

Homemaking in the public. On the scales and stakes of framing, feeling, and claiming extra-domestic space as “home”

Paolo Boccagni¹  | Jan Willem Duyvendak²

¹ERC HOMInG, University of Trento, Trento, Italy

²NIAS and University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherland

Correspondence

Paolo Boccagni, ERC HOMInG, University of Trento, Trento, Italy.
Email: paolo.boccagni@unitn.it

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Abstract

This article reviews the emerging literature on the negotiation of home-related feelings, claims, and practices in the public urban sphere, under the rubric of homemaking in the public. This contributes to a better sociological understanding of home and illuminates long-debated societal questions such as the interaction between majority and minority groups and the shifting boundaries between what is (regarded as) public or private. While home has traditionally been understood as a private and domestic matter, it also has a major public significance. As a category of analysis, it reveals how supposedly domestic attitudes, routines, and practices are scaled up into the public domain. As a category of practice, it is a powerful discursive resource for contentious politics in the extra-domestic domain. Who is entitled and legitimated to claim a public space as “home”, and what this implies for inter-group categorizations and relations, are questions that deserve original and comparative analysis in sociology. Processes of domestication of the public sphere, of mutual interaction between public and private life realms, and of claims-making on various scales can be fruitfully revisited along these lines, by advancing an original research agenda on the ways of framing, feeling and claiming public space as home.

KEYWORDS

claims-making, domestication, home, homemaking, immigrants, majority-minority relations, public space

1 | INTRODUCTION

Home, an apparently private notion, holds a number of public meanings, functions, and implications. This article analyzes its conceptual and mobilizing potential, as a category *about* and *for* the negotiation of accessibility, visibility, and belonging in the public space. Based on an interdisciplinary literature review, we advance a sociological framework on the ways in which different social actors may claim and embed a sense of home into the public, as a symbolic boundary-marker for collective categorization and mobilization, often with an exclusionary subtext.

Unlike much of the recent debate in “home studies,” we are interested not only in what home *is*, or in how home is *made*, but also in what it *does*. That some reference to “home” informs the mainstream discourse on majority-minority relations, as a metaphor for all sorts of contended public spaces, is a trend highlighted in many Western countries (Anderson et al., 2017; Atkinson & Blandy, 2017; Duyvendak, 2011; Lloyd & Vasta, 2017). It follows that the study of the ways in which home is evoked and contested in the public, in terms of everyday social practices rather than only discursively, helps us better understand divides such as majorities versus minorities or public versus private social realm. Appeals and mobilizations to safeguard a supposedly pristine home, from the side of native-born and more affluent citizens, may be ironically paralleled with forms of counter-mobilization of minority groups articulating their own views and needs about home. This grassroots political field can be related to housing provision, to social inclusion, or to broader issues of sociability, participation, and recognition in the public domain. It has been significantly reshaped, at least in the short term, by the social impact of the Covid pandemic, as we illustrate below.

In short, the increasing currency of home as a category of practice, particularly for inter-group relations in the public space, is part and parcel of the significance of home as a category of analysis. What is, then, the “home” to which mobilizing actors on different sides aspire? Is it the same construct, image and imaginary, or does it vary, and along what lines (i.e., ethnicity, length of stay, gender, sexual preference, class, religion, etc.)? Is there anything like a *right* to the home, or even to feeling at home, in the public arena of today’s diverse cities? If so, which actors are entitled to define it, in what ways, to the benefit and expense of whom?

These questions have been addressed in research on the discursive use and emotional mobilization of home, but also on the actual experience of certain public spaces as “proxies” of home, in group relations on a local, national, and transnational scale. The recent rise of nativist populism is a clear case in point (Bonikowski & Diaggio, 2016; Duyvendak, 2011). With a view to orienting this emerging field of inquiry, our paper analyzes the meanings and implications of approaching public urban space (or selected portions of it) as home, within the day-to-day dialectic between established majorities and outsider minorities (Blunt & Bonnerjee, 2019; Blunt & Sheringham, 2019). We critically discuss the reach, tensions and dilemmas of *homemaking in the public* as an evolving set of representations, emotions and practices oriented to embed a sense of home into the public space.

Building on a relational and multiscale understanding of home (section 2), we show how a focus on homemaking in the public innovates research on everyday relations between majorities and minorities. It actually illuminates them as a battlefield between different ways to approach the public space as a metaphorical home—one that elicits more or less exclusionary claims for attachment and appropriation (section 3). Furthermore, the emphasis on homemaking invites to inquire the factors that make certain public environments “home-like” to different categories of users and to revisit the public–private interplay as the outcome of mutual influences from either side, rather than as a binary divide (section 4). Last, it feeds into a comparative research agenda on the ways in which public space is *perceived* as home-like or not, and is *categorized* and *claimed* as home of some groups or collectives, thereby excluding others—often, but not exclusively based on length of residency or on being native to a place (section 5). Since the discursive, emotional, and mobilizing field of homemaking in the public is irremediably contentious, it is urgent to carry out more research into it, as we argue in the conclusion.

