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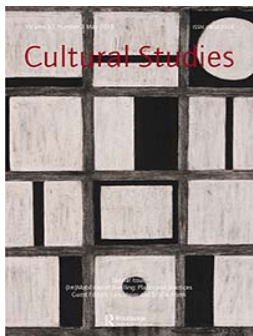
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EPHEMERAL URBAN TOPOGRAPHIES OF SWEDISH ROMA

On dwelling at the mobile–immobile nexus

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ABSTRACT

Although celebrating five hundred years in Sweden in 2012, only little attention has been given to the Roma's long-term presence in the Swedish landscape, and even lesser to their historical presence in urban contexts. Bearing in mind the Roma's twentieth-century European history and knowing of their contemporary situation, this knowledge gap is no surprise. This paper will present a study that has assembled various traces of Roma dwelling in a Swedish urban setting from the late nineteenth century until the 1950s. The study enables a pinning down of the mobile–immobile nexus around which the Swedish Roma everyday cultural practices of dwelling evolved during the particular period before citizenship and subsequent settlement: regulation, seasonality, income opportunities and material devices. Hereby it hopes to contribute to an understanding of Roma urban dwelling as moored in history by corporeality and materiality, and as related both with locality and with 'elsewhere'. The following questions are posed: Which were these urban places of dwelling and what characteristics do they have; what kinds of social connections and interactions were established at these places (co-habitation); in what sense can these places reveal a differentiated Roma history of dwelling? Besides uncovering a particular ephemeral 'multi-sitedness', the study also reveals Roma urban dwelling as related to broader spectrum of tenure than hitherto recognized.

KEYWORDS Seasonality; multi-sitedness; material devices; assemblage; co-habitation; Roma

Introduction

Although celebrating five hundred years in Sweden in 2012¹ only little attention has been given to the Roma's long-term presence in the Swedish landscape, and even lesser to their historical presence in urban contexts. Bearing in mind the Roma's twentieth-century European history and knowing of their contemporary situation (Hancock 2002, 2010, SOU 2010:55, Selling 2013), this knowledge gap is no surprise. This paper will present a study that has assembled various traces of Roma dwelling in a

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Swedish urban setting from the late nineteenth century until the 1950s. The study enables a pinning down of the mobile–immobile nexus around which the Swedish Roma everyday cultural practices of dwelling evolved during the particular period before citizenship and subsequent settlement. Hereby it hopes to contribute to an understanding of Roma urban dwelling as moored in history by material forms, as related with locality and with ‘elsewhere’ (Söderström 2014, p. 3), and as a spatio-temporal co-presence of heterogeneous components. The following questions are posed: Which were these urban places of dwelling and what characteristics do they have; what kinds of cross-cultural connections and interactions were established in these places; in what sense can these places reveal a Roma history of dwelling more differentiated than hitherto recognized?

For many reasons a focus on historical Roma dwelling and presence in an urban context brings forth vulnerable exposure. But in parallel it can bring forth a history of interaction and connectedness: with other people, with different services, with the physical materiality of landscape, with routes of escape, routes of connectivity and with ‘elsewhere’. There are however many and severe difficulties in tracking these local places and sites. This is related to several things. Mayall (2004, p. 26) notes that historical research has come ‘rather late to Gypsy studies and to a large extent the study [...] has been undertaken outside the world of mainstream academic history’, focusing instead on ‘language, folklore and customs’. A decade later Roma historiography has itself become an issue of serious concern (cf. Marsh 2008, Palosuo 2009, Reading 2012). As previously stated by Lucassen (1998) with regard to historical studies of migratory and travelling groups, by Dimitrios (2011) with regard to historical studies of sedentary Roma, and also apparent in the current study of Roma urban sites, the scarcity of empirical sources of Roma dwelling is an initial and very critical threshold for any study within this field.

As often put forth from a postcolonial studies perspective, history and memory of subaltern groups is a tricky field of research: the strands of thought and knowledge of their history are established by the socio-cultural majority in power; very few contributions stem from the community of concern; the existing representations are loaded with stereotypes and depreciation; their known history is beside one of atrocity, largely made up of silence and lacunae; but moreover, also the fact that many groups define themselves by inventing origins (not to be conflated with ‘then’) as a contemporary identity politics. This is a foregrounding of roots and rootedness that obscures the fact of the world as ‘always and already mixed’ (cf. Said [1979] 2003, Spivak 1988, Lundahl 2013). The recent works of Reading (2012, 2013) push the particularities of Roma memory and history one step further in pointing out how the hegemonic discursive figures are made up by confluences of historical facts with populist disparagement, why mediations of the atrocious

memory of slavery of East European Roma resembles a Sisyphus's work. There are thus many constraints to be tackled when searching for traces of Roma historical dwelling.

We have used the concept of 'assemblage', mostly connected with the works of Deleuze or De Landa, as a departure for tracing and reconnecting the heterogeneous and sometimes disparate components that have entered into relation with one another within the phenomenon of concern: 'Roma urban places before settlement in Gothenburg, Sweden'. The onto-epistemology of the assemblage opens up for a study of the various connections and interconnections between materiality, subjects, events, signs or linguistic utterances, etc., and their multi-scale appearance, that is, beyond singular social, spatial or cultural 'levels'. The assemblage of concern here is made up by components of varying character, stability and duration. What we are discerning are contours of a kind of dwelling that, on the one hand, shows many similarities with conventional (majority's) tenure spectrum in that it has some stability over time and also that it, surprisingly, seems to have taken place within the spectrum of the conventional housing market, but that, on the other hand, shows some particularities related to duration, position, design and kinds of interaction. This observation points at a need to insert sensitivity to power relations into the assemblage perspective.

From here, the issue of mobility in historical urban dwelling becomes a particularly crucial but only recently discussed matter: 'Histories of urban settlement typically focus on conditions of stasis, when continuous habitation in a particular location enabled the accumulation of physical evidence' (Pieris 2013, p. 185). As discussed in Holmberg ([forthcoming](#)), 'physical evidence', understood as materiality (buildings, fundamentals etc.) or written sources (traces of regulation), have had the most exhaustive influence on place narratives and place identity over time. Returning to the issue of traces and information further down, we will here only point out that the mobility perspective enables for identifying dwelling of a kind that has left very scarce material evidence; that needs to be conceived of as in terms of 'multi-sited', that is, as being made up by many different sites used recurrently on periodic basis (here primarily termed seasonality); which needs to be conceived of within the frameworks of regulation (but also beyond); which consists of a plethora of encounter and co-existence (here referred to as co-habitation).

