

# Unsettled – Reconsidering the Notion of ‘Homelessness’ through the Lens of Urban Movement

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## Abstract

This paper proposes to reconsider the notion of ‘homelessness’ under the lens of urban movement, suggesting that the long prevailing stigma against people experiencing homelessness is a repercussion of the idea that living an unsettled life can destabilize capitalist societies. Living on the *move*, by choice or, most commonly, without one, embodies a resistance to the capitalist valorization of land: Transient lifestyles resist the precept of property ownership, and hint at alternative ways of living in cities, beyond capitalist norms. Simultaneously, they are bodily evidence of the mechanisms of urban displacement further triggered by real estate speculation, as it is the socio-economic and political system of capitalism which produces contemporary conditions of unchosen homelessness. Thus, the paper links the stigmatization of homelessness to notions of urban movement and capitalist urban logics. Untangling these complex dependencies, then, becomes also a way to reconsider notions of making a home in cities.

**Keywords:** movement, home, homelessness, stigmatization, informality

## Introduction

Who has the right to call the city a home? And what does it mean to inhabit no traditional home in the city – to experience *homelessness*? The experiences and causes of not having a home or being denied to call one’s dwelling place a home are diverse and multi-layered. Clearly, there is not one reality of being homeless or a ‘homeless’ identity and lifestyle as stigmatized conceptions and derogatory representations might suggest. Parsell’s (2011) ethnographic research gives a nuanced account of how identities ascribed onto “homeless people” are highly problematic and differ from self-enacted identities. Yet, these derogatory conceptions and resulting exclusionary practices greatly affect individual lives on many levels, including physical and mental health. Research in Public Health has shown that the “excess mortality associated with considerable social exclusion is extreme” (Altridge et al 2018, 247), such as that people experiencing homelessness are more than six times as likely to die early (Altridge et al, 2018). Thus, systemic forces producing social, political and economic exclusion shape the very state of what it means to seek shelter in the urban sphere. By focusing on the political and economic allowances, prohibitions and responses to homelessness as a codified state of being, the article aims to reveal some of these invisible forces as well as to analyze how and why certain forms of urban movement are considered acceptable while others are stigmatized and criminalized in capitalist societies. The theoretical and abstract perspective on homelessness pursued by this paper is, therefore, deliberately chosen, and not

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meant as disrespect for the individual realities and multi-layered causes of experiencing homelessness which will not be addressed by this paper.

The discipline of architecture itself is involved in the socio-economic and political production of space in multiple ways: by translating human needs into spatial configurations, as part of the building industry and housing market and by designing elements of the urban environment. Thus, it seems highly relevant to also reflect from this perspective on notions of homelessness, existing societal stigmas, and their spatial implications. While homelessness is considered to be a global 'issue', the term and its connotations differ across cultures and languages. Someone living on the streets of Mumbai is not necessarily considered a homeless person in Indian society. The notion of 'home,' there, is not related to housing, dwelling space, or shelter, but instead linked to the idea of kin, of family. In this context, "security comes, not from ownership and control, but from the rights and responsibilities of kinship" (Speak 2012, 5). While in the English language the term "*homelessness*" is clearly tied to the notion of home and not house, roof or shelter, other languages, such as German ("*Obdachlosigkeit*"), French ("*sans abri*") or Italian ("*senza tetto*") refer to it as 'roofless' or 'shelterless,' whereas in other languages, such as the main Ghanaians, there is not even a word for homelessness (Speak, 2012). Even though definitions vary and remain fluid, they encompass far reaching implications. In most countries in the Euro-American context, to which this paper mainly refers to, the label of 'homelessness' is a statutorily defined social status, determining whether a person is eligible for housing assistance, or not (Kiddey 2017, 201). Language in this case not only reflects and reshapes normative conceptions of living in the urban, but it also becomes a tool to allocate responsibilities and determine political agendas based on statistics and comprehensive data collected according to these definitions' criteria (Busch-Geertsema, Culhane and Fitzpatrick 2016, 126-127). While there is no global definition of homelessness, the aim to develop a common language is often regarded as crucial to assess current practices, policies and their embedded societal conceptions and norms. Thus, Busch-Geertsema, Culhane and Fitzpatrick (2016, 131) propose a relational framework that works with a broad definition of homelessness as "*living in severely inadequate housing due to a lack of access to minimally adequate housing*", with adequacy evaluated in respect of the 'security', 'physical' and 'social' domains of home." This suggested definition aims at being comprehensive to encompass a broad range of 'inadequate' living conditions across the globe, thereby losing the ability to take distinctions into account. Here, living on the move and having some informal shelter are equally considered, which in turn disregards the specific 'inadequacies' of each living situation. Moreover, while trying to be inclusive, this framing still relies on three aspects of *home* as a factor to define who is *homeless*, which inevitably renders "home" a normative concept again. – Reconsidering notions of homelessness and tracing origins of stigmatization is, therefore, not just a theoretical effort, but a way to challenge norms of living and making a home which are embedded in the urban morphology, its economics and social policies.

