‘IT’S A FREEDOM THING’: HETEROTOPIAS AND GYPSY TRAVELLERS’ SPATIALITY

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‘Space is fundamental in any form of communal life;
space is fundamental in any exercise of power.’[1]

Cultures are organized spatially, they must ‘remain in the place they belong, and only there’.[2] This sedentarist metaphysics, as Kabachnik points out, is the ‘hegemonic norm … it is seen as natural and taken for granted’.[3] Sedentarization entails exercising authority through and across space, it is a dominant, ethnocentric instrument of power. As a spatialization of social order, sedentarization belongs to the realm of what Lefebvre calls ‘“dominated” space’, ‘a site of hegemonic forces’.[4] As Lefebvre puts it: ‘space has become for the state a political instrument of primary importance. … It is thus an administratively controlled and even policed space’.[5]

Sedentary society is preoccupied and ‘burdened’ – to borrow a post-colonial term – by the settlement, regulation, ordering and containment of its others, its nomads, by the ever romanticised, and demonized, wandering Gypsies. ‘It is common knowledge’, Deleuze and Guattari say, ‘that nomads fare miserably under our kinds of regime: we will go to any lengths in order to settle them’.[6] The legal rhetoric concerning nomads ranges from hostility to paternalism, yet it remains consistent in aiming at sedentarization.[7] Indeed, from the sedentarist perspective, the spatialization of Gypsy Travellers[8] escapes the settled logic, it entails a rupture from the dominant, metropolitan imaginary.

By focusing on the representations of Gyspy Travellers' sites and dwellings, this chapter explores spatialization in the context of mobility; it will analyse the ways in which Gypsy Travellers' movement, both spatial and metaphoric, impacts upon their relation to space and place. Further, it will investigate how such relations deviate from dominant, metropolitan understandings of space and interrogate the ways these novel spatial conceptualizations challenge and resist sedentarist approaches. The application of Foucault's notion of heterotopia will be adopted to illuminate understandings of Gypsy Travellers' places and spaces as sites of resistance to the dominant spatial logic.

To examine representations and relations to space and places, sites and dwellings, this chapter will draw on interviews[9] I conducted with Gypsy Travellers in Scotland and England. I will also draw on the 2009 memoir *Gypsy Boy* by the Gypsy Traveller author Mikey Walsh (a pseudonym). The different spatial representations which emerge from the autobiography – 'an irresistible guide through this secret world', [10] as the *The New York Times Book Review* suggests – and from the ethnographic material provide a wide range of examples through which to explore the issues of space and mobility addressed in this chapter.[11]

Gypsy Travellers Mobility

'But the nomad is not necessarily one who moves:
some voyages take place *in situ*, are trips in intensity'[12]

The negative construction of Gypsy Travellers' mobility is 'deeply rooted in Western thinking where movement has traditionally been considered as something other than the norm'; mobility invades the settled and sedentary way of life and represents a

threat with the potential to 'transgress existing power structures'.[13] The fear of 'shifting' people has to be understood in the context of a sedentary, progress-oriented metaphysics whereby the itinerant way of life is seen as almost 'primitive', as an earlier stage of humanity.[14]

The wealth of literature which (mis)represents Gypsy Travellers is testimony to an internalized and consolidated misunderstanding of nomadism and nomads. Judith Okely's seminal work on Gypsies and Travellers in Britain points out countless folk tales and children stories where the Gypsy is scorned, mocked, feared and demonized.[15] The seed of an anti-nomadic logic is instilled in a childhood imaginary and inhabits collective consciousness from early days. Nomadism has been and still is profoundly misunderstood; this failure affects both the settled, dominant society – ravaged by fear and obsessed by the mission to regulate and house its 'vagrants' – and the Gypsy Travellers whose identities and ways of life are constantly under threat.

From a sedentary perspective, nomadism is about moving, about routes rather than roots. However, 'nomadism is a state of mind rather than a state of action',[16] as Kenrick and Clark remind us; it is not only about corporeal travel, but also about emotional and relational mobility. 'The mobility of Gypsy Travellers involves the transmission of objects, expressions of support, the creation of landscapes of memories, as well as physical and emotional returns to particular places'.[17] The mere act of telling 'moving on' tales and singing songs about travel and movement relates to spatial travel as well as to emotional travel, as an act of coming together in the process of sharing social practices and customs. As Shubin observes:

> for Gypsy Travellers, mobility in itself is a fluid and transformative process which involves anticipating movement and adapting to changing living

> conditions with the possibility of travel in mind. These emotional, symbolic and imagined aspects that accompany the physical movement of Travellers are reflected in maintaining the travelling 'atmosphere' and customs through religious meetings and festivals, which have taken the place of traditional Gypsy Traveller gatherings.[18]

The emotional and physical nature of travel entails both dislocation and displacement; physical and metamorphic movements are realized across a set of complex interrelationships. These itinerant spatial and social practices defy hegemonic understandings of mobility and remain profoundly misunderstood, essentialized and often oppressed. Hence, in dominant discourse Gypsy Travellers are seen as 'the quintessential "others", living amidst sedentary populations but maintaining a stubborn commitment to a separate, traveling lifestyle. Implicit in this discourse is the assumption that this separateness entails a denial of the responsibilities of citizenship.'[19]

Britain has a longstanding history of policy and practice aimed at curbing mobility.[20] For instance, as Shubin observes with reference to the Scottish context, the 1984 Roads Scotland Act and the 1986 Public Order Act 'demonstrate understandings of physical travel as chaotic and disordered and as something that must be brought under control'.[21] This legislation forbids encampments and campfires by a road, prevents gatherings of more than twenty people, imposes boundaries, limits travel and ultimately criminalizes most aspects of the Gypsy Travellers' ways of live. Based on familial interdependence, Travellers usually move and pitch up in groups to both benefit from the support of the extended family as well as for work reasons. For

instance, care for the elderly and for children is often shared across the family; as Maria, a young Gypsy Traveller I interviewed, explained:

> Here you always know that there is people to help out with the elderly people, like my granny. Or with the children – somebody who has got three children and wants to go to the shops for an hour could ask the neighbours to look after them. It's normal. It's what we are used to.

