For a liberatory politics of home

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For a Liberatory Politics of Home begins with the simple yet arresting question, "What if the solution to homelessness is not home?". An opposition between home and homelessness remains the norm in everyday doxa, but what if our conventional notions of home – so often associated with safety, stability, and belonging – are wrong - and, in fact, part and parcel of the problem?

Over the course of the first two chapters (in Part I of the book), Michele Lancione carefully deconstructs home and the assumption that home, as we know it, is the ultimate panacea to its counterpart of homelessness. There is simply not room to do justice to the intricate theoretical workings in these chapters here, but they pose the kinds of questions that stay with you: "What would home be if homelessness were not only solved but were fundamentally impossible to think and to make?" (p.34). In framing this provocation, Lancione disrupts the moral and political economy that positions home as an unproblematic good, encouraging the reader to reflect on how such ideals are produced, for whom, and at what cost.

Lancione sees home and homelessness as mutually constitutive; that they are both driven by the same capitalist, gendered and racialised home-making logics. Home itself, he argues, can also be violent. In its current form, home exists as a site of privilege for some and exclusion for others. The promise of home, as a place of security, is only possible because of the simultaneous production of homelessness. Housing markets, property laws, and urban development plans favour those with capital and marginalise those without, pushing the most vulnerable into precarious living conditions. It follows, then, that if home is steeped in structures of violence and extraction, we must ask: is this the kind of home we should be striving for in efforts to 'solve' homelessness?

In the chapters that follow (Part II of the book) Lancione draws on ethnographic accounts of faith-based, low-threshold homelessness services and a repatriation centre in Turin (Italy) to argue how the current solutions to homelessness are lacking. This is not to single any out or highlight their inadequacy per se, but to reveal their very interconnectedness with expulsive home-making logics themselves. Surely some services are better than others, Lancione asserts, but this, he argues, is beside the point. The point is that they do not go far enough to offer a truly liberatory politics of home. The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house, so to speak (Lorde, 1983). The conclusions Lancione draws in these chapters may be jarring, particularly for those working within homelessness services, who are mostly deeply committed to supporting their clients – or, indeed for anyone convinced of

their value. Yet, it is perhaps this discomfort we need to prompt further critical reflection around home and homelessness.

If traditional notions of home are inherently exclusionary, what are the alternatives? Lancione thinks through this question in Part III of the book but is purposively not prescriptive here; the book is an invitation for people to find their own ways of occupying, of sheltering on a different basis, and going beyond inhabitation. Rather than offering a blueprint, Lancione gestures toward possibilities—forms of homing that reject normative assumptions and are grounded instead in collective care, resistance, and experimentation. Grassroots movements like squatting or cooperative housing represent a kind of radical break from the current paradigm, offering glimpses of what a liberatory politics of home might look like in practice, even if these alternatives remain fragile, partial, and contested. In some senses, the project is as much about unlearning (what we currently know about home) as it is about rebuilding.

Perhaps the most pressing question Lancione's work raises is whether such a liberatory vision is possible within the framework of our current socio-economic systems. Can a politics of home truly be liberatory in a neoliberal world where housing is financialised, and space is so fiercely contested? Lancione's call to embrace new forms of homing hinges on our willingness to dismantle the deeply entrenched structures that make housing a privilege rather than a right.

I have little doubt that *For a Liberatory Politics of Home* will be especially valuable to scholars, practitioners, and activists alike who are engaged in housing justice, critical urban studies, human geography and social work. Its provocative reframing of home challenges readers to think beyond conventional policy fixes and to interrogate the deeper structural and affective dimensions of housing precarity. Although the book is exquisitely written, the read is not always an easy one. It forces us to grapple with the uncomfortable idea that our current attachment to home as a private, secure space may be preventing us from addressing the root causes of inequality and homelessness. But if we are to move towards a more equitable society, we must be willing to question not just how we house people but how we think about the home itself.

Books like this are rare. Lancione brings together deep theoretical insight with political activism and ethnographic richness in a way that is both unsettling and generative. Part of what makes the book so compelling is the honesty of its voice—Lancione's writing is reflexive and at times, personal, weaving in his own experiences and positionality in ways that refute the distance of detached scholarship. *For a Liberatory Politics of Home* refuses easy answers but opens up new and necessary directions for thought and action. I imagine it will be remembered as a seminal contribution in housing and urban scholarship—one that future scholars will return to when trying to think differently about the politics of space, care, and belonging.

References

Lorde A. (1983). 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House', pp.94-101, in Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table Press).

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