

Homelessness in Human Geography

To experience homelessness is to face the profoundly spatial problem having no safe, stable place in the world. Geography, with its focus on socio-spatial modes of exclusion, has contributed an important set of debates on the subject. This chapter provides an overview of these conversations, specifically examining those that appear in English-language academic texts. As the most often-cited works tend to examine the punitive public sphere and ‘spaces of care’ in the charity sector, in this chapter I pay special attention to recent developments that engage a more intersectional approach to homelessness and take into account questions of domestic space. While studies of cities in the United States and United Kingdom dominate the literature, I also discuss a more international body of work to reflect the wider breadth of the field. The chapter is loosely organised around private, institutional, and public spaces, as three primary socio-spatial terrains that have been foundational to the geographies of homelessness. To reflect the more intersectional turn the literature has taken, I treat these categories as fluid and overlapping, and examine their relation to a range of additional issues such as race, gender, migration, empire, nature, epistemology and embodiment.

Private space

Perhaps the most marked recent development in the field has been the shift away from narrowly examining public and institutional spaces to take account of the myriad private and domestic spaces that texture the geographies of homelessness. Such work acknowledges how homelessness is deeply connected to the politics of precarious housing. In the US in the wake of the 2008 housing crisis, a growing number of people turned to mobile homes, resulting in an entire class of ‘mobile home squatters’ (Aman and Yarnal, 2010). In Hong Kong, the world’s most expensive housing market has left large numbers of people residing in extremely poor-quality ‘cage homes,’ often only large enough to fit a single bed (Kornatowski, 2008). In Buenos Aires, with housing costs on the rise, a growing number of people have turned to informal hotels for shelter, where they face the constant threat of sudden eviction (Muñoz, 2017). Altogether, such precarious forms of low-income, illegal, and insecure housing highlight the blurred boundary between squatting and homelessness, and the importance of examining forms of homelessness that exist behind closed doors.

The loss of domestic space also leaves many denied opportunities to secure their own privacy (Sparks, 2010). Geographers have examined the emotional labor and bodily performances through which people without housing produce alternative kinds of private spaces. For young people in Sydney, homelessness is often associated with a traumatic relationship with a past home and the ongoing struggle to find safe spaces. Yet social connections with others on the street can enable young people to build an

emotional sense of home (Robinson, 2005). In Cyprus, many women displaced by conflict undertake the work of rebuilding a home outside of formal housing, involving a highly precarious kind of reproductive labour (Aliefendioğlu and Behçetoğulları, 2019). Banerjee (2018) engages the concept of ‘persistence’ to show how footpath dwellers in Mumbai develop emotional ties with place, despite the state’s failure to recognize such dwelling spaces. In the US, public city streets, town squares and libraries can function as homelike sites of belonging for people without housing, as they are places to return to, to meet friends, and from which to venture forth (Hodgetts, et al., 2008; Sheehan, 2010; Ursin, 2011). An increasing number of people also make homes out of motor vehicles. Wehman-Brown (2015) argues that the mobility of the car paradoxically enables people to evade anti-homeless policing, securing a modicum of privacy and stability. In the absence of market housing, such alternative dwelling spaces require new and creative home-making practices.

In many ways, such experiences also collapse the scales of the body, home and city. As part of a ‘homeless vehicle’ project developed in New York City, artists outfitted shopping carts with built in sleeping pods, storage space, and washbasins. Smith (1992) argues that such mobile shelters challenged the construction of scale itself, as people without homes used their residential mobility to expand the scale at which they moved about in the city. As housing is designed to protect the body, homelessness is also a profoundly embodied experience. For homeless men in Cape Town, South Africa, managing the body—its movements, comforts, pains, and visibility—was central to the experience of homelessness, and a lack of bodily autonomy took a daily emotional toll (Daya and Wilkins, 2013). In turn, certain bodies are more often identified as appropriate subjects of violence and exploitation. May (2015) writes that young homeless men of colour who resided in downtown in Toronto often characterised suburban neighbourhoods as sites of intense racial scrutiny in which their bodies were sorted and judged, recalling Takahashi’s (1998) insights about the spatialisation of stigma. At the same time, the body can become a primary line of resistance to stigmatising discourses. Beazley (2003) shows how homeless boys in Indonesia engaged in shared bodily practices—dress codes, masculine sexual posturing, drug use, and body modification—as a means to counter the enormous stigma they faced. Such insights reveal that the absence of home is experienced at the intimate scale of the body, as well as at the scale of the city at large.

