who knows. They are not disciplined, what to do, how to do, what can I allow himself, they swear a lot with the adults as well, they have such a big mouth.'* (Family 4)

This differentiation reflects the same boundary as the established and outsider boundary, but grabbed from another perspective. This approach avoids judging the parents as adults or neighbours, but they express the changes in the everyday life and social practices of the colony.

*'I watch a little television; dad is dealing with the pigeons, so that we have a little rest. In the night we reach our limit, the whole bunch of kids comes out and they are yelling, playing football, everything.'* (Family 2)

According to the narratives while formerly the neighbours' older children gathered the younger ones at 7.30 in the evening, nowadays children are playing outside after midnight. These conflicts are brought back to different lifestyles and cohorts, however it is strongly related to the changing structural position of the residents. The narrowing down of employment possibilities affects the daily routine of the colony residents as well as the general condition of daily well being, and through that the colony's cohabitation:

*'The goal was not high-school graduation at the time, because with a vocation people could get on well in metallurgy. It provided security. We did not have those neurotic, stressful people as now. The youngsters are out of their mind.'* (Family 5)

These narratives on the transformation, the description of established and outsiders' relation indicates the creation of a symbolic and social boundary. Different structural positions create different social practices in the daily lives.

One important category, just as the stigma of Béke being a 'Gipsy settlement' is Béke being *criminalized*. This is partially based on the external symbolic boundary created by the rest of the population; on the other hand based on the residents' own experiences. Many describe the outsiders of Béke to be drug users, criminals, and thieves, further enforcing the boundary.

*'It's not like there are Mercedes cars or who knows what here, but beautiful well-kept gardens, we could quietly come out to walk and talk. Not long ago we also came out to sit, play guitar and sing... Nowadays, not really. Mainly because there are many [glue] sniffers. Not sniffers, but weed smokers, a lot.'* (Family 5)

*'Here the 9–10 year old children smoke, it wasn't like that before... It is like this for a while, joints, and that stuff goes. Every corner they rumble the flats for money. In these deteriorated houses where nobody lives, they are in the gardens. They say it is only amusement, because some do not gamble with money. Sometimes the police come, sometimes they are making troubles, in the next street. There used to be fights, baseball bats, everything. However this police topic is rare, it is not typical. It is not dangerous here at night, they do not pick a quarrel, and they are not here anymore. Those who sniffed were provoking, but there are no such people any more. They are in prison, they moved out or they were evicted.'* (Family 20)

While this narrative connects criminality to individuals, many apply the generalizing boundary they use for outsider residents. Still many describe the problems caused by vandalism, drug abuse as carried out by outsiders or people who actually do not live in the colony. At the same time, a second-generational established family member also describes his youth as delinquent – but his activity was rigidly kept outside of Béke, hidden from the eyes of his extended family living here. We can see that a more shaded and complex problem – which can be discussed from a cohort-related aspect as well – is introduced to differentiate resident groups symbolically.

During the boundary making process being a *latecomer* is relative: even though some families live in Béke for years, they had started a family here, established still see them as outsiders. Some of the families came from demolished or disadvantaged segregated neighbourhoods. The town could have an influence on the transforming status of different neighbourhoods and quarters through the housing tenancy policy and practice. Béke means different things to people with different backgrounds, coming from different location within the town. Some came from privately owned housing sold by auction, for others it was an escape route from another more deteriorating colony. For some Béke is an opportunity to break out, others see it as the new scene for downward mobility. One man who moved from a demolished colony describes his present home as a vivid, fluctuating community as its residents are frequently renewed. He also complains about his 'newcomer' outsider status even after 15 years of residence in Béke. The symbolic boundaries are constructed along temporal differentiations, however it is still a very relative term.

*'We have always had this – those who had been living here, and there are many new, some were even born here –, that we are incomers, we were put here, and they always have this attitude.'* (Family 8)

Many refer to distinguished families who belong to the oldest cohort and are quite embedded socially. But the boundary between established and outsiders are drawn from the individual position of each person, thus many would call themselves to be established while others would use the notion of outsiders on them. This flexible use of established-outsider boundary also builds on the *intersection with other boundaries*, e.g. with the ethnic boundary drawn within the colony.