The ways in which Roma urban dwelling evolved during the decades of concern is considered as an outcome of housing strategy but also, and which will be extended upon in the following, of the period's nationally implemented regulation of mobility among the inhabitants within the nation. Accordingly, the Roma dwellings found in this study relate very differently to a mobility-immobility axis, some occur several times over many years while other display singular appearance. Focusing on the nodes and sites that

were used for dwelling – thus only occasionally touching upon the trajectories, routes and connections over and between these sites – the issue of mobility in this case becomes concentrated to the question of how Roma urban dwelling has evolved and how it has created shifting and changing topographical patterns of over time. A mobility perspective, challenging social science ‘to change both the objects of inquiry and the methodologies for research’ and problematizing any ‘sedentarist’ approaches [...] that treat place, stability and dwelling as a natural steady-state’ (Hannam et al. 2006, p. 5), is here used to enable for a relational understanding of urban sites. Drawing on Arijit Sen and Jennifer Johung (2013, p. 207) our conception of ‘mobility of dwelling’ is one arranged within the dialectics of movement and stasis, but also related to various kinds of thresholds that direct mobility: ‘Landscapes of mobility are not unmediated panoramas of free flows of people and moving objects. Rather they are tethered by instances of stability and stasis, borders and check-posts.’

Dwelling, and Roma multi-sited dwelling in particular, is a particular instantiation of mobility versus stasis. In mapping out topographical patterns of Roma urban dwelling in Gothenburg, Sweden, this paper intends to contribute to an urban history of co-habitation and, in doing so, undermining a persistent imagery of the urban as mainly made up by socio-spatial and cultural divisions. We hereby intend to open up for a historical socio-cultural complexity that can be helpful both in questioning the contemporary understanding of European identities and in bringing forth a politics of radical inclusion beyond the territories of the nation-state (cf. Hannam et al. 2006, p. 10; Sheller 2011, p. 2, cf. Faist 2013).

Terminology and sources

It is impossible to avoid getting entangled in definition, classification, categorization and clarification of the conflict-loaded terminology that enfolds around the object of study. Some fixes in this ocean of definitions have to be pointed out, as well as some current scholarly positions. We will also clarify the terminology in use in this paper.

In the national context of Sweden where neither race nor ethnicity is officially registered,² Roma spatial history is particularly difficult to trace. It thus needs to be stressed that the assemblage ‘Roma urban places before settlement’ presented here is fundamentally constrained by a particularly complex and difficult empirical situation. In tracing the assemblage, all kinds of source material have been heeded: notations and representations in Government Official Reports and newspapers (found in clippings at media archives and Folk Lore archives), topographic literature, contemporary oral accounts from the places of concern and other. The data are also derived from many different formats of representation (photographs, maps, articles,

personal testimony, statistics, etc.). The entry was by looking for accounts of 'zigenare' and/or 'Roma' and connections to certain distinct topographic sites and place-names. To be noted is that, while these ethnifying terms entail specific historical connotations (see below) in this context they are here used as provisory devices helping to flesh out the assemblage.

Today the term 'Roma' is established on a pan-European political level as a uniting term for a broad spectrum of communities and groups who conceive of themselves as related in one sense or another Roma.³ Although embraced by many, discussion and objection to this term has continued on many levels. In line with both endonym practice and research results revealing a more complex history than hitherto known, Ian Hancock, researcher and spokesman of Roma groups, today recommends the use of the particular name of each Roma group. On a smaller spatial scale and within Swedish minority politics of 2009, again a complex situation enfolds. The Swedish minority politics term is based on the principle of 'self-identification', and that is why the term Roma refers to several different communities that only partly identify with each other when it comes to historical, linguistic, religious and cultural belongings.⁴ In daily speech and within current politics of identity, a dividing line is generally drawn between Resande [travellers] and Swedish Roma [Roma]. These terms have historical correspondents in the terms 'tattare' [traveller] and 'zigenare' [gypsy]. For the purpose of this paper our attention has been limited to the part of the Roma minority who refer to themselves as 'Swedish Roma' and who in the historical sources most frequently are referred to as 'zigenare'.⁵ Since the historical term 'zigenare' generally is considered pejorative by Roma people⁶ and also is an exonym, we consequently use the term 'Roma', only using the historical terminology when citing the sources.⁷

The historical situation of Roma groups, neither having an officially recognized 'homeland' (that could moor them into geo-history), nor an unquestioned right to stay and dwell where desired (due to various regulations), brings the issue of mobility and migration into the scene. The spatial migration of Roma is however seldom related to upward or downward social mobility as in many other cases and has only little to do with own volition, but should instead be understood in relation to a subaltern position (cf. Hannam et al. 2006, pp. 10–11, Sheller 2011, p. 6).

Legal formatting of Roma mobility and stasis

The Roma have throughout history constituted a very small part of the Swedish population.⁸ Although an official register of race or ethnicity is lacking, there are some numbers in 'special registers': in the Government Official Report of 1923 the number of Roma was set at 250 individuals out of 6 million inhabitants within the nation (SOU 1923:2); thirty years later the

number was tripled into 740 individuals (SOU 1956:43). The Swedish numbers are miniscule,⁹ but in relation to the current ambiguity concerning the number of European Roma – estimated as 4 million in 2002, as 9.1 million in 2007, as 12 million in 2010, and by some Roma organizations estimated as 14 million (SOU 2010:55, Liégeois 2012, p. 19)¹⁰ – it is necessary to understand all numbers as both deeply embedded in state politics as well as identity politics, and as an issue that will probably never settle completely.

Despite the small numbers of Swedish Roma, the amount of state measures aiming to control Roma groups as well as the perseverance of these measures has been strikingly disproportionate. Turning to the twentieth century it is well known that Roma mobility and dwelling was controlled and criminalized with particular frenzy through, first, restrictions of movement, immigration and trade; second, through culling; and also, third, through assimilation politics.

