

Glasgow's Ellis Island? The integration and stigmatisation of Govanhill's Roma population

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Abstract

This paper examines the contemporary situation of different central and Eastern European Roma communities who are currently living in Govanhill, Glasgow. Although adopting a microsociological and ethnographic approach, the wider European and UK political and policy context is discussed and broader structural factors, surrounding migration for example, are not overlooked. The primary focus of ongoing fieldwork in Govanhill is an attempt to witness and account for experiences and understandings of integration and stigmatisation of Roma communities, drawing on the work of Howard Becker, Erving Goffman and Richard Yarwood to assist the analysis. Theoretically and methodologically, the paper embraces an intersectional approach, including reference to the work of feminists such as Kathy Davis and Mari Matsuda. Such an approach is a means of ensuring that issues of class and gender, alongside ethnicity, are documented and appreciated when examining the situation of Roma vis-à-vis identity, integration and community interactions. In particular, various issues around welfare and social policy provision stand out as being principle concerns for Roma communities and service providers in Govanhill. Data from Glasgow illustrates that accommodation, employment and education are all key areas demanding further investigation to improve access, take-up and delivery of services. Responses to some of these urban policy challenges are addressed with evidence to support the argument that some successes are apparent, although there is still much work still to be done. It is notable that some of the most successful 'on-the-ground' projects are Roma-led, working in partnership with Glasgow City Council and other public and third sector agencies.

Keywords: Roma, Govanhill, Glasgow, Migration, Integration, Stigmatisation, Welfare, Intersectionality, Identity, Community.

Introduction

Roma inclusion will continue to face challenges as long as little is done to combat deep-seated anti-Gypsyism and discriminatory tendencies prevalent in European societies. Discrepancies in treatment are evident in different areas

such as housing, education, employment, health care, political participation, or freedom of movement. Attitudes towards Roma are becoming increasingly hostile. (ERPC, 2012: 57)

It hardly needs to be said but the rather fanciful comparison between Govanhill, a multi-ethnic working class area on the Southside of Glasgow, and Ellis Island, the famous gateway for immigrants to the USA located in Upper New York Bay, came from the pen of a particularly imaginative local journalist (Ross, 2013). However, behind the 'soundbite' headline there is a serious point being made in Peter Ross's rich and detailed article regarding the multi-layered issues that are involved when supporting the integration of migrants in local neighbourhoods across the UK, including policy matters of housing, education, employment, poverty and anti-racism initiatives. In Govanhill, integration is hard for many Roma residents to talk about, even theoretically, if acceptance and tolerance is deemed to be in short supply and racialised stereotypes dominate. This paper offers a micro-analysis of the historical and contemporary situation of Roma in Govanhill, a population now numbering around 3,500 people that includes Romanian, Slovakian, Czech, Bulgarian and Polish Roma (Social Marketing Gateway, 2013: 14). At the same time, however, the analysis will not only focus on localised developments but also briefly appreciate the wider UK and European context. The data for the paper is primarily based on ongoing ethnographic/participant observation work in Govanhill itself, as well as informal, semi-structured interviews with key informants and officials in both public and voluntary sectors across Glasgow and the West coast. There is also some critical analysis of reports, policy documents and media coverage.

This paper examines related themes of welfare provision, 'integration', empowerment, identity and stigmatisation in relation to mainly Slovak and Romanian Roma living in Govanhill, Glasgow. At the time of writing (April 2014) fieldwork is ongoing and as such this paper can only offer some initial thoughts and impressions rather than any complete or well-rounded conclusions. In the main, I have been working with individuals, families and organisations from both the public and voluntary sector in Glasgow and the methodology is mainly participant observation and ethnography with some interviews with key informants. A range of meetings and events both within and outside of Glasgow have been attended over the last twelve months, most of these demonstrating the range of complexities (and emotions) that are involved when attempting to balance the needs and interests of different communities, as well as finding resources to facilitate determined community engagement and 'active citizenship' (Crick and Lockyer, 2010).

