Is Nomadism the 'problem'? The social construction of Gypsies and Travellers as perpetrators of 'anti-social' behaviour in Britain

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Introduction

When it comes to defining and theorising 'anti-social' behaviour in relation to Gypsies and Travellers in Britain, there is no shortage of historical and contemporary sources.[1] Today, in the Houses of Parliament and on the front pages of tabloid newspapers, in small town council meetings or live talk show radio programmes, everyone seems to have a view to share on the 'problems' caused by Gypsies and Travellers and their 'anti-social' behaviours. Wherever and whenever a new Gypsy site is in development or a roadside encampment appears on the outskirts of town, a well-worn accusatory list of 'anti-social behaviours' – litter, tax avoidance, noise, crime, welfare fraud, illiteracy and truancy – is circulated and signed (Clark and Cemlyn, 2005; Clark and Greenfields, 2006). It is accurate to state that the vast majority of views are overwhelmingly negative when it comes to public discourses about Gypsies and Travellers (Powell, 2007; Richardson, 2006). Behind statements of their inherent asociality, lies a deep suspicion over their (presumed) mobility, with their marginalisation regarded as a 'natural' consequence of their nomadism and perceived lack of 'attachment' to fixed' local geographies (Shubin and Swanson, 2010).

Consequently, this chapter examines and challenges perceived notions of anti-social behaviour amongst Gypsy and Traveller populations within a wider context of urbanisation, settlement and social change in Victorian and contemporary Britain. Consistently, government policies have sought to draw links between Gypsies and Travellers and anti-social behaviour, especially those communities with a more nomadic way of life. For example, in 2010 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued guidance that applied pressure on local authorities to deal with issues such as 'fly-tipping, noise, straying livestock and untaxed vehicles' (Irvine, 2010). Despite containing the caveat that 'only a small minority of Gypsies and Travellers behave anti-socially' (DCLG, 2010: 5),

[1] We appreciate that there are many contested definitions of Gypsy and Traveller populations; definitions employed in the literature, as well as those used within the diverse communities themselves. In this chapter, we mainly discuss Gypsies of English and Welsh descent who have Romany ancestry. We also discuss Irish and Scottish Travellers who are nomadic ethnic groups with their own identity, culture, language and history. What is important here is that all the above groups are recognised in law as being minority ethnic groups, protected by Race Relations and Equalities legislation (Equalities Act, 2010). For a much wider discussion of such definitional matters please refer to chapter 1 of the text by Clark and Greenfields (2006).

the guidance went on to say, in the same sentence, that 'the *mobile nature* of some in this community can present particular challenges in dealing with problems' (authors' emphasis). In Britain today, Gypsy and Traveller populations are regarded as having no legitimate 'place' in society, with their presence automatically signalling the arrival of anti-social behaviour. So, is the conclusion to be drawn that to be nomadic is to be anti-social? It is this fundamental question we address in the chapter: to trace the development from the nineteenth century of the association of anti-social behaviour with Gypsies and Travellers, and their status as modern-day 'folk devils' (Kabachnik and Ryder, 2013). This allows us to get behind normative assumptions over the innate nature of their presumed asociality, and instead show how such attitudes emerged as a result of the confluence of particular socio-economic trends and cultural understandings from the mid-nineteenth century, which by the end of the twentieth century had become firmly entrenched.

What is 'anti-social' about behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour is both subjective and felt, both public and personal. It is also taken to be both a problem in itself, and dangerous because of the fear that, if allowed to take hold in certain environments, it will lead to more 'serious' criminal behaviour emerging (Kelling and Wilson, 1982; DCLG, 2010). However, what is considered 'anti-social' by one person or group may very well be deemed to be 'sociable' by another individual or group. While typically expressed in normative terms, in fact dominant understandings of 'anti-social behaviour' are profoundly influenced by historical and social context, place and time, community tolerance and quality of life expectations (Nixon et al, 2003).

