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Searching for a Higher Ground in Govanhill

Preface and Acknowledgements

Govanhill is a community I have known throughout my life. My grandparents lived on Allison Street, Govanhill (my grandfather still does). One was from County Donegal, the other from Mayo. Indeed, three of my four grandparents moved from Ireland to Glasgow in the post-war period. This research is in a way born of my curiosity of the community that is Govanhill. As a child I have vivid memories of its sights, smells and people. My secondary school, Holyrood, was in the heart of the community. Even today I still visit the place often with aunts, uncles and cousins still living in the community.

As a teenager, I began to notice that Govanhill had a bad reputation amongst some other Glaswegians and Scots and this was reflected in press coverage. More articles were being written that were critical of Govanhill, the place and its people. The backdrop to this was new waves of immigration into the community from the eastern expansion of the European community. These were being added to previous waves from Asia and Ireland. The undertone of the coverage was that both immigrants and Govanhill should not be viewed positively. This irked me as it was not my experience of the place and its people. In a sense this study is born of the disjuncture between my personal history and experience and the coverage and alternative story being told about Govanhill.

During the course of the study, I have benefitted from the supervision and guidance of my supervisors Dr. Brian Garvey and Dr. Niall Whelehan. Thank you to both for their comments on drafts, helpful discussion in supervision meetings and the professionalism, positive spirit and guidance with which they have approached the task of supervision. Other staff members have contributed to this endeavour. Not least, Prof. Arthur McIvor whose sessions on oral history and its techniques gave me great guidance and inspiration at an early stage of my research. Going back further I would like to thank the striking members of the University College Union (UCU) on the picket-lines of the university back in 2019 and 2020. This is where I first met Brian when I ‘entertained’ (well sang a few songs at least) on the picket-line and end of strike celebrations in the Student Union. Perhaps I should even thank the intransigence of university management in causing the strike, but you’re right that would be taking it too far.

Others to thank include the diligent staff members of the Andersonian (Strathclyde) and Glasgow University libraries who have assisted me along the way. Course Support Team staff members in the Department of Work, Employment and Organisation – in particular Anna who was always a great help. As was Dr. Kendra Briken in the early days in her role of the staff lead for PhD students in the department. These PhD students were also helpful in providing support and inspiration at various stages of my studies, in particular the annual meetings when I presented (often somewhat rudimentary) findings from my work.

I would also like to thank the member(s) of the department’s ethics committee for his/her suggestions and guidance during the ethics approval process for my fieldwork

research. I will not deny, that at the time some of the reasons for delay in approval appeared un-necessarily bureaucratic but, as I have learnt, this is a necessary part of the research process and one that an inexperienced social researcher like myself, can learn a lot from.

My greatest gratitude is owed to the great people of the community that is Govanhill, particularly those who volunteered their time to be interviewed for this research. Their names, words, deeds and actions appear throughout this study. They are embedded within it and given voice in the songs. In no particular order I would like to thank Fatima, Daniel, Fraser, Stewart, Roland, Simon, Carol, Ricky, Margaret (anonymised), Michael, Bernie, Roger, Jane, Caron, Augustina, Ania, Henry, Rae, Jennifer, Vivienne, Laura and Peter for their contributors to this study.

I would also like to thank all the good people who run and volunteer in the various workshops and events I have participated in throughout this research including the Govanhill Festival, Music Broth and Bees Knees Open Mic sessions.

Local cafes and hostelries should also be mentioned as over the past five years (well not so much in 2020 and 2021 (the lost covid years) I have engaged with numerous locals in informal conversation in Sweeneys on the Park, Heraghtys, the Star Bar, the Queens Park Café, the Victoria Bar, Ryans Bar (formerly Paddy Neeson's), Cibo, Transylvania Cafe and Rosie Reilly's.

I would also like to thank my family for all their support including my girlfriend Louise, my dad Neil, mum Brenda, step-dad Andy as well as brother Anton and sister Ellis. My grandparents and the stories they told of both the old country (Ireland) and Glasgow were also an inspiration – John and Eileen (now sadly deceased) and Sean and Mary.

The work is my own and any errors in fact, interpretation or the like are of course my own responsibility.

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Chapter One

Introduction – Searching for a Higher Ground

We're fighting for, fighting for, fighting for
A Higher Ground (McGarvey 2022a)

The above are the lyrics to the first song composition that served as an inspiration for this study and its title. Govanhill is virtually by every metric of wealth, income, welfare and health on the 'lower ground' of Scotland's many communities (see, for example, SIMD Scotland 2020; Clark 2021). However, many within it do not aspire to the 'higher ground' if it simply involves materialistic wealth and consumption, indeed they positively eschew it. This is their alternative 'story' and analysis. It is written from the vantage point of academia, but it is one that aspires to get under the skin of individuals in the community of Govanhill.

Like the people of Govanhill, this study is rather non-conventional and quirky. As well as utilising the rather conventional methodological tool-kit of interviews and participant observation the study has involved the creation of a collection of songs directly informed by the research (see Appendix B). It utilises a conceptual framework based on the writings of Bourdieu (1977; 1986; 1989; 1990; 1998; 1990a; 1990b; 1991; 1993; 1998).

The motivation for the study was based on personal family history and experience. My grandparents and mother grew up in Govanhill. As a child (and indeed adult) I visited there regularly. In all my time there I enjoyed the friendliness, richness and diversity of the local community. The Govanhill I knew was warm; the people were open, and the place felt vibrant and alive. In the past decade or so I started reading media stories depicting Govanhill as a place ridden by crime and poverty and essentially one of Glasgow's many (according to this narrative) working-class neighbourhoods. This would be reinforced as well through conversations I had discussing my study in taxi drives home from gigging late at night before and during the making of the project. This was not the Govanhill I recognised from personal experience. My 'problem' therefore became explaining this disjuncture between media stories of Govanhill and my personal experience of the place.

Throughout my undergraduate social science degree, I became increasingly aware of how the subject I was studying (political science) was detached from the people and places of its focus. My classes on research methods and philosophy were dominated by the notion that there was a political world 'out there' waiting to be discovered through the rigorous application of sophisticated research techniques that seemed to have a bias for production of quantitative data. Whilst I would not question the validity of this approach and the insights and explanation it can generate, in the back of my mind I had a nagging feeling that it was missing some key aspects of the reality of political and social relationships.

This was coupled with my uneasiness with studies of poverty that generate statistics around the notion of multiple deprivation and the desire for measurement. Data on

unemployment, average income, universal credit, free school meals, car ownership (SIMD Scotland 2020), whilst informative did not reveal much about the actuality of living in communities. Rather than studying communities with such cold, clinical detachment and objectivity my aspiration was to get closer – to immerse myself in them and seek to reveal *their* understanding of everyday life and experience.

At the core of this thesis is the interplay between structure and agency, refracted through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1977). This study will draw on Bourdieu's key theories – the habitus, field, capital, symbolic violence and doxa – to analyse the social space of Govanhill. Govanhill is not simply a case study. It is a prism through which we see reflected the broader machinations of neoliberalism, media scapegoating, racialised narratives, class devaluation, and the silencing of subaltern voices (Wacquant 2008b; Tyler 2013; Hall 2013; Skeggs 2004a; Skeggs 2004b). This is, in essence, a search for higher ground - not just a physical or social uplift, but an ethical one. By this, the thesis contends that if we are to challenge the dominant narratives that reproduce inequality, then we must start by listening : listening to the stories, struggles, and resistances of those living at society's margins.

Methodological Approach: Listening and Reframing

This research is qualitative and reflexive in its methodology. It draws upon interviews, personal testimonies, and cultural artefacts (including song lyrics) to construct a rich, grounded account of life in Govanhill. It privileges the voices of those often spoken about but rarely heard in mainstream narratives.

Inspired by Bourdieu's (2000) own sociological approach in *The Weight of the World*, this thesis views lived experience as both empirical data and moral testimony. It insists that sociology must be more than the study of systems; it must be a practice of listening, of witnessing, and of challenging the taken-for-granted.

The goal is not to provide a definitive account of Govanhill, but to open up space for alternative narratives. Narratives that reveal the humanity, creativity, and dignity of those who continue to struggle for higher ground amidst the ruins of neoliberalism.

The voices of working-class communities are often lost in historical and sociological studies. This study 'Searching for a Higher Ground in the Real World of Govanhill' is a critical exploration of the socio-political forces that shape, stigmatise, and dispossess such communities. In situating Govanhill - a small, densely populated working-class community in Glasgow - as the ethnographic heart of this investigation, this research aims to humanise abstract sociological theory while examining the structures of symbolic violence and neoliberal governance that have defined contemporary working-class existence in Britain.

The broad research question to be addressed is, to what extent can Bourdieu's assumptions about the stigmatisation and dispossession of disadvantaged communities, be applied to the communities of Govanhill in Glasgow? The study seeks to answer this question based on achieving a range of objectives.

Firstly, it assesses the relevance and usefulness of the theories of Bourdieu in understanding the community that is Govanhill, Glasgow. It asks whether the theoretical framework outlined by Bourdieu is of utility in understanding the dynamics of power in Govanhill. What insights does it help us reveal? What does it miss? Does the experience of Govanhill residents add weight to the theory, or does it challenge it?

Secondly, it directly evaluates what I refer to as 'the Govanhell thesis' that has been widely promulgated across print and social media. It asks whether the picture projected of Govanhill outlined measures up when set against the everyday reality of Govanhill residents.

Thirdly, and unashamedly, it seeks to give voice to the residents of Govanhill. It seeks to outline *their* story through both written word and song. In this study there are multiple quotations taken directly from the mouths of those in the Govanhill community. Their words were then utilised in the lyrics of a set of songs drawn from my own experience of immersing myself in Govanhill, interviewing residents and being inspired by their life stories and experience within the community (see Appendix B for song lyrics).

This fourth objective relates to the third. The utilisation of a unique and non-conventional methodology to add insight and understanding. This involved the co-production of songs that form part of this study. In a sense it extends the conventional boundaries of social science to incorporate the art of song-writing. This, it is argued, adds a new layer of depth to the analysis, capturing the emotions and atmospheres of lived experience within Govanhill that transcend traditional academic text. Chapter 4 will deal in more detail the rationale for and methods utilised for using song.

In seeking to achieve these objectives, the desire is to produce a new and original study that says something new about Bourdieu's theory. In applying academic standards alongside creative methods, the study will interrogate the theory, seeking to both develop and critique it in the process. By placing Govanhill, the place and its residents, at the centre of my approach it will reveal new empirical insights about the community.

Govanhill: the case study

Govanhill, long maligned in mainstream political discourse and media as a site of degradation, dysfunction, and danger (see chapter five), is in fact a complex, multilayered social space. It is a neighbourhood of paradoxes - simultaneously vibrant and marginalised, diverse and segregated, resilient and precarious. A frequent target of tabloid sensationalism (see chapter four), Govanhill has become shorthand for the 'problem community', a repository for the anxieties of a nation in flux. Immigration,

poverty, social housing, and cultural difference converge here in ways that reveal both the failures and potentials of contemporary Scottish and British society.

But this thesis does not seek to romanticise Govanhill, nor does it aim to reify it as a static or monolithic entity. Rather, it treats Govanhill as a dynamic site of struggle, a social field shaped by both internal cultural currents and external structural forces. The stories and voices from Govanhill contained in the chapters ahead are not framed as passive victims of policy, but as active subjects negotiating power, identity, and meaning in deeply unequal terrains.

Theoretical Framework: Bourdieu, neo-liberalism and the erosion of the social

To make sense of these dynamics, this thesis utilises Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *field*, *capital* and *symbolic violence* (see Bourdieu 1977; 1990b; 1991; 1993; Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). These concepts provide the conceptual framework necessary to understand how social agents internalise their positions within hierarchical structures, and how these positions are maintained through symbolic violence and misrecognition. The *habitus*, formed by past socialisation and embodied history, predisposes individuals to act, feel, and think in ways that reproduce existing power relations. The *field*, a structured space of positions and power relations, offers arenas in which capital - economic, social, cultural, and symbolic - is accumulated and contested. And symbolic violence, Bourdieu's most critical concept, describes the subtle, often invisible ways in which domination is exercised and accepted as legitimate.

This thesis critically engages with Bourdieu's ideas, not as an end point, but as a starting point. His framework is useful, though incomplete. The work draws on the refinements and critiques of scholars such as Skeggs (2004a; 2004b; 2005, 2014), Sayer (1999; 2002; 2005a; 2005b; 2010), Reay (2004) and McKenzie (2012; 2015) all of whom have extended Bourdieu's theory to better capture lived experience, emotional suffering, and the moral economy of class and race. Where Bourdieu's own work has been critiqued for its abstractness or determinism, this thesis grounds theory in the messy, and contradictory world of everyday life in Govanhill.

The rise of neoliberalism is not merely an economic project. It is a cultural and moral one. It recasts citizens as consumers, communities as markets, and rights as commodities. In this worldview, structural inequality is reframed as individual failure; unemployment becomes laziness, poverty becomes irresponsibility, and solidarity becomes sentimentality. Under this paradigm, the welfare state is not just restructured, it is delegitimised. The stigmatised narratives of 'welfare cheats', 'benefits scroungers', and 'feral families' gain traction precisely because they align with a moral logic that blames the poor for their own dispossession.

Govanhill, within this framework, is both an actual place and a symbolic battlefield. It is portrayed as the quintessential example of what happens when people 'fail to aspire'. But as this thesis will argue, such portrayals are not only misleading - they are actually violent. They erase the structural forces at play, and they silence the voices of those living in the aftermath of deindustrialisation, austerity, and racialised scapegoating.

Drawing on the work of Harvey (2005), Brown (2015), and Wacquant (1996; 2007; 2008a; 2008b; 2010), this research explores how neoliberal *doxa* – tacit and socially constructed knowledge so embedded in society that it is viewed as natural and therefore goes unquestioned by many - has infiltrated not only policy, but also the mental structures of everyday life (Bourdieu 1977). Competition, self-reliance, and market rationality for many has become common sense. Social suffering becomes internalised, and symbolic violence becomes normalised. This process is not accidental; it is actively cultivated through media discourse, political rhetoric, and institutional design.

Symbolic Violence, the Construction of the 'Other' & Community Resistance

One of the central claims of this thesis is that symbolic violence is as consequential as material deprivation. Indeed, it is often the mechanism through which material inequalities are sustained. Through misrecognition, individuals come to accept their social positions as deserved, inevitable, or natural. This is especially true in contexts where the poor and racialised are persistently 'othered' - rendered deviant, dangerous, or disposable.

The thesis examines how symbolic violence operates in Govanhill through a range of mechanisms: from housing policy to tabloid headlines, from school exclusions to everyday interactions. It also acknowledges how race, migration status, and gender intersect with class to produce multiple and overlapping forms of symbolic domination. The language of disorder, criminality, and cultural backwardness used to describe Govanhill's migrant populations is not just discursive. It has real effects, shaping access to services, employment, and dignity.

Yet symbolic violence is not unchallenged. This thesis is also concerned with counter-narratives and forms of resistance. Drawing on interviews, song lyrics, and testimonies from community actors, the research reveals moments of rupture, where the dominated reject the terms of their domination and seek to reframe their realities. These are moments of agency, creativity, and resilience. They do not erase suffering, but they complicate the image of passivity so often projected onto working-class and migrant communities.

In contrast to the atomising tendencies of neoliberalism, this thesis places considerable emphasis on the communal practices and alternative value systems that

persist in places like Govanhill. Concepts such as McKenzie's (2012; 2015) 'local value systems' and Skeggs's (2014) 'use-value' are deployed to highlight how residents create meaning, worth, and solidarity in environments that offer them little official recognition.

Here, social capital is redefined - not as elite networks or exchange-based calculations - but as mutual aid, shared knowledge, and everyday acts of care. While Bourdieu's own account of social capital has been critiqued for its narrow, instrumentalist focus (see, for example, Callinicos 1999; Jenkins 2002; Sayer 2005b; Garrett 2007), this thesis argues for a broader, more humane understanding of social relationships. In communities like Govanhill, social capital is not merely about advancement; it is about survival, dignity, and hope.

These communal practices are often undervalued in dominant discourses, yet they are central to the lived experience of many working-class and racialised individuals. They form the basis for resistance, not only to material hardship but also to symbolic annihilation. This thesis thus positions such practices not as marginal or residual, but as central to any meaningful understanding of social justice.

Thesis Structure

The thesis chapters that follow are structured thematically, each building on the conceptual foundation laid out in this introduction.

Chapter two introduces Bourdieu's conceptual framework in detail, including habitus, field, capital, and symbolic violence. It critically evaluates these concepts and explores their relevance to this study. In particular, it focuses on his approach to an understanding of power in community, introducing key concepts such as capital and symbolic violence. In analysing Bourdieu's theory, it also reflects on some critical appraisals of it as well as the refinements that have been made. It is argued that despite some shortcomings, Bourdieu's conceptual framework is of utility in examining power, stigmatisation and dispossession in the community that is Govanhill.

Chapter three situates Govanhill within the broader context of neoliberal political economy, exploring how welfare retrenchment, individualisation, and cultural scapegoating shape lived realities and dominant narratives. It elaborates on the themes of welfare and stigmatisation further and seeks to provide an outline of the broader macro context of the study. Neo-liberal ideology is outlined and examined with a focus on its evolution and its historical underpinning and assumptions. Part of the argument of this study is that, rather than internalising neo-liberal individualistic discourse many of the actors in Govanhill actively challenge it in seeking to build chains of collective community solidarity. In doing so, they are directly challenging the territorial stigmatisation of the people and community of Govanhill.

Chapter four outlines the original and unique methodology adopted in this work. It eschews the conventional positivist quantitative methodological framework of some 'modern' social science in favour of a more interpretive approach. The focus of this work is centred on understanding the people and community of Govanhill, examining and clarifying their subjective experiences and the meanings and intentions of their behaviour. It does this through a variety of techniques including interviews, participant observation and, uniquely, song-writing. This chapter will outline the rationale and justification of this approach. It will argue that songs are uniquely powerful in drawing out the voices of the unheard and supposedly powerless. They allow the discovery, understanding and amplification of individuals who otherwise may go unheard. Subsequent chapters explore themes of stigmatisation, media discourse, and community resistance. They draw heavily on qualitative data and aim to centre the voices of those most affected by social suffering and symbolic violence.

Chapter five introduces Govanhill, the place. As the case study site for this study, it is important that its historical, geographical and contemporary environment is outlined. It is a place that has, in recent years, suffered from an almost uniformly negative external appraisal across various media platforms. Indeed, so toxic has been the coverage that 'Govanhell' has emerged as a widely used descriptive term for the place. This chapter will introduce and critically appraise this 'Govanhell' thesis, introducing the voices of the residents of Govanhill and the artistic output in the form of songs derived from the study for the first time. In doing so, it outlines how these residents have challenged the negative narratives surrounding their community and presented a much more positive account.

This theme is developed in chapter six 'We're fighting for a higher ground' which explicitly focuses on the place shaping activities of the residents themselves and how they have actively sought to shape their community, its people, infrastructure, housing and general environment. It outlines and analyses three key events - the Kenmure Street protest in 2021, the Govanhill Baths Campaign from 2001 the relatively recently created annual Govanhill carnival and community festival. Each of these events, in different ways, are testimony to the bonds of collective solidarity and how it has been utilised within the community to narrate a much more positive story about the community that is Govanhill.

Chapter seven outlines the concept of a Govanhill community value system acknowledging its underpinning and inspiration for some of the songs on the accompanying EP (McGarvey 2002a; 2002b; 2002c; 2002d; 2023a; 2023b - lyrics in Appendix B). It outlines details of various institutions and community initiatives that give physical embodiment to such values. These values stand in contrast to the consumerist, individual ones associated with the neo-liberal paradigm and importantly present an alternative non-materialistic one to the residents of Govanhill. Like other chapters, the lyrics of the songs composed will be highlighted. Each song draws source and inspiration from the testimonies of the residents interviewed during fieldwork, each song bringing different aspects of these words alive. The process of

how these songs were composed will be outlined, highlighting the clear connections between the interviews and the lyrics.

Chapter eight draws together the different strands of the preceding chapters. In particular, it explicitly connects Bourdieusian theory to the methods, analysis and argumentation of this study. It revisits the key pillars of Bourdieu's theory and directly addresses their relevance and significance in Govanhill. In doing so it challenges Bourdieu's rather pessimistic evaluation of the potential for working-class agency.

Chapter nine re-visits the objectives outlined above providing a conclusion to the study. It offers a critical reflection on what it means to seek higher ground—both sociologically and politically. It considers the possibilities for alternative imaginaries rooted in community, care, and collective dignity.

In writing about Govanhill, this thesis is examining more than a single neighbourhood. The Govanhill case is generalisable to other city communities across the UK. An examination of these communities involves confronting the very soul of both Scottish and British society, gripped as they are with issues of inequality, exclusion, and disconnection. This thesis does not offer easy answers or policy prescriptions. Rather, it seeks to disrupt the certainties of neoliberal common sense and to ask: What does it mean to be seen? To be valued? To belong?

In the pages that follow, we will explore not only the mechanisms of domination but also the cracks through which light can enter. Stories and song lyrics that unsettle, complicate, and inspire will be outlined – voices that have been seldom heard capturing the day-to-day life and vitality of Govanhill. These social stories challenge the dominant social order and illustrate the importance of people power as a catalyst for pride, resistance and community cohesion. In doing so, we will take part in the collective search for a higher ground - a ground where dignity is not a privilege, but a right.

Chapter 2

A Bourdieusian Conceptual Framework

This chapter will outline, examine, elaborate and critically evaluate the utility of Bourdieu's conceptual framework for the purposes of this research. Despite flaws that will be noted, it will argue that it is an approach with much philosophical, methodological and conceptual merit in examining the stigmatisation and dispossession in the 'disadvantaged' community of Govanhill. It will be argued that Bourdieu's ideas have much illustrative potential in understanding and explaining how power and capital work to demean working-class communities in Govanhill, Scotland nationally and elsewhere.

This work will utilise Bourdieu's conceptual arsenal, as well as empirical analysis, to challenge the hegemonic narratives fuelled by the media and politicians. It will do so by seeking to give voice to the often voiceless. It will not, however, do so uncritically and identifies problematic aspects. This chapter will not only analyse Bourdieu's conceptual theory but will also flesh out his framework with commentary and analyses from other scholars (Sayer 2002,2005a,2005b; Skeggs 2004b; McKenzie 2015; Jensen 2014). In operationalising it for the purposes of this work it requires careful elaboration of its many facets. It is a body of work written in what, for many, may appear impenetrable language with conceptual complications. This chapter will unpack these concepts rooted within the case-study of Govanhill, analysing how they manifest within the dynamics of the social space.

The first of which is the concept of 'Habitus', a key philosophical departure from the conventional social theory dualism of structure and agency. Whilst 'habitus' focus on thoughts, actions and interactions, Bourdieu's concept of 'Field' broadens out the analysis to incorporate the social arena and the broader environment of human behaviour. It is through these concepts that we can examine Bourdieu's reflections on capital that have become influential across the social sciences. He broadens traditional Marxist analysis to encompass cultural, social and symbolic as well as economic capital.

The theoretical concepts of habitus, field and capital lead us to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence. This involves an examination of how societal and mental structures operate in society often with the complicity of the *victims*. Essentially the subordinated and dominated in society do not view themselves as such due to the sheer weight of destructive and damaging *violence* exercised upon them.

The final section of the chapter will examine criticisms and suggest refinements to Bourdieu's theory. This discussion and analysis will be reflected upon throughout successive chapters as this work seeks to introduce, analyse and evaluate Bourdieu's theory in practice. It can be considered the opening of a wider evaluation that this doctoral thesis seeks to undertake.

Habitus

Central to Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework is the commitment to break away from the dualist opponents of structure/agency, objectivism/subjectivism that inform

much of the philosophical assumptions on the nature of social reality. To Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 8-10), Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jean-Paul Sarte's opposing doctrines of structuralism and social phenomenology respectively both posed deficiencies regarding the nature of social reality. For Bourdieu, structuralism has an inability to acknowledge the active role of subjects in the creation of reality, whilst social phenomenology fails to account for the objective structures which govern and influence human behaviour. Thus:

> 'Social facts are objects which are also the object of knowledge within reality itself because human beings make meaningful the world which makes them' (Wacquant quoted in Wacquant and Bourdieu 1992:7).

Bourdieu aims to break away from structuralism's overly-passive view of agency in the formation of the social world by also highlighting the role of the individual in shaping it through agents' interaction through the *field.*

Habitus was Bourdieu's way of addressing the inadequacies prevalent in sociology with the overarching reliance on dealing with dualist objective/subjective which he felt was insufficient in grasping the true nature of reality. Thus, he states: 'I would talk of constructivist structuralism or of structuralist constructivism…' (Bourdieu 1977:123).

Through the interrelationship between society, status and the body (Ignatow 2009 as cited in Weigmann 2017: 96-7), each habitus contains in it a *schemata* which acts in a highly uncritical level (2017: 96-7). The term *schemata* was originated by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget in the early 20th century; these are 'constructed mental structures' (Lutz & Huitt 2004:2). In his theory, he emphasises that in most interactions in the social world, individual thoughts are organized unconsciously based on influence from past encounters and adaptability to the environment of which they are situated in the present (Weigmann 2017:96-7; Lutz & Huitt 2004:2).

In parallel, as a 'structured structure' (influenced by past socialisations) and a 'structuring' structure' (moulded by ongoing present influences), the *habitus* is simultaneously produced internally in the mind but also externally through social forces in the *field*. The objective world external to the body and subjective body act 'in a dialectical relationship' (Bourdieu 1990b:125) to form the social world, whereby 'the body is in the social world but the social world is also in the body' (1990b:190). Thus for Bourdieu (1990b) as cited in Weigmann 2017:97), individuals interpret and perceive the world not only mentally but also physically as they *think* and *feel* constrained within the boundaries of the habitus which 'incline agents to act and react in certain ways' (Thompson, intro, to Bourdieu 1991:12).

The *habitus*, according to Bourdieu (1990b:53), encompasses a set of 'durable, transposable dispositions' acquired through socialisation from childhood to the present-day which become an innate part of our nervous system (John Joseph

2010:115-6). Thus, these internalised dispositions contain all biases, predispositions, tastes, uncertainties, prejudices, cognitive structures and expectations which shape an individuals' body and mind in relation to the social world (Swartz 2002 :63). Hence, habitus is 'embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history' (Bourdieu 1990b:56). The concept is relational as it highlights how the objective and material conditions of the world manifest themselves into the subjective human psyche creating practical and reasonable expectations influenced by the objective structures of the environment they are exposed to.

Consequently, the habitus is a 'product of structures' and 'producer of practices' (Power 1999: 49). Additionally, as the habitus is prone to generate behaviours and ways of acting which mirror the environment that created it, the habitus tends to reinforce and reproduce structures with possible moderations (1999: 49). According to Bourdieu, the habitus acts in a highly uncritical level which is unconscious thereby actions and perceptions of social agents are by and large products 'of our upbringing and past experiences'(France et al. 2013: 14). As the habitus has an unfathomable capacity to generate dispositions, it is not us as social agents who are guiding the way we act and think in our social space, rather it is mediated by the system of the habitus which shape our thoughts, perceptions and dispositions (Yang 2014: 1525).

Individual histories are crucial in the formation of the habitus as past experiences already internalized by agents coupled with ongoing experiences add to the components which make up the habitus and guide how people act and perceive their social position (Reay 2004:434). Thus, childhood experiences are products of the habitus, but it is also 'continually re-structured by individuals' encounters with the outside world' (Di Maggio 1979 as paraphrased by Reay 2004:434).

Despite this, Power (1999) indicates that an individuals' habitus imprinted in childhood may be more enduring than habitus learned through later socialisations. Thompson concurs with this notion arguing that relations and environments that individuals are exposed to in childhood which influence their dispositions, 'literally mould the body and become second nature…operating in a way that is pre-consciousness and hence not readily amenable to conscious reflection and modification'(1991:12-3).

Bourdieu places considerable emphasis on the habitus tendencies to reproduce the structures it originated from. This is why he stresses that the habitus should be thought of in collective rather than individual terms as, although no individual habitus is identical to another, similar habitus tend to be attracted one another to eschew 'feeling like fish out of water' (Oliver & O'Reilly 2010: 22). In other words, individuals are more likely to reflect the traits and customs of individuals who share similar characteristics to themselves rather than individuals of a different social class. Therefore:

> 'the experiences of one's life course may be unique in their particular *contents*, but are shared in terms of their *structure* with others of the same social class,

> gender, ethnicity, sexuality, occupation, nationality, region and so forth' (Maton 2008: 53).

Although the dispositions that make up the habitus tend to reinforce the social conditions from which it was formed, Bourdieu still stresses that there are no concrete rules that control or regulate behaviour (Reay 2004:433), hence it would be more appropriate to characterise it with that of 'vagueness and indeterminacy' (Bourdieu, 1990b:77). A comparable example of how *habitus* operates according to Bourdieu can be seen through the act of improvisation in music, in particular blues and jazz. Guitarists often improvise solos in this genre of music; however, they often only utilize the notes compatible with the given key of the song. Therefore, just as musicians *can* improvise in solos whilst still staying within musical parameters, individuals *act* in the same way whilst remaining within the certain behavioural boundaries of their *habitus* (Power 1999:49). Hence, 'it is a condition of practice that shortcuts the numerous options available to the novice to a narrower range of reasonable contextual possibilities' (Warnock et al. 2017:106).

Therefore, the focus and implication of the habitus is not of implacable rules that shape behaviour, rather tacit expectations for individuals to behave in accordance with people whom they share similar characteristics within the social world, in other words, 'people like us' (Bourdieu 1990b:77). Individuals, to themselves unconsciously, make normative assumptions about the appropriate pre-scripters of their own behaviour. Social agents act with 'practical rationality' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:19) within their own habitus.

Field

The *field* is another pivotal part of Bourdieu's conceptual arsenal and is inextricably linked to that of *habitus* and *capital*. According to Bourdieu, to understand how social agents act in the social world, it is not adequate just to examine how people act and interact with each other, we also must investigate the social arena in which these events occur as well as the environment itself shapes human behaviour (Thomson 2008:67).

Bourdieu defines the *field* as a social space which contains:

> 'a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the field and that are irreducible to the intentions of the individual agents or even to the direct interactions(it) among the agents' (Bourdieu 1985:724).

Therefore, whereas the *habitus* highlights social agents' subjective internalisations of the social world, the *field* focuses on the external objective world in which individuals interact with each other (Grenfall and James 1998:15). As the habitus is dependent on this external world where relations are carried out. It is, 'just as real as a geographical space, in which movements have to be paid for by labour, by effort and especially by time' (Bourdieu 1991:100).

It is crucial to emphasise the interdependent relationship between the habitus, capital and field in Bourdieu's relational world, were each component is inseparable from the other. Wacquant (1998:221) stresses that the mental dispositions contained in each habitus are contingent on the social space they occupy, which is determined by appropriation of capital. Thereby each of these aspects of the social world inform each other and are inextricably so much so that Bourdieu (1984) devised a formula in his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* to account for the relational nature between them: '(Habitus x Capital) + Field = Practice' (1984:101).

Bourdieu emphasises that the habitus and the fields inter-dependence is two-fold; whilst the field structures the habitus and shapes the dispositions and fundamental characteristics of social agents, the habitus fosters the notion of the field as, 'a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value, in which it is worth investing one's energy' (Bourdieu in Wacquant 1989:44). Therefore, the structures inherent in fields are formed within the habitus meaning that individuals' positions in the social arena are not only material manifestations of their standing in the site, but they are also a sense of your own place whereby agents find spaces where they feel at ease. Thereby, both features of social reality strengthen the other further enhancing the legitimacy of the social world.

Bourdieu likens exchanges in a field to that of a football game or a game of chess. Social agents participate in a competitive field of play. In this fierce interplay, agents strategize and set plans of action to advance or maintain their capital in the social space. For instance, an individual from a lower socio-economic background with limited amounts of prestige would be looking to find ways and means to accumulate more capital and hence their standing in the field. Likewise, players who already acquire high levels of capital will consider mechanisms to maintain their standing and further accumulate capital and hence further enhance their position in the field of play (Thomson 2008:68-9). Also, unlike a football game, players do not participant in a field initially on equal footing as certain players enter with more advantage than others through family prestige and capital.

However, just as a football game has clear boundaries in physical form with regards to the pitch and with rules and regulations, Bourdieu insists that the field is not simply a 'battle-front for power-hungry agents' (Yang 2014:1526), rather each individual field has its own structures and ways of operating. Hence, for agents to participate in the social space, it is essential that they adhere to the *tacit knowledge* of any given field (2014:1526).

Moreover, the field of play is not a conscious deliberation. Rather each player in a social space subscribes to that fields '*doxa'* which is the 'common sense' knowledge of the social world which goes 'unquestioned' (Bourdieu 1977:166), thereby leading to its constant reproduction. Although the knowledge within the field of play has been socially constructed, its workings have become so entrenched and institutionally within the practices and customs within the field that they have become custom and taken for granted - concealing their arbitrary nature. Consequentially, this 'common-sense' like nature empowers the elites within the field as their status is viewed as legitimate, paving the way for a constant reinforcement of inequalities within the social space (1977:166).

Thus, a crucial feature of the field is its 'normalizing tendencies' (Houston 2002:159-60) to conform to the institutionalised and embedded structure of the social space (Peillon 1998). The social arena in which agents interact is not necessarily governed by 'rules' as such, rather it is guided by 'a feel for the game' where each social space is 'necessarily structured by a set of unspoken rules for what can be validly uttered and perceived within it' (Eagleton 1991:157). Thus, although not governed by explicit rules, each field has certain predictabilities of behaviour (Thomson 2008:70). There are predispositions and norms as understood by each player which condition their outlook and behaviour.

Hence, fields in the social world as stated by Bourdieu have clear boundaries. He identifies fields operating in different spheres of life such as the professional (occupations), personal (family, friends and acquaintances) and political (governmental and political institutions) (Weigmann 2017:95-6). Throughout his work Bourdieu has highlighted and analysed many fields that contribute to the social world such as the field of education, law, academia, religion, science, arts and the state (Power 1999:50).

In addition to this, in each social arena there are also sub-fields in play. To take an illustrative example, in the field of the arts there are sub-fields of music, film and television with each having their own unique histories and structures which provide agents with the 'know how' of acceptable behaviours and norms in that particular social space (Weigmann 2017:95-6). As the place in which each social agent takes on in the field is determined by the amount of capital they possess, this means that those that the top of the hierarchy tend to have a more nuanced 'feel for the game' and have superior knowledge and influence of how to act and behave in the environment to further cement their dominant position thus preserving the status quo. Indeed, some become so elevated in one sub-field that they can utilise their capital in the others. It is to the unique Bourdieusian concept' of capital to which we now turn.

Capital

In his conceptual framework Bourdieu highlighted and analysed four main types of capital in the field of play of which actors fight to accumulate: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. According to Bourdieu (1977;1986), capital can be described as an asset in the social space which can be utilized as a currency for one's advancement (Weigmann 2017:96; Wacquant 2008b). In the field of play, there is a continuous power struggle to accumulate capital as individuals strive to assert their dominance, thereby gaining access and controlling certain types of capital whilst at the same time degrading other forms in the process (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992 as cited in Weigmann 2017:96).

Economic capital is the measurement of property and financial assets encompassing both income and material wealth. In many ways this form of capital is at the forefront of the co-relationships between all different types of capital as it is often the most easily transfigured into other types of capital – cultural, social and symbolic (Power 1999:50). This is particularly apparent with the ascendency of neo-liberalism. For example, one need only think of how often party donation and sponsorship can result in favours, directorships, honours, knighthoods and even access to the House of Lords in the UK. In the sporting arena Russian oligarchs and oil-rich Arabs have recognised that buying prestigious western European football clubs gains otherwise restricted access to the upper echelons of media and social circles, enhancing their legitimacy in arenas beyond sport. In short, economic capital can be very useful and is often utilised to accrue additional other types of capital.

Bourdieu's account of economic capital has obvious clear links with the Marxist tradition as he describes this form of capital as material goods that can be 'immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights' (Bourdieu 1986: 242). This can account for anything from property rights, land ownership or financial resources or savings. However, he extends Marx's theory of capital beyond the economic prism to include symbolic forms of capital. In this regard, Bourdieu is closely aligned with German sociologist Max Weber in his particular focus on symbolic forms of capital and prestige.

Cultural capital in the field of play consists of assets that actors operating in the field deem as 'legitimate'. For instance, formal qualifications in the educational field, the attainment of professional qualifications to practice fields or even 'the old school tie network' that was (and probably still is) notorious in the recruitment and socialisation practices of employers in fields such as the London banking and finance sector.

Moreover, in the analyses of the field of education, Bourdieu and Passerson in their 1977 book *The Reproduction in education, society and culture* highlights that certain practices in schools become *institutionalised* forms of capital and help maintain the

social hierarchy by creating an environment more suited to the cultural norms of the higher class. Children from higher socio-economic background have the appropriate forms of cultural capital to succeed in the environment whilst disadvantaged children struggle to adjust. This may be simply about networks of friends and family, access to placement opportunities or simply awareness of codes of conduct and etiquette within industries or social circles. For example, it is often noted that the rituals, conventions and procedures of the UK Parliament bear more than a passing resemblance to the public schools, Oxbridge universities and London courtrooms from which many of its members have historically been educated and worked in.

Furthermore, under the mantra of 'meritocracy', common 'wisdom' is that the most intelligent and able students will receive the highest grades. However, Bourdieu insists that this is an illusion arguing that success in the realm of education is because of investment in economic and cultural capital, rather than personal achievement. Therefore, the 'social transmission of privileges is itself legitimized' (Lament & Lareau 1988:155) 'in a cloak of neutrality' (1988:159) thus aiding and further cementing the reproduction of inequality and social stratification in the educational field.

Additionally, cultural capital can come in embodied form as social agents are taught through their environment actions and behaviours that are deemed legitimate and 'proper'. Through the embodied state, individuals are conditioned by 'long-lasting dispositions of the mind and the body' (Bourdieu 1986:243). These behaviours acquired by individuals are formed through the process of socialisation and include mannerisms and linguistic abilities. This aspect of cultural capital is very closely aligned with the habitus in that it tends to reproduce an individuals' objective social position and class in the external world into the internal body.

An individual socialised in an upper-class background will adopt the cultural practices akin to their social environment. Certain forms of speaking and behaviour inherited from the dominant classes and thus they have the capacity to define 'right' and 'proper' ways of behaving in society as well as culture (Oliver and O'Reilly 2010:18). This leads to domination. Clubs, networks and societies – both formal and informal – also play a role in the reinforcement and preservation of such culture and values in the form of social capital. In this regard, the accumulation of cultural capital is a process which transpires over a significant period through socialisation.

Social capital, in Bourdieu's theory of practice takes on a rather cynical form. He defines this form of capital as:

> 'the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:119).

Thus, the amount of social capital one possesses is contingent on the volume of an individuals' network of contacts in the social arena and the amount of economic and cultural capital that network possesses (Swain 2003:189). Therefore, for Bourdieu (2003:189), social capital can only be acquired by those who are of a higher standing in the social field and is inextricably linked to one's position within the hierarchical class-based structure in which connections are made.

Bourdieu's conception of social capital is primarily one about status and follows the doctrine of, 'It's not what you know, it's *who* you know' (Gauntlett 2011:132 original emphasis). The amount of social capital one can acquire in the field is dependent on their ability to network and accumulate valuable contacts to enhance their own position (Swain 2003:189). As beforementioned, private clubs and associations are an illustrative example of social capital and the mutual granting of legitimacy to each of its members is a crucial element of its 'endurability' (Joppke 1986: 59-60). Moreover, this form of social capital can be utilized in collective as well as individual form, for instance by a family or organisation.

Thereby, social capital is always 'symbolic' (1986:60) as it is primarily one about status and reputation and what is misrecognised in the social sphere as 'legitimate' and natural whereby concealing the true suppressive nature of power relations and inequality in the field.

With symbolic capital, Bourdieu seeks to illustrate the arbitrary nature of how particular assets of social agents can advance or succumb their position in the social field and how the structures and inequality inherit in economic capital also manifest themselves onto each field of symbolic capital (Moore 2008:104). Unlike the other forms of capital which have an 'independent objectification' (Joppke 1986:60); according to Bourdieu symbolic capital is contingent on actors viewing the distribution of economic, cultural and social capital amongst its agents as 'legitimate' and 'just' whereby the 'subjective reflection' (1986:60) of the social world disguises its true arbitrary nature.

In summary, Bourdieu's conception of capital extends beyond the narrow prism of economic relations, giving a wider spectrum explanation of the role of social, cultural and symbolic capital.

Symbolic violence

Through his theoretical concepts of habitus, field and capital, Pierre Bourdieu illustrates how societal and mental structures operate in society. However, with his theory on *symbolic violence*, he emphasises the reasons *why* it is important to study them in the first place (Shubert 2008:183). Bourdieu (1992) defines the term *symbolic violence* in his collaborative book *An Invitation for Reflexive Sociology*, co-written with Loïc Wacquant, as 'violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:167).

Symbolic violence derives from Bourdieu's concept of 'doxa' whereby agents operating in the social space perceive the world as self-evident and natural. This term was

originally utilized as Edmund Husserl and describes the internal dispositions of an individuals' subjective sense of limits of what is possible and what is not possible in the social arena (Weigmann 2017:97; Lane 2000; Myles 2004). These subjective dispositions are ultimately influenced by the amount of capital each habitus possesses which in turn determines their objective position in the social field. Thus, unconscious 'doxic' are formed in a 'bodily submission' (Bourdieu & Eagleton 1992:121) which causes internalised 'silent suffering' (1992:121). The unseen nature of this suffering is a consequence of the stable functioning of the habitus which unconsciously helps individuals to adapt to their surroundings with 'internalized contradictions' (1992:121).

Following on from the concept of *doxa* and the world appearing as legitimate is the internalisation of this notion which aids the reproduction of inequitable dispensations of capital (Everett 2002 cited in Weigmann 2017:98). As the dominated perceive their subordinate positions as normal and seemly in society, even when it has a destructive and damaging effect on them, they help to further consolidate the unequal structures of society and maintain the status quo's dominance over them (Weigmann 2017; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu & Eagleton 1992; Wacquant 2008a;Wacquant 2008b). In effect a fatalism as regards the status quo and the (lack of) potential to change it pervades their mind-set.

This is what Bourdieu terms 'misrecognition' – a process in which both the dominant and the dominated both misrecognize unequal relations in power and prestige that go unquestioned and are seen to be both natural and appropriate helping to conceal the arbitrary and historical structures from which they originated from. As Emirbayer and Johnson state, this process is a consequence of a, 'dehistoricisation and universalisation' (2008:48) of power structures. Thus, misrecognition is. '…the fact of recognising a violence which is wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:168).

Due to the more subtle nature of this violence in comparison to more brute physical violence, it can tend to go unnoticed and thus it becomes harder to break the cycle of its reproduction. As in the very nature of its symbolic violence, 'is something you absorb like air, something you don't feel pressured by' and is 'everywhere and nowhere' (Bourdieu & Eagleton 1992e:115). It is reinforced and maintained seamlessly through social interactions and social structures inherent in everyday life without much consideration or recognition of its true nature. Thus, the status quo need only 'let the system they dominate have its own course in order to exercise their domination' (Bourdieu 1977:190).

Although symbolic violence is covert relative to more obvious forms of physical aggression, it is no less real in its consequences, and it causes persistent suffering and pain to those subjected to it (Schubert 2008:184). In many cases, this type of violence is more effective and ruthless than more apparent forms of violence as the oppressed can tend to misrecognise their suffering and inferior positions in society because of personal failure and inadequacies. This has become increasingly prevalent

in contemporary times with the use of language acting as a powerful instrument of domination (2008:184).

Western societies such as the USA and the UK during the 1980s and 1990s implemented a paradigm shift from the Keynesian Welfare State model to a more individual and agency centric neo-liberal conceptual understanding of economics and society. Consequently, rhetoric changed from a more collective stance to endorse individualistic notions of personal responsibility and behaviour that align with old classic liberal ideology of 'laissez-faire'. With this came more punitive policies and language in relation to welfare, work and an individual's place in society. Under the mantra of the importance of the individuals, governments in the contemporary age have started using buzzwords such as 'welfare dependency' and derogatory terms such as 'underclass' to demonise and degrade not only individuals but often wholesale with the residualisation of disadvantaged communities (McKenzie 2015; Haylett 2001; Jones 2011; Mooney 2009).

Discussion and debate in the USA and the UK around issues such as poverty and race are simplified into powerful dualistic formations of the 'worthy' versus the 'unworthy' (Katz, 1996 as cited in Bourgois 2001:29), 'striver' versus 'skiver' (Jensen 2014), recycling and reproducing old conceptions of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor from the Victorian and Edwardian era framed in new discourse for the modern times.

Under this 'doxa' of personal responsibility, dominated social agents who are powerless in their situation due to broader societal structures tend to internalise the hegemonic narratives imposed on them thus validating their positions in society and the social order itself. According to Bourdieu, this only serves to strengthen and reinforce domination of the dominated and hence increase the difficulty of any meaningful form of resistance or alternative readings to the established order (Weigmann 2017:98). Thus, symbolic violence leads individuals to an ever-growing sense of fatalism living a life in an environment 'of minimal expectations' and maintaining 'an ignorance of anything better, to kill one's hopes' (Charlesworth 2001:54). Joppoke stresses that this can lead to a sense of inferiority amongst disadvantaged peoples which is internalised resulting in a continuing process of 'humiliation and demobilizing self-blame' (1986:28-9). Likewise, Frost and Hoggett are no less stark in their evaluation stating that social suffering lies, 'at the heart of…the lived experience of the social damage inflicted in late capitalist societies on the least powerful, and the intra-psychic and relational wounds that result' (2008: 440).

The effects of this violence are no better exemplified than in his 2000 collaborative work *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Bourdieu and his collaborative team investigated the consequences of deindustrialisation, the emergence of neo-liberalism, the changing nature of work and the evolving nature of gender and ethnic relations through interviewing subjects who had direct experiences and sufferings resulting from these processes. With stories telling the reader of trauma, dispossession, displacement, unemployment, depression, stigmatization,

poverty, marginalization and severe hardship; these intimate and often unspoken testimonies link the micro and the macro social worlds and unmask how symbolic violence is lived and breathed in daily life and in interactions in the social world (Shubert 2008:193-4). Thus, not only are these personal stories; they are '*social* stories, told in *social* voices' (2008:194).

This study will analyse these social processes within the social arena of Govanhill – a multi-faceted working-class area within Glasgow characterised by transient migration patterns, deindustrialisation and shifting economic conditions. The stories within this thesis illustrate how people negotiate and live through these social transformations within Scottish and wider UK society at an intimate, everyday level.

This essentially is the approach taken in this project – individual stories within Govanhill are linked to broader Scottish and UK economic social history and society.

In illustrating how symbolic forms of domination are just as important as more concrete and visible forms of coercion in maintaining the established order, Bourdieu rejects the notion of using financial wealth as the only indicator of measuring inequitable relations between social agents and social groups:

> 'using material poverty as the sole measure of all suffering keeps us from seeing and understanding a whole side of the suffering characteristic of a social order which … has multiplied the social spaces and set up the conditions for an unprecedented development of all kinds of ordinary suffering' (Bourdieu 2000:4).

Therefore, the weight of significance Bourdieu places on the 'symbolic' can be seen to be a definite departure to Marxist conceptions of class and reproduction. According to Karl Marx, the symbolic characteristics of society were a direct consequence of labour relations, economic forces and production, therefore of secondary importance to material relations (John Joseph 2020:109). However, Bourdieu refutes this by arguing that domination is inherent in all forms of relations in society and that most forms of violence against the dominated are in the way of 'subtly condescending speech acts and withering glances' rather than 'the lash of the whip' (2020:109). This form of domination is no less tangible or impairing and can be even more effective than more brutal means for contributing to social suffering in the social world (2020:109).

Criticisms and refinements

Throughout the time of his output and thereafter Bourdieu has received much praise and plaudits for his innovative contributions to our understanding of sociology and the social world. However, his work has also been criticised for its shortcomings and inconsistencies by many scholars.

Several authors have criticised Bourdieu's rather abstruse writing style. An illustrative example of this criticism comes from Jenkins (2002:26) who characterises Bourdieu's inaccessible writing style as 'kind of illusionary profundity' which makes his output 'so irritating to read'. Likewise, his collaborator Wacquant (1998:217) admits that his work tends to be 'couched in a difficult technical idiom' which can prove difficult to demanding and complex for the reader (Garrett 2007:360).

Bourdieu has responded to this censure of his work by insisting that 'what is complex can only be said in a complex way (1990a: 51). He elaborates on this even further in *In Other Words* where he maintains that:

> 'My texts are full of indications meant to stop the reader deforming and simplifying things. Unfortunately, these warnings pass unnoticed or else make what I am saying so complicated that readers who read too quickly see neither the little indications nor the big ones and read more or less the opposite of what I wanted to say…In any case, what is certain is that I am not out to make my writing clear and simple and that I consider the strategy of abandoning the rigour of technical vocabulary in favour of an easy and readable style to be dangerous. This is first and foremost because false clarity is often part and parcel of the dominant discourse, the discourse of those who think everything goes without saying, because everything is just fine as it is…I am convinced that, for both scientific and political reasons, you have to accept that discourse can and must be as complicated as the (more or less complicated) problem it is tackling demands…I don't believe in the virtues of 'common sense' and 'clarity' (Bourdieu 1990a:52-3).

Furthermore, authors have also accused Bourdieu's work of being overly deterministic, especially with the subordinate role he attributes to the lower socio-economic classes in his conception of the social world. For instance, Callinicos argues that he, 'does not offer those at the bottom of society any prospect of a collective escape from the structures of class domination and cultural distinction' (1999: 295).

On a similar note, Jenkins contends that Bourdieu places too much emphasis on structure rather than agency in a social world which 'ultimately remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destines' (2002:91). This is also echoed by Garrett who highlights the 'dulled passivity' (2007:366-7) of social agents in Bourdieu's work, particularly those in subordinate positions.

The accusations of determinism from Bourdieu's work largely stem from his contention that the habitus largely operates 'below the level of consciousness' (Bourdieu 1977:73). For Sayer (2005b:12) this is highly problematic as it renders normative judgements are arbitrary constructs of reality which fails to recognise the importance of morality in human behaviour. Sayer argues that Bourdieu's work ironically leads to sociological reductionism, the very thing he critiques, as behaviours are 'reducible to

misrecognized social distinctions' (1999:404), whereby the moral element of what is right and wrong is reduced to 'arbitrary custom, unconscious emanations of the habitus, or the pursuit of power for its own sake' (1999:405). This aspect of Bourdieu's theory downplaying agents' normative evaluations of their own behaviour thus in turn effectively creates an amoral economy in the field in which instrumental and Machiavellian-like action is the norm (1999:409).

At this end, Sayer (1999:412-3) makes a compelling and valid point against Bourdieu's empirical work largely devoid of conscious deliberation and moral ethos resembling a zero-sum game. Alluding to Bourdieu's emphasis on pre-reflexivity and unconscious elements of behaviour (Reay 2004:438), he convincingly argues that reducing moral behaviour to arbitrary conventions fuelled by the habitus undermines any clear overarching principles or distinction of what is right and wrong for ourselves and for others. In this rather cynical view, racism, sexism and other salient issues that plague society today would be merely reduced to generative behaviours borne out from the habitus thus rendering them value-free.

This is an important and necessary step for building on the theory as it enhances and broadens the conceptualisation of the habitus to include conscious as well as unconscious deliberations. Thus, a habitus which includes 'dialogues with oneself' (Crossley 2000:138) and 'our inner conversations' will help us to illuminate and acknowledge the 'strivings, struggles and disenchantments' (Reay 2004:438) of subordinate agents' subjected to social suffering and symbolic violence within the social space.

Sayer (2005a) thus draws on the work of Adam Smith to build on the work of Bourdieu by including 'ethical dispositions' in the formulation of the habitus (Reay 2004:438). For Smith, social agents are emotional and sensitive beings who are reliant on other individuals not only for material purposes such as financial well-being or status, but also psychologically as they need love, compassion and respect (Smith 1759 as cited in Sayer 2005a:950).

Likewise, Charles Taylor stresses the importance of individuals being valued in the social field arguing that recognition is a 'vital human need' (1992:26) which 'continues indefinitely' (1992:33). He goes further by highlighting the corrosive consequences of non-recognition stressing that it can lead to individuals internalising negative portrayals of themselves (1992:36).

Richard Sennett (2003:3) adds that lack of acknowledgement from others, although less direct and more subtle than an outright offense, can be no less damaging and distressing to human beings. Sayer concurs highlighting that individuals tend to assign an evaluation of themselves in relation to how they are valued and treated by others (Sayer 2005b:2), suggesting that the need for recognition for subordinate groups may be even greater than the material financial distribution of wealth (Sayer 2002:2). Thus, if we think about inequitable bases of power relations between agents in the social space in normative and moral terms, social justice must also 'be a response to

poverty's psychological and emotional wounds, not just its financial consequences (Peel 2003:167).

Therefore, by looking at normative and moral considerations of those subjected to symbolic violence and domination within the social field, we can avoid a 'blindness to the human aspect' (Sedmak 2013:559-60) of social behaviour, depicting individuals as mere agents' in a Machavellian-like power play for power and prestige (Sayer 2005b:3). With this sociological reductionism, moral conduct and behaviour are seen as mere habits that individuals simply become accustomed to – in a similar way to how people learn how to read and write. This is clearly inaccurate as individuals are social beings as the manner of how they are treated is of paramount significance to them and has consequential effect to their psychological state of mind as a result (2005b:12). Similarly, Joppke advocates an expansion on the habitus concept to include a moral aspect comprising of norms and values to 'free it from its utilitarian reductionism' (1986:69).

Thus, Bourdieu's framework is a useful tool for considering how power structures are maintained and consolidated in the social field, however we cannot use his conceptual arsenal without taking into consideration the moral implications of them. Why is symbolic violence wrong in society exactly? The concept of the habitus needs to move beyond the parameters of 'abstraction' and 'beyond the metaphoric model of exchange, investment and accumulation. (Skeggs 2004b:90-1). In other words, only by evaluating these questions based on lay normativity and by treating individuals as vulnerable beings can we really grasp why disparity in levels of respect and power in society matters to them and challenge inequality (Sayer 2005b:133).

Furthermore, scholars have highlighted Bourdieu's rather pessimistic contributions on the matter of working-class agency or, rather, the lack of. For instance, Schinkel (2003:86) argues that Bourdieu overlooked 'the emancipatory potential in people themselves'. In a similar vein, Garrett (2007:369) argues that Bourdieu's theory of societal structures places too much significance on the concession of the 'downtrodden and dominated'.

Skeggs (2004b:87) further emphasises that, as working-class agency in Bourdieu's conceptual framework is only examined through the lens of the hegemonic culture and hence confined to their habitus, they are represented as people with no value. This image Bourdieu conjures up of the working-class, for Skeggs, leaves little room for their agency power in the field to play the game as well as discarding 'the positive, affective, justifiable experiences of anger and exclusion' (2004b:87). She advocates for a re-thinking of values beyond exchange-value, thus looking at use-values which do not subscribe to the concept of the individual or of 'accumulative subjectivity' (2004b:88).

It is at this point which Bourdieu's rather narrow conceptualisation of social capital must be elaborated on further. Under his version of the theory, Bourdieu places all emphasis on the exchange-value element of social capital in which the elite conjure up networks and connections to further consolidate their power, in effect 'a simplistic reflection of social exclusion and inclusion' (McKenzie 2012:471). This is certainly true; however, he again overlooks the power of social connections within communities which go beyond capital accumulative incentives of agents within the field. He even states rather gruesomely in *The Weight of the World* that a,

> 'stigmatized area symbolically degrades its inhabitants, who, in return, symbolically degrade it. Since they don't have all the cards necessary to participate in the various social games, the only thing they share is their common excommunication. Bringing together on a single site a population homogenous in its dispossession strengthens that dispossession, notably with respect to culture and cultural practices' (Bourdieu 2000:129).

In effect then, Bourdieu leaves no room for the dispossessed or most needy in the social structure to possess social capital (Swain 2003:189). His version of social capital is one which is insular and only appliable to agents who possess the higher amounts of capital within the social space. This completely discards the 'informal, unseen and unmeasured' (Davies 2019:202) communal benefits of social capital of which agents lower down the chain of the social space rely upon.

A useful concept to explore in this regard can be found in Lisa McKenzie's *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain* (2015). She emphasises the importance of 'local value systems' within groupings or territorial areas which lack capital within the wider social arena. These constitute practices that are valued within neighbourhoods, their cultures and ways of life. These are largely use-value mechanisms to 'get by' and, although not having much in terms of exchange-value in *macro* terms situated in the field, they have considerable use-value within their sub-field in *micro*-terms (2015:201). This exemplifies the importance of the use-value element of social capital within the social field for subordinate groups, an element of social interaction which Bourdieu continuously overlooks in favour of a more crude and economic exchange-value view of culture and social interactions. McKenzie's notion of 'local value systems' will be further examined in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Therefore, we must understand the *habitus* to be not static, but adaptive and generative. The concept of the 'local value system' thus can explain how certain practices, whilst not valued in the wider social space, are supported within certain boundaries which can in turn foster resistance to negative experiences and dispositions borne out from association within the wider field of play (McKenzie 2015:206). Thus, we must consider value systems that operate outwith the domain of

the ‘dominant symbolic’ (Skeggs 2004b:88). By doing so, we can reject the rather pessimistic notion that social capital and networks can only function as an exclusionary capital.

In addition, throughout his extensive works, it is notable how little contribution Bourdieu made to the study of race. Parker (2000:83-4) goes so far to argue that the conceptualisation of the habitus is inadequate in grasping ‘the lived experiences of racialized hierarchy’ and that his theories of the social field favour the study of class positions. Jenkins also observes that within Bourdieu’s work he seldom considers issues on ethnicity other than his work in Algeria (2002:92 as cited in Garrett 2007:365). However, this is not entirely correct. For instance, in *The Weight of the World* he acknowledges the diminished symbolic violence assigned to young children from foreign descent in the French educational system – particularly that of North Africa (Bourdieu 2000:185 as cited in Garrett 2007:366).

As well as race, others have critiqued Bourdieu’s neglect on gender (Skeggs 2004a) with Fowler (2003:480) arguing that Bourdieu’s analysis of gender issues in *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu 2001) treated women’s subordinate position as ‘independent of class’. Similarly, Skeggs (2004a) further emphasises that women internalise the social structures which surround them and their lower standing in comparison to men, further reinforcing inequities within the social space. This fails to acknowledge the intersection of gender and class in perpetuating inequality and the distinct differences in the male and female habitus in relation to their positions within power structures (Skeggs 2004a).

Despite race making sporadic appearances within Bourdieu’s work, and gender appearing even more fleetingly, there is a clear gap within his analyses of how both race and gender intersect with class. This thesis will address this shortcoming by exploring, in particular, the ‘negative symbolic capital’ placed on migrants within disadvantaged communities within Scotland – particularly in Govanhill.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and analysed key foundational aspects of Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptual framework: habitus, field, capital, and symbolic violence. It then explored their applicability to the sociological analysis of power, inequality, and social suffering. It acknowledged and demonstrated how Bourdieu’s concepts provide valuable tools for interpreting the ways in which social structures can become internalised and reproduced, particularly among subordinated and stigmatised communities such as Govanhill. By situating individual agency within structured social fields and exploring how dispositions are shaped by both historical and current conditions, the chapter established a strong theoretical basis for understanding the dynamics at play in the case-study area.

Furthermore, the chapter It has sought to build on his work by developing his contributions with a fresh 'critical gaze' (Fowler 2003:487). It has engaged critically with Bourdieu's work, identifying significant limitations in his theoretical scope and reach. In particular, the critique centred on the perceived determinism in his portrayal of working-class agency and lives, coupled with his under-emphasis on morality, recognition, and agency among subordinated groups. Drawing on scholars like Sayer, Skeggs, and McKenzie, the chapter argued in favour of a more ethically attuned and emotionally resonant understanding of the working-class i.e. one that considers not only structural constraints but also the normative aspirations and social solidarities that persist in disadvantaged contexts. It is suggested that the incorporation of 'local value systems' and recognition theory can enhance Bourdieu's theoretical framework, making it more responsive to the empirical actuality of lived realities and resistance of marginalised populations in communities such as Govanhill.

While Bourdieu's framework remains a powerful theory through which to understand and analyse symbolic domination and social reproduction, this chapter highlights the need for some refinement and extension. By incorporating moral considerations, affective dimensions, and a broader conception of social capital, sociology can move beyond reductive accounts of class and power to a more comprehensive and humane understanding of lived inequality. This adapted and enriched conceptual framework will inform the empirical chapters to follow. These chapters will apply these theoretical insights to the lived experiences of residents in Govanhill, linking the abstract theory to the grounded realities of the case-study site. Prior to the empirical chapters, the next chapter will further draw on Bourdieu's concepts to examine the broader neo-liberal context within which Govanhill exists.

Chapter 3

Neoliberalism, Welfare and Stigmatisation

This chapter contextualises the study by introducing important environmental factors of importance in understanding the community that is Govanhill, Glasgow. It extends further Bourdiuesian theory by utilising it to place the case-study setting within a broader societal framework. In particular, it opens dialogue between neo-liberalism and Bourdieu's notion of 'the field'. By doing this, it examines neoliberalism's role in framing the broad structures of the state, as well as individual and collective understandings.

The chapter begins by focusing on neo-liberalism, outlining its history, evolution and assumptions. Its penetration into basic individual and collective understandings of economy and society has subtly transformed how individuals and even whole communities view their role in society. It has, in Bourdieusian terms, become the dominant doxa overtaking traditional understandings.

Its basic logic and language have allowed new individualistic understandings to emerge regarding the role of the state in society and its role in ensuring the welfare of its citizens. In particular, the 'collective' has been downplayed, in favour of a view of society that privileges individualistic understandings. Traditional understandings of the role of class have been deemed dated, with the working-class relabelled and discredited whilst aspirational values have been championed. Working-class culture and values have been discredited, devalued and stripped of worth by neoliberal doctrine and discourse.

The chapter will outline the role that cultural production has played in embedding a new 'common sense', dramatically altering basic assumptions about fairness in terms of welfare and well-being of individuals. Groups are degraded and 'othered' if they do not conform to the normatively appropriate roles of neo-liberalism such as work, consumption and compliance.

Stigmatisation is not limited to the individual. Whole communities have been cast as sink estates or welfare ghettos by the media and politicians (Tyler 2013). These neighbourhoods (such as Govanhill) are not deemed to be an endemic feature and problem of the system itself, instead they are cast as culpable for their own misfortune. Welfare dependency, individual fecklessness and laziness are the standard assertions of causality, with little or no appeal to empirical verification.

This chapter will end with how such portrayals can be challenged at grassroots community levels. The very values of community solidarity and togetherness can challenge neo-liberal individualistic discourse.

We will begin with a review of the neo-liberalism literature focusing on parts relevant to this study.

Neoliberalism and Bourdieu

> ‘What is neoliberalism? A programme for destroying collective structures which may impede pure market logic’ (Bourdieu 1998).

Neo-liberalism is a modern adaptation of classical economic liberal ideology. Liberalism tends to project a world view consistent with the rooted and abstract assumptions of neo-classical economic theory: the world is made up of atomised rational utility maximising human agents making decisions based on self-interest and maximum satisfaction to themselves (Peters 2001). The basis of classical micro-economic theory is that these individually optimising decisions lead to efficiency in an assumed free economy with a multitude of buyers and sellers. This theoretical ‘perfectly competitive market’ assumes a minimal role for the state limited to the state’s policing and enforcement of pre-existing land ownership, contracts and property rights. Classical liberalism embedded the ownership rights of land and property owners and justified it based on a theory that assumed perpetual competition in a ‘free’ economy. Economic relations are given primacy in understanding relations.

The ‘assumed world’ of liberalism did to a degree reflect freedom, but it also was a useful ideological tool embedding in a political and legal way the free rights of the landowning class to buy and sell and make individual choices. That capacity for freedom of choice did not exist for the bulk of the population. Also neglected in the liberal economist’s assumed world was the actual reality of monopolistic and oligopolistic ‘competition’ in local, national and international markets. The property rights of the liberal economic order protected privilege, monopoly and wealth and all the economic inefficiencies and broader societal problems that arise from such an economic order.

However, despite the obvious disjuncture between the assumed world of neo-classical economics and lived reality, economic liberalism has remained, in the western world at least, the dominant paradigm of political thought and governance. Indeed, liberalism has a sound claim to be the most dominant ideology in the western world today. Combined with the idea of democracy it has become part of the conventional short-hand label used to describe western states: liberal democracies. In essence neo-liberalism is a re-working of this neo-classical political economy with the writings of economists and philosophers such as Hayek, Friedman and Nozick usually cited as influential (see for example Heywood 2002: 49-50). Neo-liberalism is similarly justified in the name of freedom and competition. However, one need only reflect on the monopolisation and embedded non-competitive power structures in fields such as banking and finance, information and communication technology, broadcasting, print and social media, energy, arms, logistics and transport to realise neo-liberalisms claims sound even more hollow in the 21st century than that of classical liberalism in centuries gone by.

Despite that (or more likely because of the power structure being protected) Bourdieu contends that neo-liberalism and its ideological conception of the world has become so enshrined into conventional thinking that it has become a *doxa* for national and international governance – a worldview that is taken for granted and undisputed (Smith 2017). Consequentially, Harvey (2005) stresses that its ideological underpinnings around the primacy of the market have meant that political, social and cultural institutions increasingly value the ethos of competition, exchange and profit over the community and the common good (Smith 2017). The encroachment of the market into fields such as public education, public health and social care, community sporting institutions and the like provides a wealth of empirical evidence of this process in action in recent decades.

Harvey (2005:2) states that the neo-liberalism is:

> 'a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade'.

Moreover, scholars have emphasised how the *doxa* of market logic has infiltrated into arenas of social life which were previously considered outwith the market field (Feldman 2019:341; Brown 2015; Garrett 2013; Schram 2015). In recent decades, for example, the public sector in the UK has been penetrated by commercial logic and profit in ways thought not possible in the post-war decades. Tax collection, roads, 'public' transport, prisons, social care and security, schools, hospitals are all areas where commercial companies now extract profit. The Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 and the profit seeking activities highlighted that even at a time of international crisis this logic was being extended and heightened. Wendy Brown (2015:10) has argued that the emergence of neoliberalism has meant that all elements of our existence have become reducible to values of exchange. Thus, the state is increasingly seen to be fostering and thickening the precedence of market logic leading to the 'economization of everything' (Feldman 2019:341).

In this regard, Feldman (2019: 341) stresses that the ideology of neoliberalism does not necessarily champion the notion of small government and weakened role of the state; it advocates state involvement in which its key objective is to promote and strengthen the market logic. This has clearly manifested itself through nation-state policies of free trade and deregulation. In some areas it can mean regulation in the name of competition e.g. compulsory competitive tendering, private finance for public infrastructure, restructuring pension rules to create more opportunities for wealth extraction for the commercial banking industry.

To this end, a fundamental feature of the neo-liberal 'common-sense' view of society is that of competition. As actors compete in the marketplace, human beings are recast

as consumers in a Darwinian conception of the world in which the strongest are rewarded and the weak are punished for their incompetence (Monbiot 2016). Foucault (2008:226) stated that, as 'art of government', the neoliberal agenda through discourse has installed into our mental structures the importance of self-reliance and social actors as an 'entrepreneur of himself' (Foucault 2008:226 as paraphrased in Feldman 2019:346). Individualisation rather than collectivisation is the reflexive instinct. In this regard, it is a philosophy which indoctrinates individuals to view themselves self-serving and self-relying agents within the social field who bear no responsibility to anyone but themselves in a Hobbesian-like zero sum game of humanity (Feldman 2019:346).

Thus, the consequences of this dominant '*doxa'* are the increasing idealisation of money, wealth and material aspects of human life. This 'greed is good' mantra has been further advocated and deemed upstanding over the years by key figures in UK politics. An illustrative example of this is Peter Mandelson, a pivotal pillar of the 'New Labour' project and recent UK Ambassador to the USA who proudly declared the party was 'extremely relaxed about people becoming filthy rich' (Hall 2011). Indeed, as Gilles (2005:837) emphasises, the New Labour project was one that focused on 'redistributing possibilities as opposed to wealth'. This rhetoric sat comfortably with the rhetoric of the neoliberal pioneer Margaret Thatcher, who governed the Conservative Party and the UK prior to the formation of the New Labour project:

> 'Let me give you my vision: a man's right to work as he will, to spend what he earns, to own property, to have the State as servant not as master: these are the British inheritance. They are the essence of a free country and on that freedom all our other freedoms depend' (Thatcher 1975).

This extract from Thatcher's speech is an illustrative example of the workings of common-sense and *doxa* through discourse as she universalised her conception of the world as pivotal definitions of Britishness and what it means to be British; that is the right to own property and for government not to interfere with individuals' freedom to accumulate their financial capital (Hall 2011:706). It is a re-statement of the classical liberal philosophy for a modern audience (with a dash of British nationalism thrown in for good measure).

Fatima, a 55-year-old trust manager at Govanhill Baths Development Trust, was born in Turkey, emigrated from Australia, and has lived in the southside of Glasgow since 1997. A lifelong anti-racist, socialist and community activist, she is also a key contributor to this research (see Appendix A for more details on the participants in the edited transcripts) and amply states her narrative of contemporary British political history:

> ‘The election of Tony :Blair…well it started very much with Thatcher…the image we see of neo-liberalism now as far as I’m concerned is this move away from society…I mean Cameron ran with this as well…it was this whole idea that society has no responsibility over its citizens and that it’s all about…you know trickle-down theory where the rich get richer then everyone else benefits you know…and so rather than the state actually playing a role in looking after people and guaranteeing human rights and so on the state became much more of a tool around how to ensure profits…I mean it’s always been that but much more under neo-liberalism so what you’ve got is this idea that greedy is good…there’s no such thing as society…people don’t like the word community it means a ghetto you know…we need to aspire…and if you can’t make it tough…but that was all over the world wasn’t it with Reagan…it was Thatcher…certainly with Tony Blair…Cameron continued that…you’re best friends the dollar and not your workmate or your community colleague…and that was everywhere it wasn’t just specific to Britain’(Fatima interview 2022).

This romanticisation of capital and monetary assets has filtered seamlessly through the cultural lens of society and has thus promoted an individualistic conception of the world which has undermined alternative visions which emphasise the importance of the communal, belonging and duty to others (2011:726). Consequently, suicide, depression, drug and alcohol abuse have all increased under the governance of neoliberalism. Still, the *doxa* of liberty and freedom still prevails in the social world despite the symbolic violence it inflicts on individuals. Buzzwords such as ‘freedom’, ‘prosperity’ and ‘growth’ enchant the public and disguise the true nature of neoliberalism which serves to protect only a small segment of individuals who possess the necessary economic, cultural and social capital competing in the social field (Smith 2017; Bourdieu 1998).

One of the key pioneers of the individualisation thesis and the processes of modernisation was the sociologist Ulrich Beck. He advocated in his book *Risk Society* (1992) that technological advances in modernity were evolving in ways that made ‘classic modernity’ (Brannen & Nilsen 2005: 414-5) forms of understanding redundant. In the new era of ‘reflexive modernity’, individuals were increasingly expected to control their own lives and create their own biographies as the stable and linear class-based society which characterised ‘classic modernity’ (2005: 414-5) was now being replaced by a risk-based society which required flexibility and independence (2005: 414-5). Thus, the ‘choice biography’, unlike the ‘standard biography’, could not follow patterns akin to previous eras as changes structurally in areas such as employment and the welfare state meant there was an increasing element of risk and instability which characterised people’s livelihoods (2005: 415-6).

Similarly, Anthony Giddens (1994) also emphasised the role of de-traditionalisation in modern society and the increasing importance of individual choices and decisions in which ‘rational’ logic overtakes ‘traditional’ modes of thinking (Brannen & Nilsen

2005:416). In doing so, he argued that ongoing rapid structural changes in society such as globalisation and consumerism required individuals to become more flexible and self-reliant to make the necessary choices in life required for the increasing risk-oriented society (Giddens 1991 as cited in Tyler 2013:158).

A key critique to the individualisation thesis is its inseparable ties to the neoliberal political ideology. As Brannan and Nilsen (2005:426) point out, due to its grand 'one size fits all' nature, the individualisation thesis has been wedded with neo-liberal common-sense rhetoric which has taken on considerable ideological strength and influence in the UK context. Moreover, as Gilles (2005:837) observes, Giddens and Beck fed onto and encouraged the doctrine and belief that hardship and deprivation was largely because of a lack of self-discipline and control. Consequentially, the hegemonic narrative embedded in the UK culture is one that champions individualisation and choice as beneficial characteristics of society (Brannan & Nilsen 2005:426).

Moreover, the clear discord between agency and structure inherent to this theory is a clear pitfall as they are both inextricably linked (2005:422). The almost absolute focus on agency and 'the individual' paints a world free from structural constraints and views everyone as equal in the social field. Thus, as Bauman (2004:51) states, the neoliberal restructuring of governance is one that places all responsibility and risk occurring from the market onto the individual, despite its fundamental flaws.

Coupled with this, both Beck and Giddens (Beck 2002; Giddens 1999 as cited in Brannen & Nilsen 2005) emphasised the decreasing valence of social class in contemporary society labelling it as a 'zombie category' and 'shell institution' respectively.

The dominant political rhetoric has intensified the narrative of the diminishing role class plays in society with the language of a 'classless society' and 'meritocracy' heralded to the nation (Tyler 2013; Jones 2011:96). In this new cultural arena, the wealthy are idealised, and others are encouraged to follow in their footsteps whilst those at the bottom are blamed for their own predicament (Jones 2011:24). Jones further argues that the discourse of meritocracy under the New Labour project acted as a justification for inequities across society 'rebranding them as deserved' (2011:97). Law and Mooney (2012) similarly state that under neo-liberalism, with its almost exclusive emphasis on the individual and choice, those with the highest amounts of capital within the social space are lauded as desirable and aspiring individuals whose wealth is, 'the morally deserved result of genetically and culturally successful individuals and their children' (2012:3-4).

Consequently, the dominant narrative of meritocracy has filtrated through society and became part of the neo-liberal common-sense. The new common wisdom that prevailed was that deprivation was down to individual deficiencies rather than societal

issues; the objective in the social field was to become part of the successful middle-class to avoid been seen as a failure (McKenzie 2015:211). Sayer (2005b) stresses that those who hold the position that the social field is a meritocracy are more susceptible to humiliation and domination as the social truths of neo-liberalism are effectively, 'wielded with tacit complicity between its victims and its agents, insofar as both remain unconscious of submitting to or wielding it' (Bourdieu 1999b:17), thus producing *symbolic violence*. To further add, McKenzie (2015) in her book *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain* illustrates through her research of St Ann's in Nottingham how disadvantaged residents were 'belittled, patronised and demonised' (2015: 211). Every UK city has a 'St Ann's', indeed Glasgow has quite a few with Govanhill being one of the most prominent in terms of media coverage and labelling (see chapter four).

As individuals misrecognise the main motivations behind the neoliberal project, it has become easier for advocates of the system to imprint the normalisation of inequality into the common fabric of everyday thinking. For instance, economic growth has declined since the 1980s in the UK in comparison to the decade's prior with an exception for the top earners (Monbiot 2016). Instead, the decades since the 1980s have seen a rapid increase in income and wealth inequality significantly aided by the decline of trade unions, tax cuts for the wealthy, rent increases and light touch regulation of the market (Monbiot 2016).

Thus, western states such as the US and the UK have seen a series of attacks on elements of society which do not fit within the remit of neoliberal common-sense. In the UK under Thatcher there was a constant charge against trade unions which has continued with successive governments since including New Labour between 1997-2010. This has led to their influence and capacity to protect workers' rights and conditions severely waning over time (Smith 2017). Whilst the Thatcher Government attacked alleged trade union monopolisation of labour markets, public assets such as British Telecom, British Steel and water were privatised as monopolies.

Neoliberalism and Class

Whilst at the same time, the UK has overseen sweeping changes in how society is governed with an erosion of the welfare state resulting in a more individualistic view of health, welfare and housing (Smith 2017). This has led to a more punitive stance on state support to vulnerable citizens in society and fostered negative and demeaning attitudes towards the poor. Notions of collective and shared citizenship have waned in favour of conceptions of some as undeserving, non-citizens, aliens and others. 'Society' has been re-cast as a series of voluntary exchanges where individual (rather than collective) rights are deemed paramount.

Despite John Major's 1990s claim that the UK was increasingly a classless society there remains considerable evidence to suggest that class still plays a pivotal role in people's lives as Dorling (2010:155) amply points out, 'A homogenising myth of our time is that people fall to the bottom because they are undeserving'.

Many scholars have highlighted the crucial role class still plays in enabling or curbing life chances in the UK (Shildrick & Rucell 2015; McKenzie 2015; Lister 2015; Skeggs 1997). As Shildrick and Rucell express (2015:1) the social background individuals are born into is still a crucial indicator and of great significant to people's life chances as they get older. Accordingly, Clark (2021) also points out that the UK remains a highly unequal society as illustrated by its GINI coefficient. The Gini coefficient is a statistical measure of inequality, commonly used to measure income and wealth distribution within a population (see Francis Devine 2025; IFS 2025; World Population Review 2025).

As Skeggs rightly states:

> 'To make class invisible is to abdicate responsibility (through privilege) from the effects it produces. To think that class does not matter is only a prerogative of those unaffected by the deprivations and exclusions it produces' (1997:7).

Despite the rhetoric of a meritocracy or 'classless society', neoliberalism *is* a class project further strengthening the control and power of those with the highest accumulation of capital in the social field whilst suppressing those at the opposite end (Bourdieu 1977; Harvey 2005). As Wacquant (2010:214) points out:

> 'While it embraces laissez-faire at the top, releasing constraints on capital and expanding the life chances of the holders of economic and cultural capital, it is anything but laissez-faire at the bottom'.

Class must be seen as a *relational* concept whereby certain practices and people are valued and devalued in the social sphere in the process of legitimation (Skeggs 1997). The neoliberal project has discredited the working-class with constant negative associations attributed to them such as suffering from a 'cultural lag', being 'un-modern, anti-cosmopolitan, backward and worthless' (McDowell 2006:839) and having 'outdated ways of thinking and being' (Haylett 2001:352). This is in stark contrast to the entrepreneurial, adaptable and aspirational middle-class individuals who are championed and acclaimed by the neo-liberal state (Tyler 2013: 166). As Sayer rightly stresses:

> 'Class matters to us not only because of differences in material wealth and economic security, but also because it affects our access to things, relationships, experiences and practices which we have reason to value, and hence our chances of living a fulfilling life. At the same time it affects how others value us and respond to us, which in turn affects our sense of self-worth. We are evaluative beings, continually monitoring and assessing our behaviour and that of others, needing their approval and respect, but in contemporary society this takes place in the context of inequalities such as those of class, gender and 'race' which affect both what we are able to do and how we are judged. Condescension, deference, shame, guilt, envy, resentment, arrogance,

> contempt, fear and mistrust, or simply mutual incomprehension and avoidance, typify relations between people of different classes' (2005b: 1).

The dominant classes have engrained into the fabric of everyday life and common-sense which practices, individuals and things are deemed to be legitimate and illegitimate simultaneously consolidating their symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1989; Skeggs 2004a) and exacerbating and reproducing inequities between social groups in the process (Mooney 2009:437; Bourdieu 1989; Skeggs 2004a; Schubert 2008:183). As Paul Gilroy (2009) highlights, we must be attuned to the interrelations between knowledge and power, particularly 'forms of ignorance that have been strategically created and deployed, and institutionally amplified'. Concurringly, Schiebinger (2004: 233) further points out that ignorance 'is often not merely the absence of knowledge but an outcome of cultural and political struggle'.

The dominated groups in the social sphere have long been seldom heard in popular discourses in Britain (Lister 2004; Mooney 2009; Charlesworth 2004; Coleman & McCandlish 2021; Hanley 2007; McKenzie 2015). Champagne (1999a:51) highlights similarities across the Western countries in the treatment of disadvantaged groups arguing that they are 'spoken of more than they speak' They thus lacking 'representational agency' (Tyler 2013:26). Bourdieu (1999a:50) concurs with this line of argument stressing that those with the lower amounts of capital and in the social field are consequently the least influential in shaping how they are portrayed within the hegemonic narrative (1999a:50). As he reminds us, 'the fate of groups is bound up with the words that designate them' (1984).

Despite the rhetoric that class ceases to play a fundamental role in modern society as advocated by neoliberal common-sense, sociologists and journalists have noted that it still plays a vital role in the devaluation of working-class practices (Lawler 2005; McKenzie 2015; Skeggs 1997; Haylett 2001; Tyler 2013; Jones 2011). As Lawler (2005:437) notes, what has differed from previous depictions of class is that it is rarely explicitly named as such but re-defined through negative cultural evaluations of 'disgust' on where they live, their lifestyle, their consumption and their accents (2005: 437).

She further notes that within the British rhetoric the lower classes are so persistently defined in terms of negative values and insufficiencies that is has become an almost taken for granted element of popular culture stripping them of any worth in the process (2005: 434). This degrading is reproduced institutionally through media production, schooling and social and public policy, where the 'spoiled identity' (Goffman 1963) of working-class culture is devalued through stigmatisation and marginalisation from the hegemonic and dominant cultural and social arena. The concept of 'spoiled identity' (Goffman 1963) will be further elaborated on in later chapters of the thesis.

'Common sense' neoliberalism and media discourse

Through this ‘symbolic injustice’ manifested everywhere in ‘social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication’ (Fraser 1997:14), the dominated within the social sphere have been vilified and treated with contempt within the mainstream discourse (McKenzie 2015:201). As Tyler (2013: 212) observes, what is striking about the neoliberal project is how, ‘the language of democracy, fairness and equality is invoked to *justify* the channelling of public hostilities towards vulnerable and or/disadvantaged populations’. Indeed, as Toynbee (2011) emphasises, ‘there is now no politics to express or admit the enormity of what has happened since the 1980s – how wealth and human respect drained from the bottom to enrich and glorify the top’. Thus, through common-sense rhetoric and ‘an imagined free-market utopia and idealised Britishness’ (Coleman & Mullin-McCandlish 2021), the true nature of power becomes somewhat blurred and subsequently ‘disappear(s) from view’ (Hall et al. 1978:216).

Coleman and Mullin-McCandlish (2021:173) have noted how ‘common-sense neoliberalism’ (Hall & O’Shea 2013) has dramatically altered as constitutes as ‘fair’ surrounding debates on welfare, immigration and work rights to impose a more individualised view of the world moving away from collectivist models. In doing so, they argue there is now a ‘normalisation’ (Coleman & Mullin-McCandlish 2021:174) of distress and dispossession imposed by the dominated onto the dominated. Jensen and Tyler (2015:485) further develop this argument pointing out that the objective facts around the increasing inequalities, because of neo-liberalism policies, are manipulated and spun by institutional agencies such as the media into ‘acceptable versions’ of the values ‘on which that cruelty depends’ (Couldry 2008:3).

Thus, to gain consent and legitimacy for policy programmes that create greater capital differentials between the dominant and dominated, the state sought to establish ‘abject’ figures or ‘revolting subjects’ (Tyler 2013) who act as ‘ideological conductors mobilized to do the dirty work of neoliberal governmentality’ (2013: 9). These symbolic victims of the neoliberal state consist of ‘‘the bogus asylum seeker’, ‘the illegal immigrants’, ‘the chav’, ‘the underclass’ and ‘the Gypsy’’(2013:9).

Jones further points to the role of the media in fostering this oppression stressing that actuality of hardship experienced by disadvantaged peoples has been manipulated by presenting them ‘demonised caricatures’ in ways that are designed and intended to provoke negative and emotive responses from its readers (McKenzie 2015:210). This sentiment is conveyed in Patrick MacGill’s (1914/2016) autobiography *Children Of The Dead End,* a real-life story of MacGill’s life emigrating from rural Donegal in the late 19th century to find work in the industrial cities in Britain. He describes the brutal and unsavoury nature of the work, exposing the unethical and dehumanising practices of the owners of production, serving as a vivid critique of industrial labour at the time. His deeply held mistrust of media practices is exemplified in this interpretation from the book:

> “The public is a crowd of asses and you must interest it. You are paid to interest it with plausible lies or unsavoury truths. An unsavoury truth is always palatable to those whom it does not harm. Our readers gloat over scandal, revel in scandal, and pay us for writing it. Learn what the public requires and give it that. Think one thing in the morning and another at night; preach what is suitable to the mob and study the principle of the papers for which you write” (MacGill 2016:278-9).

This extract from the book is still as poignant and as relevant as ever to today’s media strategies and production and is strikingly apparent within the depiction of disadvantaged communities within Glasgow today. Certain areas such as Govanhill are on a regular basis pathologized and spoke of in language of anti-social behaviour, social decay and violence pointing to individualistic causes of plight rather than structural ones of austerity, deindustrialisation and loss of work (Mooney 2009; Law & Mooney 2012; Tyler 2013). As Bourdieu rightly highlights, television (and indeed other news and culture outlets) are industries which fabricate and influence opinion ‘offering visions of the world, classified, portioned and divided in specific ways’ (Bourdieu 2011:22 in Crossley & Slater 2014). Shildrick (2018:791) further adds to this point stressing that portrayals in popular media of the poor are often over-exaggerated and over-determined as opposed to illustrating day-to-day life and material reality.

Through the reiteration and constant fuelling of negative language towards national abjects in the media, in politics and, consequently, in everyday socialising discussions within communities and public spaces, the neoliberal common-sense rhetoric against these groupings is strengthened and solidified thus becoming an objective reality (Hall et al. 1978:24-5; Bourdieu 1989). Concurringly, Shildrick (2018:793) stresses that the ‘doxa’ of neo-liberalism has become so hegemonic and persuasive within society that it has been legitimised and has thus exercises ‘a control that extends throughout the depths of the consciousness and bodies of the population’ (Hardt & Negri 2000:24).

These ‘national abjects’ serve as ‘waste populations’ (Tyler 2013:20) within the neoliberal statecraft who are ‘included through their exclusion’ (2013:20). As Stallybrass and White (1986:5-6) note, whilst these subjects are denied any agency or moral value in the social field, they act as useful scapegoats within neoliberal ideology serving as the adversary or threat to the hegemonic culture.

Indeed, as Rancière (2001) stresses, these abject figures are not merely financially destitute members of society within a body politic, rather they are ‘the category of people who do not count’ (cited in Tyler 2013:173). In this sense, they are the silent voices who are culturally degraded and discredited within popular discourse

(2013:173) and are as such presented ‘as objects rather than subjects of knowledge’ (Parker in ibid:xii).

In this sense, the ‘chav’ and the ‘ned’ (in Scotland) is the antithesis of the independent, self-reliant and entrepreneurial selves that are heralded as role models and aspirational by the neo-liberal project (2013:166). Rather, they are the embodiment of incivility and are mobilised as an abject through which the neo-liberal doctrine, financial considerations and state agencies merge to obfuscate power and validate the degradation of those at the bottom of the social sphere (Tyler 2013:170). In addition to this, working-class women especially single mothers, have become a mainstay adversary figure of the neoliberal imaginary labelled ‘welfare queen(s)’ (Feldman 2019:342) and accused of taking tax-payers money off the state from benefits.

This discourse has been filtered throughout society and reproduced within popular culture through not only the news, policy-making and political rhetoric, but also television shows and sitcoms. A clear illustration of this is found on an episode of *The Weakest Link* (2000-present) in which its presenter Anne Robinson openly mocked one of the contestants. Here is the exchange below:

Robinson: "What do you do, Ann?"

Ann (the contestant): "I'm a full-time single mum to three boys."

AR: "Three great boys. So how many Asbos?"

A: "Can you clarify that please? My nerves have taken over."

AR: "How many of your three boys have got tags on their ankles?"

A: "Well, none so far."

AR: "You're doing benefits are you?"

A: "I was waiting for this. I'm doing a 24/7 job."

AR: "Are you on benefits?"

A: "I am on benefits, yes."

AR: "And what happened to the husband?"

A: "I've had two husbands to be honest. I think I've worn them both out."

AR: "You didn't go gay did you?"

> **A:** "No. But sometimes living with three boys, there is a lot to be said for going lesbian." (cited in Yeates 2021).

Furthermore, the *Jeremy Kyle Show* (2005-19) was another television show which showcased partners in debilitated relationships primarily drawn from disadvantaged backgrounds which provided 'daytime entertainment fodder' (Jones 2011:127) for viewers. With highly complicated and intense relationship issues such as adultery being exploited and manipulated for viewer's leisure, it depicted working-class individuals and families in an unsympathetic light which further promoted individualistic explanations for deprivation whilst simultaneously discarding structural explanations (2011:127). Thus, Joseph Rowntree Foundation openly criticised the show describing it 'as a rather brutal form of entertainment that is based on derision of the lower-working-class population' (Sparrow, 2008).

In a similar fashion, reality television documenting disadvantaged households is often labelled 'poverty porn' (Jensen 2014), with shows such as *The Scheme* (2010-11) and *Benefits Street* (2014-15) depicting the lives of disadvantaged families in a particularly individualised manner. *The Scheme* is of particular relevance here as its central focus on a council estate in Kilmarnock and provides an insight to how disadvantaged areas can be portrayed within culture, media and entertainment. Through the narratives of the programme, its audiences are saturated with individualistic explanations for deprivation, hardship and precarious lives. However, within the show, there is little to no attention paid to the consequences of neoliberal governance which has transformed the circumstances of everyday life for disadvantaged communities across Britain and Scottish towns plagued by deindustrialisation and loss of industry (Law & Mooney 2012:27). Thus, the hegemonic narrative signals that we should recognise social deprivation because of reckless behaviour and bad decision-making rather than a symptom of state policies and wider social processes thereby where it is apparent it must be somewhat self-inflicted (Jensen 2014:4; Shildrick & MacDonald 2013:296).

Moreover, this highly individualised doctrine manifested itself onto popular television shows such as the sitcom *Little Britain* (2003-07) which features the character Vicky Pollard: a lone parent 'chav' figure who is represented as a person who is vulgar, immoral, unintelligent and debauched (Jones 2011:127). With this highly distorted and deliberately faulty character, the show fed on and reproduced neoliberal 'common-sense' stereotypes of working-class woman as being deficient mothers, indolent and having bad social etiquette (Adams & Raisborough 2011:83). Consequentially, this further fuelled the notion that they were somewhat undeserving and unworthy of state assistance and support (Jones 2011:127).

This class prejudice was even evident in the Kaiser Chiefs (2004) early noughties hit *I Predict A Riot*:

> *'I tried to get to my taxi*
> *A man in a tracksuit attacked me*

He said he saw it before me
Wants to get things a bit gory
Girls scrabble around with no clothes on
To borrow a pound for a condom
If it wasn't for chip fat, they'd be frozen
They're not very sensible' (cited in Jones 2011:134).

All in one verse we see all the neo-liberal categorisations and negative labelling's utilized to describe the working-class ; violent and aggressive men, whorish woman, tasteless consumption, bad health choices and imprudent and uncivil behaviour (2011:134).

Consequentially, in 2020 the BBC's own damning Creative Diversity Report discovered that "often those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are depicted negatively, fuelled by stereotypes and seen as the object of ridicule" (2020:15).

The neoliberal project has created a social environment that has endangered fundamental needs of disadvantaged populations serving as a prerequisite 'for alienation and psychopathology' (Ryan et al., 1995). Concurringly, McCartney et al. (2009:8) highlight how neoliberalism governance has led to worsening impacts on people's mental and physical health. As Ryan and Deci (2000:70) rightly stress, the prolonging and development of motivation requires 'supportive conditions, as it can be fairly disrupted by various non supportive conditions. Instead, the negative environment in Britain fostered by the neoliberal agenda with targeted labelling hostility towards the vulnerable of welfare dependency and laziness has left people feeling 'disenfranchised' (Walker et al. 2013:228).

Jarring depictions often found in the media and political expression can have considerable footprint on how broader society views these people (McKenzie 2015:18). Such harsher rhetoric has led to toughened attitudes with the wider public towards areas like welfare benefits over the last few decades (Taylor & Taylor-Goody 2014 as cited in Wincup & Monaghan 2016:267). It must be highlighted that this growing hostility comes in the backdrop of increasing precarity in work, low wage growth and clear trends of the growing reliance on food banks for the most vulnerable in society (Dowler & Lambie Mumford 2015 as cited in Jensen & Tyler 2015:484). In addition, as Shildrick (2018:790) observes, most individuals in financial hardship are in paid work which invalidates the hegemonic argument heralded by neo-liberals that being in employment is the best route out of poverty.

Moreover, the framing of these top-down interventions is often internalised by the subjects in question and thus they begin to view themselves through the prism the narratives recognise them to be (McKenzie 2015:203) and consequently are made to be feel 'weak' (2015:204). Likewise, Miller (1997:202) further emphasises the impact this denigration on its victims can have to their agency as they experience internal episodes of 'shame, self-loathing, self-disgust, self-contempt and self-hatred'.

Consequently then, ‘symbolic violence is converted into forms of material violence that are embodied and lived’ (Tyler 2013: 26).

Thus, as Bourdieu emphasises capital within the social field should not be understood solely on the *economic* but should pay close attention to the ways in which cultural capital plays a role in defining what is of ‘good taste’, but also ‘bad taste’. From the beginnings of the industrial revolution and the rise of the new bourgeois ruling class, their practices, values and interests were viewed as morally superior to that of those from the working-class (Williams 1973). As Lawler (2005: 443) emphasises, the middle-class historically have embedded and institutionalised their values and way of life as the objective ‘right and proper’ ones thereby manifesting themselves as the beacon of ‘true humanity’. Additionally, Lawler (2005: 437) further points out from as early as the start of the 20th century, within popular culture depictions of the disadvantaged norms and values were represented in such a way that suggested impurity and vulgarity. These interests are upheld through institutionally through the media which is ‘embedded in the political/social nexus, and as such reflects the dominant power relationships that exist within society’ (Jacobs et al. 2011: 13).

Therefore, *symbolic violence* on the working-class should be seen as a process rather than an event, in which differentiations made by the dominant groupings to distinguish themselves from the lower classes have evolved and adapted to reflect the current landscape rather fade away (Welshman 2013: 5). Thus: ‘Each decade we swiftly declare we have buried class; each decade the coffin stays empty’ (Hoggart 1989: vii).

The language of binary distinctions has remained a lasting and perpetual feature in British discourse over many centuries (2013: 5) and the process of drawing distinctions between groupings in society has long been ‘embedded’ institutionally (Mooney 2009: 445). Lister notes that the language deployed currently of ‘welfare dependency’ and the ‘underclass’ has clear historical continuities of the distinctions made since the Poor Law was introduced in the 1830s with its ideas of the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving poor’ (Lister 2015:143).

Thus, the working-class have historically been constructed as embodying the societal ills of any given time (Lawler 2005: 437). Indeed, as Lawler (2005: 437) advocates, since the end of the 19th century ‘ethical and intellectual justifications for middle-class disgust at working-class existence have sat side by side, forming a neat boundary which precludes any middle-class questioning of their own position’. Therefore, this disparaging rhetoric should be seen and regarded as a form of institutional oppression over time which helps build on and reproduce the dominance of the ruling elite over the disadvantaged.

Territorial stigmatisation

Distinctions and classifications are constructed and reproduced relationally through the spatialisation of the physical environment. In his theory of territorial stigmatisation, Wacquant marries Erving Goffman's and Pierre Bourdieu's theories of stigma and symbolic power respectively to highlight how a physical environment can be used to discredit certain groupings in the social space in relation to others in the field of play.

Goffman (1963: 44 as cited in Sisson 2020: 660) stresses that a 'stigma symbol' is one which represents attributes which can delegitimise the subject in question thereby 'breaking up what would otherwise be a coherent overall picture, with consequent reduction in our valuation of the individual'. In addition to this, Goffman emphasises that stigma should be viewed as a relational concept with interchanges between agents in the social field which subsequently create 'blemishes of the body', 'of the character' and 'tribal' stigma. Along with these elements Wacquant has developed the theory by introducing 'place' (Sisson 2020: 661).

To account for wider societal forces which influence social interactions within individuals in the field which in Goffman's theory is found lacking, Wacquant also utilises the work of Bourdieu and the notion of 'symbolic power' (Bourdieu 1991). As mentioned previously, Bourdieu stresses that the power of language can create what he terms as *doxa*– in which the objective nature of society is taken uncritically and seen as the 'natural order of things' (Crossley 2016: 264-5).

