Paul Cloke, Jon May and Sarah Johnsen (2010)

Swept Up Lives?
Re-envisioning the Homeless City

Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 292pp. €30.00.

The self-proclaimed purpose of *Swept Up Lives? Re-envisioning the Homeless City* is to show the reader a new and different landscape of urban homelessness. The book connects to the discourse on the revanchist city, a concept introduced by human geographers in North America. The notion of the revanchist city and the framing of homelessness within a "punitive turn" (quotation mark by the authors) envisions the marginalisation of poor people socially and geographically through regimes that force homeless and other poor people to the margins of the city and of society. According to the authors, homelessness is used as *the* exemplar of how urban policy has wilfully marginalised the visible poor. However, the authors' position is that this is at best an incomplete and inaccurate portrayal of urban homelessness, and they further question whether the concept of revanchism is universally applicable. It might well hold true for urban homelessness in North America, but the stance taken in this book is that it is not easily translated to the homeless scene in Britain.

The dualism between revanchism on one side and compassion and empathy on the other side runs as a thread throughout the book. The authors maintain that Britain has imported techniques such as "zero tolerance policing", the "designing out" of certain street activities and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders from the US to manage what is perceived as problematic street culture. This is one side of the homeless policy. On the other hand, since the 1980s there have been governmental initiatives and programmes aiming to support and help homeless people, something that is not compatible with an entirely punitive policy. The authors also find that the interventions and services for homeless people can be both open and oppressive.

Chapter two of *Swept Up Lives?* frames the empirical chapters, which form the main part of the book, in a broad outline of welfare provision in the age of neoliberalism. The chapter does not discuss neoliberalism as such, but opens with a statement of this being the "dominant form of political and ideological form of capitalist globalisation." Chapter two further outlines in brief the main features of

welfare provision and the response to homelessness under neoliberalism in Britain over the past 30 years. The overview starts with a shift from the traditional mode of "one way steering" to cooperation through public private partnership – from government to governance – which became dominant in the 1980s. The authors point out that in Britain this change was closely linked to the Conservative government elected in 1979, whose primary concern was shifting welfare provision from the state to citizens and non-statutory agencies. In the mid-nineties the UK saw a shift from governance to governmentality. The change was concurrent with the end of a decade of conservative regime and the election of a Labour Party government. Although not initiated by Tony Blair's administration, governmentality as a mode of steering accelerated under the New Labour Party's third way. The design of the third way is ascribed to the sociologist Anthony Giddens, who in this context inhabits the role of the theoretical designer of New Labour. New Labour reversed the development under Margret Thatcher and her successor, and strengthened the role of the state. Partnership with the non-statutory agents was kept high on the political agenda and opened up new spaces for non-statutory organisations, while at the same time the non-statutory sector came under increased statutory control.

The authors proceed into a discussion about the shaping of subjectivity in the neoliberal era with reference to, among others, Michel Foucault, whose work is connected to the concept of governmentality. One purpose of the book is to portray homeless people as subjects; to show resistance, negotiation with the surroundings and make visible the knowledge homeless people need and possess to be able to survive on the street. A contention in the book is that understanding homelessness entirely within the "punitive turn", denies homeless people their agency. The theoretical part is quite brief and presupposes that the reader is well informed of the discourse of governmentality and subjectivity. The connection between the theoretical position and the empirical part is not easily traced, which is not necessarily a weakness.

Another point of departure of *Swept Up Lives?* is the history and role of the non-statutory welfare sector in Britain, and more specifically the organisations operating in homeless service provision. Particular attention is paid to the role of faith in a time of "postsecularism". The authors recognise secularism as being an intimate partner of neoliberalism, but argue that secularism has prepared the way for a renewed interest in faith. Thus the punitive technologies, some of which are mentioned above, of neoliberal governmentality are contrasted with welfare organisations and individuals within these organisations. A question posed in the book is whether punitive technologies are also being incorporated into the punitive management of homelessness within the non-statutory sector. A hypothesis put forward by the authors is that services are also sites for resistance or potential resistance. Resistance, as well as empathy and care, are primarily found within non-statutory services based on faith and post-secular humanity.