It is worth briefly reflecting on Stanley Cohen's classic study, *Folks Devils and Moral Panics* (1972). In this seminal text he argued that a 'panic' occurs when there is an identifiable 'threat,' whether real or perceived, and whether arising via a group or an episode, to established societal norms, interests and (usually conservative) values. Such 'panics' occur when a localised or national 'concern' emerges that identifies a group as being detrimental to the 'good' of a society. Often this concern is demonstrated and vocalised in overtly hostile and confrontational ways, through illustrating that 'they' are not like 'us' (Thompson, 1998). This is often perpetuated and legitimised at all levels of society: politicians, local councillors, the press and other agencies can all act to reinforce, condone and legitimise the vilification of 'folk devils.' Once a consensus is reached, whereby the

majority of the population agree that members of a certain identifiable group are 'folk devils' who pose a 'threat' to society then action, in the form of draconian policies, legislation, practices, occurs to dampen the 'threat.' More often than not, the weight and consequences of the action are disproportionate to the perceived 'threat' (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994). In such a context, the aim is not to tackle any underlying material issues which may have caused the initial situation, such as youth unemployment, but rather to radically reinforce established societal norms.

Although Cohen's example was focussed around youth culture and the media (the 'Mods and the Rockers' of the 1960s on the South coast of England), his theoretical framework can usefully analyse the position of Gypsies and Travellers in Britain. They habitually face extreme scorn and contempt, while often doing little more than trying to find a place to stay, engage in self-employment practices, such as recycling work, tarmacking or landscape gardening, and raise their children. By turning now to the Victorian period, we can see how Gypsies and Travellers' 'folk devil' status while always present, started to become increasingly associated with particular 'anti-social activities' relating to public health and particular behaviours.

Gypsies and Travellers in Victorian Britain

From around the sixteenth century, the British state demonstrated its disquiet with both vagrancy and nomadism through enacting legislation against 'sturdy beggars' and 'counterfeit Egyptians' (Beier, 1986). Part of a broader project against the so-called 'idle poor,' it was also shot through with a profound mistrust of nomadism per se, with nomads being seen as intrinsically untrustworthy and challenging of established hierarchies:

> [...] nomads were seen as offering the worst face of an unacceptable society with their lawlessness, heathenism, promiscuity and barbarism […] what is more this section of the population presented the amoral face of an uncivilised society, lacking any religion, ignoring acceptable codes of decency and engaging in all forms of promiscuous behaviour (Mayall, 2004: 60).

Such attitudes may have deep roots, but this does not mean they have been entirely historically static. The Industrial Revolution and the consequent rapid urbanisation of Britain in the nineteenth century profoundly altered not only the economy, but also the nation's geography and how it was understood. By 1851, over half of Britons lived in towns and

cities, a phenomenon which not only created chaotic and sprawling urban spaces, but also led to the countryside becoming the repository for ideas of a stable and idyllic rural past (Mayall, 2004).

Within this context of urbanisation and social change, 'Gypsies' became entangled with both the search for the meaning of landscape in the nation's psyche, and legislative attempts to regulate the physical problems engendered by such rapid urban change (Taylor, 2011; 2014). Motivated as much by preoccupations of the society which was about to be lost, as a desire to understand the lives of Gypsies, a movement of amateur 'gentlemen scholars,' self-styled gypsiologists emerged. Artists such as Augustus John, and leading writers like Francis Hindes Groome (1881) developed an interest in recording the origins, language and customs of Britain's Gypsies and Travellers.

