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**Loïc Wacquant's "ghetto" and ethnic minority segregation in the  
UK: the neglected case of Gypsy-Travellers**

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# **Loïc Wacquant's "ghetto" and ethnic minority segregation in the UK: the neglected case of Gypsy-Travellers**

## **Abstract**

This paper utilises Loïc Wacquant's concept of the ghetto as an analytical tool in understanding the marginal and ambivalent position of Gypsy-Traveller populations resident on sites (or camps) in Britain. The paper argues that the fruitful work of quantitative geographers on ethnic segregation in the UK has neglected Gypsy-Travellers. It suggests that the theoretical concept of the ghetto can elucidate the ways in which the spatial marginality of sites serves as a weapon of 'confinement and control' to the dominant and an 'integrative and protective device' to the stigmatised Gypsy-Traveller population. Key characteristics in Wacquant's 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 a retreat into the private sphere of the family. This comparison also reveals key differences in terms of economic function, parallel institutionalism and the relationship with the state. The paper points to the potential offered by Wacquant's theory and suggests that the dismissal of the ghetto *concept* within the UK ignores its power as a tool of comparison. The paper suggests that qualitative and theoretical approaches should seek to complement the work of quantitative geographers through focusing on everyday social relations and encounters between ethnic minority groups and "host" populations - both within and outwith residential boundaries. It also questions the urban-centred focus of debates on ethnic segregation.

**KEY WORDS:** ethnic segregation; Gypsy-Travellers; ghetto; Loïc Wacquant; ambivalence.

## Introduction

Loïc Wacquant suggests that the historically informed concept of the ghetto is 'a powerful tool for the social analysis of ethnoracial domination and urban inequality' (2004b, p.2). Urban scholars have suggested a number of different groups and urban forms which arguably share *some* of the characteristics of the ghetto to varying degrees, such as: Palestinian refugee camps (Agier, 2009); the religiously segregated spaces of Belfast (Flint, 2009); French *banlieues* (Wacquant, 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2012); and peripheral working class areas or housing estates across Europe (Musterd, 2008). Wacquant's thesis on 'advanced marginality' has stimulated both geographers and urban sociologists alike and has been applied to a range of different contexts.<sup>1</sup> This reflects the strength of Wacquant's analysis as a tool of comparison (Agier, 2009; Marcuse, 2007; Musterd, 2008). Indeed, Wacquant suggests that the ghetto '*might be most profitably studied...alongside the reservation, the refugee camp, and the prison, as belonging to a broader class of institutions for the forced confinement of dispossessed and dishonoured groups*' (Wacquant, 2004b, p.6). Similarly, Agier asserts that Wacquant's analysis of the ghetto can be usefully complemented by research aimed at 'understanding the formation of new spaces that have been built up on the frontier, at the edges or other limits of the social and the national' (Agier, 2009, p.857).

At the same time, in the UK, there has been increasing concern and debate in recent years over ethnic minority concentration and segregation with heightened attention paid to ethnic enclaves and clusters within British cities and the perceived impacts – both positive and negative - of these urban forms for

social interaction and community cohesion. A key aspect of these debates for many urban scholars has been challenging notions of ethnic minority self-segregation, increasing polarisation and the existence and formation of ghettos in the UK (Phillips, 2006; Peach 2009; Finney and Simpson, 2009), while others have responded with counter-arguments (Carling, 2008). One ethnic minority group in the UK largely absent from these debates, however, is Gypsy-Travellers. This is primarily due to the reliance on quantitative methods employed in measuring segregation, derived from the 1991 and 2001 Censuses of Population, and the absence of comparable data relating to Gypsy-Traveller populations. As such Gypsy-Traveller segregation and/or integration have been neglected by academics within these recent debates.

In responding to these developments, this paper takes an exploratory step towards showing how Wacquant's comparative theoretical framework can contribute to an understanding of ethnic segregation in the UK, by utilising his concept of the ghetto as an analytical tool in understanding the marginalised position of Gypsy-Traveller populations resident on sites<sup>2</sup> (or camps). It is important to note that *the claim here is not that Gypsy-Traveller sites in the UK constitute ghettos*. Rather, the concept of the ghetto as a comparative framework can help understand the experiences of stigmatisation and marginalisation on such sites. It is argued that Wacquant's framework can elucidate the specific ways in which the spatial marginality of Gypsy-Travellers serves at once as a weapon of 'confinement and control' to the dominant; and an 'integrative and protective device' to the stigmatised Gypsy-Traveller population (Wacquant, 2004b, 2010, 2012). 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 a retreat into the private sphere of the family. At the same time as drawing characteristic similarities with these accounts of the ghetto applied to other groups, the paper points to key differences in the spatiality and confinement of Gypsy-Traveller sites which serve to maintain their stigmatised position within British society. It is argued that the Gypsy-Traveller site is a particularly unique spatial form in the British context encapsulating many of the negatives in Wacquant's account of the ghetto but also some of the positives. As such the Gypsy-Traveller site is characterised by a perpetual *ambivalence*, which is brought into sharp relief through the use of these theoretical tools suggesting areas for further inquiry in understanding the relative position of Gypsy-Travellers.

Through this comparison the paper also raises four particular issues of wider relevance. Firstly, that the dismissal of the existence of ghettos in Britain as a "myth" has been made too readily and complacently due to an over-reliance on quantitative analysis. Secondly, that the *concept* of the ghetto and ethnic cluster as ideal types at opposite ends of a continuum (Wacquant, 2004b, 2012) offers significant potential for complementing the fruitful progress made by quantitative researchers. By placing power and long-term social processes at the centre of any understanding of ethnic segregation and manifest inequalities, the role of the state in the production and maintenance of these spaces, *a la* the ghetto is highlighted. Thirdly, that the *everyday social relations and encounters* between ethnic minority groups and "host populations", requiring qualitative approaches, represent a vital piece of an analytical jigsaw (see also Musterd,

2008) in understanding the complex, interdependent relationship between 'territorial relegation' and processes of disidentification and stigmatisation. Finally, the specific context of UK Gypsy-Travellers used to support these claims suggests that these issues are not necessarily confined to inner urban areas (see also Marcuse (2007) on this point).

The paper is divided into four sections. Firstly, recent debates in the UK on ethnic clustering and ghettos are briefly recounted emphasising their significant contribution to the evidence base, but also their lack of nuance in acknowledging differing social and cultural processes. Secondly, the theoretical conception of the ghetto devised by Wacquant is discussed in order to show its power as a comparative tool and potential in application to peripheral ethnic minority groups in the UK. Thirdly, drawing on qualitative interview data, Gypsy-Traveller sites are analysed with reference to this theoretical framework. The final section concludes that a more dynamic reading of the ghetto, drawing on Wacquant's historical and relational concept, offers significant potential for understanding the experiences of peripheral minorities in the UK and their relationship to social processes and the state over time. The conclusions also point to the ambivalence of the Gypsy-Traveller site and the need to account for its presence, and accompanying manifestations of the social processes discussed, beyond the urban setting.