The main chapters of the book draw on extensive field studies. The authors carried out a three year research project (2001-2003), *The Homeless Places Project*, starting off with mapping the geography of homeless services through a postal survey to some 540 night shelters, day centres and soup runs in England, Scotland and Wales. The survey was followed by ethnographic studies in the above mentioned low threshold services in seven contrasting towns and cities in England. The in-depth ethnographic studies include observations and interviews with service providers and service users. One of the researchers also worked as a volunteer as part of the fieldwork. The picture on the front cover along with the title invites one to think of *Swept Up Lives?* as a study of street homelessness and street life. This is only partially the subject of the book, and a subordinate one. The main theme of the book is captured by the following paragraph:

> Rather than the streets, the current book is therefore mostly focused upon these other spaces. But we identify such spaces as an example of wider currents in the temporary city, currents that speak less of containment and control than of compassion and care and – more particularly – of growing rapprochement between secular and religious approaches to urban politics and welfare. (p.2)

Using more than two pages to review the political and theoretical framing and positions of a book that is largely a story of these homeless spaces may appear a bit unbalanced. The great strength of the book is the dialectic between the authors' theoretical position and the narratives of homeless life in specific spaces of the field studies: soup runs, day centres and shelters. In chapters three to eight, the authors explain and discuss empirical findings, organised by themes and places. Some of the chapters contain familiar stories of the homeless lifestyle. Others opened up new perspectives and knowledge for this reader.

Chapter three explores the urban landscape seen through the eyes of homeless people living on the streets and using low threshold services. Going through places to sleep, places to eat, places to earn and places to hang out, the authors visualise how homeless people negotiate repressive policing, make alliances and form friendships, and defend their territories. Interest in research on the life of homeless people has increased both in Britain and other European countries in the time span between the project's fieldwork and the publishing of the book in 2010. That said, the chapter is a necessary part of the full picture.

Chapter four is entitled *"He's Not Homeless, He Shouldn't Have Any Food": Outdoor Relief in a Postsecular Age*. The chapter discusses revanchism versus care using the soup runs as an example. Thus the chapter is not merely an account of fieldwork within soup runs, but rather reviews these very simple and close-to-the-street services as sites of faith-based but also humanitarian compassion. The chapter introduces the contention that soup runs cannot be understood (entirely) in the light

of revanchism. More than half of the soup runs throughout Britain are run by faith-based organisations basically staffed by volunteers and largely relying on donations from the public. The authors maintain that "[t]he volunteers staffing the soup runs are in turn perhaps one of the most obvious expression of that sense of 'active citizenship' championed by New Labour as a key component of a new Third Way" (p.92). The authors further point to the fact that being in accordance with the dominant political ideology does not directly translate to being in line with national programmes aimed at alleviating homelessness. Rather, low threshold services, and in particular those handing out food on the streets, are frequently blamed for keeping homeless people on the streets and prolonging the period of homelessness. Both government programmes, the Rough Sleepers Initiative and the following Homelessness Action Plan, aimed at removing homeless people from the streets and reducing homelessness.

The picture drawn of soup runs is not a simple and unambiguous one. Volunteers have different motives for volunteering and they share the beliefs of the organisations they work for to varying degrees. They may also express different opinions about the people they are serving. All in all, the authors find that soup runs represent an acceptance of homeless people and the "street life style" that is in obvious opposition to the rehabilitation and demands for lifestyle "change" that drive the national homelessness programmes. At the soup runs, one finds people with different faiths and people motivated by secular humanism working side by side because they care about homeless people. The soup runs are often a first point of contact for homeless people and represent a signpost to off-street services, which chapter five also goes into. This chapter deals with the place and role of day centres in the homeless city. Day centres are new on the homeless scene, the majority having been established after 1980, often opened as a response to the immediate needs of people sleeping rough. Day centres are described as places of refuge where homeless people may simply "be" (p.129). But the policy of accepting almost all homeless persons that knock on their doors also creates places of fear. For example many day centres have installed CCTV and physical barriers between staff, a considerable proportion of whom are volunteers, and users.