2 | BEYOND THE DOMESTIC: HOME IN THE PUBLIC AS A CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS AND PRACTICE

Home, sociologically, stands not only for one or more distinctive places, but also for a meaningful social relationship being enacted with(in) them—with all of the aggregate consequences in inter-group relations and societally (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020; Dovey, 1985; Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013). As a social experience, home is based on a tentative and emplaced attribution of certain emotions to specific socio-spatial settings. Based on a literature overview and on our own research, three emplaced emotions are particularly critical to this context-dependent endeavor: *security*, as a feeling of material and personal protection, but also as an “ontological” experience of order and continuity in external reality (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Giddens, 1991); *familiarity*, what may stem from extended and routinized interactions with a setting, and those living there, over time (Kuurne & Gómez, 2019); but also, and perhaps less obviously, *control* over one’s day-to-day life circumstances—which points to the exclusionary subtext that is also constitutive of home. In all these respects, we see homeless as a state of things than, phenomenologically, a tentative achievement—a matter of aspirations and claims (Tucker, 1994). It follows that, as a category of analysis, home designates not only a material entity, but also a set of practices that are expected to substantiate it over time. Home is a matter of *homemaking* (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Duyvendak, 2011), to be biographically revisited in light of the cognitions and emotions which underpin it—that is, as “homing” (Boccagni, 2017).

As an emplaced social relationship, home does not exclusively rest on the material foundations of a dwelling and does not necessarily overlap with its boundaries (Steiner & Veel, 2017). This is not only because the very assumption of an isolated domestic setting is problematic, as the critical and feminist literature has long shown (Mallett, 2004)—and as the Covid pandemic has further demonstrated (Brickell, 2020). At one extreme, a dwelling is a source of little or no sense of feeling at home for vulnerable or oppressed people like battered women (Price, 2002), not to mention the *home-less* (Wardlaugh, 1999). As important is that the material, relational and emotional infrastructures that are constitutive of home as an experience can also be (re)produced in different environments. If home starts with bringing some space under control (Douglas, 1991), the extra-domestic sphere can also be part and parcel of it, although in place-specific, selective and unequal ways. The homeless themselves, interestingly, may reattach some sense of home to different and *public* milieus (McCarthy, 2018; Mitchell, 1995; Veness, 1993).

Furthermore, “home” as a category of practice—a notion in everyday use, with a variety of meanings and subtexts—crystallizes historically and culturally shaped moral values, including those related to what a good home should mean and what feeling-at-home should be like (Kaika, 2004). What is evoked, claimed, or contested as home can embrace multiple scales in the public, including virtual and diasporic spaces (Blunt & Bonnerjee, 2019). The public discourse of home intersects with deep-rooted and gendered representations, along ethno-national, class, or religious lines, regarding to whom public space (or meaningful parts of it) belongs; who is entitled or legitimated to participate in it, for what purposes, in what terms; how far and when public space can be occupied and appropriated, literally or symbolically. From the most visible side of public rallies and protests to more mundane forms of everyday interaction, majority–minority relations are often played out along these lines, whether based on autochthonous versus immigrant background or other salient markers such as length of stay, legal status, age, religion, and sexual orientation. Different forms of homemaking are habitually enacted across the private/public divide—from the micro-level of one’s body, across household, and kinship groups, to larger spatial units. The ordinary patterns of access and use of streets, marketplaces or parks, with all of the attached resources and infrastructures, can be helpfully revisited in this optic (Koch & Latham, 2013). This holds also for marginalized or “otherized” social groups, whether the stake is their freedom to enact “alien” practices and rituals, their room for contestation, or their (in)visibility (Damery, 2020; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017; Mitchell, 1995).

By definition, homemaking in the public is a processual and ever-reversible achievement. As such, it invites us to reframe the private-public interface as a porous and evolving continuum, with “thresholds of domesticity” being differentially negotiated and selectively crossed (Boccagni and Brighenti, 2017). The research question is then who can feel more or less at home in the public space, depending on the person’s “fitting” into what is considered

acceptable and normal, one's resources, and opportunities to manifest oneself? This, we argue, makes homemaking in the public a significant field—in fact, a *battlefield*—to explore majority-minority relations within common public environments. Most recently, even who should have a right to stay in the public space, rather than being locked at home to mitigate the diffusion of Covid-19, has turned into a contentious political question—one that intersects expected civicism and less virtuous claims from majority groups to have more of a right to be “at home” in the public, relative to other groups. Beyond these claims, the focus of analysis shifts from the abstract and groupist terms of identity politics to the everyday practices whereby different views, emotions, and practices associated with home are negotiated (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; Dickens & Butcher, 2016). Such practices are not necessarily peaceful or consensual. Whereas home-in-the-private is more easily secured—at least for most of us—in terms of security, familiarity, and control, this is much more of an evolving battlefield in the public space.

