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Journal Philosophy

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

As this edition of the *European Journal of Homelessness* goes to press, restrictions on travel, hospitality and broader economic activity due to Covid-19 are gradually being eased across Europe as vaccination programmes are rolled out. However, uncertainly is evident in relation to the various variants of Covid-19 that are circulating, and if these variants, allied to greater social contacts, will result in further restrictions in the Autumn. Protecting people from Covid-19 has cast a cold light on the limitations of current policy and service responses to homelessness, and Ruth Owen and Miriam Matthiessen in their review of responses to homelessness in Europe arising from Covid-19 demonstrate just how inadequate and dangerous emergency accommodation, particularly communal shelters, are as a response to those who experience homelessness. The ability to protect oneself by staying at home simply adds to the large body of evidence that access to housing, with support as needed, is most effective response, not only to the residential instability that characterises that majority who experience a spell in temporary or emergency accommodation, but also how crucial a secure dwelling is across a range of other domains in providing protection, security and the capacity to develop ones capabilities.

They also demonstrate that given sufficient political will and resources, what are sometimes termed ‘intractable’ or ‘wicked’ social problems, such as responding to entrenched street homelessness, can be addressed in relatively short time frames through the provision of good quality safe accommodation, and those experiencing street homelessness are not ‘service resistant’ as is sometimes claimed, but may be reasonably resistant to poor quality, overcrowded communal facilities. Indeed, a key lesson from the pandemic to-date is the significant differences in the rate of infection amongst people experiencing homelessness in different settings, with shared airspaces and dormitories having worse outcomes than individual accommodation.

In her case study of Germany, Claudia Engelmann in her paper notes that tens of thousands of people experiencing homelessness currently live in such congregate accommodation. Originally intended as a short-term measure – for a few days or weeks – people increasingly stay there for a longer time, and that standards which suffice for short-term housing are in the main not adequate for longer-term accommodation. The paper also highlights the significant differences across German municipalities in such accommodation in relation accessibility, conditions inside, as well as the chances of moving on from shelter to regular housing. Local variability in responses to those experiencing homelessness is also a theme in the paper by Matti Wirehag, but despite these local variations, the paper argues that such services share three overarching functions: gatekeeping, managing the homeless, and administrating housing for the poor, with these functions serving to manage those experiencing homelessness rather than provide sustainable exists from homelessness.

The pandemic has also starkly highlighted the precarious housing situations of those in overcrowded shared accommodation, often referred to as the hidden homeless or sofa / couch surfers. Based on an innovative methodological approach, Henning Lohmann in his paper shows that in the case of Germany, that within a period of 12 months, about 3 per cent of households surveyed hosted a sofa / couch surfer for at least one night and provides an important template for other countries to collect data on hidden homelessness from respondents in population surveys. Deb Batterham in her paper also utilises an innovative methodology using household panel surveys to operationalise and test a definition of homelessness risk. Based on these household panel surveys, 7.9% of people aged 15 years and over, just under 1.5 million people, were at-risk of homelessness in Australia in 2015, and compared with the national population, were more likely to be women, to be Indigenous and to report fair or poor health.

Turing to practice, the pandemic has reemphasised the need for sustained efforts to assess the situation of homeless migrants, victims of domestic violence, and others whose vulnerabilities have not been adequately understood or addressed. In the case of migrants experiencing homelessness, Angeliki Paidakaki, in her paper, provides useful case studies from Vienna and Madrid on the role of NGOs in finding socially innovative housing solutions for asylum seekers and refugees through fostering strategic partnerships in contexts where affordable housing is limited.

Geoff Nelson and colleagues in their contribution to this edition aim to understand how social scientists can influence policy responses to those experiencing homelessness based on examples from Europe, Canada, and the United States. They argue that social scientists have shown that *ideas matter* by reframing effective responses to homelessness. Social scientists have also played an important role demonstrating that *evidence matters.* While problem framing and rigorous evaluation research have established a firm foundation for homelessness policy change, other strategies are needed to establish evidence-based approaches more fully into homelessness policy. In the follow up paper that will appear in the next edition of the EJH, the authors explore the considerable difficulties in ensuring that this evidence translate in policy and the crucial of politics in making the shift from ideas and evidence to policy.

This edition of the EJH also contains the first systematic review of homelessness in Switzerland, and the paper provides an important Swiss perspective to the European landscape of homelessness research and to highlight important future challenges. Finally, this edition contains two review symposia and a number of book reviews that we hope that the readers of the EJH find informative.

Articles

Part A

Social Innovation in the Times of a European Twofold Refugee-Housing Crisis. Evidence from the Homelessness Sector

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Abstract_ *This paper examines the socio-political role and potential of homelessness NGOs in triggering socially innovative transition pathways towards housing for all during the early years of the post-2015 twofold housing-migration crisis in Europe. Informed by theories of social innovation, governance and housing, and with empirical evidence from Vienna and Madrid, the paper deliberates on the opportunities and limitations of homelessness NGOs in moulding neo-welfare states and setting forward pro-equity housing policy and bottom-linked governance transformations for the benefit of the sector and the populations they serve (e.g., homeless people, low/no-income, refugees). The paper concludes that homelessness NGOs emerged as the core protagonists in finding housing solutions for asylum seekers and refugees in restrictive social housing and expensive housing markets. They also used the momentum to build up strategic partnerships to provoke public debate about the persisting affordable housing problem and the new and alarming integration crisis. The political and societal polarisation over the migration issue, nonetheless, did not prove to be the political moment for a resurgence of collective housing activism and the awakening call for revising over-commodified housing systems and promoting more substantial welfare. As a result of this polarisation, homelessness NGOs and their allies remained subtly political.*

Keywords_ "*refugee crisis", affordable housing, bottom-linked governance, neo-welfare state, Vienna, Madrid.*

Introduction

The lack of affordable housing is a critical matter in the European Union. Housing prices are growing faster than incomes in most EU cities, making housing costs the most significant item of household expenditure for at least one third of EU households (Eurostat, 2017; European Commission, 2018). Access to affordable land for construction and development of social, public and affordable housing has become a serious challenge as real estate speculation and the high-end luxury housing market heavily affects land prices (European Commission, 2018). At the same time, other speculation-driven developments such as the exponential growth of short-time apartment rentals have claimed a sizeable share of the affordable housing stock in many EU cities (Housing Europe, 2019; Joint Research Center European Commission, 2019). Rising construction costs and public budget cuts on housing programmes have further exacerbated the shortage of affordable housing (FEANTSA, 2016a; European Commission, 2018). Poor households and people who are new entrants to the housing market have suffered the most from this prevalent shortage of affordable housing throughout EU Member States. Non-EU nationals (asylum seekers, refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary or humanitarian protection, undocumented migrants) are the most vulnerable to housing exclusion and the most overburdened by housing costs in all EU countries (FEANTSA, 2018a; FEANTSA, 2020). This housing problem has been increasingly evident in many EU cities since the peak of the 2015 "refugee crisis" when the number of asylum seekers reached staggering levels in Europe[1]. The unprecedented peak of asylum seekers and the subsequent reception challenge for EU cities has pressured the housing shortage problem and tested the pre-existing cultural and institutional frames of housing systems in different EU Member States. This twofold refugee-housing crisis has been particularly poignant during the transition phase from urgent temporary housing solutions for asylum seekers to more permanent accommodation arrangements for recognised refugees. As a result of this twofold crisis, access to sufficient, affordable and dignified (semi-)permanent housing by all vulnerable populations (EU and non-EU citizens) has emerged as a key challenge and a major political question for EU institutions, Member States, cities and non-governmental and grassroots organisations.

The EU responded to the refugee crisis with a temporary, emergency-driven policy that included short-term and immediate measures that prioritised security and military concerns over other policy concerns, such as housing, integration and employment (Carrera *et al*., 2015). This lack of a multi-policy sector approach to the

[1] In 2015, the number of first-time asylum seekers seeking international protection in the EU reached an unprecedented peak of 1.2 million people, double the number from 2014. The three main citizenships of first-time asylum applicants were Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis (Eurostat, 2016).

migration problem has affected the effectual social integration and sustainable housing of recognised refugees, making them vulnerable to homelessness. To fill this policy lacuna, the homelessness sector emerged as one of the main providers of accommodation during and after the asylum process (FEANTSA, 2016b). In light of this reality, this paper sets off with the hypothesis that homelessness service providers (in short: homelessness NGOs)—in their integrative and politico-institutional role—hold great potential in recalibrating injustices in housing systems and designing and materialising socially innovative transition pathways towards housing for all. Thus, this paper aims to answer the following questions: What types of solidarity-inspired and inclusive alternative housing solutions were taken by different homelessness NGOs during the early years of the twofold refugee-housing crisis? What were the homelessness sector's coalition-building strategies in their aim to successfully house and socially integrate both refugees and vulnerable indigenous populations? To what extent and in what ways have they interacted with multi-level public authorities and elected officials for the promotion of pro-equity housing policies and the counteraction of the spiral of speculation trajectories and exclusionary patterns in housing systems? In what manner have these interactions formulated novel bottom-linked governance configurations that hold better potential in accommodating urban transition trajectories in the direction of housing for all?

To answer these questions and gain a deeper understanding of the socio-political nature of homelessness NGOs and their capacity to trigger policy and governance transformations in housing systems during the early post-2015 crisis years, the paper counts on theories of housing (Garcia and Haddock, 2016; Madden and Marcuse, 2016; Paidakaki and Parra, 2018), governance and social innovation (Moulaert *et al*., 2010; Martinelli, 2013; Moulaert *et al*., 2013; Swngedouw and Jessop, 2016; Parés *et al*., 2017; Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019; Moulaert *et al*., 2019; Paidakaki *et al*., 2020) as well as on empirical evidence from the two EU cities of Vienna and Madrid. The selection of the two case studies is premised on the following three criteria: (1) high housing cost burden (total housing costs representing more than 40 per cent of disposable income); (2) refugee population looking for accommodation; and (3) pre-existence and/or emergence of socially innovative housing actors, with a socio-political transformative potential. The research methods mobilised for the purposes of empirical research consisted of document analysis (newspaper online articles, policy and advocacy papers, case-study literature), two one-month pilot visits in Vienna and Madrid in May and June 2018 that included site visits of refugee housing and 32 semi-structured interviews with key interlocutors[2] (homelessness NGOs, local researchers and scholars, housing activists, non-profit housing advocates, journalists, city authorities, elected officials). In this research, special attention is given to the socially innovative (semi-)

2 The vast majority of interlocutors wished to keep their identity anonymous.

permanent housing solutions promoted by homelessness NGOs for beneficiaries of international protection (persons who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary or humanitarian protection status; in short, refugees). The research also focuses on the ways in which the sector has increased its influencing role in housing systems and its capacity to trigger transition pathways towards housing for all.

The first section of this paper brings theories of social innovation, governance and housing in dialogue with each other to conceptualise the dual potential of socially innovative housing actors in accommodating housing needs and transforming the institutional and governance setting that governs their actions and influences their societal impact. The following section empirically investigates the nature of social innovative actions by homelessness NGOs in Vienna and Madrid in the post-2015 era against the background of the cities' unique housing markets and local and national political climate. The last section reflects on the findings and draws conclusions on the opportunities and limitations of the homelessness NGOs in setting forward pro-equity housing policy and governance transformations in the aftermath of the 2015 crisis; it also makes note of the potential catalytic role of the Covid-19 pandemic in accelerating previously pro-equity paved ways leading to housing for all.

Social Innovation and Bottom-Linked Governance

Social innovation is a powerful idea referring to the collective capacity of societal groups to look for alternative futures and meet human needs in the face of societal challenges and crises, which have often been provoked, accelerated and intensified by market-driven development paradigms and technocratic institutional and governance arrangements (Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019). In most of the literature on social innovation and community development, generators and leaders of social innovation are third sector organisations (non-governmental/non-profit organisations and social enterprises) who utilise resources in novel ways to address inequalities, deprivation, marginalisation and other crisis mechanisms and offer alternative "recipes" for improving the conditions of excluded individuals and communities (Martinelli, 2013; Paidakaki and Moulaert, 2018; Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019). The primary concerns and enduring questions of social innovation practitioners and scholars are the design of alternatives for the improvement of the human condition as well as the identification and confrontation of exclusionary mechanisms of contemporary policy arrangements and development paradigms (Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019). Social innovation, hence, is not only *outcome-oriented* in that it offers solutions to social problems, but also *process-oriented* in that it leads a development trajectory toward more democratic, egalitarian and solidarity-inspired cities (Parés *et al.*, 2017; Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019; Paidakaki *et al.*, 2020). As such, social innovation is premised on three main pillars: (1) the satisfaction of material and immaterial human needs (housing, health, food but also visibility, recognition, citizenship); (2) the development of new forms of social and institutional relations and collaborations between individuals and social groups; and (3) the institutional leverage of social innovative practices and the formation of open and democratic bottom-linked governance reconfigurations (Moulaert *et al.*, 2013).

Within this three-pillar interpretation, social innovation and governance are inextricably intertwined and "bottom-linked governance" emerges as a key concept in social innovation scholarship. Bottom-linked governance not only breaks the dualism between "top-down" and "bottom-up" forms of action but also becomes a cornerstone for social change/transitions (Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019; Moulaert *et al.*, 2019). It is understood as a novel governance hybridity between social innovation actors and institutional enablers of social innovation (e.g., including executive/administrative and legislative public authorities, elected officials, foundations, financial institutions) who place more value on heterarchy of self-organisation in networks and unconditional solidarity-inspired action (Swyngedouw and Jessop, 2006; Manganelli and Moulaert, 2018; Paidakaki *et al*., 2020).

Socially innovative actors build up and are nurtured by democratic bottom-linked governance that is structured by intra-level and inter-level organisational interactions. *Intra-level governance* is built up by the horizontal interactions between and across socially innovative groups and the (co)construction of endogenous institutional capital (alliances, advocacy/pressure groups, policy communities, coalitions, federations) aiming at influencing decision- and policy-makers (Paidakaki *et al*., 2020). *Inter-level governance* is constructed through the adversarial and non-adversarial interactions between socially innovative actors (individually and/or with their allies) and public and private institutions. This form of governance aims to challenge dysfunctional/pro-market governance arrangements, advocating for solidarity-inspired governance forms and leveraging additional support and entitlements (e.g., through policy improvements, tax incentives, programme experimentation and alternative forms of social funding) for the benefit of the socially innovative actors and their target communities (Paidakaki *et al*., 2020). In these bottom-linked, governance-forming processes, when institutional structures are open to engage with a heterogeneity of socially innovative actors and their networks, they produce exogenous institutional capital (such as the development of open/transparent/inclusive public participation forums and human-centered public-private partnerships) and create new opportunities for governance hybridities that favour heterarchy and solidarity forms of governance (Paidakaki *et al*., 2020). The (collective) building of (new) institutional capital emerges, thus, as a fundamental element in transition strategies for universal human needs satisfaction.

Social innovation and bottom-linked governance in housing systems

Social innovation in housing systems commonly emerges in response to social, economic and political (spatial) processes that put universal accessibility to affordable housing in jeopardy. Some of the most important processes, according to Garcia and Haddock (2016), are: (1) globalisation, which prioritises city competition over social welfare; (2) financialisation/(hyper-)commodification, which triggers speculation, capital accumulation and transformation of underinvested areas into super-prime/luxurious real-estate development; and (3) state restructuring and privatised welfare, which leads to more expensive social services, social exclusion and needs deprivation. Byproducts of these large processes are a series of urban injustices and pathologies such as public housing shortages, shrinking social housing programmes, cuts to social services, homelessness, gentrification, discrimination and the potential exclusion of migrants from (publicly-supported) housing, as well as other "othering urban practices" that dichotomise social welfare beneficiaries between the native population ("us") and the migration community ("them"). National citizens are especially polarised along this dichotomy: some citizens support othering practices often informed by fear, xenophobia or racism, and others struggle against them driven by compassion, charity and philanthropy (Kaika, 2017).

Especially in times of crises, socially innovative housing actors (e.g., non-profit housing developers, homelessness NGOs, self-organised housing movements) activate themselves to build up intra- and inter-level governance structures to advance the (housing) conditions of the poorest and most disadvantaged; to gain better access to and improve the usability of economic capital; and to inform the modus operandi of affordable housing provision (Paidakaki *et al.*, 2020, p.7). To accomplish their objectives, housing social innovators act in different ways in terms of what and how to demand and whom to target. Some fight against displacement, gentrification and exclusion while others fight for housing and tenants' rights, fair rent, rent regulation, housing accessibility/affordability, new public housing construction and deeper public subsidies for social housing. Their tactics and strategies cover a wide range of actions, from eviction blocking, street demonstrations, political mobilisation and electoral participation, to legislative/programming/policy lobbying, campaigns and urban plan proposals targeting powerful groups/opponents (e.g., pro-growth housing developers), public authorities and elected officials (Madden and Marcuse, 2016). Acting either offensively or defensively in their bottom-linked interactions with influential actors, housing activists have aimed at marking turning points for hegemonic housing systems and constructing *a neo-welfare state* whose primary purpose is to incentivise and finance with deep subsidies a diverse terrain of housing actors in the most socially just way, while at the same time securing equal access to housing for all (Paidakaki and Parra, 2018). The neo-welfare state enables long-term systemic change and the building of a different world that actually provides housing for all through the promotion of diverse economic forms (cooperative, non-profit, for-profit, private, public) and by introducing and consolidating new complementary value systems (mutuality, reciprocity, and social solidarity) (ibid). Some of the actions that the neo-welfare state is expected to lead are: (1) the decommodification and definancialisation of the housing system through rent control, secure tenancies, public ownership of land, public financing, limits on speculation, “Housing First” approach to homelessness; (2) the expansion, defense and improvement of the publicly-owned housing stock available to all needy; (3) the increase of housing production by the non-profit housing sector, and (4) the democratisation of housing policy by opening up the housing system to broader democratic scrutiny and input (Madden and Marcuse, 2016).

To understand and dig into the transformative potential of housing activists in response to the twofold housing-refugee crisis in Europe, the next two sections empirically investigate social innovative practices of homelessness NGOs in the cities of Vienna and Madrid. This investigation is embedded within the housing market context and political climate that these practices played out between 2015 and 2018. In turn, the last section scrutinises the potential of these practices in triggering transitions towards novel governance formations that would better lead to housing for all, and makes some initial reflections on the prospects of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic in accelerating the observed social innovation manifestations and bolstering their transformative capacities.

Refugee-Housing Crisis and Social Innovation in Vienna

At the outset of the European refugee crisis in 2015, Austria was confronted with a severe crisis in refugee accommodation (FEANTSA, 2017). The country recorded 88 430 asylum requests with 14 413 people being granted asylum and 2 478 subsidiary protection (UIA-Urban Innovative Actions, n.d.). Asylum seekers originated mainly from Afghanistan and Syria, but also from Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Kosovo and Somalia (STATISTIK AUSTRIA, 2016). During the asylum procedure and the four months following the asylum status being granted, migrants in Austria are entitled to basic care (board and lodging, medical care, counselling and monthly “pocket money”) (Aigner, 2019, p.782). Once people are granted the asylum or soon after, they are entitled to the minimum income for food and accommodation expenses and are free to move and live in any Austrian province. More than half of the refugees move to Vienna because of its diversified labour market and large ethnic communities. They have, nonetheless, been confronted with pressing housing shortages. Unentitled to apply for public housing during the early years of their refugee status (see “Wiener Wohn-Ticket” below), refugees are either forced to live in the private rental sector—often in overcrowded flats rented out by migrants to the newcomers for an unreasonably expensive price—or, if they display some sort of vulnerability (e.g., addiction, illness, analphabetism) and are in need of social worker support, they are allowed to stay in shelters and flats run by homelessness NGOs. In Austria in 2018, non-EU nationals were on average 6 times more likely to systematically live in overcrowded conditions (FEANTSA, 2020).

The housing system and political climate of Vienna

Vienna has predominantly been a rental city that, in the last decade, has witnessed a rapidly growing population and an urgent need for new housing production. Two thirds of the population lives in an apartment that is regulated. This includes both social housing built and managed by housing associations (the main vehicles for state-led housing provision), which mostly cater to the middle classes, and council housing owned by the city of Vienna which is the largest flat owner in Europe and accommodates mostly the lower-middle classes. The other one third of the population lives in housing provided by the free market sector. Within the private rental segment, there is a sub-segment of housing units designated for migrants. This sub-segment, according to local researchers, is mainly owned by previous generations of migrants that rent out often substandard housing to newcomers at high prices.

Since 2000, private investment in the Viennese housing market has been lucrative, thanks to the drastically reduced public subsidies for housing and a clear preference for financial market-led privatisation in national housing policy (Lang and Novy, 2014). Public expenditure for housing decreased by 33 per cent between 2007 and 2017 (FEANTSA, 2020). As a result, most of the new construction activity has been led by private development companies who make high-end apartment complexes in the central districts of Vienna (1st, 2nd, 7th, 9th, 15th) to sell to well-off foreigners and investment funds. Private companies have also progressively accumulated small property owned by natural persons and radically changed the business model traditionally operated by small landlords. This new up-market housing construction in central Vienna combined with the liberalised rent regulation in the private rental market that has been effective since the early 1990s (i.e., possibility for fixed-term contracts, rent liberalisation, urban renewal program, "location bonus"), have resulted in skyrocketing rents (Kadi, 2015). Between 2008 and 2014, rents in Vienna increased by 22 per cent (and 28 per cent in the private sector); this represented a particularly alarming increase for the 36 per cent of the low-income population renting in the private rental market (BAWO, 2018; FEANTSA, 2018b). Between 2008 and 2016, homelessness also increased by 32 per cent (FEANTSA, 2018b).

In 2015, the city of Vienna did not have an organised refugee housing and integration policy in place. In contrast, the city government (and its coalition between Social Democrats and Greens) had a bonus system for long-term residents through the *Wiener Wohn-Ticket* [Vienna housing-ticket]. This system included a council housing allocation policy that put newly recognised refugees at a structural disadvantage (Aigner, 2019); according to two interviewees (local researchers), it reflected Vienna's shift in policy from integration to diversity, whereby no specific measures were expected to be made for different groups. Besides little access to council housing, recognised refugees with little means also struggled to access social housing offered by housing associations. These non-profit housing providers did not include social criteria or urgency in the allocation of their housing stock and only occasionally and exceptionally dedicated a few of their flats to specific vulnerable people in cooperation with homelessness NGOs.

Given the current political climate and housing policy framework in Austria and Vienna, how have homelessness NGOs reacted to the twofold crisis? How have they responded to the housing needs of destitute people and rearticulated the (power) relations of actors orchestrating the local housing system? Magnifying lenses are put on the actions of socially innovative homelessness NGOs in Vienna in finding housing for newly recognised refugees; in particular, the manner in which they have used the twofold crisis to challenge pre-existing social policy voids, institutional fallacies and for-profit housing market dynamics that have generated and reinforced housing exclusion.

Social innovation evidences in the homelessness sector

A prominent socially innovative homelessness NGO in the city of Vienna is Neunerhaus. A pioneer in the Viennese homelessness sector, Neunerhaus has long been promoting long-term de-institutionalisation solutions for homelessness with the introduction of the Housing First pilot programme of 2012 (Wukovitsch *et al*., 2015; Garcia and Haddock, 2016). In 2017, after witnessing the rising housing costs and shortage of affordable housing for low-income people and recognised refugees in Vienna, it further drove de-institutionalisation of homelessness by founding the Neunerhaus Social Housing and Real Estate non-profit GmbH (in short: neuner Immo). Neuner Immo is a subsidiary of Neunerhaus and a hundred per cent non-profit limited company (GmbH) established with a dual purpose: (1) to act in the housing market and provide people in need with immediate access to housing and (2) to promote its social aims (e.g., improvement of access to affordable housing by people in poverty and refugees and the cessation of competition between those two destitute groups for welfare resources) (neuner Immo, n.d.). In 2018, the main target group of neuner Immo's mobile service programme was recognised refugees.

To accomplish its aim for housing needs satisfaction, neuner Immo has mainly cooperated with housing associations to secure flats for its target groups and partnered with Neunerhaus for social support services. The novelty of neuner Immo is the mediating role between two "policy worlds"—the housing system and the social system—previously unmet in Vienna. Neuner Immo provided socially innovative solutions not only in accommodating housing needs, but also in its cooperation with housing associations and other (social) construction companies. In doing so, it has established a new institutional capital in the housing system of Vienna, informed by novel interrelations between the Viennese housing/building sector and the social/homelessness sector. This mediating role has allowed neuner Immo to be treated as an equal housing partner in the Viennese housing market: one that facilitates the acquisition of houses for the homelessness sector clients and that offers specialised services to the housing sector, such as eviction prevention.

Neunerhaus, in their role as a leading organisation of the Austrian umbrella organisation of homelessness service providers Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe (BAWO), further enhanced/bolstered the social relations between the social and housing sectors. In 2017, BAWO started to lead a participatory process together with experts from the public administration, private and social real estate, and planning and homelessness to build networks and trust as well as draft and publish a position paper on affordable housing ("Housing For All: Affordable. Permanent. Inclusive."). During a series of workshops and at the Congress of BAWO, contacts were made across experts and links were intensified between homelessness and housing policies. During these interactions, BAWO had a dual goal/expectation: (1) to manifest and prove to the building sector their expertise in housing policy seen from their unique homelessness perspective and (2) to show both within its members and across the various sectors involved that homelessness can be solved not by focusing on a small group sleeping rough but by collectively designing strategies to guarantee decent and affordable housing for a broader target group. In fact, the Austrian Federation of Limited-Profit Housing Associations (GBV), following the BAWO-led workshops and interactions, took a series of actions including: conducting a survey of social projects and initiatives taken by their members; disseminating good practices across its members; consolidating homelessness prevention methods and promoting the Housing First approach model. The position paper was also used as an instrument capable to transform the homelessness sector itself. The paper was destined to be offered across BAWO members and other homelessness NGOs and raise awareness/educate homelessness practitioners about the importance of housing (housing market, tenancy law…) in solving homelessness and widen the understanding of the issue beyond alcohol/drug abuse[3].

3 The most important claims in the policy paper include: strengthening of the rental market; preservation and expansion of limited-profit housing; improvement of access to limited-profit housing; expansion of municipal housing and certainty of its accessibility; encouragement of the usage of vacant apartments; stimulation of needs-based housing development; more financial benefits towards housing (BAWO, 2018).

Through neuner Immo and BAWO, Neunerhaus further triggered embryonic transformations in the Viennese housing system, at least at the discursive level. The non-profit organisation neuner Immo focused its work on making its voice heard (on a political and policy level) on the need to innovate the housing system. It did this in a unique way, interacting with CEOs, property managers and developers of construction companies, in a communication campaign that underscored the affordable housing problem in Vienna for homeless people and refugees and the need for the (social) housing sector to work closer with homelessness NGOs to tackle this social problem. Companies who saw the validity of the points made became open to new forms of collaboration. Neunerhaus also lobbied for a "housing for all" objective through BAWO and used the alliance as a platform for wider and deeper cooperation between construction companies and homelessness NGOs. In doing so, it has opened a wider range of housing market options to homeless/low-income people and refugees and increases the affordable housing stock, both from the income and the housing cost perspective. As Elisabeth Hammer, BAWO chairperson, eloquently explains:

> "Our aim in the beginning of this project was to point out that homelessness services—regardless of their important role in supporting homeless people—cannot solve the housing crisis in a structural and sustainable way for homeless people and for other groups suffering from a housing shortage. The end of this project is marked by understanding that BAWO is part of a broader alliance of parties/players, which can, due to a particular position, promote "housing for all" with a specific focus on people with low income. Successfully building a bridge between players in housing and social politics was one contribution to positively promote "housing for all" as a crucial social challenge for the future" (BAWO, 2018, p.3).

BAWO's lobbying activities in the city government promoting affordable housing was complex and challenging because of the Social Democratic party's different views on housing policy. In particular, BAWO challenged the narrative that separated indigenous homelessness with refugee homelessness; it built up an influential counter-narrative—one that highlighted the need for housing for people without housing, regardless of their income and/or nationality. BAWO found the position paper useful in lobbying all political parties in putting housing affordability high on their agendas and in catalysing a connection between the allocation system of council housing and the homelessness sector (which had not previously existed in Vienna).

Refugee-Housing Crisis and Social Innovation in Madrid

Complying with the distribution quotas proposed by the European Commission in 2015 to relocate asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to other members states, Spain pledged to offer asylum to 17 337 asylum seekers (Bris and Bandito, 2017). For a country accustomed to influxes of predominantly economic undocumented migrants and with a weak asylum tradition in place, this pledge put the "so far invisible" asylum issue higher on the Spanish national and municipal agendas. According to one interviewee (local researcher), the conservative party governing Spain in 2015 was mindful of the potential reactions in electoral terms of their constituencies over the migration issue and claimed for a European solution to the "refugee crisis". The two largest Spanish cities, Madrid and Barcelona, contrariwise, were openly favourable to welcoming refugees. On August 29th, the mayor of Barcelona initiated the development of a network of Spanish cities willing to host international protection seekers, while the mayor of Madrid pledged €10 million to host asylum seekers in the city and hung a white banner outside the city hall reading "Refugees Welcome" (The Local Spain, 2015).

To be able to receive this number of international protection seekers, the government launched two special programmes in 2015 and 2016 respectively, which channelled subsidies to a wide network of NGOs mandated to increase the volume of available spaces for the first phase of the reception system (i.e., accommodation in reception centres or facilities) (Bris and Bandito, 2017). In 2016, 900 spaces were finally available across Spain and only 744 refugees arrived from Italian and Greek camps (Bris and Bandito, 2017). The real "refugee crisis" for Spain started in early 2018, with influxes of asylum seekers fleeing Ukraine, Colombia and Venezuela, but also El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. The total number of people affected were 42 025, a record figure in historical terms, mainly from Venezuela (14 995), Ukraine, (4 645), Colombia, (3 375), and Syria (2 680) (CEAR, 2018). In 2018, Spain was one of the five EU countries that registered the most asylum applications, putting pressure on the inadequate and undercapitalised reception systems (FEANTSA, 2020).

In Spain, there is no differentiation between housing solutions for asylum seekers and refugees across the different phases of the asylum process, which lasts 18 months (or 24 months for extremely vulnerable). Both groups are housed in reception centres during the first phase, in Refugee Reception Centers or in NGO-run centres in the second phase, and in independent accommodation with financial and social support by NGOs in the third phase (FEANTSA, 2020). Once refugees are registered as city residents in Spain, they are supported by social emergency and integration resources and services of local governments (temporary housing/shelters, education, public health centres etc.). However, these services are designed mainly for the typical profile of homeless populations (long-term rough sleepers, male, 50 years old with substance/alcohol abuse history) and not for refugee families who represented the new reality. In Spain, non-EU nationals are 5.8 times more likely to be overburdened by housing costs and 5.7 times more likely to systematically live in overcrowded housing (FEANTSA, 2020). Between January and June 2018, Madrid hosted over 900 asylum seekers in their emergency shelters.

The housing system and political climate of Madrid

As opposed to the housing system of Austria, Spain has been traditionally a homeownership-oriented country. Since the Franco era, housing policy in Spain has put emphasis on homeownership and, hence, incentivised housing construction to sell under a complex set of subsidy schemes (Gonick, 2016). During the 2000s, the Spanish housing policy promoted the liberalisation of property and land markets, speculative real estate development and construction booms (Janoschka, 2015). This speculative bubble burst in 2008 and resulted in almost 320 000 evicted people by 2013 (Barbero, 2015). In 2009, the massive evictions gave birth to Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (in short PAH), a platform for people affected by mortgage arrears (Romanos, 2014; Barbero, 2015; Díaz-Parra and Mena, 2015; Janoschka, 2015; De Weerdt and Garcia, 2016; Garcia and Haddock, 2016; Lopez, 2017). PAH's most successful action was to stop evictions. However, a lot of their attention was to put pressure on private and public institutions to increase the rental social housing stock that was less than 2 per cent of the total housing stock (García-Lamarca, 2017). Despite this effort, several municipal and regional authorities sold their stock of public housing to private funds in order to deal with the municipal debt. For instance, in 2013, the regional government of Madrid sold about 5 000 rental apartments (with rents under the market rate) to equity/international finance investors, including Goldman Sachs and Blackstone (Gonick, 2016; Pareja-Eastaway and Sanchez-Martinez, 2017).

In the shadow of the foreclosure crisis, Spanish housing policy has shifted its focus on the private rental market—a section of the housing system that represented 12 per cent of the housing stock in 2017 (Pareja-Eastaway and Sanchez-Martinez, 2017). Under the new housing policy, private landlords are incentivised to make their empty apartments available in the housing market and often encouraged to add social criteria in the rental price. This new focus on rental units was largely based on the assumption that more units available in the market would lead to lower rental prices. However, as housing bubbles do not follow the market law of demand and supply but rather build upon expectations, prices for rentals in Spain have dramatically increased due to the exponential growth of short-term apartment rentals, new strategies of real estate investment, and the golden visa programme that allowed foreigners (e.g. Chinese, Russians) to purchase properties of more than half a million euro in exchange for a residence permit in Spain. Rents of public housing rental units also skyrocketed (up to 900 per cent) when leases expired (Pareja-Eastaway and Sanchez-Martinez, 2017). The housing market in Spain has thus been immersed in a new bubble. The unaffordability of rental houses, especially in city centre areas, has become the contemporary conflict in large cities of Spain and the root cause behind evictions for rent arrears.

In response to the rental-housing crisis, new movements have emerged in Spain (e.g., the tenants' union "Sindicato de Inquilinas e Inquilinos de Madrid") with the purpose to stop evictions from rental units through campaigning and provocation actions. The city government of Manuela Carmena (2015-2019) also started to build new social housing units. Nonetheless, the city administration's housing policy was moderately ambitious due to the high debts of the local housing company that have to be urgently cleared. Out of the 4 000 houses envisioned to be constructed, only 1 500 units were finally completed by 2018, which has led the city administration to focus more on buying from private owners for renting. Access to social housing can be gained by residents legally residing in Spain at least for five years without interruption—a restriction that largely excludes all newly recognised refugees.

Social innovation evidence in the homelessness sector

Provivienda is a homelessness NGO that socially innovated during the early years of the post-2015 refugee crisis; a non-profit association established in 1989 in Madrid, it aims to respond to residential needs, especially of people in situations of great difficulty. Provivienda was one of the partnered NGOs managing the first phase of the asylum process as a response to the government's needs for hosting centres and places for the high number of asylum seekers in Spain. As opposed to other NGOs involved in the management of this phase whose accommodation model focused on large centres (e.g., CEAR, Red Cross), Provivienda treated refugee reception through the "Housing First" lenses, offering individual houses that would better accommodate, empower and integrate asylum seekers and refugees. Their accommodation model was based on rental agreements; either between the NGO and the landlord, or between the refugee and the landlord, in which case Provivienda functioned as the guarantor. During the first year of the refugee crisis, solidarity-led landlords offered housing abundantly, making the establishment of rental agreements an easy task for Provivienda. At the aftermath of the attack in Nice in 2016, however, Provivienda was enormously challenged with increasing its network of apartments because refugees were seen as a risky population by landlords. As a result, it resorted to expensive private housing market to continue implementing its housing model.

Provivienda's expertise and leadership in finding houses was acknowledged by the HOGAR SÍ Fundación (here on Foundation), a social initiative entity created in 1998 to eradicate homelessness. Valuing the importance of complementarities between NGOs, the Foundation partnered with Provivienda for their Hábitat programme. In 2018, Provivienda also partnered with other NGOs (CEAR, ACCEM, Red Cross) building up new endogenous institutional capital taking the form of a new informal group working on social intervention and improved housing accessibility conditions for people in need. The monthly informal meetings of the group served as platforms with a dual purpose: 1) to map out the problem of accommodation for refugees in Spain during the second asylum phase and find solutions to address it and 2) to make the housing problem more prominent in the social politics agenda and harvest deeper government support. Provivienda also collaborated with housing activists beyond the NGO-complex, such as the PAH. However, this type of interaction between grassroots movements and NGOs was rather limited. This was due to their competing views on how housing activists should engage with public authorities, and also because PAH's main interest was not refugee housing, but rather rent speculation, massive social housing buying outs, Airbnb proliferation and urban touristification. As a result, PAH has been closer to new tenant unions and other traditional social movements and prioritised the real estate/housing model in Madrid as their focal conflict.

More evidence of inter-institutional interactions around the urgency of the two-fold crisis was a workshop called "De sin Refugio a Sin Hogar [From refugee to Homeless]" organised on June 13, 2018 by FACIAM, a network of nine homelessness NGOs. The main themes discussed during the workshop were: the new reality of migration in Spain with the arrival of forcefully displaced populations; the changing profile of people occupying the homelessness sector; the inaccessibility of the rental housing market and the new housing bubble in Spanish cities; the ethical imperatives and division of responsibility in receiving and integrating refugees; the (economic) inefficiencies of the present asylum system and the perspectives of rights and responses from public administrations. Present in this workshop was the First Deputy Mayor of Madrid who interacted with various homelessness NGOs (e.g., FACIAM, CEAR, Caritas Spain) expressing her openness to develop a policy tool that would adopt a holistic approach to refugee integration. Homelessness NGOs challenged the city administration on the affordable housing shortages in the city—especially public housing shortages and their constraining allocation criteria—and the limited public funds supporting NGOs (FACIAM, 2018).

Conclusions

Scrutinising social innovation in the homelessness sector during the early years of the twofold housing-refugee crisis in Europe, important lessons emerge with respect to the potential politico-institutional role of homelessness NGOs in paving new governance and policy trajectories for housing for all/ housing-led models (e.g. Housing First). The influx of refugees in 2015 shed light on the existence of weak welfare states that focus more on quick and temporary emergency accommodation for asylum seekers and pay insufficient or little attention in the development of long-term social housing policies and programmes for the housing needs of the most destitute. This long-lived disinvestment in social housing and the absence of political vision revealed an *integration crisis* that has become a significant concern for homelessness NGOs in the years following the 2015 refugee crisis. In response to this new crisis, homelessness NGOs became the core protagonists in finding housing solutions in difficult housing markets for asylum seekers and refugees, mediating between the refugee and the housing builder/owner. They also used the momentum to intensify the promotion of housing-led solutions to homelessness and the integration of social/homelessness policies with housing policies. Opportunities for fighting housing exclusion patterns—at least at the discourse level—have especially arisen with the development of new institutional capital both in Vienna and Madrid. These opportunities have taken the form of formal or informal coalitions between and across homelessness NGOs and inter-institutional, bottom-linked, partnerships between homelessness NGOs, housing associations (in Vienna), private landlords and public authorities. The new claims for "housing for all" in Vienna, and the pursuit of sustainable housing solutions for Spanish and non-Spanish citizens in Madrid, have given prominence to the issue of (social) housing and rendered the homelessness sector a fundamental catalyst and precursor for changes in public social/housing policy and governance. This catalytic effect was especially stronger in Vienna as compared to Madrid because of its differently structured homelessness and housing sectors. The pre-existence of a well-established national umbrella organisation of homelessness NGOs working closely with its members and promoting their interests in different state and institutional arenas as well as the long-standing existence of regulated social housing providers in Austria offered a more productive framework for novelties to emerge (see the pioneering establishment of a non-profit limited housing company under the auspices of a homelessness NGO) and for building and maintaining bridges between the homelessness and housing "worlds".

Alas, powerful speculative real estate activities in cities as well as the political cloud over the migration issue that divided/polarised Europeans (including Spaniards and Austrians) between pro-refugee and anti-refugee citizens, landlords and decision/ policy-makers, have hindered a contextual provision of "real affordable houses for all" to gain ground. These "Janus-faced" reactions to the refugee crisis have played an instrumental role in blocking transition potentialities in the direction to housing for all. The 2015 refugee crisis, with its divisive and politically sensitive character, did not prove to be the political moment for a resurgence of collective housing activism and the awakening call for revising over-commodified, market-driven, housing systems and promoting more substantial neo-welfare states that invest in the social housing sector, including housing for the recognised refugees. What we witness, instead, is a bi-directionality in the management of the reception crisis: one direction fuelled by an anti-refugee sentiment and another driven by pro-refugee solidarity. As a result of this polarisation and bi-directionality, homelessness NGOs and their allies have remained subtly political and have not built large social movements to mould new post-refugee-crisis imaginaries. Instead, they have engaged more with allied NGOs, public authorities and elected officials to provoke public debate about the timely issue of the integration crisis and the persisting shortage of accessible affordable housing. Through their narrative premised along the lines of "housing for all" and not "housing for refugees", a slow process has been initiated toward a cultural change within welfare arrangements that treat native and foreign populations as competitors of limited public benefits and within housing systems that have been predominantly informed by pro-growth and market-mediated logics.

