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Journal Philosophy

The European Journal of Homelessness provides a critical analysis of policy and practice on homelessness in Europe for policy makers, practitioners, researchers and academics. The aim is to stimulate debate on homelessness and housing exclusion at the European level and to facilitate the development of a stronger evidential base for policy development and innovation. The journal seeks to give international exposure to significant national, regional and local developments and to provide a forum for comparative analysis of policy and practice in preventing and tackling homelessness in Europe. The journal will also assess the lessons for Europe, which can be derived from policy, practice and research from elsewhere.

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Editorial

At the annual research conference on homelessness in Europe organised by the European Observatory on Homelessness and partners, held in Pisa on 16 September, a special edition of the European Journal of Homelessness, (Vol.5, No.1) was launched, and contained key papers from our 2010 research conference, which was held in Budapest. At the annual meeting of the International Advisory Committee to the journal held in Budapest, it was agreed that we would move to publish both a special edition of the journal each year – based on the proceedings of our annual research conference, and an open edition of the journal. The rationale for developing an open edition of the journal was that it would allow the editorial team to accommodate a greater diversity of research and policy analyses that was the case when each edition focused on a particular theme. That the International Advisory Committee, the Consultative Committee and the Editorial Team felt confident, after 4 years of producing a single edition per annum, to publish a second open edition of the journal each year is a reflection of the supply of high quality original research and policy commentaries received by the editorial team each year. It also reflects the demand by academics, policy makers and practitioners for concise, accessible and policy relevant analyses of homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe and further afield. In this, our first open edition, we are pleased that we are in a position to publish original research articles, policy commentaries, think pieces, debates and a special section reflecting on the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness which was held in Brussels in December 2010, in addition to a section providing up-dates on ongoing research on homelessness in Europe and a number of book reviews.

Articles

In the first article in the journal, Amore and colleagues provide an analysis and critique of the validity of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), which they note is arguably the most prominent definition and classification of homelessness with an articulated theoretical foundation in current use. In their article, they propose a modified approach to conceptualising homelessness. In doing so, two parts of the ETHOS conceptualisation are examined: the conceptual model, and the typology of subgroups that make up the homeless and

housing excluded populations. The authors argue that each part is found to have conceptual weaknesses that compromise the validity of the typology and a modified definition and classification of homelessness is proposed.

Stenberg and colleagues, in our second article, argue that although evictions are a significant cause of homelessness, little is known of the processes leading to evictions. The paper attempts to shed some light on this relatively unknown problem by exploring the legal basis, procedures of evictions and the possibilities of avoiding homelessness because of rent arrears in Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Preliminary data on the numbers of evictions are also given. Some striking differences in the process of dealing with evictions between the three countries are brought to light, but the overall lack of data on evictions is emphasized.

In our third article, Carminucci describes the system of social organisations and agencies providing support for homeless people in five major European train stations (Rome “Termini” station, Paris “Gare du Nord”, Berlin Zoo Station, Brussels “Gare Centrale”, and Luxemburg City’s station). The paper provides a detailed description of the homeless population in these stations, and explores the services provided by a range of organisations, and the potential effects of their cooperation in addressing the needs of homeless people.

Policy Review

In our policy review section, having earlier reviewed national homeless strategies in Scotland, Ireland, Denmark and Finland, Houard provides an analysis of the French homeless strategy.

Launched in November 2009, the strategy aims to ensure that housing provision adheres to ‘Housing First’ principle, making a clean break with the existing ‘staircase’ system of homeless service provision. However, the paper argues that the ‘staircase’ model continues to be used in practice both locally and nationally. In the second paper in our policy review section, Downey argues that quality, systematic and programme-based data on homelessness is vital for effective public policy formulation. Using the example of the Homeless Agency Partnership, established in Dublin in 2001, it outlines the data deficit that existed and how the Homeless Agency Partnership developed a data and information strategy. This paper reviews the challenges and obstacles to establishing the data and information strategy, how these were tackled over the period, and the resulting changes that took place.

Think Pieces

The issue of the applicability of the 'Housing First' approach, which originated in New York, to European member states is discussed in detail by Pleave in our first think piece. Noting that while there is strong evidence that the 'Housing First' model, in particular, the 'Pathways Housing First' model can move homeless people with sustained experiences of living rough, with problematic drug and alcohol use, and with severe mental illness straight into ordinary housing, and successfully sustain them in that housing, nonetheless questions can be raised about what 'Housing First' is delivering in a wider sense. The paper firstly explores what is meant by 'Housing First' as an ethos and as a model of service delivery, as there can be a lack of clarity about what these services are delivering. Secondly, to what extent can 'Housing First' services address the needs of 'chronically homeless' people that exist alongside a fundamental requirement for sustainable housing? The third and final question posed in the paper centres on the wider role of the 'Housing First' model, and whether the policy and research focus on 'Housing First' is overemphasising one aspect of the wider social problem of homelessness.

In his think piece, DeDecker notes that it is often argued that the substantial participation of the middle-classes in the social security system, is functional for combating poverty. The argument is that it is thanks to its universal character that the system has sufficient societal support to offer groups at risk or with a low income an acceptable minimum protection. Using the example of Flanders, Belgium, the paper argues that since the mid-1990s, the Flanders government has used this argument to increase the income ceilings for all kinds of housing subsidies. Utilising both data and discourses, the author argues that the middle-classes were never excluded from subsidies, nor are they, as some have claimed the victims of a newly emerging housing need.

Debates

In previous editions of the Journal we have published contributions to a vigorous debate on the role and meaning of participation by homeless people in shaping policy and practice. In our latest contribution to this ongoing discussion, Jordi Sanchez provides a perspective from Spain and argues that participation has changed from being simply a fashionable concept to a widely used term, but, that the practical application of participation in the field of homelessness still suffers from a lack of systematic and improvised approaches. His paper outlines some factors that have hindered the practical implementation of participation in services for homeless people in Spain.

European Consensus Conference on Homelessness

On the 9th and 10th of December, 2010 (in co-operation with FEANTSA, the European Commission and the French government), the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council organised a Consensus Conference on Homelessness. This conference built on the French Consensus Conference held in November 2007 (see Loison-Leruste, 2008 for further details) utilising a methodology, which involved the selection of experts in various domains (but not homelessness) who would adjudicate on a range of evidence and viewpoints from those with an expertise in homelessness. The Jury's report (European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, 2010), which drew on a review of literature on homelessness in Europe (Busch-Geertsema et al, 2010) and the expert opinions is a significant milestone, both in terms of how the Jury conceptualised homelessness and their recommendations for the delivery of services to homeless people. The editorial team invited a number of policy reviews of the Jury's report from a number of expert commentators – ranging from academics to service users. In addition, Ruth Owen, one of the organisers of the Conference, provides a detailed overview of the methodology involved in organising a consensus conference.

Conclusion

In 2006, Bill Edgar, one of the co-ordinators of the European Observatory on Homelessness conceived the idea for a European Journal of Homelessness as a vehicle for disseminating knowledge of policy and practice on homelessness across the European Union, and indeed further afield, to a diverse audience of policy makers, practitioners, and researchers. The reception that such a journal would receive was unknown, but since the publication of the first edition of the journal in December 2007, it is clear that the journal serves an important role in the dissemination of knowledge and ideas about homelessness across the European Union. The editorial team would like to acknowledge the support and assistance of the members of the International Advisory Committee, the members of the Consultative Committee, the contributors to the journal and the staff of FEANTSA in ensuring the success enjoyed by the journal to-date, and the maintenance of the high standards established by Bill Edgar as the first editor of the journal.

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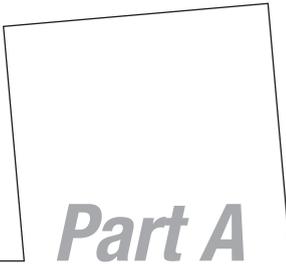
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Articles



Part A



The ETHOS Definition and Classification of Homelessness: An Analysis

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› **Abstract_** *Defining homelessness has long been a topic of debate, but international agreement is elusive, and most of the various definitions of homelessness in use across the world are not conceptually grounded. The two aims of this paper are: to provide an analysis and critique of the validity of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), which is arguably the most prominent definition and classification of homelessness with an articulated theoretical foundation in current use; and to propose a modified approach to conceptualising homelessness that the authors have developed. We begin by describing a set of considerations and criteria that can be used for assessing any system of measurement. Two parts of the ETHOS conceptualisation are then examined: the conceptual model, and the typology of subgroups that make up the homeless and housing excluded populations. Each part is found to have conceptual weaknesses that compromise its validity. A modified definition and classification of homelessness, which we think overcomes these weaknesses, is proposed.*

› **Key Words_** *Homelessness; definition; classification; ETHOS; measurement; New Zealand.*

Introduction

How homelessness should be defined is a fundamental and persistent problem. Relatively little progress has been made toward achieving international agreement in the twenty years since Greve and Currie (1990, p. 28) wrote: "what constitutes 'homelessness' and how many people are homeless is a debate which has been running for thirty years or more". A robust definition of homelessness is a necessary basis for the production of meaningful statistics on the size and characteristics of homeless populations, which are of critical importance for informed policy-making. A definition of homelessness can be judged useful if it allows for accurate and reliable identification and classification of homeless people so that policies can be developed to respond to different manifestations of homelessness and monitor the effectiveness of such interventions. At a more basic level, evidence of the size of homeless populations can play a pivotal role in determining whether the problem is included on a government's policy agenda in the first place: "it becomes difficult to urge governments to meet the needs of homeless people if the parameters of the homeless population are unclear" (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1992, p. 274).

Definitions of homelessness vary considerably across the world and few have a conceptual basis. Definitions produced by government agencies with responsibility for addressing homelessness tend to minimise the population and concentrate on those who are publicly visible. Advocates and non-government service providers, on the other hand, who regard the definition as "the connecting link between the problem of homelessness and agency responsibility" (Minnery and Greenhalgh, 2007, p. 652) (as well as the link to funding), tend to favour broad definitions that maximise the number of people identified as homeless, often by conflating people at risk of homelessness and those who are actually homeless (Widdowfield, 1999). These different framings perform certain functions, but they are unlikely to provide a valid basis for producing accurate homelessness statistics. Hutson and Liddiard (1994, p. 32) observe: "because different professionals have different definitions of homelessness, so they also produce different statistics. In this way, statistics can tell us more about the organisation collecting them than about the phenomena that are being measured".

In most nations, measurement of homelessness is limited or non-existent, and the lack of an international, standard definition of homelessness means that there is no credible benchmark for governments to be held to. Like poverty and unemployment, homelessness is a relative concept, which "acquires meaning in relation of the housing conventions of a particular culture" (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1992, p. 290). Residents of boarding houses, for example, have a relatively high level of security of tenure in some countries and virtually no security of tenure in others. Living situations included in classifications of homelessness will not be

internationally constant, but a valid conceptual definition is necessary to guide consistent decision-making as to which people, within which living situations, should be classified as homeless in each context.

This paper has two aims: first, to analyse and critique the validity of an important and relatively new approach to defining and classifying homelessness – the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS); and second, to promote comparative discussion and debate, we present a modified approach to defining and classifying homelessness.

Developed by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) and the European Observatory on Homelessness, ETHOS is both a definition and a typology (or classification) of homelessness; that is, it proposes how the homeless population should be identified and divides the population into discrete subgroups. There are two reasons for focusing on ETHOS. First, it is one of the few definitions of homelessness that is conceptually based, and its conceptual foundation is explained more thoroughly than any other definition. ETHOS has been heralded as offering, “researchers in Europe (and abroad) a thoroughly well conceptualized definition of homelessness and residential instability” (Culhane and Byrne, 2010, p. 9), but thorough critique of its conceptualisation has been lacking. Secondly, the ETHOS approach is increasingly prominent. It has been advocated as providing an appropriate basis for measuring homelessness in Europe (Edgar *et al.*, 2007; FEANTSA, 2008) and is “widely accepted and frequently quoted in almost all European countries” (Busch-Geertsema, 2010, p. 21). The independent jury of the 2010 European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (2010) recommended that this definition be adopted as the official European Union definition of homelessness, and a number of countries have adjusted or refined their national definitions of homelessness to fit more closely with ETHOS.

This paper is structured as follows: we begin by describing a set of considerations and criteria that can be used to assess any system for defining, classifying and measuring phenomena in a quantitative way. The two parts of the ETHOS approach to conceptualising homelessness – the model and classification – are then examined through application of the relevant criteria. Finally, a modified approach to conceptualising homelessness that the authors have developed and believe to be valid is described as a way of identifying potential improvements to the ETHOS approach.

Methods

Defining and measuring any phenomenon involves a large number of factors and considerations. Such measurement questions occur across all areas of public policy and many disciplines, such as public health surveillance. We find it useful to group these considerations into four categories, represented by four C's: Context; Conceptualisation; Case (or operational) definition; and 'Can do'.

Applying these considerations to homelessness, the first C – Context – refers to the institutional, cultural, and governance environment in which a definition of homelessness is embedded. This context includes the nature of the agencies concerned with measuring homelessness and their purposes for carrying out such measurement. A particularly important factor is whether their purpose is policy-orientated (such as setting and monitoring housing policy) or more operational (such as making decisions about how to manage individuals who are currently at risk of homelessness). The context includes some assessment of the importance of measuring homelessness. Arguments for the importance of this activity have been made in the introduction, so we take it as a given that homelessness should be defined and measured.

The second C – Conceptualisation – refers to the validity of the definition and classification of homelessness. Of particular importance is construct validity, which is the degree to which "...the measurement corresponds to theoretical concepts (constructs) concerning the phenomenon under study" (Porta *et al.*, 2008, p. 252). Acceptance of the definition is also likely to be increased by face validity; that is, it "... appears reasonable on superficial inspection" (Porta *et al.*, 2008, p. 91). The conceptualisation stage includes developing the criteria that define the concept and classifying the population identified by these criteria into subgroups according to selected characteristic(s). The criteria should be clearly defined and consistently applied; exceptions to the rules should be defensible. Classification systems have additional requirements, including the need for them to be exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Hoffmann and Chamie, 1999).

The third C – Case (or operational) definition – refers to the need for the concept to be translated into a meaningful description of what is being measured – in this instance homelessness and categories thereof. A case definition stipulates how the dimensions of a concept of homelessness should be applied in the real world. Many variables are continuous, so thresholds usually have to be set, and these should be set in a meaningful and defensible way. A case definition should be accurate, achieving an optimal balance between sensitivity (correctly identifying homeless people in the population as homeless) and specificity (correctly identifying non-homeless people in the population as non-homeless). The case definition should

involve consideration of what duration of exposure to homelessness qualifies a person as homeless (e.g. should a person qualify as homeless if they have been in a 'homeless situation' for an hour, a day, a week, or longer?).

There are also decisions to be made about the statistical measures that will be generated from application of the case definition, particularly about measuring prevalence (i.e. total number or proportion of homeless people in a population at a specified point in time or over a specified period – called point prevalence and period prevalence, respectively), measuring incidence (i.e. number or rate of new cases of homelessness in a population over a given time period), and lifetime measures (i.e. what proportion of the population has been homeless at some stage in their lives). In the homelessness literature, point prevalence is sometimes called 'stock', and incidence referred to as 'inflow' (Edgar *et al.*, 2007). Whichever measure is of interest, the reference period should be consistent; that is, a person must meet the criteria of the case definition on a specified date or during a specified time period in order to be counted as homeless. National level statistics would almost invariably report on point prevalence (prevalence at a specified point in time). It is necessary to specify and standardise these reference period issues to ensure homelessness data are comparable.

The last C – 'Can do' – refers to having a system that makes measuring homelessness possible. This consideration includes questions around the practicality, acceptability and affordability of measuring homelessness. A definition that meets these criteria is more likely to be adopted and used, which is an essential requirement for generating information on the size and characteristics of the homeless population. A highly useable definition is also likely to be used in a consistent way over time and in different places, thus improving reliability. Reliability refers "...to the degree to which the results obtained by a measurement procedure can be replicated" (Porta *et al.*, 2008, p. 214). In other words, any definition of homelessness should produce the same results when applied in diverse countries and over time, where the underlying level of homelessness is similar.

There are some obvious tensions between these measurement requirements. Developing a measure that has high validity in the conceptualisation stage and is highly practical in terms of the 'can do' aspect is particularly challenging. The choice of case definition will usually be a compromise between these considerations, though such trade-offs are not inevitable. One could argue that a definition that has high face validity is likely to be acceptable and used in a more consistent, and therefore more reliable, manner.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider all the requirements of an effective system for measuring homelessness; instead, we focus only on conceptualisation, but stress that a valid concept of homelessness is the basis of a meaningful case

definition and should guide the development of data collection. The ETHOS model and classification of homelessness will now be assessed for validity according to the criteria described above.

The ETHOS Approach

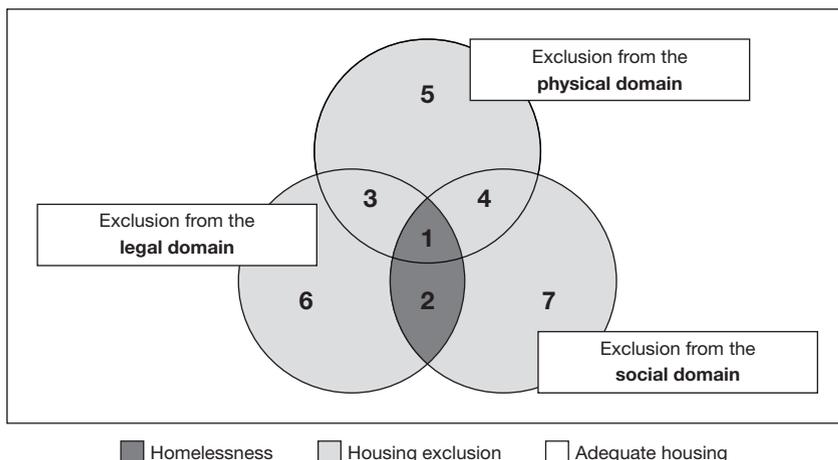
The conceptual model

The ETHOS conceptual model was developed by the scholars Bill Edgar, Joe Doherty, and Hank Meert. It was first published in the *Second Review of Statistics on Homelessness in Europe* (Edgar *et al.*, 2003), was further refined in the following year's review, and has not changed since then (as per the most recent *European Review of Statistics on Homelessness* (Edgar, 2009)). The model focuses on living situations, and calls an adequate living situation 'a home'. Three domains are identified as constituting a home; living situations that are deficient in one or more of these domains are taken to represent homelessness and housing exclusion. These three domains of home are described as:

“having a decent dwelling (or space) adequate to meet the needs of the person and his/her family (*physical domain*); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy social relations (*social domain*); and having exclusive possession, security of occupation and legal title (*legal domain*)” (Edgar, 2009, p. 15)

These domains are said to relate to each other as per Figure 1.

Figure 1 ETHOS model for defining living situations as homelessness, housing exclusion, or adequate housing according to physical, legal, and social domains



Source: adapted from Edgar, 2009, p. 16.

According to this model, a population can be categorised into three groups at the time of enumeration:

- i) the homeless population (shaded dark grey in Figure 1);
- ii) the population experiencing housing exclusion (shaded light grey in Figure 1);
and
- iii) the adequately housed population (not experiencing homelessness or housing exclusion – represented by the white space outside the circles in Figure 1).

The area within the circles is divided into seven distinct areas according to the way the circles overlap; these are taken to represent seven distinct categories of homelessness and housing exclusion. Despite being a conceptual step up from many previous and existing definitions of homelessness, we consider this model to have two main shortcomings in terms of validity: lack of clear rationale for the threshold between homelessness and housing exclusion; and failure to take account of why people are in a living situation that is inadequate for permanent habitation. These problems will now be discussed in turn.

A seemingly arbitrary threshold between homelessness and housing exclusion

The first threat to the validity of the model arises from where the threshold is drawn between homelessness and housing exclusion; this seems to be arbitrary, but it should be meaningful.

The three ‘domains of home’ shown in Figure 1 – physical (physical adequacy), legal (exclusive possession, security of occupation, and legal title), and social (privacy and ability to enjoy social relations) – seem to be reasonable descriptors of the essential elements of a minimally adequate place of human habitation; they are consistent with a rights-based approach. It also seems reasonable that exclusion from two of the three essential elements of a home should be set as the threshold for homelessness, given the three-tiered model of housing adequacy that Figure 1 illustrates. Identifying ‘homeless’ living situations as those at the most severe end of housing deprivation, whereby a person is excluded from multiple core elements of adequate housing, has strong face validity.

However, Figure 1 shows that homelessness corresponds to living situations in which the residents are excluded from at least two of the three domains, but only if two of these domains are ‘legal’ and ‘social’. Regarding the intersection of these two domains as homelessness, but relegating intersections of the other domains (Categories 3 and 4 in Figure 1) to housing exclusion does not seem to have face validity, and the rationale is not explained.

Category 3 represents living situations that are lacking in both the physical domain (physically inadequate) and the legal domain (residents lack exclusive possession, security of occupation, or legal title); an example of this kind of living situation would be a makeshift shelter on public land. We question why exclusion from these two essential domains should not qualify a living situation as homeless? It does not seem reasonable that a person living in a night shelter should be regarded as homeless (see Table 1), but if they were to move into a makeshift dwelling they would be relegated to the housing exclusion category.

Category 4 represents living situations that are lacking in both the physical and social domains; an example of this kind of living situation would be a legally tenured house without basic sanitary facilities (whereby residents are unable to maintain privacy because they have to go outside of their dwelling or property and into public space to use a bathroom). Again, we question why a person living in this situation (in developed countries at least) should not be included within the definition of homelessness?

No 'circumstances' criterion

The second issue we raise in regard to ETHOS is that the model relates only to people's places of habitation at a given time and not to their circumstances. Not everyone living in a dwelling (or space) that is deemed 'not a home' is homeless or experiencing housing exclusion. At any given time, many people will be staying in temporary or collective accommodation – for example, people on holiday staying in a tent or a hotel, people who have moved to a new town and are staying with friends until they find a home of their own, or people living in student hostels. There are some indications in the ETHOS typology that 'having no other address' and 'lacking housing' are regarded as criteria that distinguish homeless people from others staying in inadequate living situations. All criteria used to define a concept should be explicit in the conceptual model – they should not appear for the first time in a classification. Failing to include criteria in a conceptual model risks inconsistent application (across living situations and across nations); it also obscures these criteria from debate about how they should be defined and operationalised. 'Lack of housing', for instance, is only mentioned as a criterion for assessing people in two types of living situation in the ETHOS typology (medical institutions and staying temporarily with family or friends) (see Edgar, 2009). It is not clear whether 'lack of housing' should be applied consistently to all living situations, and if not, why it should only be applied to these two situations. The question of how 'lack of housing' should be operationalised is given little attention in literature concerning the measurement of homelessness.

The ETHOS Typology

The seven theoretical categories of homelessness and housing exclusion shown in Figure 1 translate into the ETHOS typology, which consists of thirteen categories containing twenty-four discrete living situations (FEANTSA, 2007). These categories are grouped under four headings: roofless, houseless, insecure, and inadequate accommodation. The roofless and houseless categories together define homelessness; insecure and inadequate are categories of housing exclusion. The typology is shown in Table 1 on the following page.

This typology is not intended as a definitive classification of living situations into homelessness and housing exclusion categories, as this will vary according to national (and possibly regional) housing standards, norms, and tenancy law. However, the typology is presented as a guide to classifying living situations according to the conceptual model. The central requirement of this typology, therefore, is that it corresponds to the conceptual model (construct validity) – this will be assessed in the next section. Following this, two other aspects of the typology will be discussed: exhaustiveness and reference period consistency.

Table 1 ETHOS – European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

	Conceptual category	Operational category	Living situation		
Homelessness	Roofless	1	People living rough	1.1	Public space or external space
		2	People staying in a night shelter	2.1	Night shelter
	Houseless	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1	Homeless hostel
				3.2	Temporary accommodation
				3.3	Transitional supported accommodation
		4	People in a women's shelter	4.1	Women's shelter accommodation
		5	People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1	Temporary accommodation, reception centres
				5.2	Migrant workers' accommodation
		6	People due to be released from institutions	6.1	Penal institutions
	6.2			Medical institutions	
	6.3			Children's institutions/homes	
	7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1	Residential care for older homeless people	
			7.2	Supported accommodation for formerly homeless persons	
Housing exclusion	Insecure	8	People living in insecure accommodation	8.1	Temporarily with family/friends
				8.2	No legal (sub) tenancy
				8.3	Illegal occupation of land
	9	People living under threat of eviction	9.1	Legal orders enforced (rented)	
			9.2	Repossession orders (owned)	
	10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded incidents	
	Inadequate	11	People living in temporary/non-conventional structures	11.1	Mobile homes
				11.2	Non-conventional building
				11.3	Temporary structure
12		People living in unfit housing	12.1	Occupied dwelling unfit for habitation	
13		People living in extreme overcrowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding	

Source: adapted from FEANTSA, 2007

Construct validity

The conceptual model defines a living situation as homeless if security of tenure and private and safe personal space are lacking, or if these two aspects plus physical adequacy are lacking. Looking down the 'Operational category' column in Table 1, there are a number of categories for which the application of these criteria is unclear. People living temporarily with friends or family (due to lack of housing) (Category 8.1), for example, are classified as housing excluded, but it seems likely that in many contexts they would satisfy the homelessness criteria: lacking security of tenure

(legal domain) and lacking private personal space (social domain). The validity of the typology would be improved if the connections between the conceptual model and the stated operational categories were clarified.

The validity of a typology is also compromised if criteria are introduced that are not in the conceptual model. This point has already been discussed in reference to 'circumstances' criteria. Another criterion that appears in the typology but not in the conceptual model is 'targeting'. Institutions targeted to homeless people are included under the roofless and houseless categories, which mean that these living situations do not meet the requirements of the legal and social domains (and the physical domain in the case of night shelters). Accommodation targeted to immigrants is also included under the houseless category. However, many other collective living situations (institutional and non-institutional) are similar to these 'targeted' institutions in terms of legal and social domains. People staying in youth hostels or hospitals, for example, are also unlikely to have security of tenure or private space for social relations. It seems that some types of institutions are exempted from application of the 'three domains of home' concept, or that there is an extra criterion – 'targeted to homeless people or immigrants'. Whatever the case, it should be made clear in the conceptual model.

Exhaustiveness

As a classification system, the ETHOS typology should define mutually exclusive categories and be exhaustive; that is, every living situation should be appraised according to the 'three domains of home' and classified as homelessness, housing exclusion, or adequate accommodation. The typology does describe mutually exclusive categories of living situations, but it lacks exhaustiveness.

Commercial (non-institutional) collective living situations in which multiple households live in the same building or on the same site – such as boarding houses and camping grounds – do not appear in the typology. In many countries, people living in these settings would not be considered homeless because the dwellings are habitable and they have security of tenure. In some countries, however, this is not the case. In New Zealand, for example, camping ground residents have no security of tenure, and tenancy rights for commercial boarding house tenants are significantly weaker than for those in private rental housing. In regard to the social domain, a person living in a dwelling in which they must share a communal bathroom and kitchen with other individuals or families certainly does not have the same level of privacy as someone living in a conventional house. Privacy in a commercial collective living situation might also be compromised by the level of access that a manager has to a person's bedroom or dwelling, compared to private rental accommodation. It is therefore possible that people in these living situations will qualify as homeless according to the ETHOS conceptual model in certain contexts. In

order to promote consistent and exhaustive national classifications of homelessness, comprehensive guidance as to how the 'three domains of home' should be interpreted would be useful – particularly for the social domain, which seems to be the least straightforward.

Reference period consistency

When classifying a population into different categories (for prevalence or incidence measures), it is important that the entire population is assessed using a consistent reference period. The ETHOS typology applies different reference periods – past, present, and future – to different categories of the homeless population. For most categories, it is implied that the person must be homeless at the time of enumeration to be counted as homeless. But some people who seem likely to *become* homeless (people due to be released from institutions) and some who *used to be* homeless (who are receiving longer-term support) are also called homeless (Categories 6 and 7 in Table 1, respectively). Edgar *et al.* (2007) concede that people in both of these categories are not actually homeless, but justify their inclusion in the definition of homelessness as pragmatic because they are populations that are relevant to homelessness policy and should thus be monitored. While we agree that these populations (at risk of homelessness and formerly homeless people) are relevant to homelessness policy and should be monitored, we think it is necessary to distinguish them clearly, rather than conflate them with the homeless population. It seems obvious that formerly homeless people, whether they receive ongoing support or not, are 'formerly' homeless and not part of the 'current' or 'actual' homeless population. Distinguishing 'at risk' from 'current' populations is more difficult. The rest of this section addresses this distinction, focusing on people due to be released from institutions.

Some countries classify people who are "due to be released from institutions with no home to go to" as homeless (Busch-Geertsema, 2010, p. 25). Edgar *et al.* (2007, p.68) argue that people who stay in institutions may be regarded as homeless "in the strict sense" if they remain there due to lack of housing. A problem with this argument is that it introduces classification based on the subjective assessment of what a person's housing situation *may be in the future*, rather than what it *is* at the time of enumeration. This concept does not appear in the model and is not applied to any other living situation. If no housing has been organised for a person in an institution to be discharged to, then it is appropriate for them to remain in the institution until it is. If a person is usually homeless but is in hospital at the time of enumeration, they should not be counted as homeless. If they are discharged into homelessness and another count is taken, then they will be counted as homeless,

but a person should be homeless at the time of enumeration in order to be classified as homeless. People due to be released from institutions with no home to go to are at risk of homelessness and should be classified as such.

By way of comparison, consider the case of unemployment. Unemployment is a key economic and social indicator with an established (albeit contested) international definition (Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, 1982) and measurement guidelines (Husmanns, 2007). Classifying a population in terms of their position in the labour force is not binary (employed / unemployed), but includes categories such as 'not in the labour force' (cf. housing exclusion). Specific adaptations of the standard definition of unemployment are recommended to take account of national circumstances (Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, 1982), which also echoes international variation in standards of adequate housing. To be classified as unemployed, a person must actually be unemployed and be seeking and/or available for work at the time of enumeration (or more accurately, within a short reference period of either one week or one day) (Husmanns, 2007). If the principle that is applied in the ETHOS typology were applied to unemployment, all those considered at risk of becoming unemployed in the near future would be counted as unemployed, even though they are employed during the reference period. At times of economic recession especially, knowledge of the number and characteristics of people at risk of unemployment is important to inform economic, labour and welfare policy, but this does not justify expanding the definition of unemployment to include those at risk of losing their jobs. If a person is at risk of unemployment they are not unimportant, but they are not (yet) unemployed.

Another argument for including multiple reference periods in the classification seems to be that: "ETHOS... was developed to reflect different pathways into homelessness and to emphasise the dynamic nature of the process of homelessness" (Edgar, 2009, p. 22). Understanding the experiences of homeless people in regard to residential instability and mobility is important. Edgar *et al.* (2007, p. 198) also state: "an understanding of the pathways into and out of homelessness is a necessary basis for policy development". This is also an important point, but these understandings are not relevant to *defining* homelessness. Describing pathways into and out of homelessness requires a definition of what people are entering and exiting. The concept of movement or dynamism is often aberrantly included in definitions of homelessness (even though it is not actually applied as a criterion) (see United Nations, 2008, Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2008 and UNECE/EUROSTAT, 2006). A homeless person should not have to move around to be classified as homeless; their current living situation is what should be appraised. If a person only stays in a night shelter while they are homeless, for example, they are no less homeless than a person who moves between staying in a night shelter and staying temporarily with friends. Pathways or life-course approaches relate to

patterns of life events over time and cannot logically be the basis for classifying a population as homeless or non-homeless at a point in time. In fact, a robust definition of homelessness is a necessary precursor to being able to identify episodes of homelessness in a housing pathway.

A Modified Approach to Defining and Classifying Homelessness

The definition and classification that we have developed was guided by the ETHOS approach and the *New Zealand Definition of Homelessness* (Statistics New Zealand, 2009a). It seeks to address the perceived weaknesses of ETHOS that have been outlined in this paper.

Conceptual definition of homelessness

Our position is that homelessness should be defined as:

1. Living in a place of habitation (during the reference period) that is below a minimum adequacy standard; and
2. Lacking access to adequate housing.

Both of these criteria should be consistently applied to all people in all living situations, with two exceptions. We follow Chamberlain & MacKenzie's (1992) argument that all institutions, apart from those targeted to homeless people, are 'culturally recognised exceptions' to the minimum adequacy standard, in that it is inappropriate to apply the requirements of tenancy rights and the level of personal private space that a private dwelling affords to institutions such as hospitals and prisons. The second exception is that for institutions targeted to homeless people, the 'lacking access' criterion should not be applied, because being resident in a dwelling of this type is sufficient indication that a person is homeless.

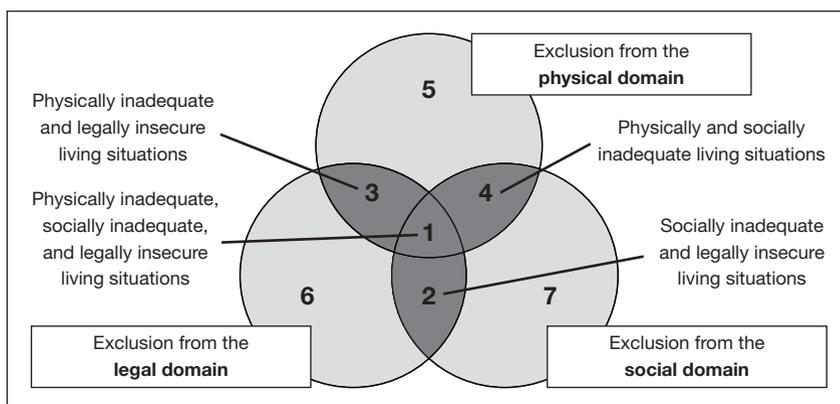
Each of these concepts requires development into more specific criteria to produce a case (or operational) definition. The 'lacking access' criterion will not be developed in this paper, except to say that we think that access to economic resources is a key indicator of access to adequate housing. The first criterion will now be expounded: it relates to the first criticism of ETHOS discussed in this paper – setting a meaningful threshold between 'homelessness' and 'housing exclusion'.

Dividing a population into 'homelessness', 'housing exclusion' and 'adequate housing' categories

Following the ETHOS model, we agree that the physical, legal, and social domains are the three essential elements for defining adequate housing. In contrast to ETHOS, however, we contend that living situations in which residents are excluded

from two or more of these three essential domains, irrespective of which two they are excluded from, should be considered below a minimum adequacy standard. People living in places of habitation that are below a minimum adequacy standard should be considered homeless, provided they also meet the 'lack of access to adequate housing' criterion (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Model for defining a population as homeless, housing excluded, or adequately housed, according to physical, legal, and social domains, and access to adequate housing



- Homelessness:** Living in a place of habitation that is below a minimum adequacy standard (exclusion from two or more domains) AND lacking access to adequate housing
- Housing exclusion:** Living in a place of habitation that is at or above a minimum adequacy standard but not fully adequate (exclusion from one domain) AND lacking access to adequate housing
- Adequate housing:** Living in a place of habitation that satisfies all three domains

Source: adapted from Edgar, 2009, p. 16.

Four broad categories of living situations below the minimum adequacy standard are identified at the areas of intersection in Figure 2:

Intersection 1: Physically inadequate, socially inadequate, and legally insecure living situations

Intersection 2: Socially inadequate and legally insecure living situations

Intersection 3: Physically inadequate and legally insecure living situations

Intersection 4: Physically and socially inadequate living situations

In New Zealand, Intersection 1 is called 'Without accommodation', Intersection 2 contains 'Temporary accommodation' (institutions targeted to homeless people and commercial collective dwellings) and 'Sharing accommodation' (staying with

friends or family), and Intersection 4 is called 'Uninhabitable housing'. In the New Zealand context, Intersection 3 is deemed non-applicable, because people living in places of habitation that lack basic physical requirements (defined as a roof and/or enclosing sides and/or basic amenities) will always also be considered excluded from the social domain because they lack an adequate level of privacy. For this reason, we would locate makeshift dwellings (without basic amenities) in Intersection 1. Internationally, however, there are likely to be places of habitation that would correspond to Intersection 3.

Classification

Table 2 shows how the four broad conceptual categories derived from Figure 2 correspond to specific living situations – again using New Zealand as an example. These living situations were identified by systematically applying the three domains to the official standard classification of places of habitation in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2009b).

Table 2 Classification of the homeless population by living situation in the New Zealand context (provided the 'lack of access to adequate housing' criterion is also met)

Broad homelessness category	Living situation	Domains that define housing adequacy		
		Physical (Habitability)	Social (Privacy)	Legal (Security of tenure)
Without accommodation	a. Living rough	X	X	X
	b. Improvised dwelling	X	X	X
Temporary accommodation	c. Night shelter	✓	X	X
	d. Women's refuge	✓	X	X
	e. Accommodation for the homeless	✓	X	X
	f. Camping ground / motor camp	✓	X	X
	g. Commercial collective accommodation (e.g. boarding houses, motels, hotels)	✓	X	X
	h. Marae (Māori meeting house)	✓	X	X
Sharing accommodation	i. Sharing a permanent private dwelling (staying with friends or relatives)	✓	X	X
Uninhabitable housing	j. Legally tenured dwelling without adequate amenities	X	X	✓

The major difference between the ETHOS classification of homelessness and this classification is the inclusion of the categories 'sharing accommodation' and 'uninhabitable housing'. This difference arises because, in contrast to ETHOS, we

consider both of these living situations to involve exclusion from the social domain. We have not attempted to define or classify housing exclusion or the population at risk of homelessness. In regard to this latter category, we stress that the population at risk of homelessness should be specifically defined, measured and reported – including those due to be released from institutions into homelessness, and possibly other categories such as those due to be evicted into homelessness.

Conclusions

There is no doubt that ETHOS has provided a useful framework for comparing homelessness statistics produced according to disparate national definitions of homelessness across Europe (Edgar, 2009). Members of FEANTSA have clearly found ETHOS useful in highlighting that homelessness is not limited to people living rough, for drawing attention to populations at risk of homelessness, and in providing a common language for advocates.

However, the ETHOS definition and classification is perceived as a valid definition of homelessness to the extent that it is recommended as the official European Union definition of homelessness. Although ETHOS may not have originally been intended as a model for defining and classifying homeless populations, it is being used in this way, and as such should be expected to provide valid guidance.

For comparison, and to encourage further debate, we have described the basics of our approach to conceptualising homelessness, which starts from the ETHOS concept of ‘three domains of home’. We think that this definition overcomes the main shortcomings of the ETHOS conceptualisation highlighted in this paper. This modified approach is not without weaknesses, and criticism is welcomed, but we hope that it provides an example of clear articulation of both the concept of homelessness and a classification that is demonstrably derived from the systematic application of this concept.

In regard to improving the validity of the ETHOS approach, we have four recommendations. First, the rationale for the threshold between homelessness and housing exclusion should be clarified, which may involve a finer definition of the ‘three domains of home’. Secondly, the conceptual definition of homelessness should include all of the criteria necessary to identify a homeless population – in particular, a ‘circumstances’ or ‘lack of access to adequate housing’ criterion. Thirdly, the classification should reflect consistent and exhaustive application of the conceptual model using a consistent reference period. And finally, an ‘at risk of homelessness’ definition and classification should be developed. This should be linked to the definition and classification of homelessness but should not be within it.

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Locked out in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Evictions Due to Rent Arrears in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden

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- › **Abstract_** *Although evictions are a significant cause of homelessness they have received relatively little interest from social scientists. International data are scarce and there are few descriptions of the processes leading to evictions. This paper attempts to shed some light on this under-researched issue. First, an attempt is made to develop a theoretical framework placing evictions in the intersection between civil and social citizenship, and the importance of distinguishing between the macro- and micro- levels in the analysis of evictions is underlined. Secondly, three specific countries are studied: Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. The legal basis for evictions, eviction procedures, and the possibilities for avoiding homelessness arising from rent arrears are presented and compared. Preliminary data on the numbers of evictions are also given. Some striking differences in the process of dealing with evictions between the three countries are brought to light, and the overall lack of data on evictions is emphasized.*
- › **Key Words_** *Evictions; Rent arrears; Social housing; Citizenship; Civil rights; Social rights*

Introduction

By the mid 1990s, the number of households evicted per year in Europe was estimated to be 560 000, involving approximately 1.3 million persons (Avramov, 1996). Evictions, despite contributing significantly to homelessness, have received very little attention in the literature on homelessness. Due to the relative lack of research in this area, our approach is mainly explorative. Initially, a theoretical framework is outlined where evictions are interpreted both in a macro- and micro-perspective. We then apply this framework to three countries: Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. As information on a national level is often scant, we also use information from the cities of Amsterdam, Berlin and Stockholm. Results from this comparative analysis show that rent arrears are the most common cause of evictions, and rent arrears are therefore the focus of this paper. However, the legal basis for evictions, eviction processes and procedures, as well as the possibilities for avoiding homelessness that is due to rent arrears are very different in the three countries.

