

Precarious living in liminal spaces: the result of insufficient accommodation for Gypsies & Travellers

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Outline

- Introduction and background
- Precarious lives
- Contested dwelling – liminal spaces & ambiguous identities
- Talking about Gypsies
- A bit about the JRF research
- Providing sites or controlling spaces?
- Conclusion



What's the issue?

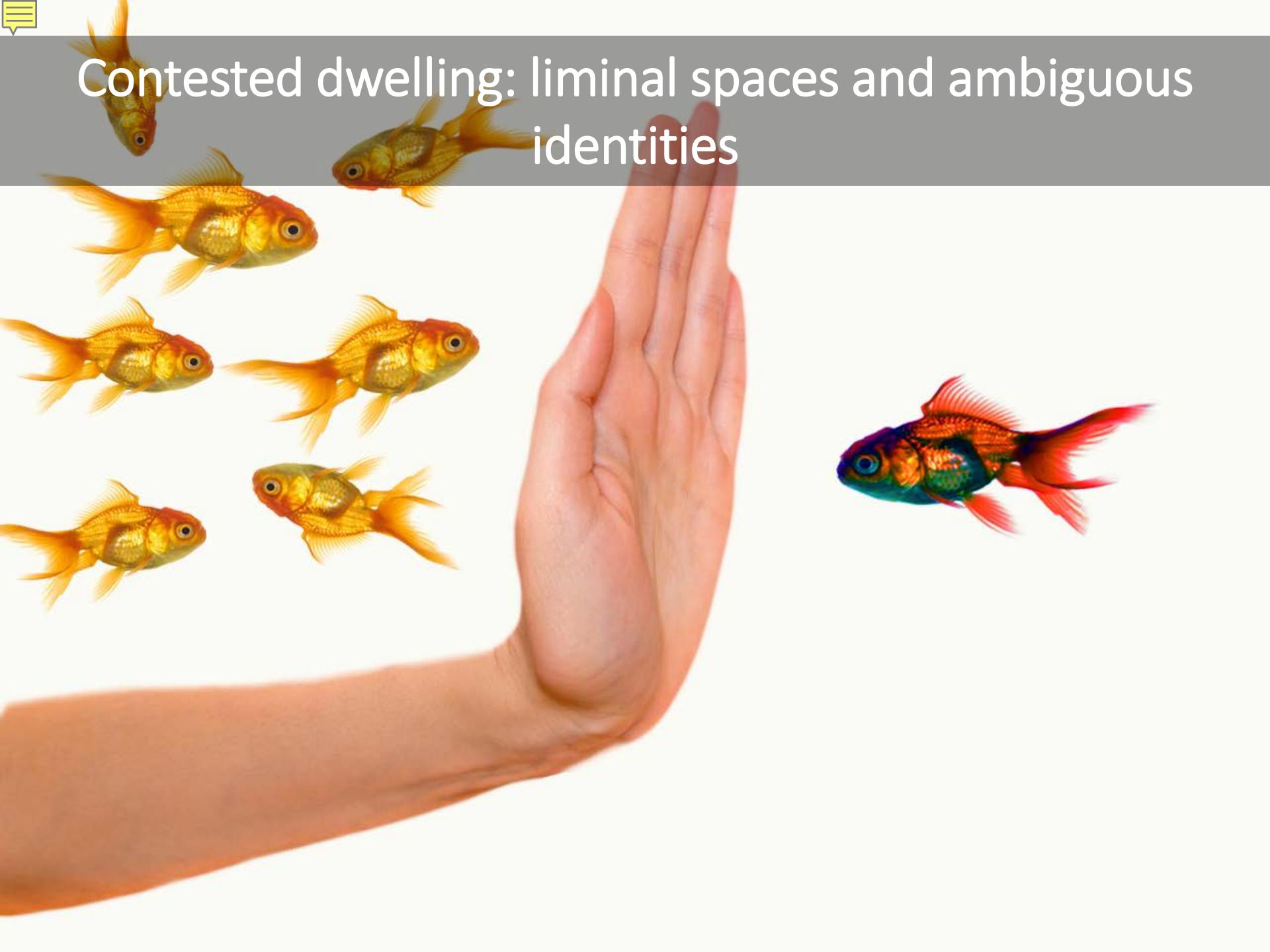


Background



Precarious Lives

- Precarity & identity (Butler)
- Condition & point of resistance (Waite)
- ‘Ghettos’ (Wacquant)
- Complexity – precariously housed (Beer et al)
- Precarity and Gypsy Travellers