Being an outsider intersects with the more refined distinction of people who moved in from certain colonies. This strategy connects symbolic boundaries to the existing *hierarchical territorial differentiations* and spatial boundaries – involving a relative temporal aspect that distinguishes established and outsiders moved in from other colonies different times. There are widely known boundaries and through them maintained hierarchies attached to the fragmented parts of Kormos. Different colonies and their residents are judged accordingly, and in this relation Béke is a higher position colony. Symbolic boundaries are used to differentiate and describe the degree to which poor people define themselves as being close to the mainstream; in the case of strong differentiation between the two (and also other) colonies and the building-up of hierarchies of spaces are parts of this symbolic struggle.

*'Now some came from Tésás<sup>4</sup>, I do not want to hurt them, but they make scenes from time to time.'* (Family 15)

One town-widely stigmatized colony is Tésás: more present Béke residents came from Tésás at different times. Besides being a commonly used degrading individual origin, Tésás is also a competing space with Béke. There is similarly sharp focus on the development of this colony, however with different emphasis and methodology. An NGO had been working there to develop and to open up the place locally for a decade, sometimes in competition with the town's own, developmental projects applying different methods, organizing different scale events and programmes. In the Béke narratives Tésás residents are unworthy through their own fault,

---

4 Similar worker's colony as Béke, after the moving out of high status factory officials, the moving in of Roma families already started in the 1970s, and by now it has become a notorious colony in Kormos.



they are also lucky to have such a strong hinterland that the NGO provides them. This relation eases Tésás' hardship of scarcity, because they also provide in-kind donations, but at the same time generates envy.

Even former Tésás residents use this symbolic boundary to differentiate themselves from their former residence and identify with Béke. There are two friends, considering themselves established, who are also positioning themselves differently related to Roma from Tésás. While the lady who grew up in Tésás and is really proud of her perceived upward mobility is looking down on them: they are dirty and undisciplined, and the volunteers who are working with them are also useless. Their life is much easier because of the undeserved amount of help. Her friend sees that they are just Roma people like others and the work of the volunteers is heart-warming. Their different positions drive them to draw symbolic boundaries differently, thus to allow us to see the differences in their interpretation of their own origin, mobility and relative position.

While hierarchical territorial differentiations are strongly symbolic, it is also linked to the time of moving in of different cohorts – in this sense, it is an objectified, social boundary as well. But being an established in Béke or an outsider from Tésás is again a very relative distinction, its understanding depends of the individual and community positions.

*'If there are Hungarians, the house is all right, but where there are none, then it is all over.'*  
Ethnic boundaries in Béke

The instrumentalist approach describes ethnicity not as an objective and stable category, but as a *social construction*. Ethnic identity and categorization is contextual, flexibly realized in the changing relations of social interactions and situations, it can be strategic, capable of change and a matter of consent at the individual and collective levels (Barth 1996, Jenkins 2008). This situationalist approach emphasizes that ethnicity is formed in space and time, part of the social perception and interpretation and embedded in the subjective process of identification and differentiation (Feischmidt 2010, Messing–Molnár 2011). The drawing of ethnic boundaries provides a great opportunity to show the *situationality of identities* just as to describe another important symbolic boundary of the transforming Béke colony. In the social relations of the colony, an ethnically mixed cohabitation, people are using situational ethnic classifications as strategic elements to redefine their own position in relation to others, between the symbolically constructed ethnic boundaries. The opportunity to enter and leave ethnic categories and thus cross ethnic boundaries is possible in a less ethnically fragmented and already mixed local society, where Roma and non-Roma relations are more permeable than in traditional societies.