The larger context for this paper is, of course, ongoing events across Europe; Roma mobility and movement that emanates from both 'push' factors (such as unemployment, discrimination, lack of trust in 'home' state institutions) as well as 'pull' factors (such as job opportunities, educational services, tolerance and an overall better quality of life) (Castles, 2000: 82; McGarry, 2012). Indeed, anti-Roma discrimination, violence and unemployment has led to many Roma families leaving central and Eastern European countries during the last couple of decades, especially since 2004 and 2007 when EU accession took place for the so-called 'A8' countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and then latterly the 'A2' countries (Romania and Bulgaria) respectively. Roma have travelled from countries such as Slovakia and Romania to enter Southern and Western European countries, such as Italy, Germany, Spain, France and the UK. The reception such migrant families have received has often been less than welcoming and actually rather threatening on occasion. For example, several extended families of Romanian Roma had to flee Belfast in the summer of 2009 and return home to Romania due to sustained intimidation and attacks by groups of local young people from mainly Loyalist

backgrounds (Clark and Rice, 2012). The more recent deportations of Roma from France - there were over 21,000 forced evictions in 2013 alone (Naydenova and Butler, 2014) - also serves as an example of these exclusionary processes; but note that even in this instance the moves threatened to split the French Government as well as bringing France into conflict with the EU (Bamat, 2013). But what of the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion' (<http://www.romadecade.org/>) and the promises it has carried? What has been achieved between 2005 and 2014 and how will such 'inclusion' work continue after 2015 when the decade completes? Will abstract, ambitious national integration strategies be followed through into more local, concrete action plans and practices? Can such strategies help dismantle the endemic, structural poverty and racism that Roma face on a daily basis? Such questions fall outside the scope of this paper but in order to understand the local situation, this wider context needs to be briefly accounted for, not least the 'real' stories that lie behind the headlines of recent times: headlines that do not stretch much further than playing the immigration 'numbers game', reproducing ethnic stereotypes, racialised notions of criminality and what might be seen, as Havel put it, a 'failed' Litmus Test (Kamm, 1993).

As David Waddington (2004: 162) reminds us, and despite what positivists may yet still attempt to claim, social research does not take place in a vacuum and the social and political contexts of research are important to fully grasp and appreciate. In this light, in October 2013, Christos Salis, Eleftheria Dimopoulou and 'Maria' became an international sensation - for all the wrong reasons. A series of tried and trusted racist stereotypes re-emerged and soon a variety of broadcast and print media ran with lurid and unproven commentaries that played into essentialised 'Roma steal children' and 'dark-skinned Roma cannot have white babies' discourses - as well as discussing 'kidnapped' child brides and the general nature of 'untrustworthy' and 'dangerous' Roma (Pilditch, 2013; Spencer, 2013). Following quickly on from the case of 'Maria', cases of children 'stolen by Gypsies' in Ireland soon appeared on the front pages of newspapers and a full-blown international 'moral panic' was beginning to emerge (McCaffrey, 2013; McDonald, 2013). Added to this, in England, politicians were getting rather agitated about different Roma communities from central and Eastern Europe who were daring to settle in their constituencies and attempting to live their lives, seek work and send their children to school, not least the former Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett MP and the current Deputy Prime Minister of the Coalition Government, Liberal Democrat Nick Clegg MP:

We have got to change the behaviour and the culture of the incoming community, the Roma community, because there's going to be an explosion otherwise. We all know that. - David Blunkett (quoted in Engineer, 2013)

There is a real dilemma ... when they [Roma] behave in a way that people find sometimes intimidating, sometimes offensive. - Nick Clegg (quoted in Bennet, 2013)

It is often within such politically-inflamed contexts that social research takes place and this has consequences for both the methods of approach adopted for the project as well as how the researcher positions him or herself. Having briefly accounted for such contexts I will now say a little about the research methodology and how the ethnography has been conducted, principally via an intersectional approach to viewing, locating and understanding power.

Methods of Approach

'Intersectionality' refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power. (Davis, 2008: 68)

With its roots broadly traced back to the pioneering Black feminist activist work of the Combahee River Collective (Boston, 1974-80) and what they referred to then as 'Simultaneity', intersectionality is now a useful theoretical and methodological tool for examining the nature of interlocking oppressions and undertaking social research; stressing as it does the need for integrated analysis of privilege, power and control (Harris, 2001). The importance and value of this early activism in shaping an intellectual and practical pathway for the liberation of Black women, especially in the North American context, cannot be underestimated and in searching for radical politics through identity, the Collective recognised that a major obstacle, in addition to the racism of the white women's movement and their lack of accountability for such racism, were the ongoing problems in organising amongst Black feminists themselves. Racism interlocked with sexism and classism also ran throughout much of society's governing structures of power: it is of no surprise that the Combahee statement called for the coordinated destruction of capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy in order to create a more gender equal and socially just, non-racist society (The Combahee River Collective, 1977). Viewed today, in an advanced late capitalist and neoliberal age, this radical agenda might seem bold and ambitious, if not rather politically naïve and idealistic. However, much can still be appreciated from the approach adopted by the Combahee Collective, both in substance and in methodology, and, further, could be used as a way of viewing the position of Roma struggles for self-determination, identity and equality in contemporary European contexts. At source, what the Combahee feminists were really trying to do was understand the nature and essence of structured power and the way it impacted on their 'lived' lives from a variety of directions; something that Deborah King (1988) has referred to as 'multiple jeopardy'.