Despite globalization's promise of hypermobility, the limitations imposed by coercive policies severely affect these practices and threaten Gypsy Travellers' social structures. Lol, a Gypsy Traveller woman, explained to me the motives behind movement:

> Why people like to move: number one, nine times out of ten is to do with work, but also we are going to pull with such and nobody, we go every year; you can go to your family, you can go to your children, you can go back to your parents. And basically is to do with being able to live the lifestyle that you have been brought up with.

This description of mobility clearly spells out economic factors as well as social factors – interdependence across the community – both elements which are at the heart of nomadic ways of life. However, aggregation, cooperation and interrelations have been and still are targeted by sedentarist laws. While policies may differ across countries, there exists a consistent trend across the West[22] to impose sedentarism as the norm and to restrain – to different degrees – any form of nomadism. Areas of

policy which affect nomadic lifestyles are diverse and range from healthcare to education, from social services to accommodation and work.

Policy reduces nomadism to movement and obliterates vital aspects of nomadic life: 'nomadism involves much more than mobility, including valuing the tradition or even potential of nomadism, economic independence and flexibility, different family structure, language, and caravan dwelling. Instead, the universal nomad is seen as the quintessential mover'.[23] The image of the wandering, itinerant and ever-shifting Gypsy only populates peoples' imaginations; as Deleuze and Guattari provocatively ask, 'even if the journey is a motionless one, even if it occurs on the spot, imperceptible, unexpected, and subterranean, we must ask ourselves, "Who are our nomads today …?"'.[24] In Britain, as a result of restrictive policies, Gypsy Travellers retain their lifestyle in different ways. Some are housed, and partially 'settled', 'many now live in grim government encampments on the outskirts of urban areas … others have integrated into dominant settled society'.[25]

Today's nomads perhaps only move for a couple of weeks a year for vacation, they might be 'settled' in the same council site and might fear moving on for lack of authorized sites. The shortage of 'legal'[26] sites in which to camp and the proliferation of unauthorized encampments have become a key concern in the last decades in Britain and – while the discussion on policies goes beyond the scope of my study – it is imperative to point out this anxiety over space. In Foucault's 'Of Other Spaces' we read that 'the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space';[27] Lefebvre would echo his words a few years later: 'space has now become one of the new "scarcities"'.[28] The relevance of these spatial concerns to the Gypsy Travellers' communities could not be more uncannily fitting, evoking the terrifying images of October 2011 – when Dale Farm, the largest Gypsy and Travellers site in Europe, was

forcibly dismantled by the police. The brutal eviction of over five hundred people is described by Imogen Tyler as 'one of the most disturbing and corrosive events in the recent history of British race relations, the consequences of which are still unfolding'.[29] The sedentarist struggle to curb nomadism is an effective embodiment of the connections between space and power. The contestation about space and about the ways space is inhabited, lived and experienced exemplifies the fraught relations between settled and nomad communities, centre and margin, norm and deviation.

Deterritorialized Spaces and Heterotopias of Deviation

In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) Deleuze and Guattari discuss nomadism as a social practice as well as a spatial practice. In differentiating the nomad from the migrant, they introduce the metaphor of the trajectory; rather than just going from point to point out of necessity, nomads are concerned with the trajectory whereby the route, the trail is crucial, it is in itself an objective.[30]

> [E]ven though the nomadic trajectory may follow trails or customary routes, it does not fulfill the function of the sedentary road, which is to *parcel out a closed space to people*, assigning each person a share and regulating the communication between shares. The nomadic trajectory does the opposite: it *distributes people (or animals) in an open space,*[31] one that is indefinite and noncommunicating. … sedentary space is striated, by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures, while nomad space is smooth, marked only by 'traits' that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory.[32]

The nomadic trajectory defies the sedentarist spatial logic: parcelling out is supplanted by distributing, closed space becomes open space. The striated, enclosed sedentary space cannot conceive of the smooth, open nomadic space; the transient traces along a trajectory are a threat to normative topographic practices, to the permanent demarcation and delimitations of sedentarist space.

'The nomad, nomad space, is localized and not delimited',[33] it entails a rupture from normative space, it is a deviation. In his first principle of heterotopia, Foucault theorizes 'heterotopias of deviation: those places in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed'.[34] Gypsy Travellers' ways of life differ from the norm, 'in constantly redrawing boundaries, Gypsies are perceived by the dominant society as "deviant"',[35] their sites and encampments are *other spaces* for they do not fit into established social (and spatial) order. 'Gypsy-Travellers, especially those who still pursue a nomadic way of life, violate the sedentarist basis of law in modernity because of their different approach to spatial ordering and management'.[36]

The otherness which such sites exude has nothing to do with orientalist conceptions of nomadism, rather it is the result of a complex interplay of exclusion and self-exclusion, marginalization and self-preservation. Such dynamics and power struggles all take place over space. As Levinson and Sparkes observe, most Gypsy Travellers exist on the peripheries, they occupy places at the margin, they often dwell in spaces which 'have been rejected by the dominant society'.[37] Whether on an authorized or unauthorized encampment, Gypsy Travellers' sites tend to be spaces discarded by society, 'those marvellous empty zones at the edge of cities'[38] as Foucault would put it. Doron points out that

