Down and Out in Los Angeles and Berlin: The Sociospatial Exclusion of Homeless People. By Jürgen von Mahs. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013. Pp. xvi+191. $74.50.

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Homelessness is an elusive and frustrating topic to study. A range of academic disciplines, government agencies, and advocacy organizations contribute to a dizzying body of research attempting to pinpoint the factors responsible for prolonged homelessness. Why are some homeless individuals successful in attaining housing and economic stability while others remain on the streets or in shelters for lengthy or indefinite periods of time? Given the variety of theoretical and methodological approaches employed, the literature is saturated with rather myopic explanations limited to investigating the effects of a single variable, be it mental illness, lack of affordable housing, or domestic violence. In *Down and Out in Los Angeles and Berlin*, Jürgen von Mahs offers an integrative framework for reconciling a multitude of compounding factors that undergird protracted homelessness. Relying on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork alongside 28 homeless individuals, 41 interviews with advocates and policy makers, and public-opinion surveys, von Mahs demonstrates that homeless people's ability to "exit" homelessness depends on a complex interplay between "bottom-up," internal factors (life-course characteristics, social networks, and utilization of social services) and "top-down," external factors (spatial contexts, organizational environments, and labor and social welfare policy).

The book is driven by a compelling empirical puzzle. Compared to the United States—a country characterized by little direct assistance to its homeless population—Germany has a comprehensive welfare system that includes social rights and benefits covering income, shelter, and health care. Despite these differences, however, Germany and the United States were marked by similar prevalence rates of homelessness throughout the 1990s. In fact, long-term homelessness was almost twice as high in Germany. To explain these numbers, von Mahs argues that although German homeless policy is de jure more extensive at the national level, de facto policy implementation at the local level is undermined by a "malfunctioning interchange" (p. 3) that exists between homeless people and service delivery systems.

The bulk of the book analyzes how three distinct yet interrelated trajectories of "sociospatial exclusion" serve to compound policy deficiencies and thereby obstruct homeless individuals' chances of exit. The first trajectory, legal exclusion, refers to the criminalization and physical dispersal of homeless people as they attempt to engage in informal economic survival strategies such as panhandling, public performances, and other shadow work. Legal exclusion is felt most acutely by those with "irregular" life courses—those with disabilities, histories of substance abuse, criminal records, thin

social networks, and minority ethnic backgrounds—because they are more likely to turn to such survival strategies and are more recognizable as "out of place" amid their domiciled patrons. The second trajectory, service exclusion, describes the ghettoization of homeless services in impoverished neighborhoods outside the city center. Service exclusion isolates homeless people from nonhomeless social networks that might otherwise assist them in securing housing and employment. Proximity to fellow homeless people amplifies alienation, substance abuse, and self-isolation, particularly for those with more regular life courses who become too ashamed to maintain former networks. Finally, market exclusion refers to the barriers that homeless people face as they attempt to access labor and housing markets. Despite dogged individual efforts and referrals from caseworkers, homeless people—particularly those with irregular life courses—remain largely unable to secure employment and housing amid intense market competition. Forced to return to shadow work and shelters, these individuals reenter the cycle of legal and service exclusion.

Accompanying homeless individuals as they negotiate interactions with police, employers, shelters, caseworkers, and peers, von Mahs reveals key, latent processes that often remain obscured when analyses focus solely on top-down factors. Yet, if an examination of the lived experience of homeless policy is the book's primary innovation, it is also the source of its major shortcoming. Given that the study is presented as a comparison of homelessness between Berlin and Los Angeles, it is surprising that von Mahs's fieldwork is restricted to the former. Rather than collect commensurate data in both cities, von Mahs assures readers that "contemporary data on homelessness in Los Angeles are empirically strong enough to provide us a baseline from which to investigate the situation and circumstances in Berlin" (p. 27). This choice means that after revealing nuanced mechanisms that exacerbate homelessness in Berlin, von Mahs speculates how these processes might be expected to unfold in Los Angeles by relying upon many of the same top-down variables that he criticizes as incomplete and even misleading. For example, von Mahs estimates that because the United States provides less cash assistance compared to Germany, homeless Angelenos are likely to resort to more shadow work, thereby becoming subject to higher rates of legal exclusion than those in Berlin. Von Mahs not only lacks the necessary data to make this comparative claim, but his methodological intervention compels us to remain wary of such casual (and causal) narratives. Reflecting on the book's central empirical puzzle, ethnographic data from both cities would not only enable von Mahs to better ascertain why homeless Berliners fare so poorly despite ostensibly expansive social welfare policies, it would also allow him to understand why homeless Angelenos fare so *well* despite a relative lack of official state support. Such insights about resilience and survival seem vital for proposing policy reforms that are less at odds with homeless people's actual life circumstances and everyday concerns, which is one of von Mahs's underlying motivations.

Despite this limitation, von Mahs is successful in providing a systematic, though concise, explanation of Berlin homelessness while capturing the

humanity and agency of his informants. To this end, the book presents a number of helpful flow charts that diagram the processes that propel individuals along each trajectory of sociospatial exclusion. The Berlin case study will be a welcome addition to sociology, geography, and political science courses on homelessness and urban inequality more generally. The book will be especially useful for advocates and social service providers for improving their own work and communicating with policy makers about precisely how official homeless policies unfold on the ground.

Wal-Mart Wars: Moral Populism in the Twenty-First Century. By Rebekah Peeples Massengill. New York: New York University Press, 2013. Pp. xvii +223. $75.00 (cloth); $24.00 (paper).

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On July 11, 2013, Wal-Mart decided to withdraw plans to build three stores in the Washington, D.C., area because of a new bill in requiring retailers with sales totaling over $12 billion to pay workers at least $12.50 per hour, which is $4.25 above the city's minimum wage. This event incorporated many aspects of the phenomenon under study in Rebekah Massengill's book, *Wal-Mart Wars: Moral Populism in the Twenty-First Century*, including Wal-Mart's clout in the local political economy, protests from actors making claims about Wal-Mart's responsibility to the livelihoods of its individual workers, and counterprotests from supporters of Wal-Mart's ability to bring affordable goods to underserved communities. In her book, Massengill examines these issues through the lenses of two major organizations that stand on either side of "the Wal-Mart debate," Wal-Mart Watch and Working Families for Wal-Mart. Through press releases, newspaper reports, and published anecdotes from the past decade, Massengill gives timely insight into how the Wal-Mart controversy relates to populist debates in other areas of American political economy.

Massengill's primary argument centers on how both Wal-Mart critics and supporters leverage populist language to make claims about the retail giant. The debate takes shape in Massengill's narrative as a war of words between Wal-Mart Watch (WMW), a union-funded, community-based organization dedicated to making sure Wal-Mart upholds its responsibility to its workers, and Working Families for Wal-Mart (WFWM), an organization founded by Wal-Mart itself to promote the good the store does for local communities. The heart of the book underscores three sets of dichotomies that frame the populist rhetoric and references invoked by these two organizational actors: one, individual and community; two, thrift and benevolence; and three, freedom and fairness. For example, Massengill argues that WMW focuses on the *individual* dimensions of claims making, specifically about worker's rights, whereas WFWM and other supporters point to the company's commitment to *community* units such as working families. Both