Indeed, there are shades here within intersectional debates of the subaltern and post-colonial - 'history from below' - thinking of critics such as Spivak (1988) and the way in which 'difference' and 'outsiderness' can see a shift from periphery to core. Shared experience is recognised and this is a key strength of intersectionality; it can offer a truly collaborative approach and embraces difference and diversity. A practical example here might be the work of Jamal and Naber (2007) who take on an intersectional theoretical and methodological perspective to help understand the connections between culture, nation, ethnicity, sexuality and gender in the context of how the North American world shifted in a post-9/11 age. Intersectionality, they argued, was the 'only way' of capturing 'the totality of reality', for those interviewed for this project which aimed to investigate the cultural dynamics and political processes at play in how an (Arab) 'enemy within' was created in the aftermath of 9/11 in North American society. For Jamal and Naber (2007), intersectionality explicitly acknowledges the racialised nature of such constructions of 'Arab', but also connects these to their gendered, sexualised and class-based roots, both in terms of representation and treatment by non-Arab-Americans, as well as resistance to oppression and subordination. It is an invaluable theoretical and methodological approach and, again, perhaps offers signposts for future projects within the broad field of Romani Studies. Capturing such a 'totality of reality' is rare within fieldwork conducted amongst Roma communities and yet it is urgent if we are to connect the experiences of different communities and the location and operation of power, both within and outside such groupings. A final contribution to the approach adopted for the current project is the

work of Mari Matsuda (1991). Matsuda (1991: 1189) proposed a novel approach to examining multi-layered issues of inequality and discrimination which she called 'ask the other question':

The way I try to understand the interconnection of all forms of subordination is through a method I call 'ask the other question'. When I see something that looks racist, I ask, 'Where is the patriarchy in this?' When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, 'Where is the heterosexism in this?' When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, 'Where are the class interests in this?'

The attraction of such an innovative approach is immediate, as are the many further epistemological and ontological questions it raises. Suffice to say, for our purposes here, fieldwork was undertaken with this key phrase in mind - 'ask the other question'. It is apparent that much research work with Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities is often seen through a highly racialised and/or ethnicised lens and this might indeed be appropriate within certain environments and contexts. However, there are surely dangers with such reductionist and limiting critical thinking, failing to capture the complexity of, for example, issues of gender and class and how they connect to 'race'. Two further concepts are important to this paper and some comment must be made on both before proceeding further - and they are integration and stigmatisation.

Integration and Stigmatisation

C: *"What are the main challenges with this idea of integration? How is that playing out in Govanhill would you say?"*

E: *"Well... How can we speak of integration when some people don't want to accept you? There needs to be more learning and listening... We can learn from each other and get away from the lazy stereotypes. There is good and bad in all of us, every community."*

C: *"Yes, that is very true..."*

Much has been written about integration and stigmatisation and there is little space to do justice to such wide-ranging debates within the confines of this paper. However, it is important to say a few words about how both ideas play out in the local context of Govanhill. With regards to community integration, the general approach within this work has been to look at the ways in which participation of different Roma communities occurs across the Southside of Glasgow. Participation can, of course, take many forms but includes self-determination, independence, empowerment, citizenship, integration and social inclusion (Oliver and Pitt, 2013; Yarwood, 2014). From a social policy perspective, it is important to look at how integration occurs across a range of areas, such as education, housing, employment, health and recreation. A recent article by the journalist Judith Duffy (2013) has questioned how far integration is occurring in Govanhill and suggests that *"many [Roma] are facing a vicious cycle of poverty, unacceptable living conditions and a lack of access to public services, education and employment opportunities... some turn to crime, including begging, as can be seen on the streets of Scottish towns."* These issues will be picked up on later in the paper, with a focus on how Glasgow City Council and other agencies (both within the statutory and voluntary sectors) are approaching the complex issue of Roma integration and social inclusion. However, it is certainly true that localised and racialised processes of stigmatisation are not helping with efforts to integrate Roma communities into wider Glasgow life and Scottish society.