> most of these *terrains vagues* have been populated by marginalized communities … These spaces are difficult to utilize by the common means of planning and architecture for various reasons: they might be physically demanding, not easily accessible, too small or of irregular shape, with tricky ownership rights, not lucrative, with other regular usage at some part of the day that might be in discord with other suggested usages, and so on.[39]

Functioning like what Doron terms 'dead zones',[40] these *other spaces* are left empty by dominant, sedentarist topography and are in fact encampments (both authorized and unauthorized) inhabited by Gypsy Travellers. The memoir *Gypsy Boy* provides rich and insightful representations of spatiality in this context; the first person narrator tells of the nature and ubiquity of such sites:

> Gypsy encampments are everywhere. Most are secluded, hidden away down inconspicuous back roads. … Our next campsite was in a dirty little town, through a dirty little road and up behind a dirty old petrol station, where we were surrounded by several overgrown fields filled with rubbish.[41]

The notion of waste and refuse pervades this image; the heaps of rubbish surrounding the site function as a metaphoric transposition of nomadism in the sedentarist spatial ordering. The human and spatial waste, to borrow from Bauman, are both hidden away from sight, secluded, othered. The space which is left deterritorialized, the non-

space, the *other space* is re-territorialized by Gypsy Travellers' encampments; as Deleuze and Guattari have it, 'the nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself'.[42] Upon arrival on a new site, Mikey, the narrator in *Gypsy Boy* recounts:

> After the darkness of the forest, the light above the clearing shone through so brightly that our eyes had to adjust. … The clearing was like a huge swamp. Not a blade of grass, not a tree in sight, but endless mud and water and several towering pillars, with iron steps at the sides and thick electric cables balancing from the top. … Welcome Travellers to Warren Woods Caravan Park.[43]

Warren Woods Caravan Park in this description is a treeless, mud-filled swamp, devoid of the very idea of a 'park'. Here the space is reterritorialized to become *another* space. For the nomad 'the land ceases to be land, tending to become simply ground *(sol)* or support' [44] to another spatial ordering, both imposed and self designated. This spatial dimension exemplifies the Foucauldian notion of heterotopia in multifarious ways. As Cenzatti reminds us,

> modern heterotopias, then, are 'other spaces' on the one hand because they are made other by the top-down making of places of exclusion; on the other hand, they are made other by the deviant groups that live in and appropriate those places.[45]

The marginal sites at the edge of cities, the non-places, the *terrains vagues* or dead zones are spaces which, as excess or refuse within the sedentarist normative

topography, are designated as *other places*. This is a top-down production of places of exclusion. In Britain, the formula of City Council-managed encampments enhances this formalized fabrication and vigilance of places of exclusion, of other places. On the other hand, privately owned encampments (often by Gypsy Travellers themselves) as well as unauthorized ones represent forms of appropriated *other spaces*, reterritorialized places which the norm has deterritorialized:

> Coming back to the camp from anywhere else was like entering into another world: a full-scale exotic trailer-filled town, created and built by Gypsies for Gypsies. Fresh concrete had been poured on top of the mud that had once been everywhere, and a smart road of jet-black tarmac flowed right through it. At the main entrance the walls curved and spiralled ingeniously like frozen waves. At the very tip of each solid wave stood the life-sized stone head of a wild horse, peering like a milky-eyed guardian at the people passing below. And inside, the plots were no longer marked out with red strings, but with scarlet brick walls, eight feet tall, surrounding each home like gigantic theatrical curtains.[46]

This extract from *Gypsy Boy* illustrates heterotopia at its fullest. The camp is described like *another*[47] world created by Gypsies and for Gypsies, a space produced by virtue of top-down exclusion and ultimately re-appropriated to become another place. Gypsy Travellers' agency is here exemplified by the spectacular re-making of this swamp into something else, something other. According to Foucault's third principle

> heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another.[48]

Mikey's dramatic description of this camp powerfully invokes this principle. Like a theater stage, this dead zone is turned into a full-scale town, mud replaced by concrete, a shiny tarmac road flowing through it. The juxtaposition of incompatible sites on one real place is uncanny: a discarded plot of land, secluded from sight in the middle of nowhere hosts curved walls 'like frozen waves', and on each wave towered 'the life-sized stone head of a wild horse'. The tall, 'scarlet' brick walls close off this 'exotic' town like 'gigantic theatrical curtains', this is after all a spectacle not to be seen. While the 'smart' road at the heart of the site functions as both metaphor and reminder of spatial and imaginary travel, the horse – also attached to the Gypsy imaginary – seems to incarnate at once self-protection and self-surveillance like a 'guardian'. The contested and fraught power relations over such sites are both implied in this representation as well as challenged. The overt heterotopic nature of this site, its *other* dimension, opens up further lines of inquiry into the application of heterotopology to both nomadism as a social practice as well as nomadic sites and dwellings.

Visibility and Resistance

Heidi Sohn argues that 'an exception to uniformity and homogeneity, heterotopia opens up pathways for the deconstruction of sameness and its subversion, becoming the antidote against the erasure of difference implicit in the progression of the cultural

logic of late capitalism'.[49] Heterotopia, both etymologically and conceptually, entails difference as a resistance to the norm (sameness) as well as a venture to protect heterogeneity against a homogenizing progressive logic. Gypsy Travellers' heterotopic sites pose a challenge to the settled communities, but most importantly seek to defy the cultural erosion which is inevitably caused by and is inherent in the sedentarist project. Sedentarism's monopolized forms of power constrain nomadism – hence their heterotopic emplacements are both a result of such oppression as well as a response to it. Sohn's description of heterotopias as an 'antidote against the erasure of difference' aptly fits Gypsy Travellers sites whereby nomadic ways of lives are practiced, preserved and handed down to generations, both challenging sedentarism and protecting their endangered cultural difference.

