

Emotional Geographies of Socio-spatial Exclusion of Homeless People in Urban Copenhagen

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People and places

We “need careful accounts” of people and places as Lancione (2016, p. 167)

Such accounts of people and places are necessary in order to gain insights in to the lives and struggles of homeless people as well as for the understanding of how policy interventions work in practice.

The paper explores the dynamics related to people and places by analyzing homeless people’s emotional experiences of places where services are offered to them.

Emotions

- Emotions are the felt and sensed reaction that arise in the (inter)corporal exchange between the individual and world (Hubbard, 2005, p. 121)
- Emotions are embodied and mindful phenomena that partially shape and are shaped by our interactions with people, places and politics.
- Emotional experiences of places are crucial in order to understand how and why places attracts or repels people
- Emotions shape our choices and practices in complex interactions with social, cultural, economic and political factors (Kern, 2012, p. 29).

Space / place

- Places are not understood as just contains for interaction rather they shape and are shaped by peoples actions at the time.
- Places are produced in an ongoing process of interchange between the materiality of the place e.g. building structures, bodies and things, the use of the given place e.g. sleeping and counselling and the its symbolic meaning e.g. ascribed qualities and discourse.
- Places are the product of interrelations which transgress the local (Massey 2005).

Emotional geography

- Emotional geographies seeks to understand the interplay between people's emotions, place (Davidson & Bondi, 2004) and explore what happens to who in specific places with an ambition to make it possible relate to people's "lives and struggles in meaningful ways" (Everts & Wagner 2012, p. 174).
- This emotional geography focuses on the homeless people's emotional experiences of places where services are offered to them, but which they nevertheless avoid.

The study

- A qualitative study based on 6 months of fieldwork in Urban Copenhagen in 2015.
- Participant observations and “on-site” qualitative interviews with outreach workers and homeless people were the primary methods.
- The empirical material analyzed in the paper is my field notes. They were analyzed as “emotional talk” (Williams et al., 2001) where emotions about places are articulated.
- The context of the study is the Danish welfare state with its relatively intensive welfare system and low number of homeless.

Fear, disgust, and being humbled



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Concluding remarks

- The accounts regarding avoidance of places where services are offered often involved negative emotions related to either aspects of the places rather than the service in itself or the substandard quality of the services. But positive emotions related to other places also play a part in the avoidance.
- Emotions seem to be an integral dynamic in the processes of the socio-spatial exclusion of the homeless. And thus emotions are not just a consequence of exclusion.
- Implications for policies? Awareness of the emotional dynamics related to places and the production of places? Awareness of the subtle socio-spatial exclusion.

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