Ecological Gentrification: Re-negotiating Justice in the City

Sarah Dooling
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In this book on Justice and Segregation, I want to return to David Harvey’s book *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*, in which he challenged scholars to explore the spatial and political forces that produce the convergence of environmental and social phenomena. Harvey called for collapsing the boundaries between social and natural through recognizing human impacts on ecosystem functioning. He also advocated incorporating ecological processes into understanding the transformation of social processes within urban spaces. As a dialectical thinker, Harvey paid attention to the complex relationships in urban spaces that planning practice and research conceptualizes as less complex and more discrete phenomena. He was and remains critical of planning’s narrow approach to urbanization, and argued that planning research fails to rigorously engage the dialectics of social and environmental change in urban areas. My work responds to David Harvey’s challenge to develop a concept which captures the spatial and political complexities operating in urban areas, and which brings together social and ecological understandings of urban change.

There are three goals for this paper. My first goal is to demonstrate tensions between notions of *home* articulated by homeless individuals in urban green spaces and definitions of *homeless* and *green space* articulated by policy makers currently involved in developing policies aimed at ending homelessness. I apply the analytic notion of bare life to capture the political consequences for homeless individuals encountering the ideologies of policy makers, planners, and law enforcement. Bare life reveals the ways in which juridical notions of power, exercised by policy makers, planners and


law enforcement work in concert to keep individuals vulnerable to the discretionary application of law absent full legal protections. At its core, bare life captures the dialectics between politically and culturally contingent notions of home, homelessness, and green space; and reveals the consequences of enforcing these notions of homeless and green spaces upon the lives of homeless individuals who lack private places while permitted to be nowhere publicly.

The second goal of the paper is the presentation of a concept that reveals the complexity and specificity of how social and environmental processes are inter-related. I define ecological gentrification as the displacement of vulnerable human inhabitants resulting from the implementation of an environmental agenda driven by an environmental ethic. Ecological gentrification captures the consequences of narrow planning approaches that fail to recognize the connectively among housing, homelessness, and urban green spaces. As the city parks department sets aside land based on ecological values and natural amenities, homeless individuals who live in these same green spaces because they consider all other options afforded not viable are forced to either move or remain illegally, thus risking incarceration. It is in these urban green spaces where social and ecological processes encounter each other in unanticipated ways, and where a concept is needed to capture this unfolding complexity.

I conclude by advocating a robust pluralism of home and green spaces as an initial movement towards re-negotiating concepts of justice in urban areas. I present strategies for resisting the production of bare life with the goal of improving the lives of homeless people, and argue that such strategies require integrating environmental and social planning agendas.

Previous scholarship has focused on articulations of home by homeless people using shelters, residing in squats, and living on the

3. Ibid.


stretches. Constructions and perceptions of home have been related to identity, to types of residences, and to spatial movement patterns and social networks. Much of this work has documented the similarity between homeless and housed people’s construction of home; while other work has demonstrated how concepts of shelter influence the types of accommodations provided by the social service industry. My research builds on this previous work, beginning with the recognition that presenting notions of home among homeless individuals documents how that which is most familiar – home – informs that which is least familiar – being homeless. In addition, I analyze how seemingly disparate concepts – home, homelessness, and green spaces – are involved in urban homelessness, and how policy makers and planners fail to recognize these connections. The decision made by homeless individuals to live in urban green spaces points to the specific ways in which homeless people are precisely managed by the social service system, the city parks department and law enforcement. In order to fully understand the complexities of homelessness, which includes the experiences of being homeless, and the political and cultural constructions of homelessness as a policy and planning issue, it is necessary to articulate the ideologies operating in concert producing bare life for homeless individuals.