The argument of this paper is tripartite: The first section explores the idea of living on the move as a potential *revolt* against a top down urban order. Movement has the potential to reinterpret public space, and to disrupt urban routines, thereby questioning the existing urban order. Yet, the presence of informal homes in the urban fabric also discloses the failure of the capitalist system to equally care for all citizens and that it is, in fact, this particular socio-economic and political system which produces contemporary conditions of homelessness. The second part traces these different ideas of *order*, questioning whether transient lifestyles disrupt capitalist urban routines, or whether capitalist urban routines disrupt individual transient lives. The third part examines the resulting *penalization* strategies which follow a two-fold logic: hiding the subversive potential of movement and impermanence in the urban, as well as the failures of the system

producing the condition in the first place. Most penalization methods force further movement onto those living on the move, leading to a reinforced circularity and further stigmatization of unsettled lives.

### **Revolt – urban movement as reinterpretation of public space**

In 1993, Lucius Burckhardt, founding father of Strollology, the Science of Walking, made a stroll with his students in the German city of Kassel; nothing remarkable, if they had used the sidewalk. But instead they occupied the street itself, each carrying a replica of a car windshield in front of their faces. Their so-called ‘Windshield Stroll’ was a commentary on the street life of Kassel, rebuilt after the Second World War as a car-oriented city with wide avenues, expelling strollers to underground passages and further margins of the urban space. With their concerted motion the strollers not only critiqued the limited perception of drivers roaming around the city in their cars, but also disrupted the everyday routine of the other urban dwellers. Re-appropriating the streets and re-interpreting their intended use, they appeared as agitators; their movement questioned the established infrastructural hierarchy and revealed creative possibilities to undermine top-down urban planning practices.

Epistemologically seen, the act of movement always incorporates the potentiality of transformation. Motion enables individuals to continuously change positions and adopt new perspectives, experiencing different angles and prospects of a seemingly unchanged physical environment. Similar to the Windshield Stroll which challenged the post-war paradigm of car-friendly urban planning, movement can turn into means to confront and denounce existing frameworks, values or societal structures.

### **Spatial practices**

Urban planning paradigms and urban movement represent two distinct types of spatial practices according to Michel de Certeau (1984, xix), who differentiates between *strategies* and *tactics* as two hierarchical forms – “calculus of force-relationships” – of spatial practice. Urban planning policies regulating public space are a part of *strategies*, applied on the institutional side which retains the producing power over space. *Tactics*, however, are enacted by individuals and their everyday use of the public sphere, reacting to strategies defining space by either abiding by their rules or undermining them. In that sense, the act of moving or walking through the city represents individual tactics, forming a spatial practice, that “secretly restructure[s] the determining conditions of social life” (de Certeau 1984, 96) and a “*migrational*, or metaphorical, city, thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city” (de Certeau 1984, 93). While the city planners of Kassel envisioned the rebuilt city as smooth ground for cars moving unobstructed from pedestrians and general urban life through wide avenues, the Windshield Stroll as an artistic intervention draws on the notion of an everyday *tactic* that questions this urban strategic order. As such, “contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power” (de Certeau 1984, 95) challenge institutionalized constructions of space and are regarded as a potential danger for the system of power. In that vein, the Windshield Stroll needed to be officially registered as a ‘cultural political convocation’ and was accompanied by police forces. Employing the state’s executive branch as guardian for this disruptive stroll, represents a *strategy* emphasizing and symbolizing the state’s control over this disruptive stroll seen as subversive *tactics* of collective human movement, not abiding the urban rules. Yet, the presence of police forces reveals that something is out of order and the state in need regain control, restricting the movement in advance to certain forms and routes in order to hinder it from becoming uncontrollable: Movement, according to Aristotle (1934, 191), is “clearly one of the things we think as ‘continuous’, and it is in connection with continuity that we first encounter the