It remains yet to be seen whether this homelessness NGOs-led process towards building up a neo-welfare state continues and bares fruit, and whether the initial societal polarisation around the refugee issue will be tamed; it also is to be seen whether the state-society contract around issues of social housing will change during the years of the post-2015 refugee crisis when integration processes will be in full swing. In this examination, the potential of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic in becoming a turning point in how homelessness NGOs politically activate themselves to advocate for deeper subsidies for the Housing First approach will be of catalytic importance. The momentum is seemingly a historic opportunity for homelessness NGOs across the EU to advocate for, level up the ambition of, and implement "housing for all", as the crisis put housing back at the core of the debate, making it an issue of life or death, irrespective of the administrative status of the housing excluded. Future research on the politico-institutional actions of homelessness NGOs in the aftermath of the pandemic (advocacy, lobbying, overcoming possible conflicts and formulating larger movements with organisations inside and outside the homelessness sector, e.g. housing providers, property managers, construction developers, activists, service providers for asylum seekers/refugees) will reveal the political potential of the sector in becoming more visible and influential in further moulding neo-welfare states and catalysing significant transitions in how housing is valued, priced, regulated and governed, for whom and by whom.

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Hidden Homelessness in Germany: Gathering Evidence on Couch Surfing in Telephone Surveys

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Abstract_ *The article provides survey evidence on hidden homelessness in Germany. I use an indirect approach to survey those who live with friends, family or other people as so-called sofa surfers or couch surfers. The data come from three multi-topic, randomly sampled telephone surveys, which were carried out in 2019 and early 2020. The survey respondents reported whether they had hosted homeless friends, family or other persons. The results show that within a period of 12 months, about 3 per cent accommodated a person for at least one night. The results are consistent over three independent samples and the socio-demographic profile of the hidden homeless people fits well with results of previous research on other countries or using other approaches. I discuss potential caveats of telephone surveys with regard to potential bias in estimates of the prevalence of couch surfing and options how to assess and minimise bias. An alternative to telephone surveys would be to include questions on couch surfing and other forms of hidden homelessness in thematic modules on housing in recurrent household surveys. The present study shows the basic feasibility of collecting data on hidden homelessness from respondents in population surveys.*

Keywords_ *hidden homelessness, couch surfing, Germany, telephone survey, population sample*

Introduction

For a long time, national social reporting in Germany largely ignored homelessness. Periodic reporting on poverty and wealth exists since the late 1990s but despite a promising feasibility study, attempts to incorporate national statistics on homelessness did not succeed (Bundestag, 2015). The extent of homelessness increased markedly over the last decade and this stirred new initiatives on national statistics on homelessness. In March 2020, the German parliament passed legislation on the establishment of a statistic on homelessness using institutional data (Bundestag, 2020). Furthermore, in the framework of the upcoming national report on poverty and wealth, a larger study on homelessness was commissioned (Busch-Geertsema *et al.,* 2019; Busch-Geertsema *et al.,* 2020). While this study compiles broad evidence on homelessness, it also stresses the lack of data on other groups "for example, sleeping rough, bivouacking or finding temporary shelter with relatives and friends because they do not have their own apartment." (Busch-Geertsema *et al.,* 2019, p.204, author's translation). In this paper, I focus on the third group, people who stay with relatives or friends. In the widely applied ETHOS light typology, this group is described as "Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing) – Category 6" (Edgar *et al*., 2007; Busch-Geertsema, 2010). More colloquially, terms like sofa- or couch surfers are used as labels for this group.[1] The literature refers to couch surfers – together with other groups such as "People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing" (ETHOS light Category 5) – often as "hidden homeless" (e.g., Robinson and Coward, 2003; Eberle *et al.*, 2009; Busch-Geertsema *el al.*, 2010; London Assembly, 2017; Pleace, 2017; Demaerschalk *et al.*, 2018).

Based on random samples, the study provides survey evidence on couch surfing in Germany. I use an indirect approach to survey those who live with friends or relatives. The data come from three multi-topic, telephone surveys that were carried out in 2019 and early 2020. The first is a nation-wide survey. The two other surveys cover the population in Hamburg, the second-largest city of Germany. Hamburg is a suited case for this study for two reasons: On the one hand, in larger cities homelessness in general is more of an issue. Thus, in a smaller population sample from Hamburg it can be expected to survey a relevant number of cases. On the other hand, Hamburg commissioned studies on rough sleepers and people who live in public accommodation about every ten years since 1996. The latest study was carried out in March 2018 (GOE, 2019) and provides a good reference point to

1 The use of the term sofa surfers is most common in the UK and Ireland (e.g., Robinson and Coward, 2003; London Assembly, 2017), while couch surfers is used more often in the US, Canada and other countries (e.g., Curry *et al.,* 2017; Kauppi *et al*., 2017; Demaerschalk *et al*., 2018). I also use the latter term.

compare the characteristics of couch surfers against those of other groups of homeless people. Each of the three surveys contains about 1 000 respondents, in total 3 380. The survey respondents answered whether they had hosted homeless friends, family or other persons over the last 12 months. Proxy information is used to describe the socio-demographics of the couch surfers. The approach of the study is similar to Eberle *et al.*'s (2009) survey on hidden homelessness in Vancouver, Canada. But the data provides more information on the respondents and the couch surfers. Furthermore, the study also provides results at the national level. As previous studies show, hidden homelessness is not primarily an urban phenomenon and should be surveyed not only in larger cities (Robinson and Coward, 2003; Kauppi *et al.*, 2017; Snelling, 2017; Demaerschalk *et al.*, 2018). The main aim of the study is to provide insights into the feasibility of the approach, but I report also substantial results as far it is possible on the basis of three smaller surveys.

The article is organised as follows: After a short discussion of previous research on hidden homelessness, I provide an overview on data collection and methods. Then, I present results on the prevalence of couch surfing in the data and discuss the potential for inferences on a population level. I compare the study's results with results of studies on other groups of and address the question how the characteristics (e.g., age, gender) of the couch surfers differ from others. Finally, I discuss the feasibility of the approach and potential caveats. Finally, I provide a brief conclusion and perspectives for further research.

Couch Surfing and Hidden Homelessness

Hidden homelessness and couch surfing are not clearly defined terms but are often used to describe people who stay with relatives or friends because they do not have a dwelling of their own. There has been some debate whether to regard this group as homeless or as a group in insecure living conditions. The original ETHOS typology (Edgar *et al.,* 2007, p.59) classifies living "temporarily with family/friends" as a form of insecure housing and more generally as housing exclusion but not as homelessness. This view has been challenged (Amore *et al.,* 2011) and it has been argued that the lack of an own dwelling and the lack of privacy resulting from involuntarily living together with others justifies the categorisation as homelessness (Sahlin, 2012). This view is also implemented in the so-called 'ETHOS light' typology (Busch-Geertsema, 2010), where people living with family and friends are included into the category of homeless (Edgar *et al.,* 2007, p.66). Still, as people live in conventional housing and are often not using services for the homeless it is difficult to distinguish between homeless couch surfers and people who just live for a while with friends or family. Later I will discuss how this somewhat blurry line complicates surveying the prevalence of hidden homelessness.

There is a smaller literature providing evidence on hidden homelessness. Most of the studies fall into one of the following three categories: 1) studies on teenagers and young adults, a group with a high prevalence of couch surfing (McLoughlin, 2013; Clarke, 2016; Curry *et al.,* 2017), 2) studies on homelessness in general, which also provide evidence on hidden homelessness (Toro *et al.,* 2007; Kauppi *et al.,* 2017; Crisis, 2019a; Crisis, 2019b; NRW, 2019; ARA, 2020), and 3) studies with a focus on hidden homelessness (Robinson and Coward, 2003; Eberle *et al.*, 2009; Rodrigue, 2016; London Assembly, 2017; Demaerschalk *et al.*, 2018). The methodological approaches of these studies differ significantly.

Besides explorative or descriptive qualitative or mixed-method studies (McLoughlin, 2013; Kauppi *et al.*, 2017; Demaerschalk *et al.*, 2018), there are a number of studies which provide quantitative estimates of the prevalence of hidden homelessness. Different methods are applied to gather quantitative evidence. A first group of studies includes questions on hidden homelessness in multi-themed telephone interviews with random samples of youths (Curry *et al.*, 2017; London Assembly, 2017) or of the general population (Eberle *et al.*, 2009). These studies ask if respondents are couch surfing or are hosting couch surfers (currently and/or within the last 12 months or similar). A second group of studies includes questions on homelessness (including couch surfing and other forms of hidden homelessness) into larger social science survey programmes. The questions are usually directed at past experiences of homelessness, in a lifetime perspective and/or over a period of two or more years prior to the survey (Rodrigue, 2016; Kauppi *et al.*, 2017; Crisis, 2019a; Crisis, 2019b).[2] Third, there are a few studies using other approaches. Toro *et al.* (2007) conducted telephone surveys on attitudes, opinions and knowledge regarding homelessness. Furthermore, they asked about lifetime experiences of homelessness. In Finland, information on persons temporarily living with friends or family is gathered in assessments or from municipal data (ARA, 2020). In Germany, the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW, 2019) gathers information on hidden homeless by surveying non-governmental service providers in the framework of social reporting on homelessness. In Britain, micro- and macro-data from various surveys are used in simulation models to provide evidence on the prevalence of and trends in homelessness including couch surfing (Bramley, 2016; London Assembly, 2017; Crisis, 2019a; Crisis, 2019b).

2 In particular, the UK has a tradition of surveying past experiences of homelessness in recurrent population studies. These are surveys such as the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and the British Cohort Study or the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey. Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2018) use all of these surveys in their article on the social distribution of homelessness in the UK but do not address explicitly the issue of hidden homelessness.

Prevalence of couch surfing and other forms of hidden homelessness differs across studies and countries. Toro *et al.* (2007, p.512) distinguish between lifetime prevalence of "literal homelessness" and "overall homelessness" which includes forms of "precarious housing (e.g., doubled-up with family or friends)". They provide evidence for the US, Belgium, UK, Germany and Italy. The prevalence of overall homelessness ranges from 5.6 per cent in Germany and 12.9 per cent in the US. In all countries except the UK, the percentage "overall homelessness" is more than double as high as "literal homelessness". This indicates that "precarious housing", a form of hidden homelessness is more prevalent than other forms of homelessness. Recent studies come to similar results. Rodrigue (2016) reports that eight per cent of the Canadian population experienced hidden homelessness in their lifetime. Kauppi *et al.* (2017), using the same data source, additionally report that two per cent of Canadians experienced forms of homelessness like rough sleeping. Crisis (2019a, p.79) provides projections for Scotland based on recurrent surveys and other data that show that the number of couch surfers is at least five times as large as the number of rough sleepers. Similar results are reported for England (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2019b, p.62) and Finland (ARA, 2020, p.4). Taking a different angle, Ebert *et al.* (2009, p.19) find that in Metro Vancouver/Canada at the time of the interview, 0.8 per cent of all households hosted at least one couch surfer, and 1.5 per cent were hosts over a period of one year. Studies on teenagers and young adults report much higher prevalence rates. Curry *et al.* (2017, p.20) report a twelve-month prevalence of 13.6 per cent in the group of US 18 to 25 year olds. A study on London/UK finds a prevalence of about 20 per cent for this group (London Assembly, 2017, p.8). Besides differences in prevalence according to age, Curry *et al.* (2017, p.21) show differences by education, income and employment status. But while other groups of homeless people such as rough sleepers differ markedly in their socio-economic profile from non-homeless, the differences are less pronounced when couch surfers are compared to the rest of the population. Accordingly, the prevalence among women and men is similar and couch surfing is prevalent in urban and as well as rural regions (Rodrigue, 2016; Kauppi, 2017; Snelling, 2017; Demaerschalk *et al.*, 2018).

As the review of previous research has shown, evidence on hidden homelessness is based on different approaches and the results are difficult to compare in an internationally comparative perspective. It has also shown that evidence on Germany is particularly scarce. In general, homelessness increased significantly over the last years (BMAS, 2020). But until recently, figures in national social reporting contained only estimates of an advocacy group (BAG-W). There is some social reporting at community level or the level of Federal States, most notably in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW, 2019). Recently, at national level, data was collected from local authorities, job centres and NGO services (Busch-

Geertsema *et al.*, 2019; Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, legislation was passed that such institutional data will be collected for an overarching statistic (Bundestag, 2020). While this closes part of the gap in national social reporting on homelessness, there is hardly any data on homeless people who are not using institutional services, on couch surfing or other forms of hidden homelessness. This paper provides first survey evidence on the prevalence of couch surfing in Hamburg, the second largest city in Germany, and at national level.

Data Collection

I use an indirect approach to survey hidden homeless people who live with friends or family. In population-wide multi-topic telephone surveys (CATI), respondents were asked if they had hosted friends, family or other persons who had no dwelling of their own over the last 12 months.

In total, data collection was carried out in three surveys (see Table 1). The first contained a module on housing insecurity and perception of homelessness (Bock *et al.*, 2019) but only one question directed at hidden homelessness. Interviews were conducted from January to early March 2019. The first survey showed that a relevant number of respondents did host people who had no dwelling of their own. Building on the experiences of the first survey, we carried out a second survey in which a larger number of questions was added (Bock *et al.*, 2020). Interviewing took place in January and February 2020. Both surveys cover the population aged 16 years and above in Hamburg which is, with 1.8 million inhabitants, the second largest city in Germany. A university research lab facilitated the data collection. Random samples (2019: n=1 069; 2020: n=1 004) were drawn using the so-called Gabler-Häder-design (Gabler and Häder, 2002), an enhanced approach of random digit dialling. As mobile phone numbers cannot be assigned to regions or cities, the samples consist of persons who can be contacted via landline phone. Furthermore, all interviews were conducted in German. It is most likely that this results in systematic undercoverage of groups with a higher prevalence of hidden homelessness. Later in the paper, I will discuss potential bias and other caveats.

Table 1: Overview of surveys

	Hamburg 2019	Hamburg 2020	Germany 2020
type of survey	multi-topic computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI)		
conducted by	university research lab		commercial survey company
population	German-speaking persons aged 16+ living in a private household in Hamburg		German-speaking persons aged 16+ living in a private household in Germany
sampling	random sample of landline telephone numbers (Gabler-Häder design)		random sample of landline and mobile telephone numbers (ADM dual frame)
sample size	1 069	1 004	1 307
weights	design weights	design weights & raking	design weights & raking
questions on hosting homeless	1	15	5

Although the design of the third survey is similar to the first two, there are a number of marked differences. It is a nation-wide survey covering German-speaking persons aged 16 years and above living in a private household. It was administered by Kantar Public, the political and social research branch of Kantar, a commercial market research firm. A random sample was drawn using the ADM sampling system for telephone surveys, which includes mobile phone numbers (dual frame, ADM 2012). The sample consists of 1 307 persons (landline: n=1 105, mobile: n=202).

In the variables on hosting friends or family, the percentage of missing values due to not being able or willing to answer is very low (less than 0.5 per cent). As usual in telephone surveys, design weights are applied to adjust for different selection probabilities by household size and number of telephone lines. In the Hamburg 2020 and Germany 2020 surveys, raking is applied to additionally adjust for non-contact and non-response bias with regard to socio-demographic and regional characteristics.[3] As the number of observations is often small, I also report unweighted absolute numbers in addition to weighted percentages.

3 Raking or iterative proportional fitting is a technique which adjusts weights until sample distributions equal known population distributions.

Results: Hosting Couch Surfers

Table 2 shows the percentage of respondents who answered in the affirmative when asked if they had within the last 12 months hosted friends, family or other persons who had no dwelling of their own.[4] In Hamburg, 6.9 per cent (2019) and 7.4 per cent (2020) answered that they had hosted somebody. In Germany, the percentage was 5.7, as well in smaller as in larger communities and cities. After having conducted the first study, I assumed that respondents included those who hosted a homeless person but also other friends and family who needed a place to stay but were not homeless. Therefore, in the second and third study the following question was added: 'Did the person not have an apartment at all or not in your location, but in another place?'. In the following, I will consider only those who answered this additional question in the affirmative as hosts of hidden homeless, i.e. 3.0 per cent in Hamburg, 2.7 per cent in Germany and 3.3 per cent in cities with a population of 100 000 and more.

As mentioned, the second survey (Hamburg 2020) contains more information on couch surfers and their hosts. I will use this survey for more detailed analysis. But let me first add a few remarks on the differences and similarities of the results presented in Table 2. In Hamburg, the differences in the percentage of hosts varies only insignificantly from 2019 to 2020. In the nation-wide sample, the overall percentage of respondents who hosted friends and relatives is slightly lower but the percentage of respondents who hosted homeless persons is quite similar. The differences between smaller communities and larger cities with 100 000 inhabitants and above are too small to draw any substantial conclusions. In evaluating these results, one has to keep in mind that the results come from three independent samples, that the sample sizes are relatively small and that two different research facilities (university lab and commercial institute) collect the data. Given this, the results are almost astonishingly robust.

4 The exact wording of the question is as follows: "Has it happened in the last 12 months that someone has stayed with you for a night or more because he or she did not have an apartment of her or his own?"

Table 2: Hosting friends or family who do not of a dwelling

	n (unweighted)	% (weighted)
Hamburg 2019		
hosting during last 12 months	67	6.9
Hamburg 2020		
hosting during last 12 months	63	7.4
hosting during last 12 months (additional question)	34	3.0
Germany 2020		
hosting during last 12 months	67	5.7
hosting during last 12 months (additional question)	29	2.7
Germany 2020: only cities with 100 000+ inhabitants (n=829)		
hosting during last 12 months	45	5.7
hosting during last 12 months (additional question)	18	3.3

Source: own calculations, for information on data sources see Table 1. Note: "Additional question" refers to a second question that repeats explicitly that the questions are about persons who do not have a dwelling of their own (see text).

Despite this robustness, although all figures come from random samples and I use weights to compensate for non-contact and non-response, I am a bit reluctant to provide population estimates in absolute numbers. First, the number of hosts in each sample is very small. And even if one believes that statistical inference is feasible, the precision of the population estimate would be rather low. As an illustration of how precise or imprecise estimates are, I calculated confidence intervals (95 per cent significance level). For a percentage of 3.0 it ranges from 1.9 to 4.1 per cent. Thus, the interval's range of 2.2 percentage points is almost as large as the percentage itself. Accordingly, the absolute number of persons who hosted somebody – in a population of about 1.6 million – ranges from about 31 000 to 65 000. Second, and more important, this is not the number I am aiming at. For an estimate of the number of couch surfers – not hosts – I need two bits of additional information: How long do couch surfers stay with a host? Do couch surfers stay with only one host within a 12 month period or with more? Hosts, the respondents, can answer the first question but not the second. An answer to the first question is needed to estimate of the number of couch surfers per night. In addition, an answer to the second question is needed for an estimate of the total number of persons who couch surfed for at least one night within the last 12 months. Given that I am lacking information to answer the second question, I discuss only how the first estimate could be obtained, the number of couch surfers per night.

Sixty-nine per cent of the hosts in Hamburg in 2020 hosted a couch surfer for a month or longer. Due to the breakdown into groups by duration, the absolute numbers in each group are smaller than the overall number. An estimate of the average duration is less precise than that of the number of hosts. What I can say from the data is that couch surfers on average stayed longer than one night and definitely shorter than a full year. Let us just assume the average is 30 nights. From this and the number of hosts, it would follow that in Hamburg 30 times 31 000 to 65 000 which equals 930 000 to 1 950 000 nights couch surfers were hosted in a period of 12 months, i.e., on average each of those 365 nights around 2 550 to 5 350 couch surfers.[5] Again, the range is wide and additionally it would be even wider if I had not just used a – more or less – educated guess of the average duration of a stay but had used a confidence interval of the duration. The number would be higher if an average of 30 nights per stay is too low (with 40 nights: about 3 400 to 7 100) and lower if it is too high (20 nights: about 1 700 to 3 550).

In my view, the numbers are too shaky for any substantial claim on the absolute number of couch surfers. At the same time, the magnitude of the numbers fits quite well with what is known about hidden homelessness in comparison to other forms of homelessness. It is probably higher than the number of rough sleepers that was 1 910 in Hamburg in 2018 (GOE, 2019, p.11). It is not unlikely that it is within the magnitude of the number of persons in public accommodation, which was 4 464 (GOE, 2019 p.99). But a sample of about 1 000 persons is certainly too small to provide a precise number. But the magnitude fits with other evidence. With a larger but not extremely large sample a more precise estimation of the average duration of a stay would be possible and also overall precision would be higher.[6] This should provide a sufficiently good basis for a serious estimate.

Structure of Hidden Homelessness and Other Forms of Homelessness

The questionnaire contained questions directed to the hosts on the couch surfers they hosted. Table 3 compares the characteristics of the couch surfers with what is known from a recent study on rough sleepers and persons in public accommodation in Hamburg (GOE, 2019). While the present study uses proxy information collected from the hosts, the information on the latter two groups was collected in interviews with homeless people.

5 The questionnaire also included a question if respondents were hosting a person at the time of the interview. Only one respondent currently hosted a couch surfer, i.e. 0.1 per cent of the sample.

6 Assuming again that the duration of an average stay is 30 days, with a sample of 5 000 the estimated number of couch surfers per night would fall into the range of about 3 350 to 4 550. The range is less than half as small as in a sample with about 1 000 respondents.

Table 3: Distribution of characteristics of different groups of homeless

	rough sleepers	public accommodation	staying with friends or family	
	% (weighted)			n (unweighted)
gender				
male	80.4	72.7	48.6	17
female	19.0	27.3	49.2	16
diverse	0.6	-	2.2	1
	100.0	100.0	100.0	34
age				
-29	18.2	14.4	54.1	11
30-39	24.5	25.8	24.7	11
40-59	48.7	41.2	21.2	12
60+	8.7	18.6	0.0	0
	100.1	100.0	100.0	34
event leading into homelessness				
termination (landlord), eviction	28.4	30.4	18.1	6
termination (self)	8.7	7.5	14.3	5
left joint apartment	25.8	19.3	18.0	9
left parents' home	6.2	5.6	26.2	3
left institution	14.5	15.5	23.3	10
other	16.3	21.7	0.0	0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	33

Sources: Column 1 & 2: GOE (2019), Column 3 & 4: own calculations (Hamburg 2020).

Table 3 shows that homeless people who stay with friends or relatives are more often female, compared to in other forms of homelessness.[7] About half, 49.2 per cent, are women. They are on average younger; 54.1 per cent are aged 29 years and below. That couch surfers are more often female and younger confirms the results from studies in other regions or countries. The higher share of younger age persons is reflected in a comparably high share of couch surfers who were homeless because they left their parents' home (26.2 per cent). There appears to be also a higher share of persons who left institutions. Compared to rough sleepers and persons in public accommodation, couch surfers less often became homeless because a rental contract was ended by the landlord (including eviction). Given the small numbers of respondents, all these results are to be read with some caution. But the numbers are large enough to see general patterns with regard age and gender which fit well into the results of other studies on hidden homelessness based on interviews with couch surfers themselves or on institutional information (see, e.g. Eberle *et al.,* 2009; Curry *et al.,* 2017; NRW, 2019).

7 Women are slightly underrepresented in the survey data on homeless in public accommodation. According to institutional data on this group the share of men is 65 percent, the share of women 35 percent (GOE, 2019, p.101).

Feasibility and Caveats

The results on hidden homeless in the paper are obtained via an indirect approach: I identified hosts of couch surfers in telephone interviews with respondents randomly selected from the population and collected data on the hosts and proxy data on the couch surfers. The results discussed so far show that this approach leads to consistent results over three independent samples and that these results fit well into the – rather scarce – evidence from previous research using other approaches. In this section I discuss a number of obvious and not so obvious caveats of the approach taken in this study. The following questions structure my discussion: 1) Can respondents who hosted couch surfers be reliably identified? 2) Can the hosts provide sufficiently accurate proxy information on the couch surfers? 3) Which sample size is needed to provide sufficiently precise estimates? 4) How likely is it that hosts of couch surfers are selected into the sample and participate in the survey?

1. Can respondents who hosted couch surfers be reliably identified?

As discussed, a general question on hosting friends or relatives who do not have a dwelling results in a rather high percentage of positive answers. A second, more explicit question on having no dwelling of one's own reduces the percentage by more than half. In combination with the first question, the second question makes clear that it is only about persons who stay with the host who do not have an apartment and not persons who do not have an apartment at the place they are currently staying (e.g., visiting friends or family). Still, further research on the exact wording and combination of the main questions would be helpful. For instance, Eberle *et al.* (2009, p.37f) use a wording which stresses "lack of money or other means of support", "no other alternatives" and ask about the freedom to decide about the end of the stay.[8] It is standard practice to gather evidence on the effects of wording in simple survey experiments. However, given the small number of hosts, experimental evidence would require rather large samples. Cognitive interviewing or a discussion of potential questions with focus groups might provide alternative approaches to shed more light on how the respective questions are understood. Another option would be to add an open-ended question, in which hosts are asked

8 The question order is also different in Eberle *et al.*'s (2009) study. They ask first if somebody is currently staying with a host and later in the questionnaire if somebody stayed during the last year. The present study started with a question on persons who stayed during the last 12 months and asked later if a person is still staying with the host. The latter question adds information on the number of current couch surfers. As the number in the sample is very small I reported it only as a footnote. Still, I deem the information as valuable as it provides an additional reference point for the estimation of the number of couch surfers per night using the information on the number of couch surfers during the last 12 months and the duration of the stay.

to briefly describe in her own words the housing conditions of the couch surfer. Surveying and coding open-ended questions comes with a certain cost but as the number of hosts is small, it would be feasible also on a tighter budget.

From the results of the present study, it is clear that a single, rather general question will not reliably identify hosts of couch surfers. But it offers a way to ask a second more explicit question, which is more likely to identify homeless couch surfers. In some cases, there is also information from open-ended questions (but only if respondents did not choose one of the standardised options). From these answers and in combination with answers from questions on the housing situation before and after staying with the host, it seems that the questions identify the group in question. But these answers also show that there is a wide spectrum ranging from persons who are seemingly just in between two apartments (e.g., because they had to leave their old apartment a few days or weeks before the contract for a new apartment starts) and persons who move from couch surfing to sleeping rough. As mentioned in the discussion on how couch surfers are classified in the ETHOS typology, there is a blurry line between housing insecurity and homelessness. It is debatable if those who bridge a few days before they move to a new apartment are homeless or if this type of couch surfing is not rather a facet of housing insecurity. But one can think of it also as latent homelessness which becomes manifest if something unforeseen happens, e.g. if the contract for the new apartment is void.

2. Can the hosts provide sufficiently accurate proxy information on the couch surfers?

This is a question that I cannot answer, as I have no data gathered in interviews of the couch surfers themselves. In telephone interviews where respondents are selected randomly out of the general population, this would only be feasible if persons in households where a couch surfers stays at the time of the interview are selected (Eberle *et al.*, 2009). Given the very low selection probability, very large sample sizes would be necessary to provide robust information. Other studies have asked retrospectively if respondents had been couch surfing during the past year, years or ever (see, e.g., Crisis, 2019a). The decision to survey hosts is based on the assumption that hosts are more likely to be included in a (landline) telephone sample and are more likely to respond. If this were the case, underreporting bias would be smaller. But as there is no study that used both approaches simultaneously, there is no test of this assumption. If hosts are surveyed, in addition, one could think of a kind of referral sampling where hosts are asked to contact persons who have stayed with them. Again, the small number of hosts in combination with two further selection steps and presumably low participation rates (hosts willing to provide contact, couch surfers participating in interview) makes this approach infeasible if not applied to very large samples. Therefore, a direct recruitment of couch surfers via snowball or ideally respondent driven sampling (RDS) seems more adequate if the indirect approach used in this study is to be complemented with interviews with couch surfers themselves.

3. Which sample size is needed to provide sufficiently precise estimates?

As mentioned multiple times in this paper, when surveying a small group such as hosts of couch surfers, sample size is an issue. The Hamburg 2020 study contains 34 hosts of couch surfers on the basis of a population sample of 1 004 respondents. With a sample five times as large, which is large but not unusual for a population sample, one could interview about 170 hosts of couch surfers. How would this change the precision of an estimated number of hosts and couch surfers that I tentatively calculated? I calculated that in a sample of n=5 000 the range would shrink by more than half. Whether this is precise enough depends on the questions which shall be answered. Such a sample would provide a more precise estimate of the number of hosts (and derived from that the number of couch surfers per night) and sufficiently precise information on the composition of couch surfers by characteristics such as age, gender and by housing situation before staying with a host. If repeated every few years, it could provide descriptive evidence on trends over time but a sample size of 5 000 would be probably too small to test for significant changes in the number of hosts and couch surfers over time unless these changes are comparably large.

Table 4: Comparison of sample characteristics with reference data

	Hamburg 2019			Hamburg 2020			reference data
	n*	%*	% (weighted)	n*	%*	% (weighted)	%
migration background[1]	196	18.4	21.4	178	17.9	24.1	31.5
not German (nation.)[2]	31	2.9	3.8	40	4.0	6.2	18.1
mobile phone use	-	-	-	959	96.7	97.4	-
landline phone use	1 059	100.0	100.0	994	100.0	100.0	-
internet use	-	-	-	956	96.6	96.8	-
	Germany 2020 (landline)			Germany 2020 (mobile)			reference data
	n*	%*	% (weighted)	n*	%*	% (weighted)	%
no right to vote[3]	29	2.6	3.9	7	3.5	4.9	10.9
mobile phone use[4]	1 004	91.5	85.8	201	100.0	100.0	81.4
landline phone use[4]	1 097	100.0	100.0	167	83.1	43.1	87.6
internet use[5]	888	81.0	75.6	185	92.0	93.1	89.0

Sources: Own calculations; reference data: 1) Statistisches Amt für Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein: Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund in Hamburg am 31.12.2017 2) Statistisches Amt für Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein: Ausländische Bevölkerung in Hamburg am 31.12.2019, 3) Bundeswahlleiter: Wahl zum 19. Deutschen Bundestag (24. September 2017), 4) ADM 2012: 10 5) ARD/ZDF online-Studie 2019. Notes: Population aged 18 years and above, *) unweighted.

4. How likely is it that hosts of couch surfers are selected into the sample and participate in the survey?

To answer this question, I take a closer look at the characteristics of the respondents. The main criteria are nationality and so-called migration background as it must be assumed that non-German respondents are underrepresented in telephone, in particular landline, surveys due to a lower degree of technical accessibility (more often no landline phone) and due to higher non-response rates when interviews are exclusively conducted in German. Previous research shows that migrants are more often affected by homelessness. Accordingly, I assume that migrant populations have a higher likelihood of couch surfing. As a consequence, the underrepresentation of this group would result in downwardly biased estimates of couch surfing. If I further assume that there is an association between characteristics of hosts and couch surfers, I should find a higher share of hosts among the respondents with migration background or non-German nationality. In fact, in the Hamburg 2020 study, the percentage of hosts with migration background is 4.6 per cent (n=7), which is above average. I also had a look at nationality and the other data, but the number of observations is too small to report these results. Further results show that the percentage (4.9 per cent, n=6, Germany 2020) of hosts in the mobile sample is higher than in the landline sample. Due to the small number of observations, the results are rather shaky. But they certainly indicate that it is worthwhile to use different modes to survey potentially hard to reach populations such as host of couch surfers.

Table 4 shows the percentage of respondents with non-German nationality and migration background in the different samples. As I expect differences by telephone mode, the table contains information on landline and mobile samples separately. I do not discuss the distribution of characteristics such as age, gender and education. The surveys' weighting schemes are based on population distributions of these characteristics and hence, these characteristics should not be accountable for potential bias in my estimates. In the Germany 2020 study I neither have information on migration background nor on nationality. But the data contains a variable which indicates that a person has no right to vote in federal elections. In Germany, the main reason why an adult person has no right to vote is non-German nationality. Therefore, 'no right to vote' serves well as a proxy for non-German nationality. The table contains also information on reference values from population registers or other data sources, either for the population in Hamburg or in Germany. As most reference values refer to the population aged 18 years and above, I have restricted also the survey results to this age group. I first discuss the results on Hamburg. Respondents with migration background or non-German nationality are underrepresented in both samples. In the unweighted Hamburg 2020 sample 17.9 per cent of the respondents have a migration background, 4.0 per cent are of non-

German nationality. Comparing these values with the population values of 31.5 and 18.1 per cent shows the degree of underrepresentation. The application of survey weights reduces the degree of underrepresentation but a large difference in the percentage of respondents with non-German nationality remains.

In the Germany 2020 survey I do not have information on migration background. In the landline sample, the results for the percentage of those who have no right to vote, which I use as proxy for non-German nationality, are similar to the results in Hamburg. In the landline sample the unweighted percentage of respondents with no right to vote is only about a quarter of the population value. With the application of survey weights the result slightly approaches the population value but the degree of underrepresentation remains high. In the mobile sample, the degree of under presentation is a bit lower. But it must be kept in mind that the number of observations in the mobile sample is rather small.

The results have shown that migrant groups who are likely to exhibit higher percentages of hosts for couch surfers are underrepresented in all samples. Weighting reduces the under presentation but only to a certain degree. Therefore, estimates of the percentage of couch surfers in the population are likely to be downwardly biased. What could be done to reduce such bias? Including modes such as interviews via mobile phone may increase the likelihood of surveying persons who are underrepresented in landline surveys. While the first measure is quite standardly implemented in nation-wide surveys, it is difficult to implement in regional surveys as mobile phone numbers – unlike landline number – are not ordered by regions. In addition, interviewers who are proficient in languages other than German might reduce the degree of underrepresentation of migrants. But even if such steps are not undertaken, telephone surveys as used in this study will provide a baseline estimate of the number of hosts (and derived from that the number of couch surfers per night) and with a larger sample more precise evidence could be gathered on groups who are underrepresented in telephone surveys. This evidence and information on the underrepresentation of such groups could be used to estimate the extent of bias.

Discussion and Further Research Perspectives

This paper provides survey evidence on the prevalence of couch surfing as a form of hidden homelessness in Germany and the socio-demographic structure of couch surfers. I used an indirect approach and surveyed persons who hosted friends or family who were homeless. In Hamburg, 3.0 per cent of the respondents hosted a couch surfer for one or more nights during the past twelve months. The respective percentage at national level is 2.7 per cent. Using additional information on the length of a stay, I also provided estimates of the number of couch surfers per night. As the sample size of the surveys is rather small, the precision of the estimates is low. But roughly, the estimates indicate that couch surfing is more frequent than rough sleeping and in the range of the number of homeless people in public accommodation. Hence, there is a relevant number of hidden homeless in Germany. This is not a surprising fact but up to now, this group was not covered separately in national social reporting or other studies at national level.

As the approach I have chosen was previously hardly applied and not yet in Germany, I was not only interested in providing estimates on the prevalence of couch surfing but also to explore the potential and the caveats of surveying hosts in telephone interviews. I interpret the consistency of the results over three independent samples and the fact that the socio-demographic profile of the couch surfers fits well into evidence of previous research as signs that the approach is basically feasible. As caveats, I discussed standard issues in survey research such as exact question wording or large enough sample size. The results show that additional questions help to distinguish visiting friends and family from homeless couch surfers. While a sample size of 1 000 respondents is certainly too small to survey a group such as hosts of couch surfers, I am convinced that results based on larger, but not excessively large samples (about 5 000 respondents or more) could provide estimates precise enough to complement other statistics at national level, e.g., institutional data on public accommodation or survey evidence on more general forms of housing insecurity. I reckon that implementing such a statistic on hidden homelessness, e.g., every five years, would be feasible at a manageable cost.

As an alternative to the implementation in multi-topic telephone interviews, respective questions could be placed in thematic modules on housing in recurrent household surveys. In such a framework, the main caveat of telephone surveys, the underrepresentation of certain groups of the population, may be addressed not only by assessing potential bias. Recurrent surveys have often established elaborate ways of sampling and are often run as mixed-mode surveys which aim at a high level of representation of all groups in a population. The inclusion of questions on current couch surfing (or retrospectively on a short period of 1 or 2 years) into larger surveys would provide timely data suitable for monitoring the current developments of hidden homelessness. Evidently, the inclusion of respective questions into recurrent surveys would come at some cost. But the costs might not be excessive, as only a small percentage of respondents would have to answer more than the first question. With regard to the impact of housing policies and changes in the housing market, such data would provide valuable information on a large segment of homelessness which is not covered in national social reporting in Germany and many other European countries.

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Who is At -risk of Homelessness? Enumerating and Profiling the Population to Inform Prevention[1]

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Abstract_ *While much international research has focused on enumerating and profiling populations experiencing homelessness, the same cannot be said for those at-risk of homelessness. Yet in order to successfully prevent homelessness we must first know who is at-risk and why. This paper uses two panel surveys to operationalise and test a definition of homelessness risk and subsequently enumerate and profile the population at-risk of homelessness in Australia. Findings revealed that 7.9% of people aged 15 years and over, just under 1.5 million people, were at-risk of homelessness in Australia in 2015. Compared with the national population, those at-risk are more likely to be women, to be Indigenous and to report fair or poor health. They also have lower levels of educational attainment and are more likely to be on low incomes and in receipt of income-support payments, linking risk of homelessness with multiple indicators of poverty and disadvantage. The paper concludes by discussing opportunities for future international scholarship on homelessness risk using household panel surveys and draws on the findings to suggest directions for primary prevention efforts in Australia.*

Keywords_ *Homelessness, risk, prevention, panel surveys, enumeration, population estimates*

1 This paper uses unit record data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey and Journeys Home. Both surveys are funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) and managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research. The findings and views reported in this paper, however, are those of the author and should not be attributed to either DSS or the Melbourne Institute.

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Introduction

Enumerating and profiling the population experiencing homelessness has been critical in elevating homelessness as a policy issue and galvanising action internationally (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2014; Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2014; Pleace, 2017; Horsell and Zufferey, 2018). Understanding how many people experience homelessness at a point-in-time or over a year, and who they are, is a key focus of homelessness research across Europe (Edgar, 2009; Baptista *et al.*, 2012; Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2014) and Australia (ABS, 2018) with numerous papers devoted to methods in this area (e.g. Sales, 2015; Lelubre and Dewaele, 2016). Counting and profiling the homeless population has been critical for securing funding to address homelessness (Horsell and Zufferey, 2018). Changes to numbers and trends in homelessness have also motivated important changes in policy direction in countries such as Finland (Pleace, 2017) and have been used to argue for the success of particular policy regimes and interventions (Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick, 2008).

If homelessness is to be substantially reduced or ended, a focus on prevention is critical (Culhane *et al.*, 2011; Parsell and Marston, 2012; Gaetz and Dej, 2017). As Edgar *et al.,* (2007, p.12) argue: '[p]revention requires knowledge of the characteristics and needs of the at-risk population'. Enumerating and profiling the population at-risk of homelessness can elevate the status of prevention efforts and focus their direction. It can also provide a way to monitor the effectiveness of primary prevention initiatives and tailor their focus and implementation over time.

Significant work has been undertaken which quantifies risk of homelessness in various ways. This literature can be grouped into three broad camps: the risk-factor approach, pathways and trigger events, and an index approach.

The risk-factor approach looks for those characteristics, behaviours or experiences which are over-represented in the homelessness population, and argues that these constitute risk factors for homelessness (e.g. Fertig and Reingold, 2008). This could include being from a particular ethnic group (Scutella and Johnson, 2012), being young (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012) or experiencing childhood poverty (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2017). This approach usually quantifies risk by determining the probability of experiencing homelessness given a particular characteristic, behaviour or experience. Some studies have also attempted to quantify the impact of area-level variables on homelessness such as housing and labour markets (e.g. Elliott and Krivo, 1991; Quigley *et al,.* 2001, Parkinson *et al*., 2019), or the combination of individual-level and area-level factors (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2017; Johnson *et al*., 2019). This data-driven approach is useful for generating lists of risk factors that increase the probability of homelessness.

However, additional work is needed to examine the number and combination of risk factors a person would need to qualify as at-risk[2] and to formulate a strategy to enumerate the population at-risk of homelessness.

Risk is also explored using the pathways approach to homelessness (e.g. Johnson *et al.*, 2008; Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2013). This approach derives common pathways into homelessness for specific groups and often specifies key trigger events. This information is then used to identify particular cohorts that may be considered at-risk. However, this approach does not always yield a richer causal story about why certain groups experience homelessness (Clapham, 2003). In some instances, trigger events alone are used to define a population at-risk of homelessness, such as those exiting an institution[3] (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012), or women experiencing domestic violence (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008). While the pathways approach may give a more detailed causal picture of the factors that lead to homelessness for particular groups (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2013), like the risk-factor paradigm, further conceptual work is needed to move from lists or groups of risk factors to a strategy to enumerate a population.