In addition to establishing homelike spaces in public, people without housing often develop entire communities. In Los Angeles, homeless encampments during the 80s and 90s offered respite from the violence of the streets, as community members provided security and protection for each other (Rowe and Wolch, 1990). Ruddick (1996) shows how such communities actively sought out invisible spaces as a strategy to bypass city policy. Homeless collectives also play an active role in reshaping urban space through creative place-making tactics (Aufseeser 2018; Dozier 2019). For those who are often subjected

to invasions of privacy and have few opportunities to be free from the public gaze (Langeegger and Koester, 2016; Goldfischer, 2018) encampments provide a modicum of much-needed private space (Sparks, 2010). Literature on camping in the US speaks to larger conversations on informality in the Global South. In South Africa, informal structures—including those without doors, locks, walls, or roofs—often constitute ‘home’ for many people living in communal shack settlements (Meth, 2003). Such informal dwellings have the potential to challenge market property as the primary building block of urban society and subvert notions of domestic space as belonging only to self-contained nuclear families (Veness 1992). But camp residents also face the everyday reality of having no access to running water, trash pickup services, or bathroom facilities, in addition to environmental hazards (Goodling, 2020). Further, policymakers often disallow informal dwellings, forcing families who live in shanties to instead rely on the shelter system (Veness, 1992). In Western Australia, policy understandings of what constitutes a home are often based on urban, colonial assumptions that are less relevant to rural contexts, resulting in increased rates of housing condemnation and homelessness among Aboriginal communities (Zufferey and Chung, 2015). Despite their challenge to normative modes of domesticity and their power to reshape the city, encampments and informal collectives remain deeply precarious.

Those who seek shelter away from the public gaze also risk becoming invisible to governments and social services. In the UK, many women stay in violent homes in an effort to avoid the dangers of rough sleeping in public. As Robertson (2007) argues, such women often experience a kind of invisible ‘homelessness at home.’ As a result, the overall occurrence of homelessness among women is vastly underestimated (May, Cloke, and Johnsen, 2007). Those doubled up on friends’ couches or moving constantly between poor living conditions are also notoriously difficult for the state or social services to identify, as with immigrant communities in the UK who are underrepresented in statistics on homelessness (Deverteuil, 2011). Across the globe, a reliance on numerical measures has resulted in the dramatic undercounting of homelessness, as statistical knowledge is based on a model of the world as sedentary. In India, large scale migration—both of rural migrants and refugees from neighbouring areas—constitutes one of the leading causes of pavement dwelling (Roy and Siddique, 2018; Shamshad and Chaplot, 2017). Yet because of the large and shifting nature of the problem, state census data is incredibly difficult to obtain. At the same time, one of the greatest challenges faced by pavement dwellers is the lack of visible citizenship, in the form of access to voter IDs, rations cards, and banking facilities (Roy and Siddique, 2018). Where homelessness exists in hidden city spaces, this invisibility is only further deepened.

Related to the question of invisibility, epistemology emerges as a key area of inquiry in recent work in geography. In Germany, the state has historically refused to collect statistics on homelessness on the grounds that it is impossible to acquire accurate data. As Marquardt (2016) argues, homelessness

