Precarious Living in Liminal Spaces: Neglect of the Gypsy-Traveller Site

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Abstract: Gypsy and Traveller sites are precarious and liminal spaces to live. Insufficient in number and below standard in management and maintenance - the impact can result in poorer health and education outcomes, but also reduced community cohesion in society where conflicts occur over perceived values of spaces and of people. This article explores the precarious lives of Gypsies and Travellers who pursue a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle, and seeks to show how neglected or insufficient accommodation impacts on their perceived identity and exclusion. It examines the problems created by the neglect of the Gypsy-Traveller site and attempts to develop a framework for better understanding the precarity of such groups, who are seen to be different because of the spaces they inhabit. In developing a more nuanced framework of precariousness, particularly focusing on the overlap of relative and perceived precarity in liminal spaces, the article highlights the marginal position of Gypsies and Travellers resident on sites and suggests that control is still exercised by the state over these 'ghetto-like' spaces, sometimes through neglect and sometimes through a move towards 'mainstreaming' management. The article helps to develop an understanding of Gypsy-Traveller site management, marginalisation and control, through the lens of precarity and within a frame of emerging theoretical concepts of the ghetto.
Keywords: Gypsy; Traveller; Site; Precarity; Liminal; Ghetto; Conflict

Introduction

Many Gypsies and Travellers live in precarious situations. Those on the roadside and in unauthorised encampments can sometimes be located in dangerous places, close to traffic or subject to surveillance, hostility and eviction (Richardson 2006). For Travellers who live on local authority or housing association sites, these are often in marginalised spaces on the outskirts of settled communities close to railway lines, sewage works or rubbish dumps – locations where there was least objection when the sites were originally planned – and they can be perceived as marginal spaces by the wider community. Those Gypsies and Travellers who have bought their own land and built a site, but who have not got the required planning permission, are subject to conflict with the local authority and judgment by planning inspectors; sometimes being given temporary permission after temporary permission – stability and security of accommodation hanging in the balance. Some Gypsies and Travellers have their

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own sites with full planning permission, but even then there is a precariousness of acceptance and inclusion by their local community and more so in wider societal, political and media discourse.

Insufficient accommodation results in poorer outcomes and lower levels of community cohesion. There has been structured repression of Gypsy and Traveller culture through lack of accommodation for years: 'Repression has taken many forms, from murder to displacement to various measures of assimilation and sedentarization' (Kabachnik 2009, 461). Recent accounts show how consequences of state organised control – such as through housing and planning legislation in England, continue to marginalise Gypsies and Travellers, creating unequal outcomes and life chances for them (see further Richardson and Ryder 2012).

Precarity of equality leads to insufficient accommodation, neglected site management and exclusion from communities. There is a precarity of security linked to management of existing sites which is interesting to explore further, as there is a gap in the current literature on site management. This article looks at the more domestic and routine construction of precarity and conflict that occurs in the structures, management, policy-making discourses and processes surrounding Gypsy and Traveller site delivery and management by local authorities and housing associations in England.

It is argued that the liminal spaces inhabited by official and temporary sites and encampments occur because of the self-reinforcing negative discourse around Gypsies and Travellers, but also because of the nexus between relative and perceived precarity of Gypsy/Traveller lives. This powerful discourse needs to be understood within a longer history of persecution and stigmatization (Richardson 2006). The argument of the article is that liminal, marginalised spaces such as Traveller sites can be improved through renewed focus on maintenance and management; low-level conflicts can be reduced when physical surroundings are improved, and community cohesion can be improved when there is better contact between sites, encampments, local agencies and communities. However, ultimate 'mainstreaming' of sites could lead to an undermining of Gypsy and Traveller culture and community diversity which is one of the strengths of a 'ghetto-like' status (which is explored in the article). There should be a space in accommodation provision and management, and in wider discourse practices, that recognises the nexus of relative and perceived precarity and which addresses specific issues where equality of provision needs to be mainstreamed, but where diversity of culture and the embrace of difference is accommodated and encouraged.

The article helps to develop an understanding of Gypsy-Traveller site management, marginalisation and control, through the lens of precarity and within a frame of emerging theoretical concepts of the ghetto. It is structured as follows - the first section, briefly, sets out the methodological approach to a study which informs part of the later argument on the challenges of the historical neglect and more recent mainstreaming of site management, which further raises questions over their ghetto-like status. Second, the article frames a debate on 'precariousness' in which there is an attempt to offer a typology of precariousness relating to marginalised groups. Third, the article moves to a discussion on liminality in spaces and places and a debate on the ghetto-like status of Gypsy Traveller sites. In the fourth part of the article, examples from the findings of a research project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and since published (Richardson and Codona 2016), are analysed through a series of themes emerging from the conceptual framework on precarity and liminality. It examines whether traditional 'neglect' of the issue and specifically of the sites physically as a method of control, has made way for a mainstreaming of management which may have the effect of 'absorbing' part of the 'ghetto-like' status of sites, also controlling through its erosion of 'community' and (re)action. The fifth and final part of the article will offer some conclusions.

Methodological Approach

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In part, this article draws on a standard literature search and review process, followed by presentation and debate of ideas on precarity and liminality of Gypsy and Traveller sites with a small British Academy supported conference of academics from a range of disciplines across the UK. It draws upon recent research findings from a specific project which ran from 2014 to 2016 and which built knowledge on some of the problems and conflicts faced by Gypsy/Traveller site residents. The article also reflects on a framework of understanding constructed from a variety of research undertaken since 2001.