Soup runs were also the forerunners of many hostels. Over time Britain's hostels have developed in different directions. Chapter six divides the shelters into four groups. Those in the first group have remained small scale services offering basic care and dependent on voluntary staff. Others have professionalised and some of these have maintained their original faith-based foundation (the second and third groups). The last group is the statutory run hostels. All hostels have one common feature; they are open to everyone. As with day centres, hostels and night shelters are pictured as scenes of compassion, care and fear. Working in a hostel is difficult in many ways. Staff are often confronted with acting out behaviour, serious mental

and other health problems, tensions among user groups and individuals, and other challenging situations. The role of volunteers in the hostels is often restricted to practical work like cleaning and cooking, and involves less contact with users. It should be mentioned that both day centres and hostels are male-dominated places where female users and staff may feel unsafe.

Chapter seven deals with the uneven distribution of services for homeless people in Britain, explored through the survey distributed to low threshold providers. The authors point to three different explanations for the geographical divergences: historical, political and organisational. The historical circumstances relate to the presence of institutions dealing with homeless people, like former workhouses and organisations like the Salvation Army, in an area. The longstanding presence of such institutions may have created an acceptance of homeless people in the community; an acceptance which fosters a high level of tolerance towards the visibility of homeless people and services today. Regarding political explanations, the authors maintain that local political responses to homelessness may have differed in ways that influenced the scale and shaping of homeless services. Organisational circumstances are connected to the presence – or absence – of large non-statutory organisations like the Salvation Army and the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), which are important providers of homeless services. Finally the authors suggest a fourth explanation – the interplay between service provision and service consumption resulting in different local homeless scenes. This hypothesis is explored through fieldwork in two contrasting towns in England. Homeless scenes are partly constituted by often tacit knowledge among homeless people about different places: knowledge about sites that offer good places to earn, to sleep, to get food, buy drugs and policing on the streets. Some places are considered friendly and other are known as displaying harsh attitudes towards homeless people. However, places change. The generosity of people in a town considered a goldmine for begging may turn into indifference accompanied by harsher policing in the streets.

Chapter seven offers a preliminary conclusion about the dual view on the revanchist city:

> Far from being simple handmaidens of the state, incorporated into revanchist regimes, such people perform care in a way that inflects many British cities with continuing subcultures of generosity and resistance that contradict the culture of revanchism and reinstate ordinary ethics of justice in the everyday lives of homeless people. (pp.209-210)

The two-page conclusion in chapter seven is an excellent summary of the main discussions in the book. Chapter eight, entitled *On the Margins of the Homeless City: Caring for Homeless People in Rural Areas*, thus appears a bit out of place.

Treating rural homelessness as something different in one single chapter leaves this reader with a feeling of having just touched upon a new theme. The chapter is interesting, however, and the objection is of a rather aesthetic character; it appears as an interruption of what in all other ways presents itself as a complete volume including the conclusive discussions in chapter nine.

Swept Up Lives? is based on extensive empirical fieldwork in Britain. However, this is not a particularly British book, in the sense that knowledge of British legislation, public administration and homeless policy is not required in order to be able to follow the narratives and the arguments. The concepts of neoliberalism and the revanchist city are not particularly British phenomenon. Framing the theme of the homeless city within these perspectives lifts the book out of the British context and into a wider discourse on managing homeless people. Low threshold services for homeless people are found across Europe regardless of the level of services and intervention practices above this level. Services take different local and national forms, but to varying degrees and depending on the welfare state arrangements in general, these services are delivered by the non-statutory sector. The book adds important knowledge to the understanding of the dualistic and often contradictory policies that govern the lives of homeless people, and many readers beyond Britain interested in deepening their understanding of homelessness will find that that *Swept Up Lives?* provides food for thought and opens up new perspectives. Finally, the book is very well written so that even a non-native English reader can enjoy its elaborate, yet easily accessible language.