As a starting point, Béke colony has always been an ethnically mixed neighbourhood. The absorbent effect of the industry attracted the Roma population: because of the countrywide catchment area of the factory and the many incoming skilled and unskilled workers the interethnic and territorially mixed marriages were highly prevalent. Roma workers who had arrived, integrated into a newly formed community and not into an ethnically segmented and already solidified local society. Even though they worked in the same factories as the non-Roma in a growing volume, they also had restricted access to some positions and to upward social mobility. Apart from some exceptional individual success stories the higher, more skilled positions were not open to Roma mostly because of their lack of qualifications. The changes in the traditional social order of Roma

being subordinated triggered a resistance against the process of emancipation (Havas 1982). The traditional hierarchic ethnic relations still caused tensions also in mixed marriages.

*'My mother is – as they say – Hungarian. She is, she also told my brother and me as well, that she is Hungarian: they are Hungarians. But Mum was disowned when she married Dad, because Dad is a Gipsy. But Mum considered herself as Gipsy.'* (Family 1)

While the assimilative policies approximated the everyday life of Roma and non-Roma in the domains of work and education, and it could show off success in social and economic integration, the post-socialist transition brought a new divergence. The otherwise approaching social positions of Roma and non-Roma diverged even more strongly than before the assimilative intentions, when traditionally maintained paternalistic relations were characteristic (Binder 1997, Messing–Molnár 2011). Béke remained an ethnically mixed location where – even though the postsocialist transition specifically harmed Roma – interethnic relations were still maintained in a context of diverging social positions.

Residents begin their positioning from their narratively important story of origin. The time and circumstances of the *family's moving in* (in connection to their cohort) allow people to position themselves as established, without crossing the stigmatizing ethnic boundary.

While interethnic marriages were traditionally present in Béke, the moving in of a large Roma family into a colony still induced resistance among the already settled residents. More interviewees reported on their own family's struggle to move in to a 'new' colony. One established Roma family describe themselves as the first Roma family in Béke. The father was an honoured dispatcher in the factory, which position contributed to their higher status and getting housing in the colony. Before Béke they were also the first Roma family in Tésás.

*'Well, it was a big struggle to get into Tésás. It was only one Roma family, us. But those who lived there made every effort not to let us in. Where we moved in, the front neighbour was an engineer, a doctor, so an elite company was living there. And understandably they did not want, did not know us. It is another issue that they got to know and like us.'* (Family 5)

As more and more Roma family moved in to Tésás in the 1980s, according to the local narratives, the colony deteriorated and the family decided to move on. They had an opportunity to move owing to the father's good relations in the local council. The process of their admittance started over: locals did not want to allow them into the designated house, but after they moved in, residents took a liking to them, and the family have a place of honour among the 'natives' of the colony to this day. Another Roma family reports the same from the beginning of the 1990s.

*'Because it was not like that I decide to move into Béke. That time it did not work like that. But Aunt Kati, because there was a Béke's Representation, said that this is an orderly family. Not loudly but they allowed us to move in. We did not need permission, but if they would want to, they could have prevented us from moving in. But my mother-in-law was well-known by Mrs Miskolci, Aunt Irmuska and Manyika – so to say the Hungarians, because it was the main point that very few Roma lived here when we came.'* (Family 5)

For the arriving Roma families the factory and council officials they have kept a personal relationship with represented a strong reference and could break the local resistance. Accordingly the new dwelling meant

a great step forward towards a higher social position. These families report on their struggle to get into a colony: the opposition of the non-Roma residents meant a resistance against the dissolution of the former patriarchal positional relations, which was implied by the better housing and employment opportunities of Roma (Havas 1982). Their success meant that they were accepted by the already 'established' (non-Roma) families. This position changed their perspective and they clearly identify themselves as established, while some others would still consider them newcomers because of their ethnicity.

The narratives on the transformation of the colony are commonly attached to the moving in of the Roma families, despite the long-term tradition of interethnic cohabitation and marriage in the colony. The older cohort of the established – although they talk about Roma as outsiders – had many connections with them during their lifetime. Interethnic marriage was prevalent and Roma and non-Roma shared their living and working space in the different departments of the factory (not always in the same position), and the presence automatically generated some connections. The opinion on Roma is diverging even within families, for today the most important thing to stress about the incoming new neighbours is their ethnicity.