Index-based approaches can be seen in two Australian-based studies which have developed indices of relative risk for homelessness (D'Souza *et al.,* 2013; Beer *et al.,* 2019). These studies produce a score for areas or persons to indicate higher or lower risk relative to each other. While providing some important insights, these studies do not clearly define homelessness risk or provide a cut-off on their risk indices to enable the population at-risk of homelessness to be enumerated and profiled.

While immensely valuable, these approaches to risk have not led to a detailed enumeration and profiling of the population at-risk of homelessness. This paper adopts a different approach. It extends previous work by the author (Batterham, 2019a) applying a clear definition of homelessness risk to enable the enumeration and profiling of the population.

This paper has two aims: first, to operationalise and test Batterham's (2019a) definition of homelessness risk; and second, to use the definition to enumerate and profile the population at-risk of homelessness using Australia. While focused on Australia, this paper outlines an approach to enumeration using a national household panel survey that is relevant to other jurisdictions. The next section of the paper presents definitions of risk and homelessness and describes the two Australian microdata panel surveys used for the empirical analysis: Journeys Home and the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey. The

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2 Bramley and Fitzpatrick (2017) make inroads into these issues with the presentation of vignettes.

3 Although the ETHOS typology would define those in institutions with no home to go to as homeless (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2014).

approach to operationalising risk of homelessness is then detailed, followed by setting the threshold for risk of homelessness, and testing whether risk predicts homelessness. Population estimates are then presented along with a profile of those deemed-at-risk. The paper concludes with suggestions for further research on homelessness risk and by drawing on the findings presented to suggest a focus for primary prevention in Australia.

Methodology

Definitions of risk and homelessness

The Batterham (2019a) definition of homelessness risk explicitly connects risk to the causes of homelessness and the mechanisms through which they act. I argued that homelessness is commonly the result of multiple factors which act together in sets. Each set is jointly sufficient to bring about homelessness, though each member of the set may or may not itself be statistically associated with homelessness. I reasoned that those mechanisms which are common to multiple types of causes of homelessness —housing markets; labour markets and economic capital; institutional (organisations); health and wellbeing; relationships; past experiences of homelessness; and social stratification and inequalities — should be taken to indicate risk of homelessness. This includes five key mechanisms[4]:

- Low income or low unstable income;
- Vulnerability to discrimination;
- The need for support to access or maintain a living situation;
- Limited social resources and supports;
- A tight housing market.

While risk no doubt occurs on a continuum with people experiencing accumulating and dissipating risk over time, as with homelessness, a cut-off must be set in order for a population to be enumerated. Within the constraints of available research and data both in Australia and internationally, I argued that having more

4 Batterham (2019a) cautioned against viewing these mechanisms as mere characteristics of a population but instead as indicators of broader causal processes. She notes that there is a tendency to conflate the level of measurement of a cause or risk factor with the level of the cause *per se*. For example, while ethnicity is measured at the individual level, the reason that certain ethnic groups have poorer health and incomes is not anything inherent in their ethnicity, but the broader social context in which these groups are more socially and economically disadvantaged. The level of measurement of the variables does not automatically correspond to the level of cause.

than one of these risk mechanisms (Batterham, 2019a, p.16) should be taken to indicate risk of homelessness but cautioned that further empirical work was needed to test this threshold.

Because this definition of risk is not derived from the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness, the relationship between risk and homelessness can be examined. Numerous definitions of homelessness exist in the literature. Some definitions were developed to be used in multiple countries (Edgar, 2009; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2016) while others are specific to particular jurisdictions, including those based on legislation. In Australia the cultural definition (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1992) has been extremely influential and widely used. However, this definition focuses on the type and tenure of housing a person has (or does not have). Some scholars have argued that homelessness is about more than housing (Watson, 2000; Mallett *et al*., 2010; Somerville, 2013), and in response Batterham (2019b) proposed a definition of homelessness as capability deprivation.

In order to test and set a threshold for someone to be considered at-risk, this paper employs two definitions of homelessness: the cultural definition and a capability-deprivation definition. Both definitions are broad by international standards, extending beyond those sleeping rough and those accessing homelessness services. Two definitions are used to ensure that the relationship between homelessness and risk is robust and because the capability-deprivation definition is relatively new and worth testing.

The cultural definition of homelessness was proposed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) and has been widely used in the Australian context. Using this definition, people are considered to be homeless if they have housing that falls below the minimum community standard: a one-bedroom flat with a separate bathroom and kitchen. Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992) describe three categories of homelessness: primary, secondary, and tertiary homelessness. Primary homelessness includes those sleeping rough on the street, in a car, or in a squat. Secondary homelessness includes people staying temporarily with other households and people staying in homelessness services or refuges. Those experiencing tertiary homelessness are living below the community standard of housing and are living in these circumstances long-term (more than 13 weeks). Much of this group is made up of people staying in boarding houses. A choice exclusion is applied to these categories whereby the person must be either not working or, if working, earning less than $600 AUD or €366 per week. Some groups, such as students living in halls of residence and those in aged-care facilities, are excluded from being counted as homeless.

Recently Batterham (2019b) proposed that homelessness is a form of capability deprivation that occurs when a person's living situation endangers their basic physical health or survival.

Specifically, a person is homeless if:

1. they are in a living situation which either:
   - lacks a basic level of stability and control; and/or
   - involves interpersonal violence or abuse; and/or
   - the physical dwelling they live in is inadequate to the point of endangering health or survival

because:

2. they lack access to another more adequate living situation.

In practice, this definition includes those experiencing primary and secondary homelessness in the cultural definition. However, it also includes those living in situations that lack safety, such as those experiencing violence and abuse within their housing. It does not necessarily include those living in substandard accommodation such as boarding houses unless there is a safety issue. This definition resembles Busch-Gertsema *et al*.'s (2016) global framework for conceptualising homelessness but differs in its explicit reference to capabilities.

Data sources

This paper draws on the relative strengths of two Australian panel datasets: the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey and Journeys Home. The HILDA survey is critical for estimating and profiling the population at-risk, yet it does not contain an indicator of homelessness. This is required to test whether risk predicts actual homelessness and to set the threshold for someone to be considered at-risk. The Journeys Home survey provides this nuanced understanding of the relationship between risk and homelessness. However, Journeys Home cannot be used to generalise to the national population or to those who are at-risk but not in receipt of income-support payments.

The HILDA dataset is a nationally representative longitudinal panel survey of Australian households modelled on existing surveys such as the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). The HILDA sample was selected from the population of persons aged 15 years and over in private dwellings in Australia using multi-stage cluster-based sampling (see Watson and Wooden, 2002 for more information). Participating households are interviewed annually. The survey covers a broad range of topics including finances, household formation and change, socio-economic, lifestyle and attitudinal items (Summerfield *et al.,* 2016, p.2). Special topic modules are also included in different waves. The HILDA survey includes a suite of weights to account for sample selection, attrition, and non-response and to enable generalisation to the national population. Weights are benchmarked against a number of surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Wave 15 (2015) of the HILDA survey was used for these analyses, as it was the most recent version available at the time of analysis and it occurred close in time to the end of Journeys Home panel.

Journeys Home is an Australian longitudinal dataset that followed a sample of people experiencing homelessness as well as those vulnerable to homelessness over time (Bevitt *et al.,* 2013). This panel is ideal for examining transitions into and out of homelessness and the relationship between risk and homelessness. Journeys Home followed 1 682 people over time and captured information using six-monthly interviews (conducted either face to face or via telephone) along with administrative data from participants' social security records[5]. Six waves of interviews were conducted between September 2011 and May 2014. The limited release version of the Journeys Home dataset was used in the present study. For information about sample selection and response rates see Wooden *et al.* (2012).

Each risk mechanism for homelessness risk was operationalised in both the HILDA and Journeys home datasets as described below. For greater detail on the precise variables used see Appendix 1.

Operationalising and Testing Homelessness Risk

Using the Batterham (2019a) definition, a person is at-risk of homelessness if they are experiencing more than one of any of the following five risk mechanisms: low income; vulnerability to discrimination; limited social resources and supports; needing support to access or maintain a living situation; and a tight housing market, as outlined above.

Low income was operationalised using a modified version of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) definition: incomes at or below the 20th percentile of equivalised disposable household income. Household income[6] was equivalised using the ABS or modified OECD approach. The 20th percentile cut-off was

5 Income-support payments and rent assistance are administered by a central agency that operates at the national level in Australia.

6 Disposable household income was used in HILDA but gross household income was used in Journeys Home because disposable household income was unavailable.

obtained from the relevant biennial Survey of Income and Housing data cube (ABS, 2018) for each wave of data (e.g. in 2015 the 20th percentile cut-off was $523 weekly or $27 196 annually).

A range of characteristics were selected that might indicate vulnerability to discrimination in the housing and labour market, including being young[7] (Wood *et al.,* 2015), being an Indigenous Australian (Wood *et al.,* 2015), being a single parent (Batterham, 2012), or being on income-support payments (Johnson *et al.,* 2019). Only those who are on income-support but who do not qualify as low income were included as vulnerable to discrimination. People who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (McNair *et al.,* 2017) or were from a non-English speaking background (Blair *et al.,* 2017) were also included. A person who had one or more of these characteristics was deemed vulnerable to discrimination in the housing or labour market.

Limited social resources and supports were indicated by three main factors: recent separation from a long-term partner or death of a spouse (Fertig and Reingold, 2008); a social network that lacks the capacity to provide material support — including financial support, accommodation or child care (Toohey *et al.,* 2004; Fertig and Reingold, 2008); or a very small or non-existent social network that does not provide sufficient emotional support and connection (Johnson and Tseng, 2014). People who had experienced a recent separation or the death of a spouse qualified as having limited social resources. This was due to the potential loss of a large form of support. However, those who had not experienced one of these issues had to have experienced both of the remaining criteria to qualify as having low social resources.

Batterham (2019a) suggested four key factors that may lead someone to require support to access or maintain a living situation. These included: having a disability, having a long-term health condition, having a mental health issue, or having problematic drug and alcohol use. While the first three of these factors were operationalised in both datasets, information was available only in relation to alcohol use in wave 15 of HILDA with no self-reported information on whether this use was problematic. As such, this last item was not operationalised in the HILDA dataset[8].

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7 Young was defined as 15-24 years, consistent with the definition of youth used by the United Nations.

8 Batterham (2019a) also proposed a fifth key mechanism in her definition of homelessness risk, a tight housing market; however, this is not operationalised in the present paper. Operationalising this mechanism requires area-based data on housing markets as well as an understanding of how various risk mechanisms intersect with housing market conditions. Such work is being undertaken at present and due to its complexity will be presented in a separate paper.

In some cases, one characteristic could be used to indicate the presence of multiple risk mechanisms. For example, those on income-support payments may be vulnerable to discrimination in private rental markets and are also highly likely to be low income. In order to prevent double counting and the unnecessary inflation of risk, each characteristic was only used for one risk mechanism.

Further, homeowners were excluded from the at-risk group even if they otherwise qualified. There is evidence to suggest that for some Australians, owner occupation is precarious and some who exit this form of tenure do not return (Ong *et al.,* 2015). However, overall, home ownership (the dominant form of tenure in Australia) provides a level of insurance (Stone *et al.,* 2015) that may slow or prevent a transition into homelessness. This is an issue that requires further research, and the exclusion of this group may not translate to other jurisdictions.

Finally, existing research (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2017; Johnson *et al.,* 2019) suggests that living in a multi-adult household acts as an important buffer against homelessness (notwithstanding the complexities of the nature and stability of relationships within and beyond the household). Building on these findings, all responding persons were grouped into simplified household types: couple households, single parent households, lone person households (including group households) and extended family households. If either lone persons or single parents qualified as at-risk by having more than one of the four risk components they retained their risk status. If responding persons in a couple household or extended family grouping were deemed at-risk of homelessness, they only retained their at-risk status if another member of their household was also deemed at-risk of homelessness. Interestingly, based on the Australian data, individuals deemed at-risk of homelessness tend to cluster in households. In HILDA, a total of 2 082 observations (11.8% of responding persons in 2015) across 1 417 households were deemed at-risk of homelessness, but after accounting for household type this number dropped a little to 1 773 observations (10.1% of responding persons) across 1 244 households.

Setting the threshold for risk

Batterham (2019a) suggested that having more than one risk mechanism was needed to be considered at-risk of homelessness. This threshold is initially explored below using simple frequency tables. Table 1 pools all observations across the entire Journeys Home panel and presents the percentage of observations considered homeless using both definitions of homelessness in Journeys Home by the number of risk mechanisms present. It suggests that most cases of homelessness involve either two or more (around 93% of all observations of homelessness across both definitions of homelessness) or three or more mechanisms (between 48% and 55% of all observations of homelessness).

Table 1 Percentage of homeless observations by the number of risk mechanisms present in Journeys Home (2011-2014) Australia

Number of risk mechanisms present	Homelessness CD	Cultural
0	0.6	0.4
1	6.5	7.2
2	40.9	48.1
3	40.9	35.7
4	11.1	8.6
Total number of obsv	1720	1229

Source: Author's calculations using Journeys Home Limited Release +RED dataset

However, these percentages reflect the probability of experiencing risk mechanisms within a homeless population, rather than the risk of *becoming* homeless given the presence of these mechanisms. This is explored below in Table 2 using logistic regressions.

The models use Journeys Home data and take advantage of the panel nature of the dataset to examine whether those at-risk are likely to transition into homelessness in the following time period for both definitions of homelessness with separate models reported for the number of risk mechanisms present (one or more, two or more, three or more or all four). The table reports coefficients from each model with the column header indicating the definition of homelessness used and all dependent variables are dichotomous. All models use random effects with robust standard errors reported in parentheses.

Table 2 The lagged relationship between homelessness risk and homelessness, Journeys Home (2011-2014 Australia, RE logit estimation).

Explanatory variables	Homelessness CD				Cultural			
L. At-risk of homelessness 1 or more [0,1]	0.433** (0.616)				0 (omitted)			
L. At-risk of homelessness 2 or more [0,1]		0.407*** (0.151)				0.373** (0.190)		
L.At-risk of homelessness 3 or more [0,1]			0.254*** (0.934)				-0.184 (0.128)	
L. At-risk of homelessness 4 [0,1]				0.021 (0.143)				0.047 (0.202_
Constant	-2.623*** (0.615)	-2.546*** (0.152)	-2.301*** (0.085)	-2.196*** (0.075)	-3.637*** (0.143)	-3.980*** (0.220)	-3.580*** (0.152)	-3.663*** (0.145)
Observations	6949	6949	6949	6949	6949	6949	6949	6949
Number of xwaveid	1608	1608	1608	1608	1608	1608	1608	1608

*Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

Source: Author's calculations using Journeys Home Limited Release +RED dataset

The coefficients reported in Table 2 above indicate that homelessness risk significantly predicts homelessness using one or more, two or more, and three or more risk mechanisms for the capability deprivation definition, while only two or more mechanisms are significant for the cultural definition. Given that both definitions of homelessness have significant coefficients at two or more mechanisms the threshold of two or more is used for the remainder of the paper.

While the concept of risk will not account for the full causal picture, specifically the effectiveness of existing homelessness interventions, a statistical relationship between risk and homelessness was expected — and found. However, the coefficients are small. This is likely to be an artefact of the Journeys Home sample where the majority of the sample qualifies as being at-risk (88.9%) and between 14 and 19% of observations involve an experience of homelessness (depending on the definition used). A better test of the predictive power of the risk definition would use a dataset that also includes those not at-risk of homelessness. The HILDA dataset includes a sample of those at-risk and those not but does not include an indicator of homelessness. However, it offers the opportunity to examine the national population at-risk of homelessness.

Who and How Many are At-risk in Australia?

Using the population weights available in HILDA[9], 7.9% of the population aged 15 years and over qualified as at-risk of homelessness in 2015. This equates to 1 437 614 people spread across 915 982 households (10.3% of households)[10].

While large, these numbers make sense in the context of homelessness in Australia. Over the 2018–19 financial year 290 300 Australians sought assistance from a Specialist Homeless Service (SHS)[11] (AIHW, 2019). In the seven years between July 2011 and July 2019, it was estimated that some 1.2 million people received assistance from SHSs (AIHW, 2019b).

9 Responding person population weights were used.

10 Household figures are not reported in the table.

11 In Australia, SHS are jointly funded by states and territories to provide services to people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. The data collected is from providers of accommodation and non-accommodation services.

Table 3 Estimated population at-risk of homelessness aged 15 years and over in 2015 for Australia and most states and territories (HILDA)

			95% Confidence interval			
	Estimated population	**Std. Err.**	**Min**	**Max**	**% of population at-risk of homelessness in area**	**Population aged 15 years and over in 2015**
All of Australia	1 475 614	73 955.7	1 326 566	1 624 662	7.9	18 786 947.0
New South Wales	495 513.3	39 720.7	415 461.5	575 565.2	8.2	6 075 386
Victoria	351 056.3	41 489.8	267 439.1	434 673.5	7.3	4 785 346
Queensland	304 674.7	32 390.9	239 395.2	369 954.3	8.2	3 717 916
South Australia	133 053.4	21 175.8	90 376.4	175 730.3	9.8	1 357 884
Western Australia	116 263.8	18 939.1	78 094.5	154 433.1	5.9	1 986 085
Australian Capital Territory	9 594.1	3 250.9	3 042.4	16 145.8	3.1	307 679.9
Greater capital cities (urban)	927 856.6	68 825.1	789 148.7	1 066 565	7.5	12 395 963
Balance of state areas (regional)	547 757	41 478.7	464 162.3	631 351.8	8.6	6 390 985

Source: Author's calculations using HILDA 15 limited release dataset

Table 3 also reports estimates for most states and territories[12] and for urban and regional areas. South Australia has the highest percentage of people at-risk of homelessness while the Australian Capital Territory has the lowest. In line with the concentration of the Australian population in the eastern states, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland collectively account for the majority of people at-risk of homelessness across the nation (78.7%, not shown in table).

Curiously, while most of those at-risk live in urban areas (see bottom two rows of Table 3), Table 3 suggests that those in regional areas are more likely to be at-risk. The spatial distribution of homelessness risk, like homelessness, is uneven, which has implications for preventive policy.

A demographic profile of those at-risk of homelessness extends our understanding of homelessness risk and can also act as a validity check through comparison with other data on homelessness. Table 4 below presents a profile of the population at-risk of homelessness in Australia and compares it to estimates for the total national population derived from HILDA and the national population accessing SHS.

12 Very remote areas were excluded from the sampling frame and from the benchmarking of weights in HILDA, making estimates for the Northern Territory and Tasmania potentially unreliable. As such they are not reported here.

When compared with the total Australian population, those at-risk are more likely to be women, have an older average age, and are less likely to be partnered. They are more than twice as likely to be Indigenous than the general population, are less likely to speak a language other than English, and are much more likely to report fair or poor health. Lower levels of educational attainment are also evident, with a preponderance of people who did not complete high school. Those at-risk are less likely to be employed and more likely to be outside of the labour force. They are much more likely to be in receipt of income-support, and consistent with this, are much more likely to be classified as having low income. Significantly, almost a third (31%) of those at-risk have one or more children living with them, highlighting the risk of intergenerational transmission of poverty (Cobb-Clark, 2019).

Table 4 also suggests a substantial level of material deprivation and financial stress. Those at-risk are much more likely to report not being able to pay bills on time, to be unable to heat their home, to have gone without meals, and to have asked for financial help from friends and family or from welfare or community organisations. This highlights both the disadvantage and poverty experienced by this group, as well as opportunities for prevention, with around 20% already having contact with welfare or community organisations. Greater housing instability is also evident with those at-risk more likely to report difficulty paying rent or mortgage on time and higher level of residential mobility.

Comparison with the profile of those accessing SHS shows strong similarities[13]. Both groups are highly likely to be in receipt of income-support payments, and are more likely to be women and to be Indigenous. They are also more likely to be either a single person or in a single parent household and less likely to be in a couple household (with or without children). As shown in Table 4, however, compared to those at-risk, those accessing SHS are more likely to be unemployed, to have children with them or to be single parents, and much more likely to be Indigenous.

13 Please note that statistics from the SHS include only those accessing services and not all people experiencing homelessness access services.

Table 4 Demographic profile of the population aged 15 years and over estimated to be at-risk of homelessness in 2015 (HILDA) Australia.

	Total	Std. Err	% of the 2015 at-risk population[14]	% of the Australian population 2016[15]	% of the 2017-18 SHS population[16]
Male	614 111.3	34 817.4	41.5	48.4	39
Female	861 502.3	46 800.7	58.4	51.6	61
Mean age	45.3	0.7	45.3 years	45.2 years	
Indigenous	191 669.4	29 191.4	13.0	2.4	25
Married/de facto	366 262.3	35 956.9	24.8	57.5	
Came to Australia as a refugee	35 264.2	8 378.1	2.4	1.8	
Speaks language other than English	162 175.5	40 174.3	11.0	7.0	
Self-assessed health rated as fair or poor*	502 666.4	26 378.0	34.1	15.4	
Lone person household	525 442.7	31 845.4	35.6	17.2	29.7
One parent with children	346 752.1	29 319.7	23.5	6.4	34.6
Couple with children	218 067.9	30 735.2	14.8	42.6	12.5
Couple without children	185 399.7	25 251.9	12.6	25.3	5.3
Other family household	162 513.5	29 105.8	11.0	7.6	11.9
Group household	37 437.6	9 007.9	2.5	1.2	6.0
Has children in their care	488 589.2	41 906.8	33.1	31.5	47.1
Bachelor degree or higher	133 095.1	15 030.5	9.0	26.3	
Advanced diploma/diploma	74 617.9	11 299.9	5.1	9.4	
Certificate 3 or 4	308 167.6	21 608.9	20.9	21.6	
Year 12 (completed high school)	218 815.5	20 351.6	14.8	15.5	
Year 11 and below	735 063.4	45 955.6	49.8	26.9	
Employed full-time	155 294.9	19 990.4	10.5	41.4	3.6
Employed part-time	230 847.8	27 845.8	15.6	21.2	7.3
Unemployed	140 429.7	16 990.6	9.5	3.8	48
Not in labour force	948 101.2	50 211.1	64.3	33.4	40.1
Receiving income-support payments	1 194 938.0	58 968.4	81.0	30.8	78
Mean equivalised weekly disposable household income	$526.0	11.03	$526.0	$1 076.2	
Low-income	910 162.8	57 092.6	61.7	16.4	
Moved house since last wave	356 526.2	28 959.1	**26.1**	**14.0**	
Could not pay bills on time	340 571.2	27 786.5	29.3	11.1	
Could not pay rent or mortgage on time	168 774.4	17 123.6	14.6	5.1	
Asked for financial help from friends and family	353 407.4	28 620.4	30.4	10.8	
Was unable to heat home	146 862.4	18 199.8	12.7	2.8	
Went without meals	181 285.9	17 131.2	15.6	3.2	
Asked for help from welfare/ community organisations	237 736.3	23 759.9	20.5	3.5	

Source: Author's calculations using HILDA 15 limited release dataset.

14 Number of observations: 1 773; population size: 1 475 614.

15 Estimates produced using population weights for all responding persons in HILDA.

16 AIHW (2019b).

Conclusion

In order to successfully prevent and reduce homelessness we must first know who is at-risk and why. Despite a large body of scholarship quantifying risk of homelessness in various ways, researchers are yet to take the additional step of enumerating and profiling a population at-risk of homelessness — until now. This paper has built on earlier work by the author (Batterham, 2019a) to operationalise and test a definition of homelessness risk, with the aim of enumerating and profiling the population at-risk of homelessness in Australia. In doing so, the paper points to new directions for homelessness research and scholarship.

A key finding from the paper is that almost 1.5 million Australians, or 7.9% of people aged 15 years and over, were estimated to be at-risk of homelessness in 2015. Other research examining the number of people who access SHS over time (AIHW, 2019b) suggest the estimated size of this population in Australia is reasonable. The profile of this population shows a highly disadvantaged and excluded group, and this itself highlights an important link between the literatures on homelessness and poverty and disadvantage. Preliminary testing of the definition using the Journeys Home panel survey revealed that 'at-risk status' significantly predicts homelessness. The threshold of two or more mechanisms to qualify as at-risk was selected for use in the present study.

An understanding of the number and profile of the at-risk population can inform and drive policy on homelessness prevention. Returning to the Australian case presented here provides an example of how this could occur in other jurisdictions. The framework for deriving the definition of homelessness risk implies that targeting prevention efforts to the key risk mechanisms should reduce risk. Taken together with the demographic characteristics of those at-risk, these findings can help to prioritise areas for action.

Perhaps most importantly, the majority of those at-risk are in receipt of income-support payments (81%). Increasing income-support payments and rent assistance[17] are direct policy levers that the Australian government can use to help prevent and reduce homelessness. The high rates of unemployment suggest that unemployment payments should be a particular focus.

17 Income-support payments, including rental assistance, have not kept pace with increases in living costs, leaving many in poverty. The majority of people below the poverty line in Australia are reliant on income-support payments (Davidson *et al.,* 2018).

Industrial relations policy is also relevant. Fully 26% of those at-risk are employed either full-time or part-time. Increases to the minimum wage, enforcement of existing minimum wage rates (Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment, 2017), and greater security in hours would also assist this group to find and maintain housing that is affordable to them.

The prevalence of fair and poor health amongst those at-risk suggests that health services for those on low incomes are critically important. This is consistent with the body of literature that demonstrates the negative health impacts of homelessness and the role of poor health and wellbeing in precipitating homelessness (e.g. Johnson and Chamberlain, 2011; Min Park *et al.,* 2011). The preponderance of people with low educational attainment suggests, consistent with existing research (Cobb-Clark and Zhu, 2015), that school engagement for children and young people is also of critical importance.

Because those at-risk cluster together in households, and because many of these households comprise women and children, strategies to prevent homelessness should focus on entire households. It is important to note that children and young people aged under 15 years were not enumerated in this study, making the population estimate an undercount in this regard. Given the highly disadvantaged profile of this group, interventions should focus not just on homelessness but also on alleviating poverty and addressing intergenerational transmission of disadvantage.

The overrepresentation of Indigenous Australians in the at-risk population is unsurprising given they are more likely to be low income or have a disability, and they report poor health at greater rates than the general population (AIHW, 2015; AIHW, 2019). That a higher proportion of Indigenous people experience actual homelessness (ABS, 2018; AIHW, 2019) suggests that focused assistance for this group is warranted.

Finally, the population estimates and profile provide a metric to assess the effectiveness of both primary prevention efforts and prevention efforts targeted at particular cohorts. This could be achieved through monitoring the overall size of the population at-risk or comparing the per cent of the at-risk population with a particular characteristic (such as those who are Indigenous) to the population actually experiencing homelessness to assess transition rates.

While this paper has focused on Australia, nationally representative household surveys are available in other countries with similar data items, providing an opportunity to enumerate and profile the at-risk population in other jurisdictions. This is an important avenue for future comparative research.

The dynamics of risk, such as how people transition in an out of risk over time and the persistence of risk, also warrants further research. These dynamics could be explored both quantitatively and qualitatively within different conceptual frameworks. For example, a strength of the pathways approach is its focus on dynamics, enabling an exploration of how risk mechanisms accumulate, intersect and dissipate over time for different cohorts are also an important area for further research. It may be the case that some risk mechanisms are more important in transitions into homelessness, or that particular combinations of risk mechanisms are associated with greater difficulty exiting homelessness. More detailed population level data that includes those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness along with those not at-risk are important in undertaking this work.

The operationalisation of homelessness risk in HILDA highlighted that those at-risk cluster together in households. It would be useful to explore how people move in and out of homelessness *as* households and *within* households over time, and how homelessness risk is mediated at the household level by relationships within and outside the household. Relatedly, a more detailed examination of the literature is needed to explore the impact of family violence, child abuse and elder abuse on people's risk of homelessness. Further, results highlighted that the population at-risk of homelessness is distributed unevenly geographically. Work has commenced to operationalise the fifth risk mechanism of 'tight housing markets' and to examine the spatial distribution of homelessness risk and its implications for preventative policy.

Finally, the exclusion of owner-occupiers from the at-risk cohort is a possible point of contention — especially beyond Australia. More thinking is needed on how best to account for the complexity of tenure type and length in general. Further research should explore the impact of negative life events such as divorce and separation, significant health issues and disability (Ong *et al.,* 2015) on transitions into homelessness and the pathways between home ownership and homelessness.

In conclusion, this paper contributes to the voluminous scholarship on counting and profiling within homelessness research (for example: Edgar *et al.,* 2007; Busch-Geertsema *et al.,* 2014; ABS, 2018) by enumerating and profiling the population at-risk of homelessness in Australia. The paper opens up new opportunities for comparative homelessness research with the use of household panel surveys to enumerate a population at-risk in other jurisdictions. The findings also highlight the connection between risk, homelessness, poverty and disadvantage. The capacity to say how many people are at at-risk, who they are, and why they are at-risk is critical for addressing, reducing, and preventing homelessness. As demonstrated here, such information can be used to inform the content of preventive policy and provide new metrics for the evaluation of preventive policies and initiatives — the size and profile of the population at-risk of homelessness and changes thereof. While preliminary, it is hoped that this research will form part of a growing body of scholarship on homelessness risk that will elevate the status of homelessness prevention, help secure greater commitment and funding for primary prevention initiatives, and reduce homelessness.

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Appendix 1: Variables used to create the at-risk of homelessness measure in HILDA and Journeys Home.

Indicator	Variables used in HILDA	Variables used in Journeys Home
Low-income or low-income with income instability		
Low-income	HH0_4, HH5_9, HH10_14, HHADULT, HIFDITP	ICYWKV, IYOTH, PCHU18R, PCOUPLE
Discrimination		
Age	HGAGE	PAGE
Indigenous	ANATSI	PATSI
Sexual preference		HWSEXPRF
Single parent status	HHTYPE	PCOUPLE, PCHU18R
Receiving income support but not low-income	BNCCRP, BNCDSP, BNCDVA, BNCNWS, BNCPNT, BNCPRT, BNCSCK, BNCSP, BNCSRV, BNCSTY, BNCWAR, BNCWDW, BNCWFP, BNCYTH, BNCSAS, BNCYJS, BNCYST, BNFHAVE, and low-income indicator	IINCSUP, low-income defined above
Non-English speaking background	ANLOTE, ANEAB	PCOBESS
The need for support to access or maintain a living situation		
Long term health condition or disability causing restriction	HEBFLC, HECRP, HECRPA, HEDGT, HEDISF, HELUAF, HELUFL, HEMED, HESBDB, HESPNC	HWLNGTRM
Diagnosed with cognitive disability	HEHIBD, HESLU	HWCOND13, HWCOND14
Diagnosed with mental health issue	HEMIRH, HENEC	HWCOND15, HWCOND16, HWCOND17, HWCOND18, HWCOND19
Receipt of DSP		ICPTYP
Diagnosed with ongoing serious health issue		HWCOND1, HWCOND2, HWCOND3, HWCOND4, HWCOND5, HWCOND6, HWCOND6, HWCOND8, HWCOND7, HWCOND10, HWCOND11, HWCOND12
Self-assessed problem with drugs or alcohol		HWDAPROB

Limited social resources and supports		
Recent separation, divorce, widowed, or death of a spouse or child	MSCHGDV, MSCHGSP, MSCHGWD, LEDSC	PCOUPLE, SXMEDT1
Does not feel connected and supported	LSSUPAC, LSSUPCD, LSSUPLF, LSSUPLT, LSSUPNH, LSSUPPI, LSSUPPV, LSSUPSH, LSSUPTP, LSSUPVL	SNEED, SLEAN, SCHEER, SLONELY, SPSFF, SFSFF,
Limited contact with family and friends		SFAMCON, SFAMFR, SFRIENDI
Lack of material support from support network	FIBFRI, FIBRELH, FIBRELO, CHU_GU, CHU_GE, CHU_GE, CHU_AE, CHU_FO, CHU_FT, CPU_GU, CPU_GE, CPU_AU, CPU_AE, CPU_FO, CPU_FT, CSU_GU, CSU_GE, CSU_AU, CSU_AE, CSU_FO, CSU_FT	
Not an outright home owner	HSMGPD, HSTENR, HSMGI	HTENURE1, HMTGWK, HMTGOUT

*Please note detailed information on each variable can be obtained by searching variable names in the Journeys Home user manual (avialable: https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/journeys-home/for-researchers) and HILDA data dictionary (available here: https://www.online.fbe.unimelb.edu.au/HILDAodd/Default.aspx)

Gatekeeping, Managing Homelessness and Administrating Housing for the Poor: The Three Functions of Local Housing Services for People Experiencing Homelessness in Sweden

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Abstract_ Homelessness constitutes a growing area of concern for policy-makers and service providers across Europe and beyond. One of the aims of this study was to explore and compare how local social services organise and manage housing services for the homeless. The other was to study specific and detailed functions of local housing services for the homeless, such as rules and regulations regarding interventions and how they are specified in different types of municipalities. Previous research has shown that housing services for the homeless are growing throughout Sweden. Today, about 1.5% of all rental contracts in Sweden are subleased as social contracts through local social services. This study used semi-structured interviews with professionals in charge of homelessness in 30 Swedish municipalities to explore the institutional settings and management of local housing services for the homeless. The results suggest that local housing services for the homeless, although varying in size and complexity, share three overarching functions: gatekeeping, managing the homeless, and administrating housing for the poor. All three functions focused, in different ways, on handling the homeless rather than ending homelessness. It is also clear that the majority of the work conducted by social services regarding housing is more similar to housing administration than social work.

Keywords_ *Homelessness, social services, municipalities, semi-structured interviews, exploratory approach*

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Introduction

In Sweden, as well as Europe, understanding the range, strength, and limitations of the available services for the homeless is a key factor in trying to grasp the scope of the homelessness issue (Pleace et al., 2019; Sahlin, 2006). The number of people experiencing homelessness at a local level is often interpreted as a result of both individual and structural factors, such as substance use and lack of affordable housing. However, several studies suggest that the type of services used and the way services for the homeless are organised and managed have a strong impact on lowering the levels of homelessness at the local level (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Sahlin, 2007; Pleace et al., 2018; Tsemberis, 2010). In a Swedish context, studies have shown that the organisation of local services for the homeless is central to the homelessness problem (Sahlin, 2007; Blid, 2008; Löfstrand, 2005; Knutagård, 2008; Wirehag, 2019). For example, persons receiving housing support from social services at the local level do not seem to transition into self-sufficient housing, but instead stay in temporary solutions provided by the social services for long periods of time. Furthermore, there seems to be an unclear division of responsibility between local public landlords and local social services regarding the issue of assisting vulnerable groups with sufficient housing (Sahlin, 2007; Grander, 2018).

In Sweden, governance of social issues such as homelessness is mainly characterised by a low degree of state involvement. Instead, soft governance is exercised, predominantly through recommendations, guidelines, and information (Sahlin, 2015). This steering model leaves great scope for municipalities to manoeuvre and organise services for the homeless as they wish, as long as they fulfil the legal obligations specified in the Social Services Act (SSA) (Bengtsson and Karlsson, 2012). At a municipal level, local social services are responsible for governing, managing, and financing services for the homeless (Sahlin, 2006; Benjaminsen, 2016; Dyb, 2017). Local social services have the same legal obligations to provide both general and targeted services to people at risk of becoming, or who already are, homeless. The legal framework of the SSA defines the right to general social assistance and specifies some interventions targeting homelessness, such as the right to shelter (SSA, Ch. 4, Section 1). However, the SSA does not clearly specify what type of shelter, for how long, or what individual conditions need to be fulfilled for a person to be provided with housing (Blid, 2008).

The general wording of the law is that municipalities are ultimately responsible for ensuring that persons "staying within their boundaries receive the support and assistance they need" (SSA, Ch. 2, Section 1) as well as "a reasonable standard of living" (SSA, Ch. 4, Section 1). The interpretation of these formulations is largely up to the judgment of local professionals, politicians, and administrative courts (Sahlin, 2020). Recent years have shown examples of how local social services, especially in large cities, have created very strict regulations, including a re-categorisation of groups so that some are excluded from the target groups of local housing services for the homeless (Kjellbom, 2019; Sahlin, 2020). This Swedish situation is very different from, for instance, Scotland, where the legal framework for the responsibilities of local social services is both stronger and clearer (Anderson and Serpa, 2013).

At present, 27 400 persons live with subleased so-called social contracts administered by the local housing services for the homeless[1] in Sweden, compared with approximately 10 000-12 000 persons ten years ago (Boverket, 2020). Social contracts are currently the most common method used by local social services to house the homeless. Subleased flats represent approximately 1.5% of all rental contracts currently available on the rental market in Sweden. Furthermore, the homelessness issue has changed from one predominantly handled by social services in urban municipalities to one that also affects local social services in small and rural municipalities. Despite this new geographical scope, recent studies have shown that most municipalities lack political strategies for homelessness (Socialstyrelsen, 2020; Wirehag, 2019). The annual housing market survey conducted by Boverket, the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning (NBHBP), has included questions on the organisation of services for the homeless since 2009.

The number of questions has increased over the years and, more recently, provided a good overarching picture of which interventions are used across municipalities. However, the results of this survey say little about how these interventions are specified or how cooperation with other actors is organised, and which rules and regulations are used to govern interventions at local level. A recent discussion initiated by the European Observatory of Homelessness (EOH) has highlighted the importance of collecting comparative data on the institutional settings and the terms and regulations that govern services for the homeless at international, national, and local level (Pleace et al., 2018; Pleace et al., 2019). As part of this initiative, a European typology of services for the homeless has been developed. This work-in progress typology can be used as a tool to systematically categorise housing services for the homeless and the methodological ideologies they represent. The typology divides different services on a continuum moving from support focused interventions such as 1) low intensity, temporary, or basic housing support such as night shelters towards; 2) high intensity temporary housing support

1 Refers to the local social services organisation created to house the homeless. The definition largely overlaps Sahlin's (1996) term 'the secondary housing market'. However, by definition, 'local housing services for the homeless' focuses more on the organisation of all housing provided by social services to house the homeless than 'the secondary housing market', which focuses more on the social contracts subleased by social services.

(treatment focused) towards housing focused; 3) high intensity support using ordinary housing such as Housing First models; and 4) low intensity support using ordinary housing such as social contracts.

The typology provides a possibility to categorise and understand how housing services for the homeless are organised both at a national and a local level (for an extensive description of the typology see Pleace et al., 2018). In Swedish homelessness research, a number of studies have provided different viewpoints on understanding the organisation of the local housing services for the homeless (for example Sahlin, 1996; Nordfeldt, 1999; Löfstrand-Hansen, 2005; Blid, 2008; and Knutagård, 2008). However, as several recent studies have shown (Wirehag, 2019; Knutagård, 2018; Boverket, 2020), further comparative qualitative data at local level across Sweden are needed regarding the way housing services for the homeless are organised, the kind of rules and regulations used, as well as the outcomes of services for the homeless in terms of moving individuals into self-sufficient living conditions.

Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the study was twofold: 1) to investigate qualitatively how local housing services for the homeless were organised and managed across different municipalities, in particular concerning rules and regulations regarding interventions, and 2) to study the actors involved in providing housing services for the homeless and how cooperation was organised between social services and other actors, in particular local landlords. The more specific research questions were:

1. Who is considered eligible for housing services due to homelessness and how are assessments made according to the participants?
2. How are housing services for the homeless organised?
3. What types of methods and housing measures are used?
4. How are social contracts defined and managed?
5. How is the cooperation between social services and landlords organised regarding social contracts?

Understanding Local Housing Services for the Homeless

Previous research focusing on the organisation of services for the homeless in a Swedish context has used different theoretical, geographical, and methodological starting points. This paper loosely builds on the theoretical framework of Knutagård (2008) and applies several perspectives on human service organisations (HSO) that address the question of how and why organisations are organised the way they are. The overall design of the analysis is inspired by Hasenfeld´s (1983, 2010) theories on human service organisations and the people-processing, people-sustaining, and people-changing technologies that HSOs typically develop and build their organisation around to be able to process their 'raw material', namely people. The organisational perspective put forward by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) on the organisation and working methods within HSOs is also used as a theoretical framework. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that HSOs are influenced by strong powers from their surrounding society or institutional environment. The development is influenced, in particular, by the moral, regulative, economic, and political structures upheld by mainstream society (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Furthermore, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that HSOs tend to develop organisational fields, with every field developing its own logic and norms that the organisations in each field must follow, regardless of efficiency or function.

