Central and East European Studies Seminar Series 2012-2013

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Wednesday 30th January 2013
17.30
JOINT SEMINAR with GRAMNet http://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/gramnet/

Central and East European Studies Seminar Room
University of Glasgow, 8-9 Lilybank Gardens

Dr Jan Grill, University of Manchester

‘Struggles for movement, new forms of disconnect. Roma migrations from Central Eastern Europe to Great Britain’

Tea and coffee from 17.00
ALL WELCOME

Abstract:

Based on a long-term anthropological fieldwork among one network of Roma/Gypsy migrants from Slovakia, this paper explores their struggles for viability on migratory pathways in urban areas of Great Britain. Following the accession of new member states to EU in 2004, many Slovakian Roma migrated to Britain in search of a better life. The paper starts by ethnographically unpacking what does this striving for betterment mean, how is it imagined and what the key tropes through which Roma experience these movements are. I show how migration to Britain crystallised as one possible avenue for socio-economic and existential mobility among Roma living in conditions of growing inequalities, unemployment and poverty in eastern Slovakia. By analysing social trajectories of migrants the paper shows how unequally distributed social connections and other forms of capital translate differentially into degrees of success and failures in migration. The paper illustrates how recent Roma migrations re-configured some of the established hierarchies, inequalities and dependencies embedded within the conditions of marginality, but how the migration dynamics simultaneously accentuated new forms of disconnect and abject among those who do not migrate or those who return from their migrations more impoverished. The talk also reflects on the uncritical assumptions often made in relation to Roma/Gypsy migrations to Western Europe.