As the state holds considerable legitimacy within the body politic as it is seen to be the authoritative institution of the nation; he argues that the state has immense power in manoeuvring 'the objective structure of society' (Bourdieu 1989: 23) and producing its own problems (Bourdieu et al. 1994: 2 as cited in Crossley 2016: 265-6). Through this symbolic power, the state has considerable weight in shaping the hegemonic narrative at any given time, with the capacity to privilege some groups whilst suppressing others (Crossley 2016: 264-5).

In this regard, areas seen as inferior spaces at the bottom of the social ladder are demeaned and degraded as 'sites of ridicule and condemnation' (McKenzie 2015: 2213; Larsen & Delica 2019: 540). As Sack (1986) highlights, bounded areas can have an objectifying capability of diverting focus away from the institutional forces that rule over and manage them and onto the stigmatised areas themselves (cited in Sisson 2020: 668). Bounded areas therefore have meaning both symbolically and physically in that locations are portrayed and discussed in an ahistorical fashion thereby naturalised and seen as inherent to the territory as well as the issues which apparently prevail in them (Sisson 2020: 662). Thus, the way in which areas are portrayed and depicted create classifications and distance in the social field symbolically and which subsequently enforces stratification but in a way that appears arbitrary and 'natural or self-evident' (Bourdieu 1989; Wacquant 2016 as cited in Sisson 2020: 667).

This process needs to be understood within the wider historical context of Glasgow. As Collins and Levitt (2010) demonstrate, post-war housing policy, slum clearance and the development of peripheral new towns beyond the city, and deindustrialisation were not apolitical or inevitable processes, but elements of a deliberate managed decline of the city, which helped shape the uneven spatial and economic conditions characterising the city today (Gray & Kallin 2023:1038; Gray & Porter 2017). The legacy of those social and public policy decisions is, in part, reflected in the so-called Glasgow Effect (Walsh et al. 2010), which highlights the disproportionately higher mortality rates in Glasgow compared to similarly deprived northern cities in the UK such as Manchester and Liverpool.

These structural and policy-driven transformations also shaped the lived conditions of working-class communities in the post-war period. Damer (1989**)** illustrates how urban redevelopment, including housing schemes and large-scale regeneration projects, could stigmatise communities, while simultaneously creating spaces for resistance and shared solidarity within the bounded area. Relatedly, Abrams et al. (2019) explore the gendered experiences of women and children in high-rise social housing, revealing how, despite isolation, residents maintained strong support networks with women at the forefront of sustaining community ties. More recent work by Cumbers et al. (2010), Gray and Mooney (2011), Gray and Kallin (2023) and Paton et al. (2017) echo these findings, pushing back against portrayals of these communities as lacking or deficient.

However, it must be acknowledged that the politics of class and place has been inextricably linked since the nineteenth century as areas within the inner cities of large industrial cities such as Glasgow, Liverpool and Birmingham were labelled ‘slums’ and attributed with negative connotations such as squalor and disorder (Mooney 2009: 447; Walkerdine 2003 cited in Lawler 2005: 433). Thus, people and place are tied together in a way that constantly describes their existence in terms of lack (Lawler 2005: 433). However, this is not so much as described in economic terms but rather through the prism of cultural capital; the assumed ‘the lack of ‘taste’, knowledge, and the ‘right way of being and doing’ (Lawler 2005: 433; Bourdieu 1986: 511).

As Mooney (2009) emphasises, the politics of deprivation and territory interweave through the utilisation of well-established contrasting distinctions of the ‘welfare/social housing ghettos’ and the ‘normal and or hard-working communities’ (2009:447). He further elaborates highlighting how Glasgow’s East End is depicted within the hegemonic narrative in a uniformly manner as an area of hardship, angst and hopelessness (2009: 447). Through this overly simplistic portrayal of stigmatised areas, there is little recognition of the many facets which make up boundaries: the array of different nationalities, the multitude of contrasting life histories and life circumstances; instead, often denigrated places are depicted as areas of social, moral and physical segregation (Mooney 2009: 443). Thus, these spaces are constructed and reproduced as manifestations and consequences of non-success (2009: 443).

This is especially apparent through neo-liberal rhetoric which consistently defines and frames poverty through agency and individualistic lenses. In this regard, deprivation in bounded areas is reimagined because of a self-inflicted way of existence (Tyler 2013: 162). Rather than an acknowledgment of the structural consequences of the processes of deindustrialisation, loss of industry and the increasing precarity in the labour market and disparity between the rich and poor, the narrative surrounding saturating in the mainstream outlets of the media and public policy is one that focuses on culture and behavioural deficiencies which has apparently became an epidemic in stigmatised areas (2013: 162).

This is evident within the discourse used by politicians labelling areas as ‘left behind estates’ (Cameron 2016), and in the process re-producing and prolonging a narrative of anguish, demoralizing lifestyles and intergenerational worklessness within these areas (Duncan Smith 2007 as cited in Shildrick 2018: 788). Thus, culpability is directed to the victims and those on the periphery in the social structure who are accused of not upholding the values and norms of the dominant culture (Bauder 2002: 87; Gans 1990; Fainstein 1993; Bourgois 1995). Through this production of knowledge, stigmatised neighbourhoods are blamed for their own plight and position within the social arena (Bauder 2002: 85).

The associations constructed between people and place within this ‘doxa’ diverts attention away from any social and economic considerations that are fundamental factors surrounding deprivation within areas and thus places accountability onto the residents rather than the institutional structures that created and sustain them (Gray & Mooney 2011: 10). Even though the mapping of territories and bounded areas is a product of policymaking within government, constant repetition of inflammatory language veered towards degraded areas ensures scrutiny is directed downwards rather than upwards, thus producing symbolic violence in the process (2011: 10).

Council estates have become a shorthand for fecklessness, welfare dependency and failure within the neo-liberal common-sense paradigm. Lisa McKenzie (2015) highlights the role of degradation and disrespect experienced by residents of council estates from popular culture in Britain today:

> ‘Narratives are important - the ways that narratives are constructed about different groups affect their life chances, and also in the ways these groups see themselves. In recent years there has been a clear and definite return to the imagery of the ‘underclass’, with council estates representing a modern version of Hogarth’s Gin Lane. This version is clear and has characters who are recognisable - the generous and violent gang member and the welfare-absorbing single mother. The discourses that surround these characters are their assumed lack of common societal values and morality, and their wilful self-destruction. It is their self-destructive behaviour, through their own practices, tastes, what they wear, how they speak and who they decide to share their beds

> with that begins to represent a real threat to British values and national life, with seemingly the only rational answer that this danger to British society coming from below must be curbed through punitive measures - benefit cuts - reawakening the whole 'deserving versus undeserving' debate' (2015:198).

The language of 'sink estates' and, aforementioned, 'left behind 'estates' (Cameron 2016) is a form of statecraft and *state violence* utilised to castigate and attack the whole notion of public housing and belittle the people who reside in them. As Tyler (2013: 160) points out, since the 1980s and the move to neo-liberal governance council housing were recast and recomposed in the public sphere as 'barracks for the poor' (Jones 2011: 81) which emphasised the need for home ownership. She goes on further arguing that it was under the New Labour project that the hegemonic narrative surrounding social housing areas was one of anti-social behaviour in which popular media outlets such as television shows, reality TV, sitcoms and the news were saturated with content portraying council estates as sites of immoral behaviour and dependency (2013: 160).

As McKenzie (2015: 200-1) stresses, social and public policy within disadvantaged communities is continuously deficient as the people who reside within the area are viewed as a problem needed solved. Thus, intervention is veered towards altering working-class practices and interests in line with the dominant culture's norms and values.

Consequentially, a 'view of nowhere' (Haraway 1991) conceptualisation of reality is established whereby those at the top of the hierarchy in the social field attribute negative values over agents with less capital while being completely disconnected to their situation. Furthermore, as McKenzie (2015:3) stresses, working-class practices are constantly misconstrued by outsiders looking in who fail to grasp or understand life at the opposite end of the social divide. These ruling voices express their symbolic power enforcing their worldview within the social structure thus differentiating certain groups from others (Butler et al. 2018: 509-10).

Indeed, as Wacquant et al argue (2014: 1275) territorial stigmatisation has real and tangible effects on the internal and external realities of agents in the social world and consequentially determine how they perceive, observe and behave as it infiltrates and spreads across the geographical social map. Consequentially, the harsh rhetoric spoke of about stigmatised areas through word of mouth, the news, politics and informal conversations is utilized, 'as a form of social practice' (Fairclough 1995: 7; Hall et al. 1978) that establishes and creates perceptions, fabrications and shame to the territory and its inhabitants (Butler et al. 2018: 4; Wacquant et al. 2014: 1273).

As Wacquant expresses:

> ‘The endlessly rising discursive velocity of journalism and politics, rooted in their ever-closer mutual interconnection and facilitated by their correlative disconnection from social reality, tends to create the illusion that urban practices and representations fluctuate and renew themselves continuously’(2008b: 282).

Concurringly, Darren McGarvey (2017:91) observes, the gulf between the dominant and the dominated within society has become so significant that suppositions are constructed and maintained over a period of the ‘other’, often resulting in unsound and faulty judgements which nonetheless become ‘reality’ and thus long-standing. However, as Butler et al. (2018: 509-10) rightly argue, top-down rhetoric from positions of distance and privilege fails to paint an accurate depiction of the true authentic experience and day-to-day life inside so-called ‘no-go’ areas (2018: 13-4).

Gray and Mooney (2011) illustrate how economically disadvantaged areas like Glasgow’s East End are pathologized as deficient spaces requiring intervention while also highlighting how communities resist and reinterpret these imposed representations. Paton et al. (2017) further this by exploring the legacy of Glasgow’s Commonwealth Games redevelopment, showing how top-down urban interventions reinforced stigma but also created opportunities for local communities to reshape their own narratives. Similarly, Cumbers et al. (2010) illustrate the agency of working-class communities, demonstrating how everyday acts of belonging and interlinked ‘webs of care’ (Katz 2004:246) contest these negative stereotypes.

As McKenzie (2015: 206) emphasises, negative rhetoric and discriminatory policy can have a long-lasting influence on how individuals see themselves, as well as how the broader social field views them. What is crucial to point out is that stigma surrounding particular neighbourhoods do not, as a matter of course, have to truthfully reflect what’s actually happening or ongoing within the bounded area; rather the perception created within common wisdom that attaches negative associations towards areas becomes psychologically true as it spreads and infiltrates the minds of individuals within society possessing an almost orthodox quality (Sisson 2021: 661). Thus, through ‘the internalization of social and political power dynamics’ (Butler et al. 2018: 3-4) stigmatised places come to be viewed as such almost uncritically which enables the reproduction of inequitable relations through people and space.

Lawrence (2019) critiques the rise of individualism in post-war Britain, noting that claims of growing individualisation often obscure the enduring importance of shared identities, collective practices and moral economies within working-class life. He argues that these communities continued to sustain forms of solidarity and collective action, even at times of economic turmoil and social decay. In a similar vein, Robinson et al. (2017) complicate the narrative of increasing individualism by showing that the solidarity within working-class spaces did not dissolve but evolved, revealing how

collective agency remained central despite increasing pressures toward individualisation.

In a more contemporary context, Lisa McKenzie (2015) not only documents the shaming and lived experience of stigmatisation within the area of St Ann's in Nottingham, it also celebrates the sense of community, kinship and resistance to negative labelling associated with living in a council estate. Moreover, through social capital accumulated through the local value system, she highlights how residents found strength within the area to challenge narratives and the way in which stories were told of them and the area (McKenzie 2015: 112 cited in Tyler 2015: 501). Thus, for McKenzie although the habitus is influenced by the past, social class and environment; it is not static, but rather generative and can illuminate 'how individuals and groups can push against, resist or adapt to those negative namings' (2015: 206). Therefore, people from marginalized areas may 'internalise an awareness of their stigmatisation rather than stigmatisation itself' (Sisson 2020: 672-3; Jensen & Christensen 2012).

Crucially, social space can be actively created and sustained in a meaningful way by the residents themselves, acting as a pivotal counterpoint to territorial stigmatisation imposed by the state or agencies outwith the community. Positive notions of belonging and deep-rooted pride can still be shaped and maintained by those within, actively challenging negative stigma placed on them from above in the process (McKenzie 2015:206). These historical and contemporary insights form the foundation for this research project, which seeks to capture the forgotten voices of Govanhill, revealing alternative understandings and hopeful knowledge of everyday life within marginalised urban spaces.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a critical exploration of neoliberalism as both an economic and cultural project. It is one that has profoundly reshaped understandings of welfare, class, and social worth in Scotland and the UK. Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic violence and doxa, it traced how neoliberal ideology has become naturalised in everyday discourse, constructing individual responsibility, market logic, and meritocracy as self-evident truths. These ideological shifts in recent decades have reconfigured the role of the state in the UK. A new agenda of moralising poverty and blaming individuals and communities for structural disadvantage has emerged as a backdrop to the hollowing out and externalisation of aspects of welfare provision.

The analysis has also demonstrated how these processes operate through powerful mechanisms of symbolic representation, particularly via old and new media and political discourse. Through the creation of abject figures such as the 'chav', 'ned', the 'benefits cheat', and the 'undeserving poor', neoliberalism legitimates punitive policy

and social exclusion. Moreover, these narratives extend beyond individuals to whole territories. Govanhill being such a community. These areas are stigmatised and pathologised as sites of economic backwardness, cultural failure and moral decay. The theory of territorial stigmatisation, as elaborated by Wacquant and others, offers a crucial framework for understanding how spatialised inequalities are misrecognised as failures of character, rather than consequences of systemic disinvestment and discrimination.

Yet despite the overwhelming weight of symbolic violence and marginalisation, the chapter also highlighted the persistence of community resistance, social solidarity, and alternative value systems in stigmatised areas. Drawing on insights from Lisa McKenzie and others, it emphasised that working-class residents need not be merely passive recipients of neoliberal narratives but active agents who contest and reframe the meanings imposed upon them. This sets the stage for the next chapters, where the lived experiences of Govanhill's residents will be brought to the fore, offering a counter-narrative grounded in voice, resilience, and collective dignity. Community outlets at grass-roots level can challenge negative portrayals of stigmatised areas to project and amplify positive stories which can raise 'critical consciousness' amongst the people who live there and raise community spirit (Sisson 2020: 670). Wacquant and Bourdieu have been rightly criticised for their failure to recognise the influence of disadvantaged communities themselves in challenging dominant narratives of the areas they reside in (Jensen & Christensen 2012; Kirkness 2014; Pattillo 2009; Skeggs 2004b).

Kinship-like relationships are frequently formed in marginalized communities and understandings of territories *within* the area are often contrasted with the highly negative representations found *outwith* the space. Therefore, use-value elements contained within area such as community solidarity, resources, close relationships and emotional attachment to the territory are discarded through the individualistic and exchange-value prism of neo-liberal discourse (McKenzie 2015; August 2014; Mooney 2009; Kirkness 2014). Concurringly, Gray and Mooney (2011: 587) express that through their study of Glasgow's East End they found that people from the area seldom left the area as their day-to day activities and social interactions were based firmly in the territory rather than other parts of the city.

Thus, residents who live in stigmatised communities need not be seen as passive victims of symbolic violence from the hierarchy in society but rather active agents whom through day-to-day interactions can provide a counter-argument to hegemonic representations of their areas being 'super-urban, bleak and monotonous place(s)' (Garbin & Millington 2012: 2078). They can actively shape their own stories. Through everyday interactions and social bonding, they position their communities with agency, value and vibrancy which directly refutes the neoliberal framing of such communities as worthless or 'problem place(s)' (Johnson & Mooney 2007).

The following chapters of this project, through dialogue with Govanhill residents and community groups within the area, aim to provide a challenge to dominant narratives portrayed about the area by giving voice to those seldomly heard within the ‘doxa’ of neo-liberalism. In doing so, it seeks to provide new knowledge in ways that challenge power and provide a platform for a more hopeful future. It will focus on Govanhill – the place, its history, portrayals and, not least, its people. Prior to these however, it is necessary to outline the approach and methodology adopted in this study.

Chapter 4

Methodology - ‘Expressing the Inexpressible, Uttering the Unspoken’: Interpretivism, Life Stories and Song

This chapter will outline the philosophy and method underpinning the research in this case study in Govanhill – an area of Glasgow situated in the southside of the city. Over the course of the study, it has been commented on in various fora as, amongst other things, that this approach is 'out there', 'quirky', 'alternative', 'unique' and the like. These descriptions at least share a certain level of non-judgemental neutrality. However, one positivist social scientist (who wishes to remain anonymous) was rather less generous, his feedback was along the lines of 'Mmmmm, you'll have to go some way to justify that methodology'. This chapter intends to go 'some way' to do just that.

A pivotal element of the doctoral thesis is the role of song is its primary output. Drawing on data derived from the interview transcripts and key themes inherent to the study, songs are utilized as the key anchor of the methodology. They serve as an innovative prism through which the life stories and everyday experiences within Govanhill are interpreted and conveyed. Thus, the use of song acted as both an *analytical* tool and an artistic *output*, acting as a key component throughout the process. The rationale for and methods utilised for this creative approach will be addressed later in this chapter.

It will proceed by examining the notion of alternative philosophical paradigms in social science research before outlining the key underlying assumptions of the interpretivist approach. How this approach 'fits' into my own critical research philosophy will then be analysed. Such discussion is important as these philosophical assumptions are an important underpinning of this study's own methodological argument and approach i.e. the chapter will seek to give justification to both the research *process* as well as *output*.

Pollins (2007: 93) refers to 'two grand traditions in social science epistemology' – positivism and interpretivism. This research has been conducted with an interpretivist outlook. This maintains that knowledge of the social world can be gained through the interpretation of meanings which motivate people to action. The focus is on *understanding* rather than *explaining* or *predicting* behaviour (Halperin and Heath 2020: 5).

The conception of my research gives emphasis to activism, engagement and co-production of research. By using a narrative form of inquiry and focusing on the stories that individuals tell, the method seeks to capture the micro stories of the individuals and community of Govanhill – the silent histories so often ignored in mainstream discourse about Govanhill and other working-class areas. This involved immersing myself in community activities such as workshops, parades, open mics, festivals and events. This was undertaken whilst conducting life story interviews from a broad range of Govanhill residents. The transcripts of these interviews were then analysed and interpreted through song. The process by which this was undertaken will be outlined. Using song as an output of my data collection, this enabled me to interpret and amplify the lived experiences of those who participated within the project in a more expressive way. Through an interpretivist lens, this brought to life an enriched emotive resonance to the stories that transcended mere traditional text or words.

The methodological approach adopted required the researcher to leave the ivory tower and chair by immersing themselves in alternative views of reality unearthing classist, gendered, aged and whatever other interpretations of a social environment (Burawoy 2005:5). Understanding the dynamics of power and belonging has multiple implications in terms of community, activism and resistance.

Interpretivism as a philosophical framework contains within it several approaches such as post-modernism, constructivism, critical theory and feminism. Its fundamental ontological assumption is that social phenomena are subjectively created by human actors and therefore the goal of the social researcher is to seek an understanding of human behaviour through interpretation of the beliefs and meanings that individuals give for action. This requires the adoption of a hermeneutical approach which assumes behaviour is the product of the 'meanings and intentions actors employ' (Halperin and Heath 2020: 47-8).

Interpretivists challenge 'methodological monism' (Cassell and Nadin 2008: 73), arguing that there must be a clear distinction between social science and natural science as human beings are conscious actors 'whose behaviour is influenced by motivation, mood and a whole range of other issues' (Seale 1999 as paraphrased by Cassell and Nadin 2008: 73). As a result, the methodological frameworks for studying social sciences need *not* be a duplication of the methods used in natural sciences as the objects of study have fundamentally different characteristics.

Furthermore, it is characterised by a relativist epistemology stressing that, as knowledge is subjective, we cannot be fully detached from our values whilst conducting research (Leavy 2011: 7-8). Thus, knowledge in this project is 'co-created' between the researcher and the researched (Hiller 2016: 103). The key objectives of interpretivist research are 'to develop understanding, increase sensitization to ethical and moral issues, and personal and political emancipation' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005 as paraphrased in Levers 2013:3). These aims motivated my research approach in Govanhill.

Research Paradigms and Interpretivism

My research philosophy rejects the idea that exclusively positivist 'scientific' approaches are the only appropriate methodological approaches when studying society. There should be no requirement that all researchers *must* aspire to the orthodox 'scientific' that involves supposedly objective, neutral, non-partisan examination of social behaviour, and developing and testing hypotheses in empirical research to generate theory. There is not always a world of positive knowledge 'out there' awaiting discovery. Instead, the social world can often reflect many understandings and interpretations of 'reality'. There are multiple meanings that humans can attach to the same action, it is not always an enlightening methodology to categorize and pigeon-hole motivation. Often a social scientist is so detached from the subject matter of research that such an approach is impossible. How can one produce categories of beliefs, attitudes and motivation when one is so detached?

Often a more appropriate methodological starting point is one of discovery of belief, attitude and motivation without any preconception.

Thus, the reliability and validity of much of my data does not stem from objectivist philosophic assumptions of theory but rather is grounded in the perceptions of those researched. Part of my underlying philosophical assumption being that authentic knowledge and understanding of Govanhill is realised through studying the history of people's life stories and the history of place of which this thesis has investigated.

As noted above, interpretivism as a philosophical framework contains within it a wide variety of approaches. All share its fundamental ontological assumption that social phenomena are subjectively created by human actors and therefore the goal of the social researcher is to seek an understanding of human behaviour through interpretation of the beliefs and meanings that individuals give for action.

Interpretivism, my research and 'critical interpretivism'

My research philosophy acknowledges positivism as an approach has recognised strengths but also blindspots and limitations, particularly in areas critical to this project. Society is *not* a collective mass of free-wheeling atomistic individuals without influence. Rather, individuals and society are active agents that merge to interact in dynamic ways to attribute meanings to different groupings and people (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016: 55).

Social justice cannot just be about redistribution. It must also be about recognition – an element of social justice largely absent in leading discourses. Struggles for recognition and political voice are one and the same (paraphrase of Philips 2003: 265 as cited in Lister 2006: 53). We must encourage these voices to tell their stories of the past, 'from the inside' (McKenzie 2015:4), present them in ways that make us feel strong and to challenge the narratives playing out in the mainstream in order that foundations of a more socially just future may be built. This thesis seeks to do just that.

Depictions of disadvantaged groups in the past, in comparison to the present, are striking in their commonality. Working-class communities were often perceived as an 'undeserving poor' (Murray 1984) due to their alleged lack of self-reliance and behavioural issues while facing poverty in Victorian Britain, similar to the rhetoric of today's discourse of 'welfare dependency' and 'underclass', with little to no mention of the structural problems of which they endure (McKibbin 1990; Haylett 2001). As noted in chapter two, reality TV in the UK is littered with examples of 'poverty porn' (Jensen 2014) broadcasts that decontextualise such groups projecting their behaviour of the causal factor in their predicament, individualising blame in under-socialised accounts of their history, context and lives (e.g. *Benefits Street, The Scheme*).

Social injustice is, I would argue, a structure and process over time rather than an event and thus this research seeks to investigate the structures in society enabling them to proceed. We, as researchers, must question what is 'taken to be normative'

(Harrison 2018: 55-56), and challenge the socially constructed structures in which power operates (2018: 55-56).

There is a strong critical element underpinning my philosophical assumptions. Large elements of my research objectives have strong resemblance to the commitments found in Critical Theory, namely a commitment to social action, 'from the overturning of specific unjust practices to radical transformation of entire societies' (Lincoln and Guba 2000 :174). Therefore, a more accurate depiction of the nature of my research could be 'critical interpretivism' (Pozzebon 2004).

Whilst I maintain that reality is socially constructed in a dynamic interplay between human beings and society, I also recognise that the *most influential* players in this dynamic relationship are also the *most powerful* – controlling and owning capital assets such as land and wealth. These influential players yield much of the hegemony and 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu 1977) over society therefore entrenching the notion that 'hierarchies are continually socially constructed not naturally given' (Kenrick 2011 :190). For example, many of the land-owning class and titled families of Scotland can trace their wealth and ancestry back centuries. In Europe this is not uncommon – economic historians researching Florence can trace the wealth of its contemporary rich families to those of the renaissance city republic period of the 15th century (McWilliams 2024).

Moreover, critical and interpretive studies are far from being on opposing teams. Critical thinking is inherent to interpretive studies and social construction is a prevalent feature of critical theory (Phillips and Hardy 2002 as cited in Pozzebon 2004:278). The way that people make sense of their world and the world around them is influenced greatly by everyday life at the micro level, the crucial point though is that the *micro* problems that people face in their lives cannot be divorced from the backdrop of events taking place at the *macro* level which are controlled largely by power structures. They are inextricably linked. Therefore, whilst people create and give meaning to phenomena and the world they live in through experience and interaction, the power structures they are subjected to also play a crucial role in how they perceive the world externally and how they internally view themselves in relation to these power structures.

A core objective of my research is a reclamation of knowledge. In social constructions of the past, working-class struggle and history is often 'ignored, destroyed or distorted' (Linkon and Russo 2002 as paraphrased by Strangleman and Rhodes: 418) by powerful agents in society. Whose voices are not being heard through the hegemonic narratives of the past and present? What knowledge has been left out? And why have they been left out? It is our ethical duty as researchers to seek representation of those voices that are being concealed and suppressed from the mainstream narrative.

Often historical, social science, mainstream or official narratives bear little to the everyday experience of the dispossessed. What and whose history are being remembered is almost always the subject of political contestation. Conflicts over

history, people, place, the present and the future are endemic in society. For example, official accounts of deprivation are quantitative heavy, statistically complex and detached from those being observed, quantified and measured. McGarvey (2017) observes that the Scottish (and no doubt other nation's) 'poverty industry' is dominated by the analysis of the liberal middle-class and when challenged by the 'observed' are often upset and offended. 'Data' is dominated by quantitative studies of child poverty, deprivation indices and numbers of benefit recipients. These numbers often detach analysis from the everyday lived reality of poverty and deprivation and in a sense dehumanise those suffering from it. Locked into a data world of trends, comparison and policy planning and strategy policymakers can lose site of the cruel reality and urgency of dealing with such problems. This project deliberate eschews such empirical data and utilises instead narrative inquiry. This involves more closeness, empathy and the possibility of impact.

My research is focused on issues of displacement, memory and stigmatisation. 'Critical interpretivism' is the most natural 'fit' in researching such topics. This 'paradigm' fits the subject matter, research methodology and, most importantly, my view of my role of a social researcher. Social research need not objectify, displace and view its subjects from a distance. It can be immersed within society, orientated to action and be committed to making an impact on it, no matter how slight.

The 'Active' Researcher

In this respect, the project leaned on the interventionist psychology and social work of the Maori health workers and the Just Therapy Team located in New Zealand. Their work is focused on ideas of belonging, sacredness and liberation and the interconnection between them through the stories told through their narrative practice (Waldegrave & Tamesese 1994: 99). Thus, a strong emphasis and commitment of their work is placed on confronting the causes and not just the symptoms of social injustice thereby linking the *micro* problems of individuals and families with the *macro*-economic, political, culture and social context of which they are being played out (1994: 96).

Therefore, as the active position of the practitioner, this research does not only have a commitment to people telling their narratives but also invites people into an open dialogue to convey their stories in ways that make them feel strong and in ways that are not debilitating. Moreover, it reveals and challenges the power *structures* which are in play throughout the narratives relating to the key themes of displacement, stigmatisation and loss which this work is investigating (Waldegrave & Tamasese 1994). In doing so, it challenges the all-encompassing neoliberal paradigm which places all emphasis on agency and individual disguising the 'symbolic violence' endured by the most marginalized in society in their everyday lives.

It is an effective medium to conduct this study as it provides a platform for the formation of multiple realities to be brought to light, but also illuminating the connections and relationships formed between individuals, communities and broader civilisation

(Fraser 2004: 181), and how each has a continual impact on the other (Moen 2006: 57). As my research will be analysing 'the meanings, categories, and practices that shape people's behaviours and perceptions' (Harrison 2018: 40), whilst acknowledging the societal and historical backdrop in which it is taking place; narrative inquiry is a wholly appropriate and necessary methodology for this project.

Narrative Inquiry and Life Stories

> **'**There is no one meaning. However, we of the periphery know that he who holds the purse strings certainly has more definition of whose meaning it is that one acquires…' (Waldegrave & Tamesese 1994: 103).

Narrative inquiry at its essence is the study of human beings. 'Telling stories' has always been a pivotal part of our humanity and is the medium through which we form our identities and make sense of the world around us (Leavy 2009; Plummer 1995). Narrative inquiry has the power to 'amplify' (Wang and Geale 2015: 195) silent histories and knowledge of working people who are seldom heard in popular discourses (Madison 2005) and challenge the stigmatising narratives often ascribed to individuals in my area of study (McKenzie 2015; Lister 2008; Haylett 1999; McGarvey 2017).

Narratives are a form of oral history that capture, 'micro-level experiences and the macro-level environments that shape and contain those experiences' (Leavy 2011: 16) at the level of community. Engagement with oral history can often have a life-affirming effect on participants - in conveying experiences and feelings they can feel validated and empowered (2011: 20). Oral testimony and narrative offer authentic understanding, knowledge and perspective of the experience of those whose voice is being heard. My research is theory grounded in the views of the interviewees and will reflect, 'the interrelationship between meaning in the perception of the subjects and their action' (Glaser 1998).

The form of narrative inquiry this project has undertaken has been life stories. A key strength of life stories is their ability to inform us of the interrelationship between structure and agency thereby 'closing the gap between the individual and the social order…' (Goodley 1996: 336). A life story approach therefore rejects, 'a fictional non-existing world constructed by the scientific observer' (Schutz 1964 as cited in Goodley 1996: 336) which is ineffectual in studying the thoughts and motivations of those it seeks and aim to understand (1964: 334 as cited in Goodley 1996: 336).

In utilising this approach this thesis emphasises the need to differentiate the terms 'life history' and 'life story', as both have been used mutually by many oral historians (Abrams 2016: 40). The key difference between these two methods is that a life *history*

is ‘a chronologically told narrative of an individual’s past’ (Abrams 2016: 40). This contains key phases of one’s life including childhood, school and adulthood constructed in a manner which it tailored to the norms and values of its audience (2016: 40). On the other hand, a life *story* is a more interpretive and ever-changing method which is based upon the interviewee’s experiences and the meanings they subscribe to those experiences.

Thus, whilst life histories can be described as a ‘kind of truth-telling’ exercise conforming to societal norms leaving little room for ‘fabrication and imagination’ (Abrams 2016: 40); a life story method endorses interpretation and the notion that ‘a life is not ‘how it was’ but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold’ (Bruner 1987: 31). Linde emphasises the method’s dynamic nature arguing that a life story is not merely multitude of stories bearing no relation to each other, rather taken as a whole, a life story is greater than the sum of its parts and that each segment of the story bears relation to each other. This consequently means that a life story is never fixed and is constantly re-written and modified to provide an understanding of our past and our self of self in relation to our current situation and the external world around us (Linde 1993: 25).

The narration of a life story is a performative one in which the research must be attentive to ‘the use of language, the deployment of narrative structure, the articulation of memory, the context within which the life is narrated’ (Abrams 2016: 34). In addition, many scholars have argued that life stories are not simply ‘tales’; they have emancipatory potential and have a capacity to shape attitudes and public policy (Kothari & Hulme 2004: 5; Bourdieu et al. 2000; Thompson 1988). As socio-linguist Charlotte Linde stresses:

> ‘In order to exist in the social world with a comfortable sense of being a good, socially proper, and stable person, an individual needs to have a coherent, acceptable, and constantly revised life story … Life stories express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way. They are also one very important means by which we communicate this sense of self and negotiate it with others’ (1993: 3).

In this regard, individuals with a coherent sense of identity and self tend to have less difficulty organising their stories in a well-defined and linear chronology that begin at childhood through to adulthood whilst simultaneously signifying clear links between the past and the present and their stories to the wider social world they inhabit. Conversely, an individual with an underdeveloped sense of identity is more likely to present their story as ‘a series of snapshots bearing no relation to one another’ (Abrams 2016: 38).

Therefore, a life story can illuminate a great deal about the individual narrating the story as it conveys to the witness how they want to be portrayed as an individual. This

is articulated in not just *what* they say in their testimonies, but most importantly, *how* it is narrated.

Moreover, at the very core of the life story method is its capacity to refute and question the 'doxa' and assumptions of the social world within hegemonic accounts (Becker 1970). This, again, is where the linkage between this methodology and the 'Bourdieusian' framework, outlined in chapter two, adopted in this thesis is clear.

At its very essence, life stories demand that, 'power should listen to the people it claims to serve' (Goodson 2001: 131). This method can have a life-affirming effect on interviewees. Kothari and Hulme (2004), for example, note that for many people providing testimonies in life stories, their thoughts and perceptions have been previously ignored and devalued in mainstream accounts of the past; thus, being invited to tell their story could have the capacity of empowering individuals and increasing their self-worth (2004: 7-8). Armitage and Gluck concur adding that oral histories have a capacity to enlighten research and contribute to deep understandings of the social world, "but also empower people to contribute to social change" (2007: 31).

Thus, this approach for this thesis is entirely necessary as it can effectively represent marginalised voices and challenge misconceptions of disadvantaged communities within Scotland and cast light 'on the mundane, the everyday practices, strategies and imperatives…' (Kothari & Hulme 2004: 12) of working-class life. These have been continuously overlooked within mainstream narratives. As multiple perspectives and interpretations are encouraged in life stories, individual narratives can have the power to confront and question taken-for-granted beliefs of the past or, as this thesis will be investigating, attitudes to working-class communities in Scotland. Even more powerfully, they can challenge implicit preconceptions (that they may not be aware of) of researchers, asking and answering unspoken questions and leading research in new directions.

As noted above, too often mainstream discourse is saturated with overly simplistic, homogenising, 'one-size fits all' narratives of the poor and the reasons for poverty (Kothari & Hulme 2004: 34). The life story method, conversely, is an effective medium in producing new knowledge and language in ways that provide value to people's stories and therefore to people by giving 'history back to people in their own words' (Thompson 1998: 265). In research seeking to give voice to working-class communities this is a powerful tool.

This method in research has been particularly popular amongst feminist scholars and has effectively been used to unearth the heterogeneity of women's experiences and to illuminate women's voices who had been previously hidden and neglected from history (Ojermark 2007: 2-3). This method has also cast light on the experiences of other marginalized groups in society such as migrants and those from working-class communities (2007: 2-3). It is now a well-established method of research amongst

both historians and social scientists seeking to explore unheard voices – its utility for this piece of work could hardly be more obvious.

Life stories are of course comprised of deeply intimate and personal recollections of the past; however, these accounts are undoubtedly influenced by past and present appreciations of the social world that have become second nature and which typify and normalise hierarchical power structures (Kothari 2001 as cited in Kothari & Hulme 2004:9). In this regard, they are relational as they tell the stories of not just themselves, but also the social world in which they are operating in (and their conception of it). Thus, this method can illuminate and demonstrate how structure and agency converge to produce the conditions of an individual's life (Ojermark 2007: 3). It is a method that allows you to tap into the mind and thinking of an individual that can reveal deep taken for granted assumptions and expectations that few other methodologies can.

Individual stories are inextricably linked and shaped by sociocultural context in which they are lived and remembered. In addition, individuals elucidate the past by giving precedence to certain experiences and events whilst omitting others (Kothari & Hulme 2004: 8-9). As Patai stresses, the act of an individual telling their story involves 'a rationalization of the past' (1993: 147) which leads them to their present situation. Thus, the functioning of memory is a crucial element to the life story method.

Portelli argues that factually incorrect accounts of past events as still 'psychologically true' (1988: 37) in the minds of individuals and that they are no less significant than factually accurate accounts. Rather, oral sources should be seen as having a *different* credibility as their strength lies not in its conforming to fact, but its divergence from it by illuminating 'imagination, symbolism and desire' inherent to people's recollections (1988: 37). He thereby emphasises that, 'memory is not a passive depositary of facts, but an active process in the creation of meanings' (Portelli 1988: 37). In other words, memories are never static nor fixed; the present has as much influence over the telling of a story as a past (Abrams 2016: 79).

In addition, the way in which an individual narrates and interprets their story can inform us significantly of their core values and outlooks (White et al. 2010: 12). In outlining their own life history, the interviewee is given considerable discretion to convey what was of importance to them '…uncovering the contradiction between reality and desire' (Portelli 1991: 116).

Furthermore, life stories are inherently relational as they provide a clear relationship between personal experiences and the socio-cultural context that they are lived in (Ojermark 2007: 3). As Bourdieu emphasises, life stories can tell us a great deal about where an individual is positioned within the social field through their intimate stories of social encounters relating to work, family and the community (Bourdieu et al. 2000: 4 as cited in Kothari & Hulme 2004: 33-4). It is in the 'social field' that this analysis is located.

Thus, the way individuals recall the past is shaped and mirrored by the present-day cultural norms and values. For example, contemporary accounts of slavery, empire and colonialism often reveal as much about values today as yesteryear. Think of the differences between sci-fi futuristic movies made in the 1950s to the 1980s to the 21st century – all reflect the fashions, values and concerns of each era extrapolated to some point in the future. Likewise, with individual accounts of the past. Therefore, a crucial element of interpreting individual testimonies is to explore how recollection and memory is shaped and moulded by contemporary attitudes just as much as its shaped by events and encounters (Kothari & Hulme 2004:10). In addition, Passerini (1987) argues that 'the silences, discrepancies and idiosyncrasies' (Passerini as quoted in Perks & Thomson 1998: 3) inherent in individual's stories can illuminate the presence and impact of the social space upon the way in which individuals remember and recollect past events and experiences (as cited in Kothari & Hulme 2004: 10). In this regard, testimonies only represent 'a partial, selective commentary on lived experience' (Goodson 2001: 138).

In addition, not only can the life story method bring to the fore earlier experiences and their influence on the psyche of an individual; it can also tell us a great deal about people's immediate circumstances (Kothari & Hulme 2004: 12). In many ways, past experiences become embedded in the present-day as individuals look to earlier recollections to interpret and understand the current social climate and their place within the world (Frisch 1990 as cited in Kothari & Hulme 2004: 32-3).

Community Research: Participant Observation, Sampling and Interviewing

In terms of sampling this project utilized purposeful sampling in the case study site, Govanhill. The key strength of purposeful sampling was that it effectively identified 'information rich cases for in-depth study' (Patton 2015: 264). Thus, participant recruitment was based on expected insightfulness in answering the key research questions for the study (Yin 2011: 311; Patton 2015: 264). Moreover, the project also adopted 'snowballing' techniques to recruit participants in the case study site. The process involved asking knowledgeable informants and personal contacts in potential participants who could provide particularly rich testimonies to the study (Patton 1990: 176).

In addition to this, social media was also used as a tool to acquire participants for the study. In doing so, I used *Facebook* to integrate myself into private groups within the site relating to Govanhill and, upon being accepted, I sent out a post to the members of the groups detailing the purpose of the study, what was expected of participants and what my intentions were in using the data. Through this invitation I received moderate interest and privately messaged those who engaged with the post through comments and likes from the platform.

Another way in which I was able to further attract interest in the project was by engaging in events and workshops within the community. Throughout the data collection period, I attended open mic nights which were held every first Friday of the month at the *Bees Knees* café within the area. In the intimate setting attended by locals and fellow musicians, I performed songs which were derived from the research project including 'Higher Ground' (McGarvey 2002a) and 'Beauty In The Hill' (2002c) and, before and after my performances, I advertised the research and highlighted the key aims of the project. Thus, the songs were not merely outputs within the study but were also part of the early engagement process – a way to draw the community and interviewees into the project.

Through these nights and engagements within the community, it was very encouraging to talk to local people about the area and express my passion on the key aims within the research. In a sense for me personally, it was very fulfilling, not only as it was widening the pool of interviewees for the research, but also for the fact that the project was beginning to feel 'real'; I was immersing myself within the area at ground level away from the rather abstract theories I was becoming accustomed to at the earlier stages of the research whilst focusing on the literature review. Thus, now I was finally at the early process of 'applying very abstract schemes of thought to very concrete things' (Bourdieu, 1993: 22).

Furthermore, I also participated, alongside other fellow musicians and residents with the area, in a six-week song-writing workshop organised by *Music Broth* – a charitable non-profit organisation based in Govanhill. I attended this workshop every Monday night from the 28th February to 28th March 2022. Not only did I attain very useful song-writing techniques from the conveners of the workshop Zac and Grace, I was able to open my eyes to the community spirit very much fostered within the sessions which made me feel a part of something bigger than myself – a sentiment which I later recalled upon in one of the songs featured within this project 'Material Dream' (McGarvey 2002d). Interestingly, a key inspiration of that track was participant Stewart, a 29-year-old Glaswegian who grew up in Govanhill and remains closely connected to the community through local cultural and music activities, whom I initially met through the *Music Broth* song-writing sessions.

Lastly, and perhaps most crucially, in March 2023 I got into contact with the convenors of the Govanhill International Festival at Govanhill Baths to perform a featured slot at the festival on Monday 7th August 2023 in *McNeills* Bar. This was a surreal experience as my first interview, which was conducted the previous year and many interviews thereafter were undertaken at the venue so it was fitting to perform the 'data' derived from them in the setting where they were first conceived.

During my set I performed all six songs which make up the compositional element of the project – *Higher Ground, Material Dream, Beauty In The Hill, Step Back, The Bothy* and *Hard Fights* (McGarvey 2022a; 2022b; 2022c; 2022d: McGarvey 2023a; 2023b).

In addition to family members in the audience, several participants who had contributed to the project were also present, and it was especially meaningful to perform material drawn from their words and sentiments in such an intimate and supportive setting.

The PhD journey can be gruelling and, quite frankly, lonely at times, so it was an especially satisfying and encouraging night for me to receive such positive feedback from an attentive audience on the material that I had dedicated three years of craft to. Consequently, the event was a catalyst for even further inspiration and productivity as the project took on a more tangible and immersive life; gauging the audience's emotional reaction and body language as they experienced the songs brought an extra illumination and understanding to the compositions.

Although not the primary focus or intention of the showcase, it was another useful and effective mode to attract more people to participate in the project. After the show was concluded, through networking and conversing with members of the audience, I managed to obtain more contacts for subsequent interviews within the area as they expressed interest after hearing the songs created from the testimonies at that point.

By embedding within local value systems in the community, I was able to conduct this collection of data. I undertook semi-structured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions from a sample of twenty-two participants. The sample featured a relatively even gender balance (12 women, 10 men) and a diverse age range from mid-20s to 70s.

Participants included both long-standing members of the community and more recent arrivals, allowing for comparison in how attachment to place is narrated and experienced. Long-term residents, such as Jane (resident since 1974), offered insight into historical continuity and neighbourhood change over time, particularly in relation to housing and shifting patterns of life within Govanhill. In contrast, newer arrivals including Ania, a 29-year-old Polish community organiser who moved to the area three years ago, provided perspectives shaped by migration, recent settlement and involvement in existing local networks.

The sample also included individuals born outside Scotland and the UK, such as Roland, a Hungarian-Romanian working with vulnerable families in the area and Daniel, a Kenyan-born community volunteer, highlighting the importance of transnational trajectories in shaping how people come to engage with and understand the intricacies of Govanhill.

Participants came from a wide range of backgrounds and roles, including community activists, trust managers, volunteers, part-time students, creative writers, musicians, photographers, educators and residents involved in grassroots initiatives or local governance.

This diversity does not simply provide breadth of perspective but shapes the kinds of knowledge that can be generated about Govanhill. It enables an understanding of the area through an array of situated viewpoints including historical, institutional, migratory and everyday experiences of community life. In doing so, it foregrounds accounts from individuals actively engaged in local organisations and grassroots networks and the ways in which community is produced and negotiated through these settings. It also inevitably shapes what becomes visible in the data, particularly narratives of engagement, pride and forms of collective action.

It was imperative that I built in-depth relationships with participants in order that trust was built and the engendering of empathy over meetings was designed to ensure engagement was not simply a rigid academic-like interview with no room for impromptu findings. Thus, this research project has placed emphasis on more in-depth interviews with a smaller pool of interviewees, in order that rapport could be built with those participating and bring to the fore illuminating subjective experiences.

Data collection consisted of a balance between structured and unstructured questions to allow the interviewee take control of the agenda, language and narrative whilst still collecting data related to the key themes of the study. Thus, my role as researcher in this project was an active and empathetic one, in which I sought to co-produce knowledge with participants to advocate social justice-oriented change and emancipation for individuals taking part in the project (McIntosh & Morse 2015: 2-3).

Furthermore, unplanned probing, openness and flexibility were a feature of the interview technique, as it illuminated experiences that the interviewee deemed as significant or crucial and could therefore perhaps enlighten areas or aspects of the research which were overlooked prior to the data collection (Halperin & Heath 2020: 313). The data collection and analysis were an iterative process whereby data collected from earlier interviews informed questions used in subsequent interviews (Beardsworth & Keil 1992: 261-2). Therefore, this study took a reflexive approach with sufficient time in-between each interview that in-depth analysis and consideration could be given to each testimony (Arsel et al. 2017: 940).

Data analysis & Song Interpretation

Admittedly, in taking on this task for my research I was apprehensive. Although an experienced songwriter of fourteen or so years (I started composing songs at twelve years old), this was an entirely new challenge but an exciting one all the same. In the main, prior to this work, my lyrical style had been largely introspective. Songwriting is almost a therapeutic tool to convey my inner emotions, thoughts and experiences. This was always my song-writing approach and philosophy prior to my experience in conducting this research. Therefore, interpreting other people's stories was a significant departure from my conventional song-writing process. However, this change in perspective allowed me to bridge the gap between what was essentially my

job, introspective songwriting and performance, and my academic studies, interpretation and analysis of the social world and its actors. The process has allowed me to make the leap from an individual songwriter burrowing deeply into my inner emotions and psyche, to a collaborative songwriter focused on a much broader social canvas of community and society.

As a songwriter, it was critical during this process that I was able to do justice to the stories of the social actors I encountered, as well as my interpretations of them. Thus, I set out to simultaneously find commonalities within my fieldwork interviews and make connections between them, whilst endeavouring to stay true to the 'voices' I was amplifying. In social scientific methodological terms, the transcripts from interviews were coded with a clear frame of reference to compare interviewee perspectives, thoughts and feelings created.

In order to retain authenticity and preserve the vernacular of Govanhill, I represented the language exactly as it was spoken in the streets keeping local expressions, slang phrases and even more conventional forms of dialect intact. This was a deliberate endeavour, allowing for readers to immerse themselves in the grittiness and character of lived experience in the area. It provided a richer, uncensored sense of place that would otherwise have been diluted or lost using perfectly polished English.

That said, not all the songs rely on contrasts and comparisons between interviews. Songs such as *Beauty In The Hill* (McGarvey 2022c) and *The Bothy* (2023a) are interpretations of single testimonies (i.e. one interview) and excerpts, whilst *Material Dream* (2022d) and *Hard Fights* (2023b) is borne out of a multitude of various testimonies coming together to create a powerful and muscular sentiment. As stories lying 'in the landscape waiting to be told' (Rae interview 2022), my job was to facilitate and unearth them in a way that stayed true to their original form, but also in a way that would captivate the reader and the listener to further enhance its core messages.

Rae, a community storyteller and former activist in her 60s, was a key contributor to this study and its songs. I was particularly struck by her convictions regarding the power of stories and, more specifically, songs as a commanding tool to illustrate and connect with people in a more emotive way than more orthodox means. In her interview, she richly stresses this point by stating:

> 'Stories are a great equalizer because even today there's people who have dyslexia or have a challenged literacy…a story people just sit and listen and when you tell a story and if you tell it right…it should chime and enchant…it shouldn't be dogmatic or bang people over the head…it should be allowing people to use their own imagination…give them a chance to ponder and come up with their own stuff and it basically just sows seeds…that's why stories are so important' (Rae 2022 interview).

Here Rae encapsulates the power of storytelling and songs – it gives space to capture the voices of the unheard. Moreover, it is empowering in taking people to places their thought processes may not otherwise reach. Telling individual stories can be a spur to a collective and inspire others to do likewise. They can also promote community linkages and integration as Rae goes on to observe:

> '…and stories are important no matter if it's the people who came here from India or Romania or Ireland or whatever…it's good to talk about those stories cos you'll find common links… you're doing it in a way that lets the story chime and it's in that chime that the importance of the story comes out' (Rae 2022 interview).

However, it is not only individual and community imagination and connection that can be enhanced by story and song. These stories provide an authentic and marked contrast to the everyday media bombardment of information:

> '…there's so much out there with media…Sky News…and it's always telling you what to do…tellin' you…tellin' you…and I think people are cuttin' off…and I've noticed something else…stories are now important in a digital age…the more we're using audio and images and whatever…we need new ways of telling more stories' (Rae 2022 interview).

Stories and songs can go deeper than orthodox conventional social science analysis. Often mainstream academic argumentation and publication focuses on surface level data whether it be about attitudes, opinions and observations. It can impose a conventional rationality on individuals asking them to rationalise their thoughts and behaviour (for example the utilisation and interpretation of survey quantitative data). Story and song can go much deeper than that. They unleash the power of artistic interpretation and add a depth, emotion and meaning to analysis that would otherwise be missing. As Rae argues:

> '…the old essay type of telling stories is okay when you're at Uni…but it's not connecting with the heart and instead of connecting with the head which a lot of…stories connect with the heart and it's important to connect with the heart rather than the head…song does that amazingly good…when you're performing a song…you've got a power with a small p…you've got a power to take people and bring them in and take them away from whatever's going on in their life but also at the same time to inform them…and in the same way as a story it's non-dictatorial…it's non-dogmatic and the music…I think music is great for your right side of thinking as well and it kind of just waves through a person…the power of song is so important for our music and it's deliberate why

> conquerors or colonizers want to change the language and get rid of our songs and all that kinda stuff or we used songs for the pool and we had all these Glasgow songs and it's kinda like the first thing colonizers do is get rid of the language and the songs have got a power' (Rae 2022 interview).

There is transformative power in music and song that elevates individuals beyond everyday life. That life *may* seem monotonous, boring and lacking in direction, and stand in marked contrasts to the elevated and leaping imagination of story and song. Stories, poetry and song can burrow deeper into the mind capturing more of the essence of life than conventional forms of social research such as questionnaires, closed question interviews and the amalgamation of such data into macro quantitative analysis. They add even greater qualitative depth to analysis.

Through data analysis and the representation of that analysis, this project embraced uncharted 'alternative' territory in terms of qualitative research through lyrical and musical interpretation. It undertook an innovative form of data analysis whereby the testimonies collected from in-depth interviews were analysed and interpreted by the researcher to create an independent voice representing both the researcher and the subject (Carless 2018: 215). Therefore, rather than employing an abstract interpretation from the data collection, this project provides a narrative-like form of lyricism that stays rooted in the participants' telling of their story (Leavy 2009: 66). Akin to 'poetic representation' (2009: 66), this analysis consolidated the narratives of the participants with the understandings and interpretation of the researcher. Thus, this work is committed to the core principles of critical arts-based research whereby:

> 'the voices of the marginalized and dispossessed can be accessed, legitimized, and empowered to confront social issues and to stimulate, incite, and inspire a commitment to social justice and social change' (Castro-Salazar & Bagley 2012 as paraphrased by Castro-Salazar & Bagley 2019: 945-6).

This form of analysis served to enhance rather than inhibit this project by highlighting and illuminating the important role of the researcher in the creation of knowledge (Canniford 2012: 392). Thinking creatively and of alternative ways to represent the data also stimulated intense reflection and meditative thinking on the content in the testimonies thus providing richer and unique analysis (Coffey & Atkinson 1996: 109 as cited in Glesne 1997: 216).

Additionally, it must be noted that through the process of data analysis, every in-depth interview was analysed and aided through manual coding and transcription. This was a labour-intensive crucial part of my analysis. In re-hearing and transcribing I became embedded in the data and relived the moments of each interview multiple times. When lyrically interpreting each interviewee, extensive thematic analysis was used for

‘identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing and reporting themes’ (Nowell et al. 2017: 2) from the testimonies. The representation sought to merge particularly emotive segments from the data with the researcher’s own interpretations (Leavy 2009: 75), thereby ‘illuminating the wholeness and interconnections of thoughts’ (Glesne 1997: 206) in the co-written representation of the data.

Like all qualitative research, ‘hearing’ is a pivotal part to any interview or oral history analysis and song representation of data has the capacity to interpret what cannot be iterated through words as effectively alone (Leavy 2009: 106). Through the dynamics and the textural tone of the composition, the researcher and artist can delve deeper into the meanings and experiences borne out from the testimonies and analyse not just *what* people said and *how* these feelings were expressed whereby providing a musical landscape interpretation (Leavy 2009: 107-108). Consequently, song and music together can illuminate, not only the words said in the participants stories, but will provide a scenery and interpretation of how they were expressed and felt during the process thus enriching the data analysis.

Furthermore, song creates a ‘multidimensional aesthetic’ (Carless & Douglas 2011: 449) as the combination of rhythm, melody, timbre, harmony and lyrical output brings out multiple, fragmented and often ambiguous sensations in people (Leavy 2009: 106; Denzin 2003: 8) as each element ‘simultaneously communicate different emotions and… experiences’ (Carless & Douglas 2011: 449). Incorporating music with lyrical content, this polyphonic interplay can further stimulate emotional connection with the reader enhanced by ‘melodic or harmonic content of the music’ (Carless & Douglas 2011: 447). Often intermissions in the lyric supplemented with instrumental music enables the listener time to dwell on the segments of the narrative they have just absorbed thereby stimulating a ‘reflective process’ (2011: 449). Representing the data in song form therefore provides the listener ‘a way of *experience* rather than merely *receive’* (Blumenfeld-Jones 2002 paraphrased in Carless & Douglas 2011: 448-9) (emphasis added).

To re-emphasise, this research advocates if we are to study human beings, we must not always treat them impersonally as measurable and quantifiable data. Rather, we must tap into their unique subjective feelings and experiences to gain richer insights (2011: 446) acknowledging song and music will present an array of different emotions to different people, therefore embracing the diversity of human subjectivities and multiple realities (2011: 447). Song can instigate and reflect a deeper evoking of human feeling and expression, cutting through the silence of inner conscious feelings. It can ‘unearth hidden truths’ (Pelias 2004: 233). It is a natural organic tool for shared and collective expression and allow minorities to ‘express the inexpressible – to utter the unspoken’ (Faulkner 2005: 211).

Govanhill: Case Study Site

Govanhill, the case study site, is an area about one mile south of the river Clyde and two miles from the city centre in Glasgow. It is divided to the north by a motorway (M74), bridge and train line that separates it from the Gorbals (CIHT, 2020; BBC, 2011). Its borders, like many inner-city spaces, are not clearly defined to the east, west and south. The area, depending on spatial definition, is surrounded by other communities such as Polmadie, Crosshill, Mount Florida, Queens Park, Strathbungo, Eglinton Toll and Pollokshields (Scottish Places, 2025). It is separate from the more famous Govan which was primarily associated with shipbuilding - this is approximately three miles away and on the river Clyde (Govanhill is not). In the past decade the extension to the M74 motorway was opened adjacent to Govanhill and now acts as an additional marker of the territory separating Govanhill and the Gorbals. This was in planning for many years and restricted development in the northside of Govanhill (CIHT, 2020).

Whilst being only around a mile or two from central Glasgow, Govanhill was outside Glasgow and did not officially become part of the city until after 1891 when the construction of many of its tenement buildings began (Downie 2020). Today it is part of Glasgow City Council and falls under its Southside Central ward (Glasgow City Council, undated). In many ways, the story of Govanhill's formation is a microcosm of Glasgow's industrial boom and growth in the mid to late 19th and early 20th centuries, which still hold an enduring legacy within the social makeup of Glasgow and, indeed, Govanhill today (Maver 2000; Pacione 1995). Govanhill's transition fits neatly into the wider narrative of Rodger's analysis of the transition of small villages into becoming part of urban cities as well as Cage's (1989) analysis of the experience of the working-class in Glasgow and the broader implications in terms of class, living standards, identity and power relations. The development of capitalism in Govanhill, as elsewhere, co-existed with slum housing, public health issues and inequality in income, wealth and power (see Cage 1989; Rodger 1989; Rodger and Sweet 2008).

Historically, the formation of Govanhill is associated with the development of Ironworks and the inward migration of English iron foundry workers – some of its homes were referred to as 'the English buildings' as they were the homes of those recruited from England (Downie 2020). The Ironworks were colloquially referred to as 'The Dixon Blazes' – a lingering reference point for an area of a land in the district that is still used today. Two of the prominent streets in the area were named after his daughters, Daisy and Annette (Downie 2022). Before the burgh town of Govanhill was recognised in 1877 other names were considered including Dixon Town, Broadlands and Victoria - two of which are now the names of a prominent local road and bar (Downie 2020).

The late 19th/early 20th century housing architecture of Govanhill is both normal and unusual by the norm of communities in inner city Glasgow. It is normal in that most of the streets are lined with four storey tenements built in the last decade of the 19th century and first decade of the 20th. It is unusual in that it is one of the few areas of Glasgow to emerge largely intact after the massive comprehensive development and

dispersal programmes of the 1960s (Smith 2015; McMillan and King 2018). This flattened much of the Gorbals and 28 other inner-city areas in Glasgow with high rises and new less dense housing buildings. Many of the populations of these areas were dispersed to New Towns such as Cumbernauld, East Kilbride and Irvine or new schemes on the periphery of Glasgow in Castlemilk, Pollock, Drumchapel, Easterhouse and Milton. The community of Govanhill remained largely intact (Glasgow City Heritage Trust undated).

That said, the community of Govanhill was not what could be described as static. It is an area that has witnessed almost continual waves of inward and outward migration. As outlined above, in its very early days English iron workers came north. They were followed by communities of Italian, Jewish, Irish, Pakistani, Polish and Roma immigrations have all, at one time or another, made Govanhill their 'home' (Clark 2014; Community Renewal undated). Govanhill, possibly more than any other community in Scotland, could lay claim to the title of the country's most ethnically diverse of the past century. Wave after wave of outward and inward migration has been the norm in Govanhill for over a century. Clark (2014), in the title of an article about the area's Roma community, utilises a journalist's rather fanciful comparison and asks whether the area is Glasgow's Ellis Island? The latter being the well-known gateway for European migrants into New York and the USA. Whilst not being an island or having the infrastructure to process and welcome migrants, Govanhill has been the first stop for many of Scotland's new migrant communities.

Its pattern of constant inward and outward migration has added another layer to the discourse around Govanhill. As Braber's (2025) work on immigration has demonstrated over the course of 1841 to 1921, the language around immigrants changed as 'alien' transformed from a legalistic neutral phrase to one denoting 'other' with negative connotations. The environment inward migrants faced was often far from welcoming. His work on the Jewish community in Glasgow (some of whom passed through Govanhill) narrates its evolution over generations (Braber 2007).

As Braber's (2007; 2021; 2025) work demonstrates, the 'strain' immigration places on the local area are often discussed around the themes of asylum seekers, refugees, assimilation and integration as well as racialized stereotypes through which the Irish, Jewish, Asian, Polish, Roma and other incoming groups have been subject to. Over the years there are sporadic episodes of 'moral panic' (see Cohen 1972), that reinforce prejudice around such themes as the creation of slums and overcrowding, child prostitution, criminality and joblessness.

Many of these communities have 'landed' in Govanhill due to fleeing famine, violence, discrimination and unemployment in their 'homelands'. In Govanhill they are seeking security, employment, education and a community that can offer better life opportunities than the areas they came from. A survey by Govanhill Housing Association of only 13 tenement blocks in the neighbourhood recorded 63 different nationalities (Ricky interview 2022). This unique (by Scottish standards) multi-national

and multi-ethnic character and fluidity to its population has undoubtedly left an imprint on the culture of the local population and the area.

Measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), Govanhill is amongst the most deprived in Scotland. This measurement divides Scotland into 6,505 data zones each of roughly 350 households with population sizes of around 800 people. Govanhill has 12 data-zones, seven of them are in the bottom 15 per cent. Only one is above the bottom 30%. One-fifth of the population have no qualifications (compared to a Scottish average of 13%). By almost any measure Govanhill ranks amongst Scotland's most deprived communities (see SIMD Scotland 2020).

Whilst these statistics do provide evidence to the social and economic hardships faced in Govanhill, they fail to capture the richness and vibrancy of experience within the community which this project aims to bring to the fore through song and life stories.

Ethics

Throughout this project, ethical practice was at the forefront of every decision undertaken during the research process. This included seeking informed consent prior to conducting data collection with participants. Additionally, it was pivotal to ensure there are no deceptions conveyed to participants in respect to the purpose of the research project and this must be spelled out clearly by myself as the researcher (Flick 2007:69).

It must be noted that the consent form for this research was different to a conventional form as the thesis is just one part of a wider project which would include an album and arts-based performance driven by the data as well as lyrical interpretation from the data collection as part of the thesis. Therefore, there were clear ethical considerations which had to be addressed.

Firstly, it was necessary to seek consent from contributors of the research for their 'voices' to be heard through an artistic medium of song and music. This is particularly imperative if excerpts from the data collection and audio recordings were going to be utilized as part of a song composition to be released publicly. It is the researcher's duty to ensure protection of participants throughout the research and make sure no harm or risk is encountered due to contributing to the study (2011: 73). Therefore, if it was of the participant's preference, full anonymity was ensured, and a mutual contract was signed by the researcher and the participant to establish good-will (2011: 72).

Second, to build up trust in the collaborative researcher-participant co-writing of knowledge for this research, outcomes from the lyrical interpretations stemming from the data were issued back to the interviewees via 'member checking procedures' (Canniford 2012: 394). It was vital to ensure compliance from participants that the interpretation of their contributions was deemed to be a legitimate and in no way

deceptive from the original data (Lincoln and Guba 1985 as cited as Canniford 2012: 394). Third, to ensure transparency, edited transcripts of each original interview is also included in the appendix section of the thesis.

Despite this, there must be room in the dynamic interplay between the researcher and the participant for the author of the study to have some artistic freedom in the interpretation of the data. Thus, it must be acknowledged that:

> 'No matter how we stage the text, we - the authors - are doing the staging. As we speak about the people we study, we also speak for them' (Richardson 1992:131).

Conclusion

This chapter has articulated the philosophical and methodological foundations of this research. It has emphasized the interpretivist paradigm and its alignment with the study's objectives. In adopting this critical interpretivist approach, this study has prioritized Govanhill residents' subjective experiences and narratives. This, it is suggested, can directly challenge the dominant, often dehumanizing, discourses that characterize some research on working-class communities. The use of life stories has enabled a rich exploration of individual and collective identities, uncovering the interplay between personal experiences and broader socio-cultural structures in their understanding. This approach has not only amplified marginalized voices but also provided a platform for co-creating knowledge that resonates with the lived realities of the community, fostering a deeper understanding of displacement, stigmatization, and resilience. The research philosophy is explicitly empathetic, and action orientated. It has sought to discover, understand and amplify the perceived reality of the dispossessed with consideration given to their socio-economic, geographical and historical context.

The innovative integration of song as a medium for data interpretation has proven to be a powerful tool in this research, bridging the gap between academic analysis and artistic expression. By transforming life stories into lyrical compositions, the study has captured the emotional and experiential depth of participants' narratives, offering a multidimensional representation that engages both the heart and the mind. By using artistic ways of representing data, it has aimed to cast light on the unseen histories, the concealed experiences, the sensations that would have otherwise remained in the dark (Ward & Shortt 2020:10-11). This arts-based methodology has allowed for a unique form of data analysis that transcends traditional social science approaches, highlighting the transformative potential of music to convey complex human experiences. The performances at community events, such as the Govanhill International Festival, further embedded the research within the local context, fostering dialogue and connection among residents while amplifying their stories in an authentic

and impactful way. The methodology of this research was deliberately action orientated and designed to impact.

The methods and representation of data proposed in this research study are in unison with the core principles of this study. Just as the research itself is committed to challenging the dominant narratives played out about the past and present in Govanhill, this study advocates a challenge and a new way of conducting research outwith the parameters of traditional social science methods. In this sense, the methods are a mirrored reflection of the study.

The methodological choices, including purposeful sampling, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews, were designed to build trust and rapport with participants, ensuring that their voices were heard authentically and ethically. The iterative process of data collection and analysis, combined with the reflexive approach to interviewing, allowed for a dynamic engagement with the data, uncovering insights that might have been overlooked in more rigid methodologies. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and member checking, were central to maintaining the integrity of the research process, ensuring that participants' contributions were represented accurately and respectfully. This commitment to ethical practice underscores the study's dedication to social justice, aiming to empower participants by validating their experiences and challenging stigmatizing narratives.

This research will demonstrate the value of a critical interpretivist approach in social science, particularly in the context of marginalized communities like Govanhill. By combining narrative inquiry with arts-based methods, the study has not only contributed to academic discourse but also created a tangible impact within the community through its performances and engagement activities. The methodology has illuminated the power of stories and songs to foster empathy, challenge hegemonic narratives, and inspire social change. Moving forward, this research hopes to serve as a model for future studies seeking to blend rigorous social inquiry with creative expression, advocating for a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of the social world.

The research framework, philosophy and methodology will underpin the empirical and analytical chapters to follow. Chapter five will introduce the notion of the 'Govanhell' thesis perpetrated within tabloid press and popular media and the extent to which the Govanhill residents subscribe to or refute this knowledge.

Chapter 5

‘Don’t Believe The Truth’ – Examining the ‘Govanhell’ thesis

‘Don’t believe the truth
Don’t believe the truth
It’s constructed in such a way to mislead you
For you to turn on the abject face’
(McGarvey 2022b)

This chapter as well as outlining Govanhill, the case study setting, critically examines what can be referred to as ‘the Govanhell thesis’. The ‘Govanhell’ narrative is one propagated by much of Scotland’s media, including old and new platforms such as print, blog and vlog (see, for example, Adams and McKay 2016; Mackay 2018; Haugh 2020; Conti 2021; McCauley 2024; Borland 2025). The negative narrative has become so commonplace that the community itself has felt the need to challenge it (see Sherry 2015; Greater Govanhill 2025a; 2025b; Greater Govanhill CIC; Uygun 2025). It has also attracted the attention of numerous scholars (see, for example, Mooney and Fyfe 2006; Clark 2014; Mullen 2018; Cumbers et al 2018; Jeannier 2024). Mackay (2018) referred to Govanhill as ‘the most intensely scrutinised neighbourhood in all of Scotland’.

As Byrne et al. (2023) argue, narratives of place are not neutral descriptions but are central to processes of racialisation, through which particular communities come to be associated with disorder and cultural incompatibilities (Tyler 2013; Mullen 2018). The ‘Govanhell thesis’ can therefore be understood not simply as a collection of negative representations but as part of a wider set of circulated and repeated narratives through which race is spatialised and certain populations are marked as alien figures (Goffman 1963; Puwar 2004; Mullen 2018). These narratives operate across multiple scales, linking local representations of Govanhill to broader national and political discourses on demographic changes and social cohesion.

‘The Govanhell thesis’ outlines a story of Govanhill that is almost uniformly negative in terms of the place, people, environment and societal indicators such as poverty, crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour. Negativity stems from many tales: poverty and deprivation (McCauley 2024), crime, overcrowding, poor housing and rogue landlords (Adams and McKay 2016); illegal fly tipping and rubbish on the streets (Adams and McKay 2016; Borland 2025); child sexual exploitation (Mackay 2018); the community stealing from charity clothing containers (Adams and McKay 2016); and the area as ‘a no-go zone’ (Mackay 2018).

Underlying these tales is a tinge (or sometimes a plastering) of historical and contemporary sectarianism and racism – the areas long-standing reputation as a community of immigrants and ‘otherness’ (see Byrne et al 2023). In previous centuries Roman Catholics, Jews, Pakistanis and the Irish were the ‘problem’, today they have been replaced by the Roma community as myths are spun about immigrant groups on outlets like GB News (see Greater Govanhill 2025b).

This narrative cannot be ignored simply by virtue of its dominance on media and external portrayals of the community. It feeds directly into the contemporary political climate of polarisation and division with far-right groups using posters and memes to spread negativity and fear in the community (McCauley 2024). This chapter will firstly set out the 'Govanhell' framing before exploring the residents' perspectives on its meaning and the extent to which the community subscribe to these portrayals.

Govanhill, like many communities within Glasgow, was a product of industrial growth and rapid demand for housing within the city, largely shaped by the structures of urban expansion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Maver 2000; Pacione 1995). Ironworks, local factories and the area's proximity to Govan's shipbuilding industry and the city centre providing a robust basis for the local economy. However, it was a victim of the ripping up of the post-war political social contract and values that were once thought of as secure and long-lasting. In *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* Weiner asserts:

> 'Until the late 1960s the generally accepted frame for the history of Britain over the previous century was that of a series of success stories: the bloodless establishment of democracy, the evolution of the welfare state, triumphs in two world wars, and the enlightened relinquishment of empire' (1981: 12).

For Weiner this 'happy frame' glossed over the UK's long decline into 'an economic Sargasso Sea'. Arthur McIvor's many accounts of deindustrialisation (for example, see 2019; 2021; 2023) also narrate the toxicity, poverty and injustice communities like Govanhill experienced.

Prior to its industrial transformation in the 19th century the area now called Govanhill was a small rural village called Govan Hill – named after the prominent hill on which it was situated (Downie 2020). That hill was no longer visible by the 21st century such was the scale of industrial and housing development in the area in the intervening period. It was outside the city of Glasgow and regulation and oversight of industrial development was negligible (Downie 2020). From 1800 Govan Hill (as it was then called) transformed from a tiny rural village of a few houses located near small local collieries – a place often referred to by locals as 'no man's land' such was its lack of identity - to having a population of over 10,000 by 1879 (Downie 2020). It was christened formally as a burgh town in 1877. Like other such communities across the UK, Govanhill was already attracting waves of immigration.

Dixon Blazes Ironworks was founded in 1839 and as it expanded during the industrial revolution there was inward migration from the English midlands (Downie 2020). Bryce (2023) narrates the waves of Irish immigration and their experience in the Govanhill community. These occurred dating back over a century from the Irish Famine up until the 1970s, primarily from the north-west of Ireland (Delaney 2007). Moreover, with the European Union enlargements in 2004 and 2007, which has seen a significant upsurge in movement to Govanhill from eastern European countries, in particular

those from the Roma community (Mullen 2018:207). This, in turn, has changed the cultural makeup within the area, and the chapter will highlight and bring to light the enhanced colour and diversity but also the extent of how perceived difference, division and unease – often articulated by those outside the community - are apparent within the lived day-to-day experiences of the residents within the area (Harris 2013; Mullen 2018).

There are other communities like Govanhill throughout the UK that fell victim to the brutalisation of deindustrialisation. Each has a story to tell. A key message of this work is that despite being presented as uniform, each story is different. This chapter will proceed by telling the story of Govanhill's emergence and development before outlining the recent emergence of the 'Govanhell thesis'. As well as examining this narrative, there will be a critical examination of it throughout with the perspective of Govanhill residents informing much of the analysis. In keeping with the methodology and approach of the dissertation, as set out in chapter four, relevant lyrics from songs will be highlighted throughout. The analysis is also informed by the theoretical underpinning of the dissertation. 'Bourdieusian' concepts such as symbolic capital and doxa's relevance will be examined. Overall, this chapter places the perspective of the Govanhill residents as central as it analyses the place and its people.

The research presented in the following chapters examines 'the Govanhell thesis' from the perspective of the people of Govanhill. Govanhill has gained some notoriety in recent years with a steady and consistent stream of negative stories in both old print and broadcast media as well as new social media. At times, to its residents, it may have felt like a community under siege with the continual bombardment of negative press and criticism. As outlined in the previous chapter, the research has involved immersion in the community that is Govanhill with interviews, song-writing workshops, open-mics, photography exhibitions, festival concerts allowing the author to be both participant and observer when conducting much of the research that informs the analysis in this chapter.

This chapter looks to contextualise the 'story of Govanhill' (there is not one, but many) within a broader environment. It will draw on many sources including the media (old and new), academic research, government reports as well as the interviews conducted in the local community.

The chapter will proceed by first discussing the knowledge which informs the 'Govanhell' thesis and how it came to be; the media's framing of the area within popular new outlets; then, it will examine how people residing within the area negotiate and attribute meaning internally to these perceptions from the outside. It will then explore Govanhill's housing, environment and the stigma surrounding the area, its multifaced cultural makeup and the extent of division within the community between different groups. Lastly, it will discuss the significance of transmission feeding this narrative but also community embrace of, and resistance against, prescribed truths surrounding it. The analysis will be informed by artistic compositions derived from the project 'Step

Back' and 'Hard Fights' which provide nuanced analysis and elevate voices and perspectives of the residents at the forefront of the study.

'The Govanhell thesis' has come to be commonly understood in everyday parlance not only of Glaswegians but the wider Scottish community. It will ask questions such as where did it emerge from? Why did it become, and why has it remained, so powerful and enduring? What are the truths of it? What are its untruths? What role has politics played in it? What do the residents of Govanhill think of it?

The 'Govanhell' Thesis

> *'Step back*
> *Step away from your TV*
> *It's distorted reality'*
> (McGarvey 2022b).

The 'Govanhell' thesis, although having historical roots, is one that has come to increasing prominence in recent years. It is one underpinned by an overwhelmingly negative portrayal of Govanhill as a 'problem community' (Parker 2015: 14). The problems are portrayed as multiple and not limited to the issues associated with multiple Glaswegian communities arising out of poverty. Essentially the 'Govanhell' thesis is underpinned by a series of negative portrayals and perspectives of the contemporary community that is Govanhill. It presents a surface level account of Govanhill based on imagery of poor housing, unkempt gardens and backyards, overfilled bins and uncollected refuse. Govanhill is portrayed as negatively unique. As well as being poor is an area blighted by environmental decay with rubbish on roads, pavements, backyards presented as its external image. Scotland has a well-known drugs problem, but this issue is magnified multi-fold in Govanhill. Likewise, other issues associated with poor neighbourhoods – overcrowded housing, overwhelmingly negative indicators in the education and health of its residents.

As this chapter will illustrate, it is a lop-sided account not only of the residents of Govanhill but also its infrastructure, housing and general environment. The negative narrative is so dominant in media reportage of the area that it is impossible to ignore. It is one the residents of Govanhill acknowledge and recognise but there is little agreement with much of its basis.

The dominant discourse about Govanhill has been (and still is) a negative one. 'Evidence', to the extent that it exists, is often media anecdotal tales of crime, drug-trafficking, prostitution, rogue landlords and uncollected refuse. This alongside societal indicators of multiple deprivation, poverty, unemployment, poor housing and anti-social behaviour shapes the conversation about Govanhill's place not only in Glasgow, but in Scotland as a whole.

The process of stigmatisation is complex. The work of Goffman (1963) is useful in understanding the process of creating 'spoiled identities'. It involves a process of socially discrediting certain attributes, behaviours and reputations which are set against the 'normal' of the stigmatiser. This creates a social and cultural divide between the stigmatised and 'normal' society. Clark argues those in the former category are deemed, 'undesirable, devalued … rejected and ostracized' (2014: 39). This moral framing is deeply rooted within Victorian and Christian culture, where deprivation and worklessness were cast as moral and ethical failings (Valverde 1996). This moral framing has endured in present-day portrayals of Govanhill, if media knowledge and language are taken at face value. Clark cites a series of 'ethnographic soundbites' that give a flavour of perceptions of the Roma community in Govanhill:

> 'Who are these people you say. They are the new Irish, son …'
>
> 'They are probably all criminals'
>
> 'They are a nightmare for local residents'
>
> 'Violence and intimidation for the Roma is the norm … hanging about in gangs'
>
> 'It just isn't safe on the streets anymore, not past 7 pm'
>
> 'Roma are making Govanhill a bad place to live … their rubbish is everywhere'
>
> 'The place is ground fucking zero … Govanhell I call it'
>
> 'They sell children for sex … that's what I heard'
>
> 'I heard 15 odd of them … in a 2 bedroom flat!''. (Clark 2014: 39-40)

Many of these 'soundbites' replicate historical attitudes to previous waves of immigration in Govanhill. They were collected by Clark in conversation in various environments such as parks, shops, taxis, meetings and gatherings over a year. They often bear little resemblance to the empirical actuality but can undoubtedly yield a rhetorical power and shape a discourse of 'moral panic' (Becker 1963; Cohen 1972). This, in the UK, is usually led by the print media.

The Media and 'Govanhell'

> *'The Daily Express,*
> *The Daily Mail*
> *Directing your moves*
> *Dictating your moods*

How you think, how you feel
How you bow, how you kneel
(McGarvey 2022b).

Step Back (McGarvey 2022b), written for this project, documents the external evaluations and judgements placed on communities such as Govanhill from hegemonic narratives from popular knowledge outlets. These, in turn, have created gossip and influenced perceptions and also policymaking in the area (Hall 2013/1978; Wacquant 2008b).

The 'Govanhell' narrative has been one of wide circulation in Scotland's media landscape - broadcast, print, vlog, blog and social media more broadly. So pervasive is it that the residents of Govanhill all acknowledge its existence. Jennifer, a 50-year-old student social worker and life-long resident, refers to its exacerbation by the media in outlets such as the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Record* who are, in her words 'real shit'. As Laura, a 45-year-old NHS Programme Manager who had recently just moved into the area, notes, coverage of the circumstances or problems of Govanhill is rarely covered with any tone of sympathy, empathy or in a way likely to generate actions or policies designed to alleviate. For her, 'it's really unfortunate that that's happening, but that perception is out there and it demonises rather than seeing things that should be better than they are' (interview 2023).

Augustina, a 25-year-old Lithuanian part-time student who has lived in Govanhill for 2 years, reports widely circulated rumours of people and child trafficking in Govanhill, suggesting that, 'whenever anything negative comes around and when people talk it can always get slightly exaggerated…and then that's the thing that sticks with Govanhill' (interview 2022).

Vivienne, a resident for 7 years in her 50s and board member of Govanhill Baths, outlines a similar perspective noting Govanhill's 'really poor coverage in the media and there's been a stereotype hasn't there of it being a place where there's people trafficking going on women are assaulted there are sex gangs operating there's rubbish dumped in the streets' (interview 2022). She notes that even when a local journalist from the *Evening Times* writes positive stories about Govanhill the comments and social media response to them are negative and critical.

Daniel, a 25 year-old community volunteer originally from Kenya and active in Govanhill since 2018. His experience reflects the voice of a younger, newer community participant, engaged in grassroots initiatives such as the Govanhill Street Music Festival and the Baths' volunteer programmes. He too outlines how, 'there's so many stories of Govanhill being portrayed as a dirty little hovel'. He even reports a story relayed to him while a student at university about how historically the terraces around Queens Park were 'bushy as hell' and it was a 'pure wealthyesque' neighbourhood consisting of lawyers, teachers, business people. For him the media's 'like a mouth of

the ruling class, always doubling down their ideas… using the media as a megaphone to hone a narrative that benefits them.' (Daniel interview 2022).

Simon (interview 2023), a 47-year-old long term documentary photographer and lecturer with deep personal ties to Govanhill, where he has spent over 20 years capturing and celebrating its unique and multifaceted community, outlines a more cynical view of politics. He suggests politicians have their own agenda, arguing that 'the criminals are often the ones in the suits and the ties' keeping their 'pals' and their money safe. Paralleling this with inner city life he suggests, '…it's just gangs'.

In a similarly cynical tone Ricky, a 25-year-old Community Development Officer in Maryhill, notes the absence of Govanhill good news stories. Despite the Govanhill Baths Community Development Trust who are 'the main dogs in Govanhill', receiving £3 million in funding to build a well-being centre, 'you don't hear anythin about that oan the news or anythin like that but ye hear everythin else…Govanhills demonised 100%' (interview 2022). For him the coverage is almost wholly negative: and you struggle to find even one or two 'semi decent' news stories for every twenty that are bad:

> 'if you google Govanhill and go ae news…a guarantee ye…out a 20 articles that are written about it you'll struggle to find 1 or 2 that ur…even semi-decent…they like tae highlight…all the bad stuff that's going on but…not that they don't want tae highlight they don't bother about the good stuff that's going on' (Ricky interview 2022).

Thus, from the outside looking in, it must not be understated the role and power of 'specialists in symbolic production' (Wacquant et al. 2014:1275) within the media and politics shaping the perceived identity and characteristics of bounded places (Pattison 2023:1213). As Fairclough observes: 'The ideologies embedded in discursive practices are most effective when they become naturalized and achieve the status of 'common sense'' (Fairclough 1992:87).

Fraser broadens this analysis out suggesting its linkage to debates about migrants and immigration that has its roots in history and the prejudice and perception of immigrants:

> 'Govanhill's been a big lightning rod for xenophobia in that sense…tapping into the wider narrative of Roma people aren't to be trusted…criminals and this that and the other…that's been the focus of it' (interview 2022).

Likewise, Simon talks of the negative coverage of Govanhill as building fear that people then feed off. He acknowledges there are people doing bad things in every culture – 'Scottish Irish Romanian Slovakian doesnae matter…Polish' – but the media narrate a story of large differentiated groups congregating on street and build fear. (interview 2023). He cites the contrasting media coverage of an event like a police chase in Govanhill compared to Newton Mearns (an affluent suburb). The latter would not be labelled as a crime scene, the former always would. For him it was stigmatisation and basic psychology:

> 'when a story goes out in the newspaper or someone says something a bit negative it's easy to tap into that cos it makes you feel comfortable…it makes you feel like you're not them…you're a different type of person with different values' (interview 2023).

An example of this within Govanhill occurred when former Labour MP for Glasgow South, Tom Harris wrote an article in the *Daily Telegraph* titled 'Object to mass immigration from the EU? Join the Romaphobe club!' (2013). Within the written piece, Harris laments the increasing numbers of the Roma community within the city and, particularly Govanhill, links them rather gruesomely to perceived social ills within the area (Mullen 2018: 205). According to Harris their presence is largely linked to and culpable for:

> 'filthy and vastly overcrowded living arrangements, organised aggressive begging, the ghetto-isation of local streets where women no longer feel safe to walk due to the presence of large groups of (workless) men, the rifling through domestic wheelie bins by groups of women pushing oddly child-free prams, and a worrying increase in the reporting of aggressive and violent behaviour [sic] in local schools' (Harris 2013).

What is interesting, as Mullen (2018: 205) demonstrates, is Harris' complete disregard of the Roma population as admissible and valid members of constituents to whom he was ultimately answerable to as at the time of writing he was the MP for Glasgow South which included many the Roma population who largely reside in Govanhill. He talked of constituents becoming ''angrier and more resentful' as their lives were being 'upon by people whose culture, way of life and attitude to authority and those around them are utterly alien' (Harris 2013).

Harris here essentially excludes the Roma population within Govanhill as being a part of civil society and creates a distinction between them and more established communities within the area (Mullen 2018:205). Thus, in this case Roma is seen as a problematic group 'diverging from normality' (Parker 2015:14). Consequentially, it

defines and reproduces the notion perpetuated within popular discourse which depicts two distinctive identities – the long-standing community marked by its 'civility and moral superiority' (Pattison 2022:284) in comparison to the inferior Roma community defined by its disorder and dysfunctional ways of being, with no room left for any nuance divergence or blurring from this simplified and binary distinction. In effect Harris's language is demarcating division within the Govanhill community.

This is not uncommon when the topic of immigrants is discussed in mainstream media, but it does have repercussions. As Martin et al. (2020:9) allude us to, 'the overall immigrant experience is largely shaped by the rhetoric that is used to describe them'. As political elites, mass media and even those who claim to serve communities continue to have immense power in formulating stories about groups of people, places and whether they are deserving or undeserving of respect with the social arena; there is a clear imbalance of influence within the field between those who have large symbolic power and those who are outcasts, thus leading to symbolic violence (Martin et al. 2020: 9; Bourdieu 1991).

> *'Send the immigrants back they say*
> *They're the ones cappin' your wage whilst their corporate friends will be protected from the cradle to the grave'*
> (McGarvey 2022b).

This pointed lyric in the verse of *Step Back* is a rallying cry to its readers and listeners to question and examine the role of distortion and power in scapegoating the disempowered - 'the abject face' (McGarvey 2022b) concealing the true nature of power (Bourdieu 1977). Moreover, it takes an active position in redirecting attention to those endowed with significant symbolic capital – the corporate elite – who are shielded and protected from exposure whilst rhetoric serves to cause friction amongst the dominated. This tale plays a facilitating role in the story often told about Govanhill – one of pointed fingers to stigmatised groups with spoiled identities (Goffman 1963), and material inequities are reproduced as arbitrary, naturalized and as a doxa – a view of the world which is taken for granted and viewed with an uncritical eye. This positioning of blame being placed on certain individuals or groups within the locale, acts as a distortion benefitting those with high symbolic prestige and keeping the dispossession fragmented (Bourdieu 1977).

The division that media language can cause for Ricky is one that is under-acknowledged. Driven by media narratives of difference a coming together of the Roma and the long-standing community in Govanhill has rarely happened. He suggests, 'they'll never acknowledge that there's like a gap between like the whites or the people that are born here and the Roma community' (interview 2022). He outlines that Romano Lav are like the only organisation that are trying to play an integrating role. For him an under-acknowledged problem is the lack of discussion about the

divide with an implicit undertone of racism in much of the media coverage. Therefore, as news outlets amplify tales of disintegration and make moralistic assessments of the Roma population and their supposedly incompatible behaviours with the rest of the population, it serves to pathologize the community masking and ignored the often material and structural disadvantage they are faced with (see Wacquant et al. 2014: 1274).

A local school and nursery implemented a survey that uncovered four housing blocks in the community with 63 nationalities and 57 languages. This, to Ricky, was something to be celebrated but he contrasts the media coverage of Govanhill with Easterhouse (another 'deprived' community in Glasgow) and suggests the latter gets,

> 'double … triple the amount a good stories coming out a there were it's a predominantly…dunno if it's predominantly white but it's definitely not is…culturally mixed is here…but aye I'd say there's undertones a racism n things lit that…a don't think it's right' (interview 2022).

Again, this is further evidence that the nature of territorial stigma within Govanhill is one which the stigma is more attached to some bodies more than others. Govanhill throughout its history has been long associated with waves of inward migration. Over generations this population has been depicted as 'moral outcasts' within the wider social sphere (Tyler 2013: 19). Bataille (1993 (1934): 9) alludes further by highlighting that certain populations can be stripped entirely of human capital and thus serve to constitute 'the dregs of the people, populace and gutter'. Paradoxically, these oppressed subjects act as convenient 'waste populations' (Tyler 2013: 20), 'included through their exclusion' (2013: 20) whom, although are denied political agency at the wider level, are crucial in establishing and strengthening the doxa and beliefs of the hegemony customs of society (Stallybrass & White 1986: 5-6).

The stereotyping of the Romanian community today has historical parallels to previous stereotyping of Jewish, Irish and Asian immigrants in Govanhill (it should be noted that many of the Govanhill residents interviewed appeared not to differentiate between 'Roma' and 'Romanian' individuals and communities). Negative notions of the implantation of their 'alien' cultures, stories of overcrowding, strange diet and non-assimilation into native communities are tales that have been consistently heard over the decades. Each wave of immigration into Govanhill has been unique but there are undoubted commonalities in some of the native population's response to each.

Roland, a 37-year-old Hungarian-Romanian moved to Glasgow in 2017. His job is embedded within the community and focused on helping vulnerable families, with a particular focus on the Roma community and primary-aged children, providing long-term support for those navigating life within the area. Unlike top-down or profit-driven work, Roland's motivation is deeply rooted in making a meaningful difference to the

lives of those he works with and challenging the structural obstacles they face such as racism and language barriers. He highlights the enduring processes of injustices throughout time, specifically within Govanhill itself. Historically there was always 'someone who needs to be blamed' and it has changed with different eras, 'it's the same thing with a different hat…it's the Romanians now…it's the same shit different day…some people don't want to learn from history' (interview 2022).

Other interviewees highlight that the media's interest in Govanhill in recent years also had a wider national political dimension. As indicated previously Govanhill was part of the then First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon's Scottish parliamentary constituency. For Roger, a musician and resident of Govanhill for 12 years, this played a role in creating the 'Govanhill bad' narrative – it served a purpose in unionist media attacks on Nicola Sturgeon. For him, Govanhill had not changed no matter what 'nonsense' written by 'some jobsworth who works in an office in London'. In his words, 'I mean Govanhill in all the years I've known it…it's always had a multi-ethnic diversity there mixed with weegies (slang for Glaswegians)' (interview 2022).

Roger was not alone in picking up the Nicola Sturgeon political dimension of media coverage. Carol, Fraser and Laura (interview 2022; interview 2022;interview 2024) all identified potential media political motivation as 'anti-SNP' and a good stick to beat the SNP Scottish Government with resulting in negative coverage of 'Nicola Sturgeon's backyard' and 'disproportionality negative' coverage and attention.

Govanhill and media negativity have gone together. Peter, a 59-year-old creative writer and long-standing member of the community, suggests that 'Govanhill's a watchword for crime violence and problems with immigration', a decade ago it was 'a watchword for sex trafficking…underage kids…immigration and the problems associated with immigration' (interview 2023). For him, it was localised 'signallin', the 'same signallin that goes on nationally with the Tories with the small boats and that talk'. For Peter, 'the racial element isn't far from the surface here cos it's Nicola Sturgeon's constituency and it's an easy thing to beat her up with' (interview 2023). For him this was dangerous and 'likely to engender and cultivate ignorance, a lack of empathy and understanding and, at its extreme, a lapse into far-right politics'. That was a key motivation of community work in Govanhill.

Other interviewees placed the 'Govanhell' narrative within a broader plain of more sinister and far-reaching motives. For Roland, there is a sense of frustration and sadness imprinted within his testimony on what he sees as negative coverage of the Roma community from the outside bearing an adverse influence on how others within the community view them. It meant 'some people can't see passed division or the media telling them that they shouldn't be friends with such and such'. This sowed division and the fact that they were not 'as educated or not presented more options' that became 'what they know … (and) believe in'. Once rooted it is difficult to change perception or belief (interview 2022).

This points towards the broader power dynamic in society, in tune with Bourdieu's concept of 'doxa' – the shaping of internal thought processes, unconscious to human agents. The paradigm of 'Govanhell' reality is an unquestioning acceptance of the division of Govanhill society. The media outlines the broad 'story' of Govanhill which is then filtered and weaved into the everyday reality of perception and is unquestioned by many from the outside looking in. Roland was not alone amongst the interviewees in suggesting a broader political motivation of an accentuation of division within society.

Jane, in her 70s, is a long-term Glaswegian resident who moved to Govanhill in 1974. With decades of experience in youth and community work, as well as political activism, she provides a historical perspective on local social dynamics, migration patterns, and community cohesion. She suggests that:

> 'The government especially if it's a Tory government … put people away from each other so if you divide you can conquer…the government cause division…people who are struggling will say look at the migrants all that they get why don't we get that' (interview 2022).

Likewise, Roger more scathingly argues that 'The Government likes to scary the little people into obedience' (interview 2022).

These insights, from long term residents with deep connections within the community, illustrate how established members of the community perceive broader political structures as influencing local inter-community relations and social cohesion in Govanhill.

> *'Tellin' you what's real*
> *Well what is real?*'
> (McGarvey 2022b).

The above lyric is utilized to highlight the durability that perceptions and framings can have on strengthening the 'doxa' and shaping opinion in conjunction with the dominant narrative at any given time, regardless of its resemblance to lived reality. Therefore:

> 'whether or not these areas are in fact dilapidated and dangerous, and their population composed essentially of poor people, minorities and foreigners, matters little in the end: the prejudicial belief that they are suffices to set off the socially noxious consequences' (Wacquant 2008b: 68).

For instance, within discourse and popular media, there has been a tendency for these groups to be described in pluralistic terms rather than as real people – with feelings, values, personalities and life experiences (Cooper et al. 2021: 201).

This tactic is used continuously by popular press and politicians describing people looking to enter the UK in metaphorically terms such as ‘waves’ and ‘floods’ (Silveira 2016). The term ‘swarm’ was even used by former Prime Minister David Cameron in relation to the refugee crisis in 2015 (BBC News 2015 as cited in Silveira 2016: 5). The distancing rhetoric serves to de-personalise fellow human beings by merely reducing them to a statistic. The unknown faceless figure. ‘(T)he abject face’ (Turton 2003: 5). Throughout their period in office there was a succession of Tory politicians using such language (see Finn 2019).

There has been a ‘Trumpisation’ in the rhetoric of the UK Government in recent years. In the early 2020s there was the example of the ‘Stop The Boats’ rhetoric and policy which aims to stop ‘illegal’ (my inverted commas) entry to the UK via channel crossings (BBC News, 2023). The ‘Stop The Boats’ slogan has striking resemblance to the narratives ushered by Donald Trump in his 2016 Presidential campaign in the USA where he pledged to ‘build a great wall’ to stop illegal immigration from the Mexican border (Valcore et al. 2021).

What is striking here is the even more extreme deployment of the distancing tactic used by the UK Conservative Government until 2024 in this instance. By using the ‘boat’ as the topic of concern rather than the people who are travelling on them, it further serves to impersonalise the narrative shifting the focus away from human beings in often troubling circumstances fleeing from danger in their native country and onto an abstract object (Doherty 2023).

Furthermore, at Prime Minister’s Questions on Wednesday 8th March 2023 Rishi Sunak addressed the House of Commons on the policy by asserting: ‘Stopping the boats is not just my priority, it’s the people’s priority’ (Sunak, House Of Commons Hansard 2023).

By using universal language, Sunak frames the issue of illegal crossings by refugees as something that the British public should feel compelled to be fearful and worried about. Consequently, he attempts to create a ‘sedimentation of common sense’ and ‘natural logic’ of how one ought to feel towards the issue (Jubas 2006:567). The repetition and continued valence of issues within popular rhetoric and the media can be formidable in formulating ‘truths’ within the social realm which become legitimised and taken for granted within the dominant psyche of the nation (Mungal 2008:4). In 2025 it appeared the national ‘mood music’ was not changing – the Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer referred to the UK as ‘an island of strangers’ – though he did latter express ‘deep regret’ over it (see Mason 2025).

As Mullen (2018:213) illustrates, this line of rhetoric has been prevalent in the coverage of Govanhill and its Roma population, with consistent tendencies to reproduce narratives which highlight worries and reproduce anxieties amongst citizens of their so-called overburdening presence with questionable statistics. In consequence, statistics become a quantitative ploy used by the media and political actors whereby 'the higher the number, the greater legitimacy' (2018: 213) for hardening policies and attitudes on immigration (Vollmer 2011: 327).

Moreover, psychologists have argued that singular histories tend to provoke more sympathetic responses from audiences in comparison to a multitude of stories (Ropeik 2011 as cited in Silveira 2016:6). Thus, by making headlines and narratives beyond the headlines less intimate and personal, there is less probability to spark emotive reactions from social agents receiving the story.

Greenslade (2005:5) observes, the tabloid press represents a culture within the UK which is more representative of a Britain belonging to the middle of the 19th century rather than the present day. He goes on further by highlighting the continuities and differences over periods of time regarding discourse within the tabloid press of ethnic groups. He notes that rhetoric and news has become more extreme and overexaggerated, the bombardment of negative portrayals has increased, and the symbolic power of political elites and the media has become even more influential even in the wake of a shift to a more multi-cultural society in Britain (2005:21).

Bourdieu is rather pessimistic about the human agency of those, whom in macro terms, do not possess symbolic capital to challenge those with authority when he states:

> 'Dominated individuals make common sense with discourse and consciousness, indeed with science, since they cannot constitute themselves as a separate group, mobilize themselves or mobilize their potential power unless they question the categories of perception of the social order which, being the product of that order, inclined them to recognize that order and thus submit to it' (1991:131).

The 'Govanhell' thesis often employs such rhetorical ploys with individual human beings replaced with broad sweeping discussion and assertion of problems involving a whole community or people.

Govanhill Perceptions

'People here know what Govanhill is
We don't need presented with what the newspapers say
We know our neighbours, we know our friends…
It's not the place it's made out to be
The horror stories you hear in taxis

It's rough, it's scary
It's a free for all in the streets'
(McGarvey 2023b)

In the backdrop of disparaging circulation of knowledge and condemnation of Govanhill from *above* (through news circulation, political elites and those with considerate symbolic capital) and from *below* (those external from the community with similar least considerable symbolic capital), this research seeks to address whether the participants within the area have 'internalize(d) the negative gaze of the dominant' (Jensen and Christensen 2012:83) thereby becoming 'a deeply felt reality' or merely 'an artefact of distant observation' (Wacquant 1996:129).

The song lyric above within the song 'Hard Fights' is one which directly confronts a central theme of this chapter – the disjuncture between knowledge written and circulated about Govanhill from the outside and the real-life perspectives of those who reside within it.