Gypsiologists were much less concerned with recording the realities of day-to-day lives of their subjects in late-Victorian Britain, than with Gypsies' ancestry and with developing theories which tied 'pure' blood lines to 'uncorrupted' Romani language use and 'proper' nomadic living. They defined Britain's 'true' Gypsy population as fluent Romani speakers living, still (but precariously) untouched on commons or byways in their bow-topped caravan, grazing horses, making and selling traditional crafts. At the same time, gypsiologists lamented the disappearance of the 'real pure-blooded' Gypsies under the pressures of urbanisation and modernity: for them the often squalid urban encampments found in towns and cities could not be populated by 'true Gypsies,' but rather by various half-bred 'didikais,' or mumpers (vagrants perceived as having little or no 'Gypsy blood') who they viewed with scorn and contempt:

> […] the Romany notwithstanding his boasted superiority to the peg-peddling 'mumpers' has degenerated, and likes to spend the winter months in the neighbourhood of a town […]. The real country – the unfrequented by-roads, the fields, the out-of-the-way hamlets – suits him well enough in summer, for then he can occupy himself after his own mysterious fashion (Brotherton Special Collection, Leeds, DUR Cuttings, Vol. 1, 65: 'KM,' 'A Romany Chal,' 9 Aug 1907).

Such 'degeneration' was viewed by gypsiologists as the beginning of the end for their desired 'true Romanies.' Given the paucity of engagement with, or solid research into, Gypsy and Traveller communities until the 1960s, the writings of gypsiologists were to have a disproportionate effect on both popular and official understandings of their culture.

There was one other source of writings on Gypsies in Victorian Britain: this period saw a growing band of reformers, educationalists and local authority officials who were offended by Gypsies' continued existence in a modern and civilised nation. Writings of this period cast them as an anachronistic and unwelcome presence in a Britain which increasingly set store by its housing, welfare and sanitary legislation:

> Gipsy idleness, gipsy frauds, gipsy cruelty, gipsy filth, gipsy lies, gipsy thefts, gipsy cheating, gipsy fornication, gipsy adultery, are looked down upon by all enlightened Englishmen and Christians […]. And he who encourages they gipsies in this wrong doing is an enemy to the State, an enemy to God, an enemy to Christianity, and an enemy to himself (Smith, 1882: 209).

Added to this were commonly expressed sentiments that not only were Gypsies and Travellers escaping the controls and taxes which were becoming a fact of modern life, but that they also threatened emerging norms of public respectability and private property – this was another clear strand to Gypsy and Traveller associations with anti-social behaviour. Although such sentiments were initially most pronounced in the Home Counties (Taylor, 2008), they were by no means confined to the more over-crowded parts of England, as revealed by the following incident in the small Scottish settlement of Kincraig, in the Scottish Cairngorms.

In the summer of 1883, a local shopkeeper, Mr Grant, deciding how it was 'very gratifying and profitable that the villas at Kincraig are highly held in the estimation of visitors,' bought land and built a villa in order to rent it to summer visitors to supplement his income. Meeting with early success, he rented out two villas in the village for the summer season to a Dr Little from India and Sir Auchland and Lady Dunbar. Knowing that the village was visited every year by Scots Travellers, and anxious that 'the purity of the air by all means ought to be preserved,' he fenced off their old camping ground, which could subsequently only be accessed through a locked gate. However, the Travellers, on arrival gained entry to their old grounds, and proceeded to stay there, as usual, for the remainder of the summer. Their presence triggered a bout of correspondence between Grant and the local laird: while he positioned the 'wretched Tinkers' as 'prowling thieves' (without offering any evidence to support this), the main focus of his ire was the 'dirty effluvia of the Tinker Camp and its Surroundings' (National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh GD176/2629 and /2631, letters from Donald Grant to Alan MacDonald, 20 Jun & 10 Aug 1883). It was their presence, different use of space and how this conflicted with his image of Kincraig as an

ideal spot for genteel visitors which was the main issue at stake. Although a small incident in itself, it can be seen as both emblematic of the growing influence of 'respectable' householders and their concern for property and appearance, as well as a foretaste of the century to come.