According to the fifth principle, 'heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general heterotopic space is not freely accessible like a public space'.[50] Mikey's description of the encampment 'by Gypsies and for Gypsies' is unmistakably conjured up in this principle. Gypsy Travellers' sites are founded on a strict code of access, of inclusion and exclusion. The importance of keeping a nomadic way of life, either with spatial or imaginary travel, is key; however, this can only be achieved as a group. Gypsy Travellers' social structures are based on interdependence and interrelations, thus an encampment does not necessarily mean a conglomerate of Gypsy Travellers living in proximity. As Lol said, 'we are going to pull with such and nobody'; this statement implies a process of selection based on a wide range of criteria. Indeed, family relations and interrelations strictly regulate spatial ordering[51] and everybody is careful about the ways in which space is collectively territorialized. Hence, access on a site, whether it is authorized or unauthorized, is carefully regulated and monitored; Gypsy

Travellers' sites, in truly heterotopic vein, are 'not freely accessible like a public space'. Insider-outsider relations are extremely complex and extend beyond space. As Karner reminds us, Judith Okely

> shows that the Travellers' cultural logic keeps the categories of 'self' and 'other' strictly separate. The insides of camps, trailers, and bodies all symbolize the 'ethnic self', which must be kept separate from, and uncontaminated by, the 'outside' (symbolic of sedentary/Gorgio society). Every 'crossing' or blurring of the self-other/in-side-outside boundary is a source of pollution that must be guarded against – hence the pronounced preference for endogamy and Travellers' rituals of cleanliness.[52]

This cultural logic based on separation, and the enhanced preoccupation with cleanliness – both physical and metaphorical – not only govern social relations, but also dictate entry and access to Gypsy Travellers' spatial realities. Hence, screening away from the outside, so spectacularly realized on the site described by Mikey in *Gypsy Boy*, is a concern and a priority for many Gypsy Travellers. Lol, who lives in a mobile home, explained to me the travelling way of life: 'It's not easy, it's a hard life, but it's a clean life. … All this low life is creeping in from outside'. Here the metaphor of cleanliness is eloquent; at once it illuminates this cultural logic and reinforces the heterotopic nature of such sites. Greenfields and Smith observe that 'the association of outsider groups with dirt and unhygienic practices is a universal characteristic of insider-outsider relations'[53] in the Gypsy Travellers context. Lol's reference to 'low life' which creeps in, signifies anxiety and preoccupation with non travelling ways of life (sedentary) penetrating in her world. In this striking example

the ‘in’ and the ‘outside’ are unmistakably put in an antithetical relation governed by a metaphorical cleanliness.

Referring to other Travellers who adopted a sedentary life, Lol said: ‘When they do seem to settle down, they get bad habits, they mingle too much with the Gorgias[54] and they got Gorgias’ ways… and say words that are no no to us. And they lose it … whatever they have had.’ It is interesting to note that settling down, leaving the ‘inside’ to inhabit the ‘outside’, entails an actual loss – once tainted by unclean ways of life of the outer world, it is impossible to return, to make it up. As Levinson and Sparkes observed in their ethnographic study about Gypsy Travellers in Britain, ‘the simple fact remains that contact with non-Gypsies for many in this study entails the risk of pollution’.[55]

The inside-outside dichotomy undeniably constructs barriers which shield travelling life from the outside (sedentary) world, and contributes to the solidification of stereotypes about travelling communities as being mysterious, secretive, unknown. This is also another aspect of heterotopia; for Soja, heterotopias are spaces ‘linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life’ which imply ‘a partial unknowability … mystery and secretiveness.[56] The dominant discourse, reinvigorated of late by a Channel 4 pseudo-documentary about travelling communities in the UK,[57] insists on secrecy as both a badge of honour and shame for Gypsy Travellers. Reproducing stale stereotypes about the mysterious and exotic Gypsy figure, such discourse both titillates undue curiosities about these communities as well as justifies its mission of uncovering the veiled truth of these ‘secretive’ people.

The voyeuristic gaze into Gypsy Travellers’ lives granted by the media is coupled with closer surveillance – the state is increasingly more concerned about counting, ordering and categorizing its nomads. As a result, the invisibility of Gypsy

Travellers communities – relegated to the social and topographic margins of metropolitan society – is both produced by dominant power as well as questioned by it. Imogen Tyler reminds us of Papadopoulos *et al.*'s notion of 'becoming imperceptible'[58] as 'the most effective tool that marginal populations can employ to oppose prevailing forms of geopolitical power. Certainly invisibility is an important strategy of evasion'.[59] Gypsy Travellers' invisibility – which metaphorically envelops their sites behind theatre curtains as Mikey recounts – though being the product of exclusion, is indeed a strategy to defy geopolitical power. The erosion of this 'imperceptibility' triggered both by media exposure as well by ever more stringent sedentarist policies, is strongly perceived and criticized by Gypsy Travellers. Lol said:

> Everything is reporting, everything is the police, nanny state, very very bad, and is closing in, closing in, closing in. It's big brother, they want to know where you are, who you are, how many people there is here, how many people is there. I mean there is nothing more revolting than being somewhere and you have got to tell them how many people lives in your home. If I want 20 people in here, I don't want to have to tell the council.

