Counting and Mapping Local Homeless Service Systems in Sweden

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Abstract_ *The aim of this study is two-fold. First, the aim is to map and explore the extent and variation of local homeless service systems in Sweden's municipalities. Second, the goal is to explore the possibilities and limits of using available secondary data on homelessness and homelessness housing services, when analysing local homeless service systems. The study is based on an exploratory cross-sectional approach and uses data from several secondary sources. An extensive mapping of the variation and extent of homelessness and local homeless service systems in Swedish municipalities was conducted. The results suggest that homelessness and local homeless services systems exist in almost all Swedish municipalities. The results also show that the social services have become a major landlord, managing around two percent of Sweden's total amount of rental apartments (2017). Special contracts are the most common type of housing measure, used both in urban and rural municipalities. The "Housing first" model still represents only a small percentage of different housing measures. Available secondary data has potential to function as a basis for comparative studies on local homeless services. However, it contains shortcomings concerning reliability, comparability and scope. This is partly due to changes in questionnaires and definitions.*

Keywords_ *Homelessness services, levels of homelessness, local homeless service systems, cross-sectional analysis, exploratory approach.*

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Defining Homeless Services

In Sweden, as in many European welfare states, both national and local homeless service systems have developed as part of the general welfare organization. In general, homeless service systems can best be described as loosely intertwined systems consisting of legal frameworks, national and/or local homeless policies, methods to tackle homelessness and measures to house the homeless. These homeless services are often regulated and organized by the local social services and provided by municipal actors, including both for-profit and non-profit organizations (Benjaminsen, 2016; Dyb, 2017). In Sweden, the municipalities are the main actors and responsible for governing, managing and financing homeless services (Sahlin, 2006; Benjaminsen, 2016; Dyb, 2017). The local social services have legal obligations to provide both general and targeted services to people that risk becoming, or already are, homeless. The legal framework of SoL (the Swedish Social Services Act) defines the right to general social assistance, but also specifies some interventions targeting homelessness, such as the right to shelter (SoL Chapter 4, §1). The definition of homelessness used by Swedish authorities is a narrower adaptation of the ETHOS[1] and defines homelessness based on four different living situations:

1. People 18 years or older who sleep rough or in emergency accommodation, e.g. shelters and hostels.
2. People 18 years or older who are due to be discharged within three months from an institutional setting (prisons or mandatory institutional care) without having a permanent residence waiting for them.
3. People 18 years or older living within the secondary housing market, or in housing organized by the social services.
4. People 18 years or older living with friends or relatives under uncertain housing conditions (Socialstyrelsen, 2011).

The right to assistance due to homelessness is approved on the basis of these conditions. However, the legal framework (SoL Chapter 4, §1) does not clearly specify which type of shelter, for how long, or what individual conditions need to be fulfilled in order to be provided with housing (Blid, 2008). This is a considerable difference compared to for instance Scotland, where the legal framework is both stronger and clearer concerning the responsibilities of the local social services

[1] ETHOS or European typology of homelessness situations created by the European Observatory on Homelessness (Edgar and Meert, 2005). ETHOS includes 13 situations of homelessness from rough sleeping to inadequate housing.

(Anderson and Serpa, 2013). Apart from the larger urban areas of Sweden, the issue of homelessness is not always dealt with by a special section within the social services. Rather, it would be under the remit of the general section dealing with adults with all different kinds of social issues. However, in many municipalities, local homeless service systems have evolved, either as part of general social services or as special branches dealing especially with housing or homelessness. Today, some type of local homeless service system exists in most municipalities, but the content and measures provided can vary greatly. In general, the types of services that exist can be some or all of the following:

1. *Local homelessness polices or strategies.* Developed by the local social board, directing the work and the measures that target homelessness.
2. *Homelessness prevention.* Preventive measures such as eviction mediation or financial assistance.
3. *Special homelessness measures.* Targeted individual interventions in the form of healthcare support, vocational training or other social activities.
4. *Homeless housing measures*. Individual interventions in the form of housing financed by the social services.