represents the limits of state knowledge. The concept of homelessness itself did not exist in Romania until after the fall of communism, when foreign aid workers introduced neoliberal understandings of homelessness as a visible and public phenomenon (O'Neill, 2010). In Australia, new and more expansive understandings of homelessness have revealed previously unknown spatial dynamics: while rough sleeping predominates in inner cities, overcrowding is a suburban phenomenon concentrated in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods. This new data suggests a strong correlation between poverty and racial inequality and highlights a kind of residential homelessness that exists beyond the 'service dependent ghetto' (O'Donnell, 2018). These studies all reveal the importance of making homelessness more visible, in all its dynamics, and moving away from simplistic, numerical models for assessing the scale and nature of the problem. As Schmidt and Robaina (2017) and Speer (2021) argue, knowledge about homelessness is crucial not only to make the problem more visible, but to advance a narrative that more accurately reflects the voices of people who actually experience it. These works reflect a larger trend in the discipline towards challenging epistemic erasure and refining existing understandings of the concept of homelessness.

Altogether, work on domesticity and private space reveals how housing itself is deeply imbricated in the politics of homelessness. These insights blur the line between homelessness and precarious housing and reveal new modes of work involved in producing domesticity while living outside. A focus on domestic space also reveals how homelessness happens across scales, in an intimate bodily experience as well as in navigating the city at large. A growing body of work examines how encampments and squatter settlements simultaneously present emancipatory potential to individuals living without the protections of formal housing, yet remain profoundly vulnerable to eviction and precarious living conditions. Finally, such alternate domestic forms produce a new kind of homelessness that is less visible than rough sleeping on a public city sidewalk. While invisibility can be a crucial source of privacy, it reinforces the silencing of homeless voices.

Institutional space

In contrast to the focus on the private sphere, a robust body of work has examined how state, private, and third-sector institutions manage the problem of homelessness. Cultural geographers have pushed back against the tendency in urban geography to over-emphasise the punitive nature of homelessness management. DeVerteuil, May, and Von Mahs (2009) argue that much of the emphasis on militaristic urban space is based in the assumption that American dynamics are universal. Instead, they argue, the situation in the UK must be examined on its own terms, as shelters often foster genuine relationships of care and compassion that are crucial to the everyday lives of homeless residents. Laurenson and Collins (2007) similarly found that support systems in New Zealand outweighed punitive

anti-homeless measures. Studies have also shown how compassion and punishment can become mutually interdependent. In San Francisco, city authorities promoted a ‘gentler’ approach to homelessness by redeveloping single room occupancy hotels into supportive housing. Yet revamped hotels imposed strict restrictions on overnight guests, installed surveillance cameras, and mandated unit searches. Murphy (2009) argues that this new mode of ostensibly compassionate assistance removed some of the only super low-income housing in the city and made it available only to those enrolled in a strict and paternalistic programme. The architectural design of shelters can also be coercive, aiming to recreate hegemonic domestic ideals of individualism and private ownership (Datta, 2005). As Lancione (2016) argues, institutional settings in Italy are often hostile to difference and promote normative and racialised visions of ‘proper’ homelessness. Altogether, these debates reveal how homelessness management often involves the deeply ambivalent comingling of compassionate and punitive initiatives.

Shelters and other services for unhoused people also face their own challenges, as they are often subject to the politics of NIMBYism. Brinegar (2003) shows how shelter site proposals in the US often result in public outcry, with districts implementing zoning measures to prevent them from locating anywhere but an inner city’s most powerless and impoverished neighbourhoods. As a result, entire neighbourhoods in the US were historically carved out as ‘service-dependent ghettos’ marked by the clustering of services. Over time, the closure of institutional support systems led to spatial fragmentation that imposed increasingly complex patterns of unhoused people’s daily mobility demands (Dear and Wolch, 1987). In Hong Kong, the government sought to maintain the aesthetic draw of touristic areas by only funding shelters in undesirable inner-city neighbourhoods (Kornatowski, 2008). Takahashi (1998) argues that such forms of NIMBYism are not simply the result of public or government attitudes towards homelessness but are the product of capitalist patterns of urban underdevelopment, revitalisation, and displacement.