In terms of stigma, or 'spoiled identity', the sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) reminds us that it is a particular type of *social discrediting* where certain attributes,

behaviours and reputations are drawn upon by 'normals' (the stigmatizer) to draw social distance between themselves and the stigmatized. The stigmatized are deemed to be undesirable and devalued and thus are to be rejected and ostracized. But Goffman also notes a third party, 'the wise' (some active, some passive) who are 'normals' but are accepted by the stigmatized as being aware of and sympathetic to their plight and condition. There is evidence within Govanhill of all of these different categories interacting in an everyday sense; indeed, this is how power operates and is negotiated vis-à-vis community relations and Roma/Non-Roma exchanges. What is most interesting in Goffman's analysis, for current purposes, is the way he assesses the 'normals' - why they stigmatize and the importance of their situational contexts. He suggests that boosting self-esteem and 'anxiety buffering' are common reasons why a 'normal' would 'downward compare'; to feel better about oneself you compare yourself to someone less fortunate than yourself (Smith, 2006). Indeed, asymmetric power relations are a prerequisite for effective stigmatisation; as Elias and Scotson (1994) have argued the power for stigma to 'bite' is dependent on the stigmatising group being more powerful and cohesive than the stigmatized and processes of 'downward comparing' tends to suggest an interdependent relationship which is utterly shaped by a distinct power imbalance - the weaker 'perform' an emotional/social function for the more powerful. Given the contemporary situation within Govanhill, such stigmatising practices are evident and poverty and deprivation go some way (but certainly not all the way) in explaining such stigmatising actions and often racist behaviours on the parts of the 'normals'. Lastly, it is important to state that alongside the social discrediting there is also a good deal of what might be termed 'power neutral' intercultural dialogue occurring that offers some hope and prospects for the future. This is especially true amongst younger people in the area and their ability to reach out to each other, both at school and outside of school.

Roma in Glasgow

I've been here [Glasgow] for six years. My family is happy here - we're planning to stay here. We feel this is the country where we want to stay and we want to make the effort to become good citizens. - Vera (quoted in Fletcher, 2013).

We now need to examine the exact situation of Roma in Glasgow and different aspects of this environment and geography. Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland and has around 600,000 people living in the area, with approximately 75,000 residents who are not of UK descent. It is also a young city with the average age being 35 years old (National Records of Scotland, 2014). It is a city that was central to colonial-era Britain - the so-called 'second city of Empire' - and it remains important to the Scottish economy to this day (and it will possibly be even more important after September 2014, should the people of Scotland vote 'yes' in the forthcoming referendum on Scottish independence). In recent years, Roma families from central and Eastern Europe have arrived in Scotland, firstly as political refugees and asylum-seekers in the 1990s, and then more recently when EU enlargements occurred during the mid-2000s (Clark and Campbell, 2000; Trehan and Sigona, 2010). Indeed, since 2004 (A8) and 2007 (A2) and the admittance of the EU accession countries, there have been steady flows of migrants from central and Eastern Europe into Western Europe, although nothing quite like the 'scare' figures that the Coalition Government and UK tabloid press imagined or feared (Bienkov, 2014). Such movement and visibility has not gone unnoticed by different states and governments, not to mention local councillors, investigative journalists and indigenous voters (Borland, 2013; Leask, 2014). Although there were restrictions initially placed on both A8 and A2 nationals in terms of work and access to welfare benefits these are now, as of January 1st 2014, lifted for both groups

– this assuming that entitlement and 'right to reside' is proven (an issue that the UK is currently battling with the European Commission over, see Mednick, 2014). In terms of the current research, and despite some proactive, capacity-building work from various public and voluntary organisations who are working with Roma families, it appears that there is still work to be done in order to improve lives and livelihoods across the city of Glasgow (Clark, Adamson and Cashman, 2007: 18-19). Principle concerns rest mainly with housing, employment, healthcare and education. The real challenge is devising strategies that properly connect these essential social policy services together and offer 'joined-up' policy solutions and practices. This is much easier said than done, especially when considering the current deeply inadequate UK integration strategy and its serious lack of attention to Scotland-specific issues and the position of Roma from central and Eastern Europe living in Scotland (Clark and Adamova, 2013; Social Marketing Gateway, 2013).