Researching the development and distribution of the home experience “out there” amounts to analyzing the objective scope and the subjective potential and inclinations for people to feel at home in certain portions of the public domain, and possibly “domesticate” them (Koch & Latham, 2013; Kurne & Gómez, 2019; Mandich & Cuzzocrea, 2016). The question is how far, and when, individuals and groups recognize their life environments as “their own”: a source of belonging, identification and inclusion, which need not work out in the same way for others—all the less so for immigrant newcomers or other marginalized groups such as religious minorities, LGBTI or people with a mental or physical disability. Feeling at home or not in one's neighborhood, or in other extra-domestic spaces, is no simple matter of personal taste or preference. It is highly dependent on the preferences and practices of others regarding the same space, in light of the material affordances it provides (Smets & Snee, 2017; Wekker, 2020). It has to do with external recognition, no less than internal orientation, and hence has deeply relational and temporal bases. Feeling at home somewhere is associated with the presence of some *and* the absence of others, as the same place may be experienced as home-like by different people, on different circumstances. Put otherwise, processes of homemaking and *unmaking* in the public (Baxter & Brickell, 2014) are deeply intertwined with each other. Besides being telling of the biographies of those involved, the appropriability-as-home of public space is then an inherently political question.

What do we specifically mean, however, by *public space*? This concept has been extensively discussed across social sciences, including sociology, cultural geography, and urban studies (e.g., Carr et al., 1992; Lofland, 1973; Low & Smith, 2006). We advance a pragmatic understanding of it, here, as any place that, at least in theory, is equally accessible for ordinary people's transition, use and consumption; put differently, as a stage where different “geographies of encounter” are enacted (Valentine, 2008). Urban squares, streets, and parks, as well as transportation facilities or buildings associated with shopping or leisure are all cases in point. This makes for a diverse and differentiated set of places and infrastructures. Common to them is the fact of being “grounded in the thin sociality of fleeting encounters across class lines” (Bodnar, 2015, p. 2097), characterized by Goffman's (1963) “civil inattention”, while also holding “the remote possibility of those encounters growing into the thicker sociability of a community” (Bodnar, 2015). In this sense, public space is a more place-specific notion than “public” (Stewart & Hartmann, 2020) or “civil” (Alexander, 2006) sphere, since it rests on geographical location, sensory involvement, and some degree of proximate interaction. It should be appreciated, however, as a continuum of degrees of accessibility for different functions and audiences, possibly at different moments (i.e., in asynchronous ways), rather than a residual category for all that is not domestic, personal, or private. Research into public space opens up to a “reality of graduated publicness” (Bodnar, 2015, p. 2099) ranging from the pure private via the parochial to the truly public (Lofland, 1998).

3 | HOMEMAKING IN THE PUBLIC AND THE (RE)PRODUCTION OF INGROUP/OUTGROUP DIVIDES

Investigating if, how and when people feel at home in the public space, or feel to be missing its traditional home-like shapes, is a worthy effort in itself. Much literature on place attachment (e.g., Lewicka, 2011; Low & Altman, 1992) and belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2012) can be revisited by exploring the interdependencies between

people's ways of feeling at home or not on extra-domestic scales. However, an emphasis on homemaking in the public has also broader significance for inter-group and societal relations. It casts light on the shifting configurations of key social divides such as private versus public, as we illustrate below, or ingroup versus outgroup, as we discuss in this section. A case in point lies in the discursive and emotional reproduction of the boundary between native-born citizens and those with an immigrant background (Sharma, 2020).

3.1 | International migration and the emotional power of home in the public

From the side of so-called receiving societies, the settlement of immigrant newcomers tends to enhance, by reaction, the material and symbolic boundaries of what used to be "their" home—a widespread psycho-social mechanism with major political implications (Boccagni, 2017). What is often at stake is less the home as a domestic space than a sense of *not* feeling at home in the street, district, or even nation by native-borns because of the settlement of strangers (Duyvendak et al., 2016). It is also by reaction to external "pressures", such as those induced by migration, that the notion of home starts to travel to scales other than the dwelling. Cities and nations at large are conceptualized as homes, by extrapolating the characteristics of the private home into public space.