Theoretical Framework: Bare Life

I want to begin by reviewing Giorgio Agamben’s notion of bare life\textsuperscript{10}, which I leverage to more precisely reveal how homelessness, motivated by specific notions of home and green spaces, is constructed by policy makers and planners. Echoing Feldman\textsuperscript{11} and Kathleen Arnold\textsuperscript{12}, I argue that bare life is a useful analytic framework for understanding that homelessness is related to more than the economics of affordable housing; that it is more than a psycho-medical problem focused on individuals’ addiction and mental illness. Homelessness is a deeply political problem tied closely to concepts of housing and shelter, and to the legitimized values and uses of housing and green spaces. The politics of homelessness are informed by relationships between politically and culturally contingent notions of home and homelessness, and requires an analytic framework that reveals the confluences of ideological categories within juridical and institutional systems in order to articulate the consequences of these categorical constructions on the lives of those being categorized.

Giorgio Agamben premises the concept of bare life upon the exercise of sovereign power, defined as “… the legal power to suspend the validity of the law, legally [placing] himself outside the law”\textsuperscript{13}. The suspension of the juridical order results in a state of exception, where people are denied protection from the law while remaining vulnerable to discrimination and violence. These individuals are known as homo sacer, a term Agamben retrieves from Roman times to describe individuals capable of being murdered without accountability. People categorized as homo sacer live ambiguous and vulnerable lives, where they are included in society by exercises of juridical power that exclude, expel and erase them from urban society. Agamben refers to this as “the ban”, in which vulnerable human lives are included as members of society through the management of their daily existences via a suite of arbitrarily enforced ordinances motivated by specific conceptions of what constitutes a legitimate citizen – and in the case of homeless individuals, motivated by specific conceptions of housing, shelter, homeless, and green spaces. However, this inclusion ultimately excludes homeless people – spatially, legally, and culturally – from other urban (housed) resi-

10. Agamben Giorgio, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, op. cit.
dents and spaces. The ban emphasizes the ambiguous relationship between insider/outsider; between legal citizen/illegal refugee; between protection/violence. It is this zone of indistinction, where juridical protection and violence becomes undifferentiated, that characterizes Seattle’s approach to urban homelessness.

The challenge in applying the concepts of bare life and sovereign power resides in their abstract qualities; and recent critiques of Agamben’s work point to this. Agamben’s idea of sovereign power is not explicitly attached to a tangible institutional body or set of human-scaled relationships involved in the everyday lives of people. Rather, the state persists as a pervasive homogenous regulating entity, elusive and powerful in its ability to render decisions regarding the applicability of law. However, the exercise and experience of sovereign power is not faceless. Although Agamben does not define the multiplicity of institutions and actors who exercise sovereign power, I argue that sovereign power is exercised not only by policy makers and planning administrators, but also by front line workers in government and social service agencies who routinely interact with homeless individuals. Integrating the work of Michael Lipsky, I argue that homeless people interact directly with those who possess discretionary power to decide when and how to enforce the law, who grant or deny access to a shelter, or choose when to incarcerate individuals for violating anti-camping ordinances. Each encounter is an exercise of juridical and institutional power that ultimately contributes to the bare life existence of homeless people.

Notions of Home Among Homeless Individuals

In this section, I present notions of home as articulated by homeless people living in urban green spaces. These vignettes are from currently and formerly homeless individuals interviewed for my doctoral research. I

15. Agamben Giorgio, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, op. cit.
17. My doctoral research is a case study that describes the disconnections between notions of home as articulated by homeless adults and ideological notions of home and homeless espoused by government agencies, local social service administrators, housing advocates, and policy makers, and provides recommendations for reconci-
have chosen these particular stories because they highlight the experiences of bare life, while also being representative of those who decide to live outside.

**David.** David is 50 years old and lived on the streets for almost 19 years. He walked away from an oil rig job in Louisiana because he was unable to pay property taxes, and hopped a freight train to Chicago and then Seattle. Upon arriving in Seattle, he began living in a homeless camp with 15 other people. While he worked day laborer jobs, either as a construction or landscape worker, the other campers would watch his belongings and take care of the common space. The camp survived on food from food banks and tolerated wet, cold winters with donated blankets and tents. Despite these hardships, David describes this camp as the only type of family he has ever known. He says: “Your word was your bond in the camp. It was very organized and dependable. It was just a good feeling.” Due to increased violence on the streets that targeted his camp, and because the land was purchased by the city parks department for the construction of a new urban green space, most of the campers, including David, moved inside. The active and supportive network was spatially dispersed, and with the former campers housed in various single room occupancy hotels throughout the city, David has not been able to maintain close connections. Now, living inside, David considers himself homeless. That is, for David home is a sense of belonging to a group of people that care for each other and share a common space.