In line with this, Knutagård (2008) argues that local services for the homeless should be considered a niche within a larger organisational field that other actor's control. The social services' power is limited when it comes to acquiring flats to sublease as social contracts. Knutagård (2008) also highlights the dialectic relation between organisation and categorisation. Local social services have to categorise potential clients out of necessity in order to process them into the organisations' pre-existing categories and by doing so automatically attribute them a low or high social status. Hasenfeld (2010) argues that HSOs that handle clients categorised as having a high social status and seen as deserving and victims of circumstances outside of their control, such as domestic violence, tend to develop technologies focusing on their clients' actual needs. If the clients are categorised as having a low social status and being undeserving, HSOs instead develop and employ technologies focusing on control, punishment, and conditional support.

Method

The data collection was conducted during Spring and Autumn 2019. A total of 30 participants from 30 municipalities were included in the study (approximately 10% of Sweden's municipalities). The municipalities were chosen based on geographical location as well as type. Four different municipality types[2] were used: 1. Large cities (excluding the three biggest), 2. Commuting municipalities (those in close geographic proximity to densely populated areas), 3. Small cities/municipalities, and 4. Rural municipalities. In the results section, a letter and a number will follow each quote; for example, L1-L8 means Large city numbers 1-8; C1-C7 is for Commuting municipalities 1-7; S1-S8 is for Small city 1-8; and R1-R7 is for Rural municipality 1-7. The data were collected through semi-structured telephone interviews. The participants were all employees within local social services and chosen on the basis of their positions. All of the participants had an overview of the management of homeless housing services in their respective municipality.

The interview guide focused on four themes: 1) the assessment and evaluation of the eligibility of clients at local level, 2) the methods and management of housing services for the homeless at local level, 3) the actors involved in the housing services for the homeless, and 4) the organisation of processes focusing on transitioning clients towards self-sufficient housing. Each theme included of a number of follow-up questions based on the responses of the participants. The interviews were conducted, tape-recorded, and transcribed by the author. The average length of the interviews was 30 minutes.

Methodological considerations

Semi-structured interviewing is possibly the most widespread qualitative interview method used (Warren, 2002). There are several benefits of using this methodology. Compared with structured interviews, the semi-structured method makes better use of dialogue and allows for follow-up questions on pre-determined themes. Compared with unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews allow for a more focused conversation and allows the interviewee to take up more time during the interview. However, one of the effects of using semi-structured interviews in this study was that they tended to become longer through the data collection period due to the constantly evolving nature of the method and the interviewer's familiarity with the specific questions and follow-up questions (Brinkmann, 2014).

Apart from allowing for a wide geographical spread of participants, conducting the interviews by telephone had several other benefits. As Shuy (2002) highlights, a contextual naturalness is created by the distance when using the telephone as a

2 The four municipality types are an adaptation of Statistics Sweden's typology of Swedish municipalities, which uses nine different municipality types.

medium. This distance not only reduces the interviewer effect but also creates "more symmetrical distribution of interactive power, greater effectiveness with complex issues, more thoughtful responses, and the fact that such interviews are better in relation to sensitive questions" (Brinkmann, 2014, p.290). In the interviews, the respondents seemed comfortable and answered even sensitive questions openly, which may have been an effect of the contextual naturalness and distance created by the telephone (Shuy, 2002).

Analysis

There are many different ways to analyse interviews, where one side of the methods spectrum focus lies the primarily descriptive reports, the 'what' in the communication, while at the other end there are methods focusing on the discursive 'how' accounts (Brannen, 1992). In this study, the respondents are treated largely as information holders, and the focus of the analysis lies in trying to get as close as possible to what they say rather than how they say it. The scope of this study was limited to 30 municipalities, even if the sample was chosen to be as representative as possible. Wider generalisations should therefore be drawn with caution.

The analysis of the interviews was conducted in five steps, beginning with the transcription of the interviews. Step two entailed reading through the interviews and identifying thematic differences and similarities in them. Step three focused on highlighting quotes and sentences and starting to identify themes throughout the interviews. The fourth step involved cutting out and collecting key sentences and quotes under common themes. The fifth step consisted of sorting the reduced interviews into themes in relation to the theoretical framework, which is presented in the results. In the quotes, the transcription marker (…) is used for omitted speech, and the author's edits, such as explanations of unclear subjects, are placed within brackets [ ].

Results

The analysis shows that local housing services for the homeless in the municipalities were built around three general functions. The first function, *gatekeeping*, categorised, assessed, and decided if individuals fitted the local social services' requirements to receive housing due to homelessness. The second function, *managing homelessness*, provided different types of housing interventions for the individuals that passed the gatekeeping process with a positive result. The matching of housing interventions with individuals was based on existing client categories within the local social service organisation. The third function, *administrating housing for the poor*, focused on providing one specific housing intervention: social contracts. In general, the local housing services for the homeless had little power to decide on the organisation and rules regulating social contracts. Very little effort was put into follow-up and support in relation to how other types of housing interventions were arranged by the local services for the homeless. Furthermore, the administration of social contracts was the biggest function in terms of numbers in all 30 municipalities. These functions covered issues that all 30 municipalities had to deal with, however, the ways in which responses were developed and designed varied. Notably, there is a similarity between the three identified functions and Hasenfeld's (2010) three technologies: people-processing, people-changing, and people-sustaining, which will be addressed in the discussion.

Gatekeeping

The gatekeeping function assesses which individuals should receive housing due to homelessness, i.e., who are homeless in a support-worthy way? Three subfunctions were identified: 1) the assessment of all individuals, 2) the processing-in of those deemed eligible, and 3) the keeping-out of those assessed as non-eligible.

Organising the assessment process

The legal framework of the SSA and a few case law verdicts provide the legal basis around which local housing services for the homeless build their assessment process. However, there are no regulations on how the organisation that was tasked with solving the assessment process should be structured. The interviews showed that there were big differences between municipalities in relation to how they had organised their assessment processes. One participant stated:

> It has been a bit so-so with them [the assessments]. They have been handled by different parts of social services, and they have different views on how to handle them. If you ask me, I would say that the assessments have not always been based on case law and legislation. (…) It varied greatly how this was handled. That has been one of the problems in this municipality; I recognise it from my old job [social services in another municipality]. (C2)

Another participant described the assessment organisation as a more structured process:

> Previously we had an organisation that took assignments from other units internally, when a person was in need of a flat. The housing section didn't conduct the assessment (…), but in 2016 we had a re-organisation and then we [the housing section] hired four investigators to handle the assessment process as well, and since then they [the clients] turn to us with the applications. (L5)

One theme that emerged in the interviews was the extent to which social services had general responsibility for assisting persons in need of housing. The idea that social services are not and should not become a housing agency was expressed by several of the interviewees. The idea was connected to a general feeling that social services were overwhelmed with too much responsibility for the housing issue as a whole at local level. Several participants discussed the importance of ensuring the assessment of who was eligible for housing interventions as strict as possible to prevent social services becoming a housing agency. One participant said:

> We are fairly restrictive… we don't want social services to turn into a housing agency (…) with them [social services] being the primary option in these situations [homelessness]. If someone applies for housing, who is obviously homeless or doesn't have anywhere to spend the night, the first thing we do is to try to make them find housing in another way, at a hostel or campsite, maybe contact and apply for acute welfare relief [another part of social services] to see if they can pay for a place at a hostel or a campsite cottage. (R4)

Another participant described a similar idea regarding the application process: "It is a bottleneck to receive housing through the housing services for the homeless. It is definitely a strategy to prevent everybody using social services as a housing [agency]" (L1). However, there were diverging accounts among the participants. One participant stated that:

> We follow the SSA and case law, but we think that case law has become too (…), how should I put it (…), too narrow (…) Because it [the case law] is very strict. We have started to think about this. Actually, we have written a new policy, but it has not been adopted yet. (L2)

Requirements

One theme that emerged in the interviews related to the assessment process was the detailed requirements used by local housing services when assessing which individuals should receive housing due to homelessness. In relation to approving housing for short periods of time, the requirements were very similar across the interviewed municipalities. Common examples of specific requirements, in relation to short-term housing, were transcripts of bank statements and other proof of lack of money and/or of possibilities to arrange housing for themselves. However, in some cases when the person was 'known' to social services, no such proof was needed. One participant said: "When talking about short-term acute housing for the night, it is often an issue for the financial unit of social services, where you sit down and account for your financial situation and the reasons why you are applying for housing" (S5). A similar account was provided by another participant: "The administrator looks at the SSA and examines if you have somewhere to stay the night, any other possibility, if you are generally approved for short term-housing" (C3).

In contrast to the requirements used when assessing short-term interventions, those used when approving housing for longer periods of time, such as social contracts, varied greatly across municipalities. Some municipalities took a more lenient approach, specifying a few formal requirements, focusing mainly on debts and lack of income, which is a step away from the stricter intentions of the SSA and current case law. One participant expressed that: "If we are talking about [long-term] contracts, then there is strong focus on social difficulties, debts and no income. Those are the two major issues we look at" (S3). In another example of a more lenient approach, one participant declared: "You should have tried to find housing by yourself. You should also have a hard time, due to debts and other difficulties, finding housing. If there's no possibility then there is a chance of getting a social contract" (C5). However, there were several examples of municipalities with a stricter approach that provided a long list of requirements that individuals needed to fulfil before an investigation could proceed. "Yes, everything has to be exhausted. They should have made contact with landlords outside of the municipality (…), you should be in a housing queue (…); everything has to be exhausted, so to speak, for us to move in and provide a [long-term] social contract" (S2). The variations between municipalities could not be clearly related to demographical or geographical differences.

Who is in?

Another theme that emerged in the interviews centred around the individuals who were categorised as eligible for housing due to homelessness. Apart from being homeless, who were they? Did the municipalities assist individuals in the same type of homeless situations? Interestingly, participants, when asked which situations would provide housing, had a strong focus on social problems, not housing needs. Participants listed groups that would be prioritised to receive housing due to homelessness. These groups (very similar in all 30 municipalities) largely overlapped the groups and social problems that social services traditionally work with, such as persons with substance use issues, mental illness, problematic family relationships, and single mothers. A typical account was "we have the especially vulnerable groups: persons with mental illness, substance abuse and families. Those are the ones we always look at and try to get a grip on" (R1). Young persons were also mentioned as a prioritised group to receive housing due to homelessness. Families, especially single mothers with children, were highlighted as particularly vulnerable and prioritised for housing.

Who is out?

The interviews showed several examples of different keeping-out processes. One participant stated: "We often discuss with the administrators what it is that needs to be assessed, namely the person's ability to access housing on their own, not their current housing status…" (L3). In addition, undocumented persons who lack housing are often excluded from housing services for the homeless altogether, even if they fulfil the criteria of local social services (Wirehag et al., 2020). Twenty-eight municipalities stated that they did not assist or even know about undocumented persons in their municipality. One participant argued that: “There are no policies for how we should work with that group [undocumented], so if you don’t have Swedish citizenship, we don’t work with them, period” (R3). Another participant said that “It would take a VERY acute situation such as a pregnant single woman for us to approve housing for more than a night at a hostel” (R1). Most of the participants stated that mainly persons who are registered in the municipality are eligible for housing services for the homeless, at least for more than a night or two. This keeping-out action is a clear example of when individuals are excluded because of a mismatch with the pre-existing categories of the organisation.

However, divergent accounts were also provided. One participant stated that they had assisted undocumented persons with long-term housing stating that “Over Christmas we provided housing for a man with a deportation decision [undocumented]; I know we shouldn’t do it according to the legislation, but what can we do when it’s 20 degrees below zero” (R2). Later in the interview, the person had been offered a social contract by social services and lived there at the time of the interview. This statement demonstrates that there is still room for different interpretations regarding eligibility, with some local homeless housing organisations being more flexible in their interpretations. The different interpretations of who should receive housing due to homelessness show that the need for housing in itself is not enough. Instead, it is the social problems attributed to individuals that qualify them for housing. Certain groups such as the undocumented are excluded altogether and not even considered homeless but are categorised as undeserving, having ‘chosen’ to be in a homeless situation (Petersson, 2017).

Managing people experiencing homelessness

After the initial gatekeeping process, individuals who were approved for housing services due to homelessness were forwarded in the organisation to different sections of social services managing homelessness. All 30 participants described a situation in which the staircase model had a strong influence over the organisation of managing the homeless, directly or indirectly. The staircase model builds on the idea of qualification, moving up the ladder when fulfilling the demands set up at each step, moving down the ladder if the person breaks the rules connected to each step (Sahlin, 2007). Nineteen participants stated that the municipality built its overarching method on the staircase model. The remaining 11 participants, when asked, said that their municipality did not use the staircase model as such. Although when describing their overarching structure, all 11 descriptions were very similar to the basic concepts connected to the staircase model, such as the ideas of qualifying for housing by proving worthy. As exemplified by one statement: “It’s not a term we use [staircase], but we have organised it in a chain, just so we know what we are doing and which of the applicants for housing to assess” (L1).

The size and structure of the staircase model varied greatly in the studied municipalities. Some participants described a small-scale structure with only a few steps between acute housing and long-term housing: “We don’t have a method as such, but if someone comes back from [drug] treatment we don’t put them in a low-threshold housing solution but in a so-called practice flat” (S4). Another participant describes the staircase model in these terms: “We have a small staircase so to speak, first a ‘practice’ flat then a social contract” (S5). Some participants, however, described large-scale staircase models and a long line of steps up the staircase. One participant describes the situation in these terms: “We are currently trying to shorten the staircase model; there are just so many steps before you can reach the ordinary housing market” (L7).

Housing interventions for low status clients

Of the 30 municipalities, 16 had some type of shelter or low-threshold housing solution. These were predominantly run in cooperation with or by NGOs themselves. When asked if they had a shelter in the municipality, a typical answer was: “We don’t call it a shelter, but we do have one. We absolutely do not call it a shelter, but we call it acute housing… you are let in by 15.30 and have to be out before 09.00 the next morning” (S3). This statement is one of several examples of the ambiguous role of these low-threshold solutions within social services, trying to rebrand them into solutions with a more positive connotation. It was also clear that low status housing solutions were reserved for individuals with certain social issues, as exemplified by this statement: “Persons with substance use will be referred to a shelter with staff (…)” (C1). When asked what other types of interventions were used in the municipalities, the participants described several low status interventions that were used for semi-long placements. Acute housing was one example of an intervention used when “Persons come out of rehab and come home. It’s an in-between before you can move into your own flat. It’s a place to assess how the person copes” (S5).

Many of the low status housing interventions described by the participants were run by private actors, and persons were placed there for periods of 3-6 months. One commuting municipality said: “We buy a lot of interventions right now (…) for 61 individuals (…) we buy interventions from private companies in a large city close by” (C4). The participants also described interventions with the intention of long placements of six months to a year, referred to as ‘practice’, ‘trial’, or ‘reference’ flats. These interventions often had a lower degree of social control and were considered a stepping stone towards a social contract. One participant described it in these terms: “Connected to the housing with support [the previous step], we have four furnished practice flats, and they are a step in-between waiting for a social contract" (S5). What the different interventions were called seemed to be connected to ideas of control and social services' rights to control the flats. One participant (C2) described an intervention they called 'support housing' that they had created after "a decision from the parliamentary ombudsman". By calling it support housing instead of housing with support, social services had an extended right to control and access the flats. Several municipalities also described a number of interventions that functioned outside the staircase model. For instance, six of the 30 municipalities described what is referred to in research as last-resort solutions (Emerson, 1981). One rural municipality described it in these terms:

> We have a property, owned directly by the municipality, with 6-8 flats where it's been decided that the down-and-out chronic alcoholics should live (…). That property is a disgrace; it is in a dreadful state. We have sanitized it for cockroaches, but it doesn't help. They [the clients] have social contracts and there is no staff. We [social services] have contact with them [the clients] and go there from time to time to see how they are doing (…) Before we had housing with support with 24-hour staff (…) but it didn't work so it was closed a couple of years ago (R2).

Housing interventions for high status clients

All 30 municipalities use campsites or hostels as a first-response housing intervention. However, campsites and hostels seem to be primarily for families or persons with no obvious social issues, such as substance use or mental illness. As one participant said: "If someone shows up who is completely without housing, and they show up in the morning, we tell them to try to fix something by themselves. If they come back at 16.00, then we will sort something out, maybe a cabin or a night at a hostel" (R2). Several participants described the use of semi-long-term interventions called, for example, 'emergency flats' or 'reference' flats that were used to house persons with a low level of social problems, a group often argued to be outside social services' responsibility. One participant described it in these terms: "We have two emergency flats; its 90% families" (S3). Another participant used similar terms: "Then we have interventions for those… who don't use substances but have illness or who for some other reason can't find housing" (R6). A third participant described a more extensive intervention targeting persons with low social needs: "We have another property for families with acute homelessness. It's an old nursing home that we have taken over and there are 27 small 1- and 2-bedroom flats. It provides housing for families and single parents with kids. There are staff during the day to help with contracts and information" (C3).

Housing First: somewhere in-between

Six municipalities stated that they used Housing First as a method, but only one used first-hand contracts from day one (a basic condition of the original Housing First method). The other five used different types of conditioned contracts sometimes internalising the Housing First model into the staircase model. As one participant described it: "We have a project coming… but it's not 'Housing First', we call it 'housing now'. We want to shorten the staircase model, have fewer steps" (L7). This particular project used 18-month contracts with the possibility of turning them into tenure. There were also examples of municipalities wishing to start Housing First projects but that stated that: "It is quite far off since it takes landlords who would let us use flats under those conditions" (C4). There were also examples of municipalities that did not know about the method at all: "No, I don't really know what you are talking about… but I kind of recognise it now that you describe it (…)" (C1). This small-scale, transformed use of Housing First shown in the interviews is confirmed by previous research in Sweden. This is in line with what Knutagård and Kristiansen (2013) showed, namely that Housing First is often changed into Housing First-like models that fit the local context, often as a loosely connected part of the staircase model.

Administrating housing for the poor

The interviews showed that social contracts constituted the majority of interventions in all 30 of the studied municipalities. They also showed that individuals who received social contracts across the municipalities shared characteristics. They were either persons moving up through the housing ladder, categorised as having fewer social issues or had been categorised as having no or few social issues apart from being too poor or having too much debt to qualify for the ordinary housing market. However, the way this function was organised differed. Some of the municipalities studied had built an organisation around the social contracts that was very similar to the functions of a housing agency, with few or no control mechanisms connected to them, treating them as ordinary contracts (although subleased without tenure). Other municipalities had built an organisation around the social contracts allowing more control and the use of special terms and regulations, influenced by the other steps of the staircase model. One participant described the overall organisation of their social contracts with these words: "We have about 50 social contracts today. They just go on and on. We don't work actively on them at all" (R2). Another participant provided a contrary statement describing a relatively organised system where:

> Every six months we have a follow-up with the persons who are renting the flat and look into the possibility of them taking over the contract We are trying not just to let things go on and on… if you can make it on your own, you don't need social services looking over your shoulder. (C5)

The participants provided a wide variety of examples of how long the social contracts would go on before transitioning into either a permanent contract or the persons moved on to a permanent contract that they had acquired by themselves. Some described a more structured organisation in which contracts were evaluated continuously and transitioned into permanent contracts on a regular basis: "We have a contract with the local public landlords and the contracts automatically transfer into permanent contracts with tenure after one year if there hasn't been any disturbance… but they can be prolonged if there have been any problems" (L7). Another participant described their organisation regarding the transition to permanent housing in a contrasting way:

> We have a frightening number of persons who have lived with social contracts for fifteen years or longer. And that is not ok… because you may have the wrong surname. This is something we have to change within both social services and public housing companies. (R1)

Another participant described a similar structure regarding the length of social contracts: "It can be anything from a month to god only knows how many years… we don't keep track" (R2). One municipality had taken another approach and organised the transitioning process and the length of social contracts in relation to the length of the ordinary rental queue*.* "The housing companies demand that the persons in question have to have the same queue time as persons in the ordinary rental housing queue, which in our municipality means 8-10 years in central parts of the municipality" (S4). Several municipalities had no process at all regarding the transition of social contracts. All contracts would go on until the persons moved or the contract was terminated by social services:

> I: So, no one can take over their social contracts?
>
> R: No.
>
> I: Waiting to find something by themselves?
>
> R: To find something on their own. (R3)

Cooperation between local social services and landlords

The administration of housing, particularly social contracts, was imbedded in a larger institutional setting where social services had to cooperate with local landlords to attain flats to sublease. The interviews show several examples of the social services limited power when it comes to organising social contracts. They also showed that the landlords had a highly influential position regarding the functioning of social contracts. For instance, in all the studied municipalities, the landlords had the last word regarding the transition to a permanent lease after social services had assessed the persons as ready. Several participants were critical of this power balance and of the landlord's practice when it came to handing over housing for vulnerable groups.

> We have a public housing company with a long tradition of looking down on certain groups (…) They think you should have a social contract if the person doesn't have a strong enough financial situation and that social services should automatically provide a social contract (…) Public housing companies say that they are required to make a profit and that they can't take the risk of losing money on your clients [social services] (…) if they can't have a guarantee that persons living on student loans will have a rental guarantee from social services when the student loans expire. They think the person should have a social contract (…) They have taken it too far in my opinion. (R2)

Several other participants provided examples of cases when the local landlords would prolong the social contract, even after social services had recommended that the contract be translated into a permanent lease. As one participant stated: "We conduct an annual review, but as I said, the large majority get a 'NO' from the landlords due to debts" (C4). Another participant describes it in these terms: "My experience tells me that things often happen along the way… and then our counterpart [landlords] wants to prolong it by another three months… It is after all they [the landlords] who have the decision-making power over social contracts" (S5). Another participant highlights the problem of landlords placing persons in specific areas, a problem that was shared by a number of participants.

> As I said, somehow, we are dependent upon the landlord's goodwill. Sometimes we struggle to find flats for our clients even from the local public housing company, and even they want securities for all possible events and would rather find a block somewhere where they could put all social service clients. We [social services] don't want it organised that way. We want persons with social contracts to be mixed in (…) we don't agree with the landlords on this. (C7)

There were contrasting accounts, however, and participants who described their cooperation with the local landlords in more lenient and less critical terms arguing that: "We have great cooperation with them [the public landlords]. They find a suitable flat for the client, and we [social services] sublease it" (S1). Further, there were several examples in the interviews of restrictions set up by local social services to be able to exercise some degree of control. This was most clearly expressed when asked about the period of notice for social contracts. Two of the municipalities used so-called 24-hour contracts. One participant described it in these terms:

> The social contracts we have, have a 24-hour period of notice (…) that is the way it is (…) and when it comes to support housing, they don't have any period of notice at all (…) That is just the way it is. It's like in a hospital. When the doctor says it's time to move (…) you move. (C2)

Another participant described a similar practice, stating that: "We establish a contract and it's a so-called 24-hour contract… but it goes both ways…" and continues: "If someone wants to move, they can just leave and pay for one day" (C1). Among the other 28 municipalities, the length of the period of notice varied, stretching from a two-week notice to a month, and in one case up to three months. However, most were considerably shorter than the three-month period that is customary for the ordinary rental market.

Discussion

The main findings of the interviews show that local housing services for the homeless in Sweden are built around three main functions: gatekeeping, managing homelessness, and administrating housing for the poor. This means, on the two-dimensional continuum proposed by the European Observatory on Homelessness (EOH), that local homeless housing services in the studied municipalities moved in opposite directions. They tend to use both support-focused (people-changing) interventions and housing-focused (people-sustaining) interventions, such as social contracts, at the same time. One section of the organisation concentrates on administrating housing, at one end of the continuum proposed by the EOH, while the other focuses on managing homelessness, at the other end of the spectrum, with heavy focus on support.

Furthermore, the results show a strong link between pre-existing client categories (families, substance users, and people with mental illness) and the organisation's decisions regarding which groups to admit or keep out of the local housing services for the homeless. Further, the interviews clearly show that the processing-in of potential clients into local housing services for the homeless categorised them as either underserving or deserving people experiencing homelessness and provided them with different types of housing interventions based on these categories. The keeping-out and processing-in of clients also shows a duality in the way that social services relate to their clients. Individuals without 'certain social needs' are generally considered not to be the target groups of social services' homelessness interventions and should be kept out.

However, if they for some reason were still approved for housing, the groups with low social needs seem to receive higher quality housing with less or no social control. On the other hand, the groups that were generally considered to be the target groups of social services and that would be downgraded across all municipalities were single adults, especially male. As Knutagård (2008) showed, social workers have to adapt to the surrounding institutional setting, categorising persons living in homelessness based on the organisation's prerequisites rather than on the persons' actual needs. From this perspective, the internal organisation of local housing services for the homeless reflects the needs of social services rather than the needs of potential clients.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe where the ideas and values of the social work profession influence the structure of how homelessness should be solved. The social service organisation as a whole is focused on social problems, with the problems having to be solved before any other progress can be made. This can lead to a situation in which individuals are transformed from a person in need of housing to a substance user without housing. Knutagård (2008) argues that the there are no clear regulations regarding the use of interventions in Swedish municipalities and that practices differ across municipalities. Furthermore, he argues that social services are characterised by an imagined scale stretching from the street to a flat with tenure. Depending on which social issues individuals were attributed when applying for housing, they were, at the same time, assigned different levels of status, categorising them as deserving or underserving. There is a ranking of housing interventions in which some, such as social contracts, have a higher status and are matched with individuals with a higher status categorised as deserving.

The interviews showed a similar pattern to that put forward by Knutagård (2008). The staircase model created an overarching structure, but the individual's status was the determining factor for where on the staircase they would be placed when applying for housing. The housing interventions found in the municipalities ranged from low-threshold housing, shelters, camping, and hostels to residential housing with staff, 'practice flats', and 'emergency flats', to social contracts. The interviews showed that the way different interventions were used across the studied municipalities differed. However, matching low status interventions with low status individuals and vice versa was common practice in all of the studied municipalities (cf. Hasenfeld, 2010). Depending on the type of municipality, the methods to provide housing differed. For instance, there were several examples of commuting municipalities buying housing solutions from their larger and more urbanised neighbours, through this keeping the clients at hands length.

As the results show, there is a strong reluctance within social services to become some sort of housing agency. Despite this, social contracts were the most widespread intervention in Sweden (Wirehag, 2019). A key finding is that there appeared to be two different housing administration strategies. Some municipalities have built their organisation around social contracts, almost like a rental market, by treating clients like tenants using a three-month notice and letting the contacts continue over long periods of time. Other municipalities use very short periods of notice as a means of keeping a degree of control. One possible explanation for this could be that the staircase model heavily influences the overall methods and ideas on how to organise the local services for the homeless. The Housing First methodology was used but seemed to have no influence over the overall organisation of methods in the studied municipalities.

In their latest housing market survey, Boverket (2020) showed that 213 out of the 248 municipalities that used social contracts aimed for a transition of the contracts into ordinary rental contracts with tenure. However, the results of the interviews show that the terms and regulations concerning the realisation of this transition varied. Some municipalities had fixed timelines for contract evaluation, while others evaluated the contracts solely based on individual conditions. A possible explanation for this variation may be that the final decision to move from a subleased to a tenured contract was not made by social services but by the landlords. The heavy influence of the landlords over the rental process can also explain the tendency to provide persons with a low degree of social needs with high status housing solutions.

It is clear that the lack of national governance regarding the organisation and management of services for the homeless has created a situation in which social services do not have the full mandate on important issues, such as the transition out of social contracts, and thus they are unable to assist individuals from homelessness all the way to permanent tenure. Further, social contracts are not only the most widespread type of intervention used across local services for the homeless but also the most used type of intervention in all responding municipalities. Based on this, the general organisation currently dominating homeless housing services in Sweden, using the EOH typology, is an organisation dominated by housing-focused social contracts with low intensity support. This part of the housing services for the homeless show strong resemblance to social housing systems in other parts of Europe where low-income groups have access to a reserved small section of the housing stock. However, the Swedish system seems to have developed an ad-hoc hybrid organisation. In European countries that use social housing systems, the contracts generally have security of tenure and an organisation built on political decisions.

Concluding Remarks

This research set out to study the organisation of local housing services for the homeless in Swedish municipalities. One of the most troublesome results of the study is the finding that social services lack the decision-making power over key functions regarding the services they provide, such as the transition of social contracts into permanent contracts. This structure not only limits the possibilities to assist persons to their own contracts but limits and downgrades the judgment of social work professionals. The interviews also showed that the organisation of local housing services for the homeless can be divided into three functions: gatekeeping, managing social issues (both of which are traditional aspects of social work practice), and administrating housing for the poor. Administrating housing for the poor as a function is not new within social services. However, it has grown significantly in the last 15 years. Nonetheless, due to the reluctant position of social services, the administration of housing for the poor has ended up in a grey area within the social service organisation, where rules and aims can best be described as unclear, and moreover, are organised and carried out hesitantly, almost unwillingly.

The interviews also show that the devil is in the detail. To be able to understand the consequences of organisational differences, it is not enough to know if municipalities have, for example, a certain intervention (which is the information that Boverket and Socialstyrelsen gather from municipalities today). Behind the names of different interventions, a multitude of different local practices is hiding. The details of these contracts are crucial to understanding the function and outcomes of the interventions. There is, thus, a definite need for policy and practice to focus on the detailed function of interventions in the continued mappings of this field.

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De Jure Temporary, De Facto Permanent: Shelters for People Experiencing Homelessness in Germany

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Abstract_ *This paper focuses on one element of homelessness services in Germany: temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. Tens of thousands of people experiencing homelessness currently live in such accommodation. Numbers are rising. Originally intended as a short-term measure – for a few days or weeks – people increasingly stay there for a longer time. This paper looks at temporary shelter from a legal and an empirical point of view. From a human rights perspective, standards which suffice for short-term housing may not be adequate for longer-term accommodation. The human right to adequate housing thus demands more than the minimum standards that currently apply for temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. The empirical analysis is based on 28 interviews with people experiencing homelessness, officials in municipalities and social workers. It reveals large differences across German municipalities in such accommodation. Differences relate to accessibility, conditions inside, as well as the chances of moving on from shelter to regular housing.*

Keywords_ *Homelessness, Germany, right to adequate housing, shelter*

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Introduction

The human right to housing obliges states to ensure that adequate housing is available to everyone in their respective country. It is recognised in several international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but also in domestic constitutions. A state may realise the right to adequate housing by different means, for instance, through a policy of investing in social housing or through statutory tenant protection or social benefits. The UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing has called homelessness "perhaps the most visible and most severe symptom of the lack of respect for the right to adequate housing" (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Habitat, 2009, p.21). In order to fully realise the right to adequate housing, states are obliged to take measures to prevent and overcome homelessness. Such measures also include providing short-term shelter to people experiencing homelessness. The article examines the legal scope of such an obligation as well as its practice in the case of Germany.

In Germany, municipalities are legally obliged to provide emergency support to people experiencing homelessness, including short-term shelter. The obligation to provide shelter arises from a general clause in police and public order-laws of the 16 regional state legislations. In the absence of further specification of this clause, municipalities have considerable leeway in its implementation. Thus, due to historical, financial and political differences in the 10 799 municipalities (as of 31 December 2019), shelter provided by the municipality can mean very different things: a low-cost hotel room, a multi-bed-dormitory or a regular apartment used by the authorities to temporarily accommodate people experiencing homelessness. Having to stay in a municipal shelter can mean continuous social support (where desired) or being left-alone despite multiple problems; a stay of several days before moving into a new apartment or a lifelong wait in the housing queue.

Few numbers exist on how many people experiencing homelessness are provided with temporary accommodation by German municipalities. Presumably tens of thousands of people are affected: In North Rhine-Westphalia, the most populous of the 16 regional states, 32 623 people experiencing homelessness were provided with temporary accommodation by the municipality (as of 30 June 2019), in Bavaria it affected 12 681 people (as of 30 June 2017). And the numbers are rising: the figure for Berlin quadrupled between 2014 (9 615) and 2018 (36 271). Statistics also clearly indicate that such accommodation, originally intended as an emergency solution and short-term measure – for a few days or weeks – is increasingly one of the longer term. More than one third of those provided with accommodation in this manner remain there for more than two years.

This prompted the author to take a closer look at temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness in Germany. The first part of this article provides some background on the national situation: How many people are experiencing homelessness? How many are provided with shelter by the municipalities, and for how long do they stay there? Section 3 summarises an analysis conducted by Engelmann et al. (2020): What does international human rights law prescribe with regard to temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, and how much does the German legal situation comply with this? Section 4 then looks at the practice in Germany: What are the realities when it comes to the legal obligation to provide temporary shelter? Who does (not) get access to the shelters? What do they look like inside? The author also discusses some of the reasons why it is so difficult to find regular housing again for people living in the shelters. The final section discusses the need for policy action, including standards for temporary homeless accommodation.

The paper starts from the assumption that temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness – they might be called shelter, hostel, transitional housing or any other term dependent on their location (see Edgar & Meert, 2005, p.23 with an attempt to differentiate between the different forms of temporary accommodation) – continue to play a role in providing homelessness services (for more elaboration on this point, see Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007). The sheer extent of that role is clearly unsatisfactory as are the living conditions in many shelters and the low prospects of inhabitants to find regular housing again. There is ample evidence that Housing First and other housing-led services, including rapid rehousing (for a differentiation between the strategies, see Pleace et al, 2019, p.10) "not only correspond to the preferences of homeless people but would also contribute substantially to reducing the need for temporary accommodation to a minimum, something hostel programmes have failed to do so" (Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007, p.84).

However, for the time being, shelters, hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation will – at least in the mid-term perspective – continue to form a key part of state response to homelessness. Not only the number of shelter users increases but evidence from several countries shows that the length of stay in shelters is by no means temporary anymore. Beyond this general trend, cross-country comparisons are methodologically problematic due to the huge differences in homelessness services in Europe (see Pleace et al., 2018, for an overview of such services) but also due to a lack of data. Shelters are still a somewhat "black box". As long as they exist, we should subject them to empirical analysis, to make sure that the living conditions of residents adhere to human rights. This paper thus contributes to the debate by filling the empirical gap, and discussing, from a legal point of view, state obligations related to temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness.

Background: About Homelessness and Shelters in Germany

Extent of homelessness

It is unknown how many people are currently experiencing homelessness in Germany. There are two recent estimates, both from 2018. One puts the number of people experiencing homelessness at 337 000 (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2020, p.83), the other at 542 000 (Neupert and Lotties, 2019). As of 2022, there will be nation-wide numbers on the extent of homelessness in Germany. The Act on Reporting on Homelessness, adopted in 2020, obliges all municipalities to report numbers on people experiencing homelessness of ETHOS-light-category 2 and 3, that is people living in emergency accommodation and people living in accommodation for the homeless. Reported numbers will include data on gender, age, nationality and household type. While the expected numbers will not portray the entire extent of homelessness in Germany – people experiencing street homelessness will neither be counted nor will the hidden homeless – it is an important improvement on the current situation. For now, there are numbers available for parts of the country. For example, North Rhine Westphalia has been publishing statistics on the extent of homelessness for many years, covering almost all categories (for more detail on available numbers in Germany, see Hanesch, 2019).

Temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness

People who are unable to find a place to stay and do not want to live on the street are defined as "involuntarily homeless" under German police and public order law (Polizei- und Ordnungsrecht). Municipalities are legally obliged to provide shelter for such people; this is known as "accommodation provided under law on police and public order" (ordnungsrechtliche Unterbringung). Tens of thousands of people experiencing homelessness were provided with such municipal temporary accommodation in Germany in 2018 (see data below).

In Germany, national legislation sets the general legal framework regarding housing and social policy, such as tenancy law, social law and housing benefit law. There is no formal role for the federal state level when it comes to the provision of homelessness services (including shelter). Instead, responsibility lies entirely with the 10 799 municipalities. The regional state level, namely police and public order law of the 16 States, sets the legal framework for providing temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. The legal obligation for municipalities arises out of the so-called police general clause of each of the 16 regional state laws which requires authorities to take immediate measures in the face of a threat to public security and public order. Until now, it has not led to a statutory regulation. The legitimacy of the way people experiencing homelessness are provided with temporary accommodation is decided on a case-by-case basis by courts. The guiding standard for such court rulings has been human dignity (see part 3).

In the absence of further legal concretisation of the general police clause with regards to the provision of accommodation to those experiencing homelessness, municipalities have considerable leeway in its implementation. Very few municipalities or regional states have adopted standards.[1] Due to historical, financial and political differences in the 10 799 municipalities, shelter provided by the municipality can mean very different things, as Pleace at al. (2018, p.37) illustrate:

> Quality and intensity of support differ widely between different types of temporary accommodation and different providers. Some municipal shelters can be very basic and provide only very basic support, others may have quite intensive onsite support and all larger cities will also have hostels run by NGOs with substantial personalised support. In addition, there is a growing bulk of supported housing for homeless people in regular flats. In some of these projects people may remain after support has run out, in a majority they have to leave after a certain period of support and search for their own independent housing.

The only common ground is that municipalities are legally obliged to provide such short-term shelter for anyone not wanting to live in the streets.

This paper solely focuses on temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness provided under police/public-order law. It thus covers people falling under category 3 of the ETHOS light terminology of homelessness. Category 3 encompasses "people living in accommodation for the homeless". Such accommodation is defined by a period of stay that is time-limited, with no long-term housing provided. It can include people staying temporarily in homeless hostels, temporary accommodation, transitional supported accommodation, women's shelter or refugee accommodation. However, temporary accommodation provided under German police/public order law does not include women´s shelters and (some of the) transitional housing settings, because they are regulated under a

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1 For example: The regional states Bavaria and Saxony have issued general and non-binding recommendations for communal homeless accommodation. Berlin adopted binding standards for its communal shelters, which are currently under review. The "old" standards included, amongst others, the following requirements: single rooms must have a size of minimum nine square metres and double rooms 15 square meters; lockable closets for single rooms and multibed-dormitories; lockable rooms; sanitary rooms must be gender-segregated; communal kitchen for maximum 10 people; toilets for maximum eight people; and facilities have to be cleaned daily by the operator. A contact person must be available in-person for eight hours per day to the inhabitants, and for the rest of the time on-call. The regional state of Hamburg determines the ratio for the contact person, one per 97 inhabitants. For more detail, see Engelmann et al. (2020, p.42).

different legal regime. These were therefore excluded from the study at hand. Moreover, the paper does not deal with ETHOS light category 2, that is people in emergency accommodation, usually overnight shelters. These shelters are only available during the night and a stay is limited to a few nights. The question of "prolonged temporariness" therefore does not arise there.

Extent of people living in temporary shelter

Numbers on the extent of people experiencing homelessness living in temporary accommodation exist for several of the 16 regional states: North Rhine-Westphalia counted 32 623 people (as of 30 June 2019) living in (emergency) accommodation for people experiencing homelessness; Bavaria counted 12 681 (as of 30 June 2017); in Lower Saxony 6 588 people experiencing homelessness lived in temporary accommodation (as of 31 December 2016); and in Hamburg 20 393 (as of 31 December 2018). The numbers are not comparable because they partly encompass different groups of people experiencing homelessness. However, one trend is clear: Tens of thousands of people are affected and the numbers are rising. The figure for Berlin quadrupled between 2014 (9 615) and 2018 (36 271); in Lower Saxony it nearly doubled between 2013 and 2016; and in North Rhine-Westphalia it more than tripled between 2014 (10 224) and 2019 (32 623).

What about the length of stay? There is a general trend that residents of homeless shelters stay much longer than originally intended. Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin (2007) speak of the "everlasting temporary status" (p.81). Numbers in Germany support this statement: Where numbers exist, it clearly shows that accommodation provided under police/public-order law, originally intended as an emergency solution and short-term measure – for a few days or weeks – is increasingly one of the longer term. In North Rhine-Westphalia, almost 50 percent of people staying in communal shelters have been there for more than two years (as of 30 June 2019); in Bavaria, this applies to one third of affected people (as of 30 June 2017); and in Berlin, more than one third of the households living in communal shelters for the homeless have been there for two years or longer (as of 31 December 2018). While one has to acknowledge that the duration of stays is overestimated when relying on point in time data, it has certainly increased in recent years.

Temporary Shelter for the Homeless and the Human Right to Adequate Housing

The human right to adequate housing

The right to housing as codified in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, article 11 (1) of the ICESCR) obliges states to ensure access to adequate housing to everyone in their respective jurisdiction. A state can choose how to realise the right to housing, for instance, by establishing a policy to invest in social housing, providing statutory tenant protections or social benefits. Providing short-term emergency shelter is another means.