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The delayed publication of this book – based as it is on a 2000 to 2002 survey of single homeless people in Britain – is attributed to the prolonged illness of the senior author. This has given rise to the rather unusual circumstance whereby the bulk of the book's subject matter has already been aired in a series of previously published journal articles (nine collaboratively written papers are citied in the references). Specifically, these prior publications prefigure the investigation of the 'tactics and performativity' of single homeless people (Chapter 3), the provision of outdoor relief and its links with faith-based organizations (Chapter 4), the problematic development of day centres as places of refuge and resource (Chapter 5), and the ambiguities and complexities associated with night shelter/hostel provision (Chapter 6). Furthermore, permeating the book and comprising substantial sections of chapters 1, 2 and 3, are three contextual themes, which also feature, prominently in already published work. The first of these relates to the entanglements of neoliberalism with the delivery of welfare, focusing in particular on the apparent shortcomings of 'punitive' perspectives on homelessness; a second theme emphasises the role of faith-based organisations in cultivating an 'ethos of care' in the delivery of homeless services; and a third theme promotes an appreciation of the purposeful agency and intrinsic humanity of homeless people, which the authors claim is "so often missing in accounts of urban homelessness" (p.20). Chapter 7, focusing on an issue less well represented in prior publications, examines the uneven development of homeless service provision, demonstrating how specific combinations of political, institutional, social and cultural factors produce distinctive 'homeless places'. The penultimate Chapter 8 is devoted to an analysis of the 'production and consumption' of homeless services in rural areas – a topic of considerable interest for at least one of the authors over the past decade (eight prior publications cited).

While this book is then something of a reprise of material already in the public domain, there may well be some benefit in assembling the thoughts of a decade in one publication. Indeed, read in this light there is much to admire, especially, for example, in the robust evaluation and assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of central government policies and local government practices (viz. Rough Sleepers Initiatives, Homeless Action Programme, Housing Plus, etc.); this includes an impassioned defence of soup runs in a potent critique of the so-called 'killing-with-kindness' (i.e. anti-begging) campaigns sponsored by several English city authorities and homeless charities. The policies and practices considered are somewhat dated, in that most have now been superseded by new government initiatives. However, as the authors cogently argue (p.19), many of these new initiatives – apart from some tactical shifting of ministerial and local government responsibilities, and some extensions and adjustments in funding regimes and targets – do not funda-

mentally alter homelessness strategies beyond those articulated in the 2002 (England and Wales) and 2003 (Scotland) Homelessness Acts. Indeed the most recent (2008/10) of these new initiatives, 'Enhanced Housing Options', emphasising as it does the familiar notions of partnership between the state, voluntary agencies and the private sectors, the provision of more-than-housing support services, a further shift towards professionalism and the recycling of the well-established principles of 'choice, empowerment and customer service' (see Communities and Local Government, 2010), validates the book's claim to continued relevance. (However, see the commentary below on data lacunae).

Equally to be admired is the charting of what the authors christen 'alternative cartographies of homelessness', created by the mundane practices and purposeful behaviour of homeless people in seeking out and accessing places to sleep, eat, earn and socialise. In demonstrating the functionality of this detailed practical knowledge of urban geography, the authors present a useful and important corrective to what is sometimes perhaps too readily dismissed as the 'chaotic lives' of homeless people.

In some other respects, however, the book's methods, message and arguments are more contentious. In particular there is (i) a lack of punctiliousness with regard to data collection and analysis, (ii) the contentious endorsement and championing of faith-based organisations and their links with the development of an 'ethos of care', and (iii) the arraignment of revanchist and post-justice perspectives on the so-called 'homeless city'.

