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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 also assess the lessons for Europe, which can be derived from policy, practice and research from elsewhere.

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Editorial

This is the first edition of the EJH to appear since the emergence of covid-19, the subsequent lockdown and the tentative gradual easing of earlier restrictions. For those experiencing homelessness, while it is not yet clear how many deaths occurred as a consequence of the virus, what is clear is that the standard response to homelessness, the provision of congregate temporary shelters is no longer a tenable response due to covid-19. Shelter based responses to homelessness have been repeatedly critiqued on the basis that there is no convincing evidence that the provision of large congregate shelters for people experiencing homelessness achieves anything other than a temporary, and generally unpleasant, respite from the elements and the provision of basic sustenance for people experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, for a small minority, it is an extraordinarily expensive and unsuitable long- term response to their inability to access affordable housing. It will not be possible to ensure safe social distancing within the majority of such facilities and that shelter populations had be ‘thinned’ out in order to allow for social distancing. In most cases, provision was made for shelter users and rough sleepers in hotels which lay near empty due to the collapse of tourism. Although not a substitute for a home, the provision of an en-suite private room in a hotel was a considerable improvement on a crowded shelter or rough sleeping.

The evidence from Housing First projects and programmes across the Global North demonstrates that the provision of secure housing is the most effective response to those who experience homelessness, and the pandemic has starkly highlighted that secure housing is essential to survival. The ability to cocoon, quarantine and other measures to avoid contacting the virus is dependent on having this basic need met. That a significant number of countries introduced a moratorium on terminating tenancies over the past few months, was a further reminder of the importance of secure tenancies with terminations only allowed in exceptional circumstances. Thus, the recent lockdown has shown that it is possible to prevent homelessness by restricting tenancy terminations and to exit emergency accommodation. The challenge is to build on what was possible during the initial period responding to the virus.

In this edition of the EJH, both Tim Aubry and Jan Váně discuss the significance of Housing First. In the case of Tim's contribution a state of the art overview of the literature on Housing First as an evidence based practice for ending long-term homelessness, and Jan documenting some of the challenges of implementing Housing First based on a case study in the Czech Republic.

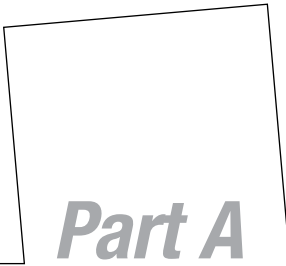
A number of contributions provide new information on the extent of homelessness and how homelessness is defined. Volker Busch-Geertsema, Jutta Henke and Axel Steffen present new data on the extent of homelessness in Germany, which they estimate at just under 340,000, and highlighting that largest group of people experiencing homelessness were refugees with protection status, who had not yet been able to find independent housing. Ingrid Sahlin in her contribution documents an emerging trend in a number of cities in Sweden where a distinction is made the 'structurally homeless' and the 'socially homeless', with the 'structurally' homeless deemed to have no support needs and have no entitlement to accommodation from the city authorities. The majority of the 'structurally homeless' tend to be families and born outside of Sweden. Family homelessness is also the subject of the research note by Letizia Gambi and Sarah Sheridan, where they examine recent trends in Dublin. They also demonstrate how different methodologies for understanding the 'causes' of family homelessness can see family homelessness as either the result of 'family dysfunction' or 'housing market dysfunction', and hence shape public perceptions and policy responses. Our final paper on measurement and classification by Mark Wilding explores some of the difficulties in measuring the extent of homelessness amongst veterans in the UK, and offers some suggestions to improving data collection for this group.

Our final research note by Rachael McDonnell Murray, Pamela Gallagher and Eoin Galavan explores counsellors' experiences of using a suicide specific assessment and intervention tool in a small scale qualitative study.

Dan O'Flaherty provides an incisive review of a recent report by the Council of Economic Advisors, who provide economic advice to the President of the United States, on the state of homelessness in the US, as well as contextualising recent announcements by President Trump on homelessness. O'Flaherty argues that 'the report's analysis is pretty good, the policies that the report recommends do not follow from the analysis, and the Trumpian initiative appears to deviate significantly from both the report's analysis and its recommendations.' A range of other reviews, including a review symposium of street homelessness and Catholic Theological Ethics conclude this edition of the EJH.



Articles



Analysis of Housing First as a Practical and Policy Relevant Intervention: The Current State of Knowledge and Future Directions for Research

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➤ **Abstract_** Bond and his colleagues (2010) developed a set of criteria, known as “ideal features” for evaluating the practical and policy relevance of a mental health intervention. The paper reviews pertinent research to determine the extent that Housing First (HF) demonstrates these features. The conducted review of the literature found HF to be well-defined, reflecting client goals, consistent with societal goals, effective in ending homelessness, producing minimal negative effects, generating cost offsets, relatively easy to implement, and adaptable to different communities and clients subgroups. The sole ideal feature on which HF could not be evaluated involved the extent it produced enduring positive long-term outcomes. Based on the analyses, limitations of the research to date on HF are identified and future directions are proposed.

➤ **Keywords_** Homelessness, Housing First, Policy Relevance

Introduction

The objectives of the paper are threefold: (1) To provide an analysis of the Pathways Housing First (HF) model based on the framework of the Ideal Features of a Mental Health Intervention developed by Bond *et al.* (2010), (2) to discuss the limitations of the current research base on Pathways HF, and (3) to identify directions for future research on HF.

The Pathways HF model provides a structure and process on how housing and support services are provided to individuals exiting homelessness (Tsemberis, 2015). In particular, the HF approach assists people to move immediately into scattered site housing by providing them with rent assistance and intensive community support. The rent assistance is set so that individuals pay no more than 30% of their income for housing. The intensive support is delivered in the form of Assertive Community Treatment (ICM) or Intensive Case Management (ICM) (Tsemberis, 2015). The housing can be private market housing or social housing (Padgett *et al.*, 2016).

Criteria of Ideal Mental Health Intervention

Bond *et al.* (2010) identified a comprehensive set of criteria for evaluating mental health interventions. Their criteria go beyond the reviews of research that examine the evidence of effectiveness and the rigour of the methods used to determine this effectiveness. The framework identifies what they call the “nine ideal features of a mental health intervention” for determining its practical and policy relevance. Table 1 presents these nine features.

Ideal Features of a Mental Health Intervention (Bond, Drake, & Becker, 2010)

Features	Description
Intervention is well-defined	Has an operational definition that specifies programme structures, staffing, and interventions.
Reflects client goals	Services are client-directed so that they are in line with client preferences and aspirations.
Consistent with societal goals	Goals of intervention are also congruent with the goals of communities.
Evidence of effectiveness	Research supporting the intervention uses rigorous research designs, includes replication of results, has low drop-out rates, large effect sizes, and produces consistent findings.
Minimal negative effects	The intervention has few or no unintended negative effects. Positive outcomes are not offset by these negative effects.
Long-term positive outcomes	Interventions produce stable and enduring positive outcomes.
Incurs reasonable costs	Cost-effectiveness and cost-offsets of intervention are judged as yielding good value for investment of mental health resources.
Relatively easy to implement	Intervention is straightforward and clear so that it can be scaled up.
Adaptable to diverse communities and client subgroups	Intervention is adaptable to implementation in diverse communities and with different client subgroups.

The Pathways HF approach will be assessed on these nine features based on the existing research and the analysis will be used to point out limitations and gaps in the research to date and to propose future research directions.

Assessment of Pathways HF Relative to Ideal Features of Mental Health Interventions

Well-defined

The first ideal feature specifies that a mental health intervention should be well defined. In other words, aspects such as programme structure, staffing, and service activities should be specified. Evidence of the presence of this feature is the existence of a programme manual that details the programme components. In the case of HF, Pathways has put out a manual describing in detail the make-up of the intervention (Tsemberis, 2015). In Europe, there is the HF Guide, available online, that sets out the core principles and presents existing knowledge for implementing HF in European contexts (FEANSTA, 2016). In Canada, a comprehensive toolkit has been developed based on the At Home / Chez Soi project that is available on the web (Macnaughton *et al.*, 2014).

In line with the programme being well-defined, the elements making up programme fidelity have been specified and fidelity measures exist for HF with ACT and HF with ICM (Stefancic *et al.*, 2013). The fidelity domains for HF are Housing Choice and Structure, Separation of Housing and Services, Service Philosophy, Service Array, and Programme Structure. A series of items describing the make-up each of these domains, specify the elements for achieving programme fidelity. Overall, it can be concluded that the programme model demonstrates the ideal feature of being well-defined.

Reflects client goals

A second ideal feature for a mental health programme in the framework of Bond and his colleagues (2010) is alignment of the goals of the programme with client goals. In the case of HF, the provision of individuals with choice around their housing and services is evidence of the presence of this feature. HF staff assist programme participants to engage in shared decision-making regarding finding housing and setting goals in the context of the support they receive from the programme.

Consumer surveys of people with serious mental illness, including those conducted with individuals who are homeless, over the past 25 years have consistently found that individuals with serious mental illness prefer living independently in regular housing. A recently published meta-analysis by Richter and Hoffman (2017), that

included studies with people who were homeless, found that 84% of individuals, if given a choice, would select this option. It seems pretty clear that HF values and principles, that emphasise client choice, are in line with client goals.

Correspondence to societal goals

A third ideal feature for a mental health intervention is having goals that correspond to societal goals. There is certainly widespread consensus in North American and European countries that ending chronic homelessness for people with complex health needs is an important societal goal. In fact, it is a central reason why many countries have introduced HF as a central part of their strategy to address homelessness (Pleace *et al.*, 2019).

A recent development in Canada has been the release of a National Housing Strategy by the federal government (Government of Canada, 2017). The strategy commits to introducing legislation that will promote a human rights-based approach to housing. Canada is late in adopting this legislation compared to some European countries. The legislation would require the federal government to maintain a strategy that prioritises the housing needs of those who are most vulnerable. The adoption of a human-rights based approach to housing fits extremely well with a HF approach and is indicative of HF goals being consistent with societal goals.

Intervention is effective

According to Bond and his colleagues (2010), a fourth ideal feature of a mental health programme is the demonstration that it is effective. In the case of Housing First, the North American evidence is unequivocal that it is effective in ending homelessness for a majority of individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness (Aubry *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, the large Canadian trial known as the At Home / Chez Soi project found HF compared to usual services to be superior in assisting individuals with serious mental illness to achieve housing stability. The results were the same for individuals with moderate needs who were receiving ICM or individuals with a high level of need who were receiving ACT (Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2015; Aubry *et al.*, 2016).

The four city French trial, known as Un Chez Soi d'Abord has had equally impressive housing outcomes as reported in its final report with 85% of participants receiving HF housed after 2 years compared to less than 40% of people receiving TAU (Délégation interministérielle pour l'hébergement et l'accès au logement [DIHAL, 2017]). Also there was a significantly greater reduction in hospitalisations for HF participants compared to TAU participants as health services were delivered to HF participants in their homes rather than in hospitals. This finding in the French

trial is in line with the trials conducted in the U.S. and Canada, with HF participants experiencing fewer hospitalisations and a greater reduction in emergency room visits compared to those receiving treatment as usual (Baxter *et al.*, 2019).

However, the evidence of effectiveness on other outcomes is more ambiguous. Some studies have shown HF participants reporting greater improvements in subjective quality of life compared to individuals receiving treatment as usual (Gilmer *et al.*, 2010; Patterson *et al.*, 2013; Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2015; DIHAL, 2017; Aubry *et al.*, 2019). The improvements tend to be in the areas of living situation, safety, finances, and leisure and the effects are small to moderate in size. However, the finding of HF yielding greater quality of life benefits than treatment as usual has not been consistent (Aubry *et al.*, 2020). In terms of mental health, physical health, and substance use, there is no evidence to date showing HF to produce better outcomes compared to treatment that is available in the community.

Despite the lack of non-housing outcomes other than improvements in quality of life being shown in quantitative data, the At Home / Chez Soi study in Canada found that qualitative data showed evidence of a greater proportion of HF participants reporting positive life changes compared to participants receiving usual services (Nelson *et al.*, 2015). In the study, 200 individuals (i.e., 100 from each group) participated in qualitative interviews at study entry and at an 18-month follow-up. The follow-up interview examined changes in 13 life domains that included social relationships, family relationships, leisure activities, housing, and finances.

Based on a blind coding of qualitative data, 60% HF participants were judged as reporting uniformly positive life changes in the different life domains over the period between the interviews compared to only 30% of participants receiving usual services (Nelson *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, only about 10% of HF participants had uniformly negative life changes compared to 30% of TAU participants. Many of the HF participants described their participation in the project as transforming their lives. In contrast, many participants receiving usual services perceived themselves as making little progress toward recovery and described themselves as experiencing deterioration during the study. A plausible interpretation is that the qualitative data are more sensitive to finding changes compared to the quantitative data.

Minimal or no negative effects

A fifth ideal feature is for a mental health intervention to have minimal or no negative effects such that positive outcomes outweigh any negative outcomes. Based on the research to date, there is no evidence that HF produces major negative effects. One unintended negative consequence that shows up in qualitative interviews involves some recipients of HF reporting that they feel socially isolated (Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2014; Quilgars and Pleace, 2016). Individuals are assisted to move into

housing and it results in a major change as they are no longer surrounded by others on the street or in shelters (Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2014). As a result, they find themselves spending a lot of time alone and they find this new situation difficult. Based on the qualitative interviews in the At Home / Choi study, it appeared that a minority of HF participants reported social isolation and loneliness (Nelson *et al.*, 2015).

Although HF achieves superior housing outcomes in comparison to usual services, research has also shown that 12-25% of recipients of HF are not successful at becoming stably housed (Padgett *et al.*, 2016). In the Canadian trial, 14% of participants were found to be unstably housed after the first year (i.e., housed less than 50% in the last nine months; Volk *et al.*, 2016). A comparison of unstably housed HF participants to those stably housed found a small number of predictors of housing instability that included greater experience of homelessness, recent incarceration, and a higher level of community integration at study entry (Volk *et al.*, 2016).

Severity of mental health symptoms, level of functioning in the community, and level of substance use were not significant predictors. The predictive model accounted for a small amount of variance (i.e., 8%) and was able to identify correctly only 4% of the unstably housed group (Volk *et al.*, 2016). This research suggests that offering HF to individuals is required to determine if HF is a good fit for individual in terms of their ability to achieve housing stability.

Presence of long-term positive outcomes

Another ideal feature of a mental health intervention is that it produces enduring long-term positive outcomes. The programme logic model of Pathways HF programmes predicts recovery as a long-term positive outcome because of stabilisation in housing and receipt of appropriate health and social services (Aubry *et al.*, 2015). Recovery includes achieving integration in the community, experiencing a satisfying quality of life in different life domains, and having improved functioning. Research on the longer-term effectiveness of HF is lacking.

A recently published study examined the outcomes of HF participants compared to the participants receiving usual services over a six-year period at the Toronto site of the Canadian multi-site trial (Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2019). Findings showed HF participants with high support needs spending 86% of their time in stable housing after six years and HF participants with moderate needs spending 88% of their time stably housed. Both groups showed superior levels of housing stability compared to individuals receiving treatment as usual at all time points. The rate ratio of days stably housed for individuals with high support needs was 1.43 (i.e., 86% for HF participants versus 60% for treatment as usual participants). The rate ratio of days stably housed for individuals with moderate support needs was 1.13 (88% for HF participants versus 78% for treatment as usual participants).

However, there were no differences in improvements in quality of life, community functioning, or substance abuse severity between HF recipients and individuals receiving treatment as usual over the six years (Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2019). The researchers speculated that the lack of differences between the groups on these variables might be the result of participants' chronic poor health, continued poverty, and lack of access to high quality health services. They also suggested that the housing and health services available to treatment as usual participants in a resource rich city like Toronto might have also contributed to the lack of differences between the groups.

Programme incurs reasonable costs

A seventh ideal feature is that the programme incurs reasonable cost. To date, there has been a small number of published studies on cost benefits and cost-effectiveness conducted on HF (Ly and Latimer, 2015; Aubry *et al.*, 2017). All of these studies were located in the U.S. and Canada. Research that has been conducted using a comprehensive costing methodology, suggests that the costs of HF programmes are at least partially offset by a reduction in health care, social services, and involvement in the justice system (Rosenheck *et al.*, 2003; Aubry *et al.*, 2017; Latimer *et al.*, 2019; Latimer *et al.*, 2020).

In the Canadian trial, 46% of the cost of delivering HF with ICM to people with a moderate level of need (€10 100) was offset by the reduction in emergency shelter use, substance use treatment, and supportive housing (Latimer *et al.*, 2019). A cost-effectiveness analysis determined that each additional day of stable housing for the HF participants cost €39. In contrast, 69% of the cost of delivering HF with ACT to people with a high level of need (€13 953) was offset by reduced use of emergency shelters, substance use treatment, supportive housing, ambulatory visits, and incarcerations. As a result, the cost of each additional day of stable housing was estimated to cost €29 (Latimer *et al.*, 2020). Costs here are presented in 2016 values and have been converted from Canadian dollars to Euros.

One of the reasons for HF programmes only achieving partial cost offsets is the nature of the distribution across individuals when it comes to costs associated with their service use. In a study of costs associated with individuals who are homeless receiving usual services in the Canadian trial, a broad distribution of total cost of service use was found ranging from – €10 452 at the low end reflecting contributions through income exceeding service costs to €243 880 at the top end (Latimer *et al.*, 2017). It is clear that cost savings will be maximised in the case of individuals who are the heaviest users of services. On the other hand, the lower end users of services will end up costing more. Hence, the achievement of only partial cost offsets.

Programme is easy to implement

A recent study examined the level of fidelity of Housing First programmes in nine countries in Europe and North America (Aubry *et al.*, 2018). Using a validated self-assessment measure of fidelity with staff in these programmes, the study found the programmes having moderate to high levels of fidelity. On a 4-point scale with higher scores reflecting higher levels of fidelity, the total fidelity score across all 10 programmes averaged 3.5 (Greenwood *et al.*, 2018).

The two areas of lowest fidelity were service array (i.e., meaning the extent programmes helped clients access a wide range of health and social services) and programme structure (i.e., referring to programme characteristics like frequency of contact with participants, participant / staff ratio, frequency of team meetings) (Greenwood *et al.*, 2018). These two areas had an average of 3.2 on the 4-point scale. The areas assessed as having the highest levels of fidelity were separation of housing and services (e.g., requirements to qualify for housing, provisions in lease agreement; effect of housing loss on support services; $M = 3.9$) and programme philosophy (i.e., values guiding services; $M = 3.7$).

Overall, these domain scores and total scores are very similar to those achieved by the programmes in the Canadian trial (Macnaughton *et al.*, 2015). The achievement of this level of fidelity across all of these programmes in very different contexts, with different capacity, and different levels of access to training and technical support suggest that HF can be implemented in a relatively consistent manner.

As part of the multi-country study, programme staff were interviewed or participated in a focus group in order to identify factors that facilitated and impeded achieving a high level of fidelity. The most frequent mentioned facilitators by the 10 programmes were agency commitment to HF values ($N = 8$), availability and partnership with community services ($N = 8$), and landlord's cooperation and supportive attitudes towards having HF clients as tenants ($N = 5$). On the other hand, the most frequently identified obstacles to fidelity were the lack of availability of housing and the high cost of rental market ($N = 8$), lack of training and supervision of support staff ($N = 8$), and limited funding ($N = 7$).

Adaptable to diverse communities and subgroups

The final ideal feature is that an intervention can be adapted to diverse communities and client subgroups. Research to date shows that HF demonstrates this feature in that it has been implemented successfully throughout Europe and North America (Greenwood *et al.*, 2018; Pleace *et al.*, 2019). The housing outcomes achieved in different countries for HF recipients appear to very similar (Padgett *et al.*, 2016).

As well, findings from the Canadian trial on different subgroups showed HF achieving similar housing outcomes that were superior to treatment as usual for

youth (Kozloff *et al.*, 2016) and older adults (Chung *et al.*, 2017). In the trial, HF has also been adapted successfully for Indigenous clients (Distasio *et al.*, 2014) and ethnic minority groups in Toronto (Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2016). Other research has been conducted on HF with people with severe addictions (Cherner *et al.*, 2017) and with rural populations in Vermont (Stefanic *et al.*, 2013).

Limitations of Research on HF

There are some limitations to the research conducted to date:

1. There is a wide range of HF programmes that have been studied and the differences between them have not been documented. This complicates the interpretation when studies report different outcomes.
2. Related, the assessment of fidelity of HF programmes is relatively new and absent in many studies.
3. It is frequently unclear what makes up usual services or standard care in HF studies. As a result, it is difficult to compare the results of different studies.
4. There has been a narrow range of health outcomes examined in studies with a heavy focus on housing outcomes.
5. There is a lack of qualitative research on the changes experienced by HF recipients who are housed.
6. The period of follow-up for most studies on HF is 24 months or less. As a result, the longer-term trajectory for HF participants in terms of experiencing health and social outcomes including recovery is unknown.
7. The small number of economic studies make it difficult to draw conclusions about cost offsets and cost-effectiveness associated with HF.

Future Research Directions

The following future directions for research would address the limitations of HF studies to date:

1. Given the lack of health outcomes being produced by HF programmes, research needs to examine the effectiveness of enriched and more targeted forms of evidence-based community support that can be integrated into HF programmes like Strengths-Based Case Management, Integrated Dual Diagnosis Treatment, and Individual Placement and Support.

2. The ideal feature lacking in HF research is evidence of its long-term effectiveness. There is clearly a need for studies of a longer duration.
3. More research focusing on the relationship between programme fidelity and outcomes is needed.
4. There remains 10-20% recipients of HF who fail to achieve housing stability. Research clarifying their personal characteristics and the situational characteristics contributing to this non-responsiveness is needed.
5. More cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness research is needed to understand the economics of HF in different contexts.
6. As much as possible, qualitative methods should also be used in outcome studies to more fully understand the positive and negative changes experienced by HF recipients in an in-depth manner.
7. Finally, there is a need to compare the effectiveness HF combined with different types of support (e.g., HF + ICM versus HF + ACT).

Conclusions

Overall, based on the research findings to date, HF demonstrates most of the ideal features of a mental health intervention as defined by Bond and his colleagues (2010). As presented in this paper, the presence of these ideal features is an important reason for its dissemination internationally.

The one feature on which data is lacking is evidence of long-term outcomes other than recent findings of the Toronto site in the Canadian trial (Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2019). As well, some HF tenants experience social isolation and there are a small subgroup of HF recipients, who are unsuccessful at achieving housing stability (Padgett *et al.*, 2016).

Finally, it is clear that HF demonstrates a large effect on housing outcomes when compared to treatment as usual services or standard care in communities (Baxter *et al.*, 2019). However, for the most part, it has not demonstrated greater effectiveness than usual services in improving health and social outcomes other than self-reported quality of life (Aubry *et al.*, 2020).

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Moving Targets: On reducing public responsibilities through re-categorising homeless people and refugees

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- › **Abstract_** *Categorising people and housing situations is unavoidable in research and national and local statistics on homelessness, as well as in regulating and planning for interventions and supply and allocation of suitable accommodation. Despite different motives and original functions, however, these categories and the use of them are influenced by the political discourse, especially when they travel from one policy area or level to another. This article deals with categorical change through revisions of target groups of policies to settle newly arrived refugees and accommodate homeless people, respectively, in municipalities in the south of Sweden. One conclusion is that certain subcategories of homeless people and newly arrived refugees seem to overlap, forming a specific category of non-entitled homeless refugee families, who are excluded from the target groups of settlement policies as well as homeless policies. Another conclusion is that municipalities can actively defy the general imperative of integration and housing provision through responsabilising the target group.*
- › **Keywords_** *structurally homeless; newly arrived refugees; re-categorisation; local homeless policies_*

Introduction

Of the more than 20 million refugees outside their country of origin and under UNHCR's mandate in 2018, most were staying in neighbouring countries, while 2.8 million were hosted by Europe (UNHCR, 2019, p.13). Within the EU, Sweden has a relatively high rate of refugees (25 per 1 000 inhabitants) (ibid. p.21). By the end of 2019, 19,6 per cent of Sweden's 10.33 million inhabitants were born abroad. During 2019, 26 424 people were granted asylum or residence permits as family members. However, less than a quarter of all the residence permits approved by the Swedish Migration Agency that year were granted to refugees and their families; the rest concerned labour migrants, other family members, students, guest researchers, etc. (The Swedish Migration Agency Statistics 2020). In addition, an unknown number of EU/EES-citizens were staying in Sweden. Still, much of the public debate on immigration in the country focuses on the 'newly arrived', i.e. refugees and their families from third countries who recently got residence permits, are registered in a municipality and subject to regular establishment measures.

This article examines and reflects on classifications of newly arrived refugees without homes and other homeless people in the Swedish context, with a special focus on policies and practice in the municipalities of the Skåne county. The aim is to explore and grasp how the general categories 'homeless' and 'newly arrived' are (re-)defined and differentiated over time in local settings and policies. How do the municipalities delimit their target groups for homeless/refugee accommodation? How do they motivate and account for these boundaries and their revisions? And how are categorical distinctions within the larger groups of refugees and homeless people related to each other?

Hacking's (1986/2006) theories on categorical changes through interaction have inspired the title 'Moving targets', which is intended to cover different movements and their causes. *First*, it refers to the fact that the goals and *target groups* of refugee settlement policies as well as homeless policies *are changing*, partly due to new legislation and requirements for state subsidies, partly due to new, locally determined principles for housing assistance to homeless people or newly arrived refugees. This kind of move is facilitated by the Swedish principle of municipal self-government, combined with the inherent ambiguity of valid legislation and vague policy concepts that remain open for interpretation.

Secondly, *individuals* categorised as one kind or another of homeless people *are being re-categorised* because of, e.g., changed age (turning 18) or family status (single, couple or family with minor children), time spent in the country with residence permit – or due to policy-induced or financially motivated re-interpretations of existing rights, rules and requirements. Accordingly, re-categorisations of

individuals may be caused by altered circumstances and the fact that time passes, but they may also be initiated by national or local authorities, political actors or by professionals' revision of their assessment of individuals.

Thirdly, individuals in the target group may *move physically* to some other accommodation within or outside the municipality in which they were first registered – voluntarily or because they are dislocated and forced to move by the local authorities or (other) landlords. Physical moves, in turn, often entail or are preceded by re-categorisations.

Put differently, targets and target groups are movable and sometimes fluid, related to power, policies, rights and numbers; categories are defined in and out of them, and categories change and are re-defined – as do the categorised people. These three types of 'moves' will be illustrated below by the delimitation of two kinds of target groups for municipal support to accommodation – newly arrived refugees and homeless people in general – with examples gathered from the research project *Scanian Homes*¹. This study's aim is to investigate, assess and compare 'regular' homeless policies and policies to settle newly arrived refugees in the 33 municipalities of the Skåne county, located in the very south of Sweden with 1.38 million inhabitants, whereof 22.6 per cent are born abroad. According to the latest national count of homeless people, 5 452 people (18 years or older) were homeless in Skåne in April 2017 (NBHW, 2017). Almost 3 000 of them stayed in Malmö, which is the third largest city in Sweden.²

The research methods are diverse and include a questionnaire to the municipalities, interviews and focus group discussions with social workers/housing coordinators, and analyses of policy documents and political board proceedings published on the municipalities' websites 2016–2019, as well as an overview of national investigations and legislation. Ethnographic case studies are conducted in four municipalities, including observations and interviews with newly arrived refugees and homeless people. In a special case study in Malmö, we explore the implications and implementation of new guidelines for homeless accommodation.³

¹ This research project is financed by the research council FORMAS and carried out by researchers at the School of Social Work at Lund University, 2018–2021. Project leader is Marcus Knutagård.

² This figure deviates from the city's own. The NBHW counts (adult) individuals, known by NGOs, institutions and social services, excluding EU-migrants, asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants but including tenants on the secondary housing market. The city excludes also the latter group in its mappings and surveys only clients with the social services.

³ The municipal case studies are conducted by Arne Kristiansen and Weddig Runquist, and the follow-up study of the new guidelines in Malmö by Weddig Runquist and myself.

The point of departure for this research is that the following groups with an insecure and problematic housing situation are differently targeted by national and possibly local policies:

- a) newly arrived refugees, assigned by the Migration Agency to specific municipalities for settlement;
- b) newly arrived refugees, settled in the municipality on their own initiative ('self-settled'), and
- c) 'other homeless people'.

The first two groups are primarily distinguished by the legislation that obliges municipalities to accommodate assigned but not self-settled newly arrived refugees; the third group is not targeted by any national policy but often by traditional, local homeless policies.

In what follows I will first discuss what categories do and how they can be analysed. Next, I briefly present national and local policies regarding refugee settlement and homelessness. Then follow two recent examples of how municipalities in Skåne move their targets: first a distinction between so-called 'structurally' and 'socially homeless', then the revision of a plan for integrating and accommodating newly arrived refugees.

The Study of Categories and their Functions

Categorising people is not only a means to describe and analyse a certain population but also a way to obtain control and govern through drawing borders between groups, whose internal variations are simultaneously disguised or neglected. Because they infer simplification and may imply rights, categorisations are continuously contested, defended and revised. Policy-related categories are, in addition, often subjected to critical analysis for the costs they may imply for the public. Change of labels is one common response to such criticism, differentiation is another.

Research into immigration policies has, among other things, focused on the implications of migrant categories as defined by law and used by politicians and the media (see, e.g., Jørgensen, 2012; Schrover and Moloney, 2013; Schrover and Schinkel, 2013), and dealt with the definition of 'refugee', 'illegality', etc. more than on the differentiation of migrants who have already been allowed to stay in the country. This is probably related to the fact that social science often departs from the nation state and national legislation and policies. Analyses of public discourse have found that distinctions between immigrants and natives are powerful and influential (see, e.g., Strömbblad and Myrberg, 2015). My concern here is rather how

the housing needs of certain subcategories of newly arrived refugees are targeted and handled in local policy and practice. Although they cannot impact the right of migrants with residence permits to remain in Sweden, municipal politicians often try to affect how, when, where and if they settle in their own municipality.

Categorisations used in counting and mapping the homeless population are frequently problematised (see, e.g., SOU 2001: 95; Thörn, 2004). For example, it has been questioned why and to what effect some homelessness is hidden from national statistics and whether or not tenants threatened by eviction or residing in transitional housing should be included (Edgar, 2009; Busch-Geertsema, 2010; Foundation Abbé Pierre and FEANTSA, 2019). In Sweden local categorisations of homeless people have been examined and discussed in several doctoral theses (Sahlin, 1996; Löfstrand, 2005; Knutagård, 2009). For instance, Knutagård (2009) studied the development and interaction of homeless categories in the organisation of social work and homeless accommodation in Malmö. He showed how individuals were classified by social workers in relation to specific places and accommodation units, resulting in a 'moral geography'. To categorise homeless people is also a requirement for arranging accommodations according to a 'staircase' model, where advancement to higher steps (with regard to standards, terms and privacy) is conditioned upon personal improvement and consequential re-categorisation (see Sahlin, 1996; Sahlin, 2005). Although this research is relevant for an analysis of homeless policies, this article deals rather with the rough distinction between homeless people with regard to their entitlement to any accommodation through the municipality.

To understand the emergence, establishment and change of local target groups for accommodation I will apply different perspectives on categorisation. The overall design is inspired by Ian Hacking (1986/2006), who has analysed the interaction between categories, institutions, and the categorised and shown the dynamics and movement of categories in use. Further, I will draw on the argument by Charles Tilly (1998), that 'categorical inequality' and existing social inequality are mutually reinforced when administrative, 'internal' categories are linked to societal, 'external' ones. In the same vein Mary Douglas (1986) claims that institutionalised distinctions both depend on and reinforce the legitimacy of such boundaries with the public. Michael Billig (1987), finally, approaches categories as elements of a rhetorical strategy, where references to common values and the option to except sub-categories are used to convince an audience. Discursive responsabilisation (Juhila *et al.*, eds, 2016) is another municipal strategy to avoid accountability. I find these different theoretical entrances helpful for understanding the power and dynamics of categories, subcategories and re-categorisation of homeless people – migrants or not – and their entitlement to accommodation.

Policies for Refugee Settling and Homeless Accommodation

Policies for refugee reception and settlement are in Sweden formalised from above, through legislation and state funding, but municipalities use their space of discretion to make – and revise – local interpretations of subcategories of migrants with residence permits, as well as of the meaning of ‘settlement’.

Homelessness, on the other hand, has no legal definition or state funding, and it is not in itself clearly associated with any public duties or individual entitlements. Homeless accommodation is quite unregulated, too, apart from general requirements for human habitations and temporarily established local guidelines. While the current Swedish housing policy aims at increased construction of new homes, and housing provision is a local responsibility, allocation of permanent dwellings is mostly left to the market.

The national refugee reception policy in Sweden

Sweden received many asylum-seeking refugees until the immigration policy was turned around in November 2015, resulting in drastically reduced possibilities to enter the country to apply for asylum, to obtain permanent residence permits and to unite with family members. Today, temporary residence permits are the norm.⁴ Combined with various efforts by the EU to hinder entrance to any of its member countries, this has entailed that the number of asylum-seekers in Sweden has decreased from almost 163 000 in 2015 to 21 500 in 2018, and in 2019 only 6540 residence permits were granted to asylum-seekers (The Swedish Migration Agency Statistics). Nevertheless, migration and integration policies in Sweden are subjected to continued heated debates and were important issues in the 2018 election to the Parliament and the municipal councils. Today most political parties claim that refugee migration must be reduced even more and that the newly arrived refugees should be subjected to higher demands and stricter control.⁵

Policies to accommodate refugees vary within the EU. According to Baptista *et al.* (2016), refugees in most member countries are assured equal rights as other residents to the housing market, including to social housing. Denmark stands out, though, as all refugees are assigned to municipalities, which are obliged to provide them with long-term housing (*ibid.*). Sweden has adopted a similar legislation,

⁴ If categorised as refugee, the residence permit lasts three years; if defined as a person in need of subsidiary protection, 13 months.

⁵ In August 2019, the Moderate Party suggested that the number of asylum-seekers should be reduced by 70 percent, while the Sweden Democrats require that it be zero. Together, these two rightwing parties obtained 37.4 per cent of the votes in the Parliament election 2018, and on average almost 42 per cent of the votes in the municipal councils in Skåne. However, the Social Democrats, too, have expressed ambitions to work for reduced refugee immigration.

although only for refugees who used to stay in the Migration Agency's reception centres. Since March 2016, municipalities are obliged to receive and provide accommodation for a given number of assigned newly arrived refugees every year. Some of the motives for this Settlement Act (2016: 38) were that the previous voluntary agreements with the municipalities on refugee reception were insufficient, and that the Government wanted to place refugees in towns with relatively good labour markets, even if they did not volunteer as refugee receivers. In addition, it became a tool to even out the differences between towns and cities with many self-settled newly arrived migrants and those who had no or only a few such inhabitants (Gov. Bill 2015/16: 54). Hence, a great number of newly arrived refugees were assigned to municipalities with no experience of refugee reception. In Skåne, a few high-income municipalities with only a small share of rental dwellings have been assigned several hundreds of new inhabitants in recent years.⁶

Unaccompanied children (up to the age of 18) are since 2014 assigned to municipalities for accommodation and care, and the costs are fully reimbursed by the central state. Adult asylum-seekers and their children may stay in reception centres, which about 40 percent do, or arrange their own accommodation, which is more common.⁷ When residence permits are granted, the central state retains the economic responsibility during the 'establishment period', which is calculated to last for a couple of years (but often takes longer). Provided that they comply with 'establishment plans' designed by the Public Employment Service, the newly arrived are entitled to an 'establishment allowance', to cover costs for their livelihood and housing. Meanwhile, the municipalities are offered substantial funding for their refugee reception, including administration, language training, housing arrangements, etc. After the establishment period, these migrants are supposed to be sufficiently integrated – settled, employed and Swedish-speaking – and treated as other residents. If they still cannot provide for themselves, they are referred to the social services.