Building on previous research with Gypsy and Traveller communities, a project to further examine the conflict inherent in site delivery and management was developed in 2014, in conjunction with a PhD student/ Traveller advocate. Following subsequent close working in three case study city areas to further develop the research question with Gypsy and Traveller advocacy organisations, the project was successfully funded by the JRF (Richardson and Codona 2016). The research sought to understand the different levels of conflict within Gypsy site delivery and management in order to suggest how the challenges, complexities and in some cases improved outcomes could be negotiated. The original plan for the research was extended by the research project advisory group to focus on the ingredients for good practice in site delivery and management across the country. What was originally envisaged to be a study based on three (anonymised) case study cities became a national level piece of work. For the JRF research, the team visited 54 Traveller sites, spoke to 122 Gypsies and Travellers and 95 professionals from across the range of public services, in the four countries of the UK. The original selection of the three case study city areas was achieved in discussion with JRF colleagues and project advisors, based on knowledge of existing challenges, conflicts and communication breakdowns hampering delivery and management of sites. The extension of the study to areas outside of the original cases – and across the UK – was based upon learned knowledge from Gypsy and Traveller community members and advocacy groups advising the researchers that 'you must visit x place – their sites are great/ awful'.

Precarious lives: a conceptual model for precarity

> Precarity also characterizes that politically induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence and to other forms of aggression that are not enacted by states and against which states do not offer adequate protection. (Butler 2009, ii)

Waite (2008, 412) discussed that the term precarity 'implies both a condition and a possible rallying cry for resistance'. Standing (2011) echoes this point for resistance and notes that the Precariat are a new 'dangerous class' ready to mobilise through collective action.

Yet 'precarity' is complex and still difficult to define as it is relational and changing according to wider contexts. Beer et al. (2016) attempt to define 'the precariously housed' in Australia according to three specific measures – anyone suffering from the effects of two or more of these three is deemed to be in housing precarity. Summarising Beer et al.'s three measures in the study, they are: (1) housing costs in excess of 30% of income (this is a standard measure across housing studies of 'affordability') (2) living in private rented accommodation (the authors explain that in Australia this tenure is insecure, which is in common with England but less so with other mainland European countries) (3) the third measure in Beer et al.'s study was whether the survey respondent had been 'affected by a recent forced move'. Coupled with housing precarity, Beer et al. (2016) also included 'the precariously employed' which included households where all adults were in casual labour contracts.

The study by Beer et al. (2016) is interesting for housing studies generally as it highlights the way precarity is structured into housing and employment systems. The private rented sector in certain countries, with a lack of regulation and scrutiny is seen as a whole

tenure to be precarious – and seeing as that sector is growing in market share in England, that must be a concern. Affordability in many cities in the rented and owner-occupied markets sees residents spending significantly more than 30% of their income on their accommodation and the broader political and economic system is dependent on a market where house values constantly increase. Employment precarity is also seen to be on the increase in England in spite of challenges by Uber drivers and others in the temporary and shadowy corners of the 'flexible' employment market. The same people, vulnerable people, those with precarious lives, inhabit these realms – they live in the private rented sector with high rents, poorly regulated landlords, prone to revenge evictions or extreme rent hikes and at the mercy of employers who can call them in or cancel work at a moment's notice. The same people inhabit the various and multiple precarious realms.

Within the mutually reinforcing cycles of deprivation and marginalisation it is possible to see how 'super marginalised' groups like Gypsies, Roma and Travellers can live extremely precarious lives. More prone to eviction – such as Roma economic migrants living in tented camps on the outskirts of cities, or English Gypsies or Irish Travellers constantly evicted and moved on from one roadside layby to another car-park, to another deep verge, for as long as it takes a council to liaise with police and go to court to evict, or to draw up a public space protection order or injunction. Even when 'settled' Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are seen as 'other' and discriminated against in schools where children face bullying, or (in)access to public services and broader acceptance and accommodation in communities. Gypsy and Traveller sites may be seen in popular media, political and social discourse as 'ghetto-like' spaces of deviance.

The argument resulting from the JRF study (Richardson and Codona 2016) and other studies, (Richardson 2006 and Richardson and Ryder 2012) is that Gypsy and Traveller sites' ghetto-like image results from discursive exclusionary practices, insufficient physical and social accommodation and poor/ neglectful site management. And so a range of responses are needed to match these multi-faceted problems which can occur in these liminal spaces of precarity. Whilst it is evident against a number of criteria that many Gypsy and Traveller sites are spaces of absolute precarity, these are also spaces of relative and perceived precarity and even where physical and economic improvements are made, if Gypsy and Traveller site residents still believe they live more precarious lives this can lead to self-segregation - an element of ghettoisation. It is important then, through responses to exclusionary discourse, through better communication strands between site managers and residents to attempt inter-group contact approaches in order that communities see precarity can be a point of unity and similarity rather than difference. Whilst Kauff et al. (2016) noted from their studies that '... intergroup contact may work via different processes for majority and minority members' (pg 23) there is evidence that 'cross-group friendship' could help reduce 'in-group distancing'. In his work evaluating culture, Johnson (2013, 132) noted that 'It is the interaction between people working within different (and differently realized) social institutions which shapes possibilities for well-being within the two groups'.

In terms of understanding the lives of Gypsies and Travellers in need of accommodation, this article suggests there are two broad areas of precarity, related to (1) equality and (2) security – and linked to security, there is a third level of (3) 'perceived precarity'. The first type (equality) is a well-rehearsed area of analysis in relation to Gypsies and Travellers (for example, see further Richardson and Ryder 2012) amongst others. There are examples of absolute poverty, but also relative measures which create relational inequality and also perceived inequality. The second type (security) links to the feelings associated with safety of current accommodation – for example on an unauthorised encampment there may be an absolute danger related to situation on the roadside, but there is also relative insecurity even where one might be living on a permanent site safer, at least, from highway traffic. Examples

were found in the JRF research where there were deficiencies in the road surface, or broken drain covers, or lack of fencing around pitches; whilst there was not necessarily the level of danger as on a roadside encampment, there were fears of relative insecurity and safety. Finally (the third level of precarity), there could also be perceived insecurity even when on the surface things seemed to be stable: perceived precarity.