Many native people mention that they had Roma friends, who they would '*kiss even in the open street*', but they are different than the present-day people. Their difference lies in the common lifestyle and mentality similar to 'the old', which is the outcome of several points of coupling rooted in the common experience and the factory-related past.

*'I do not feel safe anymore, just as the others. This place is only good for the families, because we still have some Hungarian families. I note that there are some exceptionally wonderful Gipsy families here in Béke, who would be worth to show around for money – not for free, because they have worked as much as hell. I knew a woman close to the steam bank, you could only enter her flat standing on your hands and in a muzzle.'* (Family 22)

In many cases *children of the non-Roma established* also live in the colony and they form a distinct, separate group that maintain boundaries stronger than their parents'. They are the better-off families of the colony who have higher standards of living. Nonetheless they also face labour market struggles, but they are able to sustain their income from several sources thus they can ensure a higher minimum level in the scarce times. The investment they have put into their tenancy is a strong argument against their moving out. These second generational established families are maintaining symbolic and social boundaries jointly as they maintain the ethnic boundary in strict everyday practices. Their networks are really closed in the colony and they maintain many outward social relations. These families are moving within a defined social network which means a limited contact including only their own families, established neighbours and those adults who they know from their childhood and grew up together. Their friends are mostly from outside of the settlement. The categorical aspiration of these families is to stay entirely separated from their environment and in the long term leave the colony behind. Their children are going to the local kindergarten, but they aim to 'rescue' them from the school and enrol them into one of the better-status central schools. Their children hardly keep contact with others from the colony, they don't go out to the playground, only play with each other and other children from the family. The narrative of the second established generation includes a firmly drawn boundary between the

Roma and non-Roma, meaning the differentiation between hardworking and unworthy resident interpreted from a middle-class position. In several cases they even spend financial resources to maintain two tenancies just to avoid unwanted neighbours. In the case of one family the confrontational approach is especially prevalent, while others choose the strategy of avoidance.

*'And this kid steals the pumpkin from the garden of the old lady. It was this small, not bigger, and the lady is over 80 years or more. I would say, it is interesting, because I have never seen you here before. It is his garden. Than go – I say – to show it to Aunt Ilonka, how beautiful a pumpkin has grown in her garden! But I said it loudly and the kid looked ashamed and dropped the pumpkin on the grass. Let me tell you, have you stolen it for that!? At least you should have brought it back to your mother to cook a pumpkin dish. He picked it off, but he did not finally take it home...'* (Family 19)

This approach may cause problems for their relatives who are constrained to maintain social relation with those affected by the conflicts (e.g. schoolmates, friends). However, the own labour-market problem of a second-generational established lady forced her to apply for a position at the Roma Minority Self-Government.

After all we can also find interethnic relations that are bringing back to the former years: neighbours are paying attention to each other, help to do shopping or the small matters around the house. *'There are people who are better than the Hungarian'* (Family 11). There are examples of the connection of the older and younger cohorts.

*'This small child is coming here because I teach her, I chant verses, and sing and I correct her speaking. (...) We met once when she said, "you witch!" I told her how would I be a witch, I do not speak the witch language. But somebody told her. Than we started to play ball; she has a ball, I served the ball. As she grew she regularly came to me. I asked her in the spring, "Szandi, am I still a witch?" "Oh, you are not". I am anywhere, even in public places, she comes to me, "Aunt Joli, Aunt Joli," and she snuggles up to me. I adore this child. She needs to be cared for.'* (Family 22)

Although this relation could have been a beginning of a relation full of disputes and tensions, the openness and the sensitive approach to other's circumstances connected two groups living with different attitude and lifestyle. Even though ethnic boundaries appear in the narratives of some residents with good interethnic relations, they only apply it symbolically and not socially, contrary to the second generational non-Roma residents.