Attempts to pass versions of Moveable Dwellings Bills, which sought to regulate the sanitary aspects of living vehicles and tents, as well as requiring Gypsies and Travellers to be registered, were efforts to control or harass nomadic families out of local areas. Likewise, sanitary sections of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1885 and a host of local by-laws were used in a similar fashion: as means to control rather than improve the day-to-day lives of Gypsies and Travellers. Indeed, the Chief Constable of Berkshire in his evidence to the 1906 Committee on Vagrancy, made the repressive nature of the legislation explicit when he stated that 'we are running them out very fast by means of the sanitary conditions which are being imposed upon them […] at Ascot we have nearly run them out altogether' (Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, 1906: 4818-4822).

Here we need to pay attention to the classed nature of reactions to Gypsy and Traveller populations; something present throughout the period under investigation. Although gypsiologists might have depicted Gypsies as separate from the humdrum of modern life; and while reformers, landowners and the aspirant classes focussed on their deviancy from the norm, the reality of Gypsy and Traveller lives were that they were intimately bound up with the settled community, and particularly the working classes. Arthur Harding's classic account of the East End of London underworld at the beginning of the twentieth century revealed in passing how Gypsies and Travellers were part of the everyday fabric of poor urban life (Samuel, 1981). Gypsies lived in peri-urban encampments or even cheap lodging in cities over winter alongside working-class populations, making and hawking goods, moving in regular circuits across the countryside in the spring and summer, picking up seasonal work, hawking and attending fairs:

> The annual round of farm work began in late spring with hop training and throughout the summer and autumn Gypsy Travellers moved from farm to farm as each crop needed harvesting. Cherries, strawberries, blackcurrants during high summer as well as peas, beans and other vegetables were needed to be quickly gathered in as they ripened. The hops were ready in September followed by apples and pears in the autumn and potato picking up in early winter […] Places like Yalding Lees or Hothfield Common near Ashford were traditional stopping places where Gypsy families might stop for a day or two before moving on. During the winter months most local Travellers would find a place to stop on the

edge of the larger towns or the urban fringes of south east London where there were large traditional stopping places that had been used by Travellers for generations (BBC, 2005).

Far from being 'a separate people,' their economic survival in fact depended on close interaction with the wider population (Clark, 2002; Okely, 1983). More than this, their lifestyles, if nomadic, were not so far from those of the poorer working classes: both had common experiences of over-crowded, often damp accommodation with no running water and inadequate heating, and were governed by the capriciousness of landlords; levels of literacy were still low and experiences of education by and large alienating; and work was often temporary, seasonal with household livelihoods a precarious 'economy of makeshifts.' Consequently, while the rhetoric of 'Gypsy deviance' (or anti-social behaviour in today's parlance) existed, and was being perpetuated and reinforced by Victorian elites, writers and reformers, it was competing with an everyday lived experience which suggested otherwise.

The build up to 1994

Moving forward a hundred years, to the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it is clear that the trends which emerged in the late-Victorian period – the idea of the 'pure-blooded' Gypsy *vs* the deviant 'didikai'; the growing importance of regulation and ideas of social and environmental conformity – have become firmly entrenched in British society. For its Gypsy and Traveller populations, this has been little short of catastrophic. Put briefly, Gypsies and Travellers in the post-war period modernised alongside the rest of society, but crucially the changes in their lifestyle removed what settled society understood as the markers of 'true' Gypsies (living in bow topped caravans, speaking 'pure' Romani etc.). These iconic images increasingly became the rod with which their backs were consistently beaten: failing to conform to romantic expectations, the stereotypes most often deployed within settled society were the negative ones relating to anti-social behaviour and a failure to conform to the standards of 'normal' society (Morris, 1999). In popular understanding 'real' Gypsies lived in bow-topped caravans, travelled the countryside, and were socially acceptable; 'dids,' 'pikies,' 'travellers' living in modern trailers, who dealt in scrap metal, thievery and are a violent threat to society, are beyond the pale. Such fanciful distinctions, as Thomas Acton (1974) has consistently argued, have been used as much by government as the communities themselves. Officials have consistently argued that services and policy

provision must only be made for the 'real' Gypsies, whilst for Gypsies and Travellers themselves it allows for the creation of internalised hierarchies and creative 'victim-blaming': it is always the 'fake' Travellers on the roadside encampments that are causing the noise, litter and crime, and never the 'genuine' ethnic Romanies on the established private or local authority sites (Clark and Greenfields, 2006).

