Mid-term review- UK Roma National Integration Strategy: Roma at the intersection of ethic-inclusive, post-racial and hyper-ethnic policies.

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Mid-term review- UK Roma National Integration Strategy: Roma at the intersection of ethic-inclusive, post-racial and hyper-ethnic policies.

Abstract
Rather than developing a specific strategy to promote Roma integration, the UK government decided to use mainstream legislation. However, the complex mechanisms of UK policy-making, means that responsibility for integration is defused. Because of the devolved governmental systems and the localisation agenda, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) populations often find that they are subject to different forms of inclusion and exclusion depending on their specific geo-political location. In this paper, the authors suggest that in addition to experiencing the impact of devolution, 'mainstreaming' approaches to Roma integration are failing because GTR communities find themselves located at the intersection of three different policy ideologies in the UK: 'ethnic inclusive policies' (that seek to promote Roma inclusion), 'post racial policies' (that obscure specific forms of structural inequalities) and 'hyper-ethnic' policies, (targeted in a discriminatory manner towards certain communities). With the British about to exit from the European Union, concerns are also being raised about the future of Roma communities and the commitment to their inclusion.

Key words, Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, UK, ethnic inclusive policy, post-racial policy, hyper-racial policy, Brexit.

1. Introduction

The high levels of social exclusion and discrimination experienced by the Roma across Europe have been well documented (European Union FRA, 2018, European Commission, 2012, World Bank 2016). In 2011, the European Commission called on all EU Member States to respond to these concerns, by adopting the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS). Member States could choose to either establish an integration strategy, or outline a set of objectives and measures to promote the integration of their Roma populations. The UK government lobbied for this second approach and have advocated for using existing policies and legislation to promote Roma inclusion (Ryder and Cemlyn, 2016).

In this paper, the authors examine some of the complexities of the United Kingdom (UK) policy-making mechanisms that are purported to promote Roma integration in the UK, developing a critical analysis of these mechanisms and the ways in which they impact Roma integration.

The paper is divided into two parts; in part one, the authors outline the complexity of UK policy-making mechanisms, where policy is made at both the central government level, as well as through the devolved administrations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Consequently, different aspects of policy that relate to Roma integration are informed either by policies at the central/national level, or at the level of the devolved governments (National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups et al, 2018). In recent years the central government has also been promoting the localisation agenda, which means that decision-making and budgets are supposed to be transferred to local

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governments, the local authorities and local people. Consequently, even within the same nation, Roma people have differing access to services and support depending on their geo-political location (Lane, Spencer and Jones, 2014).

However, in examining the finding of the EU mid-term review of the UK National Roma Integration Strategy, the authors argue that part of the reason that 'mainstreaming' approaches are failing is because Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities find themselves located at the intersection of three policy ideologies.

Therefore, in part two of this paper, the authors highlight the implications of 'ethnic inclusive', policies' (that seek to promote Roma inclusion), 'post racial' policies' (that obscure specific forms of structural inequalities) and 'hyper-ethnic' policies (that are targeted in a discriminatory manner, towards nomadic Gypsies, Travellers and the Roma migrants). Finally the paper ends with a brief reflection on the UK exit from the European Union (EU) community and concerns about the future of Roma inclusion.

2. Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the UK

The European Commission uses the term 'Roma' in policy and other documentation as an umbrella term to describe a range of heterogeneous communities, which includes Romany Gypsies and Travellers living in the UK. Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers have been part of British culture for hundreds of years. However, the National Census only collected data on Gypsies and Travellers for the first time in 2011, indicating there are 58,000 people who self-identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller in England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2011). This is usually considered to be a considerable undercount and other reports have estimated that the Gypsy and Traveller population is nearer to 200,000 to 300,000 (Irish Traveller Movement in Britain, 2013, Wemyss et al. 2015).

Under the Equality Act (2010) Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised as minority ethnic groups, with 'protected characteristics' and should be afforded protection from discrimination under equality legislation (Legislation.gov.uk, 2010). However, a number of reports have highlighted that many Gypsies and Travellers face multiple disadvantages as well as discrimination, hate speech and hate crime (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2015, National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups al., 2018). In the UK the term 'Roma' generally refers to the Roma communities from East and Central Europe who have arrived as migrants largely by exercising their freedom of movement as EU citizens. The Roma are not a homogeneous group and are from various nations and different subgroups that can transcend national borders and consequently, they often have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as different needs to indigenous Gypsies and Travellers (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2016). It is difficult to know how many Roma live in the UK and the 2011 national census failed to collect any ethnic data on Roma communities. However data generated from one national study based on questionnaires to UK local authorities, suggests that the migrant Roma population in the UK is approximately 200,000 and they tend to live in and around major cities (Brown, Scullion and Martin, 2013).

