Foreword

Bryan Sanderson

As Chairman of the Home Renaissance Foundation (HRF) I am delighted to welcome this book, which includes rich contributions from a wide array of disciplines, elucidating the crucial role of the home in the wellbeing of all members of society, from young children to the elderly. HRF developed out of a conviction that the work of the home is much more than a series of functional tasks and activities. Rather, it encompasses a wealth of human skill, aesthetic quality and relational dynamism. It is a living deposit of the human culture of care and transmission of values, and what Charles Handy refers to as a true ‘school for life’.

HRF has taken the lead globally in telling the story of the home, foregrounding its value, and shedding light on its centrality to societal growth, personal wellbeing and human development more broadly. The home is an intrinsic foundation of the human story and building home environments has, for several millennia, been an essential part of what it means to be human. However, academic research, economic frameworks and cultural institutions have often failed to see the home as an essential lens through which to understand human flourishing. HRF’s research initiatives have engaged and continue to engage profoundly with the home as both a source and a product of the human story, emphasizing the importance of valuing the work that goes into creating, maintaining and nurturing healthy, congenial, sustainable home environments that are conducive to making society more humane.

Since HRF’s beginnings in 2006, we have promoted forward-thinking research focused on renewing the culture of the home, and envisioning its role in the future life of society. The trajectory of this research has resulted in contributions applying new areas of thought to the home, as well as stimulating innovative ways of reflecting on the role and status of the home in human life and society. Some of the central innovations in thought stemming from HRF’s work have included: understanding work done within the walls of the home as having a professional dimension, involving a vast array of skills and competencies; tracing links between environmental and social sustainability and the work and culture of the

home; studying how home environments in their social and material manifestations impact child development, care of the elderly and broader family wellbeing; exploring how economic paradigms might better recognize and record the value of work in the home; examining the role of interdependency and intergenerational relationships in the home, both in the provision of care in daily life and in the transmission of culture and values; and contributing to broader ontological and epistemological debates about the nature of the home and how it may be approached by multidisciplinary research.

These theoretical considerations on the home have been enriched through HRF's commitment to practical training programmes, such as SMART Home Management and Starting on the Right Foot, which are part of a rationale that places research in both the academic and policy spheres, as well as excellence in training in action, at the centre of exploring the revaluation of the work of the home and its place in the life of society.

Drawing on these theoretical and practical engagements with the work of the home, HRF decided to encourage the production of a book by authors from different disciplines and countries, with the home as the centre of its analysis. The inspiration for this book is the fact that the home is both universal and highly complex. Its complexity may be one of the characteristics that lead researchers to shy away from research involving the home, while its universality is what makes such research undeniably pressing. The authors who have contributed to this publication—from the realms of public health, philosophy, anthropology, law, sociology, geography and economics—have had the intellectual audacity to bring the home into focus through their academic work, resulting in a plethora of conceptual contributions and revealing unexplored angles from which to view the home. This vibrant engagement with the home abolishes disciplinary blinkers and works as the threads of a tapestry tracing the importance and meaning of the home for the human story, and situating this narrative within the context of specific social and policy challenges being faced at present both in the UK context and globally. This book thus serves as an integrative foundation for the work of policymakers, legislators and practitioners charged with establishing and protecting the broader societal and institutional structures surrounding the home.

HRF is indebted to the Social Trends Institute (STI) for advice, assistance and financial support in making this publication possible. This prestigious non-profit research centre was founded more than a decade ago by Carlos Cavallé to foster understanding of emerging social trends and their impact on human communities.

This book does not claim to provide a complete answer to every question regarding the values of the home. Its various chapters, however, do offer stimulating lines of thought and potentially fruitful topics for further research. It is hoped that some of these may be taken up and put to good use in all sorts of different fields, by people concerned to develop the home as an integral part of what it means to be human.

Bryan Sanderson, CBE
Chairman, Home Renaissance Foundation

As a think tank, the aim of the Home Renaissance Foundation (HRF) is to promote and develop greater recognition of the importance of the work required to create a home that meets the fundamental needs of individual and family and its crucial role in creating a more humane society. We believe that work in the home allows the individual to develop in his or her most intimate environment: the home and the relationships that flourish within it. Every individual needs this care whether they are children, elderly, adolescents or men and women with demanding and stressful professions.

HRF carries out this work and acts as a catalyst for change in a number of ways. HRF raises awareness of the importance of housework by facilitating dialogue between academics in various fields, and supports local- and international-based training facilities. We encourage and back research projects on a vast number of topics relating to work in the home. In order to facilitate academic dialogue between subjects we organize international conferences, experts meetings and symposiums that focus on a specific aspect of the home. We also raise awareness of the importance of housework through local-based training initiatives in various countries and through our growing presence in the media. We strive to become an authority on knowledge relating to the home, the work of the home and family care.

HRF mainly develops three types of activities:

- Interdisciplinary research, which gives us the tools to raise awareness of the value of the work of the home.
- Excellence in training. We aim to ensure that our inherited traditions, natural talents and the correct and efficient use of new technologies all contribute towards the creation of nurturing and well-run homes.
- International initiatives. As an international organization based in London, we strive to support and back many initiatives carried out around the world.