There are residents of Béke who do not accept the openly used ethnic boundaries and stress their positive experience with their Roma neighbours, friends, etc. To some extent they see the interethnic past and the situational, sometimes diminishing ethnic identity and do not attach importance to the boundary between Roma and non-Roma. A Roma resident emphasized that the ethnic discrimination is also diminishing because now a lot of people realize that social problems are not due to the otherness of Roma but because of structural disadvantages that now affects non-Roma in Kormos as well.

*'I have a lot of Hungarian pals, still to this day. It was not like so the Gipsy, so the Hungarian. I have never been like that. Just now – because some incite – it is not the fault of the people, it should not be like this.'* (Family 18)

Some are more sensitive to the changes, and see that not only negative, but also rather mixed processes are shaping the social composition of the colony. These arguments seem to draw more shaded lines and less symbolic boundary making.

*'They are not loud in the playground, although there are a lot of children. They thought that the playground would be demolished by the winter, but no. They warm to the work, if they see that they are sweeping the snow, they do as well. They also asked how to plant in the garden. Still they cannot use the hoe, plots are overgrown.'* (Family 11)

Ethnicity can be considered a symbolic boundary in the micro community because the differentiation is not objectified – however we can also find examples (children of the non-Roma established) for intentions to enforce and normalize symbolic boundaries to become social ones. In the meantime Roma face discrimination in the labour and housing market, education and the institutional systems which means that there is an already solidified social boundary applied by the majority society and state institutions.

Within a system of categorization situational identity is a tool to change positions. The colourful social and ethnic composition of the former and the present time colony is strengthened by different variations of ethnic identity. Even the similar positions within one family do not bring the diverging understanding into a general common ground. As an example, a husband defines himself as Roma without Roma identity, because for him it would be connected to dark skin and Romani language: *'I have the strange craze for Hungarians. I am almost an enemy of the Roma.'* (Family 17) In contrast his wife is proud to be Roma and can identify with the Roma culture – even though she has negative experiences in connection to her ethnicity, because she suffered discrimination several times in the local hospital. They describe their daughter as a child who decided to have non-Roma friends in the school on her own, and because she was an outstanding student, *'she could marry a Hungarian'*. Her situational Roma identity can dissimilate in her interethnic educational and marriage mobility.

Just as in the last example the diverging attitude of two friends from the colony – already mentioned in the previous chapter – illustrate that ethnic identity is constructed in situations and their understanding and narrative on the colony is strongly connected to their personal life history. The friends had different backgrounds during their years, but now both of them are among the poorest in the colony. While an outsider would see their situation quite similarly, they see themselves and their ethnic position among boundaries truly differently. One lady holds Roma origin, and considers herself as an established resident of the Béke colony since she had lived here for more than 25 years. She grew up in Tésás colony; her non-Roma husband originated from a farmstead. As she tells it her goal as a young girl was to marry a non-Roma, thus she married the hard-working man she came to know in her workplace. The marriage brought disruption in the family of the husband, and the parents-in-law did not attend their wedding. The pair has four adult children who also live in Béke colony with their family and they all have jobs. Her husband is partially paralyzed and cannot work now, thus both of them rely on the public worker wage of the lady. She is proud that they could bring up their four children right, they all got married late and did not have children 'indiscriminately' and learnt their father's hard-working attitude. The other lady was born into an interethnic marriage. Her mother declared herself 'Hungarian' and was disowned after her marriage with a Roma man. Later she lived as a Roma with Roma identity. Their family moved into a colony as an only Roma family.