The imaginative power of home as a resource for this extrapolation should not go unnoticed (Dobel, 2010; Hage, 1996; Kral, 2014). There seems to be much more to the metaphorical re-scaling of home than instrumental and top-down domopolitics (Walters, 2004). The homeland-home conflation touches deep chords in the commonsense. There is nothing wrong or undesirable, on the surface of it, in framing one's local community or nation as home; not, at least, until the exclusionary subtext of this account is foregrounded. This calls for a more open debate on the potential dark side of the home jargon, as a fundamental marker of ascription that can be easily harnessed by nationalist, nativist and xenophobic political agendas (Jones et al., 2017).

Interestingly, international migrants tend to experience a parallel "scaling out" of the boundaries of home vis-à-vis their countries of origin. The latter may be framed as home altogether by default, particularly among newcomers (e.g., Wiles, 2008), including refugees (Brun & Fabos, 2015). A specular conflation underpins diaspora-reaching appeals, whereby emigration countries try to flatter emigrants' nostalgic allegiance to the national home and, more pragmatically, attract their money and human capital investments (Ralph, 2009; Skrbis, 2008). By the same token, policy schemes to encourage return migration appeal to the evocative power of migrants' supposedly unabated home (Flahaux, 2017). So do, in a still more ambiguous way, state-funded policies and programs for the repatriation of refugees, including "failed" ones (Tete, 2012).

However, several studies suggest skepticism on the homeland-home equation (Tucker, 1994). From the side of immigrant newcomers, all that the previous home stood for may get more blurred and discontinuous over time, as a result of extended mobility and of its socio-legal, cultural, and psychological aftermath (Fitzgerald, 2014; Waldinger, 2015). How the bases of their past home experience are then reproduced and distributed, on a local and transnational scale, is critical to migrant identification with their host and home societies, from an often marginal position vis-à-vis both contexts (Boccagni et al., 2020b).

3.2 | Why call public space home? Length of stay, attachments, and claims

As exemplified in immigrant/native relations, a focus on homemaking illuminates the ways in which different people and groups construct public space as home-like or not, based on their habitual ways of staying in it—and on their length of stay in it. Environmental psychology research on the private home has shown that homemaking is fundamentally time-dependent (Lawrence, 1987; Werner et al., 1985). There is no reason to underplay the influence of length of residence on homemaking in the public space, as a matter of increasing familiarity and "personal

engagement" with it (Kuurne & Gómez, 2019). Long-settled citizens, who often consider themselves as natives, can be expected to associate more easily a sense of home with the outer environment or specific parts of it. Everything else being equal, they are more likely to feel it as homely indeed (or to recall the past time when it was perceived as such), and to cultivate a sense of "moral ownership" over it (Kasinitz, 2013). Yet, immigrants or other minorities may also attach a distinctive sense of home to some parts of public space, including its "quasi-public" (Smets & Watt, 2013) and "hybrid-domestic" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017) variants. They do so, borrowing from the lexicon of Vertovec (2014), by building "route-ines", creating "room without walls" and "corridors of dissociation" within the public spaces they share with the mainstream and other minority groups. While this process is affected by several socio-demographic variables, one point remains: migration-driven heterogeneity makes the home-likeness of outer environments less a self-evident state of things than a potential outcome of purposive attempts at "domestication" (Koch & Latham, 2013), "privatization" (Kumar & Makarova, 2008) and "personalization" (Ley Cervantes & Duyvendak, 2017). Both majorities and minorities may engage in such attempts, albeit, often, from unequal power positions.

Importantly, negotiating a sense of home in the public is not simply a matter of place attachment. It also has to do with appropriation—claiming visibility, recognition, and participation, if not ownership, over space. These stances do not necessarily result in progressive or inclusive agendas. They may be driven by all sorts of political interests, as is typical of the discursive and emotional manipulation of home (Dobel, 2010). This can be generalized to other minority-majority relations as well. A case in point is Duyvendak's (2011) study of the LGBTs in San Francisco's Castro, experiencing it as "their" neighborhood to be defended against the influx of straight families, noncommunity owned shops, and the local extension of the cable car. In essence, fully being at home in public (in "heaven", opposed to the private place of the "haven") affects the possibility of others to feel equally at home.

Furthermore, who is considered to be "native" to a place is often an embattled issue, particularly when migrants start to settle. In today's Amsterdam, for instance, those who have been living the longest or are most numerous in certain neighborhoods are Dutch-Moroccan women (Buitelaar & Stock, 2010). This is not to suggest that they will be considered the most native, or that they consider themselves as such. The battle for belonging is deeply political and given the marginalization of Dutch-Moroccans (Duyvendak, 2011), their claim to "nativeness" is still problematic. When we discuss majority-minority relations, therefore, we do not primarily focus on numbers, but rather on deep-rooted qualitative differences and power inequalities, which in turn affect the claims for home in the public (Foner et al., 2017).