These are organized and regulated by local social services, often in cooperation with local for-profit and non-profit actors. Swedish national statistics show that there has been a steady increase across Swedish municipalities in developing special homeless services and homeless housing services over the last 20 years (Socialstyrelsen, 2015). Today, homeless housing services are the main intervention used by local social services to target homelessness (Socialstyrelsen, 2017). However, there are different ways to organize the local homeless service system and there are variations concerning the local political interest in the matter. We know through research from the Nordic countries that the types of services provided at a local level matter (Benjaminsen, 2016; Dyb, 2017). This research also indicates that organizing and creating national as well as local strategies and methods tackling homelessness have an impact on reducing the level of homelessness (Pleace *et al*., 2015; Dyb, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

This study has a two-fold aim. First, the aim is to map local homeless service systems in Swedish municipalities. Two questions are at the centre of this mapping: the issue of homelessness and local interventions and methods used to house homeless people. Data collected by the National board of housing building and planning (NBHBP), the National board of health and welfare (NBHW) and the

Statistics Sweden (SCB) will be used in the analysis. The data collected by Swedish authorities and public bodies over the last ten years are underexplored, especially when it comes to comparative analysis at a local level. Therefore, the second, but closely related aim of this study, is to explore the possibilities and limitations of available secondary data. One of the key policy positions upheld by FEANTSA is that there is a need to develop national, as well as local, data concerning interventions and methods used at a local level. This is to understand how interventions against homelessness affect the levels of homelessness (FEANTSA, 2017; Pierre and FEANTSA, 2017).

Homeless Housing Services

Previous research shows that, in general, the homeless housing measures provided by local social services may be more or less temporary, may be more or less integrated into the overall homelessness services and may include a greater or lesser amount of care for and control over the individual (Busch-Geertsema, 2005; Sahlin, 2007a; Blid *et al.*, 2008;). In Sweden, the most common types of housing provided as part of the homeless housing services are: a bed at a night shelter, a room in a municipal housing complex with staff, or a short-term to long-term lease of an apartment with a "restricted contract" (Sahlin, 1996; Sahlin, 2005).

Previous research in Sweden shows that the types of housing solutions within the homeless housing service vary between municipalities, but no detailed national mapping exists (Sahlin, 2006; Blid, 2008; Hansen Löfstrand, 2012). When a person applies for housing assistance, the first step is to visit the local social service office. This process is similar within most municipalities, and starts with an individual assessment of the needs of the applicant (client) based on SoL Chapter 4 §1 (Blid, 2006). However, interpretations and praxis of how to implement the law may differ between municipalities. If the application for housing is approved, the next step of the process is to assess what type of housing the person needs. The type of housing offered differs depending on the types of housing solutions available, as well as the evaluation of individual needs and circumstances. Re-evaluations of the person's needs for housing may be conducted from time to time. The housing offered by local social services is often organized in relation to two different methodological models (Sahlin, 2007a; Knutagård, 2008): the "Continuum of care" or "Staircase of transition", in this paper referred to as the "Staircase model", and the "Housing first" model. The Staircase model builds on the idea that homeless people should be moved to permanent housing through a series of steps. This begins with communal housing shelters, moving slowly into independent "training" apartments, and then finally to permanent or semi-permanent housing, provided by the social services in cooperation with both non-profit and for-profit care providers and local landlords (Benjaminsen

and Dyb, 2008; Pleace, 2011; Dyb, 2017). One semi-autonomous part of the Staircase model is the special contracts, which Sahlin (1996) defines as a secondary housing market. These special contracts[2] involve various types of rooms and apartments provided by municipal or private landlords to the social services. The social services then sublease these apartments to their clients. The special contracts are characterized by a high degree of control and a low degree of individual choice and freedom. In Sweden, as well as in several other countries, the Staircase model and the special contracts of the secondary housing market have been criticized for posing as an obstacle rather than a pathway to the ordinary housing market for some of the most vulnerable parts of the population (Sahlin, 2007a). Partly as a response to this criticism, Pathways Housing First (PHF) was develop in the United States in the 1990s (Tsemberis, 2010). This method promotes optional and client-promoted control and permanent tenure as its key features.

Housing first was introduced in Europe during the last decade, and Finland has led the way in the implementation of the method (Pleace, 2017). A number of Swedish municipalities are currently adopting and implementing this methodology, and some research reviewing the first Housing first projects in Sweden has been conducted. Knutagård and Kristiansen (2013) have shown that different types of Housing first model are being implemented, where some municipalities stay true to the methodology of PHF, while others adopt "Housing first-like" versions. These are in many cases similar to the methodological traits of the Staircase model (Pleace, 2011). The homeless housing services are at the centre of local homeless service systems. Comparisons between the Nordic countries have shown that the secondary housing market in Sweden is considerably larger than similar solutions in, for instance, Norway and Denmark (Dyb, 2017).