**Michael.** Michael is 43 years old who was homeless from adolescence until his early forties. In his words, he says: “At 14 years old, I voiced to the system: the abuse needs to stop here. I want to be set free from the system of abusive adults.” Upon legal emancipation, which he achieved with the help of a prostitute and drug dealer, he lived on the streets along the west coast. He claims that living on the streets stabilized his traumatized psyche. He lived under a highway for eight years in a wooded camp site; he got his food from dumpsters; he went without taking showers for years; and remained a loner, working through the intense anger, betrayal and confusion that resulted from extreme childhood abuse. Michael slowly learned to enter into relationships with street people. He worked with a community psychiatrist who allowed him to holler out his anger. Michael says: “He let me reconstruct the human being in me.” For Michael, home was a landscape

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ling these disconnections. I combined semi-structured interviews with 80 homeless individuals and 20 policy makers, with multi-sited participant and direct observations conducted in three agencies in policy development meetings associated with Seattle’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.
that was large enough to contain his overwhelming grief and rage while he recovered himself. Home, as a childhood place, was associated with pain and terror, and until his psychological trauma was processed, Michael could not be at home contained by four walls. Instead, home was a process of reconstructing and recovering a sense of himself. It was only after recovering a strong sense of his personhood that Michael was able to move into a single room occupancy hotel, where he has lived for the past five years.

Pablo. Pablo is 20 years old. Born in Columbia, he has been homeless for two years, arriving in Seattle from Florida where he was episodically employed. He sells and uses marijuana, and works as a day laborer to earn enough money for food, coffee, and pot. He lives in an urban green space that is adjacent to a city park in a wealthy neighborhood. Pablo decided to live outside to heal lung damage he sustained while working in Florida. The green space he lives in holds 30 camps during the wet winters and roughly 150 camps in the summer. Entrances to the camps along the perimeter are concealed by brush strategically placed by campers, yet Pablo fears being detected by local residents and park users when he returns to his camp site at the end of a work day. While camping in the green space is prohibited, the parks department and police are aware of the camps, and allow campers to reside until a neighborhood resident complains; then the parks department begins to sweep the camps out. So far, Pablo’s camp site has not been detected. Despite minimal camaraderie between camps, Pablo has made connections with some of the longer term residents. In the summer they pool money for beer and combine food stamps for grilling meat. The majority of time Pablo works as a day laborer, and when not working, he reads about cosmology and explores his connections to nature. For Pablo, home is the privacy of the camp where he can heal his body, connect to nature, and develop friendships.

Mel. Mel is a 61 year old Native American who has lived outside for 15 years. He ran away from his home on a Minnesota reservation when he was 15 years old. He worked for the Canadian railroad for a few years, and then spent 20 years building log cabins. He tried living in a single room occupancy hotel but was disoriented by the quiet and absence of his friends. The schedules, rules, and expectations associated with the shelters are not compatible with his desires for autonomy and freedom. Mel has a legal eviction on his record, and he occasionally pools money with friends for hotel rooms during the rainy season. For Mel, home is not defined by four walls, and includes places in the city where he and his friends congregate to socialize and sleep. He notes that there are fewer places where he can camp now, and he has been jailed for sleeping in parks and green spaces. He says: “I am
homeless because it’s the way I like it. People ask me where I live and I say – over there and over there. I drink when I want to and I move around when I want to.” Mel’s notion of home is also related to specific cosmology that embraces a physical and spiritual intimacy with the natural landscape, even in an urban area. For Mel, home is located in a landscape steeped in a cosmology that prefers the openness of the urban environment despite threats of incarceration.

