

POVERTY AND HOME

Occupying for Survival: Legitimizing Homeless Space

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This talk focuses on Right 2 Dream Too, a contested rest site in downtown Portland, Oregon that has been providing the homeless community with a safer place to sleep since October 2011. I am concerned with how this rest site has mobilized to sustain itself despite long-standing relocation efforts from the City of Portland, private developers and neighborhood groups. Through the continued occupation of prime space within the downtown landscape, it has been slowly institutionalizing itself as a viable emergency housing service via a self-organizing principle. Drawing on ethnographic work with the rest space, I suggest the particular socio-spatiality of the site has reversed the notion of the homeless as politically illegitimate actors. I therefore consider this rest space as a grounded alternative to the lack of housing accommodations for this population.

Discourses of Endangered Language, Disability, and Poverty: How Attitudes toward Deaf Signing Communities in Latin America Produce Poverty

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Language loss and decreased linguistic diversity is not only a loss of human knowledge, it is also strongly correlated to weakened socioeconomic structures in which languages become endangered or extinct and the environments of minority communities are at risk. Signed languages, in particular, are often considered endangered due to people's attitudes toward a visual-gestural language mode, norms of transmission where signing is not passed down in family structures, number of speakers, and social pressures to conform to culturally hearing ways of being. Communication theorists argue that communities are organized and constituted by discourse; the discourses in Deaf Signing Communities both reflect and construct their ongoing vulnerability. In this paper, I explore how Deaf Signing Communities are constructing endangered social identities and managing endangered linguistic codes. Based on extensive linguistic fieldwork from 2006-2011 in 13 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, I argue that signed languages in Latin America and the Caribbean often exist in vulnerable states because they, and the Deaf Signing Communities that use them, are socially stigmatized. This, in combination with limited deaf educational opportunities, tends to marginalize Deaf Signing Communities. Finding employment by gaining and/or proving that they have the necessary skills to be gainfully employed is very difficult. Through dozens of interviews with Deaf signers, I discuss how Deaf Signing Communities understand their own socioeconomic situation and the first steps they suggest for constructing better ways of being, including greater acceptance and protection of their native signed languages in all of their social networks.

Housing First and the ambiguous politics of homelessness

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This paper focuses on a policy and service model known as Housing First. Targeting 'chronic homelessness', a term commonly applied to long-term homeless individuals with complex support needs, Housing First programs involve the provision of permanent housing linked to comprehensive, client-directed support services. Such programs are

often hailed as progressive responses to homelessness—particularly in their opposition to traditional emphases on client passivity, sobriety and moralized deservingness—yet their popularity depends in large part on consistency with economically conservative political imperatives. Despite the rapid globalization and high public profile of Housing First, it has received little attention within critical policy and homelessness literatures. In response, this paper discusses the spread of Housing First. Focusing on its political ambiguity in particular, the paper explores how Housing First is changing popular understandings of homelessness and reshaping the governance of contemporary poverty.

Visualizing multi-scale poverty: Seattle neighborhoods 1990-2010

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The very nature of relational poverty makes it difficult if not impossible to quantify or to map in all its complexity. While the desirability of quantifying such complicated relations may be legitimately contested, there is value in considering how relational poverty might be rendered visible in this way; both as a means for comprehending some of the inherent complexity and as a means of making a political statement about how and why relational poverty affects people and places (Plummer and Sheppard 2001; Wyly 2009). Recent work on residential segregation has proposed re-imagining segregation in neighborhoods as a multi-scalar phenomenon reflecting the fact that processes that are both larger than and smaller than the neighborhood are relevant for individuals' experience of segregation (Fowler in review). This paper explores a similar method for quantitatively representing poverty as multi-scalar and considers the implications for contributing to the idea of relational poverty. The study focuses on neighborhoods in the City of Seattle and covers the years 1990 to 2010.

A Quiet Politics of Spatial Solidarity: Faith and Middle Class Place-Making

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In this paper, we examine the process of 'intentional neighboring'—a national movement of faith-motivated, middle class (MC) individuals and families to high-poverty neighborhoods to live in solidarity with the marginalized and to self-consciously develop place-based relationships with existing residents to effect social change. Drawing on work from relational poverty scholars, we analyze how intentional neighbors encounter class difference and the types of poverty politics that ensue to better understand the reproduction of normative MC places and identities, as well as possible alternatives. We extend the relational poverty literature by asking how faith and faithful practices mediate encounters with difference as MC actors make place. Further, we ask whether can faith can disrupt hegemonic discourses of those in poverty, force recognitions of MC privilege, and/or lay the groundwork for a cross-class urban politics. Drawing from a multi-year study involving interviews with intentional neighbors from across the country and highlighting the efforts of intentional neighbors in the neighborhood of South Atlanta in Atlanta, Georgia, we show how intentional neighbors work to make and remake their neighborhoods. In particular, we highlight the ways in which faith informs both their

place-making efforts and their encounters with social difference. We find that their theologies hold potential for enacting a poverty politics that challenges dominant narratives of who is poor, why, and what to do about it. We argue therefore that faith should be conceptualized as a multi-dimensional social force in cities, capable of both reinscribing class boundaries as well as opening up spaces for more intentional cross-class engagement.