



Network Discussion 2

Roma migrants in the UK and the number games

Edited by Judit Durst

Background information:

The discussion was initiated on Nov 1, 2013 by Yaron Matras's critique on the Salford University's research team's published report that estimated the number of Romani migrants from Central and Eastern Europe living in the UK at ca. 200,000. The main elements of prof. Matras's critique concerned the methodology and the "irresponsible" media dissemination of the reports finding. Numerous members of the Network had their contributions to the debate which not only resulted in the Salford research team's revealing response but also contributed to the long-established realization of the responsibility of researchers about the careful dissemination of their research findings and also to the general phenomenon that as soon as policy-oriented reports are not transparent in terms of their methodologies, the source of their statistics, they can easily be used for anti-Gypsyism by the media and the public. Many contributors have called about the need for unity among researchers in working towards greater inclusion of Roma and against widespread anti-Gypsyism in the UK.

Participants of the discussion:

1. Yaron Matras (University of Manchester)
2. Philip Brown (and his research team) (Salford University)
3. Andrea Krizsán (Central European University)
4. Fosztó László (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities)
5. Jose Luis Lalueza (Autonomous University of Barcelona)
6. Irén Kertész Wilkinson (Goldsmiths College London)
7. Ábel Bereményi (Autonomous University of Barcelona)
8. Ryan Powell (Sheffield Hallam University)
9. Ada I. Engebriksen (NOVA-Norwegian Social Research)
10. Margaret Greenfields (Buckinghamshire New University)
11. Jan Grill (University of Manchester)
12. Aidan McGarry (University of Brighton)
13. Colin Clark (Strathclyde University, later The University of the West of Scotland)
14. Martin Levinson (University of Exeter)



15. Helen O’Nions (Nottingham Trent University)
16. David Scheffel (Thompson Rivers University)
17. Thomas Acton (University of Greenwich, Bucks New University, Corvinus University)
18. Natasha Beranek (University College London)
19. Martin Kovats (independent researcher)
20. Jan Conka (Charles University in Prague)
21. Janie Codona (One Voice 4 Travellers)
22. Christian Brüggermann (Technical University of Dortmund, later Humboldt University)
23. Sharmin Havas (Brunel University)
24. Sam Beck (Cornell University)
25. Judith M Okely (Hull University / Oxford University)
26. Ciprian Necula (National School for Political and Administrative Studies)
27. Laura Cashman (Canterbury Christ Church University)
28. Marius Ciobanu (Roma Portraits)
29. Vincze Enikő (Babes-Bolyai University)
30. Daniele Viktor Leggio (University of Manchester)
31. Nando Sigona (University of Birmingham)
32. Michael Stewart (University College London)
33. Cerasela Voiculescu (University of Edinburgh)
34. Huub van Baar (University of Amsterdam)



Yaron Matras:

Date: 1 November 2013

Subject: Irresponsible research

A group of researchers at Salford University in the UK have published a report that estimates the number of Romani migrants from central and Eastern Europe living in the UK at ca. 200,000. A summary and a link to the full report can be found here:

<http://www.shusu.salford.ac.uk/cms/news/article/?id=51>

The team based their estimates on questionnaires that were received from individuals within 150 local authorities in the UK, where they were asked to estimate the number of Roma in their community, specify their country of origin, and point out where they have experienced difficulties. The team then used a population demographics formula to multiply the figures obtained. The mathematical exercise yielded a total of 197,705 Roma in the UK.

The team did not speak to any Roma, or their representatives, nor did they involve any Roma individuals in the research. Further, judging by the bibliography, the authors did not consult any of the research literature on the Roma, except for two titles, thereby limiting their sources to online policy reports.

The study was published just two months ahead of a change in UK legislation that will allow citizens of Romania and Bulgaria to seek full-time employment in the UK. Its sensationalist statements are fueling the voices that call to put a stop to immigration in general, and to that of Roma in particular. The echoes of this can be seen on this Channel 4 news report, to which the authors gave 'exclusive' access to their results:

<http://www.channel4.com/news/immigration-roma-migrants-bulgaria-romania-slovakia-uk>

It is unfortunate that research should contribute to scaremongering in this way. The report and its results are questionable both on methodological and ethical grounds: It is irresponsible to release figures based on a theoretical multiplication model which the authors admit (p 75 of the report) has not been verified in its applicability to the Roma community. The results are also unreliable since the sources have not been identified. The authors claim to have received information from local authorities, but at least in the case of Manchester, where I checked this morning, the City Council is unaware of any official response sent on its behalf, and I would suspect that the authors simply gathered data from a random selection of contacts. The authors claim to be able to make statements about the reasons that motivated Roma to migrate, but they did not make the effort to speak to a single Romani family, and all their statements are based on the impressions of local agencies, not the experiences of the migrants themselves.

Not only is the reliability of the findings questionable, they were further sensationalised by selling an 'exclusive' to a TV news channel -- the same channel that sensationalised Romani culture over the past two years in its series 'Big Fat Gypsy Weddings.'



The MigRom project -- an EU consortium involving researchers based in Paris, Verona, Cluj, Granada, and Manchester, in partnership with Manchester City Council and the European Roma and Traveller Forum -- is trying to set better standards for research into Roma migration by directly surveying the needs and aspirations of Roma migrants, by involving Roma in the research, and by contributing to capacity building within the Roma community:

<http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/>

We look forward to collaboration opportunities with interested colleagues.

Philip Brown, Lisa Scullion and Philip Martin

Date: 4 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

A response from the authors of 'Migrant Roma in the UK' to the statement by Yaron Matras:

"We welcome the opportunity to comment on the critique offered on the recent study. Many of the issues and questions raised are in fact detailed in full in the report and we would encourage colleagues to read this report where it is relevant to you. We provide a response to the issues raised but also provide some context that has a material bearing on the statement issued by Yaron. We apologise for the length of this response but we are extremely concerned that readers could be significantly misled by how this research and its release has been framed and described.

Before responding to specific points, we would like to briefly discuss why this research was carried out. The research was conceived and conceptualised – in partnership with a number of experienced local authorities and practitioners - in order to respond to what was considered by many as a massive knowledge gap as to the size of the migrant Roma population in the UK. This absence of data was being used by the UK Government to lessen their obligations towards Roma inclusion under their response to the European Commission's call to produce National Roma Integration Strategies – where the focus was mainly on UK Gypsy and Traveller populations. At this early stage, the government had not attempted an enumeration of the migrant Roma population or asked local authorities if there were issues to be accounted for. This position potentially severely reduced the chances for local areas to have recourse to EU structural funds to assist with Roma inclusion issues. Within the UK from 2014, these funds are to be administered via Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in the UK and their draft strategies were due to be submitted for review by the Government in October 2013. Prior to October 2013, alongside the production of the research, we have worked hard with partners to inform the Government department responsible, as well as LEPs, as to the issues emerging from our work and to influence the development of these strategies. At the same time that this research was undertaken, the University of Salford was approached to work with a number of partners – including Roma led NGOs – to form a UK National Roma Network. This network has acted as a steering group to this research throughout its production. This network has also allowed the research team to disseminate key findings to a variety of organisations – notably



Parliamentarians, UK Civil Servants and EU officials - in order to work towards, what is emerging as a more informed approach to Roma inclusion in the UK.

In response to particular points raised by Yaron:

1. The study surveyed all local authority districts/municipalities in the UK – a total of 406. A total of 151 responses were received once double counting was accounted for (in England there are two-tier governance arrangements in certain areas – there was occasional duplication of administrative boundaries as a result). A number of these authorities were able to estimate the migrant Roma population in their area. A number of others informed us that they were unable to estimate the population, as they were ‘not aware’.

2. The sample frame for the research (i.e. who in the local authority districts) was selected according to which department in the authority (e.g. equalities, cohesion, education etc.) would most likely possess information/knowledge of relevance to the aims of the study. Surveys were issued via letter and email to addresses obtained via the web or contact with the authority. Respondents were encouraged to discuss the completion of the questionnaire across different service areas to elicit what they considered the most accurate response. A copy of the survey was also issued to each Chief Executive of these authorities in order to inform them as to the presence of the study and to encourage them to pass the survey on to the officer they deemed most likely to be able to complete the survey. We did not merely consult the officers in authorities with whom we already have good relations. Instead we wanted a consistent approach with each authority in order to avoid response bias. Each authority was subject to extensive chasing via telephone and email to encourage as high a response rate as possible.

3. It is correct that we do not publish data attributable to particular local authorities with regards to the estimates they provide. This is an issue the research team discussed thoroughly, in partnership with our advisory group for the study. The conclusion we arrived at was that because there was a policy imperative to provide as comprehensive a population estimate as possible, we would require the response rate to be as high as possible. Therefore, we assured the anonymity of responses in order for authorities to feel comfortable that they could draw on a variety of sources (formal and informal) without fear of being singled out by local and national pressures with regard to the size of the migrant Roma population in their area. Unfortunately we cannot comment as to whether Manchester City Council responded to the survey in order to maintain these assurances of confidentiality. The covering letter for the survey, available in the Appendices for the report, clearly states, “The responses we receive to questions will be reported on a non-attributed basis and the anonymity of responding authorities will be maintained.”

4. The data we obtained from local authorities was grounded in an approach often used to compare local authorities in the UK. We consulted with several senior UK based academic specialists in the area of survey analysis and human geography from the Universities of Manchester, Salford and Bristol. Following this consultation we utilised a tool used by the UK Audit Commission to assist in grossing the data received via our sample to the UK context. It is incorrect to say this is a population demographic approach. Rather this is a geo-demographic approach which takes into account a



range of features within each local authority area in order to compare 'like for like'. i.e. Manchester is incomparable to Salford (due to issues around demographics, deprivation indicators, tenure mix, employment rates etc.) but is more similar to areas such as Birmingham and Leeds for example. It is correct that this has not yet been used to enumerate the Roma population – we state this clearly in the report - but in the absence of any other meaningful methodology to estimate the population (we include a review of other approaches used across the EU to date) we consider this the most robust approach at the current time. The academics consulted recognised the difficulty in enumerating a community which does not appear in many (or any) central or local governmental data sources which was one problem elucidated in the Home Office sponsored study on monitoring illegal migrants in the UK but it was recognised that there is no easy solution to this issues but our approach was a fruitful method at this time. We clearly outline this approach and its potential shortcomings in the report. We believe this approach has value but make no claims as to its definitiveness.

5. It is also correct that this study did not directly consult with the Roma as one of the stakeholder groups. This was never the remit of the study. This study was very clearly focussed on the data held by public authorities and their experiences. Our work documenting the everyday experiences of Roma in the UK is currently on going. However, Roma led NGOs are a part of the National Roma Network and had opportunity to comment on this study on a number of occasions.

6. The findings of this report have been in the UK and EU policy arena for around two months prior to October 2013. It is naïve to suggest that a report of this nature would not be picked up by the media at some point in the near future. In collaboration with partners we carefully considered the implications of either reacting to stories in the media or being proactive and helping guide the initial story. We were approached by Channel 4 to include the findings in a piece they were planning to produce about migrant Roma in the UK. We were assured by their commitment to helping demystify the issues concerned and, post-release, we were mostly content with their handling of the story. We did not “sell” the story to the media. We do not feel that this piece contributed to ‘scaremongering.’ A number of people predominant in the field – both individual Roma and workers – have responded supportively on the piece. To be clear, we make no defence of the programme Big Fat Gypsy Weddings as we too feel this is extremely unhelpful in the inclusion of Roma populations. However, it should be pointed out that to our knowledge Channel 4 news is quite separate (produced by ITN) to the production company behind BFGW.

There are several other points of context that are relevant to state in order to underline our commitment to work towards the inclusion of Roma and our long-standing and recognised work in the field of community engagement and capacity building:

1. SHUSU is an award-winning research unit in the field of community engagement. We have worked in the field of community development and, in particular, community research for nearly two decades. Staff within the Unit have published on community research with UK Gypsy and Traveller populations as well as other Black and minority ethnic communities. We have trained (and paid) at least 200 members of vulnerable and marginalised communities to be community researchers over this time – many of whom have used this experience to seek further sustainable



employment and have engaged in community level capacity building. We have written good practice guides on this process. Similarly, we currently benefit from the expertise and insight of two Romany Gypsies as paid staff members at the Unit who have worked with us for around five years. Staff members – particularly Brown, Scullion and Steele – have published widely about our experiences of community research and capacity building across minority ethnic communities and in particular UK Gypsy and Traveller groups and migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. Readers are encouraged to consult those references if appropriate.

2. We have recently commenced an innovative programme of mentoring at the Unit where we are working with three young migrants Roma in Manchester/Salford. These people will be part of the SHUSU team over the next 12 months and are part of the community of mentees that are being supported by partners in the Roma MATRIX project. As a result of the Roma MATRIX project there will be more than 40 mentees working within public authorities across the 10 Member States in which we are working – along with a large network of supported Roma community mediators.

3 The Roma MATRIX project is a large exciting project involving 20 partners in 10 Member States. Partners include municipalities, private sector organisations, NGOs (a number of which are Roma led) and two Universities (Salford and York, UK). This also involves nine exceptional academics from across the Member States who will be supporting our research efforts. We are working collaboratively on research, capacity building, supporting Roma women, understanding Roma children leaving the care system and supporting positive image media campaigns, amongst other things.

Finally, we enjoy the sense of togetherness and shared endeavour that academic and practitioner networks can provide. We are members of a number of networks where we feel stimulated, supported and challenged. However, we have a sense of significant sadness that this network is not – as yet – able to match this as it is threatened by a small, yet dominant number of voices who are attempting to delegitimise the rights of others to engage in the diverse field within which we work.”

Yaron Matras

Date: 4 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

“Thanks to Phil for providing prompt clarification. We are now able to establish that the data that reportedly underpins the research is not open to scrutiny, and that the results of the projection exercise are therefore not verifiable. This makes them non-transparent, or, in plain terms, ‘unscientific. ‘The only statement regarding numbers that the team is able or ready to make public is the hypothetical total of 200,000 Roma migrants in the UK. It is doubtful whether such a statement can help policymakers assess needs or plan resources without a breakdown by region, country of origin, age group, or other relevant factors.



The hypothetical total appears to be meaningful only as 'media sensation,' and that is the reason I used the term 'irresponsible.' Channel 4 News's presentation of the findings and the interview with Phil as an 'exclusive' suggests that the team was seeking publicity rather than clarity. It is telling that Channel 4 News invited only one politician to join the panel to discuss the team's results -- a representative of the extremist anti-immigration movement UKIP. I wouldn't know how to estimate how many voters UKIP gained on the day that the Salford study was published; perhaps there is a statistical tool that can perform the calculation.

But regardless of what Phil and his colleagues may think of the level of discussion on this network, Romani studies have been preoccupied for many years with issues of ethics and the responsibilities that come with feeding information into the public discussion. This is just one of those incidents where it would do no harm to take a moment and reflect at what has been achieved by this publication and at what possible cost."

Philip Brown

Date: 5 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

It is evident that we do not agree with your characterization of our research. We have had some extremely positive feedback by policy makers: Roma, grassroots workers and senior social policy academics, regarding our research and its potential for positive impact for Roma inclusion. However, we are always very happy to get feedback on the work with which we are involved."

Yaron Matras

Date: 5 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

I've obtained the following statement on the Salford study from a scholar with some 40 years of experience in population demographic work and the author of several leading textbooks on population studies. The statement has the status of an 'anonymous peer review' so that the focus can stay on the arguments rather than on the author. The comments pertain to the methodology, rather than the political value of the study or the timing and manner of its publication:

"In my own years in the academy and as a practicing social demographer I have come across more than a few crackpot or quaint schemes for estimation of poorly-documented sub-populations. For example, there have been attempts to estimate the Jewish populations (not so identified in the U.S. Census data) of American locales and communities by counting the excess numbers of pupils absent from school on Yom Kippur; or attempts to estimate numbers and proportions of "wanted" vs. "unwanted" children on the basis of family-planning and birth-control survey data. I did not find the



Appendix 5 account of "a methodology for making an UK Roma population estimate any more convincing. Some specific points are as follows:

1. Professional and competent census and survey organizations confronted with non-trivial levels of "Non-Response" would never use or report (or manipulate or "model") the partial-response data or findings without careful study and investigation of (initially, but subsequently tracked down and studied; employing whatever additional post-initial-field-work time and resources are required) Non-Respondents and their characteristics and responses in order to learn, understand, and correct for the biases entailed by the non-response at whatever the levels.