In terms of geography and location, a recent 'mapping report' indicates that the vast majority of Roma families in Scotland reside in Glasgow (3,000-4,000), with much smaller communities in cities and towns such as Edinburgh (105-210), Fife (60) and Aberdeen (50) (Social Marketing Gateway, 2013: 14). Drilling down further, most Roma in Glasgow are actually concentrated within just a few dozen streets in Govanhill, on the Southside of the city. This is no surprise, given the fact that Govanhill has a long history of migrant presence in the area and it is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in Scotland, where more than 50 languages are spoken on a daily basis (Zabiega, 2013). Also, such patterns of Roma migration tend to show that settlement in extended family networks within concentrated geographical areas is the norm and, to some extent, a preference - mainly for social and economic support and community solidarity (although there are issues of segregation/'ghettoisation' that need to be considered). Such patterns of movement and settlement are also shown to exist in cities in England, such as Sheffield and Manchester (Grayson, 2013; Leggio, 2013), and it is also important to bear in mind that such preferences for movement/settlement are not unknown amongst many other minority ethnic groups. In this sense the Roma communities in Glasgow are replicating earlier patterns of migration witnessed across Europe, which led to the emergence of various 'Chinatowns' in cities as well as areas such as 'little Russia' in London or Hungarians living in particular parts of Romania (Marcuse, 1997; Musterd and van Kempen, 2009; Wacquant, 2008). Data on Roma numbers in Scotland are not especially complete or reliable although the 2013 mapping exercise felt confident in providing a figure of anywhere between 3,804 and 4,946 Roma in Scotland - with estimates suggesting some 3,500 in Glasgow alone (Social Marketing Gateway, 2013: 14). This sizable Roma presence in one city has ensured that local responses have been concentrated and proactive. However, whilst it is important to note that this data is not especially methodologically robust, certainly not when compared to the methodologies adopted for the 2011 Census, the numbers are generally regarded by a range of public and voluntary sector agencies and local service providers as being reliable and credible.

What are the issues?

"Who are these people you say? They are the new Irish, son..."

"They are probably all criminals."

"They are a nightmare for local residents."

"Violence and intimidation from the Roma is the norm... hanging about in gangs."

"It just isn't that safe on the streets anymore, not past 7pm"

"Roma are making Govanhill a bad place to live... their rubbish is everywhere."

"This place is Ground fucking Zero... Govanhell I call it."

*"They sell their children for sex, that's what I heard"
"I heard, 15 odd of them... in a 2 bedroom flat!"*

Whilst certainly not exhaustive or even especially representative, the above ethnographic 'soundbites' do reflect some of the concerns and anxieties, whether real or imagined, that are expressed by non-Roma residents staying within the Govanhill area. These comments were heard and gathered by myself in conversations taking place in local parks, supermarkets, shops, taxi cabs, schools and at various meetings and 'gatherings' over the last twelve months. It is interesting to note that the language and terminology appears to follow a familiar pattern, also witnessed in other areas of the UK where Roma have settled, such as Page Hall in Sheffield (Shute, 2013). There are allegations of criminality, public nuisance, sanitation issues, anti-social behaviour, inappropriate rubbish disposal and overcrowding – and a sense that the situation is, as one Govanhill resident who is involved in a local residents group was quoted as saying, "...a big, bubbling pot of tension and something has to be done before it gets too much" (Jade Ansari, quoted in Fletcher, 2013). However, when taken together and looked at objectively, rarely are such claims supported by firm and conclusive evidence from the Police and other statutory agencies who work with Roma and other communities (Grill, 2012). The rhetorical power of such statements far exceeds the truth and bears direct testimony to some of the 'moral panic' arguments proposed many years ago by the likes of Howard Becker (1963) and Stan Cohen (1972). Indeed, one police officer, PC Keir, who is quoted in a recent story in the local newspaper *The Evening Times* admitted:

To be honest, it's rarely the Roma or Asian youths that we find we have to deal with... It is usually the indigenous, white youths who are causing problems. If we see groups of Roma youths outside, they are normally behaving lawfully but we will have a chat with them and suggest they move into the park or socialise elsewhere. (Stewart, 2014a)

To be sure, this is not to suggest that there are *no* issues around anti-social behaviour, low-level crime, overcrowding and so on in Govanhill. There are such issues, as will be demonstrated, across a range of social policy areas. However, what cannot be said, as there is no evidence to support such claims, is that "the Roma [or 'East Europeans' in local parlance] are to blame" – which is another statement and conversation that is often heard in the local area amongst non-Roma residents, almost on a daily basis. Sociologically, we can see that what is often socially constructed as morally reprehensible and anti-social for non-Roma is actually seen as being social, hospitable and inclusionary by Roma themselves. For example, 'loitering on street corners' is actually socialising with friends and 'improper' rubbish disposal is actually forms of recycling and income generation. In terms of the 'soundbites' listed above, at one point in Glasgow's rich history this would have been said about the Irish or the Italians, or the Pakistani's or the Poles – as a local resident (above) is quoted as saying the Roma are the 'new Irish'. Indeed, for now it is the Roma's turn to be the racialised scapegoat of endemic, structural poverty in an age of austerity and public and voluntary sector cuts (Naysmith, 2013). What is important to do, more so than offering misplaced moral judgements and racialised public scorn, is to address the structural issues at play and see what can be done to improve life in the local environment for all communities who currently call Govanhill 'home'. What is clear is that there are now many statutory bodies, local organisations and charities working in the local area (such as Community Health Partnership, Oxfam, Glasgow Life, Govanhill Youth Project, Govanhill Law Centre, Crossroads, Education Services, Positive Action in Housing etc.) but Roma are still, with few exceptions, often marginalised and on the 'outside' of such