To summarize, the notions of home articulated by the four individuals presented here include: autonomy (defined as management of self by self), freedom, a sense of belonging to a community, the recovery of oneself, healing oneself in nature, and dwelling not bounded by walls. Some of these notions of home reflect aspects of home (autonomy, freedom, belonging) articulated by traditionally housed individuals. Other notions of home (healing in nature, dwelling not bounded by walls) challenge societal, governmental, and institutional conceptions of the legitimate home as a structure with four walls, where nature and the built environment are clearly distinct. What is striking is how the four conceptions of home presented here, and the strategies these homeless individuals practice to obtain, sustain, and occasionally lose, strategies for being-at-home, challenge the legitimized concepts of shelter and housing that drive current policy development efforts aimed at ending homelessness.

It is important to recognize that I am not romanticizing homeless people’s lives in urban green spaces; I am not advocating that homeless people take up permanent residence in urban green spaces as a strategy for alleviating homelessness. No one should be forced to sleep outside as a last resort. What I am emphasizing is that the options afforded homeless individuals are not viable. Homeless individuals I interviewed experience shelters as spaces of violence and crime, requiring a constant vigilance, where programs and meals are often linked to a religious agenda that they experience as insulting or alienating. Single room occupancy hotels are described as places of surveillance with monthly cleaning inspections, places where an active drug culture persists. All of these environmental factors threaten the sense of freedom, autonomy and dignity, and an alignment with a cosmological orientation (like Native American spirituality that embraces direct connections with the biophysical landscape) central to

how these individuals want to live. In response to these environmental factors, some homeless individuals opt to camp in urban green spaces precisely because in these spaces they can achieve desired qualities of home. Their decision to camp outside is not an absolute preference; rather, it is a choice made relative to the viability of all other options.

**Policy Context**

These decisions of individuals to sleep outside are made as policies aimed at ending homelessness are currently being developed in Seattle. Although Seattle’s homeless population constitutes less than one percent of the total population, this remains a highly visible group of people, partly in response to the federal initiative to end homelessness. Seattle, like over 290 communities in the United States, is in the process of developing what is referred to as The Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has mandated that Ten Year Plans be developed by communities in order to receive HUD money for homeless services. HUD rationalizes the local approach to policy development by claiming homelessness varies locally, and consequently effective strategies to ‘end homelessness’ need to be developed locally. The role of HUD in the development of ten year plans is primarily facilitative, providing technical expertise to local policy development groups. Critics of HUD’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness initiative assert that HUD is devolving its responsibility for creating a national housing strategy, and, with concurrent budget cuts in housing voucher programs and homeless services funds, critics assert that HUD is setting up local policy development efforts to fail through lack of adequate funding.

19. Seattle/King County Coalition for the Homeless, *The 2004 Annual One Night Count: People Surviving Homelessness in King County, Washington, Seattle, WA*, Seattle/King County Coalition for the Homeless, 2006.

20. In 2000, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) published *A Plan, Not A Dream: How to End Homelessness in Ten Years* (Washington, D.C., 2000). NAEH defined four strategies: collect local data; implement a housing first strategy; prevent individuals from becoming homeless; and integrate employment, housing, and services into building the infrastructure to end homelessness. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development endorsed ending chronic homelessness in ten years; and in 2002 the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness was re-activated.

HUD categorizes homeless individuals based on the amount of time spent homeless and the places used for sleeping. A chronically homeless person is a person who has been continually homeless for a year or more, or at least four times in the past year. A non-chronically homeless individual is defined as:

a person sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (i.e., on the streets, parks, cars), residing in emergency shelter, transitional housing, or supportive housing. Also someone being discharged from an institution without subsequent residence identified and lacking the resources and support networks needed to obtain access to housing.