In realising the right to housing, states must make use of their maximum available resources and must progressively enhance service levels over time. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, which monitors the implementation of the ICESCR, stresses that the right to housing is more than "a roof over your head" meaning that housing must be adequate. What is adequate depends on the specific country situation, the economic situation and the overall standard of living. This means that the realisation of the right to adequate housing can put a higher threshold on state authorities in countries with a relatively high standard of living, such as Germany, and a lower one on low-income countries, such as Romania.

Notwithstanding resource availability, some obligations are of immediate effect, including the obligation of non-discrimination and of non-retrogression. This means that states have to guarantee the right to adequate housing in an equal and non-discriminatory manner and prevent forced evictions or halt other measures that infringe on people's right to housing (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Habitat, 2009).

What does the human right to adequate housing actually encompass? The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (1991) developed seven criteria to monitor the adequacy of a specific accommodation: legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location and cultural adequacy.

Legal standards for temporary shelters

Engelmann et al. (2020) analyse in how far this normative content of the right to adequate housing (such as legal security of tenure, availability of services, materials and facilities, affordability, accessibility, location, protection from violence) resonate with German law. Apart from basic health, safety and building regulations, there is no unified and codified set of standards for temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness as the municipal obligation to provide shelter arises out of a general clause in regional state legislation (see section 2). Thus, in order to answer this question, one has to look at standards developed by German administrative courts.

Under the current jurisprudence in Germany, a very simple minimum standard of housing and the availability of facilities and services are deemed sufficient for accommodation provided under police/public order law. German administrative courts have judged the provision of temporary accommodation on a case-by-case basis using human dignity as a yardstick. Although German case law does not refer explicitly to criteria from the international human rights regime, more or less the same aspects are considered when it comes to judging the adequacy of temporary housing for people experiencing homelessness. For example, courts determine that temporary accommodation must include heating in winter, basic sanitary and cooking facilities, as well as basic furniture including a bed, a closet and electricity. Dormitories are viewed as sufficient. For certain aspects, requirements arising under international human rights law go further than the current German case law, such as in the case of the normative criteria of accessibility. The requirements for people with disabilities or people with other special needs remain unclear. There is also legal uncertainty with regard to the security of tenure, in particular under which circumstances people who are not entitled to social benefits in Germany have access to shelter. There are other aspects of the right to adequate housing that have not been dealt with by German courts so far, including location (in the sense of connection to public transport and services such as doctors, school, work possibilities, support structures) and protection from violence.

From a fundamental and human rights law perspective, standards which suffice for short-term housing may not be adequate in the case of housing used for longer-term accommodation. In light of the fact that accommodation provided under police/public order law in Germany is de facto being used as longer term accommodation, the right to adequate housing demands more than the minimum standards that currently apply.

Empirical Analysis: the Obligation to Provide Shelter in Practice

This section looks at the practice regarding temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness: Given the legal obligation to provide temporary shelter, who does (not) get into the shelters? What does it look like inside? The paper also discusses some of the reasons why it is so difficult to find regular housing again for people living in the shelters.

Methodology

To inform this analysis, the author, supported by a second interviewer, conducted qualitative interviews with 28 experts in six municipalities. The selection of municipalities was based on three exploratory expert interviews with people having a long-term and comprehensive knowledge about German municipalities´ response to those experiencing homelessness. Since the research aimed to show a broad spectrum of shelter practice in Germany, municipalities with maximum differences regarding size, region and organisation of services were been selected.

From each of the six municipalities, interviewees included at least one, but mostly two, people currently or formerly experiencing homelessness, at least one frontline staff from non-profit service providers (usually social workers), as well as at least one employee of the municipal office responsible for providing people experiencing homelessness with shelter. Interviewed people experiencing homelessness were heterogenous in age, gender and nationality. One interview was conducted with the support of an interpreter. In order to get in contact with potential interviewees, the interviewers contacted local support organisations in the respective municipality.

The semi-structured interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes. They were audio-recorded and transcribed. Interview transcripts were analysed according to Mayring´s (2010) qualitative content analysis, with the help of a qualitative data analysis software (MaxQDA). Categories derived primarily from the seven criteria for the right to adequate housing and their respective interpretation through the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1991). For example, all quotes related to accessibility were coded and subsequently categorised into a hierarchical coding frame. Being aware of the potential bias such a coding approach might inherit, the author tried to be open to new themes in the data that were unrelated to predefined categories. Throughout the coding process, parts of the transcripts were test-coded by a second researcher, and where necessary, the coding system was revised.

Interview data was supplemented by existing studies as well as information and statistics from the federal states and municipalities. Data collection took place between February and June 2019.

Getting in

In Germany, municipalities are legally obliged to provide accommodation to people who are “involuntarily homeless”. This obligation relates to the municipality where the person is actually located, irrespective of whether one has a local connection to the municipality and also irrespective of nationality. The absence of a local connection rule in Germany is comparatively unique in a European perspective, with only Austria, Denmark, France and Slovakia have similar rules stipulating that a person experiencing homelessness cannot be refused access to emergency accommodation on the basis that (s)he had no local connection (Baptista et al., 2015, p.7).

However, in practice, access to temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness is by no means entirely inclusive. There are municipalities which do not comply at all with the obligation to provide shelter. They argue that there are simply no people experiencing homelessness on-site. However, this view is contradicted by official statistics and studies (for example: Busch-Geertsema et al., 2020, p.83). Other municipalities argue that they are not responsible due to a local connection rule (which is unlawful in the German case, as noted above) or because the person experiencing homelessness is not entitled to social assistance; or simply that they cannot accommodate because they have no or no adequate spaces available.

There are big differences with regard to whether municipalities can provide adequate spaces for all people experiencing homelessness that need to be accommodated. The supposed biggest group lacking adequate spaces are women experiencing homelessness. Existing studies show that women largely avoid municipal accommodation for people experiencing homelessness because they feel unsafe and experience gender based violence. It is still common in Germany that homeless shelters are not separated by gender. Civil society has for many years been critical of the insufficient and inadequate support, including shelter, for women experiencing homelessness in Germany.

Another group with largely inadequate access to homeless shelters in Germany are people with disabilities. There is no reliable data on the question of how many people experiencing homelessness are disabled. However, what is known is that many municipalities have no accessible accommodation at all or far too few spaces (see for example Busch-Geertsema et al., 2020, p.87). A social worker of a shelter in a large city describes how she, on an almost daily basis, has to reject a person experiencing homelessness in a wheelchair:

> I am not allowed to let him in, due to fire regulations. He can also not get into another shelter in the neighbourhood, and not on another one. Hospitals regularly drop them here in front of the shelter. They take the wheelchair with them because it belongs to them. What do I do with these people?

She continues describing that, eventually, these people camp in the neighbourhood of the shelter.

The lack of adequate shelter spaces has several consequences: people continue (or start) living on the street, as the example of the man in the wheelchair illustrated; or they live in shelters – in some cases for many years – but cannot be provided with adequate support. Social workers interviewed stressed that a significant number of people experiencing homelessness in communal shelters need additional support, next to actual housing, to exit homelessness (see next section). For women experiencing homelessness, the lack of adequate shelter results in many cases in hidden homelessness. What is typical for women experiencing homelessness are experiences of abuse and housing situations that are insecure and change frequently (see for example: Moss and Singh, 2015; Mayock et al., 2015).

In addition, access to municipal shelters for homeless EU-citizens is a key aspect in the current public debate on homelessness in Germany. The number of people experiencing homelessness from other EU countries, especially from Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, increased in the past number of years, particularly in large cities like Berlin or Hamburg. In this regard, Germany is not different from other EU member states. The legal obligation for municipalities to provide accommodation under police/public-order law applies irrespective of the residence status and nationality of the person concerned. This immediate obligation is also supported by several court decisions. In practice, however, many municipalities do not provide shelter to people experiencing homelessness from other EU member states, or provide only a minimum form of support for a short period of time (see also Busch-Geertsema et al 2020, p.87). The consequences are similar to EU migrant homelessness in other European countries (see for example, Mostowska, 2015): People experiencing homelessness from other EU countries live in very poor circumstances, either sleeping on the street or facing unacceptable housing conditions (see for example, Gerull, 2018).

Inside

There is no systematic overview on the conditions inside communal shelters for those experiencing homelessness in Germany. Accommodation facilities vary greatly, ranging from "normal housing" (flats) to multi-bed dormitories in collective accommodation facilities. Many municipalities also use hotels or hostels to fulfil their obligation of having to provide shelter. Further differences relate to sanitary and cooking facilities, common spaces and location (in the sense of connection to public transport and services such as doctors, school, work possibilities, support structures). The Federal Government acknowledged in its 2017 Report on Poverty and Wealth that accommodation provided under police/public-order law is, in some regions, inadequate (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2017, p.483).

One key problem concerning accommodation provided under police/public-order law are the very cramped sleeping and living conditions. Multi-bed dormitories are very common, as are spaces with less than 10 square meters per person. These living conditions go hand in hand with permanent noise and a lack of privacy.

Keeping in mind that people do not stay for a few days but several months or years, it is an unbearable situation for everyone, but especially for people with mental disabilities or women having experienced violence.

There are also large differences with regard to sanitary conditions ranging from impeccable hygienic conditions to bordering on squalor. During the interviews, former inhabitants of such shelters talked about cockroaches. Being asked about a particularly difficult condition, one interviewee, a long-time volunteer for a support organisation, describes the following:

> The tiles are very dirty, there is no bin. The last bin has been destroyed […] There is litter everywhere […] The doors can´t be locked because someone destroyed them […] a lot of broken things have simply never been replaced […] toilets are broken.

Of course, it has to be stressed that the sanitary and living conditions described above are not prevalent in homeless shelters in all municipalities. However, studies, support organisations and media reports on German shelters for people experiencing homelessness provide evidence that they are not uncommon, and by no means exceptions.

As a consequence, people experiencing homelessness living in these shelters are exposed to a climate of violence, noise and fear of being robbed. (Former) people experiencing homelessness described during the interviews how they constantly felt insecure because they were not able to lock their belongings. Their daily life is determined by being afraid of violent attacks from their roommates, and by conflicts, often connected to alcohol and drug use. A former man experiencing homelessness who lived for several months in a multibed dormitory and was sick during this time, described his living situation as follows:

> You had people living next to you who would, during the night, bawl at each other all the time or get drunk. And then blare songs. This was not useful to get healthy again. You never had peace and quiet.

These latter findings about shelters in Germany are by no means an exception in comparative perspective. Especially large shelters have been linked with poor health and wellbeing of their inhabitants, characterised by crime and use of drugs. Empirical evidence primarily exists from the US (Grunberg and Eagle, 1990; Mackie et al., 2017, p.22 for more sources) but there are also a number of studies on European countries (for example Hansen Löfstrand, 2015).

On the one hand, these circumstances explain why people experiencing homelessness choose to live on the streets rather than in shelters (for example Fahnoe, 2018; Mackie et al., 2017). However, they also provide one explanation why people do not leave shelters. The term "shelterization", coined by Grunberg and Eagle (1990), describes a process of personal adaption to these circumstances: "despite the dangers of shelter living, many residents do not flee; instead they develop coping strategies that provide them with a feeling of mastery unparalleled on the outside. This […] 'shelterization' is characterized by a decrease in interpersonal responsiveness, a neglect of personal hygiene, increasing passivity, and increasing dependency on others" (p.521). For the case of Germany and probably most European countries, we still know very little about living situations in shelters, including a possible "shelterization" effect. We also know little about successful ways out of shelters. Existing studies as well as anecdotal evidence from media and support organisations about the shelter conditions suggest that we urgently need a debate on the role of shelters in the support system (see conclusion).

Getting out

Accommodation provided for people experiencing homelessness under police/public-order law is per definition temporary. However, a big part of people experiencing homelessness remain in such shelters for many months and years, some people even until the end of their life. Varying from person to person, the reasons might be simple or complex and often interrelated. The lack of affordable housing is another key issue, but not the only one. Even if housing is available, people experiencing homelessness hardly have access to it. Again, there are many reasons for this. Two key aspects, arising from the interviews, are explained in this section; there is a general lack of adequate support for people experiencing homelessness and people experiencing homelessness are discriminated against when looking for an apartment.

Lack of adequate support

When it comes to overcoming homelessness, a large proportion of people experiencing homelessness depend on support, not only with regard to actually finding an apartment, but also with regard to overcoming problems that might be related to their homelessness, such as alcohol (or drug) addiction treatment, settling debts, dealing with public authorities or meeting deadlines. The scale of the communal support structure is huge in Germany. Differences relate not only to the very availability of services but also to its organisation (private/public) and the legal regime under which support is provided (see for example Pleace et al., 2018; Hanesch, 2019; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2020). The following results only relate to support that is directly related to people accommodated under police/public-order law. Thus, it does not relate to people experiencing homelessness who are accommodated and supported under social legislation, which is only a small part of people experiencing homelessness in Germany.

A "classic" way to receive support with regard to finding an apartment is the local social welfare office. Some municipalities have also "bundled" all support related to overcoming and preventing homelessness in one central office (so-called "Fachstelle Wohnungslosigkeit"). If needed and desired, they would refer to further welfare services: a person experiencing homelessness who also has problematic substance use would be referred to addiction care, an older person experiencing homelessness to nursing care, a young person experiencing homelessness to the youth welfare system. In many cases, imparting to other welfare services has been described as rather difficult. For example, there is specialised support for people having to overcome social difficulties (according to §§ 67 sqq. Social Code, book XII). However, receiving such support requires extensive paper work, time and patience. A social worker interview describes it as follows:

> An application can take six weeks or two months. [...] Or it is rejected for unknown reasons and then one has to file a lawsuit against this decision. By then, the client [homeless person] has given up.

In addition, social welfare offices rarely have the capacity to reach out to people experiencing homelessness living in communal shelters. Their capacities are fully occupied by the people who find their way to their office. Interviews illustrated that employing outreach teams is the exception rather than the norm. As a result, those not finding their way to the local authorities, "fall through the cracks", as an employee in a social welfare office stresses. However, these people are usually the ones who need the support most. In practice, they stay in their communal accommodation and support services are not available to them.

Another possibility for people experiencing homelessness accommodated under police/public-order law is to receive on-site support. This could be an incoming social worker or a support office that is permanently installed at the accommodation depending on the size of the accommodation, the people living there and the overall support structure in the municipality. Such on-site support could help inhabitants to find an apartment or to refer to further welfare services if other or increased assistance is desired. Civil society has for many years been pointing out that such a support structure is hardly ever available (for example: Qualitätsgemeinschaft Soziale Dienste e.V., 2018; BAG W., 2013). Apart from a handful of local studies and media reports, there is hardly any empirical evidence on whether or not such support is available for people experiencing homelessness accommodated under police/public-order law. There are also only very few examples of local standards regarding the on-site support (see footnote 1 above).

Certain groups of people might be in even more need of sufficient counselling by a qualified social worker, e.g. people who suffer from addiction, people with mental impairments or long-term care needs. They may be unable to gain access to assistance appropriate to their needs – such as therapy, an assisted living group or out-patient services. Without these services, these people end up in accommodation for the homeless as the “last social net” (the best case scenario) or out on the streets (the worst case scenario). In their meta-study, Mackie et al. (2017, pp.17, 24) argue that if no adequate support is provided, shelters face a concentration of the most complex needs people. Similar observations have been reported by the social workers interviewed for this research project.

Discrimination in the housing market

In some municipalities in Germany, people experiencing homelessness hardly ever have a chance to find an apartment again. This is first and foremost related to the lack of affordable housing. Social housing stocks in Germany have, just as in other European countries like Spain and the UK, been continuously shrinking over the last years (Fernandez Evangelista, 2016). Where social housing is available, people experiencing homelessness are the last in the competition to be considered as potential renters. The reasons are illustrated by an interviewed social worker:

> And then we talk about stigmatisation meaning landlords say that they will not take people who receive social assistance. I can hear it when [homeless] people phone the landlords: No chance without an employment contract; they want to see six salary slips, a paper of proof that there are no rent arrears. And in the ideal case also a household insurance and a liability insurance, and so on.

The label “homelessness” minimises the chance for getting an apartment. Interviewed social workers stress that simply saying the name of the current accommodation – meaning a communal shelter –already is enough reason for many landlords not to rent out to people experiencing homelessness. This is not only a German observation. There is evidence that in several European countries social and private landlords do not want to rent out their apartments to people experiencing homelessness (Baptista et al., 2015, p.51). Interviewed people experiencing homelessness as well as social workers see the so-called “Schufa-Auskunft”, a paper of proof that is required by landlords to show that there are no rent arrears, as one of the central obstacles to finding an apartment. Many people experiencing homelessness are thus excluded by housing companies from the very beginning.

There is also evidence that certain groups of people experiencing homelessness experience intersectional discrimination because they have problematic substance use or are mentally disabled, but also because they are single or due to their race (see for example Pries and Tuncer-Zengingül, 2018). An interviewed social worker stresses:

> A homeless person of colour will have big difficulties finding [an apartment]; same goes for people from other EU member states, maybe speaking no fluent German and living in communal homeless accommodation. They will have even more difficulties to find an apartment.

Conclusion

From an empirical perspective, there are large differences across German municipalities in accommodation provided under police/public-order law. Access to accommodation is largely determined by whether the municipality in question has sufficient accommodation places available. However, the municipality's understanding of and attitude towards its obligation to provide accommodation also plays a role. Accommodation facilities vary greatly, ranging from "normal housing" (flats) to multi-bed dormitories in collective accommodation facilities, from impeccable hygienic conditions to bordering on squalor. Although the results are not generalisable in the strict sense, they do show the range of practices across German municipalities. A number of common problems emerge from the data regarding access to shelters and the living conditions at shelters, and this, combined with the number of people living in temporary accommodation, amounts to an urgent need for action.

Under the current jurisprudence in Germany, a very simple minimum standard of housing and the availability of facilities and services are deemed sufficient for accommodation provided under police/public-order law. However, from a fundamental and human rights perspective, standards which suffice for short-term housing may not be adequate in the case of temporary housing used for longer term.

In light of the fact that accommodation provided under police/public order law in Germany is now de facto being used for longer term accommodation, the right to adequate housing – which applies to accommodation in this category in Germany just as it does for other forms of housing and shelter –demands more than the minimum standards that currently apply. In Germany, setting such standards has been a key demand of support and advocacy organisations for the homeless for many years (for example: BAG W, 2013; Qualitätsgemeinschaft Soziale Dienste e.V., 2018; Zentrale Beratungsstelle Niedersachsen, 2020). Also in a European context, cross-country minimum-standards (Busch-Geertsema and Shalin, 2007) as well as benchmark standards (Fitzpatrick and Wygnanski, 2007) have been proposed.

Alongside physical and social standards, a debate on standards in municipal homeless shelters also needs to focus on achieving a safe living environment. What can someone do who feels violated in his/her human rights? How can an effective monitoring be realised and what is the role of monitoring bodies in the process?

How can we ensure that people with special protection needs are identified at an early stage? In order to answer these questions, it is worth having a look at other regulatory systems where many people are accommodated on limited space – for example refugee accommodation. In the German context, the discussion on protection from violence, complaints mechanisms or identification of vulnerable people in refugee accommodation is much further advanced and should become part of the debate on standards for homeless shelters.

Until now, the federal government of Germany and the 16 regional states primarily view municipalities as being responsible for realising the right to adequate housing for people experiencing homelessness. However, fundamental and human rights also legally oblige the federal government and regional state governments to take action. At the regional state level, some governments are active in financially supporting homelessness services (see Hanesch, 2019). However, action at the federal government level does not go beyond acknowledging the inadequacy of conditions in communal shelters in some municipalities (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2017, p.483). A national discussion about homelessness has still not been initiated. Germany is one of the countries in Europe where no National Strategy on Homelessness exists (Baptista and Marlier, 2019). There is also no political debate on the need for standards for municipal temporary accommodation. Hopefully, this will change once the first results of the national homelessness statistic are published in 2022. By then, there will be the first reliable nation-wide numbers on how many people live in communal shelters for those experiencing homelessness in Germany.

We also need a wider debate on the role of shelters in the support system. There is no doubt that shelters – or any form of temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness – is a key part of state responses to homelessness (Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007; Fitzpatrick and Wygnanska, 2007, p.42). There is also no doubt that this role has been growing over the last years. Not only is the number of shelter users increasing, but evidence from several countries show that the length of stay in shelters is by no means temporary anymore. Despite this fact, we still know surprisingly little about the role of shelters in resolving homelessness. Under what conditions can shelter-users find regular housing again? Shelters are still somewhat a "black box". We need more research on these topics.

However, raising the standards of temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness is only one of many elements necessary to improve the living conditions of people experiencing homelessness in conformity with the human right to adequate housing. The primary aim of state action on homelessness – at the federal, regional state and municipal level – should be to overcome the problem completely by addressing root causes in order to get and keep all people out of homelessness. In addition to the effective organisation of all assistance services at the municipal level, achieving this aim will require the availability of an accessible and affordable housing supply in the municipalities, particularly for those living in poverty, and that people experiencing homelessness and those at high risk of losing their homes receive priority in the allocation of that housing.

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How Social Science Can Influence Homelessness Policy: Experiences from Europe, Canada, and the United States. Part I – Problem and Solutions

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Abstract_ *Guided by Kingdon's (1995) policy streams framework, the aim of this paper (and a companion paper) is to understand how social scientists can influence policy responses to those experiencing homelessness based on examples from Europe, Canada, and the United States. Playing the role of conceptualiser-innovator, social scientists have shown that ideas matter by reframing effective responses to homelessness as those that lay stress on the unconditional provision of housing in the first instance, with support (financial and social) as required. Social scientists have also played an important role as researcher-evaluators, demonstrating that evidence matters. For example, a growing body of social science research has found that those experiencing homelessness are not homogenous in their needs and a tailored response is required. In the first instance, the provision of secure housing, with support as necessary, successfully ends homelessness for a majority of households experiencing homelessness and at a significantly greater rate in comparison to responses that prioritise emergency accommodation and treatment. Moreover, there are promising interventions that can prevent spells in*

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emergency accommodation. While problem framing and rigorous evaluation research have established a firm foundation for homelessness policy change, other strategies are needed to establish evidence-based approaches more fully into homelessness policy. For example, the importance of involving people experiencing homelessness in policy and practice and, concomitantly, promoting their choice and self-determination have contributed to reframing our understanding of the responses to homelessness.

Keywords_ *Policy streams, social science research, homelessness*

Introduction

In this paper and a companion paper (O'Sullivan et al., 2021) we aim to show how social scientists can use evidence to influence public policy responses to homelessness, specifically research on Housing First (HF), a response to homelessness which provides immediate and unconditional access to housing with support, in contrast to responses where those experiencing homelessness must meet certain conditions before they are deemed ready for housing (Greenwood et al., 2013). We draw from our experiences and those of others in Europe, Canada, and the United States (US), using research, education, training, advocacy, programme development, and knowledge transfer to inform homelessness policy. One caveat is that since we are basing the paper on experiences from two continents, one with many different countries, we cannot provide as much detail on the context of each country as we would like in the limited space that we have.

We use Kingdon's (1995) policy streams framework to understand policy and how it can be changed. Within each dimension of this framework, we identify lessons learned for policy change, borrowing from and expanding on Shinn's (2007) paper on influencing homelessness policy. For each lesson, we describe roles for social scientists (Lavoie and Brunson, 2010) that can be used to influence policy related to homelessness. These roles include: conceptualiser-innovator, researcher-evaluator, partnership-maker, policy advisor, knowledge translator (KT), training and technical assistant consultant, and advocate (Nelson et al., 2020).

Social Policy

Social policy can be understood as legislative, administrative, programmatic, and funding actions taken by governments to resolve social problems. Policy solutions to social problems do not occur in a rational, linear fashion. Rather, social problems compete with one another for public attention and government resources (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988). Moreover, policy solutions are influenced by multiple stakeholders (Fischer, 2003) and the broader socio-political context (Evans and Masuda, 2020). A discursive approach emphasises that the policy process is intensely political with different stakeholder groups making different claims about the nature of the problem and how it should be addressed (Fischer, 2003). Weiss (1999) stated that:

> … Policy making is the arena where all the conflicting pressures in society come to bear. Policy making deals with a choice of directions. And some groups will be advantaged and others disadvantaged by the choices made. The phrase "policy making *arena*" has an apt connotation of the place where contests are waged and some team or interest comes out the winner. In policy making, the contest is called "politics." Multiple interests collide and seek advantage. (p.477)

Social scientists are one stakeholder group in the policy process, and they aspire to inform policy with research evidence, and for Fitzpatrick et al. (2000, p.49), identifying 'clear policy aims' should be the primary rationale for researching those experiencing homelessness. However, evidence-based policy (Bogenschneider and Corbett, 2010) must compete with other stakeholders who are not well informed about, don't care about, or actively oppose research evidence on important issues (e.g., global climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic). For example, in the homeless-serving sector in Canada and the US, there are campaigns to end homelessness that rely on giving services to people according to a vulnerability screening process. In fact, one of the most widely used vulnerability screening tools in North America is being discontinued after research has revealed poor psychometric properties (Brown et al., 2018) and racial bias (Cronley, 2020).

Even when policy in relation to homelessness is stated to be evidence based, as Parsell et al. (2014) note in relation to Australia, models of service provision that are not evidence based can be established and where "intuition and direct personal experience were afforded more credibility – viewed as more 'trustworthy' – by relevant stakeholders than peer-reviewed research" (p.84; see also Baker and McGuirk, 2019). Nonetheless, while research evidence is neither the sole basis for policy formulation, nor is it the only tool that social scientists bring to the table, it is an important consideration for policy-making.

While many different theories can be used to understand the policy process (see Sabatier, 2007), we use Kingdon's (1995) policy streams framework as the primary lens for our analysis (see for example, Baker and Evans, 2016; Evans and Masuda, 2020; Lancione et al., 2018, for alternative frameworks for interpreting the expansion of HF in North America and Europe). Kingdon's theory, originally formulated in the 1980s, continues to have heuristic value today (Rawat and Morris, 2016; Boswell and Rodriques, 2016) and is applicable to understanding policy responses to those experiencing homelessness. We selected the policy streams framework because we are concerned with how social scientists can influence policy, and Kingdon's approach points to potential levers for policy change that can be used by social scientists.

This approach also aligns with the increasingly influential research on policy mobility which, for example, has highlighted how policy adapts to local contexts and the significance of 'windows of opportunities' in achieving policy shifts (Soaita et al., 2021). Thus, we explore the emergence of public policy in responding to homelessness in three specific contexts; Canada, the United States, and Europe, but also the mobility of these policies and how they "shape the recognition of a 'problem' and the endorsement of a 'policy solution'" (Soaita et al., 2021, p.8).

Overview of the Policy Streams Framework

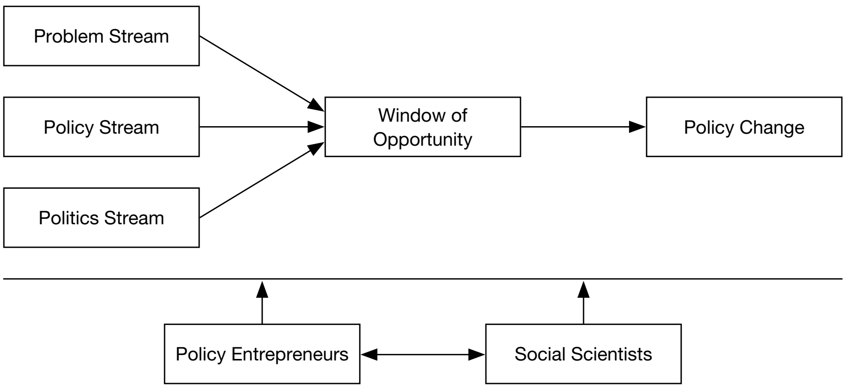
Kingdon (1995) proposed three streams in the policy process: problems, policy, and politics (see Figure 1). The policy streams framework emphasises the roles that stakeholders play in the policy process. In this set of papers, we concentrate on the roles used by social scientists to influence policy.

Three streams: Problems, policy, and politics

In the case of homelessness, the *problem stream* is important for understanding how homelessness is conceptualised, as the way a problem is framed often dictates how it will be addressed. The *policy stream* is concerned with the development of solutions to the problem, including research demonstration projects that can provide a foundation for evidence-based policy-making (Baron, 2018; Pawson, 2006). The *political stream* refers to the social-political context of policy-making. Sarason (1978) observed that many social problems appear intractable because research evidence from social scientists must compete with power and persuasion in the prevailing political climate. Sometimes the political climate is open to and favourable for policy change, but at other times it resists and impedes the adoption of evidence-based solutions.

Another dimension of Kingdon's (1995) framework is that of *policy windows*. He argued that there are critical moments when the three streams coalesce to create opportunities for policy change (see Figure 1). During these rare moments when the streams converge, change agents who have been called '*policy entrepreneurs*' (Kingdon, 1995) or '*institutional entrepreneurs'* (Padgett et al., 2016) intervene to influence the policy process. We argue that social scientists can work with policy entrepreneurs or they can be entrepreneurs themselves in policy change (see Figure 1). Finally, we consider the outcomes of the policy process – policy change.

Figure 1: A Framework for Public Policy Change



Focus of the Two Papers

This paper and its companion are divided in a way that reflects the stages in the policy-making process. In this first paper, we examine the problem component and one aspect of the policy component – the development of solutions to the problem through research. Defining the problem and developing evidence-based solutions is a necessary first step in policy formulation. The second paper examines the political context and strategies for achieving evidence-based policy change. Once solutions are developed, the next step is to influence policy so that these solutions are 'rolled out' on a wide-scale basis.

Unlike Canada and the US, Europe is a continent whose nation states are quite diverse and heterogeneous in their homelessness policies. While we touch upon homelessness research and policy in several European countries, we devote more space to France because France recently conducted a large-scale, rigorous demonstration research project on ending homelessness for people with severe psychiatric disorders and subsequently expanded this successful approach across France.

The Problem Stream

Homelessness as a social problem

The nature and extent of homelessness varies across continents and nations. Here we provide a brief overview of homelessness in Europe, Canada, and the US. In Europe, with the notable exceptions of Finland and Norway, the available evidence based on point-in-time data suggests an increase in the number of households experiencing homelessness at a point-in-time, particularly in the past decade (Serme-Moirin and Coupechoux, 2021). The different definitions of homelessness adopted by countries in Europe preclude being able to accurately estimate the level of homelessness across Europe. However, the development of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion, better known as ETHOS, in the early 2000s (see Busch-Geertsema, 2010) has facilitated cross-national analyses of the extent and profile of those experiencing homelessness across the EU members states (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014). Overall, adult-only households are most likely to experience homelessness, particularly long-term homelessness, in Europe. In addition, women with children (Mayock and Bretherton, 2016) and households displaced by refugee migration to Western Europe (Baptista et al., 2016) are experiencing significant levels of homelessness across Europe.

Stephens and Fitzpatrick (2007) have argued that countries with strong welfare safety nets, and resulting low rates of poverty and income inequality, have equally low overall rates of households experiencing homelessness, but that these households are likely to have complex needs. On the other hand, countries with weaker welfare safety nets have higher rates of homelessness, but with the majority of households experiencing homelessness arising from poverty and having few if any needs other than need for income to access housing. Empirical evidence from a number of different welfare regimes in Europe has supported this thesis (Benjaminsen, 2016; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Parker, 2021; Waldron et al., 2019).

Although primary responsibility for tackling homelessness rests with EU member states, the *Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness,* which was launched by the European Commission in June 2021, commits member states to end homelessness by 2030, so that:

- No one sleeps on the street for lack of accessible, safe, and appropriate emergency accommodation;
- No one lives in emergency or transitional accommodation longer than is required for successful move-on to a permanent housing solution;
- No one is discharged from any institution (e.g. prison, hospital, care facility) without an offer of appropriate housing;

- Evictions should be prevented whenever possible and no one is evicted without assistance for an appropriate housing solution, when needed;
- No one is discriminated against due to their homelessness status.

In Canada, it has been estimated that on any given night there are 35 000 people who are experiencing homelessness and that there are approximately 235 000 people who experience homelessness in a year (Gaetz et al., 2016). Homelessness rose in the 1980s as the Federal Government substantially reduced funding for affordable housing, economic inequality increased, and housing and rent costs rose rapidly (Gaetz et al., 2016; Nelson and Saegert, 2009). Moreover, the nature of the homeless population has diversified. Homelessness is no longer confined to single men, but now includes other socially excluded groups, including low-income families, youth (with an overrepresentation of youth leaving the child welfare system and LGBTQ youth), and an overrepresentation of Indigenous people, particularly in the northern territories and the western provinces. Although the overall number of shelter beds has remained the same in Canada from 2005 to 2016, the number of unique shelter users has decreased by 20% (i.e., 159 000 in 2005 to 129 000 in 2016), mostly as a result of a decrease in adults aged 25-49 years old. However, the duration of shelter stays has increased for all age groups and for families (Duchesne et al., 2021).

Beginning in 1999, the Federal Government of Canada began to fund programmes for people experiencing homelessness. However, most of the services were crisis-oriented and consisted primarily of shelters and transitional housing. In the mid 2000s, responses to homelessness began to shift to a focus on permanent housing. The province of Alberta led the way with a 10-year plan to end homelessness using a HF approach. Shortly thereafter in 2008, the Federal Government funded the At Home/Chez Soi project, a national multi-site randomised controlled trial (RCT) of the Pathways HF approach (Nelson et al., 2020). In response to the trial's positive findings, the Federal Government required communities receiving funding from its homelessness initiative to expend a minimum percentage of it on HF programmes (i.e., 65% in the 10 largest cities) (Macnaughton et al., 2017).

In 2017, the Federal Government released an ambitious 10-year National Housing Strategy, allocating $40 billion through shared spending with provinces and municipalities, toward ending homelessness through the building of affordable housing, the renovation of public housing stock, and the creation of a new portable rent subsidy (Government of Canada, 2018). Lauded for the re-emergence of significant investment by the Federal Government in housing, the strategy did not include the continuation of mandated spending by communities on HF, slowing down significantly the shift from the predominant treatment first philosophy to HF.

In the US, 580 000 people were counted as homeless on a single night in 2020, roughly divided between individuals on the streets (35%), in shelters (35%), and families (30%) whom, thankfully, are mostly sheltered (Henry et al., 2021). Over the course of a year, 1.4 million people stay in shelters, a number that has shrunk only modestly since the US began to keep track in 2007 (Henry et al., 2021). Because most homelessness is temporary (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998), far more people experience homelessness over longer periods (with 17% having chronic patterns). African Americans, Latinx, Native Americans, and LGBTQ youth are overrepresented, even relative to their share of people living in poverty. Because children in families experiencing homelessness are mostly young, the age at which an American is most likely to spend a night in a homeless shelter is infancy (Shinn and Khadduri, 2020).

Homeless policy in the US has varied with federal administrations. The Clinton administration (1992-2000) asked communities to form 'continuums of care' to set priorities for federal funds. These are administrative units, but the name reflected the prevalent view that resolving homelessness required step-by-step programmes beginning with shelter, proceeding to transitional housing, and eventually leading to permanent housing. This was a treatment first, then housing approach.

During the administration of George W. Bush (2000-2008), the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the US Interagency Council on the Homeless (USICH) urged cities and states to develop 10-year plans to end homelessness, especially long-term homelessness. The plans came and went with only modest impact, although the supply of permanent supportive housing increased and long-term homelessness was modestly reduced (Urban Institute, 2020). The US Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) adopted a diluted version of HF, meaning providing housing with few barriers to entry without emphasising the importance of follow-up service support that Pathways HF argued for (Tsemberis, 2015), and confirmed by the evidence provided by the Canadian At Home/Chez Soi project (Goering et al., 2014).

The HF label has now been stretched to include 'rapid rehousing', a programme that provides short-term rental assistance with some services focused on housing and employment. During the Obama administration (2008-2016), pressure to reduce homelessness among America's 75 000 veterans resulted in the implementation of a HF programme called HUD-VASH, alongside other prevention and re-housing programmes. We describe this programme in more detail in the companion paper. During the Trump administration (2016-2020) the USICH had advocated a policy of returning to a treatment first approach and called for expanding shelters, providing treatment, and emphasising employment.

Key Roles for Social Scientists

In this section we describe the roles that social scientists can play in shaping how we think about homelessness (ideas). We explore the type of research conducted by social scientists in a crowded field where other disciplines, particularly medical research, are influential in shaping how policy makers think about homelessness (see for example, O'Sullivan et al., 2020) and the impact of social science research on policy. We also explore the role of research conducted in co-production with those with lived experience of homelessness in designing policy.

Ideas matter

Ideas about how problems like homelessness are framed are important for policy discourse (Fischer, 2003). Homelessness is often framed in terms of having either personal or structural determinants, or both (Pleace, 2016a). If homelessness is considered to result from individual psychopathology, poor choices, or a moral failing, then a model that emphasises 'treatment first' or charitable care is often invoked. Treatment and care are provided to help the individual reduce symptoms of mental illness and/or become abstinent from alcohol or drugs so that the person is prepared and made 'ready' for housing. In contrast, framing homelessness in terms of its structural determinants, including economic inequality, housing affordability, inadequate income, and deep poverty (Allen et al., 2020; Shinn and Khadduri, 2020), leads to policies that emphasise the provision of affordable housing and income supports (Aubry et al., 2020).

In the same vein, Shinn and Khadduri (2020) reframed the individual vs. structural determinants of homelessness binary. They argued that individual factors play a role in homelessness only because of structural factors. For example, if structural racism is reduced and disability incomes are adequate, individual characteristics like race and mental illness recede in importance as risk factors. Further, the understanding that homelessness is a state that many people pass through rather than a permanent trait leads to different thinking about intervention – how to prevent people from entering homelessness, speed up their exit, and prevent their return.

In the post-World War II period in most western industrial economies, homelessness was generally seen as a residual problem, consisting largely of single men, a problem that would gradually wither away as states broadened and deepened their reach to support vulnerable households. However, by the early 1980s, initially and most visibly in the US, it became apparent that homelessness had not faded away, rather the number experiencing homelessness was increasing, and was no longer experienced almost exclusively by single men. As the number of people experiencing homelessness increased during the 1980s and 1990s, the basic model of provision that prevailed for single men in earlier periods (i.e., rooming houses, shelters, and other congregate facilities providing basic subsistence, infused with various strands of rehabilitative, religious, and redemptive assumptions) was simply expanded, rather than changed to respond to the needs of the increasingly diverse population who were experiencing homelessness.

Social scientists can play the role of *conceptualiser-innovator*, providing new ideas that shape the narrative of homelessness as a social issue (Seidman and Rappaport, 1986). Many social scientists were clear about the structural causes of rising rates of homelessness from the 1980s onwards, and documented that countries with generous, comprehensive and integrated welfare, health, and housing systems had the lowest rates of people experiencing homelessness (O'Sullivan, 2010). They were also clear about the ineffectiveness of focusing on making people 'housing ready' as a response to what was, for the majority of people experiencing homelessness, effectively a problem of housing affordability. The problem was not the inability to *manage* a tenancy, but the inability to *afford* to pay for it. However, for the minority who were experiencing long-term or entrenched literal homelessness and mental health/problematic substance use, and those individuals were increasingly visible on the streets of cities in North America and Europe, social scientists lacked robust evidence-based alternative responses to ending their homelessness until the emergence of a new model of provision, Pathways HF, that was rigorously evaluated using the gold-standard of randomised control trial (RCT) (Greenwood et al., 2013).

This new model challenged the dominant 'housing ready' or 'treatment first' approach to addressing homelessness and proposed an alternative way of addressing homelessness (Tsemberis, 2015) that was validated by the research showing superior rates of retention in housing when compared to the 'treatment first' model. Guided by a belief that housing is a basic human right and a philosophy that emphasises empowerment, consumer choice, and recovery, Pathways HF consists of two major components: 1) subsidised, decent, affordable housing (typically facilitated by a rent supplement), offered without prerequisites for sobriety or participation in treatment; and 2) mobile, voluntary community-based supports (e.g., mental health, health, and problematic substance use) that are provided in clients' homes either directly or in partnership with other providers (Tsemberis, 2015). The Pathways HF model has been enormously influential in the way that homelessness is viewed across the world (Laval, 2019; Padgett et al., 2016; Pleace, 2016b; Raitakari and Juhila, 2015), albeit that Clarke et al. (2020, p.956) suggest that although the policy shift toward HF is increasingly powerful, it remains nonetheless 'mutable and fragile' amongst other 'competing policy discourses and ideas.'

