



# The Value of Homelessness: Managing Surplus Life in the United States (Difference Incorporated)

*Craig Willse*

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It is all too easy to assume that social service programs respond to homelessness, seeking to prevent and understand it. *The Value of Homelessness*, however, argues that homelessness today is an effect of social services and sciences, which shape not only what counts as such but what will?or ultimately won't?be done about it.

Through a history of U.S. housing insecurity from the 1930s to the present, Craig Willse traces the emergence and consolidation of a homeless services industry. How to most efficiently allocate resources to control ongoing insecurity has become the goal, he shows, rather than how to eradicate the social, economic, and political bases of housing needs. Drawing on his own years of work in homeless advocacy and activist settings, as well as interviews conducted with program managers, counselors, and staff at homeless services organizations in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, Willse provides the first analysis of how housing insecurity becomes organized as a governable social problem.

An unprecedented and powerful historical account of the development of contemporary ideas about homelessness and how to manage homelessness, *The Value of Homelessness* offers new ways for students and scholars of social work, urban inequality, racial capitalism, and political theory to comprehend the central role of homelessness in governance and economy today.

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