policy and practice discussions (Adamson and Poole, 2007). This is something that needs to change sooner rather than later if progress is to be made.

It is certainly a concern that even with Glasgow's history of active social and economic inclusion policies there are still significant social protection and welfare issues to be addressed. According to a recent paper by the Scottish Government (Communities Analytical Services, 2014) it appears that further public sector austerity cuts by the Westminster government will work their way across Scotland in the next couple of years; hampering further the fight against poverty and offering protection for vulnerable groups in society, including the Roma. The projections forecast by the Holyrood government suggest a reduction of about £6 billion in the welfare budget up to 2015-2016 with changes in how benefits are uprated, tax credits and child benefit being identified for cost saving targets (Communities Analytical Services, 2014: 1; Macnab, 2014). Indeed, taking a rather traditional approach to the current situation, we can identify William Beveridge's 'five giants' still at work across the different areas of social policy with regard to the Roma: what he referred to as "*want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness*" (Beveridge, 1942). A brief overview follows below with some extended comments on the area of social security and welfare, as a case study of sorts.

- 1) Poverty/'Want': There are high levels of social exclusion in the local area, especially amongst Romanian and Bulgarian Roma, even with the rule changes in January 2014 regarding their right to work. This issue will be given some attention in more detail below (Cowan, 2012; Paterson, Simpson, Barrie and Perinova, 2011).
- 2) Health/'Disease': There is some evidence of poor health amongst the community with low GP registrations, immunisation take-up and mental health issues. However, there have also been reports of good access and treatment at some GPs practices and word quickly spreads when a practice is seen as being 'good' with Roma patients within the communities (Adamson and Poole, 2007; Harkins and Egan, 2012).
- 3) Education/'Ignorance': There are continued reports of low attendance at school - though improving - as well as corresponding issues of attainment, poor literacy and numeracy. There are exceptions to this rule and some schools have worked very hard to include Roma children in the curriculum and everyday life of the school (e.g. Holyrood Secondary School, Annette St Primary School). It has been found that forming good relationships with the parents is pivotal in encouraging attendance and performance, often involving the children acting as informal interpreters. Bilingual and English Additional Language (EAL) support is also crucial in overcoming barriers to health (Barrie, 2011; TESS, 2012).
- 4) Housing/'Squalor': This issue is normally one of the first raised by Roma families as a serious issue, especially regarding landlord issues, as well as concerns over overcrowding, deposits, charges for 'additional' services and insecure tenancies, where such agreements are in place (Stewart, 2014b; Tarcsafalvi, 2014: 46-47). Illegal evictions have also occurred and much of the accommodation in Govanhill is privately rented and issues of irregular maintenance and extortionate costs feature prominently in conversations. There are also some issues regarding good relations with neighbours, for example:

C: "*Have you had trouble with the flat then, you were saying that...*"

T: "*Oh yes, yes... it has been hard. Hard. No money and price [rent?] goes up all the time. We need fixes to kitchen, leaks and... the people upstairs make noises... all do is watch TV...*"

C: "Did you speak with them, turn it down?"

T: "No, no... no trouble..."

- 5) Employability/'Idleness': Despite the efforts of Jobs and Business Glasgow, there are still issues around low paid, unsustainable and temporary work as well as lack of access to training (Briggs, 2012). The practices of recruitment agencies are also of concern with regard to the 'hiring and firing' of Roma employees (Social Marketing Gateway, 2013: 12-13). Worries over finances, alongside housing, is another concern that is a regular discussion point amongst the Roma communities in Govanhill. However, a range of income-generation strategies are in place amongst the communities (what might be termed 'gathering and selling' work) and the lifting of employment restrictions on January 1st 2014 has now enabled Romanian and Bulgarian Roma to access paid work in the public and private sectors.