⁶ The number of refugees assigned to the Skåne County was 2 766 in 2016 but will only be 769 in 2020. The yearly number assigned to individual municipalities in the county has varied between 0 and 488 (The Swedish Migration Agency Statistics).

⁷ 39 193 asylum-seekers were registered in the Migration Authority's reception system on Feb 1, 2020. Of them, 41% were staying in reception centres, while 56% had arranged accommodation on their own and about 3% were minors assigned to municipalities. Since January 2020, asylum-seekers who choose private accommodation in certain vulnerable residential areas may be deprived of their daily allowances (Gov. Bill 2019/20: 10; Minutes from the Parliament Nov. 27, 2019). In Skåne, four municipalities (including Malmö) have decided that their whole territories should be defined as such 'vulnerable' zones. Hence, possible self-settled refugees from 2020 on are not entitled to any allowances for their subsistence, not from the state, nor from the city.

Although the Settlement Act (2016: 38) and its accompanying ordinance (2016: 39) oblige municipalities to receive assigned refugees for settlement, the Government has failed to define what kind of accommodation or housing is required:

The Government's intention is that the municipalities should as far as possible offer the newly arrived who are covered by the assignments permanent housing. However, it cannot be ruled out that municipalities will have to offer temporary housing to fulfil their obligation. In order not to constrain the flexibility that is necessary for the municipalities' ability to offer accommodation of more temporary nature, the Government considers that it is not appropriate to regulate by law the type of housing intended. (Gov. Bill 2015/16: 54, p.18)

Probably because the idea was permanent housing, the Government also failed to stipulate the time during which the municipalities should provide accommodation or housing for the assigned newly arrived refugees. Hence, the scope for local policy variations is further widened – especially since the Administrative Court of Appeal in Stockholm in February 2019 concluded that evicting received refugees after 24 months was not against the law (Case No. 4155-18).

Local settlement policies

In Sweden the extreme right movement is strong and represented in both the national Parliament and the municipal councils by 'The Sweden Democrats' (SD), whose main political goal is to stop or reduce immigration – into the country as well as into the municipalities. SD is the biggest party in the council of every third municipality in the Skåne County, and in five of them it is part of the ruling majority. This party's council members are very active and issue similar motions to the councils of most of the county's municipalities, requesting, e.g., that assigned newly arrived should not be received or accommodated, that they should be encouraged to leave town, subjected to an 'integration duty' and evicted from their accommodation as soon as legally possible. In combination with legislative changes and readjustment of state subventions, this political situation has affected the local policies and strategies for refugee settlement in Skåne – directly or indirectly.

'Newly arrived refugees' is actually a legal construction, aimed at demarcating the target group for special establishment measures for refugees in an act adopted in 2010, and subsequently transferred to the 2016 Settlement Act (Gov. Bill 2015/16: 54, p.14). It refers to migrants with residence permits as refugees (or as persons in need of subsidiary protection or quota refugees) and their family members during the establishment period. This definition is of great significance, since it is related to both state subsidies to the municipalities and individual allowances. However,

the distinction between newly arrived who are 'assigned' and 'self-settled', respectively, has proved to be of even greater importance for the municipalities, which are only obliged to accommodate the assigned category.

In our questionnaire, we asked the municipalities what groups were targeted by the local (formal or informal) strategy for accommodating newly arrived migrants. The answers differed quite a lot. All included newly arrived refugees assigned since March 2016 in this policy; 6 municipalities excluded all other migrant groups. According to 2 respondents, refugees assigned according to prior, voluntary agreements were included although by this time (autumn 2018) at least almost three years had passed. Unaccompanied children were targeted in 8 municipalities, and 6 of these included such youths even after they had turned 18, although they are not obliged by law to house them after this age. Available accommodation options stretched from regular permanent tenancies with the municipal housing companies and other local landlords, time-limited sublease contracts for dwellings in existing or modular houses, to shared flats, corridor rooms and caravans.

However, only 2 municipalities stated explicitly that their settlement strategy also included newly arrived who were self-settled, and other responses and comments indicated that if this category of refugees was targeted at all, it would rather be by policies and practice for other homeless people in the municipalities. Many respondents claimed that they did not know the number, needs or actual housing situations of the self-settled households in the municipality. Others provided rather vague answers:

They are lodgers, often short-term solutions. We do not work actively with this group.

There is no information on the housing situation of those self-settled ones after them having received their residence permits. We have no solid knowledge, but the general picture within Malmö City is that a great share of homeless households has a background as self-settled asylum-seekers.

Most of the self-settled ones in the municipality manage on their own and we get to know about them only when they have children that need day-care or school or if they need any help with livelihood support.

A third subcategory of 'newly arrived' comprises re-uniting family members of assigned refugees. According to a more recent survey, only 3 out of 18 responding municipalities in the county arrange accommodation for them (Skåne County Adm., 2019: 31). From focus group discussions we have learned that several municipalities do not believe, or accept, that they are obliged to arrange accommodation for these

family members when they arrive to the municipalities. Instead, they ascribe this responsibility to the individual that was assigned first – even if this is an unaccompanied child or someone who is prohibited from having lodgers.

Although the state subsidies for municipal reception are quite generous, some of the municipalities in Skåne have objected to the obligation to accommodate assigned refugees, and/or protracted the receiving of them, mostly with reference to local shortage of rental housing. Considering the relatively indistinct and ambiguous legislation, it is no surprise that the municipalities, in addition, interpret their obligations and responsibilities, as well as the concerned individuals' rights and entitlements, differently. Several accommodation coordinators claim that they themselves have had to sort out what they must do and what they can do. Board proceedings confirm that these officials are often squeezed between the law and the local politicians. Furthermore, it is obvious that several municipalities have recently changed their policies, primarily resulting in reduced ambitions regarding the duration, standards and target groups for refugee settlement.

National housing and homeless policies

Despite increased housing construction in recent years, a great majority (83 per cent) of the municipalities in Sweden suffer from severe shortage of rental housing, especially affordable housing, according to the National Board for Housing, Building and Planning (NBHBP, 2019). The prices for owner-occupied housing have risen substantially in the last decade and a growing share of the population cannot buy their dwellings, nor pay the rents of new-built homes (ibid.).⁸

Sweden's housing policy has changed dramatically in recent decades. Public housing – owned by municipal housing companies (MHCs) – comprises only about 15 per cent of the dwellings, somewhat less than the private rental sector, while the remaining 65–70 per cent are owner-occupied (Statistics Sweden). Since 2007, rents in new or newly renovated rental housing are set by the market for the first 15 years (so-called presumption rents), while rents for existing flats are collectively negotiated and related to the dwellings' standard, size and site. There is no social housing in Sweden, but a growing secondary housing market (NBHBP, 2019), where the municipalities rent flats and then sublease them to homeless clients on special terms and without security of tenure. Public housing in Sweden does not target the underprivileged strata of the population and is by law required to act 'business-like' since 2011. The combined effect of these two reforms is that many MHCs choose

⁸ Severe difficulties for employers and universities to recruit employees and students outside their commuting area are nowadays described as a serious threat to the national economy (Gov. Bill 2019/20: 1, p. 34).

to build flats of kinds and in sites where they can attract high-income people willing and able to pay high rents (Grander, 2018; Grander, 2019). But here, too, policies vary between municipalities.

All municipalities are obliged to plan for provision of housing to their residents, and since 2014 these plans should contain an analysis of the needs of 'special groups', which include newly arrived migrants as well as homeless persons. Even though certain new subventions for housing constructions require that the municipal councils adopt guidelines for housing provision, there are still no sanctions attached to municipalities' omissions to do so, or to implement adopted plans. However, in most municipalities in Skåne these requirements have entailed some investigation of the housing situations and needs of the concerned groups.

There is no national homeless policy in Sweden, and no right to housing, besides for people with severe and lasting disabilities who have a legal right to specially adapted dwellings. The National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) maps the number of homeless people known by the social services, NGOs and hospitals, etc. (excluding EU-migrants, asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants) every sixth year – the last count was made in April 2017 (NBHW, 2017). The obligation to support and accommodate homeless people is generically regulated in the Social Services Act (SSA), which states the following:

Persons unable to provide for their needs or to obtain provision for them in any other way are entitled to assistance from the social welfare committee towards their livelihood (livelihood support) and for their living in general.

Through the assistance, the individual shall be assured of a reasonable standard of living. The assistance shall be designed in such a way as to strengthen his or her resources for independent living. (Ch. 4, Section 1)

Although this section of the act has not changed since 1980, and a few verdicts of the Supreme Administrative Court indicate that a 'reasonable standard of living' includes a regular, self-contained flat, the Administrative Courts of Appeal have in recent years frequently come to other conclusions. Whether or not housing or accommodation is a necessary ingredient in a reasonable standard of living is therefore, in practice, to a high extent up to the judgements of local professionals, politicians and the administrative courts.

Besides the rights of the individual to social support, as quoted above, the municipality has the "ultimate responsibility for ensuring that persons staying within its boundaries receive the support and assistance they need" (SSA, Ch. 2, Section 1). Whether or not this implies that homeless people – and if so, what kind of homeless households – are entitled to (or the municipality obliged to provide) temporary

accommodation or even long-term housing, is recurrently debated. Other sections of the SSA state that the social services should especially consider the situation of children, elderly people, certain victims of crime and substance abusers.

Local homelessness policies

In our survey, 24 municipalities responded to the question on whether or not the municipality had a policy or action plan to counteract homelessness and provide housing for homeless people. Eight said yes, and 16 said no – but half of the latter still described a practice that could have been formalised as a policy. Many claimed that they cooperated with the MHC and offered sub-leased flats with special contracts, i.e. without any security of tenure. Another common option was ‘emergency flats’ for short-term accommodation, and some had training flats and/or some kind of shelter. Bigger towns usually reported more tiers of accommodation and sometimes a limited Housing First project, while smaller municipalities had less alternatives. From their accounts of the current housing situation of local homeless people, it was clear that the respondents’ knowledge was often significantly better on this category than regarding self-settled newly arrived refugees.

So far, the results of this research seem to confirm that the self-settled newly arrived, the assigned ones, and other homeless people are differently targeted by local policies, although the self-settled ones are in some places subsumed in the group of ‘other homeless people’ and a few municipalities have begun to integrate the administration of accommodation for assigned refugees and other homeless people. However, if assigned refugees move to another municipality they will be defined as self-settled, and the category ‘newly arrived’ is temporary by definition: If people have not obtained long-term housing while included in it, they may be re-categorised as ‘other homeless’ afterwards.

Moving the Target Group through Re-categorisation

Laws, rules and guidelines on support and services tend to shape a specific kind of what Tilly (1998) calls ‘categorical pairs’, where one party is entitled or targeted and the other one not. The classical example is of course deserving versus non-deserving poor. Formal distinctions and classifications, in turn, affect our views of people, which is captured by Mary Douglas (1986) in her thesis that institutions ‘think’ for us.

Who shall be saved and who shall die is settled by institutions. /... / An answer is only seen to be the right one if it sustains the institutional thinking that is already in the minds of individuals as they try to decide. (Douglas, 1986: 4).

This kind of institutional categorisation through division will now be illustrated by the current splitting of the previous target group for homeless accommodation in Malmö.

From cause to category: 'structurally homeless'

It is a common understanding that homelessness has structural causes in terms of economic inequality, shortage of (affordable) housing or tight housing markets on the one hand, and that individual vulnerability increases the risk to actually become and remain homeless, on the other. In research, structural causes are distinguished from individual ones, but they are rarely viewed as mutually exclusive or unrelated (see, e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2005; Pleace, 2016). Lately, however, a strange discourse has emerged, for example in Malmö, where 'social' homelessness is distinguished from 'structural' homelessness, as if these terms refer to completely different situations and groups of people. 'Structurally homeless' is claimed to indicate not only that the individual would not have been homeless given that the supply and allocation of housing had been different, but also that the person has no 'social problems' and no need of any special support, monitoring or help. 'Socially homeless', on the other hand, stands for individuals with 'special difficulties' to obtain housing due to substance abuse, mental health problems and similar attributes and who need social support to acquire and manage in a home. These are problems and people that the social services are used to handle and treat; they are traditional targets for social work. But how did these new homeless categories emerge and why? And who are being categorised as 'structurally homeless' and with what consequences?

According to an interviewed official in Malmö social services, the concept 'structural homelessness' was originally developed within the social services about ten years ago to highlight that shortage of housing was a significant cause of homelessness, which must be addressed at the national level or by the city as a whole. Nevertheless, it has now become synonymous with 'not having special difficulties to find housing' – and subsequently with not being entitled to accommodation through the social services.

This translation from cause to category is odd in many ways. It is not found in the SSA or any state investigation. If a similar reasoning were applied to unemployment, a great share of the households receiving social assistance for their subsistence would have been defined as not eligible, because their poverty was caused by structural unemployment and not by specific, individual difficulties to find work. But this would be clearly at odds with the whole welfare system, which is based on the principle that the municipal social services should function as a safety net for those whose needs are not covered by regular income, social insurance or families. In 2018, about half of the households who received social welfare in Sweden were able to work but unemployed, and "unemployment is since 2010 the main reason why people cannot support themselves" (NBHW, 2019, p.1).

In spring 2019, the local social authorities of two of the biggest cities in Sweden, Göteborg and Malmö, adopted new guidelines for housing assistance to homeless people.⁹ These underline that the social services are not responsible for organising accommodation to 'structurally homeless' people, and that such households will in the future be offered temporary accommodation only in emergency situations, and if so, no longer than for one week.¹⁰ The distinction is sharp and absolute; households will be categorised as either 'structurally' or 'socially' homeless. This revision of the policy targets is triggered by the social services' ambitions to reduce their increasing costs for shelters and hostels through delimiting their target group. However, no other local or national authority accepts responsibility for the supply and allocation of housing or accommodation for those who are categorised as 'structurally homeless'. One has to wait many years to get an offer of a dwelling through the housing queue of Malmö, no one gets precedence and many fail to meet the landlords' requirements anyway.

Who are the 'structurally homeless'?

'We have almost only single people who are "social" – at least in this part of the city. And our families, we have a lot of "structural" families.' (Social worker in Malmö)

In Malmö's new guidelines for homeless accommodation, this category is negatively defined as those who do not meet the following requirements for being entitled to accommodation:

... both criteria must be met:

- being **totally homeless** (roofless)
- having **special difficulties** to obtain a dwelling of one's own (refers to special difficulties for the individual, not to those general difficulties that prevail in a municipality with severe housing shortage) (Emphasis in the original. Malmö City 2019a, p.1).

⁹ According to Samzelius (forthcoming), the same policy is used by Stockholm City and its suburbs, although it has not been formally articulated and adopted.

¹⁰ Homeless people with mental health problems, substance abuse or a history of previous evictions used to be refused long-term housing through the local social authorities, since they were assumed to be 'incapable of independent living' (Sahlin, 1996). It is ironic that these groups are now prioritised on the very same ground, namely, that they are incapable of (acquiring) independent living without support. As soon as they become 'capable', they now risk being re-defined as 'structurally homeless' and deprived of further help. Another irony is that no social support is actually provided at the accommodations that are now in principle preserved for 'socially homeless' people.

An interviewed social worker claims that today, 'it's super, super, super-strict requirements for being 'social' and exemplifies with a homeless man with substance abuse, depression, a history of evictions and/or recently released from prison, but who is still not categorised as 'social'. However, statistical evidence suggests that the "structurally homeless" category, in practice, predominantly applies to other homeless groups in the city.

According to the city's own mappings, the homeless population doubled and its composition changed significantly between 2010 and 2018; "the structural homelessness and homelessness among persons with children have grown significantly during this period of time" (Malmö City, 2019b, p.8). Of the almost 2000 adults recorded as homeless in October 2018 (ibid., p.16), 71.5 per cent were born abroad; whereof half (696 individuals) had been in Sweden less than three years at the time of counting. Hence, they were self-settled in the city. The cause of their homelessness was their unstable and deficient economic situation (ibid., p.11), i.e. 'structural'.

Homeless persons living with children are almost always structurally homeless. This holds for 97% of all parents in the mapping. This means that they do not have any known problems like substance abuse and/or mental ill-health. (ibid., p.14)

More than 92 per cent of the homeless parents of 1 374 minor children staying with them, were born abroad (ibid., p.13), and many were women: "Women in homelessness live with their children to a higher extent than men and they are also structurally homeless in a higher degree than men" (ibid., p.8). The city's settlement policy is to provide accommodation for assigned newly arrived refugees up to four years, so members of this category are not (yet) included in the homeless counts. Homeless people without residence permits are also excluded from the mappings. Taken together, this information indicates that 'structurally homeless' is almost synonymous with self-settled, often newly arrived refugees, who stay with their minor children in temporary shelters and hostels.¹¹

With the new guidelines, however, things have changed rapidly. In November 2019, the social services administration released a press report (Malmö City, 2019c), with diagrams and tables that evidenced a dramatic reduction of structural homelessness in the past year. At the same time, the number of temporarily accommodated families with minor children more than halved (ibid., p.3). The following table is based on figures from the mappings on the 1st of October 2018 and 2019, respectively:

¹¹ Single adults without 'social problems' have probably already been denied support to accommodation and therefore been excluded from the social services' counts of local homeless people.

Table 1. Categories of homeless people in the mappings of Malmö on October 1, 2018 and 2019, respectively.

Kind of household/individual	Oct. 1, 2018	Oct. 1, 2019	Change
Homeless adults	1 959	1 355	- 604
Whereof...			
born in Sweden	560	548	- 12
born abroad	1 399	807	- 592
<i>whereof</i>			
<i>in Sweden 0–3 years</i>	449	184	- 265
structurally homeless	1 337	727	- 610
socially homeless	622	628	+ 6
Homeless fam. with children	509	251	- 258
Homeless children	1 347	692	- 655

Sources: Malmö City, 2019b, 2019c.

It is quite obvious that the subcategories of homeless people who had some kind of temporary accommodation through the social services in 2018, but not in 2019, are those born abroad (often self-settled newly arrived), with children and defined as structurally homeless. There is no information available on where these families stay today, but only a minority seems to have succeeded to find permanent housing.¹²

In the guidelines excluding the 'structurally homeless' from support to accommodation in Malmö, the point of departure is that "the social services are no housing allocation agency" but specialised on dealing with individuals with specific 'social' problems. They accept no responsibility for the excluded 'structurals'. Because of this, the rejected homeless individuals and families are to a growing extent also excluded from the mappings of homelessness in Malmö City.

Making Categorical Exclusions Legitimate

Institutional decisions and distinctions require, and at the same time confer, legitimacy (Douglas, 1986). Through defining one category as in need and having a specific right, the other one in the categorical pair will appear as clearly different also in other respects. Put differently, we tend to ascribe the non-entitled category further attributes that reinforce and help motivate the institutional division between them (Sahlin, 1994). Once such distinctions are established, it is tempting to identify the individuals who are placed at different sides of the border with the average of the category of relevance or, alternatively, with stereotypical images of category

¹² An investigation in another municipality revealed that a great number of structurally homeless families had moved in from other municipalities in the Skåne county. They had paid brokers and landlords for rental contracts – which is illegal – for inadequate housing with very high rents. Although they were severely indebted and felt deceived, they were too scared to report their situation to the authorities (Tingne, 2018).

members as 'good' or 'bad', respectively. Accordingly, the non-eligible homeless may be identified either with the average home-seeker, who has acceptable housing but maybe not the perfect dwelling, or with the stereotype of outsiders, who are perceived as extremely strange or even as a threat to the local community (cf. Elias and Scotson, 1965/1994). The point is that none of these types deserves sympathy or help. It is precisely through exaggerating the differences between the targeted ones and those who are not entitled to help, that the distinction becomes legitimate and natural. In addition, such accounts help the decision-makers to counteract and hamper experiences of ambivalence and doubt (cf. Festinger, 1957).

In *Durable Inequality*, Charles Tilly (1998) puts forward another quality that bestows legitimacy. He claims that 'categorical inequality' tends to be lasting if it is in accordance with general societal distinctions such as gender, race and nationality. As shown above, the new 'internal' categorical pair of 'structurally' versus 'socially' homeless people coincides to a great extent with the 'external' pair of Swedes versus 'migrants/aliens'.

It is nevertheless remarkable that in Malmö, homeless women (born abroad) and their children by now are judged to be less 'deserving' than, e.g., homeless single men (born in Sweden) with substance abuse or mental health problems. The new categorical distinction between 'structurally' and 'socially' homeless is obviously at odds with the historically strong social norm that women – especially mothers – and children should be protected by society. Adults in general – and men in particular – are mostly viewed as less vulnerable and more responsible for their problematic situation. Indeed, in the local practices of settling assigned refugees, families with children are often offered better temporary housing than single adults (usually young men), who tend to be placed in collective accommodation where they have to share bathroom and kitchen with others. Hence, the target move involves not only a re-categorisation based on causes of homelessness, but also that 'vulnerability' is replaced by 'special difficulties' as the main criterion for deserving support and that the definition of 'homeless' is narrowed down to 'roofless'.

Michael Billig (1987) has a different approach to 'categorisation', which he views as a strategy of rhetoric. His thesis is that categories, combined with 'particularisations' – that is, examples and exceptions – are created and invoked with the aim to convince an audience of the logic and righteousness of a political distinction or a legal verdict. The move of the target for assistance to housing or emergency accommodation is an interesting example of what he names "the strategy of the special case" (ibid.: 173 ff.). According to the SSA's general section on the right to assistance, including to housing (see above), persons who are "unable to provide for their needs or to obtain provision for them in any other way are entitled to assistance". In appeal cases, this is always quoted by the Administrative Courts,

followed by the statement that this does not mean that homeless people in general has a right to housing, but only those who are *completely* homeless and have *special* difficulties. Although the courts do not use the term 'socially' homeless, this particularisation has now become established – support to accommodation is no general right for homeless people, only the special case may be entitled to it.

'Special difficulties', in turn, has been elaborated in the Malmö guidelines through a list of particularities that are judged as *not* being special.

If the person is affected only by the housing shortage in Malmö with surroundings, or cannot speak Swedish, alternatively cannot apply for housing via Internet, s/he does not belong to a group that according to court praxis is considered to have special difficulties. A deficient economy, which makes it difficult to live up to a landlord's requirements or to get any offer at all through a housing queue is not a reason in itself, either. Nor is being an unaccompanied youth with a temporary residence permit /... / in itself a reason to get assistance to housing. (Malmö 2019a, p. 1f.)

Thus, the category 'special difficulties' is combined with a number of particularisations that are exempt from it. It is like a Russian doll: problem after problem is exempted, until the core of the eligible category is hardly discernible. "Particularities are invoked in order to shift the essence away from one set of social values to another set", claims Billig (1987, p.175); in this case from the needs and rights of the homeless persons to their theoretical ability to obtain housing on their own. Only very severe difficulties qualify as 'special'.

What is radically new with the structural versus social homeless categories of Malmö, however, is the non-consideration of children as a vulnerable group (Björkhagen Turesson, 2019; Samzelius, forthcoming). While it is quite common in Skåne's municipalities to delimit the target group for housing assistance and provision of temporary accommodation, guidelines for the social services often include a particularisation concerning children.

If a family can manage an accommodation, that is, pay the rent in time, not disturb their neighbours and handle an apartment on their own without support, it is an indication that the right to assistance in the form of housing can be called into question. This does not, however, preclude that assistance can be provided on the basis of a child perspective in order to prevent an emergency situation or based on an individual assessment in cases with social problems. (Osby Municipality, 2018, p. 5)

If the person who applies for assistance to housing has children, special regard shall be taken to them and to the possible consequences of denied assistance. (Skurup Municipality, 2015, p. 39)

Moving the Target through Removing Responsibility

When things go wrong or are questioned, or when criticism is voiced or anticipated, we all use accounts as defence (Scott and Lyman, 1968). These do not work unless the values that we invoke are shared with those to whom we address our excuses and justifications. Likewise, categorisations and particularisations rely on, and are rhetorically combined with, references to common public values (Billig, 1987).

Allocating responsibility while invoking public values appears to be central in arguing for narrowing target groups for homeless accommodation and reduced ambitions in refugee settling. Politicians would rarely deny that the situation as homeless is difficult, but rather ascribe the responsibility for the hardship to somebody else. In a local 'integration plan', adopted in March, 2019, by the council of Staffanstorp's municipality in Skåne, the following is the only mentioning of housing for newly arrived migrants:

Accommodation for newly arrived refugees shall be organised in an economically justifiable manner and no special precedence in housing queues or the like shall prevail. During the establishment period, which is two years, the newly arrived are responsible for finding their own housing. The municipality's responsibility ceases after the establishment period.

Despite the legal obligation, this municipality declares that the target and essence of its integration policy are not to provide housing for the newly arrived, but rather to see that their accommodation does not imply any costs or disadvantages to other inhabitants of the municipality. The refugees' own responsibility is underlined, while the municipality's responsibility is but defined in negative terms – what it does not include and when it does not apply. There is an explicit reference to the value of sound municipal finances ('an economically justifiable manner') and an implicit reference to the value of an unregulated housing market ('no special precedence'). Indirectly, the newly arrived are positioned as a threat to both of these values – why else would these principles be highlighted in this context?

In May 2019, the same municipality adopted a 'housing strategy' for accommodating the assigned newly arrived, which replaced a three years older plan. A comparison between the two documents (Staffanstorp Municipality, 2016; Staffanstorp Municipality, 2019b) reveals that the general goal in the 2016 strategy that housing for the newly arrived "should reinforce and facilitate the process of integration" has been removed in the 2019 version, which, in turn has a new amendment:

Staffanstorp Municipality has no own dwellings to offer newly arrived. There are few alternative dwellings available on the housing market. When there are no other solutions, the newly arrived are offered temporary emergency accommodation through the social services. This may be in other municipalities.

The municipality offers one single accommodation alternative. If the newly arrived chooses to reject this, the whole responsibility to find housing rests with the newly arrived.

Again, the responsibility of the municipality is only defined in negative terms. This non-accountability is first excused with reference to a housing market that is presented as an external circumstance with an objective modality, i.e. as an absolute fact (Fairclough, 2003), “has no own dwellings”, “there are few alternative dwellings”, “when there are no other solutions” – no one seems responsible for this situation, and no agent is indicated. In this way the situation is excused, although the presented ‘facts’ result from conscious political decisions: Staffanstorps Municipality has sold its MHC to a private company, hardly built any rental flats in the past decades and declined to plan for housing provision for the assigned refugees.

In the second paragraph of the quote, the non-responsibility is justified with reference to an anticipated discontent and ungratefulness of the assigned refugees, who are made accountable for their absolute homelessness in case they do not accept the municipality’s only alternative – which may be a bed in a shared caravan outside the town.¹³ Through this wording, the municipality’s rejection of its obligations to plan for housing provision and to accommodate assigned refugees is effectively both excused and justified (Scott and Lyman, 1968), while the homeless refugees are responsibilised.

From Category to Cause: Children Homeless due to Failed Parenting

The dramatic decline of the number of homeless families in Malmö in the past year, as shown in Table 1 above, was almost exclusively due to a reduction of structurally homeless migrant families. However, on October 1, 2019, there were still 692 children registered as homeless. Of these, 671 have been categorised as belonging to ‘structurally homeless’ households. What does this imply for the homeless children?

As part of the research project *Scanian Homes*, we are following the implementation of the new guidelines for homeless accommodation in one district in Malmö since September 2019.¹⁴ This partial study includes repeated interviews with social

¹³ This municipality has gained certain disrepute for placing assigned refugees in shared caravans on a field near the dump outside the town, or in other municipalities (*Sydsvenskan*, March 1, 2018). In a number of motions, the SD party suggests that other municipalities in Skåne adopt ‘the Staffanstorps model’ of refugee accommodation.

¹⁴ The social services in Malmö – a city of 344 000 inhabitants – are divided into five geographical areas or districts.

workers divided off to handle ‘structurally homeless’ clients, observations of their encounters with clients and analyses of their decisions. Most of their clients are migrant families with several children, staying in emergency accommodation of 1–2 rooms, often sharing kitchen and bathroom with other households. Every week the parents must come to the office and prove that they are still in an emergency situation, despite evidenced efforts to find some private accommodation through Facebook, other online trading sites or informal networks. If they are accepted as tenants or lodgers, even if it is only for a few days and in another town, they are denied further emergency accommodation. However, because of low income, the size of the household, or their inability to pay the deposit fee or the extra sum of money that landlords often require (Tingne, 2018; Wahlgren and Paulsson, 2020), they are usually not accepted as tenants. Hence, they are allowed to stay in emergency accommodation yet another week.

The social workers do not deliberately move these families around, yet they sometimes have to shift accommodation due to changed, ceased or violated agreements between the social services and the shelter providers. “They can move you tomorrow and you have to obey”, says a single mother. On the other hand, decision records reveal that several families remain in highly inadequate and insecure emergency accommodation month after month. Unfortunately, we have only been able to interview a few of the client families so far. Still, we have learned that these ‘structurally’ homeless families often suffer from overcrowding, persistent insecurity, and consequential difficulties for all family members to focus on other tasks, such as school, work, job-seeking and language training.

To design a policy that relieves the municipality from the responsibility for newly arrived refugees is one thing, but to reject the general societal obligation to care for children in need requires additional discursive efforts (Liebenberg *et al.*, 2015). The new guidelines for homeless accommodation in Göteborg state:

... the child perspective must always be considered departing from the parents’ ability to plan for and solve the housing situation. If needed, notify the Child and Family Department on your concerns. (Göteborg City, 2019, p.7)

The Child and Family Department does not deal with housing but with assessing ‘parental capacity’ and children’s possible need of foster care. Likewise, the social workers in Malmö convey that if a structurally homeless family invokes the children’s needs, such claims are usually dismissed through phrases like: “As parents, you have the full responsibility for your children’s housing”.

In the conceptual frame of Billig (1987), the essence of the particularisation ‘homeless children’ is neither homelessness, nor children’s rights or needs, but rather ‘parental deficiencies’. In this way, the shared public value that children is a

vulnerable group that society must care for and protect and that authorities must ensure their rights, is discursively defended. Despite the fact that the cause of these families' homelessness is defined as purely structural, the children's homelessness is blamed on their parents' shortcomings.

Concluding Discussion

Since 2016 the municipalities in Sweden are obliged by law to accommodate assigned newly arrived refugees and to organise reception of them as well as of self-settled newly arrived. Homelessness, on the other hand, is by tradition unregulated and a wholly local issue. The local accommodation policies for all three groups vary within and among municipalities, but also over time. This article has probed into and reflected on how the targets and target groups of such municipal policies are moved through categorisations, re-categorisations and responsabilisation.

Although the intention with the Settlement Act was that assigned newly arrived refugees should obtain permanent housing, some municipalities in Skåne offer this target group but temporary accommodation for two years. I have demonstrated how one of them has revised its strategy for integration and refugee accommodation and discursively transferred this responsibility to the newly arrived themselves. At the same time, the target to integrate and accommodate newly arrived refugees has been replaced by an ambition to avoid immigration to the municipality.

The on-going policy changes and re-definitions of targets and target groups result from continuous interaction between public institutions at different levels, such as the municipal departments, political boards, the administrative courts and – at the level of the central state – the Government, the Migration Agency and the Parliament (cf Hacking, 1986/2006).¹⁵ These policies and their revisions make use of rhetorical strategies and arguments, which involve (re-)categorisations, particularisations as well as appeals to public values (cf Billig, 1987).

In most municipalities in Skåne, self-settled newly arrived refugees are excluded from the target groups of accommodation for both refugees and homeless people. However, if they or the assigned refugees after the establishment period have failed to find housing, they may be re-categorised as 'homeless'. When homelessness and the costs for temporary accommodation grow, while the housing market remains tight, a municipality may react through narrowing its target groups for homeless accommodation. This strategy has been exemplified by Malmö City's

¹⁵ Local landlords, including MHCs, also play a part through their requirements on new tenants regarding income, employment, maximum number of children, personal references, etc. but have not been considered here.

new guidelines, stating that only 'socially homeless' will be accommodated and supported. People who are homeless due to structural conditions, such as housing shortage and poverty, are defined as 'structurally homeless' and not entitled to any accommodation through the social services, apart from emergency shelter for – at most – one week at a time.

Since the 1990s, the 'housing staircase' is widespread in Sweden as a model for stepwise advancement into the regular housing market. Elsewhere and previously, I have criticized it, because it implies that the causes of homelessness rest with the individuals, and because it rarely works as intended – and even when it does, it implies many moves and a very long time spent in insecure housing (Sahlin, 1996; Sahlin, 2005). I always imagined that the alternative would be 'Housing First', or at least 'Housing Fast' through reforms in housing policy and housing allocation systems. However, the new model for accommodation of structurally homeless is quite the opposite. Although it formally frees the homeless individuals from being blamed for their housing problems, it gives them the whole responsibility to solve them: No matter how well they demonstrate their 'capability of independent living' and good tenant behaviour and their severe needs, there is no hope for housing through the municipality. Instead, they are either stuck on the lowest step of the demolished housing staircase, or squeezed out into the black market of private, expensive, inadequate and insecure accommodation.

The new guidelines of Malmö have implied a re-structuring of the supply of homeless accommodation. Instead of ordinary flats, subleased on special terms with the possible future transition to first-hand contracts of the same dwelling, the city now demands more emergency accommodation, with rooms let on a day-by-day basis without any lease or support, since this is supposed to motivate the structurally homeless to seek and accept any other kind of accommodation. However, emergency accommodation is generally much more expensive for the social services that have to pay market prices for the needed premises instead of ordinary, regulated rents, so the financial gain of the new order remains uncertain.

The child perspective is in most places still valid in the allocation of temporary accommodation for assigned refugees during the establishment period, implying that families more often than singles get access to self-contained flats. However, in the revised homelessness policy of Malmö it is overrun by the distinction between 'structurally' and 'socially' homeless. By now, single men with severe substance abuse problems are offered more secure accommodation than structurally homeless children. According to Tilly (1998), new hierarchies and distinctions may settle as natural in people's minds and institutions and become durable if they

harmonise with existing external inequalities. Since the 'structurals' almost exclusively are refugee families with minor children, the new guidelines are in line with the external, popular distinction between Swedes and migrants.

In addition, the responsibility for children's accommodation is transferred from the municipality to the homeless parents. The reasoning behind the new category 'structurally homeless' is that the cause of homelessness is not found in the individual's behaviour and actions, but in societal structures, poverty, housing shortage, etc. Nevertheless, the structurally homeless are made accountable for their children's homelessness, which is claimed to be due to parental deficiencies. In policies and guidelines, as well as in social workers' explanations to rejected applicants, local authorities account for their omission to provide housing for homeless children through putting the blame on their parents.

In other words, the target to reduce homelessness – not identified at the national level but often at the local level – is moving. Most municipalities aim at reducing the number of homeless individuals, but not necessarily through housing provision. Other ways to achieve such a goal is to abstain from building rental housing, stop offering or paying for such accommodation, or force or convince people to leave town. When they are no longer registered as clients with the social services they will not be counted as homeless. The described changes of categories and targets also entail forced or voluntary physical moves of the re-categorised ones to other places and other accommodation (if any), as these become rejected, evicted or encouraged to move from the accommodation they have enjoyed so far.

However, this worrying transformation and limitation of local homeless and settlement policies does not involve all of the Skåne county. Although it is unusual to include self-settled newly arrived in policies and practice, several municipalities have a rather different approach and honour the child perspective in their efforts to counteract homelessness as well as to settle assigned refugees. Some of them view, at least in principle, all homeless people without own resources as their target group for housing and accommodation, and a few of them manage to provide permanent housing to most of their newly arrived refugees. This indicates that the revisions and moves of target and target groups discussed in this article are not necessary or inevitable but the result of political decisions and priorities that are possible to change.