Precarity itself is multi-faceted and complex. It might be useful to consider a typology of precarity which helps to explain how social exclusion and poverty, or physical and perceived insecurity affects marginalised groups so that different social policy response measures can be examined.

- ➢ Absolute precarity/ adversity – based on measures of poverty or physical insecurity applicable to anyone, a static measure based on income, tenure type, physical environmental or health standards.
- ➢ Relative precarity/adversity – based on feelings of unfairness, where outcomes of poverty or physical insecurity are relative to others, such as comparative insecurity of tenure within one tenure type or one geographical area.
- ➢ Perceived precarity/adversity/ fear – it is particularly this that enforces bonding capital and 'gating in' and can be seen to exist in groups where there is already pre-defined absolute and or relative precarity. An additional element of insecurity might be felt where all things considered there was a level of relative stability, but based on individual and in-group experiences both recent and historic, a level of anxiety and fear heightened notions of precarity, amplifying the effects.

This process of the amplification of fear and anxiety as a result of the third type – perceived precarity – could be found in a number of individuals and groups living and working in conditions of deprivation, but this article argues that for individuals and groups who are 'seen to be' different, because the accommodation they live in looks different or is imagined to be 'other' then the impact of this amplification can worsen. So, in the case of Gypsies and Travellers who live on a site (seen to be different) and who are talked about by politicians and the media as being different (imagined to be other) it is argued that the impact of perceived insecurity (insufficient street lighting, poorly maintained road, lack of fencing around pitch) is felt differently – it is amplified and increases anxiety and perceptions of 'otherness' and unfairness.

It is the perceived element of the precarity conceptual framework which is particularly appropriate for considering Gypsy and Traveller lives. The spaces in which they live are part of the overarching marginalising discourse through which they are controlled. The look of the site – the location, the quality of repair and maintenance is part of the overall appearance of the Gypsy and Traveller perceived identity. When sites are perched on the edges of towns and cities, or hidden central industrial areas, when they look shabby and unloved, there is an assumption made about the residents in that space. After a while of such negative scrutiny, the impact appears to be increased anxiety on an individual level, but also across whole sites – creating low level tension and heightening the potential for conflict on and outwith the site. Not all sites, though, are 'seen' by wider communities, they are tucked away out of sight on the periphery. Many people will have limited experiences of seeing sites first hand, because they have been spatially confined to the outskirts as part of a technique of governance control – the first experience some may have of the image of a site, separated by geography, is an image filtered through the lens of press or political discourse.

Contested dwelling: liminal, Ghetto-like spaces
A central argument of this article is that Gypsies and Travellers are confined and controlled through site marginality and neglect. In the next section, findings from the research will show

how site residents view neglectful management and how it can undermine presumptions of beneficial increased solidarity that may occur in ghetto-like spaces. It is important first though, to explore notions of liminality and spatial confinement. McCabe and Briordy (2016, 2) discuss liminality as '... a transitory stage through which the social person or community passes' and to which there is an end-point once the stage has passed through (for example puberty) and emerged reintegrated in society. But McCabe and Briordy (2016, 2) suggest that understandings of liminality in anthropology allow for a broader meaning now which allows us to '...conceive liminality as a fluid state, or situation, where one is constantly moving between different worlds'. Meier and Frank (2016, 363) say:

> But dwelling is also an issue of power and contestations – as it is realized in processes such as segregation, gentrification and displacement and in socio-spatial forms such as gated communities or shanty towns.

Liminal spaces also move through lifecourse transitions of perception, moving between different worlds of inhabitants and visitors. Shields (1990, 67) talks about this transitory nature of liminal spaces through history, through his case study of Brighton Beach which moved from being seen as a medicalised beach in 1800 towards a 'carnivalisation' of that towards a mass tourist destination – the pleasure beach, then on to 'deviance and violence' of the 'dirty weekend' phase from the 1920's. The perception of Brighton, in this case, was of a liminal space then moving through varying phases of use.

In the context of Gypsy and Traveller sites then, 'liminal' spaces are both transitions of perception, both of themselves by themselves or by wider community members, politicians and press; and they are physical spaces on the margins gated out (but may perceive through an amplified anxiety lens the need to be gated in) and more likely than not (in public planning debates on providing new sites in an area) perceived as 'ghetto-like' spaces. McGarry (2017, 251) notes:

> Roma frequently are consigned to liminal, dangerous, marginal, polluted spaces that are separate from the majority. This is an expression of the socio-spatial power of the state, asserting its sovereign authority over a given space and people.

'Ghetto' is an interesting lens through which to consider Gypsy and Traveller sites accommodation and there is a growing body of literature on the spatial confinement, marginality and ghettoisation of Roma in Europe. Whilst clearly not a ghetto in the traditional sense of the word (with approximately two-thirds of UK Gypsy-Travellers living in housing and not on sites or on the roadside) there are some useful characteristics for a frame of reference in this work. The ghetto can be seen as a tool for confinement and ethno-racial domination; Marcuse (1997, 231) suggested that a ghetto was 'a spatially concentrated area used to separate and to limit a particular involuntarily defined population group… treated as inferior by the dominant society'.

It is possible to see that a Gypsy-Traveller site could sit within this definition to a degree, being spatially concentrated (often on the margins, but sometimes tucked away in central industrial parts of the city) and those living on the site being involuntarily defined as 'other' and often judged as inferior. The balance of power in relation to Gypsy-Traveller sites is very heavily in favour of the dominant society, outside the site; but there are degrees of power and control being exercised within too.