The inuring of these attitudes has its roots in the material changes of British society after 1945. The new planning system produced local development plans with no space for caravan pitches, while spawning the massive post-war house-building programme which progressively encroached on many of the long-established peri-urban Gypsy and Traveller camps. This vastly reduced the number of traditional camping grounds, and provoked a crisis of stopping places for mobile Gypsies and Travellers, which was only partly solved by the Caravan Sites Act 1968. This required local authorities to provide sites for the Gypsies and Travellers living in, or habitually using their districts, but did not provide a timescale in which this should happen. While these official sites helped ease matters, they were primarily built in marginal, non-residential areas, such as beside motorways, municipal tips or power stations. Such unattractive locations were both a reflection of, and reinforced, settled society's idea of Gypsies and Travellers as 'outsiders' in urban society (Sibley, 1981).

On top of difficulties with stopping places, patterns of work changed too, and in ways which increased the potential for friction with the settled community. A move towards scrap dealing and trade in higher value items diminished women's economic roles, just at the time when they were expanding in other communities (Okely, 1983). Crucially, it also shifted daily door-to-door and face-to-face interactions to more valuable, but less frequent economic transactions. This simultaneously reduced everyday contact between Gypsies and Travellers and majority society, as well as necessitating the storage of scrap and other materials for trade, which were seen by settled communities as unsightly 'rubbish.' When added to the overall lack of stopping places, this resulted in Gypsies and Travellers spending more time in one place, thus increasingly their visibility and heightening the potential for conflict.

A widening gap between their style of living and mainstream society, a reduction in everyday, economic and unproblematic interactions and their growing physical isolation on ghettoised official sites, all reinforced a sense of alienation. In popular imagination, Travellers became 'delinquent predators' on settled communities, bringing criminality, tax evasion, welfare fraud, rubbish and anti-social behaviour, with their presence to be resisted

at any price – within this their nomadism has become a perpetual focus for scorn and blame (McVeigh, 1997). Indeed, although the 1968 Act was welcomed by Gypsies and Travellers in England and Wales as a means for them to be able to continue a nomadic way of life in increasingly difficult circumstances, in fact the authorities had largely only accepted its measures because it was presented as a means towards Travellers' assimilation into settled society: local authorities who provided sufficient pitches could 'designate' the rest of their area as 'caravan-free', while the existence of official pitches served to further delegitimise those who were forced – through the national and local shortage of pitches – to resort to unofficial stopping places.

1994 and the end of the road?

It is in this context that we can place the passing of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 by the then Conservative Government led by John Major. Although framed to 'deal with' so-called 'New Age' Travellers and the free festival culture, the Act identified all nomadic populations as 'folk devils' at odds with the Conservative values of the day, as well as transgressing the 'spatial order' of the English 'ruryl idyll' countryside (Clark, 1997; Halfacree, 2006). Clear lines were drawn to enforce 'trespass' in the countryside as a criminal, not civil, offence and crucially that the duty on local authorities to provide Gypsy sites in their areas was removed (James, 2007). In its place was the stated aim of requiring Gypsies and Travellers to take responsibility for buying and developing their own land, with the then Conservative government asserting that the planning system was 'perfectly capable' of facilitating adequate site provision (Home, 2006).

