
Emotional Geographies of Urban Homeless People's Avoidance of Places Providing Social Services

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- **Abstract** *The article presents an analysis of how homeless people's negative emotional experiences of places providing social services leads to their avoidance of those places. The article is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in urban Copenhagen. Focusing on emotional experiences of fear and disgust, the analysis shows that emotional experiences that lead to avoidance are linked to certain spatial dynamics that are intertwined with specific places such as homeless hostels and day centers. These spatial dynamics relate to the materiality, symbolic dimensions, and the use of the place in question. The article also reveals how policies directly and indirectly affect the spatial dynamics of such places and, by extension, the related emotional experiences of homeless people. Further, the article shows that homeless people's avoidance, which results from their emotional experiences, constitutes a subtle form of socio-spatial exclusion from social services. Hence, the article argues that in order to counter this form of socio-spatial exclusion, the interplay between places, policies and emotions needs to be taken into account in policymaking processes as well as social work practices that aim to assist homeless people.*
- **Keywords** *Homelessness, Social Services, Place, Socio-Spatial Exclusion, Emotion, Social Policy*

Introduction

In order to advance our knowledge of homelessness as an extreme form of socio-spatial exclusion, we “need careful accounts” of people and places, as Lancione (2016, p.167) puts it in the 10th anniversary issue of this journal. Such accounts of people and places are necessary in order to gain insight into the lives and struggles of homeless people, and to advance our understanding of how policy interventions work in practice, since such interventions shape and are shaped by the interplay between people and the places where they are implemented. This article addresses the dynamics related to people and places by exploring how homeless people’s avoidance of places where services are offered to them (e.g. homeless hostels, night shelters and day centers) is related to their emotional experiences of these places. The article also links homeless people’s emotional experiences of these places providing social services to policies and to a subtle form of socio-spatial exclusion from the very same services. The article therefore contributes to our knowledge about how specific places evoke emotions that may discourage homeless people from using services. This knowledge is important if we are to design services that appeal to homeless people. Drawing on the sociology of emotions and emotional geography, I understand emotions as reactions to interaction with humans, objects and places. Moreover, emotions are ways of making sense of social situations (Lupton, 2013) and they motivate human actions (Bo and Jacobsen, 2017).

Existing research on socio-spatial exclusion has addressed the socio-spatial exclusion of homeless people from public spaces (DeVerteuil *et al.*, 2009) and has shown how homeless people are managed through the control of space. This control works through various types of intervention, including policing (Mitchell, 1997), the criminalization of certain behaviours e.g. begging and rough sleeping (O’Sullivan, 2012; Bence and Udvarhelyi, 2013; Coulon *et al.*, 2015), the privatization of public space (Toolis and Hammack, 2015), and deterrence through the design of physical environments (Doherty *et al.*, 2008). This research undoubtedly contributes to the understanding of the processes and outcomes of socio-spatial exclusion, as it shows how these different interventions constitute strategies of displacement and containment (von Mahs, 2005; Doherty *et al.*, 2008) that impact the lives of homeless people and their chance of being housed.

The dominant approach thus studies socio-spatial exclusion as an outcome of direct interventions. This article takes a different approach, showing how the socio-spatial exclusion of homeless people also involves an emotional dimension which is tied to homeless people’s emotional experiences of specific places. These emotional experiences that motivate avoidance of certain places are shaped by the materiality, symbolic dimensions and uses of the places in question. By focusing

on the emotions of the homeless people, the article enables a more nuanced understanding of socio-spatial exclusion that should be taken into account in policy-making processes and in social work practices that aim to assist homeless people, because it may reveal unintentional socio-spatial exclusion produced by policies and social work practices.

