



UNIVERSITY
OF TAMPERE

Housing Pathways at the Margins: Welfare Practitioners and Vulnerable Citizens Negotiating Homelessness and Housing Transitions

Suvi Raitakari

School of Social Sciences and Humanities

University of Tampere, Finland

suvi.raitakari@uta.fi



FEANTSA



EUROPEAN RESEARCH CONFERENCE
Homelessness and Social Work in Europe
Copenhagen, 23rd September 2015



**European
Observatory on
Homelessness**

Contents

1. Starting points
2. Aims
3. Housing pathways approach
4. Setting and data
5. Researching housing pathways as negotiated accomplishments
6. Data example
7. Conclusions

Starting points

- In homelessness research it has been developed a range of metaphors to understand better (long-term) homelessness and housing transitions at the margins: 'threshold', 'staircase', 'trap', 'double bind', 'career', 'safety nets', 'pathways' and 'revolving door' (Flopp 2009).
- Client-welfare worker interaction constructs and directs housing pathways at the margins, thus they are essential to study.

Aims

- I. Aim is to discuss the metaphor of 'housing pathways' (e.g. Clapham 2005; Fopp 2009) at the margins of housing and welfare services.
- II. Aim is to demonstrate how homelessness and housing transitions are negotiated in care conferences in a mental health and substance abuse work context.

Housing pathways

- General meaning: transitions between different housing facilities and lived experiences related to these facilities (housing biographies).
- “The goal of the current study was to document sex offenders’ pathways to a transitional housing facility, their lived experiences while residing in the facility, and implications for reentry transitions”. (Kras 2016, 527)
- In many studies the term (housing) pathways is not defined or theorized, but taken as a common term.

Housing pathways approach

- There is a growing body of literature that develops and applies housing pathways as theoretical and analytical framework (Meeus & De Decker 2015)
- For Clapham (2005: 27) a ‘housing pathway’ is constituted by
- “[p]atterns of interaction (practices) concerning house and home, over time and space. (. . .) The housing pathway of a household is the continually changing set of relationships and interactions that it experiences over time in its consumption of housing. These may take place in a number of locales such as the house, the neighborhood or the office of a landlord or estate agent.

Housing pathways approach

- “A housing pathways approach captures the dynamics of housing: people’s experiences of movement between dwellings and location, their decision making and preferences over time and space” (Severinsen 2013: 74; Clapham, 2002)

Housing pathways approach

- The housing pathway approach differs in important ways from the 'housing career approach' (Meeus & De Decker 2015) :
 - 1) the pathways approach does not take for granted a certain upward movement in housing.
 - 2) the pathways approach takes into account the ways in which society constructs norms and expectations about housing choices, transitions and qualities.
 - 3) it is the 'practices concerning house and home' that are analysed, and this does not necessarily mean a residential move.

Housing pathways approach

- Housing pathway approach emphasis on a bundle of practices related to housing which unfolds throughout the life course. And how these practices relate to legislative, normative and macro-economic structures (Meeus & De Decker 2015: 1119) .
- The approach includes a social constructionist perspective, focusing on the (cultural) meanings which people attach to their homeless and other housing experiences (Clapham, 2005; Fitzpatrick et al. 2013: 150).
- The approach assumes that housing pathways have both an agency and a structural dimension and that there are constantly changing discourses between them (Clapham, 2002, 2003; Mackie 2012: 808).

Homelessness pathways

- Diversification of housing pathways (Ong et al. 2015)
- Pathways into homelessness, homelessness pathways, pathways out of homelessness, housing pathways at the margins

Setting and data

- 8 recorded care conference meetings
- data have been collected from a low-threshold outpatient clinic for people with severe drug abuse and mental health problems located in a big Finnish city during three months in 2012.
- The aim of the care conferences is to try to solve clients' homelessness and to advance their proper housing transitions by mapping local housing and support services and negotiating with different stakeholders about their responsibilities and possibilities to act in difficult situations in hand.

Researching housing pathways as negotiated accomplishments

- “Etnomethodology is about studying the ways people jointly make sense, account for and reason their everyday life i.e. how ‘members’ interpreted social realities and how they act upon this knowledge.”
- “In EM studies the objective is to develop an analysis, and ways of writing that **capture active ‘doing’ of scenes and local orders** no matter how ordinary and trivial they may seem. “ (de Montigny 2007, 98)
- See also Garfinkel 1967 ja 1974; Heritage 1984; Firth 2009; de Montigny 2007 and 2013; Juhila ym. 2013

S: Well. And when it comes to your daily life, how it's going, the last time we had [the social housing landlord] here we talked about homelessness. [The client] has been homeless for more than six months, right?

C: Mm-hmm.

S: And you told us in a very touching way what it means to have to ask around for a place to stay.

C: Yes. One time I had to spend the night in the railway station's disabled toilet because my phone (a deep sigh), even my phone didn't work. So that's where I slept.

S: I'm sure it wasn't the most comfortable place.

C: No, it wasn't. (indistinct speech) (a five-second silence). A place of my own would of course be the best, but...

(a five-second silence)

S: There's kind of a conflict or challenge there as you said that living alone would be a bit terrifying.

C: Well yeah. I'm afraid that things will get out of hand and then it'll become very difficult to keep my place clean and so on.

S: I have to agree on that, as we've tried that.



- S: So, what about the psychiatric means? ((chuckles))
- P: I'm not sure about psychiatric means in this case. Other means are needed and required ((chuckles together with the social therapist)). I think that in this case we're in a relatively stable situation when it comes to psychiatric means as [the customer] has come in regularly and you've taken care of your things as you were supposed to. The medication has been evaluated. It's alright, so it's more about getting the practical things rolling.
- W: Yeah. Yes.
- P: So there's no that kind of medical (indistinct) as long as a place can be arranged.