3. Roma integration and policymaking mechanism in the UK

The UK has a complex system of policy making and only some aspects are made by central government with the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland responsible for other aspects of policy. England does not have its own parliament and issues affecting England, are decided by UK central governmental policy. The UK policy-making process is further complicated by current (and preceding) governments' promotion of 'localism' through the Localism Act (2010) where resources and power are supposed to be devolved down to local communities via the local authorities. These structures are significant for Roma inclusion because it means that Roma may be subject to different forms of inclusion and exclusion, across the UK, depending on where they happen to reside.

3.1 *National policymaking and Roma inclusion*

Despite being a signatory to the NRIS in 2011, the UK government's lack of policy or legislation to promote Roma inclusion across the country means there is no systematic mainstreaming for Roma inclusion within central Government policy. In the absence of any national policy initiatives specifically promoting Roma integration, mainstream laws and policies have had to act as a proxy for a NRIS. Ryder and Cemlyn have suggested that the divergent approaches of the devolved administrations could 'provide for interesting comparisons as to 'which method is most effective in advancing social justice' (2016, p. 153). However, the fifth monitoring report on the UK by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2016) expressed their concern about the lack of a national Roma integration strategy across the UK and recommend that the authorities develop with GRT representatives a set of policies to address the inequalities across the domains of health, education, accommodation, employment and social integration experienced by all of the communities in all the countries of the UK. Not only do devolved governmental systems create differing levels of funding and integration policies that result in differing types of inclusion and exclusion but the location of Roma people within each country means that they will often have differing access to services and support and therefore different opportunities for integration.

3.2 *The role of devolved government and Roma inclusion*

The devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of their own policies (with the UK central government being responsible for these matters in England). Funding for the devolved governments largely comes from a combination from central government, local government and EU funds. However, the funding of local services has proven highly contentious, raising questions about how funding is distributed and issues of inter-regional equity (British Academy, 2018). Policymaking is the responsibility of central and the devolved governments but the delivery of Roma integration at local levels, may be inhibited or facilitated by the availability of central funding, regardless of the intent of the devolved government (Poole and Adamson, 2008).

Scotland: The Scottish government has not developed a NRIS, although a report *'Mapping of the Roma Community in Scotland'* (Scottish Government, 2013) highlighted a range of inequalities that migrant Roma are facing across Scotland. The report failed to make any substantive recommendations and research suggests that three years later little had changed for Roma in Scotland (Scottish Churches Racial Justice Groups, 2016). Moreover, because the majority of Roma live in and around Glasgow, the Scottish policy response and service provision has been concentrated in this area, often leaving others across Scotland with limited support. The Scottish government has

introduced a 'Race Equality Action Plan' (Scottish Government, 2017), aiming to promote positive change for minority ethnic communities, which only makes limited reference to the needs of GTR communities.

England: England does not have a NRIS. Central government policy has established the legal parameters for equality though the Equalities Act (Legislation.gov.uk, 2010) and this applies across all of the devolved administrations (except Northern Ireland) but there is little evidence that this is advancing GTR integration. Indeed, the Leveson Inquiry 2012, highlighted how Gypsies and Travellers are often the targets of hostility and/or xenophobia in the UK media. Other reports have highlighted how GTR communities continue to face race-hate and discrimination (National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups 2018; Traveller Movement 2016; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016). In 2018, the government produced a consultation document for England outlining a strategy for integrated communities (HM Government, 2018), but at the time of writing, no progress has been made on these proposals and there was very little mention of GTR populations.

Wales: The Welsh Government, are the only devolved government to establish a NRIS. The first strategy in 2011 (Welsh Government, 2011), achieved some of the objectives - although ironically it made little mention of Roma migrants. The new strategy (Welsh Government, 2018) embeds Roma concerns throughout the document. However, it is notable that the strategy only involves partial monitoring on progress on integration relating to nomadic Gypsies and Travellers caravan/ trailer sites and there is very limited monitoring relating to progress on the integration of Roma migrants.

Northern Ireland has not developed a NRIS, although the government has developed a Racial Equality Strategy for 2015-2025 (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2015). This highlights the needs of Traveller and Roma communities and recognises the lack of data monitoring racial equality. Overall, there is very little mention of Roma integration in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (2018) published an investigation into Travellers' accommodation, noting that the community often face hostility and discrimination from public authorities and the settled community.