*'We have lived in a good environment; we were surrounded by Hungarians. We were alone at that time. (...) We moved there and they got to like us, because Mrs Moldvai said, that even though there are a lot of kids and they are Gipsy, they are well-disciplined. Because we did not steal, did not hurt anybody, indeed we greeted them first, if they asked us to go to the shop we went, they dared to trust us, so they came to like us. We were good kids, with good education, strict.'* (Family 1)

The woman married a Roma man at a young age, but they realized soon that they could not get along well. She thought that even though her parents-in-law are really poor they acted arrogantly, while her mother-in-law considered her bumptious – these tensions mark status conflict interwoven with differently expressed Roma identity. The couple lived in countless colonies, in temporary accommodation and in a better-preserved flat in the Béke as well. The husband became an alcoholic and assaulted his wife, and later they divorced. Five children were born in the marriage, the youngest is still of school age, one sibling cannot support himself because of a long-term illness – both stay with their mother in Béke colony, in the flat which was bought with family help. Both of them describe the outsiders and 'strangers' as fearful as the established see them. But their moving in unintentionally interconnects with their fearful situation threatened by everyday financial struggles and eviction. The lady with a mixed identity is more open and because of the situational elements appearing in her own identity she does not like to differentiate between people.

The differentiation within the ethnic group – as more and more new residents are Roma – is also becoming more sophisticated, a crucial issue that overlaps with being an outsider. It is partly connected to spatial boundaries within the town, also seen in the hierarchic differentiation of colonies, but reflected in different qualities and behaviours as well.

*'I want to leave because I do not want my son to live through the same as me. (...) There are still small gangs. I still have 2–3 years. We have the neighbours very close. Well, I am also Gipsy, I guess you realized that, but they are the typical shanty-like people, because of them we are also looked down on. They have moved next to us, they are constantly partying and yelling.'* (Family 20)

In today's boundary making processes the differentiation of ethnicity is becoming more and more important, as outsiders of Béke colony are often identified with Roma people. We can also see that negative stereotypes of Roma people have become part of the strengthened countrywide exclusionary discourses, involved in political power struggles (Binder 1997). These exclusionary narratives and tendencies are prevalent in the local politics of Kormos as well. In a context where people are able to alter and shift their ethnic ascription on the ground of social circumstances and interactions ethnicity remains a fluid boundary. With the significant strengthening of symbolic boundaries and the raising importance of ethnicity there are fewer opportunities to change ethnicity situatively. Leaving behind Roma ethnicity also appears as a struggle to escape the stigma.

The interventions into the colony's life such as the *developmental projects* are touching on important symbolic boundaries as well. The project realized in Béke colony stirred up emotions. The complex developmental programme of Roma settlements and colonies<sup>5</sup> aimed to improve life conditions in a selected neighbourhood. Many perceive it as a programme for Roma – because they are the ones to change, and also to blame

---

<sup>5</sup> The Hungarian expression does not explicitly state Roma ethnicity, however the notion is connected to segregated Roma dwellings.

for the transformation of the colony. From this perspective all the community and educational programmes connected to the project are labelled as Roma, and 'established' families aim to distinguish themselves from it. The community feast of Béke Day is humiliating for the Roma man with non-Roma identification: he hates the Roma music played there and does not see any value in the event which is based on the most popular elements of Roma culture and would be qualified to represent the whole Béke.

One developmental programme element was to give a boost to the gardening on the small plots between the buildings. A critical element causing a conflict between established residents and outsiders was also connected to the gardens. Breaking down the flowers, ripping off vegetables or fruits are crucial: the delinquent children do not understand that the old residents are cultivating the gardens just as they would be cultivating their own status symbol and they interpret the destruction as crushing their own pride. *'We are filthy peasants! But why do you harm that poor flower? Don't you see how devotedly I care for it?'* (Family 7) Even though not all residents participate in the small garden programme for different reasons, they could change the attitude of some residents towards the usefulness of the gardens. It also transformed a symbolic boundary maintained through gardening: as one resident formulated, gardening is not 'acting Hungarian' any more.

## CONCLUSION

Symbolic boundaries are constructed to differentiate people, spaces and social practices and to create categories and classifications for them, while social boundaries are the objectified and realized differentiations. Studying symbolic and social boundaries made by the residents of a former workers' colony allows us to describe the dynamically changing relations within a poor neighbourhood, paying attention to those conditional factors of local structural, political and cultural context that determine the uniqueness of this location.