Wacquant (2014) highlights the challenges inherent in attempting to transplant the notion of the 'ghetto' into other urban realities where they do not directly translate. Pointing

instead to the marginality of an urban precariat – socially, spatially and economically, but not strictly ghettoised. He says:

> I thus refute the fashionable thesis of a transatlantic convergence of dispossessed districts on the pattern of the African-American ghetto and instead point to the emergence, on both sides of the Atlantic, of a new regime of poverty in the city, fuelled by the fragmentation of wage labour, the retrenchment of social protection, and territorial stigmatization. I conclude that the state plays a pivotal role in the social as well as the spatial production and distribution of urban marginality: the fate of the urban precariat turns out to be economically underdetermined and politically overdetermined. (Wacquant 2014, 1692)

Wacquant's framework for understanding the ghetto (2008, 2014) has been analysed through examples of Gypsy-Traveller sites by Powell (2013) who makes clear that sites are not ghettos but that exploration of the ghetto framework can help to better understand their exclusion and marginalisation in society. In saying that, Powell (2013, 116) suggests that:

> Key characteristics in the definition of the ghetto are shown to hold true for Gypsy-Traveller sites such as: ethnic homogeneity, spatial confinement, shared cultural identity, mutual distancing and retreat into the private sphere of family.

Powell (2013) goes further to say that three characteristics, whilst they may hold true for Roma ghettos in Central and Eastern Europe, do not hold so for UK Gypsy Traveller sites, namely – parallel institutionalism, state retreat and loss of economic function. In the traditional understanding of ghetto there have been contentious debates over definitions and changing indices (Peach 2009). In discussing this challenging recent history in definition, Peach refers to key texts and makes clarifications:

> Philpott showed that the ghetto was dually exclusive: nearly everyone in the ghetto was Black and nearly all Blacks lived in the ghetto. The enclave, on the other hand, was dually dilute: only a minority of minorities lived in their groups' enclaves; rarely did the minority form a majority of the enclave's population. (Peach 2009, 1388)

In Peach's (1996, 234) work on analysis of the 1991 census to establish levels of discrimination and segregation, she concludes that 'Ghettos on the American model do not exist [in Britain]'. Taking Peach's (2009) comparison between ghettos and enclaves, one can see that Gypsy and Traveller sites are neither dually exclusive nor dually dilute. Whilst the majority of Gypsies do not live on sites, but in bricks and mortar (not often out of choice when asked to reflect on their accommodation preferences), sites comprise, in the vast majority of cases, 100% Gypsy and Traveller residents – a hybrid ghetto-like space.

A strict application of 'ghetto' to a number of different marginalised spaces, including Gypsy and Traveller sites, is problematic, as shown in the arguments within the evolving literature on this subject. Nonetheless, it is a useful frame for discussion to take debates forward, rather than continue in a circular argument of what exactly a ghetto is based on an American type model. Indeed Agier (2009) points to this usefulness if we look to an evolution of the term, rather than strict application of ghetto criteria.

> Moreover, researchers today use it as an urban marker for continuously confirmed marginalization at the social, economic and political levels – as a place that one cannot

but want to escape from, yet where a certain identification with the 'place' nonetheless takes shape. (Agier 2009, 855)

Wacquant (2012, 3) refers to ghetto as a 'fuzzy and evolving notion' and points to the role of the ghetto

> as organizational shield and cultural crucible for the production of a unified but tainted identity that furthers resistance and eventually revolt against seclusion... the ghetto is best analogized not with districts of dereliction ... but with other devices for the forcible containment of tainted categories, such as the prison, the reservation, and the camp.

He returns to this double-edged definition of ghetto 'as *sword* (for the dominant) and *shield* (for the subordinate) (Wacquant 2012, 23) but discusses that the defensive protective properties of ghetto are subsumed by its 'exclusionary modality'. The protective properties of ghetto are held in the communal strands of everyday living and historical, cultural norms. A site of protest, of defence, 'shield' and protection is contingent on the collective values and cultures of those residing on the site, albeit with additional recruits to physically enforce the defence (Richardson 2016). The defensive properties of a ghetto-like site are broken if individual responses come to the fore. Powell (2016) notes this in his understanding of Elias' 'We-I balance'.

> It is this feature [subordination of the I to the we] of many Gypsy-Traveller/ Roma groups which has enabled their preservation and cultural continuity, despite the persistence of asymmetric power relations and assimilatory hostility from wider society. (Powell 2016, 150)

This hostility from wider society (sword) can cause marginalised groups to further retreat behind their shield, to strengthen the capital which bonds their community and weaken the ties that bridge to wider society. Powell and Lever (2015, 11) note this can happen through 'development of parallel institutions' and state 'the educational segregation of Roma as an exemplar of this process'. In recent years, in Britain, however, one could suggest that further to segregation through 'education otherwise' - often home-schooling, there has been a wholesale undermining of the potential for a parallel system of education which protects Gypsy Traveller cultural values. Traveller Education Services have been vastly reduced in the implementation of local government austerity measures meaning those parents who wish to educate their children 'otherwise' don't have the supportive infrastructure to allow them to properly realise this ambition. It is easy enough for authorities to see the 'education otherwise' box ticked as a method for absolving themselves of responsibility, without too much introspection on how young adults, some with limited literacy skills, can educate their children in a way that doesn't further marginalise them for the future.

Returning to the question of the double-edged nature of the ghetto (sword/shield) – questions are raised by Clough Marinaro (2015) on whether the strengths of the shield (solidarity) are truly there in modern urban camps in Rome. She suggests that the impact in Europe of the modern political context of austerity undermines solidarity – reduces the ghetto properties of defence and protection from the wider world. Following on from this, Clough Marinaro (2017, 1) in her work on 'neo ghettos' analyses how state policies in Italy have pushed a number of diverse Roma groups into two accommodation responses: (1) 'surveillance intensive villages' or (2) 'unauthorized micro encampments', producing 'intertwined informalities in housing and employment that reinforce power inequalities despite Roma's

attempts to exert some agency and autonomy through building social capital within and beyond their communities'.