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Merit versus Necessity: Housing First and its Forms in Practice

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- **Abstract_** The aim of the present study is to illustrate the process of putting the Housing First concept into practice in the city of Pilsen in the Czech Republic and the unintended consequences associated with it. The research is based on ethnographic methods and involved not only participatory observations but interviews with the relevant actors—people in hostels for the poor, social workers (NGOs, state/city organisations) and influencers from the political scene.
- **Keywords_** Housing first, social housing, merit, necessity, the Czech Republic

Introduction

The growing phenomenon of homelessness affects an increasingly large number of municipalities in the Czech Republic and appears to be a structural problem that cannot be solved by legal directives or proclamatory and spectacular gestures during political campaigns.¹ The last nationwide data collection, which took place in 2019, estimates the number of homeless people in the Czech Republic (10.6 million inhabitants as of 2019) was 23 800 (Nešporová *et al.*, 2019). Homeless people

¹ In most cases, just before the elections, especially in the case of municipal elections. (e.g. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/ubytovny-a-bezpecnost-to-je-hlavni-tema-kampane-v-plzni-jednoduchy-recept-ale-strany-nemaji-56710> or <https://www.plzen.cz/v-plzni-je-rekordni-pocet-bezdomovcu-mesto-nekona-rika-lidr-ano-zarzycky> [quoted on 10 August 2019]).

clearly belong among the most socially vulnerable groups, because the loss of one's home, or the threat of this loss, contributes significantly to the threat and loss of one's security (Nemiroff, 2010; Ravenhill, 2014), without which it is difficult to realise the goals and aims of a good life. Certain abbreviations and key words, such as 'social exclusion', accompany homelessness, and all connote separation from mainstream society. Homelessness has also come to be defined as the inability to access 'essential housing', an acknowledgment that housing is fundamental to our basic well-being.

Homelessness is increasingly being paid attention both around the world and in the Czech Republic (e.g. Hradecký, 2008). Homelessness has become an integral part of all major cities, which represent the catchment areas of socio-economic life in the localities. Analyses of the causes of homelessness in the Czech Republic are relatively recent. Prior to 1989, this phenomenon 'did not occur' for ideological reasons and also because the social and structural changes caused by the transformation of industrial society into post-industrial society have become increasingly visible only since the second half of the 1990s.

Long-term risk factors for homelessness, as well as those at risk of homelessness—a fall into homelessness² on the basis of a low level of education, as a result of a personal biography associated with deprivation acquired in dysfunctional families, addiction/dependence on alcohol or drugs, unemployment and so on—are the subject of a whole host of studies (e.g. Caton *et al.*, 2005; Keys *et al.*, 2006; Ferguson, 2009; Berg, 2016). Politically, these problems have largely been either downplayed or ignored. Regional elections (regional and municipal councils) are the exception: problems with homelessness are publicised, and 'quick and effective', albeit often repressive, solutions are forwarded. The growth of the homeless population has caused concern in city districts, often to the extent that local politicians have begun to seek a long-term, systematic solution to the situation. This is a positive development; major Czech cities are beginning to address homelessness and are looking for tools and strategies to solve the problem (e.g. Toušek, 2009; Šnajdrová and Holpuch, 2010; Prudký *et al.*, 2011; Váně and Kalvas, 2014; Váně and Kalvas, 2015; Černá *et al.*, 2018; Vágnerová *et al.*, 2018; Váně, 2018a; Váně, 2018b; Sosna and Brunclíková, 2019; Černá, 2019). But more legislative support is needed for these efforts to be successful.³ The state must also declare its intention to systematically address the issue of homelessness by, for example, increasing political support for an analysis of welfare policy and homelessness (O'Sullivan, 2011; Pleace, 2011; Anderson *et al.*, 2016).

² The fall into homelessness occurs in several stages, i.e. in the process of decreasing chances of retention and hence reintegration into the majority society (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994).

³ About the definition of homelessness in Czech Republic Legislation see Appendix No.1.

The strategy that has begun to gain attention in Czech cities is connected with Housing First⁴ (HF), a concept that is increasingly recognised by both experts and political representatives abroad as the most effective model (as opposed to a strategy known as Housing ready⁵ [HR]) for helping to integrate homeless people (Sahlin, 2005; Pleace, 2008). Originally created in New York in the 1990s, the model targets primarily the chronically homeless and is expanding gradually to other subgroups of homeless people (cf. FEANTSA typology⁶). The increasing effectiveness of this service (Culhane, 2008; Pleace, 2008; Pleace, 2016; Tsemberis, 2010; Woodhall-Melnik and Dunn, 2015) has led to a turnaround in the approach to and reintegration of homeless people by political representatives in the US and Europe, and the trend is manifesting itself slowly in the Czech Republic. The most advanced phase, ‘rapid re-housing’, has so far been achieved in the city of Brno (e.g. Černá *et al.*, 2018). In addition to Brno and Pilsen, social housing projects influenced by the principles of Housing First are also being implemented in the cities of Ostrava, Prague, Rokycany, Jihlava and others.⁷

In the next section, I will describe how implementation of the Housing First concept is taking place in the Czech regional city of Pilsen, where HF ideas are being applied through a pilot project called ‘Social Housing’. My aim is to show how good intentions have given rise to a number of complications for those most concerned: (1) as unintended consequences of efforts to improve the situation and (2) as a result of different value approaches.

⁴ In summary, Housing First provides immediate or near immediate access to housing, alongside support to maintain that housing. For other principles, see Pleace (2016, p.12) or Quilgars and Pleace (2016, p.6).

⁵ Housing ready assumes that if temporary accommodation is to be provided to needy (homeless) individuals, they must first change their own behaviour, which is particularly true concerning their active drug or alcohol dependence, or in the debts they have incurred. Of course, there are discussions about which model is more effective (Pleace, 2008; Quilgars and Pleace, 2016). Alongside these two basic models, there are others, for example, a housing-led model (similar but not identical to Housing First) and Treatment As Usual (TAU). For these models, cf. e.g. Gulcur *et al.*, 2007.

⁶ <https://www.feantsa.org/download/ethos2484215748748239888.pdf> [quoted on 10 August 2019].

⁷ In the years 2016 – 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched a project entitled “Support for Social Housing”, which aims to develop social housing in the Czech Republic. A total of 16 municipalities, including Pilsen, have applied to participate in the project, and are trying to implement local social housing concepts.

Background

Pilsen is the fourth largest city in the Czech Republic (158 000 inhabitants as of 2019) and is a natural catchment area for the Pilsen Region (586 000 inhabitants as of 2019) and beyond. It lies just 100km west of the capital city of Prague on a key road to Bavaria, a major business partner of the Czech Republic. Pilsen is an important industrial city that attracts workers from a wide area. Its industrial tradition and geographical location make it a sought-after city for both domestic and foreign companies, including foreign workers. However, these trends have resulted in an increasing number of the noticeably homeless as well as those at risk of latent homelessness. Research from 2014 (census) showed that a total of 241 persons in the City of Pilsen were in the category of overt homelessness (Váně and Kalvas, 2014, p.19). The last nationwide collection, which took place in 2019, estimates the number of homeless people in the Pilsen Region to be 2 524 (Nešporová *et al.*, 2019).

The problem of housing for both those at risk of homelessness and those already on the street is exacerbated by the current labour market. Due to a high demand for labour and essentially non-existent unemployment aid, together with a vast, expanding industrial zone at the city's edge (established in the 1990s), the labour market is currently experiencing a lack of staff. Labour demand has opened up unprecedented opportunities for employment agencies to import into Pilsen labour from Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland. In addition, many hostels have closed in recent years due to an amendment to the Assistance in Material Need Act (as of June 2017, housing supplements for hostels were reduced), while others have been transformed into hostels for foreign workers.

Increasing numbers of homeless people and the chronisation of this problem as a political topic in Pilsen gradually led to the public view that Housing First (HF) should be implemented. Since there were virtually no comprehensive and long-term strategies to tackle homelessness in Pilsen (except repression), the HF concept at least presented a plan. Different management strategies and solutions to address homelessness are still being used in regional capitals. In Pilsen, there are groups with different opinions concerning homelessness. On the one hand, non-profit organisations (NGOs) work with homeless people as their clients. These NGOs have long pointed out the need to address the homeless situation and its associated problems—housing, increasing adult indebtedness and seizures imposed on families and children (most often related to non-payment of public transport fines). The HF concept is ideologically close to this group (NGO), which has been making long-term demands for the implementation of HF principles. On the other hand are the political representatives of the city who work with the problem of homelessness, especially during election campaigns. When they promise or demonstrate decisive-

ness in solving this social problem, their solutions often call for reinforced repression. For example, the spectacular ‘visit’ to the hostels of foreign workers by the Minister of the Interior or the Mayor to demonstrate that this group of problem citizens is being closely monitored and that the problem will be addressed and resolved vigorously.⁸

But the pressures of reality have gradually led city representatives to seek functional solutions to problems associated with homeless people. Paradoxically, this occurred during a boom period of employment (as of 31 June 2019, the Labour Office, Pilsen Regional Branch reported a 1.9% unemployment rate in the Pilsen Region).⁹ That is, previous political unwillingness to ‘assist the homeless’ changed when it seemed that there was nothing easier than to get a job; that is, when there was plenty of money available to secure housing. The reason for the city leadership’s change in attitude is that many homeless hostels were transformed into hostels for foreign workers, a more lucrative option for the hostels’ owners. The second reason that changed the attitudes of town hall involved repeated attempts by the government to amend the Act on Assistance in Material Need,¹⁰ the result of which threatened to cast a relatively large number of people onto the streets in a very short period of time. This raised concerns and the need to address the situation, which included the use of expert studies on homelessness in Pilsen (Toušek, 2009; Váně and Kalvas, 2014; Vašát, 2014; Váně and Kalvas, 2015; Vašát *et al.*, 2017; Bernard *et al.*, 2018; Váně, 2018a; Váně, 2018b; Sosna and Brunclíkova, 2019; Simon *et al.*, 2019).

After a series of discussions and political negotiations amongst non-profit organisations, political representatives and relevant departments of the municipality, the Department of Social Security (DSS) launched a pilot project called “Social

⁸ https://www.idnes.cz/plzen/zpravy/bezdomovci-plzen-ubytovna-pracovni-agentura.A161017_141828_plzen-zpravy_pp [quoted on 22 August 2019].

⁹ https://portal.mpsv.cz/upcr/kp/plk/statistiky/trh_prace_pk.pdf [quoted on 22 August 2019].

¹⁰ One of the dangers facing large cities was the amendment to the Act on Assistance in Material Need (No. 252/2014 Coll.), which came into effect on 1 January 2015. The aim of amending the legislation was to change the most problematic and most frequently abused social security benefit in the Czech Republic, which is the housing supplement. The proposed change to the law was set so that the housing supplement would be provided for the space, rather than being assigned based on the number of people. Until 2015, social benefits (especially housing allowances) were sent to a person who applied for and had been granted a claim. However, it was never taken into account how many people actually reside in the area. This opened the way to the operation of apartments or hostels, where a large number of people accumulated in a small space. The new law foresees that the maximum rent will be set according to the usual amount in the given place. In reality, there is a risk that with a fall in income for “human misery traders”, which will not pay for the operation of hostels, there will be a group of people who will have nowhere to go and who will end up on the street.

Housing” in March 2017. The project, which is scheduled to run until February 2020, aims to: (a) accelerate the pace of assistance, (b) start tackling the situations of those most in need—families with children and those who are at risk of losing the roof over their heads.¹¹ In other words, the project targeted primarily those who were not yet chronically homeless—those who were close to losing their housing and those living in extremely disadvantageous housing conditions in hostels, sometimes with children.

Implementation of the Social Housing project reflected a dispute over who should be eligible for assistance, the criteria used to determine eligibility and what form the actual process of housing allocation should take. This is a common issue in any city that is even willing to address the issue of homeless inclusion (e.g. Hansen Löffstrand and Juhila, 2012). The impacts of this pilot project, as well as a closer look at its first phase, are discussed later.

Research Design

Approach, strategy and methods

To address this research, a qualitative method and case study strategy were used (Yin, 2013). The study employs a multi-method design, including participant observation, narrative interviews with residents of the homeless hostels and semi-structured interviews. Data were obtained in the following steps: (1) Unstructured and subsequently semi-structured interviews with service clients, random selection with practitioners via snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012); (2) In-depth interviews with clients (24 interviews), interviews with practitioners: with social workers from non-profit organisations (NGOs) and organisations linked to the city (5 interviews) who have been working long term in the field and interviews with politicians (3 interviews).

A total of 24 interviews were conducted in cooperation with field workers from the organisation Ponton and twenty selected hostels were visited. All residents in each homeless hostel were asked what caused them to be homeless (this question served as a filter). Only respondents who selected ‘other’ as their response to this question (i.e. they did not select any of the pre-formulated reasons: high rent, easier to find money to live in a hostel, being in rent arrears, divorce, separation, widowhood, the housing provider lost their housing, retirement) were asked whether they would participate in an in-depth interview. The aim was to find respondents whose main reason for dwelling in hostels was not due to debt. As I will show later, this factor significantly complicates one’s chances of acquiring social housing.

¹¹ For exact conditions regarding the selection of tenants for vacant social housing owned by the city, see <https://soubor.plzen.eu/situace/default/546> [quoted on 8 September 2019].

Overall, 105 respondents from 16 hostels (4 of which were shelters) were approached. Of the 105 respondents approached, 40 had selected 'other' as their reason for homelessness. Of these, 24 were willing to participate in an in-depth interview, the purpose of which was to determine why they had lost their housing, thereby discovering how much they knew about the Social Housing project started by the municipality of Pilsen.

The data gathered were analysed according to the principles of thematic analysis (Ezzy, 2002) and grounded theory (Alasuutari, 1995; Charmaz, 2006). All interviews were recorded with the informed consent of the interviewees and served as the basis for a separate analysis. The recruiting of respondents began in December 2017. The first interviews with respondents were conducted in January 2018 and continued until April 2018. All interviews were conducted in private at hours and in places recommended by the participants, who were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. The research followed ethical codes and guidelines (Punch, 2014).

Findings

Need versus merit

The problem of launching the Housing First pilot project is expected to be multi-layered. Conflicts between DSS and the Housing Department (HD) appear to arise due to disputes concerning the criteria for merit and necessity. While the DSS emphasised *necessity* (as implied by HF principles) when implementing the project, the HD, despite all possible efforts and discussions with its representatives and political superiors, strictly applied the principle of *merit*.

On the one hand, there were proclamatory statements that seemed unambiguous in their intentions, and even came from the mouths of those political representatives who have an impact on the progress of the implementation: "*The pilot project is to help show that we care about these people and who needs the most help [i.e. the allocation of a flat in a social housing project]*" (Politician). In practice, however, it turned out that even the so-called most needy (without a clear consensus as to who they are and how to differentiate them) must go through a selection process that complicated the original practice (merit) because the criteria used to define need and merit became muddled, leading to a confusing situation for all stakeholders.

The issue of trust

The Social Housing project was born out of great complication, and the DSS encountered distrust from several sides—primarily the NGO and political representatives—during its implementation. The distrust of NGOs stemmed from long-standing tensions between them and the DSS. However, this distrust was lessened during the preparation and launch of the project, and at least some of the NGOs granted the DSS a degree of legitimacy and merit. As one of the NGO's workers put it:

We knew that the Social Services Department had an 'in the drawer' project that they didn't want to tell anyone about. This was the amendment (and change in the payment of social benefits), and we didn't know how the city would approach it. And we were very afraid of the attitude of the housing department, because we had the experience we have. (...) But then, we saw that the department knows what it is doing, understands those people, understands the stories, understands how individual, fickle it is, how difficult dealing with the employment office is, how unreliable the benefits are, and actually how problematic are the performance, debt, and so on, (...) There was a bit of confusion at the beginning of the project, the criteria of admission to the project were not quite clear, and so on, but I judged that we couldn't do better either, because actually there couldn't be justice in the allocation. (NGO)

Deservingness

NGO officials recognized, albeit with repeated reservations, the meaningfulness of the DSS's intention. The project was perceived even less favourably by the city's political representatives. The intention of helping homeless people was questioned by the public and elements of the city's management. In their view, because they do not want to work and they have accumulated debt, homeless people are solely responsible for their situation. This seemed especially true considering the economic boom. They refused to argue that if one does not have a roof over one's head or faces ending up on the street, one's need to repay one's debts is zero.

In addition, politicians expressed fear of losing support for homeless people by losing the support of the majority of the city's population, because the electorate could (and still do) conclude that politicians betray them: someone undeserving, without the necessary merits, is being helped. The neoliberal discourse that dominates the Czech environment (Krčál, 2017) ignores/conceals the fact that social, cultural and economic capital is distributed and reproduced asymmetrically among population groups. People who get stuck in the lowest social levels find it increasingly difficult, even in the strongly egalitarian Czech Republic, to escape the lowest social levels, a goal which is strongly correlated with educational aspirations and the very few opportunities that exist (Hamplová and Katrňák, 2018).

The reserved attitudes of the city's political representatives towards solving the problem of homelessness translate into terminological disputes or grow into discursive fights. The town hall management, represented in this case by housing, considers and identifies practically all flats offered by the city as social housing. This attitude is the result of economic considerations. Representatives of the HD, and politicians associated with it, pointed out that private sector flats in the city are rented for 100 to 200 CZK (€3.80 to €7.60) per square metre, while the city rented its best flats for 82 CZK (€3.10) per square metre. For dwellings which are catego-

alized with a coefficient of 1.0 or lower—in which the coefficient reflects the quality of the house/flat—rental prices are even lower. In comparison with the private sector, the representatives of the city and the HD consider virtually all three thousand flats owned and rented by the city to be social housing.

Decision making

Implementation of the DSS social housing project was begun in this context. However, the HD continued to have a decisive influence on the process of allocating flats to selected candidates. As the DSS does not itself have any flats that it could offer at its discretion, no decision could be made without the participation of the HD.

This fact has significantly influenced the attitudes of both NGOs and hostels for the poor, who viewed the HD with extreme suspicion.. Resentment towards the HD results from a lack of clarity in assigning points when assessing whether a flat applicant (standard/social) meets the set conditions (such as proof of income, indebtedness, number of potential household members, etc.).

Until now, any de facto citizen of the city seeking a city flat applied to the HD, which assessed the applicant on the basis of the set criteria.¹² The applicant was subsequently informed in writing of the number of points he had earned and whether or not he was entitled to the flat. Alternatively, he would be told how many people are ahead of him on the waiting list for a city flat. Key criteria included lack of debt, criminal integrity and proof of income.

The main problem, however, is that the overwhelming majority of people staying in hostels do not have sufficient education to understand all of the administrative and legal requirements of the application process. In many cases, they did not even understand the meaning of the score they had been assigned. As a result, the only information that was comprehensible to them was that they had not been allocated their flat, and that there were a number of people on the waiting list ahead of them. Mostly, their next step was to wait passively, comforted perhaps by the fact that ‘there are only 42 waiting, and the city has a lot of flats, so I think it will work out in time’ (Respondent from the hostel). Another reason why respondents did not consider submitting a new application, even when their circumstances had changed (getting a job, birth of another child, etc.) was because they were not able to deduce from the written notification what they could do to improve their chances. If they did not ask for help from social workers, their chances of changing the office’s decision or appeal would be lost.

¹² https://www.plzen.eu/urad/vyridte-si-na-uradu/o_9/skupina_mmp/oblast-bytova-9.aspx [quoted on 10 September 2019].

Role of indebtedness

The reasons for not doing so can often be linked to the existence of a debt to the city. It is this debt that represents a key point of controversy in the introduction/rejection of the HF concept, or its modified form in the social housing pilot project. When introducing the social housing project, the city decided to reduce the strict requirements for indebtedness. As of 1 June 2018, the rule that stipulated complete indebtedness as a condition for application was removed. The applicant, plus possible roommates or family, can owe up to 30000 CZK (€1 154). However, the applicant must acknowledge the debt, make arrangements for a repayment schedule and receive the support of a social worker to help the family in debt management and social inclusion.

The problem is that this rule of acceptance of 'acceptable debt' was not yet in force at the time of data collection, and was only shared among a narrow circle of those 'in the know'. In addition, although the tolerance of 30000 CZK (€1 154) debt can be seen as a shift in the right direction, representing the first penetration of HF principles into the homelessness agenda, it is still very difficult to overcome this limit in the examined environment. Two social workers described why potential applicants for social housing (affordable housing in general) do not bother trying:

Why are they afraid to try it [submit another request]? We know it from the ground. X times we came with the client to the transport companies, that we wanted to get the client out of debt, that he wants to start repaying for one of those times he was caught by an inspector, and that he can pay 200 CZK (€7.60) per month. But it began to happen that they [bailiffs] noticed the man by starting to repay one of his debts, and then they just went ahead with the execution of the bailiff's order. I am convinced that there is a long-term business with the city's receivables, with the debt being sold to friendly lawyers and then to bailiffs. This concerns many millions, even hundreds of millions in business. It is an economic leverage; the city should recover the debt, and not resell it. We dealt with some of these debts x times. That is, they don't actually ask, because they're going to report to bailiffs, and that would tell them. (Social worker)

Because as soon as he finds out how big the enemy is, suddenly the fear will be justified. They poke their heads in the sand. And he knows he has debts, but yesterday nobody confronted them, not today either, so tomorrow probably not either. What about me, what can they take? Nothing, why would I deal with it? (Social worker)

The anticipated debt to the city, along with the ignorance of its size (in view of the continuously increasing penalties), leads to the adoption of passive tactics to solve life's problems. The debts and the 'enforcement policy' of the city, which sells debts to bailiffs linked to them, are de facto an insurmountable obstacle for applicants for

urban flats. Respondents expressed fear and desperation of such a situation and reported the bailiff's harshness and stubbornness in recovering the debts.

Lack of information

In addition to debt, which is the biggest obstacle, the complicated disclosure of information about the project in progress has proven to be another barrier to improving the situation. Information about the project among those to whom it was primarily addressed received only fragmentary information indirectly through several filters (non-profit, roommates, relatives, etc.). The information was contaminated with a number of 'side-effects'. This unclear and incomplete disclosure of information led to respondents from hostels being unable to distinguish between an application for a city flat and an application for a social flat. The inability to distinguish is quite understandable: the standard rhetoric of both politicians and the HD included the claim that all flats are actually social housing.

The answer to the question as to why information about the project 'leaked' gradually and was not declared adequately and comprehensibly from the beginning, has a rather trivial explanation. It turns out that DSS was given space to carry out the project under preparation, but with a very limited number of 35 flats. DSS did not know how large a number it would have to accommodate, or even when. Only over a year after the start of the project did it become known that the dwellings allocated to the 'project fund' would number at most fifty, but it has never been made clear when and how they will be ready for habitation. There was, therefore, a concern on the DSS side that direct disclosure would lead to an overwhelming number of applications for the flats, a reference to the necessity criterion that accompanies allocation of a social flat. The intention was therefore not to generate demand that could not be met from the outset. The DSS wanted to prevent any initial complications from jeopardising the implementation of the project, and not provide excuses for critics of the project.

This led to another unintended effect. The gradual leakage of project information among homeless hostels and shelters resulted in the interviewees becoming convinced that the flats were now ready, which increased their chances of getting them. This created a false hope, albeit unintentionally, that prompted an even greater degree of disappointment in an already frustrated environment.

Yeah, I have an income, so we have something to pay it with. So I hope it works out. And as I hear, there are people who have a flat in a few months and get a flat. Well, now, as if I were interested in getting a flat, we would arrange it. So maybe it will work out quickly, when the flats are for us, what we need it.
(Respondent from a homeless hostel)

The increased expectations of hostel respondents were further fuelled by the 'whisper' that getting a flat would only be a matter of time—flats would be given to all who ask, it was claimed, including foreigners (especially Slovaks). This fiction was rooted in another misunderstanding of the situation, itself a result of mixed messaging from various sources. It was based on the experiences of clients who had received information from their relatives in the town of Rokycany, who, according to their testimonies, were supposed to easily obtain social flats. Two facts demonstrate the transmission of this information between related families and friendly individuals.

A large number of the people in hostels are of the Roma ethnic group, which is broadly linked by family ties, regardless of nationality to Czechs or Slovaks, and the town of Rokycany, with a large Roma group, is less than 20km from Pilsen. The inhabitants of this city commute to Pilsen for work. However, the social policy of the city of Rokycany is distinct from that of the City of Pilsen. This fact was unknown to the respondents, who assumed that when a small town such as Rokycany (15000 inhabitants) operates social housing, then a similar process must be operating in Pilsen.

Application process

The shift in the introduction of social housing has now (September 2019) taken on the following form. As in the case of an application for any city flat, the applicant for a social flat must continue to submit a written application in accordance with the rules laid down by the city's HD. This application is scored, and based on the data provided it is determined whether or not there is a housing shortage. A DSS social worker examines the facts for those applicants assessed as a risk group—that is, the level of need of the person seeking housing and if that person has been excluded from housing. If the social worker finds that the applicant is in compliance with the intentions and rules laid down for social housing, then his/her application is again submitted to the HD for processing.

However, the unintended consequence is that the process of selection (assistance) has been significantly complicated. If the applicant had previously demonstrated his 'merit' (no debts, city citizen, etc.), which was quantified on a point-by-point basis, a combination of 'merit' and 'necessity' has now taken place. The social worker is supposed to determine the veracity of the data during the first round, but also assess the need for this information to be communicated to homeless people or people at risk of homelessness.

In summary, the one-round process (request → result) has become a three-round process: (1) The submission of a written application, which is assessed according to the set criteria, is therefore based on the principle of merit (point system). At the time of the research, it was planned to include a box on the form where the applicant

would describe and identify his/her difficult situation; (2) The HD then assesses the application and, if it is determined that the applicant meets the necessary criteria, submits the relevant applications to the Social Services Department to assess the situation. In the course of the research, the applicant's declared difficulties were verified on the basis of the necessity principle. Applications assessed as relevant and needing an urgent solution are recommended to the HD; (3) at this point, the HD is supposed to assess and respond to the applicant's situation. However, this application goes through yet another assessment which, on the basis of the testimony of people from the HD, is again assessed through the prism of merit.

Role of patronage

This obstacle course found the applicants unable to comprehend the rules; the necessity criteria were similarly confusing. This is in addition to seeking out a patron who would support their criteria of need. Without the patronage of 'influential' characters, they had no chance of success.

Just when the project started. And then when the first flats were distributed [author's note: within the project of social housing], I asked the other colleagues to send me their most urgent cases. We created more like a story itinerary, and actually I went to a personal meeting with Mrs. XXX, I asked her for a meeting, and there I introduced her to the individual families, and she somehow checked the facts, found out the information, together their social workers made a social investigation of those families. (Social worker)

Patronage? Of course it works; we are walking proof, we social workers. I see it both in my former work and in the present day. For example, it still happens to me, and my colleagues do not like me in quotes, like, "Yeah, you are XXX", and that's a guarantee, and it's like a good one. On the contrary, it happens that the patronage in fact works also towards the authorities. That actually the longer the person is there, the more it works. (Social worker)

During implementation of the social housing project, patrons were primarily members of non-profit organisations working in the field. They intervened in favour of their client in the DSS, which checks the criteria of necessity. Other times, they tried to directly address the deputy responsible for the construction department. He then turned to the DSS in an effort to solve the situation, but not through 'his' building department, which insisted on the point system of housing allocation (merit). This gave rise to non-system solutions. And while the whole system appeared to implement the HF principles to weaken the principle of merit in favour of the necessity principle, the building department's key influence in addressing the emergency situations of homeless people and people at risk of homelessness continued.

One of the solutions considered was to set up a team of assessors (two for the DSS, two for the HD) who were to assess applications for social housing and decide the level of necessity. In the event of a tie, it was assumed that the councillor responsible for the building department would decide.

The process relied not only on the applicant's own situation, but above all the role of 'his' patron. After the resolution of disputes between the DSS and NGOs as to the implicit and explicit merits of a social housing project, there are still NGOs whose reputation and influence on the town hall is greater than that of other NGOs. This is reflected in the strategies used by applicants when submitting their applications for social housing. As the strength of a patron (whether a particular individual, such as a social worker, or a particular organisation) and his reputation gradually became part of the shared knowledge among groups living in hostels, they adopted a number of strategies. With social housing applications in hand, they turned to multiple organisations at the same time, believing that this would increase their chances of success. On the contrary, such actions have led to a slowdown, if not a blockage, because the authorities (NGOs, but also the Social Department, OSPOD, Employment Office, etc.) considered this to be a scheme or an unnecessary burden on the system.

The patronage system exists not only in the minds of those clients seeking a strong patron, but also in the strategies of the NGOs. In the second quotation (above), the social worker implies that they are aware of patronage strategies, and seek to strengthen their role as patrons among the socially excluded. Since some non-profit organisations also depend on contributions from the city, which are redistributed by the DSS, the need to prove their indispensability becomes latent. This became apparent at the moment when NGO respondents emphasized their importance and appealed to the DSS for justice, who must see that their activities (concerning children, people with disabilities or the elderly, all at risk of losing their homes) are key, and should be given priority and guaranteed by the city (Váně, 2018b).

Homeless people's perception of need and merit

So far, I have described the implications of implementing the project for those managing the change. However, the unintended consequences of introducing social housing—that is, the process of allocating social housing—also manifested among applicants, whose statements included rationalisations for the criterion of need. A social housing project built primarily on the need-to-do principle leads everyone to believe that they are the neediest. At the same time, they advocate for their need based on confusion between the necessity and merit criteria (for example, whether they are staying in a hostel, or if someone has already had a hostel).

Respondents were repeatedly reminded that need was assessed on the basis of their life situation, which further reinforced their belief that they were the ones in need of the greatest help. Their own situation was always worse, even when compared to other respondents from the same hostel. Therefore, in order to be able to put forward a sufficient number of 'arguments', they legitimised their arguments by rationalising or re-assessing their situation through the lens of merit. Let's take a look at the following example:

So, I believe it will work. Certainly, if they can get those. Maybe my mum lives on XXX Street, and I was there yesterday. And there my dad was just saying that one woman with a guy and a baby got a flat. And they have one child. So why, when we have 3, no. And this is how I hear they get the flats, so it's not right now. And we've been here for a year, and nothing. The woman comes and gets one in a week. (Respondent from a hostel)

Another respondent said, "Hey, we've never had such a flat, so we're waiting now, yeah, and there's a family, a week or so. And she said she already had one, yeah sure, so now us again, right?"

Insufficiently comprehensible rules applied to the granting of social housing thereby created tensions within the group at risk of losing housing. As they perceived the need and merit criteria—they did not know the actual criteria used to make decisions—their rivals were primarily those who were in a similar situation and could be preferred ahead of them. Therefore, in order to understand the principle of necessity, they transformed it into the criterion of merit; when they applied it, they perceived the resulting situation as particularly unfair.

By combining two criteria (merit, need), the applicant had to combine at least two adaptation strategies. Since they did not understand how the criterion of necessity was applied, they continued to rationalise it according to the principle of merit. That is, they had proven their economic inadequacy to receive social benefits (e.g. by actively seeking work but failing or that their debt is manageable and they are therefore 'socially viable'). Merit is therefore connected to a demonstration of insufficiency that is still accepted by the assessors. At the same time, however, they noticed that the queue was falling apart and that waiting for a flat was no longer working. There were individuals/families who could "overtake" them in the queue. Necessity is a criterion to which they were unable to assign comprehensible parameters. Therefore, they had to create them according to their own cognitive maps. The necessity criterion was therefore re-translated into merit (waiting time, length of stay at the hostel, number of children, number of individuals ahead of them on the waiting list—although none of these was in any way related to the chance of obtaining social housing). The result was an increase in anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation.

Demonstrating the merit of “insufficiency” itself has been reinforced by the discovery that the story needs to be adequately retold. Due to lower levels of education, they required outside help (patron). After all, ticking boxes on the form (number of children, married/unmarried, etc.) is quite different from creating a convincing story of their destiny that will not be too similar to the narratives told by their fellows, who have now become their main rivals in the fight for a better position in the pursuit of social housing. In many situations, the authors of a correctly mediated story become patrons. Their ability to adequately recount the client’s story and get him in front of the right people significantly influences the chances of ‘overtaking’ others in the queue.

Other complications associated with the launch of the project (at the time of carrying out the research) were due to the fact that its implementation depended on two municipal departments, each applying different evaluation criteria. Attitudes about the (lack of) success concerning implementation were strongly influenced by the opinions of deputies from different political groupings. At the time of the research, the launch of the project was helped by a shift in the position of the councillor to the position for economic, housing and property management (under the HD), as well as the impulses of the Ministry of Social Affairs. This unblocked the situation and launched the Social Housing project. The question now is what the situation will look like after the pilot project expires, or in the event of a new councillor.

It is not surprising that all the actors concerned provided a solution to the situation of homelessness in relation to their housing situation or to the city’s housing policy. HF emphasises ordinary housing, which is scattered across ordinary neighbourhoods, as the means by which social integration is achieved. Implementation of the Social Housing pilot project could not come about without the co-operation of the housing department (HD), which controls the supply and availability of flats owned by the city. The project that was developed and implemented by DSS was, and is, unconditionally dependent on the decisions of the HD. Efforts to ensure that social integration takes place—including a sense of security and belonging fully to the community (Padgett, 2007)—have been influenced in the course of implementation by two completely different intentions. The result, when put into practice, was a more complicated social housing project.

Conclusion

The implementation of the pilot project had a number of consequences, the most important of which were: (a) Clients/homeless people who could not distinguish between a social housing project and a standard application submitted to a HD; (b) When pursuing their goal (a flat for the client), the influence of the “patron” is a significant deciding factor; (c) The role of the patron leads to indirect competition for merit among non-profit organisations. The necessity criterion to ensure the chances of homeless people or those at risk of homelessness has led to an even stronger emphasis on the merit of non-profit organisations. They covertly seek to promote their client in acquiring a social housing project flat, thereby demonstrating their need and influence, as the chances of obtaining social housing without their support is minimal.

The situation surrounding the launch of the 2017 social housing project undoubtedly involved the best intentions. But the DSS delivered as much as possible in the existing milieu, and put them among the Scylla (political unwillingness to solve the situation or demonstrative visits to hostels and the pursuit of political points, the fight against the weakest) and the Charybdis (the pressure of non-profit organisations demanding solutions to the situation, of course best according to the principles and values of each non-profit organisation).

At present (September 2019), after taking into account feedback provided by NGOs and research reports (Váně, 2018b), the DSS has tried to clarify and make more transparent exactly who is entitled to a social flat and under what conditions. The system remains three-wheeled, aiming to introduce elements associated with Housing First, thereby maintaining the principle of necessity. Nevertheless, it is clear that this second step (necessity) has been defined with more precise quantifying criteria.¹³

Apart from the social situation and climate, the result of introducing the initial phase of the social housing project was reminiscent of the untapped Hardin experiment.¹⁴ However, there is still the threat that widespread public resentment concerning

¹³ ‘A person in need of housing is also a person who lives alone or together with the persons with whom he is assessed, spends more than 40% of eligible income on housing, 1.6 times the subsistence minimum under the subsistence minimum subsistence law, and at the same time is/are not able to solve this difficult situation on the housing market themselves. The social worker shall assess whether the applicant is indeed in a housing shortage on the basis of a social investigation with the applicant for social housing, and on the basis of an analysis of the application for a flat.’ <https://soubor.plzen.eu/situace/default/546> [quoted on 10 September 2019].

¹⁴ Thought Experiment: 60 people on a lifeboat, 150 people (castaways) asking for help. If they take them all aboard, they all perish; that is, rescuing all the needy (helping everyone) will lead to the total extinction of the ship/aid collapse (Hardin, 1974, pp. 562).

helping homeless people, who are regarded by most as predominantly ‘trouble-makers’, and the difficulty of a good citizen (referring to Hardin’s experiment), only reinforces the feeling that the ‘life raft is full’ attitude will grow stronger. This is despite the fact that the Czech Republic is doing extremely well, economically. The moment an economic downturn occurs and poverty strikes again, these weakest groups will see a resurgence of attacks. At the same time, any further failures or conflicts regarding the allocation of housing to the needy (both among clients and among NGOs as patrons and the DSS) will, given the persistent multi-level ‘needy’ selection procedure, increase the chances of failure. Given the short duration of the project, an evaluation of the success of the inclusion of selected individuals/families has not yet been the subject of investigation.