In policy circles, emergency shelters have become an increasingly unpopular response to the problem of homelessness. A range of national governments in North America and Europe have implemented new programs aimed at providing private rental housing for people who experience long-term ‘chronic’ homelessness. This new approach—called ‘housing first’—aims to do away with treatment prerequisites imposed by temporary shelters according to which residents must become ‘housing ready.’ Yet housing first in the US has been critiqued as a neoliberal strategy aimed largely at reducing the visibility of homelessness in public spaces, lowering the cost of homeless services, and forcing people into exploitative rental relations (Hennigan, 2017). In Canada, such permanent supportive housing has been found to present a range of challenges for women in particular. As many homeless women previously lived in violent homes with little control over their daily movements, residents often struggle with the high degrees of surveillance and regulation involved in supportive housing. Many women also

emphasise the need for connection and community to combat isolation and stigma, yet most permanent housing programs are based on an isolated model of individual or family residence with few spaces to foster communal connection (Klodawsky, 2009; Fotheringham, Walsh, and Burrowes, 2014). As with emergency shelter, the trend towards permanent supportive housing itself remains profoundly ambivalent.

Across a diverse range of contexts, geographers have examined how unhoused people's movements can become constrained and delimited by service infrastructures. Jackson (2010) argues that people can become 'fixed' in a condition of mobility as a result of institutional rules and regulations. She shows how homeless youth in London were often forced to leave day centres early in the evening and sleep on buses overnight, making mobility an ever-present fact of their daily lives. In Athens, service institutions often push people into continual movement in efforts to 'mobilise' them into responsible citizenship. Paradoxically, Bourlessas (2018) argues, such enforced mobility produces the sense of passively drifting through and between institutional and public spaces, rather than actively shaping one's own daily movements. Mobility is also impacted by access to public transportation. Jocoy and Del Casino (2010) write that people who experience homelessness depend on public transportation to a much greater degree than the general public yet are often unable to qualify for subsidized bus passes, thus making mobility more tenuous. At the same time as service infrastructures and anti-homeless policing enforce a high degree of mobility, they also subject people to a politics of spatial containment. Dozier (2019) argues that the entire Skid Row neighbourhood of Los Angeles has become a carceral space where people without housing are contained and subjected to racialised hyper-policing. Across the US, jails, prisons, and other carceral institutions constitute a largely under-acknowledged site for homelessness management. Particularly when homeless encampments have been co-opted and governed by local authorities, carceral models of poverty management have become enmeshed with service provision, with shelter residence often linked to state-mandated jail diversion programmes (Speer, 2018). In this way, homelessness can reproduce the paradoxical tension between continual displacement and containment.

While the bulk of geographic literature on homelessness falls within urban and cultural studies, a growing body of literature examines the dynamics of rural homelessness in relation to service provision. Cloke, Milbourne, and Widdowfield (2000) write rural that homelessness is often made invisible, at the same time as weak service infrastructures in rural areas make the need for housing and shelter ever more pressing. For First Nations people in Canada, the majority of reserves are not situated near markets or services and have been subject to more than a century of disinvestment, resulting in poor housing quality and provision. In Saskatchewan, Peters and Robillard (2009) found that homeless First Nation's people moved frequently every year, often because services or jobs were not available on the reserve. This colonial legacy renders the reserve simultaneously a space of trauma, poverty, isolation, and poor housing, as well as family bonds, social cohesion, and belonging, a tension which produces a 'circulation'

mobility pattern of constant movement between cities and reserves. In Northern Canada and in Quebec, institutional modes of gendered and racialised violence persist in the lives of indigenous homeless women (Christensen, 2017; Cunningham and Desbiens, 2021). Work on the rural geographies of homelessness brings up crucial questions around state abandonment and the legacy of imperialism.