The politics and policies in Rome, Clough Marinaro argues, are producing neo ghettos which constrain Roma, undermine their solidarity and through continued poor management embed marginalisation in a cycle. This is an argument seen in this article, where it was found in the study of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England that (1) poor management or (2) mainstreaming both in their different ways served to devalue the cultural currency of Gypsy/Traveller characteristics of site life and further marginalise and control site (and also roadside) residents.

Also based on research in Rome, Maestri (2014) suggests that community response to crisis and austerity could be a potential for bridging solidarity. Roma could work with non-Roma who are also facing the consequences of crisis (unemployment, difficulty accessing sustainable and affordable housing). This would require less of a focus on the ethnic definition of Roma in a move away from the identity politics approach of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller rights debates in recent decades. Maestri argues that solidarity between Roma and other marginalised Italian people on the basis of their inability to access the employment market, shows a more promising future for escape from the ghetto like villages that were built in response to the original economic crisis.

> Crises, as mentioned before, have an ambivalent character: they can exacerbate social conflicts, they can produce new cleavages, but they can also create the conditions for new forms of solidarity and productive contestations of previous divisions. The second lesson is about the possibility of changing the Roma housing situation by organising mobilisations on the basis of their socio-economic status rather than their ethnic identity. (Maestri 2014, 818)

Maestri (2017) follows up on this argument through her introduction of 'assemblage thinking'. Her concern is that through essentialising Roma we are further marginalising and othering them. Through observation of some Roma families she saw the circular definition and marginalisation of the Roma ghetto-like space on the people. One group in Maestri's (2017) study 'became' squatters and no longer came under 'nomad policy' remit but under a more mainstream housing response:

> By practicing a movement to a space (a political squat) that falls outside the reach of the Roma policy assemblage, the Roma managed to escape the marginalizing effects of evictions, leading to a rhizomatic rearticulation of their marginalized – rather than marginal – position. (Maestri 2017, 131).

What Maestri is suggesting in her de-essentialising assemblage approach may work on one level, and indeed it is seen in this article in the discussion on 'mainstreaming' of site management in England, but for all of its strengthening of bridging capital and accessing non-specialist responses, there is also the potential for it to undermine the strong bonding capital that so links identity and place on the Gypsy site in the UK.

There is a complicated response to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers – particularly so for Gypsies and Travellers who, in England, live on unauthorised encampments or on the roadside, being moved from place to place. Whilst it cannot be argued that Gypsy and Traveller sites are ghettos in any 'true' sense, there can be a unifying sense made in understanding these liminal spaces as particular and peculiar in the city as spaces which could usefully use a label like 'ghetto' as a way of amplifying collective identity and where (re)action could be performed from and for that place as a particular site of protest (Richardson 2016). For the purposes of

better understanding sites as liminal, marginalised spaces where residents are seen as 'other' and are at a disadvantage in the power dynamic with the majority outside the site, then a hybrid ghetto-like framework can be useful. The use of 'ghetto' to frame the argument is not simple though – there is no binary 'good' or 'bad' in relation to sites, or as shall be seen later in approaches to site management. Powell (2007) reminds the ambivalent nature of social relations, and which can be seen on Gypsy Traveller sites, at any one time site residents may at one and the same time be friends and also in conflict with one another. What the research in this article suggests though, is that where sites are particularly poorly managed and there is physically evident neglect, there may be amplified feelings of 'everyday grind conflict', one of the strings of ambivalence but which may be quick to flare.

Controlling liminal Ghetto-like spaces: from neglect to 'mainstreaming'
The stigmatisation of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers is a key aspect of 'othering' and marginalising. If we see Gypsies as 'not like us' then it is easier to say no to new site development and to acquiesce to societal marginalisation of their culture and interests (Richardson 2006). Continued stigmatisation is a key ingredient in the ongoing disempowerment of Gypsies and Travellers in our communities (Powell 2008).

In some respects, sites imagined as ghettos are easier to monitor and police (Richardson, 2007) and so it is in the interests of the state to maintain separateness in a specific place where inhabitants are easier to keep under surveillance and control. Mulcahy, in his (2011) study of policing Travellers in Ireland refers to 'policing strategies of spatial regulation' and the tactics of containment and displacement. Traditionally police would 'contain' the 'problem' of Gypsies and Travellers – leave them be unless there were complaints. Mulcahy (2011, 317) notes one police respondent in his research said 'Travellers are alright in their own place, easily dealt with'. Even in terms of unauthorised encampments there are some places that are more 'alright' than others and this was noted in the JRF research (Richardson and Codona 2016) in terms of negotiated stopping approaches.

This section of the article examines a number of examples found in the JRF study. The findings from the research included qualitative examples of differing approaches to site delivery and management. In this article, they are analysed through the theme of managing 'ghetto-like' spaces through a spectrum of measures from 'neglect' to 'mainstreaming'.

Neglect
The findings on 'neglect' in Gypsy Traveller site management ranged from a cumulative effect of lots of small things that were wrong and stayed wrong, leading to low-level conflict; through to really poor management. In the report the findings on management were categorised into three cultures of management: as 'grasping the nettle' (good management, investing in sites, communicating with residents), 'ticking along' (mostly alright, but not great) and 'ostrich' (pretending the problem will go away). Neglect was found in a small part in the second category and a larger part in the third.

Neglect leading to 'ghetto-like' site
There were two sites in separate areas of the UK, where the neglect was so severe as to make the site seem physically 'ghetto like' as a space to 'separate and limit' those who resided on it. On the first site, in England, there appeared to be dysfunctional relations between site residents themselves, and with the police, as well as run-down utility buildings, burnt-out vehicles near the entrance and serious signs of neglect; on this site visit the researcher was accompanied by police in a marked car and this would have had an impact on the level of welcome – no residents were spoken to during the visit, it was for the purposes of observing the physical state of the council run site. In this one town, there was a 'dispersal' approach on the one hand in terms of

public space protection orders and injunctions against unauthorised encampments, but then on the other hand the presence of a particularly poorly managed public site.

