Local Representations of Homelessness in Copenhagen, Glasgow and Gothenburg: A Cross-City Policy Analysis

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❯ **Abstract_** *The aim of this article is to discuss local policies and actions plans on homelessness in three European cities: Copenhagen, Glasgow and Gothenburg, with a specific focus on the processes whereby specific situations and subjects become defined as "homeless problems" and made into targets for policy measures. Drawing on Carol Bacchi's "what's the problem represented to be" framework, the analysis in this article seeks to elucidate implicit assumptions and underlying rationales for the homelessness strategies in the research sites, highlighting similarities and differences between them, as well as across the three countries. Insights from intersectionality are used to explore how local policies position individuals who lack housing discursively as homeless with differential disadvantages and needs, creating hierarchies of deserving versus undeserving, whilst at the same time masking over broader political economic structures that dictate homeless peoples' access to social, economic and material recourses. Despite claims to the contrary, dominant official discourses of inclusion and equality thus reproduce, rather than challenge, socially structured relations of inequality.[1]*

❯ **Keywords_** *Homelessness, local policy-making, problem representations, intersectionality, cross-city analysis*

Introduction

Homelessness and housing exclusion constitute a high-profile topic in political debate across Europe and beyond. As the problem of people lacking stable housing intensifies, so does the search for possible solutions, and research into effective strategies to prevent homelessness. Within the context of the EU it is not unusual to apply common solutions to what is seen as common problems through the process of policy transfer, and many EU-states have adopted national strategies or action plans to combat homelessness. Despite similar welfare policies, some of these are quite different. A few countries, like France and the UK, have gone a step further and made legislative changes to improve the situation for groups most at risk of facing homelessness. Still, national monitoring reports indicate that homelessness has increased in many EU countries during the last decade (FEANTSA, 2012). Sometimes, this rise is linked to the financial and economic crisis, while in other cases it is said to rather reflect a lack of a national homeless strategy. However, the simple fact that two countries have adopted similar national strategies on homelessness does not necessarily imply similar interpretation and implementation at the local level (Cloke *et al.*, 2001; Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2009; Gosme and Anderson, 2015).

In this paper, I examine local policies and actions plans on homelessness in three European cities; Copenhagen, Glasgow and Gothenburg, with a specific focus on the processes whereby specific situations and subjects become defined as "homeless problems" and made into targets for policy measures. The intention is to identify local representations of homelessness in the different sites, highlighting differences and similarities between and across the three cities. Carol Bacchi's (2009) *What's the problem represented to be* approach to policy analysis ("WPR") is employed as a lens through which to examine the discursive construction of the "homeless problem" taking place in the three cities' strategies in this area. In addition, I explore what an intersectional approach to policy analysis may contribute when used to study the area of homelessness. Within this kind of constructionist-based analytical approach, "policy language becomes a focus of analysis in its own right" (Marston, 2002, p.88), rather than being approached as a window into an objective reality. The empirical analysis in this article does not examine the issue of policy implementation, i.e. the impact of different policies on local delivery of homeless services is not focused. As been pointed out by Hastings (1998), among others, documents are but one aspect of policy making. However, following Jacobs (2006), I argue that analysing language use in policy documents is essential in providing a starting place for development of a framework through which further analysis of local homeless practices can be pursued.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, I introduce the theoretical framework that will guide my analysis, before turning to the context, data and methodology of the study. In subsequent sections, I apply Bacchi's WPR approach to the policies under study in order to identify, firstly, key representations of the "homeless problem". Secondly, I examine underlying assumptions and presumptions about the nature of homelessness and homeless people underpinning the policies. I uncover how well-intentioned policy formulations actually may (re)produce homelessness as a social problem rooted in individual deficiencies and personal failures. Finally, I attend to the discursive silences in the problem representations at hand and show how official discourses of inclusion and equality – despite claims to the contrary – reproduce, rather than challenge, socially structured relations of inequality.

Theoretical Background

Proceeding from the basic assumption that social problems are not given or self-evident, but rather social constructions, Bacchi's (1999; 2009) approach to policy is Foucauldian and grounded in discourse analysis. This view of the discursive turn in policy studies (Fairclough, 2013) considers social policy a "discursive activity" that limits what can be talked about in a specific policy area (Bacchi, 1999, p.49). Within discourses, here defined as "the language, concepts and categories employed to frame an issue" (ibid., p.2), certain conceptual frameworks are formed that shape certain ways of interpreting perceived problems, and also in establishing possible solutions. The task when undertaking a WPR-analysis, then, is not to identify "real" problems but rather to focus on *how* problems are represented. The point is that the way in which a problem is constituted on a policy level influences what kinds of solution are deemed proper and to be established. This, in turn, carries all sorts of implications for peoples' everyday life, as politically recommended actions translate into practical intervention, hence affecting lived lives. Bacchi's approach corresponds to governmentality scholars' notion of discourse as "a normative system" (Dardot and Laval, 2013, p.2) consisting of a set of values and ideals regarding what is good and bad, right and wrong. Here, the significance of attending to language when analysing policy lies not only in revealing the "systems of thought", but also "the systems of action" through which authorities seek to instantiate government (Rose and Miller, 2010, p.275).

Indeed, a significant literature exists that take the perspective on language outlined above to examine housing and homeless policy (Hastings, 2000; Sahlin, 2004; Hansen Löfstrand, 2010) as well as local homeless practices (Juhila, 2003; Schneider, 2009; Bretherton *et al.*, 2013). However, public polices and interventions are neither neutral nor experienced in the same way by all populations. Intersectional policy scholars such as Hankivsky (2012; 2014) argue that applying intersectional

lenses highlights the fact that single identity markers, such as gender, age and (dis) ability does not reflect the lived experience of peoples' lives. An intersectionality-informed policy analysis emphasises the mutually constitutive nature of social inequalities by, for example, class, race, gender, and sexuality. Thus, it moves beyond particular populations and aim attention to the intersections – i.e. specific combinations – of social categories and structures of power (Hankivsky *et al.*, 2014). There is a scarcity of intersectional studies in the homelessness field (but see Kingfisher, 2007; Zufferey, 2009). The capacity of intersectionality-informed policy research to expand understandings of inequalities as shaped by interlocking systems of oppression is well demonstrated within the fields of health (see Hankivsky *et al.*, 2012; Hunting, 2014), equality (see Cruells and Coll-Planas, 2013; Reisel, 2014), and drug research (see Young *et al.*, 2005; Miller and Carbone-Lopez, 2015). When incorporated in a comparative policy analysis, such an approach holds the potential to identify earlier unnoticed challenges and inequalities within and between various homeless policies. This, in turn, might open up a possibility to inform policy makers and homeless initiatives in ways that might align better with the complex realities of different homeless populations.