The focus on coloniality is echoed in geographies of homelessness, migration and race. Rusenko (2020) argues that contemporary homelessness regulation in Tokyo is simultaneously punitive and compassionate in ways that are deeply rooted in Japanese imperial formations. These insights can be further connected to literature on the historically entrenched afterlives of colonial-era vagrancy laws (Herbert and Beckett 2010) as well as colonial assumptions about what constitutes homelessness (Zufferey and Chung 2015). Across many cities of the Global South, homelessness is also deeply linked to the politics of changing rural livelihoods and racialised migrant belonging (Swanson, 2007; Muñoz, 2017; Shamshad and Chaplot, 2017; Roy and Siddique, 2018). In Europe, as cities struggle to address migrant homelessness in the wake of the refugee crisis in the Middle East and North Africa, a kind of racial neoliberalism has emerged in which migrant bodies are targeted for marginalization (Bhagat 2019) and in which homelessness is profoundly linked to statelessness (Aliefendioğlu and Behçetoğulları, 2019). Such approaches to homelessness move beyond the focus on capitalist space to show how historical legacies of empire, race, conflict, and rural disinvestment also reproduce anti-homeless politics.

Altogether, literature on institutional aspects of homelessness highlights the ambivalent nature of social services. Many ‘spaces of care’ are animated by genuine expressions of compassion and solidarity and remain crucial for the wellbeing and survival of people experiencing homelessness. Yet shelters are themselves subject to a politics of NIMBYism and workers often reinforce tropes about homelessness as a personal failure to be solved through therapy and coercion. The trend towards housing initiatives—rather than emergency shelters—also comes with its limitations, particularly where community and extended family are constrained by rules limiting housing vouchers to single individuals. Homelessness service infrastructures have been framed as both enforcing mobility and fixity on homeless communities, and constraining everyday spatial agency in the city. In rural areas where services are few and far between, the afterlives of colonialism impact indigenous communities in particular, whereas racialised urban migrants also experience state abandonment. All this contributes to a regime in which black, brown and indigenous communities are disproportionately subject to the punitive and unsupportive aspects of homelessness management.

Public space

Geographic work on homelessness is perhaps best known for its crucial interventions critiquing the exclusionary politics of urban space. Without recourse to private housing, sidewalks, parks and other

public city spaces often become much-needed spaces for a resting, cooking, washing, panhandling, recycling and socialising. Yet governments have long struggled to regulate such non-normative uses of public space. In the US, as rates of homelessness skyrocketed in the 1980s alongside the declining welfare state and 'rollback' neoliberalism, local governments began funnelling resources for homelessness into aggressive arrest campaigns and property sweeps (Mitchell, 2003). Cities also developed architecture to prevent unhoused people from sleeping or sitting and implemented programs to bus homeless residents out of town entirely (Mair, 1986). This process continues today as cities compete with each other to attract investment. Mitchell (2003) argues that the criminalisation of homelessness has slowly annihilated the public sphere, which historically functioned as a shared resource for all urban residents and a springboard for political struggle. Such measures also force people into a condition of perpetual movement, hearkening back to colonial banishment laws that framed 'vagrants' as outsiders untethered to society (Herbert and Beckett 2010). They further push people into marginal city spaces, exposing women in particular to the threat of violence and harassment (Rowe and Wolch, 1990) and preventing people from accessing crucial social services (Wolch, Rahimian and Koegel, 1993). In this way, unhoused people are often forced to navigate the exclusions and prohibitions of private property, without holding any of its privileges (Blomley, 2006).

Geographers have also traced the ways in which anti-homeless policies have travelled, as cities look to each other for ideas on how to regulate the use of public space. In Ecuador, the city of Guayaquil hired a former New York City Police Commissioner to implement an urban regeneration strategy that included harsh fines for begging (Swanson, 2007). Elsewhere, as in the US, punitive practices have often merged with discourses of compassion. Galvis (2017) argues that the widespread praise of Bogotá's inclusive and livable urban planning initiatives obscured the city's aggressive anti-homeless policies. Gothenburg, Sweden similarly implemented a series of 'soft' anti-homeless laws to create an attractive central business district for tourists and investors (Thörn, 2011). Authorities banned littering, graffiti, and street music, removed public toilets, converted a public park into an outdoor seating area for an adjacent cafe, shut down a shopping mall during evening hours to prevent sleeping, and hired private security guards to patrol the streets. While these initiatives did not explicitly target homelessness, Thörn (2011) argues that they nonetheless resemble the exclusionary dynamics of American anti-homeless policy.