## **The UK “ghetto” debate**

It is impossible, within the confines of this paper, to do justice to the significance and advancements in knowledge represented by quantitative approaches to

understanding ethnic segregation in the UK (see Carling, 2008; Dorling and Rees, 2003; Finney and Simpson, 2009; Johnston *et al.*, 2002; Peach, 1996, 2009; Simpson, 2004; for just a few examples of this progress and the corresponding methodological debates). Rather, this section briefly articulates the dominance of quantitative approaches in “proving” and “disproving” the existence of the UK ghetto and trends towards de/segregation. This then highlights the neglect of Gypsy-Travellers within these debates.

Deborah Phillips (2006) convincingly shows how discourses of ethnic self-segregation with respect to British Muslim populations are far removed from the evidence and give rise to the myth that these communities wish to lead 'parallel lives'. She notes how concerns over minority ethnic concentration in the UK have fluctuated over time. For instance, in the 1970s, there was widespread anxiety over the problems associated with the growth of "ghetto-like" concentrations, primarily associated with Black British communities, which waned in the 1980s after the enactment of the 1976 Race Relations Act (Phillips, 2006). In more recent years, following the urban disturbances in 2001 in the North of England and the terrorist attacks of 2007 in London, attention to minority ethnic segregation has grown once again but has this time turned toward British Muslim populations. Flint (2009) suggests that today's political and media anxieties over these spaces are based on the notion that they are becoming 'de-pacified', which in turn heightens concerns and sensitivities about declining social cohesion and civility. Thus, ethnic settlement patterns, clusters and segregation are central to a range of discourses which seek to problematise urban social relations. This has been accompanied by a dominant academic



response which has refuted claims of ethnic self-segregation and pointed towards the increasing *desegregation* among minority ethnic populations as a result of upward mobility (e.g. minority ethnic migration to suburban neighbourhoods) and White in-migration (Dorling and Rees, 2003; Finney and Simpson, 2009; Peach, 1996, 2009; Phillips, 2006; Simpson, 2004).

This response has largely relied on quantitative analyses drawing on data derived from a relatively new ethnicity question first posed in the 1991 Census of Population. The comparison with data from the 2001 Census of Population therefore provides an invaluable means of exploring inter-censal trends and patterns in ethnic segregation, which use sophisticated techniques developed over fifty years of fruitful academic research (Peach, 2009). Some geographers have used these techniques to explore explicitly whether the UK ghetto exists, with the dominant answer being resoundingly negative (Peach, 1996, 2009; Johnston *et al.*, 2002; Finney and Simpson, 2009).<sup>3</sup> However, studies based on the 1991 and 2001 Censuses of Population do not include Gypsy-Traveller populations in their analysis as the ethnic category for "Romany Gypsy or Irish Traveller" is only included for the first time in the 2011 Census. Thus, while authors may be right in rejecting the concept of the ghetto with regard to Black and South Asian populations in the UK, the quantitative evidence to refute the existence of the "Gypsy ghetto" is relatively weak.

Peach's (1996) definition of the 'true ghetto' (also used by Johnston *et al.*, 2002) is derived from Philpott's (1978) in relation to Chicago, which distinguished European ethnic enclaves from the Black American ghetto. For Peach the 'true

ghetto' comprises two key characteristics: that a single ethnic or racial group forms the whole population of the residential district; and that most members of that group are found in such areas (Peach, 1996, pp.216-217). On this measure, were data available, Gypsy-Travellers would appear quite well integrated into wider society given the number of households resident in conventional bricks and mortar housing. A sole focus on Gypsy-Traveller sites however (which is the focus of this paper) would suggest hundreds of "mini-ghettos" across the country given that Gypsy-Traveller sites are the exclusive preserve of groups with a nomadic heritage, with ethnic identity a precondition of residential access and acceptance.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, a rigid methodological-driven definition of the ghetto may be inadequate for some ethnic minority groups. Moreover, the absence of comparable data on Gypsy-Travellers with relation to the indices of dissimilarity, and other techniques used in these analyses, precludes this group from inclusion from the outset.<sup>5</sup>

While the focus here is on the UK, it is important to acknowledge that similar debates are also prominent in the wider Western European context (and in some American cities); where desegregating trends among ethnic populations have been shown to predominate and social processes to exhibit a trajectory *away* from that of the ghetto (Musterd, 2008; Musterd and van Kempen, 2009; Pattillo, 2009; Wacquant, 2008a, 2010, 2012).<sup>6</sup> Such developments make international comparison particularly fruitful in highlighting areas of convergence and divergence. While European comparisons with the American ghetto have become more commonplace, these have tended to focus on the changing nature of immigrant settlement patterns and their relationship to the post-Fordist

urban economy. However, as outlined below, these processes differ markedly in relation to Gypsy-Traveller sites in the UK underscoring their particularly unique position.

Phillips (2006) has warned of 'complacency' in dismissing the myth of ghetto formation in Britain. Conversely, however, Flint suggests that 'the genealogy of the ghetto highlights important differences that suggest caution in equating contemporary segregated neighbourhoods in the UK with this urban form' (2009, p.422). The remainder of this paper heeds these warnings and tensions in drawing upon Wacquant's notion of the ghetto and ethnic clustering as a continuum, and situating Gypsy-Travellers within this comparative framework. This comparison then leads to a discussion of the particular issues of wider relevance mentioned above.

### **The ethnic cluster/ghetto as a continuum**

There appears to be a broad consensus that the "true ghetto", and the extreme oppression that the term has come to imply, has existed in relation to only two groups in western societies<sup>7</sup>: the Jewish ghetto and the Black American ghetto (Massey and Denton, 1993; Marcuse, 1997; Wacquant, 2004b). This is not disputed here. Nor does this section major on defining and distinguishing "ghettos" from ethnic "enclaves", "clusters" or "citadels" and gated communities (see Marcuse, 1997; Diken, 2004; Flint, 2009; and Phillips, 2006 for a discussion of this issue). Rather, it is posited that similarities and differences can be discerned, and understanding enhanced, through the situating of Gypsy-

Travellers within Wacquant's framework. It is first necessary therefore to briefly distinguish Wacquant's conceptualisation, of the ghetto and ethnic cluster as a continuum, from other more rigid definitions. Explicit engagement here is with the spatial concept of the *ghetto* not *advanced marginality*, a more complex phenomenon (Marcuse, 2007).