2. As I understand it, the "geodemographics" approach cited as the basis of the studies and profiling of local authorities in greater or lesser involvement with migrant Roma sub-populations is an approach used by commercial demographic consulting agencies and organizations for estimates of specific target categories: purchasers of automobiles or bathtubs or mobile telephone services in specific sales or service areas, and not generally pooled for construction of population estimates. Moreover, and probably more important: the questions asked in geodemographic inquiries and surveys are typically objective, factual, personal behavioural questions (Do you own something? Do you need something? When did you last buy something? Are you employed? What do you eat for breakfast?) answers to which are replicable and verifiable, and not subjective, evaluative opinion questions (as in pp.61-72 of the Salford Report).

The stated objectives of the Salford group's research initiative: to obtain hard data about the numbers of migrant Roma; and to identify particular service areas of need are surely important independently of the political use or misuse of such information; and the Salford group has clearly not succeeded either in obtaining the "hard data" envisaged or in identifying convincingly the respective service areas of need."

Andrea Krizsán

Date: 6 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

I, together with other colleagues find the style of this recent thread of communication repugnant, and Mr Matras' campaign against a research that is not within his academic discipline illegitimate and unfit to this list. I would like to ask for some moderation to the discussion. Would that be possible, Laszlo?

László Fosztó

Date: 6 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research



The settings of this list - as a moderated email group - makes it technically possible to moderate out messages. I only used that in order to redirect personal messages mistakenly sent to the list or to stop repeated submissions.

I was, and still am, reluctant to use this possibility to select and limit messages based on their professional content or style (unless they turn into insults or personal attacks).

On the other hand I understand the concerns expressed by you and some others that this exchange so far has appeared to be based on a personal disagreement regarding one particular piece of publication. But my feeling has been that the topics of this debate are and should be discussed in a broader context, and also with the participation of much more colleagues than present here on this list.

My suggestion is that we should broaden the discussion rather than restrict the exchanges.

So I would like to invite all of you who have training and experience in the methods employed or those who have ethical considerations on the issues related to research on vulnerable groups to express their position or open new directions of inquiry and contextualisation.

I am absolutely sure that the knowledge and experience represented by the 320+ members of this network can contribute to the advancement of understanding of the ethical and methodological problems related to Romani studies even if there will be, and need not to be, agreement on all the details.

There is no single authority in all issues but we can build a shared understanding of the ways we, and others conduct research and publish results. In order to achieve this we need continue to discuss matters openly.

Sam Beck

Date: 6 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

I for one agree with Laszlo! I wish I could respond to the methodological issues regarding demography. Not my field. It seems to me that a bit of fieldwork would be helpful in expanding our understanding of this migration, whatever its size, and its impact on localities, socio-culturally and political-economically, both from the point of view of Roma and the local population.

What is of concern is the media representation of this Roma influx into GB. It sounds a lot like the alarmist approach FOX NEWS uses in the US when reporting on undocumented migrants, usually racist and xenophobic. There does need to be a response as an effort by public intellectuals/academicians!



Luis Lalueza

Date: 6 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

I believe that discussion on ethical, methodological and epistemological issues is pertinent and necessary. Our responsibility in the impact of our research in society (specially with groups characterized by this difficult situation in the balance of the power relationships) must be an issue in the focus of critical academic work. The polemic started in this list is good material that is now being used in my class regarding ethical issues in research in the Master of Psychosocial Intervention in the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Concerning methodologies used in demographical studies, we have the example of Carme Garriga and her team, who use several years of interweaving Roma families to build an approximation to the Gitano population in the city of Barcelona. It was interesting work, based on ethnographical field work, with the active collaboration of the population studied, that shared the aims of the research and was informed about the results

(<http://www.edualter.org/bd/doc.php3?r=10&ids=457014>)

Participatory action research allows an explicit reflection regarding ethical issues, where the studied population has the possibility to express their opinions and thus have some control as to the aims of the research. An example of research understood as a collaborative task could be consulted here:

http://www.academia.edu/809577/Moving_communities_a_process_of_negotiation_with_a_Gypsy_minority_for_empowerment

Irén Kertész-Wilkinson

Date: 6 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

I find it really interesting that academics who are in Romani studies one way or the other in the UK have been totally ignored by the Salford team. Has Thomas Acton been contacted, Martin Kovats, Michael Stewart, Colin Clarks just to mention the most visible and knowable ones? Yaron is in Manchester University and knows a vast amount about Roma (he just has his new book out on the Roma) and I have been myself involved with Salford University for a while and happen to be from Eastern Europe. Why do academics ignore the knowledge of other academics just because it is not exactly in the same field as they are? What about the much talked about cross-disciplinary research?



Irén Kertész-Wilkinson

Date: 6 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

I think the Barcelona group showed an excellent example of how to carry out surveys. The one I know by A. Beremenyi and A Mirga also pointed out the shortcomings as well as the difficulties of these kinds of work, hence giving an honest and thus respectable work alongside existing valuable data.

I find it really interesting that academics working in Romani studies one way or the other in the UK, have been totally ignored by the Salford team. Has Thomas Acton been contacted, Martin Kovats, Michael Stewart or Colin Clarks just to mention the most visible and knowable ones? Yaron is in Manchester University and knows a vast about Roma (just has his new book out on the Roma) and I have been myself involved with Salford University for a while and happened to be from Eastern Europe. Why do academics ignore the knowledge of other academics just because it is not exactly in the same field as they are? What about the much talked about cross-disciplinary research?

Alongside the academics there are number of self-support groups of Polish/Slovak Roma. Have they been involved in this study? After all it does concern them?

Janie Codona

Date: 7 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

"Hi, Iren,

Does anyone know how/where I could get a copy of the below:

"The Barcelona group showed an excellent example on how to carry out surveys and the one I know is by A. Beremenyi and A Mirga."

Bálint Ábel Bereményi

Date: 7 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

Dear Janie,

You can find our Evaluation Report in English, Spanish and Catalan at the following link:

<http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/emigra/en/content/reports-and-non-periodical-publications>



Janie Codona

Date: 7 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

Does anyone have any research on Roma, Gypsy and Travellers, Community Development and transformation, conflict or research oriented? Also, does anyone know of any research undertaken regarding identity on Roma. Gypsy and Travellers preferred but on any community would be helpful.

Ryan Powell

Date: 7 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

Dear Andrea,

I would certainly agree with the sentiments in your post. Personalized, sustained attacks of this nature invariably generate more 'heat than light,' are often ego-driven (in my experience) and do little for the advancement of knowledge. In fact, they distract from the academic task in hand. Sounds like a classic problem of "involvement and detachment," to use an Eliasian concept.

Ada I. Engebrigtsen

Date: 7 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

Hi Janie,

There are several works on this; I take the opportunity to promote my own book: Exploring Gypsiness, Power, Exchange and interdependence in a Transylvanian village - from 2007 for instance?

Margaret Greenfields

Date: 10 November 2013

Subject: RE: Irresponsible research

Hi Janie, as discussed in my other email I'll send over some papers in a little bit (later this afternoon).

Meanwhile I'll also take the opportunity to flag up some texts I suspect you already know - the chapter on 'Gypsies, Travellers and Identity' in the 2006 Clark and Greenfield book 'Here to Stay:



The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain, UHP and Smith & Greenfields (2013) 'Housed Gypsies and Travellers: the decline of nomadism' Bristol: Policy Press, is overwhelmingly about identity and how it is retained/hybridized, identities and gender differences in the impact of making the transition into housing/loss of control over environment etc. In the chapters on youth and gender I drew particularly on focus groups with young women who at times challenged stereotypical expectations of their role/employment practices and so on (utilising in places findings from the Greenfields (2008) "A Good job for a Traveller?" report on employment and training expectations and preferences amongst young people. There are some interesting (to my mind) discussions on the inter-play between communities and partnerships with non-Gypsy/Travellers who become partially subsumed into the community whilst children frequently identify primarily with their Romani heritage.

In terms of community development practice and how this places out in expectations/work-placed identities I can send you a paper I gave at a conference which I have sent for consideration for publication so please treat with discretion - and there is the evaluation I carried out for the Traveller Movement on their women's community development course - downloadable from their website as well as the TEIP report (Ryder and Greenfields) which discusses impacts of community development practice.

There is also a chapter I produced in 2010 on identity and the trope of nomadism amongst Romany Gypsies/Irish Travellers and New Travellers - revisited in certain sections of the Smith & Greenfields text.

There are a number of good papers on identity formation amongst South Asian communities and also gay/lesbian identity formation, you can google-scholar or search for which might be helpful and I'll look out a few other references for you and send on shortly (once I've worked on GLS newsletter edit!).

Finally, don't forget to read Brian Belton's interesting although quite challenging take on identity formation/adherence to specific models written from the stance of a Romany/Traveller/Jewish/Irish Londoner.

Questioning Gypsy Identity: Ethnic Narratives in Britain and America (2005) AltaMira Press; Gypsy and Traveller Ethnicity: The social generation of an Ethnicity (2005) Routledge."

Yaron Matras

Date: 13 November 2013

Subject: Salford study continues to serve anti-Roma incitement

Last week this list discussed the Salford study, which claimed that there are 200,000 Roma migrants in the UK, but failed to disclose precise data or sources.



The study's impact on the media was seen in the Channel 4 TV news report from 30 Oct, which presented an "exclusive" interview with one of the authors, Phil Brown, who later commented on this list that the authors were "content with their [= Channel 4's] handling of the story."

Today, this article appears in Britain's most popular tabloid, the Daily Mail:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2504398/A-spectacular-mistake-immigration-Straw-finally-admits-Labour-messed-letting-million-East-Europeans.html>

In it, Labour leaders, in what is obviously a coordinated media publicity effort, comment on how the rise in Roma immigration is likely to lead to "riots". David Blunkett, the former Home Secretary responsible for immigration, is cited commenting on "tensions" with Roma in the Page Hall area of Sheffield, his constituency, which was filmed in the Channel 4 news report on 30 Oct. The Salford study is cited at the end of the article.

The Salford study was made available to David Blunkett a couple of weeks before it was released to the public, and formed the basis of a consultation in Blunkett's office in the week prior to its publication. I know this from direct correspondence with Blunkett's office in the past few days.

The study, and the publicity that it was given through the "exclusive" interview, is being directly used by Labour leaders for a worrying public campaign against Roma.

Nobody doubts that this was not the intention of the colleagues in Salford. But lessons must be learned by academics on how to deal in a responsible way with data collection, transparency of analysis, and publicity when it comes to research on Roma in general, and on Roma migrants in particular.

The MigRom project will initiate a seminar on the interplay of research and public engagement with Roma migrants, to be held early next year, in response to these events, and we will invite our colleagues from Salford and others to attend.

Martin Kovats

Date: 13 November 2013

Subject: CEE migrant Roma in UK

Dear Colleagues,

The publication of the Salford University report estimating the UK's CEE migrant Roma population at around 200K has unsurprisingly been swiftly followed by politicians whipping up an anti-Roma panic.

Fortunately, the UK government is not endorsing this estimate and has urged caution regarding its reliability - "Salford University figures should be treated with extreme caution, as they are estimates based on replies from only a third of local authorities and rely on anecdotal information."



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24909979>

(Apologies, can't do hyperlinks, you should paste link into browser.)

Jan Grill

Date: 13 November 2013

Subject: RE: Salford study continues to serve anti-Roma incitement

A similar story has been published by the Telegraph in which the 'number games' underline the alleged 'significance' of the 'problem' in the eyes and rhetoric of public officials in the UK.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/10442352/Roma-migrants-could-cause-riots-in-cities-warns-Blunkett.html>

Also, what is striking is the speed of circulation of these types of news to other countries. Below I'm attaching a story published on one of the most read Slovak newspapers SME, which basically takes the whole story from Telegraph. The title in Slovak newspapers is 'Britain tells/asks the Slovak Roma: You must change':

<http://romovia.sme.sk/c/7003477/britania-vyzvala-slovenskych-romov-musite-sa-zmenit.html>

In all these tabloid media stories, the estimates presented in Salford's report are used to legitimise the numbers behind the story. I understand why certain institutions feel the need for more reliable quantitative data concerning the numbers of migrants (for example, various organisations and institutions can then apply for funding in order to run various services and projects for the migrants; or 'about' the migrants). In this context, I can also see the intentions of the authors of the report. However, I think that this case also highlights the double-edged character of reports of this kind, which might have rather a negative effect on the plight of Roma migrants in the UK when taken up by tabloid media and various policy makers alike.

As Martin remarks in his previous email, the UK government issued a rather cautious statement: "Salford University figures should be treated with extreme caution, as they are estimates based on replies from only a third of local authorities and rely on anecdotal information." My suspicion is that this statement can be also related to the fact that if they were to recognise these 'numbers' claimed by the report, they might need to allow for more funding and spending to go to the 'Roma problem' (which would not go too well with the current efforts of 'cuts and cuts' in this sector). Regardless of the sensationalist embracement of the '200 000' number by various tabloid media; the UK government statements of 'caution' implicated in their political struggles and agendas; or even the issues and problematic findings stemming from the methodology employed by the authors of the report (such as collecting estimates from variously situated individuals/local authorities with very different and uneven levels of knowledge of Roma migrants in their localities), what remains quite clear is that these 'number games' and discourses will have performative effects leading to potentially negative impacts on the everyday lives of Roma migrants in the UK.



It is rather symptomatic that these reports (i.e. the one published by Salford and a similar one published recently as 'Mapping the Roma community in Scotland' based on a similar type of survey methodology), and ensuing debates and critiques, tell us more about the ways in which various local authorities, policy makers and researchers imagine and represent Roma migrants and their needs rather than on more complex understandings coming from the Roma migrants themselves and/or based on a dialogue with them. In these reports, we can read about how some local authorities see and think 'about Roma migrants,' what they see as their 'problems' and how they formulate their 'needs.' However, these representations of Roma do not necessarily reflect the various viewpoints, experiences and understandings of needs arising from everyday struggles of diversely situated Roma migrants from various Roma groups in the UK."

Aidan McGarry

Date: 13 November 2013

Subject: RE: CEE migrant Roma in UK

'OpenDemocracy' just published an opinion piece of mine regarding the recent cases in Greece and Ireland of state intervention and Roma kids, and the pervasive Romaphobia sweeping across Europe. For those who are interested, here is the link:

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/aidan-mcgarry/romaphobia-last-acceptable-form-of-racism>

Margaret Greenfields

Date: 13 November 2013

Subject: RE: CEE migrant Roma in UK

Well done Aidan for that article - extremely timely.

I came across this link which I found particularly concerning and which is closely linked to my current preoccupations - note the appalling spectre of 'fascist tourists' - individuals crossing borders to engage in racist attacks on Roma and other migrant communities.

"International networking results in violent German neo-Nazis committing crimes abroad...

"There have been incidents of German neo-Nazis traveling to the Czech Republic and taking part in attacks on Roma and Sinti people - or going to Greece to see how the Golden Dawn operates,"

<http://www.dw.de/neo-nazis-form-expanding-networks-beyond-national-borders/a-17104509>

I reiterate once again the need for us to engage as both individuals and activists/scholars with broader networks and anti-racist alliances to challenge the rise of the Far Right. I would also note



that given Blunkett was present at the recent APPG on Roma Affairs at which Czech Roma spoke about their experiences of escaping violence and coming to the UK for a safer life I'm absolutely appalled at his statements and wonder if he attended the event precisely to gather data for a pre-planned speech or if I'm maligning the man and in fact he has been deliberately misquoted in these articles?

