

‘How do you Say “Stop that!” in Slovakian?’: A8 Immigration and Scotland’s Race and Ethnic Diversity Narrative

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‘How do you Say “Stop that!” in Slovakian’: A8 Immigration and Scotland’s Race and Ethnic Diversity Narrative. In 2004 8 Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) joined the EU in an expansion popularly known as the Accession, or A8. As part of this arrangement the Slovakian Roma community settled in Govanhill, a neighborhood in the South-Side of Glasgow, Scotland. Immediately, there was widespread outcry, followed by public debate, on the numbers involved and the impact on local services. One of the claims made was that, because of a ‘unique’ history of ‘self-isolation’, the Roma had altered local policing needs. There were widespread media anecdotes of anti-social behavior but also racist victimization. Using material available post-A8 Govanhill, this synthesizes the debate on Roma settlement against the wider canvass of Scottish reception and assimilation of immigrants. I claim that post-A8 phobia of the Roma is part of an unsustainable ideology of Scotland as a post-racial ‘welcoming country’ which has occluded a nuanced interrogation of the capacity of the country to welcome and successfully integrate immigrants. *Sociológia* 2016, Vol. 48 (No. 3: 247-266)

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Introduction

This article is based on a case-study of policing needs in Govanhill, a neighborhood in the South-Side of Glasgow, which was claimed by Scottish media to be experiencing profound problems of anti-social behavior as a result of sudden changes in demographics resulting from A8 immigration. The A8 was a framework of European integration in which 8 countries (The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) acceded to the European Union (EU) in 2004. Post-A8 debate on Govanhill has been over-shadowed by concern over the numbers of immigrants and their impact on local services, particularly the Roma community from Slovakia. Two sets of hypotheses have driven the debate: First, there has been anecdotal reference to a toxic mixture of Govanhill’s destitution and so-called ‘Roma mistrust of authority’: Based on case studies of Roma migration across Europe (for example, Poole and Adamson 2008; Adamova et al. 2007) fear has been expressed that Roma ‘self-policing ghettos’ - allegedly a feature of socialist-era Central and Eastern Europe- would be replicated in Scotland (See for example, *The Herald* 2007; *The Daily Record*, 2008) Secondly, and relatedly, there has been anecdotal linkage of A8 immigration to unique patterns of

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criminality. Media anecdotes-for example, *The Herald* (2007), *The Daily Record* (2008) and *The Evening Times* (2011) painted post-A8 Govanhill as 'Govanhell', or 'Ground Zero'; a slum haven of crime and antisocial behavior in which the Roma have been thrust onto 'twenty-first century race wars'. The Herald sensationally claimed, for example that:

Walking the network of streets in the heart of Govanhill is a primer for the confused and warring nature of race relations in 21st century Scotland. Local white people and those of Asian origin throw the most appalling slurs at the latest incomers to the area – the Roma community. The Roma people tend to stick together – isolated by language – unwittingly adding to the tension between them and their neighbors (4th July, 2007).

As the example above shows, Roma isolation, mostly linked to their linguistic isolation, is constructed against other aspects of their 'uniqueness', including littering the streets, rummaging through the bins, 'fly-tipping', overcrowding, street fights and prostitution (involving children as young as 12). (See for example, *The Daily Record*, 2008; *The Herald*, 2008) This 'unique' criminality is thus posited as toxically combining with Govanhill's dubious record as a hard-to-police place, producing 'Govanhell' a haven of crime, anti-social behavior and 'race wars'. Thus, on top of:

There is open drug dealing in the streets from mid-morning to midnight. In some areas litter is piled high in the streets and in tenement flat closes – a fact blamed on the Roma. Much else is blamed on the Roma: rising crime, drunkenness, anti-social behavior, allowing their children to play truant – just about every conceivable social ill is laid at their door by the long-time residents of Govanhill. (*The Herald*, 4th July, 2007)

We also hear that:

One police commander said that the area has been "the hottest hot spot for crime on the Southside of the city" since before the Roma arrived... Ironically, each wave of new immigrants into Govanhill has faced discrimination. One Asian shopkeeper described the Roma as "dirty bastards who survive through crime". Although, he added, he remembered his own family being treated in the same way when he was a child. (*The Herald*, 4th July, 2007)

This article aims to demonstrate how, apropos Roma settlement in Scotland, the notions of 'Govanhell' and 'Ground Zero' are not only critical pieces of an international ideological jigsaw which perpetuates the myth of Roma 'self-isolation', but are also evidence of victim-blaming culture which has characterized the reception and assimilation of ethnic minorities in the EU more broadly, and specifically the United Kingdom. 'Govanhell' is also the sinister combination of the isolating framework of EU accession with Scotland's devolution which places the country at a disadvantage when it comes to setting and managing its immigration and integration policy.

Govanhell is also the combination of this position of disadvantage with libidinal disavowal of the reality of discrimination, because this reality does not conform to Scotland's ideology of a post-racial, welcoming country.