(i) Ethnomethodology and data analysis

Much of the raw data assembled and analysed in this book was acquired through an enterprising programme of ethnographic research: the 'Homeless Places Project'. This project involved a postal survey of 212 night shelters and hostels, 164 day centres and 63 soup runs across England, Wales and Scotland, designed to establish a basic picture of the provision of single homeless emergency services and of their funding and staffing regimes, together with an understanding of their ethical motivations and mission. This postal survey was followed by a more detailed examination of seven English (only) 'contrasting towns and cities'. These comprised a large city in the south-west, a smaller town in the far south-west, a small agricultural and market town in the centre, a small market town in the south, a declining seaside resort in the north, a cathedral city in the west, and a large manufacturing city in the north-east.[1]

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[1]   The location of these survey sites are anonymised in this book, yet in earlier publications the authors were not so scrupulous. They were previously revealed as: Bristol, Bodmin, Banbury, Dorchester, Scarborough, Worcester and Doncaster (see Johnsen et al., 2005)

Intensive survey methods in these selected urban locations involved overt participant observation in 18 night shelters, day centres and soup runs (involving 160 'conversations' with service users); and semi-structured interviews with 39 project managers, 29 paid staff, 26 volunteers, 37 other key informants, and 90 homeless people. In addition, 17 auto-photography exercises were initiated in two case study areas, designed to record single homeless people's direct experiences and behaviours. The latter provided illustrations for the book and insights regarding hard–to-reach (by the researchers) sites of homeless occupancy.

All in all this is an impressive data collection exercise, but one, which nevertheless invites several queries. For example, there is no indication of how the sample agencies were selected for the postal survey or, indeed, of their location or response rate; to imply that this constitutes a '*national*' survey (p.13 & passim) without addressing these issues of representativeness would seem to be at best an unfortunate slippage, at worst a regrettable sleight of hand. A compounding factor here is the decision to exclude London – by far the most conspicuous concentration of homelessness in Britain – from the survey on the grounds that "discussions of the homeless city have [hitherto] tended to be shaped by developments of a small number of large cities" (p.13). Further, we are told that the data derived from the 'national' survey indicated that service users were for the most part between 25 and 45 years and that all but one were white British, but there is no indication of numbers or percentages. We are further informed that these service users were predominantly male. However, this juxtaposition of demographic data is misleading in that it seemingly conflates the so-called 'national' postal survey data (age and ethnicity) with the seven-town English-only survey data (gender).

Further undermining the claim that the data represents a 'national' pattern is the overwhelming maleness and whiteness of the homeless people sampled and interviewed. The authors attempt to excuse the lack of female representation and gender analysis with the somewhat specious argument that they did not wish to 'essentialise' or 'overdetermine' the impact of gender on the homeless experience. Given the quantity of literature on gender and homelessness already published by the early 2000s – reinforced by subsequent research – which clearly demonstrated the very different homeless experiences of women, this smacks more than a little of a *post hoc* justification. Discursive considerations of gender differences – for example in relation to the vulnerability of women and their circumspect use of day centres and hostels – partially compensate for this lacuna. Unfortunately, there is no such compensation for the absence of an examination of ethnicity. Again, research already published by the early 2000s had unequivocally demonstrated the importance of ethnicity and race in the homeless experience of sections of the British population – an experience not captured in either the authors' 'national' or English survey, and regrettably scarcely acknowledged anywhere in this publication.

The text is replete with additional examples of the lack of precision in numerical data-handling, as illustrated in the frequent reporting of percentages with no mention of total counts; this stands in contrast to the care that seems to have been taken with the interpretation of interview data. Many of these numerical issues could easily have been addressed in a tabulation of survey results combined with more scrupulous attention to arithmetic detail and a more exacting data commentary.

(ii) Faith-based organisations and the ethos of care

The startling first sentence – "'Love' is not a word one comes across very often in writings on homelessness" (p.1) – establishes a major theme of this book, namely that beyond what Cloke *et al.* characterise as the prevailing dystopic view of a homeless city of exclusion and abandonment is another homeless city character-ised by care and compassion; a city where homeless people experience empathy and friendship rather than control and containment. The authors draw upon the narratives of homeless people themselves and on their own surveys of homeless service providers to establish the dimensions of these 'spaces of hope'. Central to this process, they argue, are Christian, faith-based organisations (FBOs) in providing an 'ethic of care' which, through 'extraordinary acts of kindness', empower homeless people and facilitate their engagement in purposeful agency.