Sharmin Hamvas

Date: 13 November 2013

Subject: CEE migrant Roma in UK

Dear Aidan, it is such a timely publication. The media has stopped mentioning these two cases since this news is not interesting anymore as the girls are from Romani origin. I was wondering if your opinion could be brought to the media in a similar way as these cases were brought: to make a point on the media's role on this issue.

Judith M Okely

Date: 14 November 2013

Subject: RE: Media coverage

I complained to the BBC Trust about the fact that EVEN when it was discovered that none of the children in Greece or Ireland were trafficked, they still had the presenter Evan Davies interviewing an 'expert' on child trafficking on Radio 4's Today programme with NO critique of the racist hysteria and stereotyping. The choice of interviewee, by implication, continued to suggest the topics were interlinked. I eventually got a very defensive reply but no in depth understanding.

Sharmin Hamvas

Date: 14 November 2013

Subject: RE: Media coverage

Dear Judith,

Media response is truly shameful. And you have put your opinion across which I hope would at least make them reflect on their future coverage on this issue. I am considering writing to them along the same lines.



Yaron Matras

Date: 14 November 2013

Subject: RE: Media coverage

I'm really glad that Judith Okely and other colleagues have expressed their concerns about the media hysteria against Roma that has been sweeping Britain in the past few days. It's our duty to respond.

Here's my contribution: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24944572>

Margaret Greenfields

Date: 15 November 2013

Subject: RE: Media coverage

Completely agree - and well done to Judith, Aidan, Yaron and others who have been so quick off the mark on this.

I wonder if it would be a good move to send a collective letter signed by academics and activists to the major newspapers.

Could/would one of the 'key' people (perhaps with as precise data as currently exists and good examples of mutual community solidarity at their fingertips) take a lead on drafting something to which we could add our signatures?

I'd be happy to have a stab at this (although not until after the weekend) but Roma affairs are not my precise area and unless we want a simplistic condemnation of the hysteria and calls for solidarity, the amount of redrafting which may be required/comments by those with more accurate knowledge probably means it would be easier if someone else puts something together?

Helen 'O Nions

Date: 15 November 2013

Subject: RE: Media coverage

I think Margaret's idea is excellent. I have written about similar problems in France and Italy over the last few years predominately from an EU law and policy perspective but i think this approach would benefit from input by someone with knowledge of the specific situation in Sheffield. I heard a Dave Brown interviewed on Radio 4 at 5.15 yesterday and he had personal knowledge of the issues and presented a much more balanced perspective than the usual inflammatory comments we are hearing. I'm not sure what organisation he represented though - is he on the network by any chance?



If he has no objection to being nominated, I'm sure Yaron would make an excellent job of constructing such a letter.

Margaret Greenfields

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: Media coverage

Thanks Helen and before I disappear off line for the next 12 hours or so - travelling and training social workers in fact who are bound to ask about Roma families as part of a diversity and neglect workshop - today's Express is a horror - baby selling Roma and teenage prostitution... in haste.

Ryan Powell

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: Media coverage

Helen,

Dave Brown is from Migration Yorkshire - the organization that commissioned the Salford research on estimating the size of the Roma population in the UK.

Philip Brown

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: Media coverage

Helen/Ryan,

Yes, Dave is an excellent communicator on these issues from a practitioner/policy perspective. Just for clarity, Migration Yorkshire were not the commissioners but the partners on the research. The JRCT funded the work. He's not on the list but I can certainly pass this onto him.

I'm in total agreement with the need for a letter from this list. I would be extremely happy to contribute.

Judith M Okely

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: Media coverage

Dear Phil,



Thanks for this. It is vital that, as the most recent emails confirm, we can show solidarity. I am happy to sign. I bought the horrible Express paper yesterday with headlines of a young Roma supposedly offering a baby to 'sell.' Also in the BBC 1 programme 'This Week,' last night a former conservative MP used the diversionary 'politically correct' argument of the Roma 'not integrating.' There is a good article in yesterday's Guardian by Jake Bowers who as always identifies his Romany identity.

PS. I recall the local media hysteria about Gypsy sites in the 1970s, especially when it was obligatory for local authorities to provide them.

Sam Beck

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: Media coverage

This is a good idea. It would be important for this effort to be led by a Roma or Romas. The rest of us can support them as allies in this struggle for dignity!

Laura Cashman

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: Media coverage

I also like Margaret's idea of a public letter and would be happy to sign.

Members of the mailing list may also be interested in the following response from Colin Clark and Migrant Voice:

<http://www.politics.co.uk/news/2013/11/13/scaremongering-blunkett-faces-backlash-after-anti-roma-comme>

Colin Clark

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: Media coverage

Thanks Laura. I did try and send this message earlier this morning but it didn't seem to get through! See below.

A couple of articles below:

The first provoked a response (within an hour of going live) from Blunkett's office, claims of his words/views being 'misrepresented' and 'taken out of context':



<http://www.politics.co.uk/news/2013/11/13/scaremongering-blunkett-faces-backlash-after-anti-roma-comm>

This next piece genuinely surprised me - the IPPR acting as apologists for Blunkett. Expected better from them but then they've always been close to New Labour and not very progressive on immigration issues”:

<http://labourlist.org/2013/11/blunketts-views-on-roma-integration-deserve-better-than-farage/>

Judith M Okely

Date: 15 November 2013

Subject: RE: Media coverage

Colin,

We see Blunkett so steeped in cliches of ignorance, he declares the Roma live in 'woodlands' - regurgitating the nursery rhyme warning children against Gypsies in woods.

Martin Levinson

Date: 15 November 2013

Subject: RE: Media coverage

Just to add that we need to recognize that the current preoccupation is being driven by the media. It is not really about the rather foolish comments of Blunkett.

I was phoned a couple of weeks ago by someone who introduced himself as a 'researcher.' He claimed to be interested in my work, and asked several questions before moving on to a discussion about Gypsy groups and the kidnapping of young children. Did I know of any such cases among the communities with which I work?

As you will recall, this was around the time of the incident concerning a stolen child in Greece, and then the reaction in Ireland - the fiasco of the DNA test on a Traveller child. This narrative strand seems to have gone rather quiet in recent weeks.

It turned out that my interested researcher was working for the Daily Mail, and this is the type of source where the interest is being generated. There are quotes like Blunkett's every day, and as we know, the reporting occurs when it is considered likely to have impact or sell their papers.

One other observation away from the media. I am a member of a migrant forum. I attended a police presentation a few weeks ago during which we were informed that the Roma planning to come over from Bulgaria to the UK next year were 'a bunch of criminals'. What was the evidence? I asked. It seems that a 'fact-finding group' had gone over to Bulgaria and been told this by 'other Gypsies'. To



my knowledge, the fact-finding team were all English-speakers only, and was made up of agencies 'dealing with Roma issues' rather than individuals working with Roma communities, or indeed, Roma themselves.

If such work is left to those on the outside, is it a wonder if the general public is presented with some combination of misapprehension and generalization?

Helen O' Nions

Date: 15 November 2013

Subject: RE: Media coverage

Hi Martin,

I agree with your views of the media, although I think you let Blunkett off rather too easily. He is very much aware of the way that these sorts of comments will be interpreted and repackaged by the tabloid media. If politicians do not take a decisive stand and refrain from Powellesque language, they are a significant part of the problem.

David Scheffel

Date: 15 November 2013

Subject: letter of protest?

Dear Colleagues,

I have been following this growing outrage over UK media treatment of CEE Roma migrants and the suggestions from several corners that the Network send a letter of protest against the circulation of allegedly racist stereotypes, ethnic profiling, and similar misdemeanours attributed to the media (and some politicians). I have only superficial knowledge of the situation of Roma migrants in the UK and their adaptation to local conditions (gained during a field trip a few years ago), and I cannot determine the degree of media distortion from personal experience. That's why I wonder how many of my colleagues, especially those living in the UK and conducting research there, have had more than superficial contact with Roma migrants from CEE, and where can I find publications that provide a thorough description (read: old-fashioned ethnography) of the communities formed by these migrants? In other words, if we wish to challenge media reports as (racist?) distortions of reality, where do we find 'thick' descriptions of the migrants' lifestyle to refute them?

While my experience with Roma in the UK is limited, I am well acquainted with the conditions in one of the source countries - Slovakia. And I can say with some degree of authority that among the scores of my east Slovak Romani acquaintances who had been to the UK, the vast majority had engaged there in some form of criminal activity, either intentionally or unintentionally as victims of machinations of local (Romani) 'bosses.' The criminal acts may be of relatively benign character,



such as welfare fraud (some people known to me live in Slovakia on UK welfare/child benefits), but there are also cases of bondage, drug trade, and prostitution. I have just returned from six months of field research in Slovakia, and one of my (sad) discoveries was the existence of a network of Romani criminals in the UK who lure under-age prostitutes from Slovakia to the UK. Of course, I am not saying that all Romani migrants from Slovakia - or other CEE countries - are criminals. What I am saying, however, is that among Slovak Roma, Britain has the reputation of an 'easy' country where 'the system' can be more easily manipulated than in the home country.

Such a perception can lead to behaviour that may be interpreted as annoying by members of the host society. And this will surely find its way into popular media coverage and political rhetoric. Instead of writing letters, perhaps we should invest time and energy in thorough empirical research.

Sam Beck

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

Professor Scheffel's comments are well intended. However, they are a typical academic response to an urgent problem since a broad brush is being used to color ALL Roma and not the few who engage in criminal activities. This reminds me of how African Americans are often identified as a whole, criminal, drug dependent, amoral, etc. It is important to carry out the research and reflect as much as possible the reality of the social conditions under which Roma live, but it is also important to eliminate racism from the public discourse, especially by sensationalist media.

Colin Clark

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

David, have you reported this alleged criminal activity to the authorities? Re: Trafficking and under-age prostitution?

Thomas Acton

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

I think I would need evidence before accepting that Sheffel's remarks are well intentioned. And I wouldn't accept for a moment that such an academic response is typical. Forty-five years ago, maybe? But whatever one may think of most of the usual contributors to this network, with their



sometimes passionate disagreements, I can't think of more than one or two who could have now been responsible for either Scheffel's book on Svinia, or his email below.

Thomas Acton

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

Having read Mr Scheffel's strange book on Svinia, it does not altogether surprise me that most of his Roma friends are criminals. They do probably tell him that no one loves a grass. But the spurious moral neutrality of conservative social anthropology in no way excuses, as Colin points out, his failure to report crimes of which he has knowledge.

Ian F Hancock

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

This is not in the least bit surprising, coming from Scheffel.

Natasha Beranek

Date: 15 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

Dear David,

The only in depth, extended ethnographic study I am aware of in the UK is by Jan Grill, but there are likely to be others (perhaps in progress?).

Yaron Matras

Date: 16 November 2013
Subject: Research on Roma migrants in the UK

A report from 2009 on research among Roma migrants in Manchester can be found here (click on Report on the Romani Community in Gorton South, Manchester):

<http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/report-policy-briefs.html>



Martin Kovats

Date: 16 November 2013

Subject: CEE migrant Roma in UK

Does anyone else find it interesting that while some of us academics have expressed doubts about the Salford Uni CEE migrant population estimate because of the unreliability of the information on which it is based - and consequently the risk this entails for inflaming and racialising an ongoing public debate about CEE immigration - Jake Bowers embraces the big number because it makes '[his] community' seem more important!

How can there be objectivity in this discourse (beyond the small scale)? Is it just a matter of perspective, interest and opinion? If it is not possible to establish some kind of consensus about what we are talking about, what hope is there that societies can successfully go through the difficult process of coming to terms with Roma identity and people?

Yaron Matras

Date: 16 November 2013

Subject: CEE migrant Roma in UK

Continuing Martin Kovats's point, we mustn't forget that the hysterical reactions of media and politicians in Britain in the past few days were triggered directly by the publication of the Salford study, which contained a figure that is not backed up by any verifiable data.

I strongly favour public intervention by academics, and as I said earlier on this list, I believe we have a duty to use our expertise to introduce another angle into this public debate. At the same time we must not neglect to engage in a critical reflection on what can happen when academics provide media and politicians with selective pieces of information that can so easily be used for scaremongering.

At this stage, it would be enormously helpful if the colleagues in Salford were to issue a public statement denouncing the misuse of their study by politicians and media, and clarifying that in fact, they have no hard evidence for the figure of 200,000 Roma migrants in the UK.

Thomas Acton

Date: 16 November 2013

Subject: CEE migrant Roma in UK

I am slightly worried by the implication that the residence of 200,000 Roma in the UK should legitimately worry anyone, and also by the implication in spinning of the Salford report as a new revelation. The Fremlova and Ureche estimates were very similar, albeit without the rather



spurious exactitude. The Salford report cites their work, curiously however, without adducing it as statistical report. I'm glad that the points that Yaron was able to make in the BBC report did not get into the numbers game.

David Scheffel

Date: 16 November 2013

Subject: RE: letter of protest?

Many thanks to Yaron Matras and Jan Grill for passing on publications about CEE Romani migrants in the UK. Interesting and useful as they may be, these are not in-depth studies of the social structure and cultural systems characteristic of entire communities. Such studies are time consuming and difficult - much more difficult than conducting interviews with a sample of 'respondents.' Some twenty years ago, the Slovak ethnologist Arne Mann edited a volume called "Unknown Roma". It seems quite appropriate to capture the situation in the UK where a handful of experts on Gypsies and Travellers use preconceived notions to make sense of the vast diversity of Romani migrants from Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, the Balkans, and beyond - without understanding their histories, languages, and cultures. Perhaps Mr Acton finds my book on Svinia 'strange' because it belongs to a genre that he is not acquainted with or simply not interested in: ethnographic community studies. It requires spending years in a muddy settlement, trying to piece together genealogies, status hierarchies, and reasons why 14 year old girls bear children and 10 year old boys do drugs in one settlement but not in another one five miles away (no, it's not all due to 'racism'). I agree, this is a distinctly old-fashioned type of social science, and that's why my 'strange' book remains the only ethnography of a Romani settlement in a country that has some 900 self-contained and segregated communities of Roma. I wouldn't dream of suggesting that the community I describe is representative of 'Slovak Roma'. Similarly, I don't believe that the snippets of publications devoted to Roma migrants in the UK present a comprehensive picture of who these people are

Jan Čonka

Date: 16 November 2013

Subject: RE: letter of protest?

They are the Slovak Roma, or who is it? Why travel to the UK? Immediate housing etc? To commit crimes!? Have adequate intervention by crime/Do they have adequate means to prevent such crimes? I cannot see why the Roma in Slovakia "flee" to the UK. To defend Roma does not make sense, there is a sense of awareness of legal migrants. There is a solution to migrants, yes - UNHCR organization."



Janie Codona

Date: 16 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

David,

Is this book in English, or do you or others that I could refer to? As a Gypsy woman I want to study this aspect with separate groups using my own knowledge and experience as a beginning and my research observations to inform my findings."

László Fosztó

Date: 16 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

Dear Janie,

This is the book under discussion: Svinia in Black & White: Slovak Roma and Their Neighbours by David Z. Scheffel

<http://www.utppublishing.com/Svinia-in-Black-and-White-Slovak-Roma-and-their-Neighbours.html>

Jan Grill

Date: 17 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

In response to David Scheffel's email and other contributions on the theme of research on Roma migrants in the UK:

While I agree with David's call for a more empirical research and I do agree that more ethnographic monographs are needed, I don't think that the current relative lack of in-depth studies in the field of Roma migration should prevent us from engaging and for intervening against the current resurgence of anti-gypsyism and moral paranoia spread by politicians and journalists. I believe that there are a good number of members of this network who are well positioned to react to the current wave of attacks against Roma and we should respond. The petition can be one way of engaging.