This paper has 4 major sections. The first section presents Govanhill: As the canvass against which subsequent analysis is made, this aims to give the reader a sense of the main features of A8 immigration into Glasgow and some of the issues it raised, at least from the perspective of anecdotes. The second section presents the debate on these issues, but from the opinions of research respondents, including police officers, community safety workers and general members of the Govanhill community. Here, we seek to balance the stereotypes and conjecture with enunciations of lived experiences by those who make Govanhill what it is. This is followed by a discussion of the Roma community, locating their European and UK contexts of isolation: Are they isolated? What are the main contours of this isolation? Grasping this context allows us to claim and demonstrate how integration policies in Govanhill are based on the mythological slippery-slope of Roma 'uniqueness'. The fourth section interrogates the notions of Scotland as a post-racial, 'welcoming country', showing how the construction of these notions structures the success and/or failures of ethnic community integration, especially against the backdrop of the UK devolution apparatus.

A note on methodology

This paper is partly informed by two sweeps of ethnography in Govanhill, conducted 5 years apart. The respondents were drawn from the Strathclyde Police Services, Govanhill Community Integration Services, Glasgow Community and Safety Services and members of the local community, including young people from Roma, Asian and White backgrounds drawn from the *Govanhill Youth Project*. The first wave of research (between September 2008 and December 2009) was part of my PhD ethnography. A total of 60 interviews (including Focus Group Discussions) were carried out in this phase with a range of individuals including young people, youth workers, police personnel of different ranks, community safety Officers and key figures in local regeneration and housing associations. This phase, funded by *The Scottish Institute for Policing Research*, culminated in the publication of *'This is my hood right?'*, a monograph, which would be the basis of the second sweep in 2014. The responses to the monograph led me to seek and re-interview the same respondents 5 years later in the summer of 2014. In the second phase I aimed to compare and contrast the changing depictions of Govanhill's Roma by the local media with the 'reality on the ground'. I wanted to see what had changed in terms of the integration of the Roma community into Govanhill: Was the community now presented in so-called 'community working groups'?

Did Govanhill see a replication of ‘self-policing ghettos’, which the media had warned about? And, more importantly, what could this microcosm teach us about race relations in Scotland?

As such, the main objective of the research was to engage individuals within their ‘micro-publics’ (Amin 2002: 12; Millings, 2013) – those social spaces that shape experiences, attitudes, behaviours and individual biographies – to ensure the research was fully embedded within the socioeconomic contexts within which the Roma community had settled into. As a consequence, all the opinions included in the article are those from people who have lived or worked in Govanhill for an extended period of time. They were contacted through the researcher spending time in local clubs, mentoring projects, detached work schemes and on the streets of the estates in which they lived. The longitudinal approach taken allows us to set the media and individual commentary against the context of thoughts/experiences expressed previously.

Govanhill, the place where immigrants come

Govanhill has always been a popular settlement for people coming to Glasgow specifically, and Scotland, generally. Migration history in Govanhill goes back to early waves of settlers from the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland; Ireland, Jewish people fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe, people from the Punjab and other parts of the Indian sub-continent and, more recently, A8 immigrants (mostly from Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Romania). (*Glasgow Housing Association*, 2007; *Glasgow Centre for Population Health* (2008). This diversity is reflected in the local shops, the languages spoken in the street and in the people found locally. A recent social survey by Blake-Stevenson Research in 2007 found that 53 languages were spoken in only 13 of the area's housing blocks. The area has long been Scotland's most culturally diverse neighborhood: Of the approximately 15,000 people living in the neighborhood, approximately 40% are from ethnic minority communities. Generally, due to housing density, increases in population through migration, overcrowding and high levels of occupancy, the south west of Govanhill is one of the most densely populated areas in Scotland. Inevitably, this places a strain on local infrastructure and adds to community tensions and environmental problems. (The highest levels of multiple deprivations exist within North Govanhill, particularly in the predominantly social housing area to the east of Cathcart Road.) Govanhill has long been recognized as one of Scotland's deprived communities and this continues to be borne out in *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivations* (SIMD), a compilation of government statistics on key indicators of public wellbeing. As of December 2014 the SIMD indicates, for example, that:

- 4 of the 12 data zones making up Govanhill are within the bottom 15% of data zones in Scotland. One of these data zones occupies the bottom 5% of data zones in Scotland.
- 3,796 (25.6%) of the adult population is described as 'income deprived', whilst 2,300 (22.5%) of those of employment age are 'employment deprived'.
- 38.2% of adults do not have any qualifications.
- Life expectancy is four years lower than Scotland's average.
- Instances of violent crime are 159% above the Scottish average with domestic abuse incidents and drug offences 45% and 73% above.

Against this background, a significant number of Roma who relocated to Scotland from the A8 countries settled in Govanhill. It is estimated that more than 3000 Roma moved into the area between 2004 and 2007. (See for example, *Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities* (COSLA) 2008; *Glasgow Community Planning Partnerships*, 2007) However, data from the *Workers' Registration Scheme* (WRS) (2009) indicate that only less than 1000 Roma entered Scotland, and that the majority of A8 migrants were ethnic majority Slovaks, Poles and Czechs. (See also, Blake Stevenson Research 2007) As the figure below shows, the composition of Slovaks is less than 800, out of which the Roma were probably less than half. This would mean that, even if the Roma accounted for the total figure of 800 people, this would not be sufficient to double the population of Govanhill.