The role of FBOs in delivering welfare has been long established. Recent research – not least that recounted in this book – suggests that, particularly in the context of the provision of homeless services, FBOs have in the last few years become more public and influential. In Britain this increasing prominence reflects FBO willingness and ability to avail of opportunities created by the opening-up of care services to 'any willing provider' (especially to voluntary and civil society agencies) under neoliberal policies pursued by successive Labour and Tory governments (Milligan and Conradson, 2006). Similar trends have been identified in many other European countries (see FACIT, 2008) and in North America (Cnaan and Boddie, 2002).[2]

The authors identify three tiers of FBO homeless agencies operating in Britain/ England: those that proselytise, those that expect changes in attitudes and life-styles, and those that provide unconditional care. It is the latter – the soup runs, the day centres, night shelters and hostels – that are the focus of attention in this book. In these places, the authors claim, care is commonly and unconditionally linked with Christian notions of 'agape' and 'caritas', the purest form of care – faith-motivated but not self-serving, encapsulated in the concept of what they call a

[2] The role of these FBOs has not always been favourably assessed: see for instance Hackworth, 2010, and the infamous 'Waterproof bibles – for the homeless' incident (Atheist Underworld, 2011)

'voluntary attitude'. That many FBOs provide exemplary care is not in doubt, and they demonstratively make an unambiguously positive contribution in creating spaces of refuge, compassion and security for many homeless people.

Cloke *et al.* readily concede that such a 'voluntary attitude' of care and compassion is not exclusive to FBOs; they agree that there are many secular agencies that espouse and deliver a similar ethic. Indeed, in what can perhaps be identified as *the* major underlying theme of this book, the authors suggest that there has been a rapprochement between the secular and the religious to create 'postsecular' service spaces: that is, "spaces of praxis in which secular and faith motivation collude in new forms of ethical citizenship" (p.2). That there is some evidence of such rapprochement – in both the substantive chapters of this book and in other publications – cannot be gainsaid; what can be disputed, however, is whether the authors have accurately portrayed the relative importance of the contributions of the secular and the religious to this emergent 'harmony', and whether this harmony is accurately encapsulated in the notion of 'postsecularism'.

Cloke *et al.* explicitly portray FBOs as providing the main dynamic in this secular/ religious rapprochement, claiming that they play a 'crucial role' and act as 'umbrella organisations'. By contrast, they argue, "homelessness has served as a highly visible example of the inability of secularist ethics alone to prevent or deal with social exclusion in contemporary society" (p.42) and suggest (as a consequence?) that secular agencies are "embracing the principles of Christian faith". For their part, many FBOs are seen as moving away from overt evangelising in adopting a form of praxis in which Christian charity "is being reproduced as relational love and friendship, a gratuitous and creative practice of service without strings" (p.49). Yet, even as secular organisations apparently adopt Christian principles, and religion apparently becomes less overt in FBO practice, parity between the secular and the religious in the delivery of care is not achieved; while they 'appear similar', the authors argue, secular care is characterised by the "… absence of a spiritual dimension in holistic recovery" (p.55). Thus, for Cloke*,* May and Johnsen (and one assumes that all three concur), the FBO ethic of care is privileged over that of the secular.