As mentioned above, the definition of ghetto utilised in quantitative studies speaks to the methodologies employed and must be consistent and comparable. It therefore tends to focus narrowly on the concentration and distribution of ethnic groups across urban tracts and areal units. Put simply, the term 'in more recent times refers to a considerable area of many streets in which one ethnic group forms 90-100% of the population' (Finney and Simpson, 2009, p.120).<sup>8</sup> Marcuse (1997) offers a more nuanced definition of the ghetto than this. Again there is a need for caution, however, as he asserts that no ethnic enclave or ghetto can be considered entirely "pure" as not all residents will be excluded from the mainstream. Thus features of the "enclave" (a more positive and enabling urban form (see Marcuse, 1997)) and of the ghetto - be that the "classic", "outcast" (Marcuse, 1997) or "hyper-ghetto" (Wacquant, 2004b, 2008a, 2008b) - will overlap: 'there will always be a mix of characteristics' and there will always be *some* connection to the outside economy (Marcuse, 1997). That is, no ghetto is completely sealed. That said virtual ethnic homogeneity and spatial confinement are still central and defining characteristics for Marcuse. At a basic level he points to three important aspects to consider when defining ghettos and enclaves: spatial separation; the groups affected by that separation; and the relation of the separate space to the surrounding area (Marcuse, 1997, p.230).

This then enables a differentiation from gated communities or citadels (see Marcuse, 1997; Diken, 2004; Flint, 2009):

*'Because it is not simply space that defines the ghetto, it must be some relationship of a set of persons – **a group** – to others and to the society at large that is the ghetto's unifying characteristic'* (Marcuse, 1997, p.230 – my emphasis).

Thus:

*'A ghetto is a spatially concentrated area used to separate and to limit a particular involuntarily defined population group (usually by race) held to be, and **treated as, inferior** by the dominant society'* (Marcuse, 1997, p.231 – my emphasis).

This definition brings us closer to an acknowledgement of the structural relations and unequal power balances which characterise the ghetto. Both Marcuse and Wacquant recognise the need to move beyond a tight spatial or place-centred definition of ghetto towards an acknowledgement of *group relations* and dynamics outwith it. Wacquant, however, goes even further in his definition placing greater emphasis on an historicized account acknowledging long term social processes: 'you cannot understand what happened to these declining neighbourhoods in the 1990s without considering the full sweep of the 20<sup>th</sup> century' (2008a, p.114). This historical analysis is able to account for the role of the state in the production and maintenance of the ghetto, a central aspect of Wacquant's argument.

He argues that the social sciences have tended to conflate the two different concepts of the "ghetto" and the "ethnic cluster" and advocates thinking of the two as:

*'ideal typical configurations situated at opposite ends of a continuum along which different groups can be located or travel over time depending on the intensity with which the forces of stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional*

*duplication and completeness coalesce with each other and impinge upon them'* (Wacquant, 2004b, p.5).

He charts the changing and shifting notion of the ghetto: from its application to concentrations of Jews as far back as the early sixteenth century; to being synonymous with ethnic concentrations and slums; to the Black American ghetto; then back to the slum in the 1990s; and then a wider (and looser) expression applied to gay quarters and immigrant concentrations. Despite these shifts, Wacquant highlights 'common threads and recurrent properties to construct a relational concept of the ghetto as an instrument of *closure* and *control*' (Wacquant, 2004b, p.2).

More recently, in developing his relational concept, Wacquant has suggested that the Roma of Eastern Europe may constitute a European exception in the sense that while other ethnic minority groups tend towards *desegregation* the trajectory of the Roma is towards *ghettoization* (Wacquant, 2012). However, whereas Wacquant posits that 'class and country prove to be stronger determinants of the trajectory of Gypsies than race and space' (Wacquant 2012, p.20) this is not the case in the UK context where contestations over space in the form of disputes over the location of Gypsy-Traveller sites are central to constraining and confining the population and channelling them to marginal locations, which serves to maintain their relative socio-spatial isolation.

The following section discusses some of these 'common threads and recurrent properties' in applying Wacquant's framework to Gypsy-Traveller sites in the UK, while at the same time being sensitive to important institutional and cultural

differences. This analysis is supported by empirical evidence from 35 qualitative interviews and four focus groups<sup>9</sup> conducted with Gypsy-Travellers across 21 different sites in Yorkshire and the Humber in the UK between 2006 and 2008. Interviews often involved more than one respondent and were conducted in interviewees' trailers/ caravans/ chalets on sites; or in Gypsy-Travellers' own homes, where they were residing in conventional bricks and mortar housing. Interviews lasted between 25 minutes and three hours and the majority were recorded and transcribed, except for a handful of occasions where respondents declined to be recorded. All four focus groups were recorded and transcribed. The quotations utilised below represent typical perspectives identified from the analysis of these data. For all quotations the gender, self-defined ethnicity and, where given, age of respondents are indicated.

### **Gypsy-Travellers and the ethnic cluster/ghetto continuum**

Experiences of marginalisation and stigmatisation on Gypsy-Traveller sites share a number of commonalities with Wacquant's account of the ghetto such as: ethnic homogeneity; spatial confinement; shared cultural identity; mutual distancing; and a retreat into the sphere of the family. Three other requisite characteristics of Wacquant's ghetto are shown to differ in relation to Gypsy-Travellers however: the loss of economic function; the development of parallel institutions; and state retrenchment. This is where *the ghetto as a comparative tool is able to shed light on the diversity of ethnic minority experiences*. First, the similarities are discussed, then the differences, which draw attention to the importance of historical relations and the state's attempts at enacting 'civilising

offensives' (van Krieken, 1999; Powell, 2007) against Gypsy-Travellers in shaping today's experiences of stigmatisation and marginalisation.

### ***Ethnic homogeneity***

The ghetto is an 'ethnically homogeneous enclave' (Wacquant, 2008a). The issue of ethnic homogeneity on Gypsy-Traveller sites has been raised above where it was noted that Gypsy-Traveller ethnicity is a precondition of residential access. That is not to deny the diversity within the Traveller community. Rather, this paper focuses on official Gypsy-Traveller sites which tend to be populated by Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers, both of which are ethnic minority groups contained within the Race Relations Act 1976, amended by the Race Relations Act 2000. Thus while Gypsies and Irish Travellers are different ethnic groups<sup>10</sup> their nomadic heritage, protected in legislation, marks them out from other Travelling groups such as new travellers, Travelling Showpeople and circus people.

Well they, the new age travellers, they can be new age travellers today and go back to your job tomorrow, we are what we are, we got no separate way for us...You are what you are and that's your lot...It's not a lifetime, it's an adventure to them #8  
**(Male Gypsy).**

It is this shared cultural practice of nomadism as *a way of life*, coupled with ethnic minority status, which brings relative "homogeneity" to the Gypsy-Traveller site with virtually no "outsiders" resident on them. Furthermore, in the eyes of the categorisers within the mainstream population, these differences are often overlooked reinforcing and maintaining the stigmatisation of the categorised; and enabling the mobilisation of a collective *disidentification* from *all* Gypsy-Travellers (Vanderbeck, 2003; Powell, 2008).