Those opposing the legislation argued that leaving the local planning system to determine individual site applications would make the vicious cycle of unauthorised stopping and increasingly violent evictions worse. Indeed this proved to be the case: local authorities, many of whom had already proved reluctant to build under the Caravan Sites Act 1968, were now expected to decide individual planning applications in the face of intense community hostility. Work by Robert Home (2006) shows that on average, 90 per cent of Gypsy and Traveller applications were rejected at first presentation and a rapidly growing number faced eviction from their own land for breach of planning regulations, so by 2006 there were around 1,200 such sites subject to council enforcement action. In addition, most local authorities stopped building new sites and many allowed existing ones to fall into

disrepair, with a net loss of 596 pitches in the seven years after 1995, out of an total of 3,271 (Home, 2006: 87). Such insecurity fed into all areas of Gypsy and Travellers' lives: by the beginning of the new century their life expectancy was on average ten years lower than the majority population, and that the most comprehensive health research carried out with the communities showed that insecure accommodation was consistently and intimately tied up with their poor health status (Cleemput and Parry, 2001; Parry et al, 2004). Indeed, as Ruth Lister (2006) has forcefully argued, Gypsies and Travellers occupy a 'second class citizenship status' in contemporary Britain.

Yet, while *we* would emphasise the importance of understanding the marginalized position of Gypsies and Travellers in contemporary British society within the context of the very real material constraints, the way it was articulated by many politicians and the press was almost exclusively via a discourse of anti-social behaviour. Despite the massive constraints and difficulties the majority face in securing pitches, it is the perennial and contested issue of their mobility and accommodation 'preferences' which remains the focus for blame. Since their inception in the late 1960's, official sites have become loci of hate campaigns, while the arrival of a group of Gypsies and Travellers on an unofficial stopping place is sufficient to generate instant hysteria among the local settled population:

> […] things are getting worse. Even getting a bit of land is difficult. We go round in a convoy and sometimes we get ten to fifteen of us on the bit of land and the police come and stop the rest of us getting on […]. Sometimes they dig a trench all round with JCB diggers and say we can't get off unless we take our caravans with us. Well we're trapped then. Can't take out cars to get food even and we can't get out to get to work […] there was one morning at six o'clock when they had warrants to search for firearms and we were all out of the trailers standing in a row while they searched […]. Sometimes people are ill: one time they hitched up a trailer and the midwife looked out and said that a baby was going to be born […]. The local people we don't see directly but a few have waved sticks at us when we try to get onto a piece of land but […] [the] worst is what the papers say about us. People panic automatically when we first arrive and too much is written in the papers to frighten people against us (DOE, 1982: Appendix 3, Gypsy Traveller witness).

Note here the speaker's reference to what is 'written in the papers': since the 1960s, the falling-off in everyday face-to-face encounters between settled society and Gypsies and Travellers meant that the press was increasingly acting as 'key informant' for most of settled society's opinions of Gypsy and Traveller communities has become paramount. Indeed, a 2004 MORI poll conducted for Stonewall of British attitudes towards Gypsies/Travellers, refugees/asylum seekers, 'ethnic minorities' and gay or lesbian people found that Gypsies

and Travellers were the group respondents were most likely to feel 'less positive towards' (35 per cent) (Valentine and McDonald, 2004). Crucially, the 'two groups identified as the most threatening, asylum seekers [34 per cent] and Travellers, were the only two groups with whom most interviewees had had no contact.' The media was for many respondents the source of their knowledge and opinions. Forty-three per cent said television influenced their views of refugees and asylum seekers and 40 per cent cited newspapers (Valentine and McDonald, 2004: 17-18).

Coverage of sites has created, arguably, the worst excesses of racism in Parliament and the British national print and broadcasting press (Turner, 2002; Halfacree, 2006; Holloway, 2005), with *The Sun's* 'Stamp on the Camps' campaign (2005) creating a furore both inside and outside Parliament. The campaign was prompted by a then draft Labour government circular which was depicted as evidence that the government (and John Prescott in particular, as Deputy Prime Minister) was 'going soft' on Gypsies and Travellers and giving them 'special treatment' to create 'eyesores' in the countryside (Barkham, 2005). Seemingly, the automatic equation in the minds of the public of the presence of Gypsies and Travellers with anti-social behaviour was revealed in an ICM poll for *The Sunday Express* ('Cut council tax bill if Gypsies can live near our houses,' *Sunday Express* 23 January 2005, 50). It suggested that almost three-quarters of 'householders' believed they should pay lower council tax if Gypsies 'set up camp' nearby and that they should get a reduction to compensate for any slump in their house prices caused by 'gypsy blight.' More than a third were 'incensed' at current government policy and law enforcement, believing 'gypsies have more rights than others to set up home wherever they choose;' while 63 per cent said 'Labour's stance on gypsies' was 'lacking in common sense' and 'ruled by political correctness and fear of accusations of racism.'