concept of the 'illimitable'." In its potential to quickly gain momentum, movement has the ability to develop into an action which can not be regulated externally without applying another contrary force, according to physical laws. Aristotle, therefore, describes motion as a synonym for change in general, including the potential to threaten long established power structures.

### Concerted movement

It is this characteristic of movement as continuous and potentially illimitable change, gaining further momentum when enacted by a multitude of people, which forms the political clout of street demonstrations. Here, "bodies congregate, they move and speak together and [...] lay claim to a certain space as public space" (Butler, 2011). According to Judith Butler, it is the mere *appearance of bodies* in space that formulates a political demand, as their bodily, physical presence questions the allocation of power over urban space and its predominant interpretation. In that moment, "the very public character of the space is being disputed and even fought over" (Butler, 2011) – it is the collective action of gathering that makes urban space *public*. Here, the square represents to some extent an accepted space for political unrest, considering that within its circumscribed space people's actions can easily be controlled and integrated into the usual urban operations. Yet, once the emerging crowds leave this allocated place of protest in the city, and move into the side streets, taking over everyday infrastructures and spaces, the movement of 'bodies' becomes an unwelcome act to governing authorities of urban society, interrupting the established regular flow and order of the city. Then, "politics is no longer defined as the exclusive business of a public sphere distinct from a private one, but it crosses that line again and again, bringing attention to the way that politics is already in the home" (Butler, 2011). Concerted movement of bodies in urban space, thus, not only reconfigures the environment, but also challenges the differentiation between public and private. This dissolution of boundaries between the public and the private sphere, which Butler describes as an exceptional state of urban protest, oftentimes represents the everyday reality for people experiencing homelessness. Urban niches accommodated as a home, tents along sidewalks or benches functioning as beds blur the boundary between what is considered public versus a private space. Here, *home* appears as infraction into accepted ways of movement in the city, that collide with the *public*. Thus, following Butler's argument, making a *home* in the urban becomes a political act.

Not all urban dwellers, however, are granted the same rights of urban participation or intervention; socio-economic and political power structures are also inscribed into urban movement. The Windshield Stroll as a subversive tactic was performed by a university seminar and their professor; urban street demonstrations mostly consist of protestors disposing of enough time and material resources which they can dedicate towards forming an alliance for a political cause. Concerted motion can only arise and be recognized as an act of subversive power when its performing 'bodies' have the ability to gather and appear as a plurality. Butler's argument also points to the brutal reality that public attention is oftentimes only given to people if their bodies are perceived as "productive and performative," as they are supported "by environments, by nutrition, by work, by modes of sociality and belonging" (Butler, 2011). Following that logic, 'non-performative' bodies are neglected from public consciousness, and are in that sense excluded from collective political action. This public neglect further hides the individual and collective productive and reproductive labour of securing not only a home in the urban sphere, but also sustaining life in general. The created invisibility of these individual tactics further renders unsettled realities of living in the urban as passive, which likewise denies existing forms of agency. Meanwhile, the shortcoming of privacy puts most intimate situations on public display, which are otherwise concealed behind the walls of a privately housed home. This in turn "provides an image of identity that emphasizes their deviance" (Parsell 2011, 458). Yet, "to be outside established and legitimate

political structures is still to be saturated in power relations” (Butler, 2011). Even though certain ‘bodies’ are excluded from being seen and heard as loudly as those of street demonstrators, “whether abandoned to precarity or left to die through systemic negligence, concerted action still emerges” (Butler, 2011). Butler refers in this context to the state-less, and not right-less, as she derives rights from a mere bodily appearance – a theoretical claim that is often neglected in practice. Yet, this argument of state-lessness can be extended to the reality of people experiencing homelessness, as this paper will point out later.