Empirical Data and Method

This study forms a part of a larger planned ethnographic case study into local homeless practices in three EU cities: Copenhagen, Glasgow and Gothenburg. The intention is to trace and analyze the strategies, procedures and techniques through which national and city policies are translated into concrete local homeless practices in the research sites, highlighting similarities and differences within them, as well as across them. A key question is whether, and if so, in what ways local homeless services, as encountered by homeless people, are actually different in the three cities. If this is the case, to what extent and in what respects can the difference be explained and understood with reference to the different national and local strategies? Thus, the following analysis should be considered as a first step of a more developed study on local homeless practices across the EU.

Comparative policy analyses within contemporary housing studies are typically carried out on country level, using quantitative methods, and comparisons are often made in relation to theoretically distinct welfare regimes and housing systems (e.g. Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007; Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2009; Benjaminsen and Knutagård, 2016). This predominance of comparative analysis on national-level data has been criticised, as welfare policies and legislation operate at regional and city levels (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2012). While acknowledging the work carried out by FEANTSA (2012; Busch-Geertsema, 2014), and prior to 2004 by European Observatory on Homelessness, little qualitative comparative housing

research has been undertaken. In this paper, local homeless policies are in focus. For practical and ethical reasons, I chose to concentrate on written texts available to the general public on official websites. Hardly surprisingly, I found a vast amount of policy related documents linked to housing and homelessness in all three cities, covering an extended time span. Following Bacchi's (2009) recommendations, I narrowed my focus to concrete policy documents, i.e. "prescriptive texts" (p.34), "designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out" (p.12).

The selection of texts to serve as units of analysis was finally limited to currently operating local homeless policies and action plans in the selected cities.[2] These documents represent the final versions of earlier drafts that have gone through a process of negotiation.[3] In Fairclough's (2008, p.43) words, they are "the outcome of a process of negotiation about which voices should be included in the text and in what relation". While recognizing the limitations of not attending to the temporal dimensions involved in policy processes, this strategy of "targeted sampling" (Linders, 2008, p.475) of documents links to the paper's aim of "placing the analytic spotlight on a particular process of social construction" (ibid.). Since local level policies are shaped by national plans and legislation, I initially examined national strategies and political bills from legislators and other governmental institutions on homelessness in the three countries. These documents were, however, not included as units of analysis. I searched publications through official websites and reference lists of previous and contemporary local homeless policies in the selected cities. In order to get a deeper understanding of the local contexts and meanings, I made additional efforts to study documents produced by various NGO's and interest groups in the homeless area, using search engines such as Google and Google Scholar. Given the vast amount of texts (reports, pamphlets, books, newspaper articles, etc.) published on the issue of homelessness in the chosen cities, this exertion made me fear to "drown" in data of potentially dubious relevance. Hence, I chose to exclude this category of texts from the data analysis.

Five distinct policy documents comprise the data set used in this study: two from Copenhagen and Glasgow respectively, and one from Gothenburg. The policies covered were all published by the local City Council and they are summarised in Table 1.

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[2]   Obviously, written policy documents comprise only one element of policy processes. Formal meetings, public debates, informal discussions, as well as the implementation process are other examples of possible units of analysis that are not attended to in this article.

[3]   Tracing this editing process comprises an alternative analytical route to locate dominant homeless discourses (see Marston, 2002).

Table 1: Empirical Data

	Copenhagen	Glasgow	Gothenburg
Local strategies (titles, period, abbreviations)	*Social Strategy – a good life for all Copenhageners* 2014–2017 (SSC)	*Glasgow's Housing Strategy* 2011/2012– 2015/2016 (GHS)	*Homelessness Strategy for the City of Gothen-burg* 2015–2018 (HSG)
	Copenhagen Board of Social Welfare's foundational paper 2014–2017 (CBSW)	*Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership Homelessness Strategy* 2015–2020 (GPHS)	

All the selected texts are quite detailed as they set out a structure for achieving a range of city-specific goals in relation to homelessness, but they differ with regard to scope and focus. For example, while the SSC, CBSW and GHS represent broader, strategic approaches (including, but not limited to, homelessness), the GPHS and HSG specifically target the local homelessness field during the period covered.

In employing the WPR framework my approach to the data was discourse analytic, with special attention given to key words, binaries and social categories within the texts (Fairclough, 2001; 2008). Bacchi (2009, p.2) suggests a set of questions that facilitate the unpacking of problem representations and my analysis was guided by the following: (1) What's the "problem" (i.e. homelessness) represented to be in the specific policy? (2) What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem"? (3) What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? The first question might seem straightforward at first glance, but when I started scrutinizing the retrieved documents it was like "opening up a babushka doll" (Cort, 2011, p.25, my translation), i.e. not only one problem representation could be discerned, but several. When shifting attention to "people categories" (Bacchi, 1999, p.2) in the texts (i.e. representations of different groups of homeless people), I made use of intersectionality-informed questions such as: who is included in this category? Who is considered the most privileged or least advantaged? Where are the discursive silences in this problem representation? Through engagement of this kind the ambition was to identify locally distinct as well as cross-border under-standings of what "homelessness" entails within a contemporary EU setting. While rejecting the notion of the objective researcher, I am cognisant of my position as an outsider in relation to the concrete homeless practices in Copenhagen and Glasgow. It is most likely that a researcher with in-depth, local knowledge of the field might find additional and/or different representations of the "homeless problem". However, in line with feminist standpoint theorists (such as Smith, 2005), I argue that knowledge is always situated. My experiences as a white, Western woman researcher inevitably influences what kind of data is collected, and how the collected data is subsequently interpreted. Acknowledging the role of the researcher in the production of knowledge, in turn, raises important issues of representation that should be of concern to all researchers.

The National and Local Contexts

Despite differences with regards to social welfare regimes (Denmark and Sweden representing the social-democratic welfare regime, while the UK represents the liberal counterpart), the selected countries may all be defined as prosperous welfare states (Mostowska, 2015). Although there are considerable diversities in housing systems and provision across the states, they all have a relatively substantial (albeit shrinking) public and private rental housing sector. Also, in recent years the general trend in all countries chosen has been a pressure towards more market-oriented solutions of housing provision and less state intervention (Bengtsson *et al.*, 2013). However, unlike the Scottish rights-based housing strategy, which represents a forceful legal framework in preventing and protecting people from homelessness, there is no legislative framework implying an individual statutory and enforceable right to permanent housing in neither Denmark or Sweden.[4] Like in many EU countries, the legal responsibility for attending to the needs of homeless people here lies at the municipalities (i.e. local authorities) that are to provide funding or services in accordance with social welfare legislation (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2010). Likewise, it is local authorities in Scotland that are to carry out the statutory duties towards homeless people, meaning that by law, all unintentionally homeless households must be provided at least with temporary accommodation. All three countries carry out systematic national counts to monitor the scope and profile of homelessness. Despite some variation in methodology and definitions used, commonalities in approaches of Denmark and Sweden have enabled nation-level comparisons, showing that in larger cities the level of homelessness is of similar size across countries (even when adjusting for definitions used and population size) (Benjaminsen and Dyb, 2008).