Béke colony is an ethnically and socially mixed neighbourhood, due to the dynamic population exchange for decades that broke up the formerly socially homogeneous but ethnically more mixed workers' colony. Mobility processes between higher and lower status colonies and selective migration outlined the present population. Taking into consideration the present day livelihood strategies of the residents, we can see that families are typically relying on seasonal, short term and uncertain incomes, standard pensions as well as households that are suffering from substandard living conditions. Based on the livelihood strategies and the relations that the residents maintain within the neighbourhood and outside, we can see that Béke is a relatively resource-rich neighbourhood with networks and relations connecting the place with other parts of Kormos. People sustain institutional relations with hobby and religious groups, which also contributes to their networks, and supports advocacy skills. Even though Béke is a stigmatized colony from the outside, people maintain important outward, bridging social capital that prevents the isolation of the individuals and the collective. However, we can also see some phenomena directing towards the slow closing down of the social networks. While relatively various survival strategies are assured, the deterioration of the neighbourhood and its negative framing hinder stronger local participation and stronger attachment to the neighbourhood for the younger cohorts that would keep them in place.

Boundaries are socially constructed categorizations and classifications that differentiate groups and individuals in different positions in the struggles over the understanding and interpretation of reality. Boundaries drawn are also reflecting the individual position in relation to the neighbours and other residents and to the mainstream society. Béke holds clear spatial boundaries, which are seen in the eyes of the people as symbolic boundaries in Kormos as well: the colony is seen as a homogeneous Roma community living in a deteriorating neighbourhood. But within the neighbourhood, symbolic and social boundaries are less stable; their making partially reflecting the external stigma in their intentions of group differentiation.

Established and outsider groups are maintaining symbolic boundaries rooted in social boundaries. The oldest cohort is sharing a common experience of the past and decades of cohabitation, which implies a shared lifestyle and interpretation of the reality of Béke. In this sense we can describe a social boundary between the two groups, which is an already normalized boundary maintained by social practices. Established residents are differentiating themselves from the outsiders, often reflecting the differences as housing advantages of the newcomers, problems with the outsider children and the criminality of the outsider group and the spatial identification of the newcomers. They attribute the deterioration of the neighbourhood and the changing general interpretation of the colony to them. However the boundary between the two groups is not clear-cut but socially relative, penetrable and flexible in time: individual positions and aspirations can also define which groups they identify with. The use of spatial differentiation in connection with the established-outsider boundary points out that the social hierarchy is expressed by a spatial one. In the socialist period the spatial location of the residents was closely attached to their worker status thus to their position in the local social order, while after the transition the importance of the space remained, and the population of the different spaces were rearranged according to the changing statuses.

The established and outsider figuration is intersected with ethnic boundaries. However the symbolic distinction between the Roma and non-Roma residents of the colony is mainly symbolic: ethnicity is constructed in situations and interactions and this contextuality also contributes to the looseness of the ethnic boundary. Besides, in the traditionally ethnically mixed neighbourhood where the livelihood strategies do not differentiate ethnic categories, this boundary is appearing stronger and stronger symbolically. There are people – especially the second generational established families – who are aiming to enforce and normalize this symbolic boundary to become a social one. In this context there is less opportunity to the situational formation of ethnicity. The developmental projects realized in the colony are also changing the local symbolic boundaries and provide another opportunity to affect everyday social practices and through them change symbolic boundaries.