A number of EC monitoring reports on the UK NRIS have expressed concern about the lack of a national Roma integration strategy across the UK (European Commission, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). Although Ryder and Cemlyn (2016, p. 53) have suggested that the divergent approaches of the devolved administrations has the potential to 'provide for interesting comparisons as to 'which method is most effective in advancing social justice' in practice the devolved governmental systems means that GTR communities often have differing access to services and support, and therefore different opportunities for integration. The lack of a NRIS in most of the devolved governments, combined with a lack of national monitoring on Roma inclusion, also makes it difficult to compare progress on Roma integration within and across the devolved governments. These issues have been further complicated by the 'localism' agenda.

Localism and Roma inclusion

Since 2010, central government has promoted 'localism', aiming to decentralise power to local councils and local people (Department for Communities and Local Government, (2011). However, most local authorities now find themselves as agents of austerity, with the task of delivering central government budget cuts, while trying to maintain services (Penny, 2017). Between 2010-2016 local government spending fell by 27% with poorer areas and regions impacted disproportionately (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2017; Hastings, Bailey, and Bramley, et al. 2015). There are examples of positive practice within some local authorities, which are usually piecemeal and locally based for example, Glasgow City Council and its partners in the Govanhill neighbourhood or the Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion (LERI) project in Chatham, Kent (European Commission, 2016; EU Fundamental Rights Agency 2017). Nonetheless, a report by the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups et al. (2018) suggests that in some areas the "localism" agenda has not only failed to promote Roma integration but has facilitated an active "anti-Gypsy" stance. The EC's assessment of the UK's NRIS summarised the shortfalls of localism as hindering Roma integration by highlighting poor cooperation between central and local government; the lack of Roma input into policy formulation, and the lack of data gathering for monitoring purposes (European Commission, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016).

4. Progress on the National Roma Integration Strategy in the UK and the Mid-term review

The EU Commissions midterm review compared the situation of the Roma in 2011 and 2016 across EU Member States and noted some limited advancement in the four areas of housing, education, health and employment but concludes that progress has been 'unequal and modest' with much more required (European Commission, 2017). By 2018, a Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (European Commission COM (2018) 785 final), highlighted that at a general EU level, there was progress in the area of education, with positive changes in relation to early school-leaving and early childhood education, where the participation of Roma children grew in most Member States. However, the same Communication also suggested that while the self-perceived health status of Roma had improved, access to medical care continued to be of concern. Overall, the Communication suggested that progress towards Roma integration goals were limited, and 'no improvement has been observed in access to employment, and the share of young Roma not in employment, education or training has even increased. The housing situation remains difficult' (European Commission 2018, 3.5). In common with past EU documents, the EC 2017 and 2018 reports both recommend greater coordination and use of structural funds; greater stakeholder involvement and calls on member states to develop a set of measures to monitor progress and for greater alignment between mainstream inclusion policies and the key areas for Roma integration. It was notable that these 2017 and 2018 documents did not specifically mention the UK, indeed that last comment on the UK's NRIS was in the EC's (2016) assessment of the implementation of the NRIS that noted that in the UK:-

"The mainstream approaches have not demonstrated sufficient impact on improving the situation of Roma. Targeted measures could be further exploited by also using the existing possibilities under the ESIF funds. Scaling up the existing initiatives implemented throughout the UK should also be explored" (2016, p. 89).

An explanatory memorandum from the Department of Communities and Local Government (2017) shows no significant change in policy orientation and recalcitrance towards the Commission's recommendations for speeding up the integration process. It reiterates the UK government's commitment to advancing Roma integration within broader social inclusion and integration policies and its retreat from the targeted measures and measurable outcomes recommended by the Commission. Instead the memorandum highlights the role of local areas in determining the most effective integration measures for its local GTR communities. Similarly with regards to planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites the government argue that it is the responsibility of local authorities to assess the need for sites and to identify a suitable five year supply of sites to meet those needs.

In response to Commission concerns over the lack of data the memorandum argues that the UK has some of the most comprehensive ethnic data sets in the EU and that the collection of additional data will be considered on a case by case basis. It notes that enforcement of anti-discrimination and hate crime offences is a matter for the courts and regarding strengthening Roma capacity and involvement the memorandum notes that a quarterly Liaison group meeting with representatives from the GTR community is held but failed to include any changes or outcomes that the group has engendered. Much of the memorandum provides examples of mainstream policy measures to which GTR people can avail themselves, for example noting that the proportion of GTR pupils who qualify for the Pupil Premium (additional funding to enable schools to address educational inequalities between pupils from low income household and their peers) is much higher than average. However the memorandum contains no concrete proposals for addressing the poverty that many of these families face and remains wedded to an ethnically inclusive approach that focuses on increasing human capital. The UK government's approach also combines elements of a 'post-racial' approach that denies the distinctively ethnic dimension of Roma exclusion with 'hyper-ethnic' policies which, in opposition to equalities legislation, identify and isolate discrete populations and subject them to discriminatory and repressive policy measures. The implications of these three interrelated policy approaches are discussed below.