In all these respects, the negotiation of homemaking in inter-group relations shows that the notions of public and private, and even of inside and outside, are mutually constitutive and in continuous interaction (Hatuka & Toch, 2016; Kumar & Makarova, 2008). They are also highly embattled, for all the aspects of home that exceed the material walls of a dwelling; and sometimes even inside them, as the study of immigrant domestic work shows (Boccagni, 2018). Whatever the scale, the interplay between "inside" and "outside" through homemaking in the public deserves further elaboration.

4 | FROM THE DOMESTIC TO THE PUBLIC, AND BACK: WHAT CIRCULATES BETWEEN HOME IN THE PRIVATE AND IN THE PUBLIC

As we argued earlier, the experience of home rests on a struggle for security and familiarity, as well as on tentative control over space. Therefore, investigating the potential (re)production of home in the public requires exploring what of the expected domestic bases of home, as an intimate and routinized repertoire of cultures, practices, and material objects, is actually brought out into the public domain. Who brings it, under what circumstances, for what purposes and interests? What of the consequences on the interaction between private and public?

4.1 | What makes the public home-like?

Addressing these questions requires inquiring, first, what attributes a public space should have or develop in order to be perceived as home-like by those who use it or stay in it. Far from being only an academic issue, this is critical to urban policies that try to facilitate social cohesion in neighborhoods where everyone should have a “right” to feel at home (Duyvendak et al., 2016).

At its simplest, the response involves any material affordances and infrastructures in the built environment—pedestrian areas, benches, lighting, leisure, shopping facilities and so on—that turn a public space into a pleasant and safe area for staying, rather than for transit, to the eyes of a more or less diverse arena of users (Koch & Latham, 2013). At some level, the design of the built environment, including that of public space, does affect the atmosphere perceived in it, and the likelihood that it facilitates open and sustained interactions (Dovey, 1999; Lofland, 1998). Yet, the actual “homeliness” of a public space has to do less with design and infrastructures per se, than with the ways in which these resources are adapted by local publics. Moreover, a deeper understanding of the potential transition from home-in-the-private to home-in-the public calls for further elaboration in several directions.

First, it is necessary to unpack the normative characteristics of home and domesticity that inform the views of different categories of users of a public space (Duyvendak, 2011; Kaika, 2004). Within diverse urban spaces, distinct socio-cultural groups of residents likely cultivate different notions, emotions, and moralities of home, for instance regarding the expected prerogatives and division of labor between genders and generations. This feeds into their expectations on what is appropriate to do or “be like” in the public, given the unequal opportunities available to make it real. Other axes of social stratification are as or more important for the expected ways of engaging with public space. The ways in which street vendors or homeless people see and use public spaces such as streets or parks, for instance, are likely at odds with those of middle-class residents (Bodnar, 2015; McCarthy, 2018).

More fundamentally, infrastructural adaptations of public space inspired by principles of “order”, “safety,” and possibly “market profitability” can be at odds with the possibility to appropriate it as a stage for claims-making, particularly for marginalized social groups. This mirrors a tension between opposite “ideological visions” of public space, as “a place of unmediated political interaction” or as “a place of order, controlled recreation, and spectacle” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 125). In practice, contrasting views and expectations about feeling and being at home in the public are often a source of discontent and mobilization. For instance, antigentrification and anti-eviction movements can be appreciated precisely as residents’ claims to retain certain home-like features of a neighborhood (including the home in itself), against the pressure of “external” economic agents and interests (Low, 2016). The latter, although a minority in numbers, may be extremely powerful in practice. It is important, then, to appreciate the inherently relational side of homemaking in the public, but also the underlying power asymmetries and inequalities. The presence or arrival of some is exactly what prevents others from feeling at home, and vice versa.

4.2 | On the mixed influence of the private on the public

The importance of the social and cultural subtexts of home, and of their spatial, material, and symbolic translations into the public, leads us to another step—to interrogate the aggregate influence of private values, lifestyles and patterns of behavior on public space. This may even include the decline or disruption of “publicness.” The obvious starting point here is Sennett’s observation that “private emotions” have taken over the public domain: “Confusion has arisen between public and intimate life; people are working out in terms of personal feelings public matters which properly can be dealt with only through codes of impersonal meaning” (1977, p. 5). Such impersonal meanings—the cornerstone of civilized urban behavior, in the eyes of many urban sociologists—may disappear in times in which personal meanings tend to take over the public domain. The ordinary scene of people who speak