On the one hand, alleys, parks and cars are not designed for sleeping, urinating, and having sex; in this sense, these spaces are not designed for human habitation, if habitation is equivalent to human dwelling. Yet, these spaces are occupied by people who are creating living in parks and green spaces because the options afforded them are not considered viable. HUD’s de-legitimization of homeless peoples’ strategies for acquiring qualities of home in green spaces reflects the adherence to an ideologically constructed notion of home. In classifying a person homeless based on sleeping in a park (and implied is sleeping in greens spaces), HUD implies that legitimate housing of homeless individuals requires four walls, separated from nature and an occupant who is clean and sober. In addition, HUD defines people who live in transitional and supportive housing also as homeless. Taken together, HUD’s definitions of a homeless person reflect the imposition of a legitimate home upon a group of people who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to, or choose not to, secure a legitimate home. Instead, what these people are offered, including shelters and transitional housing, is not perceived or categorized as a home at all by policy makers and planners. Individuals living in green spaces are consequently considered lacking the very thing (home) that they are seeking to maintain. Such irony is a fundamental experience of bare life for homeless individuals.

While the occupation of green places designates occupants homeless according to HUD, the police department considers such individuals in violation of anti-camping ordinances. In 1993, the city attorney proposed and citizens passed a series of ordinances that regulate behavior in public spaces, making it illegal to sit and lie down on sidewalks during certain

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hours, to urinate and drink in public, and to camp in public parks\textsuperscript{23}. Other scholars have argued that these ordinances reflect political economic agendas developed by political and business elites, which are enforced to produce sanitized and safe spaces of consumption that ultimately criminalizes homeless people\textsuperscript{24}. I expand this critique by arguing that the anti-camping ordinance, in particular, reflects an ideological notion of what constitutes legitimate use of green space, now appropriated to serve an ecological agenda that ignores the connections between notions of green space, home, and homelessness.

Seattle is known as the Emerald City and the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation (SPRD) manages parkland representing approximately 9\% of the city land area\textsuperscript{25}. The political context in which city parks are managed and designated has changed in response to an increasingly urban and densely populated landscape that embraces a distinct environmental consciousness\textsuperscript{26}. Beginning in 2000, SPRD broadened their management goals and embraced a more ecologically oriented strategy for parks, and created its first Urban Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan in response to citizens who expressed their desire “to have wildlife as an integral part of

\textsuperscript{23}. In 1993 Seattle City Council approved a series of ordinances known as the Civility Ordinances (Gibson Timothy, \textit{Securing the Spectacular City: The Politics of Revitalization and Homelessness in Downtown Seattle}, New York (NY), Lexington Books, 2004). The no-sitting ordinance prohibits sitting on any sidewalk between 7:00am and 9:00pm, and carries a 50 dollars fine and possible incarceration (Bass Sandra, “Negotiating change: Community organizations and the politics of policing”, in \textit{Urban Affairs Review}, vol. 36, n° 2, 2000, p. 148-177). In 1997, City Council approved a parks exclusion ordinance in response to complaints that parks were becoming homeless camp sites. Individuals caught drinking, camping, or committing “acts of misbehavior” are banned from parks. Individuals with repeat violations can be banned from parks by police for up to one year (ibid.).


\textsuperscript{26}. Ibid.
the city\textsuperscript{27}. It was during this time green space became a designated category of park property, defined as land set aside to protect natural amenities and ecological functioning\textsuperscript{28}.

Yet these are also the places where Pablo lives; where Mel drinks with his friends; and where Michael and David used to live. The parks department definition of green spaces excludes the occupation by homeless people; homeless people are also expelled if detected through the enforcement of the anti-camping ordinance. These are markers of bare life, where homeless people are included in society through active exclusion, expulsion, and erasure. But this is an old story.

**Ecological Gentrification**

Here is the new story unfolding in Seattle: that an espoused environmental ethic is also involved in the production of bare life for homeless people. I refer to this concept as *ecological gentrification*, and define it as the displacement of vulnerable human inhabitants resulting from an implemented environmental agenda driven by a totalizing environmental ethic. Ecological gentrification captures the complex dialectics involved in the transformation of urban environments; specifically it integrates the relationships involved in the production of bare life for homeless people which conventionally have been treated discretely, or integrated in limited ways, by policymakers and planners.