The chosen cities were selected on the basis of similarities in terms of prosperity (e.g., established welfare systems and relatively high level of welfare provision) and comparatively extensive homeless service provision on the one hand (Mostowska, 2015), and considerable differences with regard to national legislation, housing systems, and local arrangements in the area of homelessness on the other (Boesveldt *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, count data on municipal level reveals that despite a shared officially stated ambition to combat homelessness on a local level, the three cities all face a shrinking stock of affordable housing and rising rates of homelessness (Benjaminsen and Hesselberg Lauritzen, 2015; City of Gothenburg, 2016; Scottish Government, 2016).

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[4]   However, there are legally enforceable obligations for local authorities to provide emergency
      accommodation for people in acute homelessness in both of these countries.

Copenhagen

The capital of Denmark is the country's most populated city with a municipal population of about 591 500. The Danish Homelessness Strategy implemented 2009 -2013 is one of few European examples of a large-scale Housing First programme. This national approach is based on a close cooperation between national and municipality level authorities and stresses the need for integrated individualised social support in addition to provide permanent accommodation (Hansen, 2010). Characterised by a close partnership between the state and the municipalities, where the latter is provided extra resources for implementing Housing First in combination with evidence-based methods, the Danish approach has been singled out as a "success story" with the potential to serve as an example for other EU-states (Benjaminsen, 2013; Busch-Geertsema, 2014). Public housing, i.e. municipally owned rental housing, make up 20% of the total housing stock in Denmark and in Copenhagen, one third of vacant flats in the public housing sector are reserved for municipial referral. Nevertheless, the city saw an 5% increase in homelessness levels between 2009 and 2013 (Benjaminsen and Hesselberg Lauritzen, 2015).[5]

Glasgow

With a population of close to 600 000 people, Glasgow represents the largest city in Scotland. It is also home to the country's largest homeless population. Unlike most local authorities in Scotland, Glasgow City Council no longer serves as a landlord. Instead, actors from the private and voluntary sector provide social rented housing to homeless people and large-scale homeless shelters for men run by the city have been closed. The Housing First model has been piloted as a project in Glasgow since 2010, with evaluations indicating positive outcomes (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2013). At the same time, there is a variety of housing support services for homeless people in the city, many of which are based on a "treatment first" philosophy, and concerns have been raised that homelessness in Scotland is likely to increase as a result of welfare reforms such as the "bedroom tax" and stricter benefit sanctions for job seekers (SFHA, 2014). Even if there has been a decline in the number of people sleeping rough, recent statistics also indicate an overall increase in homeless applications received in the city during the last years (Scottish Government, 2016).[6]

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[5] The definition of "homeless" draws on the ETHOS´ classification of homelessness that covers persons who have no residence, are homeless, live in insecure and/or insufficient housing.

[6] The term "homeless" here draws on the ETHOS´ classification of homelessness that covers persons who have no residence, are homeless, live in insecure and/or insufficient housing. However, as Pawson and Davidson (2008) points out, the concept of "homelessness" as embodied in the Scottish legislation might be subject to interpretation on local authority level.

Gothenburg

As the second-largest city in Sweden, Gothenburg has a population of roughly 550 000. In contrast to its neighbouring Nordic countries, no national homeless plan has been presented in Sweden since 2007, when the government adopted a time-limited strategy against homelessness and housing exclusion for the period 2007-2009 (for a critical review, see Sahlin, 2015). Over the last decade, there has been a shift in directions to reduce homelessness in the city. Even though limited state interest and resources are invested in this area nationally, the city has recently adopted an ambitious homeless strategy, with "a city without homeless people" as its ultimate goal. Instead of promoting and expanding the staircase model, the need to provide more long-term solutions has been emphasised, at least on a rhetorical level (Hansen Löfstrand, 2010). Yet, the most recent local survey shows an increase of 3% in homelessness in 2016 – most of which are people sleeping rough – compared to the 2015 figure (City of Gothenburg, 2016).[7]

Representations of the "Homelessness Problem" and "the Homeless"

In what follows, implicit problem representations of homelessness in the retrieved local policies are "unpacked". When quoting Swedish and Danish documents, the original language has been translated to English.[8]

Copenhagen

Already the introductory sentence in the city's Social Strategy makes clear that "Copenhagen is a fabulous city to live in… a fellowship, where Copenhageners trust and look after each other". Unfortunately, not everybody have the possibility to be a part of this presumably tightknit community and "live the life they dream of":

> [S]ome because they due to disabilities rely on others to do many of the things that others take for granted. Others live on the edge of society or are completely outside. Often it is due to social problems that have taken over so much of one's life that one can no longer hold down a job, take care of one´s child, or get through the day without alcohol. There are no human beings who wish to live such a life.

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[7] "Homeless" is defined in line with the categories suggested in the ETHOS´ typology, with the exception of insufficient housing that is not considered to be a form of homelessness.

[8] While recognizing translation as an inherent obstacle in international comparative research (Mangen, 1999; Temple and Young, 2004), the sampling reduced difficulties related to language and translation of the documents, as I speak all languages involved.

Contrary to earlier polices in the city specifically addressing homelessness, the CBSW and SSC represent a broader approach that aim to include "all Copenhageners in need of support from the social services (…) no matter if it regards children, substance abuse, psychiatric disorder, disability or homelessness" (SSC, p.30). Still, in both documents "vulnerable Copenhageners" in need of social assistance are continually singled out and constructed as an important target group. Variously described as "vulnerable", "socially vulnerable" and "with social problems", it is hard to assess exactly what is implied by this category, since it is never clearly defined. That homelessness falls under the scope of "vulnerable" is made clear in the first stated policy objective in both strategies: "1 000 vulnerable Copenhageners" are expected to have been assigned housing in 2017. In addition, less housed Copenhageners are to be evicted, more people assigned housing will stay housed, and the number of "Danish homeless" in the city will be reduced. The apparent problem representation here is that *homelessness concerns people with a local connection* firstly, secondarily *Danes* from other parts of the country that lack local connection. Given that local authorities in most EU states require that homeless people can prove their connection to the city or municipality to qualify for support, this outline is hardly surprising. This picture is also in line with previous reports highlighting that the severe shortage of social housing in Denmark coincides with a tendency of municipalities to focus on local residents, despite the possibility to also attend to the housing needs of nationals (Baptista *et al.,* 2015).