As an example, it is worth looking at issues around social security and welfare benefits. A recent study by Govanhill Law Centre (Paterson, Simpson, Barrie and Perinova, 2011) found that it was a regular occurrence that Roma were being denied their rights under EU law with regard to interactions with agencies of the state, such as the Department of Work and Pensions, HMRC and local government. Administrative delays, in particular, were found to be causing poverty and this deprivation of income has led to subsistence on very limited resources and a reliance on charity, faith group and food bank support. For example, the study found that over half of the GLC sample cases had received a refusal of benefit based upon an erroneous decision made by a public authority and when complaints were made responses were delayed or non-existent. Similarly, in cases involving the HMRC, the study found that cases were often referred to their 'Compliance Team' and not informed as to what was causing the delay whilst Roma passports and other documentation, such as child birth certificates, were held onto for disproportionate amounts of time. Even more worrying, the Govanhill study found that officers of public authorities sometimes wrongly stated the law, for example the HMRC advising clients that they could call at the client's home without any notice and seize all of his possessions for a disputed overpayment (Paterson, Simpson, Barrie and Perinova, 2011: 26). The study did report that services provided by Glasgow City Council were generally well regarded and the majority of GLC's Roma clients reported their interactions with the Council as being positive and good (though they were still, even here, subject to differential treatment). It should also be mentioned that although restrictions on the 'right to work' have now been lifted for A2 nationals, the discriminatory 'right to reside' and 'habitual residency' tests are still being applied by the UK government even though the European Commission is currently preparing to challenge the UK on this matter in court (Mednick, 2014).

Responses?

By definition, social inclusion can only take place if exclusionary practices are eradicated. Instead of blaming the Roma for our fears and fantasies, we should reach out to them and allow ourselves to be inspired by their generosity, flexibility and their commitment to mutual support. (Matras, 2014)

As Yaron Matras has recently suggested, serious and sustainable forms of inclusion can only be fostered if wider structural systems of exclusion are dismantled. A benefit of this might be that non-Roma 'fears and fantasies' are challenged and a truly intercultural learning process can begin. There are some signs of this change occurring in Glasgow, coming via responses to some of the social policy issues briefly alluded to

above. A range of agencies and organisations are involved in such work in Scotland, mainly from the public and voluntary sectors – such as Glasgow City Council and Oxfam (Poole, 2010). However, there has also been the emergence of Roma-led support organisations as well – such as *Romano Lav* (Roma Voice) which aims to not just raise cultural awareness and challenge anti-Roma racism and stereotypes but also improve living standards and contribute to the development of the local environment in Govanhill. One of the best and most recent examples of this innovative approach has been the 'clean green team' - a small project that has seen groups of Roma men and women in high-visibility jackets go around the streets of Govanhill cleaning streets and back yards of litter and rubbish. It has been effective as it actively challenges one of the most recurrent racialised stereotypes about Roma – that they are 'dirty', 'unclean' and leave rubbish everywhere. As one of the founding members of *Romano Lav*, Marcela Adamova explained the idea to a local journalist (Stewart, 2012):

The volunteers were very keen to help clean up Govanhill. They are enjoying doing something useful in their neighbourhood and have enjoyed meeting with each other to do good things locally. Their work is also actively challenging existing perceptions of the Roma community. Roma people want the same things as everyone else in Scotland - a decent job, a decent wage, decent housing and decent opportunities for their families.

It has been recognised that this type of active community engagement and collaboration between all sections of Govanhill residents is critical in ensuring that attention and investment is given to the local area. It has also been clear, via the work of *Romano Lav* and other organisations, that when funding and support is made available capacity building can occur and assist those who want to engage in community activities that benefit all residents in the locality. A key focus must be in ensuring that multiple 'Roma voices' are heard when shaping policy and service provision that directly impacts on these communities – 'nothing about us without us' as the activist slogan has it. Ongoing work on developing teams of Roma Mediators, especially Roma women, is a step in the right direction (Kyuchukov, 2012) and at the time of writing members of *Romano Lav* are preparing for a public celebration of International Roma Day 2014 (April 8th) in Glasgow, with a city centre 'flash mob' event and then a march, rally and evening celebrations in Govanhill itself. The energy and commitment of the group is hopefully a positive sign of things to come.