The clash between two groups of people who attempt to help people in social need—whether in the media or represented by specific political groups—is a clash between supporters of those who call for unconditional help for people in social need and supporters of those who have worked and contributed to health and social security, but have always been on the edge of poverty. Whether they are from the working class or because they are connected to some type of disadvantage (spatial, economic, educational) that reduces their chances of better life. In addition, they feel deceived: no one is helping them and their lives continue to be evaluated through the lens of merit.

Successful introduction of social housing in Pilsen will not be possible without significant political support and appropriate legislation. In the vast majority of cases, however, the state (albeit influenced by national legislation) leaves this burden on the shoulders of the cities. However, it is the cities that influence the design and size of localities at risk of attracting concentrations of individuals living in or at risk of social exclusion (Brizolit, 2019). In addition, it is impossible to achieve a shift in tackling the general homelessness problem without changing societal perceptions and attitudes. Attempts to tackle homelessness without relying on the effectiveness of Housing First and the enforcement of social housing law will remain dependent on the enthusiasm and perseverance of small groups such as non-profit organisations and competent local authorities.

Appendix No. 1. The Definition of Homelessness in Czech Republic Legislation

In Czech legislation, the issue of homelessness is generally closely tied to the issue of housing provision. However, this is not a coherent general definition of the term homelessness. While there are several laws that deal with homelessness, they do so only tangentially and without an obvious definition of the term. When the issue is viewed through the lens of Czech legislation, there are several perspectives on who can be defined as a homeless person and what homelessness is, but there is no single unifying line.

According to *Act No. 40/1993 Coll. on acquiring and losing state citizenship of the Czech Republic, as amended*, a person without state citizenship is defined as a homeless person (§ 3). In conformity with *Act No. 133/2000 Coll., on the registration of inhabitants and identification numbers, as amended* (§ 10), from the perspective of an individual's permanent place of residence on the territory of the state, a homeless person is someone whose permanent place of residence is the registration office in the district in which the person was born. From the perspective of considering a person's domicile or dwelling, homeless persons are also mentioned in *Act No. 108/2006 Coll. on Social Services, as amended*, which works with the expressions 'persons without shelter' (§ 61, 63, 69) or 'persons in difficult social circumstances in connection with having lost their housing' (§ 57).

From the perspective of Czech legislation, it is also possible to group homeless persons into different categories: (a) socially maladjusted, physical persons, in conformity with *Act No. 435/2004 Coll. on employment, as amended* (§ 33); (b) persons who find themselves in material need, in conformity with *Act No. 111/2006 Coll. on assistance in material need, as amended*; and (c) persons who have difficulties in terms of being able to attain the living and subsistence minimum, in conformity with *Act No. 110/2006 Coll. on living and subsistence minimum, as amended* (Hruška, 2012: 6).

From the examples presented above, it is clear that Czech legislation does not work with a satisfactory definition that specifies how the term should be used and what it denotes. It is for this reason that the ETHOS typology, prepared by the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), seems to be the most appropriate option.

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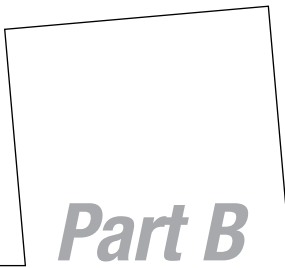
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Research Notes



Part B



Homelessness in Germany

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- **Abstract_** *This report summarises the results of a large nationwide study of homelessness in Germany, funded by the German government. The overview about extent and causes of homelessness, service structures and the policy recommendations of the study are based on an online survey of more than 500 selected local authorities, Jobcenters and NGO services, 12 local case studies and 31 interviews of people who have experienced homelessness. The recommendations include among others to strengthen prevention efforts, to overcome the barriers blocking access to permanent housing and to introduce minimum standards for shelters and other types of temporary accommodation.*
- **Keywords_** *Germany, nationwide study, extent of homelessness, policy recommendations, homeless refugees*

Introduction

The following report about homelessness in Germany¹ summarises the results of a nationwide study funded by the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The *Gesellschaft für innovative Sozialforschung und Sozialplanung e. V.* (GISS) [Association for innovative social research and social planning] conducted a nationwide study from September 2017 to June 2019 examining the “causes, development and structures of homelessness and strategies to prevent and eliminate it”. The last comparable study was conducted 15 years ago. A total of 551

¹ This research note is a revised and translated version of a summary first published in *Nachrichtendienst des deutschen Vereins für öffentliche und private Fürsorge* 11, 2019, pp.487–492. The translation was done by Marie-Ruth Henke.

autonomous cities, cities and municipalities within administrative districts, counties, NGO services for homeless people, and Jobcenters were surveyed in the course of an online inquiry. The 12 districts of Berlin, and the Berlin Senate Administration were included as well. The following quantitative results are based on the data provided by the 414 localities (75 per cent) that answered the comprehensive online survey. During the second half of the study, as part of in-depth case studies, experts at twelve selected localities were interviewed about the local organisation and procedures in their aid to people experiencing housing emergencies. Finally, the evaluation team reconstructed individual case histories by interviewing 31 people who were experiencing homelessness at the time or had experienced homelessness in the past.

This multi-perspective approach made it possible to establish a connection between individual biographies and circumstances of people experiencing homelessness on the one hand, and municipal and independently organised support systems on the other: What are the risk factors that result in insecure living situations? To what degree are people in Germany affected by homelessness? What are individual providers of housing emergency support doing to recognise personal or structural risk factors and prevent impending homelessness? How are they reacting to the state of the housing market, and are they successful in eliminating homelessness? And finally: Do the results suggest points of action for successful intervention by the welfare state on all political levels. The study put particular emphasis on recent developments like the impact of an influx in refugees and immigrants. Lastly the study aimed to fill gaps in knowledge regarding homelessness in the East German states. The result of this study is a current and complete overview of the problems faced in housing emergency intervention and relief structures for people threatened and affected by homelessness in the Federal Republic of Germany²; some of the crucial findings are presented here.

² The complete study (in German) can be viewed as "Forschungsbericht 534" on the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs website (<https://www.bmas.de/DE/Service/Medien/Publikationen/Forschungsberichte/Forschungsberichte-Arbeitsmarkt/fb534-entstehung-verlauf-struktur-von-wohnungslosigkeit-und-strategien-zu-vermeidung-und-behebung.html>) or on GISS website (www.giss-ev.de).

337 000 People in Germany are Without a Home

It is not a new insight that the number of people affected by homelessness grows with the size of the city: homelessness has always been primarily an urban issue. The GISS study ascertained the point-in-time number of homeless people in the participating municipalities as of May 31, 2018; the survey categories were informed by the well-established homelessness statistics of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

In the nine surveyed large cities with a population of over 500 000 – among them the city states Berlin, Hamburg, and Bremen – approximately 8.6 out of every 1 000 citizens had no home. In cities with a population up to 500 000 the share was 5.3. In the participating small towns and rural municipalities with up to 20 000 citizens, the density was “only” 2.4 homeless people for every 1 000 residents; many small communities reported no cases of homelessness. Their everyday experience with comparatively low case numbers leads many actors in small towns and in rural areas to believe that special efforts to prevent and eliminate homelessness are expendable. But especially in medium sized cities (affiliated with administrative districts) with up to 100 000 residents, support systems showed difficulties to adequately react to the housing emergencies of their citizens. In these cities, 3.1 out of every 1 000 people were homeless. For an average city with 50 000 residents, this would mean that 155 people are without a home – too many to forgo preventative measures and qualified support.

The largest group of people experiencing homelessness were refugees with protection status, who had not yet been able to find independent housing (despite having full entitlement to job seekers benefits with a housing component and full rights to rent a home). Depending on the size of the municipalities, between 1.1 (small towns and rural counties) and 4.0 (large cities) refugees with protection status out of every 1 000 residents were homeless. The data in the participating municipalities also indicates that these numbers are significantly lower in the east German states when compared to the west – this can partially be explained by the fact that for a long time housing markets in the East were more affordable than those of West Germany, which at least temporarily made it easier to find housing for refugee families with protection status specifically.

Based on the empirical research in the participating municipalities, an informed estimation of the number of homeless people within the Federal Republic of Germany was possible. According to this, on 31 May 2018, a minimum of 337 000 people in Germany did not have access to a contractually secured housing situation. The people were staying in public shelters, or in an accommodation project of NGO services for homeless people in accordance with §§ 67 sqq. social code, book XII (social assistance), or they had recourse to counselling by such services, without

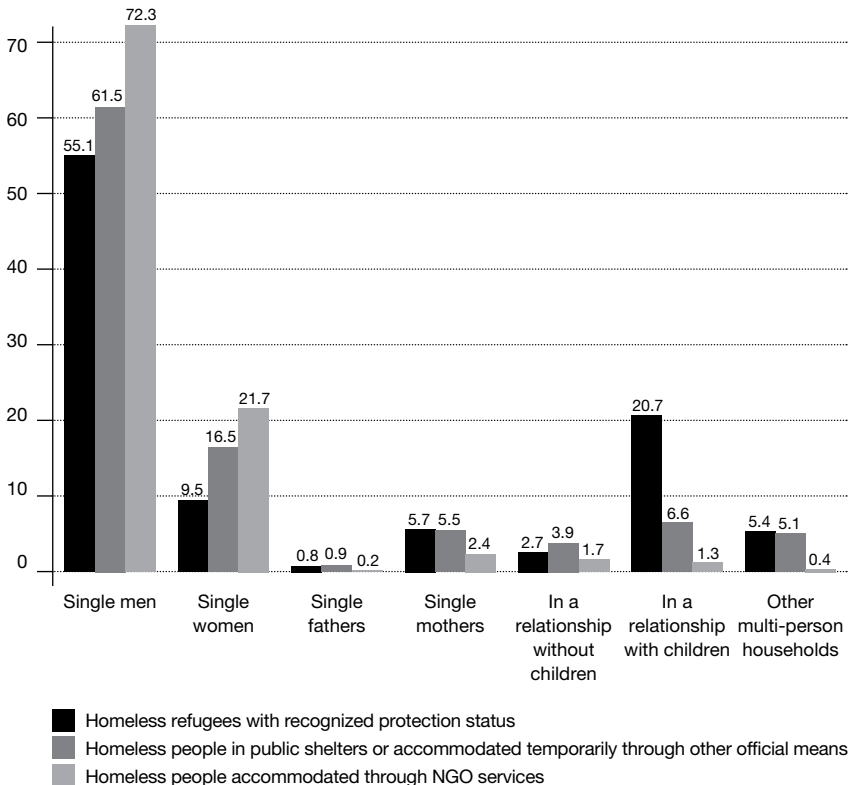
having housing. Refugees with protection status, who had not been able to move into independently secured housing despite recognition of their status, were counted as well. A considerable number of unknown cases remains: people not in contact with institutionalised support systems could not be counted. This is especially true for persons who temporarily stay with friends or acquaintances, women who choose dependence on a male provider of housing over governmental support, and people who live on the street without any contact with welfare institutions.

Singles Disproportionately Affected – A Minimum of a Quarter of the Homeless Population is Underage

Even though the number of multi-person households among the homeless has increased with the growth of homeless refugees with international protection status entering the housing emergency systems, single people still make up the overwhelming majority (see figure 1 below). The share of single households was especially high in services provided by NGOs (94 per cent). On the cut-off date, 78 per cent of households in public shelters were single households.

Among the homeless refugees with protection status, 65 per cent of households were single households. Their 20.7 per cent share of homeless families was significantly higher than for the shelter population without refugee background, and for homeless people provided with accommodation through NGO services (approximately 7 per cent each). In May 2018, approximately every fourth person in a government accommodation facility was underage (27 per cent); among the refugee population this number reached 37 per cent. Depending on the group, a quarter to a third of homeless people are women. About 6 per cent of households among the refugees with protection status and households in official shelters were single parents with their children.

FIGURE 1: Current homeless population by type of household 2018 (in per cent)



Source: Busch-Geertsema, V., Henke, J. and A. Steffen (2019): Entstehung, Verlauf und Struktur von Wohnungslosigkeit und Strategien zu ihrer Vermeidung und Behebung. BMAS-Forschungsbericht 534, S. 112.

Causes of Homelessness

There are a number of risk factors that can result in a housing emergency situation. Often biographical turning points and personal crises – the death of a family member, job loss, illness, or domestic violence – play an important role. Institutional negligence like an unprepared prison release or sanctions of job seeker allowances elevate the risk of becoming homeless. But in the end there are two factors that are most decisive: low income and medical issues.

The overwhelming majority of cases of threatened homelessness reported to municipalities in the year 2017 were a result of issues with rent payments. In that year, 85 per cent of households who lost their home did so because failure to make rent payments resulted in eviction proceedings. 64 per cent of households at risk of homelessness were unable to pay rent even though they were receiving benefits

on the basis of social code, book II (SGB II, unemployment assistance for jobseekers). Households who rely on low mixed incomes and have to manage multiple and/or changing sources of income – e.g. a minimum wage pay check or alimony payments, and benefit transfers – are at a noticeably higher risk of becoming homeless. In the case studies, experts named young adults in the transition between school and work and single mothers as high-risk groups.

Risk increases when people who are already in a financially precarious situation, also suffer from health issues that impact their ability to practice self care and navigate everyday life. In the in-person interviews a significant majority of people who had experienced homelessness reported serious physical or mental illnesses as factors in the loss of their home. The interviewees described severe depression and suicidality during their crisis. Those affected broke off contact with the outside world for the most part, and could not be reached in writing, because they did not open their mail. Such cases highlight the importance of preventative measures (including home visits), since reintegrating people suffering from mental illness into a normal living situation once they have become homeless is universally regarded as very difficult. The experiences of interviewed experts confirm the high vulnerability of this group.

A majority of people who lost their homes and were not in contact with a welfare institution, initially lived in hidden homelessness, by temporarily staying with friends, acquaintances, or family members. Because of inadequate standards, misinformation, shame, or fear of stigmatisation, public shelters were (initially) avoided, even if the affected were aware of them. For a majority of the interviewees who had experienced homelessness, two years (valuable time for reintegration) passed before they sought out contact with an institution of the welfare systems.

Inadequate Housing Standards

Cities and municipalities are legally responsible for providing people experiencing homelessness with a roof over their heads. A considerable number of people accommodated this way were refugees, who, despite recognition of their international protection status, initially remained in the group homes intended for asylum seekers.

The law does not specify standards regarding the quality and equipment of public shelters for homeless people. This is one of the reasons why vast disparities exist between different localities. While cities and municipalities with access to “normal” living space use their own or rental apartments for temporary accommodation of homeless people, elsewhere these are accommodated in containers. Almost two thirds of shelters only accommodate “non-local” German homeless people for a few of days, if at all, among other reasons out of fear of attracting more people in

need. Homeless citizens of the European Union overwhelmingly are excluded from aid, and are instead directed towards the welfare systems in their country of origin. Only 17 per cent of autonomous cities and a quarter of municipalities affiliated with administrative districts indicated that they accommodate persons in this category without strict time limitations. Some cities only accept this group of people in winter emergency shelters. Especially in larger cities, transregional solutions were needed.

Homeless people who were also suffering from a mental illness often could not be accommodated according to their needs. People without a full understanding of their illness, as well as people suffering from addiction were explicitly named as inadequately supported groups. Also, wheelchair accessible accommodation options could only be provided in very few municipalities. The surveyed institutions urgently called for accommodation and shelter options specifically for women, or single-sex shelter options.

There is No Alternative to Prevention

In order to protect the human dignity of people experiencing homelessness, adequate public housing options are indispensable. More important still are preventative measures aimed at avoiding homelessness before it even occurs. The German civil code (BGB) suggests a number of solutions in the case that a rental agreement is terminated due to failure to pay rent. It grants deferment periods of eviction, and in cases of a serious threat to life or health it even grants stays of eviction. According to both German social assistance code (social code, book XII – SGB XII) and to unemployment assistance for jobseekers (social code, book II – SGB II), welfare providers can, or even have to take on their clients' rental debt (usually as a loan), if said client is at risk of homelessness. If an action for eviction based on rental debt is filed with a district court, both welfare providers should be informed. Particularly during times of tense housing markets there is no alternative to preventative measures – even for economic reasons.

The findings of this study suggest that the smaller the cities and municipalities are, the weaker their support networks are, especially in regards to preventative measures. About half of autonomous cities had implemented a “central specialist unit” after the model promoted the German Association of Cities (DST)³ that concentrates into one specialised administrative unit the authority to take on rental debt, provide in-person, at home counselling, shelter, and support for reintegration

³ Deutscher Städtetag (ed. 1987): *Sicherung der Wohnungsversorgung in Wohnungsnotfällen und Verbesserung der Lebensbedingungen in sozialen Brennpunkten* [German Association of Cities (ed.) *Securing Housing Provision in Cases of Urgent Need of Housing and Improvement of Living Conditions in Social Focus Points – Recommendations and Advice*], Colon.

into normal living spaces. Often municipal authorities are ill equipped to provide comprehensive preventative care, and district affiliated cities as well as county administrations that operate by a specialised scheme are the exception. In 51 per cent of autonomous cities and in only one county, rental debt relief under social code, book II had been delegated to municipal agencies, so as to bundle all prevention responsibilities in one entity.

For the included cities and municipalities, the survey established a density of 5.8 households threatened by homelessness out of every 1 000 households. With a share of 14.6 per cent, single mothers were significantly over-represented. On average, the households threatened by homelessness had 1.8 members. Every fifth person threatened by homelessness was still a minor, while about every tenth person was above the age of 60.

In about 63 per cent of cases in which the outcome was known to the responsible institutions, municipal agencies had been able to prevent homelessness. Even though rental debt is the most common cause of impending homelessness, agencies only took on debt in a minority of cases. Apparently it was often possible to find alternative solutions, for example in the form of deferred payment plans. In about a third of cases, it was either not possible to prevent the loss of a home, the impacted households found a solution independently, or the outcome of the case was unknown.

The case studies showed that the administrations charged with prevention face two practical challenges.

Firstly, despite legal provisions, responsible agencies often do not become aware of impending homelessness in time: only the autonomous cities (including Berlin) reliably received reports from the district courts regarding eviction suits due to rental debt, and reports from bailiffs regarding eviction notices and dates. The responsible agencies in counties and municipalities, on the other hand, were not always made aware of impending homelessness in a timely manner. Municipalities often were only informed when eviction was imminent and the opportunity to prevent the home-loss were very low. Jobcenters learn of potential housing emergencies significantly earlier than other institutions in the local welfare systems – directly from the affected people. As providers of financial support they are often the first to be contacted by households at risk of becoming homeless. Since the study only found few indications of preventative measures at the Jobcenters' disposal being used to their full potential, it is imperative that they be fully integrated into the local welfare systems.

Secondly, the responsible agencies work with limited resources to facilitate in-person contact with clients. Initiating contact to households, who because of the reasons outlined earlier, do not seek it out themselves, in many cases requires

regular home visits. This could not always be provided to the degree deemed necessary by the responsible agencies. Generally households facing eviction are invited one or more times in writing. When families with children are threatened, home visits are possible. Especially singles are often excluded from in-person support, and according to reports in the case studies, were often immediately directed towards the shelter system. This suggests that (preventable) shortcomings in prevention efforts could potentially be a factor in the overrepresentation of single men – a “high risk group”– among the homeless population.

What are the Responsibilities of Independent Welfare Organisations?

Aid to overcome significant social difficulties according to §§ 67 sqq. social code, book XII is predominantly provided by NGO services. These however – despite potential individual legal entitlements to support – are not present everywhere, and there are large gaps in their networks.

In a majority of counties they only offered the most basic support: approximately two thirds (66 per cent) had a counselling office. Beyond that, the only widely implemented measure was care and counselling to clients in their own living space that about two thirds of counties (66 per cent) had access to. All other offers only existed in a minority of counties. In 40 per cent of autonomous cities and in 61 per cent of counties, there was only one NGO service to provide support to people threatened and affected by homelessness. This could indicate limited demand and specialised service, but it also means that people rarely have the chance to choose between different providers. The fact that not all organisations offer the same services additionally limits choices.

More than half of NGO services were integrated in municipal prevention efforts, about 46 per cent limited their work to people who were already homeless. In local support systems, NGO services often took on responsibilities for municipal temporary accommodation, as well as care for the people accommodated in their facilities. In 45 per cent of autonomous cities these organisations were tasked with street work. In counties, NGO services were more often charged with home visits than in autonomous cities – possibly an attempt to compensate for the fact that local offices can be hard to reach in rural areas.

Permanent Housing Provision – High Demand for Institutional Support

The people interviewed in person who had overcome homelessness had depended decisively on institutional aid and support. According to the interviewees in the municipal and independent agencies as well, there was no alternative to individual and in-person support in efforts to find housing – especially in the current condition of the housing market. In particular, prior rental debt and negative credit checks were named as almost insurmountable barriers to reintegration into permanent housing.

Eight out of ten participants of the online survey reported that reintegration of homeless people into permanent housing situations had become more difficult since 2015. A large majority of counties, municipalities, and NGO services did not have access to the tools needed to strategically provide housing for their clients. In the autonomous cities, these tools mostly consisted of access to publicly subsidised housing projects, as well as different forms of “trial living”, with and without the chance of permanency. Permanent housing for small households and (in smaller numbers) for very large households was particularly scarce.

Recommendations

The research report contains a number of detailed recommendations. One focal point is the strengthening of efforts to prevent homelessness. Municipalities are urged to implement and further develop specialist units into prevention oriented, cross-agency networks. These should ensure improved access to preventative measures (through early and data-secure information from housing providers, expansion of reporting duties for district courts, comprehensive information for affected households about support opportunities, increased home visits etc.), and inclusion of preventive measures in tenancy law. Within the framework of social code, book II (SGB II), rules and practice for service provision should also be focused more towards prevention (explicit mission to find housing, no sanctions on living expenses). In cases of prison or jail time, the existing options to secure housing during temporary detention should be used more often, and release management should be more focused on preventing homelessness.

Housing standards for the shelter system should be raised and streamlined. The municipalities are urged to fulfil their obligation to provide housing to non-local homeless people (regardless of nationality). The integration measures for citizens of the European Union in crisis situations should be improved and humanitarian aid should also be accessible to those who have declined offers of repatriation.

Another focal point of the recommendations are measures to (re)integrate people affected by homelessness into permanent housing situations (occupancy rights, quotas, social rental agencies, need based construction and remodelling etc.) and to dismantle existing barriers (poor credit reports, old debt, time spent waiting for Jobcenter approval). Rent in publicly subsidised housing projects should always be deemed “appropriate” for people who qualify for aid under social code, books II (SGB II) and XII (SGB XII) and housing benefits for households in housing crisis situations should be allowed to exceed the threshold for “appropriate living expenses”.

Finally, it is recommended to improve access to medical care for people experiencing housing insecurity, expand counselling services, and include a clear mission of prevention and reintegration in the support provided under §§ 67 sqq. of social code, book XII (SGB XII). Hostel care as well should be organised in a decentralised manner, and should ensure a secure housing situation at the end of treatment.

Family Homelessness in Ireland: The Importance of Research Design in Evidence-Based Policy-Making

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- **Abstract_** *Ireland is currently in the grip of a homeless crisis, with consistently high numbers of families presenting as homeless to their local authority each month – notably in Dublin. There are two sources of published research on the characteristics and trends in family homelessness in the capital: (i) a national homeless organisation who works directly with families and (ii) the lead statutory local authority in the response to homelessness in Dublin (drawing, respectively, on bespoke survey data and administrative data). While there are considerable parallels across the two suites of publications, the findings diverge significantly in presenting the ‘causes of homelessness’. By drawing on unpublished secondary analysis conducted on the homeless organisation’s survey data, this research note outlines how the divergence in the findings is closely related to a question of research design. The paper argues that the dynamics of homelessness – and the protracted and unpredictable accommodation transitions that can precede entry into emergency accommodation – need to be embedded into the collection and analysis of homelessness data. Without this consideration, published research and data can run the risk of providing a misleading understanding of the root causes of homelessness.*
- **Keywords_** *family homelessness, social policy, evidence-based policy, research and data*

Introduction: Available Evidence on Family Homelessness in Ireland

Since 2014, there has been an unprecedented increase in rates of homelessness in Ireland, most notably in Dublin (and increasingly in other urban areas). While increases in homelessness have been noted across all groups, cases of homelessness among families have risen sharply. In July 2014, there were 344 homeless families across the country (79% of whom were living in Dublin). By March 2020, this number stood at 1 488 families, representing a 333% increase (Department of Housing, 2020). Local authorities initially accommodated the majority of families in hotels and Bed & Breakfast facilities across the city – at considerable expense to the Irish taxpayer (during 2019, for example, a total of €170 million was spent on emergency accommodation in Dublin alone, of which €80.16 million was paid to private providers or hotel and B&Bs¹). Over time, congregate homeless facilities or ‘family hubs’ have expanded to respond to the growing problem. The monthly publication of stock data relating to homeless figures receives consistent media attention and homelessness and housing dominate the political debate across local and national elections campaigns (with the discussion concentrating particularly on the roofless population and homelessness among families). Dedicated research studies on the nature of this worsening homelessness crisis took time to emerge and tend to focus on the impact of homelessness on parents and their children (see Share and Hennessy, 2017; Walsh and Harvey, 2017; Ombudsman for Children, 2019).

In 2016, there was an urgent need for timely research and data publications that can speak to the key drivers of the crisis *as it unfolds*. Initially, when the numbers of families presenting as homeless began to increase, there was only stock data publicly available, which captured trends in numbers and limited demographic profile details. However, there was a vacuum of reliable data capturing the causes of family homelessness. The absence of data can result in the circulation of anecdotal hearsay and may also result in poorly-designed services – particularly around homelessness prevention. It is in this context that Focus Ireland – a national organisation supporting those experiencing homelessness across Ireland – invested resources into collecting targeted survey data with families who were presenting as homeless. This data collection continued on a quarterly basis from 2016 to 2017 (Gambi *et al.*, 2018), followed by a larger cross-sectional analysis of families supported by the Focus Ireland Family Homeless Action Team in 2018 (Long *et al.*, 2019). These initiatives resulted in a total of 534 surveys across a 2.5 year period.

¹ This figure – which was up 19% from the previous year – was published by the media outlet Journal.ie reporting the details released upon a Freedom of Information request. The same report also revealed that one hotel alone received between 4 and 5 million euro during 2019. See: <https://www.thejournal.ie/homeless-dublin-hotels-cost-5017050-Feb2020/>

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) subsequently began publishing (bi-annually) an analysis of administrative data on family homelessness collected across four local authorities in the Dublin region between 2016-2018.

Both of these datasets offered an insight into the causes of family homelessness in Dublin. However, they also have some fundamental differences that are worthy of close consideration, as these differences undoubtedly impact on how policy-makers understand family homelessness. The following research note aims to unpack the research design underlying each dataset and considers how the design yields divergent findings. The following text will also draw from unpublished secondary cluster analysis of the Focus Ireland data set, which provides additional clarity on the housing histories of families entering homelessness. Ultimately, this research note seeks to highlight the importance for close consideration to research design in the collection of homelessness data to ensure effective policy-planning and targeted service delivery.

Two Studies of Causes of Homelessness in Dublin: What are the Differences?

Both the DRHE² and Focus Ireland provide published materials on the causes of family homelessness through data collected with families soon after presenting as homeless. While these studies may have similar objectives in understanding the nature of family homelessness in Dublin, the DRHE draws from administrative data collected at point of initial assessment when families present as homeless while Focus Ireland conducts telephone surveys with families. Significantly, the two bodies of evidence differ in their conceptualisation of 'reasons for homelessness'. The DRHE presents 'last living situation' in determining causes of homelessness, while Focus Ireland records the previous four living situations before homelessness to determine the root cause of the loss of a family's *last stable home*. The implications of this in terms of interpreting 'headline' findings of both studies are considerable. First, however, it is worth further clarifying the data sources indicating the causes of family homelessness in both research initiatives.

² The Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) has responsibility for coordinating responses to homelessness on behalf of the four Dublin Local Authorities. It provides the placement service for all persons in emergency accommodation and publishes Dublin's homeless figures. It has gathered official homelessness data since 2014 through the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS).

On the one hand, the DRHE produces a series of reports³ on family homelessness drawing on administrative data recorded by the four local authorities in the Dublin Region – i.e. the initial assessment forms filled out with the families when presenting as homeless, and the Pathway Accommodation and Support System (PASS)⁴. The DRHE captures a single primary reason for homelessness – which is referred to as the ‘last living situation’ (Morrin, 2019). The DRHE began recording a primary reason for homelessness in January 2016 and updated this section in May 2018 by replacing the original open-ended question with a list of the most common reasons for family homelessness. Across these reports, the DRHE data captures the totality of the families newly entering homelessness over the time period.

On the other hand, Focus Ireland’s studies on family homelessness are published through its ‘Insights into Family Homelessness Series’⁵, drawing on survey data that has been collected quarterly by Focus Ireland since March 2016. Respondents consist of a proportion of all families entering homelessness in the Dublin Region that are being supported by Focus Ireland homeless services (note: in the corresponding time, Focus Ireland was the largest provider of services for families experiencing homelessness in Dublin). Questions pertaining to the last four accommodations are the central component of the surveys – including length of time spent in each accommodation, self-reported primary reason for leaving each accommodation, and tenure type (including details around rent supplement assistance). This information sheds light on two principle areas of insights: families’ housing histories; and the triggers or events which resulted in the families’ loss of their previous four accommodations. Thus it seeks to uncover respondents’ *last stable*⁶ home, which may not necessarily coincide with their last living situation (Gambi *et al.*, 2018). Regularly, families’ last accommodation in the period before entering emergency accommodation consisted of one or more informal temporary living

³ These reports are published both bi-annually – covering six-months data (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2019a; Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2019b), and yearly – covering multiple years, such as 2016-2017 (Morrin and O’Donoghue Hynes, 2018), and 2016-2018 (Morrin, 2019). For DRHE publications and research, see: <https://www.homelessdublin.ie/info/publications>

⁴ PASS is an online shared system that captures details of individuals in State-funded accommodations, and it is accessed by homeless service providers and all local authorities in Ireland. Thus, it provides real-time information for homeless presentation and bed occupancy across the Dublin Region. The routinely collection of administrative data through PASS allows the creation of a reasonably accurate picture of the extent of homelessness in Ireland, although it includes only those services funded under Section 10 of the 1988 Housing Act.

⁵ Focus Ireland *Insights into Family Homelessness Series* can be found here: <https://www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/research/>

⁶ The term ‘Stable’ was chosen as the best approximate measure of ‘ontological security’ among homeless families. Homeless and housing literature identified ‘ontological security’ markers as being represented by a feeling of constancy, daily routines, privacy, and having a secure base for identity construction (Padgett, 2007).

arrangements (Long *et al.*, 2019). Focus Ireland's survey response rate was 66% (Long *et al.*, 2019), which is comparable to the average response rate for telephone surveys (67%) (De Vaus, 2013). Therefore, non-response error caused by low response rates can be ruled out.

Routinely collected administrative data has the benefit of being readily accessible. Therefore, administrative data recorded through systems such as PASS can be particularly useful for identifying distinct patterns of homeless service use and exits to tenancies, providing real-time information on the profile and overall number of homeless adults within the Irish population (Culhane, 2008; Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2020), and collecting health and social needs (Daly *et al.*, 2018). Notwithstanding the potential of these data sources, its use can still be subject to disadvantages, especially the limitation of variables available, which may not fit the researcher's needs (Judson and Popoff, 2005) or provide the level of detail that offers full explanatory value. In these cases, survey data can aid and complement administrative data by generating insights at a specific point-in-time and help to drill into insights that may not be otherwise available – for instance more subjective variables, like attitudes (Schnell, 2013), or simply more detailed information at the individual level, such as people's behaviours (Sibley *et al.*, 2010). When Focus Ireland piloted its survey on family homelessness for the first time in 2015, one of the concerns was filling the data gap left by administrative data on the reasons for family homelessness. While the DRHE has recently acknowledged the limitations of their data collection approach and proposed a plan to capture the accommodation history in a revised format of the initial assessment form with families (Morrin, 2018), no report reflecting data from the new form has yet been published. In this way, the administrative data in combination with the targeted telephone survey data can provide a more comprehensive picture on the drivers of family homelessness, with the latter necessarily complementing the currently available administrative data.

The Different Research Findings (DRHE and Focus Ireland)

The use of different research methodologies has also led to a certain degree of divergence in the studies' findings, as outlined below.

DRHE's 'Reasons for Homelessness'

The DRHE's latest report on family homelessness (Morrin, 2019) presents a single reason for homelessness as reported by the 1 112 families who newly presented to homeless services from January to December 2018. Over this twelve months period, an average of 50% of families presented as homeless directly from a tenancy in the private rented market, while 42% of the remaining families presented from staying with family or friends, citing *family circumstances* – such as relationship breakdown

and overcrowding, as their main reason for leaving their last accommodation. Also, 8% of families indicated *other* reasons – such as ‘no income source’, ‘experience of anti-social behaviour’, and ‘property damage due to fire’, etc.

Reasons for homelessness are complex and, as such, data which only collects breakdown of last living situation should be interpreted with caution. This seems especially true with regards to those families (42%) who reported reasons related to *family circumstances* since, as also acknowledged by the DRHE, “some may have moved out of private rented accommodation prior to moving in with family or friends” (Morrin, 2019, p.26).

Focus Ireland’s ‘Reasons for Leaving Last Stable Home’ and ‘Housing Trajectories (and Routes into Homelessness)’

The most recent Focus Ireland’s study (Long *et al.*, 2019) – which echoes previous quarterly data with striking similarity – reports on families’ primary reasons behind leaving their *last stable home* (as opposed to last living situation): 58% of families (n=137) reported that they had to leave due to either their *private rented property being removed from the market* – e.g. landlord selling/ moving back in, bank repossession of property, or *private rented sector (PRS) related issues* – such as overcrowding, rent increasing, landlord renovating, etc.; 30% of families (n=70) cited reasons related to *family circumstances* (e.g. family fall out, overcrowding in the family home/with family, domestic violence); and 13%⁷ (n=30) of families reported reasons due to *other circumstances* – e.g. moved country, not specified, or anti-social behaviour/ conflict with neighbours.

Long *et al.* (2019) identified five types of ‘housing trajectories’⁸: (1) Very stable housing histories, which accounted for six in ten families (60%, n=142); (2) Precarious housing histories (16%, n=39); (3) Highly unstable housing history (8%, n=19); (4) New family formations (11%, n=26); and, (5) Vulnerable migrant pathways (5%, n=11).

The Focus Ireland findings highlight how the key drivers of family homelessness in the Dublin Region – *private rented property being removed from the market* and *PRS related issues*, are closely related to macro-level factors in the housing market, especially housing affordability and supply (Baptista *et al.*, 2017). Family fall-out and overcrowding certainly played a role in families’ trajectories into homelessness (Gambi *et al.*, 2018; Long *et al.*, 2019) but feature *far less prominently* here than in the DRHE data. This finding is further reinforced by the families’ broadly stable housing histories.

⁷ Due to rounding, percentages do not add up to 100%.

⁸ The analysis was based on the qualitative assessment of respondents’ last four accommodations, duration of stay, and main reasons for leaving each of these accommodations.