In Europe, the term 'Housing-led', as well as HF, is used to describe responses to homelessness that stress the provision of permanent housing with supports as necessary, rather than temporary shelter-based responses, which often became long-term and expensive. The term Housing-led emerged from the deliberations of a Jury of Experts following a Consensus Conference on Homelessness held in Brussels in December 2010 which critiqued the provision of congregate shelters as a response to homelessness. For the Jury, Housing-led described:

> … All policy approaches that identify the provision and/or sustaining of stable housing with security of tenure as the initial step in resolving or preventing situations of homelessness. These approaches treat housing as a fundamental right and a prerequisite to solving other problems such as social health and other issues. (European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, 2010, p.14)

The intention was to distinguish such approaches from 'staircase' models and to conceptualise *all* approaches for *all* households that experienced homelessness that broadly adopted these principles, and not just specific HF programmes for those experiencing long-term and entrenched forms of homelessness.

Research and evaluation matters

The *researcher-evaluator* role is very important for social scientists to influence solutions to homelessness by bringing evidence into decision-making. Social scientists can bring skills in the evaluation of needs and preferences of service users, programme implementation, programme outcomes, and cost-benefit analysis to inform decision-makers. We now have good evidence about what works and what does not work to prevent and to end homelessness (Shinn, 2016; Shinn and Khadduri, 2020; O'Sullivan, 2020). We selectively provide a number of examples of a number of areas of research which have been particularly influential, namely understanding the composition of those experiencing homelessness, how to prevent homelessness, and evaluations of HF programmes.

Long-term, episodic, and transitional experiences of homelessness

One of the most influential lines of research informing homelessness policy has entailed the identification of different subgroups of individuals experiencing homelessness. In a pioneering study using longitudinal administrative data, Kuhn and Culhane (1998) identified three groups of adults based on the length and frequency of their use of homeless shelters in New York City and Philadelphia. The 'transitional' group was made up of a majority of shelter users and typically had only one relatively brief stay in shelters. In contrast, the 'episodic' group had somewhat longer stays and had multiple episodes while the 'chronic' group had the longest stays. The latter two groups were more likely to have physical and mental health problems, as well as problematic substance use, compared to the transitional group. Kuhn and Culhane's study has been replicated in other countries including Canada (Aubry et al., 2013; Jadidzadeh and Kneebone, 2018), Denmark (Benjaminsen and Andrade, 2015), Australia (Taylor and Johnson, 2019), and Ireland

(Waldron et al., 2019) and the policy response to this work has been for governments in these countries to prioritise the delivery of more intensive and longer-term support to the episodic and chronic groups of adults in particular, through programmes such as Pathways HF.

In some cases, the response was based on 'applying' the research evidence from other jurisdictions, particularly North America, to local contexts, and as local data confirmed the trends evident from North America, it bolstered efforts to provide support to an increasing number of households experiencing homelessness. For example, in the case of Ireland, there has been a shift from an exclusive emphasis on those literally homeless for accessing the HF programme to include those in emergency accommodation on a long-term basis (Government of Ireland, 2018).

Preventing homelessness

Recognising the importance of the *prevention of homelessness* to complement the research on programmes to help people exit homelessness, there has been some research on initiatives to prevent homelessness in the US, but less so in Canada and Europe (see, Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick, 2008). The same housing vouchers that end homelessness for families also prevented families receiving welfare benefits from becoming homeless, as found in a rigorous multi-site RCT (Wood et al., 2018). There is both experimental and quasi-experimental evidence that community-based services provided by New York City's Homebase programme work, more modestly, to prevent homelessness (Goodman et al., 2016; Rolston et al., 2013). The programme links individuals and families to all of the public benefits that they may be entitled to, and can help with eviction prevention, job placement, childcare, financial counselling, free legal representation, and other services. It can also provide small amounts of money to pay rent arrears or to stabilise a tenancy. Cash assistance to prevent evictions is a relatively common form of prevention assistance, and although most people who become evicted do not become homeless, this form of help reduced that number further (Evans et al., 2016). For each of these programmes, the prevention efforts made the most difference for people at highest risk of homelessness (those whose welfare benefits were about to end, those with the highest scores on a risk index, those who were poorest).

There is suggestive evidence that additional programmes can work as well. For example, screening military veterans who came in for medical services for homelessness risk was part of the large-scale effort that cut veteran homelessness nearly in half in the Obama administration. The challenge for targeted prevention programmes (as opposed to general efforts to increase incomes and the supply of affordable housing) is to get services to the people who will benefit most.

Programmes like eviction prevention often target people who are deemed worthy of assistance rather than people who are most likely to become homeless in the absence of assistance (Shinn and Khadduri, 2020).

Evaluating Housing First

In the past 10 years, several western European countries have implemented and evaluated HF programmes. In a cross-sectional study, Busch-Geertsema (2014) reported high rates of housing stability for participants in HF programmes in cities in five European countries. In a mixed methods study, Ornelas et al. (2014) found improvements in community integration for participants in a HF programme in Lisbon. In the recent HOME-EU cross-sectional study (Greenwood et al., 2020), the experiences of participants in HF were compared with participants in treatment first programmes in seven different countries. Across nations, it was found that participants in HF fared significantly better than those in treatment first programmes on measures of housing stability, housing quality, choice, satisfaction, psychiatric symptoms, and community integration. While the Busch-Geertsema study (2014) included Hungary and the HOME-EU study (Greenwood et al., 2020) included Poland, the extent to which HF can be implemented in other eastern European countries that have less robust housing systems for their citizens than those in western Europe is not clear at this point, and in the case of Poland, Wygnańska (2020) has noted some difficulties in implementing all aspects of HF, in particular the right to housing and consumer choice. While the findings from these studies are supportive of the HF approach, they do not meet the standards of a large-scale, randomised controlled trial (RCT). However, such a study was recently conducted in France.

A multi-city RCT was launched in France, *Chez Soi d'Abord,* in 2011 following a report to the Minister of Health (Girard et al., 2010) that showed people who experience long-term homelessness have significant chronic health conditions and a lower life expectancy, and that existing services were crisis-oriented and insufficient to promote social reintegration. Motivated by a combination of political will and the efforts of researchers, the trial of HF was larger and more ambitious from the standpoint of research rigour than its counterparts in other European countries described above. The HF trial was coordinated by DIHAL (Délégation Interministérielle pour l'Hébergement et l'accès au Logement), a governmental organisation created in 2010. The Pathways HF model was used, and participants were supported by multidisciplinary Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams made up of social workers, doctors, nurses, peer workers, and housing coordinators, working within a recovery-oriented approach (Tinland et al., 2013). A total of 700 individuals participated in the study that was located at four sites (Marseille, Lille metropolitan area, Toulouse, and Paris). Participants were interviewed over a period of 24 months.

Compared with TAU participants, the HF group was more stably housed, spent significantly fewer days in in-patient hospital admissions, and scored significantly better on a measure of quality of life (Tinland et al., 2020). A comparison of the costs of HF with ACT to TAU showed the reduction in use of services by HF recipients exceeded the cost of the HF programme (Tinland et al., 2020). In this study, a majority of the cost offsets were the result of a reduction of days spent in hospital for psychiatric crises and a reduction in emergency shelter stays. The trial also included a qualitative evaluation of the professional practices developed by the support teams, the individual trajectories of the people participating in the programme, and the institutional and political factors contributing to the programme's implementation (Hurtubise and Laval, 2016; Laval, 2017; Rhenter et al., 2018).

In Canada, the Federal Government through the Mental Health Commission of Canada launched the At Home/Chez Soi (AHCS) demonstration project in 2008. AHCS was a five-city pragmatic RCT that tested the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of Pathways HF compared to TAU with 2 148 participants (Goering et al., 2011). The study examined the effectiveness of HF with two different types of support, namely ACT for participants with high needs and Intensive Case Management (ICM) for those with moderate needs. Compared to TAU, HF proved to be more effective in helping people with both high needs and moderate needs to leave homelessness and achieve stable housing (Aubry et al., 2016; Stergiopoulos et al., 2015). A six-year follow-up of participants at the Toronto site found that HF recipients continued to show significantly better housing outcomes than TAU recipients (Stergiopoulos et al., 2019).

In addition to better housing stability outcomes, individuals with high needs receiving HF reported greater improvements than TAU in quality of life over the first 12 months of the study (Aubry et al., 2015), but these differences were no longer present at 24 months (Aubry et al., 2016). In contrast, people with moderate needs who were recipients of HF reported greater improvements in quality of life than recipients of TAU, with the differences continuing to be present at 24 months (Stergiopoulos et al., 2015). Analyses of cost offsets associated with HF programmes found that HF with ICM offset 46% of the costs (Latimer et al., 2019), and HF with ACT offset 69% of the costs (Latimer et al., 2020). Like Un Chez Soi d'Abord, AHCS also included qualitative research on the project's conception, planning, implementation, outcomes, and sustainability (Nelson et al., 2015).

The original Pathways HF programme in New York City described earlier was subjected to rigorous evaluation research by social scientist Sam Tsemberis and his colleagues. Tsemberis and Eisenberg (2000) conducted a quasi-experiment and compared 242 HF clients with 1 600 clients using New York City's residential continuum. Over a five-year period, 88% of the HF clients remained housed compared to 47% of the comparison group. Tsemberis et al. (2004) reported the results of a RCT with 225 homeless people with mental illness. After two years, participants randomised to HF were significantly less likely to be homeless or use psychiatric hospitals and incurred lower costs associated with different residential accommodations (i.e., emergency shelter, hospital, housing) than those receiving usual treatment (Gulcur et al., 2003). In another RCT conducted in a suburb of New York City with 260 participants experiencing homelessness, Stefancic and Tsemberis (2007) found that HF participants were significantly less likely to be homeless than participants in TAU over a four-year follow-up period.

HF programmes for individuals focus on people with serious mental illnesses and problematic substance use that more rarely affect families. Thus families, at least in the US where family homelessness is widespread, often require fewer services to succeed. In the US, the 12-site *Family Options* study randomly assigned over 2200 families recruited in homeless shelters to offers of one of three intervention programmes or usual care. The programmes on offer were: 1) long-term housing subsidies, typically vouchers for use with private landlord that held the families' housing expenses to 30% of their income; 2) short-term 'rapid rehousing' rental subsidies with some services focused on housing and employment; and 3) transitional housing programmes where families live in supervised settings and receive extensive psychosocial services for up to two years. Usual care typically involved more extended shelter stays followed, often, by entry into one of the other sorts of programmes. The interventions have different theoretical foundations: the idea that homelessness is a housing affordability problem that vouchers can solve; the idea that it is a temporary crisis best dealt with by getting people back into housing rapidly; and the idea that families who become homeless need extensive services to ready them for independent housing.

Results provided clear support for the housing-affordability perspective. Offers of long-term subsidies without dedicated services not only reduced homelessness and other forms of residential instability but also provided a platform for families to solve other problems on their own over the three-year follow-up period. Domestic violence, psychological distress, and problematic substance use decreased for adults. School moves, absenteeism, and behaviour problems dropped for children. Fewer parents became separated from their children, and families had less food insecurity. Paid work also went down slightly. All of these benefits cost only 9% more than usual care.

Transitional housing had modest effects on homelessness during the period that some families were in the transitional housing programmes but had no effect on any of the other outcomes. In particular, there was no benefit for the psychosocial outcomes that transitional housing is intended to affect. Further, if there were effects of the rapid rehousing programmes, which lasted about eight months, on average, the researchers missed them when they went back for their first follow-up 20 months after random assignment. Rapid rehousing was no worse than usual care, and cost slightly less, so it would be preferred on those grounds, but did not have the long-term benefits across multiple domains that the long-term subsidies provided (Gubits et al., 2018). The impressive findings of the Family Options study need to be tested in other countries to determine their generalisability.

The role of people who are experts by experience

Social scientists can play the role of *partnership-maker* to frame the problem of homelessness. When homelessness policy is developed, various stakeholders (e.g., service-providers and planners from different sectors) have input. However, people who are most directly affected by the problem, those with lived experience of homelessness (Mangano, 2017) or mental illness (Trainor and Reville, 2014), are often sidelined in policy formulation and practice. The HF approach was developed by asking people with mental illness who are homeless what they needed and what their preferences were for housing and support (Tsemberis et al., 2003). Overwhelmingly, people who have experienced homelessness, including those who experienced severe mental illness, see their most urgent problem as a lack of access to housing, not as a need for treatment, and they want to live in a secure, private place, ideally an apartment of their own (Richter and Hoffman, 2017). Many HF programmes incorporate people with lived experience as staff, supervisors, and directors on the board of the agency.

At an EU level, the most formal inclusion of experts by experience was evident in the preparatory committee for the aforementioned European Consensus Conference on Homelessness in 2010, and the preparation of a 'European Consultation of Homeless People' process, which included the views of 225 experts by experience across eight member states.

In France, various initiatives to involve people with lived experience have recently emerged. The Un Chez Soi d'Abord HF programmes in Marseille and Paris publish newsletters featuring contributions from people who are experts by virtue of their experiences. Moreover, new HF sites in France, created since 2019, have also launched participatory initiatives, such as support groups for tenants. During the COVID-19 pandemic, WhatsApp groups and peer support platforms facilitate continued meeting, either as part of the programme or as part of a network of peers available in a region. As well, there is a promising development at the national level in France, namely the creation of a national training programme for peer support workers, known in France as 'médiateur de santé pair' (peer health mediators).

The first attempts to have salaried peer support workers are recent, notably with the MARSS (Mouvement et Action pour le Rétablissement Sanitaire et Socialeteam) in Marseille in 2007, followed by the Un Chez Soi d'Abord HF programme in 2011, and the Programme Médiateurs de Santé Pairs in 2012, with training of peer support workers conducted at the undergraduate level, which also included research training. For the past five years, the development of peer support workers has gone beyond the boundaries of HF programmes into mental health services in France. For example, in Marseille, peer support groups and the creation of a Recovery College were formed in the city in response to the efforts of Un Chez Soi d'Abord in partnership with founders of these projects and in recognition of the value of experiential knowledge.

Un Chez Soi d'Abord provides an exemplary case with regard to the participation of people with lived experience of mental illness and homelessness. In particular, the peer support worker in HF programmes represents an influential example for bringing the issue of power-sharing to light and legitimising experiential knowledge and expertise. However, these positions still have relatively minimal influence when it comes to decision-making with regard to the delivery of services.

People with expertise by virtue of lived experience played a central role in the planning, implementation, evaluation, and knowledge translation (KT) of the Canadian/Chez Soi project (Nelson et al., 2016). They played an advisory role during project formulation and implementation and participated on the National Research Team and National Working Group that guided the project. Experts by virtue of experience were also hired as researchers and service-providers. All HF teams that use Assertive Community Treatment must have a peer support worker. The voices of people with lived experience were also loud and clear in KT activities. Notably, people who were experts by virtue of experience were profiled in a National Film Board production on the project (Here at Home, 2012). Currently, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness has formed the Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network to recognise the value of and amplify the voices of people with expertise by virtue of experience.

Conclusion

Experiences from Europe, Canada, and the US demonstrate that social scientists can, in some cases, shape how homelessness is framed, and bring about evidence-based shifts in policy responses that have proven to be effective in ending homelessness for some people experiencing homelessness. While problem framing and rigorous research have established a firm foundation for homelessness policy change, they are insufficient in terms of achieving such change. In some European countries like France and Finland (discussed in our Part II companion paper), governments have made progress in reducing homelessness using HF and other approaches. However, in North America, levels of homelessness remain stubbornly persistent in spite of the development of HF programmes.

How do we account for the uneven progress in reducing homelessness in Europe and North America and what are the implications for the roles and strategies that social scientists can take to end and prevent homelessness? Much of the criticism of HF focuses on how it functions in nations governed by neo-liberal agendas, including increasing economic inequality, a hollowing out of the state (especially the state's role in housing for citizens living on low income), strong reliance on markets, and blaming the victims for not achieving housing stability and economic productivity on their own (Baker and Evans, 2016). Moreover, in their analysis of the genealogies of supported housing, Hopper and Barrow (2013) note that supported housing in mental health, like HF programmes, use existing housing stock in a market where rents and housing prices are rapidly rising, while the affordable housing approach focuses on the creation of new housing stock for people living on low-income. In a companion paper, we address strategies for expanding evidence-based practices to end and prevent homelessness in its larger political context. We will note the importance of the political context in efforts to reduce homelessness.

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Research Note

Part B

COVID-19 Response and Homelessness in the EU

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Introduction

This research note aims to take stock of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected people experiencing homelessness and services around Europe, what kinds of responses were rolled out in different contexts during Europe's first and second waves, and finally, what can and should be done going forward.

Since long before the pandemic, a vast body of literature has established a link between housing and health. In its 2019 health equity status report, the World Health Organisation concluded that one of the most important requirements for closing the health gap is investing in housing and community facilities (World Health Organisation, 2019, p.xxviii). Since housing is one of the most important social determinants of health, those without it are especially vulnerable in this respect, and often suffer from weakened immune and respiratory systems. It was no surprise then, that in the context of an infectious respiratory disease pandemic, people experiencing homelessness were considered to be one of the most at-risk groups. People experiencing homelessness can be both socially and clinically vulnerable to infectious respiratory disease. The living conditions of homelessness, especially for those experiencing street homelessness and/or in emergency shelter, increase risk of transmission and compromise both access to hygiene and the possibility to socially distance. Those experiencing homelessness also face multiple barriers in accessing healthcare as well as public health information. Chronic homelessness is associated with poor health and disability. Prevalence of respiratory disease is relatively high. Given these risks and vulnerabilities, as COVID-19 cases and deaths started to rise in Europe, there was a fear that infection and mortality rates amongst people experiencing homelessness would be disproportionately high compared to the general population.

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In many ways, such fears were justified: in a survey carried out in Paris at emergency food distribution sites, emergency shelters, and migrant workers' hostels, 52.7% of surveyed individuals tested positive[1]: 88.7% at the migrant workers' hostels, 50.5% in emergency shelters, and 27.8% among individuals sampled from food distribution points (Roederer et al., 2020). Roederer et al. (2020) identified living in crowded conditions as the most important factor explaining the variation in exposure levels, echoing similar findings carried out in other countries (Tinson and Clair, 2020). However, a number of studies suggest much lower prevalence rates than expected, revealing a mixed picture. In Ireland, prevalence and mortality rates in Spring 2020 were lower than expected, with 2% of the homeless population diagnosed (compared to 1% of the general population) (O'Carroll et al., 2021). O'Carroll et al. (2021) attribute this outcome to the availability of shielding accommodation as well as a swift, decisive, and coordinated response focused on people experiencing homelessness. Similarly, a Dutch study concluded that strictly in terms of incidence, the homeless population was not more affected than the general population (Van Laere et al. 2020, p.5). Adequate implementation of protective measures and additional shelter capacity to reduce overcrowding and shared airspace is likely to have contributed to this, emphasising the importance of early and effective communication across sectors, clear information and outreach on guidelines, low-threshold testing, and sufficient accommodation space (Van Laere et al., 2020).

Taken together, the above mentioned studies illustrate the difference made by putting in place protective measures during the pandemic. One aim of this research note is to provide an overview of what these measures were in order to better understand what worked well and what did not. Furthermore, the studies appear to confirm much of what was already known or could be inferred from existing research on housing and health. Firstly, housing is ultimately what makes self-isolation possible, and is therefore one of the best forms of protection against infection. Secondly, worse health outcomes (in this case in the form of higher infection rates) are linked to overcrowding and living or working in hazardous conditions. An overarching argument in this research note is that, when it comes to homelessness, what the pandemic effectively did was bring into clearer focus an already existing problem with already existing solutions. It should be understood not so much as an anomaly but rather as an intensification of existing conditions, which has underlined the inadequacy of the regular policy responses to homelessness in Europe.

1 426 out of 818 individuals.

Content and Scope of this Note

The aim of this research note is to provide a general overview of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted people experiencing homelessness and homeless services in Europe, how public authorities responded and through what measures, and what kinds of commitments can and should be expected as we look ahead. The paper is structured as follows: Part 1 of the research note reviews measures across three categories: targeted public health measures, accommodation, and prevention. Part 2 outlines longer-term commitments that have been made by governments to secure adequate and permanent housing, provides some further recommendations, and concludes.

The research note draws on desk research, literature reviews, as well as two informal surveys of FEANTSA members in March-May and December respectively through a Google Group set up at the beginning of the pandemic to facilitate information sharing and exchange. During the first wave, FEANTSA regularly sent out update requests and gathered comparative information on specific measures (extent of testing for homeless population, number of additional emergency places created directly as result of COVID-19, post-lockdown plans), keeping track of updates in a document that could be accessed by all Google Group members. Relatively little primary research into the impact of COVID-19 on people experiencing homelessness has been carried out yet. As we are still in the midst of the pandemic, this note is a tentative attempt to summarise key learning points and recommendations at this juncture.

FEANTSA's analysis comes with certain inherent limitations. Given the uncertainty and fluctuation of the pandemic and its policy responses, the information is highly time-sensitive. Furthermore, the information collection process can sometimes be geographically skewed due to factors such as language, information availability, and accessibility. Finally, the research note aims for breadth and comparison using measures in different EU countries as illustrative examples of different responses, rather than a thorough country-by-country overview and evaluation.

Part 1. Review of Measures

One of the most memorable aspects of the lockdowns, and particularly the first round, has been the 'stay home' imperative circulating across all imaginable media. This sudden focus on staying home to protect oneself and others made homelessness very visible. Public authorities and services were thus starkly confronted with the vulnerability of people experiencing homelessness. An immediate advocacy agenda was created, which in some cases lead to urgent policy attention. In many contexts, protecting people experiencing homelessness became a public health priority almost overnight. The following section looks at measures taken by EU Member States and local authorities across three areas: targeted public health measures, new and existing accommodation, and prevention. For a more detailed EU-level overview of impacts on people experiencing homelessness and services, see FEANTSA (2021).

1.1 Targeted public health measures

Pandemic planning and guidance for the medically and socially vulnerable

In a 2016 report titled *Pandemic Preparedness and Homelessness: Lessons from H1N1 in Canada* (Buccieri and Schiff, 2016), the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness notes the following on the relationship between homelessness and pandemics: "Homelessness presents a key challenge to effective pandemic preparedness because of people experiencing homelessness's vulnerability to disease and their socially marginal status and, most significantly, because of the inherent weaknesses in a response to homelessness that relies mostly on the provision of emergency services and supports" (p.13). All countries, including in Europe, seem to have been under-prepared for a pandemic, including planning for medically and socially vulnerable populations[2].

In early March 2020, following the first COVID-19 outbreaks in Europe, some public authorities used the short window of opportunity to develop swift and coordinated plans to protect people experiencing homelessness, working closely with the sector and providing guidance[3]. Ireland's Health Services Executive's plan in the Dublin region is one example. Such planning by health authorities in cooperation with the homeless sector seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. In many countries, official guidance was missing for many weeks into the outbreak, even after lockdowns had been put in place, and came only after calls from the homeless sector. Guidance that was published at the outset of the pandemic was sometimes inadequately adapted to the operational reality of these settings. More detailed and specific guidance for the homeless sector has emerged with time in various countries.

At the European Level, the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) published guidance for medically and socially vulnerable populations in June (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2020) but published relatively little sector-specific guidance, particularly when compared to the extensive guidance produced by its US counterpart United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC) (United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention,

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2 After the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, the ECDC/WHO published guidance on key changes to pandemic plans, but it makes no mention of vulnerable groups or homelessness.

3 See HSE (2020) for Ireland's guidance published by the Health Service Executive on 4 March 2020.

2020). The ECDC guidance that was issued was mostly directed at service providers rather than public authorities. Like much of the guidance issued in homeless service settings, especially in the early weeks, it struggled to take full account of the reality in these places; placing emphasis on coordination and cooperation over more categorical risks such as shared air space and under what conditions services should remain open. The ECDC's efforts to plan to protect people experiencing homelessness have improved since, especially in relation to vaccine distribution. The ECDC has consulted FEANTSA on how to ensure vaccine access for people experiencing homelessness.

Health outreach and information

Public authorities and services rolled out targeted health outreach for people experiencing homelessness to varying degrees. Targeted health communication and outreach have proved important given the rapid and fluctuating roll-out of measures restricting access to public space, and the greater barriers of access to information and services facing people experiencing homelessness.

Homeless services sought to provide information to service users and staff as quickly as possible. Measures included the production and dissemination of information materials (videos, leaflets, posters, etc.). The availability of these materials in different languages was important in many contexts[4]. In some countries organisations on the ground reported that such efforts were lacking, generating confusion about the situation, especially among non-native speakers.

Failure to adapt the enforcement of general public health measures to the circumstances of people experiencing homelessness created a more hostile environment for them in some instances. For example, since lockdown rules were predominantly designed on an assumption that there was somewhere for everyone to stay inside or stay at home, situations arose where people experiencing homelessness were issued fines for not observing lockdown rules despite having nowhere else to go (Dearden, 2020; Bacchi and Chandran, 2020).

Food and hygiene

Access to services providing food and hygiene has been put under pressure during lockdowns. Maintaining and adapting these services presented a range of logistical and sanitary challenges once social distancing and lockdown measures were introduced. In many countries, day centres and soup kitchens rely heavily on volunteers, making them particularly vulnerable to lockdown. As countries closed down, food services such as soup kitchens had to close or adapt, often by inviting fewer or no people inside and instead handing out food boxes and takeaway meals to be eaten outside the facilities. In Spain, community canteens (*comedores sociales*)

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4 See Groundswell (2020), Doctors of the World (2020), or HSE (2020a) for examples.

were opened to distribute food for takeaway. In France, food cheques (*chèques déjeuner*) were made available for people who could no longer rely on food banks. In Bratislava, food packages for the homeless were prepared, including a hygiene kit (hand disinfectant and face mask), and distributed throughout the city by a team of social workers and NGOs. At the very beginning of the pandemic, Bratislava City Hall also opened hygienic stations (sinks and drinkable water) in public spaces frequented by people experiencing homelessness, to make up for the lack of opportunities for accessing hygienic care that resulted from the lockdown. In Brussels, the closure of small voluntary-sector day centres was met with a coordinated response from the public agency BrussHelp, which enabled centralised staffing, planning, and opening of new temporary provisions for the pandemic, for example at a Youth Hostel and public swimming pool.

Social support

During the most severe lockdown periods when all face-to-face contacts were prohibited, for many social services this meant outreach work and counselling had to stop or instead take place via telephone, video call, mail, outside, or in-home offices if available. Many homeless services have had to innovate in order to continue to support users.

Some Housing First services replaced visits from a social worker with video calls. For example, RAIS, an organisation providing Housing First in Spain, developed practical guidance on this which was also shared and adapted by colleagues around Europe.

The new restrictions had important implications for harm reduction practices. As O'Carroll et al. (2021) explain, substance use was identified as one of the main deterrents to compliance with isolation guidelines, and having to collect medication from treatment centres would increase risk exposure. In Ireland, these problems were addressed by increasing treatment capacity, which significantly reduced waiting times (from many weeks to a couple of days), and by allowing harm reduction services to collect clients' medication and deliver it at set intervals (O'Carroll et al., 2021).

Digital exclusion also became more visible as schools and other physical settings were moved online. In France, a partnership between Fondation Abbé Pierre and Emmaüs was launched to provide homeless families with computers and internet connection in order for their children to be able to follow online classes, which would have otherwise been impossible.

Finally, where new temporary accommodation solutions were rolled out (which will be addressed in the next section) the availability and quality of social support in these settings proved crucial. Where hotels have been used to provide new, temporary accommodation, the availability of social support has been an important success factor (e.g. London, Brussels, Prague). Similarly, in Dublin, social support to people experiencing homelessness moved into shielding units (accommodation for those advised to follow strict stay-at-home guidance because of vulnerability to COVID19) was a critical part of the strategy.

Testing

As the risk of asymptomatic transmission came to light, testing widely and often in crowded living spaces such as shelters became all the more important. In their study for Médecins Sans Frontieres, Roederer et al. (2020) found that more than two-thirds of seropositive individuals had not reported any symptoms. A similar Italian study by Ralli et al. (2020), who tested residents and staff across a number of homeless shelters in Rome, found that 75% of positive cases were asymptomatic, leading them to conclude that early identification of asymptomatic carriers is important to avoid transmission and outbreaks in shelters. As Barocas et al. (2020) point out, this explains why symptom screening, one of the most frequently used measures to contain the virus in shelter settings, proved largely ineffective as the sole means of prevention. Furthermore, as one FEANTSA member pointed out, there was little point in testing without adequate self-isolation units or structures in place. In the best-case scenarios, testing is a means to effective triage and treatment.

An informal survey carried out with FEANTSA members in early April 2020 revealed a wide variation in testing in homeless accommodation settings across Member States. In Denmark, Region Hovedstaden turned their tuberculosis testing service into a mobile COVID-19 testing service (Kass et al., 2020). In Brussels, a central dispatching service guaranteed by BrussHelp (a public agency) started deploying GPs to homeless services in the case of suspected COVID-19 cases, to evaluate whether the person needed to be isolated or hospitalised. In Dublin, the COVID-19 Homeless Response included protocols for identification and immediate testing for homeless clients with symptoms (O'Carroll et al., 2021). An existing primary care charity played an important role in testing in homeless services in Dublin. In Budapest, the Municipality undertook an effort to test all employees working in the homeless sector (and other social services). The testing of all service users and workers in the homeless care sector started on 16 April, and was financed by the municipality. By May 11, 1 822 service users and 406 employees had been given a PCR test. In Denmark, health personnel were testing at set days at shelters, while in some other countries testing was made available in the case of symptoms, and in others no testing of people experiencing homelessness was taking place. It is important to note that many of these reports come from the early months when testing was not yet available at scale, and that as testing capacity in countries increased, the ability to test widely in shelter settings may have changed as well. It seems clear that effective testing strategies for people experiencing homelessness are a precondition for triage and access to treatment when needed. Without this, people who are homeless are extremely vulnerable because of their living conditions. The arrival of more infectious variants seems to heighten the urgency for effective testing strategies for vulnerable groups like the homeless.

Vaccine access

One of the most important protective measures that was not on the horizon until the end of 2020 is vaccination against COVID-19. There is a clear case for prioritising people experiencing homelessness for vaccination on the basis of vulnerability. In October 2020, the European Commission published recommendations on key elements to be taken into consideration by Member States in developing their vaccination strategies (European Commission, 2020). In the priority groups that the EC asks its Member States to consider, three categories implicitly encompass prioritising the homeless population ("Vulnerable population due to chronic diseases, co-morbidities and other underlying conditions"; "Communities unable to physically distance"; and "Vulnerable socioeconomic groups and other groups at higher risk"). As vaccination roll-out proceeds, there has been considerable variation on how strategies have been conceived, and on whether the homeless population is a high-priority group.

The UK was the first European country to begin vaccinating its population. Housing Minister Robert Jenrick said at the beginning of January that the UK Government planned on going further than the 'Everyone In' initiative and focus on GP registration of people experiencing street homelessness, in order to ensure they do not miss out on the vaccine (Peachey, 2021). However, ensuring people do not miss out on the vaccine is not the same as actively prioritising them, and in countries where the responsibility of the vaccine distribution happens at more local levels, the extent to which people experiencing homelessness are prioritised in practice may be a matter of discretion at this level. For example, Oldham Council in Greater Manchester developed, together with local GPs, the first scheme in the UK to make people experiencing homelessness a priority group for the vaccine (Forres Gazette, 2021), and more councils have since followed suit (Mohamoud, 2021).

Since the beginning of 2021, Denmark has been among the fastest European countries in terms of vaccination per capita (Our World in Data, 2021). Following a shelter outbreak in Copenhagen where 26 people tested positive for coronavirus, concerned associations as well as the Mayor of Copenhagen called on the country's Minister of Social Affairs to move people experiencing homelessness further up the vaccination priority queue, which in Denmark currently comprises 12 groups (Jyllands-Posten, 2021). According to the Danish Street Lawyers' Association, people experiencing homelessness would have initially been vaccinated in priority group 10, but following these calls, the Minister of Social Affairs announced in a statement on 19 January that “homeless and socially vulnerable people who are particularly at risk are vaccinated in category 5” (The Local DK, 2021), which is one of the groups being offered the vaccine at the time of writing.

In other countries, prioritisation strategies for the vaccine vary. At the time of writing, Spain had published its most recent update on the roll-out on 21 January 2021, and remained in its first vaccination phase that encompasses four groups of healthcare workers, which will be followed by those aged 80 and above (Sistema Nacional de Salud 2021). Spain seems to gradually release more information about upcoming priority groups as the vaccination schedule moves along rather than outlining all priority groups from the start, as other countries have done. In Germany, asylum seekers and staff working in asylum seeker facilities as well as people living in shelters are part of the second priority group to receive the vaccine, following the elderly (80+) and healthcare workers (InfoMigrants, 2020).

Given the difficulty that most EU Member States are facing in rolling out vaccination programmes, groups that risk being seen as ‘undeserving’ such as people experiencing homelessness may be overlooked. Ensuring that they are reached is one of the most urgent priorities for the homeless sector at this point in the pandemic.

1.2 Accommodation

The impacts of the outbreak and the ensuing lockdowns were immediately and deeply felt across homeless accommodation services. Policy decisions on the provision of homeless accommodation during the pandemic varied a lot, both geographically and over time. Overall, the pandemic has thrown a spotlight on the inadequacy of much of the accommodation for people experiencing homelessness and the need to do better.

Existing accommodation

Services had to work quickly to adapt their service provision, and ensure social distancing measures, which is extremely difficult in a typical shelter setting. Shelters unable to maintain adequate safety and hygiene conditions under these new circumstances faced the prospect of having to close their doors or reduce bed spaces and turn people away. The trade-off between safe airspace and shelter capacity sometimes led to mixed messages from different levels of government and/or services, and was made all the more difficult by the rising demand for services, as well as increasing homelessness in many places as a direct consequence of the pandemic.

An immediate priority for the homeless sector was to adapt existing shelters and other accommodation services to facilitate social distancing measures as far as possible. This adaptation was initially very difficult given that self-isolation units with own bathroom facilities are difficult, if not impossible, to provide in most temporary accommodation for the homeless, and also due to the scarcity of PPE equipment at the beginning of the pandemic. The degree to which this was achieved depended on the level of public authority engagement and the resources made available.

Existing shelters sought to limit the movement of people coming in and out of shelters, which in many cases meant turning night shelters into 24/7 shelters, but keeping the residents fixed and not accepting new referrals. Some services set up rooms for self-isolation for anyone showing symptoms. Particularly difficult to adapt are large dormitories. Shelters adapted as best as they could by placing mobile walls between the beds and moving the most at-risk and vulnerable into safer and more contained units. Links between social services and medical personnel were strengthened during this time, through agreements with GPs and hospitals or other healthcare personnel to help identify possible cases that would require self-isolation.

Another early priority was the extension of winter programmes into the spring and the creation of additional capacity. Extensions varied in length, with most extended until at least May 2020 after the first wave of COVID-19. For example, the city of Madrid initially extended its Winter Plan from March 31 to May 31, and later re-extended it until the beginning of the next one, effectively turning it into a full-year programme. In France, where the winter programme was also extended, this provided 14 000 emergency shelter beds.

New accommodation

The pandemic has driven many public authorities to provide additional accommodation to people experiencing homelessness, so as to get them off the streets and/or out of accommodation associated with increased risk of transmission. An informal survey carried out by FEANTSA through its COVID-19 Google Group just over a month into the first lockdown (late April 2020) found that across 10 EU Member States[5], around 22 200 additional temporary accommodation places had been made available as a result of the lockdown, though this number is likely to have varied a lot since then. In France alone, 21 000 extra shelter places were created, of which 11 397 were in hotels. Ninety seven treatment centres for people experiencing homelessness with COVID-19 were created, and an additional budget of €50 million was made available. Many cities took action to increase local shelter capacity. Berlin, for example, rented additional hostel space containing 200 beds, with rooms containing no more than two people (Pleace et al., 2021).

Driven by a desire to reduce rough sleeping and the number of people in shared airspace settings, bold measures have been taken to mobilise self-contained accommodation units. Hotels, tourist flats, public buildings, and student housing have all been used for these purposes. In cities all over Europe, public authorities

5 Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, UK.

set up contracts with hotels in order to use the rooms to accommodate people experiencing homelessness, often for an initial period of around 12 weeks (from April until June). For example, the British ‘Everyone In’ scheme saw some 15 000 people placed into emergency accommodation, mainly in hotels. This extraordinary mobilisation showed that “given the mandate and funding, councils, working with their partners, have the means to end the vast majority of rough sleeping” (Cooms and Gray, 2020, p. 22). A modelling study estimated that between the beginning of the outbreak and 31 May 2020, these measures may have avoided “21 092 infections (19 777–22 147), 266 deaths (226–301), 1 164 hospital admissions (1 079–1 254), and 338 ICU admissions (305–374) among the homeless population” in England (Lewer et al., 2020, p. 1181). In Czechia, Prague City Hall accommodated around 300 people experiencing homelessness in hotels until at least March 2021 (Tesarkova, 2020). In the Autumn, the City of Prague announced its intention to buy hotels, hostels, or apartment blocks to provide a longer term supported housing offer to 500 people (Zabransky, 2020).

Another type of accommodation that emerged was the use of larger facilities such as football stadiums, pavilions, or conference centres to create large temporary shelters. In the city of Mons in Belgium, the municipality agreed to host the homeless at the Tondreau football stadium, where they could also use the showers. In Madrid and Barcelona, major conference centres and pavilions were transformed into emergency shelters that could accommodate 150 people each. Lisbon City Council made available the Casal Vistoso Pavilion by turning it into two large dormitory spaces. Although the intention with these larger spaces is to line up the beds such that safe distances are ensured, the airspace remains shared between many people, and though the beds may be at a safe distance, maintaining this distance between people throughout the whole day remains a challenge. More generally, even in places with a significant mobilisation to house and protect people experiencing homelessness, there was arguably insufficient attention paid to the problem of shared airspace and to the risk that accommodation centres intended to protect large groups of people would themselves become dangerous due to the limited possibilities for isolation.

Whilst evidence is still limited, there appear to be striking differences in infection rates in different contexts. High rates of infection in homeless services in France and the US contrast with much lower-than-expected rates in the UK and in Dublin, for example. As mentioned earlier, French research has shown that settings with the least private space have the highest rates of infection. Homeless services have proved more resilient in the face of the pandemic in contexts where people experiencing homelessness are provided with individual accommodation or ordinary housing (Pleace et al., 2021).

COVID-19 has the potential to provide a turning point whereby the main focus of homelessness policy shifts away from emergency accommodation towards the provision of more adequate housing solutions. The extent to which this happens will depend on whether public authorities are willing to build on short-term measures to create substantive change. At the time of writing, this remains very unclear in many contexts. There has been a notable lack of consistency in measures during the pandemic in some countries, with robust actions taken during the first wave subsequently dissipating. For example, a report by the National Audit Office found that the UK Government's response to the resurgence of COVID-19 in England during the second wave did not appear as comprehensive as the initial 'Everyone In' in the Spring (National Audit Office, 2021).

Access to accommodation for particular vulnerable groups

Some groups of people experiencing homelessness face barriers in accessing accommodation. In some instances, these barriers were reduced during the pandemic. In others, access was curtailed.

The extent to which undocumented migrants were included in new protective measures was a problem highlighted in multiple country reports and during FEANTSA information exchanges. In the UK, councils faced a conflict in that the government strategy to bring 'Everyone In' initially included those with no recourse to public funds. However, this was not matched by a change in eligibility for benefits or council services for these groups (NRPF Network, 2020). UK local authorities were offering emergency accommodation to a significant number of individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), but planning was made difficult due to these inconsistencies between lockdown measures and other existing policies (Boobis and Albanese, 2020), highlighting the discrepancies that often exist between policy announcements, their practical implications, and their on-the-ground implementation (including actual funding allocations). After an initial easing of access, central government reminded local authorities in May 2020 that legal restrictions on offering support to people with NRPF remained in force, and that exceptions should only be made in cases of risk to life. Some local authorities stopped taking those with NRPF into emergency accommodation and sought to move on those already in such accommodation (National Audit Office, 2021). Some countries, like Italy and Portugal, dealt with the situation of undocumented migrants by offering temporary regularisation programmes. In Portugal, the first country to take such an initiative, the programme granted access to health care, welfare provisions, as well as to the labour market, to those who had applied for a residence permit before 18 March 2020 (PICUM, 2020). However, while some measures were taken to mitigate the difficulties facing undocumented migrants during the pandemic, other decisions exacerbated them: a number of EU Member States directly or indirectly suspended asylum procedures as part of their lockdown or state of emergency measures. In Belgium, the arrival centre for asylum seekers was closed down, effectively barring them from the application process. In Greece and the Netherlands, the asylum procedure was suspended for a set time until beginning or mid-April, raising concerns over the compatibility of such measures with international human rights law. For a more complete overview of country measures in this area, see ECRE (2020).