The article also contributes to existing knowledge about socio-spatial exclusion as its empirical focus is on the homeless people's emotional experiences of places providing social services. It thereby shows how emotional dynamics form an integral but covert aspect of socio-spatial exclusion from services. Places providing social services for homeless people have largely been neglected in research on socio-spatial exclusion, which has focused primarily on exclusion from public spaces mainly used by 'mainstream' society (Stuart, 2014). The few exceptions include Löfstrand's (2015) study of private security officers' policing of shelters which resulted in the exclusion of potential service users, and Stuart's (2014) study of police patrols in Los Angeles' Skid Row district. Sparks (2010) has shown how, in their struggle for privacy, homeless people avoid shelters that are characterized by pathologization and surveillance in an effort to protect their personal information and maintain control over their social identities. Sparks (2010) points to the need for studies on why homeless people avoid places providing social services. A better understanding of homeless people's avoidance would arguable support attempts to establish and maintain contact with hard-to-reach homeless people. Addressing emotions connected with places providing social services, Johnson, Cloke and May (2005) demonstrate that day centers in the UK constitute *spaces of care*. However, these spaces of care are ambiguous as they are spaces of fear too, because the unusual and often deviant practices of some services users cause fear among fellow service users. I pursue this line of inquiry, focusing on how homeless people's emotions are related to particular places, can lead to their avoidance, and are linked to the spatial dynamics of the specific place and policies.

Theoretical Framework

The article's theoretical framework draws on emotional geography, which seeks to understand the interplay between people's emotions and place (Davidson and Bondi, 2004) and explores 'what happens to who' in specific places, the ambition being to relate to people's "lives and struggles in meaningful ways" (Everts and Wagner, 2012, p.174). Emotional geographies of socio-spatial exclusion of homeless people, like the ones presented here, are relevant to policy making because they draw attention to the often neglected importance of emotions and place. Anderson and Smith (2001, p.7) argue that such neglect "... leaves a gaping void in how to both know, and intervene in, the world" since emotions are one of

the most essential ways in which humans relate to and understand the world (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p.2). Jupp (2013) has shown that social policy interventions and outcomes are interlinked with emotions, as interventions influence the emotions of the affected people and consequently their actions, with implications for how policy interventions work in practice. Clearly, there is a need to acknowledge the importance of emotions if policies are to be successful. Jupp (2013) argues that social policy interventions are shaped by the spatial dynamics of the places where the interventions are conducted. Keeping this in mind, this article's focus on places providing social services is particularly relevant as these are places where supposedly benevolent social policy interventions happen and are experienced and felt by homeless people.

The fields of emotional geography and the sociology of emotion conceptualize emotions as the felt and sensed reactions that arise in interactions between people, objects and places. Given that they are reactions to these interactions, emotions also involve judgements about people, objects and places and they motivate human action in an interplay with cognition and rationality (Bo and Jacobsen, 2017). Thus, emotions are both shaped by and partially shape interactions (Davidson and Bondi, 2004). This understanding of emotions entails a rejection of the dichotomy between emotion and rationality, acknowledging instead that individuals may be rational and emotional at the same time.

There is no consensus on how to study emotions. They are bodily sensations as well as mental phenomena and cannot therefore 'just' be observed. They are also fluid and not easy to represent. Yet although emotions cannot be completely represented through the use of language, it is widely considered valid to study emotions through people's descriptions of them (Williams *et al.*, 2001; Hubbard, 2005; Parr *et al.*, 2005). I therefore focus on how the homeless people describe their emotional experiences of places, drawing on Rose, Degen and Basdas' (2010, p.346) concept of *feelings about buildings* which "... are the considered, reflexive opinions that people hold of buildings [or places] often based on comparisons with other remembered buildings, and which can be bound into their emotions".

Places are not just neutral containers for interaction; rather, they shape and are shaped by people's actions. Places may be understood as social spaces which mean that they are "the product of interrelations, as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (Massey, 2005, p.9). This relational understanding, which draws on Massey's (2005) notion of space/place, implies that places are also the product of relations that reach beyond the specific locality. Such relations include, for instance, policies and economic circumstances affecting a given place. Based on this relational understanding of space/place, explorations of the interplay between emotions and places have the

potential to link the emotional experiences of individuals to broader contexts and structural factors. In this article, I use the notion of 'place' rather than 'space' in order to draw attention to the materiality of the locality where interactions happen, while linking these to the policy context. The relational production of places and their significance can be understood as an ongoing process of interchange between the materiality of the place e.g. built structures, bodies and objects, the use of the given place e.g. sleeping and counselling, and its symbolic meaning e.g. ascribed qualities and discourses. The latter include emotional experiences and, as Cloke *et al.* (2008) write, places become meaningful to people through emotional interactions. It is important to recognize that the meaning of a place differs depending on the individual's age, class, gender, status and point of view (McDowell, 1997). These emotional experiences of places are crucial in order to understand how and why places attract or repel people (Hubbard, 2005). Still, it should not be ignored that emotional experiences of places are dynamic and therefore always have the potential to change, and they may also be contradictory and ambiguous. It is also important to recognize that there are no deterministic or causal relations between specific spatial dynamics and people's emotional experiences.