Inhabiting and reinterpreting public spaces with all bodies’ needs, people without ‘proper’ homes become visible, they “appear” to speak with Butler, and make a claim – a denouncement of and a revolt against existing social conditions and the capitalist system producing them.

### **Order – transient lives disrupting the urban, or the urban disrupting transient lives**

Hence, the mere presence of informal homes and transient urban lifestyles and their visible spatial tactics are regarded as disturbances of a capitalist urban order. The origins of stigmatizing unsettled lifestyles as ‘disturbing’ lie in the social relations of a capitalist society which produces contemporary conditions of homelessness; in order to understand the perceived offensiveness of the homeless realm, these relations need to be analyzed (Hennigan 2018, 149).

#### **‘Productivity’**

Based on the paradigms of monetary value, profit and growth, the capitalist economy is in need of workers to produce the necessary surplus value. On the contrary, individuals *appearing* non-productive are considered valueless for the economic system, and are, therefore, neglected or even penalized by capitalist societies and their institutions: “The apparent offensiveness of homeless people, specifically the apparently ‘able-bodied’ homeless, originates because they are seen to not be regularly selling their labour power, not producing new, surplus value through commodity production” (Hennigan 2018, 150). In capitalist terms, productivity is solely associated with wage labour, neglecting the fact that most appearing ‘non-productive’ are constantly working to maintain and manage their everyday lives. As seemingly non-productive individuals, people without proper homes appear antagonistic to a capitalist logic. Moreover, in cities with ever rising rents an increasing number of precariously employed workers can no longer afford to live in an apartment, a ‘proper’ home. Thus, the equation of homelessness and unemployment is not only highly stigmatizing but also long obsolete: according to a 2017 survey, 13% of San Francisco’s homeless population was employed (Wagner, 2018).

#### **Propertied citizenship**

On an institutional level of state administration individuals living a mobile life are difficult to be governed, as citizens are administered and controlled best if they maintain stable circumstances of habitation and can be physically allocated. Hence, one needs to present a permanent address in order to be eligible for citizenship as the right to be protected by the state in the form of welfare or police protection, or to make use of political rights such as voting (Kannisto 2016, 223). It is in that sense, thinking of Butler’s argument earlier, by being non-eligible for certain rights of citizenship like voting or social welfare, that experiencing homelessness in contemporary societies can be seen as a form of being stateless. The discourses of home and homelessness have to be considered in regard to this notion of state control exerted on individuals, or as Rachel Kiddey (2017, 200) puts it more drastically: “Home in the Euro-American context, must now involve stasis, a building or place that can be fenced around, however small

or ill equipped it is to function as home – because it must be taxed.” It is the interest of the capitalist state that its citizens invest in property, in a certain piece of land, which needs to be tended both physically and financially: Resources are extracted or taken care of, and render the land physically productive, while mortgage and tax payments integrate it and its owners into the larger capitalist economy. Property ownership is, therefore, regarded as a ‘positive,’ monetarily valued contribution to capitalist society. Living on the move, then, can be regarded as a form of resistance to this idea of *propertied citizenship*, described by Ananya Roy (2003, 476): “The paradigm of citizenship has come to be tied to property ownership, so the homeless have been seen as trespassers in the space of the nation-state.” This paradigm of *propertied citizenship* not only forms the model relationship between state and individual, but “also an ontology of being in the world, [which] emphasizes a system of values and norms, requires certain epistemologies or ways of knowing and is constantly articulated and extended” (Roy 2003, 464). A propertied home, then, is a way to regulate individuals not only financially and on an administrative level, but also socially. On the contrary, “the homeless body is [declared] the ‘constitutive outside’ of propertied citizenship, the alien figure that at once violates and thereby reinforces the norms of citizenship” (Roy 2003, 464).