Many East and Southeast Asian countries experienced a similar trend in the wake of rising rates of homelessness after the Asian Debt Crisis of 1997. In South Korea, the national government instituted neoliberal welfare reforms that drew a clear distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, where only employable men were considered deserving of welfare and employment opportunities. Homeless women, to avoid the danger of street life, were forced to cycle between various impermanent housing options. Under pressure from the IMF and World Bank, the government devolved responsibility

for the crisis to the municipal level and cities began to criminalise sleeping on the streets (Song, 2011). In Japan, rising homelessness after the 1990s represented a rupture in the nation's vision of a right to livelihood. Hayashi (2013) argues that as cities instituted increasingly punitive reforms, they became autonomous sites for homelessness governance marked by the denial of national rights. In Phnom Penh, Cambodia, a newly changing city subject to waterfront development projects, Springer (2020) shows how people without housing have suffered a rise in arrests and state punitive violence as a result of the adoption of neoliberal modes of urban governance and associated 'urban beautification' agendas. Taken together, anti-homelessness after the Asian Debt Crisis can be seen as part of a larger global trend towards neoliberal modes of punitive poverty management and the increased reliance on privatised social services (see also Kornatowski, 2008; Rusenko 2020).

In Russia and Eastern Europe, many governments responded similarly to the rising rates of homelessness that accompanied the rapid shift towards capitalism. In St. Petersburg after the 'shock therapy' period of Russian capitalist reform, social welfare systems were dismantled and poverty rapidly increased. Yet deregulation initially allowed for the existence of a 'refuse economy' where homeless citizens could make a living informally and find places to sleep in abandoned buildings, train stations, and boiler rooms. It was not until as recently as 2000 that urban renovation swept the city, transforming these sites into 'prime spaces' from which unhoused people were displaced. At the same time as lodging opportunities vanished, the city failed to institute any temporary shelter system, and social services remained limited only to those with *propiska*—registration at a permanent address (Höjdestrand, 2011). In Hungary and Romania, where socialist governments invested heavily in housing and public services, homelessness was framed as the aberrant result of personal pathologies rather than a failure of social services. Such ideologies resulted in a lasting stigma against homelessness that continued long after the fall of state socialism (O'Neill, 2010; Udvarhelyi, 2014). In Hungary, this stigma culminated in national level legislation that marked homelessness as an illegal obstruction of public space (Udvarhelyi, 2014).

At the same time, geographers are increasingly moving beyond simplistic tropes of neoliberal urbanism, instead engaging theories of the urban assemblage and performativity to interrogate the complex relationship between unhoused people and the urban sphere. Lancione (2016) and Vašát (2020) argue that people without housing shape the urban landscape just as much as they are subject to its pressures and limitations. Scholars have also analysed how in-between and leftover urban spaces—underneath highway overpasses or alongside train tracks, for example—enable people to evade surveillance and transform the city to meet their own needs. For people who camp in peri-urban green spaces, such practices often become framed as a form of rugged wilderness survival (Rose and Johnson, 2017). Urban parks have also been crucial to homeless livelihoods in many cities, not only for material survival in the absence of market housing but also to satisfy personal preference and emotional needs

(Koprowska et al. 2020). Such work not only reveals a rich terrain of urban livelihoods but also highlights practices of urban survival, camaraderie and resistance.