As mentioned, the work of Glasgow City Council has also been instrumental in ensuring that Roma issues have been addressed and in particular the project 'Roma Net'. This project, funded via the EU's URBACT II Programme, principally aims to promote social inclusion and raise the socio-economic standing and position of those Roma who have settled within the Glasgow area. A local action plan for Glasgow covers most of the social policy issues raised in this paper and recommendations have included the employment of Roma mediators, support for community activities such as language classes and 'positive image' work as well as assisting with crisis support and advocacy services (Glasgow Roma-NeT, 2013). Within Scotland, Glasgow City Council is certainly leading a path to a 'model' (albeit in early development) of what a Scottish Roma Integration Strategy could look like, perhaps drawing on the recently published Swedish model that has a long-term approach to issues of integration, anti-racism and challenging stigmatisation (Clark and Adamova, 2013). In a sense, it is no surprise that such a proactive and progressive policy approach has been adopted in Glasgow, given the high concentration of Roma living in this city when compared to the much smaller numbers of Roma living in other Scottish towns and cities, such as Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh. It is probably also notable and helpful that Govanhill is the local constituency of the Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, who has from an early

stage taken an active interest in Roma issues. It does seem to be the case, in this instance, that a critical, visible and vocal Roma presence and organised 'voice' has precipitated an increasingly effective Council response, as has also occurred in Manchester it seems (Leggio, 2013).

Conclusion

C: 'What do you see as the biggest challenge facing Govanhill today?

K: 'I have no idea... But it might be how we all live together, side by side, and what we can do to make this place better to live in.'

C: 'Less rain maybe!?'

K: [laughs]... '... aye!'

Besides the rain, as has been shown, there is a rather long list of speculative allegations, wild gossip and persistent, unproven rumours circulating with regard to the various Roma communities in Govanhill, Glasgow - but, to be sure, this is a list that only tells part of the story. Such stigmatising narratives told by Goffman's 'normals' are countered by 'other voices' ('the wise') and the sometimes less visible and discussed 'everyday' intercultural exchanges on the streets, at the bus stops, in the parks, community centres and supermarket queues within Govanhill. Such community 'mixing' and integrative cultural exchanges are a fact of life in the area and efforts have been made, by both the public sector (e.g. Glasgow City Council) and community-led voluntary sector organisations (e.g. Romano Lav), to help improve the local environment and different quality of life aspects, as well as interpersonal relations between and within the myriad of different nationalities, ethnicities and communities who are residing and working in the local area. As has been argued, power relations, and how these 'play out' in terms of ethnicity, gender and class differentials, are central in trying to understand the complex power dynamics at work and how agency interacts with structure in the sociology of everyday life.

It has been shown in this paper that the main issues facing the various Roma communities in Govanhill are very similar to what other migrant communities have endured when they too were recent arrivals, whether Irish, Jewish, Pakistani or Italian; including housing, finances, health, community development and youth work, access to social security, training and sustainable employment and, finally, tensions within and between neighbourhood communities themselves. In a sense, the central argument here is that what is needed, as a progressive and constructive way forward, is an effective 'bottom-up' national and local integration strategy that perhaps revises and updates elements of the famous Beveridge Report of 1942: that is, a comprehensive (as well as responsive and flexible) plan to tackle the 'five giants' ('want, idleness, squalor, disease, ignorance') that the 1942 publication did not, unfortunately slay and a transformative plan that seeks to place equality, human rights and multiculturalism at the heart of the debate. In the Scottish context, the outcome of the September 2014 referendum on independence will be a crucial, defining moment in determining what 'road map' will be used in charting the path ahead.

Finally, in closing this paper, it is important to fully appreciate that 'Roma issues' are omnipresent across Europe, whether looking East or West. It is also important to adopt a tentatively optimistic point of view and general outlook, seeing the potential in future efforts and initiatives and not being dented by past failures or lack of vision. There are examples of innovative projects where Roma are setting agendas and being 'leaders', rather than being led by non-Roma interests and acting as passive 'followers'. In my mind, there are four key issues at stake in this debate, bearing in mind the wider European context. All four are important to consider when examining

where we go next in terms of Roma social inclusion: 1) The marginalisation of the Roma is not just a central and Eastern European issue – *it's an issue for all of Europe and all Europeans*; 2) New Roma migrant communities do present urban issues and challenges to cities and towns throughout the UK, including Glasgow, – *but these are not to be ignored or exaggerated and they are certainly not insurmountable*; 3) Cities, such as Glasgow, need to be the drivers of socio-economic and cultural change – *but cities are inhabited by people whose agency we cannot underestimate in seeking progressive social change* and 4) A louder “bottom-up” Roma voice is needed to guide service provision as well as anti-racism efforts – *but this 'voice' needs to be plural, not singular, to best represent the diversity of views within and between the exceptionally heterogeneous Roma communities of Europe.*

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