Conclusions

- Housing pathways approach provides promising, holistic, yet demanding framework for homelessness research.
- How well ‘pathway’ metaphor resonates with the reality and experience of homeless citizens?
- Interactional data offers rich material to study how participants’ agency, experiences, cultural and moral expectations and structural matters shape the local housing/homelessness transitions in practice.
- The clients’ agency is dependent on welfare workers’ actions: pathways are social, mutual and negotiated accomplishments in particular time and place.

Literature

- Castro Campos, B. et al. (2016)** The anticipated housing pathways to homeownership of young people in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Housing Policy* 16(2), 223-242.
- Christian, Julie & Clapham, David & Abrams, Dominic (2011)** Exploring Homeless People's Use of Outreach Services: Applying a Social Psychological Perspective. *Housing Studies* 26(5), 681–699.
- Clapham, David (2002)** Housing Pathways: A Postmodern Analytical Framework. *Housing, Theory and Society* 19(2), 57–68.
- Clapham, David (2003)** Pathways Approaches to Homelessness Research. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 13(2), 119–127.
- Clapham, David (2005)** *The Meaning of Housing: A Pathways Approach*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Clapham, David & Mackie, Peter & Orford, Scott & Thomas, Ian & Buckley, Kelly (2014)** The Housing Pathways of Young People in the UK. *Environment and Planning* 46(8) 2016–2031.

Literature

- **de Montigny**, Gerald (2007) Ethnomethodology for Social Work. *Qualitative Social Work* 6 (1), 95–120.
- **de Montigny**, Gerald (2013) Ethnomethodology. In Mel Gray & Stephen A. Webb (eds.) *Social Work Theories and Methods*. 2. edition. Los Angeles & London & New Delhi & Singapore & Washington DC: Sage, 205–2117.
- **Firth**, Alan (2009) Ethnomethodology. In Sigurd D'hondt & Jan-Ola Östman & Jef Verschueren (eds.) *The Pragmatics of Interaction. Handbook of Pragmatics Highlights 4*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 66–78.
- **Fitzpatrick**, S. (2013) Pathways into Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in Seven UK Cities, *Urban Studies*, 50(1), pp. 148–168.
- **Fopp**, Rodney (2009) Metaphors in Homelessness Discourse and Research: Exploring 'Pathways', 'Careers' and 'Safety Nets'. *Housing, Theory and Society* 20(4), 271–291

Literature

- Garfinkel, Harold** (1967) *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Garfinkel, Harold** (1974) The origins of the term 'ethnomethodology'. In Roy Turner (ed.) *Ethnomethodology: Selected readings*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education, 15–18.
- Juhila, Kirsi & Hall, Christopher & Günther, Kirsi & Raitakari, Suvi & Saario, Sirpa** (2015) Accepting and Negotiating Service Users' Choices in Mental Health Transition Meetings. *Social Policy & Administration* 49(5), 612–630.
- Juhila, Kirsi & Mäkitalo, Åsa & Noordegraaf Martine** (2013) Analysing Social Work Interaction: Premises and Approaches. In Christopher Hall & Kirsi Juhila & Maureen Matarese & Carolus van Nijnatten (eds.) *Analysing Social Work Communication: Discourse in Practice*. London: Routledge, 9-24.
- Kras, Kimberly R. et al.** (2016) A New Way of Doing Time on the Outside: Sex Offenders' Pathways In and Out of a Transitional Housing Facility. *International Journal of Offender Therapy & Comparative Criminology* 60(5), 512-534.
- Mackie, Peter K.** (2012) Housing Pathways of Disabled Young People: Evidence for Policy and Practice. *Housing Studies* 27(6), 805–821.

Literature

Meeus, Bruno & De Decker, Pasca (2015) Staying Put! A Housing Pathway Analysis of Residential Stability in Belgium. *Housing Studies* 30(7), 1116-1134.

Natalier, Kristin & Johnson, Guy (2012) Housing Pathways of Young People Who Have Left Out-of-Home State Care. *Housing, Theory and Society* 29(1), 75–91.

Netto, Gina (2011) Identity Negotiations, Pathways to Housing and “Place”: The Experience of Refugees in Glasgow. *Housing, Theory and Society* 28(2), 123–1

Ong, Rachel & Wood, Gavin & Colic-Peisker, Val (2015) Housing older Australians: Loss of homeownership and pathways into housing assistance. *Urban Studies* 52(16), 2979-3000.

Parsell, Cameron & Parsell, Mitch (2012) Homelessness as a Choice. *Housing, Theory and Society* 29(4), 420–434.



FEANTSA



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



Literature

Raitakari, Suvi & Berger, Nicholas Permin (forthcoming) Making Active Citizens in the Community in Client-Worker Interaction. In Kirsi Juhila, Suvi Raitakari & Christopher Hall (eds.) *Responsibilization at the Margins of Welfare Services*. London: Routledge.

Raitakari, Suvi & Haahtela, Riikka & Juhila, Kirsi (2015) Tackling Community Integration in Mental Health Home Visit Interaction in Finland. *Health and Social Care in the Community*. doi: 10.1111/hsc.12246.

Severinsen, Christina Anne (2013) Housing Pathways of Camping Ground Residents in New Zealand. *Housing Studies* 28(1), 74–94.

Skobba, Kim (2016) Exploring the Housing Pathways of Low-Income Women: A Biographical Approach. *Theory & Society* 33(1), 41–58.

■ Thank you for your interest and time