Poole and Adamson (2008) attribute this statistical discrepancy to the fact that the majority of the Roma immigrants under A8 could not meet the stringent criteria of the WRS, and may therefore not have registered with the scheme. This could have happened because of lack of appropriate documentation to prove one's residence and employment history, for example. Inconsistent statistics may also relate to what has been referred to 'Roma transience'; that is, the frequent change of residence and employment by members of the community. (Adamova et al. 2007; Poole – Adamson 2008; Barany 2000) (It may also be because of a combination of the two factors: Strict WRS criteria (such as evidence of residence history) together with the largely seasonal nature of the jobs available to immigrants generally, and not just the Roma.) This explanation has also been favored in recent accounts of Roma isolation (for example in development reports by *Glasgow Community Planning Partnership* (GCPP), 2007; 2009 and *Glasgow Housing Association* (2007)) except with the twist that, owing to their illiteracy, the Roma may have missed out on documenting their presence in Govanhill.

Table 1: **Numbers of A8 migrants into Scotland** (Reid-Howe Associates, 2007)

Czech Republic	405
Estonia	21
Hungary	120
Latvia	185
Lithuania	120
Poland	5285
Slovakia	785
Slovenia	9
Total	6925

‘They are not putting down their culture’: Roma, Govanhill and ‘Govanhell’

Either way, what has been unique about the presence of A8 Roma – at least in the early phase, between 2004 and 2007 – is the construction of their presence in Govanhill as detrimental to ongoing community integration initiatives. This construction took two dimensions, which we shall briefly explore below. On the one hand, there was concern that existing frameworks of gauging Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) needs (through their community representatives) were insufficient against Roma’s ‘self-isolating’ history. The argument here was that, unlike early waves of Irish or Asian immigration, the Roma did not have shared communal institutions – for example the Catholic Church or the mosque, for the Irish and Asian communities respectively. This would prove correct to a point on account of the Roma of Govanhill being very much stranger to each other (as Poole and Adamson’s 2008 ethnography argued) and on the basis of historical subjugation of Romani communal institutions – as Castle-Kanerova (2002) claims. Either way, the impact of this concern was to accentuate Romani uniqueness – as special victims or as a hard-to-reach – minority, as Poole and Adamson (2008) also depict them. The first dimension usefully highlighted the vulnerability of the Roma to employment and housing exploitation with research accounts (for example, Blanchflower et al 2008) distinguishing the economic plight of the Roma from other groups of A8 migrants, such as Poles and Ethnic majority Slovaks.

Unlike the first, the second dimension was that of confusion: A homologized mythology of Roma history, centering on ‘their near-extinction’ in Eastern Europe (Castle-Kanerova, 2002; Roma Rights Centre 2004), became the engine of how the community was viewed. By that token, accounts seeking to elucidate Roma plight in Scotland had the opposite impact of depicting the community as apathetic to integration because of layers of ‘suspicion’

engendered by historical marginalization. (See, for example, Poole 2010; Poole and Adamson, 2008)

The 'suspicious' community thus became the 'suspect' community: Keen to highlight both the destitution and vulnerability of the Roma to local crime, Govanhill was reconstituted as 'Govanhell', a haven of crime and anti-social behavior in which so-called 'race wars' were frequently staged. A snapshot of local media articles, depicted in the introduction above, reveals this trope of Govanhill's contamination apropos of A8 Roma: Govanhill's transition into Govanhell is depicted by the imagery of 'drugs', prostitution and 'gang wars' – including 'dealing in the streets from mid-morning to midnight' (*The Herald*, 2007). This is linked to environmental degeneration involving littering in the streets and in tenement flat closes, drunkenness, and anti-social behavior, especially by truant Roma children. (*The Evening Times*, 2008; 2011) A sample of post-A8 articles elucidates this shift from Roma vulnerability to the idea of 'Govanhell': On 4th August 2008, *The Evening Times* 'revealed' to its readers that;

The latest wave of immigrants to arrive in Govanhill is Roma people seeking a new life in Scotland... In the past four years the population of the two-square mile area has swelled from 10,000 to 14,000. Estimates say there are between 3,000 and 4,000 new Roma arrivals living in just three or four streets in the heart of the community. This has put pressure on housing and infrastructure and led to tensions in the area. Locals blame the new residents for fly tipping, a rise in crime and anti-social behavior... In one Victoria Road property there are believed to be more than 20 Roma crammed into a two-bedroom flat.

In 'Govanhill declared Scotland's murder capital' *The Daily Record* also points out that;

A tiny neighborhood on the south side of Glasgow where 8500 people live in less than a square mile – have been stunned by a wave of violence and 11 murders in just six years. The murder rate of one per 4644 people is five times higher than Glasgow's, of one per 23,255, and more than 12 times Scotland's rate...Govanhill does have problems that other areas in Glasgow don't suffer from... including poverty being imported to the area by new migrants. (*The Daily Record*, 24th August 2008)

In the standard depictions of 'Govanhell', Roma presence was constructed as a major strain on local education, health and policing resources, projecting a fear that Govanhill was degenerating into a 'self-policing ghetto' – the kind 'common in 'Slovakia'. (*The Daily Record*, 2008; 2011; *Evening Times*, 2008) Here, *The Evening Times* informed its readers for example that;

Slum housing in Govanhill has led to the area becoming a "breeding ground" for crime, exploitation, poor health and education and cockroaches... It

is this problem which creates the severe dangers to public health, fire risks, anti-social behavior and race relations conflicts. (7th October 2008)

‘How do you say ‘stop that!’ in Slovakian?’