Indeed, the common perception during the thirteen years of 'New Labour' rule (1997-2010) was that the government considered the accommodation and welfare needs of Gypsies and Travellers on local authority, private and roadside sites before the needs of 'settled' residents living in houses. This inaccurate perception is one reason for the current Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government's 'tough' stance on Gypsies and Travellers since coming to power in May 2010: a stance that aims to remove perceived 'special favours' in planning regulations from Gypsies and Travellers applying to develop a private site. According to Ryder et al (2012: 1) the Coalition's approach to Gypsies and

Travellers is '[…] hierarchical, does not engage with or adequately promote community groups and opposes forms of positive action; as a consequence of localism it is reluctant to endorse central government interventions' (Ryder et al, 2012: 1). Indeed, Royal Assent has been granted to the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill and although this piece of legislation, which will become law in May 2014, does not specifically mention Gypsies and Travellers in its content, the far-reaching definition of what constitutes 'nuisance and annoyance' could clearly be employed with regard to roadside encampments and private site developments. A further clue as to future Coalition plans in this area was signalled in a recent debate over at Westminster Hall (Tuesday 4 February 2014) where Conservative Andrew Selous' debate on Gypsy and Traveller planning policy included discussion on changing the current legal definition of who he termed 'travellers.' Selous and other contributors to the debate deployed an argument which would have found favour with Victorian gypsiologists, arguing that only those Gypsies and Travellers who are 'genuinely' nomadic should be classified as Gypsies and Travellers (HC 4 February 2014, Vol 575, Col 1WH).

Alongside debates in Parliament, we have also witnessed the appearance of Gypsies and Travellers into the realm of reality television. This has brought aspects of Gypsy and Traveller life under the spotlight. Recent research has revealed the 'class pantomime' element of programmes like *'My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding,'* allow the parading for entertainment and media comment the social inadequacies and limited cultural capital of individuals, shorn of the socio-economic context which helps to generate such behaviours (Skeggs and Wood, 2012; Tremlett, 2013). For Gypsy and Traveller communities, this trend was writ large through the aforementioned Channel 4 programme '*My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*' and its various offshoots (2010-13) which purported to examine the social, economic and political worlds of English Romani Gypsies and Irish Traveller communities in Britain. This invasive programme in actual fact illustrated the dual-position that Gypsy and Traveller communities occupy in the British-psyche; placed in a kind of social and moral 'other world' that appears to be defined and positioned as inherently anti-social ('anti-British,' in fact) in the extreme. From the beginning, the programmes were controversial; especially in terms of the way they portrayed the individuals and families on the shows. Jake Bowers, a Romani journalist, suggested that the series 'has as much to do with Gypsy people as Borat had to do with Kazakhstan' (Bowers, 2011). Yet the show had mixed responses;

some viewers praised the focus on strict morals within the communities, as well as detailing some of the hardships endured in contemporary Britain. However, other viewers complained to OFCOM and argued that the series exploited individuals and families as well as deliberately misrepresented aspects of Gypsy and Traveller life and culture (McIntyre, 2012).