There are, according to Reading (2012, 2013) and based on studies of Romanian Roma, a handful of intense and violent discursive figures that obscure the facts of Roma historical persecution, and one of them concerns dwelling: the discourse of 'Roma nomadism'. This device transforms the Roma into 'the Other' (since they lead their lives in ways different from 'normal' people), but second and most important, it makes the Roma alone responsible for what in fact is legally embedded expulsion. Below, Roma mobility will be highlighted through the lens of how some different legal devices structured mobility within Europe and Sweden. As will be shown, these structures were partly directed towards Roma in particular, but partly also had more general aims. We here discern the particular modes of a 'differential mobilities', played out through regulation and with the effect of ordering different subjects over time–space along the axes of mobility–immobility, scape–mooring and movement–stillness (Sheller 2011, p. 5).

The issue of Roma dwelling needs to be put in the context of how regulatory devices have determined not only the very existence (or absence) of Roma dwelling, but also that it has determined the sources to knowledge about these places and dwellings (Holmberg, *forthcoming*). This need for acknowledging Roma historical subordination is one side of the coin.

The other side of the coin is about the very historicity of mobility and vagrancy. When looking at general European conditions, it is obvious that mobility was something very different within pre-modern times and prior to contemporary industrialized society. Then local and regional demands for services and labour made up a different scene, requiring an abundance of itinerant craftsmen, traders and workers. Also movement itself, over longer and shorter distances, made up a constituent everyday duty for most individuals, but especially for those having their provision within transport, public or clerical administration, craft and trade. Vagrancy, in and of itself, permeated and

structured socio-spatial relations on every social level, and put things, individuals and places in different historically specific relations to each other.¹¹

Making up a necessary fundament, vagrancy was precisely therefore putting particular pressure on the social institution of reciprocity, and was, accordingly, a field restricted by both social control and legal device. As pointed out by several scholars in Romani Studies (Lucassen et al. 1998, Mayall 1988, Bancroft 2005, Pulma 2006, Tervonen 2010), the gradual institutionalization of social concerns furthered public measures to control vagrancy, and was effected by laws regulating the areas of mobility, poverty and labour. From the Swedish context a core example is the transformation of the poor relief system during early mediaeval time. Poor relief was then gradually taken over by the town governances from religious parties, which in turn brought the establishment of a crucial distinction between the 'legitimate poor', that is, those being part of the resident population, and the 'illegitimate poor', that is, those lacking local connection. This distinction resulted in sedentary dwelling being put up as a prerequisite for poor relief but, subsequently, also resulted in the ban of alien, illegitimate poor from the towns (Lucassen et al. 1998, p. 55ff, Montesino Parra 2002, p. 89, Tervonen 2010, p. 42). The nineteenth-century Swedish Vagrancy laws (cf. below) can be understood as related to this legal distinction based on the varying stability of the individual's relation to place.

Since the national border of Sweden was relatively open before the twentieth century, few attempts had been made to regulate immigration through ordinances: movement across the borders was in practice difficult to observe (Svanberg and Tydén 2005, p. 216). The gradual development of the nation-state gave increased importance to the status of citizenship, furthering an institutionalization of the category 'foreigner'. In the early 1900s it was feared that poor immigrants would burden the poor relief system (Montesino Parra 2002, p. 92). Launched in the wake of massive mobility caused by an accelerating industrialization, urbanization and emigration, the nineteenth-century Vagrancy laws aimed at first place at a marking of the limits for public responsibilities. In legal terms a 'vagrant' was defined as someone without employment or means enough to manage livelihood, and under this Act those lacking domicile were defined penal and could be held in custody until identity and residence were identified (Montesino Parra 2002, pp. 88–90, Selling 2013, p. 45). The last Vagrancy law, declared in 1885, was in practice as late as until 1964.

Against the background of an increasing spatial mobility and some Vagrancy laws, Sweden in 1914 implemented two new laws that came to have particularly devastating consequences for the Roma population. The Immigration law explicitly prohibited foreign Roma from entering into Sweden. For the Swedish Roma the Immigration law had severe consequences since it put them in total isolation from family and friends abroad.

But apart from that, the Immigration law also effectively prevented people from seeking refuge in Sweden during the Second World War and thus had fatal outcomes for those Roma who were denied immigration (Montesino Parra 2002, pp. 95–96, SOU 2010:55, pp. 140–141, Tervonen 2010, p. 87). The Immigration law was in use until 1954. The other law of 1914 was instead directed towards people without citizenship but who were living within Sweden. It prohibited ‘foreigners’ (such as the Roma) to conduct itinerant crafts, pedlary, trade and sales of other kind. Taken together these 1914 laws effectively restricted the mobility of the Swedish Roma population.

In 1923, the Poor Law [Fattigvårdslag] opened up for state measures far more crude. This law enabled for each municipality to decide on its own whether or not it would insert a special unofficial paragraph in the local ordinances. If, and where, this paragraph was inscribed, anyone could be evicted from camping after a three weeks stay at the same location/municipality (SOU 2010:55, p. 142). This law made eviction of Roma settlements legally approved. The sharpening of legal devices was foreshadowed in the preceding investigation: ‘regulations will provide the right of the police authority to evict gypsies from private land, to deport foreign gypsies and to, with penalty, prohibit landowners to lease land to travelers and gypsies’ (SOU 1923:2, p. 347).

Many municipalities implemented the three weeks camping restrictions, which forced the Roma to move from town to town about once a month. From the 1920s onwards the Swedish Roma therefore had small chances to obtain housing. The continual evictions brought that many Roma came to favour bigger towns offering better sustenance opportunities and where one accordingly could make better use of a short stay. After two decades, around the mid-1900s, a gradual process of urbanization of Roma becomes salient, especially for Stockholm.

Eventually and as a consequence of the state offer to the Roma to obtain Swedish citizenship in 1952 (a process outside the scope of this paper), the Roma were allowed to settle permanently within the municipalities. Although this was a dramatic regulatory change, the housing situation was solved only by the 1960s huge state-and-municipality’s joint effort to fund and facilitate construction of housing in order to fight the persistent housing shortage on a national scale (Montesino Parra 2002, p. 118).¹³

Through the lens of regulation and from a historical perspective, we have shown how very particular conceptions of ‘local belonging’ gradually became embedded in legal devices that prohibited vagrancy as such, and only in the early nineteenth century became transformed into regulations aiming in particular towards Roma settlement. During the period of our study (late nineteenth century until settlement in the early 1950s) these devices kept Swedish Roma on the move and brought severe difficulties in obtaining permanent dwelling.