Stereotypes of the settlement of A8 Roma in Govanhill were not exclusive to the media, however. Local policy-making was largely informed by a homologized account of historical Roma marginalization and ‘uniqueness’.² From this perspective, Govanhill’s community regeneration initiatives – driven by the *Registered Social Landlords* (RSL) and the private sector – emphasized building of links between so-called ‘mainstream cultures’ and Roma ‘self-exclusion’³. Development reports in this period (for example, *Glasgow Housing Association, 2007; Glasgow Community Planning Partnership, 2007; 2009; Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2008*) claim that the approaches that have worked for other waves of immigrants are not likely to produce tangible results against unique Roma anti-social behavior.

This perspective underlies the opinions of local policy makers, for example a Community Safety Warden who pointed out to me that the underlying problem was Roma uniqueness to ‘put their culture down’, for example by learning English:

We used to have members of the resident’s groups saying ‘I don’t know any Slovakian people; could someone give me a few phrases to say ‘hello’, or, ‘how are you this morning’; they wanted to know these phrases so they could communicate, you know. And then it was, after a few weeks, they started asking, ‘and how do you say ‘stop doing that’’, in Slovakian?’ So this showed that there was no reciprocal effort from the other end and the effort died a natural death. (Community Safety Warden October 2008)

A local police officer expressed a similar opinion:

The problems of integration in Govanhill can be collapsed into one sentence: the presence in the area, on the one hand, of a group of people who are coming from a situation where they are almost living in ghettos (with no sanitation, no running water) which are self-policing, and on the other hand, a policing partnership which finds itself under immense pressure to deliver on arrests, cautions or police presence on every street. (Community Police Officer December 2008)

² From the point of view of ‘Roma uniqueness’, local development policy has been emphatic on so-called building of links between ‘mainstream cultures’ and Roma anti-social behavior (*Glasgow Housing Association, 2007; Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2008*): As an example, following allegations of local services being overwhelmed by unique Roma behavior, local police and community safety services dispatched a ‘fact-finding’ team to Slovakia to ‘study’ Roma lifestyles.

³ See for example, *Glasgow Housing Association, 2007; 2009; Glasgow Community Planning Partnership, 2009; Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2008*.

The first thing we note in the above is not only the attribution of local unease on the Roma behavior but also the assumed dichotomy between the (homologous) Roma and the 'local community' – or 'The people' – who were variously depicted in the interviews as 'frustrated' by the unique patterns of post-A8 anti-social behavior. Sometimes this frustration was also linked to Romani 'reluctance to engage': The climax was perhaps the claim by young people (mostly from the Asian and white ethnic group) that the police were 'following them everywhere' to make sure that they didn't antagonize Roma young people, who were viewed as enjoying preferential treatment by the police even where 'they were clearly doing bad things'. Here, while the police were alleged to have 'no time' for the 'indigenous' groups, they were alleged to 'look out' for the Slovaks for a chat during the patrols.⁴

The following excerpts sufficiently illustrate the opposing dichotomies of Roma and 'local people'. They show very little variance in the opinions expressed by respondents in the early phase of my research with those in the second phase. The first is the view of a manager of a local housing association:

Everybody is going around thinking if these people are, for example, living ten or twenty of them in one tenement building and say they are working in a potato factory and you are trying to sleep only to be woken up by the twenty or thirty of them running down the stairways at 4 am to go to the farms etc.... For them to go out and play music they will need to go to a corner, but back in Slovakia they do it in teams or large groups (Local Housing Association management). (July, 2009)

In the second opinion a Community Safety Manager shares the predicament of living in Govanhill:

Now imagine that there are people who are waking up to go to work in the morning or have children going to school in the morning that is awful because it is the kind of noise that is intolerable; this is the unique feature of this group because there is no other group of immigrant that has had such a divergence with the local culture. I mean, if you have to get up three times before 7 AM how can you live with that? (Community safety Manager, July 2009)

The third opinion is that of the same community safety manager in which the symbolic contradictions of the worldview of the homologous Roma and the 'indigenous' community are emphasized 5 years later:

And they are not taking off their culture; they are not adapting to the local culture and they do not appear to be thinking along those lines... no one appears to think the police are important to life here... it is like everyone for themselves. (Community Safety Manager August 2014)

⁴ Does this not recall similar findings in Hopkins' (2007) research on young people in Glasgow which uncovered insider-outsider positionalities entrenched by police practice where the police were, in Hopkins' case, obsessed with young Asian men's uniqueness that they missed the presence of the real criminals who supplied drugs and so on!

Similarly:

‘People don't realize how difficult and unique our situation is: liberals have been talking about how people will bring benefits here but when it comes to the Roma, things are hopeless really...they won't change...people have to change to live at their level or just ran out of the place. It is chaos here...but I suppose that is normal for them. (Local Housing Association Manager August 2014)

What is perhaps remarkable are the contradictions of perspective between the managers of local Housing and Community Safety organizations and young people from white and Asian communities, on the one hand, and the opinions of Slovakian young people and local youth workers on the other. A manager of a local youth center told me in 2008 that:

Problems here, to use the phrase we hear a lot are engineered by people who don't even live here-they just come to Govanhill to work...surprise that local journalists fall for that stuff... there is a campaign to make everyone live according to a middle class fantasy, you know, you go to work, have two children and so on...Slovakians will maybe need to do that to make everyone happy. (Manager, Youth Group, August 2008).