### Constitutive outside

Roy borrows the notion of a ‘constitutive outside’ from Chantal Mouffe who refers to Derrida, emphasizing that “the ‘them’ is not the constitutive opposite of a concrete ‘us,’ but the symbol of what makes any ‘us’ possible” (Mouffe 2000, 13). Therefore, exclusionary measures addressing those living unsettled lives within the urban fabric are used to define who is a propertied citizen, and who is not. Rendering the urban homeless population as ‘constitutive outside,’ then, is an inherent part of the system itself, and this process of exclusion a result of capitalist economic development, which produces contemporary conditions of homelessness:

The continuous growth of urban areas and the rising demand of housing made land a scarce urban resource, rendering investments in housing as highly profitable and relatively safe. Housing was transformed into a global commodity, a money depot or a bank account translated into physical form, accumulating and increasing surplus value. Indeed, state legislation enabled this transformation of housing into assets of a speculative market (Rolnik 2013): Land was privatized, formerly city-owned social housing projects were sold to private investors, while the number of newly funded social housing projects decreased (Schönig, 2020). Investments in the transformation of urban infrastructures were used as a strategic tool to encourage property development and attract capital, “even though this transformation means the dispossession of current and longtime residents” (Baldwin, Crane 2020, 366). Here, the financialization of housing in Berlin can serve as a paradigmatic example: After the demise of the German Democratic Republic and the subsequent Fall of the Wall, Berlin’s housing market was deregulated and urban neoliberalization strategies as described above were increasingly applied in the entire urban area, marking a drastic shift from socialist to neoliberal housing policies (Rink, 2020). Today, thirty years later, 8,000 formerly municipality-owned real estate plots have been privatized, an area which would stretch out over an entire city district if cumulated (Schüsckke, 2020; 1989–2019: *Politik des Raums im Neuen Berlin* 2019). This long term transformation process continuously drove rents up, displacing communities, and in some cases even leading to the entire loss of housed homes.

The commodification of housing and its transformation into an investment asset traded on a global financial market is a global trend which “profoundly affected the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing across the world” (Rolnik 2013, 1059). It is these “processes of accumulation by dispossession that render capitalist development possible [which] produce informality as their constitutive outside,” according to Sheppard, Sparks and Leitner (2020, 394). While from a

capitalist perspective transient lifestyles as “invasive” elements disrupt the way the city is supposed and strategically designed to work, the exact opposite holds true from the perspective of those driven out of their apartments, seeking to make a home in the urban. Here, it is the way the city is supposed to function according to municipal administrations which disrupts the individual reality, and the routines of making oneself a home in the city.

### ***Penalization – involuntary movement and reinforced circularity***

*Appearing* non-productive, excluded from the paradigm of propertied citizenship as well as certain rights of citizenship, and rendered as constitutive outside, people without formal homes are criminalized and penalized by the capitalist state. Criminalization strategies make use of the criminal justice system to reduce the visibility of the homeless population by restricting their activities and movements in public space. Penalization, then, describes the punishment through criminalizing certain activities in public space, blocking access to services and rights, imprisonment, displacement etc. (FEANTSA 2013, 15-16). Criminalization and penalization methods serve a two-fold hiding function for the state. Intended to dispel those experiencing homelessness to invisible margins of urban space, penalization policies hide, on the one hand, social issues of inequality and poverty. On the other hand, they disguise the state’s disinterest to enforce human rights for all of its residents, as the right to housing and an adequate standard of living, formulated in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948). Brian Hennigan (2018, 162) points towards a slightly other direction in emphasizing the effects of such policies driving people off the streets and into institutionalized structures as a way to ‘reintegrate’ those experiencing homelessness into the capitalist system of employment: “the vast landscape of criminalization and welfare, then, is nothing more than the necessary mode of governance for this mode of production.” Enforcing movement onto individuals and ‘relocating’ them – not only into institutional settings – becomes a technique of the state to revalue these bodies and to make them productive again.