5. Ethnic inclusive policies and Roma integration

The authors have drawn attention the UK policymaking mechanisms that are supposed to promote Roma integration, which raises the question of whether current policy approaches are sufficient to actually promote integration.   The Equality Act (2010) is the dominant policy promoting integration in the UK although in Northern Ireland, the equality legislation is not harmonised and consequently, there is a lack of consistency in protection and rights (Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2011).

The UK Equality Act prohibits unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and protects individuals from unfair treatment. It protects GTR and all other 'race groups' from discrimination and others with 'protected characteristics' (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016). In addition, the Equality Duty (2010) places a duty on all public authorities to promote equality of opportunity and good community relations. Combined, the Equality Act (2010) and Equality Duty (2010) should promote equality for all, and by default, it should also promote Roma integration. Despite this legislation, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016) five-yearly found that Gypsies and Travellers continue to face multiple disadvantages and discrimination in

education, health, the workplace and the justice system.

This is not surprising because while this legislation gives individuals 'rights', it does not require systemic changes, or address the role of neo-liberal economies in perpetuating social exclusion (Goldberg, 2009). Indeed, despite providing the conditions for the legal protection of ethnic minorities, evidence indicates that a legal 'right' to equality does not necessarily result in equality or inclusion (see for example, the governments' own 'Race Disparity' report) (Cabinet Office, 2017). Imbalances of power and inequality are core to neo-liberal economies that are inherently unequal and which therefore prevents equalities legislation (such as the Equalities Act), from having a genuinely transformative effect. In the following section, the authors examine how these contradictions (between equality policy located within a system that promotes inequality), negates (or makes 'invisible'), the specific ethnic experiences of inequality and discrimination, through 'post-racial' discourses.

6. Post-racial society: rendering Roma inequality invisible.

Despite the fact that race has been used to promote exclusionary practices (Umut, Karim and Nahaboo, 2016), within 'post-racial' discourses ethnic and racial differences are considered inconsequential because it is the individuals 'choice' to maximise opportunities available to them within neo-liberal economies (Goldberg, 2009). Theories of post-racial societies have been informed by the earlier work of Beck (1992), who argued that in 'risk societies' social inequalities lose their rootedness in the social realm and are articulated as personal inadequacies. Goldberg suggests that far from the post-racial discourse signalling an end to a racialised society, it presents us with a new modality of racism, in which racist practices operate, under the illusion that 'the dream of the non-racial has already been realized' (2015, p. 108). Indeed as Solf suggests, the fact that the UK government failed to recognise the specific ethnic needs and experiences of GTR communities, it 'neglects the social existence and abject situation of most Roma, and enables authorities to make the issue non-existent' (Solf, 2018, p. 142). It might also be suggested, that by deploying the policy tools of mainstreaming to further GTR integration, the UK government aimed to make invisible (depoliticise) the specific ethnic inequalities that are perpetuated through its economic and social structure.

7. Hyper-ethnic policies in the UK

Paradoxically, while post-racial discourses negate the structures that create ethnic (and other dimensions) of inequality, some ethnic communities find they are made 'hyper-visible' (Powell and Van Baar 2018). For Gypsies and Travellers, there has been a long history of hyper-ethnic policies linked to nomadism. Due to the lack of legal stopping places, many find themselves confined on permanent sites that are usually geographically and socially isolated from settled communities (Powell, 2013). These sites also create ethnic boundaries where Gypsy and Traveller communities often find that they are subject to extreme surveillance and control (Richardson, 2007). This is despite the fact that they have protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010) and local authorities have a public sector equality duty.
A recent Civil Society Monitoring Report on Implementation of the NRIS in the United Kingdom also argued that the 'mainstream' approach used by the UK government (i.e. using existing equality legislation to promote Roma integration) had failed to facilitate equal opportunities for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities (National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups et al., 2018).

Indeed, not only has the UK government failed to introduce the Roma integration strategy but it has also introduced hyper-ethnic policies. For example, recently the Conservative government introduced a significant change in the definition of 'Gypsy' and 'Traveller' under planning law (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2015).   This means that if a Gypsy or Traveller stops travelling permanently (e.g. for health reasons or old age), they will lose their 'Gypsy status' for planning purposes. These hyper-ethnic policies also have implications for public sector professionals who often become hyper-vigilant of Gypsies and Travellers. For example, in the domain of social work, researchers have identified a significant and disproportionate rise in social work interventions involving GTR children due to systematic prejudice (Allen and Riding, 2018).