To identify implicit problem representations Bacchi (2009) recommends examining the underlying reasons for the problem in question, as described in policies. In both the SSC and CBSW, one explaining factor as to why homelessness persists in the city is a lack of adequate housing supply, which seems to indicate a housing-led policy focus. However, this structural orientation stands beside an individualising discourse centred on personal traits of the "vulnerable":

> Prices for public housing in Copenhagen are generally high compared to the ability to pay among vulnerable locals. (…) [E]ven if the Social Service Administration's [SSA] interventions are dependent on the provision of inexpensive housing, the SSA has limited influence on whether the appropriate housing stock is available (CBSW, p.7).

In the excerpt, excessive housing prices and shortage of affordable housing are mentioned. Still, the phrase "compared to the ability to pay among vulnerable locals" illustrates the imbedded transfer of the causes of homelessness to an individual level continuously taking place in the Copenhagen texts. The excerpt above also illustrates how the prevailing market-oriented system regarding production and distribution of local housing is taken for granted and presented as a "fact" that appears to be natural and, therefore, little can be done about. The direction of future

efforts subsequently becomes extensive collaboration with "various partners" – most often the private rented sector – to solve the lack of "affordable housing for vulnerable Copenhageners" (ibid.).

Turning to people categories portrayed in the strategies, there is a clear focus on additional social problems and personal deficits when homeless people are mentioned. An illustrative example is when the need to provide housing for "vulnerable Copenhageners" is accounted for:

> Social vulnerability is reinforced if you do not have a home. It [homelessness] makes it difficult to deal with social problems such as a messy economy, substance abuse and loneliness, and it is a barrier to education and employment. Therefore, we want more vulnerable Copenhageners to be assigned a home of their own, and that they are supported to maintain this (CBSW, p.7).

Here, homelessness is cast as a *social problem* that intensifies an already difficult living situation, signaling that the "homeless problem" entails *additional difficulties to that of lacking adequate housing.* This is a representation in line with what comparative policy studies on national-level have suggested, namely that in social democratic regimes "homelessness is to a greater extent concentrated among people with complex social problems" (Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2009, p.43). While structural obstacles are mentioned (limited access to education and labour market), when attending to the linguistic details of the excerpt, the additional problems stated (such as substance abuse and loneliness) all come with negative connotations and are individual in nature. The phrasing "a messy economy" might be read as individually orientated in that it signals a personal inability to handle money in a proper way (as opposed to "poverty" that could shift focus to more structural issues). The final utterance, "that they are supported to maintain this", implicitly positions homeless individuals as needing help not only to access, but also to maintain housing, indirectly producing *"the homeless" as the problem*. Accordingly, housing might be an essential, but not in itself sufficient, measure to live a normal, independent life. This way of representing homelessness draws on and reproduces culturally dominant, stigmatized images of homeless people as uneducated, anti-social "addicts", unable to manage their economy and, perhaps, unable to take responsibility of their own lives (Juhila, 2004). As noted by previous scholars, underpinning such a characterization is an individualizing, neo-liberal discourse that emphasizes the role of personal deficits and individual failure, rather than structural issues related to economy (such as housing policy, low pay or under-employment) and unequal distribution of resources (Lyon-Callo, 2004; Pantazis, 2016).

"Community" and "fellowship" are two frequently occurring concepts in the Copenhagen policies, which both seem to build on the basic idea that social "inclusive" interventions not only could, but also should, lead to a normalization of

individual lives. This normalized position translates to living as independent a life as possible and again "be included in society through education and employment, relations with family and friends, with an active leisure lifestyle" (SSC, p.4; CBSW, p.3). This representation of a "normal" and desirable life echoes Western middle-class values and may be placed within a wider neoliberal discourse of workfare. This discourse conceals the fact that for many, wage labour is a source of stress, poor health, and little time for family and leisure (Pantazis, 2016). Urban welfare policy in Copenhagen has previously been described as having a "participatory-empowering" orientation, following an underpinning rationale of social inclusion in order to solve the "problem" of social exclusion (Andersen and Elm-Larsen, 2003). The next excerpt highlights the close conceptual connection between the Copenhagen texts and contemporary EU policy vocabulary of social exclusion.

> It strengthens people's identities to be part of a community, where you contribute something positive to others, have friends, acquaintances and colleagues, and where you can get the feeling of being like everyone else. (…) That is why Copenhagen will open up, so vulnerable Copenhageners and disabled Copenhageners can be a part of the city's communities (SSC, p.4-5).

Within the EU policy discourse of social exclusion, exclusion is most often concep-tualized as "a static position or condition mainly characterized by being located outside of the labour market, occupied by a homogenous group of 'others', for social workers to assess, monitor and transform" (Davidsson and Petersson, 2017, p.7). Ideas about personal development and "including" interventions at a micro-level are intimately linked to this notion of exclusion, while less attention is given to excluding actors, structural determinants (such as high unemployment rates or employer discrimination), or potential power hierarchies and inequalities among the supposedly included (Peace, 2001; Petersson and Davidsson, 2016). Drawing on Nikolas Rose's (2000) work, the particular form of inclusion implied in the excerpt above may also be read as attempts to govern and control people. Rose argues that contemporary control strategies work through binding people to particular communities of morality. Individual conduct and obedience are regulated by "binding individuals into shared moral norms and values: governing through the self-steering forces of honour and shame, of propriety, obligation, trust, fidelity, and commitment to others" (ibid., p.324). In contrast to being governed by others, then, individuals are now governing themselves through their commitments to communities.

Returning to people categories, there is a prominent "them and us" approach in the texts, where "vulnerable" and "disabled" Copenhageners are consistently being constituted as the Others. While often mentioned together, these categories are simultaneously constructed as binary target groups, as in the following passage:

> All people possess some form of resources and skills – including people with
> social problems or disabilities. This might include the vulnerable parent, who
> finds it difficult to structure the daily life of one's child, but is good at caring and
> playing with the child, or the disabled person, who is sweet and kind and want
> to help others (SSC, p.19).