On historical dwelling practice of Roma

Dwelling practice has since long been at core within research related to issues of identity, belonging and place-making (Brun and Setten 2013). In accordance, this is the departure also for Cottaar's (1998, p. 175) study of the nineteenth-century Dutch travellers: 'the form of housing and identity of the residents were coupled with each other inextricably'. Nevertheless this field of study still has many lacunae since it, for example, is very difficult to distinguish the Roma mobile dwelling from other itinerant groups', or to give voice to insider's narratives.

When it comes to Swedish conditions, the general understanding is that the Roma primarily stayed in camps and were separated from the rest of society (SOU 1956:43, Tillhagen 1961, 1965, Taikon 1963, Takman 1976, Demetri, Dimiter-Taikon, Olgaç *et al.* 2010, SOU 2010:55). A rare account from an insider is the Swedish Rom Katarina Taikon's (1963) account in the 1960s of the camp dwelling of her childhood in the 1930s. The camp was organized in the shape of a circle with the openings of the tents and caravans pointing towards the centre. The central fireplace was used as space for socializing and work. Taikon recalls the oldest type of tent, a small size 'three-top tent', with an oblique pole supported by struts holding up the canvas, and tells that they were replaced by bigger box-shaped tents and furnished caravans around the 1940s.

A certain seasonality in moving in between rural and urban places seems characteristic of Roma historical dwelling: cities were preferred in winter, while in spring the settlement moved to the outskirts of the city or the countryside (SOU 1956:43). In an interview of 2013, a Swedish Roma woman in her 80s recalled her childhood's seasonal itineraries from rural to urban places: 'Often we went back to Skåne [in the south of Sweden] in summertime and then, perhaps, we went back to Gothenburg [on the west coast] in winter.' The advantages with coming to Gothenburg had to do with earning one's living: 'It was a big town and my brothers traded cars [...] and here [in Gothenburg], there were lots of car dealers.'¹⁴ The pattern of seasonal movement is confirmed by studies in other national contexts. Historically many British Travellers moved into rural areas in summer because of the demand for farm workers, or simply because of the climate (Okely 1983, p. 125). Later, in the late nineteenth-century British Roma tended to take up more urban and sedentary dwelling habits: the Roma used 'winter lodging in houses and flats' located in so called 'low localities in [...] large towns' (Mayall 1988, pp. 18–20).

Thus, the seasonality in movement is closely related to opportunities to earn one's living, but must also be put in the context of shifting technologies and the transformation of material devices. In a study of Dutch itinerant groups, Cottaar (1998) has discussed precisely the relationship of the

construction and successive extension of hard-surface roads between urban and rural areas, and the timing of the introduction of the wooden caravan. In England and France the wooden caravan came in use around the 1860s, in the Netherlands and in Germany it was introduced somewhat later and in Sweden not until the 1930s (cf. above). The wooden caravan could enable for year-around outdoor living, and thus could dramatically change the patterns of movement. During colder periods itinerant groups now became much less dependent upon the sedentary population.

Before the wooden caravan was introduced, several different types of dwelling were in use. English nineteenth-century Gypsy travellers¹⁵ had tents, covered carts and wagons (Mayall 1988, pp. 23–27); the Dutch itinerant population¹⁶ is reported to make use of rooms to rent or lodging houses in cities, while farm sheds could provide shelter in the countryside (Cottaar 1998).

Dwelling at the mobile–immobile nexus: Gothenburg’s Roma sites before 1952

In searching for historical Roma urban settlements and sites for dwelling in Gothenburg before 1952, we were at first sensitive for anything that could relate to ‘camps’ or ‘commons’. We did indeed find some sites of this kind, but very soon came to learn that these categories were far from sufficient. Roma dwelling could only be unfolded by the addition of categories of a general kind more or less equivalent with ordinary divisions of tenure (ranging from owner occupancy to squatting¹⁷). In order to understand Roma urban dwelling we thus needed to leave behind the preconceptions that obscured the variety of tenure.

In the next section Gothenburg’s Roma dwelling is presented in the temporal order in which they occur and with regard to the different kinds of tenure: (1) squatting, (a) agreed or conventional or (b) neither agreed nor conventional; (2) long-term tenancy/hotel; and (3) owner occupancy. The study identified ten distinct sites of this kind in use for longer or shorter periods of time from the end of the nineteenth century until year 1952. These places have been projected onto a Gothenburg map of 1921.

Some particularities must be noted already initially concerning the results of the study. First, that there is a persistent deficit of reports from ‘insiders’, that is, Roma, on the issue of concern.¹⁸ Second, that the public reports, although produced from the perspective of state regulation, convey the richest accounts of Roma settlements in Gothenburg (an instantiation of ambivalence); and finally, that the accounts by contemporary popular historians offer a striking outspokenness of the moral, symbolic status of the places connected to Roma dwelling (Gregory 1994, Holmberg 2006) (Figure 1).