As for David's comments on my own work, I just wanted to respond with some clarifications. I have carried out a long-term ethnographic fieldwork both in Slovakia and among Slovak Roma migrants in the UK (2006-2008; with regular re-visits and shorter fieldwork trips since then). Like most social anthropologists, I have worked within a specific network of Roma migrants coming from a particular area of East Slovakia (they do not come from Spis area of Slovakia where David Scheffel



did his research). I have never claimed that these articles provide a comprehensive study of all Slovak Roma or all Slovak Roma migrants.

You can find some of my work on the following link: <https://manchester.academia.edu/JanGrill>

Due to the word limits and formats, articles obviously focus on some particular aspects and themes. However, they are not based on interviews or a sample of respondents (as suggested by David). I have done a long-term participant observation, learned and speak Romanes, lived with Roma families for more than two years, etc. I also reconstructed social trajectories and historical developments in the particular area where I did my research. Of course, all these factors and methods are important for understanding the present situation and strategies of migrants. However, the fact one does not publish one's work in a format of monographic book (classical ethnography) does not mean that one has not done this type of long-term fieldwork. I also do not think that one has to wait for public engagements until publishing a classical monographic book.

Also, there are several younger scholars and activists who have been carrying out long-term ethnographic fieldwork among Roma migrants in Europe. Some of their works are currently being published; others are in preparation.

Christian Brüggemann

Date: 17 November 2013

Subject: RE: letter of protest?

Elizabeta Jonuz (Stigma Ethnizität. Wie zugewanderte Romafamilien der Ethnisierungsfälle begegnen) has shown that in search for structural integration, Roma migrating from former Yugoslavia to Germany might not be keen to present all aspects of their identity. Rather they pretended to be (non-Roma) migrants, thus facing only part of the possible difficulties that they might have encountered. My friend J. (coming from a small Roma settlement near Budapest) was never identified as Romani while doing her Erasmus semester in Tübingen. Literally every German might be able identify and study Roma migrants - going for example to Harzer Straße in Berlin (known as little Romania) or other marginalised places with huge media coverage. One would likely find issues Mr Scheffel has pointed out. And, one might find similar circumstances in many marginalised areas around the world. I would like to call for three approaches that might at least partly improve our perspective on Roma migration: a) not to focus on the marginalised only, b) taking into account an (international) comparative perspective c) paying attention to poverty and other confounding variables.

Sharmin Hamvas

Date: 18 November 2013

Subject: RE: letter of protest?



It's very inspiring to see so many responses to writing the letter to the media. My research area is on the Roma in Hungary and I would be very keen to take part in adding my input to this message to the media. I have already personally written to the BBC and am waiting for their response!

I agree that its better if the message comes from a Roma and we all support this. However, if it's not possible, I think that it shouldn't stop us from taking this action. I also agree that first of all we need to identify the issues that would be talked about in the letter but also to keep in mind that it would be more effective if we write sooner than later. I shall support whoever writes this message to the media.

Sam Beck

Date: 18 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest?

Sharmin,

I suggested that this campaign should be led by Roma. It should not stop allies from writing! We all have a responsibility as truth seekers to express our opinions!

Sharmin Hamvas

Date: 18 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest

I agree Sam.

Thomas Acton

Date: 18 November 2013
Subject: RE: letter of protest

I think perhaps I should apologise for being so rude about David's book (sorry about the Mr.) and e-mail. Even at my age I still need to learn how not to fly off the handle. In particular it was gratuitous for me to question whether he is well meaning. On reflection it is apparent David is sincere and honest. His prejudices are transparent - he doesn't try to sneak them past us; he comes right out with them. His publishers solicited a favourable comment from me for the cover of his book, and were clearly very surprised and indeed offended when I refused. So I do feel a bit of a louse for being so dismissive of his work. Read critically, it has value. As St Paul says, (in Chaucer's translation). "All that is y-writ, ywrit to our doctrine is.



Nonetheless, that critical eye is important, and of course, I'm not directing that just at David. I've actually been listening to Gaje? explaining I don't understand "their" Roma for around 47 years. And I suppose I've been being obnoxious about what I regard as the structural defects of Western social anthropology since my 1979 critique of American Gypsylorism, of which David's book is a late, but still classic example. I think the most amusing thing about David's book is the way he credits all of the Gaje villagers' complaints about the Roma in Svinia, and clearly disbelieves all or most of the Roma complaints about the villagers. (And don't get me started on the recycling of anti-semitic tropes in his depiction of Roma moneylenders!).

We should not, however, underestimate the practical difficulty of Colin Clark's advice to him. As in all communities, there are a few Roma, Gypsies and Travellers who break the law, sometimes habitually, and my insistence in my own fieldwork and political practice down the years that I will neither be made party to crimes or the knowledge of crimes, and that I am prepared to go to the police, except in the case of manifestly unjust laws, has led very occasionally to tricky stand-offs, especially if one hasn't been clear enough about this from the start. Those who habitually carry out actions harmful to others among the Roma, Gypsies and Travellers, are usually feared as dangerous, and relatively isolated socially among their own people, and they do sometimes seek almost to seduce Gaje, including even academic enquirers, to be their confidants. The Portsmouth crime novels of Graham Hurley, while never explicitly indicating the ethnicity of the main criminal protagonist (and indeed the ethnic identity of notorious criminals of Romani heritage like the Kray brothers is often compromised, uncertain and ambiguous precisely because of their relative social isolation), are possibly a brilliant fictional portrait of such a flawed but charismatic individual. The moral disengagement inculcated by classical Western social anthropology can lead the victims of such seduction into buying into their criminal mentors' deviant vision of their criminality being ethnic in character, and their exaggeration of their own criminal prowess. The late Werner Cohn was perhaps one such anthropologist.

Anyone on this list who fears they are falling into such a position should seek confidential help. They really should. Staying close to strong (or even quite weak) Roma organisations enables one to find such help and advice.

This does not mean one should never associate with people who have committed crimes. The Romani Christian congregations contain a few individuals of whom I remember people saying 20 or 30 years ago "it'll be a miracle if they ever go straight" - and as God is my witness, I have seen such miracles. Sometimes, especially where there is an addiction problem, the miracle may have to happen more than once. But it can. I'm with the late Clement LeCossec in believing one should never give up on a single human being. In particular, there is a strong Christian injunction to visit those in prison. One can only be of help, however, if one is confident in one's own integrity.

Speaking of those in prison, and perhaps to add balance, I should say that I have more often come across apparent police attempts to fit Roma, Gypsy or Traveller individuals up than I have experienced attempts to make me complicit in crime. But they are both still rare and this should not prevent one supporting the police in general. In particular support for individuals of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller heritage in the police force, or thinking to join it, is important in making clear that



improvement of police support for the security and safety of these communities is a vital precondition for tackling the relatively rare crimes by individuals from those communities.

Finally, I should perhaps just say a word or two about prostitution, which David mentioned. It may be the case, as I have been told, that some Slovak Roma prostituted themselves or have been forced into prostitution. I have no personal experience; but I do have experience of young women falsely accusing one another of being prostitutes. Many of the Slovak Roma who have migrated to the UK, especially those who have discarded the Romani language (which may be as many as or more than half of them) are classically working class rather than entrepreneurial in their aspirations. Although extended kin networks are important in facilitating chain migration even in working-class families, there is often an expectation and hope that people will find jobs, (rather than join or start family businesses as in a lot of Romani chain migration and in some other communities such as Sylhetis and Patidars). Such proletarianised kin networks, I fear, find it much harder to find emergency resources in the case of unexpected family crises compared with more entrepreneurial ones (the opposite of what Blunkett suggests); and they also come much closer to European working class norms in their marriage and courtship practices. One doesn't need to be an anthropologist to make a virtual tour of you tube clips of Slovak Roma community dances and band concerts in the UK. Young men and women do go to such events looking for partners, and some non-Rom Slovaks too. And they find partners. The actual content of accusations of prostitution by young women who go to such dances against each other turns out in my experience to mean little more than "she stole my boyfriend" or some such accusation. All very regrettable and quite shocking to someone from a more conservative Romani background, and very concerning if social services become involved in the case of a family crisis, but not actually prostitution. And I would repeat what other UK academics on this network have said, that the vast majority of Slovak Romani families I have come across, whether or not Romani-speaking, whether of proletarian or entrepreneurial orientation, are working all the hours they can, and gaining what training and schooling they can access for themselves and their children to build new lives and a better future. Their optimism, good humour and courage in the face of adversity are stunning, and their migration is Slovakia's loss and the UK's gain."

David Scheffel

Date: 19 November 2013

Subject: RE: letter of protest

I appreciate the change in tone, and the apology is nice - though it wasn't really necessary. I am used to worse, especially from some ethnic Slovaks who have accused me on numerous occasions of being uncritically 'pro-Gypsy'. This may be difficult for Thomas to believe, as it is difficult for me to believe that he really sees my book about Svinia as favouring the gadje position. As the subtitle "Slovak Roma and their neighbours" indicates, I tried to come to grips with the relationship - a very difficult one - between two groups of reluctant neighbours (Whites and Blacks in local parlance) who have been forced by circumstances to live side by side for the last century or so. There are



thousands of places like that all over Central and Eastern Europe, but, to the best of my knowledge, my book is the only one to offer not only an ethnographic description of the status quo but also a painstakingly researched historical analysis of the evolution (or, rather, 'devolution') of that century - long relationship. I had arrived in Svinia on a mission that Thomas would probably approve of since it entailed none of that old-fashioned moral relativism that he is so scornful of. Convinced that the 'Whites' were the oppressors and the Roma their innocent victims, I had come to Svinia to manage a community development project financed by the Canadian government which was to empower the Roma in various practical and symbolic ways. After five long years of politically correct drudgery, I was driven out of the community by angry Slovak villagers (if Thomas still believes that I show them excessive sympathy in my book, I humbly request that he re-read it, and this time really page by page). Since then, I have been doing more conventional research in Svinia and other ethnically mixed communities in the same region, trying to come to grips with a profoundly tragic set of circumstances. Unlike Thomas who has been lucky to befriend mostly born again Roma (beyond the narrowly Christian meaning), I have had the misfortune of shackling up with too many disoriented people who have lost sight of some universal moral compass - if there is such thing. That confusion seems to be infectious, because now I see the plight of the Roma as well as the gadje, the money-lender as well as his/her victim. But "anti-semitic tropes" in my depiction of money-lenders?! Please read my defense of Romani usury (Slovenská chudoba a romská lichva [Slovak poverty and Romani usury]. *Obcianská spoločnosť* [Civil Society], 14 (1): 47 - 62, 2010) where I invoke Anton Blok in order to make sense of the (excessive) use of violence in (some) Romani communities. And, on the topic of law-and-order and its enforcement, I am afraid that Slovakia still has a way to go to reach the EU standard. A short while ago, Svinia's chief usurer became its deputy mayor while awaiting trial for assault and extortion. His main business partner is imprisoned on account of human trafficking between Slovakia and the UK. And no, I am not breaching confidentiality here as this stuff is routinely reported in the Slovak press. But I do hope that Thomas is right, and that I have simply been spending too much time with a badly skewed sample of Romani society.

Yaron Matras

Date: 19 November 2013

Subject: UK Roma debate

Another commentary on the public debate triggered by the release a couple of weeks ago of a study by a group at Salford university claiming that there were 200,000 Roma migrants in the UK":

<http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2013/11/18/comment-the-roma-are-hardworking-people-who-don-t-deserve-to>



Brown Philip

Date: 19 November 2013

Subject: RE: UK Roma debate

One of the strengths of this network is that it allows academics from different disciplines and different countries to comment on each other's work. As an academic community we are all striving for equality for Roma. It is for that reason that I do not intend to further divert from the important conversation about the issues by replying, again, in detail to each of the criticisms and insinuations brought against The University of Salford by Yaron Matras. I agree with other contributors for the need to refocus on tackling anti-Roma sentiments.

However, the insinuation that recent media attention was caused solely by the publication of our most recent research into Roma in the UK is misleading and an attempt at a strange re-writing of what happened. It is obvious that media focus was already primed as a result of the events in Greece and Ireland. The involvement of senior politicians (two former Home Secretaries and the Deputy Prime Minister) in the UK in the last week heightened these issues further. It is also clear that the majority of reporting is about tensions in local communities and the media would have run these stories whether we had done our research or not. This follows a pattern which many of us who have been working in migration for some time are familiar with, such as the media response to asylum seeking around a decade ago.

I have no argument with the assertion that as a group of academics and researchers we should reflect on the wider social impacts of our work. However we are not naïve enough to believe that a single piece of research can steer a national debate. As I've previously said we took steps to carefully consider the publication of our work

I'm not going to provide further attention to Yaron's comments, and in some cases outlandish insinuations, about the research and University, including; that we 'sold' the story to the media (we obviously did not); about the quality of the research (which I have already commented on, is in the report in full and will be published in peer review journals in due course); that we, knowingly or otherwise, collaborated with an alleged Labour party agenda on Roma migration (?!!).

I am disappointed that Yaron has chosen not to talk on this list about the other many issues we have presented such as: the complexity of Roma migration and settlement; the lack of resources available to communities; the effects of compounded multiple exclusion; the reality of poor housing conditions and so on. It is encouraging to see that a number of commentators in the Guardian have now returned to these issues such as Townsend's and Younge's pieces and the Editorial. Furthermore, the highly respected Institute of Race Relations in the UK provided this review of the research. In a similar vein I welcome Yaron's recent positive contribution to the debate in his comment piece.

I echo the calls of other contributors on this network about the need for unity going forward in working towards greater inclusion of Roma.



Yaron Matras

Date: 19 November 2013

Subject: RE: UK Roma debate

The following link to a BBC report contains a segment from a radio interview with David Blunkett, in which he explicitly mentions the Salford study, and which thus documents how Blunkett's statements were directly inspired by the Salford study:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24909979>

I have said before on this list that I did not think the Salford team played into the hands of politicians intentionally; I simply think that they were careless with their data collection, their conclusions, and the manner in which they sought publicity.

Philip Brown

Date: 19 November 2013

Subject: RE: UK Roma debate

As I've said previously we clearly don't agree with these views on the data collection, findings or release of the work. Furthermore, those of us with even a general knowledge of what is happening 'on the ground' in communities like Sheffield will be aware that David Blunkett has focused on Roma issues for years and meets regularly with local councillors and senior officers about the issue. He has written regularly to the Minister, asked Parliamentary Questions and led a group of MPs to lobby on the issue. BBC Radio Sheffield has regularly run stories on these issues in Page Hall and Rotherham's Eastwood area. But by all means don't let the facts get in the way of a point.

Marius Ciobanu

Date: 20 November 2013

Subject: RE: UK Roma debate

Just to add the latest news on the Badalona case involving the xenophobic remarks and pamphlets on the Romanian Roma."

<http://romaissues.wordpress.com/2013/11/20/xavier-garcia-albiol-sera-el-primer-alcalde-juzgado-por-su-discurso-xenofobo/>



Enikő Vincze

Date: 21 November 2013

Subject: RE: UK Roma debate

I would like adding an additional dimension to this debate.

While talking about the public responsibility of the researchers and in particular of those producing and disseminating knowledge about Roma migration, we should not forget that the whole anti-Roma-immigration politics and its underlying racism is part of an effort to "justify" on the side of older EU member states (and of the European Economic and Monetary union) why capital might travel freely across EU member states, and labor (especially labor force from former Eastern and Central Europe) should not. Anti-Gypsy racism is part of this neoliberal regime promoting on the one hand the extension of "free market" conceived as product of civilization (or the interests of the Euro area countries) and on the other hand sustaining the austerity measures and the marketisation processes in the areas that the EC calls more and more explicitly as "peripheral countries". This current form of anti-gypsy racism is having the function of protecting the former from the "invasion" of the impoverished populations from the latter, perceived as symbols of "primitivism." Parallel with these processes we may witness how the impoverished populations (mostly from Romania and Bulgaria) are racialised, and how the political category of "Roma" is associated with Eastern poverty by those who had a crucial role in creating and sustaining it. And what are these "peripheral countries" doing? Their political decision-makers (economically benefiting from the system described above) are doing all their best to distance themselves from their native population(self)identified as Roma while blaming the latter for all the failures encountered in their road towards the promise land of EU. Meanwhile, the European social agenda and the European framework strategy for Roma inclusion are rhetorically flourishing.