loud on their mobile phones in any public space, bringing into the common realm even intimate aspects of their private lives, is a powerful symbol of this development (Hatuka & Toch, 2016; Kumar & Mukarova, 2008). Sennett's objections against the "tyranny of intimacy" grew out of his concern that the dominance of personal emotions would cause "dead public space". Along similar lines, several authors have emphasized an increasing "domestication" of the urban public space, as a process whereby commercial and security concerns take over preexisting "civic culture" (Atkinson, 2003; Zukin, 1995). Yet, in revisiting public space through the lens of homemaking we should empirically trace the consequences of attaching home feelings to public space, rather than presupposing the end of public space as such (Koch & Latham, 2013). Furthermore, this process is by no means unidirectional. An opposite colonization of the private sphere by extra-domestic (e.g., work-related) concerns is now unprecedentedly at work, under the Covid-19 "new normal", in ways that demand more investigation. While the long-term societal consequences of the pandemic may be hard to predict, a clear and unprecedented development lies in the overburdening of the domestic sphere with external functions, related both to work and social reproduction. As significant and in need of further research is the Covid-driven unsettlement of the "emotional boundaries" of home (Durnova & Mohammadi, 2021).

In short, how far the private versus public divide holds, and in which domains, is a question to be addressed by investigating *what* people bring from the private into the public, and the other way around. The two forms of home experience, and the underlying cognitive, emotional, and material bases, are mutually interdependent. This is one of the several facets of home-in-the-public as a terrain for (more) sociological inquiry, rather than only as an evocative "metaphor" or a "spatial imaginary" (Koch & Latham, 2013).

5 | RESEARCHING THE "BATTLEFIELD" OF HOMEMAKING IN THE PUBLIC: A THREE-LEVEL APPROACH

Overall, the negotiation of a sense of home in the public, as both attachment and appropriation, has been approached in the literature—and could be further investigated—at three levels: a cognitive ("framing"), an emotional ("feeling"), and a performative ("claiming") one. Empirical research can involve, first, the commonsensical ways of *framing* public space as home, whereby some groups or categories are assumed to "naturally" belong there, contrary to others; second, the subjective ways of *feeling* at home there, if and when a space elicits an exclusivistic sense of home to particular individuals or groups; third, the ways of actively *claiming* public space as home, whenever majority–minority relations are shaped by claims for territoriality, or for some space to be the exclusive home of some, at the expense of others.

Framing, *feeling*, and *claiming* space as home are, in our argument, three levels of the potential, selective, and unequal domestication of the public domain. Their empirical combination, within and between social groups, delimits the contentious political field of home-in-the-public across multiethnic urban settings. While these levels are closely related to each other (cf. Hochschild, 1979), each of them deserves its own elaboration, on a continuum between a literature overview and a research agenda to appreciate the sociological significance of home in the public, as a category of analysis and practice.

5.1 | Framing public space as home

Historical and locally sensitive research can be conducted, to begin with, on the deep-rooted processes whereby urban multiethnic public space is framed as the "natural" home of some groups—typically the mainstream—rather than others (Duyvendak, 2011). The widespread perception of a legitimate ownership of space is what matters here, even when the notion of home is not explicitly used. The point is unveiling the historically patterned processes whereby a certain space has been assumed as the belonging of a given group or category—in fact, of different ones,

possibly conflicting with each other, over time. Much of the ways of framing the public domain as home has to do with deep-rooted power and prestige hierarchies along ethno-national, religious, political, or cultural lines. It can be justified and made effective through indigeneity and autochthony (Geschiere & Jackson, 2006), the length of residence, the everyday use of space or the similarity between a particular social group and the features of the space in question. In fact, framing a certain land as home may have equally to do with the historical negation of preexisting indigeneities, often with the use of military power (up to the extreme of genocide), and with unremitting efforts at “self-indigenization”, as the critical literature on settler colonialism has shown (Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006). This has meaningful implications for the native/migrant divide as well (Sharma, 2020).

As a matter of fact, studying the appropriation of public space along these lines helps de-naturalize it as an historically contingent product of unequal power relations; all the more so, whenever it scales up as homeland, nation, or state (Davies, 2014; Hage, 1996; Walters, 2004). This enables to deconstruct the ways of associating a group with a public place—and on a larger scale, a population with a bounded territory, as highlighted by the critiques of sedentarism (Malkki, 1995) and of methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2003).

Whatever the determinants, any historically shaped association between a group and a given public space is made more salient by extended contact between the “home-owner” group and outsiders like newcomer immigrants—more strikingly, when the latter’s socio-demographics and lifestyles diverge, or are perceived to diverge, from the mainstream. Under these circumstances, the predominant perception of the public-as-home is brought to more explicit awareness and may call for new ways of legitimation or justification. Home-in-the-public turns then into a politically contentious question.