In the second example in a different country of the UK, there was no electricity to the site on the day and had not been for some time, there was flooding on one pitch due to a water tap being stuck on. The site had an overwhelming feeling of neglect and there was rubbish piled near the site entrance and further away on one boundary. The residents on this site were incredibly welcoming and friendly, because of the regard in which the liaison officer, who did not work for the organisation supposed to be managing the site, was held.

Feeling neglected
On other sites visited, even where the site was physically being regenerated, there were feelings of neglect and worry by residents, because of internal conflict on site which was not seen to be dealt with:

> We've just put our names down for a house, love the site - the plot and shed are very nice; but fed up with the violence and feuding. (M17d & F12d)

> Been told that they were coming out to do it [put fence around plot] in January and its March now – when is it happening, kids not safe. I'm very frustrated as [the site officer] couldn't give a date [site officer voiced frustration too]. Two weeks ago there was a fire and police came out because of fires and burning of the rubbish along the roadway. (F59d)

There can be a perception that 'Gypsies will sort their own problems' – this approach was noted in the Mulcahy (2011) work earlier in the article related to police perceptions that conflicts and problems will be resolved 'internally'. This also resonates with the discussion earlier on Wacquant's (2014) work on the Chicago ghetto. It can leave residents on site feeling isolated and neglected when issues are left because they're seen to be a 'Gypsy' issue rather than a site management issue.

> There was an issue of ASB with some visiting kids who threw bricks at a passing bus and now it won't stop at the site. The issue with tipping – CCTV caught it. [Local agency] people see it but think its o.k to do this on the site: they don't report it - different expectations. (F1l)

> Would like to see council listen more and things to be more about what the people on the site want who live with the situation day after day. We never get listened to, we never have what we want only what the council wants us to have, sick of asking nobody listens anyway, sick to death. (F21l)

> The management is what lets the site down. We have to have rules, but we also have to follow those rules. Travellers are a problem sometimes, they cause the problems by not listening, not behaving themselves, causing the rest of the people on the site to want to move off to get some peace. (F22l)

> We need to do a lot more work with vulnerable people, biggest issue is sites/rents and utilities. Disproportionately high costs of rents and bills…. I'm not choosing sides and things like that – its about fairness. You should not be treated differently. (Professional)

'Potholes of doom'

The research team visited very many 'ticking along' sites where there were a number of long-standing, low-level management issues, compounding a lack of longer term maintenance and investment on the site, and creating feelings of mistrust, amplifying fractures in the lines of communication between organisations managing sites and the residents.

A pothole on one of the sites in case study one became emblematic of a problem being reported but nothing being done. On repeated study visits residents talked to one of the housing association officers about getting it fixed and were told it would be looked at: with no result. Follow-up emails from the research team enquiring about the pothole were met with replies that it was in process and would be fixed. On one visit a resident showed minor damage to their trailer caused by a car driving fast over the pothole. It became an emblem of poor communication and institutional understanding of site management processes for specific problems that included rubbish near the entrance, small repairs requested repeatedly and issues related to street lights, drain covers and rubbish on a communal area. But it was the pothole which seemed to become a symbol of low-level, 'daily grind' conflict. It also was a perceived threat to physical safety by residents:

> I keep myself to myself, some people get on here: some don't. It's a troublesome site. Sometimes I don't feel safe. Danger of car going into my caravan [as a result of the pothole]. People all time of night, skids, handbrake turns. That's how I got the dent in the caravan. (F39d)

In addition to the insights on site management, this response (and other conflicted Traveller site responses quoted earlier) also challenges notions of internal solidarity in ghetto-like spaces. Clough Marino (2015) questioned the strength of the 'shield' of solidarity in such spaces. The response of F39d in this research also questions the notions of Traveller solidarity on sites where low level neglect through poor maintenance adds 'low level grind' conflict that seems to undermine the 'shield. Officers on subsequent visits were asked who was responsible– which officer and which team – but there seemed to be a lack of management. It got 'reported in' but it was never very clear where. The 'pothole of doom' even prompted the research team to request a meeting across different parts of the organisation to talk about communication (as well as to share emerging findings from the case study and to share wider good practice from elsewhere). Happily, the pothole was finally repaired before the end of the study, the rubbish was cleared and the drain cover fixed; but it was just one example of very many and although the physical presence of the pothole was a perceive threat to safety, it was emblematic of the long-running maintenance issues on many sites, that can cause residents to feel unheard and neglected.

Mainstreaming

A double-edged sword - 'mainstreaming' site management was found to include physical improvements to sites, but was not always sensitive to specific needs of residents (literacy and standardised communications processes, for example) and also seemed to have the potential to erode the distinct nature of site community characteristics, and perhaps diffuse (re)action to marginalisation and control.

However, many residents spoken with, showed a preference for mainstream management by the council or housing association, than specialist approaches. Residents seemed particularly concerned at council sites being sold to or managed by other Gypsies or Travellers, away from the mainstream scrutiny that could be applied if a local authority or housing association initiated sufficient management and communication practices.

> [The site] is run well, I like the council running it – wouldn't want a private Gypsy/Traveller to buy it and manage it. [My husband] used to be a warden on the site …it might be o.k on small sites, but not on bigger sites, open to power and bullying. (F65s)

Mainstreaming of Gypsy-Traveller sites and lives seems to be developing in three ways: (1) not allowing informal (non-mainstream/ meanwhile) sites through continuous eviction of encampments and unauthorised developments and (2) encroachment of town and city boundaries onto previously marginal spaces on the outskirts and (3)'mainstreaming' of site management processes aligned with the rest of the housing stock.