In 2014 I was not able to re-interview the same person, as he had moved on, but there is a notable similarity of opinion with her successor:

I thought you would ask me about another group of problems which appear to come a lot...maybe there is Ebola in Govanhill?... Anyway, we are still here, and no one has asked us how we can buy new wheelly bins or collect litter more frequently... just ‘are the new problem people coping’? (Manager Youth August Project 2014)

In the first sweep of research, Slovakian Young people noted that ‘everybody is good...police say, ‘go and be few’’ or ‘show me pockets’’ by people good. We play, jimmy⁵ says hi matteo and passes... No problem’.

I noted in my monograph how this confirmed their integration in Govanhill; for example that most of the young people interviewed were members of more than 1 local youth group and attended schools regularly. This was a stark contrast to interviews with Asian and White young people who reported school exclusions and involvement in anti-social behavior. Thus, whereas these young people saw police attitude to Slovakian young people as preferential treatment, the police considered the same a mere element of fear by some of the individuals of being picked on for their criminal records. One officer observed, that

There is none we can do about that to be honest...we don't give them these records... and it doesn't matter to us, really... (The Community Police Officer December, 2008)

⁵ Local police officer, not his real name.

When I did interviews in 2014 with respondents from the different groups of the 2008 sweep, I noticed how, although a number of the young people had struggled to find jobs or had been sanctioned for crime (with two of the original Focus Group Discussion members going to jail), none of these were from the Slovakian Roma community. On the contrary, the Slovakian group (from the Govanhill Youth Project) had gone on to record a music album and had featured in annual events to celebrate refugees and immigrants. They also become prominent members of local regeneration. Matheas⁶ pointed out that

Govanhill is a good place...no more car wash for me...I make better money and I am now starting my own gym, you know, to teach young ones about boxing... Miro is also working and creating work for people so they should be happy not yap yap yap all the time'. (Slovakian Youth Leader August 2014)

What, then, may account for this discrepancy between how both Govanhill and the relationship of the people are viewed by different groups, and by the media? What, for example, is the basis of the notion of Roma uniqueness? (Does it have a basis?) We cannot answer all the questions related to the plight of Govanhill especially those involving the constructions of group identity. What we can do is, by showing how the notion of Roma uniqueness is intractable we can perhaps diagnose a key feature and driver of community isolation in Govanhill, and the lessons to be drawn from that apropos of Scotland's race and ethnic diversity. Let us briefly review the trope of Roma uniqueness and how it has been appropriated in justifications of Roma marginalization.

A brief context of Roma 'self-isolation' and discrimination

A stereotype of the 'self-excluding' Roma has dominated recent accounts of the community. Typically, this stereotype has served two opposed purposes: On the one hand, research accounts have sought to show how, as a result of historical marginalization (some – for example, Barany 2000; Erjavec 2001 – even claim near-extirpation in Central and Eastern Europe), the Roma have learned to be 'inward-looking' and self-reliant, viewing with suspicion all forms of authority. This trope has been the most dominant in Scottish research on A8 Roma, especially ethnography by Poole and Adamson (2008) on the Roma of Govanhill. Such ethnographies read the immigration of the Roma under the A8 as a 'forced exit', an escape from their marginalization and forced assimilation in CEE. This is how Erjavec, for example, reads historical Roma marginalization:

As the Roma are not recognized as an ethnic minority group with special minority rights in Slovenia, they are not entitled to formal education in their

⁶ Not his real name.

mother-tongue. Because Romani children do not speak the Slovenian language when they enter primary school they are often placed in ‘special’ schools for children with mental and physical disabilities. As there is no formal education adapted for Romani children, which would encourage them both to learn their mother tongue and the Slovenian language, the majority of Romani children (there are very few exceptions) never finish primary education and learn the Slovenian language. The Roma therefore remain completely marginalized second-class citizens of Slovenia, because the state refuses to acknowledge their needs. (Erjavec 2001: 700)

Erjavec’s perspective is a nutshell of the Roma historical marginalization argument, which can be summarized as:

- Relegation into self-policing ‘ghettos’ with inadequate social amenities in Slovakia (Poole 2010; Barany 2000; Erjavec 2001);
- Forced assimilation – culminating in the near extermination of the Roma culture and population in the former Czechoslovakia (Poole 2010);
- Sterilization of Roma women and/or transfer of custody of their children into the care of non-Roma families or ‘special schools’, with such children sometimes being labeled as ‘mentally retarded’ in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania (Poole 2010; Barany 2000; Puckett, 2001);
- Discriminatory criteria for welfare access based on data collected by the state without Roma knowledge or consent in most CEE countries (Poole 2010);
- Enforcement of social gulags for the Roma through urban planning in which the Roma were prevented from leaving their ‘zones’ (of under-privilege) through the use of ‘location-specific residence permits’ in Slovenia and the former Czechoslovakia. (Poole 2010)⁷

To be fair these points are contested by other research which shows that the detrimental impact of socialist state policies were not limited to the Roma alone, but were felt across the spectrum of all who fell afoul of socialist regimes. As the *European Roma Rights Centre* (2007) also points out, it was not uncommon for CEE authorities (especially the former Czechoslovakia) to seek families and individuals without local residency permits and evict them from the more desirable areas in the urban places, or to refuse residency permits to those applying to remain in their secure accommodation. Nonetheless, when the imagery of socialist clampdown is evoked apropos of Roma marginalization it provides a potent barrier against attempts to explore other factors on the poor integration of the Roma.