Evictions: Theoretical Perspectives

For the purposes of this paper, an eviction is the removal of a tenant from a landlord's premises. In most cases, both in Europe and North America, this is the result of conflicts arising from the non-payment of rent by the tenant (Stoner, 1995; Avramov, 1996; Eriksson *et al.*, 2010). In most countries, the procedures for evictions are regulated and so-called 'Self-Help Evictions' (where the landlord padlocks the entrance, disconnects the electricity etc.) are illegal almost everywhere.

Evictions have received very little interest in the social sciences generally (Hartman and Robinson, 2003; Beer *et al.*, 2006; Gottesman, 2007). There has, however, been some increased focus on this matter in recent years. In a European review of statistics on homelessness, Edgar (2009, p.39) connects strategies for combating homelessness with different modes of data collection, concluding that there is an increased reliance on register data "especially for eviction data from the courts" in a number of countries. This can be seen as a consequence of the shift away from emergency services towards "an overarching *aim of prevention*" (*ibid*). The purpose of our study is not to evaluate the importance of evictions in comparison with other causes of homelessness; rather, it seems clear that they represent one major cause of homelessness (Avramov, 1996; Edgar, 2009).

An eviction is the final step in a conflict between a landlord and a tenant. In Europe this conflict is strictly regulated. Evictions can also be analyzed from a macro- and a micro-perspective, while a longitudinal perspective is, of course, necessary in order to understand changes over time. We will, in this section, make an attempt to place the problem in a theoretical context. Although we try to include different

perspectives, our academic approach is essentially grounded in social work and sociology. It is also important to underline that our data sources are meagre and that the following theoretical context is difficult to test empirically. It should be interpreted, rather, as an attempt to understand a phenomenon that may later be tested if richer data becomes available. Accordingly, our presentation of national data later in the article is mainly explorative.

An eviction has both formal and informal causes. As mentioned, rent arrears seem to be the most common formal cause of evictions in many countries. Rent arrears can in turn be caused by structural factors such as unemployment, inadequate income, or the lack of eligibility for rent assistance, but they may also result from a range of individual level factors, such as relationship breakdown. One should also bear in mind that the landlord plays a crucial role once the tenant has formally broken the conditions of the lease. As late as the day of the eviction itself, there is often room for compromise, such as the use of instalment and repayment plans. Finally, it is important to note that factors explaining evictions also can be *effects* of evictions. It is, for example, not unreasonable to expect that evictions trigger relationship breakdowns or make it difficult to maintain employment. Problems that may be present before the eviction might also interact with, and be reinforced by evictions. This complicated context can be difficult to sort out in independent and dependent variables, but could be an important issue for further research.

Our first theoretical approach puts evictions in a macro-historical context, highlighting the basic conflict between the owner and the user of the property. In a famous lecture in 1949, the sociologist T. H. Marshall made a distinction between equality in the social class system and equality of citizenship, where citizenship or full membership of a community "... is not inconsistent with the inequalities which distinguish the various economic levels in the society" (Marshall, 1963, p.72). He divided citizenship into three categories: civil, political and social.

Rather than being strictly divided, the three forms of citizenship were supposed to be seen as a continuous historical process beginning with civil rights – most directly associated with the courts of justice, followed by political rights, and finally social rights. Although the extension of citizenship rights was substantial, there was little effect on social inequality until the beginning of the 20th century. Marshall's approach to social services was that they created equality of status rather than equality of income; it was equalization between individuals within a population rather than between social classes. Social rights might postulate that every member of a society has the right to higher education, health care or housing according to a basic standard recognized by the level of civilization at the time, but a right does not guarantee an equal distribution across social classes. Social services like housing and education are also, because of the qualitative element, more difficult

to define than social insurance, like pensions. What is in many countries codified as a 'right' to housing "...can only be understood in terms of how the relation between state, citizens, and housing provision is in fact perceived in a particular national housing discourse, something that can seldom be summarised in a brief and clear-cut definition" (Bengtsson, 2001). The ownership, quality and price of housing are differentiated, making it difficult to define a minimum standard in the 'right to housing'.

Developments in the 60 years since Marshall's lecture was published (e.g., the breakdown of colonialism, democratization of the former communist countries, globalization, the growth of feminism, and increasingly ethnically diverse populations in Western Europe) have, of course, problematized his theory and given rise to much criticism. It has, for example, been argued that his description of the historical development of citizenship is too Anglophile (Hirschman, 1991; Mann, 1996; Møller & Skaaning, 2010); that it does not take into account the development of women's rights (Walby, 1994); that the concept of nation is problematic (Anderson, 2006); and that his citizenship has a heterosexual bias (Richardson, 1998).

Although civil rights are most commonly associated with individuals, in our view the theoretical framework also applies to companies and organizations. Individuals form organizations, and civil rights, as formulated in the law, do not necessarily make a strict distinction between individuals and organizations. As a matter of fact, the right to create economic organizations can be interpreted as part of the development of civil rights. Political and social rights are, on the other hand, more closely connected to individuals.

This paper is focused on evictions that arise due to rent arrears. According to Marshall's concept of citizenship, one can interpret this as a conflict between civil and social rights. Property owned by an individual or by a company is protected by the same rules, i.e. civil rights. During the 20th century the absolute power of landlords was dissolved in favour of a more balanced relationship between landlords and tenants. The right to evict a tenant was, and is, based on the civil rights that are necessary for individual freedom – in this case the right to own property and the right to justice. A lease is a manifestation of this right. If, however, the lease is broken and the tenant is at risk of losing the housing, social rights are jeopardized. As the security of tenants, like security of tenure and the right to keep basic belongings, has increased with the development of modern European welfare states, one could argue that tenants in a conflict with landlords also have civil rights. These rights are, however, subordinated when it comes to the basic conflict concerning property, where the landlord has strong civil rights.

International research that compares the balance between civil and social rights on the housing market is very meagre. There are some studies in law, in which pre-emption proceedings are compared (Djankov *et al.*, 2003). Our brief comparison of Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden will show significant variations in the regulation and extent of evictions. We argue that some explanations for these differences can be found in power relations, especially between landlords and tenants, where civil and social rights are in focus.

Evictions also have some important characteristics that make it essential to differentiate explanations on macro- and micro-levels. This is especially important in international comparisons and when changes over time are studied. As a lease is almost always a precondition for being registered for rent arrears and consequently also for evictions, people without leases are almost never evicted.¹ In addition, people living with a lease-holder are socially and psychologically affected by evictions, but mostly, they do not appear in the statistics.

This mechanism implies that the number of people without a secure position on the housing market may be large when the actual number of evictions is relatively low, and vice versa where, if the supply of dwellings increases heavily, more people at a comparably high risk of not being able to pay the rent will get their own lease, possibly leading, in turn, to a higher eviction rate. An expansive housing policy could thus, paradoxically, have unintended consequences (Boudon, 1982; Stenberg, 1990).² If the well-intended legislature makes it very difficult to evict tenants, landlords will most probably compensate for this by making increasing demands on potential tenants. One example of this is the long and expensive eviction process in Berlin that makes it very difficult for people on social benefits or with private debts to get a lease, because in order to avoid high costs in terminating a tenancy, landlords prefer solvent tenants. However, the relationship between supply, demand and legal regulations is complex and there are no 'natural laws' in this area. Although it is reasonable to believe that an efficient homelessness prevention policy, for example, could result in a decrease in both homelessness and evictions over time, these complex and sometimes paradoxical relationships are important to consider in analyses of social marginalization in the housing market.

¹ There are some rare exceptions where people are evicted from properties they occupy without judicial grounds.

² This effect might be modified by policy measures like housing benefits and social assistance. As such benefits are often means-tested one could, however, question their efficiency. An investigation of evicted households in Sweden in 1993 (Flyghed and Stenberg, 1993) showed that only 30% received housing benefits and that 75% of households without housing benefits had not even applied for same.

The development of the Swedish housing market is an illustration of this reasoning. A decrease in homelessness (Heule *et al.*, 2010) was, during the 1960s and 1970s, accompanied by an increase in evictions due to a massive supply of new dwellings (Stenberg, 1991; Stenberg *et al.*, 1995)³. New apartments provided space for people without leases, but many of them could not meet their obligations as tenants and were later evicted. When Sweden experienced a severe economic crisis at the beginning of the 1990s, evictions increased in parallel with a shrinking housing market. As a result of the economic crisis, unemployment rose and many people had to give up their homes due to loss of income. At the same time there was a severe halt in the construction of new apartments. When the economy stabilized in the second half of the 1990s and the beginning of the twentieth century, though building remained slow, evictions decreased to a historically low level. Between 1999 and 2005 homelessness increased by about 3000 people (Socialstyrelsen, 2006) and the secondary housing market (temporary accommodation for homeless households) grew from 8500 to 13500 apartments between 1989 and 2001 (Sahlin, 2007). According to the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, this market increased from 11000 to 13400 in the period 2007–2010 (Boverket, 2008; 2010). As the supply of housing didn't change much in the same period, we speculate that a large share of those who had been evicted during the crisis didn't get new leases, which led, in turn, to a lower level of evictions and a larger share of homelessness (Eriksson *et al.*, 2010).

We do not think that this paradox necessarily works in every country and at all times. It illustrates, however, the complexity involved in analyses of change in housing markets. To conclude, the idea of a paradox in evictions is that although, on a micro-level, they represent a disaster as people are forced out of their homes, they might, on a macro-level and in some cases, be interpreted as an indicator of a market that actually provides housing to a larger part of the population. Thus, behind an increasing number of evictions we might find not only individual tragedies but also, perhaps, a housing market that offers more people decent dwellings. In the following sections we will present, respectively, the available statistics on, and the legal bases, processes, and procedures of evictions in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden.

³ In the period 1965-1975 one million new dwellings were built in Sweden.

Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden: A Comparison

This section of the paper includes a comparison both of these three countries and of the cities Amsterdam, Berlin and Stockholm. The comparison is based on statistics that are far from comprehensive, especially in relation to rent arrears and evictions, and our results should therefore be interpreted with caution. The presentation commences with basic statistics on demography, housing markets, and marginalisation measured as rent arrears and evictions. This is followed by a presentation of the legal and administrative framework regulating evictions that arise due to rent arrears.

Population, housing markets and housing marginalization

Basic figures on population, housing markets, and marginalization in the housing markets are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Population and Housing Indicators
Germany/Berlin, The Netherlands/Amsterdam, Sweden/Stockholm (2009)**

	DE	B	NL	A	SE	S
<i>Demography (m)</i>						
Population	82	3,4	16,5	0,75	9,0	0.9
Private Households	40	2,0	7,0	0,1	4,5	n/a
<i>Housing market (m)</i>						
Number of dwellings	39268	1,9	7 107	0,37	4503	0.44
<i>Proportions of all dwellings (%)</i>						
Dwellings in apartment buildings	53 ^a	89,7 ^b	29,0	30	55,0	90
Rented dwellings (social & private)	54	86,0	42,0	84	44,0	53
Social rental dwellings ^c	5	8,5	32,0	55	17,0	24
Vacant dwellings	8	5,5	1,5	4	1,7	n/a
<i>Marginalisation</i>						
Rent arrears (households)	n/a	n/a	n/a	34000	38299 ^d	n/a
Applications of eviction	n/a	9076 ^e	n/a	6000	9714	2005 ^f
Executed evictions	n/a	3700 ^g	5022	1300	3040	627 ^f

Sources:

Germany: www.destatis.de; www.statistik-berlin.de; Senate Department of Integration, Labour and Social Affairs (2011);

Netherlands: van Laere and de Wit (2005); Gemeente Amsterdam (2011);

Sweden: www.scb.se; www.kronofogden.se;

Doi and Haffner (2010); Stockholms läns landsting (2011).

^a Two-dwelling buildings not included. Including two-dwelling buildings, the figure should be 71%.

^b Two-dwelling buildings not included. Including two-dwelling buildings, the figure should be 92%.

^c 2008 in Germany; 2010 in Sweden.

^d Applications to the bailiff for summary proceedings.

^e 10 out of 12 districts (84% of the population).

^f County of Stockholm with 2 million inhabitants; 0.9 million dwellings; 0.7 million multi-family dwellings; 0.4 million rented dwellings; 0.2 million social rental dwellings.

^g Estimation

In terms of population, Germany is by far the largest of the three countries, followed by the Netherlands and then Sweden. In both Germany and Sweden more than half of the dwellings are in apartment buildings. The corresponding rate in both Berlin and Stockholm is 90%. In the Netherlands and in Amsterdam almost one third of the dwellings are in apartment buildings. Rented dwellings are most common in Germany, especially in Berlin at almost 90%. They make up for slightly more than 40% of the housing markets in the Netherlands and Sweden, 84% in Amsterdam and 53% in Stockholm. One third of the dwellings in the Netherlands are social rental dwellings, but only 5% in Germany. In Sweden 17% of the total housing stock is used for social purposes. The Swedish social housing sector is different from the other two countries in the sense that there is no means-testing of new tenants.

As already mentioned, data on rent arrears and evictions are scant. We summarize the identified data in Table 2.

**Table 2: Rent arrears, Applications for eviction and executed evictions
Germany/Berlin, The Netherlands/Amsterdam, Sweden/Stockholm (2009)**

%	DE	B ^a	NL	A	SE	S
<i>Rent arrears⁴</i>						
Population	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.4	n/a
Households	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.9	n/a
All dwellings	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.9	n/a
Rented dwellings	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.1	1.0	n/a
Social rental dwellings	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.0	n/a
<i>Applications of evictions</i>						
Population	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.1	0.1
Households	n/a	0.3	n/a	n/a	0.2	n/a
All dwellings	n/a	0.6	n/a	n/a	0.2	0.2
Rented dwellings	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.3	0.5
Social rental dwellings	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.7	1.3	0.9
<i>Executed evictions</i>						
Population	n/a	n/a	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
Households	n/a	0,004	0.07	0.06	0.07	n/a
All dwellings	n/a	0,002	0.07	n/a	0.07	0.06
Rented dwellings	n/a		n/a	n/a	0.1	0.2
Social rental dwellings	n/a	n/a	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3

Source: Calculations are made from the numbers and percentages given in Table 1, except van Laere and de Wit (2005).

^a 10 out of 12 districts

⁴ At least one month

Germany does not have any national statistics at all. There was an estimated €220-230 million of accumulated rent arrears in Berlin in 2009. Ten out of twelve districts in Berlin had more than 9000 applications for evictions in 2009, and an estimated 3700 out of 5021 scheduled evictions were effectuated. Whilst rent arrears in euro seem to have decreased over the last number of years, applications to court for evictions, and evictions scheduled by the bailiffs, seem to have remained stable.⁵ More data is available in the Netherlands, where about 5000 evictions took place in 2009. In Amsterdam 34,000 households were in rent arrears in the same year, of which 6000 got an eviction order and 1300 were actually evicted.⁶ In comparison with the other countries, Swedish data are the most complete. Almost 85% of evictions are the result of rent arrears, while only about 5% are due to disturbance (Flyghed and Stenberg, 1993; Flyghed, 2000). During 2009, bailiffs in Sweden received 38299 applications for summary proceedings⁷ connected to

⁵ In 2009, the Senate Department for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs was informed of 9076 applications (numbers from social welfare offices in the 10 public districts; two public districts are missing). A total of 5021 scheduled evictions are documented for the 10 public districts; this information was obtained via an e-mail request from Susanne Gerull, who sent another request for information on rent arrears and evictions to the 12 local courts in Berlin in July 2010. No statistics have been collected for the amount of rent arrears claimed by landlords or for court decisions about evictions. On another request in August 2010, 12 of about 280 bailiffs could give information on the numbers of scheduled and executed evictions in 2009. Therefore, the total numbers of executed evictions is not known, but it can be estimated that at least 75% of all scheduled evictions were executed (75-86% reported by the 12 bailiffs). The Verband Berlin-Brandenburgischer Wohnungsunternehmen e.V. (BBU), which is an association of building companies covering 40% of all rented flats in Berlin, has some data, although this is not comprehensive. Total rent arrears among BBU's companies amounted to €91 million in 2009 (Verband Berlin-Brandenburgischer Wohnungsunternehmen e.V. press release, July 16, 2010; email, October 20, 2010). If this were representative of the whole city, the rent arrears of tenants in Berlin would be €220-230 million in 2009.

⁶ The most common reason for termination of a lease and a consequent eviction is rent arrears (Aedes, 2010). Eviction data are only available for the Social Housing Sector in the Netherlands. The national alliance of housing corporations, Aedes, keeps a national record of the number of evictions issued by housing associations. In 2009, a total of 5022 tenants were evicted because of rent arrears. That is 14% less than in 2008, when 5865 people were evicted for defaulting on their rent. Aedes (2010) associates this reduced number of evictions with the responsive collection policies of housing associations; payment issues are brought to light earlier, which also enables payment arrangements to be made earlier. There is no available data on the number of evictions in the private sector in Amsterdam, but there is more documentation on evictions in the social sector. This data emphasises the fact that eviction plays a direct and indirect role in creating homelessness (van Laere and de Wit, 2005).

⁷ Landlords in Sweden can choose between three different strategies to force a tenant in debt to leave the premises; a court verdict, a decision in the Rent Tribunal, or summary proceedings. As summary proceedings are the absolutely most frequent and the fastest of the three options, the other two will be excluded from this paper.

evictions (Kronofogden, 2011a), and 9 714 applications for the execution of evictions, of which 3 040 were executed (Kronofogden, 2011b).⁸ Data for the city of Stockholm are missing but are available for the county of Stockholm. These figures are used to calculate the relative numbers in Table 2.

Regulation of Evictions

The source of all information in Table 3, except months of rent arrears before applications to courts, are cited from Djankov *et al.* (2003), whose article is based on the World Bank-sponsored project *Lex Mundi*, to which member law firms in 109 countries contributed information. The methods used in the project have been criticized (Kern, 2007), and the figures should in any case be interpreted with care. Nevertheless, based on our own knowledge of the processes the data seem to be reasonable. It is only the duration of enforcement for Germany/Berlin that seems to be much too long. As the differences between the three countries are rather large we consider the World Bank figures to reflect real differences.

**Table 3: Duration from Rent Arrears to Evictions
Germany, The Netherlands and Sweden (2009)**

Days	DE	NL	SE
Rent arrears before an application to court can be delivered	60 ⁹	150	6
Duration until completion of service of process	29	17	6
Duration of trial	191	7	135
Duration of enforcement	111	28	19
Total administrative duration (excluding the period before application)	331	52	160
Total duration	391	202	166

Sources:

Germany: Section 543 of the German Civil Code;

The Netherlands: Article 7: 201 of the Civil Code (Burgerlijk Wetboek);

Sweden: Lag (1990: 746) om betalningsföreläggande och handräckning 13 §;

Djankov *et al.* (2003).

⁸ The total number of rent arrears in Stockholm or Sweden is not known. No figures are available for applications for summary proceedings in the county of Stockholm. Corresponding numbers for applications for executions of evictions and evictions are 2 005 and 627 (Kronofogden, 2011b); this equates to one application and 0.3 executed evictions per thousand of the population. This is an historically low level and represents a big decrease since the beginning of the 1990s when almost 8 000 evictions were executed yearly (Eriksson *et al.*, 2010).

⁹ Two months.

In Germany the process, from rent arrears to eviction, can take more than a year. New numbers show that the average duration from the first rent arrears until the eviction is 15.5 months (Artz and Jacoby, 2011). More differentiated but older information about the duration of the eviction process is shown in Table 3. In the Netherlands it can take slightly longer than half a year, and in Sweden the duration is about five months.

In Germany, arrears of two months' rent (or more than one month rent accumulated during two consecutive months) can lead to the instant dismissal of a tenant. If the rent arrears are not cleared in two weeks the landlord can apply to the civil court for eviction. Social services must be informed when the eviction application has gone to court. After approximately two months of rent arrears in the Netherlands, tenants are sent a written demand from the Housing Association's department for debt collection, and a request (usually in writing) to contact the department to make a payment arrangement. The Housing Association usually offers their tenant a repayment, after which, in most cases, the lease is met 'at the last minute'. If the tenant fails to comply during a period of approximately three months, the Housing Association hands the case over to the bailiff. Rents in Sweden are normally paid monthly, and seven days after the rent is due the tenant formally loses the right to the contract. The landlord may now notify the tenant that he wishes to terminate the tenancy; because of the potential social consequences of an eviction and according to a 1978 Act, the landlord is obliged to inform the local social service administration about the pending eviction.

In all three countries a tenant can regain the tenancy if the rent arrears are regulated within a certain period of time after the eviction application is served (Germany) or sent to court (Sweden). This period is included in the 'duration of trial' in Table 3. In Sweden the period is three weeks after the notice to quit, in the Netherlands two weeks and in Germany two months. Previous debts may, however, disqualify a tenant from this option. In Germany, the protection period does not apply if, during the previous two years, rent arrears have been paid after a notice to quit. The number of permitted earlier debts is not specified in the Swedish regulation. If rent arrears are not settled during the protection period the landlord can get a court decision on the debt and eviction.

When the court decision is legally binding, the bailiff in question may schedule the eviction; in Germany this is normally executed within the following four weeks. After the debt has been handed to the Dutch bailiff he tries to collect the rent arrears or make a payment arrangement. If that does not help, the tenant will receive a summons for a court hearing at which the judge will issue an eviction order. Based on this order, the landlord may terminate the lease. There is normally a month between the issuing of an eviction order and the actual eviction. After the three week period of protection

in Sweden the tenant does not have any legal power to regain the lease, and the landlord is in charge of every future step. Sweden has two forms of summary proceedings: debt collection proceedings (*betalningsföreläggande*) and assistance (*handräckning*) (Lindell, 2004). In most cases the landlord has two claims: recovering the tenant's debt and evicting the tenant from the apartment. There is a special rule making it possible for the landlord to assert both claims in the same action (Lindell, 2004), something that is the normal case in Germany. In most cases the bailiff makes a judgement of enforcement (execution title) which obliges a tenant to pay rent that is due and vacate the apartment after the right to possess it no longer exists. This execution title gives the landlord the right to apply to the bailiff for an execution of the eviction at the court. When the bailiff has set a date for the eviction a second message is sent to the local social services.

There are basically three eviction methods in Sweden. The most common is called 'the change of name- and lock method'. In this case the bailiff changes the family name on the door to the name of the landlord. The lock is also changed so that the tenant cannot re-enter the apartment. When this is done the status of the apartment is that of a place of storage. If the landlord has applied for both an eviction and payment of debt, the bailiff assesses the value of the tenant's belongings. It is the responsibility of the landlord to store the belongings in the apartment for three months. The tenant may collect his or her belongings during this period. After the three-month period the landlord can dispose of whatever may be left in the apartment. The second method is called 'stepwise eviction'. During the first visit to the apartment the bailiff changes the lock on the door before returning the next day to empty the apartment and store the property. In this case the bailiff is responsible for the belongings during the three-month period. The last option is an 'immediate eviction'.

In Germany the relevant bailiff will schedule the eviction when the landlord has paid the advance payment, and the bailiff must also inform the local authorities. A forwarding agency and a lock and key service are then booked and the flat is emptied at the scheduled time. If the former tenants are present they may take their personal belongings and they must hand over their keys. Usually, the tenants have already left the flat. After the eviction the tenant's belongings have to be stored for a period of time unless they are classified as waste, in which case they are disposed of. The belongings may be redeemed by the former tenant or sold to cover the debt and procedural costs. The total cost from the first month of rent arrears to the actual execution of the eviction can be very high. The average cost, including rent arrears and fees to attorneys, courts and bailiffs, was around €7 000 for a single tenant and €11 000 for a family of three in 2004 (Gerull, 2004).

In the Netherlands, evictions are carried out by a specially appointed team that consists of a bailiff, police officers and the staff of municipal services such as cleaning and estate management. Tenants are usually absent during the eviction and have left their furniture behind. The eviction team empties the house of all its contents, separating it into categories. Household effects considered devoid of value are thrown away, and other effects are taken to a municipal storage space where they are kept for a maximum of six months. The previous tenants may collect their household contents within this period, following payment of transport and storage costs. Contents that are not collected within six months are sold by auction or destroyed. Evictions in the Netherlands are also costly for housing associations; there are the rent arrears that cannot be recovered, bailiff and litigation costs, and the cost of repairs for any damage to the property. The total cost of an eviction has been estimated at an average of €3600 (van Laere and de Wit, 2005). Preventing evictions is therefore not only important for housing associations in terms of preserving social cohesion, but also from a financial point of view. Previously, housing associations often dealt with procedures lasting as long as a year. This meant that tenants accumulated huge debts that they were unable to repay. However, housing associations have now changed their approach, becoming more business-minded in their debt collecting policies. This means bringing the cases to court earlier and referring defaulters to the bailiff at an earlier stage.

Prevention

Prevention can be defined on a general level as social policy at large, anti-poverty measures etc. We focus more specifically on prevention directed at rent arrears and evictions. That does not mean that we are unaware of the importance of the total political and social context, but the scope of this article does not allow for a more comprehensive discussion in this regard.

Prevention in Germany/Berlin

In 2005 new regulations separated the administration of social benefits into two authorities: federal, for people able to work (Federal Employment Agency/job centres); and municipal, for people unable to work (social welfare offices). These authorities are also responsible for rent arrears benefits. The legal grounds are basically the same – that rent arrears *may* be paid when “necessary for the protection of the accommodation or for the rectification of a comparable emergency”.¹⁰ Entitlement *should* be assumed if this is “justified and necessary and there is a risk of otherwise becoming homeless.” Households not receiving social benefits may also be entitled to debt relief through the social welfare office according to SGB XII

¹⁰ That is energy arrears (electricity and gas).

regulations. Even before the 2005 reform, several different municipal departments were responsible for the organisation of support for people in urgent need of housing (the social welfare office; the office for security and order; the youth welfare office for households with children; the local health authority for people with psychiatric problems etc.). The new structure of social benefits for the long-term unemployed, contained in two separate laws, means that the coordination of advice and support has become even more difficult.

In the case of eviction actions resulting from rent arrears, the courts are obliged to inform the relevant agencies that provide social benefits or minimum allowances for jobseekers. Bailiffs are also required to inform social authorities of any scheduled evictions. The intention behind these regulations is to provide those tenants in default with advice and support. In practice they are not particularly effective, however. In spite of a national legal basis, preventive actions and approaches are not unified and they are somewhat restrictive. Additionally, in most cases decisions about rent arrears benefits are made by overworked administrative staff, and not social workers, in the new job centres. According to the law, people in rent arrears who are unable to clear their debt should receive help. In practice, a lot of applications are turned down – in the first instance at the job centres. This has increased the risk for the long-term unemployed in rent arrears of becoming homeless (Busch-Geertsema and Evers, 2007; FEANTSA and BAGW, 2008). Of course some debtors can pay their rent arrears in instalments – with or without help from the municipal authorities or NGO services – but the most common reason for the refusal of applications for rent arrears benefit is a lack of knowledge on the part of officials about the law, as well as informal instructions given on the basis of a need for cuts in public expenditure (Gerull, 2008). Paradoxically, this can result in higher costs for public authorities in accomodating people made homeless. For these reasons, a new regulation is planned for Berlin that will ensure denied applications are assessed and approved by social welfare offices. Approaches to getting in touch with tenants in default also differ widely. The approach taken by job centres is to inform the official in charge who, in turn, discusses the problem with the client. Where the social welfare office is responsible (and they often do not know the tenant in question), they usually send a letter to the household, though some of them file the court and bailiff information without trying to establish contact. When children are involved and there is a risk of their becoming homeless, the agency that is responsible might make a home visit, but this is unusual in other cases (ibid).

The 12 autonomous public districts in Berlin do not have a consistent strategy for preventing homelessness in cases of rent arrears. Guidelines formulated in 1998 by the Senate Department are obsolete. In contrast to most other municipalities, non-statutory service providers are sometimes involved in the support of households with rent arrears in Berlin. There is a specific ambulant assistance service

(‘assisted single living’) that provides counselling by social workers, and supports needy persons so that they can keep their flats – sometimes in combination with an application for debt relief to the relevant social welfare office or job centre.

High eviction costs have also made housing companies aware of the importance of avoiding evictions, and some providers of non-statutory welfare have been cooperating for years with the public or private housing industry; in some cases these finance the social workers (Gerull, 2003). Another consequence of the long and expensive process of eviction is renting practice in Berlin. People on social benefits and/or with private debts experience significant problems getting a rent contract. The barriers blocking access to the housing market for needy persons seen as potentially ‘risky tenants’ could perhaps be interpreted as a result of the relatively strong legal protection in Germany for existing tenants as explained in the theoretical part of this paper. In 2009, 10 034 households (55% single-person households) in Berlin applied for a waiver of rent or energy arrears at job centres.¹¹ The number of applications to social welfare offices are not known, but are most likely smaller. Of the applications to job centres, 54% were approved. As most households with rent arrears in Berlin are poor and unable to pay rent arrears themselves (Gerull, 2003), the rate of approved applications is surprisingly low – but very few appeal the decision.

In relation to Marshall’s theory of civil, social and political rights, it is evident that – referring to evictions resulting from rent arrears – social rights are very strong in Germany. Even if an application for eviction is being considered, the tenant in question can safeguard his/her flat by paying their debt within a certain period of time. The right to own property is not affected, but neither is the landlord’s flat fully at their disposal, dependent on circumstances, even though the lease has been breached. On the other hand, however, the comprehensive set of options for indemnifying people against losing their flats is not sufficiently used by the administration.

Prevention in the Netherlands/Amsterdam

Rented housing in Amsterdam is controlled either by the private or the social rental sector. There is no information available on the extent to which the private rented sector tries to prevent evictions. Some information is available, however, on the precautions taken by housing associations. There are currently twelve active housing associations in Amsterdam. Three of these associations offer home visits to households that are on the verge of eviction. The other nine associations limit their efforts to trying to contact the households by phone or by letter. Van Laere and de Wit (2005) found that personal contact was established with just one third of all households at risk of eviction.

¹¹ Email by the Senate Department for Integration, Labor and Social Affairs, August 18, 2010.

In Amsterdam a number of other initiatives have been undertaken to prevent evictions. In 1997, the workgroup 'The Flying Dutchman' – a cooperation of several government-funded social workers from the Salvation Army, and a shelter for homeless people in Amsterdam – adopted a pro-active approach to the eviction issue, and began providing services and shelter for those at risk (Rakers and de Jong, 2006). As soon as the social workers from 'The Flying Dutchman' received word that a tenant had defaulted on rent and was at risk of being evicted, they would pay an unsolicited visit to the tenant to offer him or her practical help to avert the eviction process. They offered an alternative to the administrative approach generally adopted by housing associations, where tenants were rarely visited or face-to-face contact sought, but rather, correspondence was conducted by post. This outreach approach managed to prevent dozens of evictions every year. After 2004 the outreach approach pioneered by 'The Flying Dutchman' was implemented city-wide under the new name 'Er-op-af' (let's do it) (Hogeschool van Amsterdam, 2006). In addition to this new strategy, housing associations are encouraged to give defaulters a second chance under what is referred to as the 'second chance' policy. This involves the association signing a new lease with the tenant that includes special conditions. The tenant must sign a letter of agreement in which he or she agrees to be supervised by the social services or a debt relief agency. Alternatively, additional rules of conduct can be included in the lease. If the tenant fails to comply with the special conditions, eviction will proceed (Lievelling and Renooy, 2002; Kloppenburg *et al.*, 2009).

Prevention in Sweden/Stockholm

Prevention of evictions, and in consequence homelessness, has occasionally been the objective of political reform in Sweden. As early as 1936 an act was passed that banned the use of eviction as a weapon in labour market conflicts. In 1978 an obligation was introduced for landlords to inform local social services when a tenant is served a notice to quit and when the bailiff has set a date for eviction. The law was passed as a preventative measure. Furthermore, the periods after which the tenant loses the right to the lease and during which it is possible to regain the lease was prolonged at the beginning of the 1990s. No Swedish authority has the immediate responsibility to help tenants with rent arrears, but according to the Swedish Social Services Act, households unable to support themselves or their families may be entitled to a means-tested welfare benefit. If a household applies for economic help in settling arrears, a social worker carries out an investigation to decide whether or not the household had the means to pay the rent at the time it should have been paid; if it is decided that they had been unable to pay at the time, or if special circumstances like illness prevented them from paying, they may be granted economic help to cover the rent arrears. If, on the other hand, it is decided that the household had sufficient means to pay the rent at the time, the application

is rejected. It is often, however, the severe consequences of not paying rent arrears – like the eviction of families with children – that leads to economic support and help with repayment being provided. If a family with children is evicted, the local social service will often get involved, but no regulations stipulate that they must. In 2005 a public investigation drew attention to the issue of evictions and homelessness among Swedish children (Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 2005:88). The results started a debate, but no real changes were made to help decrease the number of children evicted. In the spring of 2010 the Swedish government initiated a new investigation on evictions of children (Stenberg *et al.*, 2011). The report is currently being prepared in the Department of Social Affairs, and is expected to lead to changes in Swedish law and regulations.

The social rights of tenants in Sweden do not seem to be as strong as in Germany and the Netherlands. The eviction process, from rent arrears to the eviction itself, is of the shortest duration in Sweden, where after only three weeks of rent arrears the tenant formally loses all rights to the lease. It is, of course, impossible to explain this difference at this stage, but it may be that Swedish eviction regulations and housing policy presupposes the presence of a comprehensive social security system to such a degree that people at the margin are overlooked (for a discussion of the organisation of the Swedish welfare state and homelessness see Olsson and Nordfeldt, 2008).

Comparison and Conclusions

Making international comparisons on evictions and housing marginalization is a very difficult task. Moreover, evictions as a contributory factor in the causation of homelessness has received relatively little interest from researchers and politicians. One reason may be a lack of data; currently data are largely non-existent and comparable indicators are rare. The intention behind this preliminary comparison of three European countries and cities has been to shed light on this largely hidden issue.

In most cases, evictions are the result of rent arrears, but none of the countries included in this study provide reliable data on the number of tenants in rent arrears. Comprehensive national statistics on evictions are only available in Sweden. In the Netherlands, data are only available for social housing, and in Germany there are no official data at all. The figures given in this paper should consequently be treated with caution. A thorough comparison of the level of evictions in the three countries does not only require reliable data, but the number of evictions must also be related to a proper denominator and at present there are no obvious measures for this purpose. Relating the number of evictions to population size only would be biased due to the composition of the housing market. The proportion living in rented

housing, a prerequisite for being at risk of eviction is different in each of the countries included. It is extraordinarily high in Germany, which could be a reason for the comparatively strong protection of tenants by tenancy law. Also, the stock of dwellings in the rented housing market is varied, and evictions are probably concentrated in the social housing sector.

Although the process from rent arrears to eviction is strictly regulated, the steps and the length of the process differ significantly between the countries. The duration from rent arrears to eviction ranges from 3 months in Sweden, to 6 months in the Netherlands, and to more than 15 months in Germany, but the process in Sweden is often shorter than three months. These differences in time periods have several consequences for the tenants at risk of being evicted. A long period between the first rent arrears and the executed eviction might be interpreted as something positive for the tenants. However, as seen in the Netherlands, for example, this might cause unnecessary problems both for the tenant and the landlord as the debt becomes insurmountable.

Evictions take place in the intersection between civil and social rights: the right for a property owner to safeguard their rental income and the citizen's right to decent housing. This challenge could be the reason that in all three countries, local social services have to be informed about evictions. However the legal options for protecting people in rent arrears from losing their flats are quite different in the countries compared; Germany seems to offer tenants and administration the most authority to prevent homelessness against the will of the landlords concerned. Because a lease is necessary for an eviction (as defined in this paper) to take place, homeless people cannot be evicted. Thus, an increasing number of evictions might in some cases be an indicator of fewer people being homeless, as described in the case of Sweden. This paradox is an example of the need for more research that includes evictions as an important factor in understanding social marginalization on the housing market.

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Models of Social Action and Homeless Support Services Mapping for some Major European Train Stations

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- › **Abstract_** *This article summarises the main results obtained from a study carried out in the framework of the EU HOPE (Homeless People in European Train Stations) Project. This study describes and compares the phenomenon of social marginalisation in five major European train stations: Rome's Termini Station, Gare du Nord in Paris, Berlin's Zoo Station, Brussels' Gare Centrale, and Luxembourg's City Station. It focuses on homeless people, and aims to describe the systems of social organisations and agencies that provide support in the railway stations concerned – precious resources for meeting the needs of the homeless population in those areas. This paper provides a detailed description of changes being experienced by these homeless populations; comparisons between stations are made, and a critical analysis of the action methods adopted by the various social organisations is undertaken, which highlights their strengths and weaknesses, their levels of cooperation, and their relationships with other actors operating within the stations. Finally, some policy recommendations are made aimed at strengthening these networks of help and support.*
- › **Keywords_** *Railway Stations, European Capital Cities, Homelessness, Social Organisation, Support Services, Comparative Action Models.*

Introduction

The railway station – whose buildings are tangibly and symbolically crucial to urban social dynamics – assumes many different functions, some of which are not directly related to its original role (Bowie, 1996). A physical point for travel and a specific expression of mobility behaviours and styles, the railway station becomes a shelter and a reference landscape for urban marginalisation (Bonnet, 2009). This article argues that the dynamics of social exclusion develop and unfold around train stations – at times visible, sometimes concealed – and that the main actors involved are people in difficult positions on the one hand, and support and protection agency workers on the other. Moreover, train stations, in their various representations, play a significant symbolic role, namely that of a *non-place*; that is, a discontinuous and anomalous entity in respect of the ordinary urban fabric. They acquire a deep meaning, which attracts *non-people* – those who have no visibility or social role. Hence, train stations become a sort of identity marker for a wide variety of migrants and, in particular, those people who have no social identity and who therefore identify themselves with reference to the shifting coordinates of railway station buildings.

Social marginalisation in railway stations has intensified problems around economic activity in stations, which has been increasing over the last few years following major renovation initiatives and the introduction of business activities in spacious transit areas, where shops have been opened that are also accessed by non-travellers (ISFORT, 2003). The strengthening of the railway station's business role – which has taken place in almost all major European cities – entails an increase in the demand for security, and action against whatever impacts on the security and comfort of shopping areas that are no longer only visited during the initial or final part of people's journeys (Damon, 1995; Damon, 1996; Doherty *et al.*, 2006). From this perspective, the presence of marginalised people in train stations is considered to present a multitude of problems in terms of health conditions, social needs, security and simple aesthetics. Solving such a complex problem requires an equally complex, awareness-based and, preferably, shared strategy in order to be effective – one which balances the demand, or imperative, for security with the demand, or need, for solidarity (Giannoni, 2007; Loison, 2006; Domingo, 2007; Tosi, 2007).

This paper describes and compares the systems in some major European train stations, where social organisations and agencies provide support to marginalised populations. In some respects, the range of social agencies operating within railway stations is as wide as the variety of people they support and help; various non-profit public and private organisations coexist with institutional decentralised offices and desks – generally structured associations, parish groups, volunteers, offices providing specialised services such as healthcare, counselling, legal, social/professional rehabilitation services, housing, and so on (Edgar *et al.*, 1999; Anderson,

2010). It is an extremely varied world in which those offering support demonstrate extremely different motivations, cultural backgrounds, methods and organisation; although they are active in the same place and tackle the same problems, their specific aims and the scope of their activity can differ widely, which can mean unpredictable exchanges and methods of cooperation (ISFORT, 2001; ISFORT, 2005). Therefore, the social mapping of a railway station that focuses on homeless people, provides a detailed description of the social organisations helping them, and analyses relations between those involved, becomes an important strategy in the identification and implementation of measures aimed at combining security and solidarity, as well as strengthening the relevant social organizations and assessing their impact on the system as a whole.

The HOPE Project: an Overview

The 'HOPE in Stations' (Homeless People in European train stations) project aims to improve the organization of services for homeless people in and around railway stations. The broad objective is to see train stations as places for organized services for homeless people. The analysis of social mapping in European railway stations, discussed in this paper, constitutes a specific phase in the assessment process of the HOPE project. In particular, it forms part of the preliminary inventory, supplementing and enriching the socio-political analysis of how homelessness in railway stations is addressed by those taking part in the project.