A Secondary Analysis of Focus Ireland's Survey Data

A secondary analysis completed by Gambi (2019)⁹ sought to further investigate and develop typologies of family homelessness by residential patterns before entering emergency accommodation, focusing on the raw data collected as part of Long *et al.*'s (2019) cross-sectional dataset. The analysis also offers further insight into the methodological appraisal of data capturing causes of family homelessness. Long *et al.* (2019) used qualitative methods both to investigate the 'causes of homelessness' and to develop the five categories of 'housing trajectories', while Gambi (2019) investigated whether quantitative methods would have supported (or not) these findings. To this end, cluster analysis was chosen as the best exploratory data analysis tool to deal with this classification issue, with a view to complement Focus Ireland's findings on causes, trajectories and routes into homelessness. Indeed, cluster analysis has often been adopted internationally to inform more targeted interventions to homelessness, as it allows the grouping of individuals based on certain characteristics – such as their health records (Bonin *et al.*, 2009), experiences of stressful life events (Munoz *et al.*, 2005), or patterns of emergency shelter utilization¹⁰ (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998; Waldron *et al.*, 2019). To the knowledge of the author, cluster analysis had never been used before to develop a typology of homeless families based on their residential patterns prior to becoming homeless.

Two-step cluster analysis using the log-likelihood criterion was deemed the most suitable method for analysis¹¹, and it was conducted on four variables related to the housing history of respondents – i.e. the responses to the last four accommodations: 1) Tenure type, 2) Duration of stay, 3) Main reason for leaving accommodation, and 4) Number of times the respondent moved before becoming homeless. The latter variable (4) was created¹² as a proxy of how many accommodations the person had lived in prior to entering homelessness, in an attempt to better represent respondent's residential patterns.

⁹ The secondary analysis was part of the unpublished Master thesis submitted to the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin (Gambi, 2019).

¹⁰ In these studies, homeless populations have been classified into subgroups based on the number of days spent in emergency accommodation (duration) and number of episodes (frequency).

¹¹ Further analysis was also conducted – entailing bivariate statistics and multinomial logistic regression to further explore whether different characteristics of families were associated with specific residential patterns (clusters' profiles) and predict cluster membership, but it is not reported in this research note.

¹² Before creating this variable, an assumption was made in relation to families' responses. It was assumed that the missing values for the second, third and fourth rounds of accommodation questions did not have relevant information. For example, if a respondent answered to only the first 3 rounds of accommodation questions, the number of times the respondent moved before becoming homeless was set as 3.

The secondary analysis' research findings

The secondary analysis identified discernible residential patterns among families prior to entering homelessness. A typology of homeless families was developed identifying three distinct and meaningful residential clusters (the 'subgroups') of families characterised by homogeneous housing trajectories: the 'Cohabitors', the 'Renters' and the 'Precarious Living' subgroup. Each of these clusters tells a different 'housing history', and sheds light on the main reasons for family homelessness in this sample. The 'Renters' cluster (50%) accounted for the largest proportion of the sample, while the 'Cohabitors' (26%) and 'Precarious Living' (24%) clusters almost evenly made up the rest of the sample.

Families in the 'Renters' cluster had repeatedly moved accommodation in the past; nevertheless, they spent a long time (56% of this cluster longer than 5 years; 23% for 3 to 4 years) in their last home prior to entering homelessness, which was in the private rental sector. Their tenancies ended due to structural factors, reporting *property removed from the market* (69%) – which includes landlord either selling, moving back in, or giving property to a family member, and bank repossession of the rental property, or *PRS related issues* (31%) – which includes overcrowding, rent increasing, landlord renovating, substandard, unable to afford rent, etc., as the main reason for leaving accommodation. Although the high number of accommodation transitions in the past could suggest some degree of instability, it is clear how this subgroup had achieved stability in the PRS immediately before presenting as homeless. For this residential subgroup, structural factors were seen as the sole trigger to homelessness.

Families in the 'Cohabitors' cluster had moved homes the least in the past; more than half of these families (56% of this cluster) cohabited with their families or partner for a relatively short period of time (less than 2 years), while the remaining 44% did so for a very long time (5 or more years). The former 56% of families is likely to be composed of those respondents who moved back to their family's home shortly before entering homelessness, possibly in an episode of hidden homelessness or couch surfing while looking for temporary accommodation. The latter 44% of families refers to those respondents who resided in their family's home for a long time, possibly with little or no experience of living in independent tenancies. These families in the 'Cohabitors' cluster noted reasons related to *family circumstances* (85%) (includes family fall out, overcrowding, domestic violence, family violence, relationship breakdown, bereavement) as the main cause of having to leave their last home – making 'relationship' factors the main trigger to homelessness for this residential subgroup.

The 'Precarious Living' cluster is characterized by higher levels of housing instability and precariousness, as families in this cluster had repeatedly moved accommodations in the past and, differently from the 'Renters' cluster, spent a very short time in their last living situation (50.9% less than 11 months; 25.5% between 1 and 2 years) – suggesting episodes of hidden homelessness within a housing history that already showed elements of instability. Almost half of these families (49.1%) mentioned 'Other' as their main reason for leaving their last accommodation – including anti-social behaviour, neighbour conflict, employment-related reasons, sought improved accommodation and moved to a new country; while the remaining half of the subgroup is evenly split between *family circumstances* and structural factors. For families in the 'Precarious' living cluster, entries into homelessness are a result of either structural, institutional, relationship or personal factors, or an interplay among them.

How secondary analysis relates to existing data

It is worth noting that the findings emerging from the secondary analysis are only partly consistent with data on 'reasons for homelessness' published by the DRHE (Morris, 2019), while they align to a much greater extent with Focus Ireland's 'reasons for leaving last stable home'.

On the one hand, the 'Renters' cluster (50%) roughly aligns to the figures published by the DRHE, which identified 50% of families as having become homeless due to issues in the private rented sector. However, a comparison between the 'Cohabitors' cluster (26%) and the DRHE figures shows a clear divergence, with the DRHE reporting a considerably higher percentage of families (42%) as having become homeless as a direct consequence of *family circumstances*. On the other hand, both the 'Renters' (50%) and the 'Cohabitors' (26%) clusters draw a picture that better corresponds to Focus Ireland's findings – where the primary reason for homelessness reported by most of the families (58%) linked to either their *private rented property being removed from the market or PRS related issues*, while a remarkably smaller proportion of families (30%) became homeless due to *family circumstances*.

Although it is acknowledged that the studies apply distinct research designs and draw on two different samples, the misalignment between the DRHE's findings and both Long *et al.*'s (2019) and Gambi's (2019) findings is particularly striking. It indeed demonstrates how different methodologies – enquiring only about the *last living situation* versus the *last four accommodations*, can lead to different results, interpretations, and impact on both policy and the perceptions of the public. For instance, the DRHE data suggests to the public that 'family failure' is the driver of family homelessness for nearly half of their sample – a much greater proportion

than those reporting *family circumstances* reasons in Focus Ireland's data, whereas both Long *et al.*'s (2019) and Gambi's (2019) studies showed that a chronic shortage of affordable housing is instead the key risk factor behind family homelessness.

Therefore, it becomes clear how enquiring about the *last four accommodations*¹³ could better capture "change and transition in the respondents' living situations and (partially) identify the dynamics of their housing history" (Long *et al.*, 2019, p.16). In this way, we could understand homelessness as a trajectory – which often entails a complex overlap of multiple 'causes' and life events resulting in homelessness, rather than a phenomenon driven by a single, fixed factor. Indeed, while the data made clear that residing in the private rented sector is more likely to put families on a trajectory to homelessness, this is not sufficient in itself to result in an entry to emergency accommodation. It seems likely that residential instability coupled with a relative absence of social supports and/or family network can contribute to homelessness – for example, those families in the 'Cohabitors' cluster which only cohabited for a short period of time, possibly in an episode of hidden homelessness or couch surfing while looking for another accommodation. Rethinking the causes of homelessness, as well as recognising the main drivers as housing instability and economic precariousness, have the potential to encourage more appropriate policy responses – such as well-targeted prevention measures and greater provision of affordable housing.

Conclusion: The Importance of Research Design for Targeted Policy-Making

Homelessness is widely considered a complex social phenomenon (Springer, 2000; United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, 2000), it presents a major challenge for policy-makers and service providers in Ireland and is a highly distressing reality for those who experience it. Policy-makers look to available evidence and research on homelessness as a way to inform and monitor policy formation and progress, all the while remaining responsive to macro-level change. The two research initiatives led by both Focus Ireland and the Dublin Region Homeless Executive offer important insights for policy-makers in relation to the profile of families experiencing homelessness and the events that preceded their entry into emergency accommodation. DRHE administrative data provides a more complete profile of all the families across the Dublin Region. However, by capturing families' recent accommodation transitions as collected through Focus Ireland survey data, the root causes of family homeless-

¹³ Families should be asked not only about *reasons for homelessness* but also about *tenure type* and *length of stay* for each past accommodation, as this information has proved to be extremely valuable to further the explanatory value of the data collected, and consequent analysis.

ness and the nature of housing precariousness can arguably be better understood. Equally, the secondary data cluster analysis presented in this article further demonstrates how homelessness is a protracted and complicated process; with family conflict as a cause of homelessness featuring far less frequently than might be captured in a single data point (i.e. 'last living situation').

Ultimately, research design has a profound impact on how an issue is understood and, in a context where evidence-based policy-making is considered the gold standard, research design can also influence the findings and therefore the proposed solutions or remedies. If family homelessness is understood to be caused by a dysfunctional housing market – rather than a dysfunctional family – policy makers' most effective response would be to invest far more resources into homelessness prevention services, investment in social housing (European Commission, 2019a, 2019b), tackling problems of affordability in the private rental sector among other system-level change. Understanding family homelessness as a structural issue calls into question the tens of millions of euro spent annually to expand and maintain an emergency accommodation infrastructure with the development of support services underpinned by 'therapeutic logic' (O'Sullivan, 2017, p.207). Furthermore, emerging qualitative research suggests that time spent in emergency 'family hubs' with supports does little to help families in crisis, runs the risk of institutionalising families, whilst normalising a phenomenon which could otherwise be averted (Hearne and Murphy, 2017; Share and Hennessy, 2017; Ombudsman for Children, 2019). Resolving homelessness in Ireland will "require substantial shifts and transformations in policy (from managing homelessness to ending homelessness), practice (to evidenced- based interventions) and perception by all actors (central government, local government and not- for- profit service providers)" (O'Sullivan, 2020, p.100). Ensuring that the lived reality of those affected by homelessness is embedded in the design of research and data collection is an essential starting point in this transformation.

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The Challenges of Measuring Homelessness among Armed Forces Veterans: Service Provider Experiences in England

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➤ **Abstract_** *This study investigates the measurement of homelessness among Armed Forces veterans in England, starting from the strikingly low figures in local authority administrative data returns compared to the USA. Findings from stakeholder interviews revealed awareness of more homeless veterans than identified through the local authority homelessness return, although presentations varied between organisational types. Participant perspectives on the low official numbers included both veteran- and institutional-based explanations, ranging from the perceived reluctance of veterans to present to homelessness services, through to the centrality of priority need and the exclusion of those supported outside of the statutory homelessness system. Reforms to administrative data-based statistical returns are suggested in the conclusion.*

➤ **Keywords_** *Veterans, measuring homelessness, inter-organisational collaboration, Armed Forces Covenant.*

Introduction

A sizeable minority of veterans in England are homeless or at risk of homelessness (Quilgars *et al.*, 2018), and there is reported over-representation of veterans among multiple excluded homeless people who face extreme disadvantage and difficult to meet needs (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2012). However, statutory homeless statistics, derived from administrative data, reveal that very few households are recorded as having support needs due to having served in HM Forces.

In April-June 2019, this included just 0.63 per cent of those owed a homelessness duty (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020). This discrepancy may not be surprising given the debates over how homelessness is measured (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2014; Mostowska, 2019). Still, as homelessness services are required to be accountable and cost-effective, statistics that offer an incomplete picture can have negative resource implications for homelessness services. These English figures are also low when compared to the USA, where veterans made up eight per cent of the homeless population in 2019 (Henry *et al.*, 2020). This raises the question of why official records of veteran homelessness in England are so low in comparison.

The need for this study is based on the importance of reconciling discrepant accounts of veteran homelessness in England and thereby contributing to the sparse evidence on the implementation of homeless veterans' policy (Quilgars *et al.*, 2018), along with debates on the measurement of homelessness (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2014; Mostowska, 2019). More generally, much of the research on homeless veterans in England and their service provision can be classified as grey literature in that there is a dearth of peer-reviewed studies (Jones *et al.*, 2014). Although veteran homelessness has been identified as an issue in other European states, including Belgium and Croatia for example (Mostowska, 2014; Bežovan, 2019), there is a lack of research into the issue. Nevertheless, signs of a shift to inclusive veteran policies and all-volunteer Armed Forces in Europe (Boene, 2009; Danilova, 2010), similar trends of decentralisation across Europe, with homelessness services in most countries being provided by a range of non-profit organisations (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2010), and efforts to improve homelessness statistics (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2014), mean that there may be scope for drawing lessons from the English experience.

Despite an inclusive tradition of not giving the military special treatment in England, vulnerable veterans are now considered to be in priority need, and the Armed Forces Covenant attempts to ensure that veterans are not disadvantaged across a range of areas including housing (Mumford, 2012). However, it is difficult to assess whether there is disadvantage when veteran status is not always captured among the homeless population. As such, it is necessary to understand the experiences of service providers in relation to capturing veteran status among the homeless population. This study aims to examine the demand on services from homeless veterans in order to answer the question of why administrative measures of homeless veterans in England are so low. To this end, this study draws on a review project to present the findings of interviews with 16 organisations working on this issue in one local authority area in the North of England, including housing and community organisations and Armed Forces charities.

The Literature on Veteran Homelessness

Capturing veteran homelessness

England, as with the rest of the UK, employs a broad definition of veteran that includes all personnel who have received a day's pay from the Armed Forces, with dependents also being eligible for benefits (Dandeker *et al.*, 2006). This contrasts with the US definition, which only extends to those who have actively served (Henry *et al.*, 2020). This is a significant difference as broad definitions tend to be tied in with relatively weak veterans' rights, not least because of the costs involved in extensive service delivery to a wide population (Danilova, 2010). There have, over recent years, been a number of initiatives to improve veterans' rights, however, which will be discussed below. Estimates of the proportion of homeless people in England that are Armed Forces veterans have followed a downward trend since the mid-1990s, which Jones *et al.* (2014) attribute, along with improvements to veterans' services, to the declining proportion of people with Armed Forces experience (as a result of the shift to all-volunteer forces and reduction in overall numbers in the forces). Still, there is a significant minority of veterans at risk of homelessness or who become homeless (Quilgars *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, a study found that across seven UK cities, veterans made up 11 per cent of non-migrants experiencing multiple exclusion homelessness, identified by factors including time in prison or substance misuse (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2012).

This contrasts with the statutory homelessness statistics, however. In April-June 2019 in England, 70030 households were assessed and owed a prevention or relief duty, and only 440 (0.63 per cent) were recorded as having support needs due to having served in HM Forces (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020). The English figures are also significantly lower than in the US, where federal estimates of veterans as a proportion of the homeless population stood at eight per cent in 2019, down from 12 per cent in 2013 (Henry *et al.*, 2020). The differences with the US may be due in part to the larger veteran population there, with English estimates suggesting that veterans make up five per cent of household residents aged over 16 (Ministry of Defence, 2019), compared to 7.6 per cent in the US (Schultz, 2019). Nevertheless, as the English veteran homelessness figures are so much lower, this implies that there are issues with capturing and recording veteran homelessness in England. The literature on homeless veterans offers veteran- and institutional-based insights which can help to explain the low-recorded numbers of homeless veterans.

Veteran-based explanations

The low figures in England are partly explained by homeless veterans being less likely to present to housing services (Jones *et al.*, 2014). This may be due to a lack of awareness among veterans of their entitlement to support from local authority homelessness teams, along with a number of services being available from Armed Forces charities, with preferences for one sector or the other being contingent on their attitudes towards their time in the military (Johnsen *et al.*, 2008). The timing of veteran homelessness may also affect the decision on whether to disclose veteran status, as the most common explanation of homelessness among veterans is relationship breakdown (Milroy, 2001; Johnsen *et al.*, 2008), and this can occur at any point in time. The onset of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be delayed (Goodwin *et al.*, 2012), which may mean that veterans or homelessness teams do not attribute veteran vulnerability to leaving HM Forces. Although there is diversity in homeless veterans' circumstances, those leaving the Armed Forces are usually more prone to alcohol misuse and reporting mental health disorders, including PTSD (Hatch *et al.*, 2013). The mix of vulnerabilities and resilience of many homeless veterans may help to explain why they are more likely to sleep rough and avoid presenting as homeless (Armes *et al.*, 2019).

US studies have highlighted similar issues (Tsai *et al.*, 2016; Metraux *et al.*, 2017). While PTSD is common among homeless veterans (Tsai *et al.*, 2016), homelessness typically occurs more than two years after leaving the military, and as other factors including unemployment, substance misuse and relationship breakdown often occur in the interim, veterans tend not to directly link their military service and homelessness (Metraux *et al.*, 2017). Tsai *et al.* (2016) suggested that homelessness service presentation rates are low among veterans. Yet, they found that they are higher for black and minority ethnic veterans who are more likely to be without health insurance and thereby need to rely on the Department of Veterans Affairs system (which supports veterans' homelessness services) for their healthcare. In contrast to veterans in England, US veterans are less likely than the wider national homeless population to be rough sleepers (Henry *et al.*, 2020). This appears to be related to the exclusive approach to veteran homelessness through veteran specific services, which will be discussed below. Due to the broad similarity of homeless veteran characteristics in the two countries, such institutional differences may offer more insight into the reasons for the disparities in the prevalence of veteran homelessness between England and the USA.

Institutional-based explanations

In part, the low figures in England may be explained by the ways in which access to homelessness services is rationed and how this relates to homelessness statistical returns. The English definition of homelessness is broad in that it goes beyond rooflessness to include people without the right to stay where they are and people living in unsuitable housing (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018). In England, there is a right to housing, and prevention services are now universal (Wilding *et al.*, 2020). However, demand for services among those already homeless is managed through mechanisms including priority need (i.e., only those with children or the vulnerable are deemed deserving of support), intentionality and local connection (Dwyer *et al.*, 2015). More specifically, those who are vulnerable due to serving in the Armed Forces, for example through the type of service engaged in or time spent in a military hospital, were added to the homelessness priority need categories in 2002.

In line with the rationing mechanisms, veteran status only appears in the statutory homelessness statistics for those considered to be vulnerable and who meet the intentionality and local connection criteria. In addition, the need to self-report veteran status means that low numbers of veterans have been accepted as homeless due to having served in the Armed Forces (Jones *et al.*, 2014). A further factor which minimises government homeless veteran numbers is that as the statutory homelessness statistics are collated from local authority homelessness team data returns, homeless veterans who are supported by Armed Forces charities or other housing organisations without going through the statutory system do not appear in the figures. This is possible as the duty to refer, which was introduced for specified public authorities under the *Homelessness Prevention Act 2017* requires the service users' consent and does not include charities and housing organisations, although a number of organisations have made voluntary commitments (Garvie, 2018).

A range of non-statutory support services centred on homelessness were previously brought together by Supporting People. However, changes including austerity measures mean that there is no longer a budget allocation for this programme, and this has damaged strategic efforts to coordinate housing-related support services and data collection through an administrative database on Supporting People services (McNeil and Hunter, 2015). Ongoing examples of collaboration include the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), which is a multi-agency database that records veteran status among other information in seeking to avoid duplication of efforts in appropriately supporting rough sleepers in London (St. Mungo's, 2017). Nevertheless, this level of data is not available nationwide for all types of homelessness. Where veterans are concerned, the need for coordination is arguably even greater, with almost 400 welfare focussed Armed Forces

charities being identified in the UK (Pozo and Walker, 2014). This has led to the observation that post-military welfare is a 'competitive, confused and confusing assemblage' (Herman and Yarwood, 2015, p.2628).

Government efforts to improve collaboration, including the Office for Veterans Affairs and the Armed Forces Covenant, bear a resemblance to US initiatives. The Office for Veterans Affairs was launched in October 2019 to champion veteran interests within the UK government and to improve coordination and collaboration towards this end. Making a home in civilian society is one of the key themes of the *Strategy for Our Veterans*, which the Office seeks to deliver against (HM Government, 2018). The Armed Forces Covenant is another key mechanism which encourages collaboration between organisations from the public, private and third sectors as part of its efforts to ensure that policies for veterans are upheld and that they receive equitable treatment (Mumford, 2012). The Community Covenants in the USA influenced the Task Force, which rebuilt the Armed Forces Covenant in the UK in 2010, particularly in terms of local community pledges (Strachan *et al.*, 2010). Covenant guidance makes specific reference to housing (Ministry of Defence, 2017a), and a range of housing associations have voluntarily signed up to the Covenant, as have community organisations, charities, and local authorities (Ministry of Defence, 2017c). As such, it has been suggested that homelessness amongst veterans can be best addressed through more integrated multi-agency support from veteran and generic housing and other services, with leadership from within the housing sector and government (Quilgars *et al.*, 2018). A criticism of the Armed Forces Covenant in England, however, is that it shifts the onus of responsibility for veteran care from the state to society, in line with the greater decentralisation and commissioning of public services (Mumford, 2012).

In the USA, there is no right to housing and the availability of support is more limited (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006). Yet, veterans are privileged through exclusive service allocation, for example through US Department of Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing, which provides housing vouchers for rental assistance to eligible homeless veterans (Cretzmeyer *et al.*, 2014). Administrative data is combined with survey data to produce federal statistics, but there are also significant differences from England in administrative data collection methods. Veteran status is a universal data element in the USA, required across all programmes and projects dealing with homelessness (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019). As such, this is a question that programme administrators are instructed to ask and record the response to, along with additional questions for service users who may not be aware that they are considered veterans. Moreover, this multi-agency data feeds into the US Department of Housing and Urban Development homeless veteran statistics. This is not to say that measurement of veteran homelessness is not without its own issues in the US.

For example, as with administrative data more generally, less data is collected in areas with fewer homelessness services, which can lead to under-recording homelessness (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2010). However, the US approach does allow for a broader range of organisations to contribute to federal homelessness statistics and appears to record a greater proportion of veterans experiencing homelessness. This array of organisations collaborates in service delivery to homeless veterans similarly to in England (Verkuil and Fountain, 2014). Nonetheless, an important difference, stemming from the exclusive approach to veterans, is the prominent role of the Department of Veterans Affairs, which has long pursued a joined-up approach to veteran welfare as well as supporting veteran specific facilities (Cretzmeyer *et al.*, 2014).

Study Design

This study is based upon findings from interviews with stakeholders in one local authority in the North of England. Access was given as part of a review project to inform the local authority approach to housing veterans. Twenty-eight stakeholder organisations were invited to participate in a telephone interview based on a purposive sample of organisations offering services accessible to local veterans, and 16 interviews took place in January to May 2017. Telephone interviews were used as a data collection method due to the convenience that this offered busy service providers, with interviews being fit in, often at short notice between other appointments. Although telephone interviews are often overlooked in the qualitative research literature, the data gathered can be vivid and of high quality (Novick, 2008).

This range of organisations was included to capture support given to veterans at various stages of the homelessness pathway, including housing advice, temporary accommodation, floating support, and allocations. For the purpose of the analysis, and to maintain anonymity, participants are disaggregated only so far as the broad group which most closely represents their function: housing organisations (n=10); Armed Forces charities (n=4); and community organisations (n=2). These interviews took a semi-structured format to examine perspectives on issues including the number and type of requests from veterans, and the reasons underlying these numbers. The findings are presented thematically under the headings of type and extent of requests; veteran-based explanations; and institutional-based explanations.

Rather than suggesting that the case is representative of local authorities throughout England, we instead seek to draw out implications for practitioners facing similar issues (Yin, 2017). Although seeking to situate the findings internationally and particularly in relation to the US literature on homeless veterans, we accept that the

different approaches to veterans, homelessness, and administrative data limit the generalisability of the findings. Nevertheless, there may be lessons that can be learned from examining what exactly it is in the English way of measuring homelessness that makes the figures so much lower than in the US.

The following information can be provided about the local authority area to contextualise the findings. The local authority is in the upper quartile for homelessness in England as assessed per thousand households (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020). Based on available statistics, we estimate that veterans make up almost eight per cent of the local authority area population, and that 53 Armed Forces leavers returned to the local authority area in the 12 months prior to the research taking place (Kinsella, 2011; Ministry of Defence, 2017b). Although there is no national database of the location of veterans, these estimates are consistent with reports of the North having a relatively high veteran population compared to the rest of England (Riverside ECHG, 2011).

Interview Findings

Type and extent of requests

It was difficult to pinpoint the numbers of homeless veterans in the area, due to reasons including non-collection and non-availability of data, or there being no cases. However, homeless veterans were recorded in the year prior to the interviews by the local authority homelessness team (5 cases) and a supported housing organisation (21 cases), while an estimate was provided from another supported housing organisation (12 cases). It is not possible to ascertain the degree of overlap between the figures for each organisation. We do know, that except for one couple identified by a housing association, all instances were of single men. Moreover, none of the reported cases were recorded as statutorily homeless through losing their last settled home due to leaving HM Forces. The figures are similar for the community organisations providing housing-related support, with the only organisation able to offer an estimate reporting the equivalent of supporting one veteran each month. A divide emerged in the interview responses amongst supported housing organisations and Armed Forces charities on the one hand, as organisations that have been subject to a significant number of support requests, and general needs housing associations on the other, as organisations that have received no requests or very few.

Veteran-based explanations

Participants put forward a range of veteran-based explanations for the perceived low overall numbers of homeless veterans recorded as receiving support, from veteran resilience and reluctance to accept support through to a lack of awareness of available services. Participants from supported housing organisations stressed that although they had accommodated a number of veterans, demand varied throughout the year, and they tended to move on quickly before they could be housed. This was ascribed to reasons including pride and the readiness to sleep rough if necessary:

Christmas is always a crunch period. They don't mind sleeping rough so much in Summer. (Housing organisation 10)

We had like three or four at the same time. They've all moved on now because they don't like to be in a position like this. It's very much a pride thing. (Housing organisation 6)

One of the general needs housing associations reported that they had housed several veterans in recent years. In some instances, they had presented directly, but in others they were referred by an Armed Forces charity. Overall numbers were low, and they faced difficulties in providing services due to an apparent reluctance among those referred to accept support:

In the last few years, we've had four referrals [from an Armed Forces charity]. We rehoused one person. The other three just disappeared, despite us chasing them. (Housing organisation 7)

The interview responses contrasted in attributing veterans' reluctance to accept support and disclose their Armed Forces background to pride and attempting to maintain distance from authority. However, there also appeared to be challenges in meeting the needs of homeless veterans, which may in turn have made them more reluctant to request support:

Because they're proud and see themselves as people that should be supporting others, they're not quick to accept help, so it's us being able to provide opportunities for them to help themselves. (Community organisation 1)

Some refuse help. They see us as an authority that they're trying to get away from. (Armed Forces charity 4)

Awareness was perceived to be a key challenge in terms of veterans being unsure of their rights or how to access support, despite increased support given through the Ministry of Defence before discharge and the availability of information from the local authority and housing associations:

Is it the publicity that people don't realise that they can apply? We do promote it in our literature, it's there. (Housing organisation 3)

Institutional-based explanations

Interview responses also revealed institutional explanations for the overall low numbers of recorded veterans, including the centrality of priority need in local authority homelessness returns, and limited knowledge of the work of other organisations supporting homeless veterans. A key reason put forward for the low numbers of homeless veterans recorded as homeless by the local authority was the difficulties of linking vulnerability (and thereby priority need) to service in the Armed Forces. This is significant, as veteran status only appears in the homelessness statistics for those deemed to be in priority need. Still, proving priority need based on vulnerability was unlikely for some as their circumstances could not always be attributed directly to service in the Armed Forces:

The majority served quite some time ago and have never held a tenancy on their own... some come back to us after a relationship breakdown. (Housing organisation 10)

Another explanation for why the numbers of homeless veterans appeared low from the perspective of statutory figures was because not all homeless veterans made it as far as mainstream housing services, due to their support needs being met by Armed Forces charities:

What seems to happen is that if somebody's involved with SSAFA [an Armed Forces charity] already, or one of the [Armed Forces] organisations, then they've sorted the problem out before they get to the stage where they need to come to us. If they've got a good worker, they probably go above and beyond sometimes and solve the problem before we're needed. (Housing organisation 5)

Thus, these veterans were excluded from the official homelessness figures, in stark contrast to practices in the USA. Moreover, housing organisations' lack of detailed information about the extent of support for homeless veterans in the local authority area from Armed Forces charities meant that less need was seen for inter-organisational collaboration, and in turn that there was less potential for homeless veterans to come into the mainstream homelessness system, thereby continuing the cycle of low official numbers. This is problematic because the lack of collaboration helps to maintain the low visibility of homeless veterans to mainstream housing organisations and official homelessness statistics. For example, there was an assumption from housing organisations that if the issue of veteran homelessness was serious enough, then the Armed Forces charities would initiate collaboration. Similarly, none of the community organisations, and only one of the housing organisations, had signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant:

We haven't done so much on the Covenant, but we take guidance from the Council on that. (Housing organisation 9)

If it was a large problem within [local authority area], then the ex-military charities would have been in touch to try and work with us because we do recognise that there's a need for housing this group of people. (Housing organisation 1)

Conclusion

This study has attempted to understand why administrative measures of homeless veterans in England are so low. Though more homeless veterans presented to services than identified in the local authority homelessness return, veterans were predominantly self-referring into direct access hostels or accessing support through Armed Forces charities and community organisations. As such, these veterans were not going through the statutory homeless system. This is despite the availability of a range of relevant services, from temporary accommodation to post-tenancy support. Housing organisations have sought to explain this selective take up of services through veteran resilience and reluctance to accept support, along with a lack of awareness of available support.

These findings are in line with the related literature that notes a lack of awareness of housing rights and reluctance to present to services (Higate, 2000; Johnsen *et al.*, 2008), and are broadly consistent with findings from the USA (Tsai *et al.*, 2016). Nevertheless, other factors were clearly also at play, including institutional-based explanations. These include veteran status only appearing in statistical returns for those who are in priority need due to leaving the Armed Forces, and limited knowledge of the work of other organisations supporting homeless veterans. Thus, the numbers differ markedly from the US where statistics are recorded by all programmes and projects. This is due in part to the privileged status of veterans who are exclusively defined in the context of limited housing support. Yet, it is also due to the more systematic approach to local planning and evaluation, which includes a recognition of the need for ongoing data, which has driven the advances in homeless management information systems (O'Connell, 2003). A more joined up approach to veterans, led by the Department for Veteran's Affairs has facilitated these developments. In England, the lack of a joined-up approach, including a passive attitude to the Armed Forces Covenant, means that many mainstream housing organisations have only limited awareness of other organisations' work to support homeless veterans, which serves to underplay the issue.

More reliable homeless veteran statistics are clearly needed, not least to make the extent and nature of veteran homeless support needs more transparent. One way of doing this is to require local authorities to submit the numbers of all homeless

veterans in their statistical returns, not just those in priority need due to having served in HM Forces. This would help to ensure that all homeless veterans going through statutory homelessness services, and who declare their veteran status, are captured in homelessness statistics. However, it is also important that the homelessness of veterans presenting to non-statutory housing and related support services is captured in statistics. As such, an alternative is to compile the figures from all organisations working with homeless veterans, similarly to the US model. To some degree, extending the approaches used in the Supporting People and CHAIN databases offers a way forward. If the data on use of non-statutory housing and related support services, including provision by Armed Forces charities, was compiled for each local authority, a much clearer picture of the prevalence of homelessness amongst veterans and their support needs could be established.

Data both reflects and supports inter-organisational collaboration, and so efforts at a coordinated approach to supporting homeless veterans can facilitate more coherent data collection, as has been seen in the USA. To build on approaches to data collection developed in the homelessness sector, and to ensure the necessary consistency between homelessness and veteran organisations, collaboration could be strengthened at several levels. Housing and community organisations signing up to the Covenant could act as a starting point. However, in the absence of tangible progress measures and penalties for non-compliance (Mumford, 2012), there is a need for leadership. Along with strategic collaboration at the inter-ministry level, led by the new Office for Veterans Affairs, leadership could come from Elected Councillor Armed Forces Champions and Lead Officers in local councils, with reporting to the local Covenant Forum as recommended by the Forces in Mind Trust (2016). There is also a need for leadership from within the housing sector and so there may be a case for the appointment of Armed Forces Champions within homelessness teams, as is already the case with the Jobcentre Plus.

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An Exploration into Counsellors' Experiences of Using the Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality Among the Homeless Sector in Ireland

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- **Abstract** *Those experiencing homelessness are an at risk group for experiencing suicide ideation and behaviour. The aim of this research was to explore counsellors' experiences of using a suicide specific assessment and intervention tool, The Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS) and the Suicide Specific Treatment Track (SSTT), among the homeless population. In-depth semi-structured interviews were held with six counsellors. Interviews, once recorded, were transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was conducted on the collected data. Seven main themes were identified which included: The lasting impact of in-person training on counsellor practice, Approaching the CAMS paperwork, CAMS and the SSTT as a psychological resource for the counsellors, Building a trusting relationship, Challenges in implementing CAMS, Flexibility of integrating CAMS into counsellor practice, and The importance of colleague support. This research has important practical implications for clinicians who wish to use CAMS or the SSTT among the homeless sector. Such as, the use of role-plays specific to the homeless population during training, the benefit of having the SSTT when working over the phone or in environments where delivery of the CAMS was not possible, and the perception of the necessity of building a trusting rapport with the client prior to introducing the paperwork.*
- **Keywords** *Suicide, homelessness, suicide intervention, assessment, suicide prevention, counselling service*

Introduction

Suicide is a complex phenomenon emerging from a dynamic interaction of biological, psychological, social and cultural factors (Quarshie *et al.*, 2015). Those experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable groups to experience suicide ideation and behaviour (Sinyor *et al.*, 2017). Given the growing numbers of people who are experiencing homelessness, suicide prevention is a priority issue for, and one commonly encountered by those working in this sector. This highlights the need for evidence-based suicide prevention interventions and related assessment tools for mental health professionals working in this sector.

Assessing an individual to determine their level of suicide risk is one of the most challenging experiences a counsellor can face (Granello, 2010), and can provoke feelings of anxiety, fear and doubting professional competence (Reeves and Mintz, 2001). In order for practitioners to feel confident in risk assessment and provide evidence-based interventions to reduce suicide, formal training is a necessity (Cole-King *et al.*, 2013). The importance of this training is evident when its potential impact is considered. For example, Pisani, Cross and Gould (2011) reported that such training is an effective means of transferring knowledge and shifting attitudes. Furthermore, Jahn and colleagues (2016) reported that practitioners who had received sufficient formal training in a suicide specific intervention and risk assessment, reported greater skill and comfort working with suicidal clients and a greater knowledge of suicide risk and protective factors when compared with practitioners who felt they had not received sufficient formal training. Nonetheless, further research on the experiences and impact of training on clinicians' practice with clients is required.

The Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS) is a suicide specific intervention for the assessment, management and treatment of suicidality. It is unique in that it is non-denominational, allowing for the incorporation of any psychotherapeutic approach or technique to be used within the framework (Jobes *et al.*, 2015). There is now a growing body of literature in support of the effectiveness of CAMS in reducing suicidal ideation and behaviour (e.g. Andreasson *et al.*, 2016).

At the core of the CAMS approach is the Suicide-Status Form (SSF), which is a multipurpose clinical assessment, treatment planning, tracking, and outcome tool (Jobes, 2012). Despite positive findings on using CAMS, recent research highlights the importance of considering the context in which CAMS is used and whether it is important to adapt CAMS to suit the needs of different organisations, staff and clients (Jobes and Chalker, 2019).