The interplay between emotional dynamics and place is a fairly new focus in research on homelessness (Marquardt, 2016). It was introduced by geographical research that seeks to draw attention to the emotional dynamics of homeless people's use of places (Johnsen *et al.*, 2005; Cloke *et al.*, 2008; Daya and Wilkins, 2013). In line with that research, this article aims to humanize homeless people by contributing to our understanding of homelessness as lived and felt, and by revealing the agency exercised by homeless people. This approach also raises questions about rationalistic understandings of homeless people's use of places as manifestations of rational regulations and resistance against such regulations. While such an understanding is valuable, it conceals the emotional dynamics that also affect the lives of homeless people (Cloke *et al.*, 2008), including their use of available social services.

Data and Methods

This article is based on empirical data from a research project on lived citizenship among homeless people (Warming and Fahnøe, 2017). The data was generated during six months of ethnographic fieldwork in which participant observation and qualitative interviews served as the main methods. The study focused on homeless people's experiences of social outreach work and the related practices and negotiations between outreach workers and homeless people. The participant observation was conducted by accompanying outreach workers from the municipality. This allowed me to gain access to encounters between outreach workers and homeless

people, that took place throughout the City of Copenhagen from parks, streets, and squares, to day centers, night shelters, homeless hostels, and social services offices. The outreach team's main task was to help reduce homelessness in Copenhagen, however the outreach workers did not have a mandate to offer social housing or to grant social services, substance abuse treatment or social benefits; instead, they helped the homeless people to apply for such services. The outreach work often involved conversations about homeless hostels, night shelters and day centers and whether they were suitable options for meeting the homeless people's needs. The interviews with social workers and homeless people were conducted on site as "conversations with a purpose" which (Burgess, 1984, p.102) describes as "a series of friendly exchanges in order to find out about people's lives". The interviews with the homeless people centered on their experiences of being housed and unhoused, their contacts with the social services, and their use of public space. Emotions were not a focus at the outset of the research project, so I did not touch upon the theme of emotions with the participants during the fieldwork. However, due to frequent references to emotions related to specific places both during the outreach encounters and the interviews, it became clear that emotions were vital in order to understand how the homeless people made sense of and used different places. The interviews were documented in field notes jotted down between encounters which were subsequently written up as comprehensive field notes. I coded the field notes based on various themes divided into sub categories. One theme was the spatial dimension of the outreach work and related social services. Subgroups under this theme included: the use of places, accounts about places, and the physical layout and location of places. In this article, I exclusively analyze accounts that occurred during encounters between homeless people and outreach workers where the homeless person talked about specific places. I have analyzed these accounts as *emotional talk*, which Williams *et al.* (2001, p.211) explain as the ways in which "people convey their feelings". Williams *et al.* argue that a focus on emotional talk might be a suitable way to explore people's reactions to specific social situations – and to places, I would argue.

Besides the outreach workers, the people I was in contact with during my fieldwork included homeless people and people with a history of being homeless who still spent time on the streets for various reasons. The people who figure in the material that I analyze here were all homeless at the time of our contact, according to the ETHOS typology of homelessness. They were sleeping rough, couch surfing, or staying at night shelters and homeless hostels or illegally in non-conventional buildings. Further, they had all agreed to collaborate with the outreach workers and most of them had had long lasting and often difficult relationships with the authorities. It is also important to note that all the homeless people included in this study had legal Danish citizenship and consequently full citizen's rights, which meant that

they were entitled to social benefits, social services and health services according to their individual needs. Thus, barring any local and temporary individual sanctions at certain places, these homeless people had legal access to the services provided at the places included in the analysis.