The broader external media narrative about Govanhill is so powerful that it permeates much discussion about the area. During the COVID lockdown a Glaswegian took to walking around the streets of the area whilst outlining a derogatory commentary and editing to pinpoint aspects of the area that fitted the tone of his online video. This was not warmly received by many of the interviewees. Michael, for example, described him as a 'despicable individual' and the video as a 'sort of really horrible poisonous Tommy Robinson type narrative spreading myths about the Roma and attitudes to their daughters and all this kinda stuff' (interview 2023). For Michael he was 'rightly ridiculed for they videos' arguing his story 'ran counter to a lot of the good work that was being done in Govanhill'.

Despite a hegemonic story of disorder and division within Govanhill, several participants were dismissive of the reputation it carries from outwith the community. Fraser, a 32-year-old Energy Justice Lead at Regen and newcomer to the area, originally from a working-class town Forfar in the outskirts of Dundee, detailed how people would gasp at bewilderment when he and his partner told them they were planning on moving into the area. In complete contrast, he expresses a dealignment between the stories of outsiders and the lived reality within the territory, an observation which forms the sentiment of 'Hard Fights' (McGarvey 2023) within the project which emphasises kinship connections and friendliness amongst neighbourhoods. Their first impressions were a 'really friendly community' – ''it wasn't the scary place people made it out to be…complete opposite…diverse…vibrant…lively…active…which is exciting' (interview 2022). He goes further highlighting the safe environment of the locale and its surroundings, contrasting it with the unsafe narratives of the media.

This observation is closely aligned with Augustina, who was seemingly mystified and bewildered by the reputation that precedes the area. She said she'd never felt so calm and had no fear of mugging:

> ‘When I used to work in Shawlands and walk home every night when I worked at the bookies my punters used to say oh how do you get home? And I’d say I walk it’s like a 15-minute walk down the road and they’d say like you walk home…at Govanhill…during the night-time?! I was like of course I do I live there how else do I go to the shops at night to get a missing ingredient for dinner? What do you mean how do I walk home at night? With my legs like do you think there’s a Bible John still walking around or something…like you know?’ (interview 2022).

Similarly, for Ania, a 29-year-old Polish migrant and freelance community organizer and facilitator who moved to Govanhill 3 years ago, the negative coverage of the community comes from the outside. She works to engage residents through events such as open mic nights, women’s circles, and meditation sessions embedded within the area, as well as volunteering with local initiatives like Thriving Govanhill and G42 pop ups. For her, the work is not about financial gains but instead based on fostering belonging and connection across the multi-cultural community (interview 2022). For her, ‘there’s issues in every area, every town, every city’. She suggested there were few people in Govanhill who ‘‘would say anything bad about it’ (interview 2022)’. In concurrence, Vivienne contrasts the negativity of coverage of Govanhill with her ‘really positive’ experience of living there – ‘I don’t have any negative stories about my own experiences of Govanhill I’ve just had positive experience from people in Govanhill’ (interview 2022). Similarly, Jennifer refers to the ‘circle of gossip’ of taxi drivers who regale passengers of tales that have never actually happened. In her words the reaction of ‘90% of the drivers will say to you aww shit you don’t live in Govanhill do you?’ (interview 2022).

Other residents reported similar tales. As Ania notes these negative perspectives tended to come from individuals unfamiliar with the area – **‘**it’s mostly from people who’ve never lived here or never made friends here or have never actually spend any time here’ and likens it to perspectives on the whole of the city of Glasgow from those ‘down south’ in England telling ‘horror stories of … stabbing … it’s dirty and dangerous’. For her, this was simply ‘people talking and talking shit’ (Ania interview 2022).

Again, these sentiments and testimonies made by participants of the study were utilized and conveyed within ‘Hard Fights’ highlighting ‘the horror stories you hear in the taxis’ and that ‘it’s rough it’s scary’ (McGarvey 2023) which were brought up frequently. The track was formed in a very deliberate way to illustrate the almost homogeneous rejection to these narratives by the community. Thus, it is an artistic and critical exploration challenging these views. Its unapologetic 4/4 driving beat was carefully crafted here to set a scene of defiance and frustration to match the sentiment of the voices it seeks to amplify.

Laura (originally from Kilwinning in Ayrshire) outlines how her mother sends her press articles ‘every now and then about bed bugs or cockroaches or bats…fly-tipping’. She even admits that her perception before she lived in Govanhill was framed by such stories, in her words ‘it’s easy to make judgements about somewhere you don’t know or understand…I think that’s what I did when I moved here’ (interview 2023).

Therefore, external judgements and valuations placed on Govanhill by some are littered with ‘overwhelmingly negative emotions, revulsion and condemnation’ (Schwarze 2021:4) and depict the area as “vortexes and vectors of social disintegration” (Wacquant et al. 2014:1274, original emphasis). In this sense, the notion of ‘bad neighbourhoods’ has become universalised and embedded within orthodox understandings of social space (2014:1973).

Consequentially, structural and historical reasons of poverty and problems in stigmatized areas are often overlooked within news circulation and those within the bounded area are often homogeneously labelled as “lazy, immoral, violent or whatever stereotype outsiders employ to separate ‘them’ from ‘us’” (Junnilainen 2020:45). Therefore, the underlying issue regarding the nature and presentation of knowledge ‘is less what people know, but rather what they do not know’ (Slater 2018 paraphrased in Schwarz 2021:18).

For Caron, a newcomer to the area in her 30s and a complementary therapist and walking tour guide specialising in street art and LGBT+ community history, the belittling commentary of Govanhill has manifested itself with disrespectful behaviours from those from outwith the area:

> ‘workies vans and stuff like that comin thinkin fuck it I’ll just dump my shite here or their builder’s rubble here and cos there’s the backstreets at the back of the tenements … and be like fuck it it’s Govanhill and just dump their shit here…like who cares and that really really annoys me’ (interview 2022).

She perhaps sums up the situation best in her dialogue with a work colleague:

> ‘She’s fae Possil and she wis like where are you fae? And a was like Govanhill and she wis like that’s a shitehole…I’m like what makes you think that? Why’s it okay to just be like it’s a general consensus that Govanhill’s a shitehole but I’ve no opened a newspaper and saw like a shootin…in Govanhill or like somebody’s wain getting ran er by a motor like in Castlemilk outside the shops n stuff like that…a just can’t help but wonder why is it Govanhill that’s the shitehole…cos to me…it’s actually awryt…there is parts of it that are mingin and manky…bit it’s no different to anywhere else…it just really really pisses me off that Govanhill and the southside…Govanhill in particular…everyone kinda just looks down their nose at it’ (interview 2022).

Moreover, she suggests a misconception of Govanhill due to its diversity and how ‘everyone kinda just looks down their nose at it’ (interview 2022). For her there is a ‘racial undertone’ as other poor areas of Glasgow do not get anything like the volume of bad press. Her lived experience is directly contrary to the negative narrative. For Caron the negative narrative, sadly has elements of a lower white working-class (of which she is a member) as part of a lower rump:

> ‘ … hopin that there’s somebody below (the social ladder) ye cos that means that you feel higher and a think that’s the game wae a lot a people who spout that nonsense… ye do get some who are desperate fir someone tae be below them’ (interview 2022).

Moreover, Augustina cites ‘the older generation’ of Scottish people she encounters in the bookmakers (many of whom are oblivious to her Lithuanian nationality as she lived in London aged 10 to 22) who narrate negative tales of Romanians which she challenges on the basis that, ‘I’m Lithuanian and I live in Govanhill and I am that…I am those foreigners that you’re talking about…just cos I’m a couple of shades lighter than them it doesn’t mean that we’re not these people’ (interview 2022), defending their right to seek a better life.

Perceptions of difference and what social psychologists refer to as ‘othering’ has undoubtedly played a role in the placement of Govanhill outwith the Scottish and Glaswegian mainstream. It is a unique community in many ways rooted, in both positive and negative perceptions, in its differentiation from the rest of the city and country.

Although demeaning knowledge circulated within the media can pervert the lived experience of areas such as Govanhill, it is necessary and crucial not to idealise Govanhill or gloss over its problems and structural disadvantages.

Likewise, Roland (interview 2022) refers to ‘the blame culture’ and examples of it can be traced historically to different generations of migrants. Sadly, the narrative is passed on in families and results in needless predispositions and prejudice:

> ‘it’s like saying I’m definitely going to hate you…I’ve not even talked to you but I definitely hate you because you’re coming from that street or that neighbourhood or whatever…they don’t give a chance to each other…and even the Romanians amongst themselves…they are divided they are not unified you know…even the Scottish or anyone they all have their different groups and they are like ohh I’m not talking to them cos…I don’t know…they are a different religion or they are a very working-class you know there’s always gonna be division’ (interview 2022).

He suggests there are local events like open mics and festivals that play a real facilitative role in bringing communities together but often it can be transitory and some 'go back to their old habits of thinking bad of others'. These events have the potential to challenge pre-conceptions and divisions within the area fostered by negative news and knowledge produced by external forces. With social gatherings that encourage socialisation, previous negative dispositions of groups within the community can be 'denaturalised' (Singh 2022:10) which can directly refute the 'doxa' of the dominant narrative seen in news outlets of disintegration and disharmony within Govanhill which can greatly influence perceptions if left unchallenged (Fram 2004:557). These sentiments are a prevalent theme within *Hard Fights* (McGarvey 2023b), an artefact of shared resistance borne out of the voices of real Govanhill people.

Govanhill Housing and Environment

As outlined previously Govanhill is a community largely made up of Glasgow tenement blocks. The vast bulk of these are rented accommodation, with many privately rented. There are also bed and breakfast accommodation run for homeless families and individuals. The cumulative impact of this is that Govanhill has more than its fair share of vulnerable people living in the community. This, rather inevitably, places strain on community, council and social services. This combined with a decade of UK Government imposed austerity on local government expenditure has not been a healthy mix for community well-being in Govanhill and many other communities across the UK. As Bernie notes the combination of: 'a lot of private rented accommodation, bad private landlords … homeless … vulnerable people' does have an unsettling and fragmented impact on the community' (interview 2023).

Peter (interview 2023) outlines the poor conditions of many of the tenement buildings (as they are over 120 years old), the fact that they are older than elsewhere in the city, 'backcourts overrun with rats and litter' and poor 'basic street infrastructure'. Other interviewees noted similar issues. Michael (interview 2023) notes, flats 'sub-divided into much smaller sub-units', in closes 'didn't seem to be kept completely clean'. Fatima too acknowledged 'a real issue with slum landlords and tenants' with a knock-on consequence that:

> 'Govanhill has more drug deaths and more drug users than I think any other part of Glasgow at the moment and really serious problems that come with poverty and mental health that you see more and more on the streets'(interview 2022).

Margaret (anonymized) acknowledges that the downside of housing is ‘you don’t know from the one day to the next who’s gonna get put in beside ye’ when you buy a house. It could be ‘junkies we had drug dealers ye know what I mean?’ (interview 2022).

Many of the interviewees acknowledged the environmental litter problem in the neighbourhood. Augustina (interview 2022), too acknowledged a fly-tipping problem, a ‘lack of love shown for the streets’ as well as the littering of sunflower seed, noting that ‘a lot of Romanian people really like to crack sunflower seeds so they can stand around in like groups of friends’, and its cultural dimension whilst saying ‘we don’t shit in our own doorstep’. Ania too acknowledged ‘rubbish problems’ and ‘if we don’t change the mind-set to taking care of the place that we live that’s a problem’ (interview 2022). Margaret (anonymized) (interview 2022) continues in a similar vein, ‘a don’t know if that’s a cultural thing that they put their rubbish out in the front rather than actual putting them into bins and shops were also doing it’.

Peter (interview 2023) suggested littering was ‘a city-wide problem now’ with the rising population of rats leading to other connected issues. He implicated both tenants and landlords with responsibility though arguing ‘a don’t wanna get in the habit of blaming tenants or immigrants cos it’s not right…but people need to take personal responsibility up till a point’. Stewart (interview 2022) too acknowledged, ‘when you’ve got all these different cultures there can be miscommunication and what have you and the litter in the area’. Ricky also speaks about the issue with specific reference to the Roma community, however placing emphasis on material reasons and the presence (or rather non-presence) of rogue and absentee landlords:

> ‘Govanhill’s a bit of a dump these days there’s litter in every street emmm…the backs in Allison Street are terrible n a lot of that is inhabited by people of the Roma culture but again that’s people that are livin wae like 8 people in a 2 bedroom household it’s gonny get clumped up…again it is the litter but the root problem of the litter is probably the dodgy landlords ‘n the amount a people there is cos their dodginess’ (interview 2022).

Simon (interview 2023) also acknowledges the problem by stating ‘with more people there’s more litter (and)… it’s people…it’s not every person…it’s some people’. He also points out potential repercussions that ‘you’ll get groups saying ohh let’s tidy up our lane but it is the council’s job … so they do that then that breeds contempt against the council and then the government and then it becomes divisive doesn’t it?’.

The litter problem brings with it discussion of the wider environment and infrastructure of Govanhill to which we now turn. As outlined many interviewees made a clear linkage between the migrating and transitory nature of population flows in Govanhill and wider environmental problems. For example, Peter recalls a big influx of Roma in the early to mid-2000s that pressurised housing and infrastructure. In his words:

> ‘it was a difficult time it was a dark time…a lot of collaboration between Scottish Government and local authorities and Govanhill Housing Association to improve things…to buy up and clean up a lot of these absentee landlords…Govanhill Housing Association buying over a lot of (landlord) properties’ (interview 2023).

The nature of tenement properties brings a level of population density. What was just as notable regarding this was what was *not* discussed. ‘Normal’ urban problems of car parking and traffic were not brought up by interviewees. This alone highlights the low levels of car ownership in Govanhill associated with the area’s poverty levels and the make-up of its population. Tenements also tend to be associated with a younger population. As Laura notes (interview 2023), most properties in Govanhill have accessibility issues. Tenement housing not on the ground floor is not suitable for the elderly or anyone with mobility issues.

Govanhill does have many environmental problems that its population was willing to discuss and acknowledge but many did so by contextualising them within the wider environment of public sector austerity and cutbacks, historical legacy and poverty. ‘Fault’ was rarely emphasised as one of the individuals – the problems of Govanhill were layered and complex.

For some this is reflected in the policies and attitudes of state services in the community with a differentiation in responsiveness of them to areas deemed ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Augustina (interview 2022), cites how Queens Drive (an upmarket neighbourhood on the edge of Queens Park) is ‘incredibly well kept there isn’t a single piece of rubbish…bins get collected on time the tenants pay a certain fee for the block to be maintained for everything to be pristine’. However, ‘two rows behind and where I live on Langside (there is a) lifetime of a difference … it’s a minute difference of a walk and it’s a shambles’. She cites leaky tenement roofs, absent (and unresponsive) landlords, overloaded rubbish, bins uncollected for weeks, single recycling bins serving a whole block. A contrast is made with other areas of the southside such as Battlefield and Shawlands with far more responsive public services where the environment is ‘looked after’ and ‘bins get picked up on time’. So ‘so you *feel* (interviewee emphasis) a difference to how the residents of Govanhill are being looked after’ (interview 2022, emphasis added).

For Peter (interview 2023), ‘Govanhill is such an easy target…Nicola Sturgeon’s constituency’. According to him, that is why ‘far-right groups … demonise the place…blame immigrants’. He refers to how 15 years ago the community felt ignored and forgotten about when the complained about noise and litter issues, ‘nobody wanted to live in Govanhill…nobody…flats stayed empty for 2 years…they wouldn’t even use the word Govanhill in estate agents and that’s the genuine truth’. However,

for him 'demonising immigrants' was profoundly wrong as the fault lay with governing authorities allowing decay and neglect through austerity policies.

Ania (interview 2022), too blames inadequate and unresponsive council services – 'the council weren't picking up rubbish on my street … the council say they don't have money to send more than one person every two weeks to pick up rubbish on that street…it's bullshit'. In response her street created a neighbourhood community hub, got the housing association to provide materials and equipment to safety get the rubbish off the street themselves. For Margaret (anonymized) (interview 2022), 'the council prioritise certain areas and neglect others…Govanhill is neglected'. Only community lobbying made the council do anything about the rogue landlord issue though she did acknowledge investment in new housing in the area.

Thus, what is evident here within the testimonies is that stigmatization placed on Govanhill has also been reflected within the policies of the council and what are deemed higher and lower priority areas within the city. In this regard, Govanhill has suffered from a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman 1963) and is regarded as a bounded area within the social space with less symbolic capital, thus receiving less attention in political decision-making (Bourdieu 1977; Wacquant 2008b). The recognition and awareness of these material disadvantages within the area is pivotal to creating an environment which promotes a fairer and less asymmetrical approach to policymaking – one that prevents compounding and reproducing already existing inequalities within Govanhill and Scotland as a whole.

Govanhill Culture and Diversity

This difference is often framed under the rubric of 'culture' (again both positively and negatively). As Peter outlines, 'Yeah well that's a kinda cultural thing…it's a very emotive topic but I think we need to talk about how …Govanhill's just a quirky unusual place wae interestin tenants' (interview 2023).

Cultural differences undoubtedly bring challenges of understanding in everyday life. As Fraser acknowledges, 'when you've got all these different cultures there can be miscommunication'. Bernie (interview 2023) reports seeing instances of racism – young children harassing Asian women. Likewise, Michael (interview 2023) reported a similar experience and being called 'a Paki lover' by twelve-year-old children.

Furthermore, Ania (interview 2022) expressed a disjuncture between her own day-to-day experiences living within Govanhill as opposed to the widely held coverage of hegemonic accounts and outsiders but acknowledged feeling a degree of insecurity on Allison Street (a key thoroughfare in the community) by groups of guys hanging on the corners. With this account, Ania is acutely aware of the negative reputation ascribed to Govanhill from a macro perspective looking in. For the most part, there is a dismissive attitude to how she negotiates the disparaging rhetoric of her place of residence. However, when describing Allison Street as 'infamous' and an area unsafe

to walk in at night, there is an incorporation reproduction of the orthodox narrative attributed to the street. Thus, within stigmatized locations there can sometimes be a tendency for division and internal fragmentation (Wacquant 2007, 2008a).

Moreover, Ricky further comments on his family members hesitance on walking down Allison Street due to the presence of Roma men their reputation with some in the locality suggesting that 'some a the Roma community do intimidate woman in Govanhill like it is quite evident…like I've heard more than one story of like a woman walkin by say Allison Street or the health centre n like gettin followed by a group of them' (Ricky interview 2022). He does however 'think the media do have undertones of racism in their reports or whatever about Govanhill' and 'there is people who just don't want to accept other cultures in general' (interview 2022).

In concurrence, for Simon (interview 2023), 'you always get that mix of culture and with that comes fear at times'. However, he cites standing on street corners a part of 'the Romanian culture'. He thus puts emphasis on general anti-immigrant scaremongering – 'I think immigration fuels fear…people are worried that new people who move in are gonna take their jobs and take this and take that' (interview 2023).

Certainly, within some narratives surrounding Govanhill, the Roma community are depicted as the 'archetypal problem neighbour' (Mullen 2018:2012), in comparison to more long-standing groups who had resided in the area for a longer duration. Margaret (anonymized) describes the disharmony she feels with the Romanian community in comparison to more established communities within the area:

> 'new communities came in kinda stuck with each other…didn't wanna mix like the Romanians…it was hard cos they stood in big groups so we didn't understand them and they didn't understand us…in the last fifteen to twenty years I got kinda wary about walking about Govanhill just because there were large groups of men standing in the corners who have a different outlook on women than the Asian community…' (interview 2022).

She further adds:

> 'I don't know if it's a culture to play loud music to all hours but there is a family of them further along the road where their neighbours must be demented…they're big drinkers the Romanians as well…it was just a bit of a menacing community like you'd walk along and they'd be standing there and you'd know they'd been drinking and things like that you know…and shouting loud but they were still standing their corners in their big groups till maybe one or two in the morning' (interview 2022).

Within Margaret's narrative, there is a positionality of respectability which is starkly contrasted with the improper behaviours of Romanian and their perceived culture of

alcoholism and anti-social behaviour which establishes and reproduces their ‘markers of differences’ (Mullen 2018:212) of being ‘bodies out of place’ (Puwar 2004) within the community. Furthermore, by alluding to Romanians as ‘menacing’ and ‘big drinkers’ in a uniform fashion, the distancing and racialized language portrays Romanian men as an indistinguishable section of society whose characteristics are ‘socially unadaptable’ (Cretan et al. 2022:85) from the rest of the community.

Moreover, Laura acknowledges her difficulty when she first moved to Govanhill and her being ‘apprehensive of different language and making unfounded assumptions’ (interview 2023). The diversity was something she had never experienced before ‘but when everybody’s different it means everybody’s the same…it’s a total equalizer and I’d never experienced that anywhere before’ (interview 2023). For her the initial wary perspective came from ‘ignorance and nobody wants to say it was racism but it probably was…in fact it definitely was’ (interview 2023). She continues further by acknowledging her apprehension at first when groups of people were talking in a different language but over time she didn’t ‘think about it anymore’. It became part of everyday life. (interview 2023).

As demonstrated by Laura’s candid of reflection of her changing habitus and dispositions over time adjusting to the new social field she has now found herself negotiating in; it highlights that her initial uneasiness around foreign voices and figures in the area stemmed from pre-established doxic thinking influenced by the environment which she was embedded in and accustomed to, which she describes as a ‘small remote town’ where ‘everybody looked the same’ and were there were unwritten codes of ‘looking and acting in certain ways’ (interview 2023; Singh 2022:13).

However, Bourdieu stresses (2000:160), as social agents find themselves in a new social setting where previously held views are challenged and are no longer compatible with the new field they are operating in, pre-conceived doxic understandings learned from the previous field no longer govern them in the same way (Singh 2022:4). Consequentially, Laura states that her lived experience in Govanhill ‘has taught me a lot about people and myself as well cos you don’t realise the unconscious bias about things but inside your mind you’re putting these things together that are absolute nonsense but you don’t know that at the time’(interview 2023).

Jennifer on the other hand outlines that she has never felt threatened by groups of people in the dark suggesting that ‘one of the biggest problems is the language but people just hear a foreign language and get scared and I think maybe cos I’ve travelled a lot I don’t feel that intimidated by foreign language’ (interview 2022).

On the other hand, Jennifer (interview 2022), questions the attitude of Govanhill residents who have Irish backgrounds as often among the most intolerant to the new community. The irony being that lots of impoverished families came over from Ireland looking for a new life free of hardship and famine. Those families sent money back to

Ireland just as the Poles or Romanians do today. This of course is a normal feature of many first-generation immigrant stories in all parts of the world.

Augustina (interview 2022) refers to a nostalgia for the old days of Govanhill and Victoria Road – her work colleague who is 55 speaks of going shopping and having a whole day out in the shops, the park and eating out. For her 'a bog standard family day out that still exists to this day but she kind of painted the picture where it was…clean…there weren't that many Romanians around…it was safer'.

With this nostalgic idealised account of 'the good ol' days' of Govanhill, what is interesting is that the topic of migration is spoken of implicitly in a way that would suggest it is a new phenomenon that needs dealt with urgently (Bryce 2023:7). Ironically, as Bryce amply points out, the story of Govanhill shatters that falsity and demonstrates the fact that it is 'the very bedrock of human society since its beginnings' (2023:7).

Transmission

The transmission of 'Govanhill stories' can come via many routes but perhaps the most obvious (and effective) route is household transmission. Children are socialised by older members of their family, eavesdropping can pick up on the stories, language and attitudes of their parents or older siblings. In this way, negativity and prejudice is socialised and becomes inter-generational. For Roland, tales of robbery that happens to involve a Romanian citizen transforms from an individual crime to one of that whole community. He likens cultural differences and the acceptance and celebration of them or the rejection of them as being like 'an accordion sometimes it's open sometimes it closes…it can unify or close off…it depends on many situations' (interview 2022).

In this account, there is a resignation in Roland's account which acknowledges the cruciality of socialisation in shaping and internalising perceptions. Thus, the notion of disidentification with certain groups within the locality he feels has been a symptom of past socialisations and present socialisations especially with younger generations internalising the world they are negotiating in (Bourdieu 1977). In this regard, the incompatibility of Roma has been embedded into the internal workings of the habitus, and it viewed uncritically as a custom mode of thinking (1977). Of course, this analysis must be taken with caution as it is narrated from a third-party standpoint assuming other people's perceptions.

However, how Roland *feels* as a Hungarian-Romanian within Govanhill itself must also be of paramount consideration as well, and it is evident that he has somewhat contrary feelings about inter-relations between ethnicities within the area through experiences of life on the ground. Thus, it must be acknowledged how individuals embody ethnic identity within social environments and how that can work to impede them in 'a social world shaped by histories of colonialism' (Singh 2022: 3; Singh 2021b: 6).

Another transmission route is social media. One interviewee Jennifer (interview 2022) reported a group called 'Govanhillians' who openly mocked certain cultures on their social media pages, making assumptions that they were Romanian or Roma without even having a clue whenever they were. She felt sickened by the open prejudice exhibited that mushroomed into negative gossip and tales of child exploitation with no evidence base. This aspect of division infiltrated through social media is captured within the message of *Step Back*:

> *'Step back*
> *Step away from your computer screen*
> *It's negative energy'*
> (McGarvey 2022b).

This artistic declaration within the project is one which demands the listener and reader to reflect and think critically about the knowledge which is absorbed and spread about Govanhill. In an era of social media, gossip and demeaning knowledge can spread like wildfire and become even more persistent than word of mouth transmission (Hall 2013/1978). This particular lyric is a direct opposition to misrepresentation of areas which encourage toxic disintegration and division within the community.

The perception of difference is accentuated for Roland by the barrier of language:

> 'I wish everyone could understand everybody … someone trying to shout out for help but they can't because they don't know English so they are very vulnerable…maybe some cannot take a stand for themselves because they cannot express themselves' (interview 2022).

Roland, who works in the community, emphasises the diversity within what some people perceive as a single homogenous group of migrants. He notes that the Roma community comes from different countries – Slovakia, Poland, Czech as well as Romania. Some remain divided but others over time become more engaging and friendlier talking about cooking, recipes, their housing. Often, he suggests, it can take time to develop the language skills to engage in conversation. Without community conversations some take local news from Facebook and social media where there is much misrepresentation. Much of the observations of interviewees testify to the ignorance and lack of differentiation that is made between 'Roma' and 'Romanian' (or indeed other eastern European) immigrants.

However, aforementioned, there is evidence of Govanhill residents taking a proactive role in combating and resisting this 'doxa' from the outside. They were cleaning up streets, Romano Lav were promoting the Roma community, Govanhill Baths

Community Trust and Govanhill International Festival promoting integration and fightback to those oppressing and taking ownership of the story of Govanhill (Ania interview 2022, Fatima interview 2022; Ricky interview 2022). This element of fightback within the community will be explored further in this chapter and the proceeding chapters following on.

Community Embrace and Resistance

'Don't believe the truth'
(McGarvey 2022b)

The closing refrain repeated at the end of *Step Back* is a mantra and an advocacy for critical thinking; in direct opposition to the 'othering' and media-led understanding which perpetuate and feed the 'Govanhell' narrative. In doing so, it gives voice to those within the area who informed this study and amplifies their message of defiance to these inflected 'truths', a key motivation for me as the researcher of this study.

Simon (interview 2023) stresses the importance of embracing new cultures and being open to people of different backgrounds to become a more 'well-formed person…a balanced person and an open person'. Similarly to Laura's admission, he believes in the power of Govanhill as a unique part of the city of Glasgow in which 'within a square mile, there is the world and there is your experience and you can travel without travelling if you're open to it'.

He further demonstrates that a key motivation of his photography work in the area is expressing the humanity and beauty in the diversity of its people and to challenge spectators' potential pre-dispositions, 'you've got to shake off this fear' and his photography projects sought to do this:

> 'when I photograph people…usually I have direct eye contact and I put them in a window and so the person who doesn't walk by the corner by the Roma men so they've heard something about it now looks at a Roma person in the face and has eye contact…usually looking down and it might trigger a question in their mind thinkin ye know what they're not that different than me ye know we're not so different…our lives might be alike and then hopefully in that small act it might build a bridge in a sense between the community' (interview 2023).

By personalising and providing authenticity and empathy within his photography, Simon confronts the often dehumanising and homogenous nature of how the media characterises the Romanian population in Govanhill and seeks to break down barriers of misconceptions and agitation which may be felt by some within the community

(Simon's photography exhibition can be seen at https://www.documentscotland.com/portfolio/govanhill-photography-glasgow/).

As highlighted previously, fear can still play a facilitating role if not challenged otherwise according to Fatima (interview 2022) who expresses frustration at the consistent attempts to pit one community against each other. However, Stewart (interview 2022) places the contemporary period within the framework of his life suggesting that Govanhill 'seems like a sort of friendlier place'. He contrasts it with the roughness of street gangs such as the Govanhill Young Team of his youth 'who slashed people'. The differing cultures for him has 'actually become one of the highlights of the area and those cultures have actually come together a little bit more because of things like maybe the Govanhill Community Trust and programmes' (Stewart interview 2022).

Jennifer (interview 2022) describes Govanhill immigration as coming 'in waves like a rollercoaster' and acknowledges she at one stage was intolerant but 'it's changed and you can feel the vibe coming back' with students and young professionals now moving in. In her experience it was a very tolerant place but at one point 'it seemed to change…I think it really changed when the European community came and lots of different nationalities moved to the area…I'd say it was about 30 years ago'. In the early 1990s 'it became really, really multicultural… all these different nationalities coming here whereas before you'd only really see Irish or Asian'. The intolerance for her started when the Eastern European community moved and 'it was really ugly in Govanhill at that point…I think it still exists…there's this real ugliness that was aimed towards Eastern European communities'. She suggests the Roma community are more transient and aim to return home, unlike previous waves of Irish and Asians.

Ricky, a youth worker, acknowledges his initial difficulty in engaging with the Roma community due to the language barrier. However, over time:

> 'some a them were the friendliest young people that I've worked wae…some a them have been in the community for a good number a years now some a them are half Romanian/half Scottish or half Slovakian/half Scottish or whatever but the ones that moved over here who are 15/16' (interview 2022).

Having come from poverty they are excited 'to be part of something' and by the many free inclusive community services Glasgow has to offer whether it be sports or events happening nearby.

Fatima suggests a racist undertone to some communities and individuals and notes:

> 'abuse…swearing…being blamed for whatever ill was in the community at the time so if it was rats well obviously it was the Turkish or the Lebanese or the

> Greek people that brought them in cos no rats ever existed before we were there…same towards Roma people' (interview 2022).

She goes further alluding to the historical continuities of racism throughout generations and across nation state lines rather convincingly suggesting that racism is identical across the world – the treatment of people as inferior or stupid and that is the reason they do not integrate, or they did not speak the same language or eat the same food. – 'we had no time to learn English cos we're working 20 hours in a factory … racism's the same it's about degrading people and making them feel inferior and blaming them for things you have no control over in your life' (interview 2022). Fatima also noted the existence and pervasiveness of institutional racism:

> '…not being able to access jobs or learning or being treated by police…I mean police are awful you know we had paddy wagons used to just circle our community all the time and obviously the name comes from when they used to just jail Irish people all the time but…you know just harassment from police you know…it doesn't matter where you go it's pretty much the same' good backdrop, racial, historical continuities' (interview 2022).

Therefore, what is clear here is that when the spoiled identity of a place is manifested through negative narratives external from the community, innovative research techniques can be utilized as a powerful tool to counter quantitative analysis and data indexes which blur the human story which this thesis seeks to bring to light (Byrne et al. 2016:80). As the song *Step Back* demands of its audience, *'Don't believe the truth'* (McGarvey 2022b) – a plea to question the arbitrary nature and acceptance of 'truths' spoke of Govanhill, which have been socially constructed through quantitative statistics, political rhetoric and media framing (Mullen 2018; Harris 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter has critically examined the 'Govanhell thesis,' a dominant media narrative portraying Govanhill as a community plagued by poverty, crime, environmental decay, and social dysfunction. It has not sought to ignore Govanhill's real challenges. In many ways they are endemic to any inner-city community that plays host to both indigenous and new migrant communities. There *were* and still *are* many issues of littering, noise, neighbourhood safety, crime and anti-social behaviour.

As a community populated by what have historically been transient migrant communities, this coupled with the negative media narratives could lead to what Giddens (1984) refers to as a condition of 'ontological insecurity', Defined by Dickens as, 'a sense in which people have precious little understanding of the processes

affecting their inner selves, their daily lives, the sense of who they are and where they belong' (1990: 4).

However, the community of Govanhill has not responded as passive recipients of this condition of 'ontological insecurity'. External decisions and perspectives have been and are challenged by the residents of Govanhill. However, this thesis argues that Govanhill is characterised by a place with problems rather than a problem space (Johnson & Mooney 2007 as cited in Watt 2020). Whilst there is undoubtedly a degree of 'ontological insecurity' internalised by residents they have also responded to its challenges. The people of Govanhill have responded and sought to place themselves as key actors in 'place-shaping' processes – the community's response to the council decision to close Govanhill Baths being a key catalyst for local activism and events such as the community festival ensuring the durability of collective activism (more on this in succeeding chapters).

The chapter has sought to demonstrate the stark disconnect between external stigmatization and the actual lived realities of Govanhill's diverse population. The 'Govanhell' thesis, rooted in sensationalized media portrayals and political rhetoric, often amplifies xenophobic tropes and oversimplifies complex socio-economic challenges, ignoring the historical context of deindustrialisation, austerity, and systemic neglect. Residents' testimonies challenge this story, highlighting a vibrant and resilient community. Despite their undoubted materialistic poverty and hardships, it is a community that fosters solidarity and cultural richness, actively resisting the 'spoiled identity' (Goffman 1963) imposed upon it.

Step Back (McGarvey 2022b) and *Hard Fights* (2023) (McGarvey 2023b) have aided and been at the forefront of this analysis, not only as artistic expressions, but as sharp messages and reflections depicting the voices of the people who live in the area. *Step Back* is a composition which asks of its audience to question long held beliefs and attitudes which had plagued Govanhill enabling its 'spoiled identity' (Goffman 1963) status and masking structural disadvantages which inform the day-to-day struggles often highlighted within the testimonies. Its mantra demands and points at the role of symbolic power reproducing negative production and pathologization of the area, resisting the '*negative energy'* (McGarvey 2022b) which enables territorial stigma (Bourdieu 1977; Wacquant 2008b;Tyler 2013).

Furthermore, *Hard Fights* turns the lens inwards as it captures the gap between the perceived and real reality lived within the area as residents refute the narratives imposed by symbolic production (Bourdieu 1977; Wacquant 2008b). This ardent message, captured in both the lyrics and feeling created by the music, points to a community with agency and one which is not bound to others shaping its narrative. Instead, it depicts one of pride, cohesion and kinship amidst oppressive forces from the outside.

These songs manifest the importance of critical evaluation but also the power of community-driven narratives to counter territorial stigmatization, actively shaping narratives that celebrate community spirit and embrace cultural diversity.

By contextualizing the 'Govanhell thesis' within Bourdieusian concepts like doxa and symbolic capital, this chapter exposes how media and political elites perpetuate division and 'othering,' particularly targeting marginalized groups like the Roma. Yet, the residents' pride in their multicultural identity, coupled with grassroots initiatives like community hubs and cultural events, demonstrates a collective agency that redefines Govanhill as a place of unity and resistance. This analysis not only debunks the myths of 'Govanhell' but also offers a broader critique of how stigmatized communities can reclaim their narrative, providing a framework through which to understand the interplay of power, perception, and place in shaping social realities.

A central theme of this thesis is that space and community matters. Govanhill matters. As Dickens notes:

> 'Space cannot be treated as an optional extra of we are attempting to develop a satisfactory understanding of social relations, social processes and their relationships to people as active human beings' (1990:2).

The interaction of individuals in communities, their individual and communal expression, has repercussions for societal, economic and political relationships. This thesis puts the perspective of the *people* of Govanhill at the centre of analysis. There are few who would deny that parts of the *place* that is called Govanhill, on the surface, are not the prettiest. Govanhill is not a pristine, suburban environment of detached homes, mowed lawns, picket fences and litter free streets. It – like virtually all multi-cultural inner-city neighbourhoods – is unkempt in places, has rather random architecture and shops, exhibits an unplanned rather chaotic exterior to the outside world.

Simon, the photographer, perhaps best summed Govanhill up:

> **'**there was a joke back in the day that Govanhill had two sides – Bengal and Donegal…the Irish side and the Asian side and it is…it's a place where people come and people arrive…maybe the first impression of Scotland is Govanhill and there's a lovely quote by Mark Steinmetz and he said '*you can't find treasure on a mowed lawn…you've got pretty places but the treasures here even if it's a bit rough…so I like that about Govanhill'* (interview 2023, emphasis added).

Chapter 6

‘We’re Fighting For A Higher Ground’

Are we searching for a greater humanity?
Or waiting for the heavens to open their doors
To free our souls
From this age of greed
Celebrity
If we wait for our day to come
It'll never come
(McGarvey 2022a)

This chapter presents an empirical based analysis of what elevates the community in Govanhill, continuing from Chapter five which focused on challenging 'the Govanhell thesis'. The quote above and the lyrics to *Higher Ground* emphasise how communities need not be passive recipients and bystanders of decision-making processes that shape their living spaces and lives. Through social and political organisation, communities can take positive steps and elevate their place and lives to a 'Higher Ground'.

The 'Govanhell' narrative, as chapter five outlined, is well recognised by some residents of the Govanhill community, a point this chapter illustrates. It is one that cannot be ignored simply by virtue of its dominance on media and external portrayals of the community. As this chapter five outlined, it is so dominant and all-encompassing that it has – to a degree – been internalised by many of the residents themselves.

Through each stage of research, it became obvious that some of the residents of Govanhill were active and positive place shapers seeking to play a role in influencing their communities, people, infrastructure, housing and general environment. This chapter is therefore dominated by a more positive narrative of the community that is Govanhill. Like chapter five, it is one that emerges from the perceptions and language of individuals and groups which were communicated in interviews conducted for this thesis.

This chapter will proceed by firstly focusing on the lyrics to my composition *Higher Ground* and how they served as both inspiration and context to this study. It will then outline details of three important community campaigns in the recent contemporary history of Govanhill: the Kenmure Street protest in 2021, the Govanhill Baths Campaign from 2001 and the newly incepted annual Govanhill carnival and community festival. These campaigns in different ways embodied a spirit of resistance and celebration and the elevation of the place and community of Govanhill to a higher ground. The song *Hard Fights* (McGarvey 2023b) will weave through the analysis illuminating the active capacity within the area and demonstrating how the past informs the present through collective solidarity and an inherent sense of belonging.

The Underdog: History & Background of Govanhill Residents

In many ways, my passion and intrigue around the topics this research attempts to address long pre-dated the start of my PhD journey back in October 2020. The original

version of *Higher Ground* was written in April 2018 and re-worked in 2022. It explores the disparities and immorality fostered by neo-liberal economic policymaking and politics and the role it has played in the commodification of everything deemed meaningful in society. This piece is in many respects the centrepiece of this project and album; it sets out the macro landscape in which Govanhill and its community is wrestling with. Thus, the composition sets the scene for the untold stories of Govanhill and its people by providing a backdrop to the outside world they face and are subsequently shaped by.

A 'Higher Ground' in this case is one whereby social actors do not succumb to the values which the dominant consumerist paradigm of contemporary society and governance holds supreme: the sovereignty of the individual, commodification, greed, money, fame and profit. To what extent do the people of Govanhill live by or reject these values? Or to what extent are they resigned to them as Bourdieu would, rather pessimistically, predict of disadvantaged neighbourhoods?

These questions are posed in the first lines of the song: *'Are we searching for a greater humanity? Or waiting for the heavens to open their doors/ To free our souls'* and in the second verse, *'Are we searching for some kind of morality?'* (McGarvey 2022a). In this world consumed by competition, individualism, profit and consumerism can we still resist or reject these principles or are we conditioned by them? This uncertainty is conveyed by bringing in the concept of heaven and pondering whether you can truly accomplish a 'higher ground' in this world, or whether this is only possible in an alternative or eternal one.

Musically the chord progression in the verses is F sharp minor to B major. To my ear, this progression has always sounded futuristic. To further invoke this feeling, the reverb guitars and the fluctuating dynamics of the sound serve to conjure a sense of a trance-like wavering feel … an uncertain state … a journey … a searching … for a higher ground.

The feeling of precarity within the lyrics and musicality of the track serves to mirror the external world of which the narrator finds itself operating in. A decade of austerity and accompanying public sector fiscal retrenchment has left communities such as Govanhill in a constant state of transition without many of the previous community-based services provided by the council or other community-based groups such as housing associations, voluntary agencies and local employers. The local labour market contains jobs that are zero-hour, part-time, seasonal without reliable hours or consistent shift patterns. Employers offer these jobs in the name of agility and flexibility, but the experience of the employee is often one of anxiety and precarity. The feeling of individual and community precarity and uncertainty because of commercial and governmental decision-making over which those in the community feel little control.

Whereas the lyrics in the verse express feelings of angst and unease, the chorus exhibits signs of defiance and resistance to the unsavoury forces of the external world.

The line, *'We must stand up and fight for. Our people and this side of town'* (McGarvey 2022a) drew inspiration from a significant contributor to this research – Fatima Uygun, born in Turkey and the Trust manager of Govanhill Baths Community Trust and self-acclaimed 'life-long anti-racist activist, socialist and community activist'.

As outlined previously, Govanhill is a diverse, multi-ethnic community. The richness of its history and diversity was apparent in the back-stories of its residents. Migrants, through their struggles in transplanting themselves from one continent and/or country to another often have a resolve and wherewithal. For example, Fatima notes:

> 'they were two woman from Muslim backgrounds who didn't have a huge amount of education and they only finished primary school and to be able to migrate thousands of miles from your home, raise a family and in a very racist country like Australia raise four children without speaking a word of the language was pretty impressive and my grandmother you know…she was a bit of a fighter and a bit of a Republican in Turkey…it was just good to see role models like that who were very feisty and pushed the boundaries of their own oppression you know…to do what's best for their kids'(Fatima interview 2022).

Indeed, Fatima Uygun herself speaks of the racism she endured in Australia and conveys the institutionalised nature of the discrimination by expressing a troubling encounter during her childhood with her teacher – a figure of authority at the time of experience: 'I remember one of my schoolteachers telling me that…I shouldn't aspire to do too much in my life cos I'm just gonna end up in a factory' (Fatima interview 2022).

This type of demeaning language was a reflective mirror on the racist institutional policies in Australia. As she further states:

> 'When we moved to Australia in 1970 you still had five years earlier the White Australia Policy and they only took in Turkish people or people from that area of the Mediterranean…darker people from the first time around there and we were very conscious that we were immigrants…enormous amount of racism and bigotry at the time…horrible horrible…(Fatima interview 2022).

Importantly, she reflects on her childhood through the prism of the wider political and social processes of racialised oppression, recalling: 'I just remember as a child the language used against us and yeah I think it was 1970 before Australia recognised Aboriginals as humans…'(Fatima interview 2022).

As outlined, the theme of displacement and moving to a new foreign land is one which is central to the stories of many participants for this research and indeed the story of Govanhill. Carol, a 57-year-old nursery teacher and life-long resident of Govanhill, tells

the story of her grandfather dying prematurely at a young age in rural Donegal which left her father as the main breadwinner of the family to support his two sisters and mother. As he migrated to Glasgow to find work to support his family, he, similarly to Fatima's grandmother and mother, encountered difficulty and discrimination due to his Irish nationality and lack of literacy skills.

Carol even points out that her father was forbidden from becoming a godfather to his nephew from the priest as he did not know a full prayer in English. His first language was Irish Gaeilge which adds important context to this story, emphasising the way in which cultural and language differences were suppressed rather than acknowledged. This account is a manifestation of the institutional prejudice which was all too prevalent at the time. Furthermore, she highlights other precautionary steps made by the family at the time which illustrate the highly discriminatory anti-Irish feeling when she points out that her mother never gave her children Irish sounding names due to fears that it would adversely impact their chances of employment. This is a first-generation immigrant story often told, particularly from the Irish arriving in post-war Britain where, 'No blacks, No dogs, No Irish' signs were commonplace in flat and bed-sit rental advertising in the 1950s and 1960s.

Similarly, Jennifer tells the story of her father migrating to Glasgow from county Monaghan in Ireland due to the lack of job opportunities and hardship he was facing in his native town. She recalls stories of her father struggling to adjust to a different life in a foreign land and being subjected to institutional violence due to his Irish nationality:

> 'My dad got a job as a porter in Mearnskirk hospital and he remembers being really shy…he remembers them all laughing at his accent…he had a really strong Monaghan accent and he felt really embarrassed cos of his lack of education so he went to night school and got whatever qualifications he needed to do his nursing training and he worked his way up…he worked really hard…his co-workers were making fun of him cos of the fact he was Irish and an Irish Catholic…I remember him saying that he felt discriminated against…' (Jennifer interview 2022).

During the 1950s-1980s, the Irish were seen as 'abject figures' (Tyler 2013) and bodies out of place within the hegemonic social space. These stories are manifestations of the symbolic violence endured by Irish families in that era – these were not one-off 'bad apple' tales of anti-Irish prejudice, they were the normalised experience of the Irish immigrants to Scotland. Sectarianism has long been recognised as an endemic feature of Scottish society in this era. As noted by Bruce et al. (2004: 58): 'It is not difficult to find evidence of highly negative attitudes towards Catholics in general (and descendants of Irish Catholics in particular) amongst Scotland's Protestants'.

Scotland's established church was Presbyterian, a strand of religion that had a long history of tension with Catholicism. As Devine and Rosie (2020) stress, anti-Catholic

sentiment was woven into the fabric of Scottish culture and society within much of the 19th and 20th centuries, with Scottish Protestantism shaping their identity and core values in opposition to Catholicism (Devine & Rosie 2020:275; Devine 2012:498-499).

Catholic immigrants from Ireland were often framed as menaces, held culpable for community decohesion and characterised as incompatible with core Scottish and British values. Indeed, they 'were stereotyped in the strongest possible terms. Alien in religion, speech, culture and politics, they were massed at the bottom of the labour market' (Devine & Rosie 2020:276), often made the scapegoats for a wide range of supposed social ills at the time such as excessive alcohol consumption, crime and the spread of disease within the industrial cities in Scotland (Devine 2012:498-499; Braber 2012:496).

There is certainly evidence of the Irish community in Scotland succumbing to the pressures associated with their degraded capital within the social sphere. For instance, the insistence of not naming children a name stemming from the country of their heritage in fear over job opportunities could be seen as a resignment to oppressive forces at play. Audrey conveys the subordinate position of the Irish community in relation to other groupings in Glasgow before this period during the middle of the nineteenth-century by observing:

> 'They were often the least skilled, undertook the least desirable jobs and lived in the worst housing. Negative stereotypes were in abundance: they were a filthy inferior 'race', arriving in large numbers, multiplying at an alarming rate and turning whole areas into slums; they were immoral yet obsessed with their religion; they were lazy and living off charity, yet taking the jobs of others' (2017:21 as cited in Mullen 2018:208).

These stories of past discrimination in the 19th and 20th century are crucial to our understanding of social injustice as they bear considerable resemblances to the oppressive forces and symbolic violence endured by the so-called 'abject figures' in society today (Tyler 2013). This shows that social injustice should be considered as a *process* rather than an *event* in time. Another contributor to this research Roland, Hungarian born and raised in Romania and now a support worker based in Govanhill, narrates a harrowing episode of his life how he migrated to the UK through human trafficking illustrating an extreme example of the consequences of the neo-liberal climate and its degrading of people with little to no symbolic capital for financial imperatives.

Roland narrated the story of how he and his friend used a job agency in Brussels advertising jobs on a cruise ship or multiple cities in Europe such as Lisbon, Milan, Amsterdam, London, Paris and Vienna. The latter jobs involved selling cosmetic products to people at shop entrances to lure customers into the shop. The

advertisement of the job shown to Roland and his friend showed what they considered a luxurious working environment with cosmetics and everybody smiling. In Roland's words:

> 'you know they fed us the shit on a golden plate…so obviously we were maybe it's not like it is showing but we were so desperate we didn't care so we were like fuck it let's try…they promised that they were going to give us 1,300 euro' (Roland interview 2022).

Roland conveys that they tried to push him to go to France, but he knew his French was weak and he wanted to go to London with his friend. He eventually accepted their offer but on condition that they had to pay his ticket from Romania to Paris and if he did not like Paris, they'd pay for his ticket to go from Paris to London. However, not long after arrival he realised it was a scam - the accommodation he was living in was owned by the company they worked for and money was taken from wages to cover rent. After five days in Paris he quit and moved to London to work as previously agreed. After one month working in London, he was due £1000 in basic salary plus £300 commission; but subsequently found out there was no basic salary. He was working in Westfield Mall for *Soap and Co.* and tried to live one month to the next without any contract. He was then told to register as self-employed but had no idea of the processes involved in this. Basically, they said after they'd taken his money for rent, he had only had £252 left. He was earning less money than he had in Romania. Even in his homeland he recognised the reality that he was doing two jobs in sales and purchasing and earning one third of what he could in the same job in Italy for the same company. In his words,

> '…this is how multi-national companies make money they go to these cheap labour countries like Romania…China…Africa…they are going to all these countries where the workforce is cheap so basically they are doing even more work than what the Italians are doing…they got rid of a shit load of Italian workers who were working for them for years and years and they were opening their factories for nickels and dimes abroad and not in Italy because the workforce was way more cheaper and when you don't have many options…I had to go from one factory to the other' (Roland interview 2022).

Roland eventually arrived in Glasgow, but his labour market experience was not dissimilar. He worked for a job agency called Blue Arrow (now called Capita) who showed him Skypark and he thought 'wow, this is so fancy I'm gonna work up there like in the movies'. However, the reality was, in his words 'it was like a gift very nicely wrapped

... Inside you had shit'. He worked in the basement for *T-Mobile* but he described that experience as a

> 'a very stressful job. I had pains in my stomach I was so stressed out because people were swearing at me over the phone, threats were made towards us it was very degrading even though you know the person is far away or I'd have English people phoning up and saying 'oh you're a fuckin Indian as well' and they wanted to talk to someone from the UK…at the job it was organised chaos…or rather unorganised chaos' (Roland interview 2022).

Stress from the job led to his own health being 'on the line' with very bad stomach problems caused by stress from the job. From there he worked self-employed in an interpreting job and while the hourly rate per hour sounds impressive and high the reality was that the job 'wasn't paying the bills'. He was sent from the agency to NHS appointments in different hospitals with no time paid for travel. The reality was despite being paid £15 per hour he was taking one hour travel each way to get to hospitals, so the reality was it was £5 an hour – half of so-called living wage. It also became apparent that the NHS was paying £40 an hour for interpreters but the agency was taking the bulk of that money. To him this was akin to the original scamsters who recruited him from Romania.

Roland, at the time of interview, had found a more fulfilling role working for organisations who help the families in the community with children at primary schools. In his words he's 'no longer working for a multi-national company I don't work for the rich to get richer'. The job proved to be stressful but also fulfilling and he was helping the vulnerable and showing people the stuff that, when he first arrived into the UK, he was not shown. As Roland states, it fitted 'like a glove', was more holistic and involved problem solving helping people get from A to B and Y to Z. The stress came from the limited number in his role and the rising demand for support in the community, especially amongst the Roma who were often overwhelmed by differences and racist hostility. He did however suggest the second-generation children were becoming more integrated and 'used to having people with different backgrounds in their classes from primary and secondary'.

Roland's migrant tale is a very modern European one. It captures the exploitation of trans-continental global corporations, the dark reality in some quarters of the flexibility and agility of the modern pre-Brexit single European labour market, the modern UK private outsourcing model of governance in the UK's public sector and the cold hard reality of what an agile labour force means in practice: a precarious existence full of stress and constant mobility in search of some sense of place and home.

> *'There's a beauty in the stories that make us strong'*
> McGarvey (2022c)

Govanhill has always been a microcosm of a broader political environment which has brought issues of dispossession, racism and resistance to the fore. As outlined by Rae (2022 interview) their exposition and performance highlight commonalities and linkages between the people, culture and communities of Govanhill.

Not only can communities find strength within the historical stories and tales of resistance within 'places', but this can also be innately inherited through family histories of struggle and refusals to accept hierarchical bullying and persecution. Govanhill is a community where ideas and identities are visible, openly discussed with comparison and linkages made between different groups in the community.

Therefore, whilst conducting interviews for this project it felt, not only appropriate, but necessary to delve into accounts of family life and how the knowledge and values past on inter-generationally gave the participants strength and agency and how this influenced their lives. Carol emphasises the enduring influence of her family in shaping her as a person today as she conveys:

> 'they brought us up…told us right fae wrong…installed beliefs in us…gave us our morals and our heritage which is the most important thing…it's important to know who you are…they're you' (Carol interview 2022).

This sense of kinship is not only limited to blood family for many in Govanhill; however, Vivienne insists that the high concentration of migration in the area has meant that many of its residents share similar stories of dispossession and displacement and have therefore strengthened their bonds with each other:

> 'in Govanhill I feel at home…cos when I start talking to people about my background and those sorts of things happening to me it's not like I'm the only person that that's happened to…there's lots of people around Govanhill who are like that' (Vivienne interview 2022).

The feeling of 'home' was expressed by several residents within the area. Daniel, whose family origins are from Kenya, conveys how hearing people speak in his native language Swahili made him feel 'very safe' and comfortable in his surroundings. Similarly, Fatima expresses that the diverse make-up within Govanhill was a primary reason for her to move to the area in the first place:

> 'I had a look at the rest of Glasgow and it was like…can you get any whiter? I grew up in Fitzroy in an incredibly diverse and multi-cultural community and

> when I was looking around Glasgow it was so white and then I came to Govanhill and I felt so at home here…I think that's something that nearly everyone who has migrated here feels…there's a sense of security seeing people of colour…or seeing people who look like you…you don't feel you are going to be stared at or treated badly…you can hear your own language in the streets…' (Fatima interview 2022).

Thus, it is evident through Fatima's narrative that she felt most drawn to the setting of Govanhill where there was familiarity from past socialisations and her habitus as opposed to the 'disquiet, ambivalence, insecurity and uncertainty' (Reay et al. 2009:1105) of predominantly white areas within the city. Moreover, this unease could be seen as a product of her and her family's experience of institutional racism and hostility within Australia in her early years, not least from figures of authority such as teachers downplaying her prospects of success due to her heritage.

These testimonies enrich the different understandings of what constitutes a sense of 'home'. For Fatima, negative past encounters with white figures of authority could be seen to have subtly shaped and moulded her internalised perceptions of areas in which she feels wary or watchful of as opposed to Govanhill where there is a clear linkage between the culture she was embedded in throughout her life and the people who reside within the area. In that respect, the habitus and the field were more closely intertwined (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:127).

Moreover, experiences of dispossession were also evident in residents who moved to Govanhill from closer to home. In his testimony, Fraser details a childhood marked with poverty and abuse. Living in a five-storey 'high-rise' in Forfar with his mother and brother, he documents candidly of how his brother's father was abusive to himself and his mother throughout his childhood. He further comments how this abusive behaviour was a normalised part of life in the area at the time, as well as alcoholism and drug abuse. However, crucially, he attributes the community in Forfar as a 'big crutch' and a 'source of stability and source of support' (Fraser 2022 interview) in dealing with the trauma and difficulties endured by the abuse:

> 'I grew up poor … skint as fuck … and the main driving force in everything I do is for other people as far as possible to not have to go through that … I like to contribute to something bigger than myself and help people in their spaces and help them as much as possible … the core of what's important is helping folk … getting to know folk … lots of different people … I think that's where richness comes from' (Fraser 2022 interview).

Throughout his interview, it is evident and clear that Fraser wishes to navigate the hardship faced in his earlier years to help others in the quest for a more fulfilling and meaningfully prosperous life rather than personal prestige and advancement. For Fraser, he sees many similarly aligned values in Govanhill and his native town:

> ‘I feel at home in Govanhill because I think there are a lot of people who feel proud of where they come from and connected to where they come from and they are not how can I gain personally from this? … They are thinking how can I make things better for folks around me … they feel part of something that they feel proud to represent … despite the narrative of flaws and everything else …’. (Fraser 2022 interview).

In this regard, it is closely aligned to Putnam’s conception of the theory of social capital. For Putnam, social capital is characterised by ‘connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them’ (Putnam 2000:19).

> *If we’re looking for a Higher Ground*
> *We must stand up and fight for*
> *Our people and this side of town*
> (McGarvey 2022a).

This chorus lyric to *Higher Ground* captures a central argument to this chapter and project - that individual histories of displacement as well as the history of dispossession within Govanhill have created a strong connection that is resilient and active within the area – one that actively challenges any forces outwith the area deemed as a threat or divergence to the community’s shared values. Therefore, as Rae explains:

> ‘I always think maybe the Irish nature does a lot … to make a place … maybe a bit more militant … I think when you’re part of a diaspora … you come together … and you come together in a bond and a community and you are kinda struggling with the discrimination … you can see that now with Romanians or people who are Muslim … it’s kinda like coming together because they know what the struggles are like … Govanhill’s strength is that there’s been a lot of people here who have probably struggled but they’ve spoken about their struggles …’ (Rae interview 2022)

This sentiment is no better manifested than in the closing refrain where we are no longer ‘searching’ or ‘looking’ for a higher ground - we are ‘fighting’ for it. Indeed, Govanhill, like much of the history of Glasgow, has been renowned for its history of fighting injustices and defending its people since its inception both *inside* and *outside* the community in local, national and international issues respectively which are evitability inexorably linked. Contemporary examples would be the overlaps between groups campaigning regarding injustices due to poverty, welfare policy and global

issues such as genocide in Gaza. For instance, locals have been banging pots and pans outside Langside Halls in support of Gazan's and in protest against the UK governments perceived inaction on the matter, illustrating the residents' affinity with broader social justice issues (McCole 2024). This can be attributed to a large degree from family injustices generationally and ones acutely felt today.

> *'We're fighting for*
> *Fighting for,*
> *Fighting for*
> *A Higher Ground'*
> (McGarvey 2022a)

'Hard Fights'

The commonality of struggle perhaps goes some way to explaining the Govanhill community's long history of resistance at the local level, which extends to the contemporary era. Govanhill as an inner-city neighbourhood in Glasgow has been at the centre of, or close to, many famous historical and contemporary struggles and campaigns. The Govanhill Baths campaign has been central to the community's fightback against governmental retrenchment and austerity. Govanhill residents were well represented in the resistance to the UK Home Office's deportation in neighbouring Kenmure Street (less than one mile from the neighbourhood), the defeat in the area of Mosley's Blackshirts in the 1930s and Mary Barbour's Govan Rent Strikes in the 1910s were all cited in interviews. These will be discussed in more detail in this chapter.

These insights ultimately served to greatly influence the song 'Hard Fights' for the project, a key piece celebrating the high morale and pride ever-present within the area and its surrounding neighbourhoods. With the defiant message expressed by the lyrics of the track, the potent words I felt had to be matched by an equally towering and hard-hitting musical accompaniment. In this regard, the music to this track was inspired by protest and resistance songs I had grown accustomed to over my childhood years listening to my dad's record collection; artists such as Billy Bragg and Bruce Springsteen whose records had become part of the fabric and furniture of living at home. Inevitably, their music now lingers within my own compositions through engagement at an early age.

The track itself is a culmination of multiple testimonies coming together to form a robust and united sentiment and message; very much in line with the stories of multiculturalism, People Power and resilience which the composition celebrates. Similarly, the use of power chords in the verses of the song are used to meet and connect with the ardent lyrical message which the music serves to match.

‘*It’s important to know your history*
We beat The Blackshirts in the 30s
The fascists came out week after week
Against our Jewish communities
(McGarvey 2023b)

The lyric from *Hard Fights* was taken from and inspired by the testimony and article research done by Henry Maitles (interview 2023; Maitles 2003:95). It encapsulates perfectly the active and ardent conviction of the residents of Govanhill historically to oppressive forces at play. It would be fair to say that Glasgow has had a rich history of active engagement against what could be considered regressive organisations and forces. The Rent Strikes of 1915 in the city are still seen to be amongst the most pivotal and significant acts of defiance against clearance and rising rent charges from landlords in British history signalling the need for state-owned housing UK wide (Guzman & Ill-Raga 2022:199-200).

It was a crucial turning point in the historical struggle between landlords and working-class tenants. The economics of rapid urban expansion was placing a growing burden on working-class families as demand outstripped the supply of housing in inner city communities such as Govanhill. These strikes placed issues such as the deep inequalities of the housing market and its lack of regulation and oversight firmly on the political agenda. They signalled a new era of the mass mobilisation of tenants directly challenging the capitalist housing system and calling for systematic change with tenant’s rights at the forefront of their demands (Bailey and Livingstone 2008).

These strikes became the catalyst for increased state intervention in the housing market and within a couple of decades, a new model of direct state provision of affordable and secure housing (Moriss 2007). They illuminated the exploitation and failures of the private housing market in communities such as Govanhill. Legislation and policies such as post-war urban renewal schemes, new town housing and the mass state led building of housing projects can trace their lineage back to these early struggles.

Another towering example was the opposition to the British Union of Fascists (BUF) by Glasgow Workers Circle, a left leaning Jewish organisation within the area, and the Clerical and Administrative Workers Union in the southside of the city in the 1930s (Maitles 2003: 95). Cullen (2008) and Finlay (2005; 2012) outline how the BUF made limited headway in urban Scotland due to strong local resistance, its limited understanding of local social and sectarian dynamics and weak local leadership. Local trade union, communist and Labour Party activists were successful in their disruption of marches, meetings and recruitment activities. Morris, as cited in Maitles (2003:95), recollects how the BUF were forced out of the Queens Park gates and prevented from gaining potential attraction within its surrounding areas, including Govanhill, Crosshill and Pollokshields, which were key working-class and immigrant areas in Glasgow at the time.

Maitles (interview 2023) further stresses the long association in Govanhill with empowerment within the community and a strong collective presence against repressive politics has manifested itself within recent episodes such as Kenmure Street protests (against the deportation of an asylum seeker), the fight against the closure of the Govanhill Baths and the Govanhill International Festival annual celebrations.

The legacy of the victory against the fascists at the Queens Park gates is an integral part of the Govanhill International Festival and is celebrated by a walking talk provided by Henry Maitles. A key contributor to this research project and activism within the area Fatima (interview 2022) conveys that it is one of the most popular events that the festival has to offer. The key reason for the significance of such events within the historic episodes within the past is how they inspire the cultural defiance and togetherness which characterises Govanhill and its surrounding areas in the present day.

> *That same fighting spirit has carried on today*
> *Hearing about the dawn raids in Kenmure Street*
> *We rallied in our numbers serenading the van*
> *Two innocent men released by our demand*
> *We went up against the British state and won*
> (McGarvey 2023b)

Crucially, the song also conveys how '*past victories'* (Hard Fights 2023) also inform and give inspiration to resist and fightback against ongoing discriminatory policies and actions levelled at people within the community. Of course, this past episode of victory against oppressive and divisive toxic forces is a cornerstone of the Glasgow story of humanity and resistance. At its core as Anne Kerr emphasises, the Kenmure Street protest was an 'act of solidarity' by neighbours and activists showing with conviction that those who are attempted to be detained by the Home Office were a part of their community (2021:1).

Stewart, an interviewee, reflecting on the influence of Glasgow shipyard trade unionist and former University of Glasgow rector, Jimmy Reid is illustrative of this. Citing his friend Eileen (the daughter of Jimmy Reid) who had a picture of him in her living room, he suggests The Kenmure Street protest:

> ' … felt like not one man pulling this all together or people at the shipyard but it was the community coming together to voice something to do something they felt was right and it really had that energy of…I don't know…it felt revolutionary whether it was or not…the feeling that coming together could stop something that is mad like deportation…there's a woman trying to raise funds for a

> Kenmure Street Festival in celebration of it so it's very good something like that happening and us being able to celebrate it you know' (Stewart interview 2022).

Daniel (2022) cites a 'that sense of collectivisation'. He cites how:

> 'somebody brought the bottles of water, somebody was doing the tiny little stall at the bus stop, somebody was crawling underneath the vans … somebody parked their car to block it people were risking going against the British state and the fact that they were willing to do that for two men that they didn't know'(interview 2022).

Thus, it is important to acknowledge the normative aspect of human behaviour which is inherent and clearly visible within exchanges and communication within Govanhill and its surrounding areas. As Sayer rightly emphasises:

> 'Arguments about what is good or bad, what is merited or undeserved, cannot be sociologised out of existence by reducing them to arbitrary custom, unconscious emanations of the habitus, or the pursuit of power for its own sake' (Sayer 1999:405).

The mass group of protesters who came out supporting the two detainees were largely strangers who never knew the men personally; therefore, the reason for the support on the day was an acknowledgement and judgement on their part that what was happening was morally wrong and, through their moral sentiments, they chose to act accordingly to prevent wrongdoing on the part of the British state. In a sense it was a community of strangers bound together by a sense of injustice and empowered by the collective expression of community solidarity, empowerment and fightback.

Simon (interview 2023) who was in attendance on the day perfectly encapsulates the spirit and moral code which guide those within the community, and which inspired their actions at the protests:

> 'just being neighbourly and trying to be a good neighbour … and that's a biblical thing as well isn't it … no matter what religion you are you'll have teachings of being neighbourly being kind be good to your neighbour you know … do unto others as you want done to yourself and those sort of religious ideas come into law so it's there from the very early days not just in Scotland but as people … if you see someone getting bullied or abused … you think they don't deserve that … ye know I don't know the stories of the guys getting deported (Kenmure

> Street) … I don't care … ye know … a care that people stood up for them' (Simon interview 2023).

As Teresa Piacentini eloquently articulates highlighting the importance and significance of the victory against the Home Office:

> 'it was a teachable moment for them to understand that the immigration enforcement does happen to your neighbours, the people that you see that you say hello to at the bus stops, that you see, you know, walking up and down your street, and that no-one is safe unless we're all safe is a really important message that for me is one that came out really strongly that day'. (2021: 3)

In concurrence, for Daniel, it was an example of people looking beyond right-wing press narratives of scroungers, the unworthy and criminals and creating a 'massive aurora of the entire community' (interview 2022). Millar (2021:5), similarly documents the racist attacks on the communities in Pollokshields and Govanhill but also the irrepressible nature of the communities, drawing on the ardent and active histories of the communities challenging and standing up against such hostile and oppressive forces in the past such as the Govanhill Baths protests in 2001 and opposition to Mosley's Blackshirts in the 1930s.

Moreover, Fraser described the basis of community in Govanhill in more graphic (and accurate) terms:

> 'that sort of external Govanhill is a shitehole it's full of immigrants criminals and that sort of stuff … it's amazing how that can bond the community behind the sort of nah fuck you actually'(interview 2022).

Peter (interview 2023) also noted a sense of resistance in Govanhill. People were standing up for 'the authentic Glasgow or Govanhill which is a warm and welcoming place'. He points to the Home Office attempted arrest of a migrant in the neighbouring community of Kenmure Street in Pollokshields as a clear manifestation of this defiance. Simon also raised this example suggesting 'there's a great resistance'. It showed 'the power of the people and people coming together and a lot of people in Govanhill'. People stood up and betrayed the 'media narrative about maybe Romanians or asylum seekers'(interview 2023). For Peter the mobilisation of the community to save a migrant from deportation:

> ‘was absolutely inspirational …a couple dozen people then an hour later 75 people and a few hours later a couple hundred people…that made headlines all over Europe…that’s a great example of people coming the gether…a wonder if just the vitality of Govanhill is a rebuttal to that ye know what a mean? Just the fact that it hasn’t let itself be beaten down…it’s still a thrivin ever-changin locale ye know’ (Peter interview 2023).

The chorus lyric from *Hard Fights* (McGarvey 2023b) exemplifies a community togetherness not rooted in Christian missionary zeal, but in a conviction and culture rooted in common struggle and survival.

> *It’s not cos we’re all lovely Samaritans*
> *It comes from having to fight the hard fights*
> *To make a stand for this town*
> *To fight for a higher ground*
> (McGarvey 2023b)

These lyrics draw from the observations of Fatima and capture the essence of culture within Govanhill – one of solidarity and collective aid. It argues that these qualities and legacy which characterises the area are not merely a product of nobility, but long-standing history of communal struggle. Fatima places much emphasis on history shaping this ‘doxa’ understanding embedded within the Govanhill psyche, arguing that the history of immigration into Govanhill started with the Irish community who called it ‘Little Donegal’ for a very long time (Bryce 2023). During the early period of the 20th century the combination of the Gorbals and Govanhill housed one of the biggest Irish communities in the whole of Scotland (Braber 2012). Social services as we know it today did not exist,

> ‘so you had the Gaelic club and you had…you know the cultural institutions and the churches played a huge role so a lot of the social services were done by ordinary people…you know so there is a culture there of people getting together…uniting to do things in support of their communities so…that is there in Govanhill and that’s continued to today where you know very very quickly people will respond to…a need you know…we hear the racists are coming out we’ll mobilise…we hear that people are hungry the food banks shoot up…you know there’s a tradition of just do it attitude emm…but that comes from a long history of having to unite together and struggle and fighting back…you know fighting for services and so on…it’s not just cos everyone’s lovely Samaritans you know…it’s come from having to fight hard fights…’ (Fatima 2022).

Indeed, Bryce (2023:16) amplifies this point by emphasising the centrality of the church as the heart of the neighbourhood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries –

facilitating and managing education and acting as the central social hub to Irish migrants who first moved to the area in the decades post-famine. This has, of course, waned in recent decades within the area, reflecting the demographic changes within the area and the declining influence of the Church as the key anchor of community life.

Again, the sentiment of 'fighting for a Higher Ground' is one which is a key anchor and inspiration to the song 'Hard Fights'. On a lyrical level, the track encompasses an array of testimonies discussing the aversion to the British Home Office's attempt to detain two residents within Kenmure Street in 2021 as well as a celebration of Govanhill's diversity which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Of course, the Kenmure Street protest was also based on both morality and humanity. It was an effort to help those at risk of deportation and based on the human aspect of the will to look out for others. In this sense it challenges Bourdieu's pessimistic view of people's behaviour. Bourdieu's original concept of the habitus depicts a Machiavellian view of human nature of which is calculating and self-centred and one which downplays the role of morality and cooperation within the social realm (Sayer 1999: 409).

The Govanhill Baths Campaign

In 2001 Glasgow City Council announced plans to close Govanhill Baths as part of a wider strategy of budget cuts. The then council leader Charlie Gordon's statement about closure was reported in the local *Glasgow Evening Times* in early January 2001. The council gave a closure date at the end of March (Govanhill Community Baths Trust no date). Local users, parents from the Kingston Amateur Swimming Club, the Govanhill & Crosshill Community Council and other groups formed a campaign (at different times referred to as *Save Our Pool* or *Southside Against Closure*) and held weekly meetings, protests and petitions. The group organised street protests and a petition gathering thousands of signatures from the local community and beyond (Sherry 2015; Downie 2021).

The direct-action campaign started on the evening of 21 March 2001, shortly before the official closure date, when a few campaigners entered the baths after the last swim, chained themselves to cubicles and refused to leave. That action began a continuous occupation of the building. A 24-hour picket was organised to protect those inside. The campaign held weekly events, a gala day, demonstrations and marches (reports mention a large demonstration / gala with hundreds of supporters). 'Save Our Pool' singalongs became highly visible in Govanhill life for 140 days (Downie 2021). The occupation is described in the literature as the longest continuous occupation of a civic building in recent British history (Uygun 2022). The campaign 'occupiers' were

removed with force after a substantial police operation that involved mounted police, helicopter surveillance and over 200 police officers (Sherry 2015).

Mooney and Fife (2006) outline the occupation as exposing tensions between top-down regeneration/partnership approaches and bottom-up adversarial protest: the kind of radical, confrontational community action Govanhill represented does not sit comfortably with New Labour policy models that valorised managed, depoliticised community participation.

The eviction did not end the campaign, with the grassroots campaign evolving into *Govanhill Baths Community Trust*, constituted some years later. This body engaged in fundraising, grant applications and eventually repair and refurbishment. The site was used for arts events and gradually parts of the building re-opened over the course of the 2010s (Glasgow Heritage Trust undated) and full re-opening in 2022 (Uygun 2022). Much of the analysis of the campaign emphasises the role of women (both as users of the baths and as organisers) and the baths' function as a gendered and culturally plural civic space. It offered sessions that served Muslim women, Jewish men and parent-and-toddler groups with women's leadership a key part of the campaign (Larkin 2017; Uygun 2022).

Sherry (2015) emphasises the Govanhill Baths campaign as illustrative of how occupations can become durable political and cultural markers: the Govanhill occupation is often cited in later community campaigns as a template for sustained occupation, creative direct action, and for mixing cultural programming with political demands.

The Govanhill Baths campaign is, in a contemporary sense, the most well-known ongoing resistance campaign in Govanhill. The campaign for Fatima (2022) was a fight against the 'neo-liberalisation of Glasgow City Council…fight against neo-liberalisation of community politics'. It challenged the then council leader, Charlie Gordon's assertion that 'no one is interested in community…if you talk to anyone on the streets about community they think you're talking about ghettos…what people want is drive-thru cinemas and golf courses and places where people can aspire to grow' (Fatima 2022). For Fatima such a quote was illustrative of the disjuncture and divide between political representatives and the ordinary people of Govanhill:

> 'What land are you on? Where you dreaming? People in Govanhill are gonna go in their Rolls-Royce and drive to a golf course have you lost your mind? But they were so removed from ordinary people' (Fatima interview 2022).

Concurringly, Michael referred to it as seeming 'like an attack on a community' that placed a lot of emphasis on local community resources like pools, libraries and park facilities. Michael suggested a cynical interpretation would be that the closure of Govanhill pool was decided based on the expectation that the community 'was

perhaps not so middle-class and wouldn't fight back and wouldn't know how to vent for themselves'. To both Michael and Bernie, it was obvious the community valued the intrinsic benefit of community assets way more than the council did in their decision-making. Bernie referred to, 'shockingly bad ... very top-down … very very arrogant political leadership' and that there was, 'a bit of alienation from people and what people want … I think it was quite paternalistic…like we'll decide what's good for you sorta thing'. For Michael the messaging was very paternalistic –

> 'we've built this shiny new pool (in the Gorbals) with these great new facilities…it's not in your community but you can still use it…paternalistic…we know better than you'. They were not focusing on the needs of the community in Govanhill' (Michael interview 2023).

Bernie also points out how the Govanhill community has low car ownership and residents needed amenities in their community they could walk to. In this regard, she argues that the council ignored the financial expenses of going to the Gorbals for swimming and cultural aspects like Asian women whose religious practices forbid them from swimming alongside the opposite gender (Mooney & Fyte 2006:142).

Thus, Darren McGarvey (2017: 91) highlights the disconnect between those making decisions from outwith the community and those they seek to represent by highlighting the vast disparity between social positions within the field leading to top-down decisions based on faulty pre-suppositions and presumptions on communities they fail to understand or fully appreciate regarding their needs. This could not be clearer in this episode of the Save The Govanhill Baths campaign and the rather dismissive tone regarding community assets from the then leader of Glasgow City Council, Charlie Gordon.

Michael tells the back story to the Govanhill Pool sit-in and the picket-line from when it was occupied. Initially, there was always people outside on the picket line with one or two people inside and volunteers did picket duty in shift rotations. He recalls:

> 'At one point, after the pool was drained, I was in the building myself for two or three days … it was quite surreal (and) … a bit creepy … to be outside then inside and it was quite a weird experience…quite creepy to be inside that building in the dark by myself… it was creepy but it was nice…you felt a sense of belonging and a sense of community…it felt good to be active…doing something that could perhaps have a positive outcome' (Michael interview 2023).

Moreover, Bernie recalls posters as the campaign organisers had encouraged people to put up in their house windows, replicating the Mrs Barber Glasgow rent strike

campaign from the 1910s. For her, the campaign ‘was really energetic’. Michael also speaks fondly of the ‘Save Our Pool’ t-shirts which were, ‘all bright yellow…it was all quite clever…everyone in the campaign were wearing these t-shirts so you were easily identifiable as a supporter’. Michael reminiscences and remembers it being ‘a really vibrant campaign…lots of creative people…musicians involved…you’d be on the picket line sometimes and Peter Mullen the actor popped by one time’.

Bernie further points out the diverse ‘meetings with people with different issues of their own…I think it felt very supported…the first few days like all the fast-food shops were sending food round for people inside the pool and going round and getting donations’. Michael concurs highlighting that, ‘you’d get a wee granny sitting round and talking to a 17-year-old Asian boy, it was a very diverse campaign, young people, old people’. There were money donations, ‘huge amounts of support’. Consequently then, ‘there was then this defence of this institution within the community and I think that galvanised a lot of folk’.

For him the defence of asylum seekers in Pollokshields had echoes of the Govanhill pool campaign. Both involved making a conscious decision to challenge authority and the law. As Bernie notes (during the Govanhill Baths campaign) that there were court cases and trials but all of them were thrown out and no convictions were made.

> ‘but that went on for a couple of years and that takes energy out of things cos people are going through a criminal case…I think the diversity and depth of the campaign…you see in Govanhill now there’s a lot more active community and grassroots organisations…I do think the campaign was a massive catalyst for that’ (Bernie interview 2023).

She credits her fellow campaigner Fatima who ‘had a real tonicity and was willing to challenge authority and not just put up with what you’re told to put up with’. The whole experience ‘galvanised a community that maybe felt that they were under attack and getting slagged off’. It opened eyes of people in the community – in Bernie’s words:

> ‘I think with that diversity I think you can suddenly see people in a community actually share a lot of common values…there were people from all different parties on the campaign and despite all that diversity and ethnicity…people then value this same thing…there’s these shared values than you could galvanise around…particularly in a community setting people would come out and say actually nah we all value that and we want to defend it…the importance of activism and protest…we did a lot of lobbying and writing but it was probably the direct action that had the biggest impact at the end of the day but you see that today where they’re trying to clamp down on protests but that’s where we get social progress in the main…if you really wanna push against stuff then you really need that direct protest’ (Bernie interview 2023).

Reflecting on it, Michael calls it ‘a very unique campaign…I haven’t seen anything like it since…the way it did bring everybody together’. For Bernie, ‘the scale of it I think is what kept the momentum’. The council were hoping it would fizzle out and our ‘small wee group and (would) fade away in a matter of weeks or months or whatever… (but) the persistence of the campaign relied on having a lot of people’. Michael recalls six months of ‘constant presence on the picket line and we’d take our turn and go round in the early morning’. For Bernie ‘a bit of leadership and tonicity’ kept momentum going as well as a sense of being sick of being downtrodden and fighting back against injustice.

For Fatima, the imposition of decisions was:

> ‘a constant fight against that and sometimes we lose the fights and sometimes we win them…but it’s always an onslaught…when you’re in Govanhill you know there’s cutbacks to the litter…you know there’s no investment in housing …you know they’re trying to take the green spaces away…you know that mental health services are cut just by being in the street! I mean you know you’re under attack just by living in Govanhill’ (interview 2022).

Activists like Fatima play a very significant role in mobilising the population of Govanhill. Without such community activism there is a danger, as Laura notes, ‘in Govanhill there’s populations that are easier to ignore’(interview 2023). It is easier to marginalise people from different places and cultures if they lack a sense of collective and people who can organise and bring them together. For Laura, without the engendering of a sense of community and collective mobilisation, ‘it’s easier to demonise people and demonise places than to actually do the things that need to be done about it to look after the people that live there it’s about power and money’ (interview 2023). In a sense the established narrative of Govanhill would go unchallenged without local political actors, groups and movements mobilising against the bias and prejudice in-built to the conventional story of Govanhill as a community.

The Bothy (McGarvey 2023a) encapsulates the enduring impact of the resistance to the closure of the baths in 2001, with its lyrical content highlighting the continued spirit which has carried on ever since.

> *Nowadays is more stressful in different ways*
> *The road to disconnection and decay*
> *We wear our scars with pride*
> *Held the line side by side*
> *As 24 years on we’re still here*
> *We’re still here*

We're still here
And we've won
(McGarvey 2023a)

For Bernie the legacy of the campaign is the transformation of the downtrodden community of Govanhill into an active place. It was an area 'overlooked because it didn't quite hit all the top deprivation indices (but)…it's much more active now though'. The assumption underpinning the council's decision to close the pool was that there would be no or very little passive resistance – it 'relied on the protests fading out and people's energy levels disappearing' (Bernie) and 'underestimated the power of the community' (Michael).

For both Bernie and Michael diversity was an important component of the campaign:

> 'I think people thought well this is a diverse group of people that I wouldn't normally meet in my day to day life…there was a degree of that…it was of all ages…ethnicities…backgrounds and class so maybe that's what helped bring it together…you know…we weren't all just of the same type of background' (Bernie interview 2023).

This for Bernie has carried through to support of the Romanian community and resistance to the racist narratives and attacks.

The Govanhill Baths Campaign goes to the heart of the research question posed in the title of this dissertation. Glasgow City Council completely under-estimated the depth of feeling in the Govanhill community and the scale of the resistance to their decision to close the facility. The community directly challenged the council's agenda of closure and cutbacks. In doing so it illustrated that the Govanhill community were and are not passive victims. Instead, they were and are willing to challenge assumptions underpinning council decision-making as well as pose an alternative. In doing so they were challenging existing power structures and hegemonic ideas contained within them.

Importantly, the campaign also created a collective memory and source of inspiration for community activism in the present, in large part sustained and carried out by the Govanhill Baths Development Trust, which was borne out of the campaign. Overall, the Govanhill Baths campaign continues to be cited both within and beyond the community as one of this century's most successful social movements built on grassroots resistance.

'It's the Govanhill Dream'

We've got our festival every year
We come together, make a song and dance
Romani flamingo, DJs and bands
People out windows waving their flags
(McGarvey 2023a)

The Govanhill Baths Campaign had its roots in bringing those of diverse backgrounds together. More recently the diversity of Govanhill has been utilised to create a new annual Arts Festival in the community. It was often said in interviews that this festival was based around showcasing community diversity and this created an idea and sense within the community that people could travel without travelling due to the melting pot nature of its demographic and multi-faceted influence of different cultures it possesses.

Whilst the fight to save the Govanhill Baths and Kenmure Street protests were based on reactionary resistance the festival has a more positive basis. It embodies the idea that Govanhill should not be and is not confined to historic episodes. Instead, it gets across the notion that activism manifests itself through day-to-day activity within the area and is culturally embedded. Thus, it could be seen as an alternative *doxa.* Moreover, this stems from pride within the area rather than merely just from negativity surrounding the area as Fraser emphasises.

> 'pride is a good word for it like nah we know what's happening in here we're very very proud of it and you feel very connected to it … you feel a part of something in Govanhill … that bonding of sort of resistance to those narratives … the more that we are just gonna do our thing and showcase it and be proud of it … it's transitioned now from just fighting the constant xenophobic narrative to showcasing what we are proud of and doing it well' (Fraser 2022 interview).

The Govanhill International Festival is now embedded in the calendar of the community. It showcases the openness and diversity of Govanhill. A pivotal aspect of the festival is to celebrate the colour and the eclectic mix of people who live in the area. Vivienne (2022) outlines how the centrepiece parade is an effort to reflect as many local groups as possible and for it to be representative of the community. This includes ethnic minorities, LGBT, different ages so everyone can feel the parade belongs to them. For her when individuals get to the end of the parade 'you should be standing there feeling like every single person has equal value and equal worth within the community and that is what's been celebrated' (Vivienne interview 2022).

Our town doesn't pick
You are who you are
No matter your age, race, gender, religion, sexual taste

(McGarvey 2023b)

That theme of inclusion highlighted within *Hard Fights* was constant across every interview. As Ania notes,

> ‘I’m part of it and if I wanted to take part in it I’d feel even more part of it … Govanhill doesn’t pick people…you just are and if you live here you’re just part of it no matter what and it doesn’t matter your age as well…if you’re disabled or whatever…everyone’s part of it…everyone…literally everyone’ (interview 2022).

With more militant undertones to her narrative, Fatima explains the importance of celebrating the positive aspects of the community and fighting back against the discriminatory rhetoric and policy choices of those outwith the area.

> ‘I mean…all of that is imposed on us isn’t it? It’s not like we chose that it’s imposed on us…you can’t escape what is trying to be imposed on our local community but what is important is that people are resisting it…you know it’s really important that people recognise that on a daily basis people resist…you know why is it that the only gay and lesbian bookshop in the whole of Scotland is in Govanhill? Why is it that Govanhill has so many mosques? Why is it that you have a food pantry here like no other? It’s because people resist what’s being thrown at them and look for alternative ways to pose as a solution to what we’re being told is…you know…the neo-liberal right way to do things’ (Fatima interview 2022).

Thus, amidst the competing and contradictory narratives surrounding Govanhill it is important that there is an alternative story of the area as opposed to the often-disparaging tone within popular knowledge. Bernie (2023) notes the influence of social media and how its negative narratives about an area seep into popular culture and that is why ‘value driven organisations’ such as ’creative and independent enterprises’ needs to help get the real messages of valuing multiculturalism. Michael also suggests:

> ‘you need things like the carnival to celebrate an area…to say people who live there have something of value to live there and can bring in musicians and community groups to put on something that celebrates an area’ (Michael interview 2023).

Moreover, Henry Maitles whom during his interview was discussing the resistance to the National Union of Fascists in Queens Park in the 1930s aforementioned, likens the Govanhill International Festival to previous anti-racist demonstrations in the past and emphasises that these events help ensure that there is an alternative to unsavoury narratives surrounding the area and that racist rhetoric is 'nipped in the bud' and suppressed (Maitles interview 2023). This central theme of the festival was illustrated within the lyrics of *Hard Fights* (McGarvey 2023b).

> *We showcase what we're proud of and we do it well*
> *Diversity strength, dividing superficial*
> *We draw on past victories*
> *Coming together in loving harmony*
> (McGarvey 2023b)

Here the words within the song point to historical acts of resistance and the celebration and acknowledgment of their legacy within the present day. Also, it takes an active position in championing the multifaceted nature of the area and the colour manifested by it within the festival; whilst being critical of shallow borders dividing people based on ethnicity, sex orientation and gender which plague negative understandings of the area through media circulation. The song therefore is a manifestation of the community's rebuttal to these narratives - an ode to integration and belonging.

The inclusive ideals have had a positive effect on the everyday culture and norms within the community as well. Stewart (interview 2022) cites the example of a queer community football group on Tuesday nights. For him it is a good way to showcase how Glaswegians have changed to his 34-year-old gay brother who was bullied at school. He also cites the example of a 'queer Yiddish Café' that had its windows 'tanned' (broken) when they were opening. They put up a sign saying 'whatever your beliefs are you will not intimidate us and on the window it's like Jewish people for Free Palestine'. He emphasised the change that such establishments symbolised:

> '… to be honest with you a queer Jewish in the middle of a Glaswegian…in the middle of Victoria Road…a couple of years ago…10 years ago? Shit man I don't think that'd exist but it just shows you that people are now more confident to come forward… that in itself shows the transformation of how times and the area has developed and got better that what used to be a boozer is now a sort of free range vegetables and food shop…it's mix with such a wide range of sexuality of religion and all this sorta stuff as well you know' (interview 2022).

For Ania (2022), Govanhill is a unique community in Glasgow, in that it is a community of blended differences – 'it's different communities and we're trying to kind of blend it together and get all the people together'. There are people in the community saying,

‘look we’re not different…we’re all the same we just speak different languages and have different culture backgrounds but we’re still people and we wanna do things together for each other’. They recognise the superficiality of division – ‘we didn’t decide that we just happened to be born in a certain place or another’. The people of Govanhill, for her, as migrants were naturally curious about other people and ‘take the best things out of all of the cultures to blend and adapt’. For her this had a psychological dimension and was enlightening – ‘I think it connects with the human nature thing it’s our need of discovering and developing rather than just being stagnant and sticking to what we just know’ (interview 2022). In her description, migration and migrant interaction brings a positive energy to the community.

Finding the world at your doorstep

> *It’s the brush-ins with random people*
> *Getting a taste of flavours from around the world…*
> *It’s the Govanhill Dream*
> (McGarvey 2022d*)*

Ania’s observations were consistent with the celebratory tone of other interviewees. Simon Murphy an award-winning photographer whose photographic exhibition ‘Govanhill’ ran in *Street Level PhotoWorks* in 2023/24 suggested a trip to Govanhill was:

> ‘finding the world on your doorstep…you don’t have to travel to get that cultural experience or to learn something new about some other person or some other culture or world or life … that’s what I love about it…within a square mile there’s the world and there is your experience and you travel without travelling if you’re open to it’ (Simon interview 2023).

Simon further observes, through narrating his life story, that travelling to different countries such as Congo and Bangladesh and photographing in camps with displaced people made him more empathetic and understanding of other people and their situations as they ‘navigate through life with all its problems’ (Murphy interview 2023). In addition, he attributes the ‘melting pot’ environment inherent in Govanhill enhancing his life and subsequently enabling him to be a ‘more open, richer and well-formed person’ (interview 2023).

Ricky also credits growing up as a child in the multi-faceted environment of Govanhill and socialising with children from different nationalities as making him ‘more culturally aware’ from an early age attending Holycross Primary. He reflects and observes that:

> ‘everyone had respect for each other n the boy from the Philippines in ma class…infact both him and the Sri Lankan boy were both altar boys so faith wis a big thing for them…that sorta faith n that sorta respect for one another…a kin remember them being quite open talkin about where they were from n that (interview 2022).

This sentiment manifests itself within the life story of Stewart, a part Buddhist, who at times I observed as almost the symbolic human embodiment of the ethos of Govanhill. He suggested:

> ‘we are all part of this ‘is’ and we are all just different pieces of the jigsaw puzzle and the more you can meet people and talk to people and get other people’s points of views the more you can just get a full experience of what this is’ (interview 2022).

In the Govanhill community he was learning so much from different people ‘cos they’ll have had experiences and points of view you’ll have never considered’. He felt like a sponge absorbing different views and cultures – ‘I never wanna spend a full day in the house … I just want to absorb something from the day…go out and see a face and just to discover more about life you know’. For him, ‘if you want to help the world…you have to start by healing yourself and you have to start by being more open and understanding’. When he meets someone ‘that seems to have a grasp of life I feel that energy … so sharing people’s energies and discovering what energies right for you’. He had recently secured a new job in Edinburgh but had no intention of moving due to the positive energy he felt in the local community.

Furthermore, during his early upbringing within the area, he acknowledges the multifariousness of the social environment he was digesting as a young child. His gran picked him up from school and she lived in Govanhill allowing him to witness different cultures at first hand, ‘the head scarfs and things like that and it was just a kind of education to grow up in this area*’* (interview 2022).

Thus, the values and world surrounding Stewart since his inception are one of outwardness and inclusivity, so much so that aspects or narratives on the social field that emphasised division and oppression in broader terms are ones he has clearly found harder to grasp and contemplate. He recalled how he was one of only three white boys in his school but did not recognise any divisions at the time. He recalled being perplexed by a theatre production called *Divided City*:

> ‘I remember saying to the guy I was like I think you wanna be careful with that cos you know…to go into schools and tell them that the city is divided is maybe not the best idea you know what I mean?’ (interview 2022).

He had suggested calling it United City as

> ‘I was at a school that was so multi-cultural it was news to me that people didn’t get on with people with different skin colours and religions’ highlighting that he felt comfortable going into ‘the Sikh temple, the Church and the mosque and stuff like that’ (Stewart 2022 interview).

In this sense he, similarly to Simon, attributes the diversity of his social upbringing and circles to his outward looking philosophy and values in life. At school he visited the Sikh temple, the Church and the mosque. He suggests that shaped him to try different things, explore and learn. In his words, ‘I like to be an unabsorbed sponge and go in at ground zero and take in as much as I can’ (interview 2022).

Stewart acts as a human embodiment of the area in which he inhabits. Through the workings of the habitus, the values and logics of the world exposed to him at an early age have informed his mental structures and the way he navigates and views the social order around him (Bourdieu 1977). However, and very crucially, it is the micro-world of Govanhill which has informed this his habitus. As illustrated previously, his bewilderment of a world characterised by division and racism was largely due to this world being alien to him; the environment he was accustomed to was one of co-operation and multi-culturalism.

> *It's the Bangura music playing out in the streets*
> *It’s the comfort in the racket of the inner city*
> *It’s the Govanhill Dream*
> (McGarvey 2022d)

Fatima also emphasised her favourite aspects of Govanhill was its diversity. Its congested nature meant it was busy night and day, there was a broad range of foods and green grocers not seen in other Glasgow places. The tight networks led to people supporting one another:

> ‘you’re not isolated … there’s also something really lovely about the way people negotiate life…you’re living really close to one another … usually in crammed housing … you know there’s people above you there’s people below you you gotta negotiate who cleans the closes you gotta you know … people just

> automatically know unconsciously…you know…who to walk past … who to say hello to…there's something that happens in these communities where you're forced to live really close together … and I quite like that … I think a bit of research should be done on that really like places in Detroit and Govanhill … where people are forced … usually very very poor … usually ethnically diverse often don't have the same language but they live together in quite a lovely harmony and usually the racism comes from outwith the community (interview 2022).

Fatima also celebrated the communities' diversity:

> '… tell you what I love … I love walking down the street and hearing coming out of the cars Romanian music … Roma music … a bit of Arabic music … lads driving around with all these sounds coming out of the cars and then you walk down the streets and there's evidence that there's been Roma people around because they've all been eating their little sunflower seeds and then you know from the smell … you know you're salt on the senses of living in a community like Govanhill you don't get anywhere else and that's fantastic … some people might find it overwhelming but I absorb it like a sponge….' (interview 2022).

Thus, the benefits of living in such densely populated inner cities can be seen to have benefits which are 'informal, unseen and unmeasured' (Davies 2019:202). In his study of investigating tenement life in Glasgow, Davies found that participants valued the communal and sense of stability it brought to life by viewing their neighbours as a 'huge extended family' (Davies 2019:202).

Laura, a Scot from a more traditional Scottish community suggested living in Govanhill had widened her personal horizons, allowed her to appreciate diversity and 'doing different things and I think that has really helped me to grow as a person' (interview 2023). Michael who grew up in a similarly more homogenous environment, somewhat ironically, likened Govanhill to the modern planning concept of 'Ten Minute Neighbourhoods'. It had

> 'the shops you needed', pool, library'. It also has 'diversity… … different cultures and different faces … sounds … smells and foods and so on … it certainly had an influence on me yeah…and being involved in the pool campaign certainly … my thinking and thoughts about community' (interview 2023).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how Govanhill has actively resisted external narratives of dispossession and marginalization through collective action and cultural celebration. It is a community that through resilience has actively resisted the demonisation of its community and their own sense of worth. This spirit was captured in the songs *Higher Ground* and *Hard Fights* that sit alongside the testimonies of residents like Fatima, Roland, and Stewart. It is a place that refuses to be defined solely by its challenges. Instead, Govanhill emerges as a place of strength, where histories of migration, discrimination, and struggle have forged a collective identity rooted in solidarity and resistance. The Kenmure Street protest, the Govanhill Baths Campaign, and the Govanhill International Festival exemplify how residents channel their experiences into acts of defiance and celebration, elevating their community to a metaphorical 'higher ground' that transcends the constraints of neoliberal policies and systemic inequities. This chapter has presented a much more elevated narrative of the Govanhill as a community. It directly confronts the pessimism of Bourdieusian reductionist narratives of working-class communities as by-standing, weak and passive social and political agents.

The interviews with Govanhill's residents reveal a profound sense of belonging and agency, shaped by both personal and collective histories of overcoming adversity. The diversity of the community, as highlighted by interviewees like Ania and Laura, serves as a cornerstone for its vibrancy, fostering an environment where differences are not just tolerated but celebrated as a source of strength. This multiculturalism, coupled with a deep-rooted tradition of activism, challenges the hegemonic narratives that often portray Govanhill as a place of decay. Instead, the community's ability to mobilize, through protests against deportations and cultural festivals, demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and mutual support, creating a space where individuals feel valued and empowered to contribute to a shared vision of social justice.

Govanhill, this chapter suggests, stands as a testament to the power of community-driven resistance and cultural pride in redefining place and identity. By weaving together the micro-level experiences of its residents with macro-level critiques of societal structures, this research highlights the transformative potential of collective action and storytelling through song. The legacy of campaigns like the Govanhill Baths and the ongoing vibrancy of the International Festival illustrate that Govanhill is not a passive recipient of external forces but an active agent in shaping its future. This chapter, through its lyrical and narrative explorations, affirms that Govanhill's strength lies in its ability to unite diverse voices in a shared pursuit of a higher ground, offering a model for how communities can resist, thrive, and inspire change amidst adversity. As the composition, *Higher Ground*, alludes to, a very different story of Govanhill can be told if community residents, rather than external opinion formers, are placed at the centre of analysis.