While relatively little English-language scholarship in geography examines homelessness in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, a growing body of work reveals an entirely distinct—yet equally punitive—public urban sphere, with a particular focus on the experiences of street children. In Ecuador, the policing of street children manifested as part of a project of *blanqueamiento* or ‘whitening.’ As neoliberal policies made agricultural livelihoods ever more tenuous, many rural indigenous people were forced to abandon their plots of land and relocate to cities to engage in informal labour. At the same time, cities sought to sell themselves as sites for tourism and upper income consumption, and in so doing cracked down on informality and begging. Policies targeting poor rural migrants were profoundly steeped in racial and colonial ideologies that privileged whiteness (Swanson, 2007). In Uganda, street children pushed out of prime urban areas moved to marginal niches in the city centre so they could continue to engage in survival strategies such as begging, window washing, and stealing, which required the presence of dense urban crowds. Young (2003) argues that such spaces—trash heaps, underground drainage tunnels, and parking lot rooftops, for example—are not geographic peripheries on the urban outskirts, but culturally produced peripheries in the heart of the city. In Ethiopia, childhood begging practices are necessary for the survival of poor urban households, many of whom came to the city after their rural livelihoods became untenable (Abebe, 2008). In stark contrast to homeless youth in the US who often have severed or strained family ties (Gibson, 2011), street children in Ethiopia often framed their begging practices as a kind of work through which they could gain economic security for their families (Abebe, 2008). Together these studies all highlight a distinct geography of homelessness marked by rural immigration and large numbers of people, including children, who rely on public space as a source for urban livelihoods (see also Shamshad and Chaplot, 2017; Roy and Siddique, 2018).

Across this newly emerging and increasingly global scholarship on homelessness, the critique of state responses to unhoused people remains central to the analysis of the public sphere. In contexts deeply impacted by neoliberal interventions and pressures, city governments have often mimicked US-style punitive models that frame unhoused people as unsightly bodies to be removed for the sake of urban capitalist growth. In places where homelessness is so demographically overwhelming that it becomes impossible for the state to manage, pavement dwelling is more often tolerated as a kind of informal mode of subsistence. As Roy (2003) argues, widespread tolerance of informality in the Global South enables people to engage in makeshift homemaking and informal employment in ways that are impossible in more formalized urban economies. Across Africa, Latin America and South Asia, street children navigate the hostile terrain of the city in the wake of widespread rural-to-urban migration. The literature examining

these contexts highlights a crucial geography of homelessness linked to the politics of migration and the changing nature of rural livelihoods in the Global South.

Conclusion

New work in geography on homelessness and domestic space reveals the blurred line between precarious housing and homelessness and casts light on a much larger and more urgent problem than previously acknowledged. New methodologies are needed to combat the epistemological erasure of hidden homelessness and the silencing of homeless voices. The focus on the reproductive labor of 'home making' on the street and women's invisible homelessness also calls attention to the gendered aspects of homelessness, an area which would benefit from further investigation. In particular, few geographers have explicitly taken up the task of examining homelessness as it relates to the politics of sexuality, an increasingly important topic as more and more LGBTQ youth are experiencing housing insecurity. Work on institutional spaces of homelessness has also revealed how third sector 'spaces of care' are situated in an ambivalent policy landscape in which shelters and housing projects are themselves subject to NIMBYism and stigma against homelessness. The comingling of anti-homeless sentiment with the racist and the xenophobic treatment of black, migrant and indigenous groups calls attention to the need to understand homelessness as a structural problem that is profoundly intersectional, while at the same time acknowledging unhoused people's agency in shaping their own lives. In their study of public urban spaces, geographers have highlighted how homelessness challenges the smooth functioning of capitalist markets, such that neoliberal urban governments seek to address the issue through the 'geographic fix' of continual displacement and containment. They have also highlighted the important role that neoliberal capitalist growth plays in producing homelessness through rural disinvestment and urban redevelopment, and how US-style anti-homeless legislation has spread as a globally popular response to rising rates of homelessness. Geographers can produce a clearer picture of these dynamics by investing in more research on homelessness outside of Europe and North America and placing this into a historically textured and decolonial approach to the study of homelessness.

Altogether, geographers have shown the many ways in which people without housing face a fundamentally spatial set of problems. Across the globe, people share the common experience of struggling for freedom of movement in the face of anti-homeless policies, navigating between institutional resources to survive and securing a modicum of privacy in the public sphere. Yet there is much room for further analysis in the field. In today's world of rising nationalism, race, nationality, and migration status all profoundly shape the experience of homelessness in ways that are poorly understood. More broadly, it is crucial to research the ways in which homelessness manifests at the intersection of multiple forms of inequality and oppression, including disability, sexuality and gender.

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