This is a sharp criticism of sovereignty and surveillance: police and state – suitably conceptualized as the eye of a reality show camera – are seen as an approaching force threatening their ways of life. The image of closing here is very effective as it recalls Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of sedentary space as striated and 'closed', in antithesis to smooth and 'open' nomadic space. Moreover, this passage also raises important questions about sedentarist policies and surveillance; once again word choice here is key. 'Revolting' has been theorized by Imogen Tyler in her recent book

Revolting Subjects (2013) with reference to those who are both rendered *abject* by governmentality and who represent a precarious counter-public revolting against coercive ideologies. [60] Despite being among the 'revolting' groups in Tyler's analysis,[61] one of the disposable 'wasted humans', Lol, the Gypsy Traveller woman I interviewed, perceives the abject from the other end of the telescope: in her words the state's surveillance practices are 'revolting'. The state has rendered nomadic life untenable, and the renewed visibility and increased categorization of Gypsy Travellers have 'led to the immobilization within systems of bureaucracy and penal control'.[62] Amalia, a middle-aged Gypsy Traveller woman, said, 'we are what we are. We are a moving on people. They have to let people be independent. They pushed us *out* for centuries and all of a sudden they want to throw us *in*'. This plea for independence clearly draws out the terms of a century old power struggle where margins (out) and centre (in) are in constant tension. Infantilized by dominant power structures, nomads today are ever more visible, yet still dwell at the margins, and are increasingly more immobile.

This question of visibility and marginality, imperceptibility and recognition – as irreconcilable aspects of the same site – pertains to heterotopias of difference. Cenzatti points out that:

> these other spaces can never be fully understood, since we cannot know the 'other' and the group-specific cultures, codes, interactions and the 'unknowable and secretive' spaces the 'other' produces. Yet, to what extent heterotopias are visible and can be known depends on their position shifting between invisibility, marginalization, assertion of difference.[63]

Cenzatti's reading of Foucault's heterotopia, while not referring to any specific place, seems to gesture towards sites such as Gypsy Travellers' encampments. Their otherness, unknowability and secretiveness aptly fit this context; moreover, the shifting between invisibility and recognition summarizes the complex dynamics of exclusion and resistance which are at play in the power struggle over space. I argue that Gypsy Travellers' sites do not embody deviancy per se, but constitute forms of resistance to power structures; theirs is an empowered otherness. Interestingly, Kendall identifies Travellers' home places as 'sites of resistance' for the 'cultural survival' of marginal groups;[64] however, beyond self-preservation of certain cultural practices, such sites also subvert hegemony. Against the metropolitan, sedentarist logic, Amalia said: 'Nobody wants anything done. You have a problem because you made us a problem. We want to be left to do what we want, ourselves. People want to help themselves, be allowed to help themselves'. Here it emerges a cogent counter-argument: the 'burden' of settling nomads heralded by the state as a benevolent mission towards marginal communities is unmasked, rejected and challenged by Amalia. An assertion of individual and collective agency comes to the fore with clarity and force. Karner also discusses Gypsy Travellers' practices as counter-ideologies, claiming that 'their lived rejection of dominant values amounts to, in Roland Barthes's (1993) terminology, a powerful "de-naturalisation" of (post-)modern "common sense" and hence presents an ideological challenge for (post-)industrial societies.'[65]

Gypsy Travellers' social and spatial practices pose a real challenge to dominant, sedentarist – or as Karner has it – (post-)industrial societies. The emancipatory metaphor of nomadism, elaborated by de Certeau, Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari among others, interprets mobility as an escape from spatial order, as

freedom from rules and regulations;[66] such a metaphor is valuable to further illuminate our discussion on resistance, though I do not wish to romanticize nomadism as an escape from both social participation and social obligations. Rather, my analysis seeks to deploy heterotopology in order to examine Gypsy Travellers' response to centralized territorialization and capitalist spatiality. For Lefebvre, heterotopia 'delineates liminal social spaces of possibility where "some thing different" is not only possible, but foundational for the defining of revolutionary trajectories'.[67] The difference as possibility and potential toward revolutionary trajectories is a fruitful way to approach Gypsy Travellers' spatiality. Lol said: 'I am not tied down. Being a Gypsy Traveller is a way of thinking'; this statement asserts difference and at the same time defies sedentarism at its very root. Sedentarist policies cannot ultimately change her travelling ways of life – since it is more than anything else a state of mind.

The ways Gypsy Travellers relate to and conceptualize time are also crucial to explore the notion of resistance. Foucault discusses heterotopias linked 'to time in its most fleeting, transitory, precarious aspect … These heterotopies are not oriented toward the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal.'[68] Part of the fourth principle of heterotopias, these heterochronies produce another mode of ordering time in space. Gypsy Travellers' spatial logic not only defies normative spatialities, it also challenges established understanding of time. Gypsy Travellers' temporalities are anchored in the transient, in the precarious; 'Travellers do indeed "manipulate time" – through their alternative work routine that resists sedentary (/"proletarianising") control and, if nomadic, by deciding when to travel and how long to stay.'[69] The transient nature of Gypsy Travellers' sites is due to the omnipresent possibility of moving on – as Maria told me, to 'pick it [the mobile home] up and go' – thus quickly

altering the topography of an encampment. Mikey Walsh recounts how, within hours his family shifted from one site to another, from one mobile home to a new one:

> We had been in the bungalow for just over a year when our father arrived home one day with the news that a new Gypsy camp was being built a few miles from where his family was living. He had bought a plot, a brand-new trailer and a new lorry to ship us all there. … And so we packed up and moved to start a new life just a few miles from Tory Manor, in West Sussex.[70]

Mikey's family departure altered the topography and the spatial relations on both sites – the one they left and the one they moved on to. The transitory nature of these spatialities is emphasized by the fleeting temporalities that govern them: 'Slowly the camp was taking shape … Each of the families found their spot and within a few minutes the legs were wound down on the trailers and the dogs set free from the backs of the lorries.'[71] This image of trailers' legs stretched into the ground – within a few minutes – and of the site taking shape almost instantaneously represents a rupture from sedentary temporalities, whereby such transience is only conceived in the context of festivals, holiday camping, and fairgrounds. The fluidity of space and time in the nomadic logic entails resistance to normative spatio-temporal dimensions, the delimited and universalized segments of time and space that sedentarism produces. To recall Soja, such localized spatialities and infinite temporalities trace new possibilities for alternative, revolutionary directions, *other* ways to inhabit space and time.