5.2 | Feeling at home in public

Another research focus, on which more fieldwork has been done already, involves the emotional underpinnings of homemaking in the public. Attaching a sense of home to extra-domestic space is a selective, emotionalized, and temporally shifting experience. Studying the emotional side of home-in-the-public entails doing biographical and ethnographic research within particular settings, to explore how people and social groups feel at home or not by virtue of meaningful relationships and/or deep-rooted routines enacted there (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019; Kuurne & Gómez, 2019). Here again, homemaking in the public involves long-term residents but also newcomers and other minorities. For international migrants, feeling at home in a public space—if only for a while—may be related to the sense of “controlling” it, or of expressing their habitual lifestyles with some degree of freedom from the external gaze and control; or possibly to participate in shared activities (regarding leisure, religion, etc.) which either connect them with the past home experience, or bridge across the boundaries with majority groups (Boccagni et al., 2020b; Miranda-Nieto et al., 2020; Wagner & Peters, 2014). Feeling at home in some parts of the public space may ultimately mean feeling “normal” —that is, not perceived as out-of-place—inside them (Damery, 2020).

An example of the potential of public space to nourish feelings of being at home is Hondagneu-Sotelo’s (2017) study of South Los Angeles urban gardens, where Central American families cultivate “home-like” herbs and plants. This enables them to reconnect with the past home life through the activities they perform, their relationship with a “natural” environment and their mutual co-presence. Another case in point is Law’s (2001) study of Hong Kong’s *Central*—a large public space in which Filipino migrants organize informal food markets which recreate a home-like ambience “through sights, sounds, tastes, aromas” (cit., p. 263). Plenty of similar instances can be found across migration studies (e.g., Saint-Blancat & Cancellieri, 2014, on religious public rituals), as well as in urban studies (e.g., Hall, 2009, on the reconstitution of a sense of home among the customers of a neighborhood café in London). The typically short temporality of this emplaced sense of home-in-the-public makes it no less meaningful to those involved.

The built environment itself, at least in large metropolitan areas, can provide suitable affordances, and bear meaningful traces, of immigrant group-specific ways to feel at home. Ethnic neighborhoods, markets, streets, and other spaces of proximity provide a rather generalized sense of home, typically mediated by co-ethnic sociability (Botticello, 2007). Likewise, so-called ethnic enclaves can operate as repositories of “signs, symbols, language, food, and artefacts” that connect immigrants with the past home-life—often hybridizing it with their new life circumstances, as for Vietnamese-Americans in a Californian “Little Saigon” (Mazumdar et al., 2000). Community development strategies often build on the attachment to particular public spaces and on the investment in them, as provisional and nonexclusive homes (Koch & Latham, 2013). This may come also by opposition to domestic spaces in which patriarchal relations, gender segregation, or domestic violence make some—particularly women and youth—“homeless at home” (Wardlaugh, 1999). Several studies of immigrant-descent youth have provided insights along these lines (e.g., Ahmet [2013], Back [2007] and Dickens & Butcher [2016], in London; Damery [2020], in Brussels).

5.3 | Claiming public space as home

Still another research focus stems from the previous two, foregrounding the more contentious and politically significant dimension of home-in-the-public: the ways in which public space is purposefully *claimed* as home, particularly from the side of long-term, supposedly original inhabitants. The stake, in majority–minority relations, regards the legitimacy, reception and impact of any claim for a public home. Unsurprisingly, politicians get often involved in the struggle for control over space—be that a street, a park, a market, or any public facility (Duyvendak et al., 2016). The empirical question, primarily for ethnographic research, is who they consider as the legitimate users and symbolic “owners” of the space involved. Do they try to balance the various claims, by regulating the place for different groups to be able to use it at the same time or sequentially? Or do policymakers side with the claimant groups they see as more “native”, “indigenous,” or “autochthonous”?

In the case of majority populations, similar demands are often considered indisputable and self-evident. Only when minorities claim access to the same space does it become evident that the allegedly “neutral” space was de facto “colored” by the majority in the first place. This may change whenever, in urban neighborhoods hosting people from many backgrounds, the original majority becomes a numerical minority (Crul, 2006). This pluralization, however, does not guarantee that people will get along better or that the struggle for belonging will be more peaceful, as some “superdiversity” literature seems to suggest (e.g., Wessendorf’s [2014] “commonplace diversity”, or Wise and Velayutham’s [2014] “convivial multicultural”). On the contrary, those who consider themselves to be native will likely feel threatened in their position and may well cling to populist and nativist positions (Alba & Duyvendak, 2019).

In short, inequalities and conflicts remain central to everyday ways of “living with difference” in multiethnic cities (Valentine, 2008). The claims for home in the public, stemming from everyday encounters between different individuals and groups, are an equally central terrain to study their roots and developments.