Contested dwelling: liminal spaces and ambiguous identities



Talking about Gypsies





The JRF research approach

- Co-production – working *with* communities
- 3 case studies
- Interviews with 122 Gypsies and Travellers on sites in the UK
- Interviews with 95 professionals including local politicians, housing and police, health and community workers
- Visits to 54 Gypsy/Traveller sites



What did we find?

- Different approaches to site management and delivery across the country.
- Majority are ‘ticking along’,
- Some are ‘grasping the nettle’, demonstrating leadership and providing good quality sites
- But some are also putting their heads in the sand, ‘ostriches’ and not dealing with accommodation issues.



Neglected spaces – neglected people



Not all sites are neglected



Key ingredients for site management

1. Clear plans, policies and lines of accountability; particularly a fair and well-communicated lettings policy.
2. Reasonable pitch fees (and utility rates).
3. Clear processes for repairs and maintenance with a strong focus on physical environmental issues.
4. Resident participation and engagement.
5. Managing and designing-in safety and security on sites.
6. Consistent policies for dealing with animals on sites.
7. Communal facilities on sites (can be a source of conflict or cohesion)
8. Supportive and facilitated opportunities for Gypsies and Travellers in their daily lives
9. Trained staff for site management
10. Negotiated approaches to unauthorised encampments to bring business and social benefits to the locality.



Key ingredients for site delivery

1. Robust and defensible evidence of accommodation need.
2. Strategic, not reactive, local decision-making on plans.
3. Political will and leadership.
4. Good communication, accompanied by Gypsy and Traveller will and leadership.
5. Good site design with appropriate facilities.
6. Effective financial and project management.
7. Adaptable and agile approaches with consideration of the alternatives.

- An eighth ingredient – that there must be strategies in place for sustainable lettings and long-term management of new sites – links back to the ingredients for successful site management.