⁷ As an example, in 2007 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that it was illegal to systematically segregate Roma children into ‘special schools’.

Attempts at alternative explanation – and useful to our analysis of Scotland's Roma – have centered on the role of institutional alienation in generation of 'weapons of the weak' (such as maximizations of welfare claims or petty thefts) and in the process solidifying the self-fulfilling prophesy of the Roma vagabond. As Castle-Kanerova (2002) also points out, where documentation needed to collect benefits are withheld by landlords the Roma are typically exposed to 'escape' crimes such as prostitution and pickpocketing. Viewed from this perspective, the concern should not just be unique Roma criminality, but also the excluding framework, such as socialist CEE policies, or the in the case of Scotland, the framework of benefits access for A8 immigrants. Still, this would not answer the all-important question of whether, and to what extent, the Roma experience this exclusion differently from other groups of immigrants (or other ethnic minority groups in their CEE domiciliary). Although we cannot resolve this conundrum here, we can take it as a starting point for an analysis of Scotland's framework (of inclusion or exclusion). That is to say, we should shed more light on the A8 framework itself, seeking to understand how it relates to other important layers of entitlement. What, for example, is the impact of the UK devolution apparatus on the construction of needs arising out of immigration – related changes in demographics? How might these needs differ across the UK's home nations? Are there other important factors, beyond devolution, which make Scotland stand out? Does the presence of a community with a troubled history – irrespective of the contested particulars of this history – challenge the institutional setting of the labor market access and welfare entitlement of migrants from the A8 countries (and devolution) in the same way as other groups of 'outsiders'? In other words, understanding the constitution of A8 and devolution 'insiders' and 'outsiders' is crucial to articulating and responding to the needs arising apropos immigration into Scotland. But this, in itself, is not enough: We must also understand how Scotland constitutes itself when it comes to immigrants, and the broad question of diversity.

The notion of Scotland as 'post-racial'

As de Lima (2005) points out, the debate on race and ethnicity in Scotland has not received the prominence it has in England and Wales, mostly on account of the absence of widely publicized racist incidences. This absence of incidences has ontologized widely uncritical depictions of Scotland as a post-racial, 'welcoming' country. As Lewis (2006) additionally points out, ontologies of post-racial Scotland not only occlude critical discourse on diversity and integration, but also mask deep-seated structural discrimination of minorities. (See also, de Lima 2005; Clarke – Campbell 2000; Lewis, 2006). Two widely-cited examples should suffice: First, although ethnic minority people of African

descent have overall high levels of educational attainment they are overrepresented in low-paid employment (de Lima 2005). Secondly, Asian and Black people are overrepresented in low-quality, semi-permanent accommodation as well as having high levels of stress-related mental health incidences (de Lima 2005; Lewis, 2006)

Apropos of Govanhill we may infer, from this general schema, that 'Govanhell' – which, remember, is constructed on the back of a homologous 'difficult Roma' – is not a new, or surprising thing, after all! Clarke and Campbell (2000) have catalogued Scotland's excluding (and exclusionary) mentality in their review of the idea of 'gypsy invasion' apropos Eastern European asylum seekers in 1997. In their reading, although Scotland has been cited as having had a comparatively warm initial reception to CEE immigrants, this quickly gave way to the narrative of 'foreigners, stealing our jobs'. Later research by Blake Stevenson Research (2007) and Lewis (2006)⁸ agrees with their reading.

Similarly, although post-devolution Scotland has been promoted as 'the place to live and work' by a number of high-profile campaigns and initiatives – for example the '*Fresh Talent scheme*'⁹ and '*One Scotland, Many Cultures*'¹⁰ campaigns – past surveys of public attitudes have confirmed that a persistent section of the Scottish population expresses negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities, asylum seekers and refugees. (See also, Bromley et al. 2007; Barr and Beattie, 2003; Lewis 2006) To take one example, Lewis (2006) shows us how the settlement of asylum seekers into Glasgow under the *National Asylum Support System* (NASS) was greeted by widespread phobias of immigrants, especially Africans who were roundly castigated as 'benefit thieves' or 'invaders'. Lewis aptly concludes that, although many in Scotland are supportive of the principle of asylum – and feel that people fleeing persecution should be offered sanctuary – there is a pervading national mentality of 'good' and 'bad' guests; those deserving or undeserving of the Scottish welcome. Everything depends on how those entering Scotland are constructed along this

⁸ To be fair, Scotland has fared better than the rest of the UK when it comes to attitudes to immigrants. Lewis (2006) has attributed this 'warm welcome' to four distinctively Scottish factors apropos of foreigners: First, the language coming out of the Scottish Government has been more positive than that from Westminster, particularly in relation to economic migrants. Secondly, the Scottish media painted a relatively positive picture of asylum seekers, in comparison to continuing media hostility in much of the UK-wide press; Thirdly, Scotland's experience of migration is quite different to that of many places in England. Scotland has a strong sense of national identity and pride – including among its ethnic minority population – with little fear that Scottish culture will be damaged.

⁹ The fresh talent scheme was an initiative by the Scottish Government to encourage people to settle in Scotland, as a way of countering the 'biggest challenge facing Scotland' – its falling population. The key part of the initiative was to allow overseas graduates from Scottish university who expressed the intention of living and working in Scotland, to stay on for two years following graduation to seek employment.

