

Content

- Concepts
- Methods
- Context
- Discourses
 - Universal homelessness vs. Individual responsibility
 - Colorblindness vs. Cultural visibility
- Conclusions

Conceptual framework

- Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw)
- Structural social work theory (Mullaly)
- Discourses of Deviance (Anthias, Amster)
- Street-level bureaucrats (Goffman)
- Colorblindness (Neville, Haney-Lopèz, Garner)

Persons of color

- Make up 60% of homeless individuals
(CODA G4 2012)
- Possible structural causes of homelessness adversely affect POC more than white Dutch
 - Unemployment rates 2 - 3,5x higher
 - Higher employment precarity and discrimination
 - Higher prevalence of renting, thus affected more by budget cut in rent subsidies and rent hikes

Social Professionals as street-level bureaucrats

- Personal convictions
- Engagement with service users
- Situational variety
- Professional requirements
- Organizational requirements
- Policy field
- Societal narratives

Methods

- Discourse analysis
- Policy documents
- Interviews
- Focus group
- Participant observation

Profile of respondents

- Employed for an average of 5 years
- 50% male, 50% female
- Mostly highly educated
- Personal narrative and motivations to be involved in this line of work

Context

- early 1900s liberal movement
 - workers empowerment
 - Christian duty
- 60s
 - empowerment, women's empowerment
 - emergency housing as a way to ensure empowerment, self-reliance, female opportunity etc
- Late 1990s/Early 2000s: critique
- Call for corporatization of social institutions to promote efficiency



Context (2)

2007 Introduction Social Support Act (*Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning 2007*)

- ❑ Decentralization welfare structures
- ❑ Increased responsibility of the “active citizen”
- ❑ Shift from welfare services as a right and means for emancipation, to self-sufficiency as an obligation

Action Plan Social Shelters

■ 2006-2014

■ Focus on 21.800 vulnerable persons: homeless and the “reservoir”

✘ Gemeente Amsterdam
✘
✘



Gemeente Den Haag



Gemeente Utrecht



Gemeente Rotterdam



Ministerie van Volksgezondheid,
Welzijn en Sport



FEANTSA



EUROPEAN RESEARCH CONFERENCE
Homelessness and Social Work in Europe
Copenhagen, 23rd September 2016



European
Observatory on
Homelessness

Framing Vulnerability

From Action Plan Social Shelter
2005:

vulnerable because they
'cannot solve their
problems or (...) provide
themselves with means of
existence [due to]
psychiatric disorders
(including problems with
addiction) or (...) severe
psychosocial problems and
simultaneously have
multiple problems in other
areas'



FEANTSA



EUROPEAN RESEARCH CONFERENCE
Homelessness and Social Work in Europe
Copenhagen, 23rd September 2016



Deviance and responsibility

- Homelessness as individual failure and deviance
- Vulnerability framed through disease, disorder and crime
- Intervention at the individual level
 - Staircase model: increase housing readiness.
 - Model of the participant citizen as normative

Professionalism

Anyone can become homeless

- Homelessness as a universal, neutral force that can affect anyone equally
- Professionalism
- Denial of/ exasperation with structural causes

R2: You are not prejudiced... like... because they are like that. Could happen to anyone.

R3: Yea, we are all people right and we could all get into a situation where we are like that. And if you see it, like, in your work, just like normal people, yea, then to me there is no distinction or difference in that, you see. I see myself also as an equal to someone who is homeless. I think that is the approach and you work from there.

Individualizing discourses

- Individual responsibility

I was just thinking of other countries [buitenland] I have to say that it [welfare] is accessible. Here it is bigger in terms of support [hulpverlening] when it comes to government than you would see in other countries. When it comes to that, a lot will have to happen before you become homeless. I don't think you... There has to be something the matter with you or that you neglect things, things that are not going well...

- Professionals also use individualizing narratives as room for agency

Racial discourse in NL

- Denial of racism/ innocence
- Racism is associated with far-right/elsewhere
- Explicit racial categorization is frowned upon
- Culturalized notions of race
- Ethnocultural hierarchies with Dutch and Western on top
- Dutch imagined characteristics: problemless, and homogenous in race, values and traditions
- Integration and “invechten”

Colorblindness

- Professionals and organizational policies require colorblindness. Instead Individually medicalizing discourses are given precedence

I don't see people as Moroccan or... no, I always forget about that. I do know, yea, that I would like to know if somebody has had a psychosis or if they are sick and the family cannot handle it.

Well I think the moment you notice that you get lots from a specific group, then you would be able to do something with that, but only a little in the way we approach them [bejegening], but not a lot. I don't think you should do too much. It is more about the approach, how do you get through to people (...). I don't think that we, well, that we should treat those people any differently.

Colorblindness

- Professionals and organizational policies require colorblindness. Instead Individually medicalizing discourses are given precedence

I don't see people as Moroccan or... no, I always forget about that. I do know, yea, that I would like to know if somebody has had a psychosis or if they are sick and the family cannot handle it.

Well I think the moment you notice that you get lots from a specific group, then you would be able to do something with that, but only a little in the way we approach them [bejegening], but not a lot. I don't think you should do too much. It is more about the approach, how do you get through to people (...). I don't think that we, well, that we should treat those people any differently.

Colorblindness and cultural visibility

- cultural visibility prevails: culture as primary explanatory factor of vulnerability/lack of skills
- Racializing narratives reserved for homeless POC:
 - Aggressive
 - Unwilling to integrate
 - Unknowledgeable of basic household skills
 - Demanding
 - Culture as cause

Shifts

- Housing First and strength based approaches
- Away from narratives of deficiency
- Towards structural approaches?

Conclusions

- What is the role of inequality in homelessness policy?
- Racializing narratives in the face of structural disadvantages
- Professionals both negotiate and reproduce
- How do we ensure that we recenter complex experiences in which multiple forms of exclusions intersect?