Besides illustrating the tendency of Othering in the retrieved documents, this quote
also reveals how people categories may be rooted in gendered and ableist notions
of normality. The expectation attached to the parent position ("good at caring and
playing with the child") is consistent with conventional gender norms and the
"emphasized femininity" western women are expected to display (Connell, 1987).
The assertion regarding people with disabilities ("sweet and kind and want to help
others") aligns with stereotypical patronizing and romanticized attitudes often high-
lighted and criticized by critical disability scholars (e.g., Loja *et al.*, 2013). In addition
to the distinction between "vulnerable" as opposed to "disabled", the category of
"vulnerable Copenhageners" is also bifurcatory. When attending to policy recom-
mendations regarding interventions, two sub-categories emerge: those considered
able and willing to "develop themselves to the extent that they can no longer be
characterized as socially vulnerable", for which efforts should focus education,
employment and independent housing. For those considered unable or unwilling to
change though, life quality is described as having a "stable framework for their lives"
and getting the basic needs attended to. For this latter, "un-willing" category, social
support is consequently reduced to harm reduction measures. This is similar to
what Järvinen and Andersen (2009) describe as a principal dilemma in the "formula
story of harm reduction" within outpatient treatment centers for people addicted to
opiates: the question of "change" versus "stabilization" as guiding treatment
principle. The stabilization-oriented work carried out at the centers rests on notions
about heroin addiction as an incurable, "chronic" state. However, this conflicts with
the change-oriented expectations of those participants who have goals of becoming
drug-free and do not identify with the character of the "chronic addict". Furthermore,
underpinning the binary split of "vulnerable Copenhageners" into "willing" versus
"unwilling" is the division between "the deserving", on the one hand, and "the unde-
serving" on the other, a longstanding split that the use of binaries here has the effect
of reproducing (Meeuwisse, 2008). The implicit assumption here appears to be that
some homeless peoples' inability or unwillingness to exhibit the anticipated self-
changing behaviors is the root cause of their homelessness, mirroring a discourse
of empowerment and providing the rationale for addressing unruly individuals
problem of "non-self development" with decreased social support and increased
control measures (Mik-Meyer, 2004).

Left out of these local representations of "the homeless" are the binary oppositions to the frequently used categories "Copenhageners" and "Danes": homeless migrants and failed asylum seekers who stay in the city but lack citizenship, permanent residence permit or the right to reside in Denmark. This discursive silence might have many plausible reasons. However, it is nevertheless noteworthy since it effectively conceals the fact that homeless migrants comprise a part of the city´s growing number of rough sleepers (Projekt Udenfor, 2012). Given that agencies such as the Copenhagen Board of Social Welfare can be expected to have a comprehensive picture of the homelessness situation in the city, omitting this category of homeless people could very well be interpreted as a "manipulative silence" (Huckin, 2002), an example of governing through taking discursive control over categorisations in homeless policies (Sahlin, 2004).

Glasgow

The key outcome guiding both Glasgow strategies is that "[h]omelessness is prevented and if not prevented, is addressed effectively through improved service delivery". In line with the Scottish national homeless plan, prevention is given a lot of attention. One priority action to be put in place is a "Homelessness Prevention Mediation Service". This is motivated with reference to "the main" cause of the issue at hand (GPHS, p.23): "friends or family being no longer willing to accommodate. Mediation, with its focus upon the rebuilding of relationships, has a role in preventing homelessness". The implicit problem representation here seems to be that *homelessness is a family problem*, and the solution becomes to assist housed family members and their homeless kin in repairing (presumably) damaged relations, so the family once again can take their housing responsibility towards their estranged member. In situations where homelessness has not been prevented, "improved service delivery" is the prescribed solution, indicating an additional problem representation: *homelessness constitutes a welfare problem.* Subsequently, people experiencing homelessness should be assisted through social interventions. This framing implicitly positions homeless people as in need of not only housing but of social support and services, which deviates from the rights-based, housing-led approach often associated with the Scottish attitude to homelessness.

Another prominent way of characterizing the "homeless problem" in the Glasgow strategies is as an *increasing, economic problem for the City Council*. This representation is consistently highlighted in the texts through wordings such as "tight financial constraints", "within a framework of very limited resources", "severe cuts in public spending", and the need for "better use made of resources". The failure of the UK government to provide appropriate economic means is identified as an endemic problem and a root cause for the growing levels of homelessness in the city.

> The UK Government is in the process of delivering major changes to the welfare benefit system (…) These changes will have significant implications for service users in terms of how benefits will be delivered, and will also mean that claimants may have significantly less money to live on" (ibid., p.8).

Underpinning this characterization is an idea of *homelessness as a structural problem* with political and economic roots. However, what is also illustrated in the excerpt, the underlying causes seem primarily to be related to the UK government and "emerging pressures flowing from Welfare Reform" (ibid., p.26), and not to the prevailing economic system. The City Council's strained economy is put forward as the main reason for the "pressures on the supply of settled accommodation" (ibid., p.28). Both Glasgow documents have adopted a strong market-oriented language, expressed through statements such as "deliver high quality services", "stakeholders deliver", "cost effectiveness", and "balancing supply and demands in terms of homelessness and housing". Partnership is an additional strong theme, not least with the voluntary and private sector, and homeless individuals are often described in market-oriented terms such as "customers" or "service users". Elements of the empowerment discourse identified in the Copenhagen texts are present also in the Glasgow strategies, visible in phrasings like "allow people to maximize their full potential" (GPHS, p.22), but to a much smaller extent. Potentially stigmatizing statements regarding the character of homeless households are rare, and the depicted needs of "people affected by homelessness" tend to be modified through structurally oriented explanations, such as "due to the effects of homeless-ness". People experiencing homelessness are often described in a de-stigmatizing language, like in the following excerpt.

> At different points in people's lives, personal, work, and family situations will change and a different kind of housing solution might be needed. Everybody could find themselves in a situation where they no longer have a permanent home and need support to find somewhere to live. Sometimes, getting information on what options are available can seem difficult. The range of options can be numerous particularly given the diversity of Glasgow's housing system. The type of housing support and number of agencies can be overwhelming (GHS, p.32).

A possible interpretation of the quote could be that it reflects the national statutory rights-based approach and a housing-led understanding of the homeless problem. The implicit problem representation here seems to be that *homelessness is a consequence of the prevailing housing system* in the city, indicating a structural understanding of the issue at hand. This portrayal is also present in statements such as "the nature of rough sleeping within the City is related to the pressures on temporary and settled accommodation" (GPHS, p.16). Nevertheless, my analysis shows that alongside discourses that focuses on structural causes of homeless-

ness, sits an individualizing discourse centered on personal problems and pathology. An illustrative example of this is the next excerpt where the underlying causes of homelessness is described yet again.

> The root causes of homelessness are complex and varied, and can relate to both structural and individual factors. Homeless households often have multiple and complex needs and require a range of support services from different agencies, which need to work well together. This can include support with a range of issues including mental, physical, and sexual health, drug and alcohol dependency, behavioural problems, daily living skills, employability, and development of social networks (GHS, p.15).