Roma migrants also experience the impact of hyper-ethnic polices linked to their status as both Roma and migrants. With the expansion of the European Union, the arrival of A8 and A2 migrants from Eastern Europe into the UK, was greeted by a hostile response from much of the British media (Clark, 2015). The Roma became constructed as a distinctive type of migrant, portrayed as linked to criminality, antisocial behaviour and 'welfare tourism' (Clark and Rice, 2012). In response to these public concerns, the UK sought to restrict both access to employment opportunities and welfare benefits for Roma migrants right up until 2014. Consequently, Roma became subject to a complex web of hyper-ethnic policies, where they experience different rights and entitlements from other European citizens (Palidda, 2011; Solf, 2018).

8.   Conclusion

In light of the EU mid-term review of Roma Integration, there are two main reasons that 'mainstreaming' approaches are failing in the UK. Firstly, because of the devolved governmental system in the UK and the ideology of localism, GTR communities are subject to different forms of inclusion and exclusion depending on the specificity of their geo-political location.   Secondly, the authors have suggested that GTR communities often find themselves located at the intersection of three conflicting policy ideologies. *Ethnic-inclusive* policies (as exemplified in the Equality Act, 2010), views inequalities through an individualistic and neo-liberal lens, which perceives GTR inequalities from a 'cultural deficit' perspective. This stresses the need to equip individuals with the right skills and competencies to thrive in a free-market system (e.g. through education and training) and to facilitate them to 'take up their rights' to education, health, employment and housing (Silva, 2014). However, the lack of a NRIS may also be considered as part of a wider discourse about *post-racial* policies, where racist discourses are obfuscated by a new modality of racism, where racial differences are no longer considered to be of any consequence. This effectively depoliticises the specific ethnic experiences of poverty, discrimination, marginalisation, vilification and social exclusion in GTR communities.

The authors of this paper have suggested that what is problematic about *ethnic-inclusive* and *post-racial* policies is that they both fail to recognise the context of GTR communities and their specificity of experiences. Neo-liberal economies create and perpetuate social exclusion and the systemic nature of racism and anti-gypsyism is enacted through pre-existing social structures (James and Smith, 2017). In essence, this can be seen as part of the wider systemic violence created by neo-liberal economies (Žižek, 2008). Paradoxically, GTR communities also find themselves subject to *hyper-*

ethnic polices. While a number of reports have highlighted that GTR communities have the worst outcomes in health, education, employment and housing than any other ethnic group in the UK (United Nations, 2017; Home Office, 2016) GTR communities have become subject to a specific 'ethnic gaze' via their status as nomads or migrants and central government has designed specific ethnically-targeted polices to address these (i.e. specific planning laws related to nomadic Gypsies and Travellers and migration regulations for Roma migrants). Simultaneously, issues concerning inequality and discrimination have become subject to discourses of general inclusion (exemplified in the Equality Act, 2010)- thus vilifying some aspects of identity (relating to nomadism and migration) while at the same time obfuscating systemic racism and inequality.

In conclusion, while the authors argue that GTR people often find themselves at the intersection of the complex governmental systems, and subject to ethnic-inclusive, post-racial and hyper-racial policies, it is important to recognise that all of these factors operate within a neo-liberal framework that shapes and perpetuates inequality.

Footnote: thinking about Brexit

Following the UK referendum result in 2016 concerns have been expressed about UK based migrant Roma's 'Settled Status' and the process for securing their right to reside in the UK as well as the general rise in anti-migrant hate crime (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2016). At a wider level, there are also concerns that Roma integration will no longer be on the political agenda, especially as they already face discrimination in employment, housing, education and health (Burchardt, Obolenskaya, Vizard et al, 2018) and social inclusion objectives generally have fallen off the political radar under the impact of austerity cuts and political preoccupation with Brexit. In this regard, it has been suggested that Brexit will only have a limited impact on policy formulation and objectives towards Roma migrants in the UK firstly because of the desultory response by the government to Roma integration and lack of commitment to improving the position of GTR communities to date. Secondly because economic injustice, inequality and exclusion is inherent within the current socioeconomic system regardless, meaning Brexit is unlikely to create much change for the Roma living in the UK (James and Smith, 2017). Much depends on the outcome of internal divisions within both of the major political parties about Brexit and the future direction of the UK, the post-Brexit migration system and the outcome of ongoing negotiations with the EU concerning Brexit and the UK's future relationship with the EU.

Declaration of interests: None

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