Chapter 7

‘Beauty In The Hill’

This chapter investigates the 'local value system' (McKenzie 2012;2015) inherent within Govanhill, focusing specifically on the people and the sense of community they foster. It also threads together the inspirations for some of the compositions that are drawn from the fieldwork, specifically '*Material Dream'* (McGarvey 2022d) '*The Bothy'* (2023a) and '*Beauty in the Hill'* (2022c). The chapter deliberately conveys what could be considered the more positively orientated testimonies from interviews and fieldwork observations.

It introduces the concept of a local community value system (see McKenzie 2012; 2015) as well as analysing on how interviewees viewed their local community and Govanhill's broader place in society. The rejection of modern materiality is a consistent theme in interviews with an alternative culture and value system informing the logic of behaviour and everyday life in the community. This is captured in the song verse and lyrics. This tends to involve the embracing of simpler pleasures in life such as nature, alternative culture, music and song as well as simply the random difference and diversity to be found in the community of Govanhill. The chapter proceeds by introducing what is meant by Govanhill's 'local value system'.

Local Value Systems

As highlighted in previous chapters, Bourdieu argues (1977;1984; Bourdieu et al. 2000) that social agents compete in a social field comprising of four interlinked capitals – social, economic, cultural and symbolic – by which they acquire positions in a social hierarchy to which they are recognised (McKenzie 2012: 459). Within this hegemonic system, those at the bottom of the social ladder struggle to obtain any standing or influence due to their little to no possession of capital within the social realm (McKenzie 2012: 459).

However, as McKenzie (2012: 459) argues, contrary to Bourdieu's pessimistic forecasting of working-class communities, they are not merely submissive recipients of this dominant system. Conversely, they take on a role of active agency internally within their communities creating an alternative value system which key characteristics are of kinship, togetherness and collective identity.

Indeed, during my years of research within the community of Govanhill, it became obvious that there was an inherent activism and sense of community in everyday living within the locale. A distinct local value system was a key part of the fabric that made up Govanhill culture and everyday living.

There were numerous examples of more kindred and human connections which bring out the sensitivities of businesses and organisations working in an inclusive manner for the community such as Govanhill Baths Development Trust, Bees Knees Café, MILK café, South Seeds, Big Noise and Music Broth. What is key here in terms of analysis is Govanhill offers a challenge to Bourdieu's often exclusionary worldview in which people's behaviour is determined by how it may advance oneself within the social field. This view excludes moral sentiments and the need for fellow recognition

and compassion for fellow human beings as seen in Govanhill (Sayer 2010). The presence of a distinct local value system in the community is a direct challenge to a key part of Bourdieu's thesis introduced in chapter two.

In the words of my song *Higher Ground:*

> *In midst of all fractured society*
> *Rising equality*
> *Rising insecurity*
> *Rising corporate need*
> *Rise must our communities*
> (McGarvey 2022a)

Many interviewees, whilst not explicitly using the language of 'local value systems' expressed observations and cited instances of activities consistent with the existence of such a thing in Govanhill. For example, Fraser cites 'South Seeds' that have been going for two decades or so a community gardening group 'which is a good sort of solidarity building space'. The organisation was not just in Govanhill but sprawled out to neighbouring communities such as Pollokshields. While its focus was green and environmental initiatives, Fraser also noted an important social dynamic to this community level gardening in 'getting marginalized folk within the community into those spaces' for conversation about 'climate-based stuff'. He refers to this as a rich history and network of community level gardening that is radical, justice focused and allows for the creation of mutual aid networks. In his words,

> 'because Govanhill is a place that has a lot of issues with tenants' rights there's a lot of refugees in that area a lot of asylum seekers a lot of immigration I think lends itself really well to a lot of solidarity building…to movement building' (Fraser interview 2022).

This echoes the sentiments of the empirical findings in previous chapters. Locally created institutions such as Govanhill Baths, the People's Pantry and Govanhill Youth Base are all similar organisations that in Daniel's words are 'very non-profit motive and service, it's kinda things like that that put people before profit especially with rising prices rising cost of living' (interview 2022).

For Vivienne (interview 2022), such organisations are important in broadening the horizon, outlook and ambition of the youth in the area as 'you get kids who believe they can be doctors who believe they can be police inspectors…it raises the aspirations'. She suggests that such community-based institutions like Govanhill Baths are attentive to the community's needs and, thus, are more sensitive than perhaps council services to what people's needs are. She also cites the Youth Club

for Govanhill that was set up as a response to a need being identified from speaking to people in the community; it exists to combat boredom and street drinking, ensure a safe place and allow for opportunities for children to be 'inspired, entertained and encouraged … looked after…protected…develop social skills that sort of thing' (interview 2022). She suggests it is particularly useful for children who have not reacted well to the more formal adult authority in their school but see it as an alternative more informal space.

Concurringly, Ricky, who works as a community development officer for a community centre in Maryhill, shares this sentiment highlighting the difference between Glasgow Life – a council led community initiative - in comparison to grass-roots organisations stating that council led initiatives, 'are saying they're doing community work but they aren't really…they're providing youth services but real youth work is consistent'. Youth work takes time it is more than providing a one-off service (Ricky interview 2022).

He goes further emphasising that grass-roots organisations such as Govanhill Baths Development Trust 'try to meet of the needs *of* their local community…they know the going ons in the local area so they're trying to meet the needs *of* the local residents'. He contrasts this starkly with the council-led Glasgow Life of which he was a former employee where 'everything's generalised everything's tickin boxes…they're looking for statistics…it's tokenism' (interview 2022).

Furthermore, Stewart cites the example of *Music Broth*, a community music library where you pay £6 a month and you've got unlimited access to 'any and all' instruments they have. You have the option of casual use or joining community-based workshops and classes. These include lessons in how to play the instruments as well as their maintenance and repair. The emphasis is very much on inclusivity rather than exclusivity. Even if a child does not have their standard £6 a month subscription to their classes, 'they'll sort something out' (interview 2022). During the Covid lockdown they were delivering instruments 'to people's houses and stuff as well'. The group 'are a big believer in music being something that can bring people together and help people express themselves and help with mental health issues and all that sorta stuff' (Stewart interview 2022).

Jennifer also cited music and the *Big Noise* initiative that is based on a Venezuelan idea to bring music to poorer areas. Her daughter had experience of it throughout school from primary two and was, at the time of interview, sixteen. All four Govanhill primary schools were involved. They could choose any string instrument such as violin, viola, cello or double bass. Her daughter was now in Glasgow Schools Orchestra and her mother suggested:

> 'it's been life changing for her…going every Saturday to this orchestra and playing this beautiful instrument…she can play bass guitar she can play drums she's just flowing through her now' (interview 2022).

She could never have afforded such instruments as a single parent and noted that she had never had such an opportunity:

> ' …she's so confident now she played at the Commonwealth Games…City Halls playing to thousands of people and really had these great opportunities cos of music…I always said to her if you can play music you'll always have food!' (Jennifer interview 2022).

Moreover, other residents allude to other non-conformity and kinship-like connections fostered within the local shops and amenities within the locale. For instance, Daniel conveys that he will buy his ingredients to cook his favourite dishes within the confines of the area. He adds further that:

> 'I don't even know the names of these shops I just know the people…I'm like Raj what's good bro? What have you got coming in today? And just random little things like that make it so accessible' (interview 2022).

What is clear here is the importance of the *people* within the local amenities rather than the actual *space* itself. Daniel reflects further emphasising: 'it's not like a corporation it's not like Sainsburys…soulless…when you go into these shops you never know what's gonna be in stock'. There were seasonal surprises (Daniel interview 2022). For Daniel, these 'random little things' bring out warmth and nurturing feeling within the community that people are 'really looking out for you even if you don't really know them…you haven't even spoken a word to them before'. For him, this was something he finds 'really endearing' about Govanhill.

In Bourdieusian (Bourdieu 1977) terminology this collective 'doxa' spirit prevalent within the area extends to the Open Mic nights hosted by a major contributor to this research – Ania and her partner Barry – at *Bees Knees Café*. Ania reflects glowingly on her time hosting the event by emphasising the joyous and intimate atmosphere of the nights and the sheer unpredictability of who would be present week on week. For her, it was clear that 'the number of extremely talented people who live in Govanhill and at your doorstep' was 'just immense!' (interview 2022). She also places great significance on the inclusive and impromptu nature of the gatherings:

> 'No one really messages us saying oh can I come…the open mic was always aimed to be open and if you show up and feel like performing then change your mind that's fine as well…if you wanna dance if you wanna do stand-up if you wanna play guitar and if you wanna just stand there and say hello that's fine well…we were trying to be as friendly as possible and try to make everyone

> welcome and wanted and make them feel that people want to listen to them and see them for what they are and what they have to show' (interview 2022).

Thus, there is evidence that the outward looking ethos within the area is not just confined to the Govanhill International Festival but is celebrated and lived through everyday living and socialisation in the community. To add to this sentiment, when I attended several of the Open Mic in discussion at Bee's Knees Café, I was immediately struck and enlightened by the sheer communal feeling in the air and the eclectic mixture of musicians, poets and storytellers showcasing their art to the intimate and attentive setting. Indeed, when asked 'if you were to pick a song that reminds you of Govanhill?' in her interview, Vivienne answered 'Come Together' by *The Beatles* with her reasoning being: 'it's a song that has influences from all over the world…you can hear the Ravi Shankar influence and it sounds like experimental music'. She suggested the ambience of Govanhill allowed you to 'push boundaries and be experimental about what you do' (Vivienne interview 2022).

Moreover, Ania details the sheer vibrancy and eclectic array of places where locals can hang out and interact within the area. She cites Patricia's café as 'a sort of hipster point for everyone', Bees Knees as 'more of an arty crowd' and one which attracted Polish and Slavic groups due to its Polish owner. Moreover, she reflects and observes that whilst her friend resides in Shawlands, she has a particular affection to Govanhill and its diversity nationalities likening it to Palermo in Italy where life was lived at a fast pace but 'done with a smile'. Ania clearly concurs with her friend's sentiments by concluding that in Govanhill:

> 'despite the differences people from different places come together and we're trying to communicate even if we don't speak the same language…we're still trying to find a middle somewhere…just tryin to be together' (Ania interview 2022).

'It's the love for this town, it's the love for our people'

Central to the composition of '*Material Dream'* (McGarvey 2022d), is the question of what values, beliefs and practices are important to the people of Govanhill and to what extent do they deviate from the dominant neo-liberal paradigm of status, money and individualism. The musical landscape projected within the moody aesthetics of this piece is one of tension - an uncertainty, an uneasiness as minor chords serve to underpin the two starkly contrasted value systems in question and invite the listener to engage and deliberate more attentively to the participants sensibilities.

With this track, the contexts within the lyrics largely stem from the answers to two questions I posed to the participants whilst interviewing in the field:

- ‘What in life is important to you?’
- ‘What is of lesser importance?’

A common theme throughout all the interviews conducted within this research was the importance of family and kinship-line connections within the community but also, significantly, a rather dismissive view on the lure of capital and, in Bourdieusian language (Bourdieu 1991), position within the social field in relation to others. Thus, co-operation and collectivism were unanimously favoured over personal prestige and status as ways of life which were of high importance to residents. As Jennifer amply conveys in her testimony, ‘material things are not feelings…okay they’re tangible…they’re there but for me happiness or satisfaction is something that doesn’t cost…it’s just a feeling’ (interview 2022).

The story of Govanhill in this research in many ways throughout the stories told by the people who live there are dominated by people and connections between them within the community, rather than one of personal pride and advancement. This is in direct conflict with the hegemonic mantra imprinted as common sense within the dominant psyche of neo-liberal thought.

These values are imprinted within the culture of belonging through its people and the everyday attitude that ‘you can do a lot with people’ (Daniel 2022). This was clear through the prism of what participants regarded as relevant to bring up within their testimonies. In many regards, the story of Govanhill as narrated by the participants was a ‘very human’ (Jennifer interview 2022) one.

> ‘I’ve seen so many folks that help lift prams down the train stations…I’ve seen other people help like complete strangers taking a baby down…it’s people power in that sense I think it’s really important for me’ (Daniel interview 2022).

Daniel had a plurality of different instances that he could cite of such acts of warmth and kindness:

> ‘There was a guy who worked at Transylvania (a coffee shop in the area ran by two homosexual Romanian men) when we had like zero décor…like we didn’t have batteries for the PA…he literally took off his little apron and was like how can I help? Dude climbed up ladders getting a power supply that was hidden…even though it wasn’t even something he was signing up to do…it’s finding little acts like that that just really bring that kind of place to life in the way

that the location and settings bring out the best in people…' (Daniel interview 2022).

Again, within '*Material Dream'*, my aim was to convey these sentiments by picking out parts of interviews which illuminated elements of day-to-day life which the people of Govanhill view as important. Therefore, whether it's unplanned meetings with strangers in cafes or neighbours helping through tough circumstances, this track serves to demonstrate the strong local value system in Govanhill and how that differs to Bourdieu's rather exclusionary depiction of social capital based on social standings and exclusion.

What gives you happiness?
Your monthly salary
Or being a part of something bigger than ourselves?
(McGarvey 2022d)

This lyric sheds light on a concurring theme across the testimonies which is an apparent indifference and weariness to seminal core principles of the dominant culture surrounding money, individualism and profile. Simon and Daniel sum it up well:

'vanity and ego … very destructive … having this false idea that you're somethin when you're just part of something that's much bigger … I think it's very dangerous and it's embarrasin as well … I think it lacks humility … thinkin too much about yourself and not giving … I think it's important to give' (Simon 2023 interview).

'the rat race … it is the thing I have the least time of day to rationalise or to even understand or comprehend because at the end of the day it's just about competition … we're seeing individuals who need to fight over the last piece of corn and I think that that is something we can't allow to govern the way we drive ourselves' (Daniel 2022 interview).

These values have manifested themselves and have been influential in the way in which the interviewees have navigated their own lives. Ania, for instance, was working in a well-paid transcribing company in London before the pandemic struck in early 2020. However, after moving to Scotland and working remotely for the company for a year, she soon became more and more apathetic to the inflexible hours and the stressful nature of the job. In addition, Govanhill opened her eyes to alternative values to life and work in comparison to the standardised commercial and careerist driven environment she was accustomed to down south in England, 'after learning how living can look like and how you can enjoy yourself and your life with having less money but

being happy and engaged in an area I was like hmmmm fuck it. She quit her job and started her own business with less money arguing 'I can still be happy but not sitting in front of my laptop 9-5 and then having 2 or 3 hours of living … I want to be a bit more engaged' (Ania interview 2022).

Thus, the *habitus* should be seen as generative and not determining. Although it is highly influenced by past socialisations and internalised as second nature according to Bourdieu (1977;1984) there is evidence here that Ania moving to an area which differed from her previous environment had resulted in a reflective re-consideration of her cognitive thoughts and behaviours she was attune to in her previous field: 'three years ago when I moved … my outlook on life was changing at the time in general and I think that it definitely helped me in becoming a bit more open and a little more accepting' (Ania interview 2022).

Ania speaks candidly about the dramatic changes in environment between London and Brighton (where she worked and lived respectively) and her new home in Govanhill where she had to delve into 'deep waters' (interview 2022) to find new acquaintances and open herself up to a new setting. She describes the culture within London and Brighton as 'always very picky and cliquey' and one in which you had to be wary within social exchanges. This environment is one therefore which seems more akin to the hegemonic culture and Bourdieu's theoretical assumptions of exclusion and hierarchical standings and profile within the social field (Bourdieu 1977;1984;1991).

However, her interactions and social experiences within Govanhill, and its differing value systems, have now seemingly influenced and moderated her psyche and her ways of thinking. In her own words, she observes that 'it helped me change in a good way…we become a little bit of every person we meet…we always get a little something and we change and shake in accordance to where we are' (interview 2022). Again, there is a moral underpinning to the way Ania tells her story of moving to Govanhill.

As previously illustrated by Skeggs (2004b) it is important that we address cultural and social capital in a way that addresses its potential beyond exchange. On the surface through the prism of Bourdieu's theory, Ania has reduced her symbolic capital within society by moving away from working in London (the most symbolically powerful location within the social field) to a less well-paid job living in a comparatively less well-off place than the one she inhibited before. However, through the diverse, vibrant and friendly culture embedded within Govanhill, Ania has increased her social and cultural capital and is living a more fulfilled and happier life since moving. From this perspective, Bourdieu's theory is one which is too fixated on the pursuit of capital for power means and fails to recognise that agents can act within the social sphere in ways to advance their well-being and happiness rather than purely their standings within the field of play.

There is a reductionist tendency in Bourdieu's assumptions on social behaviours to be overly focused on self-interest. It is clear within Ania's testimony and others that *giving*

back to the community was a way of developing oneself and a mechanism to further advance their standing and ties within the area:

> ‘Belonging…the feeling of belonging…feeling a part of things…that’s why I’m going to milk community stuff because I just wanna be part of something and if I can help I wanna help and if I can volunteer my time I’m gonna do that…fuck money…people and belonging’ (interview 2022).

Similarly, Caron had recently just moved into the area and she saw intrinsic value in contributing to the greater good of the community and building kinship connections within that:

> ‘it feels like to be a part of somethin’ know wit a mean? Or like go into ma wee shops and have like ‘Aw Caron! Is it the usual? Know what a mean? Just like really really get involved wae making this wee place a better place…yeah a love it here…there’s no one day where a don’t walk about the streets here and look aboot me and think I’m grateful to be here’ (Caron interview 2022).

We must not downplay the role of normativity in the interplay between social agents and the inner workings of agents themselves within any given field (Sayer 2010: 87). Not only do we rationalise the world around us; we also evaluate and act accordingly in line with our *feelings* and the *feelings of others* (2010: 87). To not acknowledge this is not comprehend what it means to be a human being. And at its very essence, the Govanhill story is a very human one. The abstract theorising of Bourdieu reduces and hollows out the humanity of individuals. There are ample examples throughout this study of conscious deliberation in the day-to-day lives of participants living within the environment which emphasise collective action and duty to others rather than actions equating to self-gain.

Stewart from a young age saw the value in capital which was not intended to be exchanged for goods or higher status within the social field, and his sentiment became a key cornerstone and poignant message of which ‘*Material Dream*’ sets out to amplify:

> *My parents never really had the money*
> *So I’ve tried all my life*
> *To find the simple pleasures, simple delights*
> *In people, conversations*
> *Getting a feeling for a place and a time*
> *Rather than the things we have*
> *We get a feeling*
> *Get a feeling*

Get a feeling
(McGarvey 2022d)

His recollection of his youth illustrates that, due to his upbringing, he has never really longed for money and grew accustomed to low budget activities, finding the simple joys and pleasures in life. He was 'glad not to have high taste really'. Moreover, he reports that, 'what is on offer in the shops isn't of huge interest to me'. He enjoyed just the simple pleasure of 'walking down the street' (interview 2022) and taking in the sights and smells of the neighbourhood.

Likewise, Jennifer would turn to human capital when she sensed that she possessed little or no symbolic capital (in Bourdiuesian terms). In deep reflection, Jennifer suggested living on income support of '£120 quid' at the time of raising her daughter with no childcare support helped her grow inner resilience and strength and was proud of the fact that she 'could find happiness even though' she 'had nothing'. Moreover, she states that the thing she spent most money on was a 'takeaway coffees' (Jennifer interview 2022) which coincided with a walk in the park.

Here we see the habitus internalising the social environment and the objective reality and the constraints within it. However, *through these constraints,* Stewart and Jennifer have built up an inner resilience and a deeper appreciation and understanding of the values which are important to them.

Indeed, there have been examples of dissonance in which participants have moved from one area to another. Jennifer, who had grown up in her childhood within a culture in which 'doors were open…everybody knew each other and we all looked out for each other' in a 'very tight community' (Jennifer interview 2022) had moved to Muirend (a Glasgow suburb about two miles from Govanhill) with her father and step-mother which was much more akin to a culture of individualism. She speaks candidly of the sudden move from the world she's known to this new alien environment based on differing ideals and how 'she did not fit in at all y'know…that was really hard…it was a different class'. For her it was 'definitely a whole new world for us…no community at all…the community in Muirend was like who's going to play golf?' (Jennifer interview 2022).

Therefore, the unconscious passive acceptance of the hegemonic culture and the downtrodden psyche Bourdieu predicts of working-class people and towns is one which is misplaced when speaking about Govanhill to many of the participants of this study. Roger describes Govanhill as 'multi-ethnic diversity there mixed with weegies' (a slang name for Glaswegians). For him, it was 'good to have mixed community and just accept your neighbours you know…they're not aliens we all come from the same planet' (interview 2022).

Jennifer cited her lived experience of 'friends from Somalia, India, Africa … all over the world'. She observed of her neighbours that she would be comfortable asking them for assistance and cited an example of one who helped her out by feeding the gas

meter when she was out of work and that she would happily reciprocate the gesture. She outlined, ‘my neighbours are from Pakistan and they are the best neighbours I’ve ever had…I love their ethos that they help their family first and their neighbours next’ (Jennifer interview 2022).

Likewise, Fraser outlined his closeness to his Muslim neighbours citing Ramadan as his favourite time of year. How his Muslim neighbours would ‘fast all day and make fucking enormous meals and then they’ll chap the door at midnight, and you’ll get all the leftovers from the meal’ (interview 2022). Although rather amusingly, he cited the example of the first time this happened:

> ‘we shat ourselves cos it was 11 o’clock at night and the door was going going and going and it was just the neighbours trying to be friendly…there was a bag of rice saag paneer all kinds of lamb everything coming to the door … it’s fucking brilliant…absolutely fucking brilliant’ (Fraser interview 2022).

Rae also spoke on a particularly turbulent period in her life in the late 1990s living in Govanhill and how she drew on support and comfort through socialisations within local amenities. She spoke of a ‘great shop called Hollies’ where ‘in the basement there was a café’ where she would meet four other people spontaneously in a regular basis. She reflected on these interactions adding:

> ‘it helped us…it helped us to get away from our problems…it was a place we could sit…it didn’t feel like we were being rushed…it had the best rolls in Glasgow but what I really appreciated was I could go in there with my troubles and park them for an hour then come out feeling good…’ (Rae interview 2022).

Furthermore, she added that when the shop shut down they ‘never saw each other again’ but remembers their encounters in the café fondly as ‘a therapeutic place over a tea and a roll’. Placing great emphasis on the importance of communication, support networks and belonging within the locale, she observed that ‘there’s somethin about the Govanhill accent that makes you feel good’.

Again, such observations fed into the song:

> *It’s the impromptu meetings with strangers at cafes*
> *A therapeutic place over a roll and coffee*
> *It’s the neighbours helping out with the gas meter*
> *It’s the knowing that someone’s there to help out in the hard times*
> *To keep the hope alive*
> *It’s the Govanhill dream*

Oh, it's the Govanhill dream
(McGarvey 2022d)

The theme of neighbours and community was evident in all interviews. In Peter's words, 'yer friends family neighbours are really precious and I'm really lucky ye know…the people round aboot ye are really important…community'. For Peter, feeling part of a community:

> 'makes me feel brilliant cos it makes you feel that ye belong somewhere and that's a really positive thing…belonging…it brings warmth it brings security it helps you to reach up rather than crumbling…if you're secure on the ground it means you can reach up…good part of a community is that it brings you nurture warmth security and these are really, really important' (Peter interview 2023).

Again, these sentiments were captured in the lyrics of '*Material Dream'*:

It's not the car
It's not the twelve-room house
It's not the status symbols
Not the Gucci Belt
It's not your material dream
Profile, accolades, competition and the rat race
Oh no, it's not your Material Dream
(McGarvey 2022d)

There was a definite sense amongst the interviewees that Govanhill was a place apart from the mainstream. So much so that the 'other' society was often described in less that glowing terms. For example, Daniel conceived of himself and Govanhill as being outside what he described as 'the rat race'. For him:

> 'it is the thing I have the least time of day to rationalise or to even understand or comprehend because at the end of the day it's just about competition we're seeing an individuals who need to fight over the last piece of corn or whatever and I think that that is something we can't allow to govern the way we drive ourselves but because businesses survive on that whole competitive factor…profit and competition has literally tiptoed its way into literally every sector of society that has meaning…but it's still so good to see down to earth people take…take a restaurant like this a dude will come and tap you and chill…sit at the table maybe…that's the part of what I like concentrating about…at the end of the day we're supposed to be cooperative literally by nature or else you wouldn't have made it past 120 thousand years of civilisation…yeah man competition kills' (Daniel interview 2022).

Govanhill blog writer Peter placed emphasis on his relationship to the place that is Govanhill and that is what his blog sought to celebrate. He describes Govanhill as 'the main character' in his blogsite. This quote perhaps best captures Peter's sense of Govanhill and its people:

> 'what are ye gonnae think about when yer oan yer deathbed…what's gonna get you through when you're in dark rooms…it's not the amount of time you spent in the office…it's the people you are surrounded by…your friends your family your neighbours the people you see every day…so relationships…wae yer fitbaw team yer community your favourite writer your favourite author whoever that might be' (Peter interview 2023).

The quotes above played a role on feeding into another song called '*The Bothy'*. It uses the Govanhill Baths Trust as a symbolic institution capturing the interactive community orientated spirit of the place:

> *No matter what anyone says that pool changed my life*
> *Opened my eyes to the wider world at play*
> *And gave me a voice*
> *Hearing Gramsci for the first time*
> *Led me to University*
> *When I say the pool changed my life*
> *I mean the women at the Bothy*
> (McGarvey 2023a)

Through her time occupying the pool in opposition to the proposed closure of Govanhill Baths in 2001, Rae remembered the 'marvellous conversations' she had with other women volunteers. She reflected on her chats at the Bothy as a 'sort of social and human capital' as she was 'listening to people who were talking about the system and politics' and was the first time she 'heard of Gramsci and Chomsky' (interview 2022).

Rae detailed her life previously as an unhappy one where she was 'going through a terrible divorce' having 'married too young' as well as juggling the difficulties and challenges of motherhood with 'lots of horrible jobs'. Consequently, she 'became sick…and agoraphobic' whereby she struggled to leave the house 'cos everything was just all toppled on me' (interview 2022).

However, she observed that through learning about social and political theory, through socialising at the pool; she had a newfound impetus and courage to overcome her personal difficulties at the time to go to University in Cork and fulfil her dream to become a storyteller. She elaborated further by highlighting that, before going to

university, she ‘didn’t really have a voice … my voice was like my mothers or the people who bullied me … that was a big change for me’ (interview 2022).

Thus, in her life story, Rae clearly attributes a great significance and importance on her encounters at the pool conveying that she is now a ‘total different person and that’s why I’ve got a lot of feelin’ for that pool … no matter what anyone says … it changed ma life … the people who sat at the Bothy’ (interview 2022). The declaration forms the cornerstone of the song *The Bothy* derived solely from the life story of Rae.

This human aspect of communication and belonging within Govanhill is illustrated within the chorus of ‘*Material Dream*’ – which drew its inspiration from the testimony of Caron:

> *It’s the love for this town*
> *It’s the love for our people*
> (McGarvey 2022d)

Caron emphasised that ‘dishin oot love for as long as possible for as much as possible’ and how all her jobs were people focused as that purpose was ‘genuinely wit gets me out ma bed in the mornin’. For her, ‘You can make an impact oan someone’s life by love and nonsense… just extending it … like when I’m on ma tours it’s the love for ma city it’s the love for ma people’ (Caron interview 2022).

Therefore, as Caron and Rae’s sentiments manifest, acts of kindness, warmth and compassion has created a local value system in Govanhill which has fostered a strength and resilience reproduced and re-emphasised daily within the neighbourhood in everyday life and happenings within the space.

‘There’s a beauty in the stories that make us strong’

Another song composed more specifically about Govanhill is ‘*Beauty in the Hill*’. The overall composition was almost solely all borne out of the testimony of Augustina – a Lithuanian student who recently moved to Govanhill. The song tells a subjective story of the ‘second- hand happiness’ (interview 2022) experience she had from the confines of her kitchen; looking out and taking in the rapturous sound coming from a garden nearby across the train tracks. She speaks in her testimony of the group consisting of people from Romania with inter-generational age having a barbeque on a summer’s evening.

Musically with the song I want to capture the spirit and essence of the setting which was being narrated within the lyrics, thus the track incorporates stripped-back folk influences from artists such as *Big Thief* and *Bruce Springsteen* coupled with major chords to induce a light and communal sensibility. Additionally, it was also crucial that I stayed true to the words and feelings ushered by Augustina whilst also bringing in

my own interpretation of what this story illustrated to me about the people and spirit prevalent in Govanhill.

In a sense the song explores, much like '*Material Dream*' the previous track, what practices and beliefs people hold of value in the area. All over this subjective story is a story of people coming together: connecting with their heritage through the singing of folklore from their roots, inter-generational socialising and communal eating.

Augustina's kitchen backed onto train tracks and across those tracks she faced other people's back garden. She reported that 'a lot of Romanian dudes live at the block across from us and they always have barbecues'. Often this involved 30 or 40 people gathering in the garden with kids. She told how they would often start singing what she assumed were old traditional Romanian songs. She noted their similarity in tone to Lithuanian folk songs she was accustomed to – 'very folky and very like woooaa and harmonised'. She loved how the different generations would join in and sing together '15 of these boys ranging from the age of 12 and 50 and just sitting in their garden by the barbie waiting for the meat to cook and they're all just saying these old folky tunes but they're harmonising in the way where…'. In her words,

> '…cos there's so many of them and they're in the open and we're across from them…the music just pours in through the windows on these random summer nights … it would just warm my heart and these random groups of people would just walk around to their different flats and go home and they'd be walking home and singing as well…there was once like a boy with a guitar walking down the street and like 3 or 4 of his boys were with him and they were all just singing and walking down the street!' (Augustina interview 2022).

The track '*Beauty In The Hill*' is based around Augustina's subjective recalling of an everyday, unassuming gathering within the community which is a manifestation of the spirit and humanity which this research has sought to unearth:

> *Our kitchen backs onto the train tracks*
> *And across the train tracks we watch the parade*
> *Romanian brothers and sisters all congregating*
> *Around the fire as the children roll on the grass*
>
> *Different generations all coming together*
> *Rejoicing in the folklore of their roots*
> *And the harmonies pour and pour through our window*
> *There's a gritty and spicy side to the hill*
>
> *Govanhill*
>
> *They're having a barbie*

All laughin' and singin'
And for a moment there they forgot all their troubles
And we're in the kitchen
Feeling the vibrations
It melts our heart like second-hand happiness
Happiness

There's a Celtic sayin' that the first death is the passing
And the second death is when a name don't tumble from a native's tongue
But tonight they're keepin' their folks alive and kickin'
Through the memories and celebrations of their songs
(McGarvey 2022c)

This track captures a change of mood of Govanhill and its people - one of agency, celebration and inclusion - narrated by a third party looking into a garden from their kitchen. When writing about the story behind this song the words of Roger really stood out to me:

> 'if it were local press who were based and living around Govanhill you'd get a better picture of reality in Govanhill … if you're some jobsworth who works in an office in London and then just googles a few journalists clips or articles then you're not really getting a true picture of what Govanhill is like' (Roger interview 2022).

Although Roger may not be local press, the overall sentiment rings true; the reasoning behind conducting interviews and delving into subjective experiences of Govanhill was to showcase the grittiness and authenticity of day-to-day life away from the sensationalism ever-present in the tabloid journalism surrounding the area, often dehumanising the subjects celebrated within this song with scare stories and demeaning rhetoric.

Despite our circumstances
We still find joy in this world
There's a beauty in our collective
There's a beauty in the stories that make us strong
(McGarvey 2022c)

As illustrated in the lyric above, an element which I wanted to express clearly in the track which stood out to me within Augustina's interview was her genuine joy when speaking of this subjective experience. Her amazement of this experience really shone throughout her testimony where she was drawn to the sometimes-gritty side of Govanhill:

> ‘just at awe of how beautiful the collective here is and how these people may not have as much money or as much resources or maybe getting worried about getting deported or looked at differently by Scottish people’ (Augustina interview 2022).

She enjoyed being uplifted ‘just listening and feeling the vibrations and frequencies coming out of their voices’. Thus, despite their circumstances, these people ‘were still finding things in life that are beautiful’. For Augustina and her boyfriend, ‘it was beautiful…to other people it could be trash but beauty is in the eye of the beholder’ (interview 2022).

It was evident that through the singing songs from their native country and being together in a collective inter-generationally, this provided moments of joy, happiness and inner strength within the participants of the gathering in the garden which was greater than the sum of their parts individually.

The inspiration for this was also partly drawn from other parts of Augustina’s testimony and other interviews. It draws on various observations. Augustina cites the randomness of Govanhill and how her boyfriend stepping out on ‘a random Tuesday night’ encountered a dance studio promoting their existence on the street in the middle of March with loud music drums, ‘wee bikes rolling with like speakers’ and a projector that projected their faces onto tenements. There were ‘different people of like all different kinds of races were doing their cultural dances and this lasts like 20 minutes half an hour’, ‘everyone was just looking at these people dancing and not that many people wouldn’t have known what on earth was going on’. For Augustina, with people sticking their heads out of tenements to view the spectacle ‘it was just such a random beautiful moment’ (interview 2022).

Observations from Peter were also relevant. He argued that people living in high rise or tenement flats ‘are just as interesting and just as rich in their lives than a fuckin posh place from London or something’. He argued that there is a richness in communities such as Govanhill to be contrasted with the sterility of middle-class life highlighting the mundanity and day-to-day living has an inherent ‘richness’ and ‘a joy and it’s up to us to find that…it’s always there…it’s there in the desert…that interest and vitality is always there…with money there comes power but it’s far less interesting’ (Peter interview 2023).

For instance, Peter cites his Czech girlfriend’s experience of Govanhill and how

> ‘her favourite pubs are the most working-class pubs…Neesons which is now Ryan’s Bar…that was her favourite because it’s the kinda things we take for

> granted in Glasgow…we're walking down the street and she says you don't understand how friendly and happy people are…strangers walking past her on the street…everyone's smilin…so we're in there and some drunkish guy was chatting away to her…very nice and polite…it utterly charmed her…and we went to Queens Park Café…Bell Jar … the Star Bar lunch for a fiver … we went to Rose Reilly and what she loves in what I love about Glasgow…it's the Glasgowness of it…the humour…the people…the directness…the lack of pretension…the openness…if you're a prick we'll call you a prick…we'll help you in any way you need…we're really funny and don't take ourselves too seriously…that's what I love about Glasgow…it's what I love about Govanhill and what she loves…it's the place of constant colour Govanhill…constant noise and just a constantly endlessly fascinating place' (interview 2023).

He talks of being constantly inspired and endlessly fascinated by the community. When walking the streets you 'canny get bored' as its always colourful and different, 'hearing different accents, different voices then you get some fuckin bam in the middle of the street wanting to fight wae a car or somethin and I'm thinkin fuckin brilliant' (interview 2023).

It is clear here that Peter equates pejorative terms here with a sense of kinship and warmth rather than that of hostility, which could differ from those residing from outwith the community who could interpret this type of language as intimidating. For him Govanhill was inherently working-class with 'quite a lot of social problems, housing, poor health, poor employment - that's the same as Drumchapel, Castlemilk and so on and that's why it's part of Glasgow'. He notes how today, 'a lot of students will come here and live for five or ten years and then get tae fuck when they have kids or whatever…it's a very transient place and the nationalities are very transient as well' (interview 2023).

To further add, contrary to his own expectation was getting more radical as he got older and suggesting that working-class communities were worth preserving and celebrating,

> 'the timelessness of it … industrial workin-class heritage…that culture brings with it things that are really important…things like humour… self-depreciating humour…directness…openness…clarity…lack of pretension and those are Glasgow values that are worth preserving' (interview 2023).

Peter's sentiments find echoes in Fatima's insightful observations:

> 'You know we are incredibly creative human-beings…do you think it's the rich that invents culture? Do you think it's the rich that invent fashion or it's the rich that invent music or…they do fuck all…you know it's on the streets and ordinary

> working-class people that invent all the music we love and it's sometimes difficult to recognise that because it's hidden in theatre's or it's hidden in shops or whatever but so much of the culture…well you know this…that we rely on now comes from poverty…comes from responding to…you know wanting to make something beautiful in a pretty shitty world…and I think you see that every day in Govanhill' (Fatima interview 2022).

Simon's reflections on Govanhill were recognitions of its flaws as well as its virtues. In one of the more 'off the wall' parts of his interview he makes a comparison of Govanhill to the famous movie character Rocky, played by Sylvester Stallone:

> 'I think it's a place where people are willing to stand up because they feel stigmatised or they feel the underdog…and the truth is we all love the underdog…we all love Rocky…ye know what I loved about Rocky? Rocky wisnae a great guy…in the scene where he's gettin paid by this guy to break somebody's finger…there's a scene down the docks…basically he's a paid bouncer and he's doing what he has to survive and he's told to get money off a guy…he's workin for a loan shark and he's told to break the guy's finger and he goes and roughs him up but doesnae break his finger and the guys like that a told you to break his finger you do what a say…but Rocky…we love Rocky but there's certain parts of that film…Rocky's very real the character because he's not all good…ye know at Hollywood you either all good or all bad…because you're born into a situation that's difficult you make decisions…and sometimes you're moral compass is based on your parents moral compass that's inherited from their grandparents and it's about survival so sometimes those things that are seen sometimes as not a good act might seem like a sensible thing to do for someone else so this media sort of black and white…good and bad…it's so simplistic' (Simon interview 2023).

As he sees it, in Govanhill, 'there are good people normal people average people…people who are good who do bad things…people who are bad that do good things…that's what I love about it' (interview 2023).

Moreover, Peter conjectured that the vitality of Govanhill might itself be a rebuttal to wider society's view of it and the negative discourse and imagery associated with it: 'Just the fact that it hasn't let itself be beaten down…it's still a thrivin ever-changin locale ye know' (interview 2023). Likewise, Simon recalls bizarre stories of living in Govanhill such as wrestling with a naked man on New Years Day talking of the unique energy of Govanhill and reflecting that, 'even in the most difficult life's there's profound moments of joy'. For him, 'this whole idea of those people are poor and those people are unhappy and those people are rich and those people are happy it's just false ye know'. Despite living through 'tough times' they have a resilience that 'not having an awful lot than you appreciate things a little bit more' and 'it always comes down to that

it's being the underdog and keepin going no matter what and having a dream' (Simon interview 2023).

He argues there is a richness to living in and experiencing Govanhill that heightened your emotions and senses. Govanhill living is a different kind of living, outside the more sterile, mainstream of society:

> 'you can be the richest man in the world and not have a penny to your name…not a penny…because you've got these experiences or you've got family that love you or you've got a community around you or you've got good neighbours that bring something in for you to eat…ye know and that's a fulfilled life not just because of what you're getting out of it but what you are able to give as well because going back to the kinda biblical thing there's more happiness in giving than receiving and I think that in communities that don't have an awful lot…for some reason they're very, very good at giving everything they have…a don't have anythin but here ye go ye know what a mean?' (Simon interview 2023).

This goes right to the heart of the essence of Govanhill and acknowledges (as do the words of Beauty on the Hill that:

> *There's a gritty and spicy side to the hill*
> (McGarvey 2022c)

Peter during his interview reflected on the changes around the area of recent years and conveys that it was only a few years previously when he had, 'kinda had enough of Govanhill' and its 'crumblin flat mess' and private landlords and transient population 'who don't care' (Peter interview 2023). But on reflection, he stayed to celebrate Govanhill through writing about the qualities of the place.

> 'a don't want it to be a dry celebration of Govanhill though ye know…a want to talk about the weirdness of the place and how surreal it is and how fuckin psychedelic the place is and how it's utterly fucking bizarre and surprising and ye don't have to take mushrooms to have that…ye don't have tae sit in a valley in California to have it…ye get it in the graveyard in the corner…or the fuckin backcourt over there…that's the joy of life…findin that joy in the pishin rain in Glasgow on a rainy day, know wit a mean?' (Peter interview 2023).

As Peter talked of being inspired by the colourful endless changing nature of Govanhill, Fraser potently sums up his experience of Govanhill reflecting that it is, 'not a straightforward place to understand but it is an easy place to enjoy and appreciate' (Fraser interview 2022).

> *There's a beauty in the hill*
> *Beauty in the hill*
> *Govanhill*
> *There's a beauty in the hill*
> *Beauty in the hill*
> *Govanhill*
> (McGarvey 2022c)

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the vibrant local value system of Govanhill. It is suggested that through this, Govanhill actively defies Bourdieu's pessimistic view of working-class passivity within a hegemonic social field. Through the lens of residents' testimonies and the evocative lyrics of songs such as *Material Dream*, *The Bothy*, and *Beauty in the Hill*, Govanhill emerges as a place where kinship, collective identity, and non-materialistic values shape everyday life. The testimonies of residents such as Ania, Daniel, and Augustina articulate a profound sense of belonging and agency. They prioritize human connections, community activism, and cultural expression over the neoliberal pursuit of status and wealth. Grassroots initiatives such as Govanhill Baths, South Seeds, and Music Broth exemplify this ethos, fostering inclusive spaces that challenge exclusionary social hierarchies and nurture resilience and solidarity.

This challenges Bourdieu's rather pessimistic notions regarding the capacity of working-class agency. As Schinkel (2003:86) notes there is much 'emancipatory potential in people themselves'. Despite the media portrayals of their community and its people, they are not the 'downtrodden and dominated' (Garrett 2007:369) depicted in Bourdieu's theory of societal structures. This chapter has presented evidence that the internalisation of negative portrayals of their community is far from complete for many Govanhill residents – they still retain the scope to challenge it and outline a far more positive account of themselves and their community through their own localised value system.

Through the songs '*Material Dream'*, '*The Bothy'* and '*Beauty In The Hill'*, this chapter has sought to cast light on the everyday and the mundane within the community - the conversations at the Bothy, the kind gestures in local shops, the therapeutic meetings and Open Mic nights at cafés, the intergenerational gatherings in back-gardens with barbecues and folklore singing - which reinforce and foster a more positive 'doxa' of hope and resilience to those who reside *within* and are thus a key fabric to what it means to belong to Govanhill.

The narratives and songs emphasise Govanhill's rejection of consumerist ideals, embracing instead the simple pleasures of diversity, mutual aid, and creative expression. By highlighting personal stories like Rae's transformation through the Govanhill Baths campaign or Augustina's joy in witnessing communal gatherings, the chapter reveals a community that finds beauty in its gritty, human essence. This local value system, rooted in cooperation and compassion, not only counters Bourdieu's focus on self-interested capital accumulation but also, this study argues, redefines social capital as a collective resource for well-being. Govanhill's residents demonstrate that meaning and happiness are cultivated through shared experiences and acts of giving, offering a powerful critique of the dominant culture's materialistic imperatives.

Govanhill has an energy that challenges theories and stereotypes of the poor, poverty and inner-city downtrodden communities. Positivity, resilience and optimism were far more common themes of conversations than those associated with negativity and pessimism. This chapter re-iterates, is emblematic of the enduring strength of community-driven values in resisting broader macro societal pressures of individualism and conformity.

Govanhill is a cultural community enriched by music and storytelling, and is a dynamic and diverse community where, adversity fuels creativity and hope rather than dampens it. By celebrating the *Beauty in the Hill*, this research highlights how marginalized communities can narrate alternative social realities, challenging broader societal doxa and inspiring a reimagining of what constitutes a fulfilled life. This research suggests that Govanhill's story, as told through its people and their art, can serves as a beacon of human resilience, solidarity and collective spirit, affirming the transformative power of community in the face of systemic challenges. This should not be surprising in a community where migration stories dominate. Migrants have usually at some point in their lives made the decision to re-capture control of their lives in the face of war, famine, economic hardship or persecution. It would be more surprising where they to give up that re-captured control once they settle in a new country and community. As the title of the song goes – they are seeking a 'higher ground' elsewhere in the world.

Chapter 8

What is Govanhill?

This penultimate chapter consolidates the theory, methods and strands of analysis and argumentation outlined so far together in a coherent and focused whole. In particular it reflects on the relationship between Bourdieu's theory and the empirical evidence regarding the community of Govanhill, Glasgow. In doing so it will reflect on the value and utility of Bourdieu's concepts when analysing stigmatised communities such as Govanhill. Govanhill is a case study site, but it should be viewed as an inner-city community with aspects that are generalisable for many other sites. The findings presented here, whilst drawing on empirical evidence from Govanhill, offer an analysis and argumentation of broader relevance, in that they represent a general assessment of Bourdieu's theory.

As well as evaluating theory, this chapter will also expand the analysis of the role of historical legacy in understanding the contemporary people and place of Govanhill. The sense of place, collective memory, familial history and its linkage to contemporary perspectives and actions was evident in many testimonies collected in fieldwork. The collective story of Govanhill and the pride the community has in the place is a tale of many individual appreciations of their family's heritage and their own stories of migration, identity and displacement. Rather than viewing these as individual, atomistic stories the community of Govanhill actively builds connections and seeks commonalities amongst its diverse residents. In doing so, it actively builds up a sense of how such diversity should be celebrated in the community.

The active citizenship engendered by such events has resulted in a distinct and identifiable local value system emerging in Govanhill. Importantly, it is one that is *not* consistent or subservient to the dominant value systems in neo-liberal society emphasising materialism, consumerism and individualism. Everyday understandings in Govanhill, encountered in this research, reflect an alternative conception of how to live life with more emphasis on the collective, finding connections and building community based on empathy.

This chapter will proceed by reflecting on the key pillars of Bourdieu's theory and their relevance and significance in the world of Govanhill. It will firstly look at the influence of symbolic capital and violence in shaping the 'doxa' within the area, but also its impact from outwith the community and how the place is viewed from the outside. It will then address the importance of the history of Govanhill and familial influence in shaping the 'habitus' and environment within the area and its people. It will then examine the 'local value system' of Govanhill in relation to Bourdieu's concept of 'social capital'. This will be illustrated through the power of song in capturing the day-to-day life and spirit of place. Lastly, this chapter will tackle the central topic of this study, what exactly is the 'doxa' of the area, and how aligned is it with Bourdieu's vision of working-class communities?

The research question for this study was as follows:

> ‘To what extent can Bourdieu’s assumptions about the stigmatisation and dispossession of disadvantaged communities, be applied to the communities of Govanhill in Glasgow?’

‘It’s like an accordion… sometimes it’s open sometimes it closes…it can unify or close off…’ - Exploring the impact of Doxa, Symbolic Capital and Violence within Govanhill.

As outlined in chapter two, Bourdieu’s concept of ‘doxa’ is one whereby the orthodox teachings and rhetoric of those who acquire the highest amounts of symbolic capital achieve the status of ‘common sense’ (Hall & O’Shea 2013). For Bourdieu, symbolic capital is the accumulated wealth of capital which can be acquired through the economic, the cultural and the social (Bourdieu 1977, Bourdieu & Passeron 1977). Economic capital is the quantification of all property and monetary assets; cultural capital consists of etiquette and norms perceived as ‘legitimate’ within the space and social capital comprises the networks and relationships acquired through the socialisation of those of a higher standing with the social field (Power 1999:50; Oliver & O’Reilly 2010:18; Swain 2003:189).

Symbolic capital is therefore an abstraction of material capital, seen as custom and orderly, enabling it the power to command control. Due to the power that symbolic capital wields, the knowledge produced within it largely goes unquestioned and is misrecognised amongst the population as natural paving the way for its constant reproduction (Weigmann 2017; Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu & Eagleton 1992; Wacquant 2008b).

Consequently, for Bourdieu, this leads to ‘symbolic violence’ of those who hold little to no stake of capital within the social sphere, as they view their predicament as justly as they view the status quo as legitimate. In turn, this can lead to the internalisation of the social order amongst the domination further enhancing suppression and an inferiority complex which impedes any challenges to the hierarchy (Weigmann 2017:98).

Within Govanhill, these social forces are inextricably linked to the historical legacy and make-up of the area. Many of the residents who made up the neighbourhood in the industrial boom of the late 19th and 20th centuries were of the working-class, with a large proportion of them coming from the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland, as well as from Ireland and other immigrant groups with degraded symbolic capital (Bryce 2023; Bourdieu 1977; Jeannier, 2024; Govanhill Community Information 2025; Braber 2012). The value of their labour was extracted and used as exchange value for the benefit of the owners of production – the industrial capitalists and landlords.

In addition, the often-overcrowded tenements in which workers lived were utilized as forms of income, with landlords using cheap land to house immigrants, thereby fostering more capital and prestige for themselves, reinforcing the hierarchical social order (Bourdieu 1977). This uneven distribution of power underpins how class, capital

and value dynamics positioned workers with limited symbolic power despite producing surplus value, while landowners and capitalists wielded much of the economic, social and political power, asserting their dominance (Bourdieu 1977).

Moreover, the asymmetrical and uneven distributions of capital which underpinned the formation of Govanhill continue to manifest themselves spatially within the area, with certain streets holding discredited status. Thus, areas with this stigma are pathologized through popular discourse, concealing the structural reasons for its plight and re-emphasising individualistic and moral behaviours against such communities (Tyler 2013:162; Bauder 2002:85). Importantly, this knowledge is reinforced through the producers of symbolic production in the media and politics which have the capacity to create narratives that reproduce and justify their own power and privileges. In this sense, communities are portrayed in a binary distinction outwith the realm of 'normal' culture and clear distinctions are cast highlighting their incompatibility with common values and ways of being (Tyler 2013:162; Bauder 2002:87; Gans 1990; Fainstein 1993; Bourgois 1995).

Despite structural disadvantages in symbolic and economic capital, the Govanhill community *has* actively shaped the area, fostering social networks, diversity, pride and resilience. These elements within the area provide a sense of security for its residents with participants in interviews viewing the space as home. In doing so, residents engage in *place-building* through small but meaningful acts. For instance, Daniel from Kenya and Fatima who grew up in Fitzroy in Australia emphasised their feelings of acceptance and belonging within the community, manifested through simple everyday practices inherent within the area, such as hearing their own language spoken on the streets (Daniel interview 2022; Fatima interview 2022).

This emphasises that space-bounded territory is not just state controlled but is created and given meaning through those within it through social interactions, cultural norms and shared ways of seeing and being. Whilst residents actively contribute to the shaping of their area through socialisation and community building, negative evaluations of Govanhill perpetrated through media and popular discourse continue to shape perceptions of the space, giving weight to its status as a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman 1963).

The power of language and choice of words used by those endowed with considerable symbolic power should not be underestimated (Martin et al. 2020:4). Rhetoric undoubtedly has significant political implications. Actors within the public domain are influential in shaping opinion and setting the narrative shaping perceptions where 'no word is gratuitous, no phrase is formulated just for the sake of it, everything is actually the result of deliberate behaviour' (Cuza & Mocanu 2016; Martin et al. 2020:4). The language employed around discussion of Govanhill is a testimony to its power in shaping both external public perception of the place but also internalising it amongst the population of Govanhill.

Not only can political elites and mass media influence popular opinion amongst its listeners and readers; it can also justify punitive measures against oppressed groups by 'othering' and distancing techniques which serve to create 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' (Martin et al. 2020:4). This creates alternative groups within the social sphere often using simplistic binary distinctions of 'us' versus 'them' and who is 'deserving' and 'undeserving' (Silveira 2016; Cooper et al. 2021; Shah & Ogden 2021; Pattison 2022). As Kenneth Burke amongst many others argues, a clear characteristic of discourse is to shape perceptions and to provoke emotional responses amongst social beings (Brock et al. 1990:184).

So to what extent do these concepts hold up when examining them in the context of Govanhill? Are Govanhill residents merely passive victims in the wider socio-cultural context in which they are degraded? Or is there push-back and an alternative reading to life and agency within the area?

There is clearly evidence of sensationalising accounts of Govanhill implanted within outsiders' understandings of the reality within the bounded area which associate Govanhill with crime, disorder and danger (especially for females) (Hall et al. 1978:102). These understandings are often informed by journalism, news outlets, social media and prominent political figures whereby the nature and tone of the discursive language used to describe certain neighbourhoods shape perceptions of how readers see and feel about that community (Richardson 2007:75).

There was evidence of those with little symbolic capital of their own pointing downwards rather than upwards when stigmatising the Govanhill neighbourhood. Thus, it could be said that orthodox knowledge of Govanhill portrayed within hegemonic narratives were naturalised by those outside of the community achieving the status of 'common sense' beliefs (Bourdieu 1991:236). In this regard, Bourdieu's theory is useful to demonstrate how communities such as Govanhill have been pathologized and labelled as 'bad neighbourhoods', thereby in the process concealing the true nature of power and the social and economic reasonings for material deprivation within the space (Wacquant et al. 2014:1274).

In some cases, it is undeniable that internalised 'silent suffering' has and is taking place in the community of Govanhill. Simply citing empirical data on instances of drug deaths, suicide, litter and overcrowding does provide an indication of the reality of deprivation and inequality. This can, and undoubtedly does in some instances, lead to associated mind-sets of subordination. In this regard, the neglected and run-down condition of housing and streets within the area is undoubtedly a component which enhances and reaffirms the negative symbolic status attributed to it (Watt 2020:22; Wacquant 2008b:82; 158-60; 220).

Moreover, what was notable when interviews centred around the topic of litter and environmental issues within Govanhill was that, whilst there was an acknowledgement of rogue landlords and local council inactivity to deal with the issue, there was also an allegation or perception that those within the Romanian community are the main

culprits around the decaying state of the streets of Govanhill. Crucially, however, the manner in which this was discussed was cautious and open to dialogue, in a sensitive way that was not dictated or facilitated by powerful actors in hegemonic discourse such as media and politicians. For instance, participants made sure to convey their views whilst highlighting the structural and economic constraints faced by the Romanian community (Ricky interview 2022).

This important acknowledgement is inherently lacking within popular discourse, with even former Labour MP for Glasgow South Tom Harris blaming the Romanian community for perceived upsurges in anti-social behaviour, supposedly immoral and incompatible culture, and intimidating presence on the streets (Harris 2013).

Thus, knowledge can be represented to impose 'symbolic violence' on degraded groups and within the British press and political elite, there has been a consistent attempt to exercise symbolic capital 'to impose a…way of seeing the social world' (Bourdieu 1991:106). This establishes minority communities as a threat to 'normal' British values and ways of being (Pattison 2022). Therefore, the freight and blame of its material ills can be more easily attached or associated with some groups within the community more than others enabling inequitable relations inside the area (Kadıoğlu 2022:4-5; Pinkster et al. 2020). The discourse surrounding the community of Govanhill undoubtedly did this.

In Bourdieu's works, outwith his study in Algeria (2002:92 as cited in Garrett 2007:365) there is a noticeable gap in conceptualising and examining his theory through the prism of race. This factor is crucial and of paramount importance in contextualising his theory of symbolic capital through the lens of Govanhill.

Namely, the Romanian population within the area suffered from a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman 1963). For instance, Margaret's negotiation and understanding of Govanhill has close alignment with the hegemonic rhetoric surrounding the Romanian community within the area, especially Romanian men.

The stereotypical misogynistic and backward-looking Romanian man depicted within her testimony was contrasted with the more embedded and established Asian community in Govanhill, whose outlook and values are more closely aligned to the popular culture (though one could suggest that historically that community had suffered from a similar stereotypical labelling when the first generation arrived). Thus, the assumptive portrayal of male chauvinist reproduces popular knowledge of 'foreign' Romanian men as a threat to women is internalised as a legitimate and serious threat amongst some residents within Govanhill.

Within Augustina's testimony, she highlights how some residents within the area would speak to her of 'the good ol' days' (Augustina interview 2022) with the implication being that there were not as many immigrants and the community was more cohesive, safer and cleaner as a result. In addition, there was a reproduction in the rhetoric of the work-shy foreigner within Jane's testimony. She suggests that, unlike the Irish and

Asian influx which came to the area previously, the Romanian community tended to be reluctant to work and had a desire to go back home (Jane interview 2022).

Nostalgic recollections to a Govanhill of a bygone era are used here as a symbolisation and narrative to emphasise the perceived negative changes within the bounded place and the notion of the Romanian population being out of sync with the rest of the community (Mullen 2018: 217-218). In this romanticised view of the past, there is a depiction of a homogenous and integrated population within the area with compatible goals and behaviours living harmoniously with each other. As Hall points out, for othering rhetoric based on race to be potent and have enduring emotive power, 'who is included is just as salient as who is excluded' (Hall 1997:56 paraphrased by Mullen 2018: 217).

Through the intersectionality of class, race and place, the Romanian community have been targeted and blamed for many of the perceived ills surrounding the area such as fly-tipping, crime and uncleanliness due to their degraded capital and position within the social space (Bourdieu 1977). In this regard, they are dehumanised and used as a powerful weapon of being 'abject figures' (Tyler 2013) within the social sphere who are framed as a marked contrast from the hard-working long-standing families who have lived in the area for generations who have accumulated symbolic capital throughout time.

It should also be noted that there were inequitable degrees of symbolic capital spatially within the territory. It was highlighted within accounts that stigma was associated more closely for certain parts of the area such as Allison Street (a main thoroughfare with shops below tenements) whilst other more affluent parts such as Queens Drive (solely residential with higher property prices) were immune to such status. This manifested itself in the prioritization of the council in their efforts to clean up certain streets whilst neglecting others, highlighting how unequal power dynamics can operate and be experienced *within* as well as *outside* bounded areas (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

However, in the main, the analysis is suggestive that Bourdieu's theory of 'symbolic capital', 'symbolic violence' and 'doxa' are useful tools when discussing Govanhill *outsiders* and *the media's* perception and attitude towards the area, but significantly less so when considering those who reside *within* the area.

Evidence of Bourdieu's notions of *doxa* and *symbolic violence* were not readily apparent amongst interviewees for this most part within the study. A reminder that symbolic violence is 'violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 167). Many of the interviewees categorically did not see the status quo in Govanhill as in any way self-evident and natural. What was clear was that there was a considerable fightback of this narrative towards Govanhill and particularly to the Romanian population within many other testimonies with many participants such as Fraser, Jennifer, Augustina, Michael and Fatima expressing feelings of unfairness, anger and bewilderment at the coverage of the area from the outside *and* the inside, rather than passive acceptance and

agreement. Indeed, to them this coverage, discourse and attitude to the area was self-evidently to be questioned and campaigned against.

Many argued that Govanhill's multi-cultural demographic was a primary reason for its 'spoiled' symbolic capital and lack of 'good stories' surrounding the area within popular rhetoric (Fraser interview 2022; Ricky interview 2022; Fatima interview 2022). In addition, others observed that language within print and social media involved negative signalling and connotations targeting of the area not afforded to more affluent areas of the city and areas with high concentration of ethnic minorities, further cementing its perceived ill status (Simon interview 2023; Peter interview 2023).

To add further, many did not show any restraint on their disdain for groups within the community to what they felt was stirring up racial division and signalling. For instance, Jennifer (interview 2022) strongly condemned the prejudice rhetoric targeted at the Romanian community from the Facebook page 'Govanhillians' expressing how 'appalled' she felt reading their content online (see https://www.facebook.com/groups/1379692518981813/). Moreover, Michael (interview 2023) referred to a man videoing closes and streets of Govanhill on social media, and in the process blaming the decaying state of the area on the Romanians, as 'vile' and 'despicable'. Such tales of resistance and action against anti-migrant sentiment and oppression are evident throughout this work.

However, there were concerted collective efforts from people to take matters into their own hands and make sure their streets were clean on their own accord (Ania interview 2022). Rather than being passive to council inaction and their perceived 'spoiled' position within the territory, people within the streets were taking ownership and responsibility in a 'just do it attitude' (Fatima interview 2022). This sits uneasily with Bourdieu's rather gloomy writings of fatalism and resignation of working-class communities (Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu et al. 2000). Indeed, it directly contradicts it.

Furthermore, when showing acknowledgement of the issues surrounding Govanhill, there was a tendency for participants to use universalised language likening the area's issues to other similarly deprived parts of the city or the city as a whole (Simon interview 2023; Caron interview 2022; Peter interview 2023). Thus, it was characterised as a place with problems rather than a 'problem place' as such (Johnson & Mooney 2007).

Interviewees showed little inclination towards a mind-set that gave emphasis to low expectations. Unequal relations in power, money and politics were not unquestioned by the local population. They were not deemed natural, arbitrary or appropriate. Many were willing and able to outline and conceptualise that such structures were often based on historical legacy and existing societal power structures and their impact on Govanhill. There was little evidence in interviews of the internalisation of contemporary media and political welfare narratives such as 'skivers', 'scroungers' and the 'undeserving poor'. Rather, there was a considerable sense of dealignment from participants from the outside perception and knowledge of the area to their own lived

reality within the community. Many interviewees were willing and able to place Govanhill within a broader historical and sociological context and did not replicate and reproduce 'conventional' narratives of the area.

To illustrate this tension, with its polyphonic interplays between its two differing guitar riffs, the song *Step Back* (McGarvey 2022b) seeks to mirror the bombardment and chaos of competing narratives and often contradictory knowledge imposed on the area, which residents find themselves contending with and, in many instances, challenging in their daily lives. In many regards, the Govanhill internal 'doxa' is one which competes with the overarching hegemony from the outside which demeans the area and reduces it to a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman 1963).

The song itself is a narration from myself, the researcher, challenging the orthodox teachings and principles of neo-liberal logic and framing that target the community. However, the message within the track is heavily inspired by the sentiments made by the participants of the study itself, who were acutely aware of the negative namings being placed on Govanhill and its people, but rarely endorsing or internalising such narratives as Bourdieu would suggest (1977;1999). Rather, there were observations and ideas being cast on how to combat and paint a different outlook on such knowledge. The acknowledgement and deep awareness of oppressive knowledge from political parties and tabloid press and the '*Don't Believe The Truth'* refrain within the track pays homage to this sentiment.

Therefore, amid this uneasy climate, to build empathy and ultimately enhance harmony, communication was deemed as a crucial component and necessary way in which to challenge people's perceptions of each other within the community. Roland, a Hungarian-Romanian participant who lives in Govanhill, emphasises the vitality of actors within the community promoting and celebrating an alternative narrative of inclusivity and acceptance, amidst the hostile and negative knowledge embedded within certain news coverage.

This was felt to be pivotal in the acknowledgment that it was a difficult task to challenge conceptions and beliefs engrained within the habitus and re-emphasised and reasserting themselves unconsciously through exposure to negative knowledge on Govanhill and certain groups (Bourdieu 1977). In this regard, there were observations from participants that Govanhill was becoming more tolerant and accepting as a community. This was made possible through initiatives and groups promoting integration within the community such as Romano Lav, Govanhill Baths Community Trust, and innovative methods of photography within the area (Ricky interview 2022; Jennifer interview 2022; Stewart interview 2022; Simon interview 2023).

Moreover, Roland expressed that, through working with the Roma community and assisting them with their English language skills, he could see that they were becoming more connected with their neighbours, through sharing cooking recipes and communicating. As a result, he observed that dispositions and biases which had been learned and feed through the 'negative energy' (McGarvey 2022b) of social media

were now being challenged more within the area through meaningful interaction and socialisations within the space.

This tale of the Roma community has clear echoes of the same immigrant community cycle as the Irish, Asian and Jewish stories before it; one of initial suspicion through ignorance followed by community engagement and integration through a shared appreciation of alternative cultures. These sentiments are captured in the song, *Higher Ground* (McGarvey 2022a). Therefore, people and organisations embedded within the community have the capacity to actively shape and nurture a culture *within* a shared humanity despite differences of ethnicity and backgrounds to strengthen kindship and bonds of friendship (Kirkness 2014).

Hegemonic narratives were certainly utilised by the media, public and politicians to paint overwhelmingly negative pictures of places such as Govanhill. However, this study reports little evidence to suggest that participants were bounded or shaped by these narratives, rather they were largely refuted. Indeed, one of its key arguments is in direct opposition to Bourdieu's assumptions about working-class communities being too heavily cued towards resignation rather than resistance. A more accurate observation from this study of Govanhill would be that:

> 'The degree of acceptance and respect for existing hierarchies may be less deeply internalized in numerous instances than the idea of symbolic violence implies' (Swartz 2010:48).

However, whilst this study does critique some aspects of Bourdieusian theory, it argues it is still of immense value in understanding and analysing the wider contours of power in society. Economic stigmatisation and dispossession are a very real empirical reality across many communities throughout Scotland, including Govanhill. The power of capital can and does demean such communities. There are very real economic and social struggles going on within them. But the wealth of statistical data on poverty, multiple deprivation and economic inactivity often presents a rather cold, unattached de-humanising picture of such communities. This paints an intrinsically negative portrayal of them with discussion of such communities dominated by themes of crime, poverty, deprivation, anti-social behaviour and economic distress. This study challenges that by outlining tales of the humanity and community embedded within the area.

'It's important to know our history…' – An exploration into the Diaspora of Govanhill and the Ties That Bind.

Another key component to Bourdieu's conceptual framework is 'habitus'. An individual's dispositions are guided by events occurring in early life and continuously by environments which they encounter in the present (Weigmann 2017:96-7; Lutz &

Huitt 2004:2). However, according to Bourdieu, these thoughts operate in an internal and external level below consciousness and are seen as arbitrary and viewed uncritically (1977).

In this regard, the ‘habitus’ tends to reproduce behaviours of the social landscape it has been accustomed to, and as a result the social world has an endurability to constantly reproduce the social order (Power 1999:49).

The ’habitus’ concept is one of undoubted value in understanding many of the broad contours of society as well as everyday life in communities such as Govanhill. There is undoubted theoretical and conceptual utility in his insights that individuals have ‘constructed mental structures’ (Lutz and Huitt 2004: 2), and there *may* be a lack of consciousness in how historical legacy and experience shape and influence our perspective in the present. However, the evidence presented in this work highlights that this is by no means universal.

Indeed, there are numerous examples of individuals in Govanhill whose perspective has been shaped by their ‘back-story’ or ‘lived experience’. Some interviewees displayed deep awareness of the legacy of history in everyday life and consciousness. For example, Fatima pointed to the deep-rooted support systems within Govanhill which started with the role of the Gaelic Club and the churches during the initial influx of Irish migration to the area. This internal social services network has continued today with food banks and grass-root organisations, such as Govanhill Baths Community Trust, as well as fightbacks against hostility and discrimination from outwith the community with anti-xenophobia groups and tenants’ right groups such as Romano Lav and Living Rent respectively (Fatima interview 2022; Fraser interview 2022).

Consequently, in many cases participants were in opposition to the blaming of immigrants to the areas perceived issues and were acutely aware of the historical legacy of scapegoating placed upon the ‘newcomers’ within the area throughout passages of time. In these instances, testimonies alluded to discrimination of their parents or family members when they initially moved into Govanhill (Carol interview 2022; Jennifer interview 2022), first-hand recent episodes of hostility (Roland interview 2022) and accounts of racism (Fatima interview 2022) endured from other countries which all pointed towards the durability of oppression throughout space and time for residents. Many of the interviewees in Govanhill were self-reflective of their own family’s historical experience and ready and willing to see parallels with the past and empathise with the predicament of the newcomers to the area.

Therefore, the evidence of the naturalisation and dull acceptance of power structures was in no way appliable to Govanhill. In fact, the opposite case was true. Participants were deeply aware of prejudices which plagued the community and their families over episodes in history, and this largely shaped how they negotiated and narrated their lives in the present (Kothari & Hulme 2004:32-3). Certainly, in the Govanhill case, Bourdieu’s theories of working-class communities overstate the passivity of social agents and their compliance to societal structures and their perceived inevitably.

A towering example of this came from the testimony of Laura, a newcomer to the area who grew up in a prominently white suburban neighbourhood. Through her navigations in moving into the new field of 'Govanhill', Laura's differing mindset and attitudes *do* emphasise the role of the habitus facilitating as a 'structuring structure' and a 'structured structure'. From socialisations within her new social context and experiences with people who she was once fearful of due to toxic beliefs shaped and inherited from her previous surroundings, Laura has rejected her once held beliefs and welcomed the inclusivity and diversity embedded within Govanhill through adapting to her new environment (Singh 2022:9).

However, although now rejecting her previous attitudes, she did acknowledge that these once held wary beliefs about Govanhill and its diversity were influenced 'unconsciously' (Laura interview 2023). Her prior life in a previous 'field' and knowledge exposed to her on Govanhill on the outside looking in had prejudiced her. In addition, Michael (interview 2023) who grew up in a similarly predominantly white area, observed that his lived experienced of Govanhill propelled him to reflect and reconsider his thoughts about community.

Residents observed that the multi-cultural make-up of the area gave them resilience and a sense of fellowship, as they could find commonality within lived struggles and stories of family histories. Consequently, there was a collective spirit, and a bond shared through ethnicities and generations from a mutual recognition of one another's struggles and hardships as being 'part of a diaspora' (Rae interview 2022). In Govanhill's case, this is not one homogenous diaspora, but rather a commonality of struggle and experience from distinct migrant histories of Irish, Pakistani, South Asian and Roma communities.

This familiarity meant that residents did not leave the confines of the area for long periods of time. 'Home' was a word that was repeatedly used to describe Govanhill within the study and residents spoke about not leaving the area for weeks at any given time, indicating a sense of belonging and attachment to Govanhill. This was consistent with other studies of working-class areas within the city, as previously mentioned in chapter three with Gray and Mooney's (2011:587) study of Glasgow's East End.

In addition, the 'habitus' could be seen to have re-produced dispositions learned from individual histories, as residents expressed emotions of feeling comfortable and at 'home' in an environment which had people 'who looked like them' and where they could hear their own language in the street, as opposed to predominantly white areas in the city where they were wary of being judged due to past encounters of discrimination (Bourdieu 1977; Fatima interview 2022).

Moreover, Smart (2007) argues that individualization theory (Giddens 1991; Beck & Ritter 1992) produces an alienation account of the social world which fails 'to capture the richness and complexity of everyday life' (Devine 2010:153). Instead, she places emphasis on the cruciality of familial influence, heritage and camaraderie amongst human beings, which evoke emotional bonds enticing individuals to act in ways that

preserve these influences which they identify with and care deeply about (cited in Devine 2010:153).

Indeed, throughout the testimonies gathered from the study, many participants were quick to put prominence on the significance of their upbringing and family as key pillars on how they lived their lives. Many spoke to what could broadly be described as collectivist ideals, bestowed to them at early childhood, which has been the blueprint to their actions in adulthood (Carol interview 2022; Fraser interview 2022; Jennifer interview 2022; Caron interview 2022; Ania interview 2022; Jane interview 2022). Moreover, stories of familial experiences of discrimination and fightback against oppressive forces provided a source of inner-strength and tonicity to participants (Fatima interview 2022; Carol interview 2022).

Consequentially, this also meant that when derogatory language or 'attacks on the community' (Michael interview 2023) from the outside were levelled at Govanhill, there was a shared defiance and challenge to such knowledge, rather than the tendency for passiveness and acceptance predicted in Bourdieu's theory (Fraser interview 2022; Bourdieu 1991). Interviewees reported taking perceived slights and attacks on the community personally, suggesting that Govanhill, the place, has been internalised as being a significant component of their self-identity.

Bourdieu's concept of the *field* in this research was defined rather broadly as that of community politics in Govanhill. This was because the place of Govanhill was a very meaningful one for interviewees. It was indeed one endowed with sense and value, and thus one worth investing one's energy in. It was also one where they could develop a sense of their own place in the community and further enhance the legitimacy of their own world view. This was a view that tended to have significant space for community political action and voice. It often involved communal interaction with other like-minded actors where they could interplay, strategize and develop collective plans for action. In Bourdieusian terminology, they were social agents maintaining and advancing their capital in the social space. The accumulation of such social capital was a way of enhancing their own sense of self-worth as well as standing in the broader community. There were predictabilities of behaviour in the field of Govanhill, particularly if decisions were made that involved the cut-back or closure of community facilities. The community had ready-made teams of campaigners ready to be triggered into action. The accumulation of knowledge, experience of past campaigns for a springboard for any new action. Govanhill's social capital was tangible, knowledgeable, experienced and readily available for action and protest.

Why? One could hypothesise that the lack of individual and familial economic capital in the community of Govanhill meant that any facility that did exist took on accentuated cultural, social and symbolic significance for campaigners. Indeed, the lack of fixation on economic capital and the culture of consumerism meant the local Govanhill value system automatically placed much more relatively *higher* value on communal facilities and spaces. Community spaces were 'theirs' and had to be defended from 'external'

outside forces be it the council, commercial developers or other agents and institutions of the state.

There was no better manifestation of this than the campaign to save the Govanhill Baths in 2001. Described as a direct fightback against the neo-liberal politics being imposed on the community at the time; this episode for participants highlighted the clear disjuncture between the values of the community and policymakers from the outside announcing closure of building which was 'the bedrock of family histories'. These themes were highlighted in the composition, *The Bothy* – see chapter 8 and Appendix. The Govanhill Baths campaign created a lingering institutional legacy of community connection and organisation.

There were numerous accounts of a vibrancy and energy of a movement from the campaign. Some observed that it signalled a newly found agency creeping up to the surface of an eclectic community comprising of different backgrounds, ages and interests; but one also enriched with common values and principles they could defend and fight for (Michael interview 2023; Bernie interview 2023).

Govanhill's social capital came from within, rather than beyond, the community. Bourdieu's conception of the doctrine as being, 'it's not what you know, it's who you know' (Gauntlett 2011: 132), could be interpreted as leaving the community somewhat isolated and lacking in political connection. However, campaigns and movements in Govanhill have allowed the community to build up their own 'bottom-up' (rather than 'top-down') networks that have allowed them to make valuable connections both with one another, but also like-minded campaign and political groups across the city. Progressive political parties, social movements, groups and individuals have all been drawn upon to add weight and muscle to messaging and campaigns.

Cumbers et al. (2018) make this move most explicitly, arguing that social capital should not be understood as a pre-given asset circulating through elite or institutionalised networks, but as something continuously generated through everyday practices of mutual aid, shared labour and cooperation. In this sense, what appears as capital is better understood as use-value in formation: forms of social reproduction that generate collective capacity directly through practice, rather than operating primarily as resources to be exchanged, accumulated or leveraged elsewhere (Skeggs 2014). This reframing is significant because it shifts attention from social capital as positional advantage within a field, towards social capital that is lived relationality, produced in and through the everyday organisation of social life (McKenzie 2015; Skeggs 2014).

Traill's recent work (2023;2025) extends this argument by situating these micro-social processes within broader changes in urban governance and valuation. In her analysis of Glasgow regeneration, she shows how policy has shifted from a social logic concerned with housing, welfare and material improvement towards a neoliberal, market-oriented approach emphasising investment from overseas and highly visible 'legacy' projects (Traill 2023: 21). Within this shift, neighbourhoods are frequently reconstituted through negative framings, while community participation becomes increasingly mediated through audit cultures and funding regimes that

privilege measurable outputs and quantitative impact. Consequently, what emerges is not merely a redistribution of resources, but a fundamental restructuring of what counts as value in the first place: exchange-value logics progressively displace the recognition of use-value relations that actually sustain everyday community life (Skeggs 2014).

However, Traill (2023:107) also insists that this same terrain is not only one of governance and constraint, but also of situated political agency. The everyday is conceptualised as a 'source, stake and site of struggle' (Beveridge and Koch 2019: 146) where autonomy is enacted through practices of self-direction and collective negotiation (Berlin 1969:190; Traill 2023: 107). Significantly, this produces an important tension: formal systems can only recognize community activity that is measurable through metrics, yet the everyday practices of the community - mutual aid, collective decision-making, care, and activism - often exceed or escape what can be formally evaluated. In this sense, social capital is not simply a resource that can be captured or given externally; it is actively produced and lived as a form of situated autonomy, whose richness remains only partially visible within formal evaluation and governance frameworks.

Within Govanhill itself, campaigns and movements can therefore be understood as producing bottom-up networks that connect residents to one another while also linking them to wider progressive political formations across Glasgow. These networks are not best conceptualised as convertible resources within a field of exchange, but as use-value relations of solidarity, reciprocity, and collective care that sustain political and social life in their own right. External actors are thus better understood not as originating mobilisation, but as being drawn into an already active field of locally produced agency - one that both precedes and exceeds the forms of recognition through which it is usually rendered visible.

Judged against Bourdieu's idea of social capital as being 'symbolic' (Joppke 1986: 60), and as being primarily about status and reputation, the nature of power relations could be seen as given. However, for many in Govanhill they were interpreted as unequal and repressive. Many actors viewed the distribution of social, economic and cultural capital as unjust. Many Govanhill residents did not view their status as a given, they were ready to challenge the status quo. The structures of inequality in economic and symbolic capital were not viewed as 'legitimate' or 'just'. The working-class habitus of Govanhill was less succumbing and compliant with their status than Bourdieu's writings would tend to suggest they would be. The politically charged movements within the community raised consciousness amongst actors of both the history and contemporary reality of cultural, social and economic life in Govanhill.

The significant number of protesters to the Home Office's attempted detainment of two residents on Kenmure Street in 2021 reflected the community's rejection of what they deemed as unjust and repressive, anchored in a neoliberal agenda that cast their neighbourhoods and fellow human beings as unwelcome. People chose to act with real and tangible moral impulses which reflected past resistances within the area such

as the rejection of Mosley's Blackshirts in Queen's Park in the 1930s (Maitles 2003) and to the historic Rent Strikes of 1915 (Bernie interview 2023) but also, personal and family histories of resilience and struggle which guided and influenced behaviours of the habitus. Moreover, Bryce highlights the sheer diversity of people who attended the protests, pointing to a collective spirit and agency against such repressive policies (2023:8).

Thus, it is important to acknowledge the normative aspect of human behaviour which is inherent and clearly visible within exchanges and communication within Govanhill and its surrounding areas. As Sayer rightly emphasises:

> 'Arguments about what is good or bad, what is merited or undeserved, cannot be sociologised out of existence by reducing them to arbitrary custom, unconscious emanations of the habitus, or the pursuit of power for its own sake' (Sayer 1999: 405).

Therefore, if we are to gloss over, or fail to acknowledge, disinterested behaviour or acts of kindness and duty towards others which do not necessarily correspond to serving one's advancement within the field, then we are at risk of portraying an overly economic and transactional view of social relations which serve to give life little to no meaning at all (1999: 409). Throughout its history, the Govanhill tales of resistance to classism, racism and injustices have served to refute such an alienated and cynical conception of human action.

Furthermore, this has also evolved into a more celebratory tone which manifests itself in the annual Govanhill International Festival. With an emphasis on showcasing the strengths that bind the community together; it is unapologetic in promoting the dogmatic alternative 'doxa' embedded within the area of diversity, recognition, co-operation and inclusivity. This was given particular importance in the festival parade whereby those involved were meant to feel like a microcosm of the community at large, highlighting and spreading the mantra of equal worth and value (Vivienne interview 2022).

This 'doxa' of connectiveness and blended differences was seen to have influenced the area with residents highlighting the virtues of living in a multi-cultural neighbourhood and positive implications it had on the prism in which they view the social world within the dispositions generated from the 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977). Some observed that daily lived experience in a diverse community enriched their lives with an intensified understanding and sensitivity to other fellow individuals which produced an open mindset (Simon interview 2023).

Similarly, as alluded to earlier in the chapter, others who had moved into the area spoke candidly of their change of attitudes. They became a more inviting and inclusive character, influenced by the new environment they found themselves living in. This broadened their outlook on life as they negotiated through a new field, one that was

different from their previously more ‘cliquey’ (Ania interview 2022) or less diverse settings (Michael interview 2023; Laura interview 2023).

Moreover, there were others who had observed that the area was becoming a more inviting and accepting place to live, citing the importance of events such as Govanhill International Festival and day-to-day activity within the area honing-in on the message of inclusion and ‘bringing the vibe back’ (Jennifer interview 2022). A manifestation of this was the sheer existence of a ‘queer Yiddish Café in the middle of Victoria Road’, which signified the transformation and more tolerant atmosphere surrounding the area (Stewart interview 2022).

The collective social stories narrated in interviews were not those of contemporary deprivation and poverty (though interviewees were willing to acknowledge its historical and contemporary existence). Instead, they were interspersed with stories of collective struggle, solidarity, pride – above all – tales of a community unwilling to equate a lack of material wealth and consumer good with one of social and cultural domination and deprivation. If symbolic violence was being exercised against the people and community of Govanhill it was rather uneven and ineffective in its impact on some. The residents of Govanhill interviewed failed to conform to the ‘dull passivity’ of subordinate social agents reflected in Bourdieu’s writings (Garrett 2007: 366-7).

This adds weight to the critique of sociological reductionism that Sayer (1999) identifies in Bourdieu’s theoretical work. The conscious and unconscious deliberation and reflections of Govanhill residents – their inner conversations or ‘dialogues with oneself’ (Crossley 2000: 138) - are evident in their rhetoric and behaviour. However, instead of tales of ‘strivings, struggles and disenchantments’ (Reay 2004: 438), there are more positive tales of mobilisation, challenge, protest but also celebration and a sense of pride and identity from being part of Govanhill and its diversity.

The people of Govanhill had a sense of place and an appreciation of their own families’ history of displacement, struggle and oppression before they had arrived in Govanhill. That shared history is evident in their stories of individual and collective agency in how they viewed Govanhill as a place to be proud of and how its diversity and pluralism was a feature to be celebrated. Contrary to Bourdieu’s notions of compliance and subservience the community of Govanhill actively organised and challenged negative stereotyping of the area and its community.

‘This is real people, real lives’ – The Power of the Everyday and Humanity in Govanhill.

Nowhere was this active pride and identity more apparent than in the camaraderie, culture and local value system that was evident in the research. Govanhill has an inherent local value system (or alternative system) focused on collectivist ideals rather than individualist solutions. It directly opposes the dominant wider societal system of neo-liberalism. The Govanhill local value system manifested itself in everyday life

within the community and social interactions in the area. This is sustained by key leaders and activists within the place, such as Fatima and Vivienne, mobilising community capital and spirit, bringing a sense of shared pride and identity through place-building.

As participants such as Laura (interview 2023) noted this bottom-up leadership elevates morale and sense of collective purpose within the community, helping to reframe Govanhill's story on the community's own terms rather than external evaluations fostered through popular rhetoric (Mullen 2018; Harris 2013). Fatima, in particular, has played a commanding role in events previously mentioned within the chapter - the Govanhill Baths protests in 2001 and the Kenmure Street protests in 2021 - and continues to play a pivotal part in the organisation of the Govanhill International Festival, celebrating the diversity of the area (Fatima interview 2022).

Organisations and local amenities and events embedded within the area such as Big Noise, Music Broth, Open Mics and Govanhill Baths Development Trust were said to have non-profit motives and were attentive to the needs of the community, valuing kinship connections and solidarity building. Another key aspect in all of this is that within these local value systems, there was no super strict hierarchy; instead, there was an emphasis placed on acceptance, emotional investment and inclusivity which consequentially elevated engagement as participants felt they could express themselves without any judgement or feeling out of place. Thus, the work undertaken within key organisations within the area return a use-value that may be material such as planting gardens (Fraser interview 2022; Vivienne interview 2023), but also immaterial – fostering self-esteem, pride and spirit (Jennifer interview 2022; Stewart interview 2022; Fraser interview 2022).

The type of social capital in communities such as Govanhill is, as Davies (2019: 202) puts it, 'informal, unseen and unmeasured' but the research presented in this paper testifies to its undoubted presence. It chimes with McKenzie's (2012; 2015) notion of 'local value systems'. Govanhill is a community with its own way of life. It has collegiate and collective values that individuals and collectives within the community tap into – this culture may be unseen and deemed of little value outside a community such as Govanhill, but it can be harnessed and energised within the community. The 'habitus' that is Govanhill is adaptive and generative and has been utilized to foster resistance to negative experiences. This Govanhill value system operates outwith the 'dominant symbolic' one and does not subsume to the ethos of neo-liberalism – rather it is a form of social capital maintained and reinforced to further collective rather than individual means.

This meant that there was a desire for people in the community to involve and embed themselves in the community, strengthening their presence assisting and making a positive impact on the lives of those within it. In this regard, Govanhill from the inside represents a world which differs from Bourdieu's rather competitive driven conception of capital based primarily on hierarchical standings within the social realm. Unlike Bourdieu's formulation based on a zero-sum game with winners and losers largely

resulting in the reproduction of inequities in relations between actors in the social field (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), Govanhill, in contrast, represents a social capital funded on co-operation and partnership (Putnam 2000:19).

In many ways, Bourdieu's conception of social capital is a privileged and restrictive one, which gives little to no scope for those who do not possess high amounts of symbolic capital to acquire or harness (Swain 2003:189). However, this study's unearthing of the everyday and mundane life through song serves to undermine this overly elitist and transactional notion of the term.

The power of song and story within this study has illustrated how the subjective and objective environments inform the understandings of people's lives and how they view themselves through experiences (Linde 1993:25). Based on the testimony and life story of Rae (interview 2022), '*The Bothy'* (McGarvey 2023a) is a story of the power of connections between human beings and the agency and capital which can be fostered through it.

Before the experience of exchanging and communicating with fellow neighbours and friends from within the Govanhill Baths, which she refers to as 'The Bothy' she spoke candidly of episodes of self-blame and overly individualistic reasonings her material situation of juggling various jobs, going through a divorce and struggling to make ends meet (Rae interview 2022). Here we can see an internalisation of societal structures gravely impacting on Rae's mental dispositions, in a process of 'misrecognition' whereby the hegemonic dogma of neo-liberalism and its individualistic explanations for material disadvantage were seen as undisputed (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:168; Bourdieu 1977: 190).

However, through her social circle and regular meetups, she details that she became more aware of the social world around her and realising 'there was a bigger thing at play' (interview 2022) as friends would speak to her about the theories of Gramsci and Chomsky and the processes of power within societies. As proclaimed in the song, she attributes the exchanges with the other women at 'the Bothy' as saving her life, giving her newly found confidence and social mobility to fulfil her passion as a storyteller and going to University College Cork (Rae interview 2022).

The motivation behind the writing of this song was that Rae's story conveys a potent message and serves as a manifestation of the vitality of social capital and supportive environments on the human psyche and agency (Sayer 2005b; Smith 1759). As Charlie Taylor emphasises, the effect of non-recognition can have a consequence of a fatalist mindset and one of perceived subordinance (Taylor 1992:36). This was the case for Rae within her testimony to the time prior to her interactions within Govanhill and the Bothy.

Within 'The Bothy', there is a story of liberation and the importance of people and everyday exchanges in the process of cultivating 'social and human capital' (Rae interview 2022). By considering ethical and moral considerations within the habitus,

we can escape a watered-down cynical depiction of human nature based on exchange capital and the accumulation of power for power's sake (Sayer 2005b:3; Skeggs 2004b:90-91). It was clear that residents within Govanhill have found agency from *within* their community even as their capital externally may be limited (McKenzie 2015). Through soft power focused on communication and being together, this provided a sense of escapism and liberation from periods of instability which documented periods of their lives. Therefore,

> 'pleasure, curiosity, and a need for community and recognition are powerful engines for human action, certainly as powerful as the quest for power and the maximization of one's position in fields of power that are privileged by Bourdieu' (Lamont 2010:138).

The songs co-created between the researcher and the participants of this study were centred around the sentiment that 'you can do a lot with people' (Daniel interview 2022). In addition, through performing the songs *within* the area at Open Mics and the Govanhill International Festival, this allowed the wider community and participants to hear their voices, experiences and stories amplified and transmitted through music. Therefore, the project became a vehicle for giving back to the community, providing them with agency and power over how their stories were conveyed. This was an important and deliberate aspect of the project, providing a counterpoint to the ways in which the story of Govanhill and its people is often framed without appreciation or value of their lives and rich experiences.

The capturing of the everyday and mundane was not just confined to 'The Bothy' (McGarvey 2023a); this is further conveyed in the songs 'Beauty in the Hill' (2022c) and 'Material Dream' (2022d) (see Appendix B for full song lyrics). The song 'Material Dream' is inspired by and comprised of key excerpts from multiple testimonies, highlighting the importance which the community placed on belonging and being present with each other.

This 'Govanhill Dream' was starkly contrasted within the track of neo-liberal ideals and the dogma which characterises the mainstream 'doxa' which sit uneasily together. To illustrate this, the track flirts with major and minor chords to create a tension between the two differing visions to the world of which the Govanhill residents are contending with.

When it came to choosing specific parts of testimonies to include within the piece, it was crucial for me to use excerpts which conjured up vivid imagery and provided an authenticity which encapsulated the Govanhill which I experienced whilst working on the project and represented within the life stories of its residents.

Each composition has its roots in interviews and observations from Govanhill. Some were individually focused in that their inspiration derived directly from one interview,

whereas others were drawn from multiple testimonies. The key point is that each song should be viewed as a co-production between an individual or collective and myself.

Therefore, the day-to-day meetups in cafes, impromptu bump-ins with strangers, multi-cultural music playing out in the streets and neighbours helping in hours of need were all potent elements which depicted the atmosphere and the 'vibe' of Govanhill and the 'comfort in the racket of the inner city'. This 'family first, neighbours second' (Jennifer interview 2022) mantra had an affirming effect with residents elevating their morale and emotional security in the process and it was pivotal to capture that vitality within this Govanhill story.

This depiction of the 'simple pleasures, simple delights' (Stewart interview 2022) within the track is contrasted with the materialistic consumerist ideals promoted within the neo-liberal paradigm. 'The Gucci Belt', 'the status symbols' and 'competition' were pitted up against inducing an individualistic mind-set whereby competition is the natural arbitrary instinct.

It is important to note that these were all ideals which were rejected within the testimonies within the study. This would suggest that the power of symbolic capital was not as all-encompassing and absorbed uncritically as Bourdieu would predict within working-class communities (1986; Bourdieu & Eagleton 1992). The Govanhill participants were forthcoming in advocating and carrying out alternative and more meaningful elements to how they lived their life's and what was deemed important to them, which in turn manifested itself within the wider community creating a social hub based on inter-dependence.

Thus, there is a tendency inherent in Bourdieu's theory, including that of capital, to view the motivations of human behaviour as largely transactional, whereby each move is utilized by social actors to advance themselves within the social field (Sayer 2005b:3).

Material Dream, like each song on the accompanying EP, is a co-creation by the researcher and the participants of this study which puts up a mirror to Bourdieu's assumptions and argues that, alternatively, the stimulus for human action within the area was shaped greatly by fellowship and care for one another.

This point is at the heart of a deeper concern over Bourdieu's underlying theory which underpins his analysis of communities such as Govanhill. The study argues that the framework is one driven by a view from above and viewed through the prism of the dominant's gaze. It is due to this fact that working-class practices and everyday living is devalued, as the theory only places value at an exchange level (Skeggs 2004b:87).

This sentiment is no better exemplified than in *Beauty in the Hill*, inspired by Augustina's experience of 'second hand happiness' watching inter-generational Romanians singing folklore songs in the back-garden of a close. In this case, 'second-hand happiness' (Augustina interview 2022) is a term Augustina used to describe the warm and genuine affection she felt as a witness to the 'first-hand' joy shared by fellow

neighbours within the area. The track is an example of how song and music can bring communities together and create a feeling and ardour which cannot be replicated through mere words or text.

Throughout the lyrics to this song is the importance of being in touch with our native countries' story and rejoicing and celebrating its history and culture especially in the face of adversity. As outlined within this study, the Romanian population in Govanhill has been the victim of enduring hostility and derogatory stereotyping from the media, politicians and people from outwith the community (Mullen 2018; Harris 2013, Clark 2014). This song represents a Govanhill resident's acceptance and appreciation of that community's heritage and their right to actualise and celebrate it within the community of Govanhill.

However, what is clear through Augustina's testimony and her 'second hand happiness' from witnessing the rejoicing of the community and the 'celebrations and memories of their songs' (McGarvey 2022c) was the multi-faceted nature of the human psyche, starkly contrasted with Bourdieu's economic neo-classical depictions of rational actors ever lured by their prospects of capital gain and advancement (Bourdieu 1977). Rather, there were genuine affectionate emotions of seeing others flourish in a moment of jubilation, especially through the recognition of their groups degraded position attributed to them from outside the community.

Bourdieu's abstract top-down theory of social relations from above over-generalises and is reductive about the motivations of human beings. This research demonstrates that at a micro level, many in Govanhill are largely influenced by the community's own alternative value systems which places importance and pride in communal action and duty to others (Sayer 2009). It is the very existence of this culture, the people power and community capital that Govanhill has accumulated that it is not a bounded area passive to the stigmatisation from outside the area.

To add further to this point, the 'underdog' lively feeling within the area was evident through testimonies highlighting unique episodes such as dance choreographies with loud music playing mid-week in the streets. The spontaneous tendencies and strong leadership of those within the area all pointed towards a setting not drowned out by fatalism, but one with an inherent realness, authenticity and a distinctive charm which prevailed within mundane every-day life.

Also, there was a pivotal role for myself as the researcher, in the creation of knowledge within these compositions (Canniford 2012:392). For *Beauty In The Hill*, it was crucial for the musical components of the song to capture the setting and the *feeling* the lyrics depict but, also pivotally, the emotions and account of Augustina's testimony (interview 2022) of which the song is derived from.

Thus, the campfire acoustic quality of the composition serves to re-create the 'second hand happiness' account of Augustina's emotions as she watches through her window of a group of inter-generational people of the Romanian community, 'rejoicing in the

folklore of their roots' (McGarvey 2022c). This is further re-emphasised in the music with the track using primarily major chords, conveying the warmth and togetherness of the original scene as observed in the words of Augustina.

In addition, the stripped-back nature of the song is deliberately utilized to bring to the fore the authentic and 'on the ground' like documentation of the everyday living within Govanhill of, 'real people, real lives' (2022c). Thus, song form in this regard has the capacity to offer the recipient a form of *experience* to the humanity within the area in a way which transcends conventional data and invite people to become immersed in the life of Govanhill.

This is a fundamental component to this study, as the people who form the life and soul of these songs and stories of Govanhill have been demonised and demeaned within neo-liberal framing as caricatures within popular knowledge, often through a form of negative quantitative statistics designed to scare and create angst amongst the population (McKenzie 2015:210).

The songs within this project bring a humanity and a story to the people within Govanhill which challenges this over-exaggeration, dangerous and increasingly orthodox rhetoric amongst migration communities within Govanhill and around the world (Shildrick 2018:791). In doing so, it gives agency to the voices of the often silenced (Tyler 2013:173). Thus, this study is an exploration of the lives from *within*, rather than a 'view from nowhere' (Haraway 1991) of quantitative gruelling statistics depicting a detached and 'distorted reality' (*Step Back* 2023b).

What are the 'Doxa' teachings of Govanhill?

The people, the organisations and the history surrounding the area has created autonomy and has ushered an alternative reading to the 'doxa' of the hegemonic culture and subsequently has built up resistance and challenge to the common-sense workings of the *Material Dream* driven by money, profit and personal prestige.

On one level Bourdieu is right to emphasise that in many social situations there are no concrete rules that control and regulate an individual's behaviour. In interviews conducted, instances identified of interviewees acknowledging that their behaviour was dictated by their environment was at times not apparent. However, it would be very difficult to logically deny the existence of such instances in everyday life. For example, poverty limits the scope of purchase options when one enters a grocery store or other food outlet. In economic decision-making socialisation and income reality undoubtedly narrows the scope of choice. However, in the social and cultural field the scope of autonomy is likely to be more open.

Adaptive behaviour and a lack of conformity to societal (but not necessarily Govanhill) expectations was a more accurate characterisation of much behaviour. Many interviewees outlined instances of 'off-script' behaviour completely non-associated with any notion of 'appropriateness'. Indeed, a convincing case could be made that the *habitus* of Govanhill is somewhat lacking in 'conventional' scriptures and tacit

expectations of how one should (or should not) behave. Non-conformity for some was part of the culture of the area. Govanhill is perhaps an extreme example of the lack of concrete normative assumptions as a guide to appropriate pre-scripted behaviour.

The 'practical rationality' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 19) in Govanhill was one of standing up for oneself and your community, challenging authority, being part of the 'awkward squad' and *not* conforming to societal assumptions. Some may argue that having a degree of anarchy and rebellion of consciousness is not an unhealthy predisposition if you are to challenge the norms and power structures of an otherwise conservative society. However, in many cases residents had a positive (rather than negative) interpretation of this. As illustrated by Jennifer, Stewart and many others within the study, there is clear evidence of pride when talking about their community and the values they hold and even a push against the common-sense beliefs installed within the neo-liberal paradigm.