It is no coincidence that anti-homeless laws and policies have increasingly been implemented in the United States from the 1980s onwards, accompanying the proliferation of neoliberal urban policies and the retrenchment of the welfare state, not only in the US, but also in Europe (Schönig, 2020). Municipalities and city administrations passed laws which forbid sleeping in public and strictly regulated the use of sidewalks, thereby making way for undertaking so-called ‘sweeps’ of homeless dwellings in the US (NCH/NLCHP 2006, 14). ‘Sweeps’ describe the brutal clearance of urban homes and encampments, often involving bulldozers which destroy informally built structures. The wording is alarming, as it draws on notions of uncleanness, filth and waste which need to be cleaned up, swept away. Here, language directly reflects the dehumanizing approach of penalization strategies towards the homeless population in general which goes hand in hand with criminalization strategies (Dozier, 2019) and the social construction of further stigmas. From a top-down state perspective unhoused personal homes and their private belongings do not count as individual property that is to be protected, in contrast to other forms of property such as urban land. In her research on strategies of dispossession and criminalization in Los Angeles’ Skid Row neighbourhood, Deshonay Dozier (2019, 186) cites a neighborhood activist who describes a scene of one of those ‘sweeps’: A woman running after a dumping truck which had just deported all her belongings, including the ashes of her deceased mother, screams “I need to get my mom out of there’, ‘I need to get my mom’s urn out of there’, ‘I need to get my mom’s ashes out of there’, and they didn’t even think twice.” Thus, the activist concludes that if you are “not allowed to get your mother, that means that the people on the other side of the

equation don't give a damn about anything that you have to offer. You're not even human to them and you don't deserve anything." (Dozier 2019, 186)

Although the scale and frequency of systemic 'sweeps' is (still) less extensive in Europe, an intensified regulation and enforcement of a 'proper' use of public spaces, officially advocated to ensure 'public safety,' has increasingly been adopted by various national policies in Europe as well. While national context and regional legislation vary, "there are notable common features and possibly some common underlying explanations for these new legal orientations" (FEANTSA 2013, 61) which prevent those without traditional homes from accommodating their needs in the public sphere and making a more permanent claim on urban space as a space of dwelling.

### **Enforced movement and 'relocation'**

Penalization methods employed by the state to criminalize and discipline humans living on the *move* and thereby resisting capitalist norms of productivity and spatial disposability have precursors in social history (Hennigan 2018, 160). Marx coined the term "the bloody legislation against vagabondage" to describe the brutal methods employed to discipline those out of work and on the move: "If it happens that a vagabond has been idling about for three days", one 1547 English statute read, "he is to be taken to his birthplace, branded with a redhot iron with the letter V on the breast, and be set to work, in chains, in the street" (Karl Marx cited in Hennigan 2018, 159).

While a lifestyle of impermanence is, on the one hand, penalized by municipalities and government bodies, measures introduced by the state to address homelessness enforce impermanent lifestyles and movement onto individuals. It is, in fact, often not movement as such that is directly penalized, but it is the act of staying at one place and accommodating it to one's needs, the 'loitering' and 'lingering' in public, which is rendered offensive and criminalized.

In 1987, the municipality of New York City began to distribute free one-way bus tickets out of the city to people sleeping rough, with the intention to 'relocate' individuals and families to other places inside and outside of the US if a contact address at the end of the journey could be confirmed. Under the mandate of mayor Michael Bloomberg this program was relaunched and heavily funded, making New York City the main originator city in the US of this so-called 'Homeless Relocation Program' (Bosmann, 2009; Gee, Wong and Lewis, 2017). While city councils officially declare it as a possibility to start anew and find greater stability, the individual outcome is likely to be unsettling instead. As a cheap way for cities to dispose of their 'homeless problem' this practice reveals the broad social hostility against the unhoused population. It is a cosmetic operation on the statistical level of official data, reducing the local quantitative number of the unhoused population, while the systemic causes of homelessness and its resulting challenges are not addressed, but instead shifted to other places. Ironically, most municipalities which employ this method dispose of a high median income (Gee, Wong, and Lewis, 2017); yet, they leave individuals basically roofless again, only this time on the couch of a family member or friend.

### **Reinforced circularity**

Besides the brutality of advocating displacement, the Homeless Relocation Program represents a contradictory and cynical approach: It encourages people without traditional homes to continue a life in impermanence, while this is a main reason for their socio-political and economic exclusion and penalization in the first place. Similarly, everyday evictions and 'sweeps' force people living unsettled to keep moving further into potential instability, both in a literal and a metaphorical sense. 'Sweeps' often not only mark the individual loss of personal belongings with emotional value which make a home, such as the remains of one's mother as described above, but even more so a dispossession of valuable documents and tools important to "participate" in urban society, such as personal identification or everyday medication, money, laptops, radios etc. (Dozier 2019, 186).