The objectives of the social mapping, the research process and the methodological approach

The principal objective of the social mapping is to draw a quantitative and qualitative map of the social organisations that provide support and assistance to homeless people in railway stations or in the area around stations. The analysis also involves a brief look at other entities or stakeholders within the station for whom the presence of homeless people represents a possible problem: rail companies, commercial operators, security personnel and so on. It does not, however, take the customers of railway stations into consideration, i.e. the passengers and those who make purchases. In more general terms, the social mapping should involve a description for each station of the applicable model of intervention in situations of social exclusion (assuming that there is one!), focussing on homeless people and highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the model in question. The survey involved railway stations in five European capitals involved in the HOPE project: the three active partners – France, Italy and Belgium – and the two partners with an

intermediate status – Germany and Luxembourg. The railway stations involved are: Paris, Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est; Rome, Termini Station; Brussels, Central Station; Berlin, Zoo Station, and Luxembourg, Main Station.¹

The research consisted of three temporally interrelated activities. The first involved a detailed reconstruction of the services provided by social organisations in the stations (Navarini *et al.*, 2001; Pleace and Quilgars, 2003); the characteristics of users and associated trend changes (where possible distinguishing the data on homeless people); methodologies adopted for intervention; levels of cooperation with other entities in the stations, particularly other social organisations; (self-) assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of intervention models; and the assessment of support available at various levels for strengthening the response to problems faced by homeless people in these stations (Wolf and Edgar, 2007). In methodological terms, the analysis was conducted through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the managers of the various organisations, and analysis of the documentation available from those organisations.

The second section was targeted at gathering quantitative and qualitative information on the homeless population living *at* and *around* the stations: the number of homeless people; the conditions governing their presence (permanent/temporary, inside/around the rail complex); their sociodemographic profiles (sex, age, level of education, ethnic background, legal/illegal status); their needs; and trends, in terms of changes in these parameters over recent years. In methodological terms, the analysis was conducted through interviews with the social organisations (see above) and, in some stations, through participant observation carried out during the day and at different times of the week (on the use of this method see e.g. Spradley, 1980; Jorgensen, 1989; Tedlock, 1991; deWalt and deWalt, 2010). The observation aimed to:

- ascertain the presence of socially marginalised people in the station, with a particular focus on physically and/or mentally disabled people with the characteristics of homeless people, and describe their demeanour and attitudes;
- understand the types of people present, focussing on such features as nationality, gender, age, dress, posture, possible behavioural disorders;
- understand which areas in or around the station are most frequented by marginalised/homeless people;

¹ The survey was performed by a Working Group made up of Isfort (coordination) and four national researchers who were responsible for the local surveys: Christophe Blanchard (Paris and Luxembourg), Franca Iannaccio (Rome), Patrick Italiano (Brussels) and Carla Wassermann (Berlin). The final Report, on which this paper is based, has been carried out by Carlo Carminucci (Isfort) and Giampiero Forcesi (Isfort).



- observe the relationships between people in this group, and the behaviour of other people towards them;
- point out possible contextual factors that can influence the homeless presence at the station such as meteorological factors, the presence of security staff (more/less relevant during the day/week), and the opening hours of shops.

The third section was dedicated to the analysis of stakeholders and involved semi-structured interviews with a small group of major entities in the stations (representatives of rail companies, commercial operators, security personnel, cleaning personnel, etc.); information was collected on their perceptions of the seriousness of social marginalisation in the station, their knowledge of the actions taken by other parties in addressing problems (social organisations, rail companies), and on intervention models and specific measures that could be adopted (ORS-GRVS, 2009).

Activities undertaken

The various stages of the research process were completed between May and November 2010. In total, 47 social organisations were surveyed; three institutional organisations in Paris and 19 stakeholders were interviewed; and participant observation was undertaken in Rome and Berlin. Preparatory activities were undertaken in Rome to test and ensure the complete functionality of the methodological instruments and of the research teams carrying out the surveys in each station (online training and a methodological workshop).

A summary of the research activities is provided in Table 1 below. A Working Group made up of ISFORT as coordinator and four national researchers carried out the survey who were responsible for the local surveys in Rome, Berlin, Brussels, Paris and Luxembourg.

Table 1. Summary of research activities

	Preparatory activities	Research tasks			
	Training and methodological workshop	Pre-testing	Participant observation	Social organisations surveyed	Stakeholders interviewed
Rome Termini Station	X	X	X	10	6
Paris Gare du Nord	X	(no)	(no)	15 (+ 3 "institutional")	6
Berlin Zoo Station	X	(no)	X	10	-
Brussels Central Station	X	(no)	(no)	8	7
Luxembourg Station	-	(no)	(no)	4	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>19</i>			

The railway stations involved and the profile of their homeless populations

Rome's Termini Station was involved in the study. It records some 600 000 users per day, and plays a key role in city, regional, national and international transport systems. Since 1999, the station has been undergoing major rehabilitation works that have significantly altered its organisation and functions, and transformed it into an urban square, rich in services and shopping opportunities. It seems that such changes have also made it more appealing to disadvantaged people, while homeless people have partially moved outside the railway station building to its surrounds, or to minor railway stations including Ostiense, Trastevere and Tiburtina.

Two Parisian railway stations were studied, namely Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est, which are very close to each other and centrally located in the 10th *Arrondissement*. They record some 800 000 passengers overall per day, and together constitute one of the main railway infrastructures in the world. Gare du Nord alone records some 500 000 passengers a day, thus ranking first in Europe and third in the world. These railway stations have also been recently refurbished with the introduction of new shops. In Brussels, the survey targeted the Central Station, which records the highest number of passengers per day – 140 000. It is very close to the city centre, near the *Grand Place*, and is therefore very busy with tourists and employees of the many offices located in the area. It is very well linked to the other city railway stations – *Gare du Nord* and *Gare du Midi* in particular – which are all located in the city's central districts.

In Berlin, analysis focused on the Zoologischer Garten railway station, also called Bahnhof Zoo, located on the outskirts of the Charlottenburg neighbourhood, and named after the nearby zoo. It records 120 000 passengers a day and for a few years now has been serving only regional railway lines (a total of 400), having lost the national and international ones. 600 subway lines also serve the station, which was renovated in the 1990s creating significant improvement in terms of security conditions. The first social Help Desk was opened here in 1979. In Luxembourg, the Luxembourg City Central Station is both the national railway station of this small country and an international train station. It is very busy with cross-border traffic and foreign trains. It is located two kilometres from the city centre, near the Bonnevoie neighbourhood where all social services are located. Renovation works started in 2006, and the train station has now been fully refurbished. The shopping area has also been significantly enlarged.

Despite significant effort, no reliable data could be found for any of the countries on the number of homeless people in the relevant cities or nationwide. The figures shown in Table 2 below are therefore estimates or generalisations. In fact, in some cases data was collected in a targeted way, on a specific day, through detailed observation of a single train station (e.g. Rome and Berlin), while in some other cases, more generic estimates were made, sometimes regarding less specific areas (e.g. Paris). In some cases an increase in the presence of very marginalised young people was reported (Paris and Luxembourg), as well as an increase in the 'new poor' (Rome and Berlin). The number of immigrants and asylum seekers – especially from Eastern Europe (including Roma people) and areas of conflict or poverty – was reported to be increasing almost everywhere. Conversely, the number of long-term homeless people seems to be stable and quite low, though these also show a limited likelihood of rehabilitation.

Table 2 – Approximate information on the number and characteristics of homeless people in the stations surveyed, as well as relevant changes

	Homeless in the Station (and surrounding areas)	Types	Changes
Paris (Gare du Nord and de l'Est)	Between 600 and 800	Between 40 and 60 years of age; European (French, Belgian, Polish, Romanian), Maghrebi, Sub-Saharan and Caribbeans; often with alcohol problems; many with psychiatric problems; rarely seek out the associations and rarely accept meals (approximately 200) Young people, often with dogs, sometimes drug addicts (approximately 30) Exiles, refugees and asylum seekers, above all Iraqis and Afghans; then Tamils from India; also Roma; mostly men aged from 16 to 35 years (approximately 150-200) Romanians, both young people and families, and young prostitutes, often stopping on their way to London or Amsterdam (approximately 150)	From 2002, the year when the transit zone between France and Great Britain was closed (Calais), there has been an increase in political refugees and asylum seekers stopping at Paris and gravitating towards the stations. There has also been an increase in young people with dogs and young people using narcotics, because there is considerable drug trafficking in the 10th arrondissement. More Romanian prostitutes.
Brussels (Central Station)	Approximately 300. A count completed in one day in November 2008 within the entire historical centre identified 262 people sleeping in the street (in the area around Central Station alone, the number is much lower: 18)	In Central Station, there are about 40 'chronically' homeless (but not all of them sleep on the street all the time), about twenty of whom are present most of the time, while the others are more seasonal and younger; most are Belgian; some women; lots of alcohol; some dogs. There are many North Africans, Poles and Indians in the Nord and Midi stations, where there is more space, both inside and in the surrounding areas. Few create problems for travellers (five-ten people). Cases of theft are rare or completely non-existent.	There is an impression of an overall increase in numbers of homeless throughout the historical centre: above all, groups of migrants (illegal immigration of Asians on their way to Great Britain; migrants from Spain and Italy, where they have lost their jobs; Roma). Expulsion by the police is frequent.

Rome (Termini Station)	Approximately 130 people found sleeping on the ground in Termini Station or in the surrounding areas on one day in March 2010.	70% are non-Italian; average age 35 years; more men (80%); health fairly good; small minority of drug addicts; they find places mostly outside the station. Others, the 'historical' cases, number about ten; about thirty are 'new poor'. There are many health and hygiene problems; they often suffer from psychiatric conditions and alcoholism. They find places mostly inside the station.	They are increasing, also because of the increasing services being offered (such as health services). Numbers of migrants are increasing (especially Somalis) as well as 'new poor' (e.g. divorced men).
Berlin (Zoo Station)	It is certain that each day, approximately 400 people come to the station for a meal distributed by the associations. However, few sleep in the station or nearby.	Few people spend the night in the station or station entrances as the police are strict, but many people of various types and origins spend several hours in the station or its surrounds at various times. There are numerous young people and adolescents for whom the station is an alternative social space. A few elderly, isolated homeless people who read the papers. Some middle-aged women, even more isolated, with obvious mental health problems. Young people working as prostitutes. Drug addicts who use the mobile bus. Isolated individuals or groups who come for an evening meal or to the outpatient clinic in a nearby street.	They are increasing, above all people from the new EU countries and Roma. There are also an increasing number of German citizens, with medium- or high-level qualifications, who are in debt and have ended up on the street.
Luxembourg (City's Station)	Approximately 60 in the railway station surrounds and in the nearby coach station area.	25-30 are young (18-20 years), mostly drug addicts. Approximately 50 are newly-arrived foreigners without documents (mainly from former Yugoslavia, but also Asia, Latin America and Africa); for these people, access to healthcare is difficult, and they are accommodated only for a few days in homeless shelters. The others are 'historical' vagrants.	The numbers of highly-marginalised young people under the age of 25 are increasing; many of them are drug addicts or alcoholics. The number of illegal foreigners is increasing.

The social organisation network and services provided

The vast majority of the social entities operating in railway stations are non-profit organisations. However, this wide category includes associations that do not receive public funds and have no remunerated staff (although just a minority), social cooperative societies, and foundations, with some of them even receiving significant public funding on a long-term basis. Furthermore, whether they are religious or lay organisations does not seem to affect the types of services provided, how they are delivered, or their quality. All organisations operating in the Paris, Brussels, Berlin and Luxembourg train stations get public funding, but this is not the case in Rome; organisations operating at Paris' train stations get a share of public funding, as do seven out of eight of the associations located at Brussels' Central train station whose representatives were interviewed; all organisations operating at Luxembourg City train station receive similar funding, while in Berlin in particular, federal laws provide for a wide variety of services for homeless people (making access to such services easier), and task solidarity associations (mostly Evangelical and Catholic organisations) with providing such services. In Rome, on the other hand, six out of the ten organisations interviewed get no public funding. Where there are a higher number of predominantly state-funded organisations (i.e. in Paris, Brussels, Berlin and Luxembourg), there is a wider range of more diversified services for homeless people, and, of course, better remunerated and more skilled personnel providing those services. At Berlin's Bahnhof Zoo, for example, there are more than 60 full-time workers, while in Brussels there are 50. There is a third element that seems to be linked to public funding – more cooperation between the relevant social organisations. In fact, *Operation Thermos* in Brussels coordinates all voluntary groups distributing meals at Brussels' Central Station, and also delivers training to the volunteers in other association. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail later.

Significant differences were observed in terms of the services provided, their variety in particular. As has already been pointed out, a wider range of services, something that could potentially mean that the various needs of marginalised people are better met, seems to depend mainly on the presence of national and local welfare systems that invest heavily in policies that target homeless people and extreme poverty, and that also support non-profit organisations in this field on an ongoing basis. Service variety seems to be crucial to their success. Of course, in and of itself it does not guarantee quality, effectiveness or efficiency, but it is a precondition for these.

Table 3 – The distribution of social organisations by type of services provided (in brackets if the service is indirect or is only a kind of orientation)

	Paris (12 organisations)	Rome (10 organisations)	Brussels (8 organisations)	Berlin (10 organisations)
Listening and identifying homeless' needs	9	4	8	10
Distribution of meals	6	7	3	7 (+3)
Distribution of blankets	3	3	5	4 (+4)
Distribution of clothes	2	3	4	7 (+3)
Temporary shelter to sleep and wash	2	3	2	3 (+6)
Permanent night shelter		1	1 (+2)	2 (+7)
Canteen	1	1 (+1)	3	2 (+7)
Medical assistance and infirmary	2	3 (+1)	6 (+1)	3 (+7)
Psychological assistance	3	1	4	10
Support/guidance for social inclusion	7	2 (+4)	6	10
Support/guidance to get a house	2	1 (+1)	5 (+3)	4 (+6)
Support/guidance to get a job	6	1 (+1)	2 (+3)	1 (+2)
General legal assistance	3	1 (+2)	1 (+3)	2 (+8)
Special services for drug/alcohol addicts/mental illness	1	1	4 (+3)	1 (+9)
Special services for specific sub-populations	7		5	3 (+7)
Other (access to internet, phone, postal address, safe deposit, public relations, etc.)	...	2	4	5 (+5)

The social organisations operating at Rome's Termini train station provide a very limited range of services; more than half of the services surveyed are provided by a single organisation, and it is only in the provision and distribution of meals that a range of providers is evident. At this station overall, there is a prevalence of distribution services (including the distribution of meals, blankets and clothes) over those of healthcare and psychological counselling, legal aid, and social/professional rehabilitation services. Only one permanent canteen, one permanent night shelter and one active addiction service were reported to be available. In Paris, the range of services provided by social organisations in the two train stations was wider. At Brussels' Central Station, all services are delivered directly or indirectly by at least two organisations, and the most prevalent service is, like Paris, that of listening to the needy. Brussels-based organisations mainly provide healthcare, social rehabilitation, addiction support services, and help for those affected by mental health issues. The range of services provided at Berlin's Bahnhof Zoo is even wider; all 10 organisations interviewed provide listening services, psychological counselling, and social inclusion services. They all share the same goal, namely listening to the needy and identifying the most appropriate solutions for each person's specific

needs. A wide range of services is also provided at Luxembourg City railway station, although its small size makes any comparison with the other railway stations surveyed problematic.

Service providers: issues arising

The figures on homeless people benefiting from the various services at the railway stations surveyed are difficult to interpret and even more difficult to compare, due to significant differences in context, and the fact that the organisations involved collected data with different criteria. It is also very difficult to make a distinction between people that can really be considered homeless, and all other needy people that benefit from the services in question. The interviews with social organisation representatives, and an analysis of the little available monitoring data, suggest a number of common concerns.

All stations reported an increase in migrants using services, especially those from Eastern Europe including Poles, Romanians, and those from future EU access countries. The reported increase was particularly sharp in Berlin; at the Franklinstrasse shelter near Berlin's Bahnhof Zoo, it was reported that the number of migrants had doubled over the last two years, and an increase was also recorded in all other train stations. The Emergency Shelter and the Help Centre, both located near the same train station in Berlin, also reported an increase in the number of German citizens with medium or medium-high education who have accumulated debt and fallen into poverty. This was also reported by Rome's Help Centre, where some of the men presenting found themselves in serious financial difficulty following divorce. Similar cases of middle-class people running into debt or experiencing poverty were reported by the organisation working at Luxembourg City's train station. In Rome, over one-third of the people who utilised the Termini railway station Help Centre were under 29, and in Paris, young people that periodically hang out at the train station or sleep on the street – sometimes with their dogs – many of whom are drug addicts, have become one of the most significant target groups for social organisations, although they number just a few dozen. The same applies to the Luxembourg City train station.

Interaction with railway companies

In Paris, Rome and Brussels, the organisations surveyed include among their priorities or future goals the improvement of relations with the relevant railway companies. In Paris, three out of the twelve social associations have entered into agreements with the SNCF, which allow them to carry out 'maraudes', or patrolling activities, at the railway stations whereby they can approach homeless people and ascertain their needs. The organisation can then sit at a table with personnel from the railway company and discuss the actions to be carried out. In Rome, relations with the FS

(Ferrovie dello Stato: Italy's state railway company) are also good, but this only applies to *Europe Consulting* (that, based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the FS, they run the Help Centre and Daytime Shelter located in the Termini train station building) and *Caritas* (whose personnel carry out their activities for homeless people in premises made available by the FS). There are, as yet, no permanent mechanisms in place for coordination or regular consultation. In Brussels, respondents insisted on the need for personnel from the railway and security companies to become more cooperative. Only recently, for example, the Luxembourg Railway Company (CFL) adopted an approach of cooperation with the relevant social organisations, designating one staff member the permanent point of contact for social organisations in December 2010.

Interaction with other stakeholders

A questionnaire was specifically designed to determine the perceptions of stakeholders in respect of the presence of homeless people in stations, their knowledge about actions being taken by social organisations to address issues of homelessness, and their opinions on interventions underway and what could be done to improve them. Naturally, it is not easy to generalise the views of such a diverse range of stakeholders, who in this case included the rail companies, rail employees in direct contact with socially excluded individuals, retailers, security personnel, cleaning personnel, representative of local councils and so on. Before attempting to draw any conclusions, we will therefore begin by examining the information that emerged from the survey, station by station. It should be noted that no stakeholder interviews were conducted in Berlin or Luxembourg, as the individuals in question were not available to take part.

Stakeholders at Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est in Paris appear to be fairly tolerant of homeless people; they acknowledged the considerable progress made by the SNCF in addressing their needs through its support of specialist associations. Retailers, however, while valuing the actions of the railway police, feel excluded from collaborative efforts aimed at meeting the needs of homeless people, and they do not show any particular appreciation for the work of the social organisations, which they feel should be more active; this may be because these operate mainly in the evening and at night and are therefore unseen by retailers. The railway police in Paris (the SUGE) are critical of the already limited cooperation between the relevant social organisations, and have noted that activities of treatment and recovery by a hospital near Gare du Nord are too loud and disruptive. With regard to the three associations that have agreements with the SNCF, security personnel expressed the wish that they would show more interest in the coordination meetings organised on a monthly basis. All of the stakeholders

would like greater collaboration between the various entities involved, including a pooling of resources to protect security and image, and to identify valid responses to the needs of homeless people.

In Rome, no particular alarm has been expressed by stakeholders within Termini Station over recent years at the presence of socially excluded people in the station, thanks to the support provided for many years by the FS to the Help Centre, and even before that to the diocesan entity *Caritas*. These two social organisations, by guaranteeing to handle the most problematic situations, have reduced the negative impact of the phenomenon of homelessness on the image of, and daily life in, the station.

At Brussels Central Station, the presence of homeless people in the station is, for the most part, perceived as highly problematic by stakeholders, who simply wish for them to disappear, and who do not believe that it is the responsibility of the SNCB to deal with them. Retailers in particular have a very negative view of socially excluded people in the station; neither do they have a positive opinion of the social organisations, about which they actually know very little. They are also critical of SNCB security personnel because they believe they are too tolerant. Customers using the metropolitan and urban transport systems (both of which operate within the Central Station) are ambivalent about homeless people. STIB (the transport operator) has observed the necessity of strict cooperation with the social associations in respect of psychological issues affecting people in difficulty. SNCB security personnel (Securail) believe that it is appropriate to use a repressive approach, and are critical of the social associations; the association Operation Thermos, in particular, is criticised for attracting too many homeless people when it organises the distribution of food, and the security personnel are opposed to the distribution of food in the station in general. Indeed, in other stations in Brussels, the distribution of food is prohibited. However, both Securail and the retailers seem to be aware that a repressive policy, intended merely to protect the station's image and keep homeless people at a distance, is not effective and does not resolve the problem. Team Hershman, made up of local police specifically trained on contact with people in difficulty, uses a very different approach based on human contact and on trust; it was these police agents who invited the SNCB security personnel for training to clarify the roles of each entity in the station, to reduce repressive attitudes, and to increase collaboration between the urban social services and the social organisations that operate in the station. According to the operators in this team, the SNCB is too concerned about its own image.

Overall it appears that where rail companies have provided space and support for social organisations to work with homeless people, the tolerance of stakeholders has increased, particularly among travellers, but also among all those who use the stations more generally, including retail outlets and commercial services.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis of social organisations providing homeless support services in some major European railway stations provides information on this hitherto largely neglected sphere of service provision. A key finding is that where the railway companies concerned have supported the relevant social organisations in their delivery of services to homeless people, the tolerance level of passengers and, in general, of all train stations users (including shopkeepers, owners and shoppers) is increased. Furthermore, in order to better tackle the mistrust that exists in some stations vis-à-vis homeless people, and even the social organisations helping them, it seems advisable to involve all stakeholders in a much greater way in coordinating the social actions carried out at the train stations. Hence, social organisations and railway management should also involve the security companies, railway police and shop owners in their activities.

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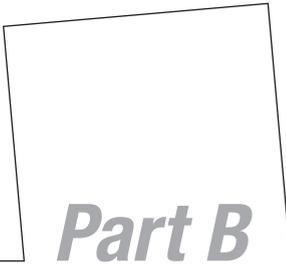
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Policy Review



Part B

The French Homelessness Strategy: Reforming Temporary Accommodation, and Access to Housing to deliver 'Housing First': Continuum or Clean Break?

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- › **Abstract_** *In November 2009, the Secretary of State for Housing unveiled the French strategy to assist people experiencing homelessness and housing hardship, which aims to ensure that housing provision adheres to the 'Housing First' principle. Making 'Housing First' a public policy aim might seem unexpected in a country like France, where a fundamental right to housing was introduced in the Act of 6 July 1989, and a statutory basis for implementing it was subsequently provided in 1990. The right was made enforceable by the Act of 5 March 2007, which provides for remedies through the courts, replacing the State's 'best efforts' obligation with a performance obligation. In November 2009, the French Government announced a far-reaching, clean break with the existing system of homeless service provision. This paper argues that the change took place was, instead, gradual, and that the 'staircase' model continues to be used in practice both locally and nationally.*
- › **Keywords_** *Housing First, enforceable right to housing, France, national homelessness strategy, policy change*

Introduction

This article starts off by chronicling the emergence of a ‘staircase’ policy model in France, and describes the processes that led to its institutional entrenchment. It then focuses more specifically on how new principles of public policy were brought onto the agenda in the 2000s, in particular the ‘continuum of care’ principle and an enforceable right to housing. The concluding part of the article looks at the 2009 reforms to the French homeless strategy in terms of policy origination and practical implementation, in an effort to understand the underlying policy direction, especially ‘Housing First’. The ‘new social issue’ (Castel, 1999), and especially the ‘homelessness issue’ (Damon, 2001), appeared on the policy agenda with the onset of the economic crisis, rising mass unemployment and the growing visibility of homeless people in France from the mid-1980s; this led to a transformation in the system of temporary accommodation services, which grew in scale and complexity and whose structure came to involve two types of public policy approach – emergency and inclusion. So, alongside the accommodation and resettlement centres (CHRS), created in 1953 as staging posts on the way to ordinary housing for marginalised groups,¹ there developed a more short-term provision known as ‘emergency shelter’. Although designed as a temporary solution, emergency shelter services continued to diversify, accounting for an ever-growing share of provision (Haut comité pour le logement des personnes défavorisées, 2004).

Emergency Provision for Homeless People

In 1993, the State entrenched the emergency approach by introducing a specific budget item and creating the Social Samu – night-time mobile outreach teams going out “to those who have given up entirely”. Distinguishing this approach from community reintegration accommodation, its founder, Dr. Xavier Emmanuelli, defined the scope of social emergency services in medically-inspired terms: “social emergency services are all operations undertaken to rescue a person considered as a victim on the road to ruin whose life appears to be at risk in the short to medium term” (Emmanuelli and Frémontier, 2002, p. 82). Support in emergency accommodation (welfare hotels, communal night shelters or more individualized provision) must theoretically be immediate, low-threshold and short-term, while users of so-called community reintegration accommodation stay much longer and in better conditions, with individual rooms or even independent housing; however, both sets of users are required to engage with a socio-educational approach to ensure their ‘fitness’ for

¹ Since 1974 this includes: Vagrants capable of social integration; people discharged from prisons or hospitals; refugees; sex workers; and any individual or family who cannot discharge their responsibilities to society alone.

housing (Noblet, 2010). Since the early 1980s, the dominant policy has been that of a linear progression that theoretically leads to mainstream housing at the end of the integration process. In practice, however, critics of this model have come to talk increasingly in terms of ‘revolving doors’ (Conférence de consensus «Sortir de la rue» (2007)), or ‘snakes and ladders’ (Hardy, 1995; Damon, 2001) rather than integration, as these emergency policies often result in homeless people being shunted from centre to centre in a morale-sapping loop, without ever getting into mainstream housing, or only moving to long-term integration facilities (Brousse *et al.*, 2008). Meanwhile, the CHRS (Centres d’hébergement de réinsertion sociale) accommodation and social integration centres tightened their eligibility criteria, and now tend to focus primarily on those adversely effected by the crisis who do not qualify for low-rent public housing, rather than the most marginal groups. The length of stays in these centres rose as waiting lists for social housing lengthened. At the same time, intermediate forms of accommodation proliferated, ultimately replacing and making mainstream housing a more remote and unachievable prospect (Ballain and Maurel, 2002; Lanzaro, 2009; Loison-Leruste and Quilgars, 2009).

From Controversy to Policy Agenda: The Emergence of the ‘Continuum Principle’ and an Enforceable Right to Housing

The increase in homelessness from the early 2000s brought a rising tide of protest from a wide range of social welfare groups – humanitarian, charitable, activist and even single-issue housing groups – criticizing the shortage of accessible temporary accommodation and housing places, but also the way that temporary accommodation and access to housing provision was managed and the lack of access to fundamental rights.

Demands first focused on the uncertain nature of emergency provision and the ‘obstacle course’ it imposed on users (Rullac, 2008); it then focussed on managers of integration provision and their tendency to screen service users without offering any real prospects of moving on to housing (Lévy-Vroelant, 2000; Damon, 2001). Finally, some criticized the right to housing as vague and ineffective (ENA, 2005; Lévy-Vroelant, 2008), pointing out that low-rent public housing landlords were likely to avoid certain population groups and fob them off to temporary accommodation or even relegate them to the run-down private sector (Bourgeois, 1996; Houard, 2009). Concluding that existing provision was not working, the motto “housing: an urgent need and a right” emerged; the afore-mentioned groups demanded a move away from an emergency-focused approach to the recognition of the right to housing as a fundamental right, and both a state guarantee and an individual right that could be upheld by the courts (Lévy-

Vroelant, 2008). The management of temporary accommodation and access to housing was thus thrown sharply into question, but at no point was revisiting the 'staircase' approach on the agenda (Noblet, 2010).

Social welfare groups outlined their demands in the many forums where they met with researchers and policy-makers such as the Haut comité pour le logement des personnes défavorisées,² the National Observatory on Poverty and Social Exclusion, and the National Council on Policies to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion – forums at which political alliances were formed, expertise developed and policy proposals firmed up. Through forums of experts, researchers and social welfare groups, some at European level, a consensus eventually emerged on overhauling temporary accommodation and access to housing, yet despite this development, the issue remained confined to specialist groups and was slow to filter through to the public sphere. This did not, in fact, happen until the winter of 2006-2007 through action taken by the Enfants de Don Quichotte group, established in late 2006 to publicize the issue and put it on the political agenda.

2007: A break in public policy and the continuance of the 'staircase' model

During the winter of 2006-2007, the Enfants de Don Quichotte group set up a tented camp on the banks of the Saint-Martin canal during the presidential campaign. A year later, in December 2007, the same group demonstrated on the banks at Notre Dame. Through high-impact, headline-grabbing actions, the Enfants de Don Quichotte, backed by many humanitarian and charitable groups, turned homelessness into a political issue on the government agenda. There was a policy shift in 2007 and the policy-making process began to pick up speed, something that had failed to happen previously despite the demands for an enforceable right to housing made by the Haut comité pour le logement des personnes défavorisées in every report to the government since 2002.

Within weeks, the new momentum led to the adoption of the Reinforced Strategy for Persons Experiencing Homelessness (PARSA) on 8 January 2007, followed by the Act Establishing the Enforceable Right to Housing (DALO) of 5 March 2007. These legislative enactments mark a change in the management of temporary accommodation and access to housing, and the introduction of new public policies including:

- *Moving away from the emergency-focused approach:* intake into emergency shelters was transformed with the requirement that they stay open from 5pm to 9am on weekdays and round-the-clock at weekends with no time limit on stays.

² See the reports of the Haut comité pour le logement des personnes défavorisées to the Prime Minister since 2002

- *Entrenching the ‘continuum of care’ principle for homeless people:* the rules of temporary accommodation were changed to include an obligatory indefinite stay service; in addition, all those leaving temporary services must be offered a housing solution.
- *Establishing an enforceable right to housing:* the Act of 5 March 2007 made a radical change to how the right to housing was implemented by introducing a negotiated settlement in early 2008 and then a judicial review in late 2008 for priority categories, and setting the State a performance obligation in implementing the right to housing, whereby the court can order a Prefect (the French State’s representative in a department or region) to house an applicant on pain of a daily default fine.

To create the conditions for implementation, a focus was put on increasing the supply of affordable housing, and the target for new social housing construction was raised to 160 000 units a year, including 120 000 in the public stock; a special emphasis was placed on PLAI (subsidized inclusion rent loans) and PLUS (social housing construction loans) – social housing reserved for low-income or poor families. These policy shifts were affirmed at the Off the Streets Consensus Conference initiated by FNARS (la Fédération nationale des associations d’accueil et de réinsertion sociale) held on 29–30 November 2007 in Paris (Loison-Leruste, 2008), and more broadly in all the relevant policy documents of the following year, such as the Pinte report and the Action for Housing and against Exclusion Act of 5 March 2009.

In addition to greater uniformity in policy-making, the relations between the State and relevant social welfare groups were formalized in the mandate of Prefect Alain Regnier, General Delegate for temporary accommodation and access to housing provision. Paradoxically, it was just as things came to the point of practical implementation – when state representatives and social welfare groups finally seemed to agree on the objectives to be delivered by 2012 and appropriate time frames – that the government described as critical the changes to temporary accommodation and access to housing. A new paradigm was emerging – the ‘Housing First’ model.

2009: A newly-imported paradigm – ‘Housing First’

In 2009, a new approach to tackling homelessness entered the public policy sphere – ‘Housing First’. It spread so rapidly that it became an explicit goal of the reform of temporary accommodation and access to housing unveiled on 10 November 2009. While FEANTSA had already published some studies of homeless strategies in other jurisdictions that adopted a ‘Housing First’ approach, it was not until the release of sociologist Julien Damon’s report (2009) on homelessness policies in the EU that the discussion moved out of the circles of Brussels-based experts and researchers. It was in the Damon report, submitted to Housing Minister Christine

Boutin in April 2009, that 'Housing First' made its first public appearance in France. This report showed Finland to be pioneering this approach, but it was defined by Damon in very vague terms: *"the principle is to have as vestigial a system of temporary accommodation as possible. This is not to suggest scrapping it, but logically to look at turning it towards supporting people into permanent housing"* (Damon, 2009, p. 62).

'Staircase model' versus 'Housing First'

Since the late 1990s, increasing thought has been given in Europe and the United States to the most effective means of providing services to people experiencing homelessness. Working from experimental local schemes, experts, researchers and practitioners have sought to identify the types of service that most meet users' needs within the budgetary constraints states now face. Policy norms have been mooted through research articles, discussion forums and briefing documents. It is clear from the research literature and public policies adopted in France and elsewhere that two service models predominate: 'staircase' and 'Housing First' (see, for example, Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, 2007; Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008; Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009; Busch-Geertsema, 2010; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010; Tsemberis, 2010; Pleace, 2011; European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, 2010; FNARS, 2011). It is around these two paradigms that the stakeholders develop and argue their opposing worldviews, the core question being whether homeless people should or should not be placed directly in housing.

The 'staircase' or 'continuum of care' approach refers to a linear progression leading into permanent housing, this being the ultimate reintegration goal of those experiencing homelessness. To achieve this, the homeless person must make a stepwise progression through residential services, with increasing degrees of privacy and independence at each stage, before being deemed 'fit' to access permanent housing. This approach underpins the public policies pursued in many European countries, including France. However, there has been mounting opposition to this worldview since the late 1990s on the grounds that many people find themselves stuck on one step, being judged unfit to move up to the next, or they drop out of the services due to the strict rules imposed (Pleace, this volume).

In contrast to this stepwise approach is the 'Housing First' approach, the essence of which is that homeless people, including problematic drug and alcohol users, must get into permanent housing as soon as possible. It is a service-based system that focuses on living in 'normal' conditions in the community. If developing independence is determined more by housing than treatment (Kresky-Wolff *et al.*, 2010), users should be steered directly towards independent, permanent housing with tailored health and social services (Pleace, 2011). This approach emphasizes

consumer choice: the choice of where to live, of the level of engagement with health and/or social treatment, and whether to continue using drugs or alcohol. This model has been challenged in academic circles in North America, mainly for its failure to reintegrate people into society and the economy, and for isolating users. However, assessments are generally positive with regard to the length of time stayed in housing, payment of rent, and the costs incurred for the community. They show that most homeless people prefer to live in ordinary homes than in welfare hotel rooms, public hostels or communal night shelters. Assessments have also highlighted positive impacts on the wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness (Dane, 1998; Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, 2007; Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2010; Busch-Geertsema, 2010; Pleace, 2011).

Dissemination of these positive assessments has contributed to the increased discussion of 'Housing First', initially in the United States, where it was taken up at federal level, and then in various European countries like Finland and Denmark, while Sweden and the United Kingdom are currently considering the transferability of this model (European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, 2010). However, the 'Housing First' concept has different meanings in different countries, and it can vary according to the target audience, the housing provided, the lengths of stay involved and the degree of user choice (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008; Busch-Geertsema, 2010).

The popularity of the 'Housing First' approach in EU institutions owes much to the dissemination of these positive assessments, but also to FEANTSA's lobbying of the European Commission, EU Member States, policy makers, researchers and experts. The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness held on 9 and 10 December 2010 in Brussels came down firmly in favour of the 'Housing First', or what the jury called a 'housing led', model (European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, 2010 –see the special section of this volume on responses to the Jury's report).

French Reform of Temporary Accommodation and Access to Housing in 2009: Continuum or Clean Break?

France's reform of temporary accommodation and access to housing, which began in late 2009, is explicitly aimed at developing a 'Housing First' model of service provision. With state representatives claiming it as a 'radical clean break', or a restructuring of the system, it might be expected from experiences elsewhere that housing would be the first requirement for people experiencing homelessness, before any form of social support. Yet government guidance (information documents, departmental instructions, etc.) is arguably at variance with the model's underlying

worldview; the linear progression approach and the idea of the actual or perceived 'houseability' of users seems to dominate policy-making. The press release issued on 10 November 2009 when the reform was unveiled, for example, says:

"While housing is often what families most want, some are not ready to access housing, or will probably have difficulties staying in it once re-housed. Some can feasibly take immediate occupancy on ordinary terms without social support. For others, support is needed to help them access or stay in housing and to show that the family really can run their home on their own so that social landlords do not run too-great a risk" (Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Maritime Affairs, 2009, p. 12).

A more recent departmental instruction to Prefects dated 15 October 2010 defines 'Housing First' as a principle that makes temporary accommodation "a temporary and auxiliary response on the pathway towards independence."³ The same reliance on the 'staircase' model is also found in the public statements of social welfare groups and social landlords (Union sociale pour l'habitat, 2010; FNARS, 2011) and correspondence with government.⁴ Close analysis of the background to this reform shows that change is more about setting up new public policy instruments in France's Départements (creating integrated intake and referral services; producing Département intake, temporary accommodation and integration plans) without changing the overall policy direction. Despite the pervasive references in policy documents to the paradigmatic shift towards a 'Housing First' approach, change in policy itself appears to be more restrained.

An examination of the history of policy-making in the field of temporary accommodation and access to housing also reveals that there has been a shift in balance between the government and social welfare groups, with the locus of power moving from the street to ministerial bodies, and the balance of power shifting towards state representatives. Although the social welfare groups are fully involved in the reform process, as the government is aiming for reform that is agreed upon by both the State and social welfare groups, the formulation of the problem and the proposed solutions are taking shape within a specific institutional framework. Discussions are steered by the Prefect as the General Delegate for temporary accommodation and access to housing provision; the remit of working groups, the time frame, the overall budget and the goals are set by State representatives ahead of negotiations. In September 2009, the government called on the stakeholders in the policy-making process to spell out the broad lines of the reform and flesh out

³ DGCS/1A/2010/375 departmental instruction of 15 October 2010.

⁴ Open letter from charities to the Prime Minister on measures to reduce public debt, signed by the presidents of UNIOPSS, APF, CNAP, UNAP, Fondation Abbé Pierre, UNA FNARS, the French Red Cross, Secours Catholique, and ADMR dated 31 May 2010

the concepts of 'Housing First' and 'public temporary accommodation and access to housing' within two months, focusing on organizational measures rather than more structural provisions such as the level of funding for personal assistance or social housing construction, in order to take account of fiscal constraints.

The most ambitious measures merely reaffirm the guidelines set out in the PARSAs, the so-called DALO Act, the Pinte report, and the Action for Housing and against Exclusion Act of 5 March 2009. The new elements are essentially organizational:

- setting up an Integrated intake and referral service (SIAO) in each Département to structure users' pathways into housing, and to match supply and demand for temporary accommodation and transitional housing;
- defining a national framework for social support towards and in housing;
- the method of area-wide distribution of temporary accommodation and social rented housing supply is now specified in the PDAHI (intake, temporary accommodation and integration plans).

The paradigmatic shift towards 'Housing First' announced by the government has materialised as a scaled-down version of the scheme developed by the *Pathways* agency in New York, and been piloted at four sites (Paris, Lille, Marseille, Toulouse) for 400 homeless people with severe psychiatric disorders who have become sub-tenants in private rented accommodation. The decision on whether to roll the trial out nationwide will not be taken before 2014, but even in the current trial, the fixed-term nature of the tenancies mean that the homeless people are not in ordinary housing situations.

There is, therefore, a striking contrast between the government's renewed calls for a move in the direction of 'Housing First', and the policy continuum and predominance of the 'staircase' model even in the communications emerging from government departments, social welfare groups and low-rent public housing agencies. The concepts of being 'fit' to access housing, transitional housing, and pathways into housing are still the order of the day.

A year and a half after the launch of the restructuring of temporary accommodation and access to housing, the thrust of 'Housing First' and the broader scope of the reform remain shrouded in ambiguity. With no shared political definition, it is also the focus of criticism by social welfare groups, particularly as the reform is played out against a background of cuts and fiscal constraints. In a letter to the Prime Minister dated 31 May 2010, the United Coalition of Social Welfare Groups describes the government reform as "reform on the cheap" and uses the slogan "housing first

means houses first!”⁵ The next section provides a more nuanced assessment of the scale of the change beyond simply policy-making, looking at the outcomes of policy on temporary accommodation and access to housing, the investment of local government resources, and the problems encountered in putting it into practice.

‘Housing First’ in Practice

Selected indicators of homelessness and housing hardship

Without a reliable and uniform statistical monitoring system, homelessness and housing hardship are difficult to document as they can be measured only approximately. Indicators of trends do, however, exist. A recent survey by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) shows that in the second half of the 2000s, 133 000 people in France were deemed to be homeless; 33 000 were on the streets or in emergency hostels, and 100 000 were in temporary accommodation for long periods. A further 117 000 persons without homes had come up with individual solutions including paying for their own hotel rooms and staying with family or friends. Moreover, 2.9 million people were found to be living in overcrowded housing or homes lacking amenities (Briant and Donzeau, 2011).

DALO figures also give an idea of the level of housing hardship. At the end of December 2010, three years after the introduction of negotiated settlements and two years after the introduction of judicial review, some 185 000 housing appeals had been lodged; 143 665 had been reviewed by mediation committees; 57 561 households had been identified as priority cases in urgent need of re-housing; and only 35 000 households had been re-housed as a direct or indirect result of the DALO Act.⁶ In judicial review cases, findings were made against the state in 5 585 cases for failure to offer appropriate housing within the statutory time-limits.⁷ These figures aside, obstacles to the implementation of DALO have been noted in some qualitative research reports (Loison-Leruste and Quilgars, 2009; Brouant, 2011) in that Prefects, who are responsible for performance, are having difficulties re-housing priority applicants; this is due to the large number of rejections by

⁵ Open letter to the Prime Minister on measures to reduce public debt, signed by the presidents of UNIOPSS, APF, CNAP, UNAP, Fondation Abbé Pierre, UNA FNARS, the French Red Cross, Secours Catholique and ADMR (31 May 2010).

⁶ Source: DHUP/Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Maritime Affairs; 31 December 2010. As a reference, social housing allocations average 420 000 per year (including 20% in the Ile-de-France).

⁷ Source: Conseil d’Etat statistics, 31 December 2010

low-rent social housing agencies on grounds of insufficient income or their obligation to ensure social diversity (Massin *et al.*, 2010). The situation is particularly strained in the Ile-de-France region, which includes Paris.

Local government efforts

The size of the social rented stock in France is comparatively high at 4.5 million units (Whitehead and Scanlon, 2007), and the government has recently funded record levels of social housing; this rose from 40 000 in 2000 to over 130 000 in 2010. This trend is, however, qualified by a number of factors, not least the loss of low-quality, low-rent private housing stock. Local government efforts to meet housing needs can only be understood by looking at supply against total demand, especially from low-income families. Meeting the requirements created by DALO Act would mean producing 440 000 to 500 000 new homes a year up to 2015 (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2011). But the number of new houses starting to be built has slumped since 2007: only 333 000 new units were started in 2009 compared to 435 000 in 2007 – down 23% in 2 years. Analysts agree that housing production falls short of the need for housing, and is generally unsuited to the low-rent demand; there is a shortage of affordable rental properties for low and middle income families, especially in the Île-de-France region.

In respect of temporary accommodation, the government decided as of the 26th of May 2010 that under the ‘Housing First’ principle, temporary accommodation places should be held at their 31 December 2009 levels. However, government figures show that temporary accommodation provision – excluding provision for asylum seekers – currently stands at 72 066 places and is rising steadily, having already risen more than 40% in five years. The programme documents (the PDAHI) issued in each Département indicate that temporary accommodation provision could expand still further. Somewhat ironically, the government’s talk of supporting access to permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness seems to be belied by budgetary trends, as the housing budget is shrinking while local government provision of temporary accommodation continues to rise.

Against this background of political, administrative and budgetary constraints, the goal of ‘Housing First’ looks set to be the focus of tension between state representatives, social welfare groups and social landlords. Low-rent social housing agencies see it as potentially causing budget problems and turning certain housing estates into areas of severe deprivation. Among social welfare groups, some fear that the government may use the concept “mainly to achieve budget cuts” and a “root-and-branch dismantling of the temporary accommodation sector”, while others fear that in practice, ‘Housing First’ will not result in people in difficulty being

provided with direct access to housing, but rather in their being forced into transitional provision (FNARS, 2011), or in the restructuring of social housing waiting lists through re-housing in 'problem' neighbourhoods.

Conclusion

The clean break announced with the launch of the reform in November 2009 has led to restructuring in the provision of services for homeless people; in particular, it has resulted in the setting up of SIAO intake and referral services⁸ and the production of PDAHI programme documents in each Département. Despite these changes, it is clear that local government efforts in housing are decreasing and that the 'staircase' model remains the rule locally and nationally.

In exploring the policy shift by state representatives, it is evident that the path of change is beset by limitations and obstacles (Pierson, 1993; Palier, 2004); first, there is the often entrenched path dependency of social welfare groups and government agencies in the sector; some influential stakeholders like social landlords and accommodation facility managers also fear the established balance being thrown into question; and there is also the desire of stakeholders to preserve the *status quo* in the absence of a consensus approach to the meaning of 'Housing First'.

A year and a half after the adoption of the reform with no vision on the meaning of 'Housing First', the stakeholders in accommodation and housing policy are calling for the opening up of discussions to determine the scope of the concept, and to identify the issues, resources and time needed to adapt the system to this new paradigm. This is also what sociologist Julien Damon called for in his April 2009 report to the Housing Minister wherein he stressed the need for change to be made as part of a long-term process; for discussions to be organized; for common approaches settled in line with the 2010 European consensus conference on homelessness; and for the accommodation sector to adapt to the 'Housing First' approach by 2012 (Damon, 2009).

⁸ As at 28 February 2011: 99 Départements had opened an SIAO; one (Cher) had put the opening date back to 31 March 2011; 116 SIAO were open (5 Départements have between 2 and 7 SIAO), there was complete area-wide coverage in 93 Départements.

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Evidence into Action: How the Dublin Homeless Agency's Data and Information Strategy have shaped Homeless Policy Development and Implementation in Ireland

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- › **Abstract_** *Homelessness became a specific policy focus in Ireland in 2001 with the adoption of the national policy framework Homelessness: An Integrated Strategy (HAIS). Previously homelessness had remained (at best) a secondary concern of Irish social policy, identified only occasionally as a priority issue in a patchwork quilt of unrelated policy initiatives: some local, some national, but rarely (if ever) a combination of both. Key to understanding this was the absence of quality, systematic and programme-based data, considered vital for effective public policy formulation and implementation in Ireland. The Homeless Agency Partnership, established under HAIS in Dublin in 2001, identified this deficit and set out to develop a data and information strategy to bridge this gap. This paper reviews the challenges and obstacles to establishing the Homeless Agency's data and information strategy, how these were tackled over the period, and the resulting changes. Adopting a critical perspective throughout and taking the phenomenon of homelessness as its key focus, the paper considers how the relationship between primary research, and policy making and implementation has changed since 2001.*

¹ The Homeless Agency was established in Dublin in 2001, having replaced the Homeless Initiative, which was established in 1996. The Dublin Region Homeless Executive formally replaced the Homeless Agency in July 2011. It is a local government shared-services arrangement established as part of the Dublin Homeless Consultative Forum and Management Group as per the provisions of Chapter 6 of the Housing Act, 2009. The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Dublin Region Homeless Executive or the Dublin Homeless Consultative Forum and Management Group.

Introduction: Evidence in the Making: Homelessness, Data and the Role of Dublin's Homeless Agency since 2001

Prior to the adoption of *Homelessness: An Integrated Strategy* (HAIS) in 2001, Irish housing, health, welfare, education and justice policy in relation to homelessness was characterized by little or no integration and few attempts at inter-agency action (O'Sullivan, 2008). A major weakness identified by statutory and NGO actors seeking to influence policy decision-making on behalf of homeless households was the absence of sufficient data on the causes and consequences of homelessness. The adoption of HAIS in 2001 provided the first real opportunity to address this data deficit and to render decision-making on homeless policy development and implementation more rigorous and outcome-focused.

To do so, the Homeless Agency (established under HAIS) used its data and information strategy to deliver on, and lead in the adoption of an evidence-based approach to the creation of homelessness policy in Dublin. Importantly, this has included an emphasis on local policy implementation in Dublin. Notably, HAIS directed that each Irish local authority assess the homeless situation in its area. Central to the delivery of this was the need to establish an agreed methodology for measuring homelessness. Core to this was how the legislative definition of homelessness under the Housing Act, 1988 allows for subjective judgement in that it includes a qualifying statement to the effect that classifying an individual as homeless is based on "the opinion of the (local) authority" (see Bergin *et al.*, 2005).

It was subsequently concluded in an independent assessment of Irish homelessness policy that by allowing such a broad interpretation of homelessness between local authorities "there remains scope for the problem to be hidden in certain areas, and for responsibility to be shirked to some degree" (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2006, p. 54). In the meantime in Dublin, the Homeless Agency ensured that work commenced on developing an agreed methodology for measuring homelessness. This work built on lessons learned from a previous attempt at enumeration of homelessness conducted by the Homeless Initiative in Dublin in 1999 (named *Counted In*) (Homeless Initiative, 1999; Homeless Agency 2008a). The original methodology employed proved instrumental in the subsequent development of the data and information strategy of the Homeless Agency from 2001, beginning with its first three-year action plan *Shaping the Future* (2001-2003). Since then, and over the course of two subsequent action plans (*Making it Home* 2004-2006 and *A Key to the Door*, 2007-2010), the Homeless Agency has worked to adopt, develop and adapt methodological approaches in order to generate evidence that is relevant to making and implementing policy in Dublin.

This work reached a peak of activity in 2008 with the commencement of three major, parallel projects to:

- (a) Undertake the periodic *Counted In* survey to measure and describe the extent and nature of homelessness in Dublin using a more extensive survey instrument;
- (b) Undertake a systems evaluation of all homeless services in Dublin to ascertain their coherence as models of service delivery; and
- (c) Generate the first formal review of expenditure and finance using the established Central Government Value for Money methodology.

Subsequently, a submission to the Irish Government, based on the evidence generated and setting out the case for key operational changes in service delivery, led to the establishment of a change management process that in turn resulted in major changes to the configuration and delivery of services in Dublin. Since 2009, the statutory and voluntary (NGO) partners in Dublin have developed a change management process based on stakeholder consensus achieved using the evidence base itself (Homeless Agency, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d).

This has supported Homeless Agency partners' and stakeholders' reconfiguration of housing, homeless and support services into a new model of service delivery known as the *Pathway to Home* model (Homeless Agency, 2009). It is the final outcome of a process, underway since the establishment of the Homeless Agency, aimed at agreeing and adopting a model of service delivery for homeless, housing, support and care services in Dublin, and its agreement, under the Homeless Agency's final action plan *A Key to the Door* (2007), represents a major achievement.

Evidence in Action: the Pathway to Home Model of Service Delivery

The establishment of the *Pathway to Home* model is based on ensuring the prevention of homelessness, as well as the swift and speedy exit from homelessness into housing with support (as required) for those experiencing it. It is unique in that it represents the first comprehensively evidence-based service model implementation plan for the delivery of housing, homeless, care and support services in Dublin. Indeed, without the evidence base required at each stage in the change management decision-making process over the period since 2009, the confidence of stakeholders in the Agency's ambition to eliminate long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Dublin would have quickly diminished.

Notably, the desired outcomes and overall performance of *Pathway to Home* will be measured on a person-centred basis under the original coordinating vision of the Homeless Agency; the desired outcomes are to prevent homelessness, to eliminate the need to sleep rough, and to eliminate long-term homelessness. To ensure that this happens, a customized data management system has been developed to

support the delivery of all service functions established under *Pathway to Home* – from information and advice services to prevent homelessness, through assessment and placement in emergency accommodation, and onto supported progress towards an exit into secure, affordable and appropriate housing (with support as required).

Called the PASS (Pathway Accommodation and Support System) system, it is a central element of the *Pathway to Home* model: it organizes the key work-flow processes affecting service-users at risk of and experiencing homelessness; it supports inter-agency cooperation and care, as well as case management activity focused on meeting the service-user's needs; and it ensures that critical real-time data at the level of the individual household is available to authorized service providers. In turn, this data supports decision-making and service responses that ensure the household's progression through emergency homeless services and towards an exit into independent living with support as required.

Filling the Evidence Gap: Data Strategy and Methods of the Homeless Agency since 2001

The key questions considered here are: how did the Homeless Agency get to this stage of service development in Dublin, and how established and sustainable is the evidence-based approach for future decision-making?

From the adoption of its first action plan *Shaping the Future* in 2001, the Homeless Agency recognized the significant evidence gap in data on homelessness. Without adequate data of sufficient quality, the planning, coordination and delivery of services in Dublin, and the measurement of their effectiveness and quality of outcome (in terms of both strategic policy objectives and service user outcomes) was likely to be based more on anecdote and assertion than evidence.

The Agency's aim to fill the evidence gap was not, however, uncontested or without opposition. Resistance was encountered from the very beginning among a number of internal and external stakeholders in the policy and service delivery areas of what has become known in the period since 2001 as the 'homeless sector' (Brownlee, 2008). Reasons for this resistance are specific to the nature and origins of different service providers (statutory or voluntary) and to the services they seek to provide across the spectrum of crisis intervention and accommodation provision, care and supports; they can be explained by one or a combination of the following:

- A reluctance to agree to the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) initiatives in homeless service provision, particularly the desired focus on accountability and transparency in the funding regime in terms of public expend-

iture in both statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as the service delivery compliance with performance management required of organizations under new forms of service level agreement;

- A failure to resource the process of gathering and reporting evidence effectively and equally. This ensured the continuation of a lopsided sector wherein larger organizations could afford the required investment in staff, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and service user participation, while some couldn't and some others simply didn't;
- A reaction against so-called 'bean-counting' methods (in use or proposed) that were perceived by some stakeholders, rightly or wrongly, as changing the culture of service provision for the worse in being over-bearing, inappropriate and displaying a fundamental disregard for the identity, privacy, and needs of the individual experiencing homelessness.

While resistance is legitimate for many reasons, the rationale behind it during different periods of change management since 2001 (and leading up to the reconfiguration of stakeholder organizations) has been less than consistent. More often than not, it has appeared to be self-serving, and it has not always focused on attaining the desired outcomes envisioned by the Homeless Agency. For many people working in the sector, the vision of the Homeless Agency is the ultimate organizing rationale, yet it is worth noting that it has been disparaged as overly ambitious and unrealistic by many. Recognising the contested reality of the day-to-day experience of homelessness, the Homeless Agency has been careful to ensure that a variety of evidence from all types of interested parties and actors is requested, generated, used and communicated.

This has been achieved through collaboration with academics, professional researchers, advocates, service providers, policy decision-makers and especially with service users themselves. Over time, this has generated confidence and success in methodological innovations focused on problem-solving and filling the evidence gap for decision-making purposes as well as for purposes of explanation, understanding and advocacy. Methods include:

- Empirical approaches to measuring the extent of homelessness using scientific approaches;
- The use of longitudinal panel data on pathways into, through and out of homelessness;
- The use of qualitative case-study evidence based on focus groups and one-to-one interviews;
- The use of service user testimonies and participant observation in fieldwork when evaluating services in terms of impact and overall outcomes;

- The use of individual submissions and communications reported on an almost daily basis through the various working groups and networks established by the Homeless Agency;
- The use of information submitted directly via email, the Agency's website and the phone.

Knowledge Transfer and Communication: The Role of Evidence in Policy Implementation in Dublin since 2007

Since the adoption of the final Homeless Agency action plan *A Key to the Door* in 2007, the implementation of national policy objectives to the end of 2010 at the local level in Dublin can be likened to driving over speed bumps while attempting to reach one's destination intact and on time. The speed bumps represent periods when the rate of the change management process, and progress in attaining the Homeless Agency's vision, had to be reduced in order to overcome hurdles and obstacles – mostly caused by inadequate information on, and evidence for, the effectiveness or otherwise of decision-making. The absence of verifiable and up-to-date real-time data at the level of the individual service user was identified as presenting a considerable challenge to the decision-making process. More importantly at the time, however, was the realization that the Agency's roadmap was incomplete, and that major decisions were required for the configuration of services into a coherent model of service delivery.

From 2007 on, as confidence in the role of evidence-based approaches became more established in the homeless sector in Dublin, the Homeless Agency's focus turned to the issue of knowledge transfer, and the dissemination and communication of findings and evidence relevant to homeless policy decision-making. Beginning in 2008, a sequence of primary evidence generating work projects led by the Homeless Agency resulted in rapid and significant knowledge transfer into both national policy decision-making and local policy implementation.

This was also facilitated by important early changes in the formulation of national policy made in response to recommendations arising from the aforementioned Fitzpatrick review to establish a National Homelessness Consultative Committee (NHCC), which the Homeless Agency was invited to be a part of. The NHCC proved to be a timely and successful innovation by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government as it helped to ensure an appropriate forum for the open discussion of policy options in response to the overall recommendations of the Fitzpatrick review. Importantly, the NHCC also established a Data Sub-group with an explicit focus on methodology and data strategy.

Table 1 below sets out key milestones in the transfer of research evidence into the development and implementation of national policy; the degree of national and local integration in terms of programme decision-making has increased significantly, especially in Dublin.

Table 1: Chronology of Key Milestones

Year	Evidence/ Knowledge Transfer	Policy Change and Development at National (N) and Local (L) levels
2006	Fitzpatrick Associates (2006) <i>Review of the Implementation of the Government's Integrated and Preventative Homeless Strategies</i> (Dublin: Stationery Office).	Early change made in the policy development infrastructure with establishment of NHCC (N)
2007	<i>A Key to the Door</i> , Homeless Agency action plan to 2010 (2007) setting out the vision of preventing homelessness, and eliminating long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Dublin	Impacted on debate on policy formulation in response to recommendations of Fitzpatrick Associates Review (2006) (N)
2007/8	Homeless Agency commissioned Impact Evaluations of Emergency and Transitional Accommodation	Policy statement <i>Pathways to Home</i> (2007) issued by Homeless Agency in response to evaluation findings and recommendations. Identifies three steps necessary for real and lasting implementation of recommendations: revise standards-based approach to delivery of services; create targeted programme of capital investment and development of appropriate revenue finance model; and establish holistic models of support in housing and care as well as ensuring access to mainstream services. (N) (L)
2008	<i>The Way Home, 2008-2013</i> (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008)	The newly revised national homeless strategy was launched in August 2008.
2008	<i>Counted In</i> (Homeless Agency, 2008a) <i>Evaluation Series</i> (Homeless Agency, 2008b) <i>Review of Finances and Expenditure</i> (Homeless Agency, 2008c)	<i>Homeless Agency Submission to Government</i> (2008d) (N). This policy submission was the most comprehensive evidence-based analysis yet produced by the Homeless Agency as a direct input into the implementation of the national strategy, <i>The Way Home</i> , and into realizing the Agency's 2010 vision as stated in <i>A Key to the Door</i> action plan (Homeless Agency, 2007).
2009	<i>Pathway to Home</i> (Homeless Agency, 2009)	This policy document is the Homeless Agency's implementation plan for the major reconfiguration of services into one agreed model of service delivery arising from agreed actions based on recommendations for change made in the <i>Homeless Agency Submission to Government</i> (2008d) (N) (L)
2009	<i>Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan</i> (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009)	Published by the Government shortly after <i>Pathway to Home</i> (Homeless Agency, 2009), this national implementation plan sets out the specific actions required to meet the strategic aims of <i>The Way Home, 2008-2013</i> (N) (L)

Strengthening the Evidence Base on Homelessness: New Developments

The adoption of the revised national policy *The Way Home* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008) is arguably the best example thus far of an evidence-based approach to homeless policy-making in Ireland. In addition to the poverty and health impact assessments that accompanied its formulation, it was followed by an innovative and detailed implementation plan (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009) setting out key actions under each strategic aim. Throughout *The Way Home* and its implementation plan, there is an emphasis on the importance of information flow in monitoring key targets. Other commitments to the evidence-based approach are found in actions aimed at refining measurement systems; monitoring and evaluating progress in meeting long-term housing needs; sharing good practice; and ensuring consultation with, and the participation of, service users in the configuration of services.

The Way Home includes a data and information strategy as a key strategic aim. Priority actions here include commitments to establishing a national data system based on the PASS data system developed by the Homeless Agency under the *Pathway to Home* model of service delivery. PASS generates real-time data across Dublin on a service user's progress through services and towards their exit from homelessness into housing, with support as required. It also produces verified data on key trends in relation to the extent and duration of a person's experience of homelessness, their needs and how these are being met, and the speed with which they are progressing towards the sought-after exit from homelessness.

The PASS system has been in operation in Dublin since January 2011, and although resources have been required to address compliance and data verification issues and to maintain standards, PASS is undoubtedly a success and is now central to decision-making on assessment, placement, support and housing allocation in Dublin. It is the basis upon which the four Dublin local authorities will report their periodic assessment of the extent and nature of homelessness in Dublin in 2011, and as such will replace the *Counted In* survey method previously utilized for that purpose. In 2012 the PASS system will be rolled out on a national basis and preparation for this roll-out has already begun in central and local government.

Furthermore, a very significant commitment has been made to improving attempts to measure the extent of homelessness nationally. Since 2009, collaboration between the NHCC Data Sub-group and the Central Statistics Office – the national body responsible for the Irish Census – has resulted in a project to deliver the most comprehensive enumeration of persons who are, on Census Night (April 2011), resident in communal establishments which have been pre-identified by local authorities and the Department of Environment as providing shelter and temporary

emergency accommodation to homeless persons. Additionally, the CSO worked with Dublin's newly established joint Homeless Consultative Forum and Management Group to conduct a Rough Sleeper's Count in Dublin on Census Night 2011 using the methodology originally pioneered by the Homeless Agency in Dublin.

Notably, this will allow the CSO to produce a dedicated 'sub-population' report on the extent of homeless in Ireland as well as establishing comprehensive data on the characteristics of individuals and families experiencing homelessness on Census Night in Ireland.

Reflections on Evidence in Action: 'Going Forward' while Making Progress?

Since the end of 2010 the Homeless Agency's mandate as an administrative entity has ended, and it is undergoing a transition to new arrangements under the provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009 that establishes the Dublin Joint Homeless Consultative Forum. The original timeline for delivering on its vision of ending the need to sleep rough as well as long-term homelessness in Dublin has passed without the vision being achieved in full. Nonetheless, major achievements have been made, and work towards the realization of the original vision continues and is ongoing while the organizing rationale of the vision remains unchanged. For example, the *Pathway to Home* model has been developed and is now being implemented, and the effectiveness of service configuration within the model is beginning to show results, most notably in new service provision for rough sleepers, and in the establishment of both the Dublin region local authorities' combined Assessment, Placement and Freephone Service, and the new single, integrated, client-based data and bed management system.

The *Pathway to Home* model is now the basis of the new statutory Homeless Action Plan (HAP) in Dublin. However, the economic context is extremely challenging in terms of its ongoing implementation with public expenditure cutbacks and service retrenchment. Furthermore, while there is still no actual shortage of housing stock, access to housing for low-income and excluded populations remains a very real challenge, and needs are currently unmet. The new HAP to 2013-called 'Delivering the Pathway to Home' aims to demonstrate how making surplus, unoccupied housing available to (formerly) homeless households is a realistic and cost-effective action for the near future.

There have been many lessons learned along the way; from the development and adoption of the Homeless Agency's first action plan right up to the establishment of the *Pathway to Home* model of service provision. Not least among them are lessons on how to overcome the challenges and obstacles to gathering evidence

on homelessness, and equally importantly ensuring the transfer of knowledge that bridges the gap between researcher and policy-maker. When dealing with homelessness, it is always the homeless person that must be at the heart of the process of change, and this means applying methods and developing competencies that ensure that the consultation and participation of service-users are central to the decision-making process. This means using innovative methods that demonstrate the lived reality of people experiencing homelessness and that can verify the effectiveness and efficiency of services tackling and preventing homelessness.

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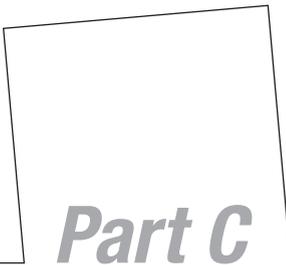
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Think Pieces



Part C

The Ambiguities, Limits and Risks of Housing First from a European Perspective

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› **Abstract** *There is strong evidence that the Pathways Housing First model can move homeless people with sustained experiences of living rough, with problematic drug and alcohol use, and with severe mental illness straight into ordinary housing, and successfully sustain them in that housing. However, three questions can be raised about what 'Housing First' is delivering in a wider sense. The first question centres on what is meant by 'Housing First' as an ethos and as a model of service delivery, as there can be a lack of clarity about what these services are delivering. The second question centres on the extent to which Housing First services can address the needs of 'chronically homeless' people that exist alongside a fundamental requirement for sustainable housing. The third question centres on the wider role of the Housing First model, and whether the policy and research focus on Housing First is overemphasising one aspect of the wider social problem of homelessness.*

› **Keywords** *Housing First, Homelessness Policy.*

Introduction

This paper begins by reviewing the origins of 'Housing First' before moving on to describe the New York Pathways Housing First model. The emergence of a wide range of Housing First services is then discussed. The paper then considers three questions, beginning with what 'Housing First' means and whether a better understanding of these services is required in order to understand and replicate success. The paper then considers whether the great gains in housing sustainability delivered by the Pathways model address all aspects of 'chronic' homelessness. Finally, the paper considers whether the current policy and research focus on Housing First models is overemphasising one aspect of homelessness.

The Origins of Housing First

During the 1950s and 1960s, the USA began to close its long-stay psychiatric hospitals. Initial resettlement of patients had mixed success and services were therefore developed to try to improve outcomes. The most commonly used was the 'staircase' model.

The staircase model moved people leaving psychiatric hospitals through a series of steps. The first step was not unlike the hospital, and each subsequent step brought former patients closer to ordinary housing, until they reached a point where they were living independently (Ridgway and Zippel, 1990). Treatment and other support services were reduced at each step. These steps could occur at a single site, but some services provided each step in a separate location. This model has also been called the 'linear resettlement model', the 'continuum of care' and a 'ladder' (Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010).

By the 1980s it was evident that the staircase approach was not always working well. Some staircase services had strict regimes, requiring compliance with treatment and banning alcohol or drug use. Those who did not follow the rules were not allowed to move between steps and could also be 'sent back' a step, or evicted, for breaking the rules. Evidence mounted that the strict rules in these services meant people were becoming 'stuck' on particular steps, often being evicted or opting to leave these services (Ridgway and Zippel, 1990).

A new service model emerged that showed patients could move straight from psychiatric hospital into ordinary housing, where they could live independently with help from floating support services (i.e. mobile support workers and clinical staff). This was initially termed a 'supported housing' approach. Supported housing was flexible in that the level of support provided could rise and fall as needed. In addition, because no fixed site infrastructure had to be built, supported housing

was cheaper than staircase services. The absence of a strictly enforced 'staircase' regime also seemed to deliver much better outcomes. Rates of housing sustainment by ex-patients using supported housing services were higher than those in staircase models (Ridgway and Zippel, 1990; Pleace with Wallace, 2011).

Drawing in particular from the work of Culhane and his colleagues, US policy-makers had become convinced that homelessness took several forms. The US evidence base indicated that the bulk of US homelessness existed in a 'transitional' form, i.e. poor people with low support needs losing housing temporarily as a result of experiences like relationship breakdown and unemployment. It also suggested there was a much smaller group of 'chronically homeless' people with very high support needs who were very intensive users of emergency shelters and who spent a significant amount of time on the street (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998; Burt, 2003; Culhane and Metraux, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2008; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010).

The small group of chronically homeless people had a mix of what Kemp et al. (2006) have described as 'mutually reinforcing' needs. Alongside sustained rooflessness, chronically homeless people also presented with high rates of severe mental illness, problematic drug and alcohol use, chaotic and anti-social behaviour, low level criminality and poor physical health (Cortes et al., 2010).

Chronically homeless people spent sustained periods in emergency accommodation, made disproportionate use of emergency medical, psychiatric and drug services, and were quite often involved in petty criminality, which meant that they got arrested and were subject to short term imprisonment at high rates (Culhane, 2008). In 2006, drawing on Culhane's work, *The New Yorker* told the story of 'Million Dollar Murray'. The article highlighted how one vulnerable individual's sustained experience of living rough had cost US taxpayers a very significant sum of money because 'Murray' made frequent use of emergency services and very often got arrested. This was contrasted with how much less it would have cost to provide Murray with settled housing and resettlement support, and how this might have prevented his eventual death on the street (Gladwell, 2006).

Both humanitarian and financial concerns led to a federal attempt to counteract chronic homelessness. Under a programme called the 'Continuum of Care', a series of staircase services for chronically homeless people were funded. Looking towards mental health services made sense, given the perceived pattern of need among chronically homeless people. What made somewhat less sense was opting for the staircase model, the effectiveness of which was being questioned even before the Continuum of Care programme was implemented (Wong et al., 2006).

The Continuum of Care programme had some success, but evaluations of these staircase services also showed that many chronically homeless people were not being resettled (Sosin et al., 1995; Orwin et al., 1999; Hoch, 2000). Service users were becoming stuck on particular steps, being evicted or abandoning services because of strict rules. EU research on staircase services for homeless people also began reporting similar findings (Sahlin, 2005; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007; Atherton and McNaughton-Nicholls, 2008).

The Pathways Approach

In 1992, Dr Sam Tsemberis founded the Pathways organisation in New York. He argued that the lessons learned about 'supported housing' in mental health services should be employed in tackling chronic homelessness (Tsemberis, 2010a and 2010b).

Tsemberis argues that staircase models require service users to comply with psychiatric treatment and show sobriety because it is assumed they will 'value' independent housing that they have 'earned' (Tsemberis, 2010b). By contrast, the Pathways Housing First (PHF) approach is described by Tsemberis as grounded in the following operating principles (Tsemberis, 2010b):

- Housing is a basic human right.

There should be:

- respect, warmth and compassion for service users;
- a commitment to working with service users for as long as they need;
- scattered site housing using independent apartments (i.e. homeless people should not be housed within dedicated buildings but within ordinary housing);
- separation of housing from mental health, and drug and alcohol services (i.e. housing provision is not conditional on compliance with psychiatric treatment or sobriety);
- consumer choice and self-determination;
- recovery orientation (i.e. delivering mental health services with an emphasis on service user choice and control; basing treatment plans around service users' own goals);
- a harm reduction approach (i.e. supporting the minimisation of problematic drug/alcohol use but not insisting on total abstinence).

PHF is not presented as a solution to all forms of homelessness. It is made clear that the service is designed for chronically homeless people. PHF requires service users to have a severe mental illness; otherwise they cannot access the welfare benefits that help fund the service (Tsemberis, 2010b).

PHF places formerly chronically homeless people in furnished apartments provided via the private rented sector. Housing must meet certain quality standards, and service users sign a tenancy agreement directly with the landlord or, very often, an agreement with PHF (i.e. the tenancy is held by PHF and the service user is sub-letting). This approach reduces any concerns about letting to formerly chronically homeless people as the tenancy agreement is between PHF and the landlord. However, a sub-letting agreement gives service users fewer rights than if they had their own tenancy (Tsemberis, 2010b). Housing is provided immediately (or as quickly as possible) and on an open-ended basis. There is no requirement for compliance with psychiatric treatment or for abstinence from drugs or alcohol. Housing provision is not entirely unconditional, however; service users must agree to a weekly visit from a PHF support worker and also to paying 30% of their monthly income towards rent (Tsemberis, 2010b).

There are two main elements to the floating support services provided by PHF. The first element is the team of programme support workers whose role is centred on support to sustain the service user in their housing. The second element is the interdisciplinary team which combines Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and Intensive Case Management (ICM) services, with the ACT element concentrating on people with the severest forms of mental illness. The interdisciplinary team includes a psychiatrist, a peer specialist (i.e. a former service user providing support), a health worker, a family specialist (centred on enhancing social support), a drug and alcohol worker and a supported employment specialist (Tsemberis, 2010b).

A series of longitudinal studies have shown that PHF has had much better resettlement and housing sustainment outcomes than the staircase model (Tsemberis, 1999; Tsemberis et al., 2004; Pleave, 2008; Atherton and McNaughton-Nicholls, 2008; Pearson et al., 2009; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010; Tsemberis, 2010a). There is also evidence of cost effectiveness. PHF costs less than staircase models because no specialist accommodation has to be built. PHF service users also make less use of emergency shelters, less use of emergency medical services, and are less likely to get arrested than when they were homeless, all of which produce savings for the US Taxpayer (Culhane, 2008; Tsemberis, 2010b).

Diversity in 'Housing First' Services

Housing First has a core role at all levels of US homelessness policy (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2010). In the EU, several Member States, including Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland and Sweden, have put Housing First at the centre of their national homelessness strategies.

As has been widely noted elsewhere, what is meant by 'Housing First' varies. The PHF model and other Housing First services can be quite different from one another (Atherton and McNaughton-Nicholls, 2008; Pleace, 2008; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010; Busch-Geertsema, 2010; McNaughton-Nicholls and Atherton, 2011).

Projects described as 'Housing First' in the USA include dedicated blocks of specialist accommodation with on-site staffing, floating support services that do not provide or arrange housing, and various modified staircase models (Perlman and Parvensky, 2006; Pearson et al., 2007; Sadowski et al., 2009; Larimer et al., 2009; Kertesz and Weiner, 2009). A recent study reviewing grant applications from 11 service providers for US federal funding to develop Housing First services concluded that only two actually matched the PHF model (Kresky-Wolff et al., 2010). Finland has adopted a Housing First model that centres on the refurbishment of its existing emergency shelter system. This has involved replacing old fashioned direct access hostels with purpose built Housing First units at no small cost (Tanio and Fredrikson, 2009; Busch-Geertsema, 2010). Pathways itself has reacted to the diversity of Housing First services by issuing detailed guidance on what it now refers to as Pathways Housing First services (Tsemberis, 2010b), and it is also developing a PHF 'fidelity scale'.

Three Questions about Housing First

One: Service diversification

The first of three questions about Housing First centres on service diversification. On one level, it might be argued that it is the shared ethos of Housing First services that matters most. These services all share the assumption that chronically homeless people do not have to be sober and compliant with psychiatric treatment before they can be successfully re-housed, and that giving choice and control to service users will provide more sustainable exits from homelessness (Kertesz and Weiner, 2009; Edens et al., 2011).

However, getting a better understanding of the variation in Housing First services might be important. The extent to which there are potential flaws and limits in the various Housing First models now needs to be understood. There would be less to be concerned about if everyone were following the PHF model, which is relatively well

evidenced, but the reality is that they are not. Beyond the model drift from PHF throughout the USA, modification of PHF is equally evident in service pilots in the UK, and in the French and Finnish interpretations of Housing First (Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010; Busch-Geertsema, 2010; Houard, this volume). As the PHF model is often not what is actually being implemented, there is a need to understand properly what is being delivered by various Housing First services in order to assess which variants work well and which may work less well (Caton et al., 2007; Tabol et al., 2009).

Two: Potential limits of Housing First

The second question centres on the potential limits of Housing First. Looking specifically at PHF, it seems undeniable that there have been considerable successes in providing sustainable exits from homelessness for very vulnerable people. However the perspective on what constitutes a 'successful' service outcome for this group of homeless people can change according to one's point of view.

One issue is problematic drug and alcohol use. There is good evidence that PHF delivers 'harm reduction' (Tsemberis, 2010a; Edens et al., 2011). However, some argue that PHF and other Housing First models are not always very effective in counteracting the harm of problematic drug and alcohol use. This criticism has two elements; the first is that PHF tends not to engage with the heaviest users, and the second is that while drug use often stabilises and falls off to some degree among PHF service users, it does not stop (Kertesz et al., 2009; Tsai et al., 2010; Padgett et al., 2011).

Some argue that there should still be a place for services for homeless people whose drug and alcohol use directly threatens their well-being and who need to stop drinking or using drugs (Lipton et al., 2000; Kertesz et al., 2009; Tsai et al., 2010). Importantly, not all those services designed to end drug use have the harsh regimes of staircase services, and some draw heavily on the Housing First ethos, facilitating abstinence, but trying to do so while maximising choice and control (Caton et al., 2007; Kertesz and Weiner, 2009). The point of such arguments is to suggest that services designed always to achieve sobriety need not use strict or harsh regimes, and that such services might be the best option for homeless people with very severe drug and alcohol issues.

More generally, the harm reduction philosophy underpinning PHF may not always be viewed sympathetically by policy-makers. In the UK, for example, harm reduction policies that arose from concerns about HIV infection through needle sharing are now subject to criticism, with some arguing in favour of re-emphasizing abstinence-based approaches (Pleace, 2008). The PHF model will not sit very comfortably within a wider national strategy that is intended to deliver cessation of problematic drug use. Whether or not harm reduction is the best

approach is a very complex question on which views can be polarised, but there are those who will look at the underlying logic of the PHF harm reduction approach and question its effectiveness.

There are also some issues around worklessness and social isolation among people using PHF services (McNaughton-Nicholls and Atherton, 2011). Social isolation undermines quality of life and well-being. Sustained worklessness is also detrimental to well-being, though further policy concerns arise in regard to the financial cost of sustaining a formerly homeless, vulnerable person on welfare benefits for what may be a lifetime.

There is some evidence that access to sustainable independent housing provided by PHF gives people a base on which to build greater social interaction and economic activity (Padgett et al., 2006; Padgett, 2007; Tsemberis, 2010a), and worklessness and social isolation are also both issues that PHF actively seeks to address. However, there is not as yet any real evidence that PHF is effective at counteracting worklessness or social isolation (Tsemberis, 2010a). However, it must be noted that there is also little evidence that sustained worklessness or social isolation are being effectively counteracted by other homelessness service models (Jones and Pleace, 2010).

From a policy perspective, the capacity or otherwise of PHF and other Housing First models to deliver good outcomes in terms of enhancing take-up of paid work may become important. This would certainly be a concern for UK policy-makers. Realism is important, as factors like unemployment may have both structural and individual causes, and there are limits to what any one service can be expected to do (Busch-Geertsema, 2005). While PHF may not be able to achieve everything, the gains it can deliver in housing sustainability need always to be borne in mind.

In New York, delivering PHF costs less than delivering staircase services, as PHF does not require specialist accommodation to be built or adapted. Yet, as PHF delivers high quality, intensive support services on an open-ended basis, it is still quite expensive to run, even allowing for the cost savings it can produce elsewhere (Metraux et al., 2003). The costs for some other models of Housing First, such as the Finnish services which involve capital spending on buildings, are even higher (Busch-Geertsema, 2010).

There is some evidence from Europe and the USA that housing sustainability for vulnerable groups can be achieved via lower intensity floating support services (Pleace, 1995; Rosenheck et al., 2003; Busch-Geertsema, 2005). In the UK, people with mental health problems at risk of homelessness are frequently placed in ordinary housing and given low intensity floating support services using a case management model. The direct cost of these services in the UK is much less than PHF, but the

services are also incurring costs to UK taxpayers in the sense that they ensure access to welfare systems, including social housing and assistance with private rented housing costs, and the UK's free universal healthcare for service users.

It is unclear whether lower intensity floating support services could produce housing stability and a quality of life equivalent to that delivered by PHF at a lower cost. This is because the evidence base on these services is weaker than for PHF. In the UK, where these services are widely used, there are (England only) data indicating that low intensity floating support services do deliver housing stability. However, these data are restricted to service exit interviews (Centre for Housing Research, 2010), which means that it is not clear how well housing is being sustained once service contact ceases. Total costs for lower intensity floating support services are not clear either, in that while it is reasonably clear what direct service delivery costs, the use of case management may arguably 'maximise' the cost of service users to the wider welfare system. A longitudinal evaluation comparing the success of PHF and some existing EU services that use low intensity floating support and ordinary housing, looking at housing sustainment, quality of life and total costs, might be useful.

The nature of the independent living that PHF delivers might also be contrasted with what other floating support service models using ordinary housing provide. The use of sub-letting does mean that housing rights are more restricted than those for the general population and, while there is no requirement to use psychiatric and drug and alcohol services, access to housing is not unconditional. For example, PHF service users have fewer housing rights and are subject to more regulation than is the case for some vulnerable homeless people living in ordinary housing and using low intensity floating support services in the UK (Jones et al., 2002). However, all homelessness services will have at least some rules, and the restrictions on the housing rights of some PHF service users need to be seen in this context.

Three: The nature of homelessness, and the operational assumptions of Housing First

The third question about Housing First centres on its operational assumptions and how we understand the nature of homelessness. Some US academics argue that the bulk of homeless people are not characterised by severe mental illness or by problematic drug and alcohol use. The immediate causation of their homelessness can be many different things, including unemployment or relationship breakdown, but one underlying cause is always the same: these are people who are too poor to afford adequate housing. From this perspective, the main interventions needed to tackle the bulk of US homelessness are an increase in housing supply, better access to affordable housing, and better chances for poorer people to get work that offers a living wage (Culhane and Metraux, 2008; Shinn, 2009; Culhane et al., 2011).

The issue here is not really about PHF; it is, instead, a question surrounding what might be called the various distortions of the original PHF model that are now referred to as 'Housing First'. As the Housing First movement – again as something distinct from PHF – spreads across the US and into the EU, securing the attention of policy-makers and media, and taking centre-stage in strategic responses to homelessness, it brings with it a particular image of what 'homelessness' is. That image is of chaotic people with high support needs, a subset of the much larger US homeless population that Continuum of Care staircase services and then PHF were specifically designed for. This is a potentially dangerous image if it is presented in isolation, because it presents a very restricted picture of what homelessness is. Emphasising the characteristics of vulnerable individuals who represent a minority of homeless people downplays the scale of homelessness and the role of labour markets, welfare systems and limited access to affordable housing in homelessness causation (Anderson, 1993; Dordick, 2002).

Conclusion

PHF and other Housing First service models can deliver significant gains in housing stability for a high-cost, high-risk group of very vulnerable homeless people. The scale of this achievement must be acknowledged. However, PHF and other Housing First services are not a panacea, and they do not always meet all the needs of the people for whom they are intended (Lipton et al., 2000; Tsai et al., 2010). There may be other ways to get vulnerable people off the streets and into more stable accommodation and housing that might cost less. While PHF and other Housing First services are designed to deal with the most difficult aspect of homelessness, they are not intended to tackle the bulk of homelessness (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010).

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Not for the Homeless? Housing Policy in Flanders: Between Selectivity and Legitimacy

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› **Abstract** *It is often argued that the substantial participation of the middle-classes in the social security system is functional in combating poverty. According to this argument, it is because of its universal character that the system has sufficient societal support to be able to offer an acceptable, minimum level of protection to low-income groups or groups at risk. Since the mid-1990s in Flanders, Belgium, the government has used this argument to increase the income ceilings for housing subsidies. In this contribution, using data and discourses, we critically examine this trend, showing that the middle-classes are neither excluded from these subsidies, nor the victims of a newly emerging housing need.*

Introduction

On the 27th of November 2009, the journal *De Morgen* reported that Flanders' largest social housing company had refused to allocate a social rental dwelling to a homeless person because he was homeless. It was reported elsewhere that in 2009 more people than ever were under threat of eviction (*De Standaard*, 30 November 2009), but there was little public reaction to evidence that private landlords discriminate against vulnerable people (Heylen *et al.*, 2007; De Decker *et al.*, 2009). That these trends and messages might be linked with the lack of efficiency of housing policies did not, apparently, arise as a consideration. Frankly, this is not surprising as policy makers over the last number of years have gone out of their way to show that the middle-classes, in particular, are experiencing housing problems. The argument goes that the middle-classes can no longer afford houses of their own because prices are twice as high as they were 10 years ago. Ownership of a house is a must, however, because it is, at least as far as the Socialist Party argues, the best way of providing

for a pension (De Decker, 2007b; Palmans and De Decker, 2009). As a leading political commentator in the national journal *De Standaard* outlined: “*The outright ownership of a house makes an enormous difference for our ageing population... there is no better insurance against old age than owning one’s house.* (Sturtewagen, 22 December 2009 – own translation). Indeed, the value of Belgian real estate stands at 969 billion euro (*De Morgen*, 2 December 2010).

These commentaries point to two issues. The first is that policy makers from different political parties and at different levels have worked, and continue to work, hard to channel more housing subsidies to the middle-classes. The second is that those households and people with the greatest housing needs are being ignored. Problem one relates to the legitimacy of housing policies in general; problem two is related to their selectivity, and to the goals of the Belgian Constitution and the Flemish housing code to subsidize, preferably, those households and persons most in need. Apparently both are at odds.

After dealing with the controversy between the legitimacy and selectivity of social policies in the first section, we will go on to show that there is no need to discriminate in favour of middle-income groups; we first demonstrate the ‘Matthew effect’ in Belgian housing policies, then show that the middle-class does not face housing problems, and finally we look more specifically at the social rental sector – the most efficient housing scheme from the viewpoint of low income people (De Decker, 2005b).

Legitimacy versus selectivity

One of the pillars of a democratic state is legitimacy – the conviction of large parts of the population that the political institutions and those running them can be trusted (Huyse, 1996). It follows that the future of social policies also depends on their legitimacy, which means, in practice, that a sufficiently large segment of the population needs to benefit from them; this includes the middle-classes, whose contribution to the welfare system is significant. It is argued that if benefits are disproportionately awarded to other groups, there is an increased risk that the middle-classes will refuse to continue contributing to the welfare state (Andries and De Lathouwer, 1996; Van Oorschot, 2000).

That the middle-classes have a big share in the foundation and development of western welfare states is well-documented (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Baldwin, 1990), and for some, their role is still crucial to understanding the dynamic of welfare states. According to Goodin and Le Grand (1987), the middle-classes still benefit directly from welfare states, while at the same time supporting those parts of the welfare state from which they benefit and seek restrictions on those parts from

which they do not benefit. There are socio-political consequences arising from the fact that the uptake of benefits by the middle-classes also plays a crucial role in the political defence of the welfare state. A selective policy focussing only on the poor would alienate the middle-classes from the system, which in the long run could lead to a lack of support and negative consequences for those most in need of it. In particular, selective benefits are subject to austerity measures in times of recession. Esping-Andersen (1990, p.33) argues that “The risks of welfare state backlash depend not on spending, but on the class character of welfare states. Middle class welfare states, be they social democratic (as in Scandinavia) or corporatist (as in Germany), forge middle class loyalties. In contrast, the liberal, residualist welfare states found in the United States, Canada and, increasingly, Britain, depend on the loyalties of a numerically weak, and often politically residual, social stratum. In this sense, the class coalitions in which the welfare state regime-types were founded, explain not only their past evolution but also their future prospects”. Cantillon (1993) also argues that the substantial participation of the middle-classes in the social security system is functional in combating poverty; thanks to its universal character, the welfare system has sufficient support – legitimacy – to offer low-income groups and groups at risk an acceptable minimum level of protection (see also Schokkaert and Spinnewyn, 1995 and more recently Judt, 2010). This is in contrast to a means-tested system of social security, for which the argument can be made that ‘services for the poor’ lead to ‘poor services’ (Titmuss, 1968) where there is a lack of political support (Andries and De Lathouwer, 1996).

If we look more particularly at housing policy in Flanders (and Belgium) over the last few years, it becomes clear that policy makers have been trying to reintegrate the middle-classes; the eligibility ceiling for nearly all housing subsidy schemes have risen, and similar changes have been announced in the policy note of housing minister Van den Bossche (2009). In other words, one of the main developments in recent housing policy is that target groups have become larger. However, besides the question of legitimacy, there is also that of efficiency: do recent housing policies help to realise the policy goals that have been set and, more concretely, do housing policies help to realise, or move towards the realisation of, every citizen’s constitutional right to housing? The answer is clear: this is a right that is far from being realised in the case of poor citizens (De Decker *et al.*, 2009).

The first problem mentioned above, relating to the tendency to channel more housing subsidies to the middle-classes, suggests that politicians’ interpretation of housing policy has become too selective and that, as a consequence, its legitimacy has diminished. On the other hand, the problem that those with the greatest housing needs are being ignored suggests that housing policies are not targeted

enough; this is how welfare workers interpreted the situation last winter when they advocated renting out Christmas cribs (to the homeless as temporary shelters?)(*De Standard*, 24 December 2009).

The Matthew Effect

“The social promotion of homeownership is an example (together with student grants) of a selective social provision, the benefits of which (...) should be reserved for lower income groups. In fact, this selectivity does not work, and buyers of government-built houses and, more particularly, the individual builders receiving [building or purchase] grants, largely belong to higher, and in some case very high, income groups” (Deleeck et al., 1983, p. 358).]

This passage is an extract from the seminal work on “The Matthew effect¹” by Deleeck *et al.* (1983), wherein they show that higher social classes participate more in a number of social service domains, and consequently represent a bigger share of social expenditure (1983, p. XI). One such domain is housing; this is the case because to become a homeowner – up to now the dominant policy goal of Belgian and Flemish governments (De Decker, 2008; De Decker *et al.*, 2009) -, the de facto access threshold is so high that candidates need to have not only substantial capital of their own, but also good income prospects. Deleeck *et al.* also point to the fact that the social rental sector has become more selective “*in the sense that provision is taken up proportionally more by lower income categories*” (p. 359). This does not imply, however, that the more marginal population categories are well represented in the social rental sector; around the same time as the latter statement was made, Demal-Durez (1982) found that approximately one in three social tenants had an income higher than the exclusion limit, and Notredame (w.d.) pointed to the fact that social selectivity in the sector was limited on the whole, as high income groups also benefit – a large number unlawfully (see also KCMB, 1991). Notredame later pleaded for increased accessibility to social renting for vulnerable people, for which he advocated the eviction of those earning above the income limits (VHM-Info, April 1993).

Based on data for 1995, De Decker (2005) reaffirmed the obstinacy of the Matthew effect: 40% of all housing benefits go to 20% of the wealthiest households, while the least wealthy 20% get only 10% of benefits. Not only do the highest income groups benefit most as a group, but they also benefit on an individual level, a bias created principally by (federal) tax exemptions, although an above average proportion of

¹ The concept comes from a line in the biblical Gospel of Matthew: “*For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away*”.

Flemish subsidies linked with the promotion of home-ownership also go to middle and high income groups (De Decker, 2010a, b). Only the social rental scheme and the negligible rent allowance scheme reach lower income groups.

Data from the 2005 Flemish housing survey (Häffner & Heylen, 2008) re-establishes that housing policies in Belgium and Flanders are characterized by a reversed redistribution effect in favour of higher income groups. Häffner and Heylen (2008) found that for the Netherlands as well as Flanders, income inequality increased after housing subsidies had been factored in. As well as showing the size and effect of some subsidies, Table 1 also shows the ratio between the first and third tercile as a rudimentary measure of income inequality. In both cases, we see an increase in inequality after housing costs minus subsidies are calculated. For tenants, the ratio rises from 2.3 to 2.8, and for mortgaged owners from 2 to 2.2.

Table 1. Flanders, affordability according to tenure and terciles in equivalent income* for households who moved during the last 5 years, 2005

	Gross housing expenditure	Rent allowances/ fiscal exemptions	Net housing expenditure	Income	Equivalent income in € after housing cost
Tenants					
1	358	-4	354	1 125	771
2	418	-1	417	1 645	1 237
3	488	0	488	2 617	2 129
<i>Ratio 3/1</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>2.8</i>
Owners with a mortgage					
1	699	-60	639	2 325	1 686
2	769	-92	677	3 111	2 434
3	1 011	-98	913	4 540	3 626
<i>Ratio 3/1</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>1.6</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2.2</i>

*income corrected for family size

Source: Flemish housing survey 2005 – Häffner & Heylen (2008)

To conclude: on the basis of existing figures, the legitimacy of housing policies are not at stake. For those familiar with the history this is not surprising, as at no point since the first housing law in 1889 has the Belgian government intended to allocate housing subsidies selectively to a (small) group of low income people (Goossens, 1982; Mougenot, 1988; De Decker *et al.*, 2005). Table 2 shows that the same applies today. The table shows into which decile income limits fall in terms of eligibility for the various housing subsidies targeted at Flemish households: 1 represents the bottom 10% of households in terms of income; 10 represents the 10% of households with the highest incomes. This means that at least 60% of net-taxable incomes in Flanders are within eligibility limits for a social rental dwelling, and that at least 90% of income levels are eligible for large renovation grants. Table 2 clearly

demonstrates the lack of selectivity of housing policies, as with the exception of the tiny rent allowance scheme, at least 60% of incomes fall within the eligibility limits for all other schemes, and for subsidies to promote or sustain homeownership,² this rises to 90%.

Table 2. Basic income ceilings* for housing subsidies; conditions 2009, earnings 2006

Type of subsidy	Max income in € (yearly net taxable income)	Decile of the exclusion limit
Tax exemption on mortgages**	none	10
Social rental: base for non singles	28 182	7***
Rent allowance	15 530	4
SHM° social purchase dwelling & plot of land	46 480	9
SHM° middle sized plot of land	none	10
SHM° social loan	46 180	9
VWF° social loan	49 260	9
EKV° social loan	none	10
Renovation grant for small works		
Owner-occupier	26 570	7
Owner-landlord	53 140	10
Renovation grant for larger works	53 350	10
Insurance against income loss for owners	53 350	10

*this concerns basic figures for couples (without possible elevations for children)

**this is a Federal subsidy; all others are Flemish subsidies

***is higher when there is a liveability plan

°these abbreviations refer to the different institutions that organise the subsidy. SHM – a local social housing company which can rent out or sell social dwellings, or offer cheap loans; VWF – an institution that offers cheap loans to large families; EKV – locally recognised housing institutions that offer cheap loans.

Websites consulted on 24 December 2009

The middle-classes and housing

The previous section showed that for the large majority of housing subsidies, little selective targeting exists. Nevertheless, an argument has developed over the last few years in policy circles that because housing prices are on the rise, eligibility limits must also go up to help those households just above existing limits. While research has repeatedly shown that little is at stake for the middle-classes in terms of affordability, and one might expect efforts favouring the lowest income groups to increase as these groups suffer the most when housing costs increase, this is not the case. Homeowners with a mortgage – almost half of all owners – have average housing costs that barely exceed 20% of their disposable income (table 3) and for ‘starters’, or those starting out on the ownership market (persons not older

² Note that the share of homeowners in Flanders is approximately 75%, social renting accounts for 6%, so approximately 19% is private renting.

than 30 at the time of moving whose previous dwelling was the parent's home) this is 22.3% (Heylen & Winters, 2008). Taking into account the normal bank requirement that housing payments should not exceed 33% of one's income, the conclusion is that home-ownership in Flanders is very affordable. In addition, the average quota of mortgaged home-owners as a percentage of the housing market has hardly risen in the last 10 years: from 19.6% in 1995 to 21.7% in 2005, and only 11.7% of home-owners with mortgages have housing costs that exceed the critical threshold of 33% (table 4).

If we look at social and private tenants, we note that the social rental sector is doing quite well, making up an average of 22.3% of the housing market, and with only 8.4% of tenants exceeding the 33% income-housing cost threshold; this is in contrast with private tenants who make up nearly 30% of the housing market, and nearly 30% of whom are paying housing costs of more than one third of their incomes; the percentage of private tenants rose greatly from 21.8% in 1995 to 29.5% in 2005.

Table 3. Flanders, evolution of the housing quota, 1976-2005 (percentage of housing market?)

	Owners with a mortgage	Private tenants	Social tenants
1976	11.8	-	-
1985	13.6	-	-
1992	18.1	-	-
1995	19.6	21.8	18.9
1997	21.6	25.4	18.6
1999	20.3	25.1	20.1
2002	20.5	27.2	21.5
2005	21.7	29.5	22.3

Source: Flemish housing survey 2005; Pannecoucke *et al.* (2001), Heylen *et al.* (2007)

Table 4. Flanders, share of households with high housing costs, 2005

	Percentage of those with housing costs above 33% of income
Private tenants	29.8
Social tenants	8.4
Owners with a mortgage	11.7

Source: Flemish housing survey 2005 – Heylen *et al.* (2007)

Another approach finds similar results. De Decker *et al.* (2008), using standardised income and housing costs, looked at the evolution of disposable income after the payment of rent or mortgage instalments – the 'rest equivalent income' (REI). Patterns are different for owners (with a mortgage) and tenants, with the former doing better than the latter; the REI for tenants has dropped consistently, while for

households with a mortgage, even where instalment amounts rose sharply, the REI has remained stable or increased (depending on the income group), as income has risen (table 5).

Finally, it must be pointed out that certain groups had an REI in 2005 that was lower than that of 1985. This is the case only for those mortgaged home-owners in the lowest income quintile, and pensioners or those have taken early-retirement – a very small group. However, it is the case for almost all categories of tenants: average tenants, those not in the lowest income quintile, tenants with an education level below higher education, (bridge) pensioners, tenants on social benefits (ill, disabled, unable to work), tenants whose head of household is older than 45, single (parent) tenants and couples with children.

Table 5. Flanders: residual income after housing cost by income quintile for mortgaged owners and tenants (1985-2005). Average prices in € as per 2005 prices

	1985	1992	1997	2005
Mortgage owners with down payments				
Quintile 1	514	553	590	475
Quintile 2	683	784	807	746
Quintile 3	857	981	996	965
Quintile 4	1072	1235	1264	1142
Quintile 5	1462	1812	1929	1788
Tenants				
Quintile 1	514	540	534	487
Quintile 2	706	768	767	768
Quintile 3	884	1006	992	960
Quintile 4	1128	1267	1290	1309
Quintile 5	1629	1860	1856	1859

Source: Flemish housing survey 2005 – Pannecoucke *et al.* (2001); De Decker *et al.* (2008)

To conclude: accessibility or affordability problems are rare on the homeowner market. How, then, should we understand the barrage of media messages that suggest otherwise – are they wrong? It is undeniably true that the visible, nominal costs of purchasing a dwelling or a plot of land have increased spectacularly: two-fold for dwellings and three-fold for land. However, this does not automatically equate to a rise in instalment payments; a combination of factors means that the same proportion of disposable income is equal to a larger amount of money, and nominal housing prices thus become inflated (De Decker, 2007a). This inflation partly explains rising housing costs, but given the inflation levels of the recent past, the effect on prices is minimal. Low interest rates have a far more significant effect:

based on the same share of its income, a household can borrow a far higher sum than it could 10 to 15 years ago, an effect that is amplified through the extension of the maturity of the mortgages.

In search of a *deus ex machina*

In Flanders the middle-classes are well served with housing subsidies, as a consequence of which the legitimacy question should not be an issue. Unfortunately this is not the case; even if policies on social rental housing were not targeted at a selective group of poor and/or vulnerable people, the comparatively weak social profile of tenants undermines the legitimacy of the sector (Pannecoucke *et al.*, 2001; Heylen *et al.*, 2007). This profile has changed tremendously over the last 20 years; the average social tenant was traditionally part of a classic household – working male, housewife and children –, but this is no longer the case. Single people, including single parents, and people on benefits now dominate, and the sector has become poorer and more ethnically diverse. In addition, although they are still a small minority, the numbers of former prisoners, psychiatric patients and addicts are on the increase. Thus, despite the fact that the sector is effective overall (housing to income ratios are low and research shows that social tenants get value for money, Heylen *et al.*, 2007), as a consequence of which the sector is popular with those in genuine need of housing and waiting lists and times are increasingly long, its lack of legitimacy has led some cities and municipalities to announce a halt in development, while many others are reluctant to endorse new schemes. In addition, due to a new decree, Flemish developers are reluctant to create a social mix by allowing social rental dwellings in private development estates; this is also due to the association of social housing with poor, uninhabitable neighbourhoods (De Decker and Pannecoucke, 2004; De Decker *et al.*, 2009).

To increase the legitimacy of social renting would require a greater social mix; in practice, this would mean either attracting middle-income households and households with children, or limiting the inflow of less desirable individuals. For the last 20 years, ministers have played around with eligibility rules in an effort to reach one or a combination of these goals; as increases in income ceilings had little effect, more and more new criteria have been added – among others, contested criteria such as a demonstrated willingness to learn Dutch, probationary tenancies and the possible introduction of local eligibility rules like awarding priority to employed people or refusing those with histories of being problem tenants. As for the homeless, the prescribed criteria are such that almost no homeless people can meet them, (see e.g. Lescrauwaet, 2005) while the ‘new’ criteria are problematic as they effectively exclude the only remaining candidates – the poor and the vulnerable; the middle-classes, who can easily become home-owners, are unlikely to apply.

It is difficult to deny that a discourse on and within social rental housing developed in the 1990s, which was often led by those directly involved; managers and chairpersons of social housing companies, housing ministers, members of parliament, and chairs of political parties have repeatedly stated that the social rental **system** was ineffective (De Decker, Newton and Meeus, 2009). Today's image of social renting is a negative one of trouble-makers and the poor clustered together in dilapidated estates, in which disputes and conflicts are part of the grammar of everyday life; while research shows that, in fact, there are no such problems with social housing (Pannecoucke *et al.*, 2001; Stoops and Albertijn, 2003). A recent survey reveals that 89.9% of social tenants are (very) satisfied with their dwelling, and that 86.7% are (very) satisfied with their living environment (Heylen *et al.*, 2007), and some managers have even admitted that troublemaking is at an individual level. It is also realistic to assume that if social housing were so spectacularly bad, it would have been the object of much media attention already.

Social renting in Belgium has always been, what the author of Belgium's housing policy history Goossens (1982), calls a *Fremdkörper*, or an alien element in a country that has traditionally encouraged private paths to housing and homeownership (see e.g. Mougnot, 1988). The consequence is that neither the policy world nor society itself actively supports the social rental sector, although efforts are sometimes made to improve its performance. It appears, therefore, that social housing, although engaged with 'the good cause', does not have a captive audience for its problems, and these problems, as a consequence, do not get resolved. Desperate needs lead to desperate deeds, and self-stigmatisation appears to have been one such desperate attempt at getting attention; a variant on the 2005 French *banlieue* rioters and the earlier Watts rioters in Los Angeles in the 1960s that caused trouble to attract attention (Le Guenec, 1998; Zizek, 2009),

There is a second paradox. It is obvious that social housing companies provide dwellings for those who cannot procure their own on the market, but past discourse has focused on excluding certain categories of the population, and on attracting households that do not need support to find decent, affordable housing. Instead of chasing groups that neither need nor want this type of housing, energy could have been spent on lobbying for real support, for a framework of care and the means to implement it, and for the participation of tenants in the identification of needs. In these areas, however, the social housing sector has progressed hardly at all; instead, it has put itself in a corner and undermined its own legitimacy at a time when globalisation and demographic changes have hugely exacerbated the housing problems of low-income and vulnerable people.

Conclusion

Although the housing subsidies provided by various governments for Belgium and its regions in the past were not selective, it is notable that the groups targeted by housing policies became broader in the last decade. If applicable exclusion limits are taken as a criterion by which to measure the level of housing needs, the conclusion must be that Belgium has substantial housing problems. Yet, the opposite is true: an overwhelming majority of people live well, often in large and affordable houses, and accessibility has not become any more problematic for the middle-classes. It is therefore surprising that ever increasing support is targeted at people and households that do not need financial support to buy or maintain their own dwelling. Even more bizarre is that the social rental sector, followed by the political world, continues to focus on segments of the population that do not want to live in a social rental dwelling, to the exclusion of those in urgent need of housing, with the brutal consequence that homeless people, for example, are left to remain homeless. There is a maxim that for a welfare state to be legitimate, the middle-classes should also benefit from it. It has been shown here that this is not an issue in relation to housing policies and that, on the contrary, middle and even high income groups get more out of the system than low income groups.

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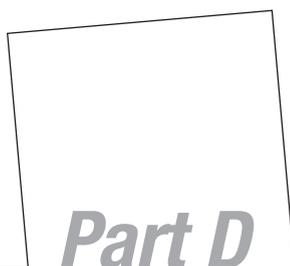
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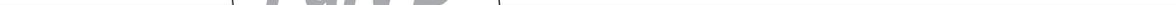
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Debates



Part D



From Capacity to Participation, from Discourse to Practice: A Spanish Perspective

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› **Abstract_** *Participation has gone from being simply a fashionable concept, to reaching the point where it can be considered a well-established methodological strategy in policy formulation and implementation. However, practical application in the field of homelessness still suffers from a lack of systematic and improvised approaches; use is made instead of the trial and error method, with all its negative consequences. Fortunately, the opposite is true in some countries, where lines of intervention include specific legislative frameworks, and guidelines such as those observed in recent years in organisations like FEANTSA. This article outlines some factors that hinder the practical implementation of participation in the field of homelessness in Spain. The theoretical approach used here is based on Goffman's theory of stigma, which reveals the importance of fighting against ingrained prejudices. This is followed by a discussion of the author's ethnographic study on the issue of homelessness, carried out over the last two years in public and private Spanish institutions, through recording the speeches of social services technicians.*

› **Keywords_** *Participation, Empowerment, Homelessness, Micropolitical analysis, Structural analysis, Discourses.*

Introduction: Considerations of Concept and Context

Participation has gone from being simply a fashionable concept, to reaching the point where it can be considered a well-established methodological strategy in policy formulation and implementation. This emerges from the conclusions of a report on participation carried out by FEANTSA and OSW (2005). Almost all of those interviewed for this study positively assessed the impact of different types of participation on the quality of services, the relationship between staff and users in centres, and, most importantly, on the actual reinsertion process of these users. Despite the significant progress made and the differences between counties, this aspect can be said to be one of today's most relevant and pressing issues. In the context of recent debates in the *European Journal Of Homelessness* on the question of participation, on possibilities for political participation or mobilisation in networks (Paasche, 2010), the need for support from external actors in the new initiatives, like SAND in Denmark (Anker, 2009) and the problematic transit between individual and collective identities and representations (Allen, 2009). This debate is far from concluded, and this paper aims to draw attention to the persistence of stigma relating to homeless service users, and the limits of top-down type interventions

The Fight against Ingrained Stigmas: A First Step in Considering Intervention in Terms of Power Relations

Exploring the reasons behind the crisis of participation in practical terms inevitably yields various explanations. However, in attempting to highlight the extent to which those who hold least power contribute opinions and contribute to decision-making, it seems particularly useful to consider, first of all and using a holistic approach, the importance of the political dimension of social intervention. In short, this would involve discussing power relations, a subject that has been greatly explored in the social sciences, but that has not always been strictly applied to the analysis of social interventions. The necessary analysis of power relations leads to a transparency exercise, but it places us in a particularly complex context. Social interventions have a multidimensional nature, in which the political aspect becomes intertwined with many others (economic, institutional, technical, etc.) giving rise to a patchwork day-to-day reality. By examining the participation of homeless people within the systems designed for them, this paper proposes two alternatives: the micropolitical approach based on the theory of stigma, and the appreciation of context using a structural approach.

The lack of participation of homeless people is linked, to a large extent, to their lack of recognition in our societies: to the survival of stigma. Goffman (1963) believes that stigma devalues the identity of the person and disqualifies him or her from full

social acceptance. It is important to remember that the idea of stigma is socially created as contrasting with that of 'normality', but both meanings change over time, space and circumstance. As such, Goffman considers it important to remember that none of us fits the 'social ideal' entirely, and that we all find ourselves at times in situations in which we may be considered socially aberrant individuals.

The creation of stigma usually follows the use of labels and prejudices that are constructed by a defined body in the form of a culture. In other words, labelling arises as a simplification exercise by the person that stigmatises, and is aimed at the other socially aberrant person, who becomes isolated from conventional roles and groups. The 'poverty culture', the 'street culture', and even the 'homelessness culture' would be sub-products of this perspective, from a simplifying standpoint of cultures. In all cases they involve stereotypes that suggest a deeper truth, despite their obviously superficial and out-of-focus nature.

It is not easy to avoid stigmas completely. They are too present in the reality surrounding us, both in discourse and in practice. They are present in messages from the media, politics, daily life and everyday ways of speaking. The social services technician or politician who works with homeless people cannot shake off this influence given its historical, social and cultural significance, and contradictions thereof can compromise their own personal and professional interests; the hegemonic nature of the technique, and its relation to the management of knowledge and the exploitation of information, means that it involves exercising certain power.

Including service users in the decision-making processes that relate to and affect them can lead to discussions about the actual organisational structure of the institution in question, its work and, of course, the technical and decision-making capacity these 'new subjects' (the users) are being introduced to. Not only do conflicts of interest and uncertainty arise here, but a real fear of chaos also emerges. In other cases, when change is not seen as the renunciation of power, changes that focus on increasing the participation of users can lead to a healthy exercise in rethinking the nature of intervention itself. As we advance along the participation scale (which in its simplified version could cover three large areas: information, consultation and co-decision-making) interventions become increasingly complex. At the last stages, on a decisional scale, the changes can entail profound and complex transformations. Reviewing the term 'user' is one of these, in that it involves converting *objects* of intervention into *subjects* thereof.

It is clear that there are no easy ways to fight stigma, but the first step is to exercise honesty, primarily by recognising the paternalistic patterns inherent in our daily practices. As Estivil *et al.* (2006) rightly suggest, participation practices entail, among other things, patience and tenacity, always with the motivation of moving forward with firm and sure steps. An increase in the level of participation in the field

of homelessness does not involve a naïve exercising of will, or the simple exercise of professional altruism. Nor does it entail an easy transferral of the principles of participative democracy to the complex area of homelessness. Quite simply, as is becoming evident, it involves a necessary review of existing approaches, which are often anchored in our consciousness and which thus arise as a logical first step when demanding and applying legal regulations and principles. Without awareness-raising, regulations may end up being of little or no practical application.

The Structural Analysis: A Necessary Examination of Context

On a European level, the structural context demands a review of the real reach of the implementation of participation processes. Participation is, as we have outlined, an established principle among the organisations of the 25 EU member states that work with homeless people. However, the diversity of approaches, perspectives and realities of participation creates a veritable labyrinth of practices and policies, which become lost in an intricate network of institutions (Estivil *et al.*, 2006). In general, the course that participation takes is related to a varied combination of factors that necessitate a holistic interpretation (Estivil *et al.*, 2006, p.201): “The factors triggering the more expansive phases, the more restrictive phases, are very much related to an economic situation, with social structures, with a political evolution, with a cultural life, and also with predominant values in each country.”

In the more specific context of Mediterranean countries, the myth that Mediterranean societies (such as Italian, Greek and Spanish) are barely participative, permeable to despotism and therefore, to a certain degree, opaque to democratic ways of participation must now be questioned, particularly in light of the recent, important factors which have impacted on these societies and on the idea of user participation in institutions. The debate about the lack of citizen participation has acquired new spirit in the current context, where citizens perceive a certain lack of control over their expectations, needs and desires in relation to public matters. It is not surprising that guidelines for social interventions in general, and homelessness in particular, have not escaped this social development.

In the case of Spain, the legal regime is, in general, favourable to the participation of users in the interventions that affect them. This is expressed at the different levels of the legal system, from article 23 of the Constitution that refers to “the right to participate in public affairs”, to the law regulating the establishment of local government, which considers different essential aspects in this matter, such as: creating local bodies of participation (article 24), providing informative facilities for users (articles 69 and 70) and the obligation to consult these in particularly important cases (article 71). These regulations become even more precise in the Law on

Measures for the Modernisation of the Local Government, although they are limited by definitions of local government competence. This is the case, for example, with the creation of consultative bodies, the competences of which must be defined by said local corporations. With all of the above, it can be observed that legislative development in Spain has not yet reached the level of other European countries such as Denmark, France, Holland and Hungary, where the obligations of users to participate in different spheres is outlined with greater precision by the state.

In the three basic levels of participation mentioned (information, consultation and co-decision-making) the results of the practical application of this framework of measures are still considered to be quite limited in Spain (Ruano, 2010); measures are mainly aimed at the first level, and rarely at the consultation level, where, if they are put in place, they rarely involve a hugely formalised experience. For example, in an examination of the possibility of implementing participation in municipal social services, it was found that there were obvious barriers to the effective implementation of organisational methods that accommodate participation, such as the advice model for users, and it was found that participative models had a limited influence on social policies in general (Pastor, 2010).

On the other hand, and leaving considerations regarding the legal framework to one side, there are indicators of context that go into great detail about the distancing of citizens from institutions. We cannot forget that in the context of an economic crisis such as the current one, citizen dissatisfaction with involvement in political processes takes on new dimensions, with different consequences in different countries. In Spain, surveys carried out by the CIS (2011) reflect, month after month, increasingly negative evaluations of political leaders and institutions. In general terms, the situation reflected in these studies is characterised by the perception of a progressive distancing of citizens from those who represent them. These conclusions are in keeping with a context of the impoverishment of the middle and poorer classes, battered by unemployment that affects 4.5 million people, about 20% of the active population.

Researchers report that if this situation continues, there is a high chance that homelessness will increase in the medium term. At the moment, social programmes and policies, for which socioeconomic assistance from local, regional and state governments plays an important role, function as containment valves. In addition to this, associations and NGOs are carrying out important work, and in many cases there is a revival of voluntary work. Nor must we forget the important role of family networks so characteristic of Mediterranean countries, in which the family still holds an unquestionable social and cultural value.

One of the most important challenges to tackling homelessness is the substantial change in the profile of homeless people in recent years. This involves a still incipient feminisation of homelessness, as well as a greater presence of young people. However, the most relevant change experienced in recent years is the significant growth in the numbers of homeless foreigners, who, according to the latest census from the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE, 2005), now account for almost half of all homeless people.

Among the obstacles to incorporating foreign homelessness people into participation processes are cultural and linguistic barriers. Furthermore, the temporal nature of the situation in which they find themselves may be a further obstacle. However, this temporality is usually more an issue of perception than reflective of their real or objective situation, as the migratory process is often perceived as 'unfinished': there is still a lot of money to send home; projects are still to be completed; debts are yet to be paid off. Additionally, the stigma of homelessness is even greater for immigrants; it has been observed in this project that they often hide the instability of their situation from relatives in their home country, and even from compatriots in the country of refuge. This deprives them of an essential link that has been recognised as having the potential to improve their situation: access to interpersonal networks of mutual support (Bosch, 2010).

Another fundamental factor related to context is the lack of coherence between housing policies and policies aimed at eradicating homelessness. The social and economic consequences of the evolving Spanish housing market in recent years are centred in the lack of affordable housing, and readjustment after the bursting of the 'housing bubble' is both slow and painful. Some experiences have been positive, though these seem to be the exception rather than the rule; they have been mainly in Catalonia, and include the role of some supportive institutions in finding rental houses, and the public housing companies that facilitate residential resources for homeless people. In any case, as Cabrera (2009) reports, these could be signs of a trend change, where the demand for the right to housing, encouraged by European and international experiences, may undergo a strong revival. It is clear that, in this context, there are no adequate structural conditions for implementing housing interventions for homeless people that situate possible assistance within the user's abilities and participation, as is the case with the 'Housing First' policy (see Pleace, this volume).

Lastly, and just as importantly, is the development of a context where the increasingly pressing economic needs of the population necessitate urgent action, mainly with regard to socioeconomic benefits. Although the benefits currently offered are not large, they are an important buffer for people who find themselves economically vulnerable. The magnitude of the problems for intervention in the context of home-

lessness is such that participation could be considered of lesser importance. Among these problems, Cabrera (2009) points to a structural framework that involves maintaining the levels of poverty and exclusion that exist in years of economic prosperity. We cannot, at present, discuss a neo-welfare development, but we can talk about urgent action to deal with pressing problems; what is certain is that focusing on emergency actions raises the risk that the importance of slow and continuous work will be overlooked, yet this is the fundamental basis of preparing spaces for participation; spaces that we think should not inhibit emergency action, but rather complement it.

Some Clues from a Qualitative Analysis: Discourses of Social Services Technicians on Participation

In addition to considerations of micropolitics and context, and to gain a better understanding of the situation in light of the argument set out thus far, the qualitative analysis of interviews carried out over the past two years with social services technicians and representatives of institutions that work with homeless people in Spain will now be discussed.¹

In the discourses of interviewees, the positive effects of participation are often referred to in general terms. Among these effects, increases in skills relating to decision-making, and the promotion of responsibility and proactivity are often mentioned.

There is also consensus on the idea that these initiatives are in a pre-embryonic state in Spain. The fact that it is a largely unexplored area has led to attempts not to complicate already complex interventions further, whether because there is insufficient involvement of the user, or because the user is not considered adequately prepared to organise even their own basic living conditions:

“People cannot be made deal with something they are not ready for, because they get frustrated. It is better to take steps towards preparing them so that they are able to participate, than to put people in places and situations that they are not going to know or that they will not be able to take on.”

“Participation depends on a person’s level of deterioration. Some people understand it and they direct the intervention toward you; they are really independent. But there are also people who you can see are very defenceless, very

¹ Some of these conclusions correspond to results from the author’s research, carried out in collaboration with the European Project PEOPLE HOME04, entitled “Networking for Integrated Care Homeless”, in which other associations also participated: FEANTSA; FADAIS; the Seville and Granada City Councils; and associations in Venice and Stockholm.

affected by stressful events, people who don't know where to turn to... and of course, they're the people that you might have to guide a bit more... There's a bit of everything."

If there is a bit of everything, different ways of participating should be considered and applied diversely. However, this does not happen in reality; preparation for participation does not lead to praxis, and organisational structures and procedures do not open up enough to consider participation as another fundamental variable. The reasons, as we have already stated, are complex. From the users' perspective, the feeling of not belonging to a group often appears in the discourse as a powerful reason. Failing to identify with a group is a typical characteristic of stigmatised groups, and the greater the diversity of typologies and situations, the more evident this becomes.

Nevertheless, one of the most frequent types of participation is one that takes place in an informal manner, such as where homeless people identify people close to them that are in situations of need; this is an essential detection task that complements the work of formal institutions. A certain feeling of solidarity still reigns in the most precarious contexts, and social services technicians exploit this:

"We have become aware of many cases of homelessness through other people in the same situation. They tell you themselves... Because at times it is true that seeing someone else like that provokes rejection, but it is also true that they find support in other people and create strong ties with them"

From the perspective of social services technicians, the persistence of a certain professional jealousy, the fear of making a mistake, or even the presence of certain social stigmas that they cannot entirely avoid (and that label homeless people variously as cunning, delinquent or lazy), means that there may be a certain lack of trust in relation to the user. The fact that there are no good practice references to follow, or even mistakes to overcome, is both a cause and an effect; in other words, *"it is a field in which we have still not even started to make mistakes"*, but in which there is unquestionable potential from the viewpoint of users:

"Maybe it's a prejudice of ours; a fear that it will turn out badly... and also to a certain degree, undervaluing their (the users') concerns, because they are very concerned and they have a lot of courage."

As we have mentioned, few forms of participation in Spain, with some honourable exceptions, have gone beyond the subsidiary consultation or evaluation levels of the decision-making process. These levels of participation are commonly used as a consultation scale, involving the completion of questionnaires about activities to be carried out or the evaluation of processes and activities that have been completed. The incorporation of users into the staff of an organisation rarely goes beyond incidental operational tasks, such as messenger or photocopier, and never

involves such positions as high-ranking quasi social services technician, or voluntary consultation-level positions in coordination or on work committees. As such, there are no opportunities for incorporation into the institutions' decision-making positions, and any possibility of a practical reversal in the meaning of intervention – from object to subject, along the lines of empowerment described above – is a long way off.

As a result, prerequisites to starting the process are beginning to be weighed up, and some essential aspects come to light; one is a necessary review of rules that apply to the relationship between institution and user. The following statement positions us on a possible first step towards participation in this regard:

“Defining what people have to do is a common factor in the majority of care resources for people who are homeless. Rules regarding occupancy and access, for example. Few devices in all the fields of social intervention have so many rules. What time you have to get up, what time you have to go to bed, if you have to have a shower, if you can go in or go out... everything. They are life rules to the finest detail.”

Although some of the problems previously outlined are also mentioned here (fear of chaos, implicit paternalism, certain latent prejudices...), we must not forget a particularly relevant fact, linked to the nature of the institution; it is no coincidence that the regulatory system is most in tune with public resources, since they must report on what they do not only privately, but also publically (politically and socially, to citizens) to a much larger extent than private institutions. This explains, at least partially, the choice of an *appearance of normality* over an *appearance of disorder*, as the latter is generally undesirable for citizens, while the former is a necessary stamp of identity.

The discourse also highlights the effects of the financial crisis on intervention. Inherent in the statement that “people living on the street have to be removed from this situation as soon as possible”, which is commonly used by social service technicians across the sector, is both evidence of weakness in the socio-professional opportunity processes, and an enormous obstacle to it. The implications for individual capacities, meaning a step backwards in the empowerment process, are evident:

“For those people who find themselves unemployed now with the recession, especially foreigners, we do not have a quick response mechanism that prevents them from getting used to street life. I tell them (the users): ‘You’re getting used to not having responsibilities, to abandoning hygiene habits, all types of habits...’ That person who is on the street, who is new now, should be a priority in intervention work now.”