The homeless population present with unique and specific needs. For example, many barriers exist for individuals experiencing homelessness accessing health-care settings including lack of funds, zero tolerance of inebriation during sessions or assessment, and difficulties in arranging or travelling to appointments (Shulman *et al.*, 2018). The Sure Steps Counselling Service, as part of the Dublin Simon Community, is a not-for-profit organisation that provides counselling and psychotherapeutic support to those who are experiencing homelessness. The service meets many of the needs of their clients as it is a low threshold service, free of charge and the counsellors are flexible in where they meet with clients. CAMS was adopted by the service to ensure the counsellors were equipped to provide suicide specific care to clients vulnerable to suicide. Preliminary research to investigate the implementation of CAMS within the service identified a number of benefits and challenges in completion of the CAMS paperwork and the need for round the clock care for homeless clients who were suicidal (Adams *et al.*, 2018). An out of hours service (5pm – 10pm) was subsequently set up as an extension of the service to work specifically with clients who were suicidal (See Appendix).

The Suicide Status Form, the core assessment tool within CAMS, was used to inform the development of the SSTT. Many of the clients attending the Dublin Simon service are being supported in residential environments, or in the public streets, where a sit down side by side format, as per the CAMS, is not possible. As such, the SSF was re-imagined into a conversational guide and a booklet was developed to help guide support workers through the conversation with a suicidal client, until they could access the CAMS intervention in the Sure Steps counselling service. The SSTT was the treatment pathway created to facilitate this process, with all Dublin Simon staff being familiar with the CAMS, familiar with the referral pathway, and able to engage suicidal service users in a risk assessment, safety planning process while waiting for a full CAMS intervention. The extent to which these changes have facilitated the counsellors work, or their experience of using CAMS and the SSTT within the homeless sector, given a period of time to become comfortable with the tool after initial training, has not been investigated in-depth.

In order to improve and facilitate training, contribute to continuous quality improvements to services and practice, and to provide insight to other mental health professionals working with those experiencing homelessness, the aim of this research study is to explore counsellors' experiences of using CAMS and the SSTT. The specific objectives of the research are to explore the beneficial aspects and limitations of the training the counsellors have received for CAMS and the SSTT, whether additional supports are required by counsellors using CAMS and the SSTT, and the advantages and barriers of using CAMS and the SSTT among those working with those experiencing homelessness.

Research Design

This study used an exploratory qualitative research design. The inclusion criteria for participants included: (1) currently working/volunteering with the Sure Steps Counselling Service; (2) hold a minimum two year diploma course in Counselling and Psychotherapy, with 100 client hours completed; (3) being in active external supervision; and (4) having received training for CAMS and the SSTT. Six participants were interviewed. In order to protect the anonymity of the counsellors, each counsellor will be identified as 'Participant' with an associated number (P.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Participants were invited to participate via e-mail. A Plain Language Statement explaining the specific details of the research was attached to the e-mail. Written informed consent was obtained prior to the commencement of the interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first author in a place and at a time convenient to the participant. Each interview was recorded, lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and was transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was conducted on the data, following the six steps as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involved initially becoming familiar with the data, the generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing, defining and naming the themes and finally, producing the report.

Results

Seven themes were identified that described the experience of using CAMS and the SSTT in the homeless sector: (1) *'Seeing it live in action'* – The lasting impact of in-person training on counsellor practice; (2) *'I don't see it now as a barrier'* – Approaching the CAMS paperwork; (3) *'... now I feel more confident'* – CAMS and the SSTT as a psychological resource for the counsellors; (4) *'They want to know they can trust you'* – Building a trusting relationship; (5) *'the client is coming in effected and there's that level of mental illness...'* – Challenges in implementing CAMS; (6) *'Use the tool to enhance who you are, use the tool to make you more proficient'* – Flexibility of integrating CAMS into counsellor practice; and (7) *'for the support, just the comradery support'* – The importance of colleague support.

***'Seeing it live in action'* –**

The lasting impact of in-person training on counsellor practice

The in-person training the counsellors received for CAMS had a significant lasting impact on counsellor's practice both in providing the theoretical and practical base for using CAMS and also on the way in which the counsellors subsequently engaged with their practice and interacted with their clients. The role play during the CAMS in-person training resonated with all of the counsellors. They noted it to be the most critical aspect during training that facilitated the transition of CAMS from a theoretical approach to how it could be practically applied.

it was more watching him interact in a session that I found particularly beneficial, the theory you can read in depth in a book and we do all have the manual... but it's seeing it live in action (P.2)

One of the counsellors described how it was not until they could ask the instructor about using CAMS with clients experiencing homelessness and see it, that they could actually visualise how to implement it within the homeless sector.

[the instructor] helped to show me... and that was so important because now, I can actually see how I could go into a completely chaotic situation and use the CAMS straight away, and I don't think that was part of the training, but I asked the question, because it was to do with my experience of working with homelessness and vulnerability (P.3)

For another counsellor, the tone of the instructor's voice and non-verbal body language was the most significant part of training, which has remained as part of their practice. This has influenced the way in which this counsellor works with clients, both when using CAMS and in general practice.

For me the best part of the training was the way he spoke, his tone, because I actually have a very high tone, so I always have to, even now I know my tone is quite high, so it was very interesting to watch how his tone, it was lower and you know like his body language was very calm even though the client was saying really distressful stuff (P. 5)

Many of the counsellors noted, that as a result of training they had become more direct in their approach of speaking about suicide.

One statement that [the instructor] made on the training, that I found horrific at the start, but actually I have used it a lot in sessions it's very effective, [the instructor] said well you do understand if you end your life now, you're not going to have the chance to work on these issues, and sort them out (P.4)

"I don't see it now as a barrier" – Approaching the CAMS paperwork

Many of the counsellors admitted that they had initially resisted the paperwork associated with CAMS, viewing it as a barrier to the psychotherapeutic process. The SSTT, which was developed specifically in this service, enabled counsellors to interact with suicidal clients in a way informed by CAMS without using the paper SSF.

I don't really like paperwork, I don't think a lot of people do if you are a bit Rogerian, paperwork you feel is a barrier, that you are not really communicating with the client... but... it is still possible, because the main thing is to connect with the client, once you have that... you can work with the paper, I don't see it now as a barrier (P.5)

The way in which the counsellor approached the paperwork in the session was seen as important to gain a positive response from the client.

I introduced [the client] to the paperwork very tentatively, I introduced it in a slower manner, ok this is the first session, I think it is very important to be very non-directive in that first half hour (P.4)

Building a rapport and gaining the client's trust was seen as important before introducing the paperwork. The counsellors elucidated to the issue that if the client does not trust you, they may not be honest during the risk assessment, as they are aware, depending on the answers they provide, it will determine the outcome of the session.

A client had actually said I'm not answering any of these questions, because I have before, and I know what happens... once [the client] trusted the paperwork, and I explained that it was in [the client's] best interest, I got it done (P.4)

In contrast to using the traditional CAMS approach, using the SSTT did not allow counsellors to track their client's progress, or to create a stabilisation plan. However, the SSTT was a useful resource when working with a client over the telephone or if there was an instance where the paperwork was not appropriate.

Sometimes when the team finds someone, you know then you can just telephone support, you can't do the CAMS stabilisation plan but that's where the [SSTT] can fit in very well and that's where I have found on the telephone, you're relying on that (P.3)

"... now I feel more confident" –

CAMS and the SSTT as a psychological resource for the counsellors

It became clear that CAMS and the SSTT provides the counsellors with confidence in assessing suicidal risk, for structuring sessions and using the forms as reassurance to reaffirm their practice in the event that a client did complete suicide. Prior to receiving the CAMS training, many of the counsellors admitted that they had not felt comfortable working with a suicidal client; "when I started Sure Steps as a counsellor, I would never had felt comfortable working with a suicidal client, because I didn't have that [CAMS] training... now I feel more confident" (P.5)

Throughout the interviews, the counsellors expressed the stress and anxiety they can experience when they are speaking to a client in a crisis situation who is suicidal. The SSTT and CAMS were credited with alleviating some of this anxiety as it provided them with direction when confronted with a crisis situation.

It is a shock when you get a call but once you have that [the SSTT] I do think it gives you a structure and you're less frazzled, and you're more focused when you're talking to the client, and you're still empathetic, you're not rattling off a check list, you are engaging with someone who is often very resistant or balling crying or both, and it feels good to be able to ask good questions (P.2)

'They want to know they can trust you' – Building a trusting relationship

Trust was a theme that emerged both as a major issue for the clients and an essential element in building a strong therapeutic relationship for meaningful work between the counsellor and the client. Given the isolation of the clients experiencing homelessness, taking a collaborative approach in addressing their suicidal ideation was seen as a necessity for the counsellors.

It has that beauty piece in that it is a collaborative approach, that element really works, what you're saying to the client is look I understand where you are, I understand where you are coming from and I am not here to try and change that, I am just here to try and help you find a better way (P.6)

One counsellor described this collaborative approach and building this trusting relationship as giving the client a metaphorical hug.

[the client] was just so heightened, so lost, just needed someone to just put their arms around them, not physically, and feel heard and not judged and they are back to a regulated place, as much as they can regulate, and be able to sleep (P.3)

"the client is coming in effected and there's that level of mental illness..." – Challenges in implementing CAMS

Due to the chaotic life circumstances of some clients experiencing homelessness, there are a number of challenges that the counsellors described when using CAMS and the SSTT among this population. As the counselling service is low threshold, many of the clients coming to sessions can be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Engaging a client who is intoxicated in meaningful therapeutic work did pose a challenge to counsellors. Furthermore, if a client had a dual-diagnosis and did not have access to a psychiatrist, the counsellors found offering the necessary support was difficult.

I do feel that there are challenges there because the client is coming in effected and therefore, they can be very agitated and find it hard to stay focused with you not least with the CAMS in general (P.1)

The counsellors also conveyed that many barriers exist for homeless clients with a dual-diagnosis in accessing mainstream healthcare for a psychiatric assessment and treatment. Many of the counsellors found that they lacked the skills to support

clients with a psychiatric condition. This caused the counsellors to feel limited in their ability in using CAMS to provide the necessary care that they believed the client required.

Most of us wouldn't have a psychological background, we're psychotherapists... we may lack certain other things... particularly when it is around severe psychiatric conditions, we just don't have that training... we have no psychiatrist, so if the client doesn't have one, that aspect of the care is missing... the clients issues may be much more complex than the tool can cover... it may be the right tool, but I don't know how to use the tool in that context (P.2)

“Use the tool to enhance who you are, use the tool to make you more proficient” – Flexibility of integrating CAMS into counsellor practice

The counsellors spoke extensively about their ability to integrate CAMS and the SSTT into their own psychotherapeutic approach and utilise their individual areas of competency.

I think it's a really good framework, and the fact that it leaves me very free to use the best skills, if they need CBT, or psychotherapy (P. 3)

The counsellors had specific ways in which they used aspects of the form to guide the sessions with their client.

I used [the client's] reasons for living and reasons for dying, to put in place small attainable goals, each week, so we took one and focused on one or two each week, it really helped [the client] (P.4)

One counsellor also claimed that it had become part of their 'toolkit', a resource they could draw from even within their general counselling practice.

It's a great guide for you, it asks questions that you can bring into general counselling, it actually opens up a lot for general counselling, in terms of like, say on the form you might identify self-hate, and they rate that as really high, then you are going to ask the questions around that, that might lead into other things.. deeper work or longer work (P. 6)

The fact that other tools can be integrated into the framework such as a complementary piece on self-harm was seen as a benefit of CAMS.

the self-harm is still definitely an aspect that we need to add on... it will be complementary to CAMS and it fits right in, [CAMS] does allow to integrate other things and that's why I like it so much (P.2)

When asked what the counsellors would recommend for another clinician using CAMS, one counsellor captured the essence of the theme in their emphasis of how important it is for CAMS to be a tool which is integrated into the counsellor's individual style of practicing.

I suppose the recommendation that I would give in implementing that in this sector or any other sector is don't lose who you are, use the tool to enhance who you are, use the tool to make you more proficient, but don't forget what your baseline is (P.2)

***"... for the support, just the comradery support" –
The importance of colleague support***

One benefit of having CAMS as a standardised tool used by all of the counsellors, was the fact that the counsellors could seek advice from other CAMS trained counsellors. This provided them with insight on how their colleagues were using CAMS.

You get a broader understanding and a different approach, you get the sense of how pressurised it can be, I haven't experienced that but someone else has, so I can understand... in their words, someone else might have met someone that is much more chaotic than I would have encountered so I would get to know how they managed that in the CAMS (P. 6)

The counsellors also noted that having an out-of-hours team did alleviate some stress when they went off shift, as they were confident in the knowledge that their clients had someone to call if they needed support; "having a team that works those hours, is incredibly helpful there, because we would be going home when they come in" (P.2).

Discussion

Seven key themes capturing the counsellors' experiences of using CAMS and the SSTT among the homeless sector were identified. A number of unique findings were captured from the current research, including how the counsellors adopted CAMS and the SSTT in their work among the homeless sector, and the added confidence that CAMS and the SSTT provided counsellors when working with suicidal clients. This research contributes to the current literature on working with suicidal clients and has provided insight on the limitations and benefits of using CAMS, and evidence-based treatment among the homeless population.

Many of the counsellors noted that prior to having received the CAMS training they did not feel comfortable working with suicidal clients. Receiving training that provides counsellors with the skills and knowledge to achieve professional compe-

tency when working with suicidal clients should be a minimum target for all counselling courses (Scheerder *et al.*, 2010). This study extends our current understanding of the challenges faced by counsellors when confronted with a suicidal client, and the necessity of providing suicide specific training for staff. A key finding from the current research was the long-lasting impact of training on the counsellor's practice with suicidal clients, which was attributed to the in-person role-play. The role-play also made the training more relevant to their cohort of client.

As documented across the literature and identified in the current study, working with suicidal clients is an anxiety provoking and stressful experience (Reeves and Mintz, 2001). Having CAMS and the SSTT to structure sessions alleviated some of this anxiety. The SSTT was seen as an important contribution to alleviating this anxiety when working over the telephone with clients. It was evident that the counsellors have become more confident in using the SSF and so many of their concerns and initial beliefs about the paperwork have dissipated. One explanation for this, may be attributed to the counsellors customising the tool to fit within their practice and thus problem solving some of the initial issues. Therefore, the way in which the counsellors integrated the CAMS into their unique style of practicing, is an important step in providing care for the client, as they are then drawing from their areas of competency and using the forms creatively to match the needs of their clients.

Building a trusting relationship was seen as crucial for the successful introduction of the SSF. Building a strong therapeutic relationship, has been seen as an important way to overcome barriers when working with the homeless population (Canavan *et al.*, 2012). CAMS is a useful tool in aiding this therapeutic alliance; as highlighted by the counsellors in this study, sitting side by side with the client did contribute to a collaborative way of working.

Challenges do exist when implementing CAMS and the SSTT within the homeless sector, such as difficulty with client engagement if the client is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, no fixed abode and often a limited support system. It was also noted by the counsellors that they lacked expert knowledge of psychiatric conditions, and felt limited in their ability to treat the client efficiently if that aspect of care was missing. This emphasises that CAMS is a tool, which still very much relies on the skills of the clinician; it also highlights the need for additional input from psychiatry in supporting the needs of homeless people.

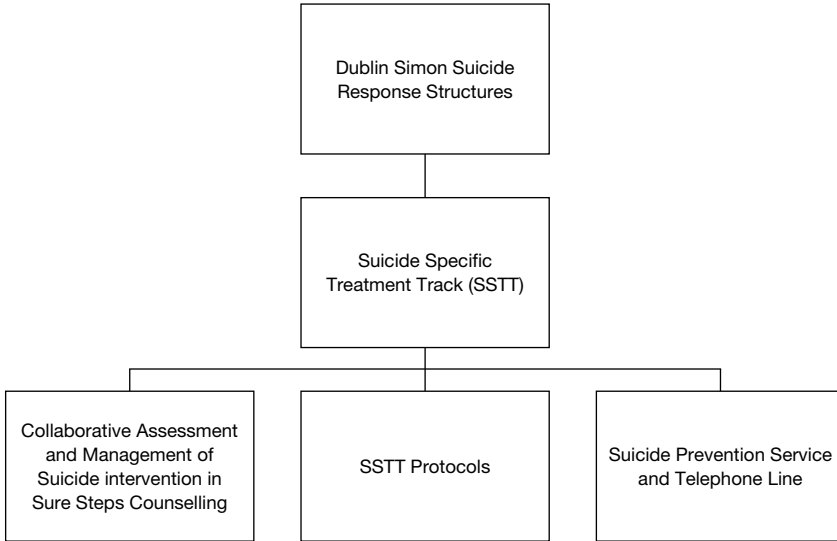
The counsellors from this study emphasised the importance of speaking with colleagues as a form of support, to confirm decisions they had made regarding a client, to seek advice, or to learn from the experiences of other CAMS trained counsellors. Thus, providing training and implementing an evidence-based suicide specific intervention among a team of mental health professionals has a number of benefits, including the opportunity for peer supervision and guidance.

There are some study limitations. The sample size was small. It was a purposively selected sample, which means that the experiences provided are only within one organisation in Dublin City Centre. Future research should also be conducted to explore the experiences of a range of professionals with differing areas of expertise in their implementation of CAMS, which would further refine the specific facilitators and challenges that exist for individual professions both within the homeless sector and across other sectors.

To conclude, this study has important practical implications for other mental health professionals adopting CAMS for their work with suicidal clients and for organisations implementing CAMS within the homeless sector. First of all, for organisations, recording a role-play which has been adapted to those experiencing homelessness, in addition to the in-person training could provide much more relevant insight for mental health professionals when beginning CAMS training and could be a resourceful tool when wanting to revise the training session. Secondly, individual mental health professionals should note that the SSTT is a beneficial resource in a crisis situation, or when working over the telephone. Finally, gaining the client's trust and forming a therapeutic alliance should be a priority before introducing the SSF. Working with suicidal clients can be a traumatic and challenging experience, therefore gaining insight from counsellors who are using a suicide specific intervention, which has been adapted for the needs of this population, offers a strong contribution to the current literature.

Appendix

Dublin Simon Suicide Response Structures



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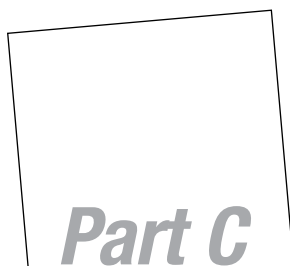
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Review Essay



Part C



Review Essay: The Council of Economic Advisers (2019) *The State of Homelessness in America* (The White House, Washington, DC).

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Introduction

Over eighty years ago, Keynes (1937) wrote: “Practical men who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.” News cycles are a lot shorter now; the “few years” have shrunk to a “few months” or a “few weeks,” and economists no longer have to be defunct before they have some influence. But we still have plenty of madmen in authority who style themselves to be practical men.

The frenzy that such madmen distill, however, is often not a thoroughly accurate depiction of the original academic scribbles. Stalin was not a perfect rendition of Marx; nor Bin Laden, of the Qur’an; nor Torquemada, of the Bible. The degree of fidelity of the renditions to the original sources, of course, has been the subject of enduring controversy.

My job here is to review the recent report of the US Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) called *The State of Homelessness in America*. This is an academic report, but it is hard to disentangle it completely from the policy actions and pronouncements that the Trump administration has been making since the report’s release. Indeed, the CEA is more closely tied to Trump than Marx was to Stalin, for instance: Marx was never on Stalin’s payroll. Any reasonably comprehensive discussion of Marx has to take a stand on how if at all Stalin fits in, and so I can’t review the report in isolation from what followed it: I have to take a stand on how Trump’s tweets and the policy that he appears to be working toward fit in with the CEA report.

The bottom line is this: the report's analysis is pretty good, the policies that the report recommends do not follow from the analysis, and the Trumpian initiative appears to deviate significantly from both the report's analysis and its recommendations.

Notice that I am being non-committal about what the Trumpian initiative on homelessness really is. Aside from expressing his dislike for Nancy Pelosi, the President has not yet set forth a clear policy. And he may never do so; after three years no one really knows what his policy on Iran, for instance, is either. The federal role in homelessness is not huge, especially in Los Angeles and New York, which spend large amounts of state and local funds, and his powers are circumscribed by a House of Representatives that the Democrats control, and by the short period left in his current term. But the tweets, some appointments, and a few official pronouncements in the bureaucracies give some idea of where he is heading.

This review will be organized around five main substantive areas of the report: housing supply, individual-level factors, better counting of homeless people, Housing First and transitional housing, and unsheltered homeless people. For each of these topics, I'll start with the report's analysis, then look at its recommendations, and finally see whether the direction that Trump policy appears to be heading follows from the analysis and recommendations.

Housing supply

Since the end of the Great Recession, homelessness—at least as measured in the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR)—has become more concentrated in a few large metropolitan areas, all of which are among the richest in the country. New York City and Los Angeles County have seen massive increases in homelessness, while homelessness has also risen in Boston, Washington DC, San Francisco, San Jose and Seattle. On average, outside these glittery metropolises, homelessness has declined. Wealth and homelessness have both become concentrated in the same places. While this phenomenon has not gone unnoticed, and is not even confined to the US, the report has done a good job of bringing it to the fore.

The report attributes rising homelessness in rich cities in large part to rising rents, in accord with conventional views (although none of the papers cited uses a quadratic specification in rents, which may match the data better). Standard urban economics predicts that rising productivity in the centre of a city implies rising wages as firms try to lure more workers to take advantage of higher productivity. Higher wages for some workers let them bid up the price of land in attractive places to live, and higher productivity induces firms to bid up the price of land directly as they scramble to expand production. As the price of land rises so do housing prices for everyone, since land is a major input into the production of housing.

So the report's analysis of the major cause of rising homelessness in the areas where it is rising is constructive and sensible.

The report's policy response to the rising tide of land prices is also commendable in its intentions. Instead of trying to engineer specially targeted escapes for small numbers of people, it seeks to hold land prices down generally through reasonably efficient universal policies. One such policy, for instance, would be following the lead of many European nations and setting a housing benefit programme as an entitlement. Another possible policy would concentrate on lowering the operating cost of low-income housing by reducing such things as water and sewer rates, or changing city ordinances that charge landowners for police responses to their properties. A third possible policy would be to repeal policies like Proposition 13 in California and the under-assessment of single-family houses in New York City that induce misallocations of land and housing. The report does not consider any of these alternatives, or ones like them.

The main policy initiative that the report recommends to reduce homelessness in big, rich cities is housing market deregulation, particularly loosening of zoning regulations, although it is vague on the specific changes it would like to see. The recommendation is based in part on Raphael (2010), which found a positive cross-section correlation between early AHAR rates of homelessness in a metropolitan area and a score on an aggregate index reflecting stringency of regulation on residential construction (the Wharton Residential Land Use Regulation Index).

Practically no economist would deny that a less-regulated housing market would probably eventually lead to lower rents and less homelessness, but it's not clear which regulations are best ones to loosen, how much a careful deregulation would reduce rents and homelessness, and how long the process would take. Careful analysis of the great volumes of detailed laws and administrative procedures is needed here; machine learning and natural language processing offer some exciting possibilities for research in this area.

Understandably, a report from the White House does not have time to wait for careful analysis. So it uses a well-known but controversial series of papers in urban economics to estimate how much optimal deregulation would reduce rents and homelessness in the long run. For me at least, this exercise backfires: after reading it, I believed that deregulation holds less promise for reducing homelessness than I did before I read it.

The report's exercise uses a series of papers by Edward Glaeser and Joseph Gyourko (henceforth G&G) (2003, 2018). (Full disclosure: I was the discussant for the first of these papers and raised many of the objections then (2003) that I'll repeat now. Murray (2019) offers a more current critique.) They think that a deregulated

housing market would act like a competitive market for a good like cornflakes. In such a market in long-run equilibrium the price of a box of cornflakes would equal the cost of making it. If the sale price were higher than production cost, somebody could come along and make more boxes of cornflakes, charge less than the market price while still making a profit, and so bid down the market price until it fell to production cost. If the sale price were lower than production cost, firms would either have to raise price or go out of business. In long run equilibrium, the only way that sale price can float above production cost in such a market is for the government to levy a tax on cornflakes. In that case, the difference between sale price and production cost would be the (per box) cornflake tax. If you got rid of the cornflake tax, the market price would fall by the amount of the tax.

G&G apply this reasoning to the housing market. For each metropolitan area, they calculate the production cost of an average (single-family detached) house, and compare it with the sale price. They call the difference the “zoning tax.” Just like the cornflake tax it represents government interference in the market. Arguably, the size of the zoning tax then tells us how much house prices would fall if zoning were abolished (just as the size of the cornflake tax tells us how much cornflake prices would fall if government interference in that market ceased). And so by comparing production cost to sale price, G&G can estimate how much house prices would fall in each metropolitan area if zoning and other regulations were abolished—all without looking at a single page of zoning code.

The CEA report takes G&G’s calculations, makes reasonable estimates of the fall in rents that a fall in house prices would cause, and then uses the best available estimate (from Corinth (2017)) of how much the resulting fall in rents would reduce homelessness. These steps are well done. The report concludes that this radical deregulation would induce modest but substantial reductions in homelessness: 54 percent in San Francisco (the city most affected), 40 percent in Los Angeles, and 23 percent in New York, for instance.

I say “modest” for two reasons, one minor and one major. The minor reason is that for some of these cities, the projected decreases bring homelessness back only to the level at the end of the Great Recession. For New York City, the projected percent decrease from radical deregulation would bring 2018 homelessness down to about 5 000 above its 2012 level, and for Los Angeles, the projected decrease would be to a level only about 1 500 below the 2012 number. For San Francisco, the decrease would be to a level well below 2012, but San Francisco is unusual.¹

¹ I am dealing only with the major federally-designated continuum of care in each metropolitan area, while the report deals with the set of continua of care for which the majority of population is in the metropolitan area. Reconstructing these sets of continua of care would require some time and access to the CEA work papers.

The major reason I say “modest” is that the G&G story on which the exercise is based is about long-run equilibrium. That “long-run” stipulation matters immensely, because houses and the attendant infrastructure are long-lived assets, and getting from where we are now to the long-run equilibrium or close to it would take a very long time—quite possibly forever, in fact. Just as expanded production of cornflakes is needed to force the sale price of cornflakes down to production cost after the cornflake tax is repealed, so too is an expanded stock of housing needed to reduce housing prices and rents in the G&G story.

For many reasons, that expanded housing stock cannot be built over night. Even if enough accessible vacant land were available to build on, builders would be constrained from a rapid expansion of the housing supply by the availability of skilled labour and possibly of certain building materials, as well as by their own and their lenders’ willingness to accept risk—better to build slowly and see what the market has an appetite for, rather than build quickly and discover too late that the market has no appetite.

This timing problem is exacerbated because much of the contemplated new housing stock would have to be built where development has already taken place—an unconstrained city would often have two-family houses where single-family houses now stand, ten-story apartment buildings where five-story buildings now sit, and so on. No known technology accomplishes these transmutations quickly and cheaply. Tearing down existing functioning buildings to replace them with new ones can be very expensive—not only because of the cost of demolition, but also because of the opportunity cost of losing the services of the existing building for the rest of its expected natural life. Buildings last for decades, even for centuries, and so the process of expanding the housing stock in areas already developed will take decades. That means that realizing the reductions in homelessness that the CEA report contemplates would also take decades, even if all zoning laws were eliminated today.

The process might even take longer to reach the equilibrium that G&G describe because of the peculiar way that they treat land. Land is a major component of the cost of housing—for instance, more than two-thirds of the value of the “house” in which I live in New Jersey is the value of the land (including the land under the structure) that comes with the structure. G&G derive the cost of land in each metropolitan area by regressing the property values of individual properties on structure and characteristics and the size (number of square meters) of the property’s land. Hence they use the “average treatment effect”—how much the average parcel’s value would increase if it were to gain an additional square meter. So what they use is the marginal value of land in the average parcel. In their equilibrium, every square meter under every house has this same cost.

When I think about the property I own, I would be willing to pay almost nothing to gain an extra square meter: there's almost nothing useful I could do with it, but I would have to maintain it. So for me and for many homeowners, I suspect, the marginal value of land is almost zero. But the average value per square meter of the land that I own is definitely positive, since the parcel taken as a whole is valuable to me and to many other people who would be willing to buy it if I put it on the market as an ensemble. So a first (and as I'll explain) naïve reaction to the G&G approach is that its use of marginal rather than average square meters wildly underestimates the cost of the land being used to produce a house, and so wildly overestimates the decrease in rents. Thus it overestimates the decrease in homelessness that deregulation could achieve.

The naïve reaction is myopic, however. Neither nature nor the market prescribed the boundaries of the parcels in my neighbourhood; the government did. And a smart market, according to the rejoinder to the naïve reaction, would not design parcels where the average value of a square meter differed from the marginal value. To see why, consider an unregulated developer designing building lots on a huge featureless piece of land (and forget about roads and parks to keep the problem easy). Then she would of course design every parcel to be the same size and shape, the size and shape that maximized average value per square meter. And that size and shape would have to make marginal value equal average value—which pushes back against the naïve view and justifies G&G's assumption.

For suppose that marginal were less than average. Then the developer could chop a few square centimetres off all the tentatively drawn parcels and add some more parcels of the new reduced size. The new parcels would have higher average value per square meter because the square centimetres they lost were producing less value per square meter than the square meters that remained. Similarly, if the marginal values are greater than average, the developer could add a few square centimetres to the tentatively optimal parcels, and since the new square centimetres would be producing more value per square meter than the ones they joined, average value would go up.

So if parcels are optimally sized by a smart market, the G&G procedure is very much the right one. After deregulation, then, market pressures could lead to redrawing parcel boundaries throughout the metropolitan area to adjust in the direction of optimality. And if deregulation were permissive enough, and time were long enough, then perhaps all the parcel boundaries could be redrawn optimally, and the low rents and low homelessness contemplated in the G&G exercise might be achieved.

But changing parcel boundaries in an existing city is going to take a long time. You can't just roll houses around on wheels, and stretch sewer and water connections like rubber. You would need to vacate and demolish large numbers of properties at

the same time to add or subtract a few square meters here and there. Meanwhile, the target would be a moving one as new technologies and tastes altered the optimal property sizes faster than natural market-driven redevelopment could reach them. And so, once parcel-redrawing is added to the mix, as it must be, the time to achieve the G&G equilibrium, if it ever can be achieved, is probably measured in centuries, not decades, if it can ever be achieved. In short, property redevelopment along redrawn property lines bears precious little resemblance to the evolving (or devolving) market for corn flakes and other breakfast products.

In this light, it is hard to be enthusiastic about a programme of deregulation as the centrepiece for resolving homelessness. In New York, for instance, if complete deregulation happened immediately (not a high probability political scenario) and long run equilibrium took only fifty years to achieve, the average annual projected decrease in homelessness would be 0.52 percent; if it took a century, the annual rate of decrease would be 0.26 percent. Even in the extreme case of San Francisco, fifty years to equilibrium would mean 1.55 percent a year decreases; a hundred years would mean 0.78 percent a year.

This is not to argue that specific, targeted, carefully-thought-out and studied changes to regulations are doomed to failure. Ideas like allowing granny flats or easing restrictions against rooming houses and shared residences are worth studying and possibly pursuing. Back-of-the-envelope calculations about pie-in-the-sky scenarios don't really tell us much more than this: the sky is very far away.

How have these recommendations been translated into policies? Hardly at all, and it seems as if the timetable for doing anything is very long. That is not surprising, considering how nebulous the recommendations are, and how much work has to go into learning about and deciding on specific steps (are the water pipe diameters that Los Angeles requires the right ones?). The report cites the White House Council on Eliminating Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing, a cabinet-level group that was established in June 2019, as evidence of Trump administration dedication. But as of January 2020 this group had no website, and its only action had been to issue a Request for Information to the public due at the end of January.

Otherwise, Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York have been frequent targets of the President's tweets, on account of their high levels of homelessness. But apparently the President has not read or considered his own CEA's report. If the report is correct that high and rising rents are the reason for the homelessness he decries, then he should think about why rents are high and rising. The ultimate reason is that a lot of people really want to live in these cities, and a lot of firms want to locate in these cities, and that is becoming truer over time. If these cities were not becoming more productive and more attractive to people, especially people who have the skills to do well in this economy, rents would not be rising, and

homelessness probably would not be rising either (or at least by as much). He should be praising these cities and asking what he could do to make the rest of America more like them.

Individual-level factors

The argument about individual-level factors is essentially that reducing the number of people who experience difficulties like poverty, substance abuse, mental illness, unemployment, and incarceration will reduce homelessness, *cet. par.* But because the report's authors are serious scholars, they see through this argument (p.22): "Although mental illness, substance abuse disorders, former incarceration, poverty, and weak social ties place individuals at higher risk of homelessness, the vast majority of individuals with any of these conditions is not homeless (even if all half million homeless faced all of these issues, there are millions of non-homeless Americans how face each issue as well)." Except for unemployment, I am aware of few if any of the many cross-section population studies have found any correlation between the number of people with these vulnerabilities and the number of homeless people (on the population level), and they know this.

The exact argument that the report makes also has some empirical pitfalls. They say (p.21) that a problem like mental illness and addiction "reduces the demand for homes and thus increases homelessness in a community." A shock that increased homelessness by increasing mental illness and addiction would therefore be accompanied by a falling price of housing. But as the report is clear, the rise in homelessness in the large rich cities has been accompanied by rising rents, not falling rents. The proximate cause of the current crisis is not an increase in individual problems. That by itself does not mean that the crisis could not be alleviated by measures that reduced substance abuse and mental illness (if any were known), but they would be partially offset by the rising rents they would spur.

More specifically, after more than thirty years of research, the only interventions we know of that reduce homelessness more effectively than waiting and hoping all involve some form of housing subsidy (O'Flaherty, 2019). Maybe there exist some interventions without housing subsidies that work, but we don't know what they are, and neither do the report's authors.

This report, however, seems determined to say that the Trump administration's general efforts to alleviate mental illness and substance abuse, as well as to promote prosperity, are significant factors in reducing homelessness. So the report just says this without any supporting analysis whatsoever.

There are many good reasons other than homelessness for a government to try to reduce mental illness, substance abuse, incarceration and poverty. There are many good reasons to promote prosperity. But if the report actually believes that homelessness properly defined and properly measured failed to decline in the Obama years when unemployment fell from 10.0 percent in October 2009 to 4.9 percent in January 2017, how can it expect the unemployment decline under Trump—from 4.9 percent to 3.5 percent in November 2019—to work any better?

Thus the conclusion that the report seeks to draw from the alleged connection between programmes that are designed to change personal characteristics and the Trump administration's performance is unwarranted, because the connection does not exist. That is an intellectual flaw in the report, but an understandable and harmless one.

Unfortunately, the uses to which this section of the report may be being put may not be so harmless. There are indications—from the past history of the new head of the Inter-agency Council on Homelessness, for instance, and greater willingness to fund transitional housing projects, for instance—that the administration may now be trying to encourage interventions targeted at substance abuse and mental illness and without a serious housing component. Nothing in the report explicitly supports such activities, and neither would any person who knew even a little bit about the past thirty years of research.

Better counting of homeless people

The report discusses data issues in two places. These concern the standard annual assessment of homelessness in the US, known as the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR). This is a single day-and-night survey taken around the same time everywhere in the country.

The report's first concern is that AHAR data are not of high quality, especially in the early years. We are probably too complacent about this, not even trying obvious techniques like weighted least squares to offset the unevenness of quality. However, alternatives are being tried now, like the enumeration processes that the Community Solutions non-profit organization is using in conjunction with its Built for Zero initiative.

The lesson that the report draws from these weaknesses is not the usual one that we should try harder. Rather the interpretation is that the triumphalist message that federal policies have worked over the last decade is probably wrong. The implication that nothing works is probably too strong. If one sets aside New York City and Los Angeles County from the rest of the nation because the massive increases in

homelessness in these locations overwhelmed any federal policies, the historical record for federal policy is not as bad as the report avows; in fact it's plausibly decent. But even with this stipulation, the CEA message is appropriately sobering.