Attempting to 'save' a space from 'meanwhile' liminal use – mainstream sites or nothing (but probably nothing)

The sites where Gypsies and Travellers live are so inherently linked to their identity and their perceived identity that the place takes on an evolving character of its own. It becomes one where the space can be pushed towards the perceived identity of the Traveller residents (brownfield, near a tip, on the edge), or pulled away from them as not being appropriate because it is 'our' space (in the greenbelt) or because it is 'our' common ground where trees are grown or football games are played – not 'theirs'. Land is 'saved' from development, for Gypsy and Traveller sites, and indeed other unpopular land uses such as for social housing more broadly but particularly for hostels and other such spaces where the residents are seen as 'other'. Such land is even protected from 'them' when the use is meanwhile, temporary and unofficial; but is amplified if there is a whiff that it will become permanent.

In the JRF research (2016) one example case involved an extended Irish Traveller family who were being moved from place to place around the town. After a period of continuously moving around, it was accepted that the family wanted to reside in the town and the local plan team were asked to identify a site in the masterplan. They found a suitable location for a permanent site in a part of woodland next to a lorry park on county council owned land within the designated urban extension. The working assumption of the consultant, from discussions with officers at the county, was that planning would be applied for and that the site would be leased to the family. The officers of the borough council suggested that pre-planning advice should be sought, which the consultant and the family duly did; the result being a design for a 5 pitch site, and a bridge building exercise between the family and the planners at the council. This case helps to illustrate the 'meanwhile use' of liminal spaces as part of the circular definition and re-definition of both place, and of the people who reside there. The 'meanwhile use' can be related to a temporary use of a space before it is developed into something else, or returned to original use – or it can refer to spaces, as found in negotiated stopping examples in the JRF work – which are not used to accommodate transitory groups most of the year round, but in response to key events, or crises, can be used temporarily, in the meanwhile.

The case above – which presented itself during the data gathering for the JRF study – highlights two key considerations – firstly the 'threat' of an alternative use galvanised reaction from the community to 'save' the space; and secondly, the space was not as green as the fantasmatic label; both locations used by the family were quite informal spaces next to existing residential or industrial use. This is not to undermine the argument from residents in the case, but to highlight that 'green belt' can be a mystical label used as an 'empty signifier' as part of any argument. The case was also reminiscent of the arguments for and against the unauthorised development at Dale Farm where one person's 'greenbelt' was another's former scrapyard.

This example from the research is frustrating on a number of levels and demonstrates the importance of 'relative precarity' in understanding the issue. In this case the officers, some councilors and a religious leader working with the planning consultant and family were

attempting to regularise or mainstream an existing liminal site as a method of site provision. The power of the crowd came in when local residents campaigned to 'save' the space from this use. One of the challenges for authorities attempting to move from 'neglect' to 'mainstreaming', particularly in the delivery of sites, is that it can result in tolerated informal use (where that occurs) becoming a negative public debate on the characteristics of already marginalised groups, and can result in no provision at all.

'Keeping them in their place' through eviction (but some glimmers of hope)
One example in the findings, in an anonymised town was particularly stark. Here, the idea of public space protection had amplified to the extent that an injunction was taken out against a list of named Traveller families connected to a large unauthorised development in the region and who were known to travel through the town and stop on the verges and common spaces. However, what was different was that at the bottom of the list was also 'persons unknown', which effectively provided a blanket ban on encampments in the town by anyone known or unknown. This particularly draconian measure was a new turn, although not completely unique as there were a handful of other areas also injuncting Gypsies and Travellers.

This example, and others, provided the flip side to 'negotiated stopping' approaches and the study found this to be much more the expensive and conflict ridden method of 'managing' encampments. The research (Richardson and Codona, 2016) also found that where there were existing sites that were managed reasonably well, then this approach was less likely to be used as there would be fewer objections to new site development from existing residents. It was surely no coincidence then that in the same town that used the injunction approach there was an example of an extremely poorly managed, dysfunctional site. Such a schizophrenic strategic climate is not conducive to delivery of appropriate accommodation and wider community cohesion, the study found. However, even in such challenging areas there were lone voices trying to change things; so in a wider climate of political hostility, the former Police and Crime Commissioner and a senior police officer were trying to reframe the debate, bring local councils together to view the problem of unauthorised encampments through the lens of insufficient accommodation. They tried to move the discussion on to solution through provision of transit accommodation, rather than a discourse of eviction.

There were was one high profile good practice example in the study report, where Negotiated Stopping was an official scheme, shared by the advocacy agency and the council with others. In other areas the approach of negotiation was more low key, in one area the senior local politician not wanting to talk about it explicitly, because it was easier to operate without a light shining on it: 'We do that [negotiated stopping] just go down there and ask them how long they'll be, take bin bags and all that'. In the first nationally recognised example, there was an attempt to regularise and mainstream an informal 'toleration' approach and to share that good practice more widely; there has been a slowing down of political enthusiasm for this in the city, but negotiation is still used in some scenarios. In the second example from the study, it was the informal (invisible) nature of the approach – the provision of accommodation by not doing something (evicting) that seemed to be key to success. In other words what looks like neglect in an area may be a hidden method of providing and that by shining a light on that hidden method the whole approach could be eroded. Mainstreaming may be an answer for local authorities on site delivery and management in some ways, but not in others. The challenge with that though is that the residents 'tolerated' at the whim of an informal, invisible agreement, are triply precarious in their housing situation – real, relative and perceived.

Encroachment: 'Who's new round here?'
This second example of the blurring of lines between ghetto-like Gypsy and Traveller sites and the dominant group outside through 'mainstreaming', was the encroachment of towns and cities

around existing sites. In one of the three case study areas which were evaluated in depth throughout the research, there was an example of one council run site, which was managed well and had generally positive responses from residents on the management. This site had been developed before the neighbouring houses were completed and so the residents grew together as a community; and at one stage during the research there was even an idea to use a common grassed space leading down from a path between the houses and the site as a play area for all residents to get together – unfortunately the officer proposing this idea and liaising with a charity to enquire if work could be undertaken left and the scheme was never followed through.