Other mobile people experiencing homelessness also faced challenges accessing essential services. For example, in Germany, there were examples of shelters that closed their doors to people with no local connection to an area, which is illegal (Pleace et al., 2021).

Domestic violence has increased during the pandemic. This is the main driver of homelessness among women and family homelessness. It is unclear at this point to what extent policies and services in different countries have been able to respond adequately to women and family homelessness during the covid crisis (Pleace et al., 2021).

Another gap in understanding at this juncture is the relationship between youth homelessness and the covid crisis, and the adequacy of policy responses in this field.

1.3 Prevention

Eviction bans

In the context of homelessness, preventive measures are understood to encompass a wide range of economic and social policies that support individuals and households so that the risk of homelessness is mitigated. The preventive focus of this research note is on the handling of evictions, though prevention also includes broader measures such as furlough schemes and other economic assistance. A detailed account of eviction bans across member states falls beyond the scope of this research note.

In Spain, when the first lockdown started, the General Council of the Judiciary ordered a postponement of all non-urgent judicial activities nationwide, including evictions. A Royal Decree Law (8/2020, March 17) also guaranteed a moratorium on mortgage payments, a guaranteed supply of water and energy for vulnerable consumers, and maintenance of electronic communications services and broadband connectivity. Similar measures, targeting mortgages, evictions, and water and energy supplies, were taken in many other EU Member States, though not all. In Sweden for example, a ban on evictions was never put in place, and the situation was left to case-by-base negotiation between residents and landlords or housing associations. Decisions to halt evictions were therefore made at the level of the housing associations, rather than national level policy (Dagens Arena, 2020). For a detailed account of mortgage holidays, eviction bans, and other housing policies related to COVID-19 in Europe, see Kholodilin (2020).

However, a ban on evictions alone is not watertight as a preventive measure. As some critics pointed out, the legislation underpinning eviction bans sometimes did little more than extend the notice period for evictions, meaning landlords were still able to serve notices that would simply be processed a few months later. Some tenants' rights advocates argued a ban on evictions did not go far enough, as it simply kicked the indebtedness can down the road, and the accumulated rent would have to be repaid eventually. How exactly this repayment would play out is not always clear. In the UK, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has stated that following the end of the eviction ban, landlords and tenants are expected to work together to establish a repayment plan, taking into account tenant circumstances (UK Parliament, 2020), which shifts the indebtedness problem to a case-by-case basis with little remaining protection of tenants and the possibility of landlords to once again serve eviction notices. A more far-reaching protective measure is the creation of an emergency fund specific to rental arrears and related costs, such as the one that was put in place by the Lyon Metropolitan Region in June 2020. This €1.3m fund, set up for March to December 2020, allows Lyon (Greater Lyon) to take up 50-100% of unpaid rent or bills for low-income households – both renters and owner-occupiers, and both social or private rental housing – who have been financially impacted by the crisis (Petit, 2020).

A second problem concerns gaps in the legislation that leave some people unprotected in the face of evictions. In the case of the UK's eviction ban, no protection was offered to residents who can be evicted without notice, which includes those who live in temporary housing (Apps, 2020). A few months after the ban was first implemented in the UK, research done by The Guardian using a freedom of information request found that between April and November 2020, at least 90 000 people had been threatened with homelessness, and half of these people had lost their accommodation. The research pointed to gaps in the protection offered by the evictions ban and the 'Everyone In' scheme, due to certain groups of people – young people living precariously or those attempting to leave a violent partner – falling through the cracks of the protective measures (The Guardian, 2020)[6].

The plethora of eviction bans that were announced during the first lockdown and their various legal details once again underscores the importance of reading the fine print, which is where people may continue slipping through the cracks, as well as researching and following up on whether the implementation and upholding of the bans has been adequate. Understanding the practical implications and

6 For a detailed discussion on COVID-19 and evictions in the UK, see Jordan (2020).

consequences of the various eviction bans as well as whether such bans may prompt changes in the practice of evictions in the future, constitute possible lines of future inquiry.

Evolution of eviction bans[7]

Eviction bans imposed in Spring 2020 have evolved in different directions in tandem with other changes to restrictions and lockdown measures. Different countries have followed different trajectories regarding extensions and suspensions of the ban. In Italy, the ban was put in place and continuously extended, but on 18 December the government rejected a proposal to extend the ban until 31 March 2021, with evictions set to resume 1 January 2021 at the time of writing (People's Dispatch, 2020). In the UK, a ban on evictions was put in place, lifted, and subsequently reintroduced, and is currently in place until 31 March 2021. In Ireland, an initial broad suspension on all grounds was introduced at the beginning of the pandemic, which was repealed after the first wave. New legislation was introduced which protected those who had lost income due to COVID-19 and were at risk of eviction due to rent arrears. When the second wave led to a second lockdown, legislation was introduced to protect from evictions when the country is at the most severe phase of lockdown (level 5). As the country emerged from level 5, this protection expired. Making eviction protection conditional on the level of severity of the outbreak has also been done in Scotland, where the ban on eviction orders due to expire on 22 January has now been extended until end of March 2021, but the extension will apply to areas under level three or four restrictions, with exceptions for serious anti-social behaviour including domestic abuse (Peachey, 2021).Writing a year on from the beginning of the pandemic, and with lockdown measures here to stay for the foreseeable future, it remains unclear what the fallout from and resolution of the eviction bans will be. But in the absence of rental assistance or debt relief that could help backstop the rent payments and prevent arrears from piling up, the number of eviction cases that are likely to be filed and processed as soon as it is once again possible to do so risks snowballing into a crisis.

7 For a detailed account of how housing policies have evolved throughout the pandemic, see Kholodilin (2020).

Part 2. Looking Ahead: Policy Announcements and Recommendations

Whilst the COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to improve homeless policies and services, its economic and social impact can be expected to drive inflow into homelessness going forward. Averting significant increases in homelessness will require investment of resources and political will. The end of eviction bans and the closure of temporary accommodation measures, if not accompanied by longer-term strategies, can be expected to drive a sudden upswing in homelessness. In this context, there is a need for public authorities to work with the homeless sector and other stakeholders to plan next steps. This section looks ahead and captures some of the promising commitments that have been made so far.

2.1. Long(er)-term commitments

The ongoing pandemic and its multiple derivative crises continuously shine a light on the state of housing and homelessness in countries around the world, and the topic has been pushed further up on the political agenda in many places as a result, with policymakers aiming to go further than emergency protection towards prevention and long-term, structural change. In many contexts, existing commitments and ideas have been infused with a strong sense of urgency as a result of the crisis. The pandemic provides a potential turning point for the fight against homelessness in Europe.

The pandemic has presented new opportunities for public authorities to act against homelessness and housing exclusion. For example, Lisbon's initiative to tap into the tourist rental market, which has been essentially deserted by the pandemic, is offering landlords rental income for a period of five years, then taking over the apartment in order to rent them out at subsidised rates pegged to the tenants' income (The Guardian, 2020). A potential win-win for all as it allows public authorities to (at least temporarily) increase their social housing stock, gives landlords an option for long-term stability, and increases the amount of affordable housing available. Some public authorities are looking into how hotels, mobilised during the crisis, could be part of longer-term solutions. In Belgium, as in the Prague example discussed above in the section on new accommodation, the Brussels region as well as some other municipalities are looking at the possibility of using hotels for longer-term projects stretching beyond the pandemic.

The political momentum that existed for Housing First already before the pandemic has been infused with an additional sense of urgency, which has increased efforts to scale up Housing First programmes in, for example, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain. In many countries this has translated into greater funding allocations for the homeless sector in next year's budget, and an intention for this spending to be channelled into longer-term initiatives that prioritise permanent housing over temporary accommodation. In April 2020, the Dutch Government announced it would make €200m available to fight homelessness for 2020-2021, with a focus on finding housing solutions and with the aim that shelter stays would be limited to a maximum of three months before a more permanent solution was found (NL Times, 2020). In May 2020, Greater Lyon presented a plan titled 'Zero Returns to the Streets' (*zéro retour à la rue*), which aimed to accelerate the availability of social housing from 200 to 500 units over five months, in order to ensure no one would return to the streets after the pandemic. This was the first of four longer-term commitments that the plan entails, with the remaining three being the mobilisation of temporary (modular), supported, and private accommodation (Boche, 2020). The UK has also announced significant extra spending, some €270 million, to follow up on 'Everyone In' (Pleace et al., 2021). However, there remains a lack of cohesive strategy to sustainably end street based homelessness.

2.2. Conclusions

This research note has summarised FEANTSA's monitoring of the impact of COVID-19 on homelessness in Europe so far. The pandemic is confirming many things that we already knew about homelessness, namely:

1. Housing is a social determinant of health.
2. Homelessness is an extremely damaging experience that can pose a risk to life itself.
3. Much of the current policy and service response to homelessness is inadequate and puts people experiencing homelessness at risk. Specifically, emergency accommodation and particularly communal shelters are an inadequate response to homelessness.
4. Access to housing, with support as needed, is the ultimate solution to homelessness.
5. Given sufficient political will and resources, 'intractable' problems like street homelessness can be addressed in relatively short time frames.

The following have proved critical in keeping people experiencing homelessness safe during the pandemic:

1. Rapid access to secure living space with possibility to isolate and distance;
2. Access to social support; and
3. Health outreach to enable adherence to guidance and overcome barriers to testing, treatment, and vaccination.

As the pandemic continues, these measures must be maintained and strengthened, rather than being allowed to ebb away. Research and advocacy need to continue to assess how adequately policies and services have protected people experiencing homelessness and make the case for sustained change going forward. Efforts are required to assess the situation of homeless migrants, victims of domestic violence, and others whose vulnerabilities have not been adequately understood or addressed. People who have been accommodated through temporary measures during the pandemic should be provided with permanent housing, rather than being discharged into homelessness when these measures come to an end.

One of the most significant lessons of the pandemic is the evidence of significant differences in the rate of infection of people experiencing homelessness in different settings, with shared airspaces and dormitories having worse outcomes than individual accommodation. This supports the existing case to shift away from shelter toward housing, with support as needed, as the main focus of public homelessness policy.

The COVID-19 crisis and the planned recovery offer a major opportunity to 'build back better' and start ending homelessness rather than managing it. Whilst some public authorities have made promising commitments in this direction, there is a huge amount of work ahead to seize this opportunity.

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Country Review

Part C

Homelessness Research and Policy in Switzerland – A First Country Report Embedded in the UN and European Framework

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Abstract_ *Even today there is little knowledge about the extent of homelessness in Switzerland; there is no legally binding definition of homelessness, and statistics that can be used at national level for profiling this form of poverty are scarce. This paper is based on the "First National Report on Homelessness in Switzerland" (Drilling et al., 2020). The report was motivated by the desire to share currently successful social science based research projects by the authors (especially: first national count; comparability study between Switzerland and Croatia; analysis of politics against homelessness in federalist regimes). In this paper we present findings in order to contribute a sound Swiss perspective to the European landscape of homelessness research and to highlight important future challenges.*

Keywords_ *Switzerland, homelessness, housing exclusion, country report*

Introduction

For a long time, Switzerland has been a blank spot on the European map of homelessness research. But this does not mean that there has not been a discussion on the topic in the country. The Federal Bodies have discussed homelessness at national level since World War II, particularly in Parliament and the Federal Council, and since the 1970s various popular initiatives have been submitted to referendum on the subject of housing. In addition, Switzerland has a long tradition in reporting on housing provision to the UN institutions. And for more than 15 years, medical and psychiatric research has been investigating the living situation of people affected by homelessness who use drugs or who are suffering from infectious diseases.

For social sciences and the structural causes of homelessness, the situation regarding insufficient research activities changed in 2017. Under the umbrella of the COST Action CA 15218 "Measuring Homelessness in Europe" the authors of this paper started a scientific project to collect data on users of services for people affected by homelessness in the city of Basel (Drilling et al., 2019) and carried out an in-depth exploration of the situation of people migrating under the terms of the Schengen visa into Switzerland, but who were ending up relying on support for the homeless (Temesvary, 2019). Currently, a survey is being prepared throughout Switzerland, the results of which will determine the number of people affected by homelessness in the country in 2021.

Housing under Swiss legislation

In the Federal Constitution, Switzerland provides for a basic right to assistance in emergencies (Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation Art. 12), which guarantees an unrestricted minimum entitlement to food, clothing, emergency medical assistance and accommodation: "Anyone who finds himself in need and is unable to provide for himself is entitled to assistance and care, and to the means that are indispensable for a dignified existence" (Art. 12 Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation 2018). In practice, emergency aid is targeted at people who have no right to remain in Switzerland and who find themselves in an existential emergency.

A universal and legal right to accommodation is not provided for in the Swiss Federal Constitution. Although the social objectives of the federal government define housing as a basic need and stipulate that people seeking housing are to be supported, they do not provide for individual entitlement to housing. In the corresponding Art. 41 of the Federal Constitution, the initiative of those seeking housing is emphasised. The planned state support for housing seekers is reflected in various housing promotion measures and housing assistance offers. These are based on the constitutionally regulated state promotion of housing construction and home ownership (Federal Constitution Art. 108), which, among other things, also provides for the promotion of housing for economically and socially disadvantaged groups. The enactment of regulations against abusive rents is also laid down as a constitutional mandate (Federal Constitution Art. 109). The primary implementing law is the Housing Promotion Act of 2003, which aims to promote housing for low-income households and access to property, taking into account in particular the interests of families, single parents, people with disabilities, the elderly in need and people in education and training (WFG Art. 1). According to the Swiss report of Switzerland at the UN Habitat III Conference in 2016 (Confederation Suisse, 2016) the Confederation, cantons and cities have been engaged in an intensive housing policy dialogue since 2013, in which housing market problems are discussed and housing policy measures coordinated at all levels of government in order to provide access to adequate housing for as many sections of the population as possible (Confederation Suisse, 2016, p.11).

For some time now, various stakeholders have repeatedly called for greater federal commitment to the promotion of affordable housing and charitable housing construction. Such demands regularly appear in national, cantonal and communal political drafts and demands, and are expressed in position papers and proposals from civil society organisations. Caritas, for example, states in an analysis on 'Housing and Poverty' (Caritas, 2014) that precarious situations in the area of housing can also be attributed to the fact that with the introduction of the Housing Promotion Act (WFG) in 2003 there was a shift from subject-based help to object-based help. Whereas in the previously applicable Housing Construction and Property Promotion Act (WEG) the Federal Government supported people with low incomes and few assets with so-called additional reductions in the sense of subject financing, the WFG limits the Federal Government's support to object assistance in non-profit housing construction (Caritas, 2014, p.6).

In Switzerland, the cantons, cities and municipalities are responsible for implementing housing policy measures and providing housing for socially disadvantaged households. The Confederation defines the legal framework and provides implementation assistance, such as the above-mentioned document, which is conceived as assistance for cantons, cities and municipalities. Possible financial guarantee models for landlords are analysed in the study 'Securing and Improving Access to Housing for Socially Disadvantaged Households' (Althaus et al., 2017), also carried out as part of the National Programme against Poverty (2018).

In addition to financial contributions to housing costs as part of social assistance and supplementary benefits for old age and survivors' insurance (AHV) and disability insurance (IV), cantons, cities and municipalities are familiar with various other forms of housing assistance for socially disadvantaged households (Beck et al., 2013). In addition to such social policy measures, the public promotion of housing construction and home ownership envisages influencing the housing market at the housing policy level. The Department of Housing BWO has also published a document in this respect in which the possibilities for action by cities and municipalities for the targeted creation of housing for socially disadvantaged households are presented (Beck et al., 2013). In the National Programme against Poverty (2018), much potential was still attributed to such support measures to facilitate access to and maintenance of suitable and affordable housing for low-income households. The report on the results of the national programme and a fact sheet on housing published at the same time call for the expansion of financial and non-monetary assistance, the mixing of residential neighbourhoods and the creation of professional interfaces between tenants and landlords in order to be able to contribute more effectively to mediation, counselling and support in terms of housing integration. Further action is also seen to be needed to strengthen cooperation between social services and the real estate sector so that the range of services can be better adapted to the needs of the letting party and, conversely, to raise the awareness of the real estate sector regarding the need for adequate housing for disadvantaged groups (Federal Council, 2018, p.33).

Homelessness appears in the housing policy regulations and recommendations mentioned above as a possible and preventable consequence of inadequate housing provision. Policies and measures that explicitly and primarily relate to dealing with and combating existing homelessness do not exist in Switzerland at the national level. Accordingly, most political debates and demands revolve around housing policy in general, such as demands for more affordable housing, and rarely around the phenomenon of homelessness itself.

Approaching Numbers of Homelessness and Profiles through Housing Market Studies

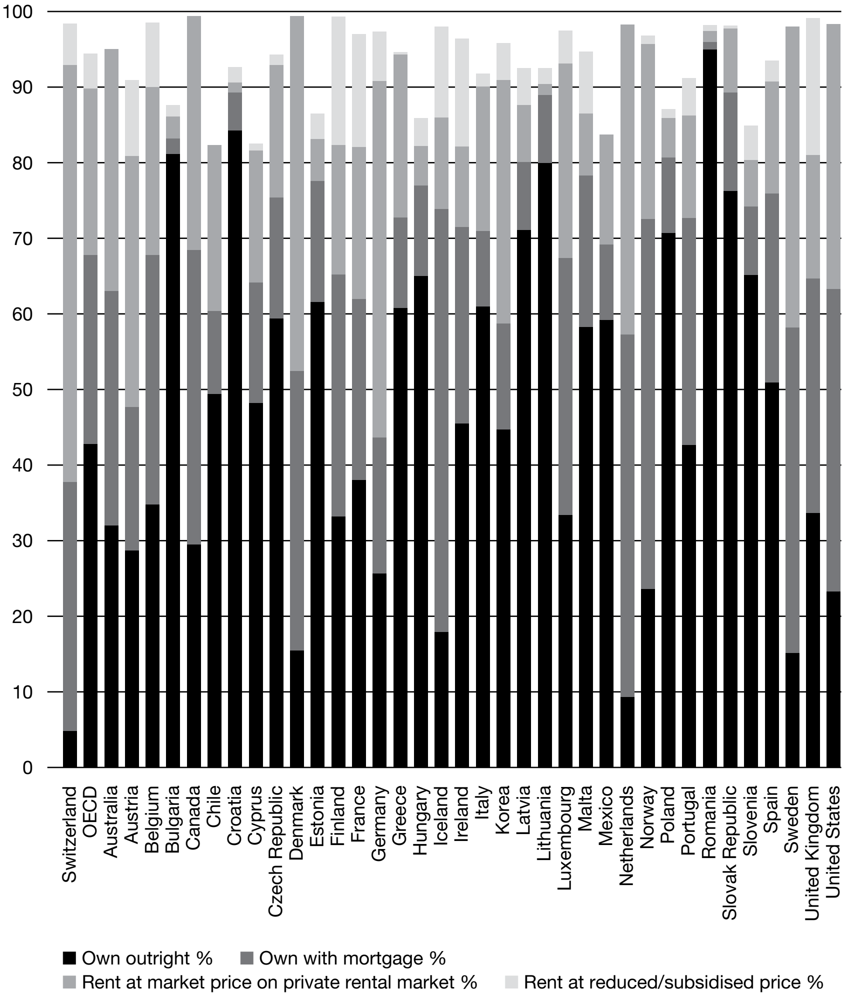
Neither the number of homeless people nor the number of people potentially affected by homelessness have been recorded throughout Switzerland to date (OECD, 2020). Estimations are therefore based on the analysis of the housing market. In general, the provision of housing via the Swiss housing market is assessed as sufficient and of high quality (see for example in the report on Switzerland on the occasion of the UN-Habitat III Conference in 2016, Confederation Suisse, 2016). However, although the housing needs of the Swiss population are largely satisfied, there are certain social groups who are disadvantaged in the private housing market – especially in cities and their agglomerations. In particular, it is difficult for older people, people with disabilities and people living in modest financial circumstances to find accommodation and they are heavily burdened by housing costs (ibid., p.11).

In their report on the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Switzerland, the Federal Office for Spatial Development and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (Confederation Suisse, 2018, p.37) state that in Switzerland almost 84 per cent of households affected by poverty and 57 per cent of households in precarious situations do not have adequate housing. The provision of housing is described similarly in the document 'Housing Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Households' (Beck and Althaus, 2018). In this publication the authors refer to the study 'Housing Provision in Switzerland: Survey of households of people living in poverty and in precarious circumstances' (Bochsler et al., 2015) and state that housing costs account for more than 30 per cent of gross income for four out of five households affected by poverty.

The Federal Departments of Housing and Social Security recognise not only a lack of affordable housing but also an access problem, as described as follows: "Access is generally difficult for people who have poor references due to debt collection, lack of payment discipline or conflicts in previous tenancies, regardless of the situation of the rental housing market. The same applies to people on welfare and/or migrants who, because of their name or skin colour, experience implicit or explicit discrimination, even in more relaxed housing markets" (Althaus et al., 2016, p.VII).

For a better understanding of the difficult situation of certain population groups in the housing market, it is worth taking a look at individual statistics regarding the Swiss housing market. Compared to other OECD countries, Switzerland has a much smaller proportion of people owning their own home (4.8 versus 48.8 per cent OECD average) and the highest proportion of all OECD countries (55.1 versus 22 per cent OECD average) of tenants paying rents at market prices (see Figure 1). According to Eurostat only 7.2 per cent of the total population benefited from subsidised housing in 2017. This situation is reflected in the distribution of owner types in Swiss rental apartments. Less than five per cent of all households are renting at reduced or subsidised prices.

Figure 1: Types of housing – Switzerland in the context of OECD countries. Source: OECD Affordable Housing Database http://www.oecd.org/housing/data/affordable-housing-database/ (all data 2018)



In addition there is a low average vacancy rate of 1.66 per cent in 2019 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Vacancy rate in Switzerland 2016 – 2019.
Source: Federal Statistical Office 2020

Number of vacant…	2016	2017	2018	2019
… 1 bed room apartments	4051	4674	4983	5323
… 2 bed room apartments	8303	9781	11199	11961
… 3 bed room apartments	17570	20599	23475	25005
… 4 bed room apartments	17173	19150	21451	21935
… 5 bed room apartments	6100	6588	7215	7246
… 6+ bed room apartments	3321	3482	3971	3853
Total	56518	64272	72294	75323
Vacancy rate	**1.3**	**1.45**	**1.62**	**1.66**

The burden of housing costs varies considerably depending on disposable income. For the reference value 'Housing costs of more than 40% of disposable income', the Federal Statistical Office calculates on the basis of EU-SILC 2013 data that around 36 per cent of all low-income households are affected. In contrast, only 1.3 per cent of all high-income households spend more than 40 per cent of their disposable income on housing. Looking at social groups, the unemployed, single parents, individuals and above all individuals aged 65 and over (around 40 per cent) are affected by housing costs that demand more than 40 per cent of their disposable income.

The OECD also argues in this direction in its 2019 informal report on affordable housing (Plouin, 2019). Here Switzerland is assessed jointly with other OECD countries and it is established that its housing prices are those which have risen the most between 1996 and 2018 (compared with prices for education or health), and that they also place the greatest burden on low-income households out of all OECD countries. At the same time, the report points to a new group who is increasingly excluded from the housing market: young people (individuals and families) who are looking for a place to live. Here the costs and significance of these costs are particularly problematic in view of disposable income.

Towards a Right to Housing? Swiss Restraint Reports on International Conventions

Homelessness as an extreme form of poverty and social exclusion is interpreted as part of a broader legal framework of social welfare, poverty reduction and the right to adequate housing (European Commission, 2013). At various levels of political administration, having no shelter or no housing is defined as a situation to be prevented, and an attempt is made to combat it through international conventions or national laws. The right to adequate housing is partially protected under constitutional law at the state level and is used in diverse jurisdictions, e.g. in connection with evictions, tenant internal protection or discrimination in housing. A right to housing derived from this, however, often exists only at the level of society as a whole and not at the level of the individual and varies greatly in its enforceability and implementation depending on the political context. International conventions and legislation which are influencing Switzerland are:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): ratified by Switzerland
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN Covenant I) 1968: ratified by Switzerland.
- EU Social Charter of 1961/1999: not ratified by Switzerland
- EU Social Investment Package: policy paper
- European Pillar of Social Rights: policy paper
- Agenda 2030: policy paper

The International Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (Art. 25) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966 (Art. 11) recognise adequate housing as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. Other international human rights treaties (such as Antiracism Convention Art. 5, the Women's Rights Convention Art. 14, the Children's Rights Convention Art. 27, the Migrant Workers Convention Art. 43 or the Disability Rights Convention Art. 28) address the right to adequate housing or aspects thereof, such as the protection of one's own home and privacy or protection against discrimination in access to housing. In addition, a right to housing is also described at the European level within the framework of the 'EU Social Charter' (Art. 31, EU Social Charter 1999) and the 'European Pillar of Social Rights' (Principle 19).

The international right to decent housing was given additional international attention in 2000 with the creation of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on decent housing. With this mandate, the scope and content of the law could be clarified in greater detail and implementation requirements for signatory states could be specified, as UN Habitat states in a factsheet 'The Right to Adequate Housing' (UN Habitat, 2009, p.1). The right to adequate housing is also enshrined in the 'Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development'. Objective 11.1 on inclusive development of cities and settlements provides for "access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services for all by 2030". In a 2018 report, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing called for an approach to nationally and locally adaptable, human rights-based housing strategies (UN Human Rights Council, 2018). This report distinguishes housing strategies from housing policy and understands strategies not only as the provision of housing but also as action plans aimed at addressing gaps and inequalities in existing systems and at reviewing and modifying existing housing policies and programmes in order to challenge possible stigmatisation, marginalisation and discrimination behind housing system failures (ibid., p.3). As a basis for such housing strategies, the recognition of the direct connection between inadequate housing and human rights violations is needed (ibid., p.4). A human rights-based housing strategy does not understand homeless people or people living in inadequate housing as recipients, beneficiaries or 'objects', as many housing programmes and policies do, but rather as rights holders and active people who are empowered to participate in decisions concerning their lives and the protection of their rights. Housing strategies should thus respond to the lived experience and promote the participation of the people concerned (ibid., p.4).

Furthermore, various resolutions, strategies and measures at the operational level of the European Union can be identified for granting the right to housing and combating homelessness. These are based on the recognition of homelessness as one of the most extreme forms of poverty and deprivation under the 'European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion' as part of the European Strategy 2020. In 2013, the European Commission published a working paper 'Confronting Homelessness in the European Union' as part of the Social Investment Package, in which it addressed the urgency of the homelessness problem and proposed specific policies and guidelines for the prevention and reduction of homelessness to the member states (European Commission, 2013). In the European Parliament, too, the increasing homelessness in most European countries has been the subject of repeated debate over the past decade. The 'European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless', FEANTSA, has produced an overview entitled 'The 2014-2019 European Parliament's Record on Homelessness', praising the broad, cross-party commitment to combating homelessness and social exclusion in the context of precarious housing (FEANTSA, 2018). In addition, resolutions have repeatedly been signed calling for an 'EU strategy to combat homelessness'. It calls on the European Community and individual Member States to make significant progress towards ending homelessness and social inclusion through regional and national strategies (European Parliament, 2011).

Switzerland is committed to respecting universal human rights and economic, social and cultural rights, as described in the ICESCR. It acceded to the ICESCR in 1992, but has not yet ratified the protocol. The EU Social Charter has not been ratified by Switzerland either, although this has been demanded by various actors for several years and the legal conditions for ratification have been fulfilled. At the same time, Switzerland participates neither in the form of statements nor through active contributions in the initiatives and resolutions of the European Union on ending homelessness mentioned above.

By signing the ICESCR, Switzerland has accepted the obligation to report regularly on the implementation of the agreement and thus also to demonstrate its consideration of the right to housing. After a delay, Switzerland submitted the first report to the UN Committee in 1998 and the combined second and third reports in 2008. The fourth report was published in February 2018 and discussed in the UN Committee in October 2019. The UN Committee addressed its recommendations to Switzerland in November 2019. The first Swiss report of 1998 discusses in detail the right to accommodation. In addition to the current housing situation in Switzerland – including that of disadvantaged groups – this report also provides a detailed explanation of Swiss legislation on housing.

With regard to homelessness, it is noted that there is no official statistical data, either at national or cantonal level, that would allow an assessment of the situation of homeless people. Only a survey conducted as part of a report from Switzerland to the World Health Organisation (WHO) provided estimates of the number of homeless people in the five largest Swiss cities. These numbers of homeless people, which vary relatively strongly from about 40 people (Lausanne) to a total of about 500 people (Basel), are not further explained in the report. Thus, it remains unclear which definition of homelessness forms the basis of the estimate.

Reports two and three, which were submitted to the UN Committee in 2008, also contain a chapter on the 'Right to Housing', which deals with housing conditions in Switzerland and corresponding federal measures. The housing situation of disadvantaged groups is dealt with only marginally and with reference to Roma people and people with disabilities. In the fourth report of 2018, the term 'right to accommodation' is no longer used. The 'Housing' chapter focuses on the federal government's housing policy with a focus on the 'Federal Act on the Promotion of Low-cost Housing' and the 'Housing Construction and Property Promotion Act'. In addition, a short section on national studies on homelessness appears in the same chapter. As in the first Swiss report in 1998, however, this reference to homelessness is also very brief. Reference is made without comment to a study on housing provision in Switzerland (Bochsler et al., 2015) and to the data on the burden of housing costs from the survey on income and living conditions (SILC) conducted by the Federal Statistical Office (BFS) in 2013.

Switzerland's reporting on the implementation of the ICESCR repeatedly triggered fundamental criticism, not only from the UN Committee, but also from actors within Swiss civil society. In its recommendations to Switzerland in 2010, the UN Committee has expressed fundamental criticism of the binding nature of Switzerland's economic, cultural and social rights. The Committee regretted that most of the provisions of the ICESCR in Switzerland are only programmatic and social objectives, not binding provisions. This means that some provisions cannot be given effect and cannot be appealed to national courts (Economic and Social Council, 2010, p.2). Although the UN Committee does not specifically address the right to housing in this context, its criticism should also refer to this. The first report from Switzerland to the UN on the implementation of the ICESCR acknowledges that the Swiss Federal Constitution does not guarantee any right to housing as such and that a corresponding referendum (popular initiative 'Right to housing and extension of family protection') was rejected in 1970. The right to accommodation is only recognised under constitutional law in individual cantons. It is precisely this lack of a national, binding right to housing that forms part of the comprehensive criticism by Swiss non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of Switzerland's first report on the implementation of the ICESCR (Kadima et al., 1998). In their commentary published in 1998, they noted the following shortcomings: "Although tenants are legally protected against eviction and excessive prices, there is no right to housing, i.e. a legal claim including the right of co-determination. Despite protection against eviction, it is now possible, for example, to evict an older, long-term tenant without offering an appropriate replacement and regardless of the psychosocial consequences. Renovations can be carried out at very short notice without the tenants having a say" (Kadima et al., 1998, p.30). The civil society actors demand a constitutional anchoring of the right to housing that goes further than Article 41 of the Federal Constitution, which only provides for the obligation of the state to ensure that housing seekers can find adequate housing through private initiative and personal responsibility (ibid., p.31). In November 2019, the Economic and Social Council of the UN responded to the fourth report on the implementation and status of the ICESCR of Switzerland. The topics of housing, shelter or precarious living are no longer included within it.

A second debate is taking place in Switzerland regarding the non-ratification of the EU Social Charter by Switzerland. Although Switzerland signed the Social Charter in 1976, both attempts (1987 and 2004) to ratify it have so far failed. Switzerland is thus one of the few member states of the Council of Europe that have not ratified the Social Charter. Starting in 2007, a third attempt at ratification took place over more than ten years with the 'Pro Social Charter' campaign of the professional association Avenir Social. The first interim result presented by the Federal Council in 2014 was a report confirming that the legal situation in Switzerland meets the requirements for ratification (Federal Council, 2014). Since there has been no prospect of ratification due to the current political majorities, the campaign was discontinued in autumn 2018.

Switzerland has not positioned itself in relation to the 'European Pillar of Social Rights', in relation to housing-specific demands in the European Strategy 2020 or in relation to resolutions on combating homelessness. Individual references can only be found in statements by actors such as political parties or trade unions.

Social democrats, for example, are in favour of agreements between Switzerland and the EU based on the ‘European Pillar of Social Rights’. The Swiss Confederation of Trade Unions is also committed to improving living and working conditions by ensuring that new EU social achievements, such as the ‘Pillar of Social Rights’, are adopted in Switzerland. However, specific references to housing or homelessness are not included in such statements.

Oscillating Between Housing Market Failures and the Individual Fate of People Affected by Homelessness – A Chronology of Parliamentary Debates

Towards the end of World War II the prevention of homelessness became an undisputed urgency, as it made clear at its session of 29.03.1945: “The Federal Council has repeatedly taken the view that for reasons of state and social policy, the fight against homelessness must take precedence over all other considerations.”[1] To underpin this urgency, various debates and decisions were taken in the post-war years to alleviate the housing shortage. Then the decision-making behaviour changed; in the following years there are several votes which have negative effects on the protection of tenants or special target groups: On 29.1.1950, the extension of the measures introduced in 1947 to promote housing construction was rejected by a referendum. And in the Federal Council meeting of 07.12.1951 it was decided not to continue the measures for the protection of tenants, as they were defined in 1941, 1944 and 1948 (in particular the extensions to relocation dates), beyond 31 December 1952. Homelessness is explicitly mentioned here: “The so-called housing shortage is today less a question of housing shortages and the danger of homelessness associated with them than a question of rental prices. However, the latter cannot be regulated by restrictions on termination and extensions given to relocation dates.” Also the right of official use of unused dwellings and the restriction of the dwelling was abolished.

In 1955, the Federal Decree of 22.12.1954 on the popular initiative “for the protection of tenants and consumers (continuation of price control)” was narrowly accepted by the population, but rejected by the Council of States. This concludes a phase of closer political framing of housing supply and numerous target group-specific protection goals.

Even some 15 years later, protection goals cannot be enforced at national level. The ‘Referendum for the Right to Housing and the Extension of Family Protection’ (1970) was rejected. The popular initiative called for a right to housing to be enshrined in

1 Note: All quotes are excerpts from the original documents. The sources can be found in Drilling *et al.* (2020).

the Constitution: “The Confederation recognises the right to housing and takes the necessary measures to safeguard it so that families and individuals can obtain housing that meets their needs and whose rent or costs do not exceed their financial capacity”. And where there is nevertheless a shortage of housing, “the Confederation, in agreement with the canton concerned, shall take the necessary temporary measures to protect families and individuals against unjustified termination of tenancy agreements, against speculative rents and against all other abuses.” Although the volume of construction increased in the 1970s, the situation in residential construction remained tense. The tensions between a capitalist-oriented housing industry, the liberal state organs and numerous critical Marxist university institutes made the question of interventionist measures by the state an object of debate. As a result, the wholesale company Denner supported a referendum to set up a housing fund (Denner Initiative). The plan was to initiate a housing fund “from which mortgage loans with low, socially graded interest rates for the construction of apartments and old people’s homes as well as contributions to the development of building land were to be paid”. But even this petition for a referendum was rejected in favour of a counter-proposal, which only spoke of “granting the federal government general competence to promote housing construction and the acquisition of residential property and house ownership”. However, the intention to keep the development of rents in the focus of social policy led to another popular initiative in 1977. Here, too, the focus is on the protection of tenants, with a controlled increase in rents and making terminations of tenancy agreements more complex. But this popular initiative ‘for an effective tenant protection’ was also rejected, just like the counter-proposal (of 25.03.1977) on 25.09.1977.

A National Council meeting took place between the two referendums, during which homelessness was addressed directly. As agenda item ‘Narcotics. Change’ on 02.10.1974, member of Parliament Bratschi introduced the situation of an emergency shelter and opened the debate on the link between drug consumption and homelessness that continued in Switzerland until the 1990s: “An emergency shelter, called ‘Sleep-in’, also accommodates 30 young people night after night. For them, the ‘sleep-in’ should not be the final destination; it is, however, because there are no corresponding cantonal institutions that could take over this care task. We can only be dismayed and simply state: the drug wave has overrun us.”

Since the 1980s, parliamentary tasks, debates and popular initiatives have alternated on a regular basis in the areas of low-cost housing, protection of tenants, homelessness on the one hand, and drug consumption problems, homelessness and support on the other. The success of initiatives in the area of rent protection remain low. On 21.03.1986 the popular initiative ‘For an effective tenant protection’ was rejected, in 1999 the federal initiative ‘Home ownership for all’, in 2003 the popular initiative ‘Yes to fair rents’ and on 23.12.2012 the popular initiative ‘Secure living in old age' failed. Another popular initiative is planned for the coming years: 'More affordable housing' demands in the medium term that the Confederation, "in cooperation with the cantons, together strive for a steady increase in the share of housing owned by non-profit housing developers in the total housing stock. In cooperation with the cantons, it ensures that at least 10 percent of newly built dwellings throughout Switzerland are owned by these institutions."

The issue of homelessness in these years is primarily tackled as a matter of individual pathology rather than a structural issue, as in previous years. This is the understanding of the cost estimate in the National Council meeting of 18 June 1992 in which parliamentarian Leemann reads the 3.1 million Swiss francs demanded for preventive measures in the field of drugs, an argument of conformity with homelessness support and with simultaneous distribution of tasks between the Confederation and the cantons, in which he demands: "The Confederation should make the social services possible; the operation of the contact points, day rooms or emergency sleeping places, etc. should, on the other hand, remain with the cantons and communes in accordance with the statutory mandate." Parliamentarian Plattner's idea about the help for the homeless in the field of drug prevention is similarly located when, on 03.10.1994, he addressed the urgent interpellation of member of parliamentarian Weber on the drug problem: "In Basel we now have three drug consuming rooms, one of which – I don't know if this is already the case today – will even be paid for by a neighbouring canton, although it is in our city. We have several emergency sleeping places. We have a street kitchen. We have day rooms and shelters." On the occasion of the popular initiatives 'Youth Without Drugs' and 'For a Sensible Drug Policy' (Droleg-Initiative), parliamentarian Gysin links the topic of homelessness even more clearly with drug policy in the National Council on 21 March 1996: "We have a viable, integrated four-pillar model, as it is on the table at the Federal Government. We've been living this in Basel for six to seven years. We have well-developed, functioning survival support with three drug consuming rooms, emergency sleeping places, soup kitchens, day structures and other institutions….". And in the late summer of the same year, Plattner renewed his idea in the Upper Chamber (17.09.1996) on the occasion of a debate on the two popular initiatives, that drug prevention was above all also effective in the offers of help to the homeless: "This policy, the four-pillar policy, is also based on a pillar that is repressive. Repression is important, but it never has the weight that it has in the minds of some representatives of the hard line. We do not primarily send police and investigators onto the streets to clear up the problem, but we concentrate our efforts and resources – including financial ones – on drug consuming rooms, on setting up emergency sleeping places, on street kitchens, on day centres, on shelters for young drug-dependent prostitutes, on advice centres on withdrawal possibilities, on outpatient and inpatient drug withdrawal centres and much more besides." In this context two documents are relevant which refer to the accommodation of homeless people with an addiction illness (Motion Bischof of 03.06.1992 and Motion Dormann of 6.12.1993).