¹⁰ One Scotland, Many cultures was a campaign aimed at educating young people about racism and to highlight the unacceptability of racist language and behavior. It aimed to encourage people – especially young people – to celebrate Scotland's diversity and encourage them to speak out against bigoted and discriminatory behavior.

typology. The accounts cited above should clarify without doubt how the Roma, and A8 immigrants generally, were constructed as ‘others’ and how, once this ‘othering’ process had taken its toll, ground was set for their permanent exclusion from the possibility of inclusion, even where empirical evidence (including opinions by my research respondents) shows that they have integrated well into the local lifestyle.

One of the engines of this othering process is Scotland’s devolution apparatus. Following the passage of the Scotland Act 1998, and the creation of a Scottish parliament, the new *Scottish Executive* (now Government) was granted policy autonomy in a number of key sectors including health, primary education, housing and policing. However, as de Lima (2005) has also highlighted, because the UK government (at Westminster) retained over-all control of immigration, welfare access and taxation, the policy conflict and confusion which ensued impacted on Scotland’s capacity to pursue an outright integration agenda based on a widely promoted notion of a ‘Welcoming country’. As an example, where local authorities in England and Wales would not grant access to social housing to immigrants, many local authorities in Scotland provided an important (housing) safety net for thousands of immigrants who arrived in the country prior to the 2004 EU expansion, including hundreds of families relocated from crowded parts of England under the *National Asylum Support Services* (NASS). (Under the NASS relocation scheme, Glasgow City Council alone became home to more than thousand asylum seekers, between 2003 and 2005, for example.)

To be fair, Scotland has also trialed, with varying degrees of success, other schemes to attract the relocation of immigrants from the rest of the UK, including the popular ‘Fresh Talent’ *Scotland is the Place* scheme which gave graduates of Scotland’s universities visa extensions for a period of two years so they could work and thereafter transition to other UK visa schemes. But, the eventual collapse of such schemes has also displayed and perpetuated the conflict between Scottish Government policy and the UK’s. As an example, the UK’s *Home Office* and *Department for Work and Pensions* (DWP)¹¹ directives on entitlements for immigrants do not necessarily enhance Scotland’s priorities on immigration and diversity. In the case of A8, while immigrants may be granted access to employment under by the Home Office, they immediately find that they are ineligible for income and employment support under the rule set by the Worker’s Registration Scheme (WRS), a branch of the *Department for Works and Pensions* (DWP). This was the scenario in which A8 immigrants found themselves, when they arrived in Scotland from 2004: As EU citizens

¹¹ The former implement legislation underpinning immigration policy (including transitional arrangements applied to A8 migrants), the latter are responsible – under *section 5* of the *Scotland Act 1998* – for services which are critical to the integration of A8 migrants – including health care, education, children’s services, housing and policing.

they had a wide range of entitlements to employment, but as immigrants they had fulfill a strict *Habitual residence test*¹² in order to qualify for welfare assistance – for example, *Income Support*, *Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance*, *Pension Credit* or *Housing Benefit* – under the WRS directives. The implication was obvious: A8 immigrants who moved out of the common travel area (for any length of period) within the 52 weeks were classed as 'persons from abroad' and, alongside those defined as 'subject to immigration control', were excluded from benefit entitlement. As de Lima (2005) and Poole and Adamson (2008) have shown, this policy disproportionately impacted on the Roma community, on account of their frequent movement, for a variety of reasons, into and outside the UK.

Similar research by Blanchflower et al. (2008) has highlighted Roma exclusion as a result of the EU *Directive D 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council*, which specifically excluded unemployed A8 migrants from the support otherwise accessible to other groups of migrants – for example refugees and asylum seekers¹³. For the Roma, however, although the EU accession framework envisaged a voluntary flow of labor, it did not make adequate scope for their relocation for the reasons of their political and/or economic marginalization. Poole (2010) highlights this point, showing how the A8, as a purely economic framework, posited Roma self-determination in one dimension, while foreclosing it in other equally important ways: Although in principle they could return to their countries of origin, historical discrimination dis-incentivized their voluntary return, turning them into unrecognized economic asylum seekers – forsaken by the accession framework, but not enjoying other important supports available to the groups of asylum seekers.

Debunking the myths

It is to this point of contact between the Roma – as a forsaken A8 immigrant group – and Scotland's devolution weakness that we should look in order to understand the emergence of the notion of 'Govanhell'. That is to say, although it provides useful context, we should not lose ourselves in the standard narrative of the Roma as 'self-isolating' because, if we do that, we fall squarely into the 'victim-blaming' trap in which a shift occurs from how institutions and

¹² This test required A8 benefit claimants to be continuously resident in the common travel area – that is, the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands – for a minimum period of 52 weeks.

¹³ Actually, the *Immigration (European Economic Area) regulations 2006* actually envisaged this situation until a case challenging stringent conditionalities on residence (*Di Paolo v Office National de l'Emploi* (C76/76) ECR 315) made it easier for EU nationals to satisfy the habitual residence test. The success of this case ensured that a person who had their primary 'center of interest' in the UK could be counted as resident from the day of entry to the UK – even though they are forced by circumstances to leave the UK for such periods of time as break the WRS's habitual residence criteria of 52 weeks. Prior to this ruling the impact of WRS and Home Office directives on A8 immigrants were two-fold: First, immigrants who could not find employment migrated to other countries within the EU, or returned to their home countries, in order to sustain themselves. (Blake Stevenson Research 2007; Blanchflower et al. 2008)

policies are failing immigrants to how the people themselves are responsible for this isolation.