In the quote, the diversity among homeless people is highlighted and the "root causes" of the problem is linked to structural as well as individual factors. However, when specifying homeless households' "multiple and complex" needs, structural issues disappear and the "homeless problem" becomes destructurated. All of the issues or needs mentioned (mental, physical and sexual health, behavioural problems, employability etc.) are individual in nature, producing the *homeless individual as the problem*. This is more in line with what Lyon-Callo (2004) refers to as an individualizing medicalized discourse on homelessness, rather than the structurally-oriented housing-led approach advocated in the national strategy plan. Also, the GPHS's strong focus on "the most marginalised" groups, and increasing social interventions to address the "problem" is quite in keeping with characteristics of homeless strategies in social democratic regimes (Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2009, p.45).

The fact that priority need was abolished by 2012 in Scotland does not mean that categorization and ranking of homeless people is not taking place in the retrieved texts. For example, a guiding principle put forward in the GHS is "Equality and fairness" which is explicitly linked to the national legislation on this matter. However, in the subsequent text there seems to be some confusion between adhering to statutory protected grounds of discrimination (i.e. eliminating from decisions concerns based on gender, race etc.), and taking affirmative action, i.e. giving disadvantaged groups priority status in relation to access to housing.

> Glasgow City Council is committed to ensuring that its policies and services meet the diverse needs of the Communities it serves. In doing this, GHS will prioritise the following groups: disabled people; people from black and minority ethnic groups (including gypsy travellers, asylum seekers and refugees); women; lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people; older people (those over 60) and younger people; faith (religious and belief) communities (GHS, p.8).

Although different forms of inequalities are described together in the excerpt, social locations (like disability and gender) are presented as separate "sub-groups". This may be in line with statutory discrimination criteria, but lacks attentiveness to how diverse forms of inequalities may interact or link to oppressive structures (such as racism, heterosexism, homophobia and xenophobia). Another way of thinking about discrimination is that people might be discriminated on more than one ground, or simultaneously discriminated on several axes of inequality, such as gender, age and race, either at the same time or at different occasions (Crenshaw, 1991). In addition, there is a lack of empirical evidence in the GHS to support this selection of priority groups. Many of the inequalities mentioned in the excerpt seem to have little influence on a person's ability to access and sustain housing on the regular housing market, at least if put in relation to factors such as unemployment, history of substance abuse, and poverty. Apart from the section on equality quoted above, however, different homeless populations and corresponding social interventions are most often described in a manner devoid of gender, class, age, sexual orientation, etc. One exception is when discussing the role of the private rented sector in meeting housing needs. For instance, a key action during the current GHS period is to develop "the use of private rented housing (…) for *some homeless* households" (ibid., p.36, author's emphasis).

> The private rented sector plays an important role in meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse range of households including students, young workers, new migrants to the city and new families who aspire to home ownership but cannot access mortgages.

Here, diversity is connected to a variety of social locations that share mainly two characteristics: low-income and a temporary position. Class and age are implicitly drawn upon when defining what kind of homeless households that are considered suitable for housing in the private rented sector. Reflecting on who is included and who is left out of this picture, most of the priority groups mentioned above are excluded, as well as the significant proportion of the homeless population – single, unemployed men – depending on social welfare payments for their income.

Similarly to the Copenhagen policies, categorization and classification of homeless people is done primarily in relation to estimated degree of personal *vulnerability*, a term that is presented as self-evident and hence not defined. For example, it is stated that "people who use homeless services are some of the most vulnerable people in our City" (GPHS, p.22). Vulnerability is also mentioned in connection to "multiply excluded homeless", "people with complex need", "service users", "service users who frequent the City Center", and "the City Center homeless population". People associated with any of these homeless categories are said to share in common a variety of health, social care and housing needs. Still, they have little contact with

homeless services in the city, a problem attributed to deficits in current arrangements of the support system. A key objective of "the City-Centre Partnership" is therefore "to work with those most excluded service users in order that they can access a holistic package of support" (ibid., p.28). The underlying problem representation here seems to be that *homelessness is a result of system failure.* This framing of the problem is also implied in the description of the target group "prison leavers", an unmarked category in terms of gender, class, race/origin, sexuality etc., whose needs are to be more effectively attended to through "improve[d] partnership" (ibid., p. 26). Here, the underlying cause for homelessness is described as "at times, a consequence of a lack of coordinated support". On the one hand, this framing puts focus on the inadequate system and not on the individual "prison leaver". On the other hand, it obscures the role of structural problems and local systems regarding production and distribution of housing, i.e. barriers to access to housing that has to do with landlords right to hand-pick/choose their tenants.

While the lack of a clear definition of the term "complex needs" is noted in the GPHS, it is still used to designate "single men aged between 25 and 59 years (…) with drug or alcohol problems, poor mental health, and involvement in the criminal justice system" (ibid., p.15). Furthermore, it is stated that "the profile of rough sleepers is of single, relatively young men" (ibid., p.16). Yet, in the key objectives stated for the period of the strategy, the single, adult male with a history of substance abuse and criminality is not explicitly put forward as a priority category, at least not to the extent that he is to be exempted from certain accommodation alternatives. The only categories singled out as in need to be excepted from certain housing arrangements (more specifically, bed and breakfast accommodation) are pregnant women and children (ibid., p.18). Although gender is verbally marked in relation to pregnancy, women as a group are not positioned as vulnerable, or as a target population, in the Glasgow texts. In addition, there is a near total discursive silence regarding rejected asylum seekers and poor EU migrants. Contrary to "new migrants to the city" (a category considered suitable for housing in the private rented sector), it is stated that "people whose claim for asylum has been refused and certain EU migrants are likely to increase pressure on the HSCP [Health and Social Care Partnership] and undermine our attempts to end the need to sleep rough" (ibid., p.20). This articulation positions refugees and migrants who lack housing discursively as homeless with differential needs, closely related to their legal status, creating a hierarchy of deserving versus undeserving.

Gothenburg

As Sweden lacks a national homeless policy, Gothenburg City Council's four-year local strategy and action plan (HSG), constitute a key policy document representing current priorities and key actions to be taken on the local homelessness field. Unlike the other cities' broader housing approach, the HSG (like the GPHS) is target-specific. Guided by an ambitious "zero vision on ending homelessness" its purpose is to provide an overall description of how the city will work to reduce homelessness until 2018. A central distinction made is between the categories "homeless" and "houseless". Similar to the other two cities, simply lacking accommodation does not qualify a person as "homeless". To be categorized eligible, there is a need for additional social problems. Excluding "houseless" from the HSG is legitimized with reference to the national Social Service Act, according to which there is no legal responsibility for municipalities to act as housing authorities. The need of rationing with limited recourses provides an additional account for this representation of the "real" homeless: "If the social services would have to solve the housing situation for people who do not belong to the target group, this risks taking resources from the work with the most vulnerable individuals" (HSG, p.8). On the whole, cost-effectiveness and reduced public costs appear as superordinate policy goals when looking at the policy aims and recommended interventions, casting the "homeless problem" as *an economic problem for the City Council*, in line with the Glasgow strategies.