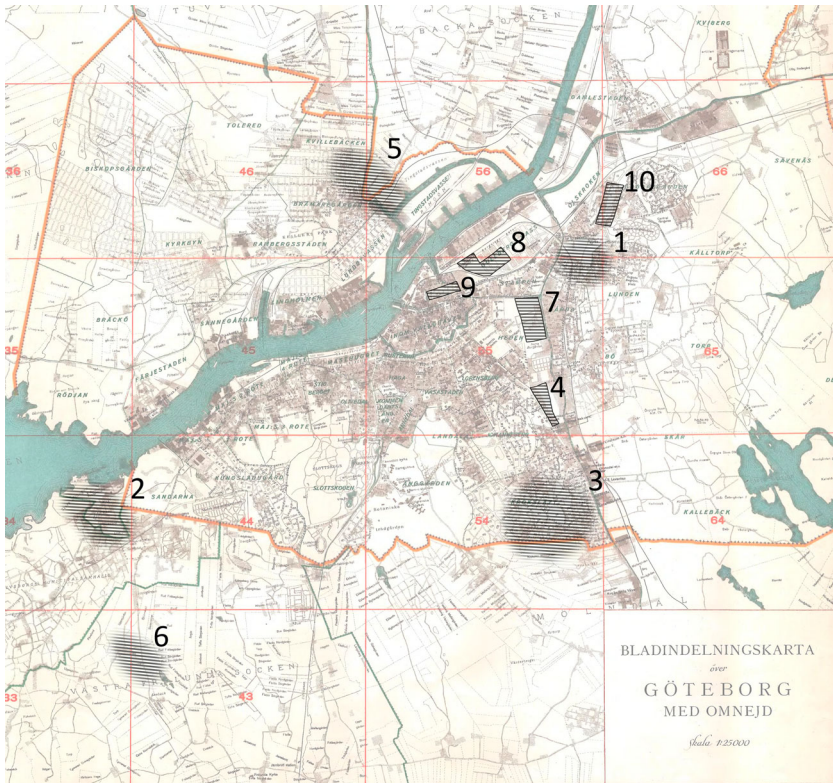


Figure 1. Gothenburg map of 1921 with Roma sites for dwelling from the end of the nineteenth century until 1952. Roma sites for dwelling are marked with numbers 1–10 and hatched areas. Faded contours are used where the exact location is uncertain and the name refers to a larger area. The strong line surrounding the city is the boundary of 1921. Before 1922 the city was little extended eastwards, which means that numbers 1, 3 and 4 – all in use before 1922 – were located outside or close to the city boundary. Numbers 9 and 10 are streets. Map by Södergren 1923: Gothenburg with surroundings in 1921, 1:25000 (Part of the atlases for the celebration of Gothenburg's 300 year anniversary). Map reproduced with permission by Gothenburg City Planning office, sub graphics by Erika Persson March 2014.

Dwelling as squatting-in-fields¹⁹

Interviews with Gothenburg citizens made in the 1920s reveal memories of Gothenburg's Roma places back in the late 1800s and early 1900s.²⁰ It is not easy to make sure whether or not the records relate to places of conventional use on common grounds or to literally squatted places, it is however likely that urban open fields were used for various temporary needs by many people during seasonal periods when no crop was growing. A kind of natural seasonality must thus have been the usual order, which in turn turns squatting of this kind of land into an activity with varying reception

over the year. We have found eight fields in Gothenburg that were used as camps by Roma.

A non-Roma oral account from the early twentieth century recalls a childhood memory of Roma camping in a park called Gubberoparken (#1) located along the eastern main road. Sometimes the Roma stayed there for a whole month, fetching water from a well that belonged to a house nearby, earning their living 'through begging, dramatizing weddings and through horse trade and divination'. The Gubberoparken was at this time located just outside the city border at short distance from the city centre (the area was incorporated into Gothenburg only in 1922). Another account is very clear on the location of Roma sites: 'gypsies couldn't settle inside town' but had to stay outside the city at places such as 'Nya Varvet and Krokslätt'.²¹

Krokslätt (#3), the area mentioned, is located along a small river which in turn is parallel to the main road entering Gothenburg from the south. At this time an outskirt of the city with scattered cottages and small industrial establishments, it is described by a local historian as follows: 'on one side of smaller and larger factory complexes, large and small houses, rustic fences ... the houses are mostly poor' (Fredberg 1922–1924, p. 400). The road itself is bordered by 'riffraff and rabble' and the characters' virtues are not abundant: 'the millers' farmhands driving their loads were not mother's best children' (Fredberg 1922–1924, pp. 400, 391).

We have found several accounts on Roma camps in and around this area. Roma, staying in Fredriksdal (#3 within Krokslätt) are in 1923 reported to having obtained permission to set up amusements: 'a roller coaster, shooting range, as well as a chain carousel, a couple of air swings and automobile lanes' (SOU 1923:2, p. 370). Also at the meadow called Getebergsäng (#4) close to Krokslätt, Roma had raised a camp while making performances in town. Although not indicated, we draw the conclusion that this Roma camp must have been set up before 1890, since the meadow of concern was exploited this year. Elsewhere it is reported that this meadow annually was used for livestock market and that 'horse dodgers were on the go' in the old days (Krantz 1943, pp. 25–27, 32). Accordingly, this meadow could have been a regular common and the Roma's tenure could thus be of conventional kind; unfortunately such information cannot be derived from the sources (Figure 2).

While the information on the Gothenburg's Roma campsite mentioned are found in interviews and texts, we also have found photographic depictions, the earliest ones shot in December 1923 by a local newspaper. The caption is clear on the characters as well on the geography: 'Gypsies on Kvillebäcksvägen', that is in the area Backa (#5). The photo shows people gathered in a ring looking at two small children in the middle of a camp with a few 'threetop tents' raised in an open field (Kamerareportage, BbankG151602). A description of this camp in a Government Official Report of 1923 – the earliest found – supplies us with details: 'Josefsson [coppersmith and musician b. 1880] and



Figure 2. This photo of December 1923 is the earliest photographic depiction of a Roma camp in Gothenburg. The photo, taken in Backa (#5) shows many people gathered in front of a 'three top tent', a type commonly in use before the introduction of the wooden caravan. A contemporary report tells how performances, with admission charges for the public, were organized by Roma precisely at this site. Some of the people shown in the photo may be locals. Photo from the press archive Kamerareportage, number BbankG151602. Reproduced with permission by Kamerareportage.

his family usually traveled in the company of [...] three gypsy families, namely Taikumer, Demeter and Taikon,²² all of which now reside in Backa, close to the city of Gothenburg'. There is also information about dwelling conditions, saying that the Roma 'dwell in tents, carried along either by their horses and vehicles or by rail'. We learn that 'the four gypsy families were living together in a big tent' but when and if 'the weather was particularly cold they usually procured temporary indoor housing'.

What we learn from here is a very flexible relation to dwelling, bringing many activities around fixing the tents, moving indoors when cold and caring for the transport of tents to other places. The report also tells more precisely about interaction with locals:

Occasionally the party conducted horse trade [...] but nowadays the party mostly earned their living by organizing performances in the tent, with admission charges for the public [...] Every now and then, the party demonstrated the ceremonies of a gypsy wedding. The fees paid at the performances would be sufficient for the gypsy party. (SOU 1923:2, p. 370)

The site of concern is a meadow just at the city's border and next to the northern main entrance road (on Hisingen, an island on other side of the river Göta Älv). The area around the meadow is known for its early industries (but does not figure in local descriptions) and is traversed by a small river. The area, just at the fringe between urban structures and the hinterland, was a key to the city. We have found records also from the 1950s telling about Roma camps in this area, which suggests that the meadow in Backa has continuously been used as a Roma campsite (Aftonposten 1952, 11 March and 1952, 31 July). Squatting, most probably in the original sense and without permission, could enable for many kinds of interaction with people passing. What we see from these reports is that here dwelling evolved over time and that the Roma could make use of a site where many people passed but where land not yet exploited and city planning not yet had been implemented.