Therefore, Bourdieu's (1977: 77) characterisation of the 'vagueness and indeterminacy' of human behaviour is perhaps a more accurate starting point for understanding residents of Govanhill. The narrated tales of Govanhill reflect more emotion, sensitivity, compassion, respect and love in the habitus than the rather cold and clinical conception of social agents evident in Bourdieu's theory. As highlighted previously, from anti-fascist resistance and opposition to Mosley's Blackshirts in the 1930s (Maitles 2003), to the campaign to save Govanhill Baths in 2001 (Sherry 2015), to the Kenmure Street protests against the deportation of neighbours (Stewart interview 2022; Simon interview 2022) and the Govanhill International Festival's celebration of the area's diversity (Vivienne interview 2022; Fatima interview 2022), residents have forged bonds through distinct histories and ways of knowing borne out of collective struggle. In doing so, they recognised that they could be greater than the sum of their parts if they were willing and able to come together and build unity and solidarity in and across their community.

As Sayer (2002) argues psychologically, in materially disadvantaged communities, the need for recognition for such 'subordinate' groups may be even greater than the material financial distribution of wealth. Recognition of their social worth and value in the community neutralises and calls into question 'the corrosive consequences of non-recognition …(and) individuals internalising negative portrayals of themselves' (Taylor 1992: 36). The empirical material outlined in this research demonstrates an awareness amongst interviewees of the value of each other. Govanhill's many diverse communities and the community enrichment that solidarity can bring to them are pivotal to the area's identity.

This research presents evidence of how social and cultural capital, and its nurturing and development, can have a neutralising effect on notions of domination and subordination associated with material deprivation and symbolic violence. Modern contemporary social science with emphasis on structure and quantitative data can often conceal the natural humanity and spirit of individuals and communities. Behind

the numbers there are self-thinking, often non-confirming, culturally and socially aware artistic human beings. Indeed Govanhill, this research would suggest, has more than its fair share of them.

This blind spot is evident in some abstract theoretical work too - Bourdieu's conception of the human subject has a degree of sterility as previous critiques such as Sayer (2005a; 2005b) have acknowledged. The false clarity given by overly abstract and deterministic theorisation, despite Bourdieu's own critiques of them, is also ironically a feature of his work. There is an over-determinism of the linkage between poverty in economic capital, equating with an equivalent poverty in cultural capital. This case study highlights that economic subordination need not necessarily be equated with social and cultural subordination.

Thus, this research would concur that Bourdieu does have a 'blindness to the human subject' (Sedmak 2013: 559-60). It has a certain 'utilitarian reductionism' (Joppke 1986: 69) that blinds it to some degree from basic humanity and morality. This is why it would also counter Bourdieu's pessimism as regards the downtrodden nature and lack of potential for working-class agency and the potential for their emancipation. The scope for 'positive, affective, justifiable experiences of anger and exclusion' (Skeggs 2004b: 87) is greater than Bourdieusian theory would suggest.

Indeed, this research directly questions its rather narrow conception of social capital based around how elites utilise networks and connections to consolidate this power. Whilst not denying this undoubtedly happens, it overlooks the potential of collective struggle and the building of cohesive social movements in communities that can challenge the accumulated wisdom and power other institutions and agents. The research presented in this work vividly demonstrates that the dispossessed and economically impoverished can possess, build and utilise social capital too. Bourdieu's top-down elitist view of social capital is of validity in understanding the institutionalisation and dominance of some interests in society, but it is rather blind to the bottom-up potential that can be inspired, built and organised in communities to challenge and even supplant the social capital of the powerful.

What is clear then is that there is a notable disjuncture between the *Material Dream* of neo-liberal ideals and the 'Govanhill Dream' based on communal links and co-operation to further enhance the capital of individuals to live more fulfilling lives and improve the lives of everyone. These acts within the community are not behaviours based on arbitrary unconscious deliberation of how to further advance oneself within the social arena as Bourdieu assumes. Rather, they are based on reflection of personal well-being and the well-being of others within the field. Thus, there must be a refined notion of the habitus to acknowledge and consider conscious evaluations and moral code (Sayer 2010:88).

In a sense Bourdieu is imposing a rather cold clinical atomistic view of community as one involving atomistic non-connected lives. In suburban middle-class communities this may have a ring of truth. However, the remnants of working-class migrant

community and familial connections oils the connections and ties the strands of individuals and groups together in communities such as Govanhill. Decades of research into the actuality of life in such communities raises questions about the accuracy of some of Bourdieu's theoretical assumptions of working-class life. For instance, Lisa McKenzie's (2012;2015) documentation on the lives of those at St Ann's in Nottingham illustrated a community who found agency and inner power from within the area, even though their capital from outwith the area was of little substance.

People of Govanhill are not the downtrodden, poor, criminally inclined skivers that such narratives suggest. They are complex human beings, with rich back-stories, illuminating experiences and unique dispositions on the world around them. They may be economically poor, but that poverty of choice and autonomy need not translate into social and cultural poverty. Indeed, much of this research raises serious questions about the reality of connection between material and cultural poverty.

This research has given voice to a small proportion of the community that is Govanhill. In doing so it has challenged both the media narratives about Govanhill but also questioned some aspects of Bourdieusian inspired understandings of such communities. It has sought to emphasise and display the social and cultural capital of such communities and how it has been and can be harnessed.

While it does not claim to represent the reality of the whole community, it does represent the lived experiences and realities of those who participated within the study. In doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Govanhill and one which challenges simplistic portrayals of the area which can shaped wider perceptions of the area.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to review the outlined empirical reality of Govanhill voices when set against both the 'Govanhell thesis,' a dominant media narrative portraying Govanhill as a community plagued by poverty, crime, environmental decay, and social dysfunction and Bourdieu's theoretical framework outlined in chapter two. The empirical findings reflect a significant disconnect between external stigmatization and the lived realities of Govanhill's diverse population. While Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic capital, doxa, and symbolic violence are useful in analysing how external media and political rhetoric pathologize Govanhill, particularly targeting marginalized groups like the Roma, they fall short in capturing the community's active resistance and alternative value system. Residents like Fraser, Augustina, and Roland demonstrate a collective agency that challenges the 'Govanhell' imposed identity. This has fostered a local doxa that gives emphasis to inclusivity, solidarity, and cultural vibrancy, which directly contradicts Bourdieu's assumptions of working-class passivity and resignation.

Somewhat contrary to Bourdieusian theory, the stigma associated with Govanhill is directly challenged by the actions of local people, groups and institutions. Instead of

meekly accepting their allotted place in economy and society the residents through their collective action, communal and cultural activities have given expression to an alternative account of their community. The activism, spirit and value system of the local community in Govanhill is one, it is suggested, inspired by the historical legacy of a place where different waves of migration have come and gone and left their imprint. The sense of place, historical linkages in families and communities was both vivid in interviews but is also very evident in any visit to the local community. The sights, sounds and smell of cafes, bars, shops, restaurants, streets, gable ends are continual and constant reminders of the cultural diversity of the community. Storytelling in families and communities as well as contemporary sights and sounds provide a contemporary visible and audible linkage to the past.

The historical legacy and familial narratives of Govanhill's residents further highlight the limitations of Bourdieu's habitus, which predicts unconscious reproduction of social hierarchies. Instead, the testimonies reveal a conscious awareness of historical struggles and migration experiences. This has shaped a Govanhill habitus that is generative and adaptive, fostering empathy and collective action. Grassroots initiatives embody a local value system that prioritizes cooperation, and cultural celebration over neoliberal individualism. This system empowers residents to challenge external stigmatization, as seen in their resistance to narratives blaming newcomers for the area's challenges, and instead build bridges across diverse ethnicities, creating a shared identity grounded in mutual recognition and resilience.

Overall, Govanhill emerges as a dynamic community that defies Bourdieu's pessimistic view of working-class subordination. It offers a nuanced critique of his theoretical framework while, at the same time, accepting its partial utility in understanding external power dynamics.

The songs and stories co-created with residents illuminate a 'Govanhill Dream' that values human connections, collective struggle, and cultural richness over material gain, providing a counter-narrative to the dehumanizing 'Govanhell' trope. By giving emphasis to the voices of its people, this study suggests the people of Govanhill have a degree of agency in redefining its identity, challenging societal doxa, and demonstrating the transformative power of community-driven social capital. Govanhill's story serves as a broader commentary on the capacity of stigmatized communities to resist, adapt, and thrive, offering a hopeful vision of social agency and solidarity in the face of systemic marginalization.

Individuals and groups have oiled the wheels of connections between the diverse communities there. The continual and constant building of linkages has ensured the strands of connections between diverse groups are strong and each of them builds up a sense of 'their place' in Govanhill.

Importantly, the empathy and understandings between communities in Govanhill has resulted in the development of a Govanhill way of how to ‘do life’. It is a way that rejects the notion of life being a neo-liberal competition between atomistic individuals driven by the alleged utility of material consumption. Instead, everyday understandings reflect its own unique value system based on empathetic, connected community culture.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion - Seeking Higher Ground

This concluding chapter reflects on the central aims of the thesis and critically evaluates the extent to which they were fulfilled through the research process. These objectives - intellectual, empirical, and creative in nature - framed this study and determined its choices in terms of methodology and theoretical framework. In drawing these strands together, this conclusion also reflects on the broader implications of this research, situating it within contemporary political and sociological debates on urban marginality, working-class agency, and the politics of representation.

As outlined in the introduction, the broad research question addressed in this study is, to what extent can Bourdieu's assumptions about the stigmatisation and dispossession of disadvantaged communities, be applied to the communities of Govanhill in Glasgow? Each chapter in the study addressed this question from different perspectives. Broadly speaking, the community of Govanhill emerged as both a site and a symbol of resistance to notions of material dispossession, stigmatisation and neoliberal logics. This thesis has proposed new ways of seeing, knowing, and valuing lives lived outside dominant frames. Each of the objectives outlined in chapter one will now be revisited in turn.

The first objective was to assess the relevance and usefulness of Bourdieu's theories, particularly his conceptual triad of *habitus, capital,* and *field,* and the overarching notion *of symbolic violence,* in making sense of the socio-political dynamics within Govanhill. The study began by acknowledging both the influence and limitations of Bourdieu's work. While Bourdieu's theories were designed to account for the reproduction of social hierarchies and the subtle ways in which symbolic domination is internalised by the dominated, this thesis has explored whether such frameworks hold when placed in dialogue with the lived experiences of an active, diverse, and often defiant working-class community.

Chapter two provided a comprehensive examination of Bourdieu's conceptual framework and reviewed relevant critiques, particularly those that question his overly deterministic view of agency in working-class contexts. The fieldwork data revealed that while Govanhill residents were certainly subjected to various forms of symbolic violence, especially through territorial stigmatisation and neoliberal policy discourses. They were not passive recipients of this social ordering.

Indeed, as the empirical chapters illustrated, many residents of Govanhill actively challenge and resist the 'doxa' imposed upon them. They do so not only through formal activism - e.g., the Govanhill Baths campaign, Kenmure Street protest - but also through everyday practices of care, cultural exchange, and communal solidarity. These findings suggest that Bourdieu's theory, while valuable in diagnosing mechanisms of power and stigma, requires supplementation from scholars like McKenzie (2012; 2015), Skeggs (1997; 2004a; 2004b; 2005), and Sayer (1999;

2005a; 2005b; 2010) who foreground recognition, affect, and moral worth as central to the working-class experience.

The empirical analysis affirms Bourdieu's relevance in conceptualising symbolic domination but complicates his assumptions about the internalisation of that domination. Govanhill's residents demonstrate a locally embedded agency, suggesting that working-class communities possess both the reflexivity and collective strength to generate counter-narratives and alternative value systems.

The second objective involved a direct confrontation with the 'Govanhell thesis', the derogatory media narrative that has come to define public perceptions of Govanhill. This thesis has rigorously deconstructed the genesis, mechanics, and effects of this narrative, drawing on media analysis, policy critiques, and the voices of those who live in the community. It dissected how mainstream and social media have depicted Govanhill as a zone of degradation, dysfunction, and criminality. This externally imposed narrative is not just discursive - it shapes policy decisions, influences public sentiment, and ultimately contributes to the stigmatisation and dispossession of the community. Through its framing, the 'Govanhell' narrative exemplifies Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, delegitimising Govanhill's residents by rendering them invisible or inherently negatively within the national imagination.

However, the research also uncovered a powerful counter-narrative. Many Govanhill residents, through interviews and communal actions, directly confronted these portrayals. As demonstrated in chapters six and seven, collective responses such as public festivals, community arts projects, and grassroots activism have worked to replace the deficit model with one centred on dignity, resilience, and belonging.

By bringing these counter-narratives into the academic and public domain, the thesis not only challenges the 'Govanhell' construction but contributes to the broader field of resistance studies. It shows that representational politics matter - how communities are seen profoundly influences how they are treated. In that regard, this objective was not only achieved but actively embodied in the research process itself.

The third core objective of this thesis was the deliberate act of giving voice to the people of Govanhill - not as subjects to be studied, but as narrators of their own experience. This aspiration was grounded in a commitment to epistemic justice: the belief that knowledge must include the experiences and interpretations of those traditionally marginalised within dominant academic and political discourses.

This aim was powerfully realised through the use of interviews, personal testimonies and their translation into song. As shown across several chapters - especially chapters five, six and seven - the voices of Govanhill residents speak back to dominant frames. They express pride, pain, hope, and defiance. They articulate a complex web of meanings attached to identity, community, and place that cannot be captured through

policy documents or quantitative data alone. In doing so, the thesis joins a tradition of scholarship that affirms the value of lived experience—not as anecdotal, but as a legitimate form of sociological insight.

The act of quoting residents extensively throughout the thesis is a methodological choice with ethical implications. These quotations are not merely illustrative. They are integral to the argument, serving as evidence and theory in their own right. In many ways, this thesis becomes a platform for storytelling, not of an individual author, but of a community's collective voice rising through layers of distortion and erasure.

Significantly, the inclusion of these voices complicates and challenges dominant portrayals of the working-class, of migrants, of the 'inner city'. Rather than reinforcing tropes of deprivation or dysfunction, the residents of Govanhill reveal rich emotional lives, deep political awareness, and a nuanced understanding of the structural forces affecting their neighbourhood. They demonstrate that agency is not absent in marginalised contexts, it is omnipresent, though often expressed in subtle, everyday acts of care, resilience, and refusal.

By giving emphasis to these voices, this thesis performs a critical epistemological task: it makes space for subaltern narratives within academic knowledge production. In doing so, it helps re-orient sociology toward its ethical roots - a discipline committed not only to understanding society but also to amplifying the truths of those it most often overlooks.

The fourth and most distinctive objective of the study was to employ an innovative methodology - namely, the co-production of original songs - to deepen sociological insight and expand the boundaries of academic research. This move represented a deliberate effort to challenge the epistemic conventions of social science, which often privilege the written word and quantitative metrics over other expressive forms.

As outlined in chapter four and demonstrated in the inclusion of Appendix B, this research involved composing and producing songs drawn directly from the interviews and fieldwork in Govanhill (McGarvey 2022a; 2022b; 2022c; 2022d; 2023a; 2023b). The lyrics, shaped by the words of residents and informed by the author's embodied presence in the community, served as both an interpretive and creative act. They distilled affect, meaning, and political critique into a medium that transcends academic jargon and engages broader publics.

The songs are not simply a supplementary output. They constitute an analytical mode in themselves. Much like Bourdieu's insistence that sociology must be reflexive and situated, this musical intervention embodies a situated form of knowledge. It is one that attends to emotion, rhythm, and resonance as forms of sociological truth. The songs function as ethnographic artefacts, emotional testimony, and political statement all at once.

This methodological innovation aligns with the work of scholars such as Les Back (2015), who advocate for more 'sensuous' sociology (see also Back and Meer 2016), and aligns with the broader movement toward participatory, creative, and performative methods in social research. Throughout this project, I performed songs at events embedded within the community such as Music Broth and the Govanhill International Festival, as well as in Strathclyde University to my peers and lecturers. The collection of songs derived from this research will also be available publicly online, broadening the scope of accessibility beyond academia – a key rationale for the methodology. By incorporating music, this thesis breaks the wall between researcher and audience, inviting the public - not just academia - into a shared space of understanding and recognition.

Moreover, the songs serve as acts of reclamation. Where the media dehumanises Govanhill, the songs humanise it. Where statistics erase complexity, the songs evoke it. Where policy speaks *about* communities, the songs speak *with* them. In this way, the musical component of the research is not an aesthetic garnish; it is a radical methodological choice that contributes to the re-humanisation of knowledge.

Thus, objective four has not only been achieved but has opened new methodological terrain. It demonstrates that the arts can do more than disseminate findings. They can generate them. They can speak the unspeakable, feel the unfelt, and reach audiences who might never read a PhD thesis but who, nevertheless, deserve to hear the voices it contains.

Toward a Synthesis: Power, Recognition, and the Politics of Belonging

Having revisited the four objectives, this final section of the conclusion draws the threads together, proposing a broader reflection on what it means to search for "higher ground" in the context of contemporary working-class life.

The phrase 'higher ground', as articulated in the title and inspired by the song lyrics cited in the introduction, takes on layered significance by the end of this journey. It refers not only to social uplift or material improvement but also to moral, emotional, and epistemic elevation. In contrast to the dominant metrics of success - wealth, consumption, status - the residents of Govanhill articulate a different vision of value. Their higher ground is one rooted in dignity, mutual care, cultural vibrancy, and place-based belonging.

This thesis has shown that working-class communities, far from being passive or backward, are active producers of meaning and value. They possess local moral economies and use-value systems that offer powerful alternatives to neoliberal logics of competition and commodification. These systems, often informal and unrecognised, are vital to survival, resilience, and identity. They constitute what Skeggs (2014) calls

‘emergent value’, forms of worth that are not legible to the dominant gaze but are foundational to everyday life.

At the same time, this higher ground is not utopian. It is marked by struggle - against stigma, against dispossession, against the slow violence of austerity. Yet in these struggles, dignity is preserved. And in the preservation of dignity, the foundations of a different kind of politics - one based on care, solidarity, and recognition - begin to emerge.

Reimagining Theory: Extending and Complicating Bourdieu

A central outcome of this thesis lies in its contribution to sociological theory, particularly its reworking of Bourdieu’s conceptual toolkit in light of empirical data from Govanhill. As outlined in chapters two and eight, the theoretical framework of habitus, field, capital, and symbolic violence was both foundational and interrogated throughout the research process.

This thesis affirms Bourdieu’s value in diagnosing how inequality is reproduced through subtle, everyday forms of domination. The *symbolic violence* visited upon Govanhill - through media scapegoating, policy neglect, and public vilification - is a clear example of misrecognition operating on a territorial scale. Residents internalise, resist, or creatively reinterpret the narratives that cast them as deficient or deviant. As alluded to in the introduction, this thesis highlights that symbolic violence is just as damaging as economic disadvantage. Yet as the data collection of the thesis illustrates, both of them are resisted by different means: material deprivation through mutual support and community initiatives, and symbolic violence through the reclamation of knowledge, everyday socialisation within the community, coupled with long-lasting community activism that nurtures local pride, kinship and a shared spirit.

However, the study also identifies and addresses key limitations in Bourdieu’s work. Firstly, his conception of social capital, as discussed in relation to McKenzie (2012; 2015) and Skeggs (2004b), is overly narrow and instrumentalist. It fails to account for *non-exchange* value forms of solidarity and support, which abound in Govanhill. Secondly, his pessimism regarding working-class agency is challenged. The residents of Govanhill - through activism, storytelling, cultural production, and mutual aid - demonstrate precisely the kind of agentic, morally grounded conduct that Bourdieu’s model tends to understate. Finally, his limited treatment of race is addressed. This thesis expands his framework by showing how class, ethnicity, and migration status intersect to shape differential experiences of symbolic violence.

Thus, Bourdieu’s framework is not discarded, but expanded. It is infused with affect, ethics, and intersectionality. The addition of concepts like recognition and local value systems complement his structural analysis, yielding a more complete understanding of life at the margins. In that sense, this thesis builds upon Bourdieu’s legacy in the

spirit of what Reay (2004) calls ‘reflexive realism’: a sociology that is theoretically rigorous, empirically grounded, and morally attuned.

Reflexivity and my position

From the outset, this project was deeply reflexive. As the researcher, my personal and familial connection to Govanhill was not a bias to be eliminated but a standpoint to be acknowledged and critically deployed. This reflexive stance enriched the research in several key ways.

First, it enabled a deeper empathy and attentiveness in the field. My familiarity with Govanhill - and the dissonance between public portrayals and personal experience - served as the initial puzzle driving the inquiry. This personal investment became a source of intellectual curiosity and ethical commitment. It opened up spaces of trust with participants, especially when paired with the creative element of songwriting.

Second, reflexivity helped resist the objectification of participants. Rather than extracting data, I engaged in a form of co-production: listening, witnessing, and collaborating in the production of meaning. This is particularly evident in the musical outputs, which represent a unique form of dialogic knowledge-making. They are less a mirror held up to Govanhill than a chorus in which the I am as researcher, just one voice among many.

Third, reflexivity sharpened my critique of social science itself. The methodological chapter is clear in its rejection of detached positivism. In its place, the thesis embraces a more situated, interpretive, and emotionally resonant form of sociology. One that prioritises voice, meaning, and recognition over objectivity and generalisation.

The songs, interviews, and narratives that fill this thesis are not just artefacts of a community. They are moments of encounter: between theory and actuality; between researcher and participant; and between suffering and hope.

Locating the study in a broader political context: reclaiming the sociological imagination

Although rooted in a specific locale, the implications of this research stretch well beyond Govanhill. This is not simply a case study; it is a microcosm of broader dynamics in contemporary Britain. The processes examined here - neoliberal governance, symbolic violence, community resistance - are at work across the UK country, from Newcastle to Newport, from Liverpool to Leicester.

Govanhill exemplifies how austerity, racialisation, and urban marginality intersect. It reveals the failure of neoliberalism not only as an economic project but as a moral one. An ideology that blames the poor for their poverty, migrants for their precarity, and

communities for their decay. In confronting this narrative, the thesis contributes to a larger political project: the revaluation of the local, the communal, and the subaltern.

The case of Govanhill also speaks to the crisis of belonging in Britain today. The recent ‘island of strangers’ utterances of Keir Starmer (2025) signify that in a climate of rising xenophobia, territorial stigmatisation, and economic insecurity, the question ‘who belongs?’ has become deeply political. The thesis is not founded on myths or overly simplistic characterisations of the community. Instead it engages with the concerns around racial tensions in a meaningful and cautious manner, opening space for dialogue at a community level without neglecting the debate.

The residents of Govanhill answer this not with abstract political rhetoric but with actual protest, poetry, and presence. They enact belonging, through festivals, mutual aid, and everyday care, in defiance of a system that seeks to exclude them. By providing a medium of these sensitive issues, this project achieves a key contribution and counter-narrative to the often fragmented and polarised social and political climate of contemporary Britain.

This, too, is ‘higher ground’, not just an aspiration, but a grounded, lived reality. It is not an abstract ideal but a set of practices that demand recognition. By documenting and analysing these practices, the thesis offers a hopeful yet grounded vision of community resilience amidst adversity.

Also, this thesis reclaims the promise of the sociological imagination. It connects biography with history, the personal with the political. It also shows how macro-structures like neoliberalism and symbolic violence can shape everyday lives. But also, how those lives can push back, resist, and reframe meaning.

Through a combination of theoretical depth, empirical richness, and methodological innovation, this work contributes to a more democratic and humane sociology. It reminds us that the people most often written about - working-class, racialised, stigmatised - are also capable of speaking, dreaming, and theorising. They do not need rescuing; they need platforms that are heard.

The task of sociology, then, is not just to analyse the world, but to listen to it. To see through the eyes of those at the margins. To hear, in their words and songs, a different kind of wisdom. A different kind of ground.

A higher ground.

This thesis, rooted deeply in the streets, stories, and solidarities of Govanhill, stands as a testament to what happens when critical theory is allowed to meet real lives. It is both a diagnosis of symbolic violence and a celebration of symbolic resistance. It is simultaneously academic and artistic, analytical and affective.

In doing so, the study contributes to several fields. It is located in the mainstream of urban sociology and class studies. By interrogating place-based stigmatisation, the research adds depth to understandings of territorial disadvantage and neoliberal governance. It pushes beyond conventional class analyses to highlight the interwoven experiences of race, migration, and neighbourhood reputation.

The study also offers a critical yet constructive engagement with Bourdieu's theories, illustrating both their applicability and their limits. By infusing his concepts with emotion, ethics, and artistry, it generates a more holistic, humanised framework for understanding power.

The study is also methodologically innovative. In incorporating songwriting and arts-based co-production, the research pushes the boundaries of what sociological work can look and sound like. It positions creativity not as a supplement but as a central mode of knowledge production. An embodied, emotive, and inclusive methodology.

Finally, it makes a contribution in the field of political sociology. By documenting acts of community resistance, such as the Kenmure Street protest and the Govanhill Baths campaign, the thesis reveals how the working-class continue to create spaces of dignity, even in the face of systemic erosion. These are not isolated victories but evidence of a deeper political culture of refusal and reimagination, kept alive in the community consciousness through collective memory, storytelling and everyday activism of organisations embedded within the area such as Govanhill Baths Development Trust. This project itself participates in that tradition: a mode of storytelling through song which brings emotional depth and power to the lives and experiences of the participants in this study.

These contributions are not confined to Govanhill. The narratives, critiques, and insights generated here are legible in many other post-industrial, racialised, and marginalised urban contexts. Thus, this thesis offers not just a local story, but a political framework with national and even global relevance.

Directions for Future Research

While this thesis addresses its objectives with considerable depth, it also opens several fruitful pathways for future inquiry. In the field of comparative urban ethnography future studies could place Govanhill in comparative dialogue with other stigmatized urban neighbourhoods across the UK e.g., Moss Side in Manchester, Tower Hamlets in London. What is shared, and what is specific, in their experiences of symbolic violence and community resistance?

There is also the opportunity for further exploration of symbolic capital, migration and race. Although race and migration were central to the analysis, further research could investigate in more granular detail how specific migrant communities in Govanhill

negotiate belonging, build networks of support, and resist racialised narratives. Ethnographies focusing on Roma, Pakistani, or Eastern European groups in Scotland would be particularly valuable.

Building on the methodological innovations here, future work could further explore the use of arts in sociological research - not only music, but also photography, theatre, or visual storytelling. What happens when research participants become collaborators, co-creators, or performers of their own narratives?

Another potential avenue is in the field of policy impact and resistance studies: As austerity continues to reshape welfare provision, housing, and community services, further research could investigate the concrete impacts of these shifts and the ways in which communities mobilise to fill the void. How do informal economies, mutual aid, and grassroots organising reconfigure the political terrain?

Finally, there is scope for longitudinal studies of community change. Govanhill is not static. Gentrification pressures, demographic shifts, and political changes are underway. A longitudinal study following key community institutions (e.g., Govanhill Baths, community festivals) could trace how local agency evolves over time in response to external pressures.

A Closing Reflection: Higher Ground as a Moral Horizon

It is important to emphasise that to speak of ‘higher ground’ in the context of this study is not to suggest moral superiority or escapism. Rather, it is to evoke an ethical orientation, a compass that points toward recognition, solidarity, and dignity in an age increasingly marked by their absence.

Govanhill is often spoke about by outsiders as a place of chaos, degradation, and failure. What this thesis has shown, however, is that it is also a site of creativity, resilience, and moral clarity. It is a community that, while economically impoverished, is socially and symbolically rich. Its residents resist not only policies that harm them, but also the narratives that devalue them. They reject the common-sense cruelty of neoliberalism and offer, in its place, a different story about what it means to live well and to live together.

The stories, songs, and solidarities documented in this study are not nostalgic. They are urgent. In a society that increasingly commodifies everything – elderly care, education, housing, health - the lessons of Govanhill are a reminder that not all value is economic. That not all relationships are transactional. That not all worth can be measured.

Sociology, if it is to matter, must listen. It must tell the stories that others silence. It must illuminate not only structures of domination, but also the cracks in those

structures where light, laughter, and resistance break through. This thesis has attempted to do just that. To search, with others, for higher ground. Not in some far-off utopia. But here, in the contested streets of Govanhill. In the voices of the people who call it home. In the songs that speak what too often goes unheard. To search for higher ground is to believe that dignity is not a privilege—it is a right. And that telling the truth about inequality, as lived and as felt, is a radical and necessary act.

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Appendix A – Abbreviated Interview transcripts

Ania

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

I'm almost 30 and I moved to Glasgow 3 years ago…before that I lived down in Brighton and 19 years I spent in Poland…I am Polish…when I first moved to Glasgow I moved to Govanhill and I remember when I was looking for flats I saw that the one I'm actually just moving out of and someone said aww you don't wanna live in Govanhill…I asked why and they said aww you'll go and see…I didn't quite understand because I didn't really know anything about Glasgow…but I moved here and I just loved it! It's just small enough and community based…I didn't see all of the dangers that people were talking about…fair enough the infamous Allison Street that I wouldn't maybe go to after dark because all the groups of people at the corners and the guys looking up and down especially when you're a girl…just feels a bit insecure but otherwise…in the last 3 years it's changed a lot I think…it's got cleaner especially when they finally finished the cycle lane…I think that was a big step…it was during the lockdown…I only moved about half a year before the lockdown…but during the lockdown the number of businesses that opened was insane! And I think that people just started perceiving it as a nicer place with the types of businesses that opened like the independent cafes…independent businesses…it seems like it's starting to shift people's perception of where they live and they don't want this place to be perceived as something that is unfit for others to impose gentrification…I've been to all the independent cafes…I'm a big fan of Bees Knees…it's probably one of the first cafes I went to when I moved here…I met a lot of my friends there…I knew 2 people when I moved to Glasgow…one of them lived in Shawlands and the other one lived in Denniston so they were not really connected to Govanhill as such…I don't think he realised what this area has to give cos he was sort of Shawlands minded and it's quite different there…so the Bees Knees… Patricia's café which was closed for quite a while and then it became a sort of hipster point for everyone…it's just opposite Locavore so I think it attracted that kind of clientele…MILK is amazing…different cafes attract different people…Patricia's is more of a hipster thing…Bees Knees more of an arty…Bees Knees is definitely Polish and Slavic groups coming in cos the owners Polish…my friend actually lives in Shawlands but loves coming to Govanhill…she said when she was cycling through Govanhill she felt like she was in Palermo in Italy thinking that there's a mixture of nationalities and everybody is speaking a different language but everything is very fast and done with a smile and despite the differences people from different places come together and we're trying to communicate even if we don't speak the same language we're still trying to find a middle somewhere…just tryin to be together

Would you say Govanhill as a place of unity, division or more complex?

I think it's not a division I think it's a community and now there are so many things going on…it's different communities and we're trying to kind of blend it together and get all the people together and I think people are starting to see that this is the point of this place cos it's unique…I don't think there's any other area in Glasgow that is like this…like people actually put effort to integrate the entire population of one area saying…look we're not different…we're all the same we just speak different languages and have different culture backgrounds but we're still people and we wanna do things together for each other…it stems from history and good human nature…dividing us

into countries is a bit superficial…we didn't decide that we just happened to be born in a certain place or another…and historically they were migrating…they were curious about other places they wanted to meet other people and learn about other people and take the best things out of all of the cultures to blend and adapt…that's what they're doing…this is exactly what we are doing and I think it connects with the human nature thing it's our need of discovering and developing rather than just being stagnant and sticking to what we just know

What has encouraged you to stay in the area?

The people I know that's for sure…you've got a feeling…when I go out and walk through Victoria Road I'm gonna meet at least 5 people I know and stop and talk with them and ask how they are…even if they don't live exactly in this area they're gonna go past this area and I'm gonna meet them anyway…so it's kinda like a meeting point or a meeting hub…so I like the idea of staying around cos it's so familiar…it's familiar faces and even if I don't know people I recognise them and you kind of give this little nod as if to say you're cool…and I wanna hang around and see how it develops and what it's gonna become because there's great things starting to happen in Govanhill…it feels like home very much so and it felt like home very quickly when I moved here…it was just so welcoming…I lived in Brighton which was very much multi-cultural but it didn't feel like a community…everyone there was quite independent and trying to show how amazing they were which is just not the point is it? They just their noises so high in the air…just really tiring…I think the difference stems from the vicinity of London I'm not sure…it's very difficult to find a community to be within there…it feels very isolated like London and southern England…in places like Romania and Poland you've got a more community based upraising so when you're moving somewhere you're gonna be looking for places where that's happening…where you feel a sense that you belong and recreate that feeling of community…I'm from a small town…we had 17 thousand people in it…you knew everyone or you knew of everyone and we were always together…there were always community events in the little area where we were from…we always seemed to be together…I grew up in a small town called Polkowice in Western Poland and it's just a small town…slightly bigger than a village…I always lived there until I was 19…I went to school there and I lived in a block of flats that were built in the 80s I think so all of my friends were kinda from these 3 block of flats and we went to school together and the local school was only 3 minutes away…we had a community…all of the kids were playing together outside of school in the local playground…my childhood felt very safe…you could roam as you pleased…because everybody knew each other with all the parents…we were safe everywhere…if we went to even the other side of town there was always an adult you could go to and they would know your mum or someone from your block of flats in case something happened so it was very safe…I see the kids running around all the time here and they also seem to know each other…and I think cos we've got tenements it's kind of similar to our block of flats…if they live in 1 or 2 tenements they're gonna be playing together and going out together and growing up together similar to what I done as a kid…there are similarities between Govanhill and where I grew up…maybe I was sub-consciously looking for a place that gave me the same feeling that I had growing up

What are the biggest strengths of Govanhill as a place?

Space for development…we can still do and think of things that need to be done and work on these together…it has got a massive potential…the house prices and the rent has all gone up and Govanhill in my head was always meant to stay an affordable place to live but there's a big potential in development and helping people out and making it a place that is affordable without pushing anyone out…so yeah potential

Are there any weaknesses if any?

Well there's peoples opinion of Govanhill still…the perception of Govanhill is still not great so I think some people who move here and want to do things to this place might push it into the wrong direction so on one hand you've got that potential and space of doing things the majority if not all of the residents of Govanhill but on the other side you've got the people who can actually damage the area and turn it into another Shawlands…so weaknesses would be new people who want to move it into the wrong direction and maybe some people who already live here and don't wanna change anything at all and don't wanna cooperate but then it's up to them and not up to us to change their mind even though you can talk to people and present them with new ideas and try to change their behaviour slightly…like with rubbish problems…if someone doesn't have it in them to sort out the rubbish and leave trash out everywhere especially now when the councils not picking bulk collections anymore for free…if we don't change the mindset to taking care of the place that we live that's a problem

Do negative perceptions come from outwith the community or in the community?

I think it's from the outside…I don't think many people living in Govanhill would say anything bad about it…there's always issues…there's issues in every area…every town…every city but it's mostly from people who've never lived here or never made friends here or have never actually spend any time here…we must know or have heard or have thought about that from another people who have thought that…how people outside of Glasgow like down south knew about this area is particularly bad for living…they must've heard it from someone maybe from Glasgow but who has never been or lived here in Govanhill…just heard horror stories of someone stabbing someone in the streets…the media probably a little bit as well but mostly people talking and talking shit…lack of knowledge about the area…people were surprised that I was moving to Govanhill and the reaction wasn't really positive because apparently it wasn't the best place to live because it's dirty it's dangerous…don't go out in the dark and all of that…that was pretty much it…there was a handful of people who said that to me but then again I never experienced anything bad happening to me personally apart from the dirty and getting pissed off that the council weren't picking up rubbish on my street…if you come to Govanhill you're probably gonna go a walk in Queens Park so you want that area to be nice and clean but if you go to any of the side roads then you'll find all the bloody rubbish but also the price difference in flats and the people who live in the areas are quite different because no one who earns less than 30 or 40k a year is going to be able to afford to live on Queens Drive…it's definitely a power dynamic with the council itself…I lived in Boyd Street and we created a neighbourhood community hub and we just said well the council is just not doing anything…people who just throw rubbish away on the street are just gonna continue to do that that's not gonna change…no fines gonna change that so we need to organise picking up rubbish on our own…contact the Housing Association and ask

them if they can provide us with the materials and equipment to safety get the rubbish off the street and that's what started happening and the roads and streets are being cleaned now by the neighbours…it's not coming from the council…the councils like aw sorry we don't have money…they say they don't have money to send more than 1 person every 2 weeks to pick up rubbish on that street…it's bullshit

Are there any events or day in the area that you vividly remember?

The Govanhill International Festival…the parade that goes on Victoria Road every year…that's amazing…that's a lot of people putting in a lot of effort…and the colourfulness of everything…and that's another thing for community because the festival is a community showcasing the internationality and the international side and how diverse Govanhill is…the whole Queens Park initiative of showing free films and free events…I think that's great and I quite like that…and it encourages people to come and participate and it doesn't segregate people…if you have money or don't have money you can go…what I really liked was a year ago Gamis organised a screening of Limbo just behind the Govanhill Picture House that was pretty cool

How did the parade make you feel?

That I'm part of it and if I wanted to take part in it I'd feel even more part of it and that Govanhill doesn't pick people…you just are and if you live here you're just part of it no matter what and it doesn't matter your age as well…if you're disabled or whatever…everyone's part of it…everyone…literally everyone

Can you tell me a bit about your open mic nights at the Bees Knees?

The atmosphere was always brilliant and what I liked about hosting was that you never knew who was gonna come and the number of extremely talented people who live in Govanhill and are at our doorstep is just immense! No one really messages us saying oh can I come or can you put me on the list…the open mic was always aimed to be open and if you show up and if you feel like it you can perform and if you show up feel like performing then change your mind it's fine as well…and if you wanna dance if you wanna do stand up if you wanna play guitar and if you wanna just stand there and say hello it's fine…we were trying to be as friendly as possible and try to make everyone welcome and wanted and make them feel that people want to listen to them and see them for what they are and what they have to show and how many people that said that they wanted to come back to the open mic was substantial…we had a girl from Belgium come once who had heard about the open mic from someone saying oh there's an amazing open mic at the Bees Knees you should go so she came and then there was an Irish guy who was on a trip from Dublin and someone in town told me to go to Govanhill there's a café called Bees Knees that's got an open mic this Friday you should go and play and he came and played! It was fantastic and we stay in touch

Do you think Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

I was going through quite a weird time a couple of years ago…3 years ago when I moved and my outlook on life was changing at the time in general and I think that it definitely helped me in becoming a bit more open and a little more accepting and through the people I met…you know in Brighton and the London area it was always

very picky and clicky and you had to be very careful and here you just go into deep waters and try and find new friends and make new connections and I had to open myself up for a lot of unknown and Govanhill being as diverse as it is it was even more that…so yeah it helped me change in a good way…we become a little bit of every person that we meet…we always get a little something and we change and shake in accordance to where we are

What in life is important to you?

Belonging…the feeling of belonging…feeling a part of things…that's why I'm going to milk community stuff because I just wanna be part of something and if I can help I wanna help and if I can volunteer my time I'm gonna do that…fuck money…people and belonging

What in life is of lesser importance?

Definitely money…I quit my job…my inhouse position of a very nice London salary to move to Scotland…I worked remotely for them for a year and after learning how living can look like and how you can enjoy yourself and your life with having less money but being happy and engaged in the area I was like hmmm fuck it…I'm just gonna ditch my job start my own business see how it goes…have less money and not care about these things because I can still be happy but not sitting in front of my laptop 9-5 and then having 2 or 3 hours of living I want to be a bit more engaged…you're not gonna die with your bank account who fucking cares? What gives you happiness? Your monthly salary in your bank account? I mean I was earning really well but it wasn't happy and I could afford all these things and go places and I didn't have to worry but I didn't have time for anything! And now I don't have time but not because I'm stuck somewhere in a tiny office…now I don't have space because I'm engaged in a community and doing things that I actually like and enjoy not necessarily getting paid well but I do things I enjoy…I'm still doing translating like what I was doing before but it's on my terms as well…my bosses were assholes…there were 2 ladies in their late 50s early 60s who were 100% Tory who hired only eastern Europeans because we had lower expectations of pay right? And you couldn't ask them for anything…they were not flexible and they were completely set in old ways of running a business…they were a bit aggressive and if I reported everything that they said to me over the years to HR they'd be in jail…when I went to hand my resignation and have a conversation of why I'm doing this one of the directors said I was an ungrateful bitch and that they'd given me a lot and that they had been very flexible with me and that I should be kneeling in front of them and thanking them for all the opportunities because they took me off university and at the end she said get the fuck out of my office (laughs)…I am now a freelancer I don't need to beg anyone for a day off…I don't earn as much but that's fine…I can still get by…I've learned how to use the money wisely…I've got so much more freedom and I can pick the work I wanna do

Are there any differences between grassroots organisations and larger companies?

Well sure cos if you've got the cooperate companies they care about profit that's the most important…making money and using people to their advantage…big companies don't care about the little people…communities do and grassroots organisations do

Are you involved in the community?

We helped Dana at the G42 pop ups…I was a volunteer at Oxfam for quite a bit back in 2019/2020 and a bit after the first lockdown…I did some Polish lessons for Thriving Govanhill…I was actually in MILK to speak to them about doing the open mic and I might be hosting an open mic for them for women in the area and meditation classes…it makes you feel amazing…when it comes to breathing and meditation and women's circle…breathing meditation…giving people tools to manage anxieties and depression and stress levels…I think it's quite important especially in the world that we live in at the moment…you can look these things up in YouTube but it's not the same as in person and I think some people might be actually interested in doing this in person with someone local and I haven't seen many things like this in community so I wanna be the first person to introduce it which is quite exciting…and women calls I think it's quite important for women to open up and recognise their needs and if they need someone to facilitate these kind of meetings where there's women only and I think MILK is the perfect place for that being a female only led café…I feel excited it's a great opportunity to engage with local people again cos it's about community

Can you tell me about your family background as far back as you can go?

My mum's family in from Ukraine so we have roots in Ukraine…my great great grandparents were definitely born around Lviv and they moved across the border to Poland…they were all teachers and my great great grandfather was an organ player in a church and he also led a fire brigade choir and my grandmother on my mother's side was one of 13 children…my grandmother was a teacher and my grandfather was a doctor…they migrated for work…I never knew my grandfather but he migrated all over Poland because he was a doctor so if any place needed a doctor he'd go and live in different villages…my mum lived in 4/5 different towns when she was little and then they moved to western Poland and they stayed there in the town I was born

If anyone has any doubts about Govanhill they should come and see for themselves

<u>Augustina</u>

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Yeah! So my name is Augustina…Lithuanian born n bread…25…part-time studying…full-time living in Govanhill for the last…I mean…2 years now living in Govanhill

Why did you decide to move to Govanhill?

I think it's the most…I don't want to say rough n ready but I quite like a bit more of a…I think Shawlands and Battlefield was way too gentrified and a bit too fancy…too many

coffee shops that's just scream overpriced and 'you can't sit with us' kind of vibe so Govanhill just had like…I wanna say spicier? But in a good way there's just a bit more going on than…like there's all the Romanian and Polish and Lithuanian shops so I quite like that…I can get like my pickled herring…my pickles and my sauerkraut and things like that so I've always felt like…you still get the Scottish pubs and that where you can go for a drink with your pals but for me…for my own gain…I liked quite a few of the…and it is kinda where a big foreign community kinda lies in Govanhill so I feel kind of a bit more…homely if you may? And the number one thing that kind of attracts you is the cheap rent…rent used to be up until a couple of months ago it used to be really really affordable…so you get the same kind of architectural structure as Battlefield and Shawlands in terms of the old tenement but the price was actually…nice…so the flat we live in right now…high ceilings…big windows like it's a gorgeous flat but we're paying like a decent amount in rent compared to like tripling the price that would cost in Shawlands

What were your first impressions of the area?

A little bit messy…a little bit too much fly tipping I'd say…there's a…lack of love shown for the streets…certain streets are just a little bit messy…overflowing bins…a set of drawers and a mattress being like flopped out of almost what looked like a window…a lot of sunflower seeds…the cracking of sunflower seeds…so a lot of Romanian people really like to crack sunflower seeds so they can stand around in like groups of friends and just kinda crack them and talk and chat but then that leaves like a huge pile of sunflower seeds in the corner of every other street which kind of irks me a little bit…personally when I hang about with my friends in Lithuania we have a wee box and we all throw that in that wee box…we don't shit in our own doorstep basically we try to keep whenever we are as clean as possible…so that would kinda always irk me so I'm in the same bubble as all the other foreigners in Govanhill we all came here from other places and by Scottish people we're all sort of put into this bubble like Govanhill it's all full of like foreigners and it has a sort of reputation sometimes it's a bit negative sometimes it's a bit more positive depending on who you ask but I would maybe have liked to have seen…as a collective of people trying to keep the streets a bit more clean…the only thing that I don't agree with is the like not feeling safe in Govanhill…I've never feel more safe in Govanhill than any other part of Glasgow…London or Lithuania…I'm sure you've heard a few rumours about police getting involved in certain cases about people or children going missing…some would like to call it trafficking other would like to call it other things…I don't know how in detail I can get cos because I think maybe there might've been a case once where illegal activities might've taken place which then was publicised which then spread like wildfire…whenever anything negative comes around and when people talk it can always get slightly exaggerated…and then that's the thing that sticks with Govanhill…like don't walk around there at night and I'm like what you talking about? Like I've never felt more calm…I've lived in London for a while so I'm quite kinda street wise and street safe…whenever it be day or night-time I'm aware of my surroundings I constantly look behind me just to be aware that there isn't anyone behind me…but I've never been mugged here never been stopped or even tried…like no ones ever tried anything…like I said when I used to work in Shawlands and walk home every night cos I used to work at the bookies and used to close at 10 and my punters used

to say oh how do you get home? And I'd say I walk it's like a 15 minute walk down the road and they'd say like you walk home…at Govanhill…during the night-time? I was like of course I do I live there how else do I go to the shops at night to get a missing ingredient for dinner? Do you I meet up with my friends and then…Queens Park is two minutes away from my house so if I go for a drink then I walk home what do you mean how do I walk home at night? With my legs like do you think there's like a Bible John still walking around or something like you know?

So do you think there is a stigma?

Oh big time…like the whole thing of like I remember the good old days like you know I remember my Govanhill…you know the whole thing of…I used to speak to one of my work colleagues when she was younger she…like's like 55 now so when she was younger she'd go to Victoria Road to do the shopping with her mum and stuff and it's like a whole day out…go get shopping…go get something to eat then maybe go to the park…like it's a bog standard family day out that still exists to this day but she kind of painted the picture where it was…clean…there weren't that many Romanians around…it was safer it was more influential…you know cos you see the strip on Queens Drive…like all the tenements that are facing Queens Park…they're incredibly well kept there isn't a single piece of rubbish…bins get collected on time the tenants pay a certain fee for the block to be maintained for everything to be pristine and that's cos it's facing the park and it's pretty…but then you know two rows behind and where I live on Langside…lifetime of a difference…the reason why I'm moving out of my block is cos termites eating at the skylight and it rains inside the block through the skylight when it rains outside and that we've been in the flat for two years and it's only getting looked into now and they're vacating the whole building cos of how bad the situation has gotten because of how long it's been left…it's a problem with landlords to start with…there is some political issues like ummm…in terms of politically when I've lived to see how…what area of Southside in getting looked after more you'll find that it's towards the left you're in like Battlefield…fairly clean…bins get picked up on time…even the binmen put the bins back in the block where they were when they picked them up…same in Shawlands then I lived in Shawlands they were never missed they'd never like overload with rubbish and they'd get put back where they belong…then I moved back to Govanhill…lifetime of a difference my bins had not been collected sometimes for weeks…they was only one recycling bin for the whole block that'd get overfilled which didn't get picked up for months sometimes you'd call the council and you wouldn't get taken care of and then instead of the bins getting put at the back of the garden where they were picked up for they'd get dropped off right at the entrance where you'd open the door to the garden…so you *feel* a difference to how the residents of Govanhill are being looked after compared to Shawlands for example…and that happens within Govanhill I mean like Queens Drive…pristine flats…beautiful…the rent is different cos it's prettier and blocks are looked after better but two streets up it's very nice and clean and then you jump back to Langside which is only two rows behind…well three rows behind but it's a minute difference of a walk and it's shambles…and it's also where the money is…like why would I look after these people who are only paying like…let's say 600 for their flat where these guys two doors up the road or whatever who are facing the park who have these beautiful tenements are gonna pay three times as much for their rent so obviously they need to

get…everything needs to be nice and tidy for them but these people aren't paying as much rent…so yeah it's weird it's really strange…it's crazy what a fifteen minute walk can do when you see the difference between how Govanhill are treated in comparison to Shawlands…there is a sense of community I've been a part of the Govanhill Community Facebook page and things like that

What community groups have you been involved in?

Immediately as soon as I moved to Govanhill I kinda wanted to just like get a few groups just to kind of…so that I'm not out of the loop…there's the Govanhill Community Page where people bring forward pictures of fly tipping and people parking like idiots and just tiny things that irk the people of Govanhill…but there's other things where people organise clean stuff like I've seen a few boys in the summer time just walking around with bin bags and picking up litter off the streets these aren't council led these are people who live here and there's different groups of different parts that would say this day this time who's down? Let's clean this part of the street and they'd take before and after pictures and say look what we can do if we all kind of…this was only 12 of us who met up…so there's like positive things like meeting up in the park and discussing certain issues that are going on to get people to sign certain things and to vote for certain things so there's a beautiful side to that and then there's people like here's another fly-tipper

What are the strengths of Govanhill as a place? Are there any weaknesses?

In terms of strengths I think Govanhill has benefitted from the influence of…kind of the foreign cultures coming in you know if you look up Vikky Road there's like a lot of Polish…like Transylvania has really popped off like they've kind of fished in a lot of Scottish and other non-Romanian non-Polish non-Lithuanian…kind of my Eastern European block…a lot of shops that I go into for like my pickles and all that they're a little more closed off and they don't look as inviting but Transylvania you've seen Transylvania right? So it's opened up like a very inviting…open…clear window kinda shop where you can look into and see coffee and cakes and other bits but a lot of people now have stepped in and looked around and I think that is now submerging the two cultures to kind of communicate better and like I see so many people drinking coffee there and having a chat and I'm pretty sure the Romanian boys…the owners of Transylvania kind of done a positive thing of opening up on the High Street and other people then…the regular people have had a wee teaser of different products and speaking to these people and I think that hopefully will break down a certain barrier…if the older generation can see that actually we're getting along just fine and I think you may have had the wrong end of the stick or have met the wrong person who has given you the idea that these groups of people are a negative on the area cos psychologically it's easier to concentrate on the negatives than it is to concentrate on the positives so if you have one bad experience you're gonna condemn these people as aww these people they come here they take benefits and they mess up Govanhill rather than most of the other people that you haven't met who actually do try to make their living

situation better and in turn help the community…so I think the positives are that shops are opening up people are getting jobs you know…money's getting put into the country rather than taken out and the negatives I would say is that a lot of people do think that people come here…sit on their arse…get a free council flat and send the money back home which is not always the case it's not that easy to get onto the system it's not that easy to have big money and send it all back home and the thing I hear all the time is ohhh they come here and they get our…they do things that blow my mind like ohhh they take our council flats and they take our jobs and they send money back home how can they take the council flats take the jobs and send money back home? You physically cannot do that…most of the time you get a council flat if you're unable to work and you're unable to afford a regular privately let flat…it's hard cos some of the people I've spoken to are nice people…like some of the older Scottish people I've spoken to in the bookies for example they're nice to me and they're sweet and they're smart and they have a lot of contribute but then things like that come out of their mouth and I'm like you do know I'm foreign I might not look it…they say that cos I'm white and it gets them to really open up the truth…I think sometimes they forget I'm Lithuanian because I sound English cos from the age of 10 to 22 I grew up in London…yeah the worst people that get shafted are the Romanians…I think what they say is that I'm English and I will also agree with their opinion of aww these people are coming into this country! And I'm like let me stop you right there pal! I'm Lithuanian and I live in Govanhill and I am that…I am those foreigners that you're talking about…just cos I'm a couple of shades lighter than them it doesn't mean that we're not these people that didn't…didn't really like our country in the sense of we couldn't get enough money there and we couldn't have the luxuries that we have here…for example if I lived in Lithuania unless I have an incredible degree and a really good job like a doctor for example…like if I just worked a regular job which I do…here then I wouldn't be able to afford holidays…I wouldn't afford certain things that I do here so people just come here cos the wages are better…it's just a human thing like my family came to London then I came here because I can freely without too many qualifications have a decent job that pays enough and pays my rent…pay for another few bits and bobs go to the pubs with my pals treat myself with a nice dinner and within a couple of months put some money aside to afford a relatively cheap holiday…that isn't as open to you back home

Can you tell me a bit about the jobs you've been in since you've been in Scotland?

Yeah I printed all my CVs and just went all up and down city centre…the only place that responded was Cook and Indi's it was a World Buffet…was gonna be a waitress it was a zero-hour contract…it was bad not good…I wanted full time money full time hours to be able to afford rent and other things so I woke to the guy who's like the manager…had a chat and he was like yeah you ready to go? He was like we're mainly gonna try and get you in for 30 hours 35 hours you know basically enough to have your wages at a good level and I was like cool…so I'd normally start at like 11 that's when the morning shifters came in and opened the restaurant and then 2 or 3ish that's when the lunch business would die down and that's when I'd mostly get sent home so I'd never complete a shift unless it was the weekends and they actually needed people on and other people would call off sick…so they'd actually need someone to be there

from 11 till closing…I wasn't given what I was promised and I was coming up from Battlefield getting a number 4 to town then back…so my travels would cost me…and my wages wouldn't have covered as much as I would have liked it to…so I was getting a bit kinda sick and tired of that…terrible hours I'd get sent home early a lot of the times where I was trying to make my hours

Can you tell me about any other jobs you've had?

I applied for Crema the coffee shop just down the road…this job I've had for nearly 3 months…zero-hour contract…but complete other spectrum of the first zero-hour contract…when I first spoke to the owner of the coffee shop who interviewed me he guaranteed me the hours that I wanted…he said when we speak to people we make sure their livelihoods are going to be covered and that you are going to be happy and feeling safe in the shop so immediately I was like okay I was feeling good…he asked me how many hours I'd be after and I was like minimum 30 cos I was just trying to get enough to pay my rent and he was like I can guarantee you you're going to get the hours sometimes if you want more that might be there for you too…only if you want it kind of a thing…I would recommend everyone to work at Crema infact if I ever have kids I'll send my kids there…him and his brother are the most wonderful people I've ever met…as employers they made me feel very safe…very comfortable…I got the hours…I got really good money…got really good tips got fed on the job got free coffee on the job…any juice I wanted from the fringe was mine…there was no restrictions…see a lot of restaurants you'd have the staff menu you were only meant to eat certain things off the menu that aren't too expensive…everything was on the table…salmon…this that so I felt so good so at seize…I called off sick at one of the days I worked at Crema…he couldn't have been more understanding…so sweet and kind cos a lot of employers get pissy when you call off sick like how can you do this? I could talk for another 2 hours of how nice this guy is…I came into work the next day and he came to me and said you still look a little bit wounded from your pains if you may and said do you want to have Sunday off? I can cover you tomorrow I can talk one of my guys and see if he can cover your shift tomorrow…that doesn't happen very often so he was very nice

What in life is important to you?

I wanna say financial stability…but financial stability in the way that I'm not stressing about how I'm gonna buy myself bread and milk you know or how I'm gonna get up the road…I don't wanna be someone who is ballin and rich but I just want to not stress about buying myself a dinner or going to the West End on the bus to see my friend cos he's cooking me dinner…just enough money to get by basically…financial stability would be good and not having to worry about money would be great but I just wanna have enough to just participate in certain things in life and I don't want a Gucci belt…I don't even want a car let alone a nice car…I wanna have my 2 legs and 2 arms to get me to where I wanna get…enough mental health to uphold the relationships I have

made and friendships and enough money to maybe participate in this stupid consumer society

What is of lesser importance?

I guess material stuff to begin with…I like to dress up nicely and I like to smell good with nice perfume but I don't care that much if it doesn't exist it wouldn't change my life at all I wouldn't…like if we were all walking around with bananas leaves instead of knickers and bras that'd be cool…you know what I mean? I don't care about cars I don't care about having a 12 bedroom house with a big garage and a conservatory…that's the last thing that I care about I don't care about whether my boyfriend is earning…you know…60k 70k a year as long as he's physically healthy and mentally okay…give or take cos none of us are really all there and that's fine…just as long as we're able to get up and go for a walk in the park and if the day is nice play some badminton that's good…the rest it doesn't matter…he doesn't have a car I don't care he can never have a car for all I care…it'd be nice to be a homeowner but I also don't care if I don't become one…it's a concept that we've constructed that in order to feel safe and good as an adult when you're older is to have a house in your name to be stable…no…there's certain homeless people out there who are happier than some of you lot sitting in your 5 bedroom house with your bimmer parked up in your gaff like…it really doesn't matter

Is there any events or days in the area that you remember vividly?

Yes yes emmm…my boyfriend was going to the lidl to get a few bits and bobs for dinner and he called me and he was like you have to run out on the street right now…just run and I was like where? And it was literally see where the new pub is on that wee corner? That wee road is where it was all kinda poppin off so Govanhill Community page or the Govanhill community people had organised this wee…like march on the streets…it was like a random Tuesday night like it was no specific thing…it was just I think it was a dance studio that were promoting their services so a few youngins were dancing infront of this kind of…in the middle of the march and there were people around them…loud music drums were going they had like these wee bikes rolling with like speakers and they had like a projector that was projecting people's…the people that were dancing infront of you it was projecting their faces and onto the tenements…so like the bike was moving and at the side of the bike the projector was facing the buildings and projecting onto the buildings the people…music was happening…different people of like all different kinds of races were doing their cultural dances and this lasts like 20 minutes half an hour! And everyone just kinda like…disappeared…I think there was about a couple hunner people…it kinda spread out nicely cos the street was covered in people…the middle of the street the sidewalks we were all there like sardines in a tuna tin if you know what I mean like…sardines in a tuna tin? Nah like sardines in a sardine tin…we were just squished everyone was just squished on the street but everyone was just looking at these people dancing and not that many people wouldn't know what on earth was going on I think people were

just hearing the sound of the drums and the commotion and like my boyfriend just got distracted and thought what are these people doing and walking down the street like on the whole road…everyone was just like happy? Confused? And just wondering what on earth is going on and it just ended in 20 minutes and I think everyone just ran out into the streets thinking what is this sound? And people were like sticking their heads out windows and it was just such a random beautiful moment…and another memory I'd say was…since I've moved in cos where we live…our kitchen backs onto the train tracks and across the train tracks we face the other people's back garden…so a lot of Romanian dudes live at the block across from us and they always have BBQs…I'd say sometimes 30/40 people come and kind of all gather at that garden…you see a fire going you see a lot of kids running around and they kind of gather and start singing old traditional…from what I'm aware of…traditional folk either Romanian like…the Romanian community give or take are based of all different…you know…but what they sing sounds kind of similar to what Lithuanian music sounds like in the sense that it's very folky and very like woooaa and harmonised…folk tunes…but foreign so I don't know what they're saying but it just sounds beautiful cos there's about 15 of these boys ranging from the age of 12 and 50 and just sitting in their garden by the barbie waiting for the meat to cook and they're all just saying these old folky tunes but they're harmonising in the way where…cos there's so many of them and they're in the open and we're across from them…the music just pours in through the windows on these random summer nights where they'd be there and I'd be cooking some dinner and I'd stop my music and open my window to hear them sing and it would just warm my heart and these random groups of people would just walk around to their different flats and go home and they'd be walking home and singing as well…there was once like a boy with a guitar walking down the street and like 3 or 4 of his boys were with him and they were all just singing and walking down the street! But these like old folky like high pitched vocally tunes that you don't hear youngins sing anymore and it just sounds like so cool and it gives this warmth sometimes to the gritty side of Govanhill that may not be all clean and loved as much as we'd like it to…there was moments where I was just at awe of how beautiful the collective here is and how these people may not have as much money or as much resources or maybe getting worried about getting deported or looked at differently by Scottish people…but they in that moment didn't seem to care they were just singing and harmonising with their pals and kids were running around on the grass and we were having a barbie and…moments like that I will never forget they were absolutely…I think the free aspect of it is what makes it like they were just sitting there in their garden and singing and I was just in my kitchen…listening and feeling the vibrations and frequencies coming out of their voices and getting very uplifted by what they were doing…it's second hand happiness…watching other people singing…and despite their circumstances still finding things in life that are beautiful and that shit just brought me up…brought me to tears sometimes…but in a happy way where you're just like where am I gonna find this song what are you singing it sounds so good! I can't record it cos it lasted like a minute and I'm the only person and my boyfriend who was in the kitchen at the time…are the only people are gonna feel this feeling…second hand from these people who are just enjoying themselves in their gardens…to us it was beautiful to other people it could be trash but beauty is in the eye of the beholder

Carol

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Just lived in Govanhill all ma days…brought up in Govanhill first in 7 Daisy Street and then in 472 Allison Street and now in 8 Dixon Road so I've lived in Govanhill all ma life

Were you involved in any community events growing up?

We used to go to a Monday club that was run by Our Lady of Consolation and we always went down there…I mean the girls went to the Brownies across from the school

A always remember Saint Patrick's Day you'd get green ribbons in your hair and we used to be able to eat sweets on that day…it was always during Lent but you were allowed to break it on St Patricks Day…we always had someone to watch us while mom and dad went to a dance…they went out on Easter Sunday and St Patricks Day and that were their 2 main events

Can you tell me about the home you grew up in? What was a typical day?

Well school and then we'd go out the back…aw the wains went into the back…at our back in Daisy Street there was a wee hut and we used to play houses in there and 2 man hunt…there was 1 big back and aw the wains were in it and there was an old wash house in it and dykes and we used to sit up in the dykes and then when everyone had to go in everyone used to say the games a bogey the mans in the lobby come out come out whenever you are! That means yer ma wis shoutin ye better go…everybody wis just pally wae everybody like if there wis a big crowd out then we'd make up games…nobody had money…there wis naebody any richer than anybody else everybody was out the back…there wis one wee lassie round the corner though she wis spoilt rotten she hid aw the dolls…Debbie her name wis…she hid aw the latest dolls…but other than that if ye wanted a go kart ye made it…know wit a mean? Ye got wheels and a box and ye made yer own go kart…ye know wit a mean? There wis nae…you[d be lovely enough to get 2 balls and ye'd play the games and there wis Chinese ropes the girls used tae get…it wisnae like yer proper skippin ropes it wis somethin that yer da brought in for ye from work…that wis yer ropes we didnae hiv proper ropes…but everybody joined in…if anybody said can a join in everybody joined in…there wis none a this you're no playing and you're no playin…everybody wis pals…I don't know what it's like now but I don't think they mix…they mix in their own groups

Do you remember much about the accommodation in 2001?

I do remember like loads of people out supporting it…they were all outside it when you were going up and down Calder Street when you were drivin past…there wis people inside the building there wis people outside the building…I just remember that and them standing with the placards and I did support cos I thought why take another thing

away from the community? Cos it was already a shithole as it was way back in that time…there was actually nothin…it's yer heritage as well…it's architecture and it's all to do with…I mean granda took us to the swimming baths every second Saturday…he used to take us down and I remember all the wee doors…the wee swingin doors going into it…I mean that was his time to spend with us and he used tae take us out and half drown us…ye know take ye out and make ye swim…it wis somewhere to go…it wis something to do as a family…ma boys learnt to swim there…used tae take them down to swimmin lessons…there wis loads of children learnin how to swim at the same time so when they were in you were sitting up the stairs…also we hid no bath…we were one of the lucky ones cos we had…it wis a cupboard that hid been made into a toilet and the Gallaghers up the stairs…they had a bath…but we never…we used to get washed in the sink and that wis it…it wis once a week…ye never got washed every night…there was none a this…a mean you got washed and cleaned behind yer ears but it was in the kitchen sink it wisnae in…we only hid 1 sink…we'd get our shower in Govanhill Baths then go swimming…the other 2 houses in our landing shared the toilet back in those days…and they had the keys for it…we didn't have the keys for it cos we had our own toilet…and auntie Mary and auntie Cathy had the outside toilets down the Gorbals…it wis the Cluggy

Do you socialise with your neighbours now?

Nah…I chat to them if I'm out the back…I know them all…there's certain ones I'd chat to cos we'd been there the longest then there's a lot of rented to young hipster types…they've moved into the area and they've been good for the area…I mean we'd never think about using our back to go and sit out in but I would think about it now…now it's totally different and there's seating up there and that was that Seeds of the Community they were like what can we do? So they built things out of old crates and put tables up so a lot of the younger ones would go out and sit out there…there's lots of grass it's a community space so a lot a them have started using it more but we don't cos our windows don't look onto it

Can you tell me about your family background as far back as you can go?

I always remember going to visit my granda…I don't remember my granny at all…my mum's mum because she died when I was 2…I just remember Granny Boyle coming around and she used to take me away cos the boys were wild and a was the only girl so she used to take me round to hers to give mum a break…I remember mum used to take us down to Bennan Square with auntie Margaret…they used to stay just round the corner and we'd go and visit them and we'd go down to the Gorbals to visit granda and auntie Cathy…they were in the same close…they were in 7 Rutherglen Road and I remember them having a big back out the side and then going up to auntie Mary's but auntie Mary stayed up the high flats and we'd be terrified going out there cos of the wind and that…mum never let us out there

Were you family migrants?

Yeah very much…dad loved his football and used to take me to the games…for a Donegal guy he never really made a difference to me from the boys so a got to go to the football so dad would take us up on a Saturday and think it was 3 pound for an adult and their children going to see Celtic…we went to mass we were Irish we spent our summers in Ireland…we spent our summers in Mayo so the minute the schools stopped we went to Mayo…dad worked through the summer…dad used to take us over in the car leave us and then he'd come back for the last 2 weeks and we knew when we seen him we were like ohhh naw we're gawn back to Glasgow hahahaha…dad was strict…dad worked 7 days a week he got a half day on a Saturday and he'd come in maybe 4 o'clock on a Sunday but the rest of the time he wis workin…he never took time off…very very rarely…couldn't cook absolutely useless! But he was the one that if we were going to the park every wain got fired in the car…it wisnae just us it was come one come all! Dad had no English when he came over…he was predominantly Irish speaking and granny was Irish speaking…dad wasn't allowed to be a godfather for one of them because he didn't know a full prayer in English which is absolutely disgusting…it would all be dependent on the priest at the time

Why was it that they move to Glasgow?

For work…granda died so dad was the main breadwinner so he hid tae earn the money for his mum and his sisters…he'd already been in Glasgow so he worked a way up the north of Scotland and he'd come down and bought a house and then he furnished it bit by bit and done it up at the weekends but he'd be workin and whatever time he got off he done the house up and then she took granny and my auntie Margaret and my auntie Kitty to Glasgow….auntie Margaret got a job as a clippy…a lot of the Irish women got jobs as clippies on the buses…dad was nearly dyin…he had lead poisoning…he'd been up on the roof and had been paintin the roof and cut himself and lead poisoning went in…he got the last rights n everythin and nearly died

Mum never named us any Irish names cos she said we'd never get a job

What is it you cherish most about your grandmother, your dad and mum?

Well they brought us up…told us right fae wrong…installed beliefs in us…gave us our morals and our heritage which is the most important thing…it's important to know who you are

What in life is most important to you?

Family is most important to me and health…no matter wit they've got yer back…ye know wit a mean? They're you

What would you say is of lesser importance?

Stature and money…workin and bein proud of wit you've achieved is important and things like that…but they're not like mainstays to me…if I see injustice a feel like I've got to say somethin or do somethin…a don't know what that is about aw a us (laugh)

I find it disgraceful that Glasgow for the size of the Irish community doesn't have an Irish centre…we seem to be the only people who don't have one know what a mean? We've got the Gaelic the Irish dancin the Minstrels and a really feel like there should be…a think when it wis the Irish centre everybody knew each other…a don't know you've got that now

I'm happy with what I've got…a don't feel like a need to have any more…like it's not my ambition to become a millionaire or like be a boss of somebody…a just wish everyone else would be able to be the same know what a mean? I'm on that Help Out page in Glasgow on Facebook where I have seen…it's a Glasgow community page that helps out if people are really struggling…it's terrible…you get people who say they aren't getting paid for 2 weeks and that they need baby milk and I'll go and get that and drop it off…if somebody's near me and is needing milk or bread or milk for their baby and things like that it's no my place to judge them…a don't care about them as such…it's the children I feel for so I have dropped off in numerous places bags of messages and things like that…I think it's important…a mean if you're strugglin…like this guy randomly stopped me a couple of weeks ago and he said he didn't have the full train fare to go into town to go into a food bank so a went up and gave him 20 quid and told him to immediately go and get his children food…a wouldn't see anyone's children not fed…I think in this day and age it's absolutely horrendous and I think once upon a time mothers who were struggling used to get milk tokens…I don't even think they're a thing now which I think is terrible…that was going when my kids were younger…I knew parents that got free milk tokens…I know in Govanhill there's the food banks and stuff like that and when they ask for food I'll get a bag together and bring it down…Trisha's is a place down at Vicky Road and it wis named after one of our pals…they opened that café and they feed the children going to Craigie Street in the morning…they can get a roll and get their breakfast and they also have counselling sessions in there as well where they can come and chat to kids who are feeling down which is a really good thing for Govanhill…at Christmas time they send in a big list of toys for Christmas and you just choose whatever you want to do and you send it to that girl to make sure all the children in that group are gonna have a Christmas present…I spend about a hunner quid…if I've got the resources a feel like a should do it cos there'll come a day where I don't have it and I'm looking to somebody to help me…you know a always put maself in their shoes…I think you should be lookin out for each other…a mean we grew up and if somebody had a toy ye got a shot of it! Ye know what a mean? Mostly we didn't have toys

I think our culture gets left out a bit…the Irish tends to get lost in it ye know that kinda way…there's still quite a big Irish community in Govanhill know wit a mean? 2nd generation maybe…they should get in touch with the Irish community and see what they can bring to the Govanhill Festival…like traditional Irish music…why not? I think in certain ways we get left out

Where do the negative stories about Govanhill stem from?

The media are anti-SNP and they know Nicola Sturgeon is the MSP for that area so I think they like to keep diggin on that

Do negative stories influence how outsiders view Govanhill?

Aww most definitely! Aww most definitely! Cos sometimes you say you're from Govanhill and they say uffffft there?! And I'm like it's not actually as bad as what you're saying…people are like ohhh you're from Govanhill?! And I'm like aye and they ask how is it and I say where I stay I'd say I'm more Crosshill but mum and dad are definitely Govanhill…a cin see a lot of bits of it…it just needs a lot of money put into it like the housing…it's coming this way…Strathbungo they've done all up and now they're moving into Victoria Road and across from the Queens Park Bar a flat went for 135,000! They have been working on the backs there and regenerating it…

Do you think the multi-cultural aspect of Govanhill is a plus?

I think it's a plus…especially now…there's just so many different shops and we try more food than we've ever tried…trying different things cos you see people eating them and you're like what's that? Like who would've thought we'd be open with our food like we try different things now that we never tried before…it started way back when it was the Mexican food and you started doing all the Mexican type of food…I think we're more open to different cultures different food varieties now than we were which is a good thing cos our foods pretty boring

I do enjoy living in Govanhill and I don't foresee myself moving out of there…there's good people in Govanhill…it's like anywhere and the people that are there are trying to make the most of it and tryin tae better it…there's probably people like me who know everything that's going on but don't take part in it but a think it's important that a should know what's going on so I'm on all the Govanhill pages so a know what they're doing and what they're not doing…I think that Big Noise was brilliant a mean that was a great initiative were they take the children and teach them musical instruments and things like that

Caron

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

My name is Caron and a live in Govanhill…I live in Annette Street…I've not lived there for long…a moved from Anderson and…before that a wis in Partick…just typical Glaswegian just bounced everywhere…and I love Govanhill I just love Govanhill…I'm a tour guide…around about Glasgow which is walking tours a specialise in the street art and LGBTI+ community tours and I'm a complementary therapist

You mentioned that you love Govanhill, why did you decide to move there?

Well…my best pals stay here…they are originally from Poland and he's a Hungarian Romanian (slight laugh) get that right…my best pals live here as well and err…my full name is Caron Wilfred Mary Elliot and the Mary is after my great-grandmother and I was born on her birthday which is the 5th March and she was born in 135 Jamieson Street in Govanhill (laugh at the end)

Can you tell me a bit more about your great grandmother?

Yeah so it's my mammy's mammy's mamma (laugh) so yeah great granny on my mum's side…great granny Gallagher she wis married tae Jimmy Gallagher…her name wis Marie but everybody called her Mae and a went tae see Jamieson Street it's a 135 it's not there anymore but it's got a lovely garden…a shed…coconut shells…so that's where she was born…and then they moved tae Parkhead…Parkheed (laugh) and she converted to Catholicism for my great granda…and they hid aw the wains and the youngest wis ma granny who grew up in Parkheed…it's cos of ma granny that a love Glasgow so much and she used to say her mammy wis super proud of being fae Govanhill she used to proper go 'I'm from Govanhill'…so yeah big family connection a wis born in the southside of Glasgow as well a wis born in Rutherglen maternity…a just like it here

Can you tell me a bit about your family background as far back as you can go and its connection to Govanhill?

Well my mum and dad they were born in the 60s so they were part of the generation that were put out to the peripheral housing estates…so it was Blackhill…Castlemilk first…my mum wis born in Rottenrow…then it wis Castlemilk then they moved to Blantyre…and yeah a know more about ma mum's side of the family…ma granda wis born in Shettleston and my granny wis born in Parkheed in Caroline Street and then ma great-granny and granda…granny Mae wis born here in Govanhill and granda

Gallagher wis born in Greenock but he had illegitimate on his birth certificate…his mammy wis sent from Ireland to here…so that side is fae Donegal and then ma granny Mae…a don't really know what her mum and dad did…I'll need to do a wee bit of research but she was a house-wife and ma granda Jimmy…he wis one of the only people in the street that could read so he's in some law books in Edinburgh or something like that cos he was a pure socialist…he used to sit in when the soshy (social services) would lit come in and try tae take people's stuff away or make them sell it he'd be like 'nah ye canny dae that that's against the law' so he wis like the people's lawyer of the street in Parkheed which was cool…ma grannies got dementia but she spoke about him constantly…he wis a prisoner of war in Sennelager and then he came back and he actually got a job in St Vincent Place public toilets…it was like all the jobs for heroes so one of his jobs was the public toilets in St Vincent Street so every time a walk past there I'm like ma granda worked in there (laugh)…yeah he wis a pure socialist absolute…like emm…like really really fiercely campaigned for the rights of the people…he had a real sense of injustice and wouldn't take it

Is there anything about his socialist roots that have inspired you?

Aw totally…cos a think back in the day you could be anything ye want as long as you wurnae a Tory (laugh) emm…but wae ma grannies story she used tae tell ye it does make ye feel proud…a hink that's part of the history cos like I've always hid a strong sense of socialism and like campaigning and volunteering and I'm sure a got that from ma granny like we're all quite a helpful family…like ma sisters a nurse… a psychiatric nurse…so we're all super proud of her…she's bringing up 2 beautiful boys…she works in service and ma brother as well he's lit always worked in service…we all kinda vote similarly and how we vote is what is the best for everybody around aboot us…and it's a granny…she was like you must vote as a woman! And I've never missed an election since…so yeah total influence trickling down from how she wis raised with a strong sense a…like…justice for everybody and it's kinda trickled down through the years so it's weird that I'm stoating about Govanhill probably saying the exact same rubbish that ma granny and granda wur sayin'

Can you tell me a bit more about your grandmother?

Yeah her names Helena…everyone calls her Lenny…she's got dementia so she's not keeping too well the now…she got covid in the care home tryin' to look after somebody who's got covid…but aye she's away wae the fairies but what's quite nice is see all the stories she's told us about her mum and dad and her growing up and things like that…they're all the same now like word for word so you're like you're tellin the truth! (laughs)

Can you tell me a bit about your granda?

Ma granda had red hair and green eyes! (laughs) He was the best guy ever…he was one of the people thit…he'd come across as quite a stern man but in actual fact he wis a man before his time…like he wis very much let people live…leave me alone and I'll leave you alone…his garden was beautiful…every plant…every herb…every shrub…you name it he had it in his garden it was absolutely stunnin…he wis hilarious…me and ma cousin as you do when you're wee…were playing with the barbies n stuff like that and we wur talkin like existential questions like 'who lives in hell?' and he never looked away fae the telly and he says 'Hitler and Maggie Thatcher' (laughs) He wis absolutely hilarious he wis ma best pal in the world ma granda…quite a poor family…think he wis the oldest of 11 in Bailleston

Were any of your family migrants at any point?

A think it's just a tiny sprinkle a that…like ma great-grandad Jimmy he'd always be like nah I'm Scottish a wis born here and a think that's had a big knock on effect through the rest of us like naw I'm Scottish…although ma granny wis brought up a Catholic…massive like a love Glasgow…a love Scotland…massive royalist (laugh) loves the Royal Family…thank goodness she's no sane the now to see wit they're up tae but they wur aw her celebrities like King George n aw that…totally weird (laughs) like ma granda wis in the Navy and he wis the one that pledged illegal allegiance…but yeah most of the family as we know now are from this neck of the woods…ma dad's side it goes so far then it stops cos I think my mum found that some of them died in the Poor House…I think it was my dad's grandad that wis adopted cos his parents died in the Poor House so at the very least a think we're all Scottish…poor…working-class (laughs) coupla centuries and we're just like yeah we're aw working-class (another laugh)

Can you tell me about your childhood with your family?

Yeah well there's 4 of us…I'm the oldest of 4 and then there's my 2 sisters and my brother and my mum and dad and various pets and stuff like that through the years…it was always a loud house (laugh) we're all very close even now…and there's more of us cos we're aw hivin babies

What would a standard day-to-day day be like in your household growing up?

Well a always remember my mum…she re-trained as a nursery nurse when she was in her 30s so a just remember her just tryin' to get us aw oot the hoose…ma dad had to do like a lot of night shifts and stuff like that…ma dad worked 6 days a week a lot of the time…a mean we'd still see him but it wis quite nice to be an adult when he didn't have to work as much so a could go to the pub with ma dad…ma dad's pure like 1 can dan so it wis nice tae like go to the pub when we were older…a would always always be on the phone to ma granny and granda cos they moved to Girvin so we'd always

phone or we'd go on our holidays to them but yeah just day-to-day just tryin' tae get us oot tae school, yenno everythin everywhere as you can imagine like…we were only 2 seconds along fae the school…we were in a scheme in Blantyre and we went to David Livingstone Memorial Primary School which wis constantly set oan fire…broken into…whenever there wis a walk like depending on wit colour wis marching through the streets you'd hiv IRA or UDF…whoever wis marching would spray paint our school…looking back at it now it seems more crazy than what it was when we were there…but yeah we were right beside the park there wis hunners a wains everywhere…we wur dead lucky cos we were right beside the park…we moved when a was like 13/14 to a place called Coalburn which is in South Lanarkshire and it wis like a big cultural shock like moving from a scheme where there's hunners of people to like a wee silly village when there's naebody so I think we all really struggled to adapt…like how oot the road it was and how out the sticks it was and all of us have…one…never been back to that neck of the woods and two…we've all moved away and have no plans to move there anytime soon and at least 50% are in Glasgow…me and my sister Kirsty and then ma brother lives in a wee village in Ayrshire and ma sister lives in Elgin

Why did you not enjoy it there in comparison to Blantyre?

I just think that people think when ye go into the country you'll be left alone but yer more autonomous in the city than what you are in a wee silly village like that…and like all the people that are comin and goin from here…there's like a lot of people who weren't born in Govanhill like maself who live here but no one cares no ones like 'where were you born you're no fae here' but it's like that in these wee daft villages and plus they've just been left to rot…like it was very isolated like this wee village in Coalburn as well and you felt it aff the people…a think a lot of people have moved away like a don't know many people…like a don't keep in touch with people a went tae High School with…a don't know many people who still live there…a think most people moved out to bigger and better places…I like the fact you can walk down the street in Glasgow and be autonomous…not all the time cos the city's totty and it's a village but lit…ye cin walk aboot wae yer music on or ye cin make an arse of yerself on a night oot and the whole village disnae know aboot it cos like somebody will make a bigger arse of themself know what a mean? Like a much prefer…like a hated living in the village a much prefer being back in the city

Can you tell me a bit about where your mum and dad worked?

Yeah so my dad used to work like factory work and things like that…he worked in a Dairy for the most part…a think they got taken over and what not…it just so happened at the time where ma mum and dad…they're in Ayrshire now…it just so happened that it was wrappin up at that Dairy and by the time they moved and things like that…and yeah he's workin at a factory with ma brother just now…ma mum's a nursery nurse she his been since…probably about 20 years now or something like that? A suppose when you've goat loads a wains you're like a could do somethin about this (laughs)

and it's weird cos like back in ma grannies day n stuff like that they aw hid like 11/12/13 kids and it wis like that wis normal but because there's 4 of us we're a big family…see whenever people asked how many brothers and sisters hiv ye got and a say they're like ufft that's a lot (laughs)

What would you say the strengths of Govanhill are as a place?

Going back on exactly what a was saying about these silly villages it's the sense of community here…like there's more people and it's more so much that everybody's git a story and you've got like a lot of independent shops here…like and that's a strong sense…like a lot of people make an effort to go…like the gentrification of Victoria Road over the last couple a years has been absolutely completely amazin…the coffee shops…like it's a shame tae see like some a the places…like the older places close down n stuff like that but that is what it is it does happen…I think thit…like see walking past everybody in here n hearing all these different languages as well like a stay right off Allison Street and like you know that feeling when you're on holiday and you go into a shop and you're like ohhh this is all new stuff…you kinda get that in Allison Street too…cos like you can go to like different themed shops and get different stuff…like ma cookins became a lot better since movin tae Govanhill (laugh)…and there's always somethin goin on…everyone's seems a lot more general…it's definitely the people of Govanhill that's the strongest part

Are there any weaknesses if any?

One of the weaknesses about Govanhill is that people think the majority of the people in Govanhill are the people that make the mess but you see vans like workies vans and stuff like that comin thinkin fuck it I'll just dump my shite here or their builders rubble here and cos there's the backstreets at the back of the tenements it's the perfect place to just dump rubbish cos there's always somethin goin on and that's what a like about livin here as well there's a racket…there's always a racket goin on there's always somebody walkin past like radadadadadada…or a motor drinkin past with one of they wee Gary boys with the music turned up like bo bo bo bo…and it's like music like this that we're listening to that's up high blast (referencing foreign music in background)…that brings me comfort though…like the quiet a the country I'm like what's gonna happen? But the racket of the city I'm like there's life out there…but it's cos of all the racket that people get away from comin from different places and be like fuck it it's Govanhill and just dump their shit here…like who cares and that really really annoys me…a love it when people talk about foreigners in Govanhill I'm like 'is that right aye?' It's disheartenin…a think probably Govanhill's biggest weakness is its reputation amongst other Glaswegians

Can you tell me a bit more about that?

I've always hung about Govanhill as well cos ma best pals live here and what not like it was always in my sights…like a want to move to Govanhill…see in colleague for example there's a lassie she's fae Possil and she wis like where are you fae? And a was like Govanhill and she wis like that's a shitehole…I'm like what makes you think that? Why's it okay to just be like it's a general consensus that Govanhill's a shitehole but I've no opened a newspaper and saw like a shootin…in Govanhill or like somebody's wain getting ran er by a motor like in Castlemilk outside the shops n stuff like that…a just can't help but wonder why is it Govanhill that's the shitehole…cos to me…it's actually awryt…there is parts of it that are mingin and manky…bit it's no different to anywhere else…it just really really pisses me off that Govanhill and the southside…Govanhill in particular…everyone kinda just looks down their nose at it…a think it's probably cos of the diversity…there's a lot of other places that feels a wee bit protected…cos like when you look at other places of Glasgow…a don't wanna call anywhere less than what it is cos a lot of the problems in a lot of areas are not the people who live there's fault…say like Easterhoose were they just papped loads a people oot there and never gave them a shop… a park… a school…a bus…anythin…noo they've goat the Fort where it's a lot of expensive shops right next to a place that isnae expensive to live…but at least it's somethin…but it feels like…maybe it's cos of the diversity here? Like the different kinds of people that are here…there's probably like other historical reasons as well…it's feel weird talkin aboot that as a white woman called Caron at the very least cos it's not ma lived experience…see I get tae be like 'wit ye talkin aboot?' Like every time ye hear Govanhill ye hear the word foreigner straight after it…and it's no fair…as someone generationally who is fae Govanhill…well like ma namesake like ma great-granny wis born here and lit how people were like aw it's so proud and then ye see comments oan Facebook like aye we know who's makin the mess…I think it's just the undertone…I think it's a racial undertone 100%...it's no fair…but see don't get me wrong see the majority of ma pals live here so…one of ma pals is from Dunblane…one of ma pals is from Ayrshire…one of ma pals is from Italy…another from the Netherlands…one of thems from Poland…Romania…and when I'm talkin about ma neighbours…Callum and Chris upstairs they sounded like they were Scottish like they hid a Scottish accent…but I've got a Roma family on my close as well…so yeah I think there's probably racial undertones…when you're considered low…white…and working-class you feel like you're at the bottom of a rump and when ye look at social mobility as a ladder…ye always look it the rump hopin that there's somebody below ye cos that means that you feel higher and a think that's the game wae a lot a people who spout that nonsense…I'm no sayin it's the majority a people cos the majority a people in ma opinion don't…but ye do get some who are desperate fir someone tae be below them and it's easy tae just be like Govanhill yeah…shitehole

What's the dynamic like with your neighbours?

I've not moved in there long I've been there since November but when a meet ma neighbours properly a wis lookin after ma friends dog and it done a massive jobby in the close so that ended that conversation quite quickly…a actually think the majority of people of ma close are gay…think there's 2 gay couples upstairs…there's actually a massive compulsory purchase order…it's tenements like this that's sandstone…there's construction work constantly…there's lots of empty flats round

about me as well…a read like compulsory purchase orders like the council basically took the flats off the slum lords and like regenerated a lot a the flats cos you've got the Alexander Greek Thomson tenements oan Allison Street…they've all been ripped out and renovated by Govanhill Housing Association…it's a housing association flat that I've got and a suspect it's maybe part a like a mixed communities policy…the reason why they were quite quick in like getting me like a flat in there is cos they just lookin to fill…cos there's quite a lot of empty tenements that a can see from ma window like there's a lot of construction like the flat across the landing from me…that's gettin all ripped out and renovated…right next door they actually knocked a wall on ma wall the builders…it was quite nice though cos it was in the cupboard so they came and painted aw ma cupboard for me it's really nice…and right across a can see that aw of these tenements are aw gettin re-renovated and rippin out which makes me feel really good cos there's like all housing associations on like everybody deserves a fuckin nice place to live and this is what's happenin with the housing associations…so like I've got a total mix…my mate Roland says that the school in Scotland with the highest percentage of children who attend whose first language is not English is here which is pretty cool…like I think that's pretty fuckin sound cos a think of going to a Scottish school and how terrible they were at teaching us languages…like a think that's pretty cool…the wains are already teachin themselves…and like some a these kids that are runnin about the streets have like 4 or 5 languages under their belt! They're smart…the kids here are smart!

Are you involved in any of the community groups in Govanhill?

Yeah just startin…just startin…a wis walkin back from the Lidl's with ma messages and a saw the Community Trust office open…see the one on Calder Street? And a saw folk sittin in there so a wis like (chaps the table imitating knocking a door) 'Hiya wit yous dain here a see yer dain a wellness centre I'm a …… therapist'…that incorporates massage reflexology and all that sorta stuff in a wellness centre so a was just inquiring if they were gonny have like therapy rooms cos if it's like a community project they'd be a bit cheaper or more affordable or whatever or a project or just something to get involved with the local community…so a got talkin to these lassies…they were pure pure nice they were like ahhh actually we're doing something for International Women's Day it would be great if you could get involved…emailed them and I'm just helpin us with therapeutic massages…whilst I've got other skills it's very good that I'm a tour guide but a can only speak 1 language so that's where my deficiency lies…so there is 1 thing a cin see tae help which doesnae need a lot a language which is massage and well-being and I'll hopefully do a reflexology workshop too…it feels good like a part to be part a somethin know wit a mean? Like a want tae meet ma neighbours a want tae be able to walk doon like the street in Vicky Road and be like 'Hey! It's yerself' know wit a mean? Or like go into ma wee shops and have like 'Aw Caron! Is it the usual?' Know what a mean? Just like really really get involved wae makin this wee place a better place cos it's dauntin when ye live in a city like even when we wur sayin about the wee village…it's dauntin when you live in a city cos there's hunners a folk here just tryin tae make it but it's nice to hiv yer own wee patch as well but it's big enough tae walk down the street and everybody's minding their own business cos everybody's got somethin else tae dae like it's no as intense as livin in a

village…but yeah a love it here there's no one day where a don't walk about the streets of Glasgow and look aboot me and think I'm grateful tae be here

What would a standard day in Govanhill be like for you?

If it's a tour guide day I'll get up and I'll usually go to Govanhill library and do a wee bit of work there…I heavily use the library and a wanted to do that too cos a think that's one of the best ways to get involved with the community…I'll see ye a picture of ma bestie in Govanhill library a wis sittin doin ma tax returns…it wis pissin it down outside and a looked up from ma computer and there wis a wee wumin wae a dug in a pram…browsin the books a wis like…this is the best day of ma life (laughs) there's a dug in a pram in this library! So a couldnae help maself a got up and introduced maself a wis like 'Excuse me really sorry to interrupt you but…this is amazing' so a found out that it's Kate and Toby they're in there aw the time…Toby's a lovely wee dug he's a Jack Russell in his wee pram…so it's wee things like that…even just workin in the library…just gettin tae meet ma neighbours

What is it you like about the library?

I think there's all sorts of people that use the library…see when ye think of the library ye maybe picture the image of a particular person and ma granny would always take me to and from the library…ma mum would always take me to and from the library as well…I've always been encouraged to read and I've always loved reading as well…a just think just being able to sit in the library and even just people watch and see what's going on…I think is amazing…a like Govanhill better than the Mitchell cos it's a lot more open plan and there's less competition for books as well…it just makes ye feel part a somethin as well…it's an easy way…see I'm not religious and an easy way to be a part a the community is the Church…ye walk in…a believe wit you believe n aw that…and a think for those of us who don't do that it's the coffee shops it's the wee community groups it's the library…and I could go to Milk coffee shop on their Feminist evening where it's like a niche subject but the amount of people that use the library…it's everybody…like it's absolutely everybody…like whatever image you conjure up it's completely different…everybody uses the library…there's a guy that came in and he'd clearly been a teacher…came straight in after class and sat…put his earphones in and started markin the jotters…see even just wee things like that…so you had Kate and Toby in the pram then you had a teacher comin to check his jotters…you had a guy just comin in just to watch his iPad…there's me sittin done ma tax return or writin ma tour…see just sittin watchin what people are up tae and just watchin them comin and goin

And why do you think library's matter?

It's free! It's free books like…that's the long and short of it it's free access to our stories…our life…our legacy…like we've got buildings we gin look at that's part of our human legacy as well…but not everybody has access to they buildings…like on Open Doors Day in September like these are people's houses know wit a mean? So you can look at them they're public access in that sense you've got public access when it comes tae our museums…but the fact that the wealth of knowledge you've got access to in the library…it's unmatched…like whatever your reading style is whether you're dyslectic or brassic…the library has adapted to make sure you can enjoy the stories…they do audio books…DVDs…everything like that but they also do CV workshops and stuff like that…I just wish that we could get across what the library is aw about and it's really important to me especially now and a made a massive effort…you know when everything was closed and we were all campaigning for Maryhill library and stuff like that and it's literally if you don't use it ye lose it and I've been makin a profound effort to go to the library…use it and take books oot and read them as well cos a find it really stressful a find it really hard to sit down and read a book a don't know aboot yerself…see during the lockdowns and stuff like that

Are there any events or days in the area that you vividly remember?

Well before a lived here it was the Battle of Langside Memorial Day the big thing…it was the Battle of Langside something 100th anniversary…aww a should really know this but see when it goes tae fighting and military history…or royals…a don't care…like literally don't care…up a close a want tae talk about wee Margret who lived up a close…like that kinda history…but yeah they had a big big…like Nicola Sturgeon came on the Sunday a think but a wis volunteerin at Queens Park just next tae the band stand and one of ma jobs wis tae stand at the back of a tent and direct people if they wanted tae come and see Gary the fortune tellin goat (laugh)…there wis a goat sittin in a tent…it wis like a gazebo kinda thing…they hid a wee bar and people would come through and be like where's the goat! And I'd be like it's er there! (laughs) That was part of ma volunteer role and making sure people knew were the toilets were and that sorta thing…directing people to the fortune tellin goat that's one of ma favourite days in Queens Park…then likewise me and ma pal Rolly a had a terrible day at work not that long ago…coupla weeks ago…a had a terrible day at work…someone shouted at me on ma tour…it just feels a wee bit humiliating…the woman was fae Dundee as well…a bit humiliating ma pal Rolly he had a crap day at work he's just under pressure aw the time…so a was like mon I'll take ye oot let's go for a pint and we went tae McNeills and there was a reggae bar playin or somethin like that? A band playin anyway…the place was fill…ended up talkin tae this taxi driver…like it wis an old school taxi driver…a was like who's the most famous person you've hid in yer taxi? And the taxi guy said wan a the most famous people I've hid wis Engelbert Humperdinck…a said no fuckin way wit happened? He wis like a took him in ma taxi back tae McNeills and Engelbert loves the darts…so he wis gettin leathered wae aw these taxi drivers in McNeills…represented the UK in the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest…god knows why…but at the end he wis like Engelbert Humperdinck wis like I'm no fuckin comin back here I'm no comin back here cos somebody stole his darts!

(laughs) A was howlin…that's the kinda stuff that a missed…a think we all agree that it's the impromptu nights like that…cos like we went to go to the Bell Jar just for a coupla pints to drown our sorrows but it wis a bit full and he wis like nah let's go to McNeills and it just so happened that there wis a band playin and the crowd was really cool everybody was dead nice and it's wee events like that that I really like as well…made best pals wae the lassies beside us as you do like 'we're gonny be friends forever!' They do open mic nights at Bees Knees which everybody always raves about as well…I've not been to anythin at Milk Café but they do a lot of activism and things like that…the Pink Peacock I think they're awesome…they're a pay-what-you-can vegan non-alcohol café and they've got a community pantry outside as well which is amazin…like they're really good they do a lot for the community they have a lot of stuff donated to them as well

Can you tell me a bit about the jobs you've been in?

Yeah I've been a job tart since when a wis young like I've hid a job everywhere from washin dishes tae hospitality service industry…but most of that wis in ma 20s to save up and just go away somewhere…a got to go and train in Ukraine…I've hid Malawi for a bit…Italy for a wee bit as well…down in England err…ma job that I've got the now a was at Glasgow Uni a wis doin Social and Public Policy…but for me it just kinda overwhelmed me a wee bit of how much is going on that ye canny really change ye just need tae pick one wee tiny hing…a was President of the Mature Students Association at that point and a wis going through Glasgow Uni and they were a nightmare…basically there wis a guy…there wis a girl and the guy wis exceptionally inappropriate…we had evidence going out our ears…everythin…and emmm Senate were basically like it's his word against yours we canny prove it beyond reasonable doubt…so it's the usual when it comes tae woman makin a complaint about a man…the woman's account counts for 1 person but the man's account counts for 2 so basically if it's his word against yours we're gonny go for his word because that's aw we can do…like it's bullshit and it was one of the most disappointing experiences of ma life cos a went to uni when a was older…a was 28 and Glasgow uni was always like…that's where the smart wains go…I'd always idealised this place and put it on a pedal stool and it really disappointed me that…and a was working at the Search/Recruitment agency formatting CVs in admin for like financial people and stuff like that…it was the summer a 2018 and a was like this is fuckin shite (laughs)…for ma job now when a first met my boss Jenny she met me on St George's Square it just so happened there was a happenin…there was a gatherin against the discrimination of Protestants in our country…and a love the protests in St Georges Square it's one of ma favourite parts of the job…somebody's always there protestin somethin so yer like wit's goin on? That's what a love about Glasgow as well…you talk tae anybody especially a council worker…wit's goin on? They'll give ye one answer but they'll usually tell ye everythin that's goin on cos they love moanin aboot their job…so ma boss wis standin there just fresh off fae Vietnam…she's not even from Glasgow and she wis like what's we gonny do now? A wis like we're gonny do the tour backwards then! Go this way wanny see a guy wae a cone on his heed? It's my favourite job so far been there for 4 years and then the complimentary therapy…a just felt really helpless after the situation at Glasgow uni through the Senate cos a wis like this isnae fuckin fair…like why you doin that? They were like we didn't feel like the person who

made the accusation could've cope wae it and a wis like did ye ask them though? Like they just wanted to swept under the rug cos it's obviously an accusation of sexual violence so it's easier for them to be like nah it's done…but this guy wis like harassing me all during the summer as well…it wis horrendous at Glasgow and they never offered me any support…a wis really really disillusioned wae it cos a wis studyin Social and Public Policy a wanted tae…a wanted tae like go intae the SRC and things like that and work towards policy in that way…and with the Mature Students Association a wis President there and a wis hopin that that'd give me like good experience to keep the place runnin and that it was really stressful and then that's happened wae Glasgow uni and a wis like I've not got the heart to go into Politics or Policy or anythin like that cos when things like that happen a take it too personal and I've always been interested in like aromatherapy and stuff like that so it's always been at the back of my mind and then a wis just like fuck it like a cin directly help somebody…if somebody comes to me wae a problem I'm like a cin definitely make you feel better…you know wit a mean? Like at Glasgow uni a felt a wee bit helpless

What made you overcome that difficulty?