In order to secure the participants' anonymity, all names in the article are pseudonyms, including those of the outreach workers. All participants participated voluntarily, and were told they could withdraw from the study if they wished to. I also informed the participants about my research project and my role as a researcher, but despite that, some of them apparently regarded me as social worker trainee at times.

The Study Setting

The Danish welfare state can be categorized as a social-democratic welfare regime with a relatively high level of income redistribution and welfare provision and low levels of poverty and unemployment (Benjaminsen, 2016). According to the national homelessness count (Benjaminsen, 2017), in 2017 there were approximately 1,500 homeless persons in the City of Copenhagen municipality, which has a population of 611,000 people. The number of homeless people in the municipality of Copenhagen has remained constant since the first national homelessness count in 2009, while homelessness has increased at the national level. Homelessness in Denmark is most prevalent among people with complex support needs (Benjaminsen, 2013). At both national level and local level, Housing First is the guiding principle in Copenhagen municipality policies. However, there are major barriers to the implementation of Housing First in Copenhagen. First of all, there is a lack of affordable and adequate housing (Rigsrevisionen, 2014; Benjaminsen and Lauritzen, 2015) and the number of cheap rental apartments in Copenhagen is decreasing while the population is growing significantly (Rigsrevisionen, 2014). This should be seen in the light of a trend towards more market-oriented solutions to housing provision and less state intervention (Pettersson, 2017). Consequently, waiting lists for housing are long (Benjaminsen, 2013). Secondly, a treatment first approach is still widespread in practice (Benjaminsen, 2013).

These barriers mean that temporary accommodation still accounts for a significant portion of the services provided to homeless people in Copenhagen, where 42 percent of the homeless population has been homeless for more than two years (Benjaminsen, 2017). While night shelters and homeless hostels are intended to be temporary, in practice people stay there for longer periods (Rigsrevisionen, 2014; Benjaminsen and Lauritzen, 2015). In this context, research on what happens to homeless people at these places of temporary accommodation and other social services to homeless people is relevant to policy-making.

The local municipalities are responsible for housing citizens in Denmark, including the provision of temporary accommodation. The City of Copenhagen municipality acts as a major provider of temporary accommodation, both in the form of homeless hostels and night shelters. Some NGOs also deliver temporary accommodation, which is subsidized by the service user's home municipalities. There is a total of approximately 600 beds in temporary accommodation facilities in the City of Copenhagen (Rigsrevisionen, 2014). Regional authorities monitor the quality of the temporary accommodation. The municipalities are also responsible for attending to the needs of homeless people in accordance with the Social Assistance Act, either by funding or providing services themselves, including the day centers that this article addresses. The day centers targeting homeless people are primarily run by NGOs that often rely partly on private funding. Access to the night shelters, homeless hostels and day centers is granted by the staff at the place in question.

Analysis

During the encounters that I observed between homeless people and outreach social workers, and during my interviews with homeless people, they often described why they did not use certain places and services. Their accounts frequently revealed that they had had negative emotional experiences in connection with the places being discussed. These negative emotional experiences included fear, disgust, humiliation, boredom, anger, distress, and discomfort. The places they avoided included apartments, residential areas, neighbourhoods, parks, squares, and welfare offices. Night shelters, day centers, and homeless hostels providing services specifically intended for homeless people were also avoided. The experiences associated with fear, disgust and humiliation were among the most striking negative emotions brought up in the accounts about avoiding or leaving these places providing social services.

Although my analysis explores the link between these emotions and avoidance of places providing social services, it is worth noting that negative emotions did not necessarily lead to avoidance. Indeed, many of the informants used these places and their services despite harboring negative feelings about them. This finding should be seen in the light of the ambiguity associated with emotional experiences of places as well as the acute need for care and/or physical shelter that some people experience. Moreover, the avoidance of places providing social services is, for some homeless people, related to positive emotional experiences of other places. Elsewhere, I have documented how a sense of belonging plays a part in homeless people's use or lack of use of social services (Fahnøe, 2017).