### ***Spatial confinement***

A central requisite of the ghetto is spatial confinement, which is 'imposed and all-encompassing' (Wacquant, 2004b) and prevents its inhabitants 'from fanning into the city' (Wacquant, 2008a). The Black American ghetto cannot be re-located; it is spatially fixed, which serves to concentrate the perceived "problems" and make them more "manageable". It could be argued that in application to no other population is the imposition of spatial confinement as oppressive as in the case of nomadic and semi-nomadic groups. For Gypsy-Travellers transience and freedom of mobility have historically been central to cultural expression and processes of identification, as well as key to facilitating economic activity which is often fluid and flexible. As this now retired respondent notes:

It was just a matter of finding work and just moving from county to county sort of thing...But at the same time you'd get some people who want a change like anybody else would, they'd say 'we're all moving down Dorset' or whatever **#6 (Male Gypsy)**.

In this sense the spatial confinement and concerted attempts at limiting nomadism are particularly damaging in terms of the intentional disruption of legitimate economic and cultural practices. In theory, Gypsy-Traveller households resident in caravans can "up and leave" given their mobile homes but the reality is different. The erosion of traditional and tolerated "stopping places", increased enforcement action (e.g. the quicker production of eviction orders and the barricading of land), and population growth alongside a fairly static supply of caravan pitches and sites have severely constrained this freedom. The following quote is typical of the way in which Gypsy-Travellers lament these constraints:

Like when me Mam was here she used to travel up and down a lot but back then you could get a stay on pieces of ground, you can't get staying on the ground no more, you're shifted like animals so you have to be settled down really, that's what it's all about **#FG4 (Female Traveller)**

An explicit goal of state and wider societal responses to Gypsy-Traveller mobility is an attempt to disperse, contain and to transform (Mayall, 1995; Sibley, 1987). This again resonates with Wacquant's conception of the ghetto whereby control 'can take the form of dispersal or containment, or better yet combine the two approaches' (p.117, 2008a). Gypsy-Travellers are dispersed (as in the quote above) from public and private spaces and confined, wherever legally possible, to the marginal spaces of the official site (Sibley, 1981, 1987).

It's [the site] not like on a housing estate or anywhere...you're in a derelict place with a big busy main road and nothing round it for miles **#FG1 (Female Irish Traveller)**

If you go over the back road there's two sites in [a Yorkshire town] and you can't barely see 'em cos they're in the middle of a rubbish tip!...I don't know how they can live on it...it's like they've dug a hole and put 'em in it because it's, the banks come over the top **#10 (Female Gypsy, 37)**

Gypsy-Traveller movements and settlement have been formally controlled through the planning system and policies such as the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, and the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. Both of which limited the ability to travel and stop freely, prescribed legitimate stopping places, and created no-go areas in some cases (see Sibley, 2001). Control and dispersion are also enacted through informal policies of enforcement by local authorities and their officials, often in conjunction with the local police force (James, 2007), and often as a response to NIMBYism and racial prejudice among wider society (Ellis and McWhirter, 2008).

As you pull on, nine times out of ten before you get your caravan hooked off they're [police] there, and sometimes they will escort you out the boundary. Like you pull on in Bradford and they will escort you to the borders of Leeds **#18 (Male Gypsy, 51)**

I used to go to the pub every Thursday night, and since all this has went on and they've had like the little *petition* and everything it's not the same **#19 (Female Gypsy who had applied for planning permission to develop a small private site)**

Such protests and tactics (such as the organised petition above) are employed by communities in proximity to proposed, or even considered, Gypsy-Traveller sites. In both cases organised resistance often invokes the protection of property rights, house prices, and constructs Gypsy-Travellers in opposition to "respectable" neighbourhoods in mobilising disidentifications and discriminatory resistance to developments (Ellis and McWhirter, 2008). One crucial difference however, is that these conflicts are not only confined to urban areas in the case of Gypsy-Travellers in the UK as sites are also located in rural locations. This suggests the need for detailed research which explores potential differences to the Gypsy-Traveller experience in rural, semi-rural and peripheral spaces; and how, if at all, the manifestations discussed here vary.

This historical concern with settlement control relates to the threat to the social order posed by nomadic and/or mobile groups (Halfacree, 1996; Mayall, 2004; Sibley, 1987, 1988). That is, 'the continued existence of nomads and vagrants was a key symbol of the unfinished project of modernity and evidence of the survival of unwanted elements from the pre-modern' (McVeigh, 1997, p.18). Sibley notes how the Gypsy way of life appears disordered but in fact this is just 'a different kind of order reflecting the integrated nature of Gypsy culture. The idea of a spatial separation of work, residence and recreational activities is alien to Gypsies'; while their integration is 'a form of deviance according to a dominant world-view' (Sibley, 1987, p.77). Yet spatial confinement in relation to Gypsy-

Travellers goes further than simply attempting to curtail nomadic practices and enforce a sedentary mode of existence consistent with a dominant spatial order (McVeigh, 1997). The development of permanent Gypsy-Traveller sites in marginal locations (and the denial of planning consent in other more favourable locations), often some distance from other residential settlements, is a further example of the way in which *Gypsy-Travellers are channelled to specific locations* and away from mainstream residential settlements (CRE, 2006; Brown and Niner, 2009):

Like, they make a Council estate near shops and bus routes and things but when they make Traveller sites they're out in the middle of nowhere #22 (**Gypsy**).

Whereas the Black American ghetto was exploited economically in terms of the labour it supplied, the Gypsy-Traveller site exists in its confining form so vividly today for the opposite reason: an historic group resistance to conformity, mastery and domination facilitated by a nomadic lifestyle (Mayall, 1995). That is, if Gypsy-Travellers cannot be dominated and exploited then they should be confined and controlled within prescribed spaces, which serves to perpetuate socio-spatial isolation and marginalisation (Shubin, 2011).<sup>11</sup> On the measure of spatial confinement, then, Gypsy-Travellers certainly share a commonality with the ghetto.

### ***Shared cultural identity of residents***

A further, if perhaps unsurprising, manifestation of the ghetto for Wacquant is the way in which it produces a collective identity and reinforces the divisions that it represents. Firstly, 'the ghetto sharpens the boundary between the outcast category and the surrounding population' (Wacquant, 2004b, p.5), thus

reinforcing disidentifications and prejudice. Secondly, spatial confinement and institutional parallelism erode class and cultural differences within the ghetto to some extent. A shared cultural identity is also evident in relation to Gypsy-Traveller site residents and made all the more powerful by the collective disidentification of the settled population *from* Gypsy-Travellers (Powell, 2008), which serves as a constant reminder of their difference from mainstream society and their similarity to their fellow site residents. This is best illustrated by the sense of isolation and harassment felt by Gypsy-Travellers who have had to leave sites and enter bricks and mortar housing:

I think the Gypsies in housing feel isolated from their own community, from their own way of life. Because we're all used to being like a good few of us together, that's how you get your social support, that's what you depend on, your social relationships with other people **#31 (Gypsy woman)**

We're used to being around our family and our own kind and when you go into a house you just get racism and abuse **#FG2 (Male Irish Traveller, 25)**

It should be noted however that there are many pronounced cultural differences between Gypsies and Irish Travellers. However, at a very basic level similarity relates to the shared cultural practice of nomadism and from this flows other cultural practices enacted and symbolised in the everyday relations of site residents (see Sibley 1981; Okely, 1983). This collective identity is also symbolised in the religious and cultural events at which many Gypsy-Travellers congregate (Shubin, 2011):

It's just nice to be there sort of for the [horse] fair, it's nice to be there for a bit of lead up for the fair. It's probably one of the few things of our culture that's really left. Yeah, we like to go to Brigg, Appleby, Stoke. **#31 (Gypsy woman)**

And also for some, mainly elderly Gypsy-Travellers, in language:

I was in a restaurant about a year and half ago and I was talking in Romany and I was swearing and this woman laughed and came over. She said "excuse me are you a

Traveller?" I said "yeah" and she started talking back to me know what I mean, it was nice #01 (**Male Gypsy, 58**).

