

Seminar 6: (ROOM TBC) Measuring Homelessness (1)

Chair: **Lars Benjamisen, DK**

Patrick Hunter, Ian Cooper, CA: Understanding Chronic Homelessness in Canada



Ian Cooper, PhD is the Manager of Data Analysis and Results Reporting for Reaching Home, the Government of Canada's homelessness program. Before joining Reaching Home in 2018, he spent most of the last decade in regional economic development. Ian's PhD (Sociology) focused on labour migration and inclusive development.

Patrick Hunter, PhD is Senior Policy Analyst at the Employment and Social Development Canada. Since joining Employment and Social Development Canada in 2011, Patrick has pursued the advancement of knowledge on homelessness and the means to address it. Patrick coordinated the introduction of national Point-in-Time Counts in Canada, and is now working on the development of a Canadian homelessness data strategy that aims to support national and local data needs. Patrick has a PhD in Psychology from the University of Toronto.



Analyses of new data from shelters and Point-in-Time Counts in Canada has led to a re-evaluation of the understanding of chronic and episodic homelessness. Chronic homelessness typically refers to long-term periods of homelessness, whereas episodic homelessness refers to shorter, recurring periods of homelessness. Both are associated with greater barriers to housing, more frequent use of homelessness services, and more frequent interactions with emergency services (e.g. paramedics, police). As a result, governments across various jurisdictions have prioritized housing and services for people in these situations.

Evidence for chronic and episodic homelessness came from the work of Kuhn and Culhane (1998), who used cluster analysis to identify patterns of shelter stays in two cities. This finding has been replicated in other communities, including in Canada (Aubry et al., 2013). While numbers vary between communities, those experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness represent a small minority of shelter users compared to the majority experiencing temporary shelter use.

Since these definitions were derived from patterns of shelter use, they may not accurately reflect patterns of homelessness (including homelessness experienced outside of shelters). In many cases, episodic homelessness measured by shelter data may be the result of incomplete information about an individual's history of homelessness. For example, if a person were experiencing homelessness outside of shelters between shelter stays, this would not be reflected in shelter stay data. Consequently, the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness may be significantly underestimated.

This session will include a discussion of recent data from shelters and homeless counts that suggests that patterns of homelessness described only by shelter data may not reflect patterns of homelessness per se. These data reinforce the importance of collecting data beyond shelter use to understand homelessness. Implications for research and policy will be discussed.

Marion Giovanangeli and colleagues, FR: The New French Street Counts: Figures, Lessons, and Perspectives



Maxime Gennaoui has been working for the Parisian Social Service Agency (Centre d'Action Sociale de la Ville de Paris) for two years, specializing on the issues of migrant integration and homelessness reduction. He has actively taken part in the creation and the development of the Parisian homeless streetcount, and the spreading of its methodology in France. He has also participated in the events of the C.O.S.T. action "Measuring Homelessness in Europe" in Brussels and Zagreb.

Marion Giovanangeli is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at Paris Dauphine University, France. Her main research interests are homeless families, homeless streetcounts and the social history of Parisian shelters. Since 2015, she has been working for the CASVP, the Social Service Agency of the City of Paris, where she is conducting research on impoverished families and housing policy. She is a key member of the task force that organised the homeless streetcount in Paris (La Nuit de la Solidarité).





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Bios and Abstracts

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In 2018, the city of Paris organized the first ever French homeless street count, using a distinct methodology involving 1500+ volunteers and 500 professionals to conduct a headcount and a survey of the unsheltered in one night (point-in-time). Using a similar methodology, three other French cities followed suit in 2018 and 2019 (Metz, Grenoble, Rennes) and, on February 7th this year, Paris successfully organized a second edition, while extending its perimeter.

This paper proposes to discuss 1/ the main striking quantitative and qualitative elements that transpire from the 2019 Parisian count 2/ the consequence of these findings in terms of local public policies 3/ the significance of the spreading of this specific methodology on the comparability of figures in France and in Europe.

First, conducting a count exhaustively at the level of the whole municipality while involving numerous stakeholders (public services and 50+ NGOs) allowed for a consensus on local figures, something that was notably difficult to achieve in the past. The relative similarity in terms of figures (3035 in 2018, 3245 in 2019 for the same perimeter) also hints at the strength and reliability of the method used, while questioning the difficulty to balance the need to increase the number and types of areas covered with the hazard of communicating on therefore automatically growing figures. The 2019 edition further sparked a conversation on the definition of homelessness (sheltered v. unsheltered), its duration, its determining factors and its profiles (12% women were, for example, counted, which was more than we expected).

Second, the city of Paris opened several new facilities, whose objective directly stem from the findings of the first count. For instance, the municipality opened 12 'haltes de nuit', that are new types of temporary shelters on the model of New York City's safe havens. As the response to the large number of available and willing volunteers, it also created a new kind of community center – 'La Fabrique de la Solidarité' – that acts as a hub to inform, train and recruit Parisian volunteers, and to connect them with NGOs. These unpredictable developments shed light on the multiplicity of potential positive externalities of these counts.

Last, we'll mention the impact of this newly available set of data on our ability to compare homelessness and its evolutions, not only between French cities but also at the European level.