The Government Official Report of 1923 contains a record also about Roma living in Grimmered (#6). At this time a small village located just outside the city border southwest of Gothenburg, Grimmered had commons and also a small tarn. The report tells about Johan Kaldaras Columber, born in Hungary 1877, and his strategies to earning a living and dwelling.

Up until three or four years ago, Columber had earned his living by coppersmith work why he had travelled from one place to another. Thereafter he engaged with amusement park business. During wintertime Columber also traded iron and scrap-metal. For some time now and for a fee he has provided air swings tours, roundabouts and shooting range to the public in Grimmered / ... /. In summertime, Columber and his family lived in tents, and during winter they stayed in single housing trailer owned by Columber. When extremely cold, Columber and his family rented indoor housing [...] The Columber family does not have a fixed residence. In the near future, the family will leave [but it] is not yet decided upon where they are going next. (SOU 1923:2, p. 385)

In this example, as well as in the last, there are no hints at all on disturbance or trouble, but instead the report gives an important contribution to understanding the different kinds of interactions between multi-sited dwellers and locals that enfolded around the Roma dwellings in the urban landscape. The interaction of concern is reported with neutral objectivity (Figure 3).

There are reports on Roma family at yet another meadow, named in a press photography caption of 1949 as 'Gypsy-camp at Levgrens äng' (Kamerareportage BbankG172021). The photo shows that the camp at Levgrens äng (#7) was placed along a small road and consisted of two caravans supplemented by a small tent. The children in the family are out playing. Levgrens äng, a meadow, was until 1958 an unexploited spot, located slightly east of central Gothenburg. According to local narratives it was known as a refuge for thieves and bandits (Fredberg 1922–1924, chapter 12).

From interviewing a Roma woman born in the 1930s and who stayed at this camp when being a child, we learned that the meadow was particularly



Figure 3. Roma family camping at Levgrens meadow (#7) in 1949 showing two wooden caravans of quite modern design and a small box-shaped tent. At the time this meadow was an unexploited lot close to many junctions and just outside central Gothenburg. Photo from the press archive Kamerareportage, number BbankG172021. Reproduced with permission by Kamerareportage

suitable because of its closeness to Heden, the main motor market of the period and the site for the family's main source of income. She also recalls another camp, situated behind the central railway station, and explains how this location was particularly useful during the Second World War when the Roma often had to move by train because of the reduction of horses available. The location of a camp near the central railway station gave the advantage of access to washing rooms, water and heated indoor (Figure 4).

This camp, located behind the railway station on the street Kruthusgatan (#8), was the target of a Swedish National Television's visit in 1944. The report from the 'gypsy campsite' reported twenty people living in caravans and large box-shaped tents. Children are playing in the street and a young woman stands in the small kitchen inside of a caravan. The reporter notes that the camp is cleaner and better equipped than at earlier visits (Swedish



Figure 4. The inside of a well-equipped caravan of 1944 found at Kruthusgatan (#8) close to the central station. The photo was shot by a reporter from the Swedish National Television. Photo from the press archive *Kamerareportage*, number G120400. Reproduced with permission by *Kamerareportage*.

National Television 1944, 13 November; *Kamerareportage* Scagn-71, Scang-73 and Scg-72, G120400).

Some years later, in March 1952, local newspapers report that a Roma family was evicted by the police ordinance from their camp at the park Bergslagsparken, located at one end of Kruthusgatan (Holmberg 2010, *Aftonposten* 1952, 11 March, *Kamerareportage* BbankG140638). This eviction happened the same year as the Roma were accepted Swedish citizens, but while still the local ordinances were going. Photographs from the day of eviction show aspects of the complex situation: a group of policemen are talking to the Roma family in the park, some policemen and members of the family sit down on chairs; and a caravan is parked in the otherwise desolated park. As shared in the self-biography of Hans Caldaras, Rom, writer and artist, the camp at the central railway station is part of his childhood memory in the years

around 1951. He recalls and describes the eviction as traumatic (Caldaras 2005, pp. 87–88, presentation at the City Museum of Gothenburg 20130525).

Dwelling as tenacy-in-hotels²³

As mentioned above, one of the Roma families used to stay indoors in winter, which we understand as some kind of tenure. Not knowing where such tenure occurred, we were very happy to find several reports on Roma tenure in the 1923 Government Official Report. The locations were all very central and specified as either the street Postgatan #9, adjacent to the central railway station, or as a register in Christinae församling, one of the central parishes. From the mid-1800s and into the 1900s this street was particularly known for countless hotels and inns, 'room for travelers', boarding houses, cafes and emigrant offices (Lönnroth 2003, p. 444). Emigrants going overseas or travellers to elsewhere, those waiting for the next ship or for relatives to join, all stayed in Gothenburg's district with cheap hotels for shorter or longer periods.

[T]he streets are dark and narrow, the houses are old-fashioned, the yards often terrible. The traffic of peasants and emigrants runs through the neighborhood. In this area arises a particular kind of individual more distinctly than elsewhere: the vagabond. Nowhere but here a richer sample of vagabond types occurs: tricksters, dodgers, drinkers, idlers, has-beens – some of them with the particular elegance of the has-been, some more broken, and many with a more or less pronounced predatory physiognomy. (Fredberg 1922–1924, p. 410)

The addresses particularly mentioned in the report were located towards the east, a part with many simple hotels and beds as bunks along the walls (Krantz 1943, p. 150). Here we meet some Roma families that stayed for longer or shorter periods on tenure in hotels. One Roma family consisted of spouses and nine children, but also within their realm another ten named individuals of different ages (SOU 1923:2, p. 371).²⁴ Another family of spouses and two children was reported as registered in the same parish and as having stayed at Postgatan for only some weeks during winter, but was then evicted. The conditions of yet another Roma family are extensively reported and hence of particular interest in the context of assembling 'Roma urban places in Gothenburg before settlement'.