Like Copenhagen and Glasgow, the "most vulnerable" homeless is a frequently appearing category that is never clearly defined, but used to refer to a variety of situations and groups. Echoing the diversity discourse of homelessness (Kingfisher, 2007), the HSG states that the current homeless population in the city constitutes a diverse group that exhibits a broad range of needs. Homeless "single middle-age men with drug problems" (HSG, p.6) of the 1980s is no longer to be in focus for policy efforts. Instead, street level work in implementing the policy goals is to be characterized by an "awareness of different perspectives such as gender, age, physical ability and LGBT" (ibid., p.22). The HSG frequently stresses the importance of attending to gender equality when addressing homelessness. This implies that the "homeless problem" has to do with *gender inequality* that the policy wants to address. Although the Gothenburg text recognizes that single, adult men make up the large majority of the homeless population in the city, men are never mentioned as a category in need of special attention. Instead, "homeless women" are singled out as a particularly vulnerable group whose needs must be attended to, but exactly what homeless women are vulnerable to, or what these needs consist of, is not made clear. This signals a problem representation that aligns with dominant national discourses of Sweden as a gender-equal state. In keeping with this orientation, when (in)equality is targeted in the strategy's key actions, the big diversity in the

homeless population stressed initially in the HSG is reduced to a matter of women lacking the same opportunities as men. For example, the key action "[i]nvestigate the need for gender-specific accommodation" rests on the assumption that "[w]omen and men subjected to honor-related violence or domestic violence compose a particularly vulnerable group in need of attention". However, when specifying the planned stocktake of the city's current housing supply, gender-specific housing admittedly refers to "particularly vulnerable *women* with psychiatric problems and/or substance abuse" (ibid., p.29, author's emphasis). This framing of "gender-specific housing" is clearly gendering in its effects, privileging women over men. The distinction made between "honor-related or domestic violence" is also raced, in this context, as the term "honor-related" is a clear reference to male violence perpetrated by immigrants (Balkmar *et al.*, 2008).

Similar to Glasgow, the HSG initially uses a structural language when framing the "homeless problem", which is explicitly described as "one of the most extreme forms of poverty and misery" with "many and complicated" underlying causes (HSG, p.3). Both individual measures and structural changes in housing provision are needed to "meet the various housing needs among homeless people". At the outset, the problem of homelessness is discussed in a human rights vocabulary, for example the statement "[e]veryone should have the same opportunities to live a good life in Gothenburg". The importance of focusing on the needs of children is recurrently mentioned, implying that homelessness is connected to *lack of attention to children's needs*. "Taking a child perspective" is stressed as crucial since "[t]he effects of homelessness are worst for children as they do not have the possibility to change their own situation". This seemingly neutral statement entails an implicit moral dimension in that it positions adults as a uniform category of rational decision makers that should be able to take responsibility of their lives, especially if they have children. Children, on the other hand, are positioned as weak and without agency, thus reproducing the generational order. Left out in this representation of the problem are the systemic and structurally dictated inequalities (e.g., unemployment, low pay, current housing regulation, structural housing discrimination, power of landlords etc.) that severely restrict many parents' possibilities to change a problematic housing situation. In what follows, the human rights vocabulary is abruptly circumscribed by the unadorned declaration that "[p]eople who do not hold a residence permit or the right to reside (for EU citizens) in Sweden are not covered by this strategy". This excludes the more than 200 EU migrants, mainly poor Roma people from Eastern Europe, sleeping rough in the city – and whom in some cases are accompanied by children – from the city's homeless interventions (Gothenburg City Mission, 2014). Under a separate heading, the growing number of "socially and economically vulnerable EU-citizens" begging and sleeping rough in the city is specifically addressed. In this section of the HSG, two separate

accounts are given to why this exclusion takes place. First, references are made to the prevailing statutory framework: homeless EU citizens who lack right to reside in Sweden are not covered by the Social Services Act, hence they cannot make use of the city's homeless support services. Second, the issue of EU migrants sleeping rough is redefined as not primarily a housing problem:

> Unlike other homeless, vulnerable mobile EU citizens homelessness is not as clearly a housing policy issue. It has a strong connection to labor market policy and other policy areas such as immigration and foreign policy (…) EU citizens staying in Sweden are not a homogenous group, but they have in common that they come to find work and better livelihoods" (HSG, p.18).

In this passage, homeless EU migrants in the city who lack local connection are constructed as not primarily a housing issue, but a *labour market and immigration problem*. This implicitly places the responsibility for solving the "problem" on the national governmental authorities responsible for these issues. Subsequently, it is possible for local authorities not to take any specific action for this category. It is worth noting that when a homeless person is marked as a "vulnerable EU citizen", age and gender are rendered irrelevant. Interesting is also the last sentence of the excerpt ("they come to find work and better livelihoods"), as it suggests underlying assumptions supporting this problem representation. Despite the initial disclaimer that "EU citizens" does not constitute a "homogenous group", the subsequent utterance "they come to find work and better livelihoods" still positions them as a uniform category of rational decision-makers, residing within Swedish territory on legally and economically dubious grounds. Hence, they can also be held responsible for their actions. Not considered in this problem representation is the fact that the category "vulnerable EU citizen" to a high extent signifies poor Roma people, a population facing severe housing and labour market disadvantages and persisting structural discrimination, prejudice and intolerance in their native countries (FRA, 2014). The long history of negative stereotypes, persecution and exclusion of Roma in Sweden, as elsewhere, is not acknowledged. I would argue that *vulnerable EU citizen* has become code for *Roma* in the HSG, a sort of euphemism that allow speakers to make racial references without overtly doing so. This conceptual shift in the HSG could be interpreted as an instance of structural discrimination (Pager and Shepherd, 2008), as it conceals not only generations of oppression and repression against Roma, but also obscures the highly precarious life situation and accelerating pattern of violence these people face in their countries of origin (see also Curran, 2016).

Discussion

In this paper I have explored local representations of homelessness and "the homeless" in three European cities' policies and action plans in this area. The cross-city analysis reveals similarities as well as incongruences. There is a shared conception with regards to collaboration and forming partnerships with market players and NGO's as appropriate means by which to achieve set goals (findings in line with Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2009). While a variety of local understandings of the "problem" could be identified, my analysis shows that market-based and individualized notions of underlying causes of homelessness are reflected and reproduced across all cities, although to various degrees. The Glasgow strategies' stands out as they articulate more structurally oriented discourses, and display a less morally value-laden vocabulary when describing both homelessness and homeless people.