But while the ghetto for Wacquant has positive potential in terms of the collective identification, integration and protection of the stigmatised group (see below for more on this function with regard to Gypsy-Traveller sites), it is also *ambivalent* in the way this situation also creates sentiments of self-doubt and self-hatred. This resonates with Elias and Scotson's (1994) account of established-outsider relations (see Powell (2008) for an application of Elias' theory to British Gypsies).

### ***Mutual distancing***

The spatial confinement outlined above is a product of the marginalisation and stigmatisation of Gypsy-Travellers but also a reflection of a mutual distancing informed by these complex processes (see also Valins (2003) on this process with regard to ultra-orthodox Jews in Britain). Of the ghetto, Wacquant notes that 'when its name is synonymous with vice and violence, in journalistic and political discussion, a taint of place becomes superimposed onto the stigmata of poverty and ethnicity' (Wacquant, 2008a, p.116). The response is then one of mutual distancing and a retreat into the sphere of the family. The very same taint of place is apparent among political and media discourse with regard to Gypsy-Traveller sites (Morris, 2000; Richardson, 2006; Vanderbeck, 2003). For instance, Vanderbeck (2003) notes how media commentary on Travellers is intermingled with discussion of the "worst" elements of society (e.g. the "underclass") thus reproducing pre-existing prejudices. And again, similar

processes of mutual distancing are manifested in processes of (dis)identification

(Powell, 2008) and a functional 'mixing without integration' (Sibley, 1998):

I think the problem is a lot of people hear the word segregation, like separate and go "oh you can't do that, it's wrong, it's wrong" and force it the other way, but anything you force people to do is wrong, and a lot of people don't realise that, they think "oh you've got to integrate, you've got to be the same" *but if you don't want to be the same* then it's wrong, and that's what a lot of people can't get in their heads, it's what people want that should be abided by **#15 – respondent 1 (Female Gypsy, 21)**

Many Gypsy-Travellers 'occupy marginal spaces in order to secure their difference' (Sibley, 1998, p.3). For Sibley, the spaces occupied by Gypsy-Travellers should be seen as alternative cultural spaces facilitating 'mixing without integration', rather than 'spaces of exclusion' *per se*. The quote below typifies the way in which mutual distancing is expressed as a cultural consideration:

Yeah it's like people say 'well Travellers, they want this and they want that, well one minute they want to settle down but then they won't mix with people out of the villages' but you've just got your own way of going on, you don't want your kids doing half what they [non-Traveller children] are...It's not that you don't like the other people, you just don't want your kids, you've got your own beliefs haven't you at the end of the day **#15 – respondent 2 (Female Gypsy, 37)**

In a similar vein to the above, Powell (2008) details Gypsy-Traveller fears over social contamination from wider society which can sometimes result in mutual distancing in the form of an aversion to secondary education. The importance of the extended family in socialisation is also implicated here (see below).

### ***Retreat into the sphere of the family***

It has been noted that 'British Muslim families have been frequently pathologised as inward looking, reluctant to learn English, and clinging to "unacceptable" traditions, such as forced marriage and the ritual slaughter of animals' (Phillips,

2006, p.28), with deficient parenting implicated in apportioning the blame for the 2001 riots in Northern England (Kundnani, 2001). Similar discourses are evident in application to the Gypsy-Traveller population in terms of an insular outlook, 'problematic' traditions, and the control of children (Brown and Scullion, 2010; Cemlyn and Briskman, 2002; Powell, 2011; Vanderbeck, 2005). Though Gypsy-Travellers' obviously speak English, the aversion to formal schooling among some families and low levels of literacy are also problematised in discourse (Jordan, 2001). This vilification of customs and traditions relates to the very different socialisation process among Gypsy-Traveller communities, whereby the home and the family are the primary settings for the inculcation of lasting habits and values (see also Flint (2009) on ethnic socialisation processes).

We're a close family, we're all very close...We got brought up that the only people we had into the world was my Mam and my Dad and my brothers and my sisters  
**#22 (Male Gypsy).**

Gypsy-Travellers traditionally have a different approach to learning emphasizing participation and socialisation from the family and community rather than formal schooling in an institutionalised setting (Liégeois, 1987; Okely, 1983; Vanderbeck, 2005), with family-based learning crucial to cultural preservation and continuity (Jordan, 2001) and often related to traditional economic practices (e.g. scrap metal dealing):

My Grandson's seven, he can tell you different grades of metals and scrap and that. He's always looking in the caravans for faults and damp and that. It's a culture that's learned up you see like ponies, he can go down there get a pony out to the stable, put a saddle bag on it, put a cart on it **#11 (Male Gypsy, 51)**

There is also often a related preference for greater age mixing among siblings and other family members (Liégeois, 1987) and a relatively shorter distance between childhood and adulthood (Powell, 2011). This strong family and group



orientation is at odds with dominant social processes of individualization and serves to protect cultural traditions and values while being perceived as a threat by wider society (Powell, 2011). Thus, while the decline of family and community in wider society is lamented, for Gypsy-Travellers the very maintenance of strong family bonds is *problematised*. This protective response guards against the dilution of culture and the moral threat posed by “outsiders” (Powell, 2008).

These similarities reveal a degree of commonality between Gypsy-Traveller sites and the concept of the ghetto in terms of internal characteristics, the unequal relationship to the "outside", and the response to stigmatisation - albeit with a number of important qualifications. This indicative comparative analysis also reveals crucial differences which can aid an understanding of the unique position of Gypsy-Travellers within UK society and the enduring and persistent marginalisation and stigmatisation that the community so often encounters. These differences are now discussed before some preparatory notes on a theorization of the Gypsy-Traveller experience relative to that of the ghetto. This raises several issues of wider relevance and specific areas for further enquiry.