## REFERENCES

- Alabán, P. (2012) "Siktából" az utcára. Ipari munkások az ózdi kistérség törésvonalain. *Korall*, 13, 82–105.
- Bartha, E. (2010) "Ma mindenki magányos harcos" Az emberi kapcsolatok változása a rendszerváltás óta Kelet-Németországban és Magyarországon. *Forrás*, 7–8, 57–92.
- Barth, F. (1996) Régi és új problémák az etnicitás elemzésében. *Regio*, 1, 3–25.
- Binder, M. (1997) Changes in the Image of "Gypsies" in Slovakia and Hungary after the Post-Communist Transition. *Magyar Tudomány*, 42, 656–678.
- Elias, N. – Scotson, J. L. (1994) *The Established and the Outsiders*. London: SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446222126>.
- Fehér, K. (2015) Szimbolikus határok és szociális gondoskodás intézményi szemmel. In Virág, T. (ed.) *Törésvonalak: Szegénység és etnicitás vidéki terekben*. Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 141–166.
- Feischmidt, M. (2010) Megismerés és elismerés: elméletek, módszerek, politikák az etnicitás kutatásában. In Feischmidt, M. (ed.) *Etnicitás. Különbőségteremtő társadalom*. Budapest: Gondolat–MTA Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 7–29.
- Havas, G. (1982) Foglalkozásváltási stratégiák különböző cigány közösségekben. In Andor, M. (ed.) *Cigányvizsgálatok*. Műhelysorozat 3. Budapest: Művelődéskutató Intézet. 181–202.
- Jenkins, R. (2008) *Rethinking Ethnicity*. London: SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446214855>
- Lamont, M. – Molnár, V. (2002) The study of boundaries in the social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 167–195. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.141107>
- May, D. M. (2004) The interplay of three established-outsider figurations in a deprived inner-city neighbourhood. *Urban Studies*, 41, 2159–2179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000268393>
- Messing, V. – Molnár, E. (2011) Bezáródó kapcsolati hálók: szegény roma háztartások kapcsolati jellemzői. *Esély*, 5, 47–74.
- Nagy, P. (2012) "Ahol a vállalatvezetés az úr..." A Rimamurányi-Salgótarjáni Vasmű Rt. szociális és jóléti intézményrendszere Ózdon. *Korall*, 13, 17–36.
- Nagy, P. (2011) Az ózdi vasgyári alkalmazottak lakáskörülményei 1918 és 1945 között. *Bányászattörténeti Közlemények* 11, 64–87.
- Nemcsik, P. (1976) Ózd környéki ipari munkásság a mezőgazdaságban. In *Foglalkozások és életmódok*. Válogatott tanulmányok honismereti szakkörök és kutatók munkáiból. Miskolc: Miskolci Hermann Ottó Néprajzi Múzeum, 63–81.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Small, M. L. (2008) Four Reasons to Abandon the Idea of "The Ghetto." *City & Community* 7, 389–398. [https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2008.00271\\_8.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2008.00271_8.x)
- Small, M. L. (2004) *Villa Victoria: The Transformation of Social Capital in a Boston Barrio*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226762937.001.0001>
- Small, M. L. (2002). Culture, Cohorts, and Social Organization Theory: Understanding Local Participation in a Latino Housing Project. *American Journal of Sociology* 108, 1–54. <https://doi.org/10.1086/345649>
- Small, M. L. – Lamont, M. – Harding, D. J. (2010) Reconsidering Culture and Poverty. *Annals*, 629, 6–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716210362077>
- Small, M. L. – Newman, K. (2001) Urban poverty after the truly disadvantaged: The rediscovery of the family, the neighborhood, and culture. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23–45. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.23>
- Szabó, Z. (1938) *Cifra nyomorúság. A Cserhát, Mátra, Bükk földje és népe*. Budapest: Cserépfalvi.
- Valuch, T. (2010) Enni és lakni is kellene: A nagyüzemi munkásság életkörülményeinek néhány sajátossága Ózdon a II. világháborút követő évtizedekben. In Tischler, J. (ed.) *Kádárizmus – Mélyfúrások*. 1956-os Intézet Évkönyve 2009. Budapest: 1956-os Intézet.
- Virág, T. (2008) Változó gazdasági-társadalmi kapcsolatok egy cigányok lakta faluban. *Szociológiai Szemle*, 1, 41–59.
- Wacquant, L. (2012) A Janus-faced institution of ethnoracial closure: A sociological specification of the ghetto. In Hutchison, R. – Haynes, B. D. (eds.) *The Ghetto: Contemporary Global Issues and Controversies*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1–31.
- Wacquant, L. J. (1997) Three pernicious premises in the study of the American ghetto. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21, 341–353. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00076>