Only two national mappings of the actors involved in homeless housing services have been conducted in Sweden: Sahlin (1996) and Blid (2008). These studies showed that a mix of actors are involved as providers of homeless housing services. Municipal service providers, for-profit actors and non-profit actors, such as religious organizations, are all involved in selling homeless housing services to the local social services (Sahlin, 2007b; Socialstyrelsen, 2015). Blid (2008) showed in his mapping that that the quality of services could be partly understood in relation to the duration of the placement. Shorter placements were more often temporary arrangements in collective housing, or just a bed at a night shelter with lower quality, while longer placements in general represented higher quality housing in

2 In some municipalities, called social housing contracts (author's translation of "bostadssociala kontrakt"). Other but similar terms of this type of measure can be found across Sweden's municipalities. In this paper this type of measure be referred to as special contracts.

small apartments, and a higher degree of self-control (Blid, 2008). However, several other factors within the local homeless service systems, as well as the threshold of local housing markets, are expected to affect the level of homelessness.

Methodological Considerations

Several methodological approaches can be used to explore variations in local homeless service systems and levels of homelessness. Longitudinal data would be preferable to analyse the link between variations of services and levels of homelessness, and to follow patterns over time. However, longitudinal data covering these issues is not available in Sweden. This study has therefore chosen an exploratory mapping approach, primarily relying on descriptive statistical tools and secondary data, similar to previous Scandinavian studies (Sahlin, 2006; Benjaminsen and Dyb, 2008; Socialstyrelsen, 2015; Benjaminsen, 2016; Dyb, 2017). The sample for this study includes all 290 municipalities in Sweden. These municipalities differ in a number of ways, for example when it comes to size and population. The need for targeted homelessness services is also expected to vary. Some municipalities will have only a few people in need of targeted homelessness services and homeless housing services, while others will have lots of people requiring services, causing uneven "pressure" within the local social service system. The financial possibilities available to social services also vary across municipalities.

These variations are expected to affect the effectiveness and functionality of local homeless service systems. Therefore, the analysis includes a number of structural variables describing the differences in the local rental housing market or the degree of urbanization (see Table 1 for all variables used in the analysis). Further, the character and diversity of housing options, owner-occupied housing and rental housing, differ between municipalities (Blid, 2006; Sahlin, 2006). Because of this, variables describing the availability of rental housing have been included in the dataset. In some studies, the rate of homelessness and the number of people receiving housing assistance are treated as exchangeable, suggesting that the services provided can be understood as indicators of the number of homeless people in a geographical area (Blid *et al.*, 2008). This implies that the number of services provided in a municipality predicts the number of homeless people. However, Blid (2008) argues that it is more reasonable to believe that the number of people in homeless housing services varies between municipalities due to a multitude of aspects. For example, it is probable that the number of available services conditions the amount of people receiving services. Therefore, the quantity of services should not be understood as a reflection of the needs of people living

in homelessness. It is also likely that how municipalities organize their measures against homelessness will affect the number of people receiving housing assistance (Socialstyrelsen, 2015 and 2017).

Available data

This study is part of a larger research project studying the management of homelessness in Sweden. As part of the project, a database has been created: the "Swedish homelessness database (SHD)". Currently the database contains about 100 variables covering homelessness, housing and homelessness services for the period from 2013 and onwards. The main sources of the SHD are the "Open comparisons survey" (OCS) and the "Annual database on services provided by the social services", both administrated by the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW), the "Housing market survey" provided by the National board of housing building and planning (NBHBP), and data from Kolada which is a Swedish non-profit database providing data to research and policymakers concerning Swedish municipalities and regions. Some additional data has also been collected from Statistics Sweden (SCB). The database will continuously be updated with new secondary data when available. Also, primary data will be collected as part of the research project and added to the database when relevant. The data used in this study includes variables from all previously named sources covering the years 2016-2018.

Limitations and adaptations of data

There are several issues concerning the data that need to be addressed. The quality and comparability of much of the early data from 2013-2015 is questionable and very general in its character. It should only be used to provide background insights. In the OCS, the municipalities report back to the NBHW annually on a number of questions. Questions on homelessness were included for the first time in the early 2010s, and were expanded into a more detailed set of questions in the measure in 2016. It then included questions concerning both general and special homelessness services, as well as homeless housing services. This was later changed, so the OCS questionnaire used in 2018 was not as detailed. These changes in the questionnaire hinder the comparability and limits its use. Due to differences between municipalities discussed previously, caution is necessary when comparing data from different types of municipalities. One method to make data comparable without corrupting the variables, is to recalculate the number of people in relation to the size of the municipality, converting them into a rate of 1 in 10 000 inhabitants (Blid, 2008; Sahlin, 2006; Socialstyrelsen, 2017). All the variables concerning levels of homelessness and number of people receiving housing support used in this paper have been changed into a per 10 000 people ratio. This makes data more comparable, but does not fully account for the differences between municipalities (Sahlin, 2006). Some of the variables used in the analysis have been included