6 | CONCLUSION

Bringing home into the public (as an analytical category), and appreciating the ways in which home is in the public (as a category of practice), opens up a promising research perspective on majority-minority relations, shifting boundaries between the public and the private, and the contentious politics of the everyday. This approach, we believe, enriches the older tradition in which the colonization of the public by the private (*à la* Sennett) is the dominant theme. Whereas that literature raised very general claims regarding the (market) colonization of the public sphere, we argue for more contextual and fine-grained research on the mixed ways in which public space

gets characterized by the domestic. In fact, the reverse is also the case, as the unprecedented “colonization” of the domestic under Covid-19 has clearly illustrated. Wherever the bulk of work and school-related activities is to be performed in the home, and publicly displayed to the external world, the public side of home is far more than a metaphor. It rather comes to be constitutive of domesticity itself. This complex interaction between public and private tends to facilitate feeling at home for some, but definitely not for all, and makes “publicness” less a formal overarching attribute than a matter of degrees and thresholds to be practically negotiated and selectively crossed. There is a promise in investigating them further through a sociological understanding of home, as a special social relationship with one’s life environment that different social actors envision, claim and try to emplace at different scales, given the unequal resources and opportunities accessible to them.

Once analytically projected into the public, home retains its significance as a shorthand for all attempts at appropriating space for any purpose that goes beyond transitory and functional use. Public space emerges as a differentiated, conflictive, and fragmented arena, with different attempts and claims for home being in tension with each other. In such an arena, deep emotions such as those related to home cannot just be “pushed in” via public policy, nor expected to be easily and immediately shared by outsiders such as immigrants. This is one of the reasons why the appropriation of home-related categories for political purposes is as much a widespread process, as a problematic one—at least for a progressive and inclusive political agenda. In a societal perspective, home is a fundamentally ambiguous and exclusionary notion. Its consequences as an emotionalized resource for contentious politics are likely to be equally ambiguous.

As long as home carries a “positive” subtext of security, familiarity and control, this is still and only to *its insiders*. Whatever stands for home is the marker of an insider/outsider divide—home-like to some, but not to most. It follows that home-related claims in the public have different consequences, depending not only on power balances between the relevant parties, but also in light of how extensive and permeable the symbolic walls of a public home are. This also raises the need for one last revisit of the home-like features of the public space, in a temporal optic.

Whenever the inside versus outside divide is reproduced into the public realm, it may simply replicate a home environment writ large—one in which majorities claim to feel legitimately at home, contrary to their minority counterparts. Public streets and areas for shopping in affluent neighborhoods are generally expected to reflect this implicit arrangement. However, something more complex and subtle occurs across multiethnic urban spaces: the boundary turns out to be less between inclusion and exclusion, than between distinct ways of feeling at home being unequally distributed over time. Across open urban environments such as public gardens, pedestrian squares, playgrounds, and so on, different social sub-groups may well cultivate a sense of home, but they are unlikely to do so simultaneously. The same public space turns out to be home-like for some and un-homely for most others, under the same spatial and temporal coordinates. In short, the accessibility of home in the public is stratified in time, as much as in space. The multiscale of home, as a tentative attachment and appropriation over some place, is a temporal, no less than a spatial question (Boccagni et al., 2020b).

While ethnic-driven diversity is a major source of pluralization of the public space (although the latter was never really homogeneous in the first place), it also rearticulates the meaning of publicness as a matter of little or no overlapping between different, asynchronous ways of appropriating it. The critical question for social cohesion turns out to be not only how far—if at all—people feel at home in selected parts of the public. More radically, the question is how far people *can simultaneously feel at home within the same spatial arrangements in the public sphere*. The prevalent fragmentation of ways of feeling at home in the public suggests the intermittency and fragility of this emotional experience, as long as it is emplaced at all. However, it also points to a major challenge for social cohesion policy. More ethnographic research on the temporalities of homemaking is as important as the study of the underlying spatialities, to find out how light, flexible, and inclusive versions of home-in-the public can be negotiated within multiethnic urban spaces.

ORCID

Paolo Boccagni  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8379-8561>

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Paolo Boccagni is Professor in Sociology (University of Trento) and Principal investigator of ERC StG HOMInG. He has published in the sociology of migration, home, diversity and social welfare. He is currently doing comparative research on the lived experience of home, with a particular focus on asylum seekers in reception facilities. Recent books include *Migration and the Search for Home* (2017) and *Thinking home on the move* (co-authored, 2020).

Jan Willem Duyvendak is Distinguished Research Professor of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam, and Rector of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS-KNAW). His main fields of research are the transformation of the welfare state, belonging and 'feeling at home', and nativism. His latest books include *The Politics of Home* (2011) and *Pragmatic Inquiry* (coeditor, 2020).

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