There were other examples in other towns where houses were being built near to existing sites as demand for housing grew and blurred boundaries. This seemingly positive accidental approach to bringing communities together can work well, but there are potential hazards too. The permanence of bricks and mortar housing can make residents forget that the new housing development they've moved into is new and the Gypsy site next door has been there for decades. The seeming temporary nature of the Gypsy site gives an air of 'newness' and housed residents in any complaints about neighbouring sites, might forget the site was in fact there first.

During an initial dissemination seminar in December 2016, for the published (Richardson and Codona 2016) JRF report, the authors heard verbal evidence from a council officer, which was backed up by others in the room, that banks and other lenders were saying to councils that they would not lend on housing developments where there was provision within the plans to include accommodation for Travellers. During the course of the research in interviews with professionals, it was heard that financing sites was increasingly difficult and that as well as burdensome 'value for money' tests in relation to previous grant regimes, there was also the view from lenders that sites were not a good money investment and that they would reduce rather than increase in value – unlike 'mainstream' (bricks and mortar houses) housing development. The encroachment of towns and cities out towards sites may make neighbours out of 'others' but the negative connotations are that housing development to be built near, or including designs for, a Gypsy site may not be funded; or that in forgetting the history of a site in an area can lead to site residents being seen as 'newcomers' even when the site was there first – and resulting in potentially managed decline of the site as a precursor to winding it down and selling it on as more valuable real estate potential (as indeed seems to be happening in many inner London social housing estates).

Mainstreaming management processes
In the earlier discussion under 'neglect', an example of the 'pothole of doom' was used as an emblem for a range of low level conflicts between residents and with site managers. In a bid to combat that a number of organisations were attempting to mainstream services on sites so that they were the same as wider stock management. Echoing Maestri's (2017) calls to de-essentialise Roma, mainstreaming approaches meant that Gypsies and Travellers on sites were to be treated like any other resident of the council or the housing association, in terms of key management issues such as repairs. Rather than site visits resulting in a repair being 'called in' (who knows where) residents were expected to ring the call centre as other tenants in houses were expected to do. Whilst this normally resulted in better record keeping and prompter services, there were down sides, such as one man telling the research team how much he had spent on his 'pay as you go' mobile phone on hold for the call centre, and others saying that they just did not understand the process or have the correct telephone number.

Increasingly, mainstreaming also brought an expectation on contractors as well as residents – for example that where one person was all that was necessary to fix a tap in a house, the same should be true for on-site; that there shouldn't be an expectation of double-staff visits

for 'security'. There were positive examples during data collection from councils who provided cultural awareness training for contractors to create better understanding and more mainstream approaches.

Conclusions

Whilst it is evident against a number of criteria that many Gypsy and Traveller sites are spaces of absolute precarity, these are also spaces of relative and perceived precarity. Even where physical and economic improvements are made, if Gypsy and Traveller site residents still believe they live more precarious lives, this can lead to self-segregation and perception that sites are 'ghetto-like'. It is suggested that the liminal spaces inhabited by official and temporary sites and encampments occur because of the self-reinforcing negative discourse around Gypsies and Travellers, but also because of the nexus between relative and perceived precarity of Gypsy/Traveller lives. The argument of the article is that liminal, marginalised, ghettoised spaces such as Traveller sites can be improved and site residents listened to and included through renewed focus on maintenance and management. Low-level conflicts can be reduced when physical surroundings (as embodied by the 'pothole of doom') are improved, and community cohesion can be improved when there is better contact between sites, encampments, local agencies and communities. However, the journey from 'neglect' to 'mainstreaming' is not a simple path of 'bad' to 'good' there are complications around identities, erosion of informal practices which may have been better for Gypsies and Travellers than mainstream practices (for example around negotiated stopping); and a potential erosion of the feeling of identity, of bonding capital emerging from the marginalisation of the ghetto-like space and the building of a platform from which to (re)act.

The ghetto is a tool for spatial confinement and ethno-racial domination and the traditional neglect of many sites run by the state have contributed to the ghetto-like separation of residents – countering the wider discourse of integration and cohesion. On the other hand 'mainstreaming' is not necessarily a panacea, as the process can contribute to the undermining of any, albeit ambivalent, platforms of solidarity. The use of 'ghetto' is a useful approach for considering the management of Gypsy and Traveller sites as it provides a space to consider these complex and intertwined identities and issues. Clough Marinaro (2017) challenges the nature of solidarity in Roma 'ghettos' and this article, includes similar findings on Gypsy sites in England; but the picture is more complex than that. The social networks on Gypsy and Traveller sites in this study were seen to 'tick along' most of the time but with expressions of low-level or 'everyday grind' feelings of conflict either with management or other residents. At certain points this intricate balance of social relations could 'flare' in a moment of overt conflict, or sometimes in a moment of solidarity. The usefulness of examining Gypsy and Traveller site management through the lens of the 'ghetto' is to allow for expression of such complexity.

Gypsy and Traveller sites can indeed be precarious and liminal spaces to live. Neglected and insufficient accommodation impacts on perceived Gyspy/Traveller identity and subsequent exclusion. The article helps to develop an understanding of Gypsy-Traveller site management, marginalisation and control, through the lens of precarity and within a frame of emerging theoretical concepts of spatial confinement, marginality, neglect and state abandonment of the 'ghetto'. In examining the findings from the JRF research through a more nuanced framework of precariousness, particularly focusing on the overlap of relative and perceived precarity in liminal spaces, this article has highlighted the marginal position of Gypsies and Travellers resident on sites and suggested that control is still exercised over these 'ghetto-like' spaces, sometimes through neglect and sometimes through a move towards 'mainstreaming' management.

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