without adaptation from its source, while others have been adjusted (see Table 1). Some variables are dummies (yes/no questions) and simple to construct, others are more complex. Particularly this applies to the variable describing persons receiving housing services. Homelessness is not used as a category by the social services in their data. Therefore, this variable has been compiled using two separate variables from the official statistics of NHWS. The two variables are: "adults with substance use receiving housing financed by social services" and "other adults receiving housing support financed by social services". These two groups together roughly capture all adults receiving housing services from the social services due to homelessness and can be interpreted as all adults receiving housing financed by the social services. These two variables are not "officially" defined as covering homeless housing services, but compiling them is an attempt to test available data and use it in a new way. When compared, this group to a large extent coincide with the size and local variation of homelessness measured in the homelessness count. Another adopted variable is the one describing the average number of nights that housing assistance have been received. Using two different variables available from the NBHW's annual statistics: 1) Number of persons in each municipality receiving housing assistance and 2) The total number of nights of housing financed by the social services in each municipality. By dividing these two numbers in each municipality an average was created, describing the average number of nights financed by the social services in each municipality.

Other limitations of the data are related to how it is collected. The homelessness count is based on the reported number of people living in homelessness who came into contact with some type of homelessness service during the measurement week for each specific year. The number of homelessness services reporting to the NBHW have changed over the years, as have the number of municipalities participating in the homelessness survey. This change in number of respondents may have effects on the levels and makes the data partly compromised. The 2017 homelessness count highlighted in its methods section the lower number of respondents taking part in the count and that the observed "stagnation" of homelessness could be a reflection of this (Socialstyrelsen, 2017). It is also important to keep in mind that the variables used in the analysis do not measure the quality of services provided by municipalities. The data relating to homelessness interventions is based on a self-reporting survey, where municipalities report on what type of work they conduct. Finally, a limitation of the data is that the homelessness counts only focuses on groups with a local connection and a civil right to homelessness services. It does not include undocumented migrants or EU citizens without shelter, which leaves a large degree of uncertainty in the estimations and does not reflect the actual number of homeless people at the local level.

Table 1. List of all variables used in analysis

Variable name	Description	Ratio	Year
Persons receiving housing services	Number of people in homeless housing services financed by social services (2016) (see further description under data adaptions).	1 per 10 000 people	2016
Levels of homelessness	Number of homeless people per 10 000 people. From the NBHW's mapping of homelessness. All four situations of homelessness.	1 per 10 000 people	2017
Average number of nights approved by social services	Obtained by dividing the number of people receiving housing support by the number of nights paid for reported to the NBHW. From NBHW's official statistics.	Average number of nights per municipality	2016
Cooperation with local private landlords	From the NBHBP's housing survey. If social services cooperate to lower thresholds to the ordinary housing market.	Yes/No/Missing	2017
Cooperation with local municipal landlords	From the NBHBP's housing survey. If social services cooperate to lower thresholds to the ordinary housing market.	Yes/No	2017
Rental housing market balance	Balance of rental housing market. From Kolada.	0,1,2: 0=deficit, 1=balance, 2=surplus	2016
Staircase model	If social services offer Staircase model. From OCS.	Yes/No	2018
Housing first	If social services offered Housing first. From OCS.	Yes/No	2018
Local homeless policy	Is there a plan to tackle homelessness? From OCS.	Yes/No	2018
Rental guarantees	If social services provide rental guarantees to individuals to assist in accessing contracts. From NBHBP.	Yes/No	2017
Special contracts	If social services provide special contracts, where social services lease apartments and then sub-lease to individuals. From NBHBP housing survey.	Yes/No	2017
Owns apartments	The social services own their own apartments that they sublease to individuals. From the NBHBP's housing survey.	Yes/No	2017