László Fosztó

Date: 30 November 2013

Subject: Roma migrants in Manchester

Dear All,

"You might be interested in a short broadcast about Roma communities living in the UK – video.
<http://www.channel4.com/news/uk-immigrations-migrants-roma-eu>

This time it is about the Romanian Roma in Manchester."

Daniele Viktor Leggio

Date: 10 December 2013

Subject: Roma in the UK debate



Here, you can find my contribution to the public debate about Roma in the UK.”

<http://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/2013/dec/09/migrant-roma-communities-integration-uk-manchester>

Aidan McGarry

Date: 11 December 2013

Subject: Event in London

Romaphobia and the media

Monday 20th January 2014, 12pm– 5pm.

“Romaphobia and the media’ responds to the recent negative reporting and the damaging political discourse about Roma minorities across Europe. Reflecting on both the British and European contexts, it addresses four crucial questions: (1) How and why do the representations of these groups repeatedly fail to recognise their diversity and normality? (2) Who defines who is ‘Roma’, and what for? (3) What are the styles in which these groups are portrayed? (4) Are there any alternatives?

The event will bring together academics, activists and journalists interested in challenging issues in the representations of minorities in the media. It is a collaboration between the University of Portsmouth (Centre for European & International Studies Research) and King’s College London (Centre for Language, Discourse & Communication).

The event is free and will be held at King’s College London. For further information and to book a place please contact: annabel.tremlett@port.ac.uk”

Jan Grill

Date: 11 December 2013

Subject: RE: Roma in the UK debate

In common with colleagues who have engaged in media with the recent growth of anti-Gypsism in Britain (and Europe in general), I have published a short piece on 'Britain's Gypsy moral paranoia' that might be of an interest to some of you:

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/jan-grill/britain%E2%80%99s-gypsy-moral-paranoia>



Sharmin Hamvas

Date: 12 December 2013

Subject: RE: Roma in the UK debate

Dear Jan,

It is a very 'well said' piece. It is so true about the behaviour of the 'British lads' in the CEE and how it is tolerated by Britain and the host countries. I have seen this type of shameful behaviour on almost every flight to Budapest for the 'stag do.' Interestingly, this remains unnoticed by the same critiques who want Roma to change their behaviour! You have made a very good point!

Judith M Okely

Date: 12 December 2013

Subject: RE: Roma in the UK debate

Dear Jan,

Thank you for the superb comparison with mobs who lay waste others' space as tourists, supposedly just being lads. There are comparisons even closer to 'home' within the UK, namely the famous Oxford Bullingdon Club, three of whose past members are either in the cabinet as prime minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer or mayor of London. (see images on Google). Here, poverty was never the issue but the proud ability to smash up a restaurant and tell the owner that the student(s) as multi-millionaire(s) had enough money to pay for the damages. Little of this was EVER reported to the police. It was all a competition to see who was the richest member parading sufficient inherited wealth to pay the maximum damage.

I have memories and indeed some lived experience of the macho, sexist, racist violence in 1960s Oxford among the elite male undergraduates, all covered up or even celebrated because it was 'just boys growing up, having fun.' When things had to go public they had expensive lawyers. Any working class lad from the town doing far less would have gone to prison.

No irony that in the 1970s the first night I moved onto a Gypsy site, an older man said 'If anyone hollers, just shout out, don't open the door. You'll be alright with us to look after you'. He, Mark Chapman, was right. I was safe. The danger was NEVER the Gypsies but seemingly any rogue gaje roaming outside the camp.

I could add more recent details of university/ student late night 'culture' in residential Oxford streets. When I rang up the council noise help number at 2.30 am, I was shouted at by the employee: 'Get with it, this is a student town'. Although my councilor was informed, you can see the 'culture' which a salaried local can argue as justification.



Judith M. Okely

Date: 18 December 2013

Subject: Update on petition objecting to the Spectator's use of 'pikey' and 'gyppo'

Have people seen this horrific article?

I have signed the petition.

Judith (Okely)

--

From: Traveller Movement

Wednesday, December 18, 2013 4:05 PM

To: Judith M Okely

Subject: Update on petition objecting to the Spectator's use of 'pikey' and 'gyppo'

"Thanks for joining us and signing the petition objecting to the Spectator's use of 'pikey' and 'gyppo.'

We have now lodged a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission. We will keep you updated as to what happens next.

Please continue to push the petition and get your friends to sign it as well. We are in for the long haul!

This message was sent by Traveller Movement using the Change.org system. You received this email because you signed a petition started by Traveller Movement on Change.org: "The Spectator: Make a public apology and allow a right of reply." Change.org does not endorse contents of this message."

View the petition<http://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/the-spectator-make-a-public-apology-and-allow-a-right-of-reply?utm_source=supporter_message&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=petition_message_notice

Ciprian Necula

Date: 9 January 2014

Subject: journalist invasion in Romania

Dear All,



These days, in Romania, there is an impressive number of UK journalists, looking for the "Gypsy invasion", after the new privileges for Romanian and Bulgarian citizens related to the labour market.

I talk to some of them, but a source from UK I guess, will help them better (time and money). Therefore, if some of you will like to share opinions on the Roma mobility from Romania and Bulgaria to UK, please let me know and send me your detailed contacts.

Most of them were disappointed while facing the realities from some Roma communities and moreover because nothing happens in relation to their subject "gypsy invasion".

Thomas Acton

Date: 9 January 2014

Subject: RE: journalist invasion in Romania

We might just have reached the point where predictions based on the racist fears of Cameron and others have reached self-discrediting absurdity.

Powell, Ryan

Date: 9 January 2014

Subject: RE: journalist invasion in Romania

Agreed. But unfortunately the media and government show little interest in such reality congruent knowledge, preferring instead to stubbornly stick to their ideological/ imagined "knowledge" that suits their own ends. Similar debates are ongoing regarding welfare reform in the UK where some scholars have pointed to governmental (ideological) discourse as essentially the "production of ignorance" given the massive chasm between evidence and policy. Much work to be done in challenging this.

Ian F Hancock

Date: 9 January 2014

Subject: RE: journalist invasion in Romania

The Nazis called it a "plague" – we're not far away from that!



Judith M Okely

Date: 9 January 2014

Subject: RE: journalist invasion in Romania

Ironically, a seemingly pro-immigration programme led by Evan Davis, some years ago, simultaneously showed appalling ignorance of English Gypsies' vital historic economic contribution. Thus local Romanies are also denigrated by being written out of recent history. Davis discussed E. European migrants, doubtless on slave labour wages, who came for seasonal agricultural labour. We now learn these contracts were indeed exploitative. Then Davis proclaimed a dubious 'economic' argument that the locally housed population did not do this because they were 'lazy'. I suggest they were on welfare payments not much higher than slave labour. Surely an economist should look back just a few decades. Just a TINY bit of research into the history of Wisbeach would have shown that all that migrant seasonal work was done for decades by Gypsies and indeed throughout the UK.

I recall those I lived with moving to the locality every summer. They provided their own accommodation, not needing cheap plastic tents and crumbling shacks. BUT after ever increasing conservative political restrictions on travel and the fear of losing a site place, Gypsies could no longer move seasonally with their trailers and families to farmers who had always welcomed and depended on them. Even the law officially absolved Gypsy children from school in those seasonal months. The State thus acknowledged the vital importance of Gypsies' work to the dominant economy. How disappointing that an economic 'expert' explained economic change only in terms of pseudo-psychology.

Some time later, I was asked to appear on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme concerning the Dale farm eviction. A car would pick me up early the next morning. I innocently asked who the presenters would be. When I learned one was Evan Davis, I naively and critically mentioned the above programme headed by Davis. If only I had kept back my comments for the live show. Five minutes later, the BBC employee rang back to say my services were no longer required. Seemingly my own economic expertise (I did the same undergrad. P.P.E.degree as Davis) would be far too threatening to a media celebrity and programme notorious also for sidelining female presenters.

Michael Stanzer

Date: 9 January 2014

Subject: RE: journalist invasion in Romania

Dear Judith,

This lack of media incompetence is reason for lifelong civic education!



Florentin Ciobanu

Date: 9 January 2014

Subject: RE: journalist invasion in Romania

ROMANIAN AND BULGARIAN MIGRATION TO THE UK - Report

http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2013/12/in-transition_RomBulg_Dec2013_11688.pdf

<http://www.romaissues.wordpress.com>

Yaron Matras

Date: 12 February 2014

Subject: Roma migrants and the numbers game

The following comment was published by The Guardian this morning:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/12/roma-reality-check>

Within just a couple of hours of the online publication, more than 300 comments were posted, many of them hostile to Roma migrants. (Non-UK residents will, I'm sure, also be aware that The Guardian is considered one of the more liberal media outlets).

Interestingly, quite a few comments cite the presence of 200,000 Roma migrants in the UK -- a claim made some months ago by a research team from Salford University -- as if it was a true and verifiable figure. Most cite it in order to argue that there is a threat of uncontrolled and limitless Roma immigration.

This illustrates once again how important it is for researchers to act responsibly, and with caution and scientific rigour, when entering the public debate, especially when they claim to be presenting facts and figures.

No doubt those who are hostile to Roma in principle will not be consoled by the fact that there are in fact fewer Roma in the country than the Salford study claimed; while on the other hand even if the actual number was indeed higher it would be still be our duty to warn against exclusion and discrimination. But the fact that the debate is now revolving around fictitious numbers thanks to the publication of the Salford study, is not helpful.



Helen O'Nions

Date: 12 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants and the numbers game

Dear Yaron,

I've just quickly put my comment up - I await a vitriolic response from commentators - many of whom appear fixated on stereotypes and ridiculous migration figures (200,000 - really!). I had the same response when I published a comment on Roma refugees from the C Republic and Slovakia, including a personal attack from a BNP campaigner sent to my work address.

Good luck with Blunkett tomorrow - he has a lot of explaining to do.

Margaret Greenfields

Date: 12 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants and the numbers game

I'll also respond when get a moment with supportive comments re article.

Helen - is it only women who get the hate mail I wonder - or are our male colleagues as honoured? I've had threats/suggestions that what I needed was a good kicking in a dark alley - stupidly when that happened a few years ago and I didn't go to the police just got people to help complain to the newspaper in question until it was taken down. Ditto the petition suggestion to get me sacked as unfit to teach young people as a friend of pikeys and also a small collection over the years of anonymous hate mail etc - I work on the assumption we are doing something right if we can get that strong a reaction!"

Thomas Acton

Date: 13 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants and the numbers game

I think women do get a worse reaction.

I've had my phone number in the book, and local publicity over many years, and I've only ever had hostile calls from people with some real problem, and in all cases I've just listened people out, and in a couple of cases turned people into friends by sorting out problems, those with dogs for example. I've only had one real psychopathic style aggressive phone call, and that was from a woman ENP candidate, who ranted on for about an hour, trying to provoke. I'm not sure whether there were gender issues in her aggression.

But I suspect anti-gypsyism may be a cover for misogyny in many cases.



Margaret Greenfields

Date: 13 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants and the numbers game

Would be interesting to compare the various types of 'anti' and 'isms' that those who are rabidly opposed to Gypsies/Travellers/Roma subscribe to.

I do seem to recall a study or newspaper report some years ago which set out to explore the range of people which were 'acceptable' or 'beyond the pale' to various individuals - I don't recall that there were many surprises but it would perhaps be interesting to set up a similar survey in the light of Equalities law to see how if in any way attitudes have shifted.

Thanks Thomas, for your comment.

Philip Brown

Date: 13 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants and the numbers game

Here we go again.

As the criticism by Yaron continues it might be of interest to note that since the report was published we have had dealings with a wide variety of stakeholders who have been, as we suspected, extremely positive about the study. Such stakeholders include the Institute for Race Relations, numerous local authorities, academics (from this network and beyond), NGOs and community development workers have commented about how the study has helped in their Roma inclusion work – contrary to Yaron's views. For example, the study was reviewed positively by the very well respected Institute for Race Relations here <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/no-going-back-for-the-roma/> and was mentioned in a parliamentary Early Day Motion see here <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2013-14/788> which had cross-party support. It's not my natural inclination to advertise the impact our work is having but as this particular study is once again being misrepresented I feel it is pertinent.

No claims have ever been made as to the definitiveness of the population figure in the report – quite the reverse. As we have repeatedly said this is an estimate based on grassroots knowledge of workers who work in the communities where Roma have been making their home. The authors of the study are all steeped in daily empirical grassroots research and practice with Roma communities, workers and NGOs across the country (UK). These ongoing relationships, dialogue and feedback have given us extra confidence in the findings contained within the report.



We have always seen this study as an initial step in helping to understand where and how resources could be focussed to the benefit of Roma and the communities in which they settle. We welcome approaches that build on or replace this work in due course."

Sam Beck

Date: 13 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants and the numbers game

Sitting here in my NYC office, after a one-foot snow fall and now raining, and reading the commentary about this study and its impact, I am puzzled by what appears to be opposing viewpoints. Can someone explain to me what is at stake here because all involved in this matter seem to be interested in the same thing, improving Roma conditions.

Yaron Matras

Date: 13 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants and the numbers game

Liz Fakete's review of the Salford study, to which Phil has referred us, states this:

"What we now have – and not before time – is a no-nonsense report which provides hard data on the size of the new settled Roma migrant communities"

But this is simply untrue. The study does not provide any hard data at all, as Phil admits in his message from today. It merely speculates, based on anecdotal evidence that is neither properly referenced nor presented in any transparent way that would make this data quantifiable.

For this reason, the House of Commons motion that refers to the "University of Salford's pioneering research into the demographics of the UK's new Roma migrant communities" is misguided. There is no pioneering research here, merely a crafty marketing strategy.

As for the academics to whom Phil refers in his message -- those who have supposedly commented positively on the study's merit --, they remain unnamed, much like the sources of data that Phil and his colleagues rely on in the report itself. The real test will be to see whether the study will be submitted, and accepted, to a peer-refereed publication. We are all waiting in suspense."



Judith M Okely

Date: 13 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants and the numbers game

The gender game alongside numbers:

My sympathies.

Why do people, outwardly on the same side and wanting to celebrate and defend Roma, Gypsies and or Travellers, waste valuable energy attacking imagined rivals? Earlier, someone commented on misogyny. It also exists from within. To add to the numbers game, I have accumulated venomous quotes directed at WOMEN academics, though gender may not be made explicit.

Years ago, an activist ally warned me that a 'distinguished academic' was desperately trying to find the Gypsy camp where I was living. He planned to 'reveal' to my co-residents that I was an enemy 'Government SPY'. This jealous lie risked serious consequences. At a later conference, I was threatened with a nazi practice. A gaje, with respectable phd and publications, shouted: 'Every time I read your book I want to BURN it.' Further personalised, religious and ethnic insults are censored here.

By contrast, this gaje woman NEVER suffered misogyny, and neither verbal nor physical violence from Gypsies, Roma or Travellers. She was always safe with them, but learned, through shock and awe, to be wary of 'fellow' academics. watch this space.

Thomas Acton

Date: 14 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants and the numbers game

Poring over the responses to consultations over Site Provision in Brentwood led the BGS to two insights:

1) Anti-gypsyism is often a proxy not just for misogyny, but many other grievances. Many of the complaints were diatribes about wholly unrelated issues, from the closure of sportsgrounds to the cuts in disability care, connected to Travellers only by the mantra "Why should Gypsies be helped when they do that to us!"