In the following, I explore how fear and humiliation, respectively, arise in interplay with specific places. The two selected examples represent two distinct ways in which polices affect the spatial dynamics of places and the related emotional experiences, and how different individual attributes (i.e. age, gender and ethnicity) influence the emotional experiences of the places in question.

“I am not going back there”

Fear was a common emotion expressed by the homeless people about the shelters and hostels. In most of their accounts, fear related to episodes of violence occurring in and around such places. This was the case, for example, in Peter’s approach to hostels.

Ann, an outreach worker, meets up with Peter, a man in his fifties. His long-term substance abuse has left its mark on his body. He is quite thin and his movements are slow. At the moment, he is sleeping at his friend Michael’s place. Ann and Peter discuss alternatives to sleeping at Michael’s. Ann says that the only realistic possibility right now is for Peter to stay at a homeless hostel. Peter is quick to respond, saying that he has stayed at the nearby hostel but that he does not want to do that anymore. The hostel is located in one of the buildings belonging to a larger complex that was built at the beginning of the 20th century as a workhouse. Today, the buildings house a couple of homeless hostels, a combined night shelter and day center, a health clinic for homeless people, and some workshops, among other municipal welfare service organizations. The complex that was erected outside the city is now surrounded by apartment buildings but is encircled by two larger streets on opposing sides and fences and buildings on the other two sides. It almost functions as a ‘village’ enclave populated by marginalized people within the urban neighbourhood. The outdoor areas serve as meeting places for homeless people and other marginalized people. Although staff members do not patrol the outdoor areas, they do keep an eye on the surrounding areas and intervene if tempers flare too much. Alcohol drinking and cannabis smoking are widespread and very visible in the outdoor areas. Although the atmosphere is generally friendly, emotions often run high and at times aggression and violence break out. Peter sounds upset when he talks about the hostel. He says that he does not like it there. He mentions some stabbings that happened there recently, making him feel unsafe. He adds that there are several unpleasant people there and concludes: “I am not going back there”. He sticks to his refusal to stay at the hostel, despite admitting that there is a limit to how long Michael will let him sleep at his apartment. Peter repeated several times that he did not want to go back to the hostels. I met him a few times and when he later talked about the hostels, he persistently referred to them using a pun in Danish that includes the word “slum”.

Peter's fear of violence relates to use of the hostels and surrounding areas, as well as the materiality of the place. Being physically enclosed and characterized by a high concentration of homeless services and other social services, the complex where the hostel is located is a highly contained environment and as such unusual behaviours and attitudes are accepted as they do not pose a nuisance to mainstream society. This acceptance of behaviours that would be deemed unacceptable elsewhere makes it possible to practice alternative activities and lifestyles. However, at the same time such a place of containment and its associated practices may be intimidating for people like Peter. Johnson *et al.* (2005) showed, for instance, that unusual behaviours may make fellow service users fearful. The way the staff use the place underscores their acceptance of unusual behaviours, as they provide assistance inside the buildings and keep supervision of the outdoor areas to a minimum, especially during evenings and nighttime when few staff are present. This place, characterized by unusual behaviours and norms, is used by many people who hang out in the outdoor areas but who do not constitute a single integrated community. Rather, various people and groups of people who are not necessarily friends or even acquaintances share the place. Under these conditions, tensions can escalate into violence before anyone can intervene.

The fear of crime and violence in relation to women's use of space is well documented in feminist geography (e.g. Valentine, 1989) where it is viewed in terms of gender relations. In Peter's case, his experience of the hostel as a frightening place must also be understood in relation to his age and physical condition, which is marked by his long-term substance abuse and which makes him more vulnerable to violence. This kind of vulnerability was brought up by other homeless men who were beginning to feel the effects of their hard lives on their bodies. Charlie was among them. He described how he had calmed down and withdrawn from specific meeting places now that he had become weaker. Charlie added that he was not acting so cocky and wild anymore. Instead, he was letting the younger (men) mess around and act rough. Such changes in behaviour and Peter's unwillingness to stay at the hostel could be regarded as what Warming (2017, p.82) has termed "a rational act based on emotional meaning". It seems rational that Peter, whose ability to defend himself has declined, avoids the hostel due to his fear of violence in connection with that particular place which resulted from political decisions to cluster homeless services in the enclosed complex.