Recommendations

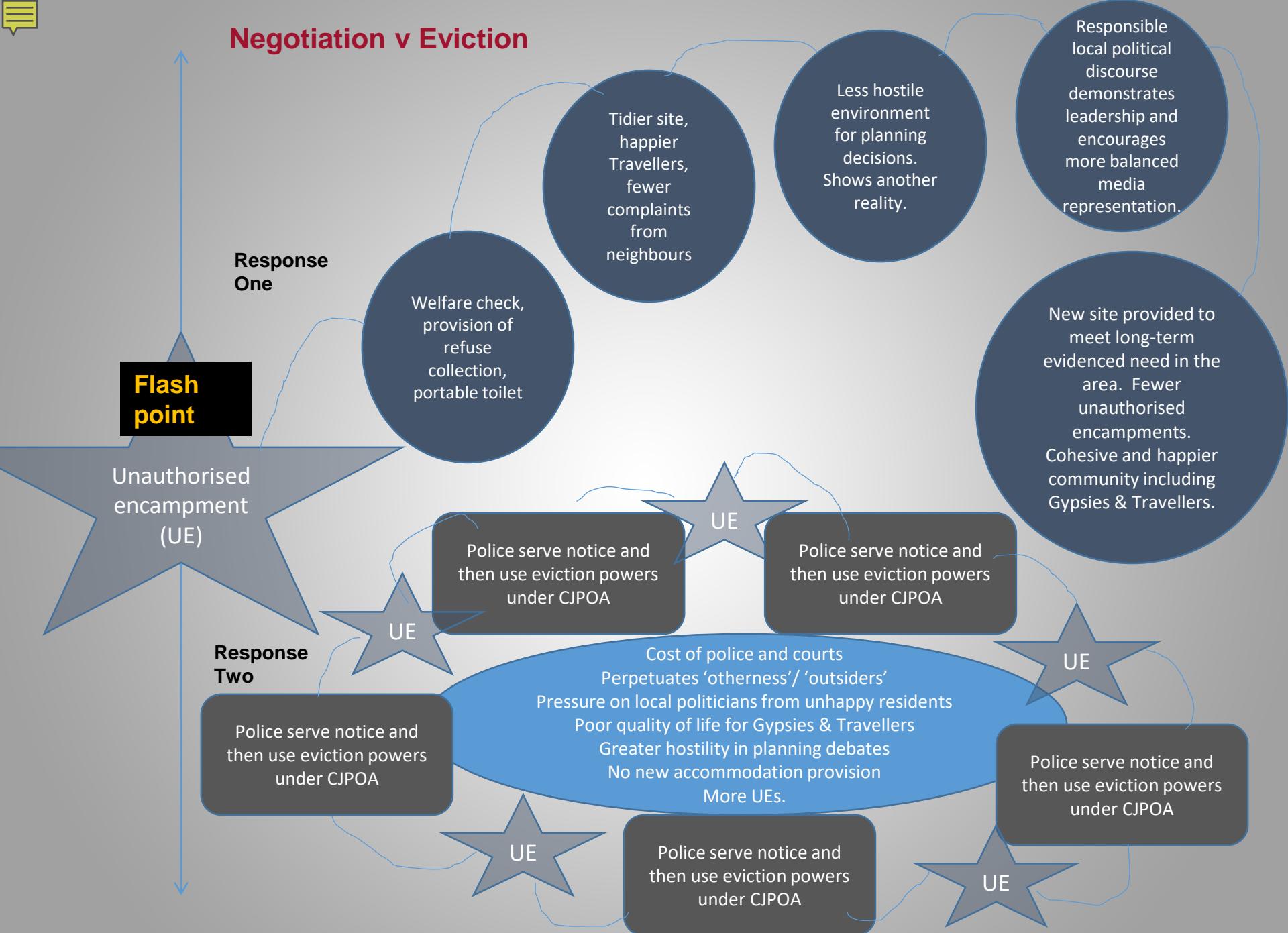
1. Recognise that site provision is the key to resolving continuous unauthorised encampments in an area.
2. Where sites are not already in existence, consider 'negotiated stopping', rather than eviction, as a more resource efficient and humane approach to unauthorised encampments.
3. Understand unauthorised encampments and lack of permanent sites as housing issues reflecting unmet accommodation needs.
4. Have robust Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment data based on open channels of communication with residents.
5. Identify sites in Local Plans and consult with Gypsies, Travellers and other residents on location of sites.
6. Encourage elected members to play a key role in leading local debates on managing and delivering sites, supported through training and by national political leadership.



Recommendations (continued)

7. Recognise a duty to promote equality in this area; challenge discriminatory discourse about Gypsies and Travellers as part of this.
8. Plan for a mixture of tenure, size and location for new Gypsy and Traveller sites, as with general housing stock.
9. Bring in Gypsy and Traveller accommodation alongside other social housing, in terms of policies, administration and standards of management.
10. Recognise that a well-run site will not cost money in the long term (income can cover costs) but capital funding is needed initially to support delivery.
11. See information sharing as key to good management: inefficiencies occur when lines of accountability between departments and agencies are blurred.
12. Pay careful consideration to future management and ownership issues when undertaking reviews of local authority sites.

Negotiation v Eviction





Providing sites or controlling spaces?

- Anti-ghettos, heterotopias
- Monitoring ghettos, policing Travellers
- Hidden responses (tunnels rather than bridges – Leeds negotiated stopping)
- Proactive ‘protection’ of space through injunctions
- Complex criteria and mythical spaces – greenbelt
- Encroachment and ‘mainstreaming’ anti-ghettoisation by stealth?



Why does the research matter?

- Process of the research particularly in the 3 case study areas has resulted in more communication between council, site managers, advocacy organisations. Observation has created a space for reflection and negotiation.
- Range of positive and improving practices is shared in our report & we will continue this through dissemination events throughout 2017.
- Recognising the challenges openly has been an important step – not just for councils but for some residents too: ownership of issues.
- The research has helped us to think about framing perceptions of people and place and the role of re-framing another reality as part of a negotiated approach to better site management and new site delivery.
- Finally, we hope it has created some ideas and examples that local authorities and housing associations can use to better manage and deliver sites in their area.



Conclusion

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