Only two documents show that in the time of the narrow definition that homelessness is mainly related to drug consumption, the National Council argued for a further thrust on the topic of homelessness: the motion Leutenegger Oberholzer for the 'Federal Housing Decree' of March 21, 1991 and the motion De Dardel of March 9, 1993. Leutenegger Oberholzer pleads for "fifteen percent of this to be used specifically for the housing supply for socially disadvantaged population groups and their specific housing needs". According to the applicant, the "housing problem has worsened for everyone. For the fringe groups of society, however, the situation has become dramatic in recent times. This is shown by the many homeless people in the cities. The Housing and Property Promotion Act promotes traditional forms of housing. It is a support programme aimed at people with medium to low incomes. It is clear that the socially most disadvantaged groups cannot benefit from this. These are the groups that do not appear at all on the traditional housing market. I am thinking of the homeless, whose numbers are also rising sharply in Switzerland. There are already many people in large cities today who do not have apartments and that are dependent on emergency shelters. Emergency accommodation may include, for example, emergency sleeping shelters, containers, etc." Leutenegger Oberholzer refers to the report 'Disadvantaged Groups in the Housing Market' by the Housing Research Commission of 1990: "I therefore request that part of the framework credits that we are approving today be used specifically to finance such alternative forms of housing for the socially most disadvantaged population groups in Switzerland. (…) Some of the low-interest loans to umbrella organisations of non-profit housing construction for the accumulation of Fonds de Roulement (an instrument for low-interest loans) are to be used specifically for the creation of housing for socially disadvantaged groups. This would then also allow the federal government to co-finance, for example, containers, emergency sleeping facilities and the like." The applicant withdrew the application after a debate, but was able to add the issue of homelessness back to the housing supply for public discussion. The motion de Dardel, which was submitted to the National Council on 09.12.1993, was also not processed any further because it was rejected after two years. Under the title 'People without Permanent Residence and the Right to Housing', de Dardel asked the Federal Council to include the right to housing as a political objective and to enshrine it in the Federal Constitution. This was especially important for people who live in very precarious housing conditions and for those who no longer have their own living space.

It would be a further 10 years before the issue of homelessness would be more widely discussed in the National Council again. On 23.09.2014 parliamentarian Marra submits an interpellation on 'Emergency Shelters for the Homeless in Switzerland'. With its questions to the Federal Council, it catapults the issue of homelessness back to the institutional level, in particular the division of tasks between the Confederation and the cantons; it sees the people concerned as being torn between the levels. She thus addresses the following issue: "There are, however, great differences between the cities in terms of policy in this area. Some do not shy away from 'sending' their homeless to other cantons where emergency shelter places might be offered. In most cases, this depends on the social policy of the city or canton. Article 12 of the Federal Constitution, however, states: 'Anyone who finds himself in need and is unable to take care of himself is entitled to assistance and care and to the means which are indispensable for a decent existence.' Marra asks whether it is 'normal' for 'certain cities to fulfil their duty by taking on this task as their responsibility, while others simply sit back and rely on the existing offer?'" In its reply, the Federal Council rejects any responsibility. It plays down the problem by writing that "the homeless are part of the reality of Swiss cities" and admits that it has "no overall view of the situation in the cities" and "therefore cannot comment on the practice of referring to other cities". The Federal Council also does not consider the lack of national data to be a reason for a survey and hopes that the "Conference of Cantonal Social Directors (SODK) will deal with the subject". On 12.12.2014 the motion was archived as completed. Two years later Marra passes a postulate to the same topic under 'emergency sleeping places'. She wanted to know from the Federal Council how the SODK or other bodies of federal social policy had dealt with this issue. In its reply, the Federal Council makes it clear and replies that no need for action has been identified in the context of the National Dialogue on Swiss Social Policy.

In the following years, there are two more interpellations: On 15.12.2016 parliamentarian Addor asks if "asylum seekers are preferred to our homeless." The Federal Council replies that due to the lack of figures on homelessness, it is not possible to answer this question. And the interpellation of parliamentarian Schneeberger of 31.05.2018 under the title "The commander of the border guard needs clear political instructions. Uncertainty and dissatisfaction among the population are growing" points out that, on the one hand, the border guard is increasingly taking on police tasks such as "routine checks of the homeless", but on the other hand the direction of the interpellation is focusing on measures to clarify the tasks of the border guard.

Homelessness as a Result of Abuse and Individual Decent Processes – A State of the Art in Swiss Research

Health issues shape research on homelessness in Switzerland. The reason for this bias is not clear. At best, Switzerland reveals what Benjaminsen and Bastholm Andrade (2015) have shown for welfare states: "that countries with more extensive welfare systems and lower levels of poverty have lower levels of homelessness, mainly amongst those with complex support needs." (ibid., p.858).

The Swiss studies illustrate the serious consequences of living as a homeless person. According to the publications many homeless people are dependent on alcohol, drugs are frequently consumed and a very high proportion of homeless people are in poor psychological and medical (especially infectious) health, with all of this also being of social origin (poor hygienic conditions, poverty). Homelessness is thus an expression of high levels of health and mental vulnerability combined with social exclusion (Grazioli et al., 2015). The studies that focus on Switzerland and are listed in international databases can be sorted according to the three topics 'schizophrenia, psychoses and trauma', 'alcohol and substance abuse' and 'tuberculosis and other infectious diseases'.

Mental health studies

In 2005, the first Swiss-related articles in international journals began to address the interface between homelessness and psychiatry. This was prompted by a series of investigations into psychiatric hospitals and programmes. Lauber et al. (2005) develop a profile of homeless people on the basis of a dossier analysis of around 16 000 patients (16 per cent of all patients were homeless in the dataset) and conclude:

"The homeless as compared to other psychiatric inpatients had higher rates of substance use disorders, equal rates of psychotic and personality disorders, but lower rates of organic and affective disorders. Homeless people were more often admitted compulsorily or as an emergency. General practitioners (GPs) were less involved in the admission. The homeless had a shorter inpatient stay and their health status did not equally improve as it did in other patients. Risk factors of being homeless at psychiatric admission were: young age, male gender, single, low education level, urban residence, abuse of illicit drugs, especially multiple substance use, and having a dual diagnosis." (ibid., p.50).

One year later, the team of authors presents another study (Lauber et al., 2006). This time they analysed around 28 000 patient dossiers from psychiatric clinics in Switzerland, among which they identified around 1 per cent of the patients were homeless people. This study focuses more on the housing situation when entering the clinics, and the following risk factors for homelessness were identified as a result: "being homeless at admission, not living in a relationship, presenting multiple substance abuse or a dual diagnosis, low clinical improvement during inpatient treatment and discharge against medical advice". (ibid., p.138). Finally, a third study by the team (Lay et al., 2006) gives a view of the length of stay in psychiatric hospitals as a function of homelessness. The researchers separated a cohort of 424 patients from a group of around 2500 hospital admissions and interviewed them regularly over a period of 5 years. Patients with a diagnosed psychosis spent the longest time in the clinics, at the same time they belonged to the group that was least often an inpatient in the clinics (in contrast to the diagnoses 'schizophrenia' and 'other psychiatric abnormalities'). In this study, homelessness was significantly associated with a longer stay in hospital over the observation period. A higher probability of having a diagnosis of 'psychosis' or 'schizophrenia' as a homeless person than for people in other housing situations in the study group could not be established. In conclusion, the authors point to social policy to cover the need of homeless people for sheltered and accompanied accommodation and safe housing: "This fits recent findings indicating that the homeless use more in-patient and emergency type services and fewer outpatient-type services which can be regarded to a certain extent as an expression of the homeless seeking shelter, but furthermore as an expression of the inability of the social system to find appropriate accommodation for them. "(ibid., p.407).

Jaeger et al. (2015) change the perspective in their study; psychiatric clinics are no longer the focus of attention, but rather institutions offering supported housing in the city of Zurich that are provided for the homeless. They ask how the situation of people diagnosed with schizophrenia has changed as a result of the restructuring of Swiss health care ('outpatient before inpatient' and thus processes of deinstitutionalisation). The authors conclude: "Individuals with schizophrenia in sheltered housing (25% of the residents) have significantly more problems concerning substance use, physical illness, psychopathological symptoms other than psychosis and depression, and relationships, daily activities and occupation than patients with schizophrenia at intake on an acute psychiatric ward." They interpret this as a contradiction, because supported housing is basically designed to prevent homelessness, but de facto "serves as housing facilities for individuals with schizophrenia and other severe mental illness. Only 25% had seen a psychiatrist within the last 6 months although 51% stated that they had a permanent mental health problem." (ibid., p.416) The study was part of a larger study on the prevalence of people with mental health issues in adult housing in the city of Zurich ("WOPP study") from 2013 (Baumgartner-Nietlisbach and Briner, 2014). The reason for this study was the observation by psychiatrists that there was an increase in "severely mentally ill and inadequately treated people" (ibid., p.4). Since in Switzerland there was a lack of data on the mental health status of people without their own housing, the scholars interviewed 338 people (out of a total of 460 people in the residential facilities) from four supported living facilities and the emergency sleeping facilities of the city of Zurich. The study is the only analysis to date of the objective and subjective mental health status of adults (categories covered by ICD-10, HoNOS-D, GAF ranges) affected by rooflessness and houselessness in Switzerland. The central results are therefore (ibid., p.5):

- “96% of all interviewees fulfilled the criteria for at least one psychiatric diagnosis. If addictions are not counted, 61% of those surveyed were still affected by at least one psychiatric disease.
- Subjectively, 70% of the participants had a permanent health problem, with 40% of all respondents feeling good or very good and 20% feeling bad or very bad.
- According to the body mass index, 30% of the participants were overweight, 20% obese and around 7% underweight.
- 90% of all interviewees had consulted a medical professional in the last six months, 50% had consulted a family doctor and 20% a psychiatrist.
- 73% of all interviewees regularly took psychotropic drugs at the time of the study.”

Although it should be noted that 259 of the 338 interviewees were from a supervised institution for socially disintegrated, mentally and physically impaired people suffering addiction, and that addiction was therefore highly likely to play a role in the objective state of health, the authors conclude for the practice that the state of health is very important for new clients in the institutions and should be regularly addressed in interdisciplinary cooperation. Morandi et al. (2017) make it clear that this cooperative approach should be put together in a permanent team and that this team should visit the people in the (supervised or supported) accommodation or even carry out patrols in public space. Their study, in which 30 people participated, showed that a combination of outreach medical, psychiatric, social work (as part of the assertive community treatment) and inpatient intervention periods is particularly effective in preventing emergency situations among homeless people. In another contribution to the practice, the authors propose multidisciplinary “Intensive Case Management” teams, a “Clinical Case Management” (Silini et al., 2016) for the inpatient sector and a prioritisation of housing, especially in the form of ‘Housing First’ (Garcia Gonzales de Ara et al., 2017, see also Schmid and Bonsack, 2018). Stalder’s approach, which set up mobile outreach teams for community medicine in Geneva’s university hospitals, also fits in with this understanding (Stalder, 2003). Stutz et al. (2017) argue in favour of a model of ‘night clinics’ such as that of the city of Zurich and come to the conclusion that this form of clinic offers an alternative for inpatient stays because it fulfils a “rehabilitative task for homeless people with primarily psychotic illnesses” and thus “contributes to the avoidance or shortening of fully inpatient hospital stays” (ibid., p.187). Di Bella et al. (2017) take a more fundamental approach with regard to Switzerland's health policy. They evaluate initiatives between 2014 and 2016 to introduce dental treatment into compulsory health insurance in Switzerland and locate a gap in the provision of dental care. For adults, dental treatment is only covered by the basic insurance in the case of accidents and serious dental diseases. Routine dental treatment must be financed by the patient. People who do not have enough money to pay for dental treatment often suffer from toothache. This affects children, the elderly, people on low incomes and homeless people (ibid., p.576).

Studies on alcohol and substance abuse

Grazioli et al. (2017) investigated the consumption habits of 85 homeless people in French-speaking Switzerland who regularly visit a contact point to consume their drugs and alcoholic beverages. The authors noted that the mere presence in the institutions contributed to a 7 per cent decrease in consumption. They conclude that shelters for the homeless are an effective intervention measure. Klingemann and Klingemann (2017) also conclude that programmes for homeless alcoholics in Switzerland have led to a reduction in dependence. They interviewed key people from eight providers of the 'Drinking Under Control/DUCPs' programme in Switzerland. However, they also drew attention to a contradiction, since the successes of the programmes are countered by the reluctance of the municipalities to offer such programmes because they fear that they will have a pulling effect on alcohol-dependent homeless people. Stohler and Gehrig (2015), on the other hand, focus on young adults in a hostel. The home offers accommodation for 28 women and men aged between 18 and 24 who cannot live with their families or independently. They have hardly any daily structures, often have debts, are mentally unstable and consume marihuana or alcohol. The caregiver in the home primarily advises the person concerned, while the social worker in charge receives more responsibility for decisions and sanctions (ibid., p.485). Over twelve months, long-term solutions are sought for the young adults, their social and personal skills strengthened and an attempt is made to stabilise their current situation. The authors conclude that the offer is suitable for people who already have a daily structure and are willing to change their situation. For young adults who do not wish to change their situation, do not cooperate, have psychological diagnoses or suffer from substance abuse problems, the length of time is insufficient. Longer-term solutions are needed that go far beyond the twelve months (ibid., p.486).

Kübler and Wälti (2001) discuss these issues on the national level and highlight the attractiveness of Western European cities in the context of drug policy. They explain the effects of measures against drug-related problems in Switzerland, which led to the establishment of facilities for drug addicts at the end of the 1980s. They also compare the successes in reducing drug and alcohol consumption with the stigmatising effects of the environment: complaints from the neighbourhood, the need to protect the living environment of contact points, etc. Swiss cities, they conclude, are still confronted today with the need for protection of the inhabitants, the needs of the consumers and the need of the city to reduce damage.

Studies on infectious diseases

The Swiss studies published in international journals show the social causes of infectious diseases such as diphtheria and tuberculosis in homeless people. Gruner et al. (1994) point out that in Zurich homeless people who also consume drugs are infected with diphtheria mainly because of their low socio-economic status. The long-term study on tuberculosis in the canton of Bern, which analysed data from individuals over 21 years, identified two thirds of those affected as homeless (Stucki et al., 2015). Janssens et al. (2017) interviewed those staying at the Geneva Municipal Emergency Service in 2015 and referred them to the Municipal Hospital in case of suspicion of tuberculosis. A total of 726 of the 832 homeless people surveyed completed the questionnaire with a positive analysis and took advantage of the hospital examination. The shorter the phase of homelessness, the greater the willingness to undergo an inpatient examination.

Arguments for Change

In Europe, Switzerland is widely perceived as a country in which homelessness is not relevant in economic, political and social policy fields. In the light of the facts and processes presented here, this does not correspond to reality. The state of research on homelessness and the absence of policies regarding homelessness is largely a problem of the lack of a comprehensive overview. At this point it becomes relevant to ask why this needs to change. From the documents presented so far, three lines of argument can be elaborated:

1. In accordance with its federal structure, the political constitution of Switzerland delegates the responsibility for combating homelessness to the cantons. Although the Federal Constitution recognises a right to housing, this is not legally binding. For their part, the cantons do not incorporate this right into the cantonal constitutions, but instead hand over responsibility to the municipalities. The municipalities, in turn, address homelessness through their social assistance practice, which is also dealt with at municipal level by the social services. This results in completely different assessments of the problem, with serious consequences for the people affected. In Switzerland, social assistance is targeted to individuals and people, and people are paid a fixed amount for housing, regardless of whether or not they can rent a place to live for this amount. Other communities also question the eligibility of the people concerned for

housing assistance. In particular, if the applicants for support have moved there from another municipality, they are advised that they ought to return to their place of origin. And communities on the outskirts of larger cities also do not hesitate to suggest that they might relocate to the cities, because the infrastructure there is better for people affected by homelessness. These attitudes are reinforced by the discussions that take place in the national parliament, where debates are regularly avoided or where the Swiss Confederation defines itself as not having competence due to federalism. As a consequence of the state's withdrawal from this task, civil society organisations fill this vacuum, but with all the weaknesses that this entails: discontinuity due to relying on the work of volunteers, lack of conceptual consistency, no professional development of services and dependence on donations or subsidies.

2. The social costs of homelessness are shouldered by the cities in Switzerland and by the NGOs working with the people affected. In Geneva, Zurich and Basel, but also Lausanne and Bern, the NGOs that take on responsibility for supporting the people affected by homelessness have reached the limits of their capacity. The widespread lack of professional standards in working with homeless people hinders the development of a common view of the problem. While some NGOs explicitly address all people affected by homelessness, others define their services as being for citizens of the canton. In addition, local policy institutions define themselves as working in the social work sector, but also take on disciplinary tasks in their contact with the people affected by homelessness. This fragmentation of the social work profession has the effect of de-politicising the issue. Individual organisations that, for example, want to place the blame on the housing market for the situation cannot find allies. Other organisations that want to criticise the way social assistance is handled meet with resistance from their own ranks because they fear that subsidies will be cut. There is hardly any support from the scientific community, as there are not enough studies that critically examine these issues. Instead, biographical studies are used to individualise the problems; the focus on the problems in the housing market is then replaced by the demand that the homeless must have sufficient skills in housing; instead of defining uniform conditions of access to municipal services, a policy of admission requirements and a pricing policy for the provision of services is promoted. And instead of fundamentally problematising the existence of homelessness in a rich society, health care costs (e.g. for stays in psychiatric institutions) are being transferred to the municipal social services without providing adequate financing models.

3. It is becoming increasingly clear that housing is being given a new meaning at international level. From a purely functional view, housing is becoming seen as a human right. Such a demand needs to be discussed at national level, and

legally binding guidelines need to be formulated, which will then have an impact right down to the level of the local municipality. The demand of the UN Human Rights Council to take a closer look at this perspective is above all a challenge to the social sciences in Switzerland. After all, in the context of applied research, it is precisely such focuses that are of societal relevance. Through broader research, the scientific community could also be given the task of supporting politicians, who tend to consider reporting to international bodies more as an obligatory exercise rather than an opportunity for reflection, while at the same time increasing the pressure to act. Such emphasis on the social sciences would in turn promote a more supportive climate for studies focusing on the extent of homelessness and housing exclusion and the profile of the people affected. The availability of figures and profiles at all three levels of government (Confederation, cantons, municipalities) would then become more important for reporting purposes. In this respect, the social sciences could also work towards networking the levels of governance, thereby strengthening professionalism in dealing with and preventing homelessness in Switzerland.

Conclusion

This paper was intended to fill a gap in European country-specific homelessness research: the absence of Switzerland. In order to provide a state-of-the-art view, different sources were used to illustrate the formats in which homelessness is discussed in Switzerland. It was found that the topic is certainly present, but is rather dealt with through analyses of the housing market on the one hand and "classical forms" of poverty research (e.g. poverty and housing) on the other.

The issue of homelessness is repeatedly included on the agenda of political debate as well. But Switzerland's federal system means this topic is consistently passed on to the cantons and municipalities, where there is far less common ground. In this respect, the opinion that Switzerland has no policy regarding homelessness is sometimes reasonably justified. The situation is quite different in the field of research, where Switzerland contributes significantly to the international research community – albeit limited to medical, psychological or psychiatric issues. One of the aims of this paper was therefore to open up the field of social science issues for Switzerland itself and to provide information on which future projects could build.

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Book Reviews

Part D

Review Symposium

MaryBeth Shinn and Jill Khadduri (2020)

In the Midst of Plenty: Homelessness and What to Do About It

New York: John Wiley & Sons. €22.00

Homelessness is a choice—not by those who must suffer from it, but a choice made by the powers-that-be who tolerate its existence. This is a recurrent message of "In the Midst of Plenty", where authors MaryBeth Shinn and Jill Khadduri draw on decades of experience in research on homelessness to provide a sweeping, encyclopaedic description of the American tragedy that is now entering its fourth decade with no end in sight. In keeping with the title, the authors give ample attention to varied ways to end this relentless inequity. Is housing a human right in the U.S.? Far from it.

"In the Midst of Plenty" describes both the extent of homelessness, its proximal and (mostly) distal origins and the massive 'industry' that has grown up around containing, managing and—occasionally—housing homeless men, women and children. Refreshingly free of academic jargon—yet attentive to the forest of data and acronyms necessitated by the vast array of service delivery systems—the authors begin in Chapter 1 with describing specific sub-populations of persons who experience homelessness—chronically homeless adults, youth, families with small children, veterans, etc. Each of these groups has a collectively unique set of needs and relevant solutions. Yet all share in the simple act of not having a place to live.

Culhane's typology of homelessness based upon shelter usage, distinguishing between long-term chronicity, episodic homelessness (repeated bouts of varying duration) and transitional (one-time) was instrumental in changing policies in the early 21st century to focus on where costs were greatest (among high-need chronically homeless persons) and cost-savings most realisable (2002). Put another way, the vast majority of persons who experience homelessness do not stay homeless but find some way out. Those left behind are more likely to have additional life problems that lead to chronicity and dependence upon a system designed for short-term emergency relief rather than provide housing.

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The ever-changing landscape of homelessness in America has its roots in the 1930s Depression era where in the squalid parts of town could be seen white males variously called 'vagrants', ''hoboes', 'tramps' and 'bums' drinking heavily and sleeping in doorways and on park benches. American cities in the ensuing decades were bereft of visibly homeless people until the 'epidemic' of the 1980s appeared. As described in Chapter 2, the 'new' homeless were a multi-racial mix of single adults and families, disproportionately African-American but with sizable numbers of White, Latinx, Native American and other ethnic groups represented. The latest demographic reports show an alarming number of aging 'baby boomer' homeless adults—a cohort whose medical and end-of-life needs scarcely fit the homeless industry's customary offerings of an unhygienic bed, unsafe surroundings and minimal medical care or support services.

The unvarying ethos of America's response was to avoid making shelters comfortable (thus inviting the supposed moral hazard of individuals choosing to become homeless to attain access to coveted housing) and to make access to housing a long slog of dubious outcome. Shinn and Khadduri do a masterful job of marshalling the evidence against such assumptions, showing that fewer families enter the shelters even when more families are being placed into housing.

The reasons for becoming homeless are more structural than personal, as affordable housing shrunk dramatically due to the defunding of the 1980s Reagan administration and an overall increase in income inequality. Up until the late 1970s, there was sufficient housing and higher-quality apartment buildings would gradually 'filter down' to poor families as more affluent households built new homes or fled for the suburbs. Growing gentrification further reduced the number of low-income units available – 200 000 single-room occupancy (SRO) units in the early 1970s shrunk down to only 25 000 in ensuing years – creating a paradoxical situation of increasing the quality of housing while decreasing its availability. Like the game of musical chairs, some families found themselves without a home, a seemingly arbitrary yet inevitable result of this supply-demand gap. The neo-conservatism of the Clinton Presidential years—where 'welfare to work' placed greater pressures on poor families with neither childcare nor income sufficient to pay rent—created further downward pressures.

Shinn and Khadduri confront head on the common discourses on causation—serious mental illness in particular. Noting that de-institutionalisation of psychiatric hospitals long pre-dated the 1980s 'epidemic' and that persons with serious mental illnesses constitute a minority of all homeless persons, they nevertheless give notice to the greater likelihood of homelessness affecting these individuals, where getting education and employment is inherently challenging and disability income clearly insufficient to pay for rent, much less cover other normal living expenses.

The picture is more complicated for young people experiencing homelessness as family problems, sexual and gender orientation conflicts and abuse or trauma enter the causal mix. Meanwhile, the 'personal' causes of homelessness did not lose ground in popular and media opinion, as the highly visible street homeless persons suffering from psychosis or addiction (or both) caught the media's attention far more often than the 'invisible' thousands languishing in shelters or trying to stow away in vacant lots, subway stations and parks.

Meanwhile, Federal, state and local entities used millions in Federal McKinney-Vento funds appropriated by Congress to build emergency shelters, drop-in centres and other stopgap measures intended to stem the tide of homelessness without institutionalising its existence. A series of '10-year plans' to end homelessness were announced by USICH (United States Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness) and HUD, their deadlines passing by with no end in sight. Shinn and Khadduri note that the numbers have declined only modestly nationwide in recent years and have increased in some cities, e.g., New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Partly in response to the hodgepodge of service arrays found around the country, HUD attempted to rationalise the sprawling system through improving management information systems. 'Coordinated entry' was designed to funnel all homeless persons through a single entry point and associated management systems would then be enabled to track their movement through the system. Simultaneously, vulnerability indexing was developed as a way to triage applicants based upon physical health and evident life traumas. The VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Assistance Tool) achieved near-iconic status as a universal metric even as its users (outreach and intake workers) complained of its over-emphasis on proximity to mortality compared to the multitude of problems people experience that should make them 'worthy' nonetheless. The admirable desire to eliminate 'cherry picking' or favouring the better-behaved applicants instead gave way to a messy, confusing and often frustrating set of arbitrary scoring points. And, sadly, even the 'winners' are left with long waits and the uncertainty of actually getting an apartment. The demand invariably overwhelmed the supply.

The HUD-sponsored Family Options Study (FOP) receives a good deal of attention by the authors (whose direct involvement is acknowledged). In this national randomised trial comparing long-term rental subsidies, rapid rehousing, project-based housing with supervision and 'usual care' (emergency shelters), families who participated proved, unsurprisingly, to balk at some of the less desirable options, so FOP was hobbled by participant refusals or dropout, difficulties in 'leasing up' (finding landlords willing to rent), delays in move-in costs, reluctance of some families to leave familiar neighbourhoods, and so on (Gubits *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, the national scope of the FOP and time length of follow-up afforded a few lessons learned. First and foremost, 'deep' and lasting rental subsidies (even without supportive services) brought the greatest benefit to families not only in housing stability but in other measures of family well-being. Rapid rehousing proved hardly more beneficial than usual care and project-based housing was among the least desirable alternatives.

There are promising developments that Shinn and Khadduri highlight in Chapter 4. One of the more shining successes has been the reduction in U.S. veterans' homelessness. The HUD-VASH programme marshalled unprecedented resources—including rental vouchers—to ensure that homeless veterans could be housed following the HF (Housing First) model, a ground-breaking alternative dating to the early 1990s in New York. Known as Pathways to Housing in its initial iteration, the HF model reversed the usual expectations of sobriety, service compliance and long waitlists for housing, instead moving homeless persons into housing of their choice immediately with support services offered without leveraging (their housing not contingent on treatment compliance and 'good behaviour'). In HUD-VASH, the numbers of homeless veterans fell from 73 000 in 2009 to 38 000 in 2018, an almost 50 per cent drop that clearly demonstrated what political will (and popular support) can accomplish.

Although overwhelmingly concentrating on the U.S. experience, Shinn and Khadduri do not shy away from drawing on experiences from other (largely Western nations). Canada has notably adopted HF after subjecting it to a massive five-city randomised trial (known as the "At Home/Chez Soi" experiment that, upon ending in 2013, showed remarkably similar results of 80+ per cent housing stability in the HF group compared to the treatment-as-usual (TAU) group. Breaking up the HF group in 'high' and 'low' needs produced predictable differences in costs savings (the 'high needs' group costs ran higher). When viewed in the context of the larger nationwide rise in permanent supportive housing (PSH), HF became a recognisable and widely heralded sub-type, a coherent manualised intervention with a core tenet of consumer choice. PSH providers often say they are 'doing' HF due to its high-level Federal endorsements by HUD, but in practice they may deviate from HF principles in requiring compliance with treatment, sobriety, curfews, and other forms of control.

The authors note how deviant the U.S. is in offering rental assistance to only about 6 per cent of its citizens compared to almost one half of U.K. and French citizens. There is another U.S.-centric deviance in its homelessness landscape—the gaping disproportionality of African Americans among homeless single adults and families. Although racial and ethnic minority groups are marginalised in many nations, the facts in the U.S. speak volumes: the number of African-Americans living in homeless shelters is 3.5 times higher in proportion to their presence in the general population

(46 vs. 13 per cent). The prototypical U.S. family experiencing homelessness is an African American mother with one or two underage children. Native Americans are also disproportionately represented –and more than twice as likely to become homeless. Underlying this racial disparity is a historically rooted—and juridically approved—history of housing and job discrimination along with mass incarceration leading to a wealth gap that is striking to say the least—White Americans average wealth (income plus assets) is 13 times higher than African-American wealth. The descent into homelessness has many shortcuts and expedited byways rooted in a malevolent segregationist history in the U.S. (Rothstein, 2017).

The prize for achievement in ending homelessness goes to the nation of Finland where HF was used in combination with generous social housing allowances and support systems for Finnish citizens (especially those with a disability). Reducing the homeless population by more than half by 2016 (about 7 500 persons) was a trend set in place that promised to effectively end homelessness in Finland by 2020. Shinn and Khadduri argue that the U.S. could also afford the investments made in Finland (obviously scaled to size) if there were sufficient political will. Barring a major upheaval leading to massive increases in social spending as of the 2020 Presidential Election (one can only hope), the U.S. is—at this writing—far from having the will to end homelessness or pay heed to the heaps of evidence showing that HF works and that subsidising rents can yield long-lasting societal benefits.

Chapter 5 takes on homelessness prevention—a topic often relegated to wistful thinking since we know so little about who among the many poor and plausible will actually become homeless (vs. remain doubled up, eke out a living paying rent, etc.). Shinn and Khadduri centre their efforts on a 'high risk' profile to direct services to those on the cusp of imminent eviction by a landlord or family member who's had enough of doubling up. Rapid re-housing funds were designed for such instances and an evidence-supported intervention—Critical Time Intervention—has proven successful with discharged psychiatric patients, former prisoners and others leaving institutions.

There are other prevention measures. Free legal assistance in housing courts can be pivotal in preventing eviction (most landlords have attorneys and a distinctly unfair advantage), a service in scarce supply nationally. Screening tools to identify risk of homelessness can be used in hospitals, emergency rooms and anti-poverty programmes and a titration of 'progressive engagement' can be used with individuals and families facing homelessness drawing from a menu of options: cash grants, shallow subsidies, legal advice, etc. Regrettably, the paucity of research on prevention offers little guidance on how, when and with whom to proceed.

The final chapter (6) goes up and out to macro-level changes needed to end homelessness on a broader and more enduring scale. Here, the research strongly supports the value of 'deep subsidies' or Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) that require the tenant give no more than 30 per cent of household income to rent payments. Only about one-fourth of eligible Americans receive HCVs and with multi-year waitlists for public housing units, the shortages are glaring, tenacious and yet fixable with 300 000 additional vouchers. Uncooperative landlords can be a problem that requires more than casual attention. The funding involved in rectifying this gap—an estimated 80 billion dollars—constitutes less than 1 per cent of the U.S. annual budget – 3.7 trillion dollars (and counting). Subsidising existing housing is far less expensive than building it anew (where construction permits, zoning laws and environmental regulations ensure higher expenses and delays lasting years). Short of permanency, HCVs could be ended when the youngest child turns 18 or when/if the family's income increased sufficiently to afford fair market rents.

One of the more politically palatable routes to housing assistance has been the Lower Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) although Shinn and Khadduri point out that middle-class renters are more likely to benefit from these subsidies via tax benefits apportioned by the LIHTC to states. The establishment of the National Housing Trust Fund in the waning Obama years held promise but was rather stingily under-funded ($267 million in 2017) and less directed to building new affordable housing.

With a U.S. Federal government defunding social programmes at record rates in 2020, localities have moved ahead, California taking the lead (after a decades of neglect) with a $1.2 billion bond issue dedicated to affordable housing. The erosive effects of exclusionary zoning laws were reversed in places like Oregon and Minneapolis. Regulatory reforms fostered support for creative types of housing – backyard cottages (granny flats), tiny houses, even SROs re-gained favour. The recent cascade of economic and human tragedies unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic will likely lead to dramatically higher levels of homelessness as Federal emergency measures (moratoria on evictions; use of empty hotel rooms for quarantined and homeless persons otherwise confined to crowded shelters) are time-limited and may only delay dire economic consequences for millions of vulnerable Americans.

Shinn and Khadduri's solution is rather simple – if accorded the political will needed. They advocate for expanded rental vouchers paired with greater income support (raising the minimum wage, earned income tax credits, higher disability payments, etc.). And, ever mindful of the racism baked into America's housing history, they argue for greater enforcement of what has become laxity in Fair Housing Law enforcement. After all, homelessness remains a choice in America.

A modest critique of the book would be that the reader (especially from outside the U.S.) can get a bit overwhelmed by all of the facts and information put forth in a steady flow, broken up occasionally by illustrative case vignettes and quotes from those with lived experience of homelessness. As a compendium of vital information, ‘insider’ perspectives on policy debates only the authors could summon, and realistic appraisals of what it would take to end homelessness, this book has no peer.

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The idea of 'choice' has a long and contentious connection to homelessness. In the public domain it is frequently expressed in terms of why people experiencing homelessness choose to do so. In this context choice reinforces long held views that homelessness is a result of deviant and/or maladaptive behaviour and poor decision making. While numerous studies have challenged the assumption that people actually choose homelessness in preference to safe, secure and affordable housing, choice nonetheless features in many academic accounts as well. In these accounts choice is generally deployed as a way of highlighting the agency of people experiencing homelessness and the way choice is enacted through adaptive responses to a constrained set of options. Choice is also a key idea that flows through Marybeth Shinn and Jill Khadduri's book *In the Midst of Plenty: Homelessness and what to do about it*. While they engage with the issue of choice, they do so from a direction that avoids pathologizing homeless people and focuses attention instead on the choices made (or not made) by policy makers, politicians and the public that have created the problem of modern homelessness in the US.

Drawing on a long and distinguished history in homelessness research the two authors skilfully weave together qualitative material, crisp descriptions of key empirical studies, and comprehensive policy knowledge to deliver a carefully considered and concise account of literal homelessness in the US. Their argument is that the emergence and continued presence of mass homelessness is a direct result of policy choices that have exacerbated inequality in both incomes and wealth in the US over the last three decades or so. Through this lens homelessness is largely seen as an inevitable outcome of policy choices that benefit the rich and put housing costs beyond the reach of a growing number of people who occupy the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder. Far from just identifying the problem, the book offers a detailed account of the policy options that, if chosen, could end homelessness.

The book can be thought of as two parts. The first two chapters examine the question of who is homeless and why do people become homeless. Both chapters canvass all the issues one might expect them to – they look at the history of homelessness and the emergence of modern homelessness in the US; they describe various ways of enumerating homelessness, as well as offering detailed accounts of various theories about the causes of homelessness, highlighting, in particular, the inadequacies of accounts that focus on individual characteristics. While much of this material is covered elsewhere, it is done in a way that is accessible and engaging to a general reader, but also detailed enough to be of interest to policy makers and researchers.

These two chapters provide the foundation for the books main interest – how to end homelessness, which as its the authors argue, is a 'problem of deep poverty, coupled with high housing costs'(p.149). In the next four chapters Shinn and Khadduri pursue this argument with vigour, and it is these chapters that distinguish this book. Chapter 3 closely examines different policy responses for people experiencing homelessness. While it points to a strong evidence base in support of long term subsidies for families and supportive housing for higher need individuals, it does not shy away from questioning claims frequently made about popular interventions. Chapter 4 examines the homeless service system in the US, and what could be done to improve it. While acknowledging various successes, such a reducing veteran homelessness, it raises important questions about the selectivity of some programs, as well as a lack of evidence with respect to key interventions. Indeed, while many homelessness policies and program responses in the US differ from Australia some of the issues raised in the book are eerily familiar – why, for instance, has transitional housing, both here and in the US, never been formally evaluated? Why, despite a lack of evidence is integration such a *de rigueur* policy position in both countries?

Chapter 5 turns its attention to prevention, an area that is notoriously difficult to study. Despite this, they draw on a number of important studies that offer insight into approaches that could more efficiently and effectively target groups at risk of homelessness, as well as identifying programs that show promise at preventing homelessness. The core message here, however, is that, despite being an underdeveloped area of research, prevention is the area that could generate the greatest 'dividends'.

Chapter 6 brings the various strands together in a comprehensive and wide ranging review of policy options. One aspect of this chapter that stood out is the detailed examination of various demand side policy options, with voucher programs in particular capturing attention. The reason it captured my attention is that in Australia (and possibly other countries) advocates and researchers have focused almost exclusively on supply side interventions, with it must be said, little success. Indeed, as a proportion of total housing stock in Australia social housing has declined over the last three decades. While increasing the supply of social housing stock is, as the authors note, a central element of any comprehensive solution to homelessness, *In the Midst* offers a timely reminder that a comprehensive effort to end homelessness likely requires both demand and supply side interventions. In presenting a clear case for both, this book challenges those who have all too easily dismissed demand side interventions.

This book should spark critical and productive engagement with those inside but also those outside the homelessness space who share a concern with the effects of increasing inequality. It is important reading for students, advocates, practitioners and researchers alike and while the focused is primarily on the US, it offers readers from other countries many insights and ideas.

It is worth noting that at the time *In the Midst* was written, the COVID pandemic had not occurred. This raises a question of how the book might hold up given the disease has revealed and magnified social and economic tensions that have long festered under the surface of many Western countries. I suspect it will hold up well. The reason for this is the sustained focus on a lack of housing that is affordable to low-income households is only likely to worsen without decisive policy interventions.

There much to learn from this book and I would strongly encourage anyone interested in homelessness to read it.

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In the Midst of Plenty is a volume in the Contemporary Social Issues series of Wiley Blackwell. The main argument of the book is "that the United States and other wealthy, industrialized countries have the resources to end homelessness, if we make the policy choices" (p.1). Simply stated, homelessness often results when people do not have access to decent, stable, affordable housing. To support their thesis, the authors, Marybeth Shinn and Jill Khadduri, present a comprehensive, but succinct review of research on homelessness. Four questions are addressed in six chapters: "Who becomes homeless? (Chapter 1); Why do people become homeless? (Chapter 2); How do we end homelessness? (Chapters 3 and 4); How do we prevent it? (Chapters 5 and 6)" (p.1). Thus, the bulk of the book is devoted to a review of research on what works and what does not work to end and prevent homelessness. Each chapter is densely packed with scientific evidence, particularly quantitative data, and many chapters also include personal stories.

Chapter 1 focuses on the methods of and findings from research that aims to define and count people who are homeless. National shelter use data and Point-In-Time (PIT) counts are the most commonly used strategies. Helpful techniques for improving the accuracy of PIT count data are described. An important topic of this chapter is how homelessness has changed over time. While single men formerly accounted for the majority of people experiencing homelessness in Skid Row areas of big cities, new groups of people have become part of the homeless population – women and children, youth, and veterans. Among these groups, African Americans constitute a disproportionately high percentage of people experiencing homelessness in the United States, and the average age of homeless people has dropped as the number of families with children has increased. While homelessness has accelerated since the late 1970s, there is evidence that rates of homelessness among veterans and adults experiencing chronic homelessness have recently decreased across the United States.

While individual and structural factors are typically invoked to explain who becomes homeless, the authors argue in Chapter 2 that individual factors only become risk factors because of structural factors. For example, an individual factor like mental illness need not necessarily consign one to homelessness if policies provide the supports that enable people with mental illness to enjoy a decent quality of life. Multiple forms of social exclusion, that are embedded in social policies, turn individual characteristics, such as race, sexual orientation, and mental illness, into risk factors for homelessness. The authors go into great detail to show that the primary structural factors giving rise to homelessness are economic – rising levels of economic inequality, income volatility, and "deep" poverty far below the thresholds of low-income cut-offs. Moreover, the United States, in particular, and English-speaking nations, in general, have substantially higher rates of economic inequality than western and northern European countries. Since the 1960s, the cost of housing in the United States has risen, along with income inequality, with the net effect that more and more people living on low-income have effectively been priced out of the housing market. Cities with high costs of rent and high levels of income inequality, like New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, have become national hotspots for homelessness.

In Chapter 3, the authors provide further evidence for the economic causes of homelessness by reviewing studies that have shown that homelessness can be virtually eliminated if homeless people are provided with rent subsidies. The multi-site Family Options study in the United States compared several different types of intervention for family homelessness and consistently found that rent subsidies, with minimal direct services, consistently had the greatest impact in ending family homelessness. The authors review research on Pathways Housing First programmes for single adults with mental illness that have been conducted in the United States and Canada. In these studies, the combination of rent subsidies with intensive support services leads to dramatic reductions in homelessness over time. Studies of Critical Time Intervention (CTI) have also shown promise in improving outcomes for people exiting psychiatric settings or shelters. The summary of research in this chapter is very consistent with a recent comprehensive review of research on income assistance and permanent supportive housing in reducing homelessness by Tim Aubry and his colleagues (Aubry *et al*., 2020). Finally, this chapter follows well from the previous chapter in showing how changing structural factors like income assistance and addressing the risk factors that people experience through intensive supports are effective ways of ending homelessness.

Whereas Chapter 3 focused on specific programmes to end homelessness, Chapter 4 examines whole systems approaches to end homelessness on a larger scale. Homelessness systems components include shelters, transitional or rapid rehousing, time-limited rent subsidies, and permanent supportive housing that is typically based on the Pathways Housing First approach. The authors note the lack of research on how to allocate housing and services to people experiencing homelessness. Many communities are using some form of coordinated entry, which, in principle, sounds like a good idea. However, coordinated entry suffers from a lack of research, utilisation of screening or prioritisation tools that do not have good psychometric properties, and insufficient resources to house those experiencing homelessness who are prioritised for housing assistance. The lack of research also limits knowledge as to the effectiveness of large-scale efforts like the 100 000 Homes Campaign, which does not provide housