John Sylvestre, Geoffrey Nelson and Tim Aubry
(Eds.) (2017)

Housing, Citizenship, and Communities for People with Serious Mental Illness. Theory, Research, Practice and Policy Perspectives.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 395, £41.49

If you would like to read just one comprehensive, well-written book to get a good understanding of current research and discussions dealing with housing in the community mental health field, I strongly suggest "*Housing, Citizenship, and Communities for People with Serious Mental Illness. Theory, Research, Practice and Policy Perspectives*". As the editors state, the book takes housing as a point of departure and combines it with crucial themes concerning living in the community with serious mental illness: "Housing is a start, the key concern is how it leads to social integration, community participation, recovery and citizenship" (p.xxiii). The book approaches homelessness and housing at the margins in the framework of community mental health and community psychology. It offers a multidimensional, research-based overview of the practice, policy and research in the field. The authors have reviewed a fair amount of previous and current research.

The book includes five sections that generate an educative and interesting journey through various housing solutions, social theories and research methods, perspectives on international housing policies and views from the frontline. The tour ends by summarising conclusions and reflections. The structure of the book makes visible how the academic housing discourse commonly discusses either theories, research methods and results, macro-level policies and housing models or micro-level experiences of the grass-roots level actors such as homeless persons, tenants and the workers providing the support and housing services. These different levels and perspectives demonstrate the multidimensionality of housing and living in the community. The structure is informative and well-functioning, yet it differentiates the macro from the micro. It would be more fruitful to construct the macro and the micro as intertwined and influencing each other – views from the frontline reproduce, put into practice, reflect and resist the current politics and research and vice versa.

Next, I will briefly introduce the main themes of the book as well as my perceptions and experiences. For me, reading the book was a journey to housing and living in the community in the twenty-first century Western world.

The first section begins with a historical grand story of deinstitutionalisation: how custodial facilities were developed first (from the 1960s to 1980s) and were followed by then single- and scattered-site supported housing (from 1990s to today) in the community. Knowing the grand story gives good grounds to continue the journey towards adopting more complicated terminologies of different housing approaches (Chapter 2). The authors introduce a three-step process including key criteria for differentiating various housing approaches from each other. However, although the chapter offers a useful roadmap, I still recognise the feeling of getting lost. What's more, this feeling followed me when reading the final two chapters of the first section that describe the ambiguity of the cost-effectiveness of community-based housing and support. The chapters offer a comprehensive review of the research findings and research deficiencies related to various comparisons of different housing and support models regarding housing outcomes, service use, clinical functioning and community integration (Chapter 3) as well as cost-effects (Chapter 4). As a summary it is stated that, although the findings are in many ways mixed, there is a quite solid consensus that "[…] the combination of scattered-site supportive housing with ICM [Intensive case management] and ACT [Assertive community treatment] yields better housing outcomes than standard care in the community or residential continuum housing" (p.94).

I became especially excited when I reached *section two* "Housing theory and research methods" that deals with theoretical concepts and thinking, and indeed the section demonstrates well the fruitfulness of combining various social-theoretical and community mental health concepts and frameworks to studying homelessness and housing. As it is of special interest to me, I will introduce this section in greater detail as it widens the scope of current housing (first) practice, policy and research by, for instance, introducing recovery, empowerment, integration and citizenship within the frame of community mental health research.

During my journey through the chapters in section two my thinking was stimulated by conceptualisations like 'program theory' that comprises assumptions about "[…] how programs are intended to have beneficial impacts on program participant" (p.155) and 'theories of change' (Chapter 5) that make sense of what is needed to achieve positive housing, clinical and integration outcomes in the micro-environments of different housing settings. In addition, the section offers various conceptualisations that perceive individuals within wider, interactive and social contexts. Chapter 6 demonstrates well how housing issues at the margins are not to be dealt with in isolation from the wider context of neighbourhoods, informal and formal

networks, 'geosocial environments' and political planning and decision-making. Chapter 7 "discuss[es] the contributions that the concept of citizenship can make to practice, policy and research on housing for people with serious mental illness" (p.212). It takes as a starting point Hall and Williamson's (1999) tripartite perspective on citizenship: 1) legal citizenship, 2) normative citizenship, and 3) lived citizenship. Approaching living and housing in the community as having, gaining and strengthening citizenship makes it a reciprocal social-political issue. The authors make a crucial closing remark (p. 229) that reminds us how serious mental illness and housing in the community are related to social exclusion:

> An inherent risk in a continued emphasis on a therapeutic perspective on housing is that the causes and solutions to problems of isolation and social exclusion will only be found within individuals. […] It takes attention away from the fact that exclusion is the product of others, of groups, of systems that exclude, and that passivity and isolation are the products of hopelessness and fear that come from poverty, lack of opportunities, or experiences of rejection. The inclusion of citizenship agenda within and complementary to our current efforts in housing practice, policy, and research provides a complementary focus that draws attention to both the means and opportunities for supporting the agency of people who wish to obtain or who live in the community housing […]"

Chapter 8 leads me to ponder the various methods of doing citizenship agenda-driven research on the lives of people experiencing serious mental health in the community. The chapter provides introductions to various research approaches including participatory action research (PAR), narrative approaches, visual methods, walking tours, mapping and geographic information systems. As the authors state (p.250), these methods both challenge and complement more commonly used (quantitative) methods in housing research. I was delighted to bump into these qualitative, inspiring methods but missed an introduction to ethnographic and discursive research methods that also have much to offer homelessness and housing studies. What is notable in the introduced methods is that they aim at giving "[…] more agency, control, and voice to participants in research and providing a better understanding of the social ecologies and context in which people participate" (p.250). Accordingly, they may be utilised in strengthening the citizenship agenda in mental health and housing practice, policy and research.

Section three addresses the "International perspectives on housing policy for people with serious mental illness". It very much tells the system-level story of how Housing First has been accepted, adapted, applied and critically reflected on as the most researched, effective and consumer friendly housing philosophy in times of austerity, in the rise of neoliberalism and decline of the welfare state in the United State (Chapter 9), Canada (Chapter 10), the European Union (Chapter 11) and

Australia (Chapter 12). The chapters also reflect the claimed 'revolutionary change' and uniqueness of Housing First. As the authors remind in Chapter 11, most of its core principles such as empowerment, integration, recovery, consumer choice, person-centred planning and harm reduction have been mainstream in community mental health and at least in Northern Europe homelessness services long before Housing First made its breakthrough (e.g. p.292). It can also be questioned "[…] how important detailed fidelity actually is (i.e. near-replication) for reducing home-lessness among people with high support needs" (p.293). I found these discussions valuable contributions to current housing and homelessness studies.

The *fourth section* offers "views from the front line" by concentrating on tenants', service providers', practitioners' and landlords' viewpoints. The rise of the tenant view is said to reflect the strengthening of the consumer movement, peer-led groups and services that call for the same rights, responsibilities and housing options for citizens with special mental health needs as other citizens have in the community (Chapter 13). Service providers' and practitioners' views are approached in the context of single-site (Chapter 14) and scattered-site supportive housing (Chapter 15). These views comprise justifications for different models of supportive housing: the first model refers to congregate housing and the latter to dispersed housing. Service providers and practitioners describe the provision of tenant-centred supported housing services with limited financial resources as a complex task, thus "ultimately, housing programs are not just about buildings but more importantly about people" (p.336). Furthermore, the important role of frontline providers in putting the Housing First principles into practice is discussed as well as the challenges and rewards they experience in their everyday work. Landlords' views are scrutinised from the sparse literature on scattered-site supportive housing. Landlords are seen to get novel roles as caretakers, site managers and superintendents and confront conflicting demands such as securing the condition of the apartments and providing housing to a tenant that potentially may damage the dwelling (Chapter 16).

The *last section* "Conclusions and reflections" brought my rewarding journey to an end. It gathers the viewpoints that are widely shared among the majority of the stakeholders, and thus it pinpoints the progress and achievements made in living and housing in the community since deinstitutionalisation took place 40 years ago. The last chapter reminds that although there has been great progress, there is no reason for complacency as poverty, lack of opportunities and choices, social exclusion, poor housing, limited citizenship, inadequate support and treatment are still commonly experienced among people with special mental health needs living in the community. Thus, my journey does not end; we all need to retain our enthu-siasm and move forward in our thinking and actions for making living in the community satisfactory and safe for every citizen.

Throughout my journey, I have learned about the obvious gaps, deficiencies and limits of current homelessness and housing research: how there is a need for more research using various research methods to explore the unexplored themes and views at the margins. This can be seen as one of the major messages and closing remarks of the book. In the last chapter, the citizenship agenda is provided rightfully as a promising signpost for better practice, policy and research in the future. The book demonstrates as a whole how research develops through dialogues between different disciplines and through innovative crossing of the boundaries of research fields. In a peculiar way, it can be read as both an interdisciplinary and profound compilation of housing in the community and as a forceful promotion of Housing First. Maybe this is why the book seems to offer something insightful for every reader for various purposes.

Suvi Raitakari
Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Tampere, Finland