2) The non-Gypsy support group members, exultant that we'd achieved a small majority in favour of provision, failed to realise how deeply the anti-Gypsy (and misogynistic) comments were hurting the Traveller members who took part in the scrutiny. These feelings of hurt were brilliantly summed up in a poem by our chair, Bernadette Reilly, which shocked and educated us all. I'll attach it.



Thomas Acton

Date: 14 February 2014

Subject: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

I think Yaron confounds 3 different issues here:

- 1) How justifiable are the Salford Study's statistical speculations?
- 2) Were they unwisely publicised?
- 3) Are the Salford Group competitive rather than co-operative with fellow academics?

1) I think Matras misunderstands the nature of statistical speculation. It is not a process of counting, or giving up if an exact count is not possible. It is a process of adducing the relevant evidence, and then trying to work out the minimum and maximum numbers compatible with that evidence. Although the Salford estimates are not as transparent as they might be, and are perhaps misleadingly specific, they are hardly unreasonable, and more importantly, it is only that spurious specificity which makes them a little less than the estimates by Fremlova L. and Ureche H. (2011, *From segregation to Inclusion: Roma Pupils in the UK: A pilot project*, London: Equality-UK)

http://equality.uk.com/Education_files/From%20segregation%20to%20integration.pdf.

If Matras and O'Nions think that a figure of 200,000 is unreasonable, why didn't they weigh in in 2011? (Even more surprisingly, why did the Salford survey not acknowledge Fremlova and Ureche, which actually I think has a more open methodology than them, but instead claim to be making the first serious estimate?) Perhaps what the Salford and Manchester groups have in common, is the idea we should judge people by whether they have a university affiliation, rather than the intrinsic scientific merit of their work? Heather Ureche died far too young, but I do hope Lucie Fremlova will enter this controversy.

In fact, I understood from Ureche, that their original estimates were a great deal higher, but were cut down by their funding sponsors at the insistence of government to an absolute minimum justifiable to civil servants. And they were still higher than the Salford survey! Critics of such speculative estimates have a duty to show how a lower number might be compatible with the evidence. Until then, theirs is a philosophical complaint about the necessity of speculative statistics, not a criticism of this particular work.

2) Were they unwisely publicised? To present such a figure as new (rather than echoing another study 2 years previous) and as a "problem" was indeed pandering to the anti-Gypsyism of public discourse, and thus perhaps cheating somewhat by the Salford group in the race for public funding, as compared with the Manchester group, which, to be fair, has largely avoided any panic approach, and has mainly, as in Matras' excellent article in the Guardian this week, presented Roma culture and heritage as an asset to the country. In this, Matras' criticism has served a useful purpose. And I agree that some of the cited endorsements of the Salford work are hardly scientific validations. But



actually pretending Roma in the UK are too few for it to be worth estimating their number undermines this a little.

3) Are the Salford Group competitive rather than co-operative with fellow academics? Maybe. But there is a certain irony in Matras being the one to point this out, which I actually find rather endearing, but somehow enrages others. (And his naive conviction that peer review is a guarantee of scientificity is also rather sweet.) But, in that Manchester has a better track record, and a deeper and more diverse competence, and continuing, if prickly relationships with some Roma, Gypsy and Traveller community members (alongside inevitable criticism by others), if I had to choose, I'd rather see public money go to Manchester than Salford, however abrasive and scientific Matras may sometimes be. But how much better if we could co-operate when there is so much to be done and so few, relatively, to do it. (And how much better it would be if UK university finances had not come to depend on how much they can skim off research grants!)

So, come on! Shape up, lads! Or else Judith Okely WILL make mincemeat of you. Why can't you be all sweetness and light like her? And please reassure us you ignored Fremlova and Ureche because they weren't university-based, not because they were women.

Ryan Powell

Date: 14 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

The personalised and sustained nature of the attacks suggest to me that this is far more straight forward. It's more about overly-emotionally involved academics wishing to protect their perceived knowledge monopolies in specific areas of inquiry. Like Judith Okely, I've always been perplexed by the bickering and squabbling and the sense of "ownership" some academics researching Gypsies/Roma seem to possess, which makes them hostile to the work of others - especially those who are younger and less established, perhaps perceived as a threat. This curious attitude only stifles the development of knowledge.

I am shocked by the continued attack on Salford colleagues by "established" academics. I have always found the Salford academics in question to be very co-operative, far from competitive and driven by the pursuit of knowledge, rather than ego or money. They're hardly Nigel Thrift.

As I have said before on this forum in relation to this "debate": a classic problem of involvement and detachment, which will ultimately achieve nothing and merely detract from the task in hand. Publicly and, almost obsessively, attacking academic colleagues striving for the same goals can only be a pernicious endeavour. But, sadly, one that is quite common.



Yaron Matras

Date: 14 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

There is no issue of competition here -- either in relation to funding or intellectual property. The Romani Project at the University of Manchester has invited colleagues from Salford on various occasions, including to closed meetings, and the colleagues in Salford have been among the first whom we have informed of, and invited to discuss our plans for the MigRom project launched last year.

My criticism of the Salford study is not personal, and has nothing to do with age or seniority; rather, as I explained before, it is focused on what I believe to be poor methodology, lack of transparency, and an irresponsible approach to public dissemination.

While colleagues are of course entitled to present their views about this debate in any form that they choose -- eg with reference to misogyny, age discrimination, or suspicion against blondes -- I note the preoccupation, among the defenders of the study, with speculation about personal motives, and the absence, so far, of any attempt to speak in support of the academic merits of the study, its methodology, or its actual contribution to knowledge.

Martin Kovats

Date: 15 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

The discussion is important, but I don't like the tone. So, I will adopt a different one.

Thomas, you are being mischievous because you want a big number.

Is the 200K figure reliable? The point is that we don't know. It is not statistics but sources that are the issue.

Do we know whom the informers were who provided the figures from which the estimate was calculated? No. Do we know how reliable their figures were? No.

Is there any reason to think that these figures might be inaccurate? Yes, loads, in the Salford report, which should be commended for the openness with which it refers to the quality of the data.

The problem is not a study publishing a 200K or whatever estimate. It's a claim that it gets discussed.

The concern is about how it has been presented and understood. The authors cannot know the 200K estimate is 'conservative' (other than by their own data). How the findings are used is a more complicated matter.



Is a big number good for Roma? That is debatable.

The UK has the potential to have a healthy Roma debate, probably the best in Europe. Let's do our best to make sure that happens.

Michael Stewart

Date: 15 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

I have not yet had time to go through the Salford report but does anyone know of any sociologist or anthropologist or other field researcher who has reported the desertification of scores of Romanian/Hungarian or Slovak villages by the Roma who have come to UK? We do know plenty of such places in Spain and Italy. We do know of some places where hundreds (NB) of Roma have left Romania for UK and also Hungary - but not on anything like the scale that the 200k figure suggests. Moreover this is something that researchers track rather fast. We know rather well from where Hungarian Rom/Magyar Cigany have been coming to the UK - because there are researchers working in those areas of Hungary. Inter alia, this is why no one I have spoken to takes the Salford claim seriously.

Sam Beck

Date: 15 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

Martin,

In anthropology a central ethical position which we try to adhere is "do no harm". Your question: "is a big number good for Roma?" Is to the point! The steal gored researchers must have known that the xenophobic and racist part of the population would behave predictably and that the media would fan reactionary sentiments. Why use questionable data?"

Sam Beck

Date: 15 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

Michael,

It is apparent that some sectors in England are taking the number seriously, even if scholars don't. Even if the 200,000 is correct, the ethical concerns regarding such a number for wide public distribution should be a concern and must be dealt with, with sensitivity and an approach that does



not put the Roma in jeopardy. It is obviously seen by the public as a dangerous number. We would not be so concerned otherwise.

Thomas Acton

Date: 15 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

I am really struck that Michael Stewart has formed his opinion of the Salford Report not on the basis of reading it, but on the basis of people to whom he has spoken.

Neither the Salford Report, nor Fremlova and Ureche, are very long. May I suggest a self-denying ordinance on the part of EANRS members who may be thinking of entering this controversy, to read both these easily available reports, neither of which are long or difficult, before they post any comments on their statistical estimates.

The separate question of whether the residence of 200,000 Roma in the UK would be a "problem", or whether it would be wrong to publish any speculation on the numbers, may be ethical questions. If so the value positions I would bring to either is the same that I bring to those who occasionally suggest that I was wrong to marry a foreigner, because it will subject my "mixed race" children to prejudice. Pandering to racists to avoid trouble is a possible ethical position. It just isn't mine."

David Scheffel

Date: 15 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

I know very little about the numbers of Roma migrants in the UK, but, looking at the migratory pattern that seems to prevail in the parts of Slovakia that I am familiar with, I would expect the numbers to fluctuate quite significantly. This is because Slovak Roma tend not to vacate their communities en masse (hence little evidence of 'desertification') but rather in waves that come and go depending on seasons, political climate, family obligations, etc. For example, Slovak press has been reporting an 'exodus' of displaced Roma from the infamous Košice ghetto Luník IX following the demolition of some buildings. Initially it was thought that most of these people would move to Ghent which already has a colony of close to 2,000 Slovak Roma, many from Luník, but whether they really get there is another question. Perhaps some will go to Manchester instead, stay for a few weeks or months (and get counted by some local enumerator), and then decide to try their luck elsewhere or return to Košice. My point is that there is a huge difference between migrating to Canada, for example, and moving within the EU. The former must be, by virtue of distance and cost, a more permanent change than the latter. I would expect such factors to have an impact on 'counting migrants'. Are we talking only about people who have permanently moved from place A to place B, or also those who are in perpetual transit between the two points, and those who are merely visiting relatives and trying out what it feels like to live in place B, and so on...?



Sam Beck

Date: 15 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

Thomas,

It is not a matter of pandering to racists, but protecting Roma. I know that when doing research in communist (actually existing) Romania, I did not publish certain things about Saxon Germans with whom I lived for 2 years because they would have suffered serious consequences. I resisted writing about LuzoAfricans (Cape Verdeans) and certain illegal dealing I observed for the same reason. I think that these examples reflect my earlier statement. Just being a Roma, just about anywhere in Europe will provoke racism, but a number as large as 200,000, a number that has no (???) evidence to support it, well...in a small space like England that is provocative. Then, of course I don't live in England. We in the USA have other forms of racism and xenophobia.

Who one falls in love with and with whom we have children is another matter. :-).

Michael Stewart

Date: 15 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

For the record - I have no opinion yet about the report. Like others familiar with scientific procedure I am used to doing a quick test of order of magnitude and as I said, (no I know who works in the sender countries feels?) that the order of magnitude of these figures corresponds with their empirical data.

I look forward very much to reading the report and am particularly interested to see whether and how they have made use of the relatively extensive literature from demography on estimating hard to find populations in different parts of the world.

Yaron Matras

Date: 16 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

I am somewhat intrigued by Thomas's continuing flagging of the report by Fremlova and Ureche in this connection.

There are actually two reports, one from 2011 on inclusion in the education system (which the authors of the Salford study do, in fact, cite), and another from 2009, which is a practical guide for managers on New Roma Communities in the UK (which the Salford study does not cite). Both are based primarily on interviews with Roma in various locations in the UK, and both are in my view,



very valuable contributions to understanding the issues facing Roma immigrants in the institutional context. A third report, also from 2009, is authored by Fremlova (with support from Ureche) and is a mapping survey of Roma from new EU member states (again not cited by Salford).

The debate surrounding the Salford report is concerned with Salford's most 'sensational' and most widely cited claim, which is that there is a total of 200,000 Roma migrants in the UK. Recall that this was the focus of the publicity that the Salford team sought for their report, and that this figure has since been adopted in some media and politicians' comments as fact. Recall also that by his own admission in the Channel 4 News interview on 30 Oct, Phil Brown's motivation to carry out the report was to highlight the need for additional resources to support Roma. The responsibility that Phil took on himself is therefore of considerable magnitude: not only was there a danger that the figure would back-fire and lead to calls to curtail migration, which is what has happened, but there was also a danger that if the figure was found to be incorrect, then that would serve as an excuse to withhold additional resources, or even to withdraw existing ones.

Thomas refers us to the Fremlova and Ureche report from 2011. This reports makes only one single statement about numbers, which is: "Although it is not known how many Roma live in the UK, the best estimate is around 500,000." (p 23). The authors don't elaborate, but refer the reader instead to Fremlova's report from 2009, while in their joint report from 2009 (practical guide) they say that "There is no clear picture of the number of Roma in many areas due to inaccuracy or, in some cases, non-existence of data on Roma" (p 20).

In Fremlova's 2009 report, she relies on a combined method of questionnaires sent to local authorities, reports from local practitioners, and interviews with Roma in various locations about their awareness of other Roma and the size of Roma families. There is thus a triangulation of methods here that goes far deeper than that of the Salford study. Unlike the Salford team, Fremlova is open in regard to the individual sets of figures received from these different sources and discusses them in detail (p 79ff): Local authority estimates give 24,000, while adding responses from practitioners raises the estimate to 49,000. Adding responses from Roma raises the estimate again to 111,000.

This is still far from the 500,000 cited in the joint 2011 report with Ureche. How can the two figures be reconciled? On p 83 of her report from 2009, Fremlova mentions that anecdotal reports from Roma put the figure at anywhere between 400,000-1,000,000 (i.e. five times the estimate of the Salford group). The figure of 500,000 thus seems to be simply a convenient 'compromise' between Fremlova's source-based estimate of 111,000 and the highest possible anecdotal figures cited by some Roma, of 1,000,000.

One could of course argue that *IF* Fremlova's figure of 111,000 was accurate in 2009, and *IF* the population of Roma migrants has nearly doubled between 2009-2013, then the Salford figure of 200,000 *MIGHT* be accurate. These are both big *IFs*. (For Manchester, we have no indication of any significant increase in Roma migrants since 2009; in fact, there has been out-migration from the city of Manchester into neighbouring municipalities in the Greater Manchester area, such as Oldham, and only a very small number of new arrivals from outside the UK).



But the point is *not* that the figure is obviously inaccurate; the point is that the Salford study's methodology is fundamentally flawed, and therefore there is no basis for the claims that it is 'pioneering' or that it presents 'hard data'. So once more, at stake in this debate is the reliability and reputation of research on Roma migrants in the UK, and elsewhere for that matter, too. The Salford team may have guessed right, but then again it's possible that so have some of Fremlova's Roma interviewees, or some lone officer at the UK Border Agency. What we expect from academic colleagues, especially those who venture out into national media and parliamentary lobby groups, is a sound, transparent, and reliable research method, and that is something the Salford team has not delivered.

How can we fix the situation? In our report from November 2009 on Roma in Manchester's Gorton South district, we provided an estimate of a local community, based on face to face interviews with around a third of the community members, and supported by reports from schools that had a proven awareness of Roma pupils' background (not all schools do). If we could set up a network of research groups around the country to replicate such local investigations, then quite possibly we might arrive at a more accurate indication not just of numbers, but also of problems and issues on the ground. This would seem more promising both as a collaborative research venture and as one that could deliver more reliable insights than an abstract calculation tool designed to market products like vacuum-cleaners and the like to consumers.

At the same time I cannot help but wonder whether we actually need a solid estimate of Roma in the entire country. Many Roma prefer not to identify themselves as Roma to authorities, but to blend in; and many, such as the Gabor Roma from Transylvania or the Latvian Roma -- both in North Manchester -- and the Hungarian Roma in Salford and Bolton, do so very successfully. There is at the moment pressure from local Traveller Education and International New Arrivals teams on these groups to "self-ascribe", primarily so that these teams can argue for a greater remit and more resources for their own staff. Our local survey of Gorton in 2009 was designed in conjunction with the community, in order to help flag their needs, and was immediately followed by a joint intervention programme of local authority, voluntary sector, and the university, first with support from the government's Migrant Impact Fund and the Big Life Company, and now with EU support. This has led to much improved school attendance and attainment rates, decriminalisation of the community, the emergence of community youth leaders and role models, and currently a campaign for Roma self-reliance (called "Le kio ilo ande-l dand!" or "Take your destiny in your own hands!").

Where such local interventions depend on understanding local issues, including numbers, then a survey seems justified and feasible. At national level, however, it is not clear what speculations on numbers can achieve, especially considering the risks of manipulation of data and the unleashing of undesired and counter-productive responses by those who are not supportive of Roma social inclusion but would instead like to see migration stopped. The EU's call for National Strategies for Roma Inclusion target local ('indigenous') Roma communities in the first instance, rather than migrants, but some countries, such as Austria and Sweden, do refer to Roma migrants as one of the target groups. In the UK, Roma migrants may certainly benefit from a national strategy for



inclusion. But lobbying for one should place qualitative issues in the foreground, rather than the tricky and very risky numbers game.

Voiculescu Cerasela

Date: 17 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

I endorse David Scheffel's view. It is the same for Romanian Roma, who look for informal/formal work within EU, by traveling, in the course of one year or less than one year, from one country to another: Portugal, Spain, Germany, France, UK, Ireland.

Thomas Acton

Date: 17 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

I think we should be grateful to Yaron for this very useful summary analysis of the work of Fremlova and Ureche, which really answers its own question as to why I should have flagged it up. He perhaps, also, is, somewhat uncharacteristically, too polite to point out that I may have over-relied on my memory in citing their work, so I'll own up to that in advance.

It also puts our positions much closer together. We are agreed that so far from being innovatory, the methodology claimed by Brown et al is probably much less thorough and diverse than that of Fremlova and Ureche, and certainly opaque in a way that theirs is not. (It isn't "anecdotal", it's just opaque.) That they cite the 2011 report, but not the 2009 one suggests that they may have been aware of this, which makes their claim to innovatory methodology disingenuous at best.

Fremlova and Ureche were even more frank about their methodology and findings in several seminars and talks they gave over the whole period of their work, and it is possible I may have mixed up my memories of these seminars with my memories of the reports. I really wish that Heather Ureche was still with us to discuss these matters. May I suggest to Yaron, however, that Lucie Fremlova might be the very best person from whom to request a review of the Salford study for the journal Romani Studies.

And of course, given that civil servants were thinking, after Fremlova and Ureche, in terms of 200,000, how reassuringly convenient it may have been for them that Brown et al came in with the surprisingly specific figure of 197,000!

Second, I agree with Matras, that whether or not 200,000 is a realistic and conservative estimate, is not the main point. What matters in this debate, is the way that estimate was spun in the press. I am grateful Matras now acknowledges that the estimate is a possible one. Of course, as he points out, it rests on a whole series of "ifs". But that is the nature of statistical extrapolation, and all sampling methodology. No one rubbishes the British Crime survey because it scales up its estimates based on



intensive local samples. This is what I read Brown et al as telling us they are doing - they just give us very little detail of how. So I don't actually think we can say their methodology is "fundamentally flawed" - they don't really tell us enough about it to make that judgment. I don't think we can assert that their methodology is both opaque AND bad. We have to opt for one or the other.

Third, I am also "intrigued" that though Matras ends with a ritual obeisance to his friends in the anti-numerate world of conservative social anthropology, his combative intellectual curiosity has led him to dive into the numbers game with all his wonted gusto. I actually think this is a good thing. It is possible to argue that we should keep quiet about how many Blacks, Asians, Jews and Roma there are, for fear of scaring the working class. Enoch Powell, that quintessentially dishonourable Tory, always argued that he was not racist, but immigration control was necessary because the majority are. It has always seemed to me that pandering to racism thus is actually more dishonourable than being racist. My whole life I have faced people in church, in the pub, in public meetings (actually even in universities) who have turned to me incredulously and said "You can't really mean that." So I am confident - and glad! - that whatever Matras might say here, keeping quiet about possibly inconvenient truth is not something he will ever actually be able to do for long. His occasional unthinking brutality to victims ill prepared to cope with it is a small price to pay for this.

Can we defend Brown et al.? I used to sit on a university ethics committee, and I know how bureaucrats, reifying the idea of ethics, often take inappropriate models from clinical practice, and apply them wholesale to the social sciences. This is especially so on the issue of confidentiality, and we probably all know Roma, Gypsies and Travellers angry about having been quoted without acknowledgement because idiot university administrators have imposed a rule that informants should never be identified. Sometimes we even get photos of people, even community leaders, who are not named, even though they are easily identifiable. So it is possible, I suppose, that Brown et al. just weren't able to stand up to an ethics committee ordering them to give inappropriate undertakings of confidentiality.

The Salford study was a team effort, led by Brown, who also has administrative responsibilities. Is it possible that Brown himself didn't realise quite how much his underlings were cribbing from Fremlova and Ureche in setting up their methodology? That wouldn't excuse, but might partially explain it.

And although various people on this list have idealistically defended the commitment of universities to scholarly standards in research, my conversations with Matras at times have indicated how robustly even he has had to assert the integrity of his research against university administrators, even with his distinguished eminence. Those of us who know what it's like in lesser universities can only speculate what pressures Brown et al. may be under to make their research pay, which may have taken the publicity for their research out of their hands.

So I still think that Yaron's absolute dismissiveness towards the figure of 200,000 was unjustified, and detracted from the impact of his analysis and critique of the public use made of this estimate. It might have been possible to make these points, and flag up the weaknesses of Brown et al. without



quite so categorically accusing them of being bad people. But absolute respect to Yaron for taking the trouble to read and make a serious analysis of Fremlova and Ureche, which raises the tone of this debate very substantially.

Yaron Matras

Date: 18 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

There is a simple reason why the method adopted by Salford is 'fundamentally flawed': it relies entirely on filling the gaps through a projection that assumes even distribution of population across locations with similar attributes/general population indicators. This method is not applicable to immigration settlement, because there is no reason to assume that Roma -- or any other group of immigrants -- are attracted evenly to all locations in Britain. Our recent investigation of the spread of immigrant languages in Britain proves this point very clearly:

<http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/census/CoDE-Language-Diversity-Census-Briefing.pdf>

It shows that on the whole, immigrant groups tend to cluster in particular areas and locations.

If the gaps were marginal, then that might not be as big of a problem. But in the case of the Salford study, by the authors' own admission the figures received were for a tiny minority of locations; and even those figures are not verifiable, their sources vary considerably so we don't even know that they are comparable, and the figures used as estimates for a few locations and which then serve as a basis for the overall calculation are not disclosed, making the entire exercise non-transparent.

By analogy, if we took an estimate of the number of Orthodox Jews in Gateshead (total population ca 200,000), where there is a noticeable community, and then assumed that the same proportion of Orthodox Jews have settled in all other locations of similar population size, average income, etc around the country, we would reach a figure that is many times higher than the actual number. Such an exercise would remove from the equation the ethnographic and historical aspect -- the factors that motivated Orthodox Jews to settle specifically in Gateshead and not elsewhere. Estimates only make sense if they take into account people's motivations, aspirations, and social and family networks and these were all completely ignored by the Salford team, which didn't speak to a single Romani family.

So there is no a priori reason to assume that the projection method that Salford applied is reliable, and every reason to assume that it isn't. My critique of the study has always been about this central aspect of the method, coupled with the over-confident manner in which the authors sought publicity for the figure.



Thomas Acton

Date: 18 February 2014

Subject: RE: Roma migrants, Salford, Manchester and statistical speculation

At the risk of anticipating the Manchester Summer School on Research methods, it would be good if we could remember to distinguish between reliability and validity. Reliability does not imply validity, merely consistency, while of course, as Yaron points out, a result that happens to be true does not mean the methods used to produce it are reliable.

The method described by Brown et al. could certainly be applied consistently, so we have no reason to suggest it is unreliable. If I were setting out to reach a plausible result just under 200,000, the very first thing I'd do is make sure I applied a consistent set of algorithms. So I think, although they are vague about their analytical methodology - it doesn't appear at all in their methodological appendix - they are unlikely to have been inconsistent or unreliable in their analysis. And one would hardly have suggested they ignore "general population indicators"! The nub of the matter is how they took the other "similar" attributes, of which they give us a rather vague list, into account. The validity of their method would entirely depend on how they did that, and without details of their algorithms and only regional distributions of their survey data to look at, that is uncheckable. And there is no apparent attempt to establish likely margins of error at any significance rate. But it's certainly not impossible to map clustered populations in this way. The late Sir Claus Moser, in his spare time from the Royal Opera, wrote an entire book on Cluster sample methodology, and while I think his enthusiasm for it was possibly a little over the top, there's no reason to assume a priori that they didn't attempt to map clusters within their regions.

I agree that relying on local authority respondents to report school data, or information from Roma families themselves, rather than seeking to assess those directly as Fremlova and Ureche did, makes the data less firmly based. I'm also slightly worried by the way they cite the figures from 2006 CRE Report on Gypsies and Travellers, as though they were a primary source rather than an inconsistent and uncomprehending extrapolation of previous flawed extrapolations. But why on earth should Brown et al. use "fundamentally flawed" algorithms? Broadly reasonable ones would work just as well, especially if you know what will be treated as a reasonable result. Even if it is presented with implausible specificity.

Perhaps actually we should be grateful for the crude way that the report was spun. Without that it would not have been so apparent how the mild and dispassionate tone of the report itself primarily presents a statistically ornamented account of how local authorities perceive their "problem". This view from the local authorities is actually quite useful; but it subordinates the perceptions of front-line teachers, social workers and grassroots community leaders, and gives very little voice to what Roma themselves think, or the very considerable achievement and contribution to British society of Roma immigrants over the past 25 years.



David Scheffel

Date: 19 February 2014

Subject: Accuracy, advocacy, or both?

I am intrigued by the suggestion that social scientists should keep quiet about "inconvenient truths" - such as the number of Roma migrants in the UK - in order to avoid potential misuse of their data. Although Thomas appears disdainful of mainstream anthropology, he is actually advocating an approach pioneered by its North American practitioners. I know scores of U.S. and Canadian anthropologists who won't publish all kinds of 'inconvenient' data for fear of causing harm to the reputation of the people they did fieldwork with. One consequence of this trend has been the excessive power we have collectively given to often ridiculously ill-informed ethics committees and the silly expectations that Thomas is also critical of. This is a slippery slope which may lead to a degree of self-censorship that can actually result in harming the interests of the people we are trying to protect. I addressed this issue in a short article dealing with the stereotypes and reality of violence in the context of Romani studies. It's available through Project Muse here

http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/collaborative_anthropologies/v005/5.scheffel.pdf. I can also send it directly to anybody interested.

It appears that the link doesn't work as it should. Here is the citation: Advocacy Trumps Accuracy? Stereotypes of East European Roma and Ethnography, Collaborative Anthropologies, vol. 5, 2012."

Huub Van Baar (Feb 22 2014)

Date: 22 February 2014

Subject: ['Mobile Banditry' Report]

Since the fall of 2013, I have followed the discussions about the Salford study Migrant Roma in the United Kingdom (Brown et al 2013) and, more generally, about the reemergence of anti-Romani (as well as anti-Romanian and anti-Bulgarian) attitudes in the UK. Several times, I intended to contribute to the discussion at this RSN forum, but my involvement in intensive domestic debates in the Netherlands repeatedly led me to postpone my comments. Now, I would like to take the opportunity to make a few comments on the ongoing debate and its more general context.

First, I am very happy to see that, over the last week, the debate has substantially deepened and that those involved in the debate have begun to explain their arguments and viewpoints more extensively. I agree with Martin Kovats, who remarked that the discussion is important, but that its tone has not been the best – at least until a week ago. Now that the tone has improved, I think we also should widen the debate. The discussion has hitherto focused on the UK, on the methodology used in the Salford study, and on the report's (possible) direct and indirect impact on the public and political debate in the UK.



To widen the debate, I think we should discuss the role of academics and scholarship on the Roma with regard to (Roma-related) policy formation and transformation, particularly at a time of renewed anti-Gypsyism and particularly since the materialization of the 'ethnic turn' in EU Roma policy of 2011. The explicit ethnicisation of EU Roma policy and the EU's promotion of the development of national Roma strategies in the context of the EU Roma Framework have led to new and renewed ways to govern Romani minorities at local and national levels. These developments have led to the rise of the demand for those who can advise policy-makers about Romani affairs, particularly in countries that have hitherto been hesitant or reluctant to develop 'national' Roma strategies. To clarify my own position with regards to these trends, I first would like to move beyond the UK-centric dimensions of the current debate and to give an example of what has recently happened in the political and public debate in the Netherlands and, to a lesser extent, Belgium. Probably, this example is also telling of the challenges yet to come in the public debate about the migration of Roma to Western Europe.

The domestic debate (that has once in a while occupied me since the fall) began with the publication of another report and its media coverage. In *Mobile Banditry: Central and East European Itinerant Criminal Groups in the Netherlands*, Dina Siegel states that the Roma are radically overrepresented among criminal East and Central European gangs that are currently operating in the Netherlands. Siegel is a professor of criminology at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands and she published this report, which was commissioned by the Dutch police academy, first in Dutch in November 2013 and then in English in February 2014.

However, mid-September 2013 and, thus, relatively long before the report's official publication, Siegel appeared in various influential Dutch and Belgian media to present the main findings of her research. She claimed that 80 per cent of these criminal gangs are Roma and that, according to her Romanian police sources, almost all of them are Roma. She proposed to break what she called 'the Gypsy taboo' (zigeuner-taboe). The revealing of the ethnic Romani background of these 'itinerant criminals' would avoid the stigmatization of all Romanians and Bulgarians, or even of all Eastern Europeans in the Western European media. Many Dutch and Belgian media reproduced these claims without checking her report (which was not yet available at that time).

In the first half of October, I saw the final version of the report for the first time. I intervened in the Dutch media; I gave a couple of interviews and wrote a long newspaper article in which I criticized both the report and Siegel's media performances from the perspective of the Europe-wide emergence of what I call 'a reasonable anti-Gypsyism' (see the attachment). A scholarly article on this debate and its wider European relevance will appear this spring, in a volume on anti-Gypsyism edited by Timofey Agarin. In this message, I will not repeat the arguments of my article. In brief, the problem is the following:

Siegel's report is based on relatively small-scale qualitative, rather than quantitative, analyses. In no way, these analyses can justify the claims that Siegel made in the Dutch and Belgian news. The percentages she mentioned in the media are even not included in the report. Moreover, the report and the research done to write it do not support the claim of the overrepresentation of the Roma in the so-called 'itinerant criminal groups'. Consequently, this overrepresentation remains a



hypothesis or, better, is based on speculation. Many of the conclusions of the report are based on statements about the Roma made by police officers in Romania and Bulgaria. These statements have been taken at face value and have not been put in their institutional and societal contexts. The report states that some 907 Dutch criminal files have been analyzed. Nowhere, however, does the report explain exactly how these files have been analyzed, what kind of selection criteria were used to identify them or whether there were any difficulties pertaining to their examination. For instance, have police and officers of the judiciary registered nationality and ethnicity in these criminal files, and if so, how exactly? How exactly have the researchers combined the information about the nationality and ethnicity of offenders with the report's central concern with regard to mobile banditry? The report offers no answers to these crucial questions. This report was commissioned by 'Science and Police', a department of the Dutch police academy. The Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security considers Siegel's report as a backing of its policy which, when it comes to Sinti and Roma in the Netherlands, primarily and symptomatically focuses on law enforcement.

What do the political, public, and scholarly debates about Siegel's and the Salford report tell us about the more general themes that I introduced at the beginning? Some caveats are in order here.