Peter's feelings about the hostel are not just connected to his physical ability to protect himself. Instead, his use of the derogatory pun about the hostel suggests that his feelings about the place also relate to the symbolic dimension of the hostel. The complex and hostel are infamous both among homeless people and social workers, who label it as one of the toughest environments among places providing services to homeless people, and as a place frequented by the most vulnerable.

The hostel and the complex are thus symbolically positioned as undesirable places inhabited by the most deviant people. Seen in this light, Peter's emotions may reflect a perception that sharing spaces with deviant people might erode his social identity (Johnsen *et al.*, 2005). This could be understood as part of a struggle for dignity in which Peter avoids a place that is symbolically tainted and where he would be exposed to behaviours that transgress the cultural norms of mainstream society, and might even become associated with such behaviours himself.

In Peter's case, fear prompts him to stay at his friend's place, although this alternative place is associated with anxiety related to uncertainty about if and when he will be forced back on the streets. This indicates how avoidance of a specific place offering services is also intertwined with relationships to other places and people's emotional experiences of these. And as Rose *et al.* (2010) suggest, judgements about a place may involve comparisons with other places. This points to how experiences of available alternatives influence the way emotions motivate human action, including the use of places.

"They are nasty"

The emotional experiences that the homeless people described in connection with shelters, hostels and day centers sometimes included disgust. Disgust was often expressed in relation to other people's behaviour and hygiene. At times, disgust was linked to gender and ethnicity as well as the physical layout of a given place. This was the case when Kate turned down an opportunity to use the shower at a day center.

Kate is a young woman who has been sleeping in a car for the past couple of weeks. She rents an apartment but is scared of staying there because she had an altercation with some of the neighbours and now she feels intimidated by some of them. Kate is talking to the outreach worker Susan. Kate is cheerful and energetic this morning. She says, "I really need a shower". Kate explains that she is eager to have a shower at the day center which is just around the corner because she feels dirty and wants to be clean before she puts on her cool new clothes. The day center is located on a lower ground floor. The main room is decorated in a homely style with paintings by service users. It is obvious that attempts have been made to make the day center feel like a cozy haven away from the streets and parks where many service users spend most of their time. The vast majority of services users are homeless male immigrants from Central Europe and Africa. The place is normally crowded in the mornings as the immigrants, who usually sleep rough, come to have breakfast, take a shower or a nap. The two small showers are accessed from a small passage that also leads to a laundry room and a sleeping area furnished with a few bunk beds and mattresses on the floor. This narrow passage is often cramped and the people passing through it sometimes bump into each other accidentally. Kate

asks Susan when the day center opens and whether they have towels. Susan calls the day center to find out. Afterwards, Susan tells Kate that the day center opens in 15 minutes and that they have towels for her. Kate then says that she just remembered that the day center is “where the Romanians are”. So now, she does not want to go there. “They are nasty” she says referring to the “Romanians” and she does not want to shower while they are around. She almost sneers and her smile has disappeared. Susan tries to laugh it off and says that they will not be in the shower with her and that she can just lock the door. Nonetheless, Kate does not want to go and she says “I would rather stink” and she once again refers to “the Romanians” as filthy. It is unclear whether she is referring to their hygiene, behaviour, mentality or all three. Susan suggests that Kate should think about it. Later, Kate goes into the city center with her Ukrainian boyfriend, Leonid, without showering or putting on her new clothes.

Kate’s disgust should be seen in the light of intersecting gender and ethnicity relations. Her disgust is directed at men she refers to as “Romanians”, who use the place and its services. This disgust serves as a marker of ethnic differences (Zembylas, 2011) and it reflects tensions related to ethnicity which also manifest in practices on the street where homeless ethnic Danes and Greenlanders rarely mix with homeless immigrants. Both the social workers and the homeless ethnic Danes and Greenlanders articulated these tensions in different ways. Besides stereotyping, prejudice and derogatory remarks, there is a widespread narrative about how certain day centers – including the one mentioned here – have been “taken over” by homeless immigrants and that the ethnic Danes and ethnic Greenlanders avoid these places because they do not want to interact with the migrant people or are “pushed out” of these places. Since it is known to be one of the places “taken over” by homeless immigrants, the day center is also symbolically tainted.