Homelessness: Size and Characteristics

In a recent policy review, Knutagård (2018) conducted an extensive analysis of the 2017 NBHW homelessness count. Only a brief summary will therefore be provided here. At the national level, homelessness has grown over the last two decades, when comparing the three homelessness counts conducted in 2005, 2011 and 2017 by the NBHW. As shown in Table 2, the level of homelessness has doubled during these twelve years with a rapid increase in the number of homeless people between 2005 and 2011 and a stagnation between 2011 and 2017 (Socialstyrelsen 2017, Knutagård, 2018). The population of Sweden has grown during the same period,

but this cannot explain the increase in homelessness. As previously discussed, these differences can be impinged by methodological issues concerning the surveys. Still, the counts show some interesting patterns (Knutagård, 2018). For instance, the increase in homelessness mainly occurred outside the three biggest cities. Approximately 50% of the homeless people were reported by the big cities in 2005, while only around 30% of the homeless people were living in these cities in 2017. This suggests that both the size and the spread of homelessness across municipalities have changed from being mainly focused in urban areas to becoming more widespread also to less urbanized municipalities.

Table 2. National homelessness mappings in Sweden by the NBWH.

Year	Number of homeless people at national level	Number of homeless people in the three biggest cities: Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö	Municipalities reporting that homelessness exists
2005	17800	12000	250
2011	34000	9800	280
2017	33250	10025	267

Source: NBHW's homelessness count 2005, 2011, 2017

Regarding the composition of the homeless population, it is notable that the relative number of both women and of non-Swedish-born people has increased (Knutagård, 2018). Also noteworthy is that the level of long-term homelessness has been quite stable in all three counts despite changes in the size of the group, in living situations, in country of origin and concerning gender. There has been a steady increase in the number of people living in housing financed by the social services, as well as a slight decrease in people living temporarily with family or friends. People sleeping rough or living in emergency accommodation decreased between 2005 and 2011, but increased again in 2017 (Socialstyrelsen, 2005; Socialstyrelsen, 2011; Knutagård, 2017; Socialstyrelsen, 2017).

Regional Variations in Homelessness Levels

The variations of homelessness between municipalities are shown in Table 3. This provides an overview of the "homelessness issue" across four types of municipalities: 1) Highly urbanized municipalities (the 24 largest cities in Sweden), 2) Commuter municipalities, located around one of the 24 largest cities, 3) Municipalities with smaller cities as well commuter municipalities for smaller city municipalities, and 4) Rural municipalities. These municipalities share similar socio-economic, infrastructural and geographical traits. The four categories are an adoption of a typology developed by the Swedish Association of municipalities and regions (SKL) that includes nine different types of municipalities. Sweden is characterized by three

highly urbanized areas around the three biggest cities of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, and homelessness as an issue has for a long time been mainly connected to these areas. As Blid (2008), Sahlin (2006) and the NBHW's mappings in 2011 and 2017 have shown, there is a close link between urbanization and the degree of homelessness. This result is also in line with findings from other European welfare states (Benjaminsen, 2016; Dyb, 2017). Table 3 confirms that homelessness is an urban issue. However, as discussed previously, two thirds of all homeless persons can be found outside of the three main urban areas in 2017 compared to 2005, when two thirds of all homeless persons could be found in the three main urban areas.

Table 3. Regional differences in homelessness in 2017 and housing market balance 2016

Type of municipality N=290	People living in homelessness (per 10 000 inhabitants)	Deficit in local rental market	Balance in local rental market	Surplus in local rental market
Large cities (n=24)	46.6	91.7%	8.30%	0.0%
Commuting (n=130)	25.3	71.5%	23.80%	4.6%
Smaller cities (n=81)	18.2	64.2%	27.25%	8.6%
Rural (n=55)	16.1	29.1%	45.50%	25.5%

Source: NBHW's homelessness mapping 2017, Kolada 2016.

Table 3 further shows that almost 26% of homeless people live in close proximity to larger cities, and about 34% of all homeless persons can be found in municipalities consisting of smaller cities or in rural municipalities. Table 3 also shows that the availability of rental housing is a major problem in many of Sweden's municipalities, also in smaller cities and in rural municipalities. Even though the problem is more concentrated to the urbanized areas of Sweden.

Local Homeless Service Systems

As discussed previously, local homeless service systems can be more or less developed and consist of a number of different types of methods and services. The development of local homeless service systems can be a result of several different factors. However, previous research (Sahlin, 2007a) has shown that different types of homeless housing services have developed not only in municipalities with a high level of homelessness and where there is a large deficit of rental housing, but also in smaller and more rural municipalities despite the fact that these municipalities have rental housing available. This indicates that there are different forces behind the development of homeless housing services in different municipalities, and they may be responding to different types of needs. A complex system can function as a gatekeeper, encouraging people who receive housing assistance to stay within

the system. In the OMS 2016, 23 out of 290 municipalities have reported that they have no developed methods, strategies or other measures to house the homeless. All of these are rural or small city municipalities.

When mapping local homeless service systems, the number of people receiving housing assistance and the length of their stay within the system are key factors. In 2016, the NBHWs annual statistics showed that a total of 30 843 individuals received some type of housing financed by the social services due to homelessness. As Table 4 shows, the number of people receiving housing financed by the social services largely corresponds to the number of people living in homelessness measured during the homelessness count in the spring of 2017 (compare Table 3).

Table 4. Number of nights financed by the social services

Type of municipality (N=290)	People receiving housing assistance per 10 000 inhabitants	Length of placement on average
Large cities (n=24)	41.80	200 nights per year
Commuting (n=130)	27.20	213 nights per year
Smaller cities (n=81)	16.70	177 nights per year
Rural (n=55)	20.25	201 nights per year

Source: NBHW's official data 2016.

The number of people receiving services increased with the level of urbanization, as expected. During 2016, more than half of these nights were approved in the 24 most urbanized municipalities. However, Table 4 shows that the average number of nights approved per person was quite similar across the different types of regions. This suggests that the procedure of approving nights is similar in most municipalities and that the actual number of people applying for housing assistance does not affect the system. This result confirms previous research showing that even though the homelessness issue is small and rental housing is available, this does not necessarily mean that the people receiving housing through the social services move towards a permanent housing solution more quickly (Sahlin, 1996; Busch-Geertseema and Sahlin, 2007a).

Methods and Policies in Connection with Homelessness

Comprehensive policies and developed methods to tackle homelessness are factors that research has shown to have an important effect in creating effective and high-quality homeless services (Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2009; Pleace, 2015; Dyb, 2017). The variables presented in Table 5 describe the presence and variation of local homelessness policies as well as the two major methods used to tackle homelessness. Table 5 shows that 50% of the 24 largest cities in Sweden have a home-

lessness policy. Policies are rare in the rest of Sweden's municipalities and just 5.5% of the 55 rural municipalities have a homelessness policy. In total, 13.1% of the municipalities in Sweden state that they have a municipal strategy or plan to tackle homelessness. Table 5 shows that most of the municipalities with a local homelessness strategy follow the same pattern as the level of homelessness and local rental housing markets. The larger the problem, the more municipalities have developed strategies to tackle homelessness.

Table 5. Methods and policies

Type of municipality (N=290)	Local homelessness policy	Housing first	Staircase model
Large cities (n=24)	50.0%	58.3%	70.8%
Commuting (n=130)	13.1%	15.4%	34.6%
Smaller cities (n=81)	7.4%	7.3%	27.2%
Rural (n=55)	5.5%	7.4%	20.0%

Source: OCS 2018

As discussed previously, the local organization of housing for people living in homelessness is largely organized based on two different types of methods: the Staircase model and Housing first. These two are the most common methods used by social services internationally and, as Table 5 shows, they are quite common in Sweden. Thirty three per cent of 290 municipalities state that they offer a Staircase model, while only 15% of municipalities offer Housing first as a method. Data from the NBHW's 2017 mapping also showed that the number of people receiving Housing first as a housing intervention at national level was only marginal (245 people or less than one percent of all people living in homelessness) during week fourteen of 2017. Fifteen per cent of the municipalities in the 2018 OMS stated that they offer housing first, while 63% of the municipalities offering Housing first also offer the Staircase model, showing a relatively large overlap between models, where municipalities providing the Staircase model also provide Housing first. The results indicate that there is a strong link between more urbanized areas and more developed homeless housing services, as previous mappings have suggested (Blid and Anttila, 2009; Boverket, 2010; Socialstyrelsen, 2015). Of the 290 municipalities, 62% do not offer either Housing first or the Staircase model, while around nine percent reported that they offered both the Staircase model and Housing first in 2016. The pattern in which Housing first and the Staircase model are spread between municipalities differs. While there is a clear connection between the Staircase model and the degree of urbanization, this pattern is more diffuse when comparing the spread of Housing first between regions. Thirteen per cent of the municipalities reported that they could provide Housing first in Sweden during 2016 and 15% in 2018 (OCS 2016

and 2018). There was a strong concentration of the Housing first method in the most urbanized municipalities. However, there was also an even spread of Housing first in the other three types of regions.