A problem with this account is that the concepts and principles that inform a secular ethic of care – in contrast with those that inform the religious ethic of care – are not properly considered. The objective of the short section devoted to this issue (pp.54-56) is primarily to demonstrate the apparent overlap and similarity with Christian ethics. Secular ethics are thereby co-opted, their non-religious, indeed anti-religious, enlightenment basis ignored, and any potential conflict with Christian ethics disregarded. Two illustrative issues of potential difference can be briefly mentioned. First, contestations over the concept of 'spirituality'; according to Cloke *et al.* this is what distinguishes and accredits superiority to faith-based services (see quote

above). The commonly attributed meaning of spirituality is simply that it is to do with things 'beyond the material world' – for secularists this comprises emotion and aesthetics; for the religiously inclined it also embraces concepts of immanence. The answer, then, to the question which reverberates throughout this book: 'What difference does faith make in the delivery of care to homeless people?' is thus revealed as tautological. A second point of potential and substantive difference relates to the 'mission' of service delivery. The theo-ethics of FBOs, as portrayed in this book, suggest that 'service without strings' is the pinnacle of achievement: in other words, 'giving is its own reward'. Certainly this may be one precept aspired to by secular agencies, but – as writers such as David Smith (1998) long ago established – secular ambition rarely ends there:

> … care, and the emotions usually associated with it, are not enough for an ethics capable of engaging the problems of the contemporary world. Once the importance of an ethic of care is recognized, attention has to be given to the context in which the practice of care takes place, to its political economy and institutional arrangements as well as to the kind of lives and needs which people are experiencing. Introducing the missing dimension of justice requires a version of social justice as equalization (Smith, 1994, pp.35-36).

Contra Cloke *et al.*, secular ethics of care frequently embrace notions of 'solidarity, congruence and identity' which involve not only service, but also a commitment to and an active engagement with the process of change; these are convictions which go beyond and challenge the 'theo-ethics' of many faith based organisations.

The argument for rapprochement as recounted in this book is based on an unquestioning acceptance of the concept of postsecularism – namely that, as religion transmutes from private reflection to public engagement, the age of western secularism is at an end. It is disappointing that Cloke *et al.* ignore the contentious nature of these claims, not least scepticism as to whether an 'age' of secularism had/has any material reality, or whether 'postsecularism' has any useful meaning. They choose, rather, to uncritically transmit Philip Blond's – the *soi-disant* 'Red Tory' and sometime adviser to the Cameron coalition on the 'Big Society' – portrayal of the claimed debacle of secularism, to wit: that secularism permitted religion to be sequestrated by fundamentalism, that secularism assumed scientific advancement was applicable in ethical and political arenas, and that secularism has spawned a "vacuum of hopelessness… a society shot through with cynicism" (pp.43-44). The debate as to whether these 'failures' adequately characterise present conditions, and whether (if they have any validity) they are causally linked with secular hegemony, is not acknowledged. In omitting reference to these debates, Cloke *et*

al. conceal the shaky foundations on which their arguments are constructed. For an exposition of some of the debates on postsecularism see, for example, Saxton, 2006; Molendijk *et al.*, 2010; Kong, 2010.

(iii) The punitive, revanchist and post-justice city

Cloke *et al.* recognise that "[r]e-imagining the city is [not] and never can be a politically neutral manoeuvre" (p.91), and indeed there is plenty of politics in this book, notably in the critique of the 'pernicious logic' (p.92) of revanchist and post-justice perspectives, and in the more nuanced evaluation of British neo-liberal homelessness policies.

From the first page, revanchist and post-justice perspectives are inveighed against as casting the homeless city in a dystopian frame characterised by 'abandonment', 'exclusion' and 'annihilation'; a dystopia in which homeless people are seen variously as "passive victims… swept up and out of the prime spaces of the city" in a "seemingly insatiable appetite for high value commodification" (p.2), or as 'convenient ciphers' in the construction of a "critique of gentrification, public space law and so on" (p.18). Given that Cloke *et al.* do not directly challenge the everyday reality of an increasingly punitive city, such invective may at first sight seem somewhat misplaced. An explanation for the authors' negativity can, however, be deciphered in the charge that revanchism as it emanates from the USA – especially as transmitted in the work of Mike Davis, Don Mitchell and Neil Smith – is too all-encompassing. It is seen, for example, as not sufficiently sensitive to context, such that in Britain (and in Europe more generally), revanchism is manifest not as 'revenge', but rather as 'punitive-lite' or, as Henk Meert would have it, a form of 'urban disciplining' (Meert and Stuyck, 2008). In the view of Cloke and his colleagues, revanchism is also too encompassing in that it obscures and over-shadows an alternative interpretation of the homeless city espoused in this book as a city of compassion and care, rather than of abandonment and exclusion. Additionally, it is claimed that the revanchist / post-justice perspective represents "a spectacular triumph of structure over agency, and of the general over the specific" (p. 1). For Cloke *et al.*, too much research (i.e. revanchism) proceeds "at a relatively high level of abstraction, with only a narrow engagement with the concrete changes shaping homeless people's lives… and little or no discussion, via a field-based methodology, with the subjects of that research – namely, homeless people themselves" (p.17). While these substantive differences of interpretation go some way to explaining the authors' denunciations of revanchism, their invective has a further purpose, whereby their reading of the revanchist city serves as recurring 'rhetorical trope' against which their wholly opposing view of a compassionate city can be favourably compared.

Politics are also to the fore in the evaluation of British neo-liberalism, especially with regard to its impact on homelessness. In this context Cloke *et al.* identify three phases. The first sees neo-liberalism promoting self-serving individualism and thereby bolstering some of the excesses of secularism; in the second phase (as noted in the previous section), neo-liberalism opens-up welfare delivery to civil society and the voluntary sector in particular, thereby creating opportunities for the dissemination of postsecularist ethics; in the third stage, however, there is a (partial) reversion to secularist tendencies as the activities of third sector agencies are reined-in with the lure of funding packages, distracting them from homeless advocacy and aligning them with government (possibly punitive – but certainly controlling) objectives. Cloke *et al.* note that this incorporation has been particularly characteristic of some larger secular agencies; what *Crisis* and *Shelter* make of this observation is not recorded. In this version of history, the way is thus left clear for those FBOs and like-minded secular agencies that are infused with a 'voluntary attitude' to carry the flag of postsecular ethics.

In the final chapter, Cloke *et al.* acknowledge that the adoption of a 'voluntary attitude' is not in itself a solution to homelessness; this requires 'deeper structural changes' (p.245). To address the underlying causes of homelessness, they suggest, "we need to build a sense of political engagement and a sense that change is possible" (p.251). The contribution of postsecular ethics to that political engagement is seen as "fostering a broader *politics of hope* that stands in stark contrast to the politics of revenge and abandonment that allegedly characterises the revanchist or postjustice city" (p.251). Stymied by an unwillingness to give any credence to revanchist politics, Cloke and his colleagues are reluctant to characterise the compassionate spaces of care created by postsecular ethics as 'resisting' or even 'coping'; rather, these spaces are offered as 'demonstration projects', existing in a parallel world, occupying the interstices of the punitive city, contrasting with but separate from that city – veritable 'beacons of light', holding out (in the authors' vocabulary) the 'hope' of a better future. Thus, Cloke and his colleague adopt a 'politics of the inert', leading by example rather than engagement, and in the process neatly complete the biblical trio of theological virtues: 'faith, hope and charity' [1 Corinthians 13: 13].

Contrast this with the course of action advocated by Laura Stivers. Stivers (2011) wears her religious beliefs on her sleeve, but is no less committed to the ethics of compassion and empowerment than the authors of '*Swept Up Lives*'. She, however, accepts the reality of the punitive city and the need to engage directly with the structures of revanchism. In proposing tactics of engagement – 'prophetic disruption' is her preferred epithet – Stivers asks: "What would it mean to make power analysis central to the issue of homelessness and housing? How are power, privilege, and social domination connected to homelessness and where do we see

intersecting oppressions (e.g. race, gender, class)" (p.20). In raising such issues, Stivers acknowledges that in tackling the causes of homelessness there is a need to 'jump scales' (Smith, N., 1993) both geographically in connecting the *micro* (spaces of compassion) with the *macro* (the punitive city), and conceptually in conjoining an ethics of care with an ethics of justice (Smith, D., 1998).

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