### ***Parallel institutionalism?*<sup>12</sup>**

The nature of spatial confinement with regard to Gypsy-Travellers discussed above also has implications for collective action and the development of institutions. Wacquant places great emphasis on what he terms ‘forced institutional parallelism predicated on enveloping and inflexible spatial seclusion’ (2004b, p.3) as a distinctive characteristic of the Black American

ghetto (e.g. separate institutions arose such as churches, newspapers, schools, businesses, political and civic associations). Thus the ghetto 'contains all the members of a subordinate category *and* their institutions' (Wacquant, p.114, 2008a). Gypsy-Traveller sites on the other hand tend to be far smaller in terms of population and scattered across space with an absence of the institutional flowering discussed by Wacquant. In this sense nomadic practices and the dual tactics of dispersal and containment serve to limit the ability for the development of Gypsy-Traveller institutions and political activity by 'diluting minority political strength' (Marcuse, 2007). Thus while advancements in social mobility and access to power have been made by other minority ethnic groups in the UK, this has not been matched in relation to Gypsy-Travellers (Gil-Robles, 2005). Gypsy-Traveller institutions tend to be national or regional in nature and not 'encased' within the residential space of the Gypsy-Traveller site (e.g. *The Travellers Times*, The Gypsy Council, various Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Groups). Similarly, spaces of congregation for the purpose of religious meetings and cultural events (e.g. horse fairs) are located outwith sites, tend to be fluid and temporary, and reinforce the symbolism of movement as households travel to them (Shubin, 2011). That is, mobile spiritual and cultural practices reaffirm mobile identities through the need to travel to them to participate (Shubin, 2011). That said Gypsy political organisation has gradually developed - locally, nationally and internationally - since the 1960s and has served to draw Gypsies together, raise awareness of shared interests and provide a basis for the 'fight for the recognition of Gypsy rights' (Mayall, 2004, p.207).

This absence of 'institutional flowering' and the decoupling of institutions from the sites of residence does not, however, negate the positive aspects of the Gypsy-Traveller site as an 'integrative and protective device'. This is evidenced most vividly by the contrast between Gypsy-Traveller experiences on sites versus a move into bricks and mortar housing. The structure of the traditional Gypsy-Traveller family, facilitated by communal space and inter-generational mixing within the trailer and site, is disrupted by the often alien settlement and channelling of Gypsy-Traveller households into housing which serves to physically separate the extended family (Power, 2004; Greenfields and Smith, 2010). Wacquant notes how 'enforced isolation from the outside leads to the intensification of social exchange and cultural sharing inside' the ghetto (2004b, p.3). But this exchange is evident with regard to Gypsy-Travellers too, suggesting that institutional parallelism is not as important in this context. Rather, the importance of everyday social relations, a shared cultural (and often oral) history and a collective disidentification from non-Gypsy-Travellers facilitate this function. In this sense, the *family* and the *site* are more important institutions to Gypsy-Traveller communities in terms of social exchange and cultural sharing.

It is important, however, not to not deny the antagonisms and ruptures that exist within the ghetto/site and between its inhabitants. Cleavages and divisions exist *within* groups and social classes, whether around notions of status and "respectability" (Watt, 2006) or territory, and they need to be recognised as such (see Powell (2008) on social divisions within the Gypsy-Traveller community).

### ***Loss of economic function?***

A central tenet of Wacquant's account is the way in which the Black American ghetto (and the *banlieu*) went hand-in-hand with economic exploitation through providing cheap labour for the factories of industrial cities (Wacquant, 2008b). Unlike the 'parallel world' of the communal ghetto of 1950s America, which functioned separately as a Black space within the White and served the factories with a large pool of unskilled labour, the hyperghetto 'does not have an economic function and is stripped of communal organisations' (Wacquant, 2008a, p.114). In comparison to the American ghetto the Gypsy-Traveller site has been less affected (at least directly) by structural processes central to the emergence of the post-industrial city, in the sense that the community was never so reliant on the manufacturing sector for waged employment (Maloutas, 2009). The history of economic marginality and the mobile pursuit of work have perversely served, to some extent, to insulate the community from such shocks as deindustrialisation.<sup>13</sup> There has, however, been a loss of economic function for Gypsy-Travellers to some degree. Traditionally, nomadic Gypsy-Traveller families would engage in farm work during the summer helping meet the labour needs of the agricultural sector in many parts of the UK:

Sometimes you'd do fieldwork, probably tulip picking or daffodils or onions, whatever, you know, things like that. We used to go up to Lincolnshire fruit picking, we used to go there every year **#8 (Male Gypsy)**

Now, however, a combination of: the mechanisation of farming and the shift to a post-productive rural economy; increased competition from students and migrant workers; and the effects of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (which served to limit the number of vehicles congregating at any one time) has squeezed Gypsy-Traveller employment opportunities in this sector. Of

course, as others have noted, Gypsy-Travellers often engage in many different forms of economic labour (e.g. tree-topping, scrap metal dealing, roofing, tarmacing) often on the margins of society (Sibley, 1981; Okely, 1983).<sup>14</sup> However, the increased restrictions on nomadism and the difficulty Gypsy-Travellers have moving around have inhibited the pursuit of economic opportunity with the result being a more 'settled' lifestyle and a longer commute for workers from their permanent site of residency:

If you got a week in one place [where you were working] you was doin' well, I mean that. But in fact...in Glasgow they know me well cos I've been there a lot of years...But I had some other lads working there being towed off, know what I mean?  
**#1 (Male Gypsy, 58)**

### ***State retrenchment?***

In Wacquant's account one of the fundamental causes of the post-sixties transformation of America's Black ghetto was 'the withdrawal of the state and the ensuing disintegration of public space and social relations' (2004a, p.95), which served to undermine 'the infrastructure enabling public and private organizations to develop or subsist' (2004a, p.101). The degradation of state schools, the closure of public hospitals and the non-response of law enforcement agencies are just some of the many symptoms of the 'organizational desertification' which took place. The process of state abandonment depicted by Wacquant is in marked contrast to the experience of state relations evident on Gypsy-Traveller sites however. This is partly due to the fact that these relations are shaped and informed by the long history of persecution against Gypsies on the part of the state (and indeed prior to absolutist state formation under successive monarchs) (Mayall, 1988, 1995):

*'Although not always systematically constructed as policy, surveillance and prosecution of families under public health, housing, education and welfare legislation have been integral to the broader raft of measures to control Gypsies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (Cemlyn and Briskman, 2002, p.55).*

Thus, far from providing a safety net for Gypsy-Travellers the welfare state has been used as a corrective device; as part of a 'civilising offensive' in the face of perceived "uncivilised" and "deviant" behaviours associated with Gypsy culture (Powell, 2007, 2011). Cemlyn and Briskman argue that the criminal justice system's response to Gypsies is 'imbued with racism' and that 'Gypsies meet stereotyped attitudes and more punitive responses' than non-Gypsies (2002, p.58).<sup>15</sup> This is emphasised by the following quote:

Guaranteed every Traveller, right, if you pull in somewhere, they'll [the police] pull you up, guaranteed they'll say 'I know you've got no license, you've no insurance, you've probably no MOT' it's guaranteed. Just cos you're a Traveller that's what they think, you're not legal...and then they'll maybe, they'll bring you down to the station  
**#FG2 (Male Traveller)**