Table 6. Other housing measures

Type of municipality (N=290)	Special contracts	Rental guarantees	Own apartments
Large cities (n=24)	100.0%	25.0%	79.2%
Commuting (n=130)	92.3%	28.5%	53.1%
Smaller cities (n=81)	80.2%	18.5%	38.3%
Rural (n=55)	78.2%	21.8%	20.0%

Source: NBHBP's housing survey 2018 (measuring 2017)

Other Housing Measures

Apart from Housing first and the Staircase model, there are other measures local social services can use to house people living in homelessness. Table 6 includes three housing measures that are not connected to a methodology but are used as tools on an ad-hoc basis by local social services when they need to provide housing. As Table 6 shows, special contracts are the most common of all the different types of housing measures. Special contracts can be integrated into the Staircase model as a last step before moving on to a permanent solution. In other cases, special contracts are provided by the social services as a direct measure, without passing through the first steps of the Staircase model such as collective housing.

The special contracts often mean that there is no tenure and a number of rules are often connected to the apartment. The contracts can easily be cancelled if rules are not followed. What is defined as special contracts overlaps to a large degree with Sahlin's (2007) definition of the secondary housing market. The apartments themselves can be provided by for-profit or non-profit actors, often subleased from municipal landlords, and sold as a housing measure to the social services. As Table 6 shows, special contracts are common in all types of municipality, also when the Staircase model or Housing first is not present. When comparing the number of special contracts to the number of homeless people, the results show that there are 0.7 contracts per homeless person in large cities, 0.85 per homeless person in commuting municipalities, 0.9 in smaller cities and 0.99 in rural municipalities. This goes against a pattern of urbanization in terms of more measures the more urbanized the municipality. The owned apartment measure, where the social services own apartments that they sublet to people living in homelessness show a similar pattern. Comparing the averages between the municipality types, the results show that large cities average 0.23 apartments per homeless person, commuting municipalities 0.53,

smaller cities 0.69, and rural municipalities 0.89. This means that this measure is more common in less urbanized municipalities. Rental guarantees are another measure used by social services to assist people who do not have a permanent income. This measure, as Table 6 shows, is used in about 20-25% of all municipalities, and is almost as common in rural municipalities as in large city municipalities.

Cooperation with Local Landlords to Lower Thresholds

Another way to assist people living in homelessness in connection with an overarching strategy is to cooperate with local private and municipal landlords to lower the threshold to their housing stock. This can be done for example by agreeing that landlords will accept financial support from social services as a permanent income source, enabling tenure. More than half of the large city municipalities have developed such cooperation with municipal landlords, as shown in Table 7. In the other municipality types, about 25% of the municipalities have developed this type of measure cooperation with private landlords, however, it is generally rare and again is more common in the large cities. Overall, it is obvious that cooperation with landlords is utilized more in large cities and that the municipal landlords are more engaged in this than the private ones.

Table 7. Cooperation with landlords

Type of municipality (N=290)	Private landlords	Municipal landlords
Large cities (n=24)	20.8%	54.2%
Commuting (n=130)	10.8%	25.4%
Smaller cities (n=81)	8.6%	24.7%
Rural (n=55)	7.3%	27.3%

Source: NBHBP's housing survey 2018 (measuring 2017)

Discussion

Mapping and analysing local homeless service systems is important in order to know more about existing differences between municipalities and how these local variations affect the possibilities for homeless people to receive services and move towards permanent housing solutions. The level of homelessness and the numbers of people receiving housing financed by the social services increased rapidly between 2005 and 2011 and has now stabilized at about 33 000 people. However, this only includes homeless people with a local connection, and does not include undocumented people or EU-migrants living in homelessness. It has been estimated that about 20 000-50 000 people live in homelessness or temporary accommodation without the right to housing assistance in Sweden (Migrationsverket, 2017). There is

a link between urbanization and homelessness, however, yet 67% of all homeless persons in Sweden (2017) lived outside the three largest urban areas of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. As discussed previously, this indicates a shift from the 2005 mapping where about 70% of all homeless persons lived within the three urban areas. This suggests a change in the geographical spread of homelessness, where the levels of homelessness have remained the same within the three largest urban areas, but increased in other urban areas as well as in smaller and rural municipalities. This increase of homelessness outside of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö could be a reflection of methodological issues, where changes in definitions of homelessness in the different homelessness counts create different results. The increase in homelessness outside of the three main urban areas could also be a reflection of changes in the ordinary rental housing market where the availability of rental housing has decreased during the last decade all across Sweden. It may further be connected to the changing policies of public housing companies in Sweden. Directives have shifted towards a for profit business model, and higher demands are put on people, when applying for rental housing (Grander, 2018).