It wis just really angerin…Glasgow uni…whilst if ye ask for support in the right way they'd give ye it like I'm struggling to make deadlines and things like that but with support in like somethin like that they were absolutely terrible… misogynistic in a way but even at that like a lot a the people that a wis corresponding with in the Senate were woman so it wis just…they wanted to do anythin to avoid a scandal…they didnae care about the wee people on the ground like me…they were like aw she's dealin with it…a found that really frustratin and it's part a the reason why a really enjoy bein self-employed and a really like just workin by maself as well cos a don't have to be responsible for a lot a people other than maself and a feel like a cin control that a wee bit better…but yeah it's totally put me off goin into policy or anythin like that cos a just couldn't cope with just how unfair everythin is in that sense

And do you see any difference between more grassroots organisations to bigger institutions?

A million per cent I mean look at GCC now like they're still arguing with workers on the equal pay like that's been going on for years…like it's a mess Glasgow City Council in the 90s hit the top 10 most corrupt councils in Europe or somethin like that…they're an absolute mess a don't trust GCC and the way it's all set up and what not and it was the same with Glasgow uni as well…it was just the lack of support more than anythin and people are talkin like things are equal now things are better…no they're not…like it's all still swept under the rug and the loopholes that are there aren't loopholes at all…they are there to be set in place to protect people in that guy and when a wis talkin to one of ma work colleagues and a wis describing the situation she named that guy…she named him and told me other stories about him so it was well known but he was still protected…he was a student…he was part of the Mature Student

Association…infamous…almost infamous…a stepped down from being President after that a wis like a can't do this…I'd done it for nearly 2 years

What in life is important to you?

Love…friends…family…animals…like I love dishin oot love for as long as possible for as much as possible…obviously it's a wee bit harder in some cases than others but just being kind…being kind to people as well…when a wake up in the morning and a get oot ma hoose that's genuinely ma intention like I'm gonny be as kind as a possibly can be and as full of nonsense as a possibly can be as well…like love and nonsense is genuinely wit gets me out ma bed in the mornin…like a love people…all ma jobs are people focused and makin people feel good…it makes you feel like you've got a purpose ye know what a mean? You can make an impact oan someone's life by love and nonsense…just extending it…like when I'm on ma tours it's the love for ma city it's the love for ma people…and ye get tae be on holiday wae people as well it's crackin…ye see the city through it and yer like look at that! And actually you're like…aye look at it that's crackin! So ye get tae be grateful as well and ma other job where I'm doin complementary therapies a lot a people are burst and the healin powers a touch…that's why we touch each other…that's why we kiss each other as well…like ma sister told me that mummy's kiss their babies and the chemical reaction that happens when their mouths touch each other the mum can pick up whether the babies deficient in vitamin C and then the mother's body exports that through the breast milk to the baby like it's mental how us touchin each other and being with each other is for our mental health our psyche…everythin about us and spendin time wae each other…one of ma jobs is Hiya you're here for a nice time and then ma other job is I'm here to look after you this is your time…but a incorporate the love and nonsense into the complimentary therapy as well I'm still findin ma place in the holistic therapy world cos like you've got like yer hippy dippy stereotype or you've got your more serious kinda professional thing…a don't talk like a lot of people talk in ma job so I'm just findin ma place in the holistic therapy…and a suppose I'm still doin that wae Govanhill as well…findin ma place and where a fit in here…a know it's right fir me…but I'm just findin ma place and where a fit in here

And what is of lesser importance?

I'd say upholdin a lot of older Scottish traditions…old institutions that don't serve us anymore a think that's…as much as a believe in tradition…the bagpipes…short bread…and a think that's what draws me to Govanhill as well…upholding tradition…like this is tradition…us all livin together and people comin and goin…upholdin a conservative idea of traditionalism isn't important to me…I'm not interested in makin sure that the Scottish way of life is upheld and followed…I'm interested in movin further altogether

And what would you say your passions are?

See just being outside wae pals or meetin new people as well…love meetin new people…absolutely love meetin new people…aside fae anythin I'll see if someone's like 'aw I've got an experimental saxophone night in Shawlands what ye want to come?' and I'm like aye let's see what happens! Love hearin people's opinions on stuff love hearin wit they've got to see and what they're aw aboot…yeah I'm passionate about being nosey

And what would you say you're proud of in your life?

I've actually became a writer through work I've written loads a tours and trained loads a people and found out loads a information…I'm proud that people come to me for answers about somethin…I'm proud a being fae Glasgow and livin here…one of ma proudest moments is…bein one of the first people watchin people try Iru-Bru for the first time that's pretty cool! I'm proudest a tellin people 'naw you live here you're a Glaswegian!' Like 'you're wan a us you're wae us as well' cos I've lived outside a Glasgow and I've came back and stuff like that and I've got a weird accent…there's people fae here like the East End like 'where are you fae?' So I'm proudest a bein from Glasgow and bein a Glaswegian I'd say…I'd say that's ancestorial proudness as well that's been handed down to me that proudness…yeah proud tae be a Weggie

Daniel

Can you tell me about your work in Govanhill?

Yeah sure so it originally started in 2018…so I started coming to the southside if I needed little groceries like planting or if I needed a certain type of root ginger or even if I was trying to do a Thai green curry or whatever like I knew I could definitely get my ingredients from here so I'd usually pop in and pop out and then I started coming across all these little community initiatives and you don't really see much of that in the West End and it was a no-brainer to kinda get absorbed into one of them cos it was time to take this social science thing I'd been learning in uni for the past 2-3 years and apply it to the ground and go into the sites of the community where people interact and that's how I ran into Govanhill Baths through Fatima…they were looking for volunteers for the Govanhill Baths Festival…when I started working for the Baths I realised how much more and political they were and they aligned to my sensitives…

Can you tell me about any experiences or events you remember vividly in the area?

Yeah so the very first Govanhill Street Music Festival that we done in Vicky Road was by far the most involved I'd been by putting something together not just as a volunteer but as an actual coordinator in a sense…so Love Music Hate Racism the campaign

that set up all the different stages supported by the Govanhill Baths of course created a space whereby we mapped out all the Vicky Road and picked out specific spots between the little alleys and some of the lanes with the bike passes to turn them into stages so we had one at Crema which was the actual Love Music Hate Racism stage…at Transylvania we had the Poetry Stage down at Bees Knees we had a folk stage which was nice…at Westmoreland Street we had a tiny little jazz type stage…nice grassy area just outside of Bell Jar and my favourite right down at Govanhill Park we had the cultural so that's where we had the Romani performers do flamingo all the dances…I think it was the most popular stage like so many people went…getting this all together was the most vivid experience I've ever had working around here to be honest…it really made me feel like I belonged in a sense because so many people could just come in and out no charge…nobody was charged a single dime so people could just come in and enjoy the little stages we had set up…that feels so much more welcoming than having like a ticketed event…this was a whole family type experience we were trying to put on which brought out so many different groups of people that you wouldn't potentially see going to these sort of gigs if they were a closed event or a Saturday night or whatever so it made me feel very appreciative of the neighbours we've got around us and the capacity of it also had to be like yeah I've gonna get a pot and pan and start banging them together and be really part of the whole process so people really do have a little airiness to them so it was nice just to see people enjoying themselves especially cos the sun was out that day and there was a little children's area so parents were able to come out…old folks…it was just really nice really nice…community was really alive

What were your first impressions of Govanhill?

First impressions of Govanhill…I can describe it in one word…home…it's the first time I'd seen heard people talk in Swahili which is Kenya's national language and also just like from the post office right down Vicky Road right up to Queens Park you'd always feel like yeah this is a place that's just got that vibrancy…always felt very safe in Govanhill

What would you say the strengths of Govanhill are as a place?

Definitely a sense of community and a sense of place cos every kinda shop you go to has something that can indicate to a community based initiative or something that is particularly helpful in the sense that people are kind of aware of where we are people are aware…like the thing in Kenmure Street that spread everywhere…there's always a thing of we defend our neighbours da da da so yeah…even like the Govanhill Go magazine that features all the Govanhill shops features all the different kind of faces was really illuminating to go that this place has claimed itself and is unapologetically out there like it's not gonna back down or back track…that's what I like man full frontal full frontal…when people were hearing that people in Kenmure Street were being evicted there was that sense of collectivisation…somebody brought the bottles of water somebody was doing the tiny little stall at the bus stop somebody was crawling

underneath the vans…somebody parked their car to block it people were risking going against the British state and the fact that they were willing to do that for 2 men that they didn't know…it was little things like that that really showed the history of people wanting to stop dawn raids in the sense of I see something I don't like it and that's the massive aurora of the entire community and there's historical renditions of different people stopping dawn raids at different parts of the city like the Red Road Flats so I had one of my good friends who organises in the community like stopping dawn raids has always happened through occupying or trying to stop or trying to make as much of a fuss if possible like we know actually what we want to see in our society and it's not deportation…you tend to have few people defending folks that have come across the state as sort of criminals or people who aren't deserving or whatever or worthy I hate using that language but the fact that people can see beyond that and the mainstream narratives and the right wing press was quite interesting to see to be honest

Can you tell me more about the mainstream press?

There's so many stories of Govanhill being portrayed as a dirty little hovel…it has always been seen as a place that's is disrepair that's becoming worse and that kind of narrative that's linked into a little story I heard in uni…the lecture taught Global History in Human Rights and we were like Govanhill used to be a pure wealthyesque inner city neighbourhood with lawyers teachers business people especially those terraces across from Queens Park those are bushy as hell and essentially because the media is like a talking mouth of the ruling class they are always gonna try and double down the ideas of the ruling class…they've got the power and they use the media as their little megaphone to kind of tell us what the narrative is and then really hone it down to a narrative that only benefits them and those who have a stake in Govanhill are probably the ones that don't wanna lose any of their prominence or privileges

Can you tell me about the community groups in the area?

Govanhill Baths has a really good spread so like the little community garden down…the People's Pantry which I volunteer at on a Friday…they've got the Govanhill Youth Base…it's a very non-profit motive and service it's kinda things like that that put people before profit especially with rising prices rising cost of living

Do you see any differences between Govanhill Baths and Glasgow City Council?

Definitely there's definitely a lot of loggerheads in terms of how a city council want to do things…what the council have particularly been notorious at doing is trying to privatise community spaces and then try to turn them into private land holding initiatives so what this was done through I think was through Glasgow Life it just seemed to be turning what was once open and accessible run by the community to

handed to an administration to a private or a third sector with all the red tape and bureaucracy to continue running the service but it doesn't turn out well…the 20 year long occupation of the baths was based on the city council wanting to take it down and turn it into flats and at the same time people are like housing stock is really low especially affordable housing but the fact that they want to destroy the only community pool means that you're taking something that's communally owned community enjoyed used to turn into a bland piece of shit brick wall…it just rips away from the community…they don't see the point of accessibility they always see what benefits them…

What in life is important to you?

People…people come in different shapes and sizes…thoughts and experiences…no 2 people are the same so random brush ins with random people especially in Govanhill for me became one of the most crucial things that really gave me that sense of belonging whereby people see you at face value and aren't gonna be a dick about it they're never gonna try and do something to screw you over so for me the people make the community and the community makes the people not the other way round for example my sister went for a job in London…fell as well it happens…and not a single person would stop from the busy air pod wearing briefcase carrying rush hour working dash…whereas here at least somebody will be like ye awryt? Or someone will pay the bus fare fee if you don't have any change or even people who carry prams like I've seen so many folks that help lift prams down the train stations I've seen other people help like complete random strangers taking a baby down…it's people power in that sense I think it's really important for me cos you can do a lot with people

What are your passions?

My passions largely evolve around creating comforting atmospheres…if somebody wants to feel heard or somebody wants to feel seen or actually exist…I'm proud of the ties and links and connections I've made…I feel like something that gives back is the way you approach people

What is of lesser importance?

Emmm the rat race…it is the thing I have the least time of day to rationalise or to even understand or comprehend because at the end of the day it's just about competition we're seeing an individuals who need to fight over the last piece of corn or whatever and I think that that is something we can't allow to govern the way we drive ourselves but because businesses survive on that whole competitive factor…profit and competition has literally tiptoed its way into literally every sector of society that has meaning…but it's still so good to see down to earth people take…take a restaurant like this a dude will come and tap you and chill…sit at the table maybe…that's the part

of what I like concentrating about…at the end of the day we're supposed to be cooperative literally by nature or else you wouldn't have made it past 120 thousand years of civilisation…yeah man competition kills

What did you cherish most about your family?

I would say the absolute effort they made to make people their kids would eat have clothes be able to go to school…survival…it's a real dog eat dog world and I feel like the way they kind of cleared the path for all of us so I try to hold their legacy of survival

If I need to get some methi spice to do some curry there's a shop just down by Vicky Road…the thing is I don't even know the names of these shops I just know the people I'm like hey Raj what's good bro? What have you got coming in today? And just like random little things like that that make it so accessible…it's not like a cooperation it's not like Sainsburys with branding with yellow letters which really wants to double down on a very cold cut…soulless shop…like in Tesco I can literally see my breath or in ASDA but when you go into these shops you never know what's gonna be in stock…there's always gonna be something seasonal…then they can also shove in a few extra bits like have some carrots bro…it's random little things like that that gives you that sensitivity to people really looking out for you even if you don't really know them you haven't even spoken a word to them before so it's really endearing

Can you tell me about Nandos?

Yeah so when we were doing our training our manager showed us the literal hierarchy 58 minutes talking about Nandos

Around an hour in difference between Nandos and pantry

Can you tell me about the Beautiful Resistance?

So the Beautiful Resistance was an idea borne out of a campaign that Love Music Hate Racism wanted to publicise…the Beautiful Resistance that fight and that pushback to really make communities understand that we will be putting on gigs that uplifts…the Beautiful Resistance was a Glasgow specific record and there's about 12 songs on it and it brings so many people together

What is so important about music in a place like Govanhill?

Definitely the rhythm…there's so much rhythm there's so much bubbling energy that comes out and gets expressed in the most artistic form…so like Rum Shack have the wildest forms of different gigs going on sometimes even like Pink Peacock used to just like blast music outside the windows at like 10 in the evening…also you can get like Bhangra music playing from somebody's car if they are like hanging out at one of those parking spots at dead ends just kicking about…and these are people are just share that same thing…like even just now in here we haven't heard a single chart tune…I love it…that's the Govanhill I know that's the Govanhill I know…diverse

What was it like having everybody out on the street at the Govanhill Festival?

It was purely magical…we were not expecting it we were actually thinking it was gonna rain that morning…we had problems getting a power supply…we had like a roadmap where we'd check every stage making sure we had enough electricity supply…water supply…garbage bins

In QPC I can't remember the name of the guy but she's always like get them at booth…we'd always be there at the randomest times like if we had a demo at Govanhill Baths we'd always make sure to go into Queens Park Café and it always felt like an environment where you could literally walk in order something to eat meet in the afternoon…it's that type of atmosphere you know it by the back of your hand you know that you'll get treated there you'll be able to chill…you can have meetings you can have birthdays…literally the bound is massive

There was a guy who worked at Transylvania when we had like zero décor…like we didn't have batteries for the PA…he literally took off his little apron and was like how can I help? Dude climbed up ladders getting like a power supply that was hidden he was like can do that…let's hang that up let's do this…the dude was like so in it even though it wasn't even something he was signing up to do that day let alone that very moment so it's finding little acts like that that just really bring that kind of place to life in the way that the location and setting brings out the best in people in that sense

Fatima

So can you tell me a wee bit about yourself?

My name is Fatima Ugyen I am the trust manager of Govanhill Baths Community Trust and I am a life-long anti-racist activist and socialist and community activist…emmm…yeah lived in the southside of Glasgow…since 1997…emigrated here from Australia…I was born in Turkey

Can you tell me a bit about your family background as far back as you can go?

My background is Turkish…my great grandmother was from Iraq they were Turkmen…we've got quite a few Kurds in our family as well we migrated to Australia when I was a child…some of my family also emigrated to Germany and to America and I lived in Australia till 1997 with my family then moved to Scotland

Did your parents ever tell you any stories about your great-grandparents?

Yeah so I knew my grandmother who passed away last year sadly…didn't know my grandad or my other grandmother emm yeah…they are predominantly…it's interesting on my father's side they are prominently …..they lived off the land…farmers and on my mother's side they were much more towns folk and fairly well educated…emm yeah I knew quite a lot about my family my background and so on…in Turkey we're part of a minority religion…Turkey even though it doesn't have an official religion because it's a Republic the majority religion is Sunni but there is a sizeable…I think about 13 million people who call themselves Alevi which is a branch of the Shia…and music and culture play a huge role in the way in which they worship…so instead of praying in a Mosque we pray in a house and we play music and we don't face Mecca we face each other and woman and men pray together so it's very different to what you'd see in the Sunni religion…so most of the musicians that you'd see in Turkey or Bulgaria or parts of Albania would all be Alevi because it's part of their culture so it's similar to Sufi in many ways…we use culture to get closer to God…not that I'm religious in any way but certainly in terms of culture of my background it was very much around…music and singing whereas in a lot of Sunni or orthodox Sunni particularly they won't have any music or any culture at all…so emm very different…quite persecuted in many ways the Alevi's in Turkey particularly since this new neo-liberal government has come in…so a lot of the Turkish refugees you see in Britain would probably be Alevi and obviously lots of kids as well who are refugees so emmm…yeah that's my cultural background in many ways

With the left and right sides of political parties, do you think there's been a complete paradigm shift towards neoliberal governance?

The election of Tony Blair…well it started pretty much with Thatcher…the image we see of neo-liberalism now as far as I'm concerned is this move away from society I mean Cameron ran with this as well…it was this whole idea that society…has no responsibility over its citizens and that's it all about…you know the trickle-down theory where the rich get richer then everyone else benefits you know…and so rather than the state actually playing a role in looking after people and guaranteeing human rights and so on the state became much more of a tool around how to ensure profits…you know the state played a huge role in cutting corporation tax and hounding benefits people…you know it started playing a role as a policeman much more…I mean it's always been that but much more under neo-liberalism so what you've got is this idea that greedy is good…there's no such thing as society…people don't like the word community it means a ghetto you know…we need to aspire…and if you can't make it

tough…you know…but that was all over the world wasn't it it was Reagan it was Thatcher…certainly with Tony Blair…Cameron continued that…I mean when the coal mines were shutting down Labour didn't bugger all…you know where were they emm…fighting for worker's rights under Thatcher they did bugger all so what you got is more and more people believing in the idea that greed is good and money was great and…you know…you're best friends the dollar and not your workmate or your community colleague…and that was everywhere it wasn't just specific to Britain

Did you see anything in Govanhill when working there that would challenge that paradigm?

You know certainly I think the campaign to save Govanhill Baths in 2001 came at a very specific time cos what we were fighting against was the neo-liberalisation of Glasgow City Council where they decided to close off whole swathes of public buildings and public services and reply with this thing called PFI which is Public/Private Finance Initiative…I mean the Council this sounds ridiculous but the council actually gave money to the private sector to build the Gorbals swimming pool…to build Shawlands Academy and then once they did that and invested money in that…the council then paid them for 20 years! Usually 2 or 3 times what it'd cost to actually build those buildings in the first place and we were absolutely opposed to this idea that the private sector could fill the shoes of the public sector so…emm if it wasn't making money on the Glasgow City council at the time…they shut it down…so the fight to save the Baths was a real…fight against neoliberalisation of community politics and there was a really famous saying by Charlie Gordon at the time who was the leader of the council and he said "no one is interested in community…if you talk to anyone on the streets about community they think you're talking about ghettos…what people want is drive-thru cinemas and golf courses and places where people can aspire to grow" and it's just like what land are you on? Where you dreaming? People in Govanhill are gonna go in their Rolls-Royce and drive to a golf course have you lost your mind? But they were so removed from ordinary people that they thought this was actually a way to regenerate Glasgow and it wasn't just a fight about this there were a huge amount of fights around the time around green spaces…around…I don't know if you know but that was around about the time when the Socialists got elected into Parliament in Scotland…2001 was a very important time in terms of fighting the neo-liberal agenda at the time…really really important year I think

Why did you decide to move to the southside of Glasgow?

Cos I had a look at the rest of Glasgow and it was like…can you get any whiter? You know I grew up in Fitzroy I grew up in an incredibly diverse and multi-cultural community and when I was around Glasgow I'm looking around it was so white and then I came to Govanhill and I was like I feel so at home here…and I think that's something that nearly everyone who has migrated here feels…that there's a sense of security seeing people of colour…or seeing people who look like you…you don't feel you are going to be stared at or treated badly you know…you can hear your own

language in the streets and so on but along with that…it was cheap…and much cheaper to live here than anywhere else because the housing was shit…you know that combination…emm…cheap housing and people who look like me and loads of students were here so there was always a cultural vibe here and the swimming pool was here! So it was like no brainer I'm gonna be moving here which is what I did

What's your favourite aspects of Govanhill and what's your least favourite, if any?

So my favourite aspects of Govanhill is that it's an incredibly diverse community it is…emm…a very congested community and I quite like that I quite like being around people I quite like walking down the streets at 3 in the morning and there's still…people everywhere I quite like the fact that's it doesn't matter what time of the day it is you can go get something in the shops…emm and I like the fact that there is a diversity of shops of foods and green grocers that you don't get anywhere else cos the people demand it…like how many green grocers are there in Govanhill compared to Drumchapel I mean really? And I like the fact that people support one another and that there's a tight network in many ways where you can get support you're not isolated…emm…there's also something really lovely about the way people negotiate life…you're living really close to one another…usually in crammed housing…you know there's people above you there's people below you you gotta negotiate who cleans the clothes you gotta you know…people just automatically know unconsciously…you know…who to walk past…who to say hello to…there's something that happens in these communities where you're forced to live really close together…and I quite like that…I think a bit of research should be done on that really like places in Detroit and Govanhill…where people are forced…usually very very poor…usually ethnically diverse often don't have the same language but they live together in quite a lovely harmony and usually the racism comes from outwith the community…I'm interested in how that works…tell you what I love…I love walking down the street and hearing coming out of the cars Romanian music…Roma music…a bit of Arabic music…lads driving around with all these sounds coming out of the cars and then you walk down the streets and there's evidence that there's been Roma people around because they've all been eating their little sunflower seeds and then you know from the smell…you know you're salt on the senses of living in a community like Govanhill you don't get anywhere else and that's fantastic…some people might find it overwhelming but I absorb it like a sponge…things I don't like…is I don't like the poverty…I don't like the attitude to Govanhill by people who think it's full of crime and usually that's equated with immigrants…I don't like that there's always attempts to pit one community against each other and I don't like the fact that there's so many slum landlords in the area we need more social housing so they're the negative things that everyone is fighting in the area to correct…emmm…yeah that's about it don't wanna go on too much about the negatives

Can you tell me a bit more about the support systems? I was really intrigued about what you were saying about your neighbours

I mean don't get me wrong we can a real issue with slum landlords and tenants that just come in and go out cos they get evicted very quickly or they are in temporary accommodation and so on and the fact that Govanhill has more drug deaths and more drug users than I think any other part of Glasgow at the moment and really serious problems that come with poverty and mental health that you see more and more on the streets…saying that…(long pause) there's one thing about a large immigrant populations coming into areas and I think you can see it when it started with the Irish community…so the Irish this was called Little Donegal for a very long time and what you saw…you know…was one of the biggest Irish communities in the whole of Scotland living really between Govanhill and the Gorbals and there were no social services at the time…so you had the Gaelic club and you had…you know the cultural institutions and the churches played a huge role so a lot of the social services were done by ordinary people…you know so there is a culture there of people getting together…uniting to do things in support of their communities so…that is there in Govanhill and that's continued to today where you know very very quickly people will respond to…a need you know…we hear the racists are coming out we'll mobilise…we hear that people are hungry the food banks shoot up…you know there's a tradition of just do it attitude emm…but that comes from a long history of having to unite together and struggle and fighting back…you know fighting for services and so on…it's not just cos everyone's lovely Samaritans you know…it's come from having to fight hard fights…emm but what that also means at a local level is…you smile at your neighbour 'Hiya Jean' people know each other they've lived here for generations and generations…emm particularly in Govanhill Baths…just talking about that negotiating…on men's nights this is a really clear example…on men's nights…you had gay men…you had Muslim men…and you had Jewish men all sharing the sauna…now this is really really important because there were no fights…people just knew their space and knew that they might not have approved of each other you know in outside of that space…but negotiated themselves in that space to do whatever they wanted you know…emm…I think that's really really important…understanding how integration works…integration not the best…in terms of how community harmony works there…it's completely unsaid no one came in and said "okay guys you all have to get along" …no one said that…it just happens…and that's unsaid which is really really nice so emmm…but I really don't think that could've happened without…Govanhill being a very working-class area…being a very immigrant area…and having to actually do a lot of fighting for rights and services…and understanding that you need to work together…you need to put aside some of our differences and what you get is…but it's taken a long time you know…it's lovely to know that cultural has still continued in many ways

Would you say Govanhill contrasts with the mantra from above?

I mean…all of that is imposed on us isn't it? It's not like we chose that it's imposed on us and it's always a constant fight against that and sometimes we lose the fights and sometimes we win them…but it's always an onslaught…when you're in Govanhill you know there's cutbacks to the litter…you know there's no investment in housing…you know they're trying to take the green spaces away…you know that mental health services are cut just by being in the street! I mean you know you're under attack just by living in Govanhill…I mean you can't escape it…you can't escape what is trying to

be imposed on our local community but what is important is that people are resisting it…you know it's really important that people recognise that on a daily basis people resist…you know why is it that the only gay and lesbian bookshop in the whole of Scotland is in Govanhill? Why is it that Govanhill has so many mosques? Why is it that you have a food pantry here like no other? It's because people resist what's being thrown at them and look for alternative ways to actually pose as a solution to what we're being told is…you know…the neo-liberal right way to do things so…yeah has that answered your question? You know we are incredibly creative human-beings…do you think it's the rich that invents culture? Do you think it's the rich that invent fashion or it's the rich that invent music or…they do fuck all…you know it's on the streets and ordinary working-class people that invent all the music we love and it's sometimes difficult to recognise that because it's hidden in theatre's or it's hidden in shops or whatever but so much of the culture…well you know this…that we rely on now comes from poverty…comes from responding to…you know wanting to make something beautiful in a pretty shitty world…and I think you see that every day in Govanhill…here's an example…all the racism that we were sad to see around Roma people…we said look let's do something good out of this yeah…let's do a festival celebrating…immigration and diversity and we set up the Govanhill International Festival…that's fantastic…so we're able to showcase the wonderful culture that exists locally and the diversity of that and not just that…how much from 100 years back so we make sure we look at the history of the area and one of the most popular talks for 2 years running was how Govanhill defeated Mosley's Blackshirts…most people don't even know that the fascists organised in Govanhill week-in-week-out against the Irish and Jewish communities…and the socialists, Irish and Jewish people came out week-in-week-out and battled with them…you know it's great to know that history…because sometimes you do feel like oh god like life's getting shitty and there's nothing we can do learning about all the great victories we've had in the past to defend our communities and cultures and so on are really important so…the festivals been absolutely wonderful…we make sure we move the festival a week to allow us to commemorate the Roma Holocaust Day…cos that's really really important so the festival starts with the commemoration of the Roma Holocaust and finishes with a celebration…a street music festival…so what other community in Scotland does that? I think it's a great response to racism but of course we didn't know that first…Notting Hill Carnival…everyone forgets that Notting Hill Carnival was established as a reaction or an antidote to the racism that existed there…and you know the first festival we did…it was called Scotting Hill by the press…isn't that good as a homage to Notting Hill Carnival so that was really really nice

Has the make-up of the crowds at the festival mirrored the multi-cultural nature of Govanhill?

Absolutely…actually you know what? There were more people marching who were from different cultural groups…a lot of white people were far too nervous…they were just standing and waving and being observant while a lot of the other cultures are more used to festivities and parties and so public displays of celebration…I mean the parade is fantastic it's full of community groups and ethnic groups all very proudly marching and then we have music in the arena…and then that usually kicks off the rest of the week of cultural events…there is no point in having an anti-racist festival if it's full of

white people…quite fake…know what I mean? But I also think it's important that we recognise…Irish people and that we recognise Jewish people and that we recognise sometimes people forget make up our community and our heritage…cos what we were finding was a lot of the racism towards Roma people were coming from older Irish people who'd been through this shit themselves and had forgotten obviously so it was really really important to make the Irish aware that they were part of this community they weren't outsiders and that we could only do this cos I what they had done before in many ways…so even though they are white I think it's really important to understand that anti-Irish racism was a blight on our society for so long…emmm…it's important to recognise this…if you're an anti-racist

Are you involved in any community groups in the area?

Yeah so I'm a treasurer of Romano Lav which is the Roma cultural charity based in Govanhill…I am the chair of the Pollokshields Trust which biggest project is the bowling green which is probably the heart of the multi-cultural community in Pollokshields which is just up the road…emmm…I am involved in Stand Up To Racism and Love Music Hate Racism…I'm organising this thing along with quite a few residents called We All Belong…it is against the Nationality and Borders Bill…yeah I'm quite active

Can you tell me a bit more about the Romano Lav organisation?

Romano Lav was set up over 10 years now…they were originally called Friends of Romano Lav so emmm…Friends of the Roma Culture and they are…fantastic they look to build a capacity amongst young people particularly giving them training and skills…very big on Roma culture and promoting that and emmm…they have International Roma Day in April every year which is fantastic and we march down the streets and it's wonderful…a real show of strength from the Roma community…we have a big dinner and cultural stuff…they are also involved as partners of Govanhill Festival…yeah they do loads of stuff locally

Can you tell me a bit about your job in Govanhill?

Yeah so I'm the trust manager of Govanhill Baths Community Trust…so we fought for 20 years to get that building reopened and we've raised over 9 million pounds now and it's currently being renovated…we occupied that building for 141 days which is the longest occupation of a public building in Britain history ever…very proud of that and emmm…we had loads and loads of stuff we do outwith that building…we have a people's pantry which is a dignified response to food and poverty…we have an environmental project where we're collecting plastic in the community and turning them into products…we only have a big vibrant art project called GBArt there's a lot of art and cultural activities locally…we have our own archives…I think it's really

important for a community like ours to have an archive and heritage program because we want people to know about all the wonderful things our community have achieved and so often…people forget…people die and their stories are gone so it's so important that we both preserve and celebrating all that and we've done a number of publications and quite a few books now…we're actually working on a book about the Irish in Govanhill so that will be launched at the festival this year…we also do community activism where we support lots of groups that are trying to get up and running but need resources and support…we employ about 23 people now we're a big organisation but at the heart of everything we do is activism emm….you have to be challenging the power that is around us and we're not there to do just mental health services for example…we're there to get people who are unwell…not necessarily get well but actually challenge the system which makes them sick you know we are a very different approach to community than say…I don't know let's just say a local community group that just works with young people let's just say…we want young people to become politically aware and challenge the shitty life's that are ahead of them cos of the environment or cos of poverty so for example our young people organise a Student Strike and a march…they did that beautiful Black Lives banner that's outside the pantry…so activism is what really drives us as an organisation…do you know a group called SWAN? Do you know Social Work Action Network? In the 60s people really fought…social work really really fought for making communities far more activist based rather than you know just dealing with the effects of capitalism or poverty or whatever but actually equipping people with the means to actually challenge the system and this is part of neo-liberalism…that has been so far pushed back I mean…I don't know if you know but the SNP government have cut millions and millions of social work year-in and year-out to what is it now? It's just a rump…it's social workers running around dealing with the worst cases of capitalism on people's health and well-being rather than being far more pro-active…like we don't even have community workers anymore we don't even have community centres where people can go to organise or work together…but yeah SWAN are great they're trying to look more critically at the role of society in community work and social activism and it's organisations like ours that are doing what social work did in the 60s and 70s…ironically…yeah…

Can you tell me about jobs you've had in the past? What have been your favourite and least favourite jobs?

Well I used to be a train guard and train driver…I was the forklift instructor…those were great jobs I loved those jobs the hours were shit but I loved those jobs…I've been everything I've been a check-out person at a supermarket I've been a chambermaid…oh god I've done millions of jobs…I currently do a lot of playwriting at the moment so I'm writing plays I've done a few musicals…one of the worst jobs I've ever done was a chambermaid…cleaning up after people in hotels is the worst job in the universe…it's so demeaning…you'd be surprised…there's only a certain amount of used condoms you can collect off the floor and emmm…it's a horrible job really really badly paid job…I've also worked in factories…sweat shops…and I've been working since I was a wee lass cos my parents used to bring work home…piece work…we used to make shoes and so on…emmm yeah I've just done lots and lots of jobs over the years…I think a lot of working-class immigrant families you just learn that work is part of our life it's not something you go to it's just something that's always

there….lots of different part time jobs…I think students are realised that now…you know…and the days were you could just be a student…they don't exist anymore you know you gotta work…emm in shitty jobs usually…emm yeah done a lot of different stuff…cook yeah…done lots of stuff

Were you ever out of work for any reason?

Do you know what? I don't know when I've not worked…I've always worked…I think when I first came here for a few months…I didn't have a job…emmm…but I've always worked…yeah always…I've always had to work yeah…since I was a kid

In the jobs you've had, have you ever had any bad experiences?

Emmm I've been sacked a few times for emmm…trying to set up a union…I've been sacked because…emmm…management have wanted to get rid of me…almost always in a workplace I try to get some union recognition or get…you know…what's the point in just going to a job…and having shit conditions? So…yeah yeah yeah I've been sacked a few times…sometimes they're really really scared like the Lighthouse…I don't know if you know the Lighthouse in Glasgow in the centre…yeah I was a duty manager there…and they found out that I'd had occupied the Lighthouse like 3 years earlier for a demonstration and they somehow found out…and they called him and the two managers were shaken whilst they said we're gonna let you go! What did they did I'd do? I was just like yeah alright…emmm so yeah they obviously got a short straw when they were going to sack me but emm…I mean even an Art Centre you'd think they'd treat workers better but they didn't…I don't think they were very keen on unions…you know some of the otherwise most progressive places as soon as you mention a union they're like oh my god you know as if it's the worst thing in the world…but you know that was in 2003 that was a long time ago… emmm I got sacked from Australia Post which is the equivalent of Royal Mail cos I was a union rep there…and yeah management wanted to get rid of me…we'd had a strike and they'd transferred me to god knows where…miles and miles from where I lived cos we lost the strike and instead of getting me sacked they agreed to transfer me to another workplace…it was miles away and emmm…they hated me! They couldn't sit in the same room as me they could just see them…if they had a shovel they'd bury me alive they were just like…they hated me…oozing off them…emmm I got sacked once for accusing the…well not accusing stating that the manager was a sexist piece of shit and ehh everytime he got drunk he was leering over the woman

How do you feel about your current job?

Well I've been in this job since 2012…it's great! I'm trying to get staff a wage rise at the moment so emm…cos inflations so so bad…trying to get staff a wage rise…only 3% this year then hopefully 3% next year but the voluntary staff is terrible isn't it in

paying people they're usually based on…what grants you get…it's not the best job security and you can't always guarantee wages are in line with inflation so…I love this job it's great…most people love working for us…it's just like a lot of voluntary sector jobs it's not always the best paid…sadly

Do you see any differences between Govanhill Baths and, say, Glasgow Life?

The differences between our jobs and Glasgow Life…I think we have a much more sympathetic board and management…I think there's more ways for the staff to be listened to and there's far less bureaucracy and staff have far more say in how they deliver their jobs…I think ironically there's probably more job security with us than the Council…how things have turned…when you got a job in the Council years ago it was a job for life…that doesn't exist anymore…I think a lot of the jobs in Glasgow Life and the council have been really de-skilled emmm…and they're really badly paid emmm I think we're less of a top-down organisation…we're more of a grassroots approach and we…emm…we believe the importance of jobs rather than volunteering Glasgow Life seems to try and get more and more people to volunteer to do paid work…emmm…yeah but in the end a job is a job isn't it? I mean everyone's got a manager everyone's got a…wage and everyone's got conditions they have to defend but hopefully we're the sort of organisation that nurtures and looks after our staff as opposed to just treating them like a…you know a machine or a cog in the wheel which it never what we wanna do

Since you moved to Govanhill in 1997 what have been the main changes you've seen in the community and work in the area?

The main changes…emm…we've lost quite a lot of services that used to be pretty…emm…pretty…obvious you know what they were and what they did…things like the jobs centre used to be just up the road…social work had a major office up the road…all around Calder Street and so on and a bit further down so they were…they were very popular places that brought people into the community but also served the community as well so people didn't have to leave the area…the other thing we've noticed is emm…they make Calder Street and Allison Street one-way roads which had a big effect on the local businesses but there was a joke around at the time and it's emm…it's pretty funny but also quite real in many ways that all roads lead to ASDA…all sort of one way road except the roads that actually lead to ASDA…the big roads…emm and that had a big impact obviously in the community little shops and so on that relied on bus stops for newspapers…bits n pieces and there was people really really upset at that…and obviously the closure of Govanhill Baths is the big one…that had over 150,000 people using it on a yearly basis and then it stopped…the other thing we've seen is emmm…that there was a campaign to get washing facilities within closes… so it was either 2001 or 2005 I can't remember were the government passed a law to enforce…to force landlords to actually have a shower or a bath in a property…before then all they had to do legally was provide running water and it didn't have to be hot running water either…emmm…so people used to go into the Govanhill

Baths for a wash and when that shut down it made it obvious that actually slum landlords were just getting away with murder…the other thing that happened was that the stock housing transfer happened which meant that all the houses that used to belong to the council…they were all sort of semi-privatised to Housing Associations who were not democratic and so what you saw was a real sweep curve upwards in terms of the cost of what social housing was and what people thought was cheap housing…but with the Housing Associations those rents went up…so there's been lots of changes locally…and they're the negative ones…but there's also been a rejuvenation of community activism in many ways

Would you say Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

Emmm that's an interesting question…I'm not sure if it's the community that's shaped me or if it's actually the campaigns I've been involved in that have shaped me so…I think it's more to do with how the fight for human rights and the fight for better facilities and the fight against racism has actually changed me as opposed to my physical environment emm…but I'm very proud of living and working in the local area but it's very similar to where I grew up in Fitzroy in Melbourne…yeah I think it's more not necessarily the physical area but it's more to do the people and the campaigns I've been involved in that have shaped me

You say that Govanhill is quite similar to the place that you grew up, in what ways are they similar?

Well I lived on the 17th floor of a very large housing estate…and it was very very congested lots and loads of people living really close together …very very multi-cultural very ethnic…immigrant based but also had lots of elements like lots of students living there and also creeping gentrification…so very similar yeah

What in life is important to you personally?

Well I don't want to be old, poor, hungry and cold I think that's important and emm…and I'm getting old you know…been doing this for a long time…I like being in a community where…poverty's not what drives you're life that's really really important you know…I think it's important that resources in our community are shared and people are looked after…that involves yourself and your friends and family…emmm health I suppose?

Has there been any events or days in the community that you vividly remember?

Obviously the occupation of Govanhill Baths very very much so…you know having a 24 hour picket for 141 days in an occupation that's pretty pretty significant and the other is Kenmure Street where we stopped the Home Office that was really really important…the other key moments emmm…when we had Govanhill Festival for the first time…when we walked down the streets celebrating diversity and immigration that was incredibly memorable and the first International Roma Day was really really important seeing all those Roma flags flying down Calder Street and Allison Street…and it was lovely cos there were Roma people looking out the windows and raving obviously not confident enough to come out in the street but also seeing Roma people with non-Roma people having an ownership of the local area and filling the streets that was lovely…so yeah quite a few memorable events

Is there anything else that you'd like to add that hasn't been covered?

Emmm…I think there's lots of marches we've had there which is unusual compared to other parts of Glasgow…a real tradition of feeder marches into big demonstrations…like the recent COP26 was great…2,000 people marched locally there…also the student's strike were the young people led the demonstration into the town to meet the bigger demonstration that was quite wonderful…that was not last year but the year before when the school student's called a strike against climate change and the youth club organised what they thought was just gonna be a small group of kids leading a figure march down to the big one and it obviously caught the imagination of local people cos there was a couple hundred people there and it was really vibrant and loud and yeah nice little achievement from the youth club

Who inspired up when you were growing up?

In terms of influences probably my mother and my grandmother…they were two woman from Muslim backgrounds who didn't have a huge amount of education and they only finished primary school and to be able to migrate thousands of miles from your home raise a family and in a very racist country like Australia raise four children without speaking a word of the language was pretty pretty impressive and my grandmother you know…she basically she had dozens of kids and…emm…she looked after lots of kids but always to her it was important that…education was important for children so she was a bit of a fighter and a bit of a Republican in Turkey and yeah…it was just good to see role models like that who were very feisty and…pushed the boundaries of their own oppression you know…to do what's best for their kids…so yeah…lots of girls in my family

You mentioned that Australia was quite a racist country growing up, could you tell me a bit more about that?

When we moved to Australia in 1970 you still had 5 years earlier…the White Australia Policy and they only took in Turkish people or people from that area of the Mediterranean…darker people for the first time around there and we were very conscious that we were…immigrants…enormous amount of racism and bigotry at the time…horrible horrible I just remember as a child the language used against us and yeah I think it was 1970 before Australia recognised Aboriginals as humans…the first time they were included in the census and there's still huge levels of racism in Australia now I mean it's like any other secular state I mean if you're gonna go into a country and dispossess native people, indigenous people there you've gotta invest all sorts of racist ideology which defines them as inferior and one of the main ways to do that is to deny them history…horrible oppression of Aboriginals at the time followed by…immigrants and then there weren't that many Muslims you know or immigrants who weren't Christians so Turkish people I think were the first wave of immigrants that weren't Christians or Catholics that came to Australia…saying that I grew up in a very very Irish dominated community as well which had a history of pushing back against some of that anti-Irish racism…but the school I went to was very ethnically diverse that was the high school…but you know there were a lot of good people in Australia as well who were pushing against that racism and Australia's got ironically a fantastic history of left wing struggles that you were aware of at the time

Did you experience any racism at school or was it a supportive environment?

Well it's funny cos when I was a primary school…I went to a Catholic school…state schools in Australia were all over the place so you could have Catholic schools that were actually state schools…but it's funny I remember a very specific moment when I was at primary school when what were named as the boat people started coming from Cambodia and Vietnam and a lot of the racist that was inflicted on us turned quite quickly to the hatred towards boat people I remember as a young kid finding that quite shocking at the time I mean the racism towards them was horrendous…I mean you got spat at you got called Wog…that was probably one of the first words I've ever learned…just loads of comments and behaviours and I remember one of my school teachers telling me that…emm…I shouldn't aspire to do too much in my life cos I'm just gonna end up in a factory just yeah…too numerous to say

Do you see any similarities of racism in Australia at that time with Govanhill now?

Aw yeah same thing same thing…you know abuse…swearing…being blamed for whatever ill was in the community at the time so if it was rats well obviously it was the Turkish or the Lebanese or the Greek people that brought them in cos no rats ever existed before we were there…same towards Roma people…I mean racism is identical in many ways wherever you are…you know the treatment of people are inferior or stupid or…one thing that they kept pushing for a long time was that the reason that we didn't integrate but that we were stupid or that it was our fault that we didn't learn the language or that it was our fault that we didn't eat the same foods or

that we were fuzzy about food rather than actually looking at why…we had no time to learn English cos we're working 20 hours in a factory you know cos the wages were so poor so very very similar here…yeah it doesn't matter where you are racism's the same it's about degrading people and making them feel inferior and blaming them for things you have no control over in your life…but also in Australia and here…there was also a huge amount of institutional racism you know…not being able to access jobs or learning or being treated by police…I mean police are awful you know we had paddy wagons used to just circle our community all the time and obviously the name comes from when they used to just jail Irish people all the time but…you know just harassment from police you know…it doesn't matter where you go it's pretty much the same

Fraser

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Aye so I've been living in Glasgow for nearly 10 years now and I've been living in Govanhill for the last 5 years or so so me and my missus got our flat in Govanhill in 2017 so fairly early on so fairly early on in terms of the big mass influx of people moving into Govanhill over the last couple of years…so aye 5 years

What was it about Govanhill that made you want to move?

There were a couple of reasons…so we were looking for a place that was affordable and at the time Govanhill was much cheaper than what it is now…we're not sorta incredibly loaded people we're no minted people so it was affordable…we knew that neck of the woods was a good area for working in climate and energy…we knew for climate specifically it was a very active area…a lot went on in the community there so we were interested in getting involved in that and some community level stuff…but aye it was a nice place that we heard good things about…I think a lot of people talk a lot of shite about Govanhill but we'd learn good things about people that we knew and lived there

Can you tell me about the work that goes on with climate in the area?

So there's a lot…I guess the hub of what happens in Govanhill stems from a fairly extensive history at this point of community gardening which is a good sort of solidarity building space…outfits like the South Seeds who have been there for the best part of the last 15/20 years or so…they're not just Govanhill they sprawl out to Pollokshields and others also…but there's the kind of hub of it where it's green it's environmental but it's not just about the green and climate side of it it's the social side of it also getting marginalized folk within the community into those spaces whether that's including within the community and the conversation or it's supporting them to go on and do more climate based stuff…so a really rich history of community level gardening and that kinda stuff but also very radical very justice focused very much linked into the

social justice networks and the mutual aid networks that work in the community…there's a lot of stuff that goes on a lot of activism…because Govanhill is a place that has a lot of issues with tenants' rights there's a lot of refugees in that area a lot of asylum seekers a lot of immigration I think lends itself really well to a lot of solidarity building…to movement building

Can you tell me about some of the community groups in the area and your experiences?

There's a lot of anti-xenophobia groups a lot of solidarity with people who have moved here…a lot of tenants' rights works so Living Rent are very very active in Govanhill very prominent and as far as I'm aware very well trusted in the area I think partly because they do case by case…they will help you resist eviction they will help you get better conditions in your block…South Seeds is another great example of community organisation and they are also 3rd sector funded but they do not just gardening stuff but fuel poverty stuff…so they help you get loans and financial support that the government provides to make your house warmer so lots of really good practical on the ground work happening alongside the more typical activism…a lot of climate justice groups work there…social justice groups…a lot of…a very strong Roma network as well…a lot of very good active community work that goes on…I think that spectrum of groups bringing the community together then actual getting stuff together makes it a very vibrant and productive place…in any place that's diverse there's a lot more trust of local community actor than a council actor or a government actor who maybe aren't on the side of the community so you have Glasgow City Council who are very invested in property development and landlords and maybe not much on the side of the community or at least that's the perception so I think the big issue there is trust more than anything

What were your first impressions of the area?

It wasn't as scary as people made it out to be…we heard all the horror stories from taxi drivers and aww Govanhill mate oh it's rough it's scary it's a ghetto it's a free for all up there it's all rats and shite on the streets there's rape it's this that and the other…our first impressions was that this is a really friendly community we moved into…before we moved in I was working in a coffee shop on a minimum wage job and I met a guy that who lived in a block that we were looking for a flat in just by chance and we went in there and the whole block when we went in to view the flat already knew who we were…that's a mixed block of an older Asian family a younger Asian family a young couple with their first kid…they knew who we were and everyone was kinda familiar already…people were just nice and friendly and very much want to involve you in stuff and want you to get involved in stuff and help out whenever you can…it wasn't the scary place everyone made it out to be…complete opposite…diverse vibrant lively active which is exciting

Why do you think there's a lot of noise from the outside?

Immigration…immigration it's the perception cos it's an area full of migrants…over time from Irish community way way back nearly a century ago right up until the Roma community more recently there's been an awful lot of prejudice and Govanhill's been a big lightning rod for xenophobia in that sense…tapping into the wider narrative of Roma people aren't to be trusted…criminals and this that and the other…that's been the focus of it…there's also no coincidence that that happens to be Nicola Sturgeon's backyard so it's good for that combination of political points…I don't remember there ever anything happening on our street in Govanhill I don't remember a thing about a mass brawl or anything like that…maybe occasionally when there's football on…but that's no people from Govanhill

What kind of relationship do you have with your neighbours?

We're dead close we're dead close…so it's just passed our favourite time of year Ramadan…we've got two Muslim families in our block and they fast all day and make fucking enormous meals and then they'll chap the door at midnight and you'll get all the leftovers from the meal…loads and loads of food left at the door…first time they did it we shat ourselves cos it was 11 o'clock at night and the door was going going and going and it was just the neighbours trying to be friendly…there was a bag of rice saag paneer all kinds of lamb everything coming to the door and that's like every night as part of the feast whatever is left over we get through the door and it's fucking brilliant…absolutely fucking brilliant

What has encouraged you to stay?

Partly that the block we're in is brilliant…our neighbours are lovely we know them all we get along with them all…when the summer comes around we all obviously have a shared back garden in the close we sit out altogether we sit and have a few beers or soft drinks for the Muslim members it's been brilliant…it's not just our immediate block that keeps on there we've become a little bit into the networks and the local people so we know the guy that runs the café at the end of the road know what I mean? We know the south seeds folk…we want to support the people who do the work around here because contrary to popular belief much of the work happening in Govanhill is been led by people who have lived here forever…I think there's this idea that Govanhill has become…hipsters have moved in and they have but a lot of the people who are leading the work the grassroots work on the ground are people who have been here for a very long time…there's a great solidarity in Govanhill partly because of that…that sort of external Govanhill is a shitehole it's full of immigrants criminals and that sort of stuff…it's amazing how that can bond the community behind the sort of nah fuck you actually…pride is a good word for it like nah we know what's happening in here we're very very proud of it and you feel very connected to it…you feel a part of something in Govanhill…that bonding of sort of resistance to those narratives…the more that we

are just gonna do our thing and showcase it and be proud of it…in the time that we've been there which is 5 years which isn't all that long enough to be embedded in the community…but it's transitioned now from just fighting the constant xenophobic narrative to showcasing what we are proud of and doing it well

Where do you hang about in the area?

Last time I was in Vicky Bar we were meeting folk from outside of Govanhill…we were in there meeting some pals and there was a funeral reception at the back of the pub and we're sitting in the front and these two old woman come stumbling from the back room scrapping like fuck kicking fuck out each other and they go outside and the rest of the funeral come outside and they're fighting and fucking going for it so the shutters get flung down on the side but they come rumbling at the front entrance again but eventually the barmaid who's about 55 herself managed to get them all out the pub and the shutters are down and we're locked in the bar and we got free bevy all night as a sort of apology…brilliant boozer

What would you say the strengths are of Govanhill as a place?

I think the diversity helps…I think that's a big big part of it…when you have so many people from so many backgrounds…not just diversity in terms of race and ethnicity but in terms of the stuff people do…different kinds of people professionally as well as demographically like community activists artists expertise in social policy…it means you can really come together a lot and achieve a lot for an area in a way that if you just lived in a suburb where everybody does roughly the same 35/40 grand a year job…professional got our 2 and a half children cars in the garage…it's not the same as a community with lots of different kind of people…life time working class folk recent immigrants recent hipsters all with a shared sense of pride and interest in the community…I think you can a whole lot more done and it just makes it a more exciting place to be

Are there any weaknesses if any?

I think so I do think so…I think the way that rents are going everywhere in a fucking nightmare and there doesn't seem to be any real meaningful drive to counter that in any way apart from the grassroots which is brilliant

Have you noticed any changes in work in the area?

There is a greater number of incomers to the area whereas before people were more sceptical of it the narrative has changed and I think that is testament to the hard work of campaigners and people who have life there for a long time to change that…you

have a lot more people trying to open up in Govanhill…I don't necessarily mean in a gentrification sort of way but I think people see it as that hub of activism and people are moving in on that…I don't think it's exploitative but different people are maybe coming into Govanhill who haven't before…the changes have been quite smooth quite subtle…the way people talk about Govanhill being this ghetto is extreme the talk about it being this gentrified husk is also extreme it's not become that…the same people who have lived in my block are still the same people…it's never changed that block the people we live across the road from hasn't changed the people who run the community centre around the road hasn't changed the people who run the Baths hasn't changed the heart of it is still very much there

I've been in the Baths before and it has that feeling of this could be a hundred years ago and I don't mean that in a bad way but in a way that you feel part of the history and part of the heritage and contributing and building on something that's maybe already been done

Are there any events or days in Govanhill you remember vividly?

The festival every year it's big it's lively a lot of music a lot of out in the street it's a proper sort of carnival atmosphere…where our flat is over the back they've just started a community garden…at the back of my flat over the wall from the garden there's a big bit of hill derelict land that the developers bought to put up flats or houses or whatever…they can't get the planning permission for it cos there are various issues ongoing…they've been trying to do it for the best part of 10 years now and South Seeds came along about 10 years ago and put up a community garden and then shortly after that the developers came and bulldozed the garden…no warning no nothing cos to them it was their land…3 years later they started the garden again and the same thing happened…last year started the garden again and the same thing happened again although they didn't bulldoze it this time they came along and asked…if wasn't South Seeds either it was a different community organisation so anytime that piece of land has been used for community stuff the developers have came along and said we're about to start building again…this time though it went to the Council for an emergency decision and they weren't allowed to do it…they set up CCTV the developers like 20 feet high so that was deemed illegal and the council ruled against the developers so there is now a garden out there that has semi regular events trying to get people round…they set up a little community tool library where you could come and share all the tools they set up a little mobile library out the back there so that's been really nice and it feels like a wee victory for the community…Govanhill festival is a let's come together let's celebrate make a song and dance literally…also the Queens Park Disco Sessions it's cool man…there's a little amphitheatre in Queens Park and you get DJs bands and stuff including Roma performers and Pakistani performers from across the community to play throughout the day and it's just a big party…you had people from Nicola Sturgeon to people from the East End of the city coming and seeing Govanhill for what it is which is a lively place a friendly place where good shit is happening where folk are coming along…nobody's fighting in the streets there's no running battles in Govanhill ever it's a fucking great place for coming together…my first disco must've been like 3 years ago and it was fuckin class…Govanhill is special and unique because of all the different groups here not just

in Glasgow but the entire country…you're talking about going towards Birmingham or London before you'll find something that feels like Govanhill

Do you think Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

Maybe a little bit…I've always been someone who's been into the people around them I'm a big believer in community I'm a big believer in local my work is in energy which we sometimes think about as big faraway stuff but Govanhill more than anywhere you see it at a local level you feel it at a local level and you feel with the amount of community activism and organising that goes on that you can do something about it at a local level and that's not something you get everywhere…it's something that's possible everywhere but not something you feel you are walking into readymade

If you were to describe Govanhill in 3 words what would it be?

Diverse…vibrant and I don't mean that in that in oh it's lively and the night-life I mean there's activism going on every day there's a lot going on every day there's a lot of determination to do stuff so vibrant much more in the community sense and complex…it's a complex place…the amounts of different people involved in it…the issues it's had…the work it does…it's not a straightforward place to understand but it is an easy place to enjoy and appreciate

What in life is important to you?

I'm a big believer in community…I'm a big believer in…helping each other man…everything I do is not to advance myself…I grew up poor…skint as fuck…and the main driving force in everything I do is for other people as far as possible to not have to go through that or just have an enjoyable fucking life…I like to contribute to something bigger than myself and help people in their spaces and help them as much as possible…the core of what's important to me is helping folk…getting to know folk…lots of different people…I think that's where richness comes from in life…getting to know folk

Can you tell me about your upbringing?

Aye so I grew up in a high-rise in Forfar…5 storeys…working-class community…my granda worked in a factory in Forfar my granny cleaned the factory in the evenings…mum was a single parent…never knew my father…my brother's father was very abusive to me and my mum…there was a lot of domestic violence growing up in that community a lot of alcoholism a lot of drug abuse a lot of violence in general…the domestic violence was always kinda big where we were from but the community side

of it was a big crutch…source of stability and source of support…growing up we were always skint always poor never had any money to our name grandparents were not…so there was a lot of picking up slack from my mum's mates from our aunties uncles that kind of stuff…got kicked out of High School before I could get any of my qualifications…was on the brew for a couple of years then went back to college got my Highers then university

I feel most proud when I remember where I'm from

What would you say is of lesser importance?

I'm not arsed about accolades I'm not arsed about profile or anything like that not arsed about money I'm arsed about doing something that feels meaningful and that's it really…where I come from you don't get a lot of doctors you don't get a lot of academics…I feel at home in Govanhill because I think there are a lot of people who feel proud of where they come from and connected to where they come from and they are not thinking how can I gain personally from this…they are thinking how can I make things better for folks around me and that's why I've always felt at home there and I think that's why a lot of people feel at home there…it's because they feel part of something that they feel proud to represent and proud to work on…despite the narrative of flaws and everything else

What are the similarities between Forfar and Govanhill?

I think it's that…I think it's exactly that…they are small town where we can say it's a shitehole…you can't say it's a shitehole you're no from here…we can talk all the shit we want about it…I think Scotland in general has that mentality of we can talk shit about it you can't talk shit about it…Glasgow has it Forfar has it Dundee has it Govanhill has it in spades

Henry

We need to learn lessons from history…the biggest lesson from history in terms of anti-racism and anti-fascism is from Germany and the lessons from that…the left has to work together if not at top level then on the ground and we never work with the fascists no matter what

The biggest lesson is you need united front activity…the 2nd lesson …you have to stop them growing you don't wait…

You have the nip something like that in the bud and that means you have to show opposition…you doesn't mean that you have to physically fight them in the streets but it means that when they show up saying down with Jewish capitalism or Islam Muslims

are the problem in Britain for example then you have to show up in bigger numbers…if they have 100 we want 1,000 so that you don't have to physically confront them but they're shown for what they are and that's what the anti-Nazi league were able to do…despite the Nazi League was a big organisation…the anti-Nazi League were able to hold carnivals with tens of thousands of people in London with Elvis Costello and Sham69…Black music…White music…all playing at these…there are parallels with the Govanhill International Festival…while at one stage Govanhill was a real stronghold of racist ideas…on that demonstration…the demonstration was incredibly welcomed by people…there are a lot of racist ideas in Govanhill…I can even remember a few years ago…that were raised sort of issues like Eastern European and Roma men congregating in the streets when we were told there was to be no more than two people and shouting at them…even 10 years ago walking down Allison Street to go to Kelvin boxing club…there were a lot of guys there…yenno if you were a single white woman it could be quite threatening…but I think that's gone a lot recently…I think the Govanhill carnival…the Roma Holocaust Memorial…all this stuff has ensured that racist ideas are nipped in the bud and I think there has been far, far,far less of it and all of the individual racists I know hang about Govanhill and put their efforts recently into the anti-vax campaign…people can be active agents or passive victims but it needs organisation or else there can be passive victims…but if there's organisations such as the thing around the Baths or the Govanhill Community Project…empowering and enabling organisation.

There has been a long history of empowerment within the community linked in with a strong anti-racist presence and with this group to the empowerment of woman

'The suffering that the Jews and the Blacks and the Roma suffered within the area…the Irish suffered it as well

Marxism stresses more the agency of working people and their ability to shape their own circumstances

'People make history but not in circumstances of their own choosing' so the circumstances are often brought in from outside and people react to it…so it's often defensive struggles that workers are involved in…so strikes tend to be defensive struggles…pay to keep up with inflation…working conditions…whereas things like the carnival tend to be more proactive in bringing the community into celebratory events as well as defensive anti-racist…strong anti-racist events…what a benefit for the community when that projects finished…it'll be an area for community groups to meet in…a space for meetings in the area…it'll be a great thing and there'll be aspects of collective running of it.

There was about 12,000 Jews within Britain in Scotland in the 1930s…there was a small community in Edinburgh and a community in Dundee but the bulk of Jews living in Scotland lived in Govanhill/Gorbals…Govanhill was seen as a step up from the

Gorbals and the majority of Glasgow Jews lived in Govanhill at that time and a smaller number in Pollokshields…there was a community in the West End…a longer standing community based around Charing Cross area…the West at that time was Charing Cross and that area…they tended to be older more established Jews…there has been a myth in the Jewish community that stemmed after the Holocaust that Jews united but there's always been a class divide between more established Jews and in-fact…there were early Jewish members of the British Union of Fascists although mainly in London…there was always a clash between Jewish employers and Jewish employees in Glasgow…especially in the layering trade…strikes in Jewish owned workplaces for wages…one of the interviewees of my project said she was collecting donations for anti-fascist work and some of the wealthier Jews didn't think it was the right thing to do.

Jane

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

A'm divorced… separated since 1985… a have 4 children… 24 grandchildren they aw live in England… a wis a Youth and Community Worker and a Councillor and a did a lot a community jobs mainly temporary jobs… ma first job wis as a machinist, and a wis born in Glasgow…

Can you tell me a bit about your job in the factory?

A left school at 15 without any qualifications and went to work as a machinist… it wis piece work in those days so that's how ye made yer money… a come from a poor family… A've got really bad arthritis in ma hands…

What would be the standard day when you were growing up?

We never went to school aw the time… we were lookin' after the two young boys... a fell behind in school... a fell behind in Maths and French at senior school and that made me stay away from school more… it wis difficult to catch up... a wis brilliant at English… a used to put on plays and a used to write for the school magazine... primary school a would also put plays on...

How do you think your childhood has influenced how you view things now?

A understand poverty and abuse... a cin stick up for other people... the jobs a took have been influenced by abuse... a want to take care of everybody else... a've taken on caring roles... everyone in the family came to me for help...

Was your family background from Migrants or all born in Scotland?

They were all born in Scotland... ma dad wis well to do apart from us…ma mum wis married before so in those days there wis a stigma against our family… ma mum didnaekeep her first family the dad took them... then ma sister had children out o' wedlock... ma mum and dad were never married...

How was it in the Estate?

It wis difficult... snide comments… no one said anything to ma face... they all spoke about ma mum and dad not being married…a did not know until a wis 15... ma mum told me to shut up when a asked about this... a wis angry about this... adidnae know

why people laughed about ma mum and dad not being married... a thought they were married…it wis horrible...

Why Govanhill?

At first a got the flat to get away from ma mum... ma dad drank and came to ma house every night o' the week... he wis straight out the coalmine and dirty...

What were the pull factors to Govanhill?

It wis near where all the shops were and near where a could get a job... a had a child... it wis central for work... the guy we knew had houses to let in Govanhill... it wis vibrant… there wis lots a different nationalities...

What year did you move to Govanhill?

1974

Do you think there is a lot going on in Govanhill now? Activities?

Aye… there's loads a things going on here… lots a Community Projects... when a moved into Castlemilk there wisnae any community projects... in the 70s in Govanhill there wis lots a Community Projects... ye knew all yer neighbours in the housing estate in Castlemilk but now people move more and ye don't know yer neighbours... they decided to build a Motorway near Govanhill and knocked down the houses... people were scattered to Toryglen or Castlemilk or Easterhouse breaking up communities... there wis an increase in burglary because a the lack a community... and that still continues to this day... most people have moved out o' Govanhill... their families will have moved away as it's known as a deprived area... Asian families stay together in Govanhill... mainly Asian families... the indigenous people from here are scattered... the Asian families will stay together even if overcrowded... they will buy flats and pass around the family... so their ideology wis to buy around about the family...

What would you say the main strengths of Govanhill are?

A lot a independent retailers... the housing is no fit for modern housing... the houses are no big enough for big families…no suitable for disabled people... modern families have changed from the 70s to now… buildings no big enough... rules about sharing bedrooms... all a these rented properties and housing association houses are no big enough for the bigger families...

Do you see a lot of overcrowding in Govanhill?

Aye... Asian families tend to live in overcrowded houses due to their culture... usually people buying a house live in overcrowded circumstances... money would be put into the pot and houses bought over time and their elderly looked after... the Housing Association will no allow overcrowding... it's mainly single parent and small families... to get them modernised will take years due to pandemic... wet rooms are taking a long time to be created for disabled people... ma neighbour has waited years... there have always been different migrating groups in Govanhill just like the Gorbals and the Briggait... the Gorbals have completely changed...

Do you see any similarities between the Irish in the 70s to the Romanians you see now in Govanhill?

No really, a do no want to sound racist but Romanians do no tend to want to work... A've met a few people from Romania who want to have money to buy a house back home... they don't want to settle here... some do work... Irish people met partners and remained here and bought houses here... this is just a stop gap for the Romanians... the Irish and Asians wanted to stay in Scotland... no work in Ireland so wanted to stay in Scotland long term...

Have you been involved in any community groups in the area recently?

Aye… a woman's group in Larkfield Centre on a Wednesday but this has stopped but there is one on a Friday... a go to an Art group on a Tuesday... there's a lot a things going on in the Larkfield Centre... a tried Tai-Chi... aye…ye also have the group in Bankhall Street… musical instruments…very cheap 6 quid... cello, guitar, group work... great second-hand shops… brand new clothes very cheap... Barnardo's and Cancer Research a bit pricier... lots a cafes… different cafes… a real café culture where ye can meet lots a people... people all know each other… it's brilliant... Bluebird café… family owned through the years... Govanhill Baths a go to on a Saturday morning then into the Bluebird café which has been there for a very long time... the people tend to meet in cafes other than pubs... no as many bakeries...

Is there any events or days from the past or present in Govanhill you remember vividly?

A think the park wis a lot more interesting… Queens Park… there wis the boating lake... at one time a am sure there were horse rides when a wis younger... so the parks were more geared up to family days out... now it's mainly picnics and carnivals... the parks were definitely more geared up for big family days out... we used to take our wee boats and race them... people could no afford to go to the seaside or go on holiday... the parks are no getting used the way they used to be and this is no so good for poorer families... a see it getting worse… a don't see it getting any better for vulnerable families...

Why do you think the parks are not being utilised the way they once did?

The government especially if it's a Tory government... The Tory government… sorry this is going to sound political but they divide people…put people away from each other so if ye divide ye can conquer... the government cause division... people who are struggling will say look at the migrants all that they get why don't we get that... they get free meals… we don't get free meals... it wis the same in ma day why do they get that and we don't get that… stigmatising people so they will no claim

Do you think that Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

Aye… a've always been interested in youth and community work even as a child in Castlemilk... it's had a big impact... we organised fundraising things and bought a wee place and the kids went on holiday

<u>Jennifer</u>

Can you tell me a wee bit about yourself?

I'm from Glasgow…I'm currently a student social worker…I have an Irish catholic background…I was brought up in the southside of Glasgow with my 3 siblings and my dad was a single father cos my mother died when I was very young…so he was the man of the house…traditional Irish values…go to mass on a Sunday infact we were the only Catholics on the street…when I was 14 we moved up to Muirend my dad used to work in Levendale hospital then he moved up to the Victoria Infirmary so we moved house and I went to Holyrood…moved up to this kinda area…I used to hang about Govanhill a lot…I ended up going travelling for 14 years…been to Germany…the Netherlands…Italy…Spain then when I was about 34 I came back to Glasgow…back to Govanhill and had my beautiful daughter and I've been here ever since living the single mother life…working and then I finally went back to uni…was the first person in my family to go to uni

Can you tell me a bit about your family background as far back as you can go?

My dad's family come from Ireland…very working-class…he's the first person to get a sort of blue collar job…very poor Irish family who came over to Glasgow to look for work in the 50s…I think my dad was probably the first person in the household of 12 who bought a house…my dad's family…very catholic…very traditional…my mum's side of the family were from Glasgow…my grandfather was a worker…he was a heating engineer and they were pretty educated…not well to do but definitely working-class they were all workers…not too dysfunctional…the Irish side of the family were very dysfunctional…lot of alcoholism…gambling amongst the men…a lot of issues there but I think that has a lot to do with the poverty that was going on in that part of Ireland at the time…no opportunities ye know…they had no electricity…they had to share a bath with a big tin bucket infront of the range…they'd heat up water and they'd probably have to share their bath water and stuff but my grandfather helped put up the first electric street lights in the street…he used to…whatever work he did…there was a little brewery in Monaghan and he used to work on the carts bringing the beer round to the pubs and then wherever he got his money he'd drink it and ma poor wee granny would be left there with her 12 wains and no food so they all helped each other in the street cos I think they were all enduring the same kind of stuff…I think they got a lot of handouts from the church…my gran used to go round and clean the chapel…so did my aunties as well they'd go down…I think they just helped each other out…one of the family members…my grans cousin or something like that owned a shop so what they'd do is they'd get tick off of them to buy food and they'd kinda share it with their neighbours and then we somebody got money they'd pay the tick and then the same thing would happen again…but it was very poor times in Monaghan at the time and nobody had much…I remember my aunt tellin me that they'd wanted one of the sisters to marry off to a farmer cos he had money and a regular income and it was a place where they could have a sort of endless supply of food

What did your dad do when he got to Glasgow?

My dad got a job as a porter in Mearnskirk hospital and he remembers being really shy…he remembers them all laughing at his accent…he had a really strong Monaghan accent and he felt really embarrassing cos of his lack of education so he went to night school and got whatever qualifications he needed to do his nursing training and then he worked his way up he worked really hard and met my mum who was a nurse…he used to do to mass together down at the Cathedral next to the Clyde…his co-workers were making fun of him cos of the fact he was Irish and an Irish Catholic…I remember him saying that he felt discriminated against…

Can you tell me a bit about your time at school?

Yeah school was very rough…very Glasgow…we all started smoking very young…we were all poor…everybody was poor it seemed…no one in our street had a phone…I remember when somebody had a video recorded it was like oh my god this is huge the whole street were out to see it…if you had a bike the whole street would own it I wouldn't be just yours cos everyone just kinda shared things…it was very often that kids in the street would come and eat in our house…doors were open…everybody knew each other and we all looked out for each other yenno…my dad always looked out for the other kids and all the other parents would look out for us…very tight community in that sense…I guess you felt really safe knowing that you couldn't really do anything too wrong cos you'd get caught…somebody would grass you up but also knowing that you'd get away with a lot as well…one of the older kids would keep you in line and keep you from getting into bad bother

What would a typical day-to-day day be like the house growing up?

Well after my mum died my gran would used to come down and get us up for school so she'd wake us up…we'd run into the living room cos they was only one fire in the house so we'd run to get a space at the fire cos it was always cold you know…used to have a cup of tea before going to school…when we came home from school my dad would be home from school so he'd make the dinner and then we'd go out to play and then he'd come out shouting for us to come in at 9 o'clock and have supper then bed kinda thing

Were there any aspects outside the household that were difficult?

Well when I was about 12 my dad married a really posh lady and we were all kinda like street kids we were just used to running around in this lovely very community environment and all of a sudden this glamorous woman was after our dad and he married her and that was a real difficulty cos there was never really rules on our house there was a lot of love…but there was never alcohol there was never really any big rules…cos we knew…we were very good kids but when this woman came along she thought we were absolute street merchant type kids…we were always dirty and the

house was really lived in and she just came in and changed everything and so that was really difficult and then after that we moved to a big Victorian house in Muirend and I just did not fit in at all y'know…that was really hard…it was a different class…we went from a kinda really poor working class family to this big posh area in Glasgow were everyone owned a house…cars outside the door and we were living with a woman who wore really classy shoes…very styled and we were like shit what's this new world? It was definitely a whole new world for us…no community at all…the community in Muirend was like who's going to play golf?

Why was it that you decided to move to Govanhill?

Well when my mum and dad first married they moved to Govanhill and I went to Holyrood so I used to get the train from Muirend to Crosshill so I knew the area and when I left school the 2nd bed sit I lived in was Govanhill on Dixon Road and I just loved the area…I felt connected to the place…I loved how multi-cultural it was…loved the vibe…I loved the community feeling it felt really robust emmm…it reminded me of Berlin which I used to live in Germany…I really loved tenements…I had so many memories here from when I went to school at the Clauda Club…memories of Govanhill…just the streets…the streets were always really busy with kids running around…playing…you know I just remember it having a real tight nit community…it was very Irish at the time so I could identity with that…it was a really fun place to be…it was a really fun place to be

How would you say Govanhill has changed, if it has?

Govanhill seems like it always comes in waves like a rollercoaster…I think it went through a patch of being really intolerant I think and it's changed and you can feel the vibe coming back…it's really thriving and there's a lot of new people coming into the area and a lot of students…a lot of young professionals…it's a really nice vibe…I don't know how much has changed because I think it used to be a really tolerant place but then it seemed to change…I think it really changed when the European community came and lots of different nationalities moved to the area…I'd say it was about 30 years ago…probably the early 90s that's when it first happened that's when you could come from anywhere in Europe and come and live in the UK…you could go anywhere in Europe…that's when the French started coming and the Spanish and it became really really multicultural…I think it changed then…the face of Glasgow changed…you became to see all these different nationalities coming here whereas before you'd only really see Irish or Asian or Pakistani now you were seeing a whole different shift of people…but I think when it really started to become intolerant was when the Eastern European community moved in and I think for some people that was just too much they couldn't understand their culture and became really intolerant…it was really ugly in Govanhill at that point…I think it still exists…there's this real ugliness that was aimed towards Eastern European communities

Do you think there's any factors that fuel that?

Aw yeah definitely…it's definitely magnified by the media…I think they make up stories sometimes and I think it's cos it's Nicola Sturgeon's constituency…I think that has a lot to do with it…with social media there's a group in Govanhill called…I think it's Govanhillians…I think people were really openly mocking certain cultures…making assumptions that they were Romanian or Roma without even having a clue whenever they actually were…I hated the assumptions they were making about certain groups in the community laughing at men hanging around in the street…laughing at other people's culture…laughing at the way they looked even though…I think there was one like they don't wash…I remember reading that and thinkin that all the rogue landlords in Govanhill…maybe these people don't have any water…maybe there's 10 in a flat we don't know…but I remember feeling really sickened by that particular group…there was only another thing I read 1 morning…some lady said I'm standing outside Neesons last night and some guy came and offered me his kids and she went on this big rant like his kids? As if…a white woman standing outside a white fuckin bar in Govanhill…I don't think that's how exploitation goes on and I remember it really mushroomed into this big thing and everyone got involved and the rumours about child exploitation going on in Govanhill got really out of control for a while…now I have never had an issue in Govanhill…I walk home really late at night…I've never felt threatened by any groups of people I don't think I'm on their radar…one of the biggest problems is the language but people just hear a foreign language and get scared and I think maybe cos I've travelled a lot I don't feel that intimidated by foreign language but yeah…

What are the strengths of Govanhill?

There's a lot of power in the community…it's a very robust community…the power of people coming together in this community is unbelievable…I know there's a big street clean up going on just now…when you can get people moving into action the way that some groups get the people movin here like the Development Trust in Govanhill and Living Rent…they've got all these really great minds together to do some action whether it's a clean-up or whether it's COP26…they done a load clean up from Queens Park to the town…we got loads of rubbish and dumped it at George Square…it still feels really small as well…lots of independent café's and things…there's no big Costa coffees…still feels really small but at the same time it's a very powerful place to live…the community is…like I don't know anywhere where you can go and learn to do mehndi for your hands and do pottery and eat Arab food and do Arab classes and learn Irish Gaelic you know…you can do that here so that's the strengths…it's just so diverse that is its strength

Are there any weak points?

I've noticed that it's a lot of people who have Irish backgrounds who are often intolerant to the new community who lives here now in Govanhill…the irony that lots of impoverished families came over from Ireland looking for a new life…they were running from hardships and real famine…no work like lots of families earned money and sent money back home to Ireland and now when someone from Romania or Poland comes over here to work and sends money back to Poland or Romania or whatever people are horrified like how dare…this can't happen…I mean these people are supporting families whenever they come from…that's what we'd all do…but it's this kinda one rule for me one rule for other people…double standards

Despite that what's encouraged you to stay in the area?

Well I've had my daughter here it's a real home for her…I have friends from Somalia…India…Africa…I have friends from all over the world here…my neighbours if I ever needed anything I could ask them…I remember once when I wasn't working I had no electricity and I asked my neighbour for money to put on the gas metre and they didn't think twice about helping me out and I couldn't think twice about helping them out…my neighbours are from Pakistan and they are the best neighbours I've ever had…I love their ethos that they help their family first and their neighbours next and I've had lots of Pakistani neighbours and I've made great friends in that community and that's what keeps me here it reminds me of all the countries that I went to when I was travelling and I love that it's multi-cultural…I have a friend who I can speak German with she's from Austria…love meeting her cos we always speak German…yeah I love the diversity of the place

Can you tell me more about your neighbours?

Well we have a WhatsApp page so along the street we include everyone who wants to join it and…it started cos a guy was going about scratching the cars so we thought we had to keep an eye out here so we just kinda started doing this lookin out for each other a bit…bringing to attention anything that was going wrong or if we had noise at the time it was the house angels…it was young Pakistani guys who had scooters making lots of noise so we kinda all decided that we'd get together and go and talk to them…it's not always easy it's not always perfect but we do try and find ways to talk to each other if there's any big issues going on

What do you think about the idea of community?

I love it cos for a long time in Germany I never got the sense of community…in Munich you could live in a house for 10 years and still not know your neighbours whereas here the community is talking to people…I mean on the way coming down here to see you today I was talking to I don't know how many people on the way down…you know people know my wee girl…me…and I just love that sense of belonging…I think it's just

a very human…I think it's in the human instinct to feel that you belong somewhere…waking up feeling that familiarity…you know the wee Asian shop round the corner if I didn't have money I know if I went in and asked them for a pint of milk they'd give it to me y'know round a wee Charlie's shop…not that I'd do it but I know if I did…I mean if I went in and I've only got my bank card he'd be like ahhh give it to me later…when my daughter was really young I remember going in there for nappies once cos she wasn't well and I couldn't go to Lidl or anything like that y'know and he's like yeah yeah take the nappies…knowing that there's somebody there to help out in these really hard times was a really good feeling…it was comforting ye know

Are you involved in any community groups in the area?

Yeah…I was helping teaching English for a while and also when the Swap Market was open on Vicky Road we done a conversational German class there…I was volunteering to teach English in the Milk café…I have a qualification of teaching English as a foreign language and I wanted to practice it so I volunteered at Milk café and I met a Turkish lady and helped her with her English…we used to do online classes…I worked with her for about 5 months until I started uni and I didn't have time to do it anymore…it was really great cos I've seen the massive barrier that language is for people coming to Scotland…it's huge…if people can just speak a little bit if they've got some language skills it can open so many doors for them and I remember going to Germany and not speaking any German and how shit that was

Are there any days or events in the area that you remember vividly, past or present?

A day that really stands out for me in the last few years is the Roma day…I found that to be very emotional…it was such a strange feeling in this community my community get together to celebrate playing their music and everything…felt like I was going to cry…it was very very strange but it was very joyous…I just felt like I was really overcome when I saw the first Roma day that they had here that they celebrated and the next year I tried to get involved by doing signs…they have these big signs and have them up around the community…so that and we also do a carnival…Govanhill carnival so I've been involved in that for the last couple of years as well which is really good

Can you tell me a bit more about the Roma day?

Yeah so it's the International Day of Roma…all around the world on this one day they celebrate with music and dancing into the early hours and I think at the beginning I remember a lady making a really horrible comment and I was really shocked by her…she said because there was police presence this lady said we'd be better off speaking the money somewhere else and I remember thinking oh my god the mentality

of people I was so scunnered I didn't even say they are taxpayers these people why are you presuming that they are taking benefits that's just not how it works…these people have an idea that these people are coming to take benefits they're coming to get new teeth and health benefits…it's just not like that…refugees and asylum seekers get such little money to live on…you'd never want to be a refugee yourself in this country ever…I think it's exacerbated by the media…Daily Mail…Daily Record…real shit…taxi drivers are another this is actually a real phenomenon…if you get a taxi and you say you're coming to Govanhill I bet you 90% of the drivers will say to you aww shit you don't live in Govanhill do you? Do you not know what's going on here? I get it said to me all the time…the stuff they're saying I have never experienced and I fucking live here…I don't understand where it comes from it's just this circle of gossip…it makes me feel angry…Govanhill is a brilliant place…it really is a brilliant place like there are opportunities here if you just look…my daughter here…can you heard of Big Noise? Anna my daughter is in 4th year now it started when she was in primary two and it is a project that came from Venezuela to bring music to poorer areas…so you could choose any string instrument so violin…viola…cello or double bass and all the four primary Govanhill got to be involved and my daughter got involved and plays double bass and she's been playing it since primary two and she's now in fourth year…she's in Glasgow Schools Orchestra and it's been life changing for her…going every Saturday to this orchestra and playing this beautiful instrument…she can play bass guitar she can play drums she's just flowing through her now…it makes me feel great cos I could never have afforded that…as a single parent and working…I still would never have had the money to do that but it was available in Govanhill…what an opportunity…she is a musician without even knowing it…she's just been doing it since such a young age…she's really musically talented…I would have loved to have played music but I never had the opportunity so I'm really happy that my girl can do this…she's so confident now she played at the Commonwealth Games…City Halls playing to 1000's of people and really had these great opportunities cos of music…I always said to her if you can play music you'll always have food!

Do you think Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

I think it has yeah…I just feel really connected to Govanhill…I can identify with the people whether they're from Scotland…Ireland…or wherever cos I love travelling I love meeting new people I love new cultures…different foods…yeah I think it has shaped me definitely it's the best part of Glasgow in my humble opinion

Can you tell me about your job just now?

When I came back to Glasgow in 2005 I was 34…I became a support worker and I've been doing that ever since…I fell into that job I never ever saw myself as a support worker…as soon as my daughter started primary I was desperate to work and I got a community where I could just work in the community with her school hours…I had to go and work with older adults and I absolutely loved this job…I think that older people are always forgotten about and the people that I work with are so lovely and funny and

have so much to offer and after 3 years of doing that job I decided to go back to colleague doing HNC in social services…I worked with people with dementia and it really inspired me to go and learn more about it and after the year was done I done a HND…I feel very connected to the people that I work with…I wish I had done it years ago…I love all the different personalities…I'm a real people person…I like to talk to people I like to hear their stories…I guess I have a lot of empathy…I think I'm a good listener and I like to get to know people and I think that there's nothing person that to work with older people…they're dead funny…they're such a funny group of people…I think to hear what they have to say…I really really love that job

Have you ever been out of work for any reason?

Yeah…just when my daughter was really young…she was a wee baby and I didn't have childcare…not having support to go out…my dad had passed away and my family worked so I had no real support with my daughter so I couldn't work and support her so I did that was the only time I didn't work…living on income support which is about 120 quid a week which is absolutely nothing and I couldn't work cos I had my wee daughter there…the only way you could save money was if you didn't leave the house…it was really terrible…I mean you can go to the park and you can buy yourself a takeaway coffee and that was my routine everyday…go to the park…all our clothes were at the charity shop…all my furniture out the house was out the charity shop…it was very very hard

What was it about your life experience that helped you overcome those difficulties?

I guess I always just had a lot of hope that it was just temporary…I'm very resilient…I think I smoke a bit of dope and that kinda helped me…when times are tough like that you need to something and I'd have a little smoke

What in life is important to you?

I think family and inner friendship circles are really important…I think it's really important to keep hopeful…even in the hard times to keep hope alive…I'm a really optimistic person even in really hard times…I think to think how hard it is it's gonna pass (stuff could add on drugs/alcohol etc)

What are you most proud of?

I'm proud that I turned my life around…I'm really proud that I went travelling and learned languages…I'm really proud that I could find happiness even though I had

nothing and the icing on the cake is my beautiful daughter and I'm really proud that I'm doing a post grad at the age of 50 and everything seems where it should be…taking driving lessons as well

What would you say is of lesser importance?

The material things you know…lesser importance is the mortgage…more important to me is beautiful quality time with my daughter…she's travelled to lots of places…we travel every summer to Eastern Europe and yeah spending that quality time with her and not buying things…like material things…material things are not feelings…okay they're tangible they're there but for me happiness or satisfaction is something that just doesn't cost…it's just a feeling…at some point in your life…it's not the car…it's not the status symbols…it's going travelling and having real life moments with your loved ones…for me that's the buzz

Can you tell me a bit more about going travelling?

This wicked step-mother I had kicked me out of the house when I was 17…I suffered a lot of emotional abuse off this woman over the years and then when I was 17 she was an alcoholic and I don't think she could help herself but as soon as I turned 17 I felt school and went bag-packing with my friend to Africa when I was 19 and caught the travelling bug…I had never been outside of Scotland or Ireland…it was just the best experience ever

Laura

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

I had been in Govanhill just shy of 10 years…it'll be 10 years in December…I work in the NHS…I am a programme manager for National Maternity Network which sounds grander than what it is

What were your initial impressions of Govanhill?

I think when we moved her 10 years ago it was the good end of quite a dodgy area…I think some of the central areas of Govanhill I felt quite apprehensive but I now know that that was partly influenced from coming from a small remote town where everybody's just the same…everybody looks the same…there's expectations of looking and acting in certain ways or not fitting in and when I came here I brought all of that with me and had to recognise that actually being somewhere like Govanhill

where everybody's different…the diversity was something I'd never experienced before but when everybody's different it means everybody's the same…it's a total equalizer and I'd never experienced that anywhere before…so at the beginning when I moved here I was a little apprehensive with the busy-ness of it…really busy neighbourhood but I think I learnt a lot from living here…it was a bit of a shocker at first and in part as well moving into a tenement flat…I'd never lived in a flat before so there were a lot of things at the beginning that were very different from anywhere that I'd lived before so there were some quite immediate things I had to get used to but then over time I think when you get to know the people about you the more you have in common than what is different so there's definitely been learning over time as well

You spoke about dodgy areas in Govanhill, can you tell me a bit more about that?

So when me and my husband first came…during the viewing process I'd never been in an environment where there were multi-generational families living within one property or one building…we viewed some places down at Kenmure Street where there were so many different names on the doors and I couldn't work out why there were so many people living in one flat but then learning more that that's the multi-generational culture and then we walked about quite a lot trying to get to different properties like Allison Street and Calder Street they've kinda got a bit of a reputation already…so I think I was a little bit apprehensive of those areas…not knowing anything about them just first coming

Has your opinion changed over time?

Yeah absolutely…I don't know what I was actually apprehensive about…I've never walked about Govanhill and felt unsafe in any way…I do spend quite a lot of time here…I do enjoy live music and theatre so I am out and about and do go places…I've never felt unsafe and I think the diversity's became a real positive thing and something I'm not apprehensive of anymore…sometimes you'd see groups of people standing about at Govanhill library…big groups of people that'd congregate together and at the beginning I was a bit apprehensive about that but like now I walk past people and people are nice to you…it's just a group of people anywhere so that's been a learning curve for me definitely

Why do you think you were apprehensive?

I think fundamentally it came from ignorance…it came from a place of not having experienced living in a place people were different because where I lived it was a quite a narrow community so being somewhere where there are people of different skin colours different languages…I think at the beginning that was something I was quite apprehensive about because if there are a group of people talking in a language you

do not understand it's easy to read too much into that and think oh well there must be talking about me when in truth they've got better things to talk about…but when you don't know and it's unfamiliar you kinda read things into things…I walk about all the time and don't think about it anymore but I think at the beginning it was ignorance and nobody wants to say it was racism but it probably was…infact it definitely was and I just hope that living somewhere like Govanhill has taught me a lot about people and myself as well cos you don't realise the unconscious bias about things but inside your mind you're putting these things together that are absolute nonsense but you don't know that at the time

Would you say Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

I think it was widened my personal horizons…it has introduced me to different ways of living and being…and a different kind of community that doesn't constrain people to be the same…there's so much diversity that diversity's encouraged and there's so much in Govanhill that supports that…like the work going on at Govanhill baths and MILK café the Govanhill festival and parades…celebrating different communities and doing different things and I think that has really helped me to grow as a person

Can you tell me a bit about those organisations?

So Govanhill Baths I've got a friend who works on the board…I know they're having a lot of trouble with funding and things costing more than anticipated but I think as a community project it's amazing group that they're doing and really hope that it works out…my own interactions with Govanhill Baths have been through music cos I've been to a few gigs there and really really enjoyed them…I live in Albert Road and there's a place there that's shut actually…it's called the Well and I think that was also a community hub…it's now a Zine shop…the festival so the Roma parade and the music festival quite recently where there was lots of people doing different things…street acts…I've been to different things in the festival over the years…I've done the Bruce Downie walk around the area and learned about Mary Queen of Scots and Langside Battles and all of that…there's quite a lot of performing arts so at the Rum Shack they'll do poetry readings or sometimes there'll be music going on there

Have you noticed any changes within the area?

Absolutely…when we moved here it was still quite a developing area…is that the right word? I think over time and this is only an interpretation I've got friends that live in central Shawlands and the house prices down there are just insane and that has priced a lot of people out of the rental market so people who are maybe trying to live in Shawlands people are moving here to get a bigger house more rooms with more reasonable prices…which has been a big help and with that young professional population pushing out from Shawlands into Govanhill that's led to a lot of changes

like Locavore where you can buy all your sour dour bread…there's a gallery thing on Albert Road where I live that has some weird things going on but they have opening launch events and it is mobbed…and at the moment there's 2 white fluffy things that look like they might've came off Sesame Street or something…was a bit puzzled…I don't think I'm smart enough for that sorta thing…there's been a lot of change in the shops and cafes and things that are in Govanhill and I think that's very much responded to the change in demographic and population and the recognition of it being a handy place for the city centre with the bike lanes and electric buses…it's became really accessible to help people that live there…my husband calls it urban warriors…the people that kick about with their dreadlocks and their veganism and everybody's got a dog…I don't mean to be disrespectful but that is something that has changed a lot in the population since I moved

Do you think that's a good or bad thing?

I think it's good and bad…a community that's responding to the people that live there is a thriving community so fundamentally it's a good thing…I just hope that things don't get lost through that…that parts of the original community and history like Govanhill Baths and the older history don't get lost in amongst the new things coming through…I think there's a lot of people fighting really hard to keep the history there which I think is a good thing

What are the strengths of Govanhill as a place?

I think it's a really good location to get to all the things you need from there…you've got Govanhill in itself but you can also easily get to the park and all the green space there and all the shops…it's not far at all from the city centre…so I think as a cultural hub it's fantastic with the things actually going on in Govanhill but also being accessible to lots of other things going on round about

What's the vibe of Govanhill you had to describe it?

It's busily…it's really busy…really diverse…always things going on…busy and diverse

Are there any negatives?

There aren't many properties in Govanhill that consider accessibility…we were talking about multi-generational households earlier and the chances of people living in properties not suitable to their needs before they're up a lot of stairs and my own experience recently with an injured leg did bring that closer to mind…my flat in Govanhill was built in 1875 and you've got to assume that people have changed a bit

since then…people are living longer having more active lives and there hasn't maybe been the development in Govanhill to build more accessible properties…the properties that are getting built…like down at the Victoria Infirmary sight…they're all tryna get the maximum number of posh apartments and the smallest amount of space…also the reputation of Govanhill can be a bit dodgy...you know my mum sends articles every now and then about bed bugs or cockroaches or bats…fly-tipping…someone sent me a photo…I stay just above the Rose Reilly now and somebody done fly-tipping right outside my door and somebody was doing a photo project in Govanhill at that point and that was one of the photos that got taken! So I think there is that sort of reputation…I think some of it is deserved because I think landlords in Govanhill in some places have taken advantage of who the tenants are and maybe their limitations be that in terms of language or being new to the country and not maybe being familiar to how the system works or people with easily ignored voices and landlords who are not serving their tenants in the way that they should in a respectful way because I do know there are issues with the bug situation for example…a part of that as well would be to do with such old buildings…in order to treat that you need everybody in the building to agree to the treatment

You spoke about your mum a bit there, what do you think her perception of Govanhill is?

It's quite funny cos having lived in a council estate in Kilwinning looking at anywhere else and thinkin ohh that's a pure dodgy place to live…I think people get used to where they are itself that that's normal and you don't really see it and then you go somewhere else and it's easy to make judgements about somewhere you don't know or understand…I think that's what I did when I moved here…and I do think with my mum and dad when they come here…for my dad it's about the parking…the streets being busy…hunners of cars everywhere…he gets upset about that so he parks a million miles away from the flat and walks and for my mum…I think she was quite worried about us when we moved here at first but we've been here a long time now and they do come and visit and everything…I think things are a lot better than they were

What do you think of the coverage of Govanhill?

I think it's disproportionality negative…because of all the attention around Scottish independence and Nicola Sturgeon and all that stuff…that's potentially influenced unwarranted negative influences about that particular community…I think also in Govanhill there's populations that are easier to ignore…people coming from different places and different cultures…I think it's easier to marginalise those people and to do not do the things that would be right and fair to do to respond to the population that lives there…it's easier to demonise people and demonise places than to actually do the things that need to be done about it to look after the people that live there…it's about power and money

Does the external coverage of the area differ from your own experiences?

I think the external coverage picks up on things that should be problems that should generate sympathy or should generate actions or things to be done about them…things like dodgy landlords or people living in bad circumstances…but rather than looking at them and thinking aww well that's terrible that that's happening let's invest and do something about that I think it's the easy answer to demonise it instead like look at this terrible community…I think it's really unfortunate that that's happening but that perception is out there and it demonises rather than seeing things that should be better than they are

Do you think Govanhill is a place of unity or division or somewhere in-between?

I think it's somewhere in-between…as my husband says urban warriors…I think there's people who think they know about diversity and maybe think they know what other people and other cultures are thinking or doing and I think it's not always based on actual facts or actual knowledge…I think people don't know what they don't know and I think people with the best intentions can exclude…I don't think that's what people are trying to do but it can be what happens anyway so I do think there's something about Govanhill that's…I think there's a sort of clash between the young professionals that are maybe coming out from Shawlands and the populations that were either already here or different community groups or different faith groups…I don't think it's all a big happy family I think there's a lot of different little pockets of different kinds of people different communities…but as I said there's something about that that if everybody's different then everybody's the same but it's an equalizer as well…I think there's a defensiveness with the people who have lived in Govanhill for a long time…people love their community and they are very loyal and really wanna fight for it…for example Govanhill Baths…groups that are willing to fight for the history of the place and to retain that older culture and the way things used to be…I think that's amazing and a really powerful thing and I can't see how there can be negatives to that…people willing to stand up and be heard and willing to fight for those around them

What would you say in life is important to you?

I would say access to education and access to the things I want in my life…for me that was music theatre…a sense of community…I had that to an extent where I was before but it was really really contained before it was quite a narrow community so you kinda had to fit in or shut up whereas it's really not like that here…there's a community hub here…it's a really good place to be based to be able to get to lots of stuff things going on about it…I think performing arts has been commercialised to a really extreme degree…what you're charged for not just tickets but booking fees and things that you never actually see and you know the money's not going to the performers…if you support somebody locally the music isn't worse the players aren't worse…the

enthusiasm and the passions there…hopefully be supporting that more locally it's not playing into the corporate industry that's happening in music in particular

Where would you fit Govanhill into that world?

I think it's trying really hard not to be…I think it's trying really hard to be supportive of newer artists and the local level…if you go to see a show at the Tramway it'll be 12 or 15 quid…if you go to see a similar show at the Kings you're talking maybe 20/30 quid…I think it's really important to live where you live and I think that was important in me coming in the first place cos I lived in Kilwinning but everything I was trying to do was somewhere else whereas here I live where I live now…the things I want to do are here

What would you say is of lesser importance?

I think being worried of what people think of you or being different…that isn't as importance as I thought it was when I moved here…and I think it's very easy to other people who you perceive as different to you and I don't think that's important anymore…that's something Govanhill has given me and I hope I am a better person for it…each of their own people will be people and that's totally fine and that includes me

Has there been any events within the area that have been noteworthy?

I love at Queens Park where they play the movies and cult classics and stuff like that where you go and sit at the steps…I think that's an amazing thing

Do you ever socialise with your neighbours?

Yeah a wee bit now…at the beginning it was a wee bit tricky cos I'd never lived in a tenement flat and the flat below me was a multi-generational family that lived there and that was difficult at the time because it was a small flat and there was a lot of people in the close all the time…and to what I was alluding to before being apprehensive of different language and making unfounded assumptions…that was difficult early on…but now people have moved in to the first floor and they have been doing up the communal garden out the back so they've been doing planting and I get the close cleaned and get the garden done…the 2 guys in either side…I think they're only 1 bedroom flats…the 2 of they guys are the same age as my husband so the 3 of them hang about in the close and talk about who even knows what…so he gets along really well with them…I've got friends who get together and have BBQs out the back and all that…I've not had personal experience of that but I can't see why not

Would you a day in the life be in Govanhill?