Still, a common theme across the three cities is that alongside structurally oriented discourses that addresses the shortage of affordable housing and a tightening fiscal climate, sits a neoliberal individualizing discourse that disregards political economic causes related to homelessness (such as the local distribution of wealth or the cost and availability of local housing). Instead, the current economic and systemic order is taken as a given, and it is implicitly understood that little can be done about prevailing housing practices. Discussions and decisions regarding more structural factors, such as the production and distribution of affordable housing, do not take place. Taking Glasgow as example, the critique of UK welfare reforms and cuts in benefits might very well be legitimate. Still, the power of landlords (registered as well as private), and the current housing distribution system is never challenged. Neither are factors like NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) (Dear, 1992), or persistent racial housing discrimination (Pager and Shepherd, 2008) attended to. As been pointed out by Lyon-Callo (2004), failing to address systemic and discursive inequities does little to eliminate homelessness. Instead, the homeless individual becomes the logic focus for attention and policy efforts. In a similar manner, current system inequalities related to class, gender or nationality/origin in the local settings are left outside the local homeless representations. The intersectionality-informed element of my analysis revealed diverging logics based on origin/race, gender, class and age underpinning the local-level policies. For instance, a pattern in practice of categorizing "the homeless" across cities was the binary split between nationals and aliens. Left out here are refugees and homeless migrants who lack citizenship, permanent residence permit or the right to reside. Through a process of demarcation and othering, these persons are consistently being constructed as a homogenous, "undeserving" category of Others based on race and nation. Bak Jørgensen's (2012) study of integration policy making at city level highlights that in a welfare system based on mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion, categorizations that separate priority/deserving

groups from non-priority/undeserving risk reinforcing unequal power hierarchies, and legitimize more restrictive measures and repressive sanctions aimed at the undeserving. Contrary to the Copenhagen texts, homeless EU migrants are explicitly discussed in the Gothenburg strategy. However, their situation is defined as not primarily a housing issue but rather a labour market and/or immigration problem. Such a construction places the responsibility for solving the "problem" on the governmental authorities responsible for employment and immigration issues; therefore, the exclusion of this group of homeless people from the "homeless" category targeted in the local strategy can be justified.

The importance of cost-effectiveness and reduced public expenses appears as an overarching goal across the cities, and as noted by Baptista, Benjaminsen and Pleace (2015, p.60), "when money becomes tight, strict local connection rules are a way to manage demand". My point here is that efforts to create affordable housing might do little for those whose legal status does not match the official prototype of "homeless". Clearly, issues like nationality and citizenship are national affairs and municipalities have little influence over such matters. Nevertheless, a newcomer's permanent residence is granted based on an evaluation made by the local authority where the person in question lives, so there is room for different strategies and interpretations (Bak Jørgensen, 2012).

Conclusion

In sum, there are similarities but also noticeable differences between the conceptual logics underpinning problem framings at local city level. A term frequently used across all cities to label priority groups of homeless people was that of "vulnerable", a concept that is by no means self-evident since there is no shared universal meaning of what it comprises. However, in the local policies analyzed the concept was more often treated as a self-evident given than clearly defined. Typically, it was used to signify a multiplicity of problems in addition to lack of housing. Across the three cities different conceptualizations tend to touch upon similar themes, of which some denote macro-level phenomena (unemployment, poverty, etc.), while others indicate problems on an individual level (substance abuse, loneliness). This lack of conceptual clarity results in a confusing picture of what local efforts to tackle homelessness might actually target.[9]

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9   A parallel can be drawn to the policy concept "social exclusion" whose transformation from a
     policy-verb used in the 1980s EU poverty programs, to a hallmark-noun in the 1990s UK New
     Labour discourse has been subjected to extensive critique and discussion (e.g., Silver, 1994).

While the Copenhagen strategies do not ignore the contexts of peoples' lives, social locations like gender, race and class are just not attended to. In contrast, the Glasgow and Gothenburg policies explicitly focus on promoting equality and non-discrimination towards a range of "priority groups" (women, LGBT people etc.), seemingly adopting what Cruells and Coll-Planas (2013) refer to as a "minoritizing perspective" on discrimination. This term denotes the tendency within European LGBT public polices to treat discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation as an isolated phenomenon. Consequently, the focus is directed towards the effects of inequality for individual women, LBGT people, etc., rather than underlying causes and structural dimensions of discrimination. According to Cruells and Coll-Planas, a consequence of this is that socially constructed categories turn into "real" target groups, "without questioning the fact that the very existence of this group is the product of social structures which set up predetermined divisions and hierarchies between bodies, genders and sexualities" (ibid., p.134).

When examining stated policy goals and suggested measures, neither Glasgow nor Gothenburg pay attention to intersections of inequalities, or how these may interact. Instead, the proposed social interventions presented are in line with binary categories of nationals and aliens, men and women, houseless and homeless, adults and children. The default category of "the homeless" tends to be constituted as specifically gendered (male) and racialised/raced (white), while "homeless women" are singled out and read through a victimization lens (i.e., as specifically vulnerable and in need of targeted interventions). However, as pointed out by Fitzpatrick (2012) the idea of women being more vulnerable to homelessness has no support in empirical data. On the contrary, in most Western countries women seem to be *less* at risk of homelessness than men. Even so, in many countries homeless men are clearly disadvantaged in relation to their female counterparts (especially single mothers) when it comes to housing provision. This conflicts with the notion that a combination of social positions such as "single motherhood", "immigrant", and "women" increases the risk of homelessness (Nordfeldt, 2012). To conclude, a dilemma rising out of the analysis here undertaken is that the broad, intersectional-blind approach identified in the Copenhagen texts risks missing special needs in homeless populations. At the same time, a dispersing of the homeless population in a wide array of separate categories (all with specific characteristics and special needs), I argue, risks obscuring the economic and systemic structures that generate homelessness. Such a categorical approach to social positions conceals similarities between homeless populations and their potential shared relationship to power (see Hankivsky *et al.*, 2012). Rather than thinking of categories as additive or isolated, the intersectional approach taken here illustrates the importance of conceptualizing categories as fluid, mutually constituted and inextricably linked to structural hierarchies of power (such as racism) (Holley *et al.*, 2016).

While the analysis in this article has suggested some new insights, it also has limitations. Apart from the fact that the study only captures a snapshot in time, one can obviously not assume that ideas expressed in policy texts mirror those implemented in local practices. We know from previous studies that policies are not simply translated in a linear way, as originally designed. More work needs to be done to explore the potential impact of different policies on local delivery of homeless services. Future studies would also benefit from mixing different data types to probe deeper into the claims that arise from this initial study.

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