First, the tone and content of Siegel's report are very different from those in the Salford report. Siegel's report, for instance, is much less carefully and openly explaining its methodology than the Salford report. Nevertheless, both reports share a lack of transparency. Apart from various problematic issues with regards to the Salford study that have already been discussed at this forum, I consider the maintenance of the anonymity of the authorities that responded to the survey as one of the key problems of the report's methodology (as troublesome as the problematic extrapolation of figures to the entire UK). This maintenance implicitly obscures the reasons of why local and municipal authorities mention particular figures, which are, in the end, not verifiable and, thus, not transparent. Siegel's report, on the other hand, uses most of its sources – whether ethnographical, juridical, historical, or conceptual – in an inadequate way. Statements made in interviews are taken at face value; the analysis of criminal files remains a black box; 17th and 18th century patterns of crime among 'Gypsies' are uncritically considered as forerunners of contemporary 'criminal Roma families', and the concept of itinerant crime is poorly explained and embedded in the overall research.

Second, the intentions of both reports are clearly very different. The authors of the Salford report 'are striving for equality for Roma' and intend to 'refocus on tackling anti-Roma sentiments' (see Philip Brown's email of November 19th), whereas Siegel claimed in the media that she wanted to break the 'Gypsy taboo'. In an interview with the Dutch daily newspaper *Vrij Nederland*, she suggested that 'the Gypsy has returned' ('de zigeuner is terug'), implying that (some of) the stereotypes are correct. Nevertheless, despite these differences between the reports, both of them have directly or indirectly produced anti-Gypsyism - in the public and political debate.

One of the crucial issues that we should rethink from the perspective of the involvement of academics in policy formation is the relationship between my first and second point. What does happen when a lack of transparency enables either the authors of such policy-oriented reports or



other actors (media, politicians, policy makers, extremist groups, etc.) to directly or indirectly contribute to anti-Gypsyism? Both the Salford study and Siegel's report are strongly policy-oriented reports. In general, there is nothing wrong with such reports, but they should use reliable and sound methodologies and provide transparency on their primary sources and the ways in which these have been used.

I am afraid that the ongoing development and transformation of national Roma strategies, and the correlated rise of the demand for strongly policy-oriented and 'positivist' studies on the Roma will more frequently lead to the writing of (commissioned) studies in which the conceptual and methodological backbones are weak or even flawed. Governmental authorities ask for easy to understand, relatively straightforward reports that preferably include figures and numbers that can be used to develop the official national strategies. In particular now that we are entering the Romani Studies Network's second stage, in which the focus of some of us will be more explicitly on policy-oriented contributions, I want to encourage the members of this network to rethink their current or future contributions to policy formation.

In the Netherlands, but also in other EU member states, I have observed a tendency to exclude those with expertise on the Roma from new national policy-oriented developments. Of course, to some extent this is not a new trend, but, since the recent reinforcement of anti-Roma and anti-migrant attitudes in Western European countries, this pattern seems to fit those national policy trends in which more 'progressive' approaches to Roma issues are increasingly lacking.

One of the increasingly recurring topics in these policy trends is the supposed large-scale involvement of Roma in transnational criminal activities. This topic has also become a main concern of transnationally organized collaborations between police forces of several EU member states, including those of the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, France, and Romania. As some of you may know, in the context of the EU Roma Framework the Dutch government has Europeanized its approach to crime-related activities and called for the inclusion of the combatting of Roma related and organized crime, including human trafficking, into EU policies dealing with the Roma. Similarly, during its EU presidency in 2010, the Belgian government has called for a European approach to so-called itinerant criminal groups.

The risk of these and similar developments is that policies (start/continue to) address the symptoms, rather than the causes of, most notably, the migration of Roma to Western Europe. A troublesome development, related to the main topic of this message, is the way in which police forces and officers have brought information in the news that also lacks transparency but that has nevertheless been used to support national and transnational policy formation and to maintain or even reinforce anti-Gypsyism in the public debate.

Let me give one example. Some of you may be familiar with the name of Bernie Gravett of the London Metropolitan Police. Between 2007 and 2009, he led Operation Golf at Europol, a collaboration between the Metropolitan and Romanian police on the combatting of organized trafficking. I have not seen evidence supporting Gravett's claim that the forced participation of Romani children in organized crime in Western European countries is a wide-spread, large-scale,



and almost uncontrollable phenomenon. I wonder whether some of our UK-based colleagues know more about Gravett's claim. In any case, Gravett played a major role in a recent Dutch news item in which he was interviewed and made this claim about Roma children who have been forced to steal and beg across Europe, as part of organized criminal networks (established by Roma). For those of you who would like to watch this fragment, please have a look at the following link (load the video at the right-hand side, wait a while and go to min. 8.44): <http://nieuwsuur.nl/onderwerp/601674-honderden-roma-in-criminaliteit.html>

Let me be clear about my view of research into criminality, in order to avoid that (some of) you may think that I do not grasp part of the current European reality. Without a doubt, research into criminality should be possible, and one should be able to identify the proportion of minorities among criminals. Similarly, within the limits of the law, the police should be able to map criminal offences committed by the members of minorities, including the Romani. The fact that criminal behavior occurs among the Roma is not under discussion here. However, what should be under discussion is the way in which the accumulation of deep-seated and repeatedly reproduced stereotyping of the Roma has led to abuses in the way they are treated, in the media and in policy building and implementation regarding them. As soon as strongly policy-oriented reports are not transparent in terms of their methodologies, statistics, the use of sources, or otherwise, these reports can easily contribute to anti-Gypsyism. I hope this message will encourage a debate about the relationship between expertise on the Roma and the demand for policy-oriented reports, particularly in a time of intensifying anti-Gypsyism."

David Scheffel

Date: 23 February 2014

Subject: Dutch report

Huub van Baar is right in cautioning against potentially inflammatory generalizations based on questionable research techniques. But I am not so sure that the claims he attributes to the report he refers to, are justified. Dina Siegel's 'Mobile Banditry' examines the phenomenon of hit-and-run crime in the Netherlands and asserts that much of it is perpetrated by people from Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania. The report is concerned with the criminality of 'Central and East Europeans' rather than Roma as such. I don't think that Siegel states "that the Roma are radically overrepresented among criminal East and Central European gangs that are currently operating in the Netherlands." What she does claim is that within the wider category of crime perpetrated by CEE mobile gangs (such as car theft, shoplifting, break-ins, etc.), Roma are over-represented in the sub-category of pick pockets, beggars, and shoplifters.

One of the five conclusions reached by Siegel is that criminality is a way "to escape repression, discrimination and economic destitution", suggesting that crime-fighting strategies ought to include a larger effort at improving the socio-economic conditions in the criminals' home countries. Clearly, the report is intended as a warning about some unintended consequences of the free movement of people in the enlarged EU.



I sympathize with Huub's regret that scholars with Roma-related expertise tend to be overlooked in policy-orientated discussions. But could this trend be attributable to the already mentioned unwillingness among these 'progressive' academics to deal with inconvenient truths in a constructive fashion? The large-scale participation of certain groups of CEE Roma in criminal activities committed in Western Europe may be one such inconvenient truth. By immediately invoking anti-Gypsyism instead of using our expertise to explain why this situation prevails and how to change it, we might very well disqualify ourselves from the advisory role we may feel to deserve."

Sharmin Hamvas

Date: 24 February 2014
Subject: RE: Dutch report

Agree with David with 'using our expertise to explain why this situation prevails and how to change it' but don't fully agree with 'large-scale participation of certain groups of CEE Roma in criminal activities committed in western Europe' since in a lot of cases they are wrongly targeted by media and local authorities assuming that they are the perpetrators as we have clearly seen in the 'alleged' child abduction cases in Ireland and Greece."

Nando Sigona

Date: 27 February 2014
Subject: on the Roma as EU citizens

I thought this might be of interest to some of you. It's a short piece on EU citizenship, Roma mobility and anti-Gypsyism": <http://nandosigona.wordpress.com/2014/02/25/eu-citizenship-roma-mobility-and-anti-gypsyism-time-for-reframing-the-debate-2/>

Thomas Acton

Date: 3 March 2014
Subject: Van Baar's comments over the Migrant Roma in the UK debate, criminology and 'tone'

Van Baar's comments over the Migrant Roma in the UK debate, criminology and 'tone'

Huub Van Baar's comments of 22 February are interesting and important. I immediately ordered Dina Siegel's book in English, and will study it carefully, bearing in mind Huub's comments on the disparity between the book and the way it was spun in the media.

At the same time we should remember that because the media says a professor said something that does not necessarily mean she did.



In the early 1990s, I was asked by the Daily Mail to write a think piece on Slovak Romani migration, and offered a fee of GBP800. I accepted straight away, and asked for the deadline. The reporter said, oh, I didn't need to write it, he would ask me questions and write it up for me. I told him never in a million years and again, when was the deadline. He told me a couple of hours' time. I gulped and said no problem; I'll e-mail it to you. I dropped everything else and turned out a trenchant piece, answering the Mail's questions exactly, and got my Head of Department to cover the first ten minutes of my next class. (This was back in the days when supportive Heads of Department who'd do things like that still existed.)

How naive I was! They never published my brilliant piece. But I was a whole lot luckier than the next academic they bamboozled. The found an elderly Jewish professor of East European Studies, somewhere in Manchester as I recall, pulled the same trick and got away with it. It was Yom Kippur the next day, and the first thing he knew about it was the rest of the minyan frowning at him all through the service. When they got outside the synagogue one of them asked him how he could have written such a disgusting racist article. He was flabbergasted to see that where he'd told the Mail this was exactly the sort of thing that East European governments said about Roma, in the article it became that this was exactly the sort of thing one would expect of Roma. Poor guy! He went to his union, and his university, and they got lawyers who told him he had to stay quiet while they sorted it out. What could they do? I never heard what happened in the end.

And that could have been me, but for my visceral distrust of the fascist-sympathising liars who run and staff the Daily Mail! I invoiced them for the GBP800, pointing out that they would have published it if only it had been racist, and told the lies they wanted. I got a cheque for GBP800 which after a moment's agonising, I passed straight to the Gypsy Council. My children were so cross with me - back then you could get a family holiday for GBP800.

My point is that the sort of instant rewards and malevolent mindsets of most of the media, and the fact that the money they toss around makes the kinds of grants people squabble over in academia look just silly, can make fools of almost any academic. Newspapers will exaggerate cautious caveats into irresponsible scaremongering at the drop of a hat; but eventually they over-reach and discredit themselves, as over the non-existent January rush of migrants to the UK. At the same time we do need to make clear to friends, colleagues and students who buy the Sun or the Mail regularly, that we regard such purchases as moral failures, not just a difference of taste. (Of course we still owe them a non-judgmental friendship, but such judgments are part of the duty of friendship.)

It is worrying to hear of the re-emergence of the at least partially discredited fantasist Bernie Gravett in the Dutch debate. He is probably, through Operation Golf, the most prolific abductor of children in Europe since the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Fortunately, in England we still have an extremely professional and committed child protection service, (despite cuts and abuse from government ministers and the press) who promptly and within days returned the children abducted by police officers to their parents or carers. It is believed by some, that the Foreign Office and security services view Operation Golf as a success because of its deterrent effect to Roma migration in general, and there has been no public apology.



There has, however, in the UK, been a cautious realisation by mainstream police thought that the conspiracy theories of Operation Golf are not of much practical use in dealing with actual street crime. A conference organised a couple of years ago by the British Transport Police at the London Transport Museum reached out both to Roma NGOs and Romani Studies, and crucially acknowledged that the success of police work in the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller Communities depends on the police being seen to be as willing to protect them in general as to arrest the small minority who break the law. The conference was addressed by the quite wonderful Petr Torok, the first migrant Roma to enter the police force in the UK, who is in the process of forming, with the blessing of senior officers, a Romani Police Officers' Association with an English Romani police officer, Jim Smith. So I agree with Huub that it is now both possible and necessary for Romani Studies academics to enter criminological debates, perhaps in a way we could not, before. When I am near my real computer, I can happily e-mail to colleagues the materials I have on and from the London Transport Museum conference, and a paper I wrote in reaction to it, which I presented at the GLS conference in 2012.

I can also, if I can locate it, supply an audio recording I made, and gave to the RSG and other interested parties, of a meeting in Ilford where Bernie Gravett agreed to meet local authority workers, community relations leaders and others to answer questions some weeks after the abortive mass arrests of Operation Golf. He came, expecting to bowl listeners over with a PowerPoint presentation full of weird statistics, photos of alleged gang leaders and their Romanian palaces, culminating in a slide on Lavinia Olmazu, whom he alleged had actually stolen 12 million GBP, rather than the mere 2.3 million alleged at her trial, and implied that she was the educated mastermind behind the whole crime wave. (Arrant nonsense, in case anybody is in doubt, even if Theresa May appears to believe it.) He was then taken aback by the incredulity, factual debunking, and open hostility of his audience, very few of whom were Roma.

I'm only sorry I didn't record an incident outside after the meeting, when my mother, then in her late 80s, went up to Gravett and told him she and her son had looked very carefully at the case of Lavinia Olmazu, and felt sure there had been some sort of mistake, and could he please have another look at the matter. This ranks in my mind with the occasion, just before the last election, when my mum went up in the street to Eric Pickles (local MP, and now government minister) while canvassing, and asked him what he was going to do to meet the need for Gypsy caravan sites in Brentwood. He went bright red, shook and growled "Madam, I'm afraid I have no sympathy with your position whatever!"

Bernie Gravett displayed more self-control. He just grinned and said "Sorry, love, can't do it. Moved on now."

Where I am afraid I don't quite agree with Huub is about the implied importance of raising the tone of the discussion. He is inspecific about the factors they think have lowered the tone, but I would speculate there are at least two:

- 1) An opinionated, anecdotal approach, much like my comments above, in fact, but also including a willingness to comment on reports the writers haven't actually read.



2) A tendency to robustness in argument, which may even become insultingly disparaging, causing offense to those criticised, and discomfort to the tender-hearted who hate to see any conflict.

It is true that the tone of some of these exchanges may not be exactly exhibit the high collaborative gravity the officials of the European Union and the Council of Europe expected when they funded the European Academic Network for Romani Studies and sanctioned this e-mail network. But that is precisely why it is a good thing; it is a fair reflection of the range of quite ordinary people who have acquired, or are on their way to acquiring the paper qualifications that fit them for the elite status of EANRS membership. Most are not towering theoretical geniuses like Huub van Baar, or passionate brainboxes like Yaron Matras or even pontificating nerds like myself. They mix the substantive with the trivial; the insightful with the mistaken and prejudiced, and only slowly sort them out through their squabbles. The squabbles may be more productive of consensus where it can be reached than the hidden malice and favoritism of anonymous peer review.

The present outbreak of high-toned sweetness and light would not have broken out if Yaron had not started the debate with his polemical attack on the Salford Report, and made us all think more deeply about demographic and methodological issues. And I praise Yaron's passion as someone who has not altogether infrequently felt the rough edge of both his tongue and his pen, both deservedly and undeservedly. The undeserved criticism does not matter; it falls away, and also wins sympathy from some quite delightful young people, and without the undeserved I would not get to take advantage of the deserved (which actually sometimes wins even more sympathy from the same delightful young people.) Matras' passion is also a guarantee of his honesty; when he disagrees with something he is almost incapable of holding his peace. Sometimes this leads to overkill which is painful to witness; but how much more terrible it would be if he were capable of using rhetoric to camouflage rather than accentuate his beliefs.

Without Yaron's critique we would not have had Philip Brown's measured and revealing response. A critical reading of the Salford report also shows us not only its weaknesses, but also its strengths in its qualitative insights into local authority attitudes - which we do need to document, just as much as we need to document migrant Roma attitudes. We may feel NOW that we need to record the latter more than the former; but will that be true in 20 years time? Van Baar's work, encapsulating the most important legacy of the "Dutch School" of Romani historiography, teaches us we need to approach all reports with a contextualising, critical eye, rather than treat any as "authoritative sources". The first question to ask, when seeking to understand any social-scientific text, is "with whom is the writer, covertly or overtly, expressing their disagreement?"

If the low tone of some of the contributions to this network helps its funders realize these truths, (and the way they, too, are contested) then it serves a useful purpose.