This echoes Wacquant's notion of courts and prisons replacing the social safety net in the ghetto, though to a lesser degree and scale. There is also a commonality with the Gypsy-Traveller site in terms of the internal and informal controls of the ghetto which maintain the social order. In both cases disputes are often settled without recourse to invasive officialdom in the form of law enforcement. In the field of state welfare, most encounters between Gypsy-Travellers and social services have arisen out of perceived crises on the part of welfare professionals and their involvement may only worsen a situation and perpetuate mistrust (Cemlyn and Briskman, 2002, p.57). Indeed, this relationship culminated in the barbaric practice of the forced removal of some Gypsy children from their parents in the mid-twentieth century, with these children then given to non-Gypsies to rear (Brearley, 2001). As one respondent

noted, "I'm actually frightened of the social services" (Gypsy woman). Gypsy-Traveller encounters with the voluntary and community sector have also been problematised (see Vanderbeck, 2009). Add to that the mainly negative encounters with planning and municipal authorities detailed above and it is not difficult to appreciate that, at least in terms of Gypsy-Traveller sites, state support apparatus was already at a deficit in comparison to the American ghetto. Thus, state retrenchment is less discernible in relation to Gypsy-Travellers in the UK, largely due to the independence of the community in response to persistent persecution. That is, the state can only retreat when it has something to retreat from.

### **The ambivalence of the Gypsy-Traveller site**

The comparative analysis presented here on the ghetto and Gypsy-Traveller sites suggests a position which is characterised by ambivalence. Building on the characteristic comparisons between Wacquant's ghetto and Gypsy-Traveller sites in the UK presented above, the notion of sites as both a 'weapon of confinement and control' and as a 'protective and integrative device' requires further discussion in order to elaborate on this ambivalent position.

'Any given spatial concentration will have strengths and weaknesses for its residents' (Marcuse, 1997, p.242). Some of these strengths and weaknesses have been outlined above. However, the protective and integrative function of the Gypsy-Traveller site is brought into sharp relief when considered alongside the treatment of Gypsy-Travellers *outside* these relatively homogeneous spaces. This points to a spatial-temporal dimension relating to the visibility and

identification of Gypsy-Travellers at particular times and in particular spaces. While, unlike inhabitants of the Black American ghetto, Gypsy-Travellers can pass "undetected" into the larger society (see Wacquant (2012) on this issue relative to the Eastern European Roma) the rejection and resistance to sedentarisation on the part of nomadic (and semi-nomadic) Gypsy-Travellers marks them out as different. Flint (2009) illustrates how attempts at minimising visible cultural differentiation have been used to resolve social conflicts. The Gypsy-Traveller caravan camp/site however is a powerful symbol of cultural difference and a way of life (nomadism) that is often alien and incomprehensible to sedentary society and reinforces disidentification and mutual avoidance. The Gypsy-Traveller site is, more often than not, a 'no-go area' in the eyes of the settled population; a place to avoid and to fear. This is of particular relevance as the marginal location of Gypsy-Traveller sites can serve as a strategy for avoiding harassment and confrontation and, as an ethnically homogenous space, allow for the expression of identity and culture without stigmatisation. In contrast, unauthorised encampments where Gypsy-Traveller families temporarily set up camp – often on the roadside and sometimes within public spaces such as parks or car parks - are greeted with vehement opposition by the public and local media. Such practices are one of the few signifiers of ethnic identity to the non-Gypsy-Traveller population and it is therefore no surprise that these spaces command the most attention from the public, municipal authorities, the media and politicians alike. Gypsy-Travellers tend to engage in unauthorised camping in the absence of sufficient site provision, when they are passing through somewhere, or when pursuing economic opportunities in a particular area. This increased visibility and concomitant hostility is also apparent at cultural events



such as horse fairs. These tend to take place in the summer, attract members of the Travelling community from across the country, and often result in thousands of families converging on small rural towns such as Appleby in Cumbria (Holloway, 2004). In both these examples spatial-temporal dynamics leave Gypsy-Travellers more open to stigma and hostility than is the case on official sites tucked away in marginal locations:

Everywhere you pull, if you're on the roadside they look at you like you're scum, they just look at you like you're nothing #29 (**Female Irish Traveller**)

That is not to deny the harassment that Gypsy-Travellers encounter on official sites, rather it raises important issues about the accepted negative and positive processes of segregation and integration, respectively (see Sibley, 1998).

Bringing Gypsy-Travellers into debates about ethnic minority segregation and urban antagonisms, alongside Wacquant's theoretical concept of the ghetto, problematises some of the assumptions framing these narratives.

In this respect, Flint (2009) sees the challenge, for academics and policymakers alike, as 'articulating more specifically what elements and forms of socio-spatial segregation are problematic and what exactly we wish to achieve by reducing them' (p.428). It is in response to this call that distinctions with regard to Gypsy-Travellers can be discerned. At a societal level it could be argued that Gypsy-Traveller segregation is a goal rather than a 'problem' with local communities, local housing and planning authorities (often led by democratically elected Councillors), and businesses and enterprise all strongly opposed to the development of Gypsy-Traveller sites in proximity to their property. This is despite the prominent public policy discourse of "community cohesion" in the

UK. Indeed, Phillips suggests that in the context of the community cohesion agenda 'the outcome of negotiations of cultural difference in the search for core values and a common identity is stacked against British Muslims' (2006, p.38). For Gypsy-Travellers this has been the case for hundreds of years and looks set to continue (Mayall, 1995). Similarly, Flint asserts that the 'community cohesion agenda reflects the competing struggle of unequal social groups to define social norms' (2009, p.427). The absence of Gypsy-Travellers within this national agenda<sup>16</sup> reflects the historical hostility towards their cultural difference and a tactic of adaptation, evasion (Mayall, 1995; Sibley, 1981, 1987) and 'making do' in the face of such unequal power relations (Powell, 2008). Yet, it also points to the more positive cultural and social outcomes derived from ethnic segregation, particularly in the face of a persistently inhospitable and hostile "host population": the "strengths" identified by Marcuse; the "protection" cited by Wacquant; and the preference and benefit of life on the margins discussed by Sibley (1998).