I would be in charity shops collecting books…go for lunch…I love going to the Bees Knees Café where they do the pancakes thing that's amazing…and CIBO open at the bottom of my street where you can get an anti-pasty and a glass of wine now…magic! And they've got their wee outside bit as well which is great…the Rose Reilly has recently re-opened and the change in demographic has been massive because it was always a wee man's pub before and now it's a much younger…it's all the urban warriors in there now and it's always really really busy and I was a wee bit worried about that at first with the noise but it's been fine…I've got a friend who lives round the corner who is vegetarian so we'll finish work sometimes and go to Ramsdens Kitchen

Do you ever go to the library in Govanhill?

No but I feel guilty about that…I think they're really important…I think they're great for little ones with the book bug stuff and there's computers…people might not have that at home…also it's somewhere just to go and chill…there's not many places you can go even for studying…there's not many places you can go and not be expected to buy a coffee or whatever but you can in the library…so there's no expectations of spending money to spend time there…I think there's something quite powerful about that…I know libraries are at quite a high risk…I think they're quite underfunded and under resourced and I think that's a huge shame but I don't necessarily think that can be fixed through books alone I think it needs to be about changing what libraries are for and how they're used and ideally without compromising what the original purpose was to go and sit in a quiet space and read or study or whatever it is…I think they could be used for a lot more diverse purposes than what they are at the moment…I think it's easy efficiency saving when they are underfunded because I think the people who use libraries are usually easier to ignore so I think that contributes to it because for people to fight for their libraries people would need to have a collective voice and I think by default I think people who would be looking to use those resources are maybe not managed to come together collectively to make that happen

<u>Margaret (anonymized)</u>

What has encouraged you to stay in the area?

Well…my kids were at school and it was right next to the school so they went to the same schools as me and it was just dead handy…it's so central…you can get a street into the town in 10 minutes…buses…10 minutes…plenty of buses going past…it was…it was what I was used to…just didn't fancy moving anywhere else

What would you say are the strengths of Govanhill as a place?

Govanhill you still know people…like I could go down and still meet people and chat and you've known them all yer days…the ones who have been there for so long we all still know each other and we have a gab and all the rest of it…I think the good thing about it now is that there's quite a lot of hipsters that have moved into the bottom end and the place is looking lovely…see if you go down to Vicky Road during the weekends and the evenings it's pure like somewhere in Spain! People aw sitting outside and there's a lot of nice wee cafes that have opened up…a lot of nice places that you can go for food…the main thing for Govanhill for me is where it is…where it's situated…I mean yer 2 minutes and yer on the motorway whenever you want to go…ye know what a mean? It's handy that's what it is

Are there any downsides to Govanhill?

Yeah…the downside is you don't know from the one day to the next who's gonna get put in beside ye when you've got a bought house…so across the road we had junkies we had drug dealers ye know what I mean? Across the road from ye…

What would you say has been the main changes in terms of community and work in the area?

Well…growing up it was predominantly white…it was either Catholic or Protestant there weren't anything too many other people about…when we were younger the Asian community came in and we got to know them…it was a bit strange cos they said they were Indian and the only Indians we ever seen were cowboys and Indians and we asked them were their feathers were and didn't believe them that they were Indian…but it was obviously a good community…everyone kinda knew each other in Govanhill emm…

Would you say that's continued?

Not so much now…new communities came in that kinda stuck with each other…didn't wanna mix like the Romanians…like they didn't really wanna mix with anybody else they kinda…it was hard cos they stood in big groups so we didn't understand them and they didn't understand us…now I realise that it was probably just the poor housing that they were in…they didn't want to stay in these houses so they mixed out in the street…in the last 15-20 years I got kinda wary about walking about Govanhill just because there were large groups of men standing in the corners and things like that who have a different outlook on women than the Asian community…it was the way they were…the atmosphere was a bit different as well and I just didn't feel safe walking along the road…it's hard to put my finger on why…Asian people didn't stand in groups as such you know that kinda way? Like big groups of them…I guess it's a cultural thing but it made me feel very uncomfortable so I stopped walking along the road…I wouldn't walk along the road unless Gerry was with me…but I know about the poor housing

and that was caused by Asians buying the houses and not doing them up and people were put into basically hovels! That was predominantly Asian putting people into these poor houses…then there was quite a lot of clashes between Asians and the Romanian community but then you get up one morning and they're gone! Like see once we went into Brexit they were gone! Cos they were no longer gettin their money…see one of the teachers she wis like there was only a third of them that stayed…they just disappeared overnight! I don't know if it's a culture to play loud music to all hours but there is a family of them further along the road where their neighbours must be demented…they're big drinkers the Romanians as well…it was just a bit of a menacing community like you'd walk along and they'd be standing there and you'd know they'd been drinking and things like that you know…and shouting loud but they were still standing in their corners in their big groups till maybe 1-2 in the morning

I think a lot has been said about Govanhill that's pretty true…but then a don't know if that's a cultural thing that they put their rubbish out in the front rather than actual putting them into bins and shops were also doing it…like you can see it down in Govanhill some of the shops were doing it down in Allison Street like the bins are overflowing but that's not their fault…but outside the shops you can't walk past sometimes cos if the bins not shut it'd physically make you sick with all the birds and rats and everything else so I don't know whether it's something the council needs to look at to make sure these bins are getting emptied more regularly

If the council aren't looking at it why do you think that is?

Money…the council prioritise certain areas and neglect others…Govanhill is neglected…I think it was Labour cos Labour were still running the council when the SNP were in power and they wanted to make Govanhill look bad cos it's Nicola Sturgeon's area but then she should've been on that…a mean a lot of moneys been put into Govanhill to try and get the area up to a standard…there's new housing been put in up Butterbiggins Road and a lot more upstandard…and they have finally went to these rogue landlords and say naw ye have tae have this and ye have to have that…you know…a certain standard of accommodation to put people in…the area has got an awful lot better…I think the council have been far more aware and they've actually been dogged for it…lots of people have started up their own groups and got things done…there's a Govanhill Association where they were going around looking for money and asking people what should the money be put into and things like that…also out our backs they had that Grow Seeds…there's a community of them and they were encouraged to go in and they've done absolute wonders with our backs…a lot of places they were encouraged to grow things in their backs and have nice areas where you can sit in and that's the Grass Seeds place…I think it's down in Vicky Road but the people were holding meetings and saying look what can we do with your backs and gave the community a kinda sense of ownership…and then there's the swimming baths group…that wis set up cos they were tryin to pull it down and it's a beautiful building…to let that just get torn down was just sacrilege…I'm aware of all the groups but because ma children are all grown up now I'm not involved in them as such but I know about them and I like to keep up to date with what's happening…I've heard Govanhill is closing down as a nursery and it's opening up as a private nursery for Asian only

Michael & Bernie transcript (M for Michael & B for Bernie within transcript)

Can you tell me a bit about yourselves and your connection with Govanhill?

B – I suppose we moved to Govanhill in 1996 September just before Thomas was born…we moved into a flat in Albert Road…we had no connections prior to that…our pals lived two closes up and we could get a much cheaper flat

M – we wanted to buy a reasonable flat at an affordable price and Govanhill's always been somewhere where you could find accommodation cos it's traditionally been lower rents…

B - great neighbourhood we didn't have a car till Katie was born so we were in Queen's Park every day…using obviously the pool

M – the pool…the library…and the glasshouse…you could go in there on a daily basis cos you could see the animals and stuff like that and the kids loved it…the pool was the same…we used to use the pool cos it was only a couple of streets up from where we lived…it had a really good sauna and steam room so me and my pal Pete we used to go quite regularly…there was a men's night and a women's night in the sauna…there was always some funny characters in there honestly…you've have these guys that'd like to be naked…it was something that was really well used within the community

B – it was run down a bit like the bowler would break down but I went to the ladies night with my friends and then I'd take Thomas and Katie down during the week…there was the big pool which was great cos you'd used to go with other mums with their toddlers and it was quite an easy place to go into with kids…it was great

Why do these places?

B – they give you a life don't they?

M – they're really important community assets that we felt and other people felt were being stripped down of areas like Govanhill…Govanhill is not a wealthy area and it was like why are they taking this resource from Govanhill that was well used and Govanhill's a very diverse community so it was important for the local Asians people as well cos they'd have ladies nights

B – I liked living somewhere that's walkable…that's got stuff local to me…living in a community where you've got things at your doorstep…it enriches your life living somewhere that's got stuff on your doorstep…you don't have to…it just made life good fun and it was somewhere to go other mums…the park…the glasshouse…you didn't have to pay for everything

M – if you wanted a swim you'd have to go down to the Gorbals pool which wasn't really walking distance…you'd have to jump a bus…it seemed like an attack on a community that didn't have an awful lot at the time…one of the good things it did have was these local community resources like pools, libraries and park facilities

Why do you think they done it?

B – it was seen as probably being easy…they kinda run it down for a lot of years…the state of the changing rooms and the tiles…the boiler would breakdown and whatever

M – if you were cynical you'd say they decided on this one because it was in the community that was perhaps not so middle class and wouldn't fight back and wouldn't know how to vent for themselves…I think there was an element of that

B – also because it's an Edwardian swimming pool…there's very little of them left now…they said they're outdated…they're redundant…we've built the Gorbals and Bellahouston…more modern facilities…they run the traditional swimming pools down and they wanted to centralise facilities a wee bit

M – they seemed to want 1 or 2 flashy swimming pools and shut down the more community-based ones

B – there was a lack of valuing these community assets

M – the more modern pools were probably more easy to run…more cost effective but it was missed out the intrinsic value of these facilities to communities…that wasn't valued

B – there was a bit of alienation from people and what people want…there was a very very arrogant political leadership…at the time the council was shockingly bad…really arrogant not really interested in what local people thought or thinking that they had to involve them…I think it was quite paternalistic…like we'll decide what's good for you sorta thing

M – the Labour Party were in power for so long and I think they thought that they could do whatever they wanted

B – there was a political arrogance…it was very top-down…paternalistic and not valuing what matters to people and they run these places down and decided themselves what Glasgow needed really…

M – it's kinda like saying we've built this shiny new pool with these great new facilities…it's not in your community but you can still use it…paternalistic…we know better than you…and not focusing on the needs of the community and the needs of the community in Govanhill were very different to neighbourhoods in other parts of the city…it's quite a unique area in many ways because of its ethic mix

B – also low car ownership…people needs things in their community they can walk to…the expense going to the Gorbals and also cultural aspects like Asian women…they couldn't go to the Gorbals cos it's like a big fish bowl and it sort of limited their opportunities to go swimming…also the swimming clubs that were long standing were all displaced and the accessibility within the community was lost

Can you tell me about your involvement within the campaign?

B – I think the first public meetings were around the January 2001…obviously cos I used the pool I wanted to know about it…pretty massive public meetings…couple hundred people and from then now there were weekly meetings…people who just wanted to be involved in the campaign down in Daisey Street…on a weekly basis there was probably 30-40 people…it was a big group of people and I think that's what made it really strong because there was quite a big diverse group and it tended to be a big circle sorta thing and within that there was sub-groups involved in different things…I worked with some of the others to do some lobbying and making the case to keep the pool doing some of the research…pulling stuff up around policy etc and then there was another group around more direct action which resulted in the occupation

M – I remember going leafleting at weekends and stuff like that…tryna go round all the closes and stuff like that…and then once the occupation started they needed people within the pool to occupy it and there was a picket outside so we used to do picket duty…

B - I was in the swimming pool when the decision was made to occupy the pool…it was pretty surreal when I look back at it…it was a Tuesday or Wednesday night in the main pool and I think I was briefed quite late on…so it was like there's 5 or 6 people

and they're gonna chain themselves…it was myself…and Andrew we'll talk to the press or talk to the staff in the pool…I thought this is a bit mental…we were all just swimming and there's obviously a couple…

B – the council were gonna be shutting it the first week in April…we'd been doing all this campaigning and stuff like that…we thought we'd occupy the pool but the staff were still there…the life guard and all of that…it was about 2 weeks before it'd be shut anyway…we thought we canny occupy it while the doors are shut sorta thing…I don't know what the thinking was beyond that I think it was a see what happens sorta thing

M – then it was a picket line from then on…I spent 3 nights inside it by myself…the story was that there was a whole load of people occupying the pool…there was initially but there was always people outside on the picket line but they always needed 1 or 2 people inside and as it transpired it was one Easter that they needed someone to go in for a few days as they didn't have anyone…it might've been the summer…I didn't realise I was going to be in myself but there were people outside so I could speak to them…by then the pool had been drained…it was quite surreal walking around in an empty pool by myself at night and I think I spent 2 or 3 nights in there…it was a bit creepy being in there…I think they ripped up a bit of light inside…we were involved in the picket duty as well and you'd do certain hours…there was always a rota of people to be outside then inside and it was quite a weird experience…quite creepy to be inside that building in the dark by myself…I remember a photographer came in one night when I was in there and he took some photos but I didn't want my face on them so I put on this hat and he took pictures of me black and white and I'm standing in this completely empty swimming pool…it's an incredible construction…the tiles then on the outside the Victorian changing rooms and all that kinda stuff…it was creepy but it was nice…you felt a sense of belonging and a sense of community…it felt good to be active…doing something that could perhaps have a positive outcome

B – I remember there was a poster campaign and we got them up in all the houses…it was a bit like that Mrs Barber campaign that done the Rent Strike…it was a bit like let's do what Mrs Barber did

M – you've probably seen all the t-shirts…the Save Our Pool t-shirts…all bright yellow…it was all quite clever…everyone in the campaign were wearing these t-shirts so you were easily identifiable as a supporter

B – I think it was really energetic

M – it was a really vibrant campaign…lots of creative people…musicians involved…you'd be on the picket line sometimes and Peter Mullen the actor popped by one time…Gary Lewis

B – you still had all the meetings during that and there was a really diverse…there was also people with different issues of their own…I think it felt very supported…the first few days like all the fast-food shops were sending food round for people inside the pool and going round and getting donations

M – you'd get a wee granny sitting round and talking to a 17-year-old Asian boy…it was a very diverse campaign…young people…old people

B – a lot of people would come round and chat to you and give money or give whatever they could to the campaign so it was definitely just huge amounts of support…it's always been slagged off to be honest the area…I think there was then this defence of this institution within the community and I think that galvanised a lot of folk

What's your perception of grass-roots organisations within the area now?

M - The recent thing in Pollokshields where they were trying to evict the asylum seekers…that had echoes of it cos there were a lot of people out preventing things from happening so I think…the Battle of Govanhill…I was quite scared at that…that was quite frightening

Can you tell me more about that?

B – so it was in August…the occupation had been going on for 6 months so it was difficult to sustain as well but the council decided…heavy handed to say the least…to come in and just forcibly removed anyone who was in there or the picket line and secure the building but they came in with dozens of police…police horses…I went down in the evening and there were lines of police…it was sort of tense and it wasn't

M – I thought it was pretty tense

B – afterwards the police said a lot of stuff

M – I was with a colleague of mine at the time Nicola who was very involved in the campaign and she was accused of trying to throw a barrier or something…she moved a barrier and the police said you're trying to injure the horses so they carried and lifted her and hustled her down the streets and I was trying kinda plead with these police officers saying what's she done? She's just moved the barrier and they were threatening to arrest her and they did arrest her and they said if you don't stand back you're gonna be next as well…the police were not great…and a lot of people turned up who hadn't been involved in the campaign up until that point

B – then there was trials and all that after that…a lot of people were charged and brought to court…all of them were thrown out and not convicted of anything but that went on for a couple of years and that takes energy out of things cos people are going through a criminal case…I think the diversity and depth of the campaign…you see in Govanhill now there's a lot more active community and grassroots organisations…I do think the campaign was a massive catalyst for that

M – there's a lot of cool cafes…it's a vibrant community…bookshops and new bars and has a young population

B – the community projects like South Seeds…there's a lot of community enterprises based down in Govanhill…there's a shift

M – with the Govanhill Trust there were people who were well against that…they thought it was this idea that it should be a public resource run for the public and the idea of the Trust and finding alternative sources of finance was taking it away from being a public immunity

B – Fatima had a real tonicity and was willing to challenge authority and not just put up with what you're told to put up with

Is Govanhill a community divided or united or both?

B – it was probably quite fragmented in some ways…but communal places such as the pool brings everyone together and that's why the pool was important and the library…I think that galvanised a community that maybe felt that they were under attack and getting slagged off…

M – I never felt uncomfortable there at all…good fruits and veg shops…

B – there was a lot of private rented accommodation…at that time there were quite a lot of B&Bs run for homeless people and so on so you had quite vulnerable people living…there was definitely drug use and that going on…sometimes it could feel a little bit unsettled and fragmented at times

M – Govanhill has a history of being a sort of transient community with one wave of immigration replaced by another…from Jewish…Irish…Pakistani…Roma

B – the Baths have seemed to support and help the Roma community which is great cos they are a community that are persecuted all around Europe aren't they?

M – we loved the fruit and veg shops and if you liked your spices it was much cheaper than going to the big supermarkets…they were all run by Pakistani people and they were dead friendly…our hairdresser was a Pakistani woman as well

B – we did see a few instances of racism…it was actually young kids harassing Asian women

M – I remember intervening with a couple of young dafties who were harassing a group of Asian women and I just thought beat it…these kids were about 12…they called me a Paki lover because I was telling him to beat it cos he was harassing these Asian women and kids…schools like Annette Street right at the heart of Govanhill at the time we were there would've been almost exclusively Asian…now it's a lot of Roma kids as well

What do you think the strengths and weaknesses of Govanhill are?

B – I suppose the weaknesses were probably that there was a lot of poverty…not a lot of money and struggling a bit and that might've been evident in the physical space

M – I remember doing some leafleting down in Daisey Street and you go into one close and it was immaculate…all clean and tiles were all swept and then you'd go 2 closes up and it'd been sub-divided into much smaller sub-units and there'd be babies wondering around in nappies and dirty so there was a real contrast…there was a definitely a stigma that it wasn't a really nice place to live and some of the closes…they didn't seem to be kept completely clean

B – there was a lot of bad private landlords that didn't look after the place really…there were quite a few B&Bs at that point as well that were housing homeless people for longer periods than they should've been sorta thing…the positives were you did live in this great neighbourhood

M – it was the 10 minute neighbourhood…the idea now that they want us to have 10 minute neighbourhoods and Govanhill was that 10 minute neighbourhood where you could have the shops you needed…you could have the pool facility you had the library there…you live in a community that provides most of your needs…you can get most

from within 10-15 minutes and I think Govanhill did at that time…you don't need to go on a bus to go to the swimming pool…you just put a towel around your arm and go…there's something very attractive about that…I liked the diversity…I grew up in a small town in the south east of England and it was a very exclusively white town so I liked the diversity of it…different cultures and different faces…sounds…smells and foods and so on…it certainly had an influence on me yeah…and being involved in the pool campaign certainly…my thinking and thoughts about community

B – I think with that diversity I think you can suddenly see people in a community actually share a lot of common values…there were people from all different parties on the campaign and despite all that diversity and ethnicity…people then value this same thing…there's these shared values than you could galvanise around…particularly in a community setting people would come out and say actually nah we all value that and we want to defend it…the importance of activism and protest…we did a lot of lobbying and writing but it was probably the direct action that had the biggest impact at the end of the day but you see that today where they're trying to clamp down on protests but that's where we get social progress in the main…if you really wanna push against stuff then you really need that direct protest

M – I think in recent days it's a very unique campaign…I haven't seen anything like it since…the way it did bring everybody together

B – the scale of it I think is what kept the momentum…the council relies on the notion that it'll be a small wee group and they'll fade away in a matter of weeks or months or whatever…the persistence of the campaign relied on having a lot of people

M – for 6 months there was a constant presence on the picket line and we'd take our turn and go round in the early morning

Why the resistance in Govanhill?

B – I think having some strong leaders did help…Fatima and there were others as well that helped just keep that momentum going and people that do recognise the injustice of it saying no this community has been downtrodden enough over the years with other stuff shutting down…I think a bit of leadership and tonicity

M – there were a lot of factors that came together that made it successful…I think the diversity helped a lot

B – I think people thought well this is a diverse group of people that I wouldn't normally meet in my day-to-day life…there was a degree of that…it was of all ages…ethnicities…backgrounds and class so maybe that's what helped bring it together…you know…we weren't all just of the same type of background

Is Govanhill a downtrodden place or an active place?

B – I think it's an active place now…I think at that time it was downtrodden absolutely and it was overlooked because it didn't quite hit all the top deprivation indices…it's much more active now though

M – I think there was an assumption that the community was gonna be more passive than they were…the council underestimated the power of the community

B – I think the council relies on the protests fading out and people's energy levels disappearing

Talking about the Govanhill carnival

M – I think that almost came out of the campaign

B – also the support of the Roma community and resistance to the racist narratives…I think down in Govanhill cos there is quite a lot of…it has been subject to a lot of racism attacks

M – the guy walking down Govanhill slagging the place…that was the sort of really horrible poisonous Tommy Robinson type narrative spreading myths about the Roma and attitudes to their daughters and all this kinda stuff…it was absolutely horrible and disgusting…and he was just going around pointing and showing the worst parts…putting 2 and 2 together and making 5 out of what he was seeing…he's a despicable individual…he got rightly ridiculed for they videos…people were annoyed

because that fella has nothing to do with Govanhill he's not from Govanhill…didn't visit there…don't even think he's from the Southside at all and he's wandering through with this poisonous message and it ran counter to a lot of the good work that was being done in Govanhill…you wanna mute these kinda guys

What narrative is winning?

B – I think just now definitely the positive one

M – the Govanhill Festival…it definitely is a more vibrant area now

B – the Bandstand…the park…there's definitely a lot going on in Govanhill just now

M – there's a queer Jewish bookshop as well…stuff like that doesn't exist in areas without a lot of activism…these small creative enterprise businesses

Are the local value systems helping to drown out the more negative narratives?

B – yeah…I suppose with social media…there's so many mediums of communications so maybe there is some other narratives going on that I don't pick up on cos I don't follow social media circles…but it is an issue of dominant narratives anyway and what seeps through into the popular culture…so I do think you need those value driven organisations to help keep those messages there rather than…there's a lot of creative and independent enterprises but would they be sufficient to keep that message of valuing multiculturalism

M – you need things like the carnival to celebrate an area…to say people who live there have something of value to live there and can bring in musicians and community groups to put on something that celebrates an area

<u>Peter</u>

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

My name is Peter…lived in Govanhill for about 20 years…grew up in Glasgow…grew up in Govan…lived all over Glasgow…lived in France for a bit as well…been writing this blog for about 4 and a half years now

Why Govanhill? What was the draw to the area?

A bought a flat in Govanhill basically…I lived in Shawlands at the time…lived in the West End for years…lived in Shawlands…Govanhill was only invented about 20 years ago ye know…

What do you mean about that?

Well the West End…Govanhill was a bit like Partick to the West End…a wee bit rougher than Shawlands…a wee bit like what Partick was to the West End…so it wasn't really a great conscious choice to move to Govanhill…it was like many other areas of Glasgow…I moved to buy a flat

What were your first impressions of the area?

Well having grown up in Govan I know Glasgow well…it's typical Glasgow ye know…with the tenements…good mix of nationalities…good variety of pubs…interesting streets but very much like any other working class area…tenements…pubs…Celtic pubs…interesting people…at that time Govanhill was always a very cosmopolitan area…I think it's always been the most cosmopolitan part of Glasgow…a lot of Asian here…lot of Irish…apparently it's the biggest Irish population outside of London in Govanhill…it's because it was part of Glasgow…see I'm a Glasgow partisan ye know and I'm also a Govanhill partisan but more of a Glasgow partisan…it's a great part of Glasgow…it's a city that I love…Govanhill I also love…but Govanhill is not unique…Govanhill thinks it's unique…Govanhill quite likes itself…a grew up in Govan in the 70s with a mix of nationalities…people from the Highlands people from Poland kids from Italian backgrounds and so on so Glasgow's always had that big city multi-cultural aspect to it…Govanhill also and the past 20 years more so Govanhill but it's kinda an expression of Glasgow…what I love about Govanhill is what I love about Glasgow…it's more cosmopolitan than most other places in Glasgow…Easterhouse…Pollok…Maryhill…these are the places that Govanhill is a part of…Govanhill's brothers and sisters as I call them…

What do you think are the strengths of Govanhill?

It's ability to embrace change…it's really changed in the 20 years I've been here…very different to what it was…so the willingness to adapt…a bit like Glasgow itself…to adapt…to embrace change…to welcome new people and to change its nature cos of the new elements of the population…but to welcome people as well…to absorb them and to allow itself to be changed by new people

Would you say Govanhill is a place of unity or of fragmentation or both?

(long pause) I'd like to say unity…I really want to say unity…I would say both…I do think it's quite fragmented…I do think there are…I do think there's a bit of a class…maybe wars a bit too extreme…there's a lot of class differences in Govanhill…a lot of racial differences as well exemplified by a white middle class who have moved into Govanhill in the last 7 to 10 years…when a moved here it wasn't particularly…a lot of demographic changes…the West End…when tuition fees were introduced…Universities here had to attract people from China so the West End really changed…it was always a very bohemian and it's far less so now…so the bohemian place in Glasgow tends to be the southside…it was never like that years ago when I was a teenager in my 20s…gradually over the years it's now the southside so if you're coming up from London or Brighton to study at the Art school 20 years ago you'd have got a flat in Partick or the West End…now chances are you'd get a flat in Govanhill…it's rolling with the punches…just getting on with things…cities change…demographics change…economics and societies change and big cities absorb that change and continue to strive I think

You spoke about racial and class differences, can you allude more to that?

Well something that's really striking in Govanhill is all these bakeries and it's the whitest shop in Govanhill…Govanhill has got 50/60/70 different languages…you go to Lidl and that's a Govanhill crowd in there…you go to some of these bakeries and it's an absolute white middle class crowd…some of these pubs…the Rose Reilly and the Bell Jar but they were very different pubs up until a few years ago…they were Irish pubs…they changed names cos they were dying a bit…Life O'Reilly Celtic and Rangers and there'd be fuckin 8 people there and but the Queens Park would be mobbed…so the Irishness is still there but that particular pub wasn't doing well so somebody comes in…does it up and attracts a new crowd and that's a really good

thing but there's a…there's no signs saying no Romanians and no Blacks but there's a kinda class distinction…class differences on show put it that way

Does Govanhill inspire and if so in what ways?

It does inspire me…constantly inspiring…endless fascinating…always changing…always interesting…I do a lot of walking…certainly since lockdown…I'm out at least once a day and a canny get bored walking down this street again…never bored…it's always busy it's always interesting it's always different…it's quite colourful…but it's the Glasgow edge to that that I really love as well…walking down and hearing different accents…different voices then you get some fuckin bam in the middle of the street wanting to fight wae a car or somethin and I'm thinkin fuckin brilliant cos the one without the other would be a bit too much ye know

What would a day in the life of Govanhill be like for you?

Well I don't think mundanity is a word…see high-rise blocks of tenements…the people livin in these flats are just as interesting and just as rich in their lives than a fuckin posh place from London or somethin…this is what middle class people are terrified of…they refuse to admit or refuse to understand that the guy cleaning their steps is just as intelligent or just as interesting…just as rich as inner life…so in these flats…the mundanity of these flats…these pubs…there's a richness…there's a joy and it's up to us to find that…it's always there…it's there in the desert…that interest and vitality is always there…with money there comes power but it's far less interesting…

Is there any vivid day in Govanhill that you recall?

Well my girlfriend is from Prague and she's been over quite regularly in the past year or so and she brings a really interesting perspective…we've been in quite a few of these pubs and her favourite pubs are the most working-class pubs…Neesons which is now Ryan's Bar…that was her favourite because it's the kinda things we take for granted in Glasgow…we're walking down the street and she says you don't understand how friendly and happy people are…strangers walking past her on the street…everyone's smilin…so we're in there and some drunkish guy was chatting away to her…very nice and polite…it utterly charmed her…and we went to Queens Park Café…Bell Jar we went to Rose Reilly and what she loves in what I love about Glasgow…it's the Glasgowness of it…the humour…the people…the directness…the

lack of pretension…the openness…if you're a prick we'll call you a prick…we'll help you in any way you need…we're really funny and don't take ourselves too seriously…that's what I love about Glasgow…it's what I love about Govanhill and what she loves…it's the place of constant colour Govanhill…constant noise and just a constantly endlessly fascinating place

Are there any negatives to Govanhill?

The conditions of the buildings are pretty poor…the condition of the backcourts…the effects of 14 years of Tory austerity on local authorities not just on Glasgow but everywhere has led to terrible budget cuts and so on…the backcourts are overrun with rats and litter…I can't even reach the bin sheds to go and empty my bins…that's been a constant issue for many years in Govanhill…across Glasgow not just Govanhill so the condition of the tenements…this amount of tenements is unusual in Glasgow…there's pockets of tenements everywhere but it's unusual to have so many with that kinda grid shape…it's very unique so there's more old fashioned tenements than elsewhere and they are 120 years old so they are crumbling…the condition of the properties is poor and just the basic street infrastructure…litter on the streets…overflowing bins…Govanhill is such an easy target…Nicola Sturgeon's constituency…you hear that and that's why I'm quite wary when I talk about litter and rubbish so that's what a lot of far-right groups use to demonise the place…blame immigrants that's not what I'm gonna do but at the same time about 10 years ago it was a fuckin nightmare livin in Govanhill…overcrowding with noise…with rubbish…with litter…and I get really angry when people pretend that that never happened but it happened…but Glasgow rolled with the punches and Govanhill after a few years began to change but nobody wanted to live in Govanhill…nobody…flats stayed empty for 2 years…they wouldn't even use the word Govanhill in estate agents and that's the genuine truth…but I'm certainly not going down that road of demonising immigrants cos we're all immigrants but at the same time a don't want to paint the picture that everything's been perfect cos it hasn't…I blame Tory austerity I blame budget cuts…50% budget cuts the last 10 years so I'm sympathetic to local authorities somethings got to give…I'd blame government authorities for the decay and neglect…and that was the worst thing 15 years ago…one felt utterly ignored…utterly forgotten about…the mess that was just building up…the noise…unbelievable noise in those buildings…and the close…the mess…and you'd raise it with your councillors and nothing would happen it would get worse and worse…nobody cares nobody knows about us ye know

Do you still think that's the case?

Less so…less so now…I think it's a city wide problem now…the rising rats in the past few years so if you don't empty the bins it leads to so many other connected issues ye know…it's a problem with landlords it's a problem with tenants as well…we can't pretend…there's a lot of responsibility people need to take as well ye know…I'll never ever understand somebody leaving their rubbish on the pavement…you feel like sayin ye know that thing it's called a bin ye know…there's no excuse for that there just isn't…I don't care where ye come up there's no fuckin excuse for that so I blame landlords cos there's more landlords here…I blame tenants…a blame non-residents…a blame everyone basically (laughs)…but a don't wanna get in the habit of blaming tenants or immigrants cos it's not right…but people need to take personal responsibility up till a point…

How has Govanhill changed since you moved here?

It's very different…it's gone through a lot of changes…initially there was a big influx of Roma in the early to mid-2000s and that brought a lot of pressure on housing…it's such a small area…5 or 6 streets you're talkin with 2,3,4 thousand people so there was a lot of overcrowding…a lot of litter…basically the infrastructure couldn't cope…if you've got 2 thousand one bedroom flats and you've got 8 people living in a 1 bedroom flat…even think about the toilet and all that…it was a difficult time it was a dark time…a lot of collaboration between Scottish government and local authorities and Govanhill Housing Association to improve things…to buy up and clean up a lot of these absentee landlords…Govanhill Housing Association buying over a lot of properties down in Allison Street…so that was a really difficult period and then after a few years that got a lot better…over the last 6/7 years a lot of interesting new shops…a mean Vicky Road with the bakeries…coffee shops it's interesting…a tell ye wit a slightly resent…just cos some 25 year old middle-class art student decides that you're 'upcoming' that's how Govanhill gets its new reputation and I'm like fuck you where were you 5 years ago when I had 26 people at the length of my close every fuckin day for 5 years…ye know cos that's how people socialise standing in the streets etc…so I do slightly resent that fact that because a few sorta white middle class people move in it's now suddenly upcoming

You mentioned people standing in the closes and the street?

Yeah well that's a kinda cultural thing…it's a very emotive topic but I think we need to talk about how it was like with 15 people in yer close its doesnae happen noo…if someday buy a 7 quid loaf a bread…Govanhill's just a quirky unusual place wae interestin tenants…people forget that a had 3 families in the close…thank god I've got

hearing loss honest to God…just wae the noise and the mess and the backcourts…the rubbish in the close…the rubbish on the landing in the close and that gets ye down cos we are…we've got enough issues in Govanhill to deal wae…it's a bit like folk askin ye fur money ye know…workin-class people are always far more generous than middle-class people…ye think I've got 50p or a pound…see if you went up to Bearsden Main Street people cin afford it up there…see if ye went tae Pollokshields they could probably afford a bit but they don't go there cos workin-class people are more welcomin…more generous ye know…so Govanhill had quite a lot of social problems…some of them are still here with the housing and so on but you've got to remember this is why it's like any other part of Glasgow…white workin class kids…it's got the same health outcomes…poor health poor employment…that's the same as Drumchapel Castlemilk and so on and that's why it's part of Glasgow and a lot of students will come here and live for 5 or 10 years and then get tae fuck when they have kids or whatever…it's a very transient place and the nationalities are very transient as well and that's what struck me with the Scottish referendum…everywhere wis buzzin…they 2 weeks before the referendum was the best example of street politics at play…everywhere…every bus stop…every pub…every taxi but ye come to Govanhill and somethin's missin cos of the mix of nationalities and different backgrounds and it wasn't as lively an issue as it would've been in other places…the turnout was quite low in Govanhill cos of that transience…it was still 75% but everywhere else was 85-90%

Tell me a bit more about what you do?

I had this idea of writing a blog…it's just observations and honest takes on what I'm writing about ye know…people can write what ye know and what do I know better than the place I live and streets I live in? the backcourt I look onto and so on

What does your knowledge of Govanhill differ from the external coverage about the area?

Well Govanhill a few years ago…see this is why it's tricky talking about what I was talking about 10/12 years ago cos it was difficult livin here but at the same time Govanhill was a watchword for sex trafficking…underage kids…immigration and the problems associated with immigration and that's why it's a really fine line to tread cos it's a really easy target…see people posting photos of rubbish…there's a lot of signallin goin on there…it's the same signallin that goes on nationally with the Tories with the small boats and that talk…so Govanhill's a watchword for crime violence and problems with immigration and so on ye know so a suppose my point was to absolutely not go

down that road but at the same time recognise that it was a difficult time…we can't rewrite history and pretend that is wisnae…so what a see…ye still get that to an extent…the racial element isn't far from the surface here cos it's Nicola Sturgeon's constituency and it's an easy thing to beat her up with

Do you think that comes from outside or inside?

Outside…outside…I think there are some people inside but mainly outside through ignorance…through stupidity…through far-right politics and lack of willingness and understanding so what I want to do is to present an authentic voice ye know? There's quite a few things a want to stand up for if that makes sense

How do you think people in Govanhill react to the negative stories from outwith the area?

I think there's resistance…I think there's resistance…I think people where they get the opportunity will resist that and will stand up for the authentic Glasgow or Govanhill which is a warm and welcoming place…Pollokshields with the immigration thing a couple of years ago…a watched that happenin in real time…I remember a was workin at the time…that was absolutely inspirational and when ye see it happenin…a couple dozen people then an hour later 75 people and a few hours later a couple hundred people…that made headlines all over Europe…that's a great example of people coming the gether…a wonder if just the vitality of Govanhill is a rebuttal to that ye know what a mean? Just the fact that it hasn't let itself be beaten down…it's still a thrivin ever-changin locale ye know

Do you think that comes from people within the area or naturally?

I think both…I think people are actively shapin it…and I also think it's what Glasgow does…Glasgow's a kinda dynamic city which I really like…that's why crowds are so good for bands and all that…it's got a thrivin scene it's a thrivin city…constantly updated itself…the Govanhill Festival is a great thing…a was at a couple a things and they were really well attended…ye read about things in Edinburgh aw the time and there's 4 people turning up…so they've been able to celebrate the uniqueness and variety of Govanhill so that's been a very positive thing

Do you think that actively shape the atmosphere within the area?

Yeah a do…a think that brings…there's a kinda pride…dark days like 10 or 12 years ago when you're comin out your close and there's just shite everywhere and yer walkin round the corner and there's shite in every street…it effects yer quality of life but your whole approach…like nobody else seems to care so why should anyone else? But when you see people takin pride in their area then it's an attractive thing…other people feed off that so it's a good thing ye know…lots of things happenin at the Band Stand…yeah people can make a big difference…these places on these streets…a see these as an example of the Glasgow a love cos every Glasgow place had a chippy with Italians or a café or whatever in Govan or Pollok…there's a kind of authenticity to this that I love instead of a homogeneous costa coffee chain…a love the variety…just sittin here every single one of these places is a one off and is unique…it reflects the uniqueness of a community…what's special about a community ye know…Vicky Road is one of the most vibrant roads right now and Glasgow was built on roads and streets like this

You do express Govanhill's willingness to adapt and embrace change, but there is a lot of praise on the well-established institutions and communities within the area, could you allude more to that?

Yeah a love the history of Glasgow…yeah that's interestin I've never really thought of that…is that an age thing? I know people get more conversative as they get older but I'm getting more radical as I get older…there is always things that are worth preserving…not for the sake of it…but the good things about Glasgow the good things about urban communities…working-class communities…those are worth celebrating…like see the Star Bar lunch for a fiver…when my missus comes over that's the first place we'll go…the fuckin warmth in there…she loves it…suppose what a love about Glasgow is the timelessness of it…where it came from the sort of industrial workin-class heritage…that culture brings with it things that are really important…things like humour…self-depreciating humour…directness…openness…clarity…lack of pretension and those are Glasgow values that are worth preserving

What in life is important to you?

Relationships…your personal relationships…your relationship to a place…I think that's what I try and celebrate in the blog…the main character in the blog in Govanhill

ye know…what are ye gonnae think about when yer oan yer deathbed…what's gonna get you through when you're in dark rooms…it's not the amount of time you spent in the office…it's the people you are surrounded by…your friends your family your neighbours the people you see every day…so relationships…wae yer fitbaw team yer community your favourite writer your favourite author whoever that might be

What in life is of lesser importance?

I think the surface appearance…whenever someone drives a car what shoes people wear what hair they have…try to get beyond that as quickly as possible…the material stuff is important cos you've got to eat ye need a roof over yer head ye need a purpose in life…yer friends family neighbours are really precious and I'm really lucky ye know…the people round aboot ye are really important…community…when a walk about Govanhill…like the owner here…wouldn't say I'm necessarily pals wae him but when I'm walkin down it's a windy day and before the seats got blown onto the road a ran out and collected them and since then I'm always talk to him…whenever it's here the pizza place…a say hello to a lot of folk so a feel part of a community…if I'm out a walk and it's the Queens Park Café lassie collecting tumblers…a do feel part of a community…that makes me feel brilliant cos it makes you feel that ye belong somewhere and that's a really positive thing…belonging…it brings warmth it brings security it helps you to reach up rather than crumbling…if you're secure on the ground it means you can reach up…good part of a community is that it brings you nurture warmth security and these are really really important

Would you say Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

Yeah I think so but I was well into my 30s when a moved here…but yeah one is always shaped till the day you die…your environment the people round about ye but I think I think about Govanhill with a slightly different perspective than other people because of where I grew up in Glasgow…so I had a lot of views already before I came here

Can you tell me about your upbringing in Govan?

Yeah grew up in Govan…big family 9 of us…my parents became teachers in their 50s…ma dad went to Langside College at night did his Highers…had 7 wains…we're from Irish heritage but quite far back…

What has made you stay in Govanhill?

Good question…the vibrancy of it…the fact that it is always changin…there's always somethin new happenin in Govanhill and in Glasgow…to be honest a few years ago I did think I'd kinda had enough of Govanhill with the crumblin flat mess and that…cos you walk up other streets and ye think this is what I clean pavement is…up at the Gorbals and ma streets are a fuckin mess…takeaways n all sorts a shite ye know? It's more densely populated Govanhill…more transient population who don't care…private landlords as well…the problems are problems that Glasgow has as well and what's great about it is what's great about Glasgow as well…the way a look at it is that it reflects Glasgow as a whole…the city centre's a shithole in Glasgow the now with litter and mess and rubbish ye know that really depresses me…a want to celebrate Govanhill through writing…and through celebrating a wanna try and celebrate working-class communities and the qualities of Glasgow…a don't want it to be a dry celebration of Govanhill though ye know…a want to talk about the weirdness of the place and how surreal it is and how fuckin psychedelic the place is and how it's utterly fucking bizarre and surprising and ye don't have to take mushrooms to have that…ye don't have tae sit in a valley in California to have it…ye get it in the graveyard in the corner…or the fuckin backcourt over there…that's the joy of life…findin that joy in the pishin rain in Glasgow on a rainy day, know wit a mean?

Rae

Can you tell me a wee bit about yourself?

Yeah well my name is Rae or I'm otherwise known 'she who spins stories'…a believe stories or other wisdom is good medicine and also stories connect us to who we are…to the community so I am very much a believer as being a people's storyteller…a lot of ma learnin has come from just bein on the road

Can you tell me any stories about Glasgow or Govanhill?

The thing about Govanhill that always surprises me is the meta-narrative story is it's not a good place where I would disagree with that

Can you tell me about the Steamie?

The steamie…aw the steamie was as you know on Calder Street…they tried to close it down in 2001…a was one of the occupiers of the Steamie…the community wanted it…we were the longest occupation of a public building in Britain and now it's gonna be turned into a new well-being centre with 2 pools…a Turkish baths…studio and café and other things…ma grandmother…one of ma grandmothers…I think it was a Monday and they used to have those big prams and they used to put the clothes in the pram and they'd take it to the steamie…and ma grandmother liked the Steamie cos it was her community and believe it or not I do remember being as a young child there was singing and there was actually dancin…when a say dancin I mean people…ye know jiggin about that sorta thing and that would be my earliest memory of the steamie…a think they created the steamie because the middle class were complaining that the men when they came back from work would wash in the Clyde and all the nice people didn't like that so that's why the baths was created and the steamie was created…for the blushes of those nice people…the steamie was for everyone it was for the whole community…people would have the baths cos a lot of the time there was the single ends in the room and kitchen and they didn't have baths so that's why they went to the baths…to get cleaned…and of course they didn't have washing machines…and some of the stuff…I mean they washed blankets and things a wouldn't dream of washin…a mean they washed everythin…nappies as well

What was the steamie like as a community hub?

Well a was young when a remembered the steamie…but then ye know my mum had the washin machine and everythin like that so…but it was later on in 2012…gosh I can't remember what was that date…aww 2001 sorry…when the pool protest happened but that was years after the steamie was the proper steamie…a suppose the steamie kinda died when people started gettin washing machine and baths in their house so that'd be kinda late 70s/early 80s a think…in ma case it was the late 60s cos a grew up in Spam Valley

Did you spend a lot of time in Govanhill when you were growing up?

When my granny died…there's this thing…I think it's called the Donegal Sorrow…a call it the Donegal Sorrow…maybe not so much in your generation but just before my kinda generation…and my mother never spoke about why she left Donegal…there was a silence…and I'm not sure she took that trip to the Bridge of Sorrows and came that way cos when I've asked her she'd just never say anything…so when my grandmother died there was no reason really to come here and she just kinda wanted to embrace all of the things of the late 60s…like a remember in Kirby it was the 1st

charity shop open called Oxfam…she wouldn't go near it and she was really mad at me cos a loved lookin for things so a think the poverty and the hunger and all that kinda stuff really affected her…I think things were really bad in Donegal…ye know there wis big families…there was hunger…there was what I call the trail of tears to the bridge of sorrow between Falcarragh and Dunfanaghy…that used to be the place where they departed…and people would either come to Glasgow and Liverpool and some would come to the USA…now that particular time when they said goodbye…now I'm going back to my mother's generation before the yellow bus came later on…but they'd never see their family again…this must've been early 1920s and a bit before…my mum was actually quite fortunate…she got a job in shipyards in Govan…she managed to get a trade as a French polisher which was not easy cos at that time Irish people weren't welcome much in this city and that's why these stories are so important…I just remember her silence…she was like the woman of silence…a don't mean she was unfriendly or anything…on other subjects she was great but she never really spoke about her past…she's dead now so she died with all her kinda secrets and a remember I was in Donegal when I lived there and a certain older woman said 'well a lot of people were like that'…it was very traumatic…I don't think they really wanted to leave…I mean it was a different culture…even before that when there was An Gorta Mór…cos a don't call it a famine I call it An Gorta Mór…I mean when people think you're a storyteller or a keeper of the stories that it's all nice…Cinderella…twee-Tinker Belle or whatever…but these stories have a lot of sorrow in them and I think now there's this thing…they want to whitewash over some of the stories just to make it nice …but my mother was after the An Gorta Mór phase and definitely when a lot of people left…they were like waves ye know…there was a lot of people that died…and there's stories…I mean it's very interesting going back to Donegal and going up to places and just listening to the wind and watch the landscape…you know the hills with its spines like mythical beast…and there's a different kind of wind…and the wind has tears in that you have to go and really…I know a lot of people think I'm but I'm not…you know we've become so rational with things…you forget there's a spiritual element…I mean people are hungry and they're dying and they're walkin to a new life…and the wind and the landscape must've something to do with it…we can't lose the stories…especially with the capitalism and neo-liberal kinda way they're takin away everybody's stories…and they want the story of everybody to buy things…commodification and that kinda stuff and people are now so busy…they're workin 2 jobs they can't afford a house and they come in and they're tired…and very few people are buy a house cos the prices are too high…rents are high and there's a lot more stress

Why is the Keeper of Stories so important in this age?

Because who we are…the past connects us to the present which really will connect us to the future…you know there is an old Celtic sayin…the first death is when somebody passes away but the 2nd death is when their names don't tumble from a family member's tongue…and a think it's so important to remember what it was like so we can also learn from it and also it's got to do with identity as well…who we are…and I think when we look at our own stories we connect with people who have different stories…being a storyteller you hear Indian stories…African stories…and there's always a great camaraderie…we'll talk about each other's stories…our stories…their stories…and you'll see that there's a common link and you'll see that people want the same thing…they want to bring up their children well…they want decent housing…and that's no matter whether you're in India…Africa or here…I mean before the 1600s…oral stories were the way because Ireland and Scotland had a great bardic tradition and most of the stories they told…it was the 1600s and the university and the professions came in and I'm not knocking books or things like that…but knowledge became more empirical and the intuitions and that sorta feeling sorta thing that you get when you tell a story which is different from a written story…that sort of changed society because at that time the women were kind of elbowed out cos of the university's became very patriarchal…and that kind of influenced society and so the stories that we tell actually influence society because the story that is told about Govanhill is that it's a terrible area to live in but it's not…I mean you've got the Pink Peacock you've got MILK doing so much work…you've got Govanhill Community Baths Trust doing tremendous work…you've got cycling…you've got guerrilla gardening…upcyclin…that's a community…but when the media gets a hold of anything it's always some terrible thing that's happened and they just milk it like that and then of course that story sticks so when we tell these stories it breaks all that kinda stuff…it breaks it through conceptions…well it should but not everyone's open to be pre-conceptions free cos they have their own story and they use that for their own purposes

Can you tell me some stories about Govanhill?

Across the road there was a great shop…it was called Hollies and I remember I was going through a really bad time in the 90s…late 1990s and it was sort of like a gent outfitter place but in the basement there was a café and the thing about that café was I would go there and I would meet four other people…you never arrange it…it was just spontaneous and at times there were different people there but do you know what happened? Meeting the people…I won't say their names cos they might not like it…it helped us…it helped us to get away from our problems…it was a place where we could sit…it didn't feel like we were rushed…it was a very old fashioned looking place…had the best rolls in Glasgow but what I really appreciate was I could go in there with my troubles and park them for an hour then come out feeling good and the thing is…when

it closed they tried to get it set up in the Pandora which is now the Locavore but it never worked so it was only for that season and we never saw each other again…I mean we never went out to see each other any other time it was just we met there…and it was like some sort of therapeutic place over a tea and a roll…sometimes I think counselling these days…it follows models and whatever and there's a place for it…but you see we were just talkin but there was great feelin in it as well and maybe a year after it closed that's when a left…there's somethin about the Govanhill accent that makes you feel good

What would you say the main changes and continuities are in Govanhill?

Well there's a new kind of shop…there's more nail salons and barbers and of course there's more coffee shops and places like this as well…not a bad thing in itself…the other change…I think there's quite a few more bohemians…I think nowadays you're more likely to get tofu and things like that in Govanhill it's all changed and I think with locavore we have seen the most bohemian kind of…maybe even with Pink Peacock…a kind of anarchist anti-capitalist sorta thing and I think there's a lot more people like that here and I think the testament was last year with Kenmure Street…there's been an awful lot of work going on cos that was no small feat stopping the deportation I mean that was a big thing…this has been the legacy of a lot of work that the Govanhill Baths have done and other organisations like MILK and the Pink Peacock

Can you tell me about the occupation of Govanhill Baths?

Aw the baths…you know the last occupation was a big game-changer for me…I had just moved into Craigie Street at the time and I do remember some friends saying to me you can't move into Craigie Street…you can't…but I did…and I'm glad I moved into Craigie Street because without Craigie Street I'd have never become part of the pool occupation and the pool occupation has got me…I'm doing a comic strip for a comic that's coming out about the pool occupation so I'd have missed out in so much! But yeah on the night that the Sherriff Officers came there was a helicopter and the horses…I remember one woman and she was badly injured…she said one of the cops had hit her but I don't know if that was true or not I just don't know…but I remember just sittin with her and just talking away to her sorta thing…unfortunately I missed a lot of the other stuff cos I was really concerned about her…but the bothy at the front of the pool was great…we used to have marvellous conversations there…we spoke about everything…and…it was also good that…I think I went on the 3rd day that it was occupied and apparently a group of people would not come out the pool and what had

happened was we had a system of people staying in the building and then comin out it wasn't the same people all the time…a remember a spent 1 night in that scaaaary pool…and it's got ghosts…I know it's got ghosts…a heard that during World War 2 it was used as a ward for soldiers…check it out don't take my word for that one…but a mean there's definitely ghosts in it…there was ghosts at that time…a heard them…and a was in myself and I'm not ashamed to say I was afraid…I'm a firm believer…and remember a lot of people would think I was mad but I'm not mad…I do believe that some people…infact all of us have the capability of having a sighting that's beyond mortal sighting rather than what you just see but some people get socialised out of it…and I think in the quietness of that night…I remember bringing my book in…sitting on a sofa and there was a fringe freezer…but it was kinda like I could hear…I could hear the children laughin in the pool…illume…bringing their big bundles of laundry and their prams…men in the baths…you know…shouts of people…and the funny thing was…I heard a lot more laughter…there was a lot of laughter I heard…if you think about it you'd think that most times were terrible…but what got me was a lot more laughter…I think maybe nowadays are more stressful in a different way…you've got machines to wash the clothes and you've got baths and showers but maybe we've got too much…we've always got deadlines…managers…that are not always nice cos you've to do a job in a certain way and all the rest of the stuff…but this is just a waverin of an older woman so whether a heard those ethos…I can't be sure… but I thought I did

And why do you think it was laughter you heard?

I don't know…cos my first thought would've been my goodness…washing those blankets…would that have been fun? And ringin them out but…I think people helped each other out ringin(look at that) (27.55) the blankets and all that sort of stuff…I think there was people coming together to make light of the work and I think one of the things now that we face is that people are much more individualised and there's disconnection so you don't have oh Mrs Backster or maybe people you'd go to and say I've got a problem and just being able to talk…now if you've got a problem it's become professionalised…and I've got nothing against that but I think we've lost something in the process of not having that camaraderie of community…but maybe that's just the story I like to tell myself…maybe I just want to say there was laughing…maybe there was nostalgia

Were there any other stories about the occupation?

I used to like going to the Bothy…sitting there and just chatting to people…I learned a lot and that's how I ended up going to uni…I went to do youth and community work…because I was listening to people who were talking about the system…politics…it was the first time I heard of Gramsci and Chomsky and I never knew who they were…it was a sort of social and human capital…you see I never about Gramsci or his theory that people are kind of lended to what society kinda is or whatever…or learned behaviour or socialisation…I never knew about that…I just thought wait a wee minute I'm in this situation cos it was all my fault…some of it might've been my fault I'm not saying it wasn't…but I realised there was a bigger thing at play so I went to UCC Cork and…it kinda changed my life because without doing that I wouldn't have done the other stuff and I wouldn't have ended up as a storyteller

You were saying you were having difficulties? What were they?

Aw I was going through a terrible divorce…now I'm not blaming my ex I'm not saying he was a terrible person but you see I was married too young…I've got 2 daughter who'd look at me now and think what? It was kinda like…that's the way women went in 1979 when a got married that was the natural progression sorta thing from where I was kinda coming from…and going to uni wouldn't have been on my mother's agenda…other than if I wanted to be something like a lawyer or something like that but I was much more artistic and not very academic that way…then I got married young I ended up having lots of horrible jobs…jugglin with my children…a became sick…a became agoraphobic I couldn't get out of the house cos everything was just all toppled on me…a was a total different person and that's why I've got a lot of feelin for that pool…no matter what anyone says it changed ma life

Can you tell me a bit about the jobs you had?

A lot of the jobs a had was like washin dishes…a remember I worked in this place that delivered frozen food and the people were terrible…it was just I didn't fit in so a really didn't…a had quite…I had jobs that…they just brought in some money but not a lot of job…cos I'm a firm believer that all jobs are worthy but it was just that the jobs I was in…I wanted a bit more and I couldn't get any more and I didn't know why I couldn't get anything better and it was when I was at the pool and they were talking about Gramsci and Chomsky I started thinkin I'll need to go to uni

What would you say the strengths of Govanhill are as a place?

Aw for me definitely…me and my pal are doing a storytelling session in the Bee's Knees on the 28th April…the strength was how people come together and I wasn't doing it all on my own and it was that support yeah…cos I've done storytelling in places where I've had to do it all myself and no one's really walkin with me but it was amazing! I was just like I'd love to do a storytelling night let's do it says Fatima…got to do it in Bee's Knees…that support…and I think for me that's the strength of Govanhill…definitely the community for me

Can you tell me about your connection with Govanhill Baths?

Well I was in the occupation…I met good buddies like Fatima who are kind of lifelong friends…we never lost friendship…I think there's a honesty as well there's a kind of honesty…there's not that passive aggressive going behind people's back and that…that's another strength…the strength of people just calling a spade and spade kinda thing…and I really think from that moment of the occupation that it was kind of funny cos my grandmother would've used the steamie…because of my mother that was all…she went onto her washing machine…I didn't realise about the steamie it was only back in 2001 that all the dots connected and it just felt like I was back at that place again…back in the place and that's my connection with the pool and of course now I'm doing stories for them…Govanhill has got good community support…you've got a variety of amenities…you've got 2 swimming pools…a Turkish baths…a yoga studio and other things…then you've got the library…there's somewhere to go there's a choice

Were there any other days or events in the community that you remember vividly?

Yeah well there used to be the Beacon Center down Queens Park and a lot of people used to go and play pool and whatever…yeah it was quite good…met a lot of friends there…but I can't really remember that much cos before I joined the pool protest I had a lot…I was carrying a big black cloud…a was tryin to make ends meet you know…before I got the house on Craigie Street a was livin in Pollokshaws and I was getting really bullied a lot cos I was a bit different…at that time I had long hair and all that kinda stuff and it was so terrible and I was so grateful to get that lovely little house on Craigie Street…it was just a room and kitchen…it had a bath and everythin but…yeah…before that there was always things goin on but I just had this big black cloud and I didn't really kinda join anything cos I was in a bad place…I can't believe that now…I'm a totally different person

What was it about your life experience that helped you overcome those difficulties?

When I was at the Bothy…for me it was when I was at the Bothy and people talkin about subjects I would not have talked about before…politics and advocacy and all that kinda stuff…and then I went over to Ireland I went to uni and that was a big change…that gave me a chance to explore not only what I was studying…but me as well….before I didn't really have a voice…my voice was like my mothers or…the people who bullied me and I felt…whatever…but yeah that was the big change for me and I have to say for me it was the pool…for me it was that cos that propelled me to go to UCC and for someone who had no voice…now I'm tellin stories…it wasn't the pool it was the people…it was the people who sat at the bothy…it was makin the CDs of all the songs…it was doing the Gala Day and all that kinda stuff…so when I say the pool I really mean the people that was involved in the pool

Would you say Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

Yeah…more than any other place…suppose Bishopbriggs and Lenzie as well but it was Govanhill that open its arms and shaped me in a more positive way…it took into uni then into storytelling and digital arts so really it was kinda like…the opening of arms and I believe that I started becoming who I am today from being in Govanhill…I wasn't my mother's daughter who wanted me to go in a certain way

Can you tell me a bit about your time in Craigie Street?

Aw it was a beautiful house…I loved the house…it was kind of like a found sanctuary…I call it a sanctuary house…I had moved in 3 days before the pool occupation and I actually think it was meant to be that I moved in then…but I had a great time and what I loved about it was I was so near the town and I could go into the city centre and I went down and worked in CND so I mean it was a good time and it was the time of the anti-Iraq War sorta thing and we were mobilising and that was cool…yeah it was quite a political time then…we had a Not in Our Name campaign and of course we had our protests and we were out in the street tryin to get people to come to the marches and the protests

Do you think the militant element of Govanhill is influenced by past struggles?

Yeah… I think the past struggles and the working-class struggles…I mean you had John McClean from Pollokshaws and you had the Red Sunday School and I think all that was a precursor to actually what happened last year in Kenmure Street cos the organisation Living Rent has been doing a lot of work with people and I think there's something about a middle classness that they don't want to share that they're struggling in the same way…I was in my black cloud of ignorance before I joined the occupation and went to UCC so I see now with different lens but I'm sure…I mean obviously the people from Ireland when they took the yellow bus cos this is Little Donegal…and it wasn't great for Irish people at all…I always think maybe the Irish nature does a lot as well to kinda make a place…maybe a bit more militant…I think when you're part of the diaspora…you come together…and you come together in a bond and a community and you are kinda struggling with the discrimination and whatever and you can see that now with maybe Romanians or people who are Muslim or whatever…it's kinda like coming together but they know what the struggles are like…sometimes middle class people…they don't really know what it's like to be discriminated…maybe don't know what it's like to get to a Wednesday and maybe not have enough money to get milk or something like that…they don't know what it's like to maybe go to the job centre and not had a clue to navigate the whole system and I think maybe Govanhill's strength is that there's been a lot of people here who have probably struggled but they've spoken about their struggles and with people like Bruce who keeps the struggles alive

When you were in Craigie Street, did you ever socialise with your neighbours?

My neighbours were very nice and we did socialise with each other…at that time we had little plants outside our door and all that kinda stuff and it was really good…we watched each other's back kinda thing…there was one incidence where I never seen someone for a bit of time…it was the winter and I thought wait a wee minute…I mean they didn't have milk bottles or anything outside the door but I just felt there was something wrong…it was noticeable of their absence…I knocked on their door and nobody was in but one of the neighbours told me they were going to stay with their daughter for a while…so everybody was always visible and if you hasn't seen them you'd ask yourself why not…knock knock knock at the door…I used to live on my own…I felt safe in my house cos I knew if I had a problem my next door neighbour would be there…and I often had that thing when I went downstairs to…I think it was Anne who stayed downstairs…it was maybe a long boring night and I'd go down there and have a cup of tea and the night was broken and that kinda stuff…I think it makes an awful lot of difference…I think staying in a place where you don't know your neighbours…it's always nice knowing when you go to bed and if anything is a bit wrong you've got Harry or whoever and it does make a difference

What in life is important to you?

Other than my family…stories…the stories that lie in the landscape waiting to be told…I think what's important is people nowhere whether it's through a drama…a story…or song…they hold onto the stories and continue the stories…not stories that just bash people over the head…not the stories of people that use racist stuff…I'm not talkin about that but people's stories are so important to me…and community is very important to me…and community takes a bit of effort as well and you've got to be a bit proactive with community as well

Why are stories so important to a place such as Govanhill?

Stories are a great equalizer because even today there's people who have dyslexia or have a challenged literacy…a story people just sit and listen and when you tell a story and if you tell it right…it should chime and enchant…it shouldn't be dogmatic or bang people over the head…it should be allowing people to use their own imagination…give them a chance to ponder and come up with their own stuff and it basically just sows seeds…that's why stories are so important…and stories are important no matter if it's the people who came here from India or Romania or Ireland or whatever…it's good to talk about those stories cos you'll find common links and it's also good that there's a lot of people…and it's not that they're ill intentioned…they maybe just don't know the stories…they don't know there were tears between Dunfanaghy and Falcarragh…they don't know that and when I've told that story you can see their eyes…you're doing it in a way that lets the story chime and it's in that chime that the importance of the story comes out…there's so much out there with media…Sky News…and it's always telling you what to do…tellin you…tellin you…and I think people are cuttin off…and I've noticed something else…stories are now important in a digital age…the more we're using audio and images and whatever…we need new ways of telling more stories…the old essay type of telling stories is okay when you're at uni…but it's not connecting with the heart and instead of connecting with the head which a lot of…stories connect with the heart and it's important to connect with the heart rather than the head…song does that amazingly good…when you're performing a song…you've got a power with a small p…you've got a power to take people and bring them in and take them away from whatever's going on in their life but also at the same time to inform them…and in the same way as a story it's non-dictatorial…it's non-dogmatic and the music…I think music is great for your right side of thinking as well and it kind of just waves through a person…the power of song is so important for our music and it's deliberate why conquerors or colonialisers want to change the language and get rid of our songs and all that kinda stuff or we used songs for the pool and we had all these Glasgow songs and it's kinda like the first thing colonialisers do is get rid

of the language and the songs have got a power…we had the old songs like you canny shove your granny off the bus but we changed the words to make it to do with the pool and that was great…it was getting our point through…you canny go to Govanhill anymore there's no baths you have to go to Bellahouston and things like that…but it's a fun way to get a message through…through music…because even if you get a CD or download it like the case just now…you know you can sit in your own home as well and sit and listen…and it's equally good when you're with a group of people and you've got a musician playing…songs are really really powerful and I often think now they have a lot of songs that aren't powerful cos they want to dumb us down with certain kinda songs that's not got that heart

What is the story of the Bridge of Tears?

The Bridge of Tears is the story of the Donegal people who had to leave Donegal and come to Glasgow or Liverpool or the US because of An Gorta Mor and hunger and no money and all that kinda stuff…basically I have the woman called Anna McGlaughlin and she's only 14 cos at that time 14 year olds would walk all the way down to the bridge of tears and it's there today and there's a plaque and it's got the bridge of tears and it's very interesting the Irish word for tears…it's much more hearty than the English would say tears…and it's the sorrows or whatever…tears of sorrows and it's at that bridge…but I made the story that Anna walks to that bridge with her mother and they say goodbye and remember the landscape is trees and the oak and hazel which all have stories behind them and at 14 she's walking bare footed and she's making her way to Derry to get on the ferry from Derry to Broomielaw and it's cold and it's wet because some of them never even got on that ferry some of them went to a place just at the edge of Donegal and they were indentured into Northern Ireland and they had to work in terrible terrible jobs…and some of them would sleep in stables and they were considered less than…so Anne McGlaughlin she goes to Glasgow and there's a big grey sky…smoky sky not like the Donegal blue just then there was a lot of smog cos of the industry it's not like that now and she has to find somewhere to stay and there's all these notices about No Irish and all the rest of it…her English isn't that great cos her first language is Irish and she has to buy books and all that kinda stuff and that's the tale of tears and if you ever get to see that bridge…it speaks…especially if you're a songwriter it'll go into your heart…a lot of people from Donegal did that…you couldn't stay…it connects me with my own story…you see it's not good when our ancestors were disconnected from our ancestors…there is such a thing at lineage and it connects me to who I am and it tells me a lot of things about who I am cos when you think about it when my mother came over she was affected by it and so she went silent she never spoke about it and she never spoke about her roots and she made the house in such a way that everything had to be nice and everything like that cos she grew up knowing what real hunger was like and I think you have to know what real

hungers like…and I think these stories are relevant for today cos you have got other people who are like refugees as well…it's about treatin people as less than and that's what always annoys me…it's how you remember the past…stories are meant to enchant and allow me to stop…ponder…and think…but as I say the stories of the past are always relevant to the stories of the future because human beings kind of go in these patterns and these stories I think are relevant to break in with these patterns

What is of lesser importance to you?

I'll talk to everyone no matter where they come from cos everybody's got a story…so for me lesser importance is not being a diva or not being a kind of person who looks down on people

Can you tell me about your family background as far back as you can go?

My mother came from Donegal but my grandmother stayed in Donegal and I've also got a Scottish grandmother sorta thing…the Donegal grandmother didn't have a lot…when a family grew up and moved they'd send money over so that kind of made things a bit better but she never wanted to change her house she liked it the way it was…my grandmother here would go the steamie but then my mother and her family all chipped in to buy her a washing machine and at that time people were being relocated from areas of Glasgow to places like Drumchapel and things like that but she ended up being relocated to Cardonald and she didn't like it she were four storey up and they broke her friends up they were all put to different places…and she didn't like the idea of a washing machine…she missed going to the steamie and she missed her friends…I don't think any thought was put in to my grandmothers age because her friends were scattered…now it might be different if you were 20 or the age I was…but my grandmother felt the loss of her very close friends than she used to get a cup of tea with…the youth culture came in and the sorta commodification culture and it was the road to disconnection and individualisation I think happened as well…I mean some families were broken up…there were families in the end close broken up…I think the balance swung to too much commodification and individualisation…people weren't arm created to be priced and bought and sold…I mean seriously…and even the commodification of everything…like how you look nowadays it's all commodified…I think individualisation cos a lot of people feeling like they don't have anyone to talk to…mental health issues…loneliness…loneliness is a worst problem now…you're more likely to die younger with loneliness and there's a lot of people who are lonely and for some reason I had a conversation with somebody and they seemed ashamed to admit that they were lonely cos it's kind of like it's your fault if you're lonely cos you

should be going out but seriously where'd you go? And especially where'd you go if you don't have much money…there's a lot of problems with individualisation and also it makes billionaires cos they're like ohh I'm on my own and whatever and all this thing about it all trickles down it doesn't trickle down at all…it trickles nowhere and even like with the music industry there's people with talent who can't even get a look in

Do you have any stories about your grandmother or great grandmother?

My grandmother was a great woman of the land and she could make things from nothing…she was just a great cook…better than my other granny… with limited resources…she was always much more open…very connected to the land…she'd say so and so's buried there…it was like she knew all the stories from a way back and it was her that told me that the 2nd death is when the name don't tumble from somebody's mouth…I felt kinda sad for her in many ways because all her family left and she was lonely…she was alone but she never said she was…she was Donegal that was her land…I don't think she could've coped…the thing is you know as well the young kids used to sleep in drawers…you had what you'd call the single end or kitchen and lots of families had lots of kids and they had the covey hole where someone would stay…and they were all in 1 bed and the youngest would be in one of the drawers…the baby would be in the drawer…not closed but they'd make a bed for the baby…that was the time before you have cots and cribs…it wasn't unusual to have maybe 6 kids in 1 double bed

Ricky

Can you tell me a bit about your family background as far back as you can go?

Emmm…well my mums from the Gorbals my dad's from Coatbridge…ehh…both working class sorta backgrounds…my mum lived in Govanhill most ae her life…with her gran at Bennan Square…emmm…….then she got a flat early 90's… in…Langside Road just next tae Govanhill Park then her and my dad met then my dad moved over here in about 91/92…but emm…2 seconds(he whispers)…emm…aye both of them from sorta working class backgrounds both of them goat a lot a siblins…emmm…

Did your grandparents live in Govanhill?

Naw ma gran and granda from ma mums' side are both from (extended pause) the Gorbals n from ma dad's side ma gran is from Coatbridge n ma granda wis from Airdrie.

And what about your grandparent's parents?

Emm no sure…a hink I'm sure that my mums side is Gorbals fur is far back as my mums knows anyway…apart from the gran that my mum lived wae in Govanhill wis in the Gorbals till she wis 60 odd n then moved tae Govanhill and my maw wis sorta her carer…but fur is back is ma mum's side it's…eh…(slight pause) Gorbals I'm sure and from ma dad's side it's like that Coatbridge/Airdrie…sorta area…Coatbridge/Airdrie/Easterhouse…like within that…dunno…I think Easterhouse is under Glasgow and the rest is under like South Lanarkshire or suttin…

Were you grandparents from a migrant background?

Emm my dad has Irish in him a think it might be…aye a hink it might be…aye a hink my dad's grandparents from his dad's side were from Letterkenny…alright so…but that's…that's a guess to be honest…emm suttin in ma head says that…but there-there(stutter) is Irish on my dad's side an-and (stutter) ma mum's side is just fully Scottish from what I'm aware.

What did your grandparents do?

Ehhh…mum's side granda was in the army…and ma gran was a cleaner in hospitals…ma gran from ma dad's side wis a home-help…and ma granda worked in the oil rigs.

Did they ever tell you any stories about what work was like?

Emmm…no necessarily…ma-ma gran worked in…ma gran from ma mums side worked in the hospitals till fairly recently miby 4-5 years ago n a…a cin remember her sayin that the conditions are gettin better so a imagine that throughout the years thit (long pause)…well aye the conditions got better.

So why did your family decide to move to Govanhill?

Emmm a think ma mum wis just comfortable there cos she spent most of her childhood caring for her gran in Govanhill then her gran died so a hink…a hink she liked hivin' that space from her and her parents even though Gorbals/Govanhills like…10/15 minute walk…a hink she still liked havin that bitta distance n hivin that sense of independence n then…emm…ma mum…when ma mum and dad met ma mum didnae want to move oot ae the city tae Coatbridge which is a wee town…so a think…it wis…they just came to the conclusion that…a hink ma dad wanted out of the kinda town as well…more opportunities in Glasgow than there is in Coatbridge even though it's no that far but…hink just lit…that wis better for both of thum.

What did your dad work as?

Ma dad's a HDV driver a lorry driver…eh still…he's always been a lorry driver…he worked in London before he met ma mum…a hink he's been a lorry driver since aboot 82/83 so he worked in London…a lot of the times…a hink most of the times he wis down there he wis sleepin in the lorry…n stuff and emmm…a hink a few times him and his pals got like….a flat like the equivalent of what an air bnb would be noo fur like a couple a weeks at a time n sorta all just slummed together

Did your dad ever say anything about what life was like down in London?

Ehhh a hink when him and ma maw got the gether ma dad wis about 25/26 so a hink most of the time down in London wis probably about 16 tae 25 so a hink he wis just being a normal teenager a normal young guy…just…oot n aboot…but nothing substantial…but emm he said he couldnae have done that like his whole life like he's still goat people thit he worked wae down in London that still come back every…down tae Coatbridge every 3 weeks or something but he says he couldnae keep that up cos there still sleepin in lorries in sleepin in that sorta…just no the best livin conditions is it?

What did your mum and dad describe their upbringing?

Well my mum's the oldest of 5 siblin's so a hink ma mum…ma mum wis…the mum fur a lot of the younger siblin's…there's between ma mum and her youngest siblin there's

14 years…so a think my mum brought up n then 2nd youngest siblin is 12 years so ma mum kind of brought them up from a young age cos ma granda and gran both hid alcohol dependencies…eh…so ma mum brought her youngest sisters up n then…ma mum is still kinda the mum of the family even though ma gran's still about but ma mum's still kinda the one thit… picks up the pieces n stuff

What did your mum feel about her parent's having alcohol dependency?

I don't think she wis happy about it…I don't hink she understood the…impact it had on her till she wis maybe in her 30s a hink…it that age it wis just kinda normalised…emmm…or she didn't hink too much of it…but a know there is…not anymore but when we were younger there wis a bit of resentment fur her family but ma gran…ma gran's been alcohol free for 6/7 year now so a hink there's forgiveness there now and ma granda died when a wis like…about 15 years ago when a was 8 or 9

What do you remember of your granda?

Ehh ma granda wis wheelchair bound from when I wis born but he wis a sweet guy he wis…dunno there wasn't much…he didn't really move out his chair what was a mean he wisnae able so…ehh just kinda…we used to go down every Friday when we finished school it Holycross..3 o'clook just go down to ma grans till about 7 or so...just it wis…always just chill time always just comfortable it wis what we done every week…but aye used tae geez a fiver every Friday…used tae just sit…talk…he'd tell us some stories about like the army and that…I canny remember exactly what he was in the army…he it wisnae like…I hink he might've been like a doctor in the army cos he wisnae right on field from wit a remember but I've no got too many stories about that unfortunately…but from what a remember from ma granda he was just like a typical granda…sorta…chilled out…nice…

What did you cherish most about your grandparents?

Ehhh just that sorta…lit…comfort…like…your grandparents let you away…well when you're younger your grandparents let you away more than your parents and that do so sorta that freedom being down there 'and…whenever we were down ma aunties were down so it was kinda…on a Friday it was a sorta family get together which was nice growing up.

Were you and your extended family close?

To ma aunties and that aye? Ehh from ma mums' side we were cos they were just down the Gorbals even from where a live now tae ma grans house…ma auntie, gran and uncle still live in the same…like 5-minute diameter from each other so a still see them aw the time aye we're quite close.

And do yous help each other out?

Emm aye I'd say so…well ma wee sister's just turned 17 but up until 2 years ago ma aunties would take a turn quite regularly a babysitting ma sister…ehh…aye we don't do a lot of family things we're no hid like a lot of family occasions but ma mum and her 2 sisters are close in their about aw the time so if there's a problem…it's a problem shared.

Can you tell me a bit about your mum?

Ehhh my mum…ma mums a carer…she's been back in caring since 2011 she took time off…when a was born she stopped working to care for ma granda…emmm…cos he wasn't able and ma gran wasn't able tae…like ma grans a wee woman so wisnae able tae like…push the wheelchair about or that was too heavy for her so my mum took time off work tae…emm care for my granda then once he died…which would've been about 2007…she dealt wae aw the stuff…she kinda picked up aw the pieces…ma sisters and that were a bit younger and wouldnae really handle death as much as she could…so she picked up the pieces fae that then since 2010 she's been back doing carin…aw well not back doing carin before…before she stopped working she was a hairdresser

How did she find that job?

Hairdressing she just done when she left school…emm it wis a family friend who owned a hairdresser up it Castlemilk Arcade…so a hink she just done it for the comfortableness and no really hivin tae…she was learning on the job getting paid on the job…like rather than going to college or that at the time she was comfortable knowing it wis a family friend she wis working under so she done that until…she wis

17 a was born when she wis 29 or something…so she done that for like 12 years and a hink she got good at it she's still pals wae some of her clients and stuff n then the carin she enjoys it

Why do you think she enjoys it?

Emmm I hink she's just always a helpful person as a say she brought up her sisters and that so a hink she's just goat that kinda motherly thing about her that she enjoys cleanin…(wee laugh) no enjoys cleanin but she doesnae mind cleanin and a hink she likes havin like a personal relationship with her clients a think her clients have been long term clients ether from when she started or most of her clients she's got have been 3 or 4 years minimum and other ones are at the 10 year mark now so a hink she enjoys hivin that sorta personal relationship wae them as well as…cleanin and doing their sorta work for them

Does she do any work for the community?

With the carin she workin 40-45 hours and she's no really got anytime to do any other external things outside her job

Can you show me a photograph that brings back memories of your childhood?

So that's my sister, my brother and me at Queens Park. Queens Park wis a regular thing for ma family. We lived in Allison Street…the top end of Allison Street towards Holyrood so we used to go round to Queens Park at least every second night growing up till a was maybe going into secondary…aye growing up we were in Queens Park every night me, ma mum…well at least me, ma siblins, ma dad, most of the time ma mum would join…but aye sorta being in Queens Park highlights ma childhood cos a would say that's what the most regular occurrence of ma childhood was.

What was it about Queens Park that made you wanna go back?

A don't know…it was just local it wis just lit an asset…to the community…suttin thit's…cos it's so big there's so many facets of it…it's got lit the hot house it's got aw

the animals in it…there's all the grass if you wanna play football on it or whatever…a dunno…it was a place of comfort…a place you felt chilled out in

What would you say this photo reminds you of?

Well me and ma siblin's are all sort of on our own paths now so don't really get time to be the gether so just kinda reminds me of that family unity.

Can you tell me a bit about your childhood with your family?

Aye so ma brothers two and a half year older than me so growin up a always sorta hid the big brother through school n stuff always hid someone to look up tae in ma younger years…like we both went tae Holycross a was in P1 he'd be in P4 so always hid the security of being somebody's wee brother when ye go intae school…then ma brother became a wee bit of a boy in secondary school so it also kinda tarnished…ma reputation in school when a joined Holyrood cos automatically a was Lee McMullen's wee brother and the teachers had that expectation that a was gonny be the same as him and when you're young and impressionable…that leads on to kinda you…a dunno (long pause)…the teachers hive that expectation of you treat ye a certain way n you end up just kinda falling into they want you to be…a feel

Do you feel that you were unfairly treated?

Aye, aye 100% (fairly convincing tone)…from 1st year right through a was unfairly treated cos of my brother's attitude a few years prior…like a remember walking into Computing and there wis this teacher Mrs Gunn and as soon as a walked in she said "you're a McMullen" and as soon as I walked in she sent me out and had a word with me before she even met me…she took me outside the classroom and wis like "no funny business" and anythin like that just cos of what ma brother hid done 3 year…ma brother wis 3 year above us so just that sorta stuff…with that comes the resentment of the teachers and that's when you start acting out…once a got to school a was automatically…painted with the same brush

So do you think the teachers were prejudice in any way?

Ehh probably aye cos any teacher that gave me the time a day where the teachers that didnae know ma brother they were the ones that always gave the best reports at parents evening cos they took me at face value and not as his wee brother…there was a difference between the ones that did know him and the ones that didn't know him definitely so there was definitely prejudice

And how would you describe your own experiences of school?

A liked school cos of the social aspect…well 1st and 2nd year you're kinda meeting new people from different primary school so a liked making new pals and…a was interested in the subjects a was interested and the ones a wasn't interested in a just couldnae get ma heed round…I'm still like that to this day if I'm no interested in it a canny get ma head round it

Was there anything outwith school life that made you have difficulties within school?

Nah not really…most of the time I'd go and play fitbaw after school or play fitbaw at the weekends or lit…when you were younger go to the cinema or whatever…a wis never really in too much bother from what a remember…just pure arguments in school…I think in school a tried to be the loudest person in the room…as a said once you get painted with that brush of your older brother you end up turnin into wit the teachers…expect you to be…but a hink a was the loudest one in the room and if there was someone else who was the loudest one in the room it would cause an automatic tension so lit a few arguments and that but it never became physical or anything like that and it was never really outside school it was always in school

And why do you think that was?

Dunno I think being the loudest one in the room probably compensated for having short confidence. A don't know why that was…a know from leaving school and like getting a job when a was 17 n that…that 6 month prior a was a different person to who a was in school just cos…a dunno…a think in school there's so much pressure and so much expectation for you to be…top of the class or to be on the same level as everybody when the school structure's no necessarily the best…no everybody takes to school.

And why do you think the school structure is not the best?

Well I'm a youth worker and a know for a fact that some younger people learn best from informal learning…some people learn best from action instead of writing…some people don't respond to authority…I'm one of them…ehh…some people don't respond tae…punishment…and a think the school punishment doesn't actually tackle the root problems of these young people…just being a youth worker I do youth dynamic awards and that's all about action that's all about being active in your community…so I've done countless numbers of them…so if somebody's coming to a youth club the bronze award will just be coming to the youth club…the silver award will be maybe helping us set up…being a wee bit more active in preparing and dismantling the youth club like if we need to put up tables, need to put up arts n crafts n that sorta stuff and then the gold award is taking a leadership role…like it's no the same level as us it might just be setting up a pool tournament…let's set up an example say John has tae keep the score…if there's any arguments we'll analyse it we'll let him step in if there's any arguments we'll let him try and take the leadership role and we'll analyse it and jump right in when we realise it might be suttin out of his hands cos the youth worker is gonny be more respect than the young person going through an award if you get me…but aye a know people that hiv came outta that that hiv felt more refreshed about themselves than they did through school

What was it about school that was ineffective?

Ehhhh…. just like…when you get to 5th year. When I got to 5th year if a needed the toilet a stopped askin cos a thought why am a asking to go to the toilet? A remember a couple a weeks into 5th year a was sitting in Modies and a wis like "can a go to the toilet" and Mrs Wilson said naw and a was like "wit do u mean naw?" then a left and a remember walking through the patio and thinkin I'm never askin to go to the toilet ever again it's a right to go to the toilet know what a mean? You're expected to make life decisions but you still have to ask to go to the toilet. I don't respond well to people thinkin they've got that authority especially when you're in 5th year you're lit 17

When you were at school did the teachers treat certain pupils differently to others?

Aye well 1st and 2nd year is your kinda intuition stage to measure your academic ability so by 3rd and 4th year…when you start getting put intae the credit, general, foundation classes…the teachers…well not all teachers…but if you were in a foundation class

you wurnae gettin the same sorta treatment as somebody in a credit class…credit classes were the ones that were gonny boost the statistics for the school n stuff like that so…when a wis in Credit drama a cin remember ma teacher Mr Wallace givin it his all…you could put it down to the individual and how they teach but then a was in Chemistry…a canny remember the teachers name but a seen the way that she taught our class then a remember a had to deliver her a message from someone and a remember the enthusiasm she had with a class that were obviously academically better so a feel like if they got stuck with a foundation class it was kinda aww whatever but if they got a group of young people who showed potential they actually tried tae drive their knowledge tae them…a lot of the young people in credit classes were from affluent families…whereas a lot a people that were in ma foundation classes…the people a walked to school wae from Govanhill or Gorbals that were…not not well-off but miby not as affluent as those from Kings Park, Croftfoot, Simshill sort of area

From your experiences what were the teachers like in the Foundation classes?

Just a lack a enthusiasm a feel like they felt they just got stuck with…a dunno…the bottom a the litter sorta hing so they didnae…they didnae try to drive their knowledge to boost the class…a feel like a lot of teachers who got stuck wae foundation classes just took that at face value and didn't see much…worth in the students

Can you tell me a bit more about this idea of a lack of worth?

Aye well it is a lack a worth…if a teacher isn't doing their job to the substantial level to boost them into the next level and not tryin to raise them up with the knowledge that they obviously have…they must see a lack of worth…in the students

I'm fortunate enough to be decently travelled when a was younger cos as a said being a youth worker you meet a lot a young people now…a took a group tae Blackpool in October week there and it wis the first time a wee guy hid ever been out a Glasgow never mind Scotland…he wis 14…we knew prior that he hidnae been outta Scotland but then we were drivin up the motorway tae England and that and it came to a sign sayin 'welcome to whatever' and he says 'is that us out a Glasgow?' and he was like 'wow' he was like 14 but it's no as if he's a baby…he wis like 'wow this is the first time I've been out a Glasgow'…it was quite empowerin… it was nice to see the other young people that wur in the same position as me who go on holiday every 1 or 2 years not slag the wee guy…people cin be brutal wae each other at times but they raised the wee guy up and wur like 'aw you're gonny hiv such a good time' and then once we

seen the 'Welcome to England' sign he wis ecstatic…like for that wee guy that's the biggest holiday he's ever hid and it was just a day trip down tae Blackpool…so it was empowering…a wis the one that organised it but it wis empowering to be part a suttin that's gonny make an impact on somebody for the rest of their life

With this job what is your main motivation?

So I'm a community development officer for a community centre in Maryhill…prior to that a done youth work for 7 year…with youth work there's always good youth work you cin do but a wis with the council and a wis just gettin moved about constantly like from community centre tae community centre and there wis just no consistency…a could build relationships wae young people…tell them we were gonny do this and that then I'd get moved so a just felt that a was just making empty promises and it wis outwith ma control to do so…once you are employed by the council you are employed by your grade and a wis Grade 3 so Grade 3 is communities team…you're employed by yer grade and you're moveable anywhere so it doesnae matter how much you build relationships…it's not community development…youth work is a strand of community development and Glasgow Life and the council are lit these big companies thit ur…the tokenism as well like they're saying they're doing youth work but they aren't they're…(long pause) they're providing youth services but real youth work is consistent…community development is a long term value driven process and it takes time…we tried to set a mental health thing up and it took 8 month and the week before it was gettin set up a got moved out so it's like they don't…there's no consistency there's no…there's no care for the job that you're doin…it's just you're doing the job and it's tickin' the boxes for them…but there's no care about the content in those sessions that you're providing (look more around 37 minute mark)…a think they provide a service rather than provide good community work…they need to be seen to do somethin cos there's the council but they don't actually put anything behind it they don't care about it really…a mean the youth clubs a wis workin in got a grand fundin each for a year that's nothin…like the job I'm in the now we just got 180 grand non restricted fundin to do whatever we want so there's so much more opportunity to do stuff outwith the big leagues which apparently the council is but all the little community projects are doing so much more that benefit

Can you tell me about the little community development projects as you describe it?

So Govanhill Baths Community Development Trust are the main dogs in Govanhill they've got their hand in every pocket they're doing…like…they're building that well-being centre which they got 3 million pound funding for…you don't hear anythin about that oan the news or anythin like that but ye hear everythin else…Govanhills

demonised 100%...ye hear stuff about Govanhill like you'll hear…about…like that psycho thit wis running about last year sayin thit all the closes are manky and yeah the closes are manky but the Daily Record, The Sun, the media platforms back people lit that and like…like to demonise the place and put the blame on the Roma community and a dunno like…if you google Govanhill and go ae news…a guarantee ye…out a 20 articles that are written about it you'll struggle to find 1 or 2 that ur…even semi-decent…they like tae highlight…all the bad stuff that's going on but…not that they don't want tae highlight they don't bother about the good stuff that's going on

And why do you think that is?

Ehhh…I think there's undertones of racism going on in there I think cos there's such a…diverse community a mean St Bride's School and Govanhill Nursery done a survey and out a 4 housing blocks there wis 63 nationalities and 57 languages…a hink because…the media might not see it as their people…thit thur…they don't give them the same respect than they would if it wis just another working-class like…if you google Easterhouse which is another working-class which has its problems a guarantee there'll be double triple the amount a good stories coming out a there were it's a predominantly…dunno if it's predominantly white but it's definitely not is…culturally mixed is here…but aye I'd say there's undertones a racism n things lit that…a don't think it's right I've worked in…I've worked in Govanhill…on and off…when a was with the council a worked in Govanhill on and off for about 4 or 5 years and the young people were pleasant there was cultural differences like…some a the Roma community wid eat nuts n spit them out n obviously when you're in a youth club you're no wantin tae clean that up so lit there's differences culturally but…lit…the young people weren't tryin to be bad it's just what they thought wis normal n what isn't viewed as normal here so there's a…cultural clash but…some a the young people thit are more…that cin speak English a wee bit better understood it and some a the ones that were still struggling with English didn't understand it which wis awryt

Can you tell me a bit more about the Roma community?

I've only been in contact with a small majority…it's hard to get engaged with the Roma community unless you're fluent in their languages like the Govanhill Baths Trust they do well because they've got staff thit speak Romanian or whatever other language thit they speak…emm…with ma youth club it wis just me and another woman just both from Glasgow so we could get through to them to an extent but there was a communication barrier…some a them were the friendliest young people that I've worked wae…some a them have been in the community for a good number a years

now some a them are half Romanian/half Scottish or half Slovakian/half Scottish or whatever but the ones that moved over here who are 15/16…they're excited just tae be part a somethin thit's free cos a lot a the community things in Glasgow are free lit community clubs youth projects or whatever…so they're probably coming from poverty from wherever they're from and they've came over here for a better life and part a what we do is give them that sense of a better life so…like…providing them with football providing them with something tae eat…they're gettin out a their normal…day-to-day life…n comin tae somethin that's a wee bit more…(long pause) inclusive

And how do you feel when you're providing this service?

Well it's good it's what we're meant to do…a lot a…(pauses to think) you're meant tae be culturally open…especially now where I'm in a management position…a need to meet the needs of the community and the community aren't just predominantly white like in Maryhill there's a lot of Asian and Chinese people in general as well as Muslim…a lot a the Muslim community are born in Scotland at this stage but lit aye it's tryin to meet the needs of everyone…it's stepping out your comfort zone to meet the needs of everyone

So can you tell me a wee bit more about the grading system?

So aye in the council our managers would actually ask ye what grade ye are so a was a grade 3 so the community development officer in the community would be a grade 6 n there boss would be a grade 7 so sometimes ye feel as if they're just askin ye tae see how much power they have over ye…or like how far ye cin…take the mick out ye so to speak

So do you feel it's quite hierarchical?

Aye 100% the grading system itself is hierarchy cos what is the grade it is level of importance? If you're a grade 3 are you less important than a grade 7?

And do you get that impression when you're working?

Aye 100% cos like a grade 3s a youth worker grade 4s also a youth worker but there's a team leader but there's about 30p difference in the hourly wage so it's no as if you have to be more qualified or anythin it's just what job ye get but some a the grade 4s…like if they had an idea that ye didnae think wis gonny work with a group a young people they would just go ahead and do it cos they're grade 4 and they have the power to do so and you're just like the grade 3 so your opinion less relevant or whatever…but aye I'm not saying that about the full council cos there's some people like me who kinda see it for the sham that it is but…a worked with so many grade 4s that a felt I was better at the job than but…a felt as a grade 3 a was the one organising the club but a didn't look at it as aw they're on more money than me or they should be doing the job…any projects a worked on a tried to make it the best as possible because I'm only gonny enjoy it if a feel like it's succeedin…whereas a don't know…especially the grade 6/7 or sorta higher they live off their grade they live off that level of importance when really it's just a number…ma manager wis good in the council…

ma manager Natalie was my manager all the time through a wis working at the council she wis always good to me but you'd go to like city wide meetings and people would ask ye yer grade and you'd feel like if someone was a grade 6 or 7 who asked you yer grade you'd feel like the conservation before they knew you're grade and the conversation after wis two different…well not exactly two different people but they had a sorta…a dunno wit dae ye call that…like a pride in themselves that their such a bigger grade than ye it's ridiculous but as a said once a left it and been workin in ma new job everyone's equal now…of course there's a hierarchy but it's nothing evident…everyone works together in this new sorta job

What is it about the new job that you like?

Like just so much freedom like Glasgow Life it's kinda do it do that so much red tape whereas in this job…even if ye fail ye don't get looked at in a bad light it's like you've went for it it's failed let's move on…a cin put my ideas forward and it's always lit let's go for it and if it fails it fails then a can apply for fundin in this new job anawl wits gonny…meet the needs of the young people a work with whereas Glasgow Life everything's more generalised…this new job I'm in a management position a done ma degree in community development for 3 year so I've got…this job merits ma degree…so a run ma own youth club…the youth clubs been about for years but since I've been in there I've took it over…I don't run it but a oversee it…but a work in it as well a wanted to be hands on with everythin…so a work in that Monday Tuesday Wednesday nights…emm so with these young people there…like really poverty strikin so the kinda projects a come up wae like providing healthy food for them every night…well healthy food most nights one night a month we do a cinema night we get a takeaway…emm but healthy foods and nutrients thit they need…tryin tae start up a clothin bank but hard tae set it up around this time when you're comin tae summer

you're better settin it coming out of summer and goin intae winter so that they've got clothes that are gonny be sufficient for the upcoming weather…so I'm just tryin tae the needs of the particular group we've got…then the woman a work wae Shannon she like plays every instrument so we're tryin tae bring out their creative side as well as just yer general sort of youth club where it's PS4, pool, arts n crafts n just a bitta patter, know wit a mean?

How do the kids respond to music?

Aye good good…a think it's the lack of music growin up that they respond it well now…maybe not the lack of music but the lack of access to instruments and that so a think they feel quite privileged being in a youth club that cin provide that for free n Shannon's…she's in some sorta correspondence with Music Broth…so Music Broth donate guitars and that to us n then once they donate guitars the old guitars we give them back to the young people so if a young person showed promise in an instrument eventually they'll walk away with a guitar of their own n that, know wit a mean?

What is the nature of your new job, is it independent?

Aye it's independent it's Community Central Hall in Maryhill it's 80% self-generated. We're a charity but Community Central Hall is a business we're the charity aspect of it but the only correspondence we have is that they give us money the business side give us money there's no…all of our ethos all of our values are community driven unlike Glasgow Life…within 3 weeks of being in the new job a set up like a sorta food thing for the young people whereas with Glasgow Life that would've took like months cos I'd have told the grade 4 the grade 4 would've told the grade 5 the grade 5 would've told the grade 6/7/8 then by the time the grade 8 decides the grade 8 wouldn't tell me the grade 8 would tell the grade 7 who would then tell the grade 6 and so on…so with this a meet the chair of the buildin and say listen a want this idea and he says go for it…simply like within one meeting…

(talking about bottom-up organisations)

They try to meet the needs *of* (emphasis here) their local community… they know the going ons in the local area so they're trying to meet the needs *of* (another emphasis) the local residents whereas Glasgow Life everything's generalised everything's tickin

boxes n that's no just Glasgow Life that's like most business in general…like the ones that aren't community driven thit have got community services like…they're tickin boxes they're…they're lookin for statistics it's all aw look what I'm doin when they're no actually doin nothin whereas all these wee different…not wee but all the ones that aren't…arm's length organisations of the council they're all meeting the needs of the people that use their service or the local area or both or like…like during the pandemic before a wis there they delivered like 15,000 food parcels tae local residents cos there's so much poverty in Maryhill so it's takin action rather than just providing a service.

I see certain parallels with Glasgow Life to how you described your experiences at school…

Aye well again it's authority it's people abusin their position of power…a mean I'm in a position of power but you used that power to benefit other people whereas in that a think they use their power to benefit themselves or build their ego or…a don't know…but aye a think some people just feed into that authoritative aspect a themself and a don't know…they don't use their power to benefit anyone but themselves

Have you ever been a part of a trade union?

Aye aye I'm a part of…who am I part of? (long pause) a canny mind but a am a pay ma union 6 pound a month…I've only used the union once…in Glasgow Life a moved team tae…I wis in the South West team which is like Govan/Pollok/Cardonald but a wanted to move back over here cos this is where a live n just like travel n stuff so a moved over here wis workin up Castlemilk/Croftfoot sorta area but then a new guy came in and we just didnae see eye tae eye…I think cos a was younger he thought he could take the piss n stuff…he just came in he wis in the company for years but he always got moved about a think it's just the way the guy is…he came in n started to move me clubs again n a hid enough and a said naw…well a didnae naw but a said a didnae want to cos we were in the middle of a project thit a knew the other youth workers didnae have the skills to upkeep a knew as soon as a left the project would…dwindle...n young people were gettin a community achievement award out it so a didnae want them to work 6 weeks a hard work n then only have another 4 more then for them no to get that achievement cos if they've no done well in school that certificate can do them well for goin for jobs goin for apprenticeships n that…so a kinda put ma foot down to that manager n he didnae like it n from then on it wis aboot 9 month it wis just back n forward always problems, either problems from ma end or problems from his end wae me n eventually a tried tae move back tae the South West

team so a put in an official transfer to get back to the South West and he came back to me 2 weeks later and said it failed…this was about November time canny remember which year probably lit 2016 or suttin…ehh and then we had staff trainin and a walked up to ma former manager n says 'why did ye…is there a reason ye denied ma request?' n they said they never got a request so the guy just didnae put a request in and said that the request had failed so a joined a union…GMB that's who I'm wae…joined the union and me and ma union rep and both sides of the managers had a discussion within 15 minutes it was solved n a got moved over…but from that a didnae just want to use the union once so I've kept them on just tae kinda…even if I'm no using them a like to do a bitta funding towards them

Would you say that manager exploited you?

Emmm I think that he seen that a was young…just at face value he walked in and seen that a was younger… in 2016 I'd a been 18 miby 19 no? 19 so a hink he thought he could just take the piss he's like you'll do what a want sorta thing n then when a put ma foot down…when a put ma foot down a wasn't being rebellious a just wanted to finish the project a was on then a would've moved happily but because a said naw I'm waitin here for another 4 weeks he just like kept pushin it and pushin it and a end up gettin ma own way and bein able tae stay cos a went to his manager and said lit it's no fair that I'm gettin moved these young people aren't gonny get the certifications n stuff so a got ma way but a think cos a went to his manager he feels like a backstabbed in a way which a did but a don't care that a did.

Do you feel that the managers care about the young people?