Second, the report argues that if transitional housing residents are considered homeless, then rapid rehousing participants should be considered homeless too. This argument is part of the larger discussion dismissing the triumphalist story of federal homelessness policy history. Both transitional housing and rapid rehousing are short-term assistance programmes for people who are already homeless, and so the report concludes that they should be categorized the same way.

The report does not include or consider any counter-arguments, but the counter-arguments are facially compelling. HUD definitions actually make it quite clear why the AHAR divides the categories—the housing statuses are different. HUD defines transitional housing as “a project that has as its purpose facilitating the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing within a reasonable amount of time (usually 24 months)” (US HUD 2019a). Rapid rehousing, by contrast, is “a form of permanent housing that is short-term... or medium term... tenant-based rental assistance.... , as necessary to help a homeless individual or family,... , move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing” (US HUD, 2019b).

Thus the purposes are different: transitional housing is trying to get a household ready to live in permanent housing, while rapid rehousing is trying to help a household live in permanent housing. If you substitute the phrase “be a professor” for “live in permanent housing,” then transitional housing is a bit like graduate school while rapid rehousing would be a programme that helps untenured faculty (but faculty nonetheless) by giving them advice and training on teaching and some time off teaching so they can do research to publish. Classifying transitional housing participants as homeless and rapid rehousing participants as not homeless is no more “artificial” (to use the report’s adjective) than classifying graduate students as students and assistant professors as faculty.²

Whether we should be unhappy or happy about changes in the size of either group is a deeper question and requires more research, but empirical and philosophical. But there is no constraint that the two groups be treated the same way.

² One may try to argue, under the analogy above, that there is no logical difference between graduate student teaching assistants and untenured faculty, other than the arbitrary whims of bureaucrats. But that argument would have to be made, point by point. Likewise, the CEA report could have explained precisely why there is no worthy difference between transitional housing programmes and rapidly provided permanent housing. However, that particular argument is one that the CEA report declined to make.

I don't know whether any action is being taken on this recommendation.

Housing First and transitional housing

Housing First has come to mean many different things, as the report notes in a footnote, but whatever it might mean, the report doesn't like it. This general distaste for a label is hard to understand.

First let me discuss the strict "Pathways to Housing" version of Housing First, which I'll call Pathways HF, because it is well-defined (Tsemberis, 2010), has fidelity manuals (Stefancic *et al.*, 2013; Goering *et al.*, 2016), and has been the subject of RCTs (Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2015; Aubry *et al.*, 2016). Pathways HF assures permanent housing and requires the housed individual to interact regularly with a case manager or therapeutic team, without mandating participation in particular treatments.³ The strong results are that Pathways HF reduces days of homelessness, relative to usual care, and does not make anything else worse (Aubry *et al.*, 2015; Benton, 2015; Aubry *et al.*, 2016). For the most part, evidence does not suggest that housing improves health (Kertesz, 2016; National Academies, 2018), with the likely exception of improved adherence and disease control for HIV/AIDS (Buchanan *et al.*, 2009; Towe *et al.*, 2019). These are all individual-level studies that look at the effect of treatment on the treated; there are no population-level studies that look at whether a policy that involves access to Pathways HF under well-defined circumstances reduces or increases the number of people who are homeless at a point-in-time.

The other uses of the phrase Housing First have not been well studied, and so there is no strong basis for liking them or not; there is even less reason that they should be treated the same way as Pathways HF. The two main approaches that fit into this category are non-Pathways permanent supportive housing, about which almost nothing is known, and rapid rehousing.

A variant of rapid rehousing involving housing subsidies for only a few months was studied in the Family Options RCT (Gubits *et al.*, 2016), but the sample was small and the study design allowed only intent-to-treat estimates rather than the more common treatment-on-the-treated estimates. In almost all dimensions, including length of stay in emergency shelters, this version of rapid rehousing was no different

³ In this regard the CEA report inadvertently mischaracterises Housing First itself. Service interactions are required under Pathways Housing First and the Veterans Administration programme modelled on Pathways, while participation in particular programmes of rehabilitation are not mandatory. The CEA report (page 2) summarises this as an "approach that does not have service participation requirements."

from usual care, but cheaper. Compared with transitional housing, there were also no differences in most domains, but rapid rehousing was much cheaper and participants were much more willing to participate in it.

While the phrase “rapid rehousing” seems to attach to the phrase “Housing First” these days, the intervention in the Family Options study that most resembled Pathways HF was termed permanent subsidies: families received Housing Choice Vouchers, or something similar. This intervention proved by far the most successful in promoting housing stability, self-sufficiency, and developmental outcomes, and it did not differ much in public cost from usual care and transitional housing.

Pathways HF and the HF-like permanent housing subsidies of Family Options thus stand out as two of the few interventions for which reasonable evidence of better performance on an individual level than usual care. They are the interventions known to be effective for treating people who are homeless.

But we don’t know how a policy of using either of these two interventions affects the level of homelessness on a population basis, and evidence on this question is sparse and indirect. The fear is that if people think they will receive subsidized housing without having to suffer through a humiliating therapeutic process or some other ordeal, more people might become or remain homeless.

In general we have no evidence on whether this fear is reasonable or not. The possible exceptions are the studies of subsidized placements of families from New York City’s family shelter system that I cited earlier. These find that subsidized placements do in fact reduce shelter population, but incentive effects are serious, and offset 60-80 percent of the shelter census reductions that these policies would otherwise cause. The bucket is leaky, but it still moves water. But many of these subsidies came after long shelter stays—on average families stayed in shelters 307 days before they left with a subsidy in the 2004-2008 period (Goodman *et al.*, 2014).

Corinth (2017) also sheds light on the population-level effects of programmes like Housing First, but says nothing about how much they might incentivize people to become or remain homeless. Using AHAR data, he finds that the local average treatment effect of adding 100 beds of what the AHAR reports as permanent supportive housing reduces the PIT count by around 8-10, but this is not statistically significant. This is not a small number, given the difference in dimensionality between PIT counts and PSH beds, and given what is known about other policies, like regular subsidized housing and placement subsidies for families. But we don’t know what permanent supportive housing as reported in the AHAR really is: how much of it is Pathways HF and how much is something else, and since the effect is local, how much of the variation in Permanent Supportive Housing that is being studied is variation on Pathways HF and how much is not.

The dimensionality issue is an important one. Corinth measures the effect of beds, empty or full, on point-in-time (PIT) counts. Consider an extreme case, where Housing First is working very much as it is supposed to, and there is no adverse behavioural response. Originally suppose there is a constant homeless population of 1 000. That number is the population because inflows match outflows at that population; it is a “steady-state” population, in economists’ terms, like the roughly constant volume of a reservoir with constant flows in and constant flows out. Now set up 100 Housing First beds. Fill those beds with 100 homeless people and assume—to keep the example stark and simple—that these 100 formerly people stay in Housing First “permanently”—that is, forever.

What happens to the PIT count? Immediately it falls by 100. Assume Housing First has no behavioural effects. So there is no change in the rate at which people flow into homelessness or in the rate at which they flow out. Then the PIT count will return to its original level, just as a reservoir that sprung a leak would return to its original level after the leak was repaired. So if you looked at the effect that the number of Housing First beds had on the PIT count of mature systems, you would find no effect.

Of course, people don’t stay in Housing First forever, and Housing First is unlikely to have precisely zero effect on flows into and out of homelessness. The actual formulas are quite complicated (see O’Flaherty 2019 for a precise statement in the exponential case). The point is this: even perfectly operating Housing First will not transmute a 100-bed increase in Housing First into a long-run 100-person decrease in homelessness, and measuring the relationship between Housing First beds and PIT counts can tell us almost nothing about the behavioural responses to Housing First.

The lack of direct evidence on either the behavioural question or the more general PIT-impact question is embarrassing and reflects poorly on the current state of homelessness scholarship. But it does not justify extirpating Pathways HF and HF-like permanent subsidies from the list of useful treatments. There are several reasons why this leap from weak evidence to banishment is unjustified.

The first reason is simple prudence. Pathways HF is likely to have some incentive effects, but as long as it’s targeted at chronically homeless people, these are not likely to be larger than the New York City incentive effects, and so not likely to reverse the first-order impact on homelessness.

The second reason is that these interventions are tools, not policies. Tools can be used well or poorly (hammers can drive nails that attach boards to each other to build a dog house; or they can break people’s arms). A policy for using Housing First includes such things as number of beds, eligibility rules, selection priorities, location of apartments, eviction procedures, and so on. Housing First can be

embedded in many different policies, and those policies are likely to have different incentive effects, and have different impacts on aggregate homelessness. One big reason to engage in population-level studies of Housing First is to learn which policies have the best effects on aggregate homelessness. We have a great tool, but we really don't know how to use it best yet. We have to use it (possibly disastrously sometimes) to find out how to use it.

Finally, discontinuing Housing First now would raise serious ethical challenges for many professionals. Physicians and social workers, for instance, have fiduciary obligations to the people whom they serve, but not to any abstraction like aggregate homelessness. My physician, for instance, is expected to treat an illness I have without thinking deeply about whether her treating me might allow me to drive a car this afternoon and crash into a school bus. So asking members of the helping professions to abjure that particular treatment of their clients which evidence has shown is the best for their clients raises serious ethical questions.

Let me point to an analogy. Since 1990 (about the time when Pathways Housing First was first piloted), medicine has made tremendous technological progress in treating people who already have heart disease. Any economist will tell you that because this technological progress made the prospect of heart disease less frightening, it may have incentivised unhealthy practices like eating meat and leading a sedentary lifestyle. It's even possible that the incentive effect overwhelmed the first-order effect of lives saved by the new technology, and the net effect is more lives lost. But absent a definitive study showing the new technology, all things considered, caused a net loss of life, it would be impossible to make today's physicians revert to using 1990s medical technology. And even if such a study existed, the discussion would be about how to limit and prioritise access to the best current technology, not about a blanket return to 1990.

Thus it is not surprising that the report does not make any recommendations about Housing First. It argues primarily that because of the lack of significant evidence of positive population-level effects (and, I would add, any accurate idea of how many Pathways Housing First beds are actually operating), Housing First should not get credit for any large part of any reduction in PIT homelessness since 2007. That is a fair point.

The closest the report comes to making a recommendation about Housing First is hailing the Trump administration's policy of allowing Continuum-of-Care to impose work requirements for some Housing First participants. This is not particularly informative, since it appears to be the CEA's policy to hail whatever the Trump administration does. But in this case the reaction is not completely silly; funding a randomized controlled trial on Housing First with some work requirements would not be a bad idea.

What about Trumpian policy? The idea of hiring a director for the Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness (aka “homeless czar”) who states his approach as “Housing Fourth” is not at all supported by the CEA’s report.

What about transitional housing? Since the Trump policy seems to be moving in the direction of changing individual characteristics, and since it seems to be against using Housing First, there is a possibility that it will shift funds from permanent supportive housing to transitional housing. The report, however, makes no recommendations about transitional housing and provides no analysis. The only discussion of transitional housing is taxonomic—whether it should be put into the same category as permanent supportive housing.

Unsheltered homelessness

The report provides an excellent summary of what we know about variation in the distribution of unsheltered homelessness across cities (following Corinth and Lucas, 2018). We don’t know much: temperature combined with the standard variables that usually work for aggregate homelessness do not explain a lot of the variation in unsheltered homelessness.

Accordingly, the report conjectures about possible missing variables and calls for more research. Policing could be one such variable in play (though not the only one possible). Since the FBI Uniform Crime Reports have data on all law enforcement agencies in the US (over 20000) it should be easy to ask whether adding a measure of police strength can explain any of the variation in unsheltered homelessness. For over 3000 law enforcement agencies, the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) data set gives more detail on type of training, diversity, and style of policing, and so could provide more variables to explore. (However neither LEMAS nor any data set I’m aware of contains a repository of systematic information on how different police agencies respond to homelessness.) RCTs can also be done: in recent years homelessness has seen several RCTs and criminal justice have seen many, and so the expertise to experiment with policing strategies is easily available.

So, for the most part, the report’s analysis of unsheltered homelessness is sane and sensible. We ought to learn a lot more about how different kinds of policy affect homelessness and homeless people, especially how policing affects homeless people’s safety. We ought to experiment to find out more—and, of course, experiments should not violate standard protocols on protecting the safety and dignity of homeless people. Almost all of the report delivers a salutary call for such research. The only recommendation about unsheltered homelessness in the report is simple (p.19): “More research is needed to understand how different policing policies affect

the outcomes of homeless people—including their ultimate destinations, mental health, drug use, employment and other dimensions of wellbeing—as well as outcomes for non-homeless people.”

What about Trumpian policy? The report’s recommendation appears to have been rejected, or at least put on hold. As of January 2020, the National Institute of Justice’s list of forthcoming funding opportunities contained 18 opportunities, but none had anything to do with homelessness (<https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/forthcoming>, accessed January 19, 2020). Instead the policy, especially with the hiring of homeless czar, seems to be going in the direction of coercive policing and authoritarian mega shelters.

The report’s analysis, however, is not without weaknesses, and some of these weaknesses may have allowed policy to deviate so substantially from the recommendations (or President Trump may have gone in that direction no matter what the report said).

The first weakness in the report is the reference to President Trump’s executive orders. The conclusion (p.33) says: “The administration has through a series of executive orders consistently supported the police.” Only five executive orders have dealt with crime and policing (13773, 13774, 13776, 13809, and 13896), and not one of them bears even the most remote connection to the policing of homelessness.⁴ If future executive orders could help police forces respond constructively to homelessness, those are--as yet--unnamed.

The second weakness may be just a slip of the tongue. The report repeatedly says that the number of people sleeping on the streets depends, *ceteris paribus*, on the “tolerability of sleeping on the streets.” This is not good economics, and separately, it embeds an ethical oversight. The correct phrase is “relative tolerability,” in light of existing options. The word “relative” should remind us that policies that reduce homelessness by making people who would otherwise be homeless worse off hold a different ethical value than policies that reduce homelessness by making people who would otherwise be homeless better off.

“Relative tolerability” should remind us also of at least one relevant variable that the CEA report forgot to consider before it leapt instantly from “unexplained variance in unsheltered homelessness” to “let’s talk about policing.” That omitted variable

⁴ Executive order 13773 (9 February 2017) establishes a task force on transnational crime and drug trafficking. EO 13774 (9 February 2017) calls for steps to prevent violence against law enforcement officers. EO 13776 (9 February 2017) establishes a task force on crime reduction and public safety. EO 13809 (28 August 2017) loosens Obama-era restrictions on providing surplus military equipment to police departments. EO 13896 (28 October 2019) establishes a commission on law enforcement and the administration of justice (Federal Register 2019).

is shelter quality. By the optimising logic that the report uses repeatedly, unobserved variation in shelter quality is just as likely an explanation as unobserved variation in policing style.

Indeed, variation in *explanans* is needed to explain variation in *explanandum*, and it is quite plausible that shelter variation is greater than policing variation. Almost all police departments, for instance, operate 24-7, while shelters vary greatly in their hours of operation, with a significant fraction closing in daylight hours and many not allowing admission late at night. Shelters have different rules, permit different lengths of stay, accept different living arrangements, serve different food or none at all, proselytize for different religions or not at all, and offer different physical facilities. Police departments are often tightly constrained by uniform state rules and training standards, but shelters are not. Police departments in multi-state areas are all governed by federal circuit court decisions on the constitutionality of various police practices, and Supreme Court decisions about constitutionality bind all police departments.⁵ Nothing comparable forces uniformity among shelters.

A comparison between New York City and Los Angeles County⁶ illustrates this point. It's just an anecdote, but an important anecdote since New York and Los Angeles account for almost a quarter of US homelessness. Los Angeles and New York are about the same size in both housed population and homeless population, but Los Angeles's unsheltered homeless rate is well above the predicted rate that the report calculated, and New York is well below its predicted rate. (The prediction accounts for temperature and the standard variables that predict total homelessness.) In the CEA's world that difference is probably due to differences in policing. But shelter quality and quantity differ enormously: as recently as fiscal year 2016, New York spent more than 14 times as much as Los Angeles did on homelessness. It is hard to imagine the Los Angeles police departments would be so poorly funded relative to the New York Police Department. Nor do New York cops make Los Angeles cops look like milquetoasts: civilians in Los Angeles City were over five times as likely to be killed by police as civilians in New York City in 2015-2016 (O'Flaherty and Sethi, 2019, Table 8.1, p.149) and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, which patrols much of the county outside Los Angeles City, alone

⁵ In the case of *Martin et al. vs. City of Boise*, the Ninth Circuit of Appeals recently ruled that "the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause of the Eighth Amendment [of the US Constitution] precluded the enforcement of a statute prohibiting sleeping outside against homeless individuals with no access to alternative shelter... [A]s long as there is no option of sleeping indoors, the government cannot criminalise indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors, on public property, on the false premise they had a choice in the matter." (No. 15-35845, p. 3) The Supreme Court has declined to review this case, and so it applies everywhere in the country.

⁶ Specifically, by "Los Angeles" I mean the Los Angeles City-County Continuum of Care, which includes all of Los Angeles County except the cities of Glendale, Long Beach, and Pasadena.

killed more than 60 percent more civilians than the entire New York Police Department in 2016, although performing over 80 percent fewer arrests (Montiel Olea *et al.*, 2019, slide 60).

The final weakness in the analysis is the lack of recognition that the theoretical relationship between aggressive policing and aggregate homelessness is ambiguous—it could go either way. The theoretical relationship is important here because we lack empirical work. Aggressive policing no doubt will discourage some entries into homelessness, and will probably make homeless people more eager to exit, but exiting homelessness requires the means to do so, not just a desire. If aggressive policing reduces exit rates enough, it could even increase homelessness.

Herring *et al.* (2020) is a compendium of possible mechanisms through which aggressive policing could prolong homeless spells: loss of medications in sweeps and property destructions, citations which if paid reduce resources for future rent and if unpaid turn into warrants that could lead to disqualification from subsidised housing and a suspended driver's license, destabilisation of people suffering from mental illness when they are forced to leave familiar surroundings or locked up in jails, loss of information about contacts and loss of tools that can be used for employment when property is destroyed or confiscated, loss of time that could be spent making money or searching for work when jailed or forced to show up at courts or police stations.

Coercive policing also feeds into cheap authoritarian shelters, as we may be seeing in the Trump initiative. Stuart (2014), for instance, describes how the Los Angeles Police Department acts essentially as a recruiting agent for the mega shelters of Skid Row, which might have a hard time breaking even without its active assistance. These authoritarian shelters hamper the ability of homeless people to make contacts, to find work, and to hold jobs.

The issue is autonomy. Autonomy is a tool that people (homeless or not) use for both consumption and production. Adam Smith's invisible hand, for instance, was a celebration of the power of personal autonomy in production. Policing and shelter regimes that reduce homeless people's autonomy (to work late and leave early, for instance) reduce homeless people's ability to produce and so make it harder for them to exit homelessness. The goal of these regimes is to reduce autonomy in consumption, and they do that as well, but autonomy would not be autonomy if you could constrain consumption without constraining production. There is no free lunch.

I'm not arguing that homeless people's autonomy should be unbridled (any more than Smith argued that non-homeless people's autonomy should be unbridled). The argument is only that restrictions on autonomy create social losses in reduced production and reduced means of homeless exit, and how big these losses are is an empirical question—about which we currently know nothing.

Conclusion

The CEA is not Marx to Trump's Stalin, or even a Svengali. They are Trump's apologists, not his gurus.

But still, you should read the report. And then read it again slowly. It's not a lot longer than this review. As I've mentioned, it has an annoying habit of making transitions of the form: (a) we don't know x; (b) hence let's talk about the things that Fox News is interested in. There is no attempt to say that (a) implies (b), and once you realise that you can relax. But aside from this, the report contains much that is serious and accurate.

New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and several other big rich cities in the US have seen staggering increases in homelessness since the end of the Great Recession, and current levels of homelessness in those cities are unprecedented in modern times. This is the major issue in American homelessness today, and the report is right to emphasise it.

And the report is mainly right to emphasise that the existing literature has demonstrated few attractive evidence-based approaches for lowering homeless populations of the size now found in these cities. Scholarship has done well in developing interventions that can be applied on a case-by-case basis and advice that can be given to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness—and that is very important. But we have done less well in developing advice that can be given to a mayor. I say "mainly" because several papers with reasonable claims to be able to say something about causality have shown effective policies for reducing the number of sheltered families without increasing the number of unsheltered families (Goodman *et al.*, 2014 and Goodman *et al.*, 2016 for prevention, and Cragg and O'Flaherty, 1999, O'Flaherty and Wu 2008 and New York City Independent Budget Office 2012 for post-shelter placement in subsidised apartments), but sheltered families are a much more important component of homeless population in New York than elsewhere in the country.

In general, population-level studies that identify the effects of richly described policies are rare, and those that exist generally find disappointingly small results. For instance, Early (2004) estimates that 100 units of traditional subsidised housing

would reduce the point-in-time (PIT) homeless count by about 3.8 to 5, Evans *et al.* (2016) find that the availability of funds at a homeless prevention hotline reduces homeless entries by about 2 per hundred callers aided, and Corinth (2017) finds that 100 units of permanent supportive housing reduce the PIT homeless count by up to 10. So, for instance, reducing Los Angeles's PIT count by 30 000 would require at least 600 000 new units of traditional subsidised housing units or 300 000 permanent supportive housing units. To date, Los Angeles has not considered investments on this scale.

Even the policies that seem to work for New York's sheltered families may be hard to extend to single adults, either in New York or on the West Coast. One problem is that prevention may not scale easily: providing services to five times as many people may not guarantee that five times as many people who would otherwise become homeless will show up at the front door of a prevention unit. The New York City prevention programme for families averted around 50 shelter entries a month when it was operating at full strength (Goodman *et al.*, 2016); that is not going to make much of a difference in Los Angeles with probably close to 3 000 entries a month (von Wachter *et al.*, 2019). However, the recent big data advances by von Wachter *et al.*, may transform the effectiveness of prevention activities. These advances seem to make predictions about who will become homeless an order of magnitude more accurate.

So the report, if you take it seriously, should serve as a helpful goad to reduce complacency. Realise that when we cannot find an answer, Fox News is likely to make one up, and their answer will be taken very seriously.

But the readers of *European Journal of Homelessness* are not the only people who should read the report. President Trump should read it, too, and read it very carefully. If he reads it carefully, and notices scrupulously what implies what, then he will see that not even his own Council of Economic Advisers can find any grounds for supporting the policies that he appears to be embarking on.

I am grateful to Rosanne Haggerty, Stefan Kertesz, and Gwen Dordick for comments and suggestions that went well beyond the normal scale of helpfulness.

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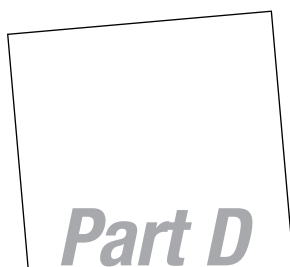
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Book Reviews



Part D

Review Symposium

James F. Keenan and Mark McGreevy (Eds) (2019)

Street Homelessness and Catholic Theological Ethics

New York: Orbis Books. pp.320. €40.65

Review I by Laura Stivers, Dominican University of California

This book is fittingly dedicated “To every homeless brother and sister of Christ sleeping on our streets tonight.” While the primary focus is street homelessness, many of the chapters also address the wider population of people who are homeless globally, whether sleeping in their cars, campsites, the homes of others, or substandard and insecure housing. Central to Catholic theological ethics is belief in the human dignity of each person created in God’s image. From this belief, the authors advocate for adequate shelter as a human right and argue that we have a collective responsibility to work in solidarity towards a common good that includes the “justice of housing and other forms of justice” (p.xiii). As Project HOME in Philadelphia puts it: “None of us are home until all of us are home” (p.8). Setting an example, Pope Francis honours the dignity of those who are homeless and challenges a culture of indifference by inviting street people to his residence for breakfast, installing showers and opening a shelter, a free laundromat, barbershop, and medical center near the Vatican, and even giving shelter in Vatican apartments to war refugees (p.xiv).

The book is divided into two parts: *Accompanying the Homeless* and *Working to End Homelessness*. The emphasis on accompanying the homeless includes listening to their voices and meeting them where they are at by understanding each individual’s unique needs. While the end goal is always justice and the elimination of homelessness, those who are in relationship and present with people who are chronically homeless are living out Pope Francis’ call for “a revolution of tenderness”, by fostering mutual transformation through God’s grace (p.3). As Sister Mary Scullion says: “In true accompaniment, both persons are changed” (p.6). She argues furthermore, that these powerful human encounters prophetically call us to societal transformation. While listening to people’s stories gives a window into the various reasons people end up on the street, it also paints a picture of the ways our society exploits and marginalises people, causing crippling poverty.

The second section of part one includes case studies of particular groups of people negatively affected by homelessness, namely stateless refugees from Syria,

Lebanon and other countries; women in India affected by domestic and other forms of violence; the elderly in Africa; U.S. military veterans; poor workers in Hong Kong; homeless youth (especially due to abuse and homophobia) in the United States; and people affected by addictions. While extreme poverty is prevalent for people in all of these groups, the particular contexts of each group also indicate a variety of other causes and factors related to homelessness, and thus, different strategies relevant to preventing and/or addressing homelessness for each group. Violence – wars, domestic abuse, sexual and verbal abuse, and all forms of oppression (e.g. race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, etc.) – make people more vulnerable to homelessness in a world where housing is not a right.

The articles in the second half of the book related to working against homelessness are divided into global and ecclesial strategies, theological-ethical foundations, and case studies illustrating local strategies in Cameroon, India, and Jamaica. Although the word “homelessness” does not appear in the United Nations’ (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the first articles discuss strategies to address ending poverty in all its forms (SDG 1), ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all (SDG 3), and creating sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). Connecting homelessness to the SDG goals is useful for addressing the root causes and complexities of the problem. Extreme poverty, inequality, and unsustainable development that negatively affects the health and well-being of everyone, but most specifically those on the margins, is a result of a global neoliberal development model that “puts absolute value on market operations at the expense of economic and social justice policies” (p.121). These articles claim that a focus on justice requires a redistribution of primary social goods in accordance with a sustainable common good.

The next articles in this section outline two strategies from above (government and Caritas) and two from below (subsidiarity and *The Catholic Worker*). One article argues that the power of government is important, and necessary, for long-term prevention of homelessness. Another article, cautions, however, that an essential function of modern governments is the protection of private property; thus, we ought to be wary of relying on government to promote a common good and should turn instead to different practices of subsidiarity. Still another article argues that Catholic social ethics relies too heavily on the principle of *caritas* in its response to homelessness, thus limiting a more structural approach that addresses the root causes of the problem. A focus on the common good would be more fruitful, according to this author.

The articles developing theological-ethical foundations for addressing the problem of homelessness focus on the principles and themes of accompaniment, mercy, human dignity, peace and justice making, hospitality, human rights and human flourishing, and solidarity. The first two articles focus on mercy and compassion

and the promotion of human dignity in our service to and accompaniment with people who are homeless. Two articles focus on hospitality. The first argues that movements of hospitality call us to listen to narratives of how actual communities address homelessness and warns us that the move toward institutionalisation in our responses is always ambiguous in its exclusionary tendencies. The second views homelessness as a problem of exclusion and advocates for hospitality as outreach. Another article argues that the appeal to human rights is connected to Catholic Social Teaching's advocacy for human dignity and that the increasing international codification of a right to housing should also be a key foundation of Catholic theological ethics. Finally, one article develops the concept of solidarity in Catholic theological ethics, emphasising its "radical prioritizing of the full and personal human dignity of each person encountered" (p.215).

This collection of essays is an important theological contribution towards global dialogue on the problem of homelessness. In their analysis of street homelessness, development of theological-ethical foundations, and discussion of strategies to address the problem, the authors in this book support Pope Francis' response to street homelessness and his emphasis on accompaniment, mercy, and justice. The case studies from different countries and the focus on particular populations of homeless people show the similarities that people on the street face, especially extreme poverty, as well as the unique challenges each group negotiates. Clearly the problem of street homelessness is not unique to poorer countries, but is a symptom of a global economic system that benefits an elite few and exploits and marginalises the majority. Connecting Catholic theological ethics to the United Nations' sustainable development goals as well as its concept of human rights, especially the right to housing, is useful in promoting global dialogue and serves as powerful critique of the neoliberal development model.

The development of theological-ethical norms in relation to homelessness from a variety of religious perspectives is extremely important if there is to be a prophetic movement to end homelessness. These authors did an excellent job of representing many of the important values within Catholic theological ethics. Accompaniment and listening to the voices of people on the street, honouring the dignity of each and every person who is created in the image of God, and working in solidarity through mercy, compassion, and hospitality are all foundational tenets within Catholic social teaching. Creating and sustaining mutual relationships with people who have routinely been marginalised and stigmatised is a first step in addressing street homelessness. As several authors note, however, works of mercy and *caritas* alone are not sufficient for preventing homelessness. Catholic social thought has always supported a common good where all may flourish.

I would have liked to have seen deeper development of what it would mean to take seriously the goal of a common good where all are housed and healthy. Does the Catholic church have a role beyond offering charity? What structural changes are necessary to prevent homelessness, and can the Catholic church offer prophetic wisdom for social change? While Catholic social thought emphasises a common good, it also supports private property. Can the church challenge the role of the state in protecting private property, especially in a neoliberal global order where corporations are treated as individuals and an elite few own vast amounts of wealth?

None of the authors draw on the well-developed concepts of “social mortgage” and “universal destination of goods” in Catholic social teaching. Pope John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (SRS) argues that private property always has a social function. Thus, the owners of private property are accountable for the ways in which the goods produced by property are used. He writes: “the private ownership of property is always under social mortgage, and so must always serve the common good” (SRS 1982, p.8). In other words, social mortgage is related to justice and the obligation of property owners to support and maintain the community. While the Catholic church recognises that individuals have a right to private property, the universal destination of goods is a moral claim that the goods of creation are destined for humankind as a whole.

The ecclesial strategies in the book tend to focus on local community efforts and accompaniment with street people. While necessary in responding to critical and urgent need, these strategies will not prevent homelessness. A deeper analysis of the connections between neoliberal globalisation, inequality, and environmental destruction is needed to adequately address poverty and homelessness. While Pope Francis does not use the term neoliberal economics in his most recent encyclical, *Laudato Si*, he nevertheless critiques our global economic system that maximises profits for a small minority at the expense of the environment and vast numbers of people struggling in poverty. Solidarity includes both accompaniment with those on the margins *and* structural social change to create a common good of sustainability and flourishing for all.

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Review II by Joe Doherty, University of St Andrews

Preamble

A curiosity of this book is an apparent mismatch between title and content. The declared objective is to ‘... deepen contemporary understandings of, and approaches to, Catholic theological ethics and the global crisis of homelessness’. Yet, while the meaning and prevalence of ‘homelessness’ is extensively discussed and debated, ‘Catholic theological ethics’ is rarely mentioned and nowhere defined. This mismatch is all the more curious given that the book chapters are derived from papers presented at a 2017 symposium in Rome on ‘Street Homelessness and Catholic Social Teaching’. Reflecting its origins, the book is replete with references to and commentary on ‘Catholic social teaching’: it is referenced over 20 times in the index, by contrast ‘Catholic theological ethics’ is cited only once.¹ This disjuncture poses a conundrum for any reviewer. Since the distinction between ‘Catholic Theological Ethics’ and ‘Catholic Social Teaching’ (if there is one) is not addressed, a possible resolution to the conundrum is to assume a congruence between the two concepts; a degree of compatibility that for the purposes of review allows them to be seen as interchangeable. This is the solution adopted here. To reflect this, in what follows, the compound term ‘Catholic social teaching / theological ethics’ (CST/TE) is used.

This book is organised by the editors into two parts: ‘Accompanying the Homeless’ and ‘Working to End Homelessness’. For the purposes of this review, however, I focus on the level of engagement of authors with the book’s declared objectives as defined above and identify three groupings of chapters. First, ‘The Disengaged’ – those that effectively ignore the book’s objectives; secondly, ‘The Evasive’ – chapters that skirt-round the objectives, and thirdly, ‘The Engaged’ – those chapters which address directly the book’s defined aims.

‘The Disengaged’

Four chapters do not reference or even allude to Catholic social teaching, ethics or theology, and quote no biblical parables, prayers or papal injunctions. In the first of these four chapters, Culhane and Montgomery examine homelessness among U.S. military veterans (pp.63–69).² Recounting a long established association between traumatised soldiers and homelessness, the authors identify the

¹ A possible explanation might be found in that the book is the latest in a ‘Catholic Theological Ethics’ series published under the auspices of the ‘Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church’; an organisation founded by James Keenan one of the editors and a contributor to this book.

² The book chapters are not numbered. Page numbers are used as identifiers.

creation in the USA of the Department of Veteran Affairs in the 1930s and the decisive 2009 policy decision of President Obama to commit substantial funding to ending veteran homelessness, as two of the most important initiatives in what has been an undoubtedly successful programme of intervention and provision: providing, it is suggested by the authors, a potential model for adoption elsewhere. The success of this programme 'bears witness' – as the subtitle to this chapter intimates – to the efficacy of conjoining 'political will' with 'evidence based policy making' – evidence which, over the past few decades, Dennis Culhane has been centrally involved in accumulating.

The second chapter, authored by Kat Johnson, explores the potential of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1) 'to end poverty' (pp.103-10). SDG 1 does not explicitly consider homelessness but does recognise housing exclusion as an issue closely associated with poverty and espouses the right to housing. Johnson rightly argues that street homelessness is as stark a demonstration of poverty as you can get, and articulates several proposals for bringing homelessness into the SDG 1 poverty agenda, these include: integrating housing into social protection systems, using street homelessness as a proxy measure for extreme poverty in wealthy countries, and incorporating housing as an 'obligatory aspect for improving the resilience of populations vulnerable to climate related extremes' (p.107).

The third chapter in this sequence is Rosanne Haggerty's 'Homelessness and SDG 3' (pp. 111-19). SDG 3 aims to 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all'; as with SDG 1, homelessness is not explicitly mentioned. Haggerty, in a rather idiosyncratic intervention, suggests that by recasting homelessness as a 'complex health problem' it can and should be adopted as one of SDG 3 goals. She advocates a community, congregate approach (a variant of Housing First) to the ending of homelessness, drawing parallels with the 'relentless, coordinated opposite-of-silver-bullet action that shifted the ground on smoking, drunk-driving and HIV-AIDS' (p.112). Haggerty cites several examples of the successful adoption of such approaches, including her own '100 000 Homes' Campaign and the 'Built for Zero' initiatives (p.117).

The fourth chapter focuses on governmentality (pp.129-37). Authored by Louise Casey – a Dame of the British Empire, a sometime deputy leader of Shelter (one of the UK's largest homelessness organisations), a homelessness 'Tsar' in Tony Blair's Labour government of late 1990s and presently homelessness adviser to the Johnson Tory government. With this pedigree, Casey has much to say on the 'necessary' role of the state in initiating and coordinating homelessness policies and strategies and in promoting homelessness legislation. However, the largely celebratory tone of this chapter is disappointing: there is no room here for consideration of the frequently conflicting motivations of central (strategies from above)

and local (strategies from below) state organisations, nor of the constraining short-term political nature of many acclaimed – at the time of their inauguration at least – initiatives.

As essays on homelessness the above four chapters are instructive and informative in their own right, but they contribute little explicitly to the book editors' stated objectives to expand understanding of the relationships between Catholic social teaching/theological ethics and global homelessness. There are several additional chapters that share this lack of explicit attention to the book's objectives. However, in stark contrast to the above 'secular' contributions, they adopt an insistent religious trope and are liberally infused with scriptural references and papal homilies and invocations. Examples are Keenan's chapter entitled 'Blessed are the Poor in Spirit' (pp.176-86), a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount Beatitudes as recounted in Mathew's gospel and Carlo Santoro's extraordinary account of 'Friends of the Homeless' (pp.19-27). In this chapter, Santoro hero-worships three popes: the canonised John Paul II, and Pope Benedict XVI and the present Pope Francis. Recounting, apparently from memory, verbatim quotes from each pope Santoro is concerned to establish the seriousness of their concern for and commitment to alleviating the lot of homeless people. Equivalent unrelenting adulation (justified or not) for a civic leader would be greeted with cynicism and scorned as a public relations exercise.