Sacred Spaces and Mobile Homes

Nomadic spatiality can be better understood in relation to what Foucault calls sacred spaces:

> And perhaps our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down. These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred.[72]

Gypsy Travellers' sites are desanctified spaces as their logic eschews these dichotomous oppositions. For instance, there is no work-leisure distinction,[73] and often 'sites constitute workplaces as well as home places';[74] further, the opposition of public and private space is debunked and complicated by the interrelational logic which pervades Gypsy Travellers' social structures. 'The doors seem seldom closed'[75] thus blurring the division between private and public space. Maria told me: 'When we go away, we never lock the door. We don't lock the door at night. We don't lock the door if we go to the shop do we? We leave all the windows open all the time'. On a similar note, an elderly woman, Margaret, said: 'I do the washing outside, the cooking outside. It's a different way of life'; Lol added: 'most people on a site have their things outside, they have got their washing machine outside, their dryer outside. I spend more time outside this place [on the site] than I do in [the trailer]'.

Many daily tasks are performed in the open air on the site, like washing up, cooking, child-minding; such practices represent a rupture from sedentarist spatial divisions.

The family space/social space dichotomy is also mostly irrelevant to Gypsy Travellers; their familial and social structures defy such division. The extended family is key in Travellers' relations – for both work and every day life; thus, living in proximity, often on the same site, renders the familial-social division redundant. Talking about living on a site and engaging with neighbours, Maria explained to me:

> You could walk round the corner and see somebody familiar to yourself. As long as there is Travelling people around me. … There is always somebody at the window or somebody you can say hello to. That's why I like it better here. Somebody just comes in and have a cup of tea. I wouldn't have it any other way. There is always somebody stopping over. Because everybody knows one another. It is all very close-knit. Even people you don't know, you know of them.

Lol said: 'If there is a slight chance you don't know some of them or their breed, before you turn around you know all of their family, their children, their husbands, their wives.' The ubiquitous presence of familiarity is enhanced by the fact that knowing others or knowing of others is based on interrelations – those who are not related to you but belong to a respected Traveller family automatically become part of the circle. Also, it is common practice among Gypsy Travellers to address an elder or somebody older than yourself as 'uncle' or 'aunty' – this custom, based on respect and reverence, effectively extends and blurs the familial over and into the social.

Foucault's heterotopology also includes a discussion of the relations between heterotopias and 'all the space that remains. … Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory'.[76] Gypsy Travellers' sites, as heterotopias, offer alternative spatialities which both challenge and expose all other sites where life is 'partitioned', delimited and enclosed, revealing their illusory nature. Such heterotopias create 'another real place, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill-constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia of compensation.'[77] Gypsy Travellers' dwellings – trailers, chalets and other types of mobile home – compensate the brutal enclosure of capitalist space and create *other places* which are perfect, meticulous, well-arranged places. Mikey Walsh's account of trailers seems to encapsulate heightened forms of compensation:

> Their trailers were monstrosities, created to mimic miniature palaces. Garish, flamboyant and overtly camp, we couldn't move for polished steel, mirrored cabinets and chrome. Every surface was carved from white, polished timber with a mirrored effect, and not one cupboard was without a glass window, so that the woman of the house could display her Crown Derby.[78]

Like small palaces, trailers are fashioned as perfect, well arranged places – often anthropomorphised; these dwellings are both home and transport and define living spaces. Within the emotional and physical nomadic spaces, mobile homes represent perfect 'real places'.

There is a plethora of literature on Gypsy Travellers' relations to mobile

homes – especially about those who are in effect 'settled' (moving only for vacation) but still prefer mobile dwellings to a brick and mortar home. In *Gypsy Boy* Mikey recalls the story of his grandfather who had been housed among brick walls: 'but after three days Granddad, miserable in a home that didn't have wheels, refused to live in it any longer'.[79] The wheel-less home instilled misery in the old man. Indeed, in their ethnographic study Levinson and Sparkes observed a

> dislike of houses, despite the extra facilities, and a preference for caravans or trailers, on both physical grounds and because of connotations. Physically, it seems, increased space can feel like a loss of space. … Houses are associated with constraints and loss of freedom.[80]

Many of the women I interviewed were very clear about the set of spatial and emotional relations surrounding mobile homes:

> Lol: 'In a chalet you have the comfort of a house, you have the work around you, and you have to the people around you.'
>
> Maria: 'I wouldn't like to be stuck in a house. …. It's to do with being together'.
>
> Margaret: 'In a house it will be too lonely. Here there is somebody you can turn to. In a house you feel shut off. The chalet is good; it is in between house and trailer. It's a good in-between medium. You are surrounded by bricks and walls in a house. … I couldn't be in a house, I would miss my relatives. I would feel lonely. In a house you are too cut off. … You can move these [chalet], you cannot move a house.'

