

Acknowledgements

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TUVA BEYER BROCH

'Home sweet home'

Proverbs promoting warm feelings towards 'home' flourish. Bound to my home for weeks, I routinely question the Norwegian saying 'A good home is the best school'. No words can describe how I long for schools to re-open. Right now I consider acquiring a small door sign with sociologist Nielsen's quote: 'Anyone with a home has something to long to be away from'. The corona-quarantine challenges and changes my understandings and feelings of 'home' from day to day. In fact, minute by minute, in line with colliding cycles of home schooling and office. What does the corona virus and its consequences do with our feelings and perceptions of the concept home?

Home is a multivocal symbol embracing contradictions. I currently want to break free from home, while simultaneously I am homey and love the time with my children. Despite the term's ambivalence, home is idealised more than other places (Broch 2020; Cieraad 1999). The coronavirus epidemic sheds new light on otherwise shaded understandings of home.

Coronavirus home-bound


Humans are bound to their homes around the world. A building or house is not automatically a home. Gullestad (2002) makes an important distinction describing the house as the tangible that can accommodate a multitude of people. While the home is grounded in the idea of family, marriage and heritage, the house as home symbolises a place of care and compassion. The home has become strongly and inextricably linked to security, predictability, warmth and feelings of longing (home). These ideas are threatened when national news currently characterises the present situation by stories about Norwegian children and adults suffering at home. We are locked inside unsafe homes surrounded by unsafe worlds, invisible and missed by alert doctors.

Our understanding of home is formed by such publicly available images that are combined with individual experiences. Home thus becomes a realisation of people's own and shared ideas.

The tyranny of the home

The home is a morally based collective image that governs and controls bodily interaction and thought. This is the tyranny of the home (Douglas 1991). And maybe that's exactly what I feel more during these times, as do others in far more extreme circumstances. The ravaging coronavirus affects our understanding of the outside world. We are forced to relate to each other and to our surroundings in new ways. The virus forces us to accept that we must stay home to prevent infection, to take care of peers with impaired immune systems. Closed doors symbolise empathy, however, closed doors represent cruelty for some.

Suddenly and explicitly, we see that our safe home, which houses 'privacy', is not only safe and not only private, but a public matter. The home cut off from the public is a delusion. Right now, the state controls Norwegian private spheres, controls the opening and closing of our doors. The state has taken up residence in our living rooms and neighbourhoods. Many Norwegians express their desire to flee their home because it now feels more like an (alien) house.

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