'Hostile Architecture' as a criminalization strategy directly translated into physical space follows a logic of unsettling in a more literal sense: Small metal ridges as park bench partitions, thorns set in concrete in urban niches and other seemingly subtle design elements form a hostile environment to human appropriation. This design intends to prevent people from appropriating the urban as a comfortable space of rest according to individual needs, let alone turning it into a homely environment or temporary dwelling. Similar to the Homeless Relocation Program, these socio-spatial design strategies lead to a self-reinforcing circularity of displacement.

Thus, there is a clear distinction between these two notions of urban movement: Self-chosen movement as a subversive tactic is not to be confused with movement enforced onto individuals by the various strategies discussed above. Here, it becomes a tool of governance, a practice of displacement that pushes people living unsettled lives repeatedly more into motion. These strategies perpetuate social stigmas and patterns of penalization, which creates a vicious circle of exclusion and displacement that is not only physically uprooting, but also socially. In their research on the interdependencies of urban displacement, poverty and race, Baldwin and Crane (2020, 366) point out that "this movement – this forced urban migration – sabotages and fractures the very politics and relationships necessary for collective, place-based resistance." As such, enforced movement as a displacement strategy not only pushes individuals to less visible margins of urban space, but also hinders the formation of social bonds, a prerequisite for forming alliances to develop a collective action and potentially an urban revolt.

### ***To say that our society is falling apart is only to say that it is alive and well – conclusion***

Urban movement, if voluntary and self-chosen, has the potential to reinterpret public space, and to hint at alternative urban routines and lifestyles. When movement is enforced on individuals, however, it turns into a practice of continuous displacement, creating a vicious circle of exclusion which uproots individual lives. The crucial difference between movement as the potential for revolt and subversive acts and movement as a penalization strategy generating continuous displacement, then, is whether it is individually chosen or whether it is forced.

Therefore, retracing to the etymological thoughts of the beginning, another way to challenge societal stigmas of homelessness and of transient ways of living is to reframe what constitutes a home, instead of dwelling on the negation, the lack of a home. Contemporary archeologist Rachel Kiddey accompanies people experiencing homelessness as research partners to their dwelling places occupied as homes, and notes: "a quiet space in front of a hot-air vent, where one is free to come and go, where smoking is permitted and dogs are allowed seems more 'homely' than a bed in an overcrowded night-shelter" (Kiddey 2017, 212). The chosen spaces have the disposition to provide the "intangible aspects of home – privacy, space, control, personal warmth, comfort, stability, safety, security, choice, self-expression and physical and emotional well-being" (Kiddey 2017, 211). Yet, in societies which criminalize and penalize individual tactics of making a home in the urban, these qualitative characteristics necessarily remain just a *potential predisposition* for a home. The regulatory strategies of governing public space such as the discussed penalization methods, deny individuals a main characteristic of home: control over one's personal place, thus also limiting all other homely parameters such as privacy, stability, or security etc. Acknowledging these important, rather invisible characteristics which constitute a home, which are often overlooked by spatial design, can help to rethink normative conceptions of housing and *home* in general. Referring to Michel de Certeau's notion of spatial practices, learning from everyday tactics of attempting

to make a home in the urban fabric, can help re-form and re-conceptualize the city as a home on an individual level. In endorsing the need to build a home, not necessarily as permanently built structure on private property, but also as temporary and supportive infrastructure in urban public land, lies the possibility for architecture and architects to support those living on the move by helping to enhance these homely aspects of urban dwellings.