From these extracts mobile homes are perceived and experienced as both safe havens and places of relations, they are sites which enable travel, both spatial as well as imaginary. As Lol said, one day you might want to think 'hang on, I have had enough of this, let's pack up and shift'. Sensory deprivation characterizes Gypsy Travellers' perceptions of brick and mortar dwellings: 'feeling trapped; feeling cut off from social contact; a sense of dislocation from the past; feelings of claustrophobia'.[81]

Mobile homes exemplify the ultimate example of heterotopia; like trains – discussed by Foucault in 'of Other Spaces' – trailers, caravans and chalets are 'sites of transportation'; '(a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is something that goes by)'.[82] Gypsy Travellers' mobile dwellings are both a home as well as a means of transportation, they defy dominant discursive categories and – in truly heterotopical terms – embody the juxtaposition of incompatible terms. Referring to her mobile home Margaret said: 'here you are in a long place. … Windows remind you of the outside, they remind you of the olden days singing and sitting outside. It is convenient'. The focus on shape ('a long place') in this spatial perception alludes to what Deleuze and Guattari have termed a 'nonlimited locality': the mobile home, with its long shape, aligns itself to the horizon and blends within it, thus failing to delimit space. Windows operate as both a reminder of the outside as well as of the past travelling life, when mobility was not curbed. Such dwelling hosts the potentials to being in other places at once – it conjugates in its shape home and travel, spatial and metaphoric movement. Foucault's essay 'Of Other Spaces' concludes with a heterotopological analysis of the boat.

> The boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea … the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development, but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. The ship is the heterotopia *par excellence*. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and police takes the place of pirates.[83]

This evocative image of the boat as heterotopia, as a place without a place, closed on itself and yet consigned to the boundlessness of open spaces, suitably fits the notion of mobile home. The ship is 'a richly ambivalent vessel … it is an emplacement that is enclosed and yet open to the outside … The ship not only visits different spaces, it reflects and incorporates them.'[84] Similarly, a mobile home visits different spaces and all the same encompasses all these sites within itself. Like the boat, a mobile home for Travellers is a 'reserve of the imagination', it involves the anticipation of movement, imaginary travel, it triggers memories of spatial travel and, by definition, it embodies the possibility of dislocation, as Deleuze and Guattari have it, some 'voyages take place *in situ*, are trips in intensity'.[85]

Foucault warns that 'in civilizations without boats, dreams dry up' – similarly, without mobile homes, Gypsy Travellers' imaginary (and corporeal) travel would cease, their associations with a traditional lifestyle would be severed. At the mere thought of being surrounded by brick walls Lol said: 'Once you are behind that door you are behind that door … It's a freedom thing'. Gypsy Traveller's mobility enables

freedom – both spatial and imaginary, it offers the opportunity to set off different kinds of journeys. It interrogates and illuminates sedentary practices and proposes alternatives ways to inhabit and dwell in space.

* I am grateful to Mary Hendry for introducing me to these wonderful heterotopic realities and for allowing me entry into these 'spaces'; to Lol and Amalia for their time and wise words, and to all the women I interviewed.

[1] P. Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 252.
[2] P. Kabachnik, 'To choose, fix, or ignore culture? The cultural politics of Gypsy and Traveler mobility in England', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 10:4 (2009), pp. 461-479, on p. 464.
[3] Ibid., p. 467.
[4] R.Shields, *Lefebvre, love and struggle: spatial dialectics* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 165.
[5] Lefebvre 1978b: 288; cited in Shields p. 168.
[6] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation* (Cambridge, London: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 146.
[7] Kabachnik, p. 465.
[8] According to Liegeois and Gheorghe, the term 'Gypsy' is 'used to denote ethnic groups formed by the dispersal of commercial, nomadic and other groups from within India from the tenth century, and their mixing with European and other groups during their Diaspora'. 'Traveller' is ' a member of any of the (predominantly) indigenous European ethnic groups ... whose culture is characterized, inter-alia, by self-employment, occupational fluidity, and nomadism. These groups have been influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, by ethnic groups of (predominantly) Indian origin with a similar cultural base'. J.P. Liegeois and N. Gheorghe, *Roma/Gypsies: A European Minority* (London: Minority Rights Group Report S., 1995) on p. 6. In this chapter I refer to the travelling communities in Britain and employ the term 'Gypsy Traveller'. Whilst acknowledging the heterogeneity of such communities, I am aware that labeling can be problematic; however, 'Gypsy Traveller' thus far is the most widely accepted terminology by travelling communities themselves.
[9] This entails semi-structured interviews with 15 Gypsy Travellers women (in this chapter I have used both pseudonyms and real names). Interviews were conducted on sites in England and Scotland between 2011-2014. The gendered dimension of this data is mainly dictated by the fact that as a female researcher, gaining access to women was more feasible.
[10] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/17/books/gypsy-boy-a-memoir-by-mikey-walsh.html (accessed August 2014).
[11] This methodological choice, which includes both ethnographic data as well as a published autobiographical account, stems from the reflection that one set of material complements the other. Where interviews tend to focus more on the personal perception of space, and on the ways space is individually experienced, the memoir provides actual descriptions of spaces and places, sites and dwellings.
[12] Deleuze and Guattari, *New Nietzsche*, p. 146.
[13] S. Shubin '"Where Can a Gypsy Stop?" Rethinking Mobility in Scotland', *Antipode* 43: 2 (2011), pp. 494–524, on p. 498.
[14] Kabachnik, p. 467.
[15] J. Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
[16] D. Kenrick and C. Clark, *Moving On: the Gypsies and Travellers of Britain* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press 1999), p. 29.