There are two recent examples of ecological gentrification in Seattle. The first example is the largest city funded ecological restoration of an urban salmon-bearing stream. In 2000, as part of the site preparation, the city cleared out homeless people who occupied the site adjacent to the creek\textsuperscript{29}. With the construction of a public trail and the improved aesthetics of the stream, the site is now monitored to ensure homeless people remain excluded. The second example was a recent public design charrette which invited housed citizens to plan future green spaces over the next 100 years to create an ecologically sustainable city through the construction of green


\textsuperscript{28} Dooling Sarah, Simon Gregory, Yocom Ken, “Place-Based Urban Ecology: A Century of Park Planning in Seattle”, *op. cit.*

\textsuperscript{29} Shapiro Sheryl, “Seattle Public Utilities”, Personal communication, Longfellow Creek Watershed Project, 2 March 2006.
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Among the two charette teams focused on the downtown core, homelessness was conceived of only in terms of threats to the safety of housed residents who entered public spaces. During early designs, participants inserted new green spaces onto the map, replacing spaces occupied by shelters and transitional housing which were removed in an effort to enhance the ecological functioning of the city while homogenizing the social diversity of downtown residents.

In the economics and planning literature, gentrification is typically conceptualized in terms of the transition of property rights. As a process of economic development, gentrification involves the displacement of residents from low-rent, often-times formerly industrial neighborhoods by higher-end real estate developments with the concomitant influx of higher income residents into these increasingly attractive spaces. Green spaces, including parks, are conceived of as tools of economic development. Parks are framed as vehicles for social reform, beginning with the Olmstedian notion of parks as spaces of democratization and socialization, and


currently associated with public health issues, often framed in the language of new urbanism\textsuperscript{35}.

The concept of ecological gentrification challenges many of the assumptions associated with the definitions, uses, and values of green spaces developed in planning literature and practice. Specifically, ecological gentrification problematizes conventional agency approaches to using green spaces as tools facilitating social reform and public health objectives, and as tools promoting economic development for the benefit of private property owners. The dialectical relationships between economic processes displacing economically marginalized residents coupled with the loss of affordable housing, and the implementation of an ecological agenda for urban green spaces has not been explicitly linked to homelessness. Recognizing the connectivity between urban green spaces and homelessness is a movement towards resisting the production of bare life for homeless individuals.

**Re-Negotiating Concepts of Justice in the City & Strategies Resisting Bare Life**

Resisting bare life requires a politics of emancipation and the possibility of antagonistic social practices. In a recent critique, Ernesto Laclau asserts that Agamben’s concept of sovereign power as a homogenous, pervasive, regulating entity called the State requires socially isolated individuals absent any sense of collective identity and agency\textsuperscript{36}. He charges that instead of bare life being the outcome of conflict between lawlessness and a juridical system imposed by some sovereign power, the conflict is actually between two systems that fail to recognize each other. That is, bare life is the result of two incompatible systems of life – the life of the legitimate citizen, housed and economically productive, deserving of and afforded full legal protection; and the life of a person existing in a zone of indistinction, targeted and vulnerable to expulsion, exclusion and erasure in urban spaces while not considered deserving of legal protection. My research demonstrates homeless individuals do exercise agency in their decisions to live outside in order to maintain selected qualities of living – autonomy, dignity, sobriety for some, and connections to nature for others – while risking incarceration. Ecological gentrification attempts to conceptually integrate


\textsuperscript{36} Laclau Ernesto, “Bare life or social indeterminacy?”, *op. cit.*
these two seemingly incompatible systems of urban living by motivating recognition among policy makers and planners that green spaces and environmental planning, in addition to housing, welfare, and employment, are involved in urban homelessness. Only with mutual recognition between social and environmental planning systems can effective strategies resisting the production of bare life be developed.