Moreover, the tensions reflected in Kate’s feeling of disgust are also affected by an ethnic hierarchy that is enshrined in policies which exclude homeless immigrants from the definition of homeless people that the City of Copenhagen aims to help (Pettersson, 2017). This hierarchy is, moreover, supported by laws that restrict homeless immigrants’ access to public social services such as shelters, hostels and social benefits. What is more, there is very limited funding for NGOs providing services to homeless immigrants (Djuve *et al.*, 2015). This restricted access compels the homeless immigrants to use the few NGO-run day centers and the one shelter that accept them and, as in this case, these places are often very crowded. The use of this specific day center, and its overcrowding, are thus a result of policies that restrict access to other places providing services and limit funding. This shows how places are not only affected by policies directed at them specifically and the practices that take place there, but also by policies that target other places. Kate’s

emotional experience of the day center as a place of disgust is shaped by this combination of policies that restricts access to services to a few places and affects the physical layout of the day center.

With this combination of policies and the materiality of the day center, the intersecting gender and ethnic relations that affect Kate's feeling of disgust are accentuated by the fact that the vast majority of the service users are immigrant men and that Kate's purpose for going there would be to take a bath in one of the communal showers where her naked body would only be shielded by a door leading directly on to the busy passage. The risk of being exposed to unwanted contact or sexual attention, or at least feeling exposed to this, is intensified because the place is so cramped that it takes some effort to dodge physical contact and the glaring eyes of the other service users. The materiality of the place, which affects how these intersecting gender and ethnic relations intertwine with Kate's emotional experiences of it, is characterized by a lack of private space which limits the service users' privacy.

Such limited privacy at day centers, hostels and shelters is widespread in Copenhagen. Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin (2007) have noted how lack of privacy hampers efforts to help service users towards inclusion in mainstream society. But, as in Kate's case, lack of privacy also prompts homeless people to avoid these places in the first place due to various emotional experiences. Being humiliated was one of the predominant emotions associated with lack of privacy, as expressed by the homeless people.

Kate's disgust could also be seen as a reaction to the fact that the majority of the immigrants using the day center were sleeping rough and had limited access to services, including sanitary facilities, and therefore found it difficult to maintain their personal hygiene. Again, this experience of disgust arises both because of the lack of places providing the needed services for homeless immigrants, and because of the physical layout of the crowded day center which makes it difficult to ignore the personal hygiene standards of those using it.

The disgust that Kate and others feel may not only increase the distance between people (Zembylas, 2011) but also between places. The distance that arises due to disgust and other negative emotional experiences of places, including fear and being humiliated, produces a subtle form of socio-spatial exclusion from the services offered to homeless people at specific places. This form of socio-spatial exclusion is more about the spatial dynamics of places than the services per se, and it indicates that services targeting homeless people and their impact are inseparable from the places where they are delivered. In effect, this subtle socio-spatial exclusion from services prevents the realization of whatever benevolent intentions that may lie behind the service delivery.

Conclusion and Outlook

Focusing on the emotions of fear and disgust, my analysis shows how homeless people's emotional experiences of places providing social services lead them to avoid these places. However, it should be stressed that despite the fact that the homeless people – like the ones presented in the analysis – explain their avoidance of places providing social services with reference to emotional experiences, this does not mean that their avoidance is not rational. Such avoidance may well constitute a rational act based on emotional meaning-making. The analysis demonstrates that different individual attributes influence emotional experiences of places offering services. The analysis highlights age, physical capabilities, gender, and ethnicity as some attributes that intersect and influence the emotions that arise in connection with a specific place and its related spatial dynamics.