## **Conclusions**

In agreeing with Agier (2009) that the strength of Wacquant's analysis lies in its use of the tool of comparison, this paper has taken an exploratory step in the application of Wacquant's relational concept of the ghetto to the marginal spaces of Gypsy-Traveller sites in the UK. In doing so it has argued that Wacquant's historically and spatially informed concept can shed light on the different experiences of ethnic minority segregation in the UK. A number of the defining characteristics of Wacquant's ghetto have been shown to resonate with the experiences of Gypsy-Travellers resident on sites, while a number of crucial

differences have also been identified. Though the Gypsy-Traveller site does not conform to Wacquant's detailed definition of the ghetto, there are clear similarities in terms of its characteristics, and certainly in terms of the asymmetric power relations which have produced these marginal, yet ambivalent, spaces. It is this notion of ghetto as a relational concept with which this paper has sought to engage and comparison suggests that a rigid definition and application of the ghetto may be unhelpful. Rather, a more dynamic reading, drawing on the continuum identified by Wacquant offers significant potential for the comparative analysis of different peripheral minorities in different spaces. It follows that dismissing the concept of the ghetto in debates on ethnic segregation in the UK may serve to close a fruitful avenue of comparative theoretical inquiry, which can elucidate the experiences of ethnic minorities in the UK (and beyond) and their relationship to social processes and the state over time. Like the ghetto, the Gypsy-Traveller site is produced by the context in which it is located, and the unequal power relations in which its population are ubiquitously situated on account of the powerful processes of disidentification and stigmatisation. These social processes are all the more powerful for their capacity to operate emotionally and become internalised on the part of both stigmatisers and stigmatised (Elias and Scotson, 1994). Yet the positive aspects of the Gypsy-Traveller site as a preferential, protective and beneficial urban form for avoiding conflict and securing cultural continuity must not be overlooked.

The ground gained by quantitative urban scholars in contributing to public debates on ethnic segregation should be commended, but this also needs to be complemented by qualitative research approaches which are grounded in

*historical* analyses (*a la* Wacquant's account of the ghetto and in greater detail than has been possible within the confines of this paper) and which can help to understand the nature and significance of everyday social relations between ethnic minority groups and "host populations". The importance of social and power relations *outwith* segregated residential spaces identified by Wacquant and Marcuse, and their interdependence with social processes, requires detailed investigation in understanding the different spatial-temporal manifestations of engagements and encounters for different ethnic minority groups, be they positive or negative (see also Musterd, 2008). The three characteristics of Wacquant's ghetto which have been argued to differ in application to the Gypsy-Traveller experience - parallel institutionalism, loss of economic function and state retrenchment - represent particularly interesting avenues for further research.

A fuller understanding of the context of Gypsy-Traveller sites also needs to take account of the different manifestations of the processes discussed above with regard to rural, semi-rural and peripheral spaces, as well as urban settings. Wacquant argues that the cases of Jews and African-Americans show that ghettoization is not a "natural" unintended consequence of urban migration. Rather, ghettoization 'is a highly peculiar form of urbanization warped by assymetric relations of power between ethnoracial groupings: a special form of *collective violence concretized in urban space*' (Wacquant, 2004b, p.3). While Wacquant's ghetto is very much an urban phenomenon, the presence of Gypsy-Traveller sites on the urban periphery and in rural and semi-rural locations calls

for the need to acknowledge the manifestations of ethnic minority segregation, and indeed 'collective violence', within spatial contexts beyond the urban.

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<sup>1</sup> The special issues of the journals *City* (December 2007) and *IJURR* (September 2009) bear testament to its resonance.

<sup>2</sup> The term Gypsy-Traveller site is used to refer to "official" sites run by local authorities, registered social landlords and private individuals. This distinguishes these sites from unauthorised encampments (where Gypsy-Travellers set up camp temporarily, often on the "roadside") and unauthorised developments (where Gypsy-Travellers buy land and develop it without first gaining planning permission).

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that a controversial paper presented at the Annual Conference of the *Royal geographical Society* and the *Institute of British Geographers* 'claimed that ethnic segregation in Britain was increasing, ghettos had formed and some British cities were more segregated than Chicago' (Poulsen (2005), cited in Peach, 2009) resulting in a methodological debate over the approach and indices used to measure segregation (see Peach, 2009). Space does not permit an exploration of these issues and they are not central to the focus of this paper. Suffice to say that the dominant academic response over the course of the last twenty years has been to refute the existence of ghettos in the UK using quantitative methodologies.

<sup>4</sup> There are cases where non-Gypsy-Travellers are resident on sites as a result of inter-marriage but these individuals often find themselves cut-off from sedentary society through complex

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group dynamics of taboos on social contact, disidentification and stigmatisation. As 'Gypsies are regarded as failing to observe the norms of the settled population, contact with them is perceived as a threat to these norms and those involved in interactions with Gypsies are therefore also perceived as threatening' (Powell, 2008, p.102). New travellers may also be found on Gypsy-Traveller sites but this is relatively rare.

<sup>5</sup> The only official source of data on Gypsy-Travellers is a biannual count of caravans released by the Department for Communities and Local Government. This is a snapshot of caravan numbers rather than households - one of many issues with the caravan count (see Niner, 2002) - but it does offer a consistent indication of the size of the population, albeit by proxy. The latest figures for January 2011 record a total of 18,383 caravans in *England only*. Of which, 83 per cent were on official authorised sites and 17 per cent on unauthorised encampments or developments.

<sup>6</sup> See also the special issues of the journals *City* (December 2007) and *IJURR* (September 2009) on these international debates.

<sup>7</sup> Wacquant (2004b) also cites the case of the Burakumin in Japan at the close of the Tokugawa era, a group also used by Norbert Elias to expound his theory of established-outsider relations (Elias and Scotson, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> That is not to dismiss this definition and approach. On the contrary quantitative approaches are an essential aspect of unpicking the complexities of ethnic segregation and have led the way in challenging dangerous and xenophobic media and political discourses.

<sup>9</sup> Where quotations are drawn from focus groups these are indicated by the pre-fix "FG" in the response identifier.

<sup>10</sup> See Powell (2008) on disidentifications *within* the Travelling community in the UK.

<sup>11</sup> There is a useful theoretical link here with the concept of the camp developed from the work of Giorgio Agamben and applied specifically to refugee camps (Diken, 2004; Sanyal, 2011) and Guantanamo Bay (Minca, 2005) (see also Agier, 2009). Though space here does not permit an exploration of these theoretical developments one crucial difference is the temporary nature of these camps in comparison to official Gypsy-Traveller sites, a more permanent form.

<sup>12</sup> Evidence in support of, or to refute, the notion of institutional parallelism was relatively thin on the ground in terms of the analysis of empirical material. That said there are important distinctions to be drawn from secondary sources and these are discussed in this section.

<sup>13</sup> That said, residents of both the Black American ghetto and Gypsy-Traveller sites share a negative commonality in the way in which they are constructed by media discourse as "benefit cheats" in receipt of "undeserved" welfare payments.

<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that a survey of Gypsy-Travellers in West Yorkshire (n = 210 households) conducted in 2008 found that of those in employment the vast majority were self-employed and engaged in the "traditional" trades e.g. scrap metal and/or car dealing; landscape gardening; guttering, roofing and tarmacing; tree topping (Powell *et al.* 2008).

<sup>15</sup> See Cemlyn *et al.* (2009) for a thorough review of Gypsy-Traveller experiences of the criminal justice system and the manifestations of inequality and prejudice in this area.

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted however that Gypsy-Travellers do command some attention within the local community cohesion strategies of *some* local authorities in the UK.