The concept of ecological gentrification provokes a re-negotiation of justice in relation to housing, planning, and the interrelatedness of social and ecological transformation of urban spaces. Within the planning and policy analysis literature, homelessness is conventionally analyzed as an economic justice issue related to affordable housing and employment. Yet, the decisions made by homeless people to sleep outside reveal the need for a concept of justice that recognizes the qualities and aspects of home these individuals seek and need, and a revision of housing and shelter that currently dominates the social service industry. Policy makers specific conceptions of housing and shelter resists the production of bare life and hinder the effectiveness of housing people by repressing those who decide to sleep in urban green spaces. This revised vision of social justice embraces a robust pluralism of home, and challenges policy makers to ask: How might policies, plans, and programs look different if, instead of focusing on shelter and housing, we focused on social networks, senses of belonging, processes of recovering from trauma, connecting to nature, dwelling without walls, and multiple cosmologies?

One strategy that initiates resistance to bare life for homeless individuals is the creation of an outreach program where outreach workers enter green spaces with the goal of listening in order to understand more clearly the reasons individuals have for camping in green spaces. This outreach strategy is very different from conventional outreach efforts whose goal is to provide information about housing and services, enforce civility ordinances, and convince homeless individuals to use shelters during extremely cold weather. Outreach strategies grounded in an appreciation of a pluralistic notion of home requires workers to interact with homeless individuals in less controlled environments, and needs to incorporate what is shared into the production of diverse housing options and strategies.

Ecological gentrification also re-negotiates concepts of nature through the recognition that green spaces, in addition to being valued for wildlife habitat and ecosystem functioning, are also places of human habitation. In providing relief and refuge from and residence within heavily urbanized environments for human and non-human urban inhabitants, green spaces are also habitations of last resort for those people unable to gain access to
the formal housing market and unwilling to suffer violence and humiliations in the shelter and housing systems. The integration of social and environmental planning systems points to a practice of spatial justice. For planning, spatial justice can be thought of as an approach to urban phenomena that acknowledges the totality of spatial locations and practices which supports diversity – for example, a diversity of home and housing options, and a diversity of values and uses of green spaces. In relation to homelessness, spatial justice integrates social and environmental systems and efforts, and begins with the recognition that homeless individuals are managed in all urban spaces – sidewalks, alleys, parking lots, parks and green spaces, shelters, and even single-room occupancy. Even future designs of green infrastructure developed by local residents produce markers of bare life for homeless individuals. A spatially just planning approach recognizes the moral calculus operating within and motivating current social policy developments and recognizes the totalizing aspects of an environmental agenda that ignores consequences of ecological transformation on vulnerable human populations. A spatially just approach might motivate policy makers and planners to ask:

• How might embracing expanded notions of home motivate re-imagined notions of green spaces?

• How might re-imagined notions of green spaces expand notions of home and homelessness?

• How might transformed notions of green spaces motivate dialectical approaches to other urban planning efforts, by recognizing the interconnections and complex relationships among inhabitants of urban spaces (human and non-human) and (social and natural) processes?

A strategy that promotes connections between social and environmental planning efforts proposed by homeless individuals is the creation of a Green Stewardship Program within the parks department. The program would allow homeless campers in green spaces to remain there, harassment-free, while working for the parks department to remove non-native vegetation. Workers would receive a living wage as employees of the parks department while implementing one of the park department’s major ecological agenda items in urban green spaces. Creating opportunities for participation in the formal economy through this proposed program could potentially cultivate perceptions of homeless people as productive inhabitants of urban green spaces, while the policies addressing the production of housing continue.
Conclusion

Both of these strategies emerge from re-negotiated concepts of justice, home, and nature, where interactions and interdependencies between multiple human and natural systems are recognized – that housing is related to homelessness, and that homelessness is related to green spaces, and that complex green spaces are produced by social and ecological transformations informing each another. A spatially just approach to planning recognizes the totality of urban inhabitants – housed, non-traditionally housed, homeless, and non-human – and in doing so, challenges the ideological constructions of home, homeless, and green space. As long as people sleep outside as a decision of last resort; as long as conceptions of housing and shelter blind policy makers to the diverse needs for social, cosmological, and psychological aspects of having a home; and as long as the inter-relatedness of ecological and social processes involved in the transformation of urban spaces is denied, bare life will continue to unfold.

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