Horse trader Maximilian Karl Hiller of catholic religion and born in Schlesien 1808, and his housekeeper Antonie Elisabet Winkler born 1868 in Oppeln, Ober-Schlesien, moved into Christine Parish, house No. 41 Postgatan on 1 February 1916, and moved to Bans parish, Malmöhus län, on 2 January 1920. It is told that:

They had arrived at hotel Victoria with 7 children on th 12th of January 1915 [...] They informed that the reason for their arrival was travelling in order to perform music. On the 6th of May all of them have left the hotel, stating that

they headed for Uddevalla. Members of this family have later stayed at the same hotel and other hotels in Gothenburg [but only before the] 27th of March 1917. [...]

While living in Gothenburg, the older Hiller had traveled around to markets and traded horses. All family members had behaved particularly well and there had not been any reason for remarks. Two daughters went to school from April 14th to May 15th [. .] one son was skilled in reading and writing. In the beginning of 1915, Hiller, who had resided in this country since about 15 years, settled in Postgatan No 41, where he immediately appeared to be inscribed in the national and local registers, and thereafter mainly has resided in the town mentioned until fall 1915. Thereafter Hiller, in the company of a Roma [zigenare] called Karl Axel Johansson, for two years had travelled around on the countryside of the Swedish midlands to perform horse trade whereby not staying at one place for more than 14 days. During this period, Hiller had often visited Gothenburg, but not stayed for more than a couple of days. (SOU 1923:2, p. 372)

What we learn here is that this family is a story of subordination and strategy. The report uses extensive space telling circumstances that do not conform to hegemonic discourse. It declares an instance of ambivalence and thus gives an important contribution to understanding the variety of relations between the Roma and the majority prevalent in the urban context, a history of co-habitation.

The street Postgatan was brought up again later. A newspaper of 1942 reports of Roma, that had never before been registered by local authorities, suddenly were registered at a non-existing hotel on the address Postgatan 25, which is all explained as related to food restrictions (permanent residence being a prerequisite for access to food cards): '53 Roma were revived from nowhere' (Göteborgs Handels och sjöfartstidning 1942, 05 May) (Figure 5).

Tenure of rooms for longer and shorter periods of time in more or less simple hotels crowded with ordinary travellers, migrants and 'vagrants', in the urban centre but close to the railway and the ships. This is one important site enabling for Roma dwelling within the urban centre. In these reports, tenure does only denote renting for certain longer periods, and we learn that some were considered to manage this situation as well as any other, and that some were not.

Dwelling as owner occupancy²⁵

In 1920, a Roma man with horse trading as provision was reported staying at a hotel at Postgatan for one night. For several reasons we assume that he is identical to a person mentioned as the purchaser of a property at Ånäsavägen No. 13 the same year (SOU 1923:2, p. 372). The street Ånäsavägen (#10) situated north east of the town and fairly close to Gubberoparken (#2) of above was planned and constructed in the early twentieth century. He is called 'the Norwegian horse trader' and it is reported that he and his wife with four children



Figure 5. Dwelling as tenancy-in-hotels was common as winter lodging. From 1910s until 1942 there are several reports that tell of Roma people renting rooms in the hotels on Postgatan (#9) in the district Östra Nordstan. In the end of the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth centuries, this part of the city was Gothenburg's major emigrant district and disrepute for its many cheap hotels. It was packed with hotels, inns, 'room for travelers', cafés and emigrant offices. Postgatan is located close to the central railway station and to Kruthusgatan (#8). Photo from the press archive Kamerareportage, number BbankG0037607. Reproduced with permission by Kamerareportage.

fulfilled the parish registration when the purchase was settled. While it seems as if the family never moved into the house (but some months later moved to the municipality of Kungsbacka) in this report we have indications that some Roma individuals in Sweden in the early decades of the nineteenth century had a wider spectrum of relations to dwelling and tenure than hitherto known. Although the sources are rare, we find this report a key to wider explorations of the relations of Roma to majority society and, in particular, to dwelling in contemporary times of overt racism.

Ephemeral topographies of Roma urban dwelling

Much research that concern the Roma have been carried out within the specialist sphere of Roma studies, which means that the Roma very seldom have been of interest within mainstream social or cultural theory (Mayall 2004, p. 25ff). Robins (2010) argues that this lack of recognition has led to a large neglect of their contributions to a changing Europe. Departing from

Robins' account, this paper comprehends Roma history as integral to the place where they have been, which means that the paper focuses on how Roma historical dwelling is entangled in connections and interactions at, but also beyond, the location of concern. Hence, this paper does not designate the sites found as 'belonging' solely to Roma urban history (as a kind of 'Swedish Roma urban landscape' apart and detached from other landscapes), and does not even understand these sites as being particularly related to dwelling practices of a certain nomadic groups (cf. Miggelbrink *et al.* 2013) or to issues such as migration.

Although the continual forced vagrancy around the turn of the last century produced many short-term sites for dwelling, we can discern some emerging topological patterns²⁶: camping in open fields and meadows (commons) while using the legal boundary of the city as a node; long-term rent of hotel rooms in the way in the wrinkles of the dense urban fabric while mingling well with other migrants and itinerants; squatting as an unintended use of planned areas and interstices (railway complexes, parks, junctions). The Roma have made use of what Saltzman (2009) calls 'interstices': in-betweens and ephemeral zones where territories and regulation is ambiguous.

The locations of concern can be related to the gradual expansion of the city and the sites therefore moved around over the time period studied. Until the beginning of 1900s the Roma sites mostly were situated south and east of the city, along the entrance roads. This changed as the municipal borders were dislocated through the successive expansion of Gothenburg through incorporation of adjacent parishes. The first record of a campsite north of town, on Hisingen in 1923, foreshadows the later 1950s many Roma settlements in this area. When industrial plants spread in the northern districts, this part of the city seems to having been favoured by the Gothenburg's Roma as the campsite location.

The different historical contexts have enabled for varying and particular dwelling strategies that relate differently to the mobility–immobility axis over time and space. While the Roma generally seem to have practised a seasonal mobility between rural and urban sites in the nineteenth century, the twentieth century brought an increasing urban dwelling. This often took place 'in less privileged spaces', but also as a hybrid system made up by a combination of objects, technologies, socialities and affects (Hannam *et al.* 2006, pp. 12, 14).