[17] S. Shubin and K. Swanson '"I'm an imaginary figure": Unravelling the mobility and marginalization of Scottish Gypsy Travellers', *Geoforum*, 41: 6 (2010), pp. 919-929, on p. 921.
[18] Ibid., p. 922.
[19] R. Mckinney, 'Views from the margins: Gypsy/Travellers and the ethnicity debate in the new Scotland', *Scottish Affairs*, 42 (2003), p. 13-31, on p. 23.
[20] Mayall 1988, 1995; Fraser 1992; Sibley 1981; Clark and Greenfileds 2006; Kabachnik and Ryder 2013.
[21] Shubin and Swanson, p. 924.
[22] Among prominent examples in the West we can recall Italy's recent crackdown on its nomads with the dismantling of Gypsy sites in the peripheries of Rome (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7893536.stm). Sarkozy's France also came up with a very controversial policy of expulsion which forcibly removed and deported hundreds of Roma Gypsies – effectively EU citizens – back to Romania (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11020429). Curbing nomadism, in these specific examples, is associated with improved security, and ultimately with offering nomads 'better' opportunities.
[23] Kabachnik, p. 46.
[24] Deleuze and Guattari, *New Nietzsche*, p. 146.
[25] Shubin and Swanson, p. 921.
[26] By 'legal' spaces it is intended authorized encampments either privately owned or run by a city council.
[27] M. Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1986), pp. 22-7, on p. 22.
[28] Lefebvre 1970b: 261–2, cited in Shields p. 180.
[29] I. Tyler, *Revolting Subjects* (London: Zed Books, 2013), p. 2.
[30] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 380.
[31] Italics appear in the original.
[32] Ibid., p. 380.
[33] Ibid., p. 382.
[34] Foucault, p. 25.
[35] M. P. Levinson and A. C. Sparkes, 'Gypsy Identity and Orientations to Space' *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 33:6 (2004), pp. 704-734, on p. 713.
[36] A. Bancroft, '"No Interest in Land": Legal and Spatial Enclosure of Gypsy-Travellers in Britain', *Space and Polity*, 4:1 (2000), pp. 41-56, on p. 41.
[37] Levinson and Sparkes, p. 723.
[38] M. Foucault, 'Theatrum philosophicum', in D. F. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-memory, Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977) on p. 355.
[39] G. Doron, '"… those marvellous empty zones on the edge of our cities": heterotopia and the zone"' in M. Dehaene and L. De Cauter (eds), *Heterotopia and the city: public space in a postcivil society* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 204-207, on p. 204.
[40] Doron explains this concept as follows: 'I have been using the term 'dead zone' (translated from Hebrew), which was taken from planners' jargon and more specifically from a discussion about a regeneration plan that will be mentioned below, to indicate a gap, if not a total break, between the signifier and the signified. (Doron, p. 204).
[41] M. Walsh, *Gypsy Boy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2009), p. 157-186.
[42] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus,* p. 381.
[43] Walsh, p. 79.
[44] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus,* p. 381.
[45] M. Cenzatti, 'Heterotopias of difference' in M. Dehaene and L. De Cauter (eds), *Heterotopia and the city: public space in a postcivil society* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 75-86, on p. 77.
[46] Walsh, p. 113.
[47] My emphasis.
[48] Foucault, p. 25.
[49] H. Sohn, 'Heterotopia: anamnesis of a medical term' in M. Dehaene and L. De Cauter (eds), *Heterotopia and the city: public space in a postcivil society* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 41-50, on p. 47.
[50] Foucault, p. 26.
[51] Okely, 1983.
[52] C. Karner, 'Theorising Power and Resistance among "Travellers"', *Social Semiotics* 14:3 (2004), pp. 249-271, on p. 262.

[53] M. Greenfields and D. M. Smith, 'Housed Gypsy Travellers, Social Segregation And The Reconstruction Of Communities', *Housing Studies*, 25:3 (2010), pp. 397–422, on p. 406.
[54] For Gypsy Travellers 'Gorgia' or 'Gorgio' designates non travelling people.
[55] Levinson and Sparkes, p. 730.
[56] E. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 67.
[57] Channel 4 broadcasted the documentary series *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* from 2011 till 2014; a controversial programme – for the ways it represents the Gypsy Traveller communities – it sparked debates across the country and ignited a remarkable interest in the subject. BBC TV and Radio also produced several programmes about Gypsy Travellers.
[58] D. Papadopoulos, N. Stephenson, and V. Tsianos, *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the 21st Century*, (London: Pluto Press, 2008).
[59] Tyler, p. 11.
[60] Ibid., p. 2.
[61] Imogen Tyler identifies among the 'revolting subjects' in contemporary neo-liberal Britain Gypsy Travellers, migrants and refugees, the working classes.
[62] Ibid., p. 12.
[63] Cenzatti, p. 82.
[64] S. Kendall, 'Sites of resistance: Places on the margin – The Traveller "homeplace"' in T. Acton (ed), *Gypsy politics and Traveller identity* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), pp. 70-89, on p. 75.
[65] Karner, p. 265.
[66] Shubin 2011, p. 498.
[67] D. Harvey, *Rebel City* (London: Verso, 2012), p. xxvii.
[68] Foucault, p. 26.
[69] Karner, p. 263.
[70] Walsh, p. 77.
[71] Ibid., p. 81, 156.
[72] Foucault, p. 23.
[73] Okely, p. 49.
[74] Levinson and Sparkes, p. 725.
[75] Ibid., p. 729.
[76] Foucault, p. 27.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Walsh, p. 149.
[79] Ibid., p. 28.
[80] Levinson and Sparkes, p. 719.
[81] Ibid., p. 721.
[82] Foucault, p. 23-4.
[83] Ibid., p. 27.
[84] P. Johnson, 'Unravelling Foucault's "different spaces"', *History of the Human Sciences*, 19:4 (2006), pp. 75-90, on p. 80.
[85] Deleuze and Guattari, *New Nietzsche*, p. 146.