Indeed, in their submission to the Leveson Inquiry, the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (ITM) (April, 2012) argued that in much of the print and broadcast reporting across the different types of media outlets in Britain there is a 'guilt by association' (or ethnicity) factor at play: they note a consistency and a pattern to the way in which there are direct links made between Traveller or Gypsy ethnicity, nomadism, crime and anti-social behaviour. Sometimes, they argue, there is mention of an 'ethnic trait' or 'cultural' reasons as to why the 'community' is tied to anti-social behaviours – the behaviour, such as a violent disposition, is 'ingrained.' Indeed, one of the examples the ITM highlights is from the Channel 4 TV documentary 'Gypsy Blood' (directed by Leo Maguire and first broadcast in 2012) where a journalist, Sam Wollaston (2012), offering a review for *The Guardian* suggests that 'Gypsies and Travellers have settled disagreements with their bare knuckles forever and they continue to do so. And to teach their sons how to [...] I'm not sure they've got much choice really. It's going to be ingrained' (ITM, 2012: 6-7). As the ITM stated in their submission to Leveson, this kind of negative and prejudicial reporting of the community can become a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby racialised stereotypes ('the Irish are violent,' especially Travellers) are merely confirmed and reaffirmed.

Conclusion

This chapter has been an attempt to locate the (perceived) anti-social behaviour of Gypsies and Travellers within a wider context of mainstream society and social change. It has been argued that reified depictions and social constructions of 'folk devils', such as Gypsies and Travellers, carry strong historical continuities and moments. Emerging concerns in the Victorian period around modernity, the loss of the countryside, ideas of respectability and reform, as well as a need to control the untrammelled expansion of the city led to both charting the culture of 'true' Gypsies before their culture 'disappeared,' and regulating the dirty, half-bred 'didikais' of urban encampments. This period also saw the beginning of local government and officials targeting the perceived behaviour of Gypsies and Travellers

through sanitary and bylaw measures, which although apparently intended to reform their lives in fact were used to harass them out of a locality.

By the end of the twentieth century, while there was a theoretical acceptance that 'real' Gypsies still existed, in fact policy and public opinion were motivated by the belief that it was only the socially inadequate or 'barbaric' who remained nomadic (McVeigh, 1997). A combination of post-war developments led to the disappearance of stopping places at the same time as Gypsies and Travellers became physically more separate from largely working-class, settled communities. This same period saw a rise in home ownership and consequent preoccupation with notions of house value alongside increasingly precarious employment practices and rapid social change. Taken together, there is little surprise that these coalesced into a particularly toxic formulation of Gypsies and Travellers as modern 'folk-devils,' often reviled when attempting to find a stopping place and misrepresented in 'reality' television programmes. Contributions from political representatives and local counsellors, as well as the wider media, were often unhelpful. The real sense of continuity and parallels, in terms of the types of legislation enacted in Victorian and more contemporary periods, is both familiar and striking.

Undoubtedly, many more newspaper articles will be published discussing the 'harassment, alarm and distress' allegedly caused by the 'anti-social' settlement of Gypsy and Traveller sites and roadside encampments. Similarly, politicians and local councillors, such as David Blunkett MP, will continue to speak publically of the 'problems' associated with where to locate new Gypsy sites. Indeed, opposing the development of a new site in his own constituency, Blunkett warned that 'a tinderbox of tensions' would be created if the site went ahead (The Sheffield Star, 2010). Such thinking is planted deep in sedentarist cultures of settlement with legislative frameworks, changing attitudes, as well as laws and policies, sustaining an ongoing tussle. And yet, understanding this dynamic perhaps presents a step towards breaking out of a deadlock created by an obsessive 'anti-social' rhetoric that is both persistent and negative.

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Abstract
Over many years the multi-ethnic Gypsy and Traveller communities of Britain have been successfully constructed in Parliament and the press as being 'anti-social' and 'folk devils.' This chapter examines why Gypsy and Traveller communities have been labelled as anti-social, principally in terms of their nomadism, settlement and accommodation preferences. We ask why, wherever they settle, Gypsies and Travellers are deemed to be 'out of place' in Britain and the neighbours that nobody wants. We suggest that behind normative and racialised assumptions of their presumed asociality are mainstream attitudes that formed as a result of the confluence of particular socio-economic trends and cultural understandings from the mid-nineteenth century which, by the end of the twentieth century, had become firmly entrenched in the British psyche.

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