Results showed that of 92.5% of Swedish municipalities have developed some type of measure targeting homelessness. Housing first exists in around 15%, and the Staircase model in around 33% of Sweden's municipalities. The spread of these methods is closely connected to the degree of urbanization, especially Housing first that is much likelier to be used in larger cities and more urban areas than in smaller and rural municipalities. However, the use of special contracts – which is not a developed method in itself – breaks the pattern of urbanisation as a denominator of a high presence of services or measures. Special contracts can be found in the vast majority of Swedish municipalities. Even in more rural municipalities, where there is available housing on the ordinary rental market, special contracts are used by almost 80% of the local social services to tackle homelessness. Through the approval and organization of housing assistance and the usage of special contracts, the social services have become one of the largest landlords in Sweden over the course of the last 15 years, with approximately 30 000 people living in apartments or some type of housing with the social service as their direct or indirect landlord. Important to note is also that out of the 290 municipalities, only 13.1% have developed strategies to tackle homelessness. This might be an important factor when trying to understand the management of local homeless housing services and the development of different types of measures and methods to house the homeless.

Another issue that breaks the pattern of urbanization is the average length of placement in housing financed by the social services. One could expect to see longer average placements in more urbanized municipalities where it is harder to access the ordinary rental market. However, the results showed a contrasting

pattern. The averages in all four types of municipalities were similar in length and the average amount of nights approved ranged between 177 and 213 nights (includes nights approved in all types of housing measures provided due to homelessness and not only special contracts). This indicates that despite the different local settings, differences in homelessness levels and the availability of ordinary rental housing, the length of placements were similar. This could indicate that the availability of ordinary rental housing does not affect the transition time from homeless into permanent housing services. However, the data is not detailed enough to draw this conclusion. The similarity in averages could also indicate that it is more difficult to receive housing assistance in urbanized areas, or that homeless people living in larger cities receive other assistance, such as substance abuse treatment or residential treatment, rather than housing assistance within the homeless housing services.

The mapping shows that secondary data can provide us with quite detailed knowledge concerning parts of local homeless service systems such as methods and measures. However, further research is needed concerning several issues that the mapping has identified. One important issue is about the actors involved in local homeless service systems. Another issue concerns the similarity between different areas in relation to average length of placement, which should be explored in more detail. My study shows that through available secondary data, it is possible to say quite a few things concerning the local organization of homelessness services. However, to accomplish this, reconstruction and adaptation of existing data is required, for instance concerning the number of persons receiving housing services financed by the social services. As mentioned, there are other limits to available data. Changes made to the number of respondents in the homelessness counts across the years affects reliability and comparability. A clear limitation that influences the longitudinal quality is that the set of questions has been changed between measurement occasions in both the NBHWS “Open comparisons survey” and the NBHBP’s “Housing survey”. This limits the possibility to analyse the degree to which changes in levels of homelessness is connected to altered methods at a local level. Also, important subjects and questions are not included in the surveys. For example, there is no information concerning what kind of local actors, private, public or NGOs, are involved in local homeless service systems. Further, there is a clear lack of data on how contracts are written in terms of tenure, length and of possibilities to convert contracts from sublets to tenured contracts. Finally, as mentioned several times, there is the problematic exclusion of undocumented migrants and destitute EU-migrants from the counts.

Conclusions

Homelessness as an issue is present in all types of municipalities of Sweden, although the levels are higher in urbanized areas. With the expansion of homeless housing measures, the social services have become one of the major landlords in Sweden not only in the cities but also in the countryside. However, explicit methods and strategies to tackle homelessness have only been developed in a minority of the municipalities. Special contracts, where the social services act as landlord, are the most common type of measure provided to people living in homelessness, and are more common the less urbanized the municipality is. Even though Housing first is on the rise as a method, only a small minority of people living in homelessness benefit from this method. Still the Staircase model and special contracts are much more used. Across the different municipality types, the average length of placement is not affected by urbanization. This indicates that there are other issues affecting the length of stay rather than the availability of rental housing and the possibility to move people towards permanent housing. Available secondary data allows for new and quite detailed analysis of the organisation of local homeless housing services. However, there are clear limitations to the data both in terms of scope, detail as well as methodological issues that needs to be improved. Keeping the same set of questions in the open methods survey is the most crucial issue, to ensure the possibility of conducting longitudinal and comparative studies in the future.

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