The analysis showed that the emotional experiences that motivate avoidance are linked to certain spatial dynamics associated with the specific places. These dynamics consist of, first, the materiality of the place in question, where a locality and its surroundings may be places of containment that evoke fear, as in Peter's case. The material aspects that influenced emotional experiences included the place's physical layout e.g. the interior layout which restricted opportunities for privacy, and led to it being associated with disgust and feelings of humiliation. Second, the symbolic dimensions of the place define the kind of place it is and who its occupants are. The analysis shows that a place can be perceived as so defiled that using it seems to threaten one's dignity or social identity. Third, the way the place is used, i.e. its occupants' behaviour, may transgress cultural norms in ways that evoke emotions such as fear or disgust.

The interplay between emotions and the spatial dynamics of places that I describe in my analysis is significant to policy-making. On the one hand, the spatial dynamics that evoke emotional experiences of places that can lead to homeless people's avoidance of those places affect how the policies regulating social services work in practice. In this way, spatial dynamics shape policies. This underlines the fact that services are inseparable from the places where they are delivered. On the other hand, the spatial dynamics related to materiality, symbolic dimensions and practices are shaped by policies. My analysis shows how containment, lack of private space, restricted access for some groups, and overcrowding are influenced by policies which, to a greater or lesser extent, define what should happen to whom and where, for example by clustering services for homeless people. It is worth noting that policies shape the spatial dynamics of places both directly and indirectly. Directly in the sense that policies are meant to do something at and/or to a given place and thus affect that place. And indirectly in the sense that policies that are intended to do something at and/or to one

place affect other places too. In the analysis, the symbolic dimension and overcrowding of the day center are indirectly shaped by policies, and in Kate's case this plays a role in her avoidance of the day center.

The homeless peoples' avoidance of places providing social services which is due to their emotional experiences of those places, constitutes a form of socio-spatial exclusion from services. Williams *et al.* (2001) has termed the avoidance of places due to negative emotions *self-exclusion*. However, this concept is misleading because such avoidance is not just an individual choice. This socio-spatial exclusion from services should instead be understood as driven by the spatial dynamics of certain places which prompt negative emotions. And it is the exclusion of homeless people from the very same services that should ameliorate their life situation and ideally direct them to proper and stable housing. Such socio-spatial exclusion from services shows that both spatial and emotional dynamics, as well as the interplay between them, must be taken into account if policies and services are to appeal to homeless people and help them to act as citizens by exercising their legal rights. It should be clear that this has cross-country relevance. Although policies, the provision of services to homeless people, the conditions under which these services operate, and access to permanent housing differ between European countries, the interplay between spatial and emotional dynamics affects the lives of homeless people and their use of services in all national contexts.

The provision of temporary accommodation is one area where attention to homeless peoples' emotional experiences of places is needed if such services are to be successful as stepping stones for those in need (Deverteuil *et al.*, 2009). As Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin (2007) suggest, temporary accommodation will most likely play a role in future policies. Despite efforts to implement Housing First, this also applies to Denmark, and especially Copenhagen. Awareness of socio-spatial exclusion from services, as addressed here, should, for one thing, lead us to jettison arguments that hostels and night shelters should not be too comfortable because this might reduce people's motivation to find other solutions (Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007). If such notions continue to guide policy-making and social work practices, this will not only negatively impact the people who actually use these places, but also others in need of a physical shelter or other services who might be repelled by the emotional experiences that arise in such "not too comfortable" places. If the places where services are provided trigger negative emotional experiences, this may make some homeless people harder to reach.

The above analysis of how policies and spatial and emotional dynamics interlink in ways that influence how policies take effect in practice has relevance for other areas of policy that influence homeless people's lives and housing. These include Housing First policies (and the ongoing discussions about these), where it is crucial

to recognize that housing occurs in a specific place with particular spatial dynamics related to its material and symbolic dimensions and use. These spatial dynamics affect the place's attractiveness or repulsiveness in the eyes of potential residents. Spatial dynamics also influence people's experiences of being housed, which impact housing retention.

The article presents an analysis of homeless people, places and emotions, and identifies a subtle form of socio-spatial exclusion from services. However, it describes just one aspect of how spatial and emotional dynamics affect homeless people's use of places and the way this is connected to policies. In order to advance our understanding of homeless people's use of places and their lives, we need more in-depth studies of the relations between specific spatial dynamics, individuals' positions and their emotional experiences.

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