Two further chapters can be added to the list of those that 'fail' to engage directly with the book's discursive agenda: that by Scullion and Williams entitled 'Accompanying Each Other on the Journey Home' (pp.3-11) and that by Carol Elizabeth Thomas on 'The Prayers of the Homeless' (pp.12-18). The first of these chapters recounts the impressive personal transformative experiences of two homeless people following their engagement with the educational and support programme offered by the Philadelphia based Project HOME.³ The second narrates the transformative experiences of the author herself (Thomas) when she worked as a care worker in the same Philadelphia project. Both of these chapters convey good news stories and are singularly congratulatory of achievement attributed to spiritual conviction that combines accompaniment with prayer. It is not to detract from the importance of these personal testimonies to observe that what these chapters say about CST/TE is difficult to gauge since equivalent testimonies – devoid of religious 'conversion' – are commonly cited by non-Catholic and secular/civic homelessness organisations as indicative of near identical personal achievements and transformations. Catholic Social teaching/theological ethics may well provide a motivator for the commitment of individual Catholic care workers and support staff and figure

³ Project HOME is nominally a non-faith based organisation. But see: <https://catholicphilly.com/2020/03/news/local-news/as-hard-times-descend-project-home-still-caring-for-the-least-of-these/>

prominently in the life transformations of some homeless people, but clearly 'compassion for others' is not an exclusive religious preserve – Catholic or otherwise. While the authors of these chapters would undoubtedly argue differently, for this reviewer the 'value added' of Catholic social teaching/theological ethics is not elucidated by these narratives.

'The Evasive'

Daniel Franklin Pilario's chapter, 'A methodological proposal for Catholic social teaching' (pp.187-98), reveals what is perhaps the major obstacle – apart from individual author disinclination – to examining the relationship between Catholic social teaching/theological ethics and homelessness, namely that the foundational documents for CST/TE, as Pilario discovered, have little to say about homelessness. Pilario's observation that 'many writers are at a loss for where to find resources in official magisterial documents' (p.187), echoes Keenan's lament in the book's Introduction that scholars were 'unable to find any article or book by any theological ethicist anywhere in the world on the topic of street homelessness' (p.xvii).

Regrettably the potential hinted at in Pilario chapter title to produce 'a methodology' which would enable the systematic examination of the interrelationships between CST/TE and homelessness does not come to fruition. Given the paucity of explicit homelessness references, Pilario eschews what would have been an admittedly demanding interpretative interrogation of CST/TE documentation. Instead he opts for recounting 'concrete stories' to 'see how they can inspire us to respond to homelessness in our time' (p.187). Pilario's story-telling leads us on an informative journey from the 'Basileias' of fourth century Turkey, through Dorothy Days' 'Houses of Hospitality' in 1930s New York and the 'Gawad Kalinga' poverty programme of 1980s Philippines. Pilario extracts two 'explorative reflections' relating to the modification of CST/TE from these case studies. The first involves a shift of CST/TE thinking from the 'universal' – which he associates with 'unchanging principles'- to the 'particular'; that is, listening 'to narratives from the ground on how actual communities address problems of homelessness'. Pilario's second and related reflection is to 'recognise the ambiguity of "institutionalisation" in our housing initiatives' (p.193). This introduces the somewhat radical idea that – in Dorothy Days' words, quoted by Pilario – 'one must live in a state of permanent dissatisfaction with the Church', meaning in this context that any tendency by the institution of the Church to favour the powerful and wealthy in conflicts over housing provision needs to be challenged and countered (p.195).

Criticism of the church as an institution runs through several of the contributions to this book. Anna Kasafi Perkins, for example, in her chapter on 'Women, Catholic Social Teaching and Disguised Homelessness in Jamaica' (pp.254-64) argues that provision of support by the Jamaican Church to homeless women – the disguised homeless – has been 'insufficient', and that 'the teaching tradition of the AEC [Antilles Episcopal Conference] has not treated homelessness (or women's issues) in a sustained or pointed fashion'. She additionally suggests that the structural causes of homelessness among women with children need to be addressed, in particular the 'culture of masculinity' that makes violence against women 'a characteristic of manhood' (p.262). Shaji George Kochuthara in his examination of responses to homelessness in India (pp.242-53), while acknowledging the charitable role of the Indian Church in constructing houses for homeless people and recognising that these 'works of mercy' need to continue, argues that the Church 'has to mobilise its own resources... sharing them with the homeless to ensure a dignified life for them and to guarantee their human rights.... we [the Church] need to change society's perception of the homeless' (p.250). Joseph L. Mben examines the history and role of 'The Household for Hope', a Catholic institution based in Cameroon that focuses on the social and family integration of street children and young prisoners (pp.230-53). Following a detailed history of the impressive work of this institution (he supplies statistical evidence for the 17 years, 2000 to 2016), Mben calls, in the face of a growing problem, for the 'involvement of the whole church' in a more comprehensive approach that 'joins other types of initiatives to supplement the work... of the Household of Hope' (p.238). The three foregoing chapters provide examples of critical and analytical comment and suggestions for improvement in the organisational structures of Catholic institutions and agencies which deliver services to homeless people, they however, for the most part, skirt round and only lightly touch on how these changes relate directly to teaching and ethical issues associated with CST/TE.

'The Engaged'

Mark McGreevy and Molly Seely's 'Preface' (pp.xxi-xxxiii) does not start well. On the first page they claim that it is 'absolutely possible for anyone to escape homelessness...[y]ou just need to construct a ladder that personally addresses each individual's needs and then be there for them' (pp.xxi-xxxiii). The ladder metaphor of course is too reminiscent of the now widely criticised and largely discredited 'staircase model' of homelessness. Fortunately, they retrieve some ground by distinguishing 'four rungs' to their ladder which have little or no relationship with 'housing ready' diktats and thereby distance their approach from staircase perspectives. Their four rungs are: 'consistent vocabulary' (predominantly with

regard to the definition of homelessness),⁴ ‘data collection and analysis’ (coverage and precision of measurement), ‘intersectional thinking’ (relating homeless to a wider context and agenda, uncovering its complex origins) and policy (piecing together solutions). Their coverage of policy is both commendably succinct and thorough, identifying and reflecting on the complex interrelationship between the life experiences of individual homeless people, the absence or presence of appropriate support services and wider structural factors. They argue that the success of strategies to end homelessness is ‘coordination between public and private stakeholders [charitable organisations?] at the local systems level’ (p.xxviii) – though not all the examples cited to support this contention have proved to be, in the longer term, as successful as first anticipated: the UK’s Rough Sleepers initiative of the late 1990s being a case in point. Their conclusion that structural factors make some people more vulnerable than others and must be addressed for any reduction in homelessness to be sustained is an issue taken up in several of the following chapters. At the very end of their chapter, McGreevy and Seely shift gear to introduce for the first time an element of religiosity in a consideration of the multiple meanings embedded in the word ‘agape’ (p.xxx). This short section – decorated with quotes from Deuteronomy and other sacred texts – has the feel of an afterthought, as if the authors had suddenly woken-up to the Catholic teaching and ethical objectives of the publication. However, their discussion of the meaning of ‘agape’ – christian love combined with charity, more generally referred to in this book as ‘caritas’ – together with their observations on structural factors, have considerable resonance in several later chapters which engaged directly with the discursive objectives of the book.

Pat Jones in her chapter ‘Caritas and Beyond’ (pp.138-47) is one of the most forthright voices in this context. In a wide ranging and thoughtful commentary, Jones argues that while the practical response to people who are homeless is strong, ‘ecclesial action and voice addressing the structures and policies implicated in homelessness is uncertain and limited... the contribution of Catholic social teaching is indistinct at best’. Jones contends that this anaemic contribution is attributable to ‘an overdependence on the principle of caritas’ and that there is a need to ‘construct an ecclesial response that aims not simply to alleviate but also to end street homelessness’ (p.140). These sentiments are replicated elsewhere, not least by Julie George (pp.43-52) in her engrossing account of the ‘violence and violation’ that homeless women endure in India. Here the gendered construction of social and economic relations within and outside the household combine with deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes to discriminate against women in practically every aspect of life ‘be it policy development, entitlement in government projects, control over household resources, right of inheritance and ownership and even the

⁴ Curiously there is no mention of ETHOS here, or indeed in any other chapter.

construction of housing.’ (pp.49-50). George maintains that the Church’s response in combination with other concerned NGOs should be to enable the transition of women ‘from being victims to being true citizens’ and ‘to stand in solidarity with them to demand their legal and human rights’ (p.51).

Joseph McCrave’s essay on ‘Hospitality’ (pp.221-29) reiterates Pat Jones’ argument as well as the sentiments articulated by Julie George: ‘Inequality is not natural or inevitable, but a product of human choice. It has structural causes which cannot be transformed by the virtue of hospitality alone’ (p.221). His insistent point is that *caritas* – a cornerstone of Catholic social teaching/ theological ethics – is not a matter of ‘either-or’ but a fundamental and necessary ‘resource for [successful] structural reform’ (p.225).

There is a thin thread running through this book which tenuously links often brief and isolated references to the importance of structural issues in understanding homelessness: the right to housing, universal basic income, private property, neo-liberalism and poverty being among the most prominent. Commentary on these issues reflects a growing concern among some in the Catholic community to move CST/TE beyond ‘agape’ and ‘*caritas*’ to unequivocally embrace social justice, to move away from a privileged focus on the alleviation of human suffering and engage in a more far-reaching programme that challenges cultural norms, as well as social, political and economic obstacles to ending homelessness.

Summation

There is much else of interest about homelessness in the 26 chapters of this book which this review has been unable to report. But it would be remiss not to recognise and acknowledge for instance the insights into: the predicament of African elders following the erosion of traditional African customs and practices leading to their increased vulnerability and exposure to homelessness; the double jeopardy of stateless refugees who find themselves ‘away from home but at the same time with no place to call home’; the vulnerabilities of the homeless in Hong Kong, one of Asia’s most affluent countries; and the complexity of issues that attend LGBT homeless communities whose ‘spiritual embrace’ by the Church does not include approval of life styles or sexual preferences. All too often, however, it can be hard work finding a way to these insights through the plethora of religiosity that attend most commentaries – of course, for many of the contributors and perhaps for the majority of readers of this book the religious message is conceivably as important as the insights into homelessness.

If there is an overall message in this book it is that ‘walking with the homeless’ is no longer sufficient. In the spirit of the plea of Pope Francis ‘to cease observing

people and things from balconies [pulpits?]' (quoted on p.xii), it is increasingly recognised that tackling homelessness requires more than kindness and empathy. It involves more, for instance, than moving homeless people from Rome's Termini railway station to St Peter's Square (p.215), more than opening up seminaries and churches to homeless people threatened with Covid-19 (Catholic News Service, 2020) and more than the 'experimental' allocation of unoccupied and under-occupied church property to social housing as in Project Bethléem (Housing Solution, n.d., pp.44-45).⁵ If Catholic social teaching/theological ethics is to advance, the Church needs to engage with what Laura Stivers calls 'prophetic disruption', that is the dismantling of social policies and practices that exploit and exclude disadvantaged people and confronts ideologies that justify such exploitation and marginalisation (2011, p.19). It needs also to build on the new found tolerance for the progressive ideas of liberation theology (Wooden, 2019) whose specific contribution – as Ethna Regan identifies in her chapter on 'Human Rights, Human Flourishing and the Right to Housing' (pp.199-209) – lies in its emphasis on 'the need for systematic structural fulfilment of the rights of the poor'. The integrity and reputation of the Catholic Church has been blighted in the recent years by the exposure of numerous crimes and scandals which have challenged the credibility of its promotion of human rights, yet it remains a resource-rich and influential institution and, as Regan concludes:

'...the contemporary challenges of social global and ecological justice make the Church's continued promotion of human rights especially the rights of the poor, an urgent imperative. Within that imperative the situation of the homeless poor needs to be treated as a violation of the right to housing, a violation that merits the same attention as that given to torture and executions' (p.203).

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Catholic News Service (2020) *Across Europe, Churches Offer Empty Facilities to Help Fight Covid-19*. See <https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2020/across-europe-churches-offer-empty-facilities-to-help-fight-covid-19.cfm> [accessed 5 May 2020].

⁵ Thanks to Freek Spinnewijn for alerting me to this.

Housing Solutions Platform (n.d.) *50 Out of the Box Housing Solutions to Homelessness and Housing Exclusion*. See https://99536665-f232-4d42-aa6c-b165414b34b8.filesusr.com/ugd/bcd9b3_a65c4a5b4a6443619a0edda6e-dfd198e.pdf [accessed 5 May 2020].

Stivers, L. (2011) *Disrupting Homelessness: Alternative Christian Approaches*. (Minneapolis Fortress Press).

Wooden, C. (2019) *Pope Reflects on Changed Attitudes Towards Liberation Theology*. See: <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2019/02/pope-reflects-on-changed-attitudes-toward-liberation-theology/> [accessed 5 May 2020].

Review III by Siobhán Garrigan, Trinity College Dublin

Confusingly, the “Catholic theological ethics” of this book’s title is not taken by most of its contributing authors to refer to scholarly public discourses on theology and ethics in the broad Catholic tradition. It refers to the ethical teachings of the Roman Catholic Church as expressed in Catholic Social Teaching (CST), a body of encyclicals and other documents issued by successive popes and Church Councils in response to major social issues of the day.

CST may be prompted by economic and political affairs, but its treatment of these, from the rise of socialism in the late nineteenth century to the climate catastrophe facing our own, always stems from its fundamental concern to articulate the right relationship of humans with God. As such, “the family” is the core unit of its version of “social”, with family meaning normative heterosexuality and binarized gender. Given this, CST could be described as a long-term reaction against Modernity were it not for its interventions on matters of economic justice and environmental repair, and its consistent insistence on the equal dignity of every human being.

The concepts of human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good that inform so many of the chapters in this volume have become ethical doctrines not by being expounded as such but by being repeatedly deployed as useful thought-changers on some of the most pressing matters of each era. Why then, this book suggests, not apply these concepts from CST to homelessness in hopes of similar intervention?

Because to do so might obfuscate the actual voices of people experiencing homelessness, causing further alienation and oppression. This is addressed in the first part of Part I, where attempts are made in different ways to include and forefront a sampling of such voices.

Because to do so might further an assumption that “street homelessness” is only about older males in industrialised societies. This is addressed in the second part of Part I, where the distinctive co-incidences of statelessness, gender, ageing, former military service, extreme wealth disparity, being young and LGBT, and addiction are all briefly explored.

Because to do so might result in a translation gap between the church and today’s governments and non-governmental organisations. This is addressed in the first part of Part II, with a strong attempt to identify where, specifically, in the UN’s strategic development goals such interventions might find a purchase (so that they can influence policy), followed by a strengthening of the Church’s own account of its response to homelessness, mostly at grassroots levels.

Because it might not be possible on its own terms. This is addressed in the second part of Part II, where contemporary theologians imagine and develop in more depth a constructive response to the question.

Because it ought not be a predominantly Western project, given the global nature of both the Church and the problem of homelessness. This is addressed in the third and final part of Part II, with responses from authors in Cameroon, India and Jamaica.

It is a worthwhile project but a difficult read, coming across as a lengthy string of vignettes mixed with overly-short scholarly nuggets. This is perhaps the inevitable underside of the book's greatest strength, which is the relative diversity of its contributors' perspectives. Getting all of these people together in one place is quite a feat and must have been wonderful when it happened in person. One can only imagine the conversations between them at the conference out of which this book project grew. But in the starkness of book form, the different perspectives are not seen to inform one another, and one is left with the homelessness edition of "from our own correspondent", despite the careful editing.

It is also difficult to review a volume in which so many essays resolve through an expression of piety rather than analysis, and it is worth noting that the intended audience for this volume is not in an academic journal but "in classes or in study groups, in urban or rural areas, in churches or schools" (p.xviii). Nonetheless, this volume is a unique resource on the relation of Catholic teachings to homelessness and not merely a call to action, and so I would like to suggest a few angles that a prospective PhD or other researcher might take up for more prolonged investigation. Other reviewers in this Review Symposium have already given detailed outlines of the content of the volume and identified aspects of Catholic thought that might have further improved it and this frees me to take this slightly unusual approach.

Research typically proceeds via questions, and the first that one might pose is: what is the homelessness that Catholic theological ethics needs to address? This volume's attempted multi-national and not solely First World perspective is reflective of a Church whose social teaching is designed to be as catholic as its membership, "universal" in the best sense of the world. But are all sorts of homelessness sufficiently equivalent (in existential or phenomenological terms) that they can be usefully corralled together under a single term? Consider the distinctions between a middle-aged woman sleeping on her friend's couch for months in a wealthy city and a young queer person forced into sexual labour in a poor rural town and vast swathes of human beings living in refugee camps or immigration-processing centres and a middle-class family evicted due to rent-raises and now sleeping in their parent's car. What makes such globally different manifestations, with such different causes, collectable in a single category?

If one is calling for Catholic theological ethics to better address homelessness, of what should that category consist and what would be its limits?

Second, how, and why, ought one to distinguish “street” homelessness from any other type, as this volume does? In a study with social justice at its heart, it seems incongruous to draw a particular focus on the *visibly* homeless, when so many more people are *invisibly* but just as damagingly so. Moreover, such an approach will bias any study’s overall outcomes to highlight the experiences of males, given that most women experiencing homelessness are not on the street, for obvious reasons. What is it about the image of the person seeking shelter on the street that repeatedly gains public attention, and why does scholarship like this follow? Relatedly, why is the phrase, “the homeless” still in such extensive usage, including throughout this book. Does it have a potent currency in public discourse that “people experiencing homelessness” does not? Not only does the term elide the distinctions between people’s situations, preventing proper study, it also objectifies them, “stripping individuals of even their fundamental personhood” (p.4) as Mary Scullion remarks in the opening essay of the non-ironically titled section, “Hearing the Voices of the Homeless.”

Third, as noted at various points in this volume, but explicitly by Daniel Franklin E. Pelario, while there are numerous responses to homelessness “from below”, “many writers are at a loss for where to find resources on homelessness in official magisterial documents” (p.187); why is this? Is it to do with the category/definition problems of the first two questions? Or is it because the Church sees homelessness as a symptom of deeper problems which it does address, such as capitalism, ecological abuse, family breakdown, etc.? Or something else? Ethna Regan’s account of the Church’s increasing adoption of the language of human rights suggests potentially fruitful avenues for further investigation here, particularly with regard to both the universal right to housing and how this is to be integrated with more systemic accounts of poverty.

Fourth, why are Catholic writers so timid in their criticism of the imagination of the State? William Cavanaugh’s article makes explicit what is implied in so much of the rest of the volume: that responses “from below” means not only empowering parishes and other local sites of mercy and accompaniment but also accepting that this is the right or the only possible response, given that “one of the fundamental roles of the state is to protect property rights, and that means protecting the rights of those who already have property” (p.150). Might it not be possible to argue for, even to model, a Catholic theological ethics that imagines and articulates a fundamental role for the State that is oriented in such a way that it does not cause homelessness in multiple ways?

Such a study would mean standing in more critical relation to Catholic Social Teaching, and this brings me to my fifth and final suggestion for further investigation. While mannerly hints are made by several contributors that the Church could develop more resources on various aspects of the topic in hand, it is surprising how much of the volume assumes the “good” or at least “adequate” nature of Catholic theological ethics. I was particularly surprised that so few contributors even questioned whether Catholic teachings might also have *contributed to* homelessness. For example, many authors in this volume rightly note that Catholic theological ethics has had a lot to say on the side of those in poverty and against the excesses of capitalism; but attention ought also to be given to the ways in which CST’s accommodation to neo-liberalism (i.e. private wealth is acceptable if it is then spent on the common good) has proven not nearly robust enough as a counter to the aggressive neo-liberalism that dominates today’s world and has homelessness hard-wired into its programme.

One potential exception is Alejandro Crosthwaite’s chapter on “Youth and LGBT: Homeless, Overlooked and Underserved” which notes that while religiosity is usually “correlated with positive mental health outcomes for young adults and adolescents” (p.83), it is negatively correlated for those who are LGBTQ, demonstrating that a significant percentage of LGBTQ homeless youth, even in the relatively liberal city of San Francisco, fled or were ejected from Roman Catholic backgrounds. He calls on the church to improve its pastoral mission in this regard and also on Pope Francis to provide the teaching “needed to offer LGBT homeless youth an unconditional spiritual embrace” (p.82). This is important, but stops far short of analysing the effects on homelessness of Catholic teaching on sexuality or CST’s insistence on “the family” as the essential unit of social organisation. Similarly, when Julie George and Anna Kasafi Perkins examine the situation of homeless women in India and Jamaica, respectively, one wonders why it is only the local Church’s response and not the magisterial Church’s teaching on women, its very theological anthropology throughout CST, that is deemed insufficient.

For all the ways Catholic theological ethics offers the inspiration and routes to action that this book outlines, the ways in which it is itself also implicated in the causes or perpetuation of homelessness remain remarkably unexplored. Without such a critically nuanced approach, it is hard to see how the necessary evolution of Catholic theological ethics can take place.

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Housing Solutions Platform (2019)

50 Out-of-the-Box Housing Solutions to Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

FEANTSA's publication *50 Out-of-the-Box Housing Solutions* is a set of creative ways to approach the problem of homelessness. Solutions presented here come from various contexts and established traditions through a variety of funding sources and partners. Most projects described in the publication are based on a holistic approach, i.e. do not solve the problem of homelessness without considering other needs or the wider context. Individual needs, such as social, cultural and the need to belong to a community are often taken into account along with broader aspects – ecology, urban development needs, energy sustainability. Many projects work closely with other service organisations, since housing alone is not enough, social assistance and other support is provided as well. Project activities often rely on the input of a multidisciplinary team. Often, in a sense, projects address the problems of loneliness and isolation, with the aim of creation of or integration into the community.

Some are community projects, which are not limited to the aspect of living within the community, but combine life in the community with responding to the needs and use of the existing support system. Some projects use welfare mechanisms that are not entirely developed in Lithuania, which could make it difficult to directly transfer the idea into the Lithuanian context. Like the Home for All Alliance (Denmark) project, in which homeless young people who want to study are accommodated in student dormitories, on the grounds of support available to the students. However, there are projects with mechanisms of operation more easily transferrable to the Lithuanian context, such as the Lazare co-housing project (Belgium). The latter is especially fascinating for the fact that it is about community involvement and is a community-led initiative. Although this aspect fascinates the most, at the same time it sounds like a considerable challenge in the Lithuanian context. There are rather few expressions of communality in our society, therefore such close interactions with one of the most vulnerable groups in society may appear quite unconventional.

Manifestations of communality bring together other projects whose primary goal is not necessarily to build a community. One of the projects that I found innovative and unexpected, but also in a way about community and solidarity, was the BLOCK project (Seattle, USA), where the owners allow the construction of a building and a

stranger to live in their home area (backyard). However, the fact that the project is initiated by architects would also pose a challenge. While these projects leave an impression, it seems that it would be a big challenge to transfer them to the Lithuanian context.

This publication presents several projects, which are initiated and implemented by architects and pursue social goals. For example, the largest passive house in the world in Spain – the Bilbao-Bolueta project or the L'autre Soi project (France) which aim to combat urban segregation. These projects are truly ambitious, progressive, combining the social and cultural needs of society with other issues, such as ecology and urban renewal. In Lithuania, of course, there would probably be no need for projects of this scale, cities are not so large and vulnerable people are not so concentrated in specific large areas. In addition, projects of this kind require relatively large financial resources, political will, a lot of human resources and competencies, which would be a challenge to mobilize with limited finances, especially if the project in Lithuania was initiated by the non-governmental sector.

The most attention-drawing projects are the ones that mobilize and utilize private sector real estate, or vacant real estate in order to help vulnerable groups. In addition, these projects also combine housing with social assistance. For example, projects by the Eurométropole de Strasbourg (France) or the Empty Homes Initiative (Ireland) in which vacant real estate has been employed to accommodate low and middle-income families. Also, the social agency in Belgium and the Neunerimm (Austria) project, which bring together different partners and stakeholders. The latter projects would be a little more difficult to transfer to the Lithuanian context due to the different real estate market situation, especially in terms of legal rent and the availability of social housing. In Lithuania, the fund of social housing is very small, there are very few legally rented dwellings, therefore, similar mediation services would probably not be as effective or necessary.

Given the existing financial possibilities, needs and legal basis, I think that, the Eurométropole de Strasbourg (France) or the Empty Homes Initiative (Ireland) projects could probably be applied in the Lithuanian context as well. There is a lack of social housing in Lithuania, many low-income families are waiting in line for up to 15 years, depending on the municipality, and it is difficult for them to legally rent housing using targeted benefits to compensate for rent. Thus, projects of this kind could bring benefit not only to large but, also, to smaller municipalities. Putting vacant real estate in use could at least partially contribute to solving this problem, however, questionably to what extent. Municipalities in large cities have relatively few unused assets. Only the private property to which real estate taxes are applied gets added to the lists of unused and/or abandoned property. These taxes are not applied to apartments, blocks of flats, or private houses, where the value does not

exceed a certain threshold, and therefore these types of real estate are not included in the unused or abandoned property lists. In order to transfer experience, atypical solutions would probably be needed, as was done in the project of the Eurométropole de Strasbourg (France). In order to motivate property owners to participate in the project, tax breaks and subsidies were applied in exchange for participation in the project and agreement to lease the property to low-income people.

The projects presented in the publication are truly inspiring. However, looking at the described projects in general and assessing the possibilities to transfer them to the Lithuanian context, one's attention is inevitably drawn to the possible challenges. The most recurring challenges I have identified relate to funding, competencies and a lack of various forms of cooperation. Many projects combine different sources of funding, both private and public. In Lithuania, it would be quite difficult to secure diverse funding. Low funding of the social sector in general, as well as low financial support to the non-governmental organisations, means that this sector is rather weak and it is difficult to attract highly qualified professionals essential for the administration and implementation of more complex projects. NGOs are still too rarely seen as potential partners to be involved in the provision of social services. Looking at the projects described in the publication, it comes to attention that frequently a project is based on cooperation between organisations, often between different sectors. In this way, sustainable and innovative projects based on a holistic approach are being implemented. Focusing solely on tackling homelessness may not bring the desired results. These projects illustrate that the success of the project and achievement of the intended results depend on taking into account various needs, a multidisciplinary team, partnership, and the use of external resources.

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Satomi Maruyama (2019)

Living on the Streets in Japan. Homeless Women Break their Silence.

Translated by Stephen Filler

Australia: Trans Pacific Press 2019

This volume builds on ethnographic field work conducted in 2002/3 for a doctoral thesis at the Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto by one of the first researchers on women's homelessness in Japan. Maruyama pioneers the scientific discussion of homelessness not only through the choice of topic, that is, women who represent officially only 3% of the homeless population of Japan, but also through her method: she conducted participant observation framed by critical gender studies.

Maruyama attempts to do three things: first, to systematically describe women's homelessness, a so-far unexplored topic within Japanese homelessness research; second, to address the question within gender research; and third, to explore what subjectivity can be observed via the individual cases studied and to link findings back to homeless women's practices.

The volume starts with a reflection on what homelessness means in the Japanese context in comparison with the European understanding and more recent research practice, and what this means in terms of finding homeless women across the welfare system and in select living situations. She claims that the narrow definition of homelessness, which constrains the phenomenon to rough sleeping men, halts not only the development of research but also that of more adequate policy responses to homelessness.

Maruyama conducts an extensive review of the changes in welfare policies relating to homelessness and destitution in the past few centuries, and dedicates special attention to responses to women's prostitution especially in the post-war context, and regulatory and service developments in handling domestic abuse and rough sleeping. For the most recent period, Maruyama collected her empirical data during field work in Osaka and Tokyo, focusing both on rough sleepers (living in tents in select parks) and on women staying in shelters (facility residents). She was member of a women's support group and worked in one of the facilities where she could

learn the life stories of a few women and could observe their trajectories back and forth between living situations and struggles to get the most effective provision. With the help of following up their daily routines, relationships and problems, Maruyama undertakes to challenge some gender study hypotheses (like the exclusivity of gender in responses to homelessness) and revisits the theory of the “autonomous subject” to show that those homeless women she got to know prove that there are target groups within the ‘politics of homelessness’ whose voice remained unheard.

Maruyama shows that Japanese research largely focuses on male rough sleepers’ and workers’ hostel-type of visible homelessness; but based on recent counts and registers, this approach covers only a part of the mosaic. She proposes reaching out to excluded living situations and hidden groups, and shows that it is justified to develop a more nuanced picture within the Japanese context, both historically and in contemporary society by addressing emerging women’s homelessness.

Women’s homelessness in Japan is presented as being bound by cultural-political and welfare policy contexts. Maruyama describes how women’s marginal participation in the labour market is mainly due to their traditional household labourer role, which makes them dependent on a male breadwinner. Given that Japanese welfare services are primarily designed to tackle male earners’ work insecurity, the marginal situation of women has not been addressed for long. To date, women’s earnings are moderate, at levels which challenges independence, enforcing their reliance on their partner’s income. Thus, divorce or death of a partner may put women into extremely vulnerable situations. Her informants all had such life experience, too.

Single mothers and women have only been targeted for a few decades with specific welfare services, but not under explicit homelessness provisions, which has been largely reserved for men. Women’s homelessness services are framed within shelters to prevent prostitution and to tackle domestic abuse, which also acknowledges that women have to be sheltered and housed. Maruyama claims that in contrast to what the workfare approach requests from males, in the case of women, given their traditional household labour role, it implies not so much an investigation of whether they can and should return to the job market in order to get served, but “whether a woman conforms to the dominant values of society” (p.91). She takes account of this question through individual cases, to explore whether women perform or fail to perform any hegemonic gender roles in order to get assisted by the welfare provision.

Based on qualitative analysis (institutional case descriptions and life path interviews), she comes to conclude that the strategies of women rough sleepers are largely common to both genders, except for hygiene and protection from physical abuse, and their more protective treatment by organisations serving homeless

rough sleepers. Moreover, strategies of forming communities, building up channels of information and reciprocal relationships all impact whether women strive to exit homelessness or stay rough sleepers or facility residents very similarly to men; this is in contrast to what gender theory would say: that being homeless is a rebellion against the traditional women's role. Maruyama also states that challenging the autonomous subject in such decisions has policy implications: the actual Japanese 'Self-Help Act' cannot categorise them appropriately and offer the most adequate services to them (including making people fully self-sufficient by bringing them into independent housing and offering labour opportunities).

The volume delivers a precise account of welfare policy development in relation to housing exclusion of women in Japan, thus, it represents a very useful resource for those interested in the design of responses in a different cultural and welfare context. The age and social composition of the respondents shed light on the vulnerabilities women – among them very elderly women – may face in Japan, which makes it especially interesting to compare with the life experiences of clients we have in the Europe. Powerful quotes of respondents (here we merit the translator, too) serve giving a voice to homeless women (as pointed out in the title), and give a tangible grasp of the agonies of the women interviewed. This analysis is a worthwhile ethnographic research read.

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Padraic Kenna, Sergio Nasarre-Aznar, Peter Sparkes and Christoph U. Schmid (Eds.) (2018)

***Loss of Homes and Evictions across Europe
A Comparative Legal and Policy Examination.***

Edward Elgar: Elgar Land and Housing Law and Policy series, pp.400. €123.00.

Evictions are the most widespread form of residential instability, and this timely publication explores both the drivers of and the protections against evictions in a number of EU countries.

Eleven country chapters cover Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom, over the period 2010 to 2016. It draws on a large EU Commission-funded pilot study examining evictions across the (then) 28 EU member states, although no explanation is offered of why a subset of these countries was selected for the book.

Admirably, each country chapter follows a similar structure, addressing the social and policy background, legal/human rights, and ‘substantive’ matters. The latter involves material on the extent of evictions, risk factors, links between evictions and homelessness, and best practice in preventing and responding to evictions. However, the assiduousness of application of this template varies, with e.g. under the heading of ‘Profile of those evicted’, the UK entry’s laconic single sentence states that “The profile of those households who experience evictions varies across the tenures”, contrasting with the rather more elaborate discussions in most other chapters.

The country chapters are based on country expert reports, while Padraic Kenna’s lengthy introduction provides a synthesis based on the country chapters, the original EU study, and Kenna’s own review of (mainly legal) literature.

The focus throughout is on the definition of eviction as a judicially supervised eviction process encompassing three stages: the pre-court phase beginning from the occupier being given a formal instruction to leave; the second stage being the court process itself; and the third involving the phase between the court order for repossession and the actual physical eviction (with the possibility of occupiers quitting their home – and potentially becoming homeless – at any of these stages).

A wide range of factors relevant to evictions is covered in the book. Some country chapters attend to issues of poverty and social exclusion in relation to social services, tenure and housing systems, while others focus on the impact of particular

shocks such as the Global Financial Crisis. Some discussions have a narrower focus on evictions, their immediate antecedents (typically rent or mortgage arrears) and policy responses. Kenna attempts to synthesise this material by drawing on an analytical framework from the EU Pilot study listing structural, systemic / institutional, interpersonal, and personal levels of causation.

Economic issues around poverty are identified as the principal cause of evictions, though this varies by country and tenure. The broadest pattern suggested by Kenna is that eviction problems stem from high rent levels in some northern and western European cities, and from higher levels of poverty in CEE states, though this geographical classification is not itself explained. Policies to address eviction are discussed at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (mirroring to some extent the analytical risk framework). Primary prevention measures, for example, refer to macro-level measures to increase housing supply and affordability, including housing and welfare benefits. Kenna also notes the significant differences in tenure systems across the eleven countries, with a shifting balance over time and between countries between the rights of the occupying resident households and the rights of mortgagees and landlords (private and social). An issue worthy of further exploration is the use of time-limited tenancies in the English private rented sector, which functions as an alternative mechanism to eviction.

Examples of 'best practice' include steps to prevent reckless lending, an integrated approach from support agencies (e.g. where there is an obligation on courts to inform social services of impending evictions), requirements that undue hardship be taken into account in evaluating an eviction case before the courts, tenancy sustainment services, and rapid rehousing.

Protection against forced eviction is one of the seven components of adequate housing listed by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1991), and much of Kenna's introduction is devoted to a discussion of housing rights at UN, Council of Europe and EU level and of constitutional and legislative measures at country level. Striking an optimistic note, Kenna anticipates the absorption of common housing rights norms into domestic policy and practice, based on Article 8 of the ECHR, and a closer link between mortgage and tenancy contracts and human rights law. However, economic and ideological forces pitted against such trends warrant further discussion (Donnelly, Finnerty and O'Connell, 2020).

Kenna readily acknowledges the difficulties of cross-country comparisons where social, policy, legal and other contexts differ. This is compounded by the paucity of eviction data both in the informal or shadow housing sector and in relation to legal (judicial and non-judicial) evictions. Where some countries have good data on judicial evictions, often this relates to court proceedings rather than pre-court proceedings where many persons leave their accommodation involuntarily. In this

regard, the section in the country template on ‘squatting’ is scarcely informative. Similarly, the section on ‘domestic violence’ yields few insights: a focus on supplier-generated residential instability would have allowed a clearer focus (Finnerty and O’Connell, 2017).

There are a number of different roles that this publication will play – principally as a compendium of eviction related policy, legislation and practice in the eleven countries discussed. From a wider social policy point of view, it provides an invaluable mapping exercise in constructing a theory of the middle range in relation to supplier-generated residential instability.

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European Observatory on Homelessness

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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