

Thinking home: interdisciplinary dialogues

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Thinking Home: Interdisciplinary Dialogues, by Sanja Bahun and Bojana Petrić, 1st Ed, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, 248pp., £85.00 (hbk), ISBN: 978-1-3500-6237-5

Thinking Home: Interdisciplinary Dialogues begins with an elaboration on its title. In their introduction to this volume, editors Bahun and Petrić set out the need for an interdisciplinary intervention into the field: that publications focusing on the many diverse aspects of home (housing, family/domestic life, home environments, homelessness, homeownership and the representation of home) exist *in silo*; and are very rarely brought together under one dialogue. As a result, our very knowledge and conceptualisations of home are fragmented and translation to policymaking and the public fora restricted.

This book is also a response to the failure to include alternative voices in the debate on home. Among its contents are artworks, poetry, and ethnographic documentation from a range of contributors including artists, activists and academics. The way the book is structured is purposeful. Stemming from the editors' commitment to think home holistically, diverse bodies of knowledge, modes of enquiry and representational formats are intended to 'interact freely', rather than being grouped into categories. Varied modes of enquiry are organised under the three 'synergic points' of the volume ('homeness and home-making'; 'home and dispossession'; and 'languages of home'). This format benefits the reader as each contribution has its own unique character, which makes the volume easy to read despite its intellectual depth.

There are twelve contributions in total. The five in the first synergic point, 'homeness and home-making', address the significance of home in shaping who we are as individuals, collectives and a species. Nigel Rapport explores home-making as an individual substantiation of a universal human capacity in his rich ethnographic writings from fieldwork with 'Arthur', 'Sean' and 'Stan'. I am pleased that Rapport acknowledges the entanglement of home and not-home, "*how individuals might conjure with senses of alienation, the unhomely and anti-homely*" (p.35), and asks if these too are substantiations of home-making. These questions are also picked up in the following contribution by Charlotte Weinberg and Obinna Nwosu on domestic dislocation, referring to people who have become separated from their homes for a variety of reasons while still living in the same country. The essay is an examination of the realities of home for those whose experience of it is not so sweet, and provides reflections on the idea that one can be a 'refugee' even when one is 'at home'. The third (stand-out) contribution comes from Renos K. Papadopoulos, whose conceptualisations of home form the backbone of this volume, and underpin many of the subsequent contributions. Papadopoulos proposes that home can be understood as "*a dynamic archetypal system, a systemic hub, a network, a cluster, a container of complex interactions between a) space, b) time and c) relationships*" (p.55). This conceptualisation adds to contemporary and increasingly sophisticated understandings of home which are critiquing, complicating and shifting from earlier one-dimensional, taken-for-granted accounts. Susan C. Pearce's essay is an important reminder that dictionary definitions of home are alienating for those whose relationship with home encompasses loss, absence, forgetting and reclaiming (as it does for the ancestors and descendants of the African Burial Ground in Pearce's study). The final contribution of part one, by Lily Hunter Green, is based around the author's art project, 'Harvest'. This is a community-led installation and an attempt to re-think home through a specific context of experiencing, celebrating, and performing home for Jewish communities.

Part two of the volume focuses on 'home and dispossession', coalescing around homelessness and home-loss. Amy Morris analyses representations of homelessness in post-Second World War US and UK culture, arguing that portrayals can be read in terms of what that culture values and fears in 'homefulness'. Vivienne Ashley, in possibly the most policy-focused contribution, focuses on those who are deemed by the state to have forfeited the right to housing as a result of their perceived irresponsibility; people who are defined as 'intentionally homeless' in the UK. Ashley highlights the disconnect between the test for intentional homelessness as sketched out in theory and how it is practised on the ground. She shows that the test is founded on a mistaken assumption that individuals who have mental capacity (as defined in the Mental Capacity Act 2005) are necessarily autonomy-competent and have the skills and dispositions required for effective decision-making that promotes their best interests. Next is a poetic commentary and visuals from a theatre project (by Biljana Golubović and Dragan Dragin) developed in reaction to news that the house they were living in at the time had been sold and condemned to destruction. The project, on the subject of home, lasted for 607 days and included a variety of performance and installation. The final contribution to this section (by Lorna Fox O'Mahony and Matthew Gibson) draws on findings from a qualitative study of 70 equity release consumers to explore the emotional dimension of trading the owned home in later life. Their findings indicate the negative feelings associated with equity release and have important implications for older owners' willingness to participate in practices of asset-based welfare.

The final part of the volume focuses on 'languages of home'. Damien Le Bas opens with a reflection on the Romani language based on his personal experience. He highlights the connection between home and shared language. Tony Capstick explores the issues of migration and belonging in the home literacies of Mirpuri families and identifies how the availability of literacies provides opportunities to shape identities at home. Recalling Papadopoulos' theorising on home, Capstick concludes that reaching home is never one directional but rather encompasses multiple meanings, places and times. Lastly, Susan Samata explores language use at home among families, and notably, how the loss of a shared first language - as a child moves to exclusive use of a majority community language - informs a sense of home.

The objective to create an interdisciplinary dialogue around home that includes alternative voices is achieved by this volume. The book covers considerable ground, much of which may be new to many readers given that knowledge around home tends to be discipline-specific. As such, I suspect it will be of interest to a diverse international readership that includes and goes beyond housing studies academics. An interdisciplinary approach is vital if we are to understand complex phenomena; I hope that future contributions follow in the footsteps of *Thinking Home*.

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