They're not active in the youth clubs the managers are office workers. A community development officer in the council is an office worker they don't develop the community in any way the grade 3s and grade 4s are the grass roots they're the ones workin wae people every day so they've actually got more of a right to say they're doing community development than the ones sittin in offices…some do every so often come out every couple a month's when it suits them and some are good wae young people some do show signs a carin but a community development officer manager is meant tae be someone that's there…like action over theory whereas…them in the council are more…they're more typing reports up and saying they're doing all the work when they're doin nothin but the managers in ma new job they're active…well I'm a manager in ma job and I'm 3 days a week cos I wanted to be involvement in the service that I'm providing.

So do you feel that independent grass root organisations are more effective?

Aye well as a say they're the ones that are actually responding to the needs of their community…like I'd get staff training in Glasgow Life for say…like smoking or drugs and alcohol and it'd be the same training I'd get if a worked in Toryglen or if a worked in the West End lit there's no…they don't target the community it's just a generalised training pack and it's off ye go with it whereas all the stuff we do in this job it's like…when that boy got stabbed up in High Street at the train station we created a knife crime workshop ourselves that's gonny…that we knows gonny like…our young people are gonna feel an impact of because we're targetin it towards a certain group…we respond to who walks through the doors or even who doesn't come through the doors like…deliverin food parcels n like in ma work we've got like a pantry…well it's no a pantry so to speak we don't brand it as that but we get people to just come and take wit they need so a think we start it from half 6 at night because a lot a people from food banks work rather than do it durin the day cos a mean it came out statistics last year in London 46% of food bank users are workin full-time…so we provide a pantry from half 5 tae 10 rather than doin it durin the day so it's accessible tae anyone…the ones that I've seen all seem grateful for it and it was the community's idea to do it from half 5 as well…again we're responding to the needs of the people we're in the position like as I says…in ma work I've got the power of position and that's what it is but ma power of position gets used to meet the needs of the people…I'm in a place where a cin implement services but it's the services that are needed by the people.

Have you ever been out of work for any reason?

Ehhh no I left school and was unemployed for 6 months but I hid savins a had a grand and a half saved up so it wis through choice…a left school in March 2014 and wis unemployed till September 2014 but since then I've worked non-stop

Can you tell me a bit about the home that you grew up in? What was a typical day in the house like?

So my mum didn't work growin up so. A lived in Allison Street so goin to Holycross wis literally like 200 yards walk…going to school coming back doing homework then walkin round Queens Park would be like a normal family day then on a Friday going down to my grans in the Gorbals then a Sunday gawn through to Coatbridge tae see my other gran that was the general week growin up till a wis about 13/14

Did you ever hang about with your neighbours?

Emmmm…there wis a few boys older than me and my brother…I'd say he was about miby…5/6 years older than me then a couple older than ma brother but we'd go out the back n play football n play football on the streets n that then there wis another boy down the stair that wis miby a year older than ma brother so we wid go out or if it wis snowin we'd hiv snowball fights n that sorta thing…but that'd be a lot of the street that wouldn't just be us like there was a good group…there was definitely a sense a community back then…Allison Street the now gets demonised but the place a lived was more further up towards Holyrood so it wis a lot of people fae a lot of different backgrounds aw just comin out to enjoy themselves the gether…it wis a sign of the times…like before mobiles…before tech got so big the only hing you could really dae wis go oot n play…like there was mobiles and there was access to computers but there wis nothin that kept ye hooked that much rather than goin outside doin stuff know wit a mean?

Do you think that's changed?

A mean young people these days…a mean you see it on a Tuesday night we try tae make it a non-phone day so the young people can either communicate wae each other where they are…like the young people a work wae will literally take snapchats of each other n snapchat each other and I'm like just talk, know wit a mean? So on a Tuesday we're tryna tae…it's a slow hing like we canny just say nae phones we're tryin tae encourage it until a point n once we get to a point we're like…well we'll make an agreement wae the full youth club that we'll dae a no phone night but we're just in the process the now where it's the early stages a gettin that in but…it's cos we're tryin to bring back that sense a community that sense of people just talkin tae each other rather than somebody sittin straight beside each other like still talkin while on their phones…a dunno…like no one's communicating with each other anymore

And do you see a difference from when you grew up to now?

Well a hink young people get demonised more for hingin about the street now…like you'll hear people say aw young people do now is sit in the hoose play the computer n then you'll hear people say aw these wee toerags are oot in the street…young people canny please adults anymer cos adults always have something to complain about…you can see there's an element of people feeling unsafe but not…any young

people I've worked wae there no been…well a have worked wae some young people that hiv went down a path of crime once they've left the youth club n got a bit older

Why do you think that was?

Ehhh…a wouldn't say completely cos they abandoned the youth club but the youth club definitely helped young people…like a lot of young people come intae the youth club tae go tae the youth workers cos we're the only adults in their life that don't have a position a power over them…so a lot a young people come tae the youth club just tae talk about their problems knowin that their no gonny get judged…even if they've done somethin wrong like punched a boy or goat suspended fae school we're gonny ask them why they done it n what led up tae it rather than just geein them intae trouble fur it know wit a mean? Like we're no in a position…they judge tae come to us so we're no in a position tae dictate what they do n don't do in their life…so we try n get to the root problem of it but we're doing it in a way were we're on the same level as them whereas a teacher has that position of authority a parent is obviously gonny have an emotional attachment n that position of authority so we're the only ones that they cin come tae thit cin speak a wee bitta sense tae them but also be at their level

Is there any particular song that reminds you of your childhood?

Just sitting in the back of ma dad's car was always like Oasis or Red Hot Chili Peppers maybe like Red Hot Chili Peppers Universally Speaking or somethin like that just ma dad playin it in the motor or Slide Away or suttin like that

Have you stayed in Govanhill all your life?

Aye…aye all ma life…a lived in Allison Street till a wis 12 then a moved tae where I am the now in South Annandale Street n I've been there since

Are there any differences to the two areas? Do you prefer one to the other?

A think Allison Street wis a good place to grow up cos it wasn't as central it wis a wee bit…no safer but a bit less intimidating fur a young person cos it wis kinda…it wis on the border a Crosshill n like you're near ASDA n like you're near Toryglen pitches n

that so…cos it's on the border and it's no central yer no meetin as many people…especially when you're younger whereas where a am now is right next tae Govanhill Park so it's a bit mer central…so aye the busyness is the main difference

What has encouraged you to stay in the area?

Ehhh no exactly by choice cos I'm livin wae ma mum and ma dad but a don't mind stayin in Govanhill it's central tae everythin it's a 20-minute walk fae the town…ma girlfriend stays in Toryglen so 20-minute walk tae there 20-minute walk tae Shawlands so it's central fur…where a need to be or where a hing aboot or things lit that

What have been the main changes in terms of community and work in the area?

In the last 5/6 years since ma jobs been workin wae communities I've realised all the different community groups n stuff so lit Govanhill Baths Development Trust…they do all sorts a different projects in the area…building the well-being centre they got aw the fundin fur that but they also set up Romano Lav but that's its own organisation now which is an organisation tae empower women…a dunno maybe it wis originally women now it's everyone from the Roma community…emm they do Rags to Riches…a canny exactly remember but it's somethin about like donating clothes tae people who are more in need…they do up-cyclin like turnin old things in like doin them up or using the parts tae like create new hings for people in the community…emm…there's just like wee cafes like the Milk café on Vicky Road…they like…all their employees are women from the Roma community n lit they get them health n safety trainin food hygiene trainin n that n then most of them go ontae bigger and better things after that…Govanhill Baths Development Trust have like a youth club n that as well n they've got their own space they've got a food pantry n that so there's all sorts going on in the community whereas when a was younger a don't think there was as much goin on cos…a dunno…like a said in our last meeting a was involved in a youth club cos a wis semi-aware of wit wis happenin in the community n a don't remember there ever been much of a community presence

What would you say the strengths of Govanhill are?

Ehhh…different cultures definitely…different people comin from all different backgrounds all different experiences…dealt with all different sorts of…ehh…things in life…like when a ran the youth club in Govanhill it wis good cos it wis like a cultural

shock…like some of the young people lit ate nuts n spat them oot n then when we shouted at them they didn't realise why cos it's like their culture so things lit that…you learn about other cultures n then you adapt tae it…instead of just shouting oan them for doin it you understand why they're dain it then ye tell them not to do it so you know wit a mean…aye I'd say one a the strengths is the culture and…like the kinda no nonsense attitude of the community development workers in there…like they don't take any stick aboot Govanhill like if they see anythin online or from a paper or lit any sorta social media outlets they'll challenge it so it's good tae have people with a little bitta resilience

Are there any negative aspects?

Ehhh…the litter…Govanhill's a bit of a dump these days there's litter in every street emmm…the backs in Allison Street are terrible n a lot of that is inhabited by people of the Roma culture but again that's people that are livin wae like 8 people in a 2 bedroom household it's gonny get clumped up…again it is the litter but the root problem of the litter is probably the dodgy landlords n the amount a people there is cos their dodginess…n then the racism between people thit don't accept the Roma culture but Govanhill before the Roma's came in in like early 2000s wis like Indians or Pakistanis n then before that there wis a big Irish influx so it's always been a place for immigrants

Do you see the racist discourse have continuities over time?

Well ma mum and that don't feel safe walkin down Allison Street but that's goin off stuff that has happened…they just feel nervous but some a the Roma community do intimidate woman in Govanhill like it is quite evident…like I've heard more than one story of like a woman walkin by say Allison Street or the health centre n like gettin followed by a group of them…then again ye don't know if that's intimidation or just another culture…but then again like some of them hiv been catcalled n that which isn't nice but ehh…there is people who just don't want to accept other cultures in general so there is definitely some elements of racism and as a mentioned the last time a think the media do have undertones of racism in their reports or whatever about Govanhill

Has there been any days or events in the area that you remember vividly in the past or present?

There's Govanhill Community Day that's usually around August time a think…they do a big day in the park n it's like people from the local area like utilising their skills but there might be somedae doin like yoga…or lit mediation n that n like at the pitches lit

beat the goalie n that sorta thing so it's like a fun family day out that a use tae take part in when a wis younger…n then just at Queens Park n that a remember durin the summer there wis the bandstand n that you sometimes get buskers n that so that's nice anawl

Do you think that Govanhill has shaped you as a person? If so, how? If not, why not?

Aye well you're a product of where ye grow up a wid say…a think…a mean I'm definitely more culturally aware like growin up goin tae Holycross n that…there wasn't as many different cultures as there would be now I assume but like…a think you probably do get schools that were predominantly white but in Govanhill you had people from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Philippines n stuff so a think a am more culturally aware because a that and understand…like just some differences n that but maybe people at that age 10 or 11 would've understood…but everyone has respect for each other n the boy from the Philippines in ma class…infact both him and the Sri Lankan boy were both altar boys so faith wis a big thing for them and miby that's somethin that doesnae get installed in us as much in Scotland…that sorta faith n that sorta respect for one another…a cin remember them being quite open talkin about where they were from n that so…aye that's it

What is life is important to you?

The usual family friends n that…in ma personal life relaxin…exercisin…in ma professional life in work I'd say stayin motivated…a lot of community development managers are quite happy sittin at their office but a think it's ma duty to go n meet the people n identity the needs in the community so…in a professional capacity that's what's important…making sure the young people that are comin tae the youth club are as much as they're havin fun are learnin about different issues n learnin how to tackle different issues like understanding what things are understanding how to deal with things if they're the victim of it

Would you say what is important to you has changed over the years?

I'd say I really found myself when a left school I think in school everybody's just tryin to be like the same thing like tryin to be popular and that a don't think you actually

express your individualism until you leave school…I think you kinda find out where you are once you're left on your own

What is it that you've done in life that you're proud of?

Ehh workin wae the community when a left school like any career advisor or that always tried to put me forward for a trade n a just knew that that wis never wit a wis gonny tae like a knew thit I wis never gonny be a joiner or a painter n decorator a just knew thit that didnae for me so I'm glad a stuck tae ma guns at a young age n didnae fall tae pressure from people tryin to dictate what you do rather than take into consideration what you want to do

And what's of lesser importance to you?

Ehhhh…lesser importance (long pause) a don't know like I'm quite comfortable with the social aspect of a life like I'm quite…well maybe when a wis younger a wis tryin tae be pals wae everybody whereas now I'm quite comfortable wae who's in ma life…a like makin new pals n meeting new people n like talkin tae new people n that but like…a used tae…well a feel like when you were younger n in school you used tae try tae…pursue it whereas now it's just kinda more natural so a hink I'm just comfortable in ma own skin…now rather than before…I think a kinda just drift through life now, know wit a mean?

Has there been any noteworthy events in your life, good or bad?

Emmmm noteworthy…(long pause) a mean a went tae India a couple a years ago with the uni…aye cos that wis like a major cultural shock…you think you've got this idea of poverty till you see real poverty…a hink that's why…well a was in the middle a 2nd year n a wis like strugglin in uni n that didnae know whether a wis gonny keep it on but like gawn there kinda inspired me to keep it on…cos like the problems we face here is nothing tae like over there like even…like the people in poverty over there don't even get acknowledged by like the media or that like if you're poor you're non-existent over there which is madness…ehh don't know if there's anythin else like a went to Canada as a young person like when a was trainin to be a youth worker n like that wis kinda the incentive tae dae the course cos it the end of the year ye get tae go tae Canada n a wis there with ma pals…so that's the noteworthy things that's the things I'll always remember

Do you see any similarities with how more disadvantaged people are treated in India to the UK?

Well like the racism in Govanhill isnae acknowledged like people…like…the media will write all sorts about the Roma community or…stuff like that but they'll never acknowledge that there's like a gap between like the Whites or the people that are born there and the Roma community like there's hardly…like Romano Lav are like the only organisation that are tryin tae integrate lit…Romanians n err…Scottish born people together but like…the divide isn't talked about at all…it's evident but it's just ignored…that's somethin that comes to mind straight away…there's hunners of things that get ignored in the media n that…I cin remember being angry just like the last couple a years lookin at things n thinkin why's that no gettin talked about?

Roger

Can you tell me a wee bit about yourself?

I'm working as a musician in this area near to Queens Park…I've been lived here 12 years…I've known Glasgow since the 1980s…

What in life is important to you?

Well you know to try and live a good life…family…you want to keep your loved ones close…be respectful to people…treat people the way you'd like to be treated yourself…it doesn't cost anything to be nice or to be polite or kind…these are just basic virtues that most humans should aspire to have…considerable charming polite

The government likes to scary the little people into obedience

Can you tell me about Govanhill?

I think it's a good sense of community in general in Govanhill because it is an accepting community you know…there's a mish mash of everyone there…if anything now I'd describe Govanhill has becoming a bit more gentrified…there are definitely a certain

amount of people in Govanhill that are artistic and creative and I think a load of them have come from London and they'll have known that Glasgow is a cool place to come who doesn't but you've got an element of people have sold up shop in London cashed in big time on their wee enterprises that they had there…nice people but they've come up here with more money than a local person can have cos we all know if you bought a little flat in London 20 years ago and you sold it now it's maybe worth a million quid…if you bought a flat in Govanhill 20 years ago it'd have cost about 10 grand and now it might be worth 40 grand so Govanhill has become more gentrified and it's become more expensive it's still a place you'd consider affordable to live and work in because rents are maybe a little bit cheaper…the general cost of living is a wee bit cheaper to get a cup of tea or a coffee but you still buy a cup of coffee at £3.50 you know off of Vicky Road…I used to live in a flat in Albert Drive in the late 90s just off Vicky Road 2 bedroom flat then a tiny room at the back of the flat that we used as a living room and it had a cupboard in there and we had a fringe in it and then it was just 400 quid a month for the rent…it was 1998 or something…and the reason that was 400 quid a month was that we got that through a letting agent…if for example we got that through a private landlord or someone not through a letting agent it might only have been 350 a month…now I'm sure the same type of flat would be 600/700 you know…probably double the amount…and I just think it'd be a right struggle for young ones in their 20s to try and find that money if they were wanting independence…if you can't afford to do that you're just gonna get into debt you're gonna be stressing out and you're gonna likely start being depressed and feeling pretty fed up with stuff you know

How would you say Govanhill has changed from the 90s to now?

It's definitely more gentrified it's been done up a bit more you know…Victoria Road and the wee streets off of it…there's more little coffee shops you've got your more organic food shops Locavore things like that so it's changed in that sense that more students and more people on the…it's more affordable so if you're trying to get a tenement flat or be near a place where it's quite a lot of gigs pubs and things you can participate in Govanhill's really handy…it's just a bus into the centre it's only 10 minutes on the bus…you've got a train station there Queen's Park train station 10 minutes on the train then you're in Central so geographically Govanhill's always been a good wee spot in terms of somewhere to live then if you need to get to places it's pretty easy…clearly it's not the most expensive part of town so it suits people with a certain budget…I personally because I like the food I like Asian food and spicy food and things like that then you're laughing in Govanhill because they've got all the good wee shops for buying your spices and herbs that kind of thing…I love the wee Samosa shop on Calder Street…it's called the Glasgow Sweet Centre because they make lots of wee desserts like all the wee cakes…I'd usually go in there and buy some lamb

samosas or vegetable samosas with the lovely mint yogurt sauce…but also the people in the Halal shops and these veg shops for example…they've always been there since I've known since the 1990s and I'm sure they've been there even before then and they've always been really nice folk…friendly…polite…I've never came around any level of harassment or any kinda things like that you know and I don't look for these things either I'm a chilled out kinda guy…for example I might go to get some chicken sometime in one of the shops and they'd make me a cup of tea and they'd be like Hey Rog how's it going? Ur Kidd and I'd get my little order of the foods some pita bread some fresh coriander and I'd be sitting there having a cup of tea with the folk in the shop and they're giving me one of their fancy biscuits that they've made and they make a lovely tea from Pakistan with green cardamom and milk and a normal tea bag…it's delicious! I mean to give a flip side of that if I went into Greggs or something or a Scottish butcher he might be friendly and say hey nice to see you again but he ain't offering me a cuppa! You know he's not saying sit around and I'll make you a cuppa and a slide of cake…I mean I'm not saying he's horrible I'm just saying it's noted it's a difference…it's a cultural thing it's definitely related to culture…our culture is commercial Western culture which is based on business business business…you know we don't have time to have a cup of tea and sit about and talk…just in my experience of the local pub that I bought some chicken in was Halal and those guys were always friendly and over the winter months it's cold down there and some of these fellas in the shop might not have the budget to heaters on full blast all day so they might trying to keep costs down by not having the shop all roasty and toasty but they're happy to give you a nice hot drink and a wee biscuit…it's just a nice little touch…but that's a cultural thing

What would you say the strengths of Govanhill are as a place?

Well being multi-cultural because that keeps people open-minded…if you just lived in the closed-community then you've not learnt much…you've not travelled with your mind or imagination or physical you've not went anywhere so you don't know how to get a better balance in life until you've seen things with your own eyes…variety is the spice of life so the more variety you have in life the more interesting things are…if you're just gonna stay on your life where you grew up and where you were born and go to the same pub then to me that's nullifying that's boring you know…you need to have different flavours different interests different events to participate in different things to see and you can see how other people do stuff and see how they enjoy themselves you know

Do your experiences or knowledge of Govanhill contrast with the media perceptions of the area?

Well again media…it depends what media it is cos they've all got agendas haven't they…so if it's a unionist media so it so happens to be Nicola Sturgeon's constituency then clearly anyone who pays some attention to politics knows that a unionist media is gonna be Govanhill bad Govanhill bad…raping…all these horrible things going on…well if you've got a few brain cells you'll know that that's just a nonsense thing anyway because shit happens happen everywhere…someone gets beaten up in the street…that's happens in any city…if it were local press who were based and living around Govanhill you'd get a better picture of reality in Govanhill…if you're some jobsworth who works in an office in London and then just googles a few journalists clips or articles then you're not really getting a true picture of what Govanhill is like now or what Govanhill was like 10 years ago…I mean Govanhill in all the years I've known it…it's always had a multi-ethnic diversity there mixed with weegies…I was down at the Rum Shack a few weeks ago and it was their day of celebration for the Roma community…great musicians great cooks…and I was doing the sound there and lovely people! The people who were hosting it were really cool really hospitable really polite…made lovely food…an elderly woman had made a whole stack of food off her own back and brought it to the venue so she could offer food to people and they asked me if I'd like some and cos I do like sampling food I found it hard to resist but I just insisted that they gave me a really small plate just in case someone was there who hadn't had a meal that night you know I didn't want to be greedy greedy but it was delicious and it was just this lovely wee meat and spices wrapped in cabbage leaves…it was really yummy and I just had a couple of them and a wee slide of white bread…and the music was great yenno! All these Roma musicians…I mean heavyweight musicians like! I mean properly smashing it out the park! All the riffs they could do and the guys on the keyboard the guy on the accordion the guy on the bass as well…unreal! I mean the equivalent of proper jazz musicians or classical musicians I mean they can really riff and doodle it out big time you know…and then they had folk dancing and doing their traditional dances and stuff and it went down well you know…and that's part of the Govanhill community just spilling over to Pollokshaws Road but it's all connected that area really…you've got a lot of flavours down there definitely…it's good to have mixed community and just accept your neighbours you know…they're not aliens we all come from the same planet

Are there any events or days in the area that you remember from the past or present?

Yeah well some of the processions they do at the festival and when we are lucky it doesn't rain…it's always very family-oriented 10/10…if you can cater for everyone then you know you get the bigger spectrum of your audience

Can you tell me a bit about the Govanhill Baths?

Yeah so I went swimming in it the last time it was open…literally the last week it was open…I used to go there regularly anyway cos I was living on Albert Drive so if I wanted a wee swim and a sauna…so I used to do the hard bit first and have a swim and then go and hang and chill in the sauna and get really hot and sweaty…I miss the baths still not being fixed…the community will benefit from that whole facility being open again and it was just Glasgow council closing these sorts of things and that was one of the ones that took a hit but then the big thing that opened was the one down at the Gorbals so then I went to that one…Govanhill Baths was the nearest one to where I was living at the time so I went there but then it closed so you didn't have that option to go to the baths anymore

What do you think is important about the Govanhill Baths?

Well it's a facility it's a community hub these things can be useful tools within the community…a swimming pool in every community is a good way to hang out on rainy days…you may as well go and get wet in the pool than standing outside in the rain…a little bit of chit chat would happen in the sauna or the changing rooms because that's where people chew the fat a wee bit…when you go to a place inside your community you'll make friends and you'll recognise faces cos you'll see them every week and you'll figure out that person comes on a Tuesday that person goes on a Wednesday just by the habit of going there regularly

Do you hang about anywhere else in Govanhill?

Yeah I'll hang out at some of the coffee shops…Bees Knees…there's loads of them now there's so many to choose from…before lockdown you'd have a wee cheeky pint of Guinness in the back room…we'd have singer/songwriter nights in there as well so I've played a few gigs there…they used to before lockdown and it'd be packed and they'd have a wee log fire on and everyone got up and sang a few songs…back in the day in Govanhill there wouldn't have been as many coffee shops…tea shops…or cake shops…there would've been some but just 1 or 2 now there's probably 15

What is of lesser importance to you?

Lesser importance to me is monetary things really…yeah and just things like people focusing on money as the be all and end all so that's the least important to me…like trying to become a millionaire…if you wanted to become a millionaire because you wanted to prove that you could succeed and then give it away to charities then that'd be a worthwhile reason to get rich but if you just want to get rich purely so you can buy expensive toys then that's shallow in my opinion and it's superficial…I'm happy to just have enough money to eat to cover my bills…I'm happy to survive you know…with what I've got and make the most out of it…

I was down in Calder Street buying a lot of chilli's a few weeks ago cos I like to pickle them…I didn't get a cup of tea at the guys shop but he recognises me I recognise him and we always have a chat and he knocked off 50p for me…so you can have a wee haggle with the guys in the shops…if you go to normal supermarkets you can't have a haggle…if you go into some of the Asian shops for your fruit and veg you can negotiate a bit or you can try…there is a sense of community definitely it's friendly and I probably think it's one of the best hub like that in Glasgow

Have you got anything else you'd like to add about Govanhill?

Not really…just get the swimming pool back open! I'll soon use it again as soon as it opens up…I haven't been down to the Gorbals one in ages…that'll be a great thing once…once they get it fully renovated…so for me that's local and for everyone else local to the area it's just a case of right I'm nippin off for a wee swim at your local pool you know so I'll definitely be happy once that opens again aye

Roland

Can you tell me a wee bit about yourself?

Yes so I am a Hungarian born and raised in Romania…moved to Glasgow 4 years ago and moved to the UK 5 years ago…I haven't been ever before that…so the first time I came to the UK was the first time I'd ever been here…I came over for a job that was actually a scam which I realised quite late so long story short it was a scam…I spent most of my money that I had put aside for moving here quite I tried to get away from the scam…so I sent in my application to this company to send me to London with my friend…with my childhood friend cos we were like okay we need to leave this place…we were earning okay at home but we were like only okay for one month to the

other…I wanted something else I wanted a change of mentality…cos where I am from it's too small…it's a village mentality where everyone knows what everyone's doing…long story short it was a trafficking job they trafficked me over then I found a job as a kitchen porter…basically after 1 year of doing these odd jobs and I worked for the Intercontinental hotel and so on then I moved to Glasgow cos I had friends who were Glaswegian and so were teaching children English more than 15 years ago and we remained friends…in London things didn't go as planned…I was depressed lost a lot of weight…by 8 months of working with the Intercontinental I lost quite a lot…I was at 69 kilos when I left…I was skin and bones and I came to Glasgow and here basically…as I started discovering the city itself cos I moved into a private rent but back then I didn't have the experience I have now so it was illegal subletting near the city centre but in every bad there is a good…that's where I met my girlfriend so we both fell into this trap of a dodgy landlord but we managed to get out of that ourselves after a few months…putting some money together and moved to Maryhill cos that's where we could find rent and we eventually moved to Govanhill cos I started working with the community so 2017 when I moved in September we worked I worked for John Lewis for 3 months…call centre then I worked for T-Mobile…call centre again and between all these jobs when I was off I was doing interpreting so I can make an extra buck…so the interpreting jobs were for agencies so I was sent everywhere to interpret for Romanian…Hungarian and so on

What were the conditions like at the call centre jobs?

Well John Lewis was okay…it was through an agency so it would obviously have been better pay if I was hired straight from John Lewis rather than the agency cos the agency had their fees

What were your first impressions of the area and why did you decide to move to Govanhill?

So when I started doing the interpreting jobs that's when I realised there were so many Romanians here…I had no freakin idea…I would never have guessed that you were gonna find…you know…a bigger minority of Romanians or Roma or both…there's like so many ethnicities…people coming from all over the place in a few square kilometres…so when I first came…it felt like a smaller London because of the diversity…we don't have sky scrapers in Govanhill (laugh) but as in terms of people and I started working here and it just sticked with me cos I was already working with the organisations that are working with the community…cos I was living quite far away I was spending quite a lot of time on the bus and I wanted to be closer to Govanhill

and thankfully a lot of our friends lived in the southside anyway and now I cannot think of anything else to work…I got too used to this job and Govanhill just stick to me…it feels like home…I'm going on the streets and people recognise each other and you're like 'hey pal what you doing?' …you recognise people from events around the area or friends of a friend…it just feels like home

What would you say the strengths of Govanhill are as a place?

It shows that we can have small community that makes big changes…yeah I think that's how I'd say it…small community…big changes…or not small…diverse community that can make changes…but small as in it's not a huge neighbourhood…it's like a mini-London in one place…you have so many minorities in one place and as you were saying back in the day there were Irish and then they were…not replaced but others came who were the scapegoats so it was the Asian community and after the Asian it were now the Roma so as I heard from others who were here before I was living…they were saying there were always minorities or a majority between the minorities and they were always the scapegoats…back in the day it was the Irish…the Asian now it's the Roma…you can't say all this rubbish is done by Roma…everywhere you find rubbish but it's politicised…it's the media…they're trying to put dirt on some areas…but I think…what I have seen from maybe families…it gets passed on kinda thing and they don't maybe realise that what they say is affecting people's feelings because you know you cannot say that aww because you're Irish I might hate you…it's just a predisposition…it's like saying I'm definitely going to hate you…I've not even talked to you but I definitely hate you because you're coming from that street or that neighbourhood or whatever…they don't give a chance to each other…and even the Romanians amongst themselves…they are divided they are not unified you know…even the Scottish or anyone they all have their different groups and they are like ohh I'm not talking to them cos…I don't know…they are a different religion or they are a very working-class you know there's always gonna be division and I see here from like people going to open mics or people going to Govanhill festival you can see people having fun every once in a while and they kind of tend to forget these differences…but then the next day not all of them remember what happened last night so they tend to go back to their old habits of thinking bad of others

Would you say Govanhill is a place of unity or division?

Both…it's weird it's like an accordion…sometimes it's open sometimes it closes…it can unify or close off…it depends on many situations…you know… I think it's based

on a case-to-case basis you know and just cos there is 1 case of…I don't know…robbery that just so happens to involve a Romanian citizen it doesn't mean that all of them are the same… many kids can be influenced by this because they see all the bad in the media or all the negativity that the parents are talking…parents talking and kids are ear dropping

Have you seen any changes in the community in terms of work?

Yeah definitely it seems way more organised…cleaner…companies started to get like more pubs…businesses started flourishing or changing so it's emm…when I came to Govanhill it wasn't the most pleasing sight…it depends where you went…it depends on the street…but now if I'm going on the same street it can see changes…I can see that some businesses have started flourishing because the neighbourhood likes them as well so…and businesses like when you go and talk to a shop owner then you go and talk to their neighbour…they're like ohh I'm not gonna sell that just cos my neighbour does it and they don't want to make their neighbour lose out on business so they're trying to help each other…you are selling shoes I'm going to sell the socks…now I hear that there might be a cooperative of shops on Victoria Road so they can advertise themselves better…that's a good beginning that's something that wasn't there before so I think now that the next step would be for the wider community to do the same

Can you tell me more about Govanhill Festival?

Yeah there you can see people trying to show off their culture…they are dressing up in their traditional costumes or they bring something from home that reminds them of home and that's where you can that people can have fun together even though they are coming from different backgrounds…like you can have fun even if you are not speaking the same language with your partner…you can dance…you don't have to talk in order to dance…it got more gentrified like more people moved in…maybe back in the day you have streets that were just like Polish or streets that were Irish but now it's more diverse so if they want to talk to their neighbour they have to make a wee effort to talk English or something…people say hi to each other…it feels like a community…I used to go to a village with my grandparents where everybody has to say hi to each other…if you go on the street at my grandparents and you don't say hi to someone or cross the street it's very rude…there's something like this here with people who know each other and sometimes some strangers say hi to me and I say hi to them…one day I was sad on the bus and someday asked me are you alright pal? That's something that only in Glasgow you can find so this for me goes along with the

motto that People Make Glasgow…Glaswegians can be very very friendly…they care about each other in comparison to London…people are too much in a rush and too much in a hurry

Have you been involved in any community groups in the area?

I'm working now with Roma from all backgrounds…Slovakian…Polish…Czech…I'm not necessarily working only with them I've started to work mainly with Roma at the beginning but now I'm working with the wider community…Asian and others…and I can see sometimes division from people coming from the same country…but you can see the other ones that are spending more time getting more and more friendlier to their neighbours…they start to talk asking ohh what did you cook or maybe they are talking about their recipes and they engage recipes and one of the parents were like well I've lived in my rent for the last 8 years and I just recently started talking to my neighbour and I realised how good of a person they are…the woman didn't know English well so it took her a wee bit of time for her to learn some English in order to talk to the neighbour and now she says she has a different perception now that she can talk a bit of English cos if you don't know how to communicate it's a bit hard cos you judge on only what you can see or what you can hear from others you can't make your own opinion…and many are taking their news from Facebook

What's encouraged you to stay in the area?

I like what I do and I love Govanhill…it's as simple as that…you have everything in one place…sometimes I don't leave the neighbourhood for days or weeks and I don't even realise it because I work in the area I live in the area I have friends in the area I don't really any reason to go any other places at the moment

Do you think the stigmatisation comes from outside the community or within?

Outside cos it feels like there always must be someone who needs to be blamed and it depends on the era that we're talking about…maybe in the 60s 70s 80s…it's the same thing with a different hat…it's the Romanians now…it's the same shit different day…same shit different era and people never learn from their mistakes that's what I wanted to get to…some people don't want to learn from history

Have there been any aspects of living in Govanhill that have been difficult?

Well litter is the obvious one but now that has been partially solved…but some new families or what other would call new migrants they don't know English and many of them haven't left Govanhill for years and they don't really try and discover Glasgow in itself because they don't really use phones or they don't know the language and are afraid to leave the neighbours…some of the locals are sometimes like why don't they know English or why are they stealing bikes or stuff like that and you know the kids hear this…the ones that know English and when I asked what do you want to do when you become big and they're like I'm gonna be a thief…they're joking but the reality is they don't really have aspirations because many people are giving the stereotypes from one another…I'm not talking about only Roma Pakistani as well…there is always some sparks between these communities but they unite with the persons who want to achieve this instead of releasing stigma…it's influence from inside but mainly outside throwing gasoline over the fire

Can you tell me a bit about your family history as far back as you can go?

As I know up until 1884 we are mainly Hungarians from my mum's side at least…from my father side it should be pretty much similar…from my mum's side my grandparents were simple farmers…they are still alive and I used to go with them on the fields to like plant potatoes…tomatoes…corn…garlic…you name it…it was fucking hard work because mainly it's either in spring…summer…or autumn…so like in the summer time you can very high degrees so many times we'd have to wake up at 4 o'clock in the morning to get up in the field at 5 or 6 so we could stop by 10 or 11 when it got too hot to continue working and we'd stop for a few hours and I'd go under the trees in the shadows and stay there until 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon until the temperature got more chilled…it taught me what it means to work hard for something because many of these farmers were struggling to get by because even though everything they produced was organic like 100% natural they didn't get as much bank for their buck because they didn't sell it for a good price because the guys who were coming to buy it off the farmers…the middle man…and sell it on to the main supermarket or whatever…cos the farmers like my grandpa didn't get time to go to the market and sell it themselves and all the bureaucratic so they'd give it to the middle man…some of the newer generation of farmers stopped farming in Romania…you cannot find as many farmers as there used to be because they started going to factories…buses are coming to take workers from villages to factories because it's more profitable for them to work in a factory and have their wee garden at the back

Did your granda ever tell you what life was like growing up?

He was saying how hard it was back in the days and how they were going to work on the fields from early morning till very late at night and I remember my granda working for a dairy factory or something and he was working way too many hours than what he should have and now his pension is shit cos others kinda of used all these farmers cos they needed a job…as a farmer you don't get a wage slip so he had to work somewhere legally so he could have a pension…and for the state the state took everything that people owned and basically people were working for the state in these collective farms so that was quite a big chunk of their life taken away…me and my dad were going to my grandparents every weekend to work on the farm just to get extra money in order to buy ourselves a flat because me my mum and my dad were living in a one bedroom flat

Can you tell me a wee bit about your childhood?

Unfortunately I was bullied at work cos I was a Hungarian…I was at a Romanian school…it was the same as here…Hungarians were getting a lot of hate from Romanians just cos of history…we were getting beaten up by the Romanian bullies…I remember one time I had to go to hospital cos of concussion and I was 3 days in hospital but some of these bullies apologised after many years because we went to uni and got rid of our village mentality…in the media there as well they were portraying that the Hungarian and Romanian people weren't friends stirring up hatred

Do you think there are similarities from how Govanhill is portrayed in the media to where you grew up?

Yeah there are similarities some people can't see pass division or the media telling them that they shouldn't be friends with such and such…instead of people being united and working towards a better future they are being divided and controlled by others…stopped progressing by perceptions…from the people that are maybe not as educated or not presented more options that's what they know and that's what they are going to believe in and it's hard to change people's beliefs or perceptions if you cannot show them otherwise

Can you tell me a bit more about how you came over here?

So basically what it was…me and my childhood friend we were looking on the internet and he found an advertisement saying this is a job agency from Brussels that's gonna help you move from here to wherever and the first option was to work on a cruise ship so like the carnival cruise ship or the 2nd option was multiple cities to choose from like Lisbon, Milan, Amsterdam, London, Paris, Vienna and so on and so basically we had to go there and sell cosmetic products to people on the streets but we were put at the entrance of the shop to lure people into the shop to give them freebees so we had like creams and stuff like that…they showed us an advertisement and video for how it would be where we were gonna work and it'd all look luxurious like wow…all the creams…everybody smiling…you know they fed us the shit on a golden plate…so obviously we were maybe it's not like it is showing but we were so desperate we didn't care so we were like fuck it let's try…they promised that they were going to give us 1,300 euro and from the interview they saw that I looked French but I could never communicate with French people cos I was not that good at the language but they were pushing me saying ohh just go to Paris go to Paris and I didn't want to go to Paris cos my friend was going to London…but eventually I took their offer but on my conditions that they had to pay my ticket from Romania to Paris and if I didn't like Paris my ticket from Paris to London and they said okay…I was very surprised because my friend for example had to pay for his plane tickets but then he left after a week because he realised it was a scam…the accommodation we were living was owned by them as well and they were taking money out from our wages to cover for rent…after Paris for 5 days I just quit and when I got to London and 1 month passed by I asked where's our salary cos you said you were gonna give us the basic salary plus the commission based stuff so I should've had something like 300 pounds from the commission plus the 1,000 pounds and they were like what 1,000 pounds? And I said well we don't have any basic salary what you talking about? You earn as much as you sell and even from the sales we only had a small percentage so basically when I was sent from Paris to London I was picked up at Kings Cross cos we came from the euro star and I was sent to Westfield Mall working for Soap and Co. having to stop people walking around the Mall to buy the products…we were there trying to live from one month to the other and basically when they told me ohh your salary is here…they had an A4 paper saying here's your salary here they wrote the calculation of how much I'd done…on the payslip they said I should register as self-employed but they never helped me but I was new to the system I had no idea what self-employed was but I asked where's my contract cos I signed a contract in Paris but not in London…no documents whatsoever…basically they said after we've taken your money for rent this is what you had so I got 252 pounds or something…I was like what the fuck is this? Cos I'd spent more than 1000 thousand pounds of what I had with me for when I was in Paris or when I was here and it was just hell…I didn't realise at the beginning…when they give me the payslip I started arguing with them saying I need money and I can't work with you for a month and this is what I get at the end…I had less than what I had in Romania almost…I was earning 400 pounds a month when I was assistant manager for a multi-national company in Italy that was working in my hometown…and as assistant

manager working in sales purchasing so I was doing 2 fucking jobs for 400 pounds and for a same job in purchasing and sales there were 2 guys in Italy earning 1,300 euros each and I was paid 400 pounds a month for 2 jobs…this is how multi-national companies make money they go to these cheap labour countries like Romania…China…Africa…they are going to all these countries where the workforce is cheap so basically they are doing even more work than what the Italians are doing…they got rid of a shit load of Italian workers who were working for them for years and years and they were opening their factories for nickels and dimes abroad and not in Italy because the workforce was way more cheaper and when you don't have many options…I had to go from one factory to the other

Can you tell me more about your jobs in Glasgow?

I was working for an agency called Blue Arrow now called Capita and they took me to Skypark and I was like wow this is so fancy I'm gonna work up there like in the movies but it turns out I was working in the bottom floor…it was like a gift very nicely wrapped…inside you had shit…when I was working for T mobile it was a very stressful job…I had pains in my stomach I was so stressed out because people were swearing at me over the phone…threats were made towards us it was very degrading even though you know the person is far away or I'd have English people phoning up and saying 'oh you're a fuckin Indian as well' and they wanted to talk to someone from the UK…at the job it was organised chaos…or rather unorganised chaos but I was happy to leave that job so basically my own health was on the line I was having very bad stomach problems…just sheer stress from this job so I done the interpreting job self-employed but that job wasn't paying the bills cos interpreters are paid well per hour but when we were sent from the agency to NHS appointments we weren't paid for the time travelling only the travel ticket so if I was sent to a hospital to the outskirts of Glasgow many times I was not taking the job cos if the appointment was less than an hour I was being paid 15 pounds but I needed an hour to get there and an hour to get back so basically 5 pounds an hour taking in the time but I was talking to someone from the NHS and they said that interpreters were getting 40 pounds an hour for their service but the agency took the majority of my money…that was another scam

Can you tell me about your current job?

Yeah so I work for organisations who help in the community basically families from primary schools…it's something that I really enjoy I'm not working for a multi-national company I don't work for the rich to get richer…it's very stressful but helping the vulnerable and showing people the stuff when I got into the UK that I wasn't

shown…like no one told me in London what the fuck I should do…it's something that fits like a glove you know…I'm doing it as a more holistic approach not only problem solving…helping people get from A to Z not only from A to B but there is only a handful of people like me who do this job…in London there isn't as much support as the community gets here especially the Roma…in order to make a more significant change to the family you need to work with them for a longer period…it gives me a sense of satisfaction knowing that we are at least trying and doing our best to make a difference you know in the community and show the middle finger to racism…the children who are 2nd generation don't care as much anymore cos they are used to having people with different backgrounds in their classes from primary and secondary but the ones that aren't born and raised here they are coming with the perceptions from back at home…it can be quite overwhelmingly

What in life is important to you?

To be healthy…to have food on the table and to be happy with your job…doing something meaningful I guess

What is of lesser importance?

Money…religion…we should all respect each other no matter what family or background we are coming from because you don't know the other person's background or history you cannot just judge them by the way they look

Even the negative experiences are still experiences and they prepare you for life going on…it's like a game…learning from our experiences in order to have a better future

What is your manager like now?

He's brilliant…since I've been working in Govanhill most of my bosses and managers from these grassroots organisations were very kind and helpful…even when I had to switch jobs they totally understood and they were happy for me for moving into a better position even though I was going to a different organisation whereas in Romania they'd probably never even talk to me again…and here it's different you can talk to your boss and say you need some time off or even if I don't tell him he'd be like you've been working too many hours take some time off

Simon

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

I'm a photographer…lecturer…I've been shooting a project in Govanhill for about 20 years and…hmmm…what else can I say…. Celtic fan(laughs)

Why Govanhill?

So it's a place I've got a lot of connections to…my dad's mum my granny lived here…so I spend a lot of time as a child here but it's more than that…the place itself…it's such an interesting place…it's a small place…it's less than a mile squared…it's said that 88 languages are spoken within it so when I discovered photography and started travelling…I kinda opened myself up to new culture and different types of people and all sorts and I loved it…and in some ways I kinda found that on the doorstep in Govanhill…there was a joke back in the day that Govanhill had two sides – Bengal and Donegal…the Irish side and the Asian side and it is…it's a place where people come and people arrive…maybe the first impression of Scotland is Govanhill and there's a lovely quote by Mark Steinmetz and he said 'you can't find treasure on a mowed lawn'…you've got pretty places but the treasures here even if it's a bit rough…so I like that about Govanhill

Would you say Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

If I'm really honest I don't think it shaped me as a child really…I came to the family house but that could've been anywhere…it was more the family unit and the diversity within the family but Govanhill was a place where that diversity existed…my grandma married an Irishman then she married a Pakistani man and I don't know how common that was in Glasgow generally at that time in the 60s…but that kind of multi-cultural element you find in Govanhill because Govanhill is a place where so many people arrive…you always get that mix of culture and with that comes fear at times…for instance just now Romanian people…people see them standing on street corners and think aww that's no good they're up to somethin ye know…but that's their culture…to go out and speak and spend time with each other so…I think immigration fuels fear…people are worried that new people who move in are gonna take their jobs and take this and take that…but I think that's the beautiful thing about Govanhill…it's finding the world on your doorstep…you don't have to travel to get that cultural experience or to learn something new about some other person or some other culture or world or life so for me I think that's quite unique to Glasgow…you know a lot of

places are closed off…go up to somewhere like Clarkston everyone's got their own driveway and their own house…you don't see many kids out in the street really…people drive everywhere…in Govanhill people walk…people say hello to each other in Govanhill…so I think even though there's problems I think there's a better community spirit in a place like this

Do you think the wider macro narrative from politics and the media influences perceptions?

Aww 100%...the agenda the immigration 100%...that's in the papers for a reason…people feed off that and it builds their fear…I mean it's not to say that people from other cultures don't do bad things…you know there's bad people in every culture…Scottish Irish Romanian Slovakian doesnae matter…Polish…naturally in Govanhill because so many people congregate and there's so many people you're gonna have more problems but the media definitely fuel it without a doubt…there was something in the paper last week…some sorta police chase in Govanhill…someone stole somethin from a shop and it was Govanhill this Govanhill that…see if that was Newton Mearns it wouldn't be labelled Newton Mearns crime scene…it's stigmatised Govanhill definitely…it always comes down to fear…people are scared of what they don't know because of that when a story goes out in the newspaper or someone says something a bit negative it's easy to tap into that cos it makes you feel comfortable…it makes you feel like you're not them…you're a different type of person with different values

Is Govanhill a place of resistance to those narratives or is it passively internalising them?

I think that there is a spirit of resistance in Govanhill…I think places like Govanhill…Govanhill is the home of the underdog because in Govanhill the odds are stacked against you…if you're born here you're usually born into poverty…I don't mean extreme poverty but I'm talking about hard to get maybe food…the other side of Govanhill…the whiter side of Govanhill which would be from Cathcart Road towards Holyrood and all that…I read that that's one of the highest rates of male suicide areas in Scotland in that area I don't know if it's true or not…but when you're born somewhere like Govanhill there are problems that you have to navigate that may not be the same in another place…I think there's a bit of both…I think there's a great resistance…I think you see that with…I know Kenmure Street wasn't quite Govanhill but that just shows the power of the people and people coming together and a lot of people in Govanhill when you see this media narrative about maybe Romanians or

asylum seekers…they see for themselves that it's not the case…their neighbours are good people…so when they see that it kinda almost throws you completely the opposite way you want to revolt against that you want to say something and I think that's what happened in Kenmure Street you know people stood up…I think it's a place where people are willing to stand up because they feel stigmatised or they feel the underdog…and the truth is we all love the underdog…we all love Rocky…ye know what I loved about Rocky? Rocky wisnae a great guy…in the scene where he's gettin paid by this guy to break somebody's finger…there's a scene down the docks…basically he's a paid bouncer and he's doing what he has to survive and he's told to get money off a guy…he's workin for a loan shark and he's told to break the guy's finger and he goes and roughs him up but doesnae break his finger and the guys like that a told you to break his finger you do what a say…but Rocky…we love Rocky but there's certain parts of that film…Rocky's very real the character because he's not all good…ye know at Hollywood you either all good or all bad…because you're born into a situation that's difficult you make decisions…and sometimes you're moral compass is based on your parents moral compass that's inherited from their grandparents and it's about survival so sometimes those things that are seen sometimes as not a good act might seem like a sensible thing to do for someone else so this media sort of black and white…good and bad…it's so simplistic…the criminals are often the ones in the suits and the ties…the politicians and they've got an agenda…because it keeps them safe and keeps them in their palaces…their money…their pals and money…it's just gangs…that's what it is and people want to survive but I think the people of Govanhill generally…because there are good people normal people average people…people who are good who do bad things…people who are bad that do good things…that's what I love about it…within a square mile there's the world and there is your experience and you travel without travelling if you're open to it…was you've got to shake off this fear and this is what my projects about a little bit where I photograph people and usually I have direct eye contact and I put them in a window and so the person who doesn't walk by the corner by the Roma men so they've heard something about it now looks at a Roma person in the face and has eye contact…usually looking down and it might trigger a question in their mind thinkin ye know what they're not that different than me ye know we're not so different…our lives might be alike and then hopefully in that small act…and it's very naïve to think…but in that small act it might build a bridge in a sense between the community because personally what I've realised through my life and the opportunities I've had especially travel…the more you embrace culture the richer you become in terms of a well-formed person…a balanced person and an open person…and I think if you are open to people it just enhances your life…so that's my message really…look people in the eyes and be open to them…it's not always gonna work cos sometimes you'll get a real bad yin

What do you think the resistance stems from?

At the very simplistic form it's just being neighbourly and trying to be a good neighbour…and that's a biblical thing as well isn't it…no matter what religion you are you'll have teachings of being neighbourly being kind be good to your neighbour you know…do unto others as you want done to yourself and those sort of religious ideas come into law so it's there from the very early days not just in Scotland but as people…we're sort of taught morals whether we're Muslim whether we're Christian whether we're Atheists…the morals are still there how to treat people and I think part of it stems from that…what does it mean to be a good person? And one of the answers is to be neighbourly…opening yourself…and it's that thing where if you see someone…even if you don't think they're a particularly good person…if you see someone getting bullied or abused…you think they don't deserve that…so I think it's like that in a wider sense where…ye know I don't know the stories of the guys getting deported (Kenmure Street)…I don't care…ye know…a care that people stood up for them…on the other hand there are people who have agendas on the very left of politics…so there were people there who just wanted to cause a ruckus with the police and they've got their own beliefs…perhaps they're anarchists or something like that…(bit about the German parliament 17.12)…for me when I look at people who have agendas…sometimes for me those at the far right extremes who tell people how to live and what they should do and what they shouldn't do and shouldn't think are almost the same as those on the very far left side who also tell you what to do and what terms to use…what to say and what to think…it's the same thing…I think in Kenmure Street…there's people who have their agendas on both sides but the core of it…the nucleus of it are just people who want to be neighbourly…who want to stand up…even though they don't know exactly the story of the individual…they just want to do the decent thing…they don't take someone from their home…you don't do that to a man or family…you don't take them and lift them in the morning fighting like that…it's not decent and I think it's just a case of people wanting to do a decent thing…as a photographer you're not part of it but it's exciting…I remember the police rushing us and I'm always at the front and I want the pictures and I'm right up at the policeman face and I'm lovin it…it's exhilarating I was excited…because you're amongst something that's energetic and possibly special…that'll go down in history…that was in the papers all over the world Kenmure Street

Are there any other events or memories of Govanhill?

My memories are mad…90s 00s crazy stuff…I remember waking up one morning…it was New Year's Day and all I heard was bangin…dosh…dosh…dosh…really loud…said to Beth what's going on there that sounds like cars…so I went to the window and sure enough there's this guy and he's walkin up the street and he's bootin every single car door just bootin them…I'm saying to Beth he's nearly at our car…so I ran downstairs and I'm up the top floor…a ran down to this guy and I'm like what ye

doin? And he starts gettin wide with me and a said you're no kickin ma car so he starts strippin right (laughs)…this guy strips no jokin New Year's Day naked completely naked on the street and then charged me…came to fight me…but he'd been out aw night so a grabbed him and a got him down and then because his trousers were lying over there…I think after that a neighbour came out or something like that and heard it as well…so I went over and got his wallet and got his ID out and started using his name and he kinda thought do you know me? And a managed to calm him down…it's crazy…I was wrestling on New Year's Day with this stark-naked guy out his head! Most of my stories are like that…like a guy walkin down the street with a seagull…walkin down Allison Street just gawn 'awryt mate' you're like 'wit ye doin with a seagull' (laughs) 'aye a just found this' and ye know a love aw that and that's what kinda draws me to Govanhill because these incidents like wrestlin with a stark naked…he was an ex-soldier…naked guy on New Year's Day…guy walkin down the road with a seagull…there was another time where a guy tied a dog to one of these metal ice-cream signs outside a shop and the dog got a fright and was runnin in the middle of Cathcart Road and Allison Street goin round and round and this thing was attached to its lead and it was smackin all the cars and all the traffic were stoppin…a don't see that happenin anywhere else in the city…it's almost like it's unique to Govanhill…Govanhill's got this energy that creates those sort of situations or attracts it so that's one of the things a love about the place…just all the wild things…it's that whole life about life…even when life is difficult and life can be really serious…there's always moment that lighten it and even in the most difficult life's there's profound moments of joy and this whole idea of those people are poor and those people are unhappy and those people are rich and those people are happy it's just false ye know…we've all got lives and within those lives there are tough times and some have tougher times because of where they've been born through no fault of their own but even within those tough life's you can find moments of real joy and I think that's a quality called resilience and I think being able to identify those moments…perhaps it comes from not having an awful lot than you appreciate things a little bit more so you recognise the good and the humour and the mad moments within that and I just think that maybe cos there's more people in Govanhill there's naturally more incidents happen and again for me it's being the underdog…it always comes down to that it's being the underdog and keepin going no matter what and having a dream…being able to dream…people who move into Govanhill tend to move out but there's something about Govanhill that always stays in your heart because it's your roots and you never forget your roots…your roots mean the most to you cos that was the times where you maybe had to endure most or appreciate most so you remember it more…for a lot of people their hearts in Govanhill…you can be the richest man in the world and not have a penny to your name…not a penny…because you've got these experiences or you've got family that love you or you've got a community around you or you've got good neighbours that bring something in for you to eat…ye know and that's a fulfilled life not just because of what you're getting out of it but what you are able to give as well because going back to the kinda biblical thing there's more happiness in giving than

receiving and I think that in communities that don't have an awful lot…for some reason they're very very good at giving everything they have…a don't have anythin but here ye go ye know what a mean?

What in life is important to you?

Family…faith…hope…photography…brothers…like Celtic as well…but I don't like the idea of borders…I think nationalism is a dangerous thing

What in life is of lesser importance?

Vanity…waste of time…it's thinking too much of yourself which also touches on ego…vanity and ego very destructive…having this false idea that's you're somethin when you're just part of something that's much bigger…I think it's very dangerous and it's embarrassin as well…I think it lacks humility…thinkin too much about yourself and not giving…I think it's important to give…when I became a teacher…whatever you want out of life…we've got a tendency in the west of Scotland to play things down or not to say what we want because we're embarrassed if we don't get it and what people will say or if we'll get a slaggin and all of that but I believe you have to identify the thing that you really want in life and just wear it on your sleeve because then it happens for you and people want to help you because they know what ye want and they'll be like 'aw I'll help ye'

What have the changes been in the area in terms of community?

I think it's come up…a coffee costs ye 3 or 4 pounds now…better coffee in Govanhill now

Does change come from outwith the community or within?

Bit a both…gentrification…for me that's just new people moving in and for a photographer it's just quite exciting and the place changing is quite exciting visually but I know that is affects people when they're priced down of their house and things like that…rents are crazy here…that can put barriers up for people and I think with more money coming in then people want nicer coffees…people will queue out of that

bread shops and spend 8 quid on a loaf of bread…I'll go to the reduced section with the sticker on it…so a think with more money comin in people are used to finer things in life…they want that then people see opportunity for business and then set up a business but then at the same time Govanhill always had artists and creative people in it…always…and sometimes gentrification brings people in who think they're bringing the coolness factor to a place and making it trendy and all that but they're not…and that's an arrogance as well and that's vanity and that's ego…there's bits of good and bits of bad in all these changes…there's challenges in all these changes…for me it is what it is I don't worry about it

What are the strengths of Govanhill as a place?

I think community absolutely…absolutely community…that outweighs everything you know people really come together…there are downsides of course yenno…with more people there's more litter…there's a real bad problem that way…it's people…it's not every person…it's some people…you'll get groups saying ohh let's tidy up our lane but it is the councils job…so they do that then that breeds contempt against the council and then the government and then it becomes divisive doesn't it? But with a lot of people you're gonna get more problems but with a lot of people you're gonna get more happy things as well

Can you tell me a bit about the local value systems in Govanhill? Do you work with them?

I'd say yes but no…I'm very conscious to not align myself with any group because it's so divisive…my projects my vision that's it…how I see things…people can have opinions but I don't want people to latch onto it and say look at these people there's an example of the negative…or I don't want people to latch onto it and say let's celebrate Govanhill it's all amazin…I just want it to be my vision but I'm very wary of…my projects my project nobody sponsors it and nobody has any interest in it apart from me so nobody has any influence on it…I know the people at the Baths…MILK and I've got a lot of time for them as people but then I also know people at the boxing club that have got…are quite extreme in terms of conspiracy and against the SNP and all that and I quite like them as well…see politics can get in the way…they're good people with opposing views…I try to be as kind as I can…as human as I can…and as approachable as I can…I think that comes from the opportunity to travel and go to different countries like Congo and Bangladesh…I've photographed in camps with displaced people…I've seen a lot of pretty bad things in life…a lot of difficult circumstances so I think that opened my eyes and because in Govanhill I've found

basically the world on my doorstep…I think it definitely made me more…it gave me more empathy…putting yourself in someone else's shoes and trying to understand what it's like for them and sometimes that's trying to understand…even though their opinion you don't really agree with…sometimes just trying to listen and understand where that comes from because it's probably from fear or lack of experience or the media drummin it up for the guys in suits agendas and sometimes when you start to understand that you realise that even those with these really extreme views…are at heart are just kinda people tryin to get on with life and tryin to do the best for their families…I spoke to a guy who was a sort of socialist guy that I photographed and he said at the end of the day everybody wants the same thing…a full fridge and to be educated…but not everybody wants to be educated but everybody wants a full fridge…I know there's something in that…it's maybe a bit simplistic but people are just tryin get by…tryin do the best they can navigating this life with all its problems

Can you tell me about your family background as far back as you can go?

Mum was married at 16 to my dad Willy…separated when I was really young…don't know what age I was…can't remember…so I was between my grandparents…we were moved around a lot so I'd say my real home was with my mum's mum that's where I was most of it…my grandpa was like a dad to me…my mum's dad…but then I had my Govanhill family who I'd come down to see and that was very multi-cultural and very exciting as well so that's my kind of upbringing…good upbringing…as a kid separation is fine…it is what it is…my dad grew up in really difficult times and this is what I mean about understanding people's situation because on the face of it you'd look at my dad and say he wasn't around for his kids…he's not a good guy…and you could justifiably say that but my dad's life growing up was so difficult…my dad was in Govanhill…his father was a bad yin…an Irishman…ma granny was out at work and he took my dad to a home in Edinburgh and never told ma granny where…so ma granny came home from work and my dad was gone…he was 6 years old or somethin…maybe less…so he spent 2 or 3 years in a children's home in Edinburgh when ma granny didn't know where he was and the things that went on there were traumatic so my dad's a little bit distant…a little bit cold but I totally understand because of what he's been through…how that shaped him as a person so a feel no anger with my dad whatsoever…I just think life back then was so different…so difficult compared to what we have now that I can't even…I could never hold a grunge cos I've not walked in his shoes…and that's what empathy is…tryin to put yourself and tryin to understand why people are the way they are…when you're 17/18/19 you're looking for a sense of belonging…ye want to know who you are and that's where football comes into it and that's where Celtic come into it and we used to drink in a bar called Life O'Reilly which is now Bell Jar…and me and my brother…we'd never met my grandpa and we thought to ourselves…we felt Irish and we felt with the Murphy name

and with Govanhill being very Irish…we felt is this where we belong? So we thought it'd be good to meet our grandad…we could maybe go over to Ireland…me and my brother were talkin this way…maybe he'll see him in a pub…just stupid…not realising how big Ireland is…so we investigated it and turns out he stayed round the corner from us in Govanhill…we'd probably walked by him…and see when we found that out…we didnae care…the draw of going to Ireland and finding this kind of sense of who we were actually mattered more than the man that we came from which is a strange thing…I don't even know if he's alive or dead…but I spoke to my dad about him and asked about him and when I started to hear about the stories…my dad was a bit reluctant to speak about him…when it emerged how he treated my grandma and what he did to my dad and all that…he was a bad yin and I thought yenno what…naw…I'm takin my stance…even though I don't know him…this is where my loyalty should be…but actually we were never that bothered cos he was never in our life…I think we were holding onto that cos that was our connection to Ireland or who we might be…me and my brother…when we found out that he was round the corner it didn't matter anymore so that sense of belonging…or the romantic notion of how what we might be was stronger than the reality

I remember you saying how women have shaped your life, could you tell us more?

Just strong women…my mum with what she went through…ma granny with a similar story…with men who were no good…including my dad at the time…so for me they were tough…they were vulnerable as well…there were a lot of tears but they were strong as well cos they were resilient…I've got a real respect for women and I try to treat women unlike any of my predecessors in my family line…I try to be a bit better

What is it about the arts that taps into people's emotions than mere words cannot do?

So the visual language is the first language that we learn as children…and therefore it's the most important language because it's always with us but through time it gets nullified a little bit…less importance is placed on it…the arts are seen as something like…ahh that's nice you're good at that…but actually it's the very essence of how we are and if you really understand that…there's two big occasions…the funeral and when you're in love…so at a funeral that's a time where you really sit in peace and quiet and you listen to a poem that someone's reading and all of a sudden you're in tears because those words trigger something within you that relates to that person that's no longer with you and it moves you…and it's the same for song…and I think

more so with song…I think song has such a power to transport you to places…with music you can smell things…you can feel the heat…on holiday with your pals…you can taste the beer you were drinkin…and if it's that emotive if you hear a song at a funeral and it connects with that person…and the same with a photograph…if photography's so important to those occasions and when you're in love and you want to see the picture of who you're in love with…so love and death…we're all born and we're all gonna die…they are the two certainties and music poetry photography…all of that is all connected cos it runs through us…we're creative people…we're all creative people but we've got to find that creativity again…that stream…we've got to find that flow and it's suppressed by the world that we live in because there's not importance placed upon it…people think it's frivolous but actually it's the very thing that enriches your life and you can tap into that…live your life like you're in love everyday…it's not easy cos we get bombarded wae problems…but also this day might be your last…take opportunities say yes to things…tap into that flow cos more of that happens to ye…but we've got to be careful…I was walking down Queens Drive and I saw this massive TV aerial…I'm lookin at it and thinkin see that aerial…that's pickin up all the pictures and all the sounds and the music that are just flowing about…(1.02.40 – vinyl album)

I don't know if the place matters that much…Govanhill is the place where these people are with all these things going on their life's and it's an interesting place…whatever shaped this place…I think it's about this point of arrival thing…being relatively cheap to live and it's this melting pot of culture which could've been somewhere else but I think linguistically it's close to the water…people are coming in in boats…it's near the town…it's urban

Stewart

Can you tell me a wee bit about yourself?

I'm 29 I'm Glaswegian I'm Scottish I think I've got a strong Scottish identity it's a big part of who I am grew up in the southside…went to Annette Street Primary School…when I was there it was a very multi-cultural school…even though it was very multi-cultural it was a big part Scotland being a very accepting place that allowed it to be very multi-cultural and I always liked that idea you know…now in 2022 there are no Scottish speaking children at that school…English is not the first language at that school anymore so when I was there it was the last wave of Scottish boys that went to that school it taught religion but it wasn't like this is the one you need to believe it was more like here is Christianity…here's Islam etc and they took us to the temples the mosques and that so it was very much have a look at this cos it was so multi-cultural…my gran used to pick me up from school and she lived in Govanhill as well

so you were going into all the different shops and seeing all different people…the head scarfs and things like that and it was just a kind of education to grow up in this area and go to that school and I was part of all the classes like ECO club and Diversity…any opportunity to like go a place and sing a song and do a performance I was part of and it was always about diversity and all that sorta stuff you know

Do you think Govanhill has shaped you as a person?

I went to the Govanhill Swimming Baths when that was still open…that's where I learned to swim…early memories of being there and learning how to swim and then the memories of the coverage of the protests and being there as well…I don't have many memories of being there but it was a big sense of community spirit so I think going as far back then to very recently the Kenmure Street protests it seems like Govanhill and its surrounding areas has this sense of doing stuff for each other and being round each other you know…my dad always talks about historically Govanhill you initially had your first wave of Irish refugees…well basically now in the Govanhill area you've got people from Pakistan you've got people from Poland you've got people from Slovakia you've got people from Glasgow and I'd say within recent times…when I was growing up Govanhill was a slightly rough area and had a bad reputation but in more recent times it feels like a really trendy upcoming place and there's vegan café's and a taco shop over there…a record shop and a coffee bean shop…it just feels like things are coming together and maybe something that would've put people off about the area initially is now something that brings people to it…why this area specifically? It just had that history I suppose…since I've known it's always been a really diverse area

Why did you decide to move back to Govanhill?

It just felt like home and it always felt like home…I used to do the reverse school round like when school was finished I used to walk everyone back home cos I wanted to be round here so much and I'm not sure whether it's just cos I grew up here or whether it's something extra that pulls me here you know…but yeah it was always my aim…I'm in Queen Mary avenue which is just round the corner…in the heart of Govanhill basically you know

What has encouraged you to stay in the area?

Well today that we're doing this interview my mates putting on a concert in the city centre and the idea of the evening is that it's people that all met in Queens Park over the summer last year and it feels like this area is such a giver man…it's a giving tree and I met so many people in that park over the summer and it just felt like a place where people come together…it feels like you get a little taste of all the flavours from around the world…just that feeling of home…home is what I associate with it and I feel like that word has got more to do with the fact that I grew up here cos there's something more special about it

What are the strengths of Govanhill as a place?

It just feels like there's always something new…like the last couple of years there's a different shop opening up all the time…the Govanhill Baths which did eventually close cos of the protests have been refurbished over and it's basically a community centre and I volunteered there before the refurb and did theatre shows in there…and the Sonika Sound…the Southside Festivals starting soon…there's always something cool and interesting and trendy and arty…I applied for a role at Govanhill Baths a couple of months ago and it was like Community Development Officer and the idea was to get people who maybe don't speak English or people who are here but don't feel part of the community to come there and be part of classes…I think its aim is to make people around here feel part of the community and to do stuff and to contribute

What have been the main changes in work and community in the area?

It seems like a sort of friendlier place…for when I was growing up it felt rougher…I used to not want to walk down the streets at night…there was the Govanhill Young Team who slashed with people but I don't see that anymore and I feel like in the last couple of years you would potentially have clashes with all the different cultures here but as things have went on it's actually become one of the highlights of the area and those cultures have actually come together a little bit more because of things like maybe the Govanhill Community Trust and programmes…

So people are actively shaping the community?

I think so yeah

Are there any downsides?

I suppose when you've got all these different cultures there can be miscommunication and what have you and the litter in the area…the litter sucks especially right in the heart of it…I think that's maybe more of a council thing…I think there's disputes with the council but yeah the litter

Are there any days or events in the area that you remember vividly?

Slightly further afield I'd say the Kenmure Street protests which I was at which is in Pollokshields but there like cousins man and that was awesome man…that was two refugees that were going to get deported on Eid and basically the community wouldn't let the van leave and my friend…her family live on Kenmure Street corner basically so I was able to go up and be on the top of the shop and film from up there as well so we got this proper birds eye view of it and that was like a real highlight of this kinda community coming together to stop something or to do something that it believed in…I felt pretty proud…I remember saying to Eileen who is Lizzie's mum…she's got this picture of her dad giving a speech at the Govanhill docks and I said to her this feels to me as close as we're gonna get to something like that in my time where it felt like not one man pulling this all together or people at the shipyard but it was the community coming together to voice something to do something they felt was right and it really had that energy of…I don't know…it felt revolutionary whether it was or not…the feeling that coming together could stop something that is mad like deportation…there's a woman trying to raise funds for a Kenmure Street Festival in celebration of it so it's very good something like that happening and us being able to celebrate it you know

Can you tell me a wee bit about Music Broth?

Yeah so Music Broth is a community music library and you pay 6 pounds a month and you've got unlimited access to any and all instruments they have…you can keep them for as long as you want…they also do workshops in terms of fixing instruments as well…they do classes teaching you how to play the instruments as well as fixing them but also if you're a casual musician or someone who just wants to play an instrument you can have it…and even if you don't have that 6 pounds a month they'll sort something out for you as far as I'm aware and there's grants and what have you and even during covid they were delivering instruments to people's houses and stuff as well so they are a big believer in music being something that can bring people together

and help people express themselves and help with mental health issues and all that sorta stuff…accessible music

Can you tell me about your experiences with Music Broth?

Yeah I've been to a songwriting workshop and I filmed that workshop as well…I primarily do sort of community documentation…the people that ran the workshop Zac and Grace they had this technique of building a song with a xylophone…I can't remember exactly what it was but it was pretty eye opening

What in life is important to you?

Communication and feeling a part of something…I'm a contemplator I love thinking I love to kinda understand life as best as I can…I'm like part Buddhist…like Buddhism is more of a philosophy for me than a practicing religion but there's this concept that everything just is and we are all part of this 'is' and we are all just different pieces of the jigsaw puzzle and the more you can meet people and talk to people and get other people's points of views the more you can just get a full experience of what this is…I just feel that for any person you can just speak to there's something you can learn cos they'll have had experiences and points of view you'll have never considered…you don't have to agree or disagree just to be a sponge and just absorb it…a director once told me just be a sponge…just absorb…and you can take what's for you and what's not for you but just to continually every single day I wanna…I always make this my business…I never wanna spend a full day in the house…I have to go and meet somebody cos I just want to absorb something from the day…go out and see a face and just to discover more about life you know…the more you can do that the more…if you want to help the world…you have to start by healing yourself and you have to start by being more open and understanding and in my belief it's the only real change you can make and allowing the healing you do and the accepting that you do sorta shine and that's an inspiration in itself and when I meet somebody that seems to have a grasp of life I feel that energy…they don't have to actively do anything to make me wanna change I just feel that you know…so sharing people's energies and discovering what energies right for you and what energies not right for you moving towards what feels right I suppose yeah…I'm starting a job in Edinburgh soon and you were asking me whether I was going to move through there and I certainly don't intend to because it feels like even just within this past year in this area the bulk of my friend group it's bizarre to me I've pretty much met them in the last 6 months to a year in this area mostly in Queens Park…people playing instruments at the Band Stand or people just sat on the grass chatting with a guitar you know…it just feels like that coming together

that maybe this area or the intention of this area has of bringing people together to it has allowed that to manifest yeah

What would you say is of lesser importance?

Being right all the time…there are some people who communicate through having to be right about a certain thing and picking out people who are not right about certain things…it's like the experience of life is constant rehearsal to a play that's always simultaneously going on and you're just constantly learning so I'm not interested in on whether or not the song we created was great for example…that wasn't the point of the class…every day is a workshop in that sense and it's more a case of finding out what works for you…not having an answer to everything it's the contemplating and the considering that's important to me not necessarily the end result you know

Are there any other community groups you've been involved in in the area?

So I volunteered for the Govanhill Baths a couple of times…one was for Sonika Sound Festival…I volunteered for the Govanhill Theatre Group as well…I'm not queer but I teach…there's a queer community football group and they play on the Tuesday nights and I play but I feel like I'm coaching them as well so I feel like I sort of volunteer coach that group as well…so my brother is 34 and he's gay and when he was in school that was a problem…now that's something that's celebrated and it just shows you the development of all the times and of the area and just down from us there's a queer Yiddish Café…I don't know too much about it other than the fact that it does exist and when it was first sort of opening up it had its windows tanned and they put up a sign saying whatever your beliefs are you will not intimidate us and on the window it's like Jewish people for Free Palestine…to be honest with you a queer Jewish in the middle of a Glaswegian…in the middle of Victoria Road…a couple of years ago…10 years ago? Shit man I don't think that'd exist but it just shows you that people are now more confident to come forward…the Locavore which is a sort of free-range vegetable natural…that used to be a pub! That in itself shows the transformation of how times and the area has developed and got better that what used to be a boozer is now a sort of free range vegetables and food shop…it's mix with such a wide range of sexuality of religion and all this sorta stuff as well you know

Can you tell me a bit about your family background as far back as you can know?

It's this area as far as I know…my grandmother has grown up in Govanhill her entire life

Can you tell me about your school days?

I probably hated school at the time but looking back now it was a great time man it was fun it was cool…and again I was probably one of three white Scottish boys at that school man so in a sense I always say this…I feel like I was somebody who had to be told about racism…I remember having a conversation with somebody at one of the theatres once…they were taking a play into schools called Divided City and I remember saying to the guy I was like I think you wanna be careful with that cos you know…to go into schools and tell them that the city is divided is maybe not the best idea you know what I mean? You could call it United City and mention how it didn't used to be that way but now it is united more so…likewise because I was at a school that was so multi-cultural it was news to me that people didn't get on with people with different skin colours and religions and that I was like alright cool if that's the case I suppose you know what I mean? I am really thankful that I was at a school like that and brought up that way…going into the Sikh temple the Church and the mosque and stuff like that…just to see it…just to see it and to hear some stuff about it…the more I think about it that school definitely shaped me quite a lot I'm quite proud of it…it was really encouraging of just trying different things and exploring as much as you can…I like to be a learner I like to be an unabsorbed sponge and go in a ground zero and take it as much as I can

What do you immediately think of when you look out of here just now?

It's got everything you want…you've got a pub you've got a record shop you've got coffee and you've got the park…I don't know if it's just Scotland or Glasgow but you're never far from green trees and stuff like that…Queens Park is like my centre point if you know what I mean…my dog used to swim in the pond there I feed the pigeons there and like I said I've met so many people there…with Queens Park I can just sit there and unwind and I've had my worst depressive days in Queens Park and I've had my happiest days in Queens Park and no matter where I am in my life it's always there you know…I can pretty much see Queens Park from my back window…I love it cos it's just so close to this hub

Do you have a relationship with your neighbours?

Yeah I do actually they've got a little girl and a little cat and I've looked after them a couple of times…it's nice it's cosy it's quite little sense of community and the guy at the bottom of the stairs Raymond he's a laugh man he's got like a massive family but yeah I chatted to him a lot through covid just sitting in the garden when you couldn't go out or anything like that know what I mean…crackin banter man

I've never really longed for money our activities were always fairly low budget I'm not a very material person…my mum and dad never really had like lots of money so it was trying to find like the simple pleasures and the simple joys and that doesn't make me unhappy…I'm glad not to have high taste really…the thing I spend the most amount of money on is probably coffees from the coffee shop and what have you…conversations with people mostly is what I like…yeah it's more people and conversations and getting a feeling of a place and a time than it is things you have you know…that's what I love as well the smell…it would've been slightly better if it had rained this morning and the smell would come up from the grass…this sort of jewy smell…a crest of the senses…what is on offer in the shops isn't of huge interest to me it's just walking down the street the great thing about Victoria Road is it's just one big straight walk to town and there's everything you need on that walk…when I go into town I pretty much just walk there and back…it takes about 45 minutes and it's a great wind up and wind down

Vivienne

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

I've lived in this area for 7 years and I have lived in the southside of Glasgow since 1995…I work fully time for Public Health Scotland and I am a board member for Govanhill Baths Community Trust and because I know a lot about public health from working with Public Health Scotland and previously for NHS Health Scotland what I try to do is take the knowledge from my work and apply that to things that are actually happening locally in the community in Govanhill…I am one of the people who runs the record shop at Some Great Reward which normally happens monthly in the shop

Can you tell me about your family as far back as you can go?

One of my great grandmothers is what people would call Liverpool Irish…she was born in Liverpool but my great great grandparents were from County Monaghan and that branch of the people were all from County Monaghan and there's also escapee from the French Revolution on that side of my family

Do you have any memorable stories of your family?

My dad is 85 and he lived through the war…when my grandfather joined up they thought he was going to be sent away immediately but instead of being sent away immediately he got sent to Derbyshire…my grandfather got sent to Sri Lanka and also to Burma and was a Japanese prisoner of war on the Burma rail line and when he came back from the war it was like he was a completely different person…he was a different man from the man by grandmother had married so that led to them splitting up because it was really difficult for them to carry on cos he was massively traumatised of his experience of being in the war…my dad didn't really talk much about it he felt really angry about being abandoned by his own dad and with his dad basically just leaving him and having nothing to do with him disappearing out of his life

Why did you decide to move to the southside of Glasgow?

At the time where I moved to the southside of Glasgow I was 7 months pregnant with my older daughter and my husband at the time got a job working in the centre of Glasgow so I'd been previously working in a job where I had a temporary contract so I didn't have a job to go back to…so rather than staying living in Edinburgh and him commuting we decided to move to Glasgow and I'd get a job wherever I was ready to go back to work…I moved to Edinburgh in 1992 and then I moved to Glasgow in 1995…I like the DIY arts thing and how if you're interested in the arts you have just join in with it and if you've got ideas people welcome you…if you've got ideas that are fun and interesting people welcome you into their group and welcome you with open arms…I think it's a bit different in Edinburgh…the students can be a bit cliquey and there's a lot of old money types in Edinburgh that like to control all of the money in the arts scene…it's harder to break into and those who aren't involved in that old money type set of people…they're very protective of their own groups and community whereas Glasgow is not like that at all…it's a lot more inclusive

What are the main strengths of Govanhill as a community?

Diversity…diversity I think is a huge strength of Govanhill and it works on many many different levels…there's a diversity of how people would approach a problem…how they'd come to a solution about resolving an issue because people come from all different cultures and different parts of the world…people have different approaches to tackling issues…but there's also different attitudes to food health and education…I think the diversity brings real strength…when you look at places that have immigrant communities very often the places with immigrant communities do very very well…the Glasgow Girls thing with Drumchapel that's a really interesting example of that…if you look at Drumchapel High you can see the influence of those girls who went into that school brought the scores for the exams up in that school not just for themselves but for the Scottish people who'd been there before…everyone done better not just the immigrant pupils…I think when you had people coming from all over the world…particularly when you're looking at people who are refugees and asylum seekers…you get the whole spread of society that comes…you get kids who believe they can be doctors who believe they can be police inspectors…it raises the aspirations…with Govanhill Baths we try to listen to what people have to say and what people's needs are…the Youth Club for Govanhill was set up as a response to a need being identified from speaking to people in the community…young people said they were bored and a lot of parents said that they wanted a safe place for their kids to be able to go that was gonna be a space where people weren't going to be drinking in particular…they wanted a space where the children could be entertained…inspired…encouraged…looked after…protected…develop social skills that sort of thing…that's exactly what a youth club does

Can you tell me more about Govanhill Baths?

Yeah so one of the communities that we work with is the LGBT community so we do quite a lot of stuff with Category Is Books…through the pandemic there were gardening clubs running and there were gardening clubs for people living in tenement flats and that might seem ridiculous and when I first heard this I was wondering how on earth this was going to work but a lot of people had bought house plants during the pandemic and a lot of people who'd bought the house plants didn't know how to look after them…and in a time of the pandemic where you're not allowed to go out and mix with other people…there were online gardening clubs running for LGBT people…that's what they wanted so that's what we put on! And the work was obviously not just learning about gardening but a lot of these things that Govanhill Baths does and what the record club is as well are anti-loneliness devices…they're all about social inclusion…it's about proper social glue…the record shop is a really good example of this because you get a range of different people and different backgrounds…the point of having a record club or film club or book club…you're gonna discuss something you're gonna bring your own experiences to it…you're gonna say from my perspective

this is what it made me think about this is how it made me feel…everyone around the table has different jumping off points and different experiences that they bring to that conversation…to get something out of that group and that community you have to really listen to what the other people around you are saying otherwise you've not gained anything from turning up on the night…normally what we do is we meet once a month at Some Great Reward and we pick a theme for the record so the first one that we done was Glasgow…we've done lots of different themes…we had one theme that was Who Wore It Better? And you were to bring on an original track and a cover version…normally everyone brings 1 song for the theme and we each play our song then the person who brought the song will explain why they brought that song but then there'll be a discussion about the song and what other people thought about the song and how it made them feel…it's split pretty much half and half between men and woman which is quite good…I'd say there's more older people than younger people…we've got a couple of younger people who come along but most people I'd say are in their 50s and 60s

If you were to pick a song that reminds you of Govanhill what would it be?

I'd say Come Together by The Beatles because it is a song that it very much a real rock n roll song by a core British rock n roll group but it's a song that has influences from all over the world…in that song you can hear the Ravi Shankar influence and it sounds like experimental music which I think Govanhill…one of the things I really love about this area is when you're doing stuff artistically you can be experimental about what you do…I've been involved in running the Govanhill Festival in the summer…not last summer but the summer before I was one of the ones who ran the Book Festival as part of Govanhill Festival but these are the sorta things where you can put on events you wouldn't normally expect to see on at a local arts festival and you know sometimes it can be massively popular…other times it can be 3 people in the audience but the local community don't really mind too much because what they care about is that you're doing something for them and that you're trying and that you're pushing the boundaries because you're doing something a bit different and the things that tend to be really popular are the ones that are different

Can you tell me more about the Govanhill Festival?

Again that is something where we listened to what people want and what people are looking for but also means those who are involved in running it can speak to other people who are interested in the arts…the parade is really important the parade is the highlight of the festival and we try to encourage as many local groups as possible to

participate in the parade and the parade should reflect Govanhill so when you look at the parade you should be able to look at it and say that's representative of the people who actually live in Govanhill so for that reason we like to have the people from different ethnic communities but also LGBT people participating…people of different ages participating and feel like the parade belongs to them…the parade doesn't belong to me it belongs to everybody and if you've been round on the parade or if you've followed the parade around and you've found yourself in Queens Park Arena afterwards…you should be standing there feeling like every single person has equal value and equal worth within the community and that is what's been celebrated…a couple of years ago I carried the banner at the front of it…I've been round the parade the last 5 summers and I love it…last summer I thought was really good…it was wonderful last summer cos we'd been through the pandemic and a lot of people had been stuck in but last summer there were people leaning out of their windows and waving at us and clapping as we went along the parade and I was able to walk through and talk to different people who were taking part and it was really happy and friendly inclusive atmosphere and genuinely celebrating diversity of the community and the colour of the community

Have you seen any changes in the community?

I would say there's more kind of nice things…a good example of this is Ginesi's Artisan Gelato…Ginesi Gelato has moved out of the Queens Park Café and moved into their own premise so they are running their own business and they're operating it themselves because they are not subjected to the landlord they were subjected to before they moved…they're people of Italian descent so they are as much immigrants as anybody else in the community…they're whatever generation of immigrants like what so many people in the area are…they run that business in an inclusive way they could charge a lot more money for their products if they wanted to…they have a very high quality product…you can see that in the summer you can see a big long line of people waiting to get in there and that queue is representative of Govanhill it's multi-ethic and multi-generational isn't it? If you go to the equivalent place in Giffnock or if you went up to the Derby Café in Netherlee and you took a photo of the queue it'd be less diverse…if you're a mum living in a Govanhill Housing Association flat in the heart of Govanhill and you've got 2 or 3 children you could take them to the park and say to the kids let's get an ice cream and it's not going to take up all your spare money you can afford to do it…know what I mean? Whereas some places you just wouldn't be able to pay you and your kids ice cream because it'd cost you 30 quid if you did that…Some Great Reward is a relatively new business and these places are changing Govanhill they're bringing something different to Govanhill…it doesn't cost any money to be a member of the record club…they give us a drink and a cake and we put in a couple of quid towards that because we feel bad them giving us that and letting us use

the room for nothing but you could go along and not have to pay any money so it is inclusive in that way you don't have to pay…and Outwith Books although the books themselves are full market price books…they have events on…I got an email today for one saying the price was between £4.60 and £6 now…for a night out it's not expensive is it? I've also been some great nights at Queens Park where there's been a film on and you can come and just bring your blanket (laugh)

What are the downsides of Govanhill?

It's reputation but that's actually one of the things that I think has changed over the past few years…when I first moved to Govanhill people were saying ohh you need to be really careful and shouldn't walk about yourself at night it's too dangerous for women to walk on their own…I think it's a safer place now than what it used to be but I don't know whether that's because it is a safer place or if things have changed in Govanhill or if things have changed in society more generally because I think there has been a change in how people react to violence against women in recent years I think it's more of a shameful thing for a young man to attack a woman now than it would've been 7 or 8 years ago…Govanhill has had really poor coverage in the media and there's been a stereotype hasn't there of it being a place where there's people trafficking going on women are assaulted there are sex gangs operating there's rubbish dumped in the streets people live in flats that don't have bathrooms but I think it gets challenged more like Cat Stewart who writes for the Glasgow Times she gets lots of flak when she writes positive stories about Govanhill and there are certain people who go online and they'll tweet or comment under her articles and say here you go again Cat presenting us with this ideal version of Govanhill when we know it's not like that at all…but she could be writing about Loop and Scoop setting up an ice cream parlour in Govanhill and it doesn't matter what she's writing about they'll still attack her no matter what she says

What has your experience been like in Govanhill?

Really positive…I don't have any negative stories about my own experiences of Govanhill I've just had positive experience from people in Govanhill

The guy in Sunshine's Electrical came and fixed my electrical gear for me…Rhiannan connected to Outwith she edits the Govanhill magazine and I've had chats with her and I work for the Strathbungo news and we've discussed coordinating stories and sometimes people provide us stories that are really about Govanhill and I pass them

onto her or she's been doing something and feels it's really a Strathbungo and she'll pass it onto me and she's been really fantastic in that way

Can you tell me about the events Govanhill Baths put on?

My son made to a workshop that Darren McGarvey did which was into doing hip pop stuff and beforehand my son said that he wanted me to go with him so I went and when we got there Darren McGarvey said I want you to feel completely free and constricted and you shouldn't feel like any authoritarian like figures are here to judge you about what you're doing and I realised that my son wasn't gonna feel like that if I was sitting there cos I was their authoritarian person in his life so I said to him I think I should leave and I said to Darren McGarvey I'm gonna go I'm gonna leave my son with him so can you look after him and I came back after and my son had such a positive experience of being with Darren McGarvey…my sons autistic but he had a really positive experience of doing that hip pop workshop and actually formed his hip pop song at the end…it was really great that he was able to do that and it really built my sons confidence and really helped him moving on to do other things in his future…it was a real building block type of thing for him

The youth club definitely benefits people cos the kids who go to the youth club…some of those kids have been in a lot of trouble and when they walk into places like school and they see the adults who are in charge and the adults are immediately like right you I don't want to hear a word out your mouth for the next hour you sit and do exactly what I say…that's no way somebody should be growing up as an adolescent…one of the really good things about the youth club is through the pandemic they've been massively helping people…so for those young people so for the young people doing that that might've been the first experience in their life where they've been knocking about adults who they don't know very well who are saying to them thank you very much you have massively helped me…and you know yourself if you do something nice for somebody whether it's a little effort or a big effort…when the other person says that's made a huge difference to me thank you for doing that…you feel good about yourself and that's what's happened to them

Can you tell me about your work with Govanhill Baths?

Well I'm a board member so I'm one of the people that…I have a role that's really about governance about looking at the policies that Govanhill Baths has and redrafting policies giving strategic direction but I'm also someone if staff need someone to talk

about or need extra help so I'm quite involved in the comms and marketing part of Govanhill Baths as well

Would you say there's a difference between say Glasgow Life and Govanhill Baths?

Well Govanhill Baths I'd say is very inclusive…for us it has to be user-led…the council would say they make their services user-led but I don't think they do in the same way that we do because if they did I think the services would look quite different and for us services have to be user-led cos if they weren't they'd leave

Have you ever had problems with management?

Well 5 and a half years ago I had a really nasty virus…it was a glandular fever type virus and I was really really ill with it…I'd never been ill like that in my life before and it really totally floored me and my manager was really lacking in understanding about my situation cos it affected me with fatigue and she insisted that I get up every morning and phone her at 8 every morning…I was suffering from fatigue every morning! That was with NHS Health Scotland and when I felt like I wanted to go back to work I referred myself to Occupational Health referrals and I'd been doing the Occupational Health thing for a couple of weeks and I had a one to one with my manager and she said you're coming off this next week we'll get you on the media line and you can be working full days from Monday and I said I couldn't do it but then she was just really nasty and sharp with me and avoided me

Have you ever been part of a trade union?

Yeah I am part of a trade union I'm in Unison…I got them involved in that situation because I wanted to keep my job and I also went back to the Occupational Health people as well and I did get support with people going back to my manager saying this is someone that really wants to come back to work and you're making it incredibly difficult for her to do it…my grandparents actually took part in the Kinder Mass Trespass…it's in the Derbyshire Dales…in the times before people had the right to go wandering in the countryside on walks…in the 1920s and the early 1930s ordinary people wanted to have rights in society not to be ruled Downtown Abbey style and didn't feel like the country should be run like Downtown Abbey across the country…so one of these was that people should be allowed to walk about the countryside so the

Kinder Mass Trespass was organised for loads of folk were to go along and go for an organised walk in the countryside…it was like a protest march but in the countryside….a demonstration that a large number of people in society would like to walk about in the countryside…they were very working-class…

They are still people who think woman should be quiet and sit in the corner or ideally being in the other room making the sandwiches…I had a really nasty experience when I was pregnant one time…one of my friends had become an advocate and I was invited along to the celebration and there was 8 people there and I was the only woman and I was left sitting at a table at one point with a guy who was a lawyer and I tried to engage him in conversation with just general nice questions like how did you meet such and such etc and he just completely completely blanked me and I didn't understand why cos I didn't do anything to upset him and then later on I asked one of my friends who was also good friends with the guys whose celebration it was and he said he'd spoken to him about it and he said that he didn't see the point in wasting his breath or his energy on me cos I was clearly pregnant…someone else had got there first to why bother…it would've been 1998

What in life is important to you?

My family are really important to me and that's changed on a practical level because the thing about being a woman is that you grow up and certainly when I was growing up as a young girl my mother didn't really approve of me studying…my mum wanted me to leave school without doing my A levels and she used to regularly have a go at me about sitting around reading she didn't approve…so when you were a young girl growing up there were certain expectations of you…other members of my family also expected me to not go to university…to stay at home get a basic job and help my mum look after the house until I got married and had children…

Why is music important?

I definitely think music can bring people together…it's a real communal experience…there aren't many things in life that can bring people together in that way where you feel part of a bigger body of people…football does it as well…it's a communion without it being religious

Is there anything you'd like to add that's not been covered?

I must say I feel very privileged to live in Govanhill and as somebody who is quite a dolly mixture person…you can see that I've got quite a mixture of ethnicities in my background and different nationalities in my background…in Govanhill I feel quite at home and I don't feel like I'm different from…I mean obviously I am different from other people but there are lots of people in Govanhill who are different so I kind of fit in here as an oddball person and things like my grandparents speaking different languages in the same house and my mum not speaking English properly…I'm not unique in that respect in Govanhill…other people have that kinda thing happen in their background and also the displacement…war torn people…displacement because of war and people who have had major issues within their family because of trauma because of war…these are things that have happened to other people in Govanhill as well…on my Gibraltarian side there's a family plot in the cemetery of my ancestors being stone masons but I've never been to it…growing up in a community or family group of people where they're from Gibraltar…I've only been to Gibraltar once and it's quite an odd thing and you have people come visit you from Gibraltar and will speak to you in a mixture of Spanish and English and it makes you feel like a bit of an oddball because no one else speaks that way growing up in that way and you feel displaced…even if I stayed in more or less the same place growing up I think I still would've felt displaced because of my mum and my grandparents and my aunts and uncles having been uprooted and because of my dad being from Manchester and moving down south as well like he wasn't living where he grew up either…it makes me feel at home around here cos when I start talking to people about my background and those sorts of things happening to me it's not like I'm the only person that that's happened to…there's lots of people around Govanhill who are like that

Appendix B – Song Lyrics and Recording

Recording Link –

https://soundcloud.com/seanmcgarvey/sets/searching-for-a-higher-ground/s-M3Cekf1ilbJ?si=74f87434bb1d4073a12ea43785f95a46&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

Higher Ground

Are we searching for a greater humanity?
Or waiting for the heavens to open their doors
To free our souls
From this age of greed
Celebrity
If we wait for our day to come
It'll never come

If we're looking for a Higher Ground
We must stand up and fight for
Our people and this side of town

Are we searching for some kind of morality?
In midst of all fractured society
Rising equality
Rising insecurity
Rising corporate need
Rise must our communities

If we're looking for a Higher Ground
We stand up and fight for
Our people and this side of town

We're fighting for
Fighting for
Fighting for a Higher Ground

Hard Fights

People here know what Govanhill is
We don't need presented with what the newspapers say
We know our neighbours we know our friends
You should come and see for yourself

It's not the place it's made out to be
The horror stories you hear in taxis
That it's rough and scary
It's a free for all in the streets

We've got our festival every year
We come together, make a song and dance
Romani flamingo, DJs and bands
People out windows waving their flags

We showcase what we're proud of and we do it well
Diversity strength, dividing superficial
We draw on past victories

Coming together in harmony

It's not cos we're all lovely Samaritans
It comes from having to fight the hard fights
To make a stand for this town
To fight for a higher ground

It's important to know your history
We beat the Blackshirts in the 30s
The fascists came out week after week
Against our Jewish communities

That same fighting spirit has carried on today
Hearing about the dawn raids in Kenmure Street
We rallied in our numbers serenading the van
Two innocent men released by our demand

We went up against the British state and won
Our town doesn't pick
You are who you are
No matter your age, race, gender, religion, sexual taste

It's not cos we're all lovely Samaritans
It comes from having to fight the hard fights
To make a stand for this town
To fight for a higher ground

People here know Govanhill is
We don't need presented with what the newspapers say
We know our neighbours we know our friends
You should come and see for yourself

Material Dream

It's not the car
It's not the 12-room house
It's not the status symbols
Nor the Gucci belt
It's not the idea we've created
That in order to feel safe you need a house in our own name
No, no
It's not the material dream

It's the brush-ins with random people
Getting a taste of flavours from around the world
It's the Bhangra music playing out in the streets
It's the comfort in the racket of the inner city
Oh, oh
It's the Govanhill dream

Oh, oh
The Govanhill dream

What gives you happiness?
Your monthly salary
Or being a part of something bigger than ourselves?

It's the love for this town
It's the love for our people
We have claimed ourselves
And we are alive tonight

Vanity, accolades, competition and the rat race
Oh, no
It's not your material dream

It's the impromptu meetings with strangers at cafes
A therapeutic place over a roll and coffee
It's the neighbours helping with the gas metre
It's the knowing there's someone to help out in the hard times
To keep the hope alive
Oh, it's the Govanhill dream
Oh, it's the Govanhill dream

What gives you happiness?
Your monthly salary
Or being a part of something bigger than ourselves?

It's the love for this town
It's the love for our people
We have claimed ourselves
And we are alive tonight
We'll never back down
We'll never back-track
This is real people, real lives
We have claimed yourself
And we are alive tonight

My parents never really had the money
So I've tried all my life
To find the simple pleasures, simple delights
In people, conversations
Getting a feeling for a place and a time
Rather than the things we have
We get a feeling
Get a feeling
Get a feeling

Get a feeling
Get a feeling

Get a feeling

Beauty In The Hill

Our kitchen backs onto the train tracks
And across the train tracks we watch the parade
Romanian brothers and sisters all congregating
Around the fire as the children roll on the grass

Different generations all coming together
Rejoicing in the folklore of their roots
And the harmonies pour and pour through our window
There's a gritty and spicy side to the hill

Govanhill

They're having a barbie
All laughin' and singin'
And for a moment there they forgot all their troubles
And we're in the kitchen
Feeling the vibrations
It melts our heart like second-hand happiness
Happiness

There's a Celtic sayin' that the first death is the passing
And the second death is when a name don't tumble from a native's tongue
But tonight they're keepin' their folks alive and kickin'
Through the memories and celebrations of their songs

They're having a barbie
All laughin' and singin'
And for a moment there they forgot all their troubles
And we're in the kitchen
Feeling the vibrations
It melts our heart like second-hand happiness

Despite our circumstances
We still find joy in this world
There's a beauty in our collective
There's a beauty in the stories that make us strong

Despite our circumstances
We still find joy in this world
There's a beauty in our collective
There's a beauty in the hill
Govanhill

There's a beauty in the hill, beauty in the hill
Govanhill x2

Step Back

Step back
Step away from your TV
It's distorted reality
Step back
Step away from our computer screen
It's negative energy

Don't believe the truth
Don't believe the truth
It's constructed in such a way to mislead you
For you to turn on the abject face
Send the immigrants back they say
They're the ones cappin' your wage
Whilst their corporate friends will be protected from the cradle to the grave

Step back
Step away from Tory schemes
Don't buy into trickle-down pipe dreams

The Daily Express
The Daily Mail
Directing your moves
Dictating your moods
How you think, how you feel
How you bow, how you kneel
Tellin' you what's real
Well what is real?

Don't believe the truth
Don't believe the truth
Don't believe the truth
Don't believe the truth

The Bothy

I am she who spins stories
Our story connects us to who we are
I remember Grandmother Mondays
Down at the Steamie
There was laughin', singin', jiggin' about
It was for everyone in the 70s
Single ends in the flats
No baths or other pleasantries
A bedrock of family histories
Opening its arms and shaping who I am today

No matter what anyone says that pool changed my life
Opened my eyes to the wider world at play
And gave me a voice
Hearing Gramsci for the first time
Led me to University
When I say the pool changed my life
I mean the women at the Bothy

In 2001 I moved to Craigie Street
And joined the save our pool campaign
I remember that night in the occupation
I could hear the ghosts of the heritage
The children laughing in the pool
Shouts of men in the baths
Woman with the laundry in the prams
Those times were tough but the thing that struck me was the laughter

Nowadays is more stressful in different ways
But we wear our scars with pride
Held the line, side by side
As 24 years on, we're still here
We're still here
We're still here
We're still here
We're still here
And we've won

No matter what anyone says that pool changed my life
Opened my eyes to the wider world at play
And gave me a voice
Hearing Gramsci for the first time
Led me to University
When I say the pool changed my life
I mean the women at the Bothy