Lastly, if the participative tools and methodologies have experienced significant development in other areas of intervention (local development, mental health, addictions, etc.), much work remains to be done in fields such as homelessness, and even more so at the last levels of participation – those that come close to the idea of involvement. As one of the social services technicians stated in an interview:

“On a plate of fried eggs and bacon, the hen takes part, the pig gets involved. We have to have a lot of serenity, a lot of planning and a lot of wisdom to think that people who are homeless can become involved on equal terms as a social services technician, or a politician.”

The discourses of the social services technicians speak clearly to this; when “being a part of something” is not enough, obstacles, requirements and impediments multiply in relation to how users move directly to decision-making. Not only can they come out harmed, but other users can too, and even the *essence* of the intervention itself can be damaged when this is set out in a top-down manner. Fears, insecurities and phobias multiply whether they have a basis or not. On the other hand, however, involvement also means being part of an institution, the *essence* of which is temporality, and the arrival onto the scene of ex-users, common in other types of interventions such as drug addiction, can be quite relevant.

Final Considerations: The Need to Rethink the Limits of Participation

In this contribution to the debate on participation of homeless people in service provision and delivery, it is argued that despite the unfavourable socio-economic framework, the systematised application of proposals that promote intervention with people affected by homelessness should be explored by acknowledging the capacities of individuals and groups in situations of homelessness. Such acknowledgement must be aimed at considering homeless people as subjects and not objects of interventions, emphasising their empowerment on a micropolitical level. A responsible and carefully thought-out implementation of these principles of empowerment should aim to improve the text and application of laws relating to the participation of users in interventions, demanding compliance with such regulations, as well as an increase in the supply of adequate technical, human, material and organisational resources. This does not have to involve minimising the importance of the informal channels by means of which participation is often established. Nor should it involve giving up creativity in intervention, but instead implementing ways that stamp out latent or evident prejudices.

The establishment of participation levels appropriate to each case, context and demand, appears to be one of the most effective ways of applying this line of action at a specific policy and practice level. We acknowledge the importance of the participative level in the context of preventing homelessness; as the promotion of user capacity and resources for self-management gains greater importance, this promotion becomes even more relevant in the case of people who find themselves in this situation for the first time, or people have not been in this situation for very long, as occurs with the immigrant population. This is one of the most sensitive sectors for future intervention.

Although this paper has emphasised the position of users, a necessary overall vision leads us to consider participation as a fundamental principle that must be incorporated into political decisions, into the commitment of technicians, into citizen participation, and in short, into the democratic commitment of society in general. However, participation is only part of a complex process. One of the risks of participation is that it becomes, itself, the optimal intervention standard as summarised in the phrase: “there is full user participation, and therefore, we have so much legitimacy that there is little to discuss/review about the work we do.”

An open-door scenario for participation involves, firstly, thinking about offering resources, possibilities and opportunities. Among these resources, information should be considered, as it is the resource users most often see as having been ‘taken from him or her’ in the form of data. At this level, many formalised experiences are found in the Spanish case. Fortunately, an increasing number of social services technicians and representatives of institutions confirm that we should not be satisfied with modest levels of participation. A step further can always be taken; without the barrier of prejudice, people in decision-making or at representative levels of participation can be seen when they were not there before. In short, although micropolitical constrictions and the obstacles of context must not be avoided, the benefits of a commitment to responsible, flexible, continuous and well thought-out participation must continue to be highlighted – benefits that must carry weight when discourses become real and effective practices.

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Special Section on the
European
Consensus
Conference on
Homelessness



Part E

The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness: Process and Methodology

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Introduction

The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (ECCH) was the first consensus conference on a social issue at EU level. The event in Brussels on the 9th and 10th of December was the most visible part of a longer process; it was preceded by a year of preparation, and followed by deliberation and the drafting of conclusions by the Jury, and finally by the dissemination of outcomes. This article will briefly present the context for the ECCH before describing the methodology underpinning the process. In the spirit of reflective practice, it will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the process from my subjective perspective as a key participant in the process.

Context for the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness

The ECCH was an official event of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, co-organized with the European Commission and FEANTSA, and supported by the French government. In 2008, the annual Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion (now the Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion) called for a European consensus conference on homelessness, supported by the conclusions of the 2008 Informal Meeting of EU Housing Ministers, which stated that “a consensus conference should be organised at EU level to generate a shared comprehension and common diagnostic of the situation” (EU Housing Ministers, 2008). The French Presidency therefore requested that the European Commission organise a consensus conference, and Vladimír Špidla, then Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, granted the necessary support and funding in 2010 during the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The precedent of “Off the Streets”, Paris 2007

An important precedent to the ECCH was “Off the Streets” (*Sortir de la Rue*), a consensus conference on homelessness in France that took place in Paris in November 2007. The aim was to move beyond the “myriad [of] different and sometimes inconsistent views competing with each other” (Loison-Leruste, 2008, p.143) in order to arrive at a more dispassionate understanding of homelessness informed by evidence. Consensus conferencing, which had been developed by the French National Authority for Health, was identified as an appropriate tool. “Sortir de la Rue” was the first application of the methodology to homelessness, and one of its first applications to a social issue. The conference’s recommendations (Rapport du Jury, 2007) contributed to the establishment of the national Priority Agenda 2008-2012 for Shelter and Access to Housing for Homeless People, and to the elaboration of a national strategy focusing on service reform (CNPPL, 2009). This provided an example of how a consensus conference on homelessness could be organised and what it might achieve.

Homelessness on the EU policy agenda

The decision to organise the ECCH represented a tipping point in the evolution of homelessness on the EU agenda. Demonstrable momentum had been developed on the issue, yet there was a lack of clarity about how to build on this to advance co-ordination and support effective strategies within Member States. Since 2000, the EU has supported and coordinated Member States’ policies to combat poverty and social exclusion through the Social Open Method of Coordination (Social OMC). This involves shared objectives, a reporting mechanism, agreed indicators, and reports on social protection and social inclusion adopted jointly by the European Commission and the Council. Between 2000 and 2010, homelessness emerged as a thematic priority in this framework. This culminated in the 2010 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (Council of the European Union, 2010a), which called on Member States to develop integrated homelessness strategies, as well as suggesting some key elements in these strategies. A central objective of the ECCH was to provide a basis from which to develop adequate follow-up of the 2010 Joint Report.

By 2010, a number of EU institutions and bodies had called for enhanced European-level action on homelessness. In 2008, the European Parliament adopted a written declaration on ending street homelessness (European Parliament, 2008). In October 2010 an own-initiative opinion by the Committee of the Regions also called on the EU to develop a homelessness strategy, and the Informal Meeting of EU Housing Ministers had repeatedly called for strengthened EU ambition on the matter. 2010 was also the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion; the Council’s final declaration of the year stated

that “particular attention should be given... to extreme forms of poverty such as homelessness” (Council of the European Union, 2010b). The ECCH aimed to provide a framework to respond to these calls.

The ECCH also came at a moment of transition within the EU policy cycle. On 17 June 2010, the new Europe 2020 Strategy was adopted (European Commission, 2010a). It was therefore important that this emerging policy context could deliver on the momentum that had been developed on homelessness. The ECCH sought to provide a foundation for addressing homelessness in this post-2010 social inclusion context.

The consensus conference methodology

Consensus conferences have mostly addressed issues of health, science and technology. The basic methodology was developed in the 1970s by the American National Institutes for Health in response to the need to assess the safety and efficacy of new technologies (Jakoby, 1990, p.7). Open to a targeted audience, these consensus conferences are designed to bring together experts to present evidence on a particular topic to a panel of clinicians, public representatives and other practitioners. The panel assesses the evidence and arrives at conclusions regarding practice. The tool has been widely used in different European and international contexts, and has evolved to suit different purposes. It was adopted in the 1980s by the Danish Board of Technology (a Parliamentary office for technology assessment), and the Danish approach is the most well-known in Europe today. Here, the Jury is made up of lay people, the idea being to bridge the gaps between scientists, members of the public and politicians in relation to new technologies. While the consensus conference model is not a fixed entity, it is defined by a combination of the following elements:

- judicial process with a Jury;
- scientific meeting between peers;
- town hall type meeting involving democratic debate and collective bargaining (Jakoby, 1990; Jorgenson, 1995).

Homelessness as a topic for a European-level consensus conference

Consensus conferencing is a ‘conflict resolution’ tool (Jakoby, 1990, p.8). Appropriate topics for such conferences are controversial issues, on which there are diverging points of view, and where the way forward is unclear; this was the case with homelessness at EU level in 2010. Grundahl (1995) identifies the following criteria for appropriate topics of consensus conferences:

- topical
- not too abstract/can be delimited
- contains conflict
- there is a call for the clarification of objectives and attitudes
- depends on an expert contribution for clarification
- the necessary expertise and knowledge are available

Homelessness had risen up the EU's social inclusion agenda, and there was interest from Member States in enhancing the effectiveness of EU support and co-ordination. A body of work, including the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), showed that homelessness could be delimited, even if formal agreement on a definition was lacking. There was conflict surrounding fundamental questions about the nature and causes of homelessness, as well as effective responses; as mentioned, the Member States' Housing Ministers had made an explicit call for clarification. It was also apparent that adequate follow-up of the 2010 Joint Report necessitated more clarity. Expert input was required to move beyond 'in-house' debate between practitioners, and to strengthen evidence-based policy development. The infrastructure was in place to provide the necessary expertise: FEANTSA regroups the European homeless service sector; the European Observatory on Homelessness had been producing European-level research for twenty years; and the Social OMC (see below) had helped establish a network that could be called upon.

Preparatory Phase

Preparatory committee

Consensus conferences require extensive preparation. A preparatory committee is usually established to guide this over the course of six months to a year. The committee "should represent all aspects of knowledge and a diversity of viewpoints concerning the topic" (Nielsen *et al.*, 2006). Chaired by Robert Aldridge (Chief Executive of the Scottish Council for Single Homeless), the committee of twenty involved NGOs, researchers, public authorities, the European Commission, (formerly) homeless people and representatives of related sectors such as social housing. Geographical balance was sought as far as possible, although there was some under-representation of Eastern and Southern European Member States. The preparatory committee met five times over one year to plan the ECCH, and once for a debriefing in May 2011. The diversity of perspectives created meaningful debate, which enhanced the quality of outcomes.

Selection of Jury members

The preparatory committee selected members of the Jury. These were ‘wise people’ who were independent from the homeless sector, but who had a profile and ‘moral weight’ in the social domain. Certain practical considerations were necessary, including proficiency in English or French, and availability and interest were often determining factors. The preparatory committee aimed to integrate a variety of fields of expertise, as well as to ensure geographical and gender balance.

Table 1: Composition of the Jury

Chair	Frank Vandenbroucke , a former Minister and member of the Belgian Senate who was involved in the development of the Social OMC and is a respected authority on EU social policy.
Vice-chair	Alvaro Gil-Robles , a well-known lawyer and Human Rights expert, both internationally and in Spain. He was the first Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe.
Members	<p>Ruth Becker, an economist and planner. She was formerly Professor of Women’s Studies and Housing at Technische Universität Dortmund.</p> <p>Mary Daly, a member of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion who chaired the Council of Europe’s High-Level Task Force on Social Cohesion and is a Professor at the School of Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast.</p> <p>Máté Szabó, the Hungarian Ombudsman for Civil Rights who is also Professor at the Doctorate School of Political Science in the Faculty of Law, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest</p> <p>Matti Mikkola, a longstanding member of the European Committee of Social Rights of the Council of Europe, who has worked extensively on housing rights. Also Professor of Labour Law at the University of Helsinki, and Visiting Professor of Social Policy at the University of Tartu, Estonia.</p> <p>Barbara Wolf-Wicha, a freelance journalist involved in managing a range of cultural activities. Also formerly Professor at the Institute for Social Sciences, University of Salzburg where she was Head of the Department of History and Political Science.</p>

Although many of the Jury members were academics, this role was for most members one of several ‘hats’ they wore, and the jury had a collectively broad range of skills perspectives and expertise. The preparatory committee acknowledged difficulties in attracting very well-known European personalities to the jury. This reflects the challenges of working on poverty at European level, another example of which would be the difficulties experienced by the European Commission in engaging high profile ‘ambassadors’ for the 2010 European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion. It also reflects the fact that the task of the Jury demanded a considerable amount of work and a considerable time commitment, and that this work was done on a voluntary basis. Such a commitment was undoubtedly a barrier for some nominees.

Selection of key questions

The process of defining key questions began with identifying issues that should be addressed, using the following criteria:

- **Relevance to EU-level policy processes and competence:** as the ECCH aimed to establish a basis for future EU-level action on homelessness, the committee focused on areas most relevant to the EU's competences.
- **Relevance to tackling homelessness in Member States:** the committee identified contentious issues that were relevant to addressing homelessness in the Member States.
- **Lack of consensus:** the key questions had to address issues on which there was a *clear lack of consensus*. This principle allowed reflection to move beyond 'getting one's issue on the table' towards consideration of where the ECCH could most add value. For example, the committee found no debate on the principle that homeless people should have a say in decisions affecting their lives. However, there was conflict on what meaningful participation in policy development might look like, and a key question was therefore formulated on this specific aspect.
- **Availability of expertise and knowledge:** on some issues, for example the definition of homelessness, there was a wealth of expertise available. On these issues, the aim of posing a question was to create better links between policy and expertise. For other questions there was less established expertise, and the committee had to consider whether the expertise available would be sufficient. The urgency of addressing some issues was considered an adequate basis on which to table some questions where less expertise was available.

Through discussion, a list of issues was gradually refined into six key questions:

1. What does homelessness mean?
2. Ending homelessness: a realistic objective?
3. Are 'housing-led' policy approaches the most effective methods of preventing and tackling homelessness?
4. How can meaningful participation of homeless people in the development of homelessness policies be assured?
5. To what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship?
6. What should be the elements of an EU strategy on homelessness?

Expertise and Evidence

A study, *Homelessness and Homelessness Policies in Europe: Lessons from Research* (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2010), was carried out to summarise the academic literature for the Jury. In addition, a transnational consultation of homeless people was carried out by the *Front Commun des SDF* (a national platform of homeless and formerly homeless people in Belgium), which aimed to present the views of people with experience of homelessness; constraints of time, budget and capacity meant that the consultation was somewhat limited in scope, and whilst it clearly influenced the Jury's deliberations, a broader consultation would have been desirable.

Three experts were selected per key question. The aim was that they would present contrasting perspectives, and balance was sought between different types of experts, e.g. researchers, public authorities, NGOs and people with experience of homelessness. Other considerations included geographical and gender balance. Experts submitted written responses to the Jury before the conference. A ten-minute summary was then presented at the conference, and experts responded to questions from the Jury and the floor. There was considerable variety in the quality of written responses and presentations; whilst the majority were of high quality, some contributions were of limited added value to the Jury's work. Naturally, the ECCH also experienced standard problems involving lack of availability or cancellations by experts. Within the preparatory committee, compromises were sometimes made without a full understanding of the suitability of particular experts. This is an area that could be improved upon.

Grundahl (1995) distinguishes between 'scientific experts' and 'opinion-forming experts' at consensus conferences. The ECCH relied on both, with scientific experts providing more technical expertise, and opinion-forming experts advocating a position. Both were necessary, given that homelessness is a social issue rather than a topic of hard science. However, over-reliance on opinion-forming experts posed a problem for some key questions (namely 4 and 5) when the lack of consensus was not sufficiently apparent. This is partly attributable to a reluctance to defend controversial positions at the ECCH. For example, despite public debates about access to shelter in some Member States, it proved impossible to secure a speaker to advocate restricted access on the basis of legal status due to the political sensitivity of this position.

The Work of the Jury

The work of the jury involved four main stages:

- **Preparation:** the Jury read the extensive literature and attended a briefing meeting before the ECCH. This enabled them to understand their role and the main issues, and to plan questioning.
- **Evaluation of evidence:** this involved both analysing written contributions and questioning experts at the public conference.
- **Deliberation and consensus-building:** the Jury met in a hotel over two days following the ECCH. They were supported by a small secretariat to record a summary of their conclusions.
- **Drafting and finalisation of recommendations:** a first report was drafted from the summary of conclusions. Re-drafting on the basis of email consultation was led by the Chair in order to arrive at final recommendations subscribed to by all Jury members.

During the conference, some Jury members took a position on certain issues, rather than going through the process of questioning experts. This prohibited them from taking full advantage of the experts, especially early in the proceedings before they settled into their role. More focus on questioning techniques at the briefing stage could avoid this.

At the deliberation stage the Jury proved to be an extremely effective working group. The members engaged critically with expert contributions, allowing rigorous analysis, debate, and forthright, credible conclusions. A well-prepared Chair with a thorough understanding of consensus-building proved essential. The Jury agreed on conclusions during their meeting, but did not focus on the precise wording of recommendations. This enabled them to get to the bottom of disagreements and reach consensus without losing time on editorial work. Drafting took place over the following weeks. The secretariat provided a first draft on the basis of the Jury's conclusions, and this was collectively revised through several rounds of amendments before being adopted by the entire jury. The resulting recommendations were both genuinely consensual and sufficiently in-depth to be a useful policy reference. They put forward solid principles for future progress on homelessness at EU level, and the recommendations have been well-received.

The Public Conference

The Danish Board of Technology emphasizes the need for agreeable, comfortable surroundings for a consensus conference (Nielson *et al.*, 2006). Although the National Theatre provided an attractive setting, the auditorium isolated the audience from the ‘action’ on stage. The original plan was to hold the conference in a Commission building that would have provided a more appropriate setting. The programme was demanding of participants, requiring long periods of active listening; whilst this feature of the methodology cannot be completely overcome, more dynamic chairing and a lighter programme would have improved the level of participation. Approximately 350 people attended the ECCH. Participation was by invitation only, and different stakeholders were targeted. The preparatory committee wished to maximize participation of public authorities in order to increase policy impact. Whilst this was successful, the closed nature of the conference meant that not everyone wishing to participate was able to, even though the venue was not at capacity.

Presentation of Outcomes

The dissemination and promotion of outcomes is an integral part of consensus conferencing. The Jury’s recommendations were disseminated to policy-makers and other stakeholders, and press work enabled the recommendations to achieve visibility; the Chair of the Jury presented the recommendations to the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and to the Belgian Secretary of State for Social Integration and Combating Poverty at a press conference in Brussels in February. The Chair has played an ambassadorial role since the ECCH, presenting the recommendations to key EU bodies and at Member State level. This is undoubtedly extremely valuable for ensuring follow-up.

Conclusion

The post-2010 policy context remains in a state of transition and it is uncertain what concrete follow-up of the ECCH there will be. Nonetheless, the Commission has committed to “identify methods and means to best continue the work it has started on homelessness... , taking into account the outcome of the consensus conference” (European Commission, 2010b). The ECCH can be considered a success based on the strength of the Jury’s recommendations. An innovative tool that delivers concrete outcomes and yet actively incorporates diverse stakeholders and realities, consensus conferencing could enhance EU social policy support and co-ordination. As the first consensus conference on a social issue at EU level, the ECCH has demonstrated the potential of the methodology. It has also generated a number of lessons to be taken forward regarding its future use.

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The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness – Reflections of a Pleasantly Surprised Sceptic

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Introduction

I interpreted my brief here as having been asked for very much a personal view on the Policy Recommendations of the Jury for the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (ECCH), albeit informed by research evidence where appropriate. This viewpoint is predominantly, though not exclusively, informed by my rootedness in the UK, and particularly the Scottish, context.

To begin with, it is probably worth being transparent with regard to my scepticism about the whole concept of a Consensus Conference, which appears to constitute an attempt to transplant a ‘medical’ model of knowledge development into the social sciences. This carries the obvious risk of encapsulating a naïve and deeply unfashionable form of ‘positivism’ – the notion that there is one uniform social ‘truth’ that we can uncover if only we use the right methodological tools (Hollis, 1999). Generations of social constructionists have challenged this epistemological position, establishing a new orthodoxy in much social science, which admits of ‘multiple social realities’ and asserts the equal validity of different (including conflicting) perspectives (Williams and May, 1996). However, I myself find critical realism a more convincing position; this acknowledges the existence of an underlying social reality and posits that some perceptions of this reality are likely to be better-informed, and therefore more valid, than others, but also that we cannot know this reality directly, so that all knowledge is ‘fallible’ and open to challenge, and we must be prepared to change our position when the evidence requires it (Sayer, 2000). Both constructionists and realists – but not positivists – would be sceptical about the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of the ECCH.

A more common-sense way of putting this scepticism would be: why should we assume that there would be a consensus? What happens if some of us, in good faith, happen to disagree? Surely the best route to rigour is open and honest debate, so that in the 'market place of ideas' we should all set out our stall as best we can in the hope of persuading others of the merit of our position, but accepting that they are entitled to disagree if they remain unconvinced. Of course, robust debate is aided enormously if we begin by identifying those areas of genuine consensus, so that they can be set to one side, and focus debating energies on areas of genuine disagreement (rather than misunderstanding). To impose the necessity of coming to a consensus from the outset sets alarm bells ringing for me; will it lead to 'lowest common denominator' compromises that can deliver only bland, empty statements impossible to disagree with as they are so devoid of substantive content, necessitating a blunting of rigour and clear lines of argument, a muddying of waters, abandonment of precision, and a kind of corporatist 'horse trading' to keep everyone on board?

I have to say that, given this scepticism, I am pleasantly surprised by the outcome of the Consensus Conference. There is far more by way of substance in the Jury recommendations than I would have anticipated, making it a far more useful and interesting process than I would have thought possible. That is not to say that I agree with all of these conclusions and recommendations – as will become clear below – but that's OK. In keeping with the realist position summarised above, I think disagreement and debate on these social issues is healthy and to be expected, and properly harnessed (i.e. eliminating ill-founded ideas and retaining ones with merit), enables us to move closer to a 'truth' that will always remain out of reach in an absolute sense, but is nonetheless the only thing worth striving towards.

I will now consider each of the key recommendations in turn.

Key question 1: What does homelessness mean?

The Jury recommends adoption of ETHOS, and I agree. ETHOS appears genuinely to command a great deal of agreement across many EU countries (though it has had little impact in the UK thus far, and certainly not in England). Thus, this seems an area of real consensus that can provide a framework for moving forward. For me, the key strength of ETHOS has been not as a means of imposing a uniform definition – institutional and cultural divergence render this extremely problematic – but rather as a framework through which to provide transparency and clarity on what different countries do and do not consider to constitute homelessness. It is extremely helpful in this regard and will rightly lie at the heart of attempts to move forward in addressing homelessness across Europe.

Key question 2: Ending homelessness: a realistic objective?

I am very supportive of the Jury's emphasis on moving away from 'managing' to 'ending' homeless, certainly at the level of individual homeless people. The Jury considered the idea that homelessness cannot be ended because some people 'choose' to become and stay homeless; unsurprisingly, they reject this view. I have always suspected that this is a bit of a 'straw man' argument; in almost 20 years of research in this field in the UK I have yet to come across anyone who claims that people make a free choice to become homeless. The far subtler –and defensible – point often made is that homeless people sometimes perceive the streets, or various insecure forms of housing, to be the 'best of a bad bunch' of unpleasant options available to them, and they can become immersed in a sub-culture in order to survive on the streets that is then difficult to break out of. However, there is ample research in the UK, and I am sure elsewhere, that shows that, with the right combination of person-centred and assertive support, and sufficient resources, the homeless state of even the most 'entrenched' and chaotic rough sleepers can be resolved. So, I agree with the Jury that the argument for rejecting the notion of ending homelessness is not a good one, even if I don't think it's a serious argument in the first place.

I think a far more legitimate objection to the goal of ending homelessness is that you cannot eliminate entirely the flow of people into homelessness, as there will always be relationship breakdowns, domestic violence, and emergencies of various kinds. The more realistic goal is to prevent homelessness occurring wherever possible, and to minimise the length of time and impact of homelessness where it does, unavoidably, occur. While the Jury appears to take this view too, highlighting the inescapability of inflows into homelessness, this does not sit logically with their assertion that it can be '*ultimately ended*' (maybe an example of the fudging required to get all to agree?).

In fact, I think a better question than whether ending homelessness is a 'realistic' goal, is whether it is a 'helpful' one. In some recent research I have been involved with, which has examined the possibilities for 'ending' youth homelessness in the UK, none of those interviewed actually felt that it was possible to end homelessness amongst young people, but some did think that this was nonetheless a helpful goal to focus energies, raise profiles and protect resources. Others took the view that it was an unhelpful goal and would lead to re-labelling or the disguising of young homeless people's problems. Either way, its helpfulness, rather than realism, was the most interesting part of the debate.

I would like to pick up on the emphasis on Scottish developments in particular here, as this is an area where I have a specific interest. At a recent conference with homelessness policy-makers and front-line practitioners in Scotland, I mentioned that I had heard it said on various occasions in the European context that Scotland is

aiming to 'end homelessness' in 2012 – cue gales of laughter all round the room (I wasn't even trying to make a joke!). While this 'ending homelessness' rhetoric is also occasionally used in the Scottish context, it is not, and never has been, what 2012 is actually about. Its focus is far more specific and narrower, though ambitious enough. It is to abolish one of five criteria that determine access to the main statutory homelessness duty – to be secured 'settled' housing by a local authority. Traditionally, 'priority need' has been the main rationing device for access to this entitlement and the target for 2012 is to eliminate this criterion (but the other four rationing criteria – eligibility, homelessness, intentionality and local connection – will stay intact!).

So, 2012 is mainly about addressing the need for settled accommodation of those who have already become homeless (albeit that duties still exist to those threatened with homelessness within two months). In order to end homelessness you would have to prevent it arising in the first place, and in this, Scotland has actually been something of a laggard when compared to England. Since 2003, England has engaged in a vigorous process of homelessness prevention that has led to a dramatic fall in statutory homelessness, but Scotland has been far more cautious and experimental, in part because of fears of 'gatekeeping' (i.e. denying people their legal rights) that have caused concern in England. Just recently, with the 2012 target looming fast and the numbers of those accepted as being owed main duty rising so fast that they are absorbing the majority of social housing allocations in many parts of the country, the Scottish Government has become serious about prevention, investing in a series of homelessness prevention regional 'hubs' and strongly promoting the English 'housing options' model. It looks a promising approach but it is early days, and its success or otherwise is yet to be seen.

¹ The Jury appears to have misunderstood an important matter of fact regarding changes to the intentionality legislation in Scotland. The changes they describe are on the statute book but have not been brought into force, and it now seems unlikely that they ever will be brought into force, with the focus now exclusively on the 2012 abolition of priority need. It may also be worth noting that the Jury appears to have misinterpreted the concept of intentionality as being related in some way to the debate about 'lifestyle choices' in becoming homeless (echoing a similar misunderstanding that I have often heard voiced by European colleagues regarding this concept). Intentionality has nothing to do with this debate, and everything to do with controlling 'perverse incentives' with respect to the priority access to council housing implied by the statutory homelessness framework in the UK. As the definitive legal text on UK homelessness legislation comments – the intentionality test was introduced to "...*allay fears of some local authorities and MPs that individuals would attempt to improve their housing conditions by voluntarily giving up accommodation in order to be housed before others on the council waiting list.*" (Robson and Poustie, 1996, p.151)

Key question 3: Are ‘housing-led’ policy approaches the most effective methods of preventing and tackling homelessness?

Here, the Jury calls for a shift from using shelters and transitional accommodation as the predominant solution to homelessness towards ‘housing led’ approaches. This means increasing access to permanent housing, and increasing capacity for both prevention and the provision of adequate floating support to people in their homes according to their needs. I could not agree more, and this is a very important and very concrete outcome of the Jury’s deliberations. My one word of caution would be that some of the most powerful evidence in this field – certainly on Housing First models – comes from the US, and it is important to generate robust evidence from within the EU to inform what may be a very profound shift away from the current dominant transitional model of ‘managing’ homelessness and homeless people. This need for a European evidence base is also noted by the Jury.

Key question 4: How can meaningful participation of homeless people in the development of homelessness policies be assured?

Empowering homeless people to take control of their lives and choices is a crucial but complex goal, which encompasses everything from building positive social relationships to gaining access to adequate income and labour market opportunities, making available appropriate and sustainable housing and living circumstances, and much else besides. In the question above, however, the goal of empowerment seems limited to participation in the development of homelessness policy, which seems a very narrow and rather misjudged focus. While it goes without saying that homelessness policies and practices should be informed by homeless people’s views, experiences and perspectives, this may relate to consultation of various kinds, as well as full-blown participation. I can appreciate the good intentions behind the question as posed here, but it risks creating an ongoing ‘homeless identity’ for those involved (Kennedy and Fitzpatrick, 2001), counter to the desire to ‘end homelessness’. Also, there is a danger of narrowing focus to the involvement of (inevitably) a small number of homeless people in the policy process, rather than a more comprehensive and inclusive form of empowerment that enhances the ‘capability’ of all homeless people to live their own version of the good life (Sen, 1992). To be fair, these points are all acknowledged by the Jury in their careful discussion of the complexities of empowerment, and their recommendations are far more helpful and wide-ranging – focusing on a shift from treating homeless people as passive recipients to emphasising their rights and autonomy – than the narrow phrasing of this question would lead you to expect.

Key question 5: To what extent should people be able to access homeless services irrespective of their legal status and citizenship?

I am very pleased to see the emphasis here on the need for the EU to take responsibility in this area, and the need for better data and knowledge on the links between homelessness and migration. This is undoubtedly a growing and very serious problem, and clearly it is morally unacceptable for anyone to be left destitute in Europe, regardless of legal status. However, there are some very tricky normative questions to be addressed here about a State's right to guard its borders, and the limits to what a State can be expected to provide for non-citizens (especially undocumented migrants), as well as practical questions about the appropriate role of homelessness agencies. Research in which I am currently engaged, on multiple exclusion homelessness in the UK, suggests that the needs of migrants using low threshold homelessness and other services in UK cities differ profoundly from those of indigenous UK citizens using these services; the causes of their situations are far more 'structural' and less 'personal' in nature. Asking homelessness agencies that were set up for one purpose to address quite a different phenomenon is problematic. This is an area where there does need to be a proper EU-wide review and strategy, as similar problems are being reported across a wide range of EU countries, and, as the Jury acknowledges, these serious social problems are directly linked in many respects to EU policies and the legal framework on free movement of EU citizens.

Key question 6: What should be the elements of an EU homelessness strategy?

The prior question of '*Should there be an EU strategy on homelessness?*' seems to me to be missing here. I remain unconvinced, as I have been for many years (Fitzpatrick, 1998) that there ought to be such a supra-national strategy, as I struggle to see what a concrete, meaningful and helpful EU-wide strategy could look like. As our recent EC study suggested (Stephens *et al.*, 2010) that homelessness and the structures that generate and deal with it differ profoundly between different EU countries, an EU strategy (if it had any substance) would risk being a crude top-down exercise that would ill fit all countries.

This is not to say that the EU does not have a crucial role to play in encouraging, supporting and facilitating countries in developing their own national, regional and local homelessness strategies; on the contrary, its role can be critical. This came across to me very strongly in the recent Peer Review of the Portuguese National Homelessness Strategy in which I was involved (Fitzpatrick, 2011). It became clear

that EU frameworks and so on had provided crucial ammunition for those seeking to move policy forward in this area, particularly in those countries with more limited or recent policies in this area. Thus the ‘voluntary’ mechanisms provided under the Social OMC – a strong research agenda, peer reviews, Social Inclusion reports, mutual learning and transnational exchanges, etc. – can be enormously helpful sources of ‘soft power’ for pushing for progressive change in such countries. It can help to provide key ‘tools’ – methodological, evidential and financial – that countries can apply in their own specific context. The EU also has a specific role to play in its areas of competence, including immigration and asylum. However, a prescriptive EU-wide policy on homelessness seems a folly to me, and a dangerous one at that. Again, to be fair, the Jury seems to acknowledge this in declining to fix a single headline target at EU level for ending homelessness, and the elements of the EU strategy that they outline are at very broad-brush level; this approach enables Member States to adapt homelessness strategies to their own circumstances as required.

Conclusion

The Consensus Conference appears to have been a worthwhile and concrete exercise – much more so, perhaps, than we sceptics would have anticipated. This is testament to the hard work not only of the Jury, but also of the preparatory committee, all those who gave evidence and provided background documents, the conference participants, and the organisations that supported it. It will undoubtedly provide a powerful point of reference for years to come in the development of national and supra-national policies in this area, and rightly so. Personally, I agree with some of the Jury’s conclusions and disagree with others – that is right and proper and how it should be. The most important thing is that they have managed to move beyond trite rhetoric to matters of substance for us all to get our ‘teeth into’. It has therefore provided a very useful function in pushing the debate onwards. As with most EU initiatives, it will likely have a more profound impact in the smaller and newer Member States than some of the larger and more established Member States (certainly I will be surprised if much or any heed is paid to it in the UK, and particularly in England), but such uneven effects are also to be expected and all positive gains are to be welcomed, even where not spread equally across the EU.

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The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness – Kudos, and Some Cautions, to Europe

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Introduction

The United States could learn a great deal from the Jury recommendations from the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (2010) and the preparatory work by FEANTSA (the European Federation of Organizations Working with the Homeless). FEANTSA has served as an important forum for incubating and sharing ideas about combating homelessness, helping countries to learn from one another. Veteran researchers and practitioners can help those with less experience, and advocates everywhere can point to something that another country does better, so as to ratchet up responses to homelessness. The Consensus Conference's status as an official event of the Council of the European Union, and the Jury's ability to invoke earlier European conventions and charters lend weight to the conclusions. The Jury has laid out a mandate, if not a detailed roadmap, for ending homelessness in the European Union, and has encouraged the continuing accumulation of evidence about what works best. Our primary reaction is applause. However, a critique is probably more useful to the EU and its Member States as they struggle to fulfil the mandate. Thus, the remainder of this commentary discusses issues of definitions and counts, prevention, the utility of research, and immigration.

Definitions and Counts

The Jury adopts the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS). It argues that all forms of homelessness should be combated, but gives priority to ending street homelessness and long-term homelessness, categories that encompass rooflessness and a portion of houselessness in the ETHOS typology. These are reasonable choices. However, the report sometimes overlooks one major advantage of ETHOS, namely its clarity about the groups under discussion. For example, the report cites research in the United States that identifies subgroups that are homeless briefly, that experience homelessness episodically, and that are chronically homeless, without remarking that homelessness here refers to the use of emergency shelters. Most people in the United States who use shelters do so only once for relatively brief periods and then move on (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998; Culhane *et al.*, 2007). However, patterns might look quite different for other definitions of homelessness. People who live in insecure and, particularly, inadequate accommodation (as per ETHOS definitions) may be more likely to do so for extended periods, because people do not enter and exit poverty as rapidly as they move in and out of shelters. There is also evidence that at least some episodic shelter-users in the United States follow 'institutional circuits', moving between shelters, the streets, medical and penal institutions, and temporary accommodation with family and friends, but never exiting from homelessness as defined by ETHOS (Hopper *et al.*, 1997).

The Jury's recommendations to include questions on episodes of all types of homelessness in the household survey of the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, and to collect data on stock, flow and prevalence are excellent ideas. Household surveys find far larger numbers of people who have experienced homelessness than do other approaches (Link *et al.*, 1994; Burows, 1997), but they may be less useful for monitoring progress in the short term because they miss people experiencing many types of homelessness currently.

The issue of distinguishing stock (or point prevalence) and flow, mentioned in passing by the Jury, should be highlighted. The measure affects not only the numbers of people counted but also their characteristics. As counts of people who are homeless at any given time are affected by flows both into and out of homelessness, people who find it difficult to extricate themselves from homelessness are overrepresented in stock compared to flow measures. Thus, cross-sectional surveys find larger portions of people with disabling conditions such as mental illness, than do studies of entrants to homelessness. Household surveys allow an estimate of period prevalence, or the proportion of people who have experienced homelessness over some period of time. Each of these measures is useful for different purposes. Stock measures index the quantity of shelter beds or other

short-term arrangements needed at a point in time. Flow measures tell more about the rate at which affordable housing must be created. Patterns of flow between forms of homelessness may indicate fertile points for the prevention of more serious forms thereof. Period prevalence indexes the broad impact of homelessness on society. Because at least some forms of homelessness are temporary, far more people are affected over the course of a year or a lifetime than the number of homeless on any given night.

Prevention

The Jury notes the importance of “broader social policies to reduce income inequality and other aspects of housing disadvantage” in ending homelessness, but argues that “targeted policies can effectively counter” adverse structural conditions to avert homelessness (European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, 2010, p. 12). Although policy-makers are turning increasing attention to targeted prevention on both sides of the Atlantic, evidence for success remains skimpy. It tends to be of two forms.

The first form of evidence comes from the analysis of trends in homelessness, and policy and prevention efforts that may account for it. A good example is Benjaminsen and Dyb’s (2008) analysis of homeless policies in Scandinavian countries. As social policies are similar across Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the authors suggest that differing homeless-specific policies account for differing levels of homelessness, both across nations and across cities within nations. The major policy contrast they point to is between a normalizing model and a staircase model for homeless services, largely for individuals with substance abuse problems, with the latter model associated with higher homeless rates. The analysis is plausible, but this comparison focuses on tertiary prevention, or rapid resettlement and prevention of repeat episodes of homelessness, rather than on preventing initial episodes of homelessness among people who have never experienced it before.

Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick (2008) suggest that recent decreases in homelessness in England and Germany are likely to be the result of targeted policies. In the case of Germany, it is hard to decide whether to apportion credit to increases in targeted services – particularly for those with rent arrears – or to the slackening of the housing market due to reductions in the inward migration of repatriates of German origin, which peaked after the break-up of the former Soviet Union. In England, there was no such slackening in the housing market. However there was a major effort to eradicate child poverty, spearheaded by the Blair government. Policies did not succeed in the ambitious goal of halving child poverty by 2010, but they did lift half a million children out of poverty. Child poverty (defined as living in households with

income below 60% of median) in the United Kingdom fell as a whole from 26.0% in 1998-99 to 22.5% in 2007-2008, before housing costs are accounted for. After accounting for these, reductions were smaller – from 33.9% to 31.1% – but still in the right direction (Joyce *et al.*, 2010). It is plausible that these policies played a substantial role in reducing homelessness among families in England. However, the bulk of the improvement occurred before the dramatic declines in homelessness between 2003 and 2007, documented by Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick (2008). Thus, neither Germany nor England provides a clear test of the extent to which targeted policies can counter adverse structural conditions.

A second form of evidence for the success of prevention is the finding that people who receive services do not become homeless, as for example in an extensive evaluation of 3600 cases of homelessness prevention in 43 municipalities in Germany (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2005). According to prevention authorities, swift interventions to deal with rent arrears prevented homelessness in one-third of cases, while the remaining two-thirds needed additional support. However, as Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick (2008) point out, such estimates lack convincing counterfactuals, or evidence of what would have happened in the absence of intervention. In the United States, the vast majority of households that are not merely delinquent in paying rent but that are actually evicted do not enter shelters, even in the absence of prevention services (Shinn *et al.*, 2001). Overly broad targeting of services (giving them to people who would avoid homelessness without them) can thus masquerade as successful prevention. In this vein, one could raise the ‘success rate’ of prevention services to 100% by targeting them to millionaires. Hennepin County, Minnesota, whose targeting model for preventing family homelessness has been widely adopted in the United States, recently decided that it had made this sort of mistake after finding that the families targeted for prevention services differed greatly from those families that actually became homeless. For example, 40% of the first group – compared to 94% of the second – had incomes below \$1 000 per month; and 1% – compared to 33% – had a head of household under 22. In requiring service providers to serve families that more closely resemble those who enter shelter, the county recognizes that the apparent success rate for prevention is likely to fall (ten Broeke, 2011).

Convincing evidence that targeted prevention works requires evidence not only that people who received the services avoided homelessness, but also that similarly situated people who did not receive services became homeless; both effective targeting (evidenced in high rates of homelessness in the control group) and successful services (evidenced by differentially lower rates among recipients) are required. Systems-level analysis is also critical to ensure that prevention services (for example, priority access to social housing) do not simply reallocate homelessness to other households whose priority is thereby reduced.

Targeting prevention services is difficult for two reasons. First, people who become homeless, especially families, look a lot like other poor people. Second, whereas rates of homelessness are too high from a moral perspective, from a statistical perspective they are low, and it is difficult to predict relatively rare events without many false positives (people identified as likely to become homeless who would not in fact do so in the absence of intervention). Thus, targeting means giving services to multiple households for each case of homelessness averted.

Overly broad targeting does not matter if services are cheap as well as effective. Culhane *et al.* (2011) argue for a system of progressive engagement, where inexpensive services are offered to large numbers of people, and successively more extensive services are reserved for those for whom inexpensive services prove insufficient. One way to avoid the problem of targeting is to wait for households to request shelter; as such, much attention in the United States has shifted to shelter diversion (immediately before entry) or rapid re-housing (immediately after). Shelter applicants are typically already homeless by the full ETHOS definition, but the programmes are still consistent with the Jury's recommendation to focus on the most severe forms of homelessness. More research is required to show how well such programmes work.

Research

The need for rigorous research to gather evidence about the success of prevention efforts applies to other conclusions of the Jury report as well. The primacy of housing-led approaches is supported by data not only about the effectiveness of Housing First programmes for individuals with serious mental illnesses (Gulcur *et al.*, 2003; Tsemberis *et al.*, 2004), but also about the effectiveness of housing subsidies, with or without social services, in preventing homelessness for families receiving public assistance in the United States (from a national randomized experiment by Wood *et al.*, 2008); in ending returns to shelter (Culhane and Hadley, 1992; Wong *et al.*, 1997); and in promoting secure and stable tenancies for families who had been homeless (Shinn *et al.*, 1998).

Much less is known, however, about whether less expensive options work, and what patterns of services should accompany housing for what populations. The Mental Health Commission of Canada is conducting a five-city trial of Housing First, using the Pathways to Housing model for individuals with serious mental illness, an alternative Housing First approach with case management services for individuals with less serious psychiatric problems in comparison to usual care, and local approaches. The Department of Housing and Urban Development in the United States is funding a twelve-site study examining subsidized housing without services, shorter-term rapid re-housing approaches, and service-rich transitional

housing in comparison to usual care, in order to learn what works best for what sort of homeless families with respect to housing stability, self-sufficiency, family preservation, and adult and child well-being. Europeans could contribute to this experimental knowledge base with multi-site approaches examining the consistency of conclusions in different jurisdictions. Because most shelter use is temporary, many programmes will 'work' to reduce homelessness in the sense that participants will not return to shelter, even if the programmes do little more than provide temporary respite. Research can help to identify optimal approaches.

There is some resistance to such social experiments, and indeed these would be unethical if we already knew what worked and had the resources to offer this elixir to all. However, the field lacks both knowledge and resources. Housing First approaches challenged a 'housing readiness' orthodoxy when they were first tried, and an experiment showing that they worked better than staircase approaches has led to their widespread adoption. Listening to the preferences of individuals experiencing homelessness, as the Jury advocates, is also important, and indeed was the inspiration for the Pathways to Housing model (Tsemberis *et al.*, 2003).

Immigration

The Jury deals thoughtfully with the intersection between immigration and homelessness, calling for more study, recognizing national differences, and reaffirming basic human rights for all. Political scientists have shown that racially- and linguistically homogeneous societies devote a larger proportion of Gross Domestic Product to social welfare spending than do more diverse societies (Alesina and Glaser, 2004). As immigration makes Europe increasingly diverse, it is perhaps no accident that some nations are rethinking the generosity of their social welfare programmes. In a sense, the European Union is a great experiment in expanding the definition of the group to whom societies owe the supports embodied in social welfare programmes; immigration challenges social solidarity, and homelessness may be one consequence. In the United States, ethnic minorities who are not immigrants, in particular African Americans and Native Americans, are at higher risk of homelessness than immigrants, and this is also true in Japan and Australia (Shinn, 2010). Europeans might do well to examine the relationship between homelessness and ethnic or religious forms of social exclusion that go beyond immigration.

This paper has suggested some concerns and extensions of the masterful jury report from the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness in the areas of definitions and counts, dilemmas of prevention efforts, the need for research, and the challenges posed by immigration. These comments do not, however, diminish our praise for the report and its ambitious mandate to end homelessness in Europe.

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The European Consensus Conference: The View of a Participating Practitioner

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Introduction

Having been part of the entire process leading to the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (ECCH), from the time it was first suggested in FEANTSA's General Assembly in Paris approximately 4 years ago, I am delighted that it happened under my FEANTSA presidency, and that this crucial event for the homeless sector in Europe became a reality. Looking back at the often delicate discussions, or should I rather say disputes, that took place in FEANTSA's Administrative Council (AC) and Executive Council (EC) around the planning of the ECCH, I am extremely encouraged by its outcomes, and I am looking forward to the new perspectives and horizons that will undoubtedly result from the recommendations of the Jury. Of course, these perspectives will not become reality by themselves, but I am quite confident that they will materialise if all FEANTSA member associations subscribe to the outcomes of the ECCH.

Preparatory Stage

Let me start by talking about the preparatory meetings. During the first presentation at the General Assembly of FEANTSA in Paris, it became evident that not every representative of the member associations present was convinced that the very positive French experience with the Consensus Conference could be replicated on a larger European stage. Key concerns included how to gather sufficiently representative experts to give clear opinions on the most important questions in relation to homelessness in Europe, and how to ensure that appropriate expertise would be available to analyse crucial questions around homelessness in a constructive way.

Then there was the crucial question of how to select the jury members; jury members that were not directly involved in the domain of homelessness, but that had the professional expertise and open-mindedness to enable them to develop objective opinions on the questions to be determined by the preparatory committee. In addition to the question of who would be part of the preparatory committee (Prepcom), the question of geographical balance in the Jury also had to be addressed; how to avoid a situation where countries traditionally strong in the social domain, such as the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries, might dominate the southern Latin countries and smaller countries, like the Benelux or the Baltic countries, or the new EU Member States.

Having defined a certain number of objective criteria that would enable FEANTSA's AC to make a wise, objective decision on the composition of the Prepcom as well as the Jury, and on the experts who would be invited to the ECCH, every member association was invited to propose candidates for the respective organs. In open discussions, every AC member had the opportunity to present his or her proposals, and although discussions were intense, most members managed to put aside personal or national preferences, and were open to convincing arguments.

A final crucial point in the organization of the ECCH was the decision on who to invite as participants for the event itself. As it was an event organized under the Belgian presidency of the EU, it was evident that the European Commission and the Belgian Presidency would have the final decision on how many people from different categories would be invited: official representatives of the Commission and its collaborators, official representatives of all member countries, representatives of FEANTSA's member associations, research experts on homelessness, representatives of people having experienced homelessness and so on.

Again it was important to have a good geographical balance, and FEANTSA's AC members were asked to source suitable representatives of the different categories from their respective countries. In my view, this was the most difficult and most delicate point in the whole process, but FEANTSA's AC nevertheless managed to come up with a well-balanced result, whereby even smaller countries such as Luxembourg could send an appropriate number of representatives. Of course, the outcome largely depended on how much energy had been invested by each AC member in contacting and motivating possible national, regional and even local authority representatives in their country. Unfortunately, this didn't work out in every case, and in the end quite a few seats were left vacant.

One negative point in relation to the organization of the ECCH was that it took place exclusively in one large plenary meeting. In my view it could have been more productive and lively if the six questions posed in the conference had been discussed more thoroughly in smaller discussion groups, where the different

categories of representatives would have been present, and would have had the opportunity to participate more directly. I am, of course, aware that this would also have meant having one (or more) specialized jury member(s) for each of the six questions, but I am quite convinced that this would have improved the balance of pro and con arguments in the discussions.

A further weakness was the under-representation of people having experienced homelessness, during both the preparation phase and the conference itself. Even though their actual representation was, in my view, of outstanding quality, I would have preferred if, within each country, there had been a more organized discussion forum for homeless people to express their opinions on the six questions posed by the Prepcom. The hope that this could be achieved by a single organization turned out to be futile due to the fact that there is still no European initiative that has the necessary contacts and links with the few existing national or regional homeless associations.

As a representative from Luxembourg on FEANTSA's AC, and like all other AC members, I had to take the initiative to propose and contact possible candidates to join the Prepcom and the Jury, as well as people who could be interviewed as experts by the Jury during the ECCH. In the end, the AC accepted the director of Caritas Luxembourg (the only FEANTSA member association from Luxembourg) and the president of Caritas Europe as members of the Prepcom. In regard to people who might participate in the ECCH, I contacted all those I thought could be interested: three civil servants from the Ministry of Family affairs; the civil servant with responsibility in the area of homelessness; the Luxembourg representative on the European Social Protection Committee; the social worker responsible for OLAI (Luxembourg's bureau for immigrants and refugees) as well as the civil servant of the Housing Ministry responsible for social housing. At the local authority level, the two civil servants in charge of services for homeless people in Luxembourg's two main cities – Luxembourg City and Esch-sur-Alzette – showed an interest in the ECCH. I was very glad that in the end all these people were accepted as participants. So, all in all, Luxembourg's delegation to the ECCH involved eight people who were directly involved in either policymaking or the implementation of policies in the domain of homelessness, and/or social housing.

Even while on the train from Luxembourg to Brussels, I had the feeling that bringing all these people together in the context of a conference that would highlight contradictory opinions on topics central to homelessness, could lead to interesting exchanges and to an emerging consensus on these topics among those responsible for homeless policies in Luxembourg – and maybe even on a wider European scale.

The Conference

Apart from some problems with the hotel reservations, the logistics (timing of different parts of the conference; meals and coffee breaks; evening events etc.) were quite well organized. Indeed, as quite often happens in this type of conference, exchanges between participants during the breaks – and in this instance especially among the participants from Luxembourg – were very positive and quite fruitful. Having listened to the interventions of the experts on different topics, and to the questions and remarks of the Jury and of other participants, discussions between the participants from Luxembourg continued beyond the conference room. These were not just theoretical discussions, however; as each of us is partly responsible for transposing theoretical concepts (such as the definition of homelessness, user participation, and emergency support for immigrants and refugees) into practical, everyday realities, we used this opportunity to exchange views on such concepts in light of the current reality of homelessness in Luxembourg.

But of course – and this is what I would call the European momentum of the conference – such discussions and exchanges did not only happen among participants from Luxembourg, but also with and among participants from other countries, giving all participants the possibility to discuss the extent to which newly presented concepts such as ‘Housing First’ and ‘National strategies to end homelessness’ are realistic alternatives to more traditional approaches like emergency or night shelters, the staircase model and so on.

Speaking as FEANTSA’s president, but also as a practitioner whose professional duty it is to link theoretical and political concepts with the problems and limitations of their practical implementation, the notion of a national strategy to combat or even end homelessness seemed to become more and more realistic over the two days of this ECCH. The opportunity to challenge and discuss these new concepts with people in responsible positions – whether at national or local level, whether civil servants or professional social workers active in NGOs – showed me that the time has clearly come for a radical change in dealing with homelessness at national and local level, as well as at European level. A very important and decisive fact in this instance is that all three levels are interdependent and must be linked in a logical, constructive and complementary way if we are to overcome the human tragedy of people being forced to live – or should I rather say to survive – without a home in 21st century Europe.

During the ECCH, these reflections and thoughts became more and more evident – not only to me, but to all the participants from Luxembourg. Over the two days we constantly exchanged views on these new perspectives and, just as the jury members did with the experts, we discussed the pros and cons of these approaches in the context of the realities we live in our everyday professional lives. In the end we all agreed that we should continue to meet once back home, and that we should try to develop strategic guidelines on the basis of the Jury’s final recommendations.

Outcomes of the Conference

The first very encouraging event emerging from this context involved a note written by the civil servant with responsibility in the area of homelessness to the Minister of Family affairs in which the ‘Housing First’ concept was briefly explained, and which the Minister accepted as a future alternative concept to be put into practice in Luxembourg; this happened just two weeks after the end of the ECCH!

There was a second event at the end of January; I was invited in my capacity as FEANTSA’s president to present the outcomes of the ECCH, and to explain the concept of a national strategy to combat homelessness, to the organisation responsible for designing and writing the National Reform Program (NRP) for Luxembourg. In the end, the concept of such a national strategy was introduced as one of the new measures of the NRP proposed by the Ministry of Family Affairs, with a clear emphasis on ‘Housing First’ or, in acknowledgement of one of the Jury’s key recommendations, on ‘Housing Led’ policies.

A third and politically very important event was the announcement by Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, in his yearly speech before the Parliament on the 19th of April that “we need a national strategy to combat the situation of homeless people, as well as a variable housing offer adapted to different types of people” (translation by the author). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Family Affairs organized two meetings that were attended by most of the Luxembourg participants in the ECCH, as well as other national and local representatives, where the first elements of a national strategy to combat homelessness were analysed and discussed. A further meeting took place at the beginning of July, and the first draft of the strategy shall be proposed to the Government by the end of this year, 2011.

Conclusion

Looking back on the impact of the ECCH on discussions on homelessness in Luxembourg and other European countries – thanks, in particular, to the recommendations of the Jury – it is clear that we now have a common European basis from which to build on and evolve the fight against homelessness. This basis may allow us to realize the European Parliament’s ambition to “end street homelessness by 2015”, which was part of its declaration as early as 2008, and which it reiterated on December 6th 2010.

If we want to overcome the problem of people being forced to live without a home, be it in Luxembourg or anywhere else in Europe, we need to stop acting in isolation. We need to link the activities of NGOs in the field with local political ambitions and strategies to avoid and combat homelessness at local level. We need the coordination of Ministries responsible for housing, employment and health for vulnerable people at national level. And we need to link national politics with the European efforts, undertaken in the frame of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (EPAP) and European structural funds, to overcome poverty and social exclusion in all EU member states.

The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness: Potential of the Conference from a User's Perspective

Edo Paardekooper Overman

Introduction

As a representative of homeless users I consider the Consensus Conference not as a self-contained achievement, but rather as a useful tool for improving communication between homeless people and policy-makers. In this article I wish to reflect on how I view this interaction and how the Consensus Conference may alter the effects of a lack of understanding on each side.

I have been representing users' perspectives and interests for six years now. My first experience of rough sleeping was during 2004/5 in the Netherlands; I was taken in by the Salvation Army shelter service, and later by its transition shelter, for almost a year. Since then I have been able to access and maintain myself in regular rental housing. All of this has been decisive in determining my mission: to improve the quality of service and care, and promote the rights and co-determination of the homeless, as well as to link more effectively the interests of users, various service providers and other stakeholders.

I therefore joined the Client Council of the Salvation Army in 2005 in order to draw attention to what I perceived as a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of service providers about what adequate support could and should be for homeless people. My goal was, and is, to help bridge this gap by demonstrating that although providers operate the services on which homeless people are dependent, each homeless person is an individual being in need of care, whose basic rights have to be respected, and who must have access to information and take part in their recovery in order to be enabled to act. In my view, this is the only way to change the often-dehumanizing conditions of homeless provision into a partnership-based operation that creates pathways out of homelessness.

Homeless people experience alienation and social exclusion. Their paths into homelessness are paved with a reluctance to listen to friends and family, social services and other service providers, and to be listened to by the same people and organisations. The relationships that fall apart with the loss of one's home lead to a seriously splintered and also diminished network, which – as there is a lack of recognition that help is needed – services cannot completely substitute for; people entering homelessness are not approached, and they do not reach out in time.

I believe that re-establishing these networks is one of the cornerstones of the way out of homelessness. How they can be restored depends on various conditions, and this is the point at which the Consensus Conference could make a substantial contribution; it could articulate and “translate” these conditions from what I believe to be the users’ perception of them into what an EU or national bureaucrat and policy-maker can understand. It could reconcile the wording and the interests of these two perspectives.

Let me illustrate this with what I have learned from my personal experience of homelessness, my housing history, and engagement with user representation, as it is through this that I have come to understand that homelessness can be a real threat to any of us, and that getting out of it depends on a constellation of efforts that have to merge into individualised solutions. Homelessness can affect very different people, and this diversity demands a diversity of answers, tailored according to individual needs and possibilities. Most of the recommendations of the Jury of the Consensus Conference echo this quite clearly, which is one of the great merits of the process.

A family breakdown, a psychological crisis, overspending even for a short time, and putting too much hope into the possibility that a partner and joint new family will offer a way out – the crisis comes too fast, and partnership, job, home, financial stability and health are all gone at once. Mingle with those who use night shelters? Not for me right now. Independence and the need for privacy are driving forces that in this case are destructive; they keep you away from service provision as they are unavailable here, but in the end these are the same forces necessary for regaining the motivation to find a way out.

Had there been not an individual with a great personality at the right time in the right place in the outreach service of the Salvation Army, I would have not re-contacted my former links and the relevant services. Getting my debts managed, some psychological help and a route to regular housing again was mainly my own doing, for there was certainly a lack of adequate practical help and knowledge there. What I did find was a roof, and after a couple of months a room of my own where I could at last find some rest again. This gave me strength, regained self-esteem and the consciousness that this was my way out. Others,

I observed, sometimes need(ed) a little more practical and other help as it took – and takes – too long to find this route again. I believe that a place of your own, including support, should be offered much earlier in the process, and that this is what needs to be offered to all homeless people: to those who do not believe they can be partners, and to those who have been turned down in most of their relationships, whether private, service-related, with the general public or with the state – whoever has stigmatised them through one-dimensional judgements of their being a nuisance, an addict, superfluous and useless.

The Consensus Conference called for granting more room for client participation, and for service provision to be more responsive and adapt more to both individual needs and societal changes. These are key issues. But these key issues require key personalities; too many workers in homeless provision have a misconception of their role, or lack the necessary experience or attitude, and sit there as judges or rule-enforcers instead of applying an adequate helper's perspective by listening to and working with clients. It is time to move away from one-sided and general solutions with service providers and other stakeholders confronted with the reality of what is happening to the people they serve on the individual level.

I do not believe in numbers and typologies. They do not change the world. I believe in images, individual stories and life events that are tangible. Therefore, I do not consider that the recommendation of the Consensus Conference to use ETHOS as the classification tool for understanding homelessness is a real step forward. Rather, it evokes a false belief that counting and defining will solve the problems. There is no need for the further mystification of homelessness, and I am afraid that ETHOS avoids a real connection with those we exclude. Thus, while on the one hand I think that the Consensus Conference is a good tool for mediating between the languages of partners, I also think that in this respect it may serve to strengthen the discourse of a policy-making that we, the users, basically want to change.

Still, even if there is no immediate impact of the Consensus Conference, it is important to acknowledge that this is one of the many forums needed to challenge those people who are entitled to represent the interests of users, and also for those people who have experienced or are under threat of homelessness. They must keep in mind that their role is to connect, and the role of user representation is to make visible what matters.

The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness: Comments on the Jury Propositions

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Introduction

Is there a consensus on homelessness beyond sentimental platitudes that serve no useful purpose? Is there a point in looking for agreement on what policies the EU needs? The answers to these two questions define the objectives of this European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (ECCH), and therefore determine the assessment of the Jury's proposals.

Any action on homelessness presupposes that homeless people are not solely to blame for their situation, but that the community is instrumental in the processes of exclusion, and that it bears a responsibility for ensuring that everyone has decent living conditions. Basically, while the individual-collective responsibility equation is the very essence of the current democratic debate, all states have, to some degree, a policy of helping homeless people and preventing housing hardship, including statutory forms of protection and housing quality standards.

The European Union pursues policies against social exclusion, but lacks responsibility for housing. Yet, the European framework of laws and regulations affects the housing sector: tax harmonization, state aid (housing-related social services exempted from competition rules), migration policies, and so on. The Union is an agent, managing factors that impact on housing, social exclusion leading to housing hardship and homelessness, and on the policies to address these issues. The main task of the ECCH was to define the scope of the European Union's legitimacy in tackling homelessness, and how to mainstream this objective across all EU policies.

Diversity of Homeless Experiences

The Jury proposed a broad interpretation of homelessness as something that affects different social groups in different and complex ways. Housing hardship as portrayed through the archetypal figure of the 'tramp' is a thing of the past; women, young people, migrants and families are among the new victims of the street. The root causes of their situations have also diversified, as has the range of living conditions that now characterize housing hardship: from insecure accommodation, through squats and places unfit for human habitation, to the street. These difficult situations intersect with other issues, like mental health and addictions. Diversity seems now to be at the core of housing hardship: diverse pathways, diverse situations, diverse causes, and diverse problems linked to housing hardship.

Understanding housing hardship now means taking into greater account its many contributing factors, personal, institutional and structural, and how they interact. This makes attempts at defining housing hardship more complex, but a definition is a prerequisite of any measure to tackle housing hardship – in terms of both targeting and quality assessment. The Jury saw the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), drawn up by FEANTSA and the European Observatory on Homelessness in 2005, as a relevant way of describing the variety of situations in each EU Member State. It is a tool that enables policy-makers to base what they do on a common analytical framework, and to steer EU policies towards a common goal of improving the situation throughout the EU, regardless of inter-country disparities. It also allows Member States to carry out coordinated joint studies, using the same analytical foundations to pursue policies, the effectiveness of which can be assessed.

However, the Consensus Conference Jury emphasized that the ETHOS guide refers only to housing *conditions*, and suggested that it might be useful to include duration-related aspects; the time spent in a given situation is arguably a determinant of how great an impact living conditions will have on physical and mental health, and on the deterioration of the social and economic situations of those affected. Furthermore, an interpretative framework, however relevant, does not preclude EU state governments from turning it to other purposes.

The Risks of Categorising Homelessness

A sociological typology in the hands of any government bureaucracy can degenerate into a tool for the dehumanizing categorization of human suffering, whereby people risk being pigeon-holed and dealt with through predefined standard solutions that ignore the social and human realities of those affected. This kind of mechanistic categorization system has long proven limited in its dealing with social issues. The

central challenge that European societies face is how to combine the full exercise of the right to housing – protected by consensual norms – with public policies that organize personal services, and with administrative procedures that respect the reality of each individual’s life, history, desires and choices. While establishing an analytical framework to monitor changes in housing problems may be a necessary step forward, it must be linked into mechanisms that guarantee the individual the full exercise of their rights, and public policies that enable rather than impose.

Homelessness and Human Rights

As the Jury pointed out, housing hardship should be seen for what it really is: a serious and intolerable violation of human rights. Such a violation of fundamental human rights and dignity should be opposed with the utmost intensity in our developed European countries. The Jury also found, vitally, that housing hardship and homelessness can no longer be tackled by policies that merely manage consequences and marginal situations, or pursue only emergency policies dictated by weather conditions; such public policies sideline people by providing only basic survival services for the most extreme situations.

Europe needs an integrated strategy that cuts across all social and economic aspects, interacting with housing, health, and working conditions, but also with the factors that shape the housing market: the scope of public service sectors; tax harmonization; bank loans and so on. By managing factors that influence price formation, the volume of construction and the scope of public housing services, EU policies play a part in defining what homelessness is. The impact of any proposed EU regulation on the living conditions and social rights of European residents must be assessed. The Jury’s finding that housing hardship is a violation of human rights raises the issue that protecting this right is no longer a policy *option*, but an *obligation* to be fulfilled by and within the EU. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and other instruments aimed at the protection of social rights, such as the Council of Europe’s Social Charter, have been incorporated into the basic Treaty of the Union, and they are now clearly binding on the various EU institutions as well as on Member States; the Union must not only respect these social rights, but also ensure that they are respected by Member States. We thus have the basis for a set of ‘social convergence criteria’, parallel to the economic criteria of the eurozone.

This is not to say that compliance with common rules and national laws, legal protection on an individual basis, and the willingness of stakeholders to enable individual strategies will be enough. Member States must demonstrate strong political will, reflected in the dedication of resources. The development of the

'Housing First' strategy in Europe will remain an empty phrase, for example, unless substantial means are provided to raise this public policy goal beyond the level of a sound bite. 'Talking the talk', or employing nothing more than a communication strategy, without 'walking the walk' and actually providing funding, discredits policy-makers and increases the risk that democratic institutions will lose credibility as they lose support from a population that considers itself as having been short-changed; this may happen where rights and ambitions are promised but not delivered though substantive policy measures.

Furthermore, even where policies prioritize the supply of, and access to ordinary housing for everyone in ensuring respect for human dignity and social integration, a safety net, or social emergency sector, is still needed. The 'Housing First' policy will not replace emergency provision that addresses other needs than exclusively housing ones. The two areas are not mutually exclusive, however; getting people into housing could be seen as a sequential process of different forms of provision, enabling people to move from one to the next (from supported housing to stripped-down basic accommodation, and then on to collective arrangements), without making this part of an integration approach, but by simply allowing everyone to progress in line with their own strategies, desires, and the vagaries of their lives.

From this angle, social support for households is less about 'inclusion', specific standards of living, or behaviour, and more about activation, empowerment, and increasing the ability of the individual to control their lives, make choices, and progress according to their aspirations. This requires a support system, whether in temporary accommodation or in ordinary housing, that can better accommodate individual time frames, meandering pathways, and minority lifestyles.

Homelessness, Criminalisation and Poverty

Homelessness policy can no longer just be about social 'sticking-plaster' solutions that aim to ensure the physical protection of so-called deviant individuals from street violence, the weather, and the lack of care. In our democracies, rights purport to be universal; just as the Greek 'demos' means 'people', so are our societies based on the idea that no-one – especially the most vulnerable, or the 'unclassifiable' in terms of social function – will be abandoned. Homelessness, however, is one of the most brutal manifestations of abandonment by society. Homelessness policy is not only about measures directed at individuals but also – and perhaps more so – at society as a whole, enabling checks on whether democratic institutions are living up to their core values.

Our democracies also purport not to be totalitarian – not to ask individuals to conform to stereotypes in order to gain access to rights; it is a society’s duty to provide a place for everyone without seeking to standardize its citizens. That being so, homeless services must seek to adapt to the diversity of human behaviour; this means accommodating homeless people’s lifestyles so that they can find a place in society without having to deny their own history or personality, and not facilitating compliance for those who do not conform to the mould of the ideal citizen.

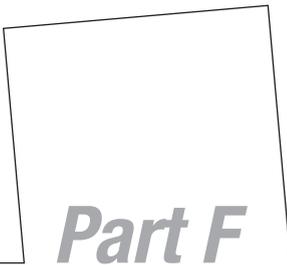
There is no question that we stand at a crossroads – at the meeting point of opposing, cataclysmic forces: on one hand, the criminalization of poverty which denies the democratic ideal and justifies abandonment on the grounds of the deviance and eccentricity of those deemed not to conform; on the other hand, the progress of social work in respecting the privacy and diversity of individuals through processes of empowerment, and the organization of housing systems that increasingly accommodate individual strategies within the framework of increasingly strong legal protection.

The race is on between the criminalization of poverty and the full recognition of marginalized individuals as part of mainstream society. Regular attacks on social rights may sometimes leave stakeholders despondent, and the forces of obscurantism may sap the democratic ideal by criminalizing poverty and blighting public policy in Member States, influencing the shaping of a Europe that is rationalist, efficient and not always heedful of the rights of its most vulnerable residents. However, the professionalism and activism of those resisting and fighting against such attacks should not be underestimated, and will flourish in the long term.

Conclusion

This conference has proven that there is consensus. There is consensus on the idea that ensuring decent living conditions that respect individual choices is a collective responsibility at each institutional level. There is consensus in seeing the institutions as stepping stones for citizens, enabling them to rise up, and not as crash barriers preventing divergence from social norms of behaviour. There is consensus that poverty is not the fault of those in need, and that the fight against homelessness is primarily a battle against ourselves – against the dark side that makes us fear others as we close our eyes to the suffering, isolating ourselves ever further in cocoons of comfort mingled with anxiety. There is no alternative but to take care of each other, and to protect ourselves collectively through ensuring rights and the policies that secure them. Even if there is no consensus, those who believe in the possibility of one will continue to come together.

Research Projects in Progress



Part F

Housing First Europe: A “social experimentation project”

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Background

Homelessness exists across the EU, even in developed welfare states. The need for innovation in the homeless sector is therefore crucial, especially with the increasing awareness that shelter systems and other forms of temporary accommodation are not providing sustainable solutions to homelessness. Housing First approaches are thought to be effective in tackling long-term/chronic homelessness, which is why they have received broad interest in Europe. Housing First was originally developed in the United States and has been primarily used to tackle chronic homelessness, especially for people with mental illness and co-occurring substance abuse. Housing First, pioneered by the organization Pathways to Housing in New York, has demonstrated high degrees of success in both housing and supporting those who are homeless with multiple and complex needs. In contrast to ‘staircase’ approaches, which predominate in many European countries, and which require homeless persons to show evidence of being ‘housing ready’ before they are offered long-term stable accommodation, Housing First projects place homeless people directly into long-term self-contained housing with no requirement that they progress through transitional programmes. But Housing First does not mean “housing only”: Substantial and multidisciplinary social support is provided to the re-housed homeless people assertively, though it is not a condition for them to participate in and comply with therapies or show sobriety and they cannot lose their tenancy for failing to do so.

Objectives

In Europe, the Housing First approach to homelessness is currently being tested in a number of cities and some evaluations are going on at the local level already. A number of articles and small studies have been published recently assessing the potential (and the limits) of the Housing First approach in different European welfare contexts. While different intervention methods to re-house homeless persons with complex problems have been tested and evaluated in the US, this has never been done systematically in any European country. An application to the 2010 Social Experimentation Call in the framework of the PROGRESS programme of the European Commission (DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) for an evaluation and mutual exchange project called *Housing First Europe* was recently selected for funding. *Housing First Europe* started 1st August 2011 and is planned to last for 24 months. It will test and evaluate Housing First projects in five European cities, leading to greater clarity on the potential and the limits of the approach, as well as the essential elements of Housing First projects. It will also facilitate mutual learning with additional partners in five “peer sites” cities where further Housing First projects are planned or being implemented and with a steering group including FEANTSA and HABITACT as European stakeholders, experienced researchers, representatives of national homelessness programmes and Sam Tsemberis, the founder of *Pathways to Housing* in New York.

Methodology

The main contractor of *Housing First Europe* is the Danish National Board of Social Services (with Birthe Povlsen as the main responsible person) and coordinator of the evaluation and exchange strands is Volker Busch-Geertsema, Senior Research Fellow, GISS (Association for Innovative Social Research and Social Planning) in Bremen, Germany, and coordinator of the European Observatory on Homelessness. The partnership involves a wide range of stakeholders including NGOs, service providers, local authorities, universities and public authorities. The five Housing First projects (or “test sites”) to be evaluated are in the following cities: Amsterdam, Budapest, Copenhagen, Glasgow and Lisbon. The five “peer sites” taking part in three of the five project meetings are in Dublin, Gent, Gothenburg, Helsinki and Vienna. The last meeting will be the final conference, which will take place in June 2013, in Amsterdam and will be open to the public. For comparability purposes, *Housing First Europe* focuses on test sites which have a strict definition of Housing First according to the original US model, namely projects:



- With self-contained living units (e.g. not hostel accommodation);
- Where tenants have some form of secure tenure;
- Targeting people with mental illness/drug/alcohol problems or other complex support needs (i.e. who could not access housing without support);
- Providing pro-active support (but housing is not conditional on acceptance of this actively offered support);
- Where access is not conditional on stays in other types of transitional accommodation or any other type of “preparation”.

Housing First Europe will be implemented through two principle strands:

1. A Research and Evaluation strand which will assess the Housing First projects and draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the approach: Key research questions will allow for detailed information about the organization of the local Housing First projects, access criteria, profile of actual clients, flow of clients through the projects and information about length of stay and numbers and reasons for drop-outs, support provision and support needs, costs involved, effects in quality of life etc.
2. A Mutual Learning strand, which will bring together different stakeholders to discuss the results of the assessments, and will generally facilitate exchanges on different Housing First projects across the EU and beyond (USA, Canada). Meetings (of the steering group and project partners) will be used to discuss commonalities and differences between the projects and common challenges, which will contribute to develop mutual understanding on Housing First concepts.

Differences in existing Housing First approaches will be discussed and analysed: for example the role of choice, the type of housing provided (scattered site versus congregated housing), the type, duration and intensity of support provided. The difficulties and successful approaches of support agencies to get access to regular housing, to manage financial risks for service providers etc. will be documented. It is planned to develop recommendations for dealing with typical challenges of the approach (like relapses of service users into street life, neighbourhood complaints, non-payment of rents, unmet support needs and rejection of support, social isolation, worklessness, substance abuse etc.) and for possible use of the approach on a wider scale.

By the end of 2011 main details of the test sites and further information about the project will be available at www.housingfirsteurope.eu.

A strength based intervention for homeless youths: effectiveness and fidelity of *Houvast*

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Background

According to the latest official count, there are at least 8000 homeless youths in the Netherlands. Despite their complex problems, there is a lack of evidence-based interventions to improve their social status and their quality of life. *Houvast* [Dutch for 'grip'] is a strength based method grounded in scientific evidence as well as 'what works' principles. *Houvast* is aimed at improving the quality of life of homeless youths by focusing on their strengths stimulating their capacity for autonomy and self-reliance.

Objectives

Aim of this study is to test the effectiveness as well as fidelity of the *Houvast* method in homeless youths in service accommodations.

Methods

In this multi site, quasi-experimental study, 300 homeless youths are interviewed four times over a period of nine months. The experimental group consists of seven service accommodations for homeless youth in which the workers are trained in the *Houvast* method. The control group consists of seven matched service accommodations that provide 'care as usual'. By means of a structured interview, personal characteristics, social support, self-reliance, autonomy, substance abuse, physical and mental health, social status and quality of life are assessed at T0, T1 (3mths), T2

Women and Homelessness in Ireland: A Biographical Pathways Analysis

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Background

The impetus for this study arose from the identification of a significant gap in knowledge within the homeless research literature in the Irish context. Women have received little dedicated research attention over the past twenty years and, as a consequence, remain largely invisible within dominant discourses on homelessness. This situation is not unique to Ireland; women's homelessness has in fact been noted as a lesser-explored area of homelessness research throughout Europe.

Objectives

The core aim of the research was to conduct a detailed investigation of the lives and experiences of homeless women in Ireland with specific attention to their homeless 'pathways', that is, their entry routes to homelessness, the homeless experience itself and, possibly, their exit routes from homelessness. The study sought to contextualise women's homelessness within a continuum of precipitating, perpetuating and/or enabling factors, crossing both structural and individual factors, that help to explain their homeless/ housing 'careers'.

Methods

A cross-sectional research design, integrating biographical interviewing and ethnographic observation, was employed. A survey instrument, covering topics including homeless history, children, violence/victimisation, and physical and mental health, among others, was also administered to all participating women. At a later stage in the data collection process, a sub-sample of ten women participated in an 'auto-photography project'. This project was designed to complement the study's other data collection methods and to provide additional and more nuanced insights in homeless women's lives. The eligibility criteria for entry to the study included: (1) a woman who is homeless or has lived in unstable accommodation during the past 6 months; (2) aged 18 and upwards; (3) single and without children or a parent living either with, or apart from, her children; (4) Irish or of other ethnic origin. Participating women were recruited from a range of strategically chosen sites including hostels and other temporary or unstable living situations in four urban locations in Ireland, including Dublin. Recruitment to the study was guided by a combination of purposive and snowball sampling.

Progress to-date

Sixty homeless women, aged 18-62 years, have been interviewed and the data collection phase of the research is now complete. The majority of the study's participants are aged between 20 and 40 years. Just over a quarter of the sample are migrants. At the time of interview, the study's women were living in a wide variety of accommodation types including emergency homeless hostels, domestic violence refuges, transitional accommodation, informal and temporary housing arrangements such as staying with friends or family members, or in newly-acquired private rented accommodation. Only one woman was sleeping rough at time of interview although many more reported that they had done so in the past. Three quarters of the women had children or were pregnant at the time of interview, but not all were caring for their children at the time of interview. A significant number of the women reported lengthy histories of homelessness and had engaged with homeless services on multiple occasions for varying periods of time. 72% of the sample had been homeless for more than one year at the time of interview and 56% for more than two years; a smaller number had experienced more than 10 years of homelessness over the course of their lives. For a large number, periods of homelessness were interrupted by multiple temporary exits from homelessness, often via private rented accommodation.

Data analysis is currently ongoing. The first written dissemination of the research findings is expected to take place in February 2012 when a number of research briefing documents will be launched at a public lecture in Trinity College Dublin.



Reviews



Part G



Paul Cloke, Jon May and Sarah Johnsen (2010)

***Swept Up Lives?
Re-envisioning the Homeless City***

Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 292pp. €30.00.

The self-proclaimed purpose of *Swept Up Lives? Re-envisioning the Homeless City* is to show the reader a new and different landscape of urban homelessness. The book connects to the discourse on the revanchist city, a concept introduced by human geographers in North America. The notion of the revanchist city and the framing of homelessness within a “punitive turn” (quotation mark by the authors) envisions the marginalisation of poor people socially and geographically through regimes that force homeless and other poor people to the margins of the city and of society. According to the authors, homelessness is used as *the* exemplar of how urban policy has wilfully marginalised the visible poor. However, the authors’ position is that this is at best an incomplete and inaccurate portrayal of urban homelessness, and they further question whether the concept of revanchism is universally applicable. It might well hold true for urban homelessness in North America, but the stance taken in this book is that it is not easily translated to the homeless scene in Britain.

The dualism between revanchism on one side and compassion and empathy on the other side runs as a thread throughout the book. The authors maintain that Britain has imported techniques such as “zero tolerance policing”, the “designing out” of certain street activities and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders from the US to manage what is perceived as problematic street culture. This is one side of the homeless policy. On the other hand, since the 1980s there have been governmental initiatives and programmes aiming to support and help homeless people, something that is not compatible with an entirely punitive policy. The authors also find that the interventions and services for homeless people can be both open and oppressive.

Chapter two of *Swept Up Lives?* frames the empirical chapters, which form the main part of the book, in a broad outline of welfare provision in the age of neoliberalism. The chapter does not discuss neoliberalism as such, but opens with a statement of this being the “dominant form of political and ideological form of capitalist globalisation.” Chapter two further outlines in brief the main features of

welfare provision and the response to homelessness under neoliberalism in Britain over the past 30 years. The overview starts with a shift from the traditional mode of “one way steering” to cooperation through public private partnership – from government to governance – which became dominant in the 1980s. The authors point out that in Britain this change was closely linked to the Conservative government elected in 1979, whose primary concern was shifting welfare provision from the state to citizens and non-statutory agencies. In the mid-nineties the UK saw a shift from governance to governmentality. The change was concurrent with the end of a decade of conservative regime and the election of a Labour Party government. Although not initiated by Tony Blair’s administration, governmentality as a mode of steering accelerated under the New Labour Party’s third way. The design of the third way is ascribed to the sociologist Anthony Giddens, who in this context inhabits the role of the theoretical designer of New Labour. New Labour reversed the development under Margret Thatcher and her successor, and strengthened the role of the state. Partnership with the non-statutory agents was kept high on the political agenda and opened up new spaces for non-statutory organisations, while at the same time the non-statutory sector came under increased statutory control.

The authors proceed into a discussion about the shaping of subjectivity in the neoliberal era with reference to, among others, Michel Foucault, whose work is connected to the concept of governmentality. One purpose of the book is to portray homeless people as subjects; to show resistance, negotiation with the surroundings and make visible the knowledge homeless people need and possess to be able to survive on the street. A contention in the book is that understanding homelessness entirely within the “punitive turn”, denies homeless people their agency. The theoretical part is quite brief and presupposes that the reader is well informed of the discourse of governmentality and subjectivity. The connection between the theoretical position and the empirical part is not easily traced, which is not necessarily a weakness.

Another point of departure of *Swept Up Lives?* is the history and role of the non-statutory welfare sector in Britain, and more specifically the organisations operating in homeless service provision. Particular attention is paid to the role of faith in a time of “postsecularism”. The authors recognise secularism as being an intimate partner of neoliberalism, but argue that secularism has prepared the way for a renewed interest in faith. Thus the punitive technologies, some of which are mentioned above, of neoliberal governmentality are contrasted with welfare organisations and individuals within these organisations. A question posed in the book is whether punitive technologies are also being incorporated into the punitive management of homelessness within the non-statutory sector. A hypothesis put forward by the authors is that services are also sites for resistance or potential resistance. Resistance, as well as empathy and care, are primarily found within non-statutory services based on faith and post-secular humanity.

The main chapters of the book draw on extensive field studies. The authors carried out a three year research project (2001-2003), *The Homeless Places Project*, starting off with mapping the geography of homeless services through a postal survey to some 540 night shelters, day centres and soup runs in England, Scotland and Wales. The survey was followed by ethnographic studies in the above mentioned low threshold services in seven contrasting towns and cities in England. The in-depth ethnographic studies include observations and interviews with service providers and service users. One of the researchers also worked as a volunteer as part of the fieldwork. The picture on the front cover along with the title invites one to think of *Swept Up Lives?* as a study of street homelessness and street life. This is only partially the subject of the book, and a subordinate one. The main theme of the book is captured by the following paragraph:

Rather than the streets, the current book is therefore mostly focused upon these other spaces. But we identify such spaces as an example of wider currents in the temporary city, currents that speak less of containment and control than of compassion and care and – more particularly – of growing rapprochement between secular and religious approaches to urban politics and welfare. (p.2)

Using more than two pages to review the political and theoretical framing and positions of a book that is largely a story of these homeless spaces may appear a bit unbalanced. The great strength of the book is the dialectic between the authors' theoretical position and the narratives of homeless life in specific spaces of the field studies: soup runs, day centres and shelters. In chapters three to eight, the authors explain and discuss empirical findings, organised by themes and places. Some of the chapters contain familiar stories of the homeless lifestyle. Others opened up new perspectives and knowledge for this reader.

Chapter three explores the urban landscape seen through the eyes of homeless people living on the streets and using low threshold services. Going through places to sleep, places to eat, places to earn and places to hang out, the authors visualise how homeless people negotiate repressive policing, make alliances and form friendships, and defend their territories. Interest in research on the life of homeless people has increased both in Britain and other European countries in the time span between the project's fieldwork and the publishing of the book in 2010. That said, the chapter is a necessary part of the full picture.

Chapter four is entitled "*He's Not Homeless, He Shouldn't Have Any Food*": *Outdoor Relief in a Postsecular Age*. The chapter discusses revanchism versus care using the soup runs as an example. Thus the chapter is not merely an account of fieldwork within soup runs, but rather reviews these very simple and close-to-the-street services as sites of faith-based but also humanitarian compassion. The chapter introduces the contention that soup runs cannot be understood (entirely) in the light

of revanchism. More than half of the soup runs throughout Britain are run by faith-based organisations basically staffed by volunteers and largely relying on donations from the public. The authors maintain that “[t]he volunteers staffing the soup runs are in turn perhaps one of the most obvious expression of that sense of ‘active citizenship’ championed by New Labour as a key component of a new Third Way” (p.92). The authors further point to the fact that being in accordance with the dominant political ideology does not directly translate to being in line with national programmes aimed at alleviating homelessness. Rather, low threshold services, and in particular those handing out food on the streets, are frequently blamed for keeping homeless people on the streets and prolonging the period of homelessness. Both government programmes, the Rough Sleepers Initiative and the following Homelessness Action Plan, aimed at removing homeless people from the streets and reducing homelessness.

The picture drawn of soup runs is not a simple and unambiguous one. Volunteers have different motives for volunteering and they share the beliefs of the organisations they work for to varying degrees. They may also express different opinions about the people they are serving. All in all, the authors find that soup runs represent an acceptance of homeless people and the “street life style” that is in obvious opposition to the rehabilitation and demands for lifestyle “change” that drive the national homelessness programmes. At the soup runs, one finds people with different faiths and people motivated by secular humanism working side by side because they care about homeless people. The soup runs are often a first point of contact for homeless people and represent a signpost to off-street services, which chapter five also goes into. This chapter deals with the place and role of day centres in the homeless city. Day centres are new on the homeless scene, the majority having been established after 1980, often opened as a response to the immediate needs of people sleeping rough. Day centres are described as places of refuge where homeless people may simply “be” (p.129). But the policy of accepting almost all homeless persons that knock on their doors also creates places of fear. For example many day centres have installed CCTV and physical barriers between staff, a considerable proportion of whom are volunteers, and users.

Soup runs were also the forerunners of many hostels. Over time Britain’s hostels have developed in different directions. Chapter six divides the shelters into four groups. Those in the first group have remained small scale services offering basic care and dependent on voluntary staff. Others have professionalised and some of these have maintained their original faith-based foundation (the second and third groups). The last group is the statutory run hostels. All hostels have one common feature; they are open to everyone. As with day centres, hostels and night shelters are pictured as scenes of compassion, care and fear. Working in a hostel is difficult in many ways. Staff are often confronted with acting out behaviour, serious mental

and other health problems, tensions among user groups and individuals, and other challenging situations. The role of volunteers in the hostels is often restricted to practical work like cleaning and cooking, and involves less contact with users. It should be mentioned that both day centres and hostels are male-dominated places where female users and staff may feel unsafe.

Chapter seven deals with the uneven distribution of services for homeless people in Britain, explored through the survey distributed to low threshold providers. The authors point to three different explanations for the geographical divergences: historical, political and organisational. The historical circumstances relate to the presence of institutions dealing with homeless people, like former workhouses and organisations like the Salvation Army, in an area. The longstanding presence of such institutions may have created an acceptance of homeless people in the community; an acceptance which fosters a high level of tolerance towards the visibility of homeless people and services today. Regarding political explanations, the authors maintain that local political responses to homelessness may have differed in ways that influenced the scale and shaping of homeless services. Organisational circumstances are connected to the presence – or absence – of large non-statutory organisations like the Salvation Army and the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association), which are important providers of homeless services. Finally the authors suggest a fourth explanation – the interplay between service provision and service consumption resulting in different local homeless scenes. This hypothesis is explored through fieldwork in two contrasting towns in England. Homeless scenes are partly constituted by often tacit knowledge among homeless people about different places: knowledge about sites that offer good places to earn, to sleep, to get food, buy drugs and policing on the streets. Some places are considered friendly and other are known as displaying harsh attitudes towards homeless people. However, places change. The generosity of people in a town considered a goldmine for begging may turn into indifference accompanied by harsher policing in the streets.

Chapter seven offers a preliminary conclusion about the dual view on the revanchist city:

Far from being simple handmaidens of the state, incorporated into revanchist regimes, such people perform care in a way that inflects many British cities with continuing subcultures of generosity and resistance that contradict the culture of revanchism and reinstate ordinary ethics of justice in the everyday lives of homeless people. (pp.209-210)

The two-page conclusion in chapter seven is an excellent summary of the main discussions in the book. Chapter eight, entitled *On the Margins of the Homeless City: Caring for Homeless People in Rural Areas*, thus appears a bit out of place.

Treating rural homelessness as something different in one single chapter leaves this reader with a feeling of having just touched upon a new theme. The chapter is interesting, however, and the objection is of a rather aesthetic character; it appears as an interruption of what in all other ways presents itself as a complete volume including the conclusive discussions in chapter nine.

Swept Up Lives? is based on extensive empirical fieldwork in Britain. However, this is not a particularly British book, in the sense that knowledge of British legislation, public administration and homeless policy is not required in order to be able to follow the narratives and the arguments. The concepts of neoliberalism and the revanchist city are not particularly British phenomenon. Framing the theme of the homeless city within these perspectives lifts the book out of the British context and into a wider discourse on managing homeless people. Low threshold services for homeless people are found across Europe regardless of the level of services and intervention practices above this level. Services take different local and national forms, but to varying degrees and depending on the welfare state arrangements in general, these services are delivered by the non-statutory sector. The book adds important knowledge to the understanding of the dualistic and often contradictory policies that govern the lives of homeless people, and many readers beyond Britain interested in deepening their understanding of homelessness will find that that *Swept Up Lives?* provides food for thought and opens up new perspectives. Finally, the book is very well written so that even a non-native English reader can enjoy its elaborate, yet easily accessible language.

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The delayed publication of this book – based as it is on a 2000 to 2002 survey of single homeless people in Britain – is attributed to the prolonged illness of the senior author. This has given rise to the rather unusual circumstance whereby the bulk of the book's subject matter has already been aired in a series of previously published journal articles (nine collaboratively written papers are cited in the references). Specifically, these prior publications prefigure the investigation of the 'tactics and performativity' of single homeless people (Chapter 3), the provision of outdoor relief and its links with faith-based organizations (Chapter 4), the problematic development of day centres as places of refuge and resource (Chapter 5), and the ambiguities and complexities associated with night shelter/hostel provision (Chapter 6). Furthermore, permeating the book and comprising substantial sections of chapters 1, 2 and 3, are three contextual themes, which also feature, prominently in already published work. The first of these relates to the entanglements of neoliberalism with the delivery of welfare, focusing in particular on the apparent shortcomings of 'punitive' perspectives on homelessness; a second theme emphasises the role of faith-based organisations in cultivating an 'ethos of care' in the delivery of homeless services; and a third theme promotes an appreciation of the purposeful agency and intrinsic humanity of homeless people, which the authors claim is "so often missing in accounts of urban homelessness" (p.20). Chapter 7, focusing on an issue less well represented in prior publications, examines the uneven development of homeless service provision, demonstrating how specific combinations of political, institutional, social and cultural factors produce distinctive 'homeless places'. The penultimate Chapter 8 is devoted to an analysis of the 'production and consumption' of homeless services in rural areas – a topic of considerable interest for at least one of the authors over the past decade (eight prior publications cited).

While this book is then something of a reprise of material already in the public domain, there may well be some benefit in assembling the thoughts of a decade in one publication. Indeed, read in this light there is much to admire, especially, for example, in the robust evaluation and assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of central government policies and local government practices (viz. Rough Sleepers Initiatives, Homeless Action Programme, Housing Plus, etc.); this includes an impassioned defence of soup runs in a potent critique of the so-called 'killing-with-kindness' (i.e. anti-begging) campaigns sponsored by several English city authorities and homeless charities. The policies and practices considered are somewhat dated, in that most have now been superseded by new government initiatives. However, as the authors cogently argue (p.19), many of these new initiatives – apart from some tactical shifting of ministerial and local government responsibilities, and some extensions and adjustments in funding regimes and targets – do not funda-

mentally alter homelessness strategies beyond those articulated in the 2002 (England and Wales) and 2003 (Scotland) Homelessness Acts. Indeed the most recent (2008/10) of these new initiatives, 'Enhanced Housing Options', emphasising as it does the familiar notions of partnership between the state, voluntary agencies and the private sectors, the provision of more-than-housing support services, a further shift towards professionalism and the recycling of the well-established principles of 'choice, empowerment and customer service' (see Communities and Local Government, 2010), validates the book's claim to continued relevance. (However, see the commentary below on data lacunae).

Equally to be admired is the charting of what the authors christen 'alternative cartographies of homelessness', created by the mundane practices and purposeful behaviour of homeless people in seeking out and accessing places to sleep, eat, earn and socialise. In demonstrating the functionality of this detailed practical knowledge of urban geography, the authors present a useful and important corrective to what is sometimes perhaps too readily dismissed as the 'chaotic lives' of homeless people.

In some other respects, however, the book's methods, message and arguments are more contentious. In particular there is (i) a lack of punctiliousness with regard to data collection and analysis, (ii) the contentious endorsement and championing of faith-based organisations and their links with the development of an 'ethos of care', and (iii) the arraignment of revanchist and post-justice perspectives on the so-called 'homeless city'.

(i) Ethnomethodology and data analysis

Much of the raw data assembled and analysed in this book was acquired through an enterprising programme of ethnographic research: the 'Homeless Places Project'. This project involved a postal survey of 212 night shelters and hostels, 164 day centres and 63 soup runs across England, Wales and Scotland, designed to establish a basic picture of the provision of single homeless emergency services and of their funding and staffing regimes, together with an understanding of their ethical motivations and mission. This postal survey was followed by a more detailed examination of seven English (only) 'contrasting towns and cities'. These comprised a large city in the south-west, a smaller town in the far south-west, a small agricultural and market town in the centre, a small market town in the south, a declining seaside resort in the north, a cathedral city in the west, and a large manufacturing city in the north-east.¹

¹ The location of these survey sites are anonymised in this book, yet in earlier publications the authors were not so scrupulous. They were previously revealed as: Bristol, Bodmin, Banbury, Dorchester, Scarborough, Worcester and Doncaster (see Johnsen et al., 2005)

Intensive survey methods in these selected urban locations involved overt participant observation in 18 night shelters, day centres and soup runs (involving 160 'conversations' with service users); and semi-structured interviews with 39 project managers, 29 paid staff, 26 volunteers, 37 other key informants, and 90 homeless people. In addition, 17 auto-photography exercises were initiated in two case study areas, designed to record single homeless people's direct experiences and behaviours. The latter provided illustrations for the book and insights regarding hard-to-reach (by the researchers) sites of homeless occupancy.

All in all this is an impressive data collection exercise, but one, which nevertheless invites several queries. For example, there is no indication of how the sample agencies were selected for the postal survey or, indeed, of their location or response rate; to imply that this constitutes a 'national' survey (p.13 & passim) without addressing these issues of representativeness would seem to be at best an unfortunate slippage, at worst a regrettable sleight of hand. A compounding factor here is the decision to exclude London – by far the most conspicuous concentration of homelessness in Britain – from the survey on the grounds that "discussions of the homeless city have [hitherto] tended to be shaped by developments of a small number of large cities" (p.13). Further, we are told that the data derived from the 'national' survey indicated that service users were for the most part between 25 and 45 years and that all but one were white British, but there is no indication of numbers or percentages. We are further informed that these service users were predominantly male. However, this juxtaposition of demographic data is misleading in that it seemingly conflates the so-called 'national' postal survey data (age and ethnicity) with the seven-town English-only survey data (gender).

Further undermining the claim that the data represents a 'national' pattern is the overwhelming maleness and whiteness of the homeless people sampled and interviewed. The authors attempt to excuse the lack of female representation and gender analysis with the somewhat specious argument that they did not wish to 'essentialise' or 'overdetermine' the impact of gender on the homeless experience. Given the quantity of literature on gender and homelessness already published by the early 2000s – reinforced by subsequent research – which clearly demonstrated the very different homeless experiences of women, this smacks more than a little of a *post hoc* justification. Discursive considerations of gender differences – for example in relation to the vulnerability of women and their circumspect use of day centres and hostels – partially compensate for this lacuna. Unfortunately, there is no such compensation for the absence of an examination of ethnicity. Again, research already published by the early 2000s had unequivocally demonstrated the importance of ethnicity and race in the homeless experience of sections of the British population – an experience not captured in either the authors' 'national' or English survey, and regrettably scarcely acknowledged anywhere in this publication.

The text is replete with additional examples of the lack of precision in numerical data-handling, as illustrated in the frequent reporting of percentages with no mention of total counts; this stands in contrast to the care that seems to have been taken with the interpretation of interview data. Many of these numerical issues could easily have been addressed in a tabulation of survey results combined with more scrupulous attention to arithmetic detail and a more exacting data commentary.

(ii) Faith-based organisations and the ethos of care

The startling first sentence – “‘Love’ is not a word one comes across very often in writings on homelessness” (p.1) – establishes a major theme of this book, namely that beyond what Cloke *et al.* characterise as the prevailing dystopic view of a homeless city of exclusion and abandonment is another homeless city characterised by care and compassion; a city where homeless people experience empathy and friendship rather than control and containment. The authors draw upon the narratives of homeless people themselves and on their own surveys of homeless service providers to establish the dimensions of these ‘spaces of hope’. Central to this process, they argue, are Christian, faith-based organisations (FBOs) in providing an ‘ethic of care’ which, through ‘extraordinary acts of kindness’, empower homeless people and facilitate their engagement in purposeful agency.

The role of FBOs in delivering welfare has been long established. Recent research – not least that recounted in this book – suggests that, particularly in the context of the provision of homeless services, FBOs have in the last few years become more public and influential. In Britain this increasing prominence reflects FBO willingness and ability to avail of opportunities created by the opening-up of care services to ‘any willing provider’ (especially to voluntary and civil society agencies) under neoliberal policies pursued by successive Labour and Tory governments (Milligan and Conradson, 2006). Similar trends have been identified in many other European countries (see FACIT, 2008) and in North America (Cnaan and Boddie, 2002).²

The authors identify three tiers of FBO homeless agencies operating in Britain/England: those that proselytise, those that expect changes in attitudes and lifestyles, and those that provide unconditional care. It is the latter – the soup runs, the day centres, night shelters and hostels – that are the focus of attention in this book. In these places, the authors claim, care is commonly and unconditionally linked with Christian notions of ‘agape’ and ‘caritas’, the purest form of care – faith-motivated but not self-serving, encapsulated in the concept of what they call a

² The role of these FBOs has not always been favourably assessed: see for instance Hackworth, 2010, and the infamous ‘Waterproof bibles – for the homeless’ incident (Atheist Underworld, 2011)

‘voluntary attitude’. That many FBOs provide exemplary care is not in doubt, and they demonstratively make an unambiguously positive contribution in creating spaces of refuge, compassion and security for many homeless people.

Cloke *et al.* readily concede that such a ‘voluntary attitude’ of care and compassion is not exclusive to FBOs; they agree that there are many secular agencies that espouse and deliver a similar ethic. Indeed, in what can perhaps be identified as *the* major underlying theme of this book, the authors suggest that there has been a rapprochement between the secular and the religious to create ‘postsecular’ service spaces: that is, “spaces of praxis in which secular and faith motivation collude in new forms of ethical citizenship” (p.2). That there is some evidence of such rapprochement – in both the substantive chapters of this book and in other publications – cannot be gainsaid; what can be disputed, however, is whether the authors have accurately portrayed the relative importance of the contributions of the secular and the religious to this emergent ‘harmony’, and whether this harmony is accurately encapsulated in the notion of ‘postsecularism’.

Cloke *et al.* explicitly portray FBOs as providing the main dynamic in this secular/religious rapprochement, claiming that they play a ‘crucial role’ and act as ‘umbrella organisations’. By contrast, they argue, “homelessness has served as a highly visible example of the inability of secularist ethics alone to prevent or deal with social exclusion in contemporary society” (p.42) and suggest (as a consequence?) that secular agencies are “embracing the principles of Christian faith”. For their part, many FBOs are seen as moving away from overt evangelising in adopting a form of praxis in which Christian charity “is being reproduced as relational love and friendship, a gratuitous and creative practice of service without strings” (p.49). Yet, even as secular organisations apparently adopt Christian principles, and religion apparently becomes less overt in FBO practice, parity between the secular and the religious in the delivery of care is not achieved; while they ‘appear similar’, the authors argue, secular care is characterised by the “... absence of a spiritual dimension in holistic recovery” (p.55). Thus, for Cloke, May and Johnsen (and one assumes that all three concur), the FBO ethic of care is privileged over that of the secular.

A problem with this account is that the concepts and principles that inform a secular ethic of care – in contrast with those that inform the religious ethic of care – are not properly considered. The objective of the short section devoted to this issue (pp.54-56) is primarily to demonstrate the apparent overlap and similarity with Christian ethics. Secular ethics are thereby co-opted, their non-religious, indeed anti-religious, enlightenment basis ignored, and any potential conflict with Christian ethics disregarded. Two illustrative issues of potential difference can be briefly mentioned. First, contestations over the concept of ‘spirituality’; according to Cloke *et al.* this is what distinguishes and accredits superiority to faith-based services (see quote

above). The commonly attributed meaning of spirituality is simply that it is to do with things 'beyond the material world' – for secularists this comprises emotion and aesthetics; for the religiously inclined it also embraces concepts of immanence. The answer, then, to the question which reverberates throughout this book: 'What difference does faith make in the delivery of care to homeless people?' is thus revealed as tautological. A second point of potential and substantive difference relates to the 'mission' of service delivery. The theo-ethics of FBOs, as portrayed in this book, suggest that 'service without strings' is the pinnacle of achievement: in other words, 'giving is its own reward'. Certainly this may be one precept aspired to by secular agencies, but – as writers such as David Smith (1998) long ago established – secular ambition rarely ends there:

... care, and the emotions usually associated with it, are not enough for an ethics capable of engaging the problems of the contemporary world. Once the importance of an ethic of care is recognized, attention has to be given to the context in which the practice of care takes place, to its political economy and institutional arrangements as well as to the kind of lives and needs which people are experiencing. Introducing the missing dimension of justice requires a version of social justice as equalization (Smith, 1994, pp.35-36).

Contra Cloke *et al.*, secular ethics of care frequently embrace notions of 'solidarity, congruence and identity' which involve not only service, but also a commitment to and an active engagement with the process of change; these are convictions which go beyond and challenge the 'theo-ethics' of many faith based organisations.

The argument for rapprochement as recounted in this book is based on an unquestioning acceptance of the concept of postsecularism – namely that, as religion transmutes from private reflection to public engagement, the age of western secularism is at an end. It is disappointing that Cloke *et al.* ignore the contentious nature of these claims, not least scepticism as to whether an 'age' of secularism had/has any material reality, or whether 'postsecularism' has any useful meaning. They choose, rather, to uncritically transmit Philip Blond's – the *soi-disant* 'Red Tory' and sometime adviser to the Cameron coalition on the 'Big Society' – portrayal of the claimed debacle of secularism, to wit: that secularism permitted religion to be sequestered by fundamentalism, that secularism assumed scientific advancement was applicable in ethical and political arenas, and that secularism has spawned a "vacuum of hopelessness... a society shot through with cynicism" (pp.43-44). The debate as to whether these 'failures' adequately characterise present conditions, and whether (if they have any validity) they are causally linked with secular hegemony, is not acknowledged. In omitting reference to these debates, Cloke *et*

al. conceal the shaky foundations on which their arguments are constructed. For an exposition of some of the debates on postsecularism see, for example, Saxton, 2006; Molendijk *et al.*, 2010; Kong, 2010.

(iii) The punitive, revanchist and post-justice city

Cloke *et al.* recognise that “[r]e-imagining the city is [not] and never can be a politically neutral manoeuvre” (p.91), and indeed there is plenty of politics in this book, notably in the critique of the ‘pernicious logic’ (p.92) of revanchist and post-justice perspectives, and in the more nuanced evaluation of British neo-liberal homelessness policies.

From the first page, revanchist and post-justice perspectives are inveighed against as casting the homeless city in a dystopian frame characterised by ‘abandonment’, ‘exclusion’ and ‘annihilation’; a dystopia in which homeless people are seen variously as “passive victims... swept up and out of the prime spaces of the city” in a “seemingly insatiable appetite for high value commodification” (p.2), or as ‘convenient ciphers’ in the construction of a “critique of gentrification, public space law and so on” (p.18). Given that Cloke *et al.* do not directly challenge the everyday reality of an increasingly punitive city, such invective may at first sight seem somewhat misplaced. An explanation for the authors’ negativity can, however, be deciphered in the charge that revanchism as it emanates from the USA – especially as transmitted in the work of Mike Davis, Don Mitchell and Neil Smith – is too all-encompassing. It is seen, for example, as not sufficiently sensitive to context, such that in Britain (and in Europe more generally), revanchism is manifest not as ‘revenge’, but rather as ‘punitive-lite’ or, as Henk Meert would have it, a form of ‘urban disciplining’ (Meert and Stuyck, 2008). In the view of Cloke and his colleagues, revanchism is also too encompassing in that it obscures and over-shadows an alternative interpretation of the homeless city espoused in this book as a city of compassion and care, rather than of abandonment and exclusion. Additionally, it is claimed that the revanchist / post-justice perspective represents “a spectacular triumph of structure over agency, and of the general over the specific” (p. 1). For Cloke *et al.*, too much research (i.e. revanchism) proceeds “at a relatively high level of abstraction, with only a narrow engagement with the concrete changes shaping homeless people’s lives... and little or no discussion, via a field-based methodology, with the subjects of that research – namely, homeless people themselves” (p.17). While these substantive differences of interpretation go some way to explaining the authors’ denunciations of revanchism, their invective has a further purpose, whereby their reading of the revanchist city serves as recurring ‘rhetorical trope’ against which their wholly opposing view of a compassionate city can be favourably compared.

Politics are also to the fore in the evaluation of British neo-liberalism, especially with regard to its impact on homelessness. In this context Cloke *et al.* identify three phases. The first sees neo-liberalism promoting self-serving individualism and thereby bolstering some of the excesses of secularism; in the second phase (as noted in the previous section), neo-liberalism opens-up welfare delivery to civil society and the voluntary sector in particular, thereby creating opportunities for the dissemination of postsecularist ethics; in the third stage, however, there is a (partial) reversion to secularist tendencies as the activities of third sector agencies are reined-in with the lure of funding packages, distracting them from homeless advocacy and aligning them with government (possibly punitive – but certainly controlling) objectives. Cloke *et al.* note that this incorporation has been particularly characteristic of some larger secular agencies; what *Crisis* and *Shelter* make of this observation is not recorded. In this version of history, the way is thus left clear for those FBOs and like-minded secular agencies that are infused with a ‘voluntary attitude’ to carry the flag of postsecular ethics.

In the final chapter, Cloke *et al.* acknowledge that the adoption of a ‘voluntary attitude’ is not in itself a solution to homelessness; this requires ‘deeper structural changes’ (p.245). To address the underlying causes of homelessness, they suggest, “we need to build a sense of political engagement and a sense that change is possible” (p.251). The contribution of postsecular ethics to that political engagement is seen as “fostering a broader *politics of hope* that stands in stark contrast to the politics of revenge and abandonment that allegedly characterises the revanchist or postjustice city” (p.251). Stymied by an unwillingness to give any credence to revanchist politics, Cloke and his colleagues are reluctant to characterise the compassionate spaces of care created by postsecular ethics as ‘resisting’ or even ‘coping’; rather, these spaces are offered as ‘demonstration projects’, existing in a parallel world, occupying the interstices of the punitive city, contrasting with but separate from that city – veritable ‘beacons of light’, holding out (in the authors’ vocabulary) the ‘hope’ of a better future. Thus, Cloke and his colleague adopt a ‘politics of the inert’, leading by example rather than engagement, and in the process neatly complete the biblical trio of theological virtues: ‘faith, hope and charity’ [1 Corinthians 13: 13].

Contrast this with the course of action advocated by Laura Stivers. Stivers (2011) wears her religious beliefs on her sleeve, but is no less committed to the ethics of compassion and empowerment than the authors of *‘Swept Up Lives’*. She, however, accepts the reality of the punitive city and the need to engage directly with the structures of revanchism. In proposing tactics of engagement – ‘prophetic disruption’ is her preferred epithet – Stivers asks: “What would it mean to make power analysis central to the issue of homelessness and housing? How are power, privilege, and social domination connected to homelessness and where do we see

intersecting oppressions (e.g. race, gender, class)” (p.20). In raising such issues, Stivers acknowledges that in tackling the causes of homelessness there is a need to ‘jump scales’ (Smith, N., 1993) both geographically in connecting the *micro* (spaces of compassion) with the *macro* (the punitive city), and conceptually in conjoining an ethics of care with an ethics of justice (Smith, D., 1998).

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Sam Tsemberis (2010)

Housing First: The Pathways Model to End Homelessness for People with Mental Illness and Addiction Manual

Minnesota: Hazelden, 244 pp. appr. €50

Housing First is the most discussed method in Europe in terms of combatting homelessness. Within a relatively short period of time the concept has been widely disseminated, but what is the Housing First model, exactly? A lot of questions have been raised in recent years: what components and elements must be included in this model? Who is the target group? Is Housing First a slogan, a philosophy, a programme, a brand – or a policy? Many have looked forward to reading this book.

Homelessness is a widespread social problem, and the struggle is ongoing throughout Europe to combat the problem. Conditions in various countries differ widely, but many actors have realized that a new approach is necessary. In Sweden, for example, an individual perspective dominated for a long time, and homelessness has been mainly analysed and explained with reference to individual factors such as substance abuse and dependence, mental disabilities or other social problems; if these problems disappear then it should also be possible to solve the problem of homelessness. Gradually, however, this explanation has changed. To a large extent, a multifactorial explanatory model has been adopted in its place, where structural factors like the structure of the housing market are of vital importance. Other structural factors are exclusion from the housing market, unemployment and discrimination. One of the fundamental ideas of the Housing First model is to separate treatment from housing. This renders the structural and individual factors visible, and it becomes clear that homelessness is much more than just an individual problem.

The interest in evidence-based practice (EBP) has grown in our part of Europe. The search for effective, well-researched methods is ongoing, and a method that has proven to be efficient in randomized trials is difficult to dismiss; the Pathways Housing First (PHF) programme is one such method, with well-established efficacy in reducing homelessness for a particular group of individuals.

The author of this book, Sam Tsemberis, created the Pathways Housing First model, which subsequently partly inspired the Housing First movement. Dr. Tsemberis is Greek-born and holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. From his Greek background he inherited certain values, including the belief that housing is a fundamental right for *all* people, including people with mental illness.. Tsemberis is based in the Department of Psychiatry in Colombia University Medical Center, and is also the lead trainer and consultant for the Pathways Housing First Training Institute.

Primarily, the book is to be characterized as a kind of manual; the first part contains an introduction followed by eight chapters, while in the second part, the Pathways Housing First Training Institute is introduced. The book also contains a number of appendices.

One question often raised when discussing how to help homeless individuals is: can people with both substance abuse and mental illness manage to live in their own apartments, even with tailored support? Is it really possible? It required a lot of courage to introduce this programme before research had proved its effectiveness, and research has been crucial for the development of PHF as an evidence-based programme. The book's introduction describes the history of the programme and the ideas on which PHF is based; each of the book's chapters is then introduced briefly so the reader knows what to expect, and at the end of this introduction a list of particularly relevant terms is provided.

Chapter 1 introduces the Pathways Housing First programme on recovery-oriented service and its philosophical assumptions. Why does it work? By providing a home for a person, the programme offers dignity and hope. For many clients, the result is the beginning of a process of change. PHF offers an alternative to the previously most common model used in the U.S and Europe – Continuum of Care (CC) or Linear Residential Treatment (LRT). Within this model, the client gradually improves their living situation; the steps or actions often begin through contact with an outreach team, followed by stays in various types of shelter or transitional housing; the last step is into permanent accommodation. 'Gaining' permanent housing is frequently associated with meeting conditions such as participation in treatment and demonstrating sobriety. For a client with a psychiatric disorder and substance abuse dependence, the path to housing is often not straightforward; many fail and fall into homelessness again. In the Continuum of Care the terms 'treatment resistant' or 'hard to house' are used.

PHF started as an alternative to this model, finding that housing is fundamental to survival and to meeting the basic human needs of refuge and safety. The principles of Housing First are: housing as a basic human right; respect, warmth and compassion for all clients; a commitment to work with clients as long as they need it; scattered-site housing; independent apartments; the separation of housing and

services; consumer choice and self-determination; a recovery orientation; and harm reduction. The emphasis is on values and the attitudes towards clients. Chapter 1 goes on to describe these principles in detail.

Chapter 2 covers the initial steps involved in PHF. The target group and requirements for joining the programme are described; the client must be long-term homeless, have a severe mental illness, and show interest in taking part in the programme – maybe not initially but over time. The client must also fulfil two core requirements: first, payment of rent – thirty percent of the “monthly income” should go to rent; and secondly, weekly visits by PHF team member. The chapter points out that engagement is one of the most important phases of the PHF programme and first impressions of the programme are very important. Four principles are emphasized as being behind the success of the programme: accepting the client’s priority for housing; providing a flexible service; removing obstacles whenever possible; and taking responsibility for follow-up. While the general philosophy in working with homeless people is to tell the clients what they need to do, PHF, in contrast, involves continually asking: “How can I help?”, and then listening to the answer.

Chapter 3 is about housing and housing support services. The desire for a regular dwelling is at the top of almost all clients’ priority lists. Approximately 95% have a preference for a private apartment within the community. This chapter explains what might be involved in the process of finding the right apartment for the client. One client said: “I walked around for years without a single key: a key to a car, a key to a house, a key to anything... I do not think people understand what a key typifies. It is something that belongs to you. It is something huge” (p.57). Various aspects of housing are described in the chapter. Difficulties like loneliness are discussed, as well as questions about having pets. The importance of relationships with landlords is highlighted, and many practical issues such as handling keys and plumbing problems are raised. Challenges like health and safety issues, and relationships with family and children are also discussed briefly, as well as what happens when clients fail; team members understand that relapses are part of mental illness and addiction, and sometimes relocation is necessary. The home visit is described in this chapter as serving many purposes that fall into two areas: housing related issues and human clinical issues. Home visits provide an opportunity for staff to get an idea of, and observe the kind of assistance the client requires to maintain their apartment in the best way. The following is an insightful quote from a staff member in this regard: “The home visit is the heart and soul of the work we do, because I think that’s ultimately where you want the change to happen, you know, in the person’s environment” (p.48).

Chapter 4 describes the two types of teams that provide treatment and support services within the Pathways Housing First model. By using the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and the Intensive Case Management (ICM), the same staff can conduct outreach and provide support for clients living on the street, assist them in finding and moving into apartments, and then continue to provide treatment and support until the client graduates from the programme. The ACT serves people with severe psychiatric disabilities and the ICM serves people with more moderate disabilities. One of the main challenges is to recruit and train staff members, and to ensure that they share the human and social justice values on which the programme is based. In this chapter, information is provided about practical tools that can be used in daily work, such as the WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan), which is based on the client's strength, needs, interests and goals.

Chapters 5 and 6 are about the two models (ACT) and (ICM) used in the context of the PHF model. These chapters are a detailed manual and explanation of how the models can best be used in the PHF framework.

Chapter 7 briefly describes a number of evidence-based practice and clinical interventions. In order to be able to offer the clients the necessary support, other methods and models than the ACT and the ICM may be used. All of the models mentioned are based on the same client-driven and human values principles that are fundamental to the PHF programme. Harm reduction is an important component of the PHF programme, where the aim is to reduce the negative effects of abuse and dependence; "The goal in harm reduction is to help the client live a better life, but is not a permanent solution. Harm reduction is about observing and celebrating small positive steps and it requires an individualized approach." Engagement in treatment is the primary goal of PHF, but staff members do not insist on treatment, nor do they challenge a client's point of view. Most PHF clients have dual problems with mental illness and substance abuse. Integrated dual disorders treatment (IDDT) is described as the most effective approach to addressing these problems, while two other well known models are also mentioned in this chapter: the Stages of Change, and Motivational Interviewing (MI). Chapter 8 is about how to adapt the PHF programme to 'your' community.

The Housing First model has been highlighted as a big success, but it has also been questioned and criticized. The main issue has been: what *is* Housing First? The extremely positive outcomes demonstrated in randomized studies raise questions: does this positive effect apply to all Housing First programmes? Which components or elements should be included in order to achieve such good results? What groups should be targeted? These questions are not all answered in this book; the book obviously only deals with the Pathways Housing First programme, and it is

clear that the target group for the programme is long-term homeless people with severe mental illness and addiction problems. The book is neither a research report nor a book on theory, but a manual for a specific programme in the U.S.

In the EU there is an ambition to broaden the term Housing First. The final report from the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness 2010 suggested the term 'Housing Led', to describe all policy approaches that identify the provision of stable housing with security of tenure as the initial step in solving homelessness.

"How can I help?" is the main question in the book. Suddenly the perspective is changed; the client is the expert and the staff assists him/her to achieve the goals. The programme Pathways Housing First must adapt to the client's needs and not the other way round, where the client is supposed to fit into the programme. "How can I help?" The question is asked again and again. Its strength is in this sentence, and this particular feeling permeates the entire book; it arouses a desire to participate in a process of change and provides an excellent description of how such work can be carried out.

The Housing First programme has sometimes been criticized for being a Housing Only solution, in that housing will be offered without the individualized support that is necessary and that also requires a lot of resources. The book shows that tailored support is crucial for success in the Pathways Housing First programme. Above all, it is the client's objectives that guide the entire programme. PHF is impressively structured and systematized with a number of tools. There is a variety of methods and programmes mentioned, as well as practical guidelines and checklists on how the planning can be done with the client in a structured way, and how objectives are then followed up. However, the most radical aspect of the approach is, as previously mentioned, that the client's perspective is the fundamental value that influences every measure taken. The discussion in the book about 'failures' is a good illustration of these values. It is a fact that clients sometimes relapse and that relocations are necessary; up to 30% of clients move from their first home, and a number move two or three times. In these cases, it is vital to have a non-judgmental attitude and to realize that those who suffer most are the clients; it is essential to ask continually: "How can I help?"

The fact that this book is written in the U.S. influences its approach. In European countries, a more moderate mode of expression is generally used, and words like 'success' may be considered shallow. However, the book is refreshingly positive. Anyone who expected a book on theory or a research study might be disappointed; the analysis has already been done, and the Housing First model is the only solution to end homelessness. Will this book really make a difference in the fight against homelessness? Yes; adapted to the situation in different countries it can be an important source of knowledge and inspiration. Research, evaluation and follow-up

are needed in the European context; a variety of measures are required for different target groups, and knowledge has to be increased with regard to those differences. This book is, however, of undoubted use for many categories of staff and researchers because the necessary components of PHF are well-described. The book can also play an important role in changing attitudes towards homeless people and the homelessness problem in general. The biggest challenge for European countries is to achieve a real change of perspective and to adopt the conviction that ending homelessness is possible.

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Mary Ellen Hombs (2011)

Modern Homelessness

California: ABC-CLIO 289 pp. \$55.00 (€39.84)

Modern Homelessness is a new book on homelessness from the United States. The author, Mary Ellen Hombs, comes to this work with rich experience in community settings and in government, both with the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, and much of the past decade with the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). She has written a number of books (including several for this ABC-CLIO textbook series) on topics ranging from AIDS, to social welfare reform, to several on the subject of homelessness. In fact, she authored a previous title in this series, *American Homelessness*.

Her new book, part of a textbook series, is intended to provide an overview of homelessness in the United States. For students of homelessness both within and outside of the United States, the book presents a brief history of American homelessness, and key developments in the areas of policy and practice, focusing for the most part on developments over the past ten years. This descriptive overview of key events and factors that shaped policy development is useful in that the information is laid out in a clear, logical way that can guide the reader unfamiliar with the American context through the changes that have shaped the current response to homelessness. This review highlights the roles and actions of different Federal departments, as well as state and local government. The book outlines a range of issues necessary to take up in responding to homelessness, as well as the necessity of considering the needs of special sub-populations, including families, the chronically homeless and of particular importance in the United States context, war veterans.

One chapter focuses on 'Problems, Controversies and Solutions'. This is an interesting read, as it provides an overview of key issues in the US, including defining and measuring homelessness and the issue of poverty. In thinking about solutions, a key theme is the importance of partnerships, and of the need for strategic, coordinated and planned responses to homelessness. Here, she provides a critical overview of the Ten Year plan model, exploring the rhetoric behind its use, implementation challenges and whether or not such plans are producing results.

While the book is ostensibly about homelessness in the United States, she does not ignore international developments. In providing overviews of the responses to homelessness in Europe, Canada and Australia, she acknowledges that the unique social and policy contexts of different nation states makes comparisons very problematic and “speculative at best”. These descriptive overviews, though brief, do give the reader an introductory understanding into the history and organization of the response to homelessness in each of these international locations. While there is a short discussion of FEANTSA the European Observatory on Homelessness, and some member states of the EU, the most attention is focused on developments in the United Kingdom, perhaps not surprising given the linguistic and cultural affinity with the US. Given that there is really little comparative research on responses to homelessness at a time when researchers and policy-makers are now becoming more interested in engaging internationally (globally), the inclusion of this material is actually quite welcome. It is also important to consider that American audiences are likely very unaware of the developments in the area of homelessness in other countries.

What makes this book a bit unusual is that over half the book is made up of chapters that consist of lists. One chronicles key players in the United States, another is a Directory of Organizations, Associations and Agencies, and the final chapter is a grab-bag of ‘resources’, including databases, DVD lists and websites. It isn’t clear to this reviewer how intrinsically useful such information is, in the current context of wireless communication, handhelds and google. Most of these items – including biographical sketches of key players – are easily obtained through internet searches. Not only that, by placing such lists in a book format – no matter how comprehensive – the content is automatically stale-dated. For instance, the book references Philip Mangano, who was certainly a key player in the homelessness world as head of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, but does not profile Barbara Poppe, the current director, who has not only made a big impact (orchestrating the development of the first US government sponsored 10 year plan to end homelessness), but has been in this role for almost three years.

Overall, this book has some key strengths, and some clear weaknesses. The first half of the book is most informative. What would have made this a particularly interesting read is if more space was devoted to discussing the historical development of USICH, which played a key role in shaping developments in the American response to homelessness during her period working for Philip Mangano, from 2003-2009. This was a period of intense change, and some biographical details of the workings of USICH, and the successes achieved under the Bush administration would have been particularly enlightening. Perhaps that is for a future volume.

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European Journal of Homelessness

The European Journal of Homelessness provides a critical analysis of policy and practice on homelessness in Europe for policy makers, practitioners, researchers and academics. The aim is to stimulate debate on homelessness and housing exclusion at the European level and to facilitate the development of a stronger evidential base for policy development and innovation. The journal seeks to give international exposure to significant national, regional and local developments and to provide a forum for comparative analysis of policy and practice in preventing and tackling homelessness in Europe. The journal will also assess the lessons for Europe which can be derived from policy, practice and research from elsewhere.

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