Yet, this would presuppose the formal acceptance and practical support of informal homes as part of the contemporary urban landscape, which are generated by the capitalist system, while simultaneously revolting against it. This contradiction which renders informal homes as a *constitutive outside* – produced and socially excluded by the same system – makes a formal and practical acceptance of urban informality in the capitalist city quite unlikely: Questions of legal status, ownership rights and the allocation of infrastructural responsibilities would need to be addressed in a way that contradicts capitalist urban logics based on accumulative practices and strictly set ideas of property and ownership. In that vein, Sheppard, Sparks and Leitner (2020, 402) see a subversive potential for systemic change in acknowledging urban informality: “The congenital failure of capitalism to end poverty as we know it means that urban informality remains a necessary alternative, demonstrating that capitalism also can be destabilized from the grassroots.” Tent city communities can be seen as such grassroot alternative communities. They “are based on collective labor” and form a stark “contrast to the individualized survival and social exclusion in a society that has learned to either despise their homeless or to look through them as if they were ghosts” (Lutz 2015, 103). Here, the potential of forming a collective is a crucial aspect; thinking of Butler’s argument earlier, it is the *conjoint gathering* of ‘bodies’ in public space which endows individual actions with a collective agency, developing a subversive power, that is also publicly seen and cannot easily be rendered marginal.

Yet, these communities have to continuously fight for their right to live on urban land. Acknowledging informality as inherent to the urban built environment could be a way to support their constant struggle. This would imply to recognize the systemic failure of the capitalist state to take care of all its citizens equally and to end social inequalities. Yet, the active role of neoliberal states in expanding housing as a global-local commodity on a national level can be seen as a confession that profit is more valuable than people’s lives. Therefore, most municipalities still favor urban planning and management strategies like ‘sweeping’ informal settlements in order to hide the controversial role of the capitalist state in producing and stigmatizing homelessness, whereas transient lives in informal urban homes do not seem to matter in this process of ‘social clean-up:’ whether their ‘relocation’ is intended to make them productive again, to be a deterrent example to ‘good’ citizens to stay obedient and maintain their productivity, or whether capitalist society simply does not value lives outside of its norms and lets them die by neglect – all options are equally brutal.

Grassroot initiatives continuously fight this clean-up on a juridical level as well as on a day to day basis. Their resistance reveals the daily contestations of urban space, its use and interpretation, as Dozier (2019) analyzes in her research on Los Angeles’ Skid Row. Here, in 2011, a successful court case against “homeless dispossession” as enacted by ‘sweeps,’ publicly disclosed the biased reading of property with all its undertones of racism and classism, and counteracted discursive strategies of framing informal belonging as insanitary and health hazards by “formalizing homeless property as being subject to collective determination and care” (Dozier 2019, 188): why should it be allowed to clear an informal home illegally erected on a sidewalk, and to destroy and crash it, if a convertible illegally parked on the same sidewalk would just be toed? Simple arguments like these show the biased reading of property as well as of urban space and its use. – In the wake of this successful court case “Property Not Abandoned” signs were handed out to residents which “included municipal codes

that constituted the removal or confiscation of homeless property as theft and auto-theft” (Dozier 2019, 191) so that they could stick them to their belongings; and this worked: Identifying them as property in these legal terms prevented local authorities from removing them, which, again, also reveals the biased perceptions of property and property rights.

According to Jessie Speer’s ethnographic research in Fresno, California, the constant contestation of urban space, and societal stigmatization of transient lives also mark a clash between different visions of home: “With the re-emergence of large-scale informal housing, homeless communities today are once again challenging dominant notions of the meaning of home, while state intervention continues to police these expressions of domesticity.” (Speer 2017, 521) Although meanings of *home* and characteristics of what constitutes a home remain relative, subjective and fluid, ‘home’ has been turned into a normative concept which excludes expressions openly enlivened in the urban public sphere. Moreover, in denying people experiencing homelessness to take individual or collective control over their dwellings in public space – as transient as they may appear – a fundamental aspect contributing to the notion of home-making is permanently being rejected. Thus, stigmatizations of ‘homelessness’ are closely linked to normative conceptions of ‘home’ which should instead be conceived of as the fluid concept which it has always been. Rethinking these normative prescriptions of ‘home’, then, can also be a way to overcome stigmatizations of ‘homelessness’, refraining from both romanticizing informal dwellings as well as stigmatizing them. –

In the midst of these growing inequalities and contradictions, ongoing contemporary crises and increasing social divides, when all feels to disintegrate, capitalism is still striving. The constant dynamics of destruction for ‘innovation’ are inherent to the capitalist logic, as Marshall Berman’s reading of Marx pointedly shows: “To say that our society is falling apart is only to say that it is alive and well” (Berman 2010, p.95).

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