



**THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

**LIVING ON THE CITY MARGINS:
Homelessness, violence and stratagems of survival
in an Australian metropolis**

Aileen F Connon

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of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis opens a window onto the lives of twentieth century urban nomads in an Australian city. Based on fieldwork in a Community Day Centre from January to August, 1997, the focus is on the reality of homelessness and violence, which is an ever-present problem within the Day Centre and in the streets beyond. Lifestyles and behaviour patterns are characterised, as are the survival tactics and stratagems of these modern nomads as they make-do in urban space. I draw on Bourdieu's concept of capital to explore nomad economy in the city.

An anthropological approach to homelessness leads to an exploration of the influences affecting the daily choices and decision made by homeless people. The dynamic state of homelessness which interfaces with issues of violence, lack of stable social relationships, and difficulties of survival in a potentially hostile environment, provides the background for a problematisation of homelessness.

Weber's conceptualisation of ideal types is drawn on for an interpretation of the structure of the Community Day Centre. Offering the most basic of services, it functions as a type of safe haven for those who choose to come in from the streets and the parklands each day. The dilemma facing this agency with its philosophy of empowering its clients, while at the same time maintaining control, is analysed along Foucault's panoptic lines. The strategies of tolerance and sanctions used by the staff, provide the basis for analysis of this community bureaucracy as it services the needs of its clients, needs which are the paramount reality of the social world of urban nomads.

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