As it turns out, recent research on the Roma has to an extent fallen for the same trope of their uniqueness, exaggerating either their victimization or involvement in crime and antisocial behavior. This oversight is precisely what the construction of 'Govanhell' relies on: Deliberate exaggeration of the magnitude of local anti-social behavior in Govanhill, let alone disproportionate Roma involvement, goes hand in hand with institutional failure when it comes to community engagement. Linkage of Roma settlement with unique or higher antisocial behavior is debunked by statistics which confirm less offending in areas where there are more Roma such as Maryhill and Drumchapel. Similarly, as the statistics above showed, the idea of Govanhill as being swamped by Roma (for example The Daily Record, 2008; The Herald 2007) flies in the face of data from the WRS which shows that, as of 2007, only less than 1000 Roma had entered Scotland. If you consider that majority of these are ethnic majority Slovaks, Poles and Czechs (Blake Stevenson Research 2007; Poole and Adamson, 2008) the extent of this exaggeration becomes clear.

But, irrespective of the numbers of Roma in Govanhill, it would be a serious fallacy to attribute local criminality to one community in the absence of disaggregated statistics. It would be an even greater danger to use any statistics on crime to resuscitate the deleterious stereotype of the Roma as anti-authority, *ipso facto* inassimilable. Common sense should actually dictate otherwise: Even before the abolition of the WRS, not only was it in the interest of the Roma to register with the scheme – because it accumulated one's chances in terms of welfare support – but it was also impossible to access work and work-related rights. Not only were employers barred from employing unregistered migrants under the terms of the A8, but violations could also be heavily penalized. We should thus read the notion of 'Govanhell' as another desperate attempt to link Roma exclusion to their 'uniqueness'. This stereotype of the Roma was fundamental to their historical marginalization in CEE, as Poole (2010), Barany (2000) and Erjavec (2001) also claim.

Conclusion; the non-existence of 'Scotland'

The process of integrating immigrants is not easily quantifiable or easy to analyze. But what makes A8 immigration particularly challenging is that it occurred against a background of a yet-to-be- (adequately)-tested Scottish devolution. When the conditionalities of EU accession (in the form of Home Office directives) were pushed into the cracks of this arrangement, the ensuing gulf was misread as evidence of Romani antipathy to authority. For self-serving reasons, the challenges of post-A8 sudden changes in demographics were also appropriated to whip moral panics of Roma 'self-policing ghettos' by local

media. The problem is that development policy and academic discourse uncritically swallowed this line hook, line and sinker, homologizing Roma (and their needs) on the one hand, and the 'local community' on the other. The result was an obsession with Roma uniqueness even where there was no evidence of such a thing. Thus, rather than the post-A8 challenge becoming the basis for contextualized policy review of Scottish diversity, it fed into a long-standing phobia of the Roma and immigrants. On first approach, seemingly harmless responses such as investment in 'fact-finding' missions into Slovakia do not appear to be based on the notion of Roma uniqueness: But look again, and you will see the irony, for example, of a fact-finding mission to the home of an African (or Australian) tribe, is taken into Scotland. Wouldn't a more concerted effort to support and fund effective integration initiatives be a wiser choice? Our conclusion is that, once the idea of Roma as beyond assimilation was uncritically accepted, this occluded examinations of how the strain on local services may be alleviated. But, against this background, my research also uncovered evidence of good practice mostly by the local Glasgow Community and Safety Services and youth groups. These have targeted their resources on community events (from Refugee Week to Black History Month) that highlight the diversity of Scotland and the contribution of immigrants.

The 'elephant in the room' remains, nonetheless: I have highlighted above the main gaps in UK's apparatus for settlement of immigrants (encapsulated in the Home Office's 'no recourse to public funds' approach) and how this sits with Scotland's powers under the devolved units. As other research on A8 migration continues to reveal, this excluding framework has created and nurtured clusters of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' across Europe; that is, those whom states are politically obligated to recognize and those whose entitlement is periodically reviewed to limit their claim on the national economy. The coming heady days, as Britain prepares for a referendum on EU membership, will be characterized by long debates on the entitlements of EU immigrants. But, even at this stage, we can vouch that aside from this European 'challenge', immigrant integration into Scotland broadly, will not receive as much attention as it should: the fact of poor mainstreaming of race and equality (de Lima 2005; Lewis 2006) will continue to be underpinned by a far-fetched assumption of Scotland as a post-racial, welcoming country.

Scotland's ethnic diversity initiatives appeared to be aimed more at upholding this ideological stance, than in asking important questions apropos the squeeze on community resources, which would require targeted investment in housing, health and education. As such, when places like Govanhill exhibit the signs of demographic pressure, such places are thereafter constructed as exceptions to the rule, temporary episodes of viral (racist) contagion. The result is major occlusion of policy debate and practice aimed at developing crucial

social cushions. Our inevitable conclusion is that, for such debate – or any initiative based on it – to be effective, it would need to be based on acknowledgement of the important ways in which the UK's devolution apparatus, and the wider EU Accession conditionalities, are debilitating when it comes to reception and integration of immigrants. More than that, we must warn that the situation will not get better with the added twist of the EU referendum campaign which is underway.

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