Conclusion

As argued in this paper, knowledge of Roma urban dwelling needs to be understood as related to varying historical contexts, sometimes harsh regulation by governmental control and sometimes conditioned within general

concerns for social stability, but all the time sited within locality and made up by connections between here and elsewhere, and between social and corporeal subjects. In framing the argument of this paper we contend that the fact of the Roma per se being targets for control, surveillance and expulsion is crucial but, while at heart of mobility studies, that it does not alone enable for embracing the full multifacetedness of Roma urban dwelling before 1952. We stand with findings that point out the fact of a topography of Roma urban dwelling before settlement; we have traced some aspects of the genealogies of repression and of circumscription of Roma dwelling; we find ambivalent accounts the Roma in the discourses that make up the very fundament for repression. In resisting on bringing a self-sustained and coherent interpretation of the findings, the paper nevertheless tries to reach beyond mere description and to bring forth a counter-history: one of urban co-habitation. The sites found can in this perspective be 'sites of resistance' not only for its users and dwellers, but also for its contemporary interpreters.

The assemblage 'Roma urban places before settlement' has departed from the notion of the Roma as corporeal and geographical subjects partaking in the continually evolving transformation of the urban landscape. The many Roma places for dwelling found in the empirical material give witnesses to an urban reality of co-habitation that consists of many different and heterogeneous kinds of subjects, trajectories and interactions (whereof the Roma are but one).

The study revealed all in all 10 different sites that were in use during varying periods and each with different interrelations with society. The sites, in and of themselves, show in what ways the urban spatial and material topography of different time-periods has been able to comprise and hold different subjects and phenomena, and even those understood as 'problematic' within hegemonic discourse. The sites reveal not only the heterotopicality and interconnectedness of urban landscapes, but also the very shifting reality of Roma dwelling. This dwelling not only shows similarities with the conventional tenure spectrum but also shows some particularities related to duration, position and kinds of connection.

From the assemblage perspective, the connections exposed at these sites are not only between different people, places, materialities, things and flows over space and time, but also between these entities and the very sources that the study has made use of. While much of the empirical material is produced as registers of control, it is nevertheless obvious that it also can reveal that Roma dwelling in Gothenburg was a situation of connection and co-habitation. In giving another and different picture of Roma everyday historical dwelling, knowledge of these places per se take us well beyond hegemonic discourse, into ambivalence and also into the politics of future possibilities.

Note

1. The first evidence of Roma presence in Sweden is found in year 1512 when a group of 'tatare' arrived in Stockholm (Almquist & Hildebrand 1931, p. 272). A regulation of 1637 says that all 'tartars' should be driven out of the country, and yet another law (the Hang law) stated that all Roma men should be to be hung without trial. During the same century all Roma present in Sweden were relegated eastwards (today Finland) (SOU 2010:55, pp. 137–173).
2. But cf. the illegal and covert police register, uncovered in September 2013 by a Swedish newspaper (Orrenius 2013).
3. Cf. Liégeois (2012) on the terminology deployed by the Council of Europe.
4. Within the Swedish minority politics there are several different groups and among them those who often refer to themselves as Resande, i.e. Travellers. Among the travellers there are some that do regard themselves as part of the Roma minority and others who do not (SOU, 2010:55 p.81–82:113). For more details on terminology and difficulties, see Council of Europe (2011), Hancock (2002), Lucassen et al. (1998), Svensson (1993, p. 87).
5. It should be noted that before the turn of the last century, occasionally, the historical term 'zigenare' also comprised the historical term 'tattare' (Montesino Parra 2002). In our study this complication has been handled.
6. An exception is found among our interviewees (Personal communication, 19 Dec 2013).
7. In this study it has not been feasible to find and deploy a differentiated endonym terminology of the kind suggested by Hancock.
8. It is often stressed that that many people did not define themselves as Roma only for the sake of escaping discrimination or persecution.
9. With exception for the Sámi and Sverigefinnar, these small numbers are similar to the other Swedish national minorities. For statistics on Swedish minority groups, see SOU 1997:193. For historical numbers, see Svanberg & Tydén (2005).
10. The growing numbers have been explained as related to a growing awareness among the Roma of their particular situation, an extended identification with related groups, an official recognition of the numbers offered by Roma organizations. Although the numbers of Roma officially identified have been at least tripled over the last ten years, the numbers are largely unsettled since many countries, among them Sweden, do not register ethnicity, cultural- or language-based groups while other countries do (or do rely on numbers offered by Romany representatives).
11. See, for example, the historical works of Le Roy Ladurie (1981, 1997) that explore both local ambivalences around mobility (the village of Montailou) and mobility as a strategy (The Platter's family). For a recent account of the centrality of understanding the past through the lens of mobility also in the context of the study of pre-historical times, see Leary (2014).
12. The political debate in Gothenburg in the 1950s regarding Roma housing is referred in Selling (2013, p. 138).
14. Personal communication with a Swedish Roma woman, 19 December 2013.
15. Mayall's study compares the dwelling practices of English 'Gypsy-travellers' with other itinerant groups, constantly stating that it is difficult to be completely sure of which group the facts refer to: itinerant beggars, tents- and van-dwellers or strolling outcasts, etc.

16. In Cottaar's study, 'itinerant population' refers to all kinds of people and groups and includes travellers (but not 'gypsies').
17. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Housing_tenure.
18. All names used in the text are quoted from printed material. When personal communication is referred, no names are specified.
19. Numbers 1–8 on map.
20. As a results of over a hundred years' work with documenting popular culture, the archive at the Institute for Language and Folklore in Gothenburg holds a large collection of through interviews and question lists.
21. A 1914 photograph caption in a local newspaper also confirms this location: 'gypsies at Nya Varvet' ([Kamerareportage](#) BbankG129761).
22. Personal names have not yet been replaced or modified in citations. Definite decision regarding the use of personal names in this article will be done before publishing.
23. Numbers 9–10 on map.
24. It remains unclear if these individuals also are church registered in Gothenburg or if they only were living at the same address.
25. Number 10 on map.
26. But cf the discussion on fluid, gel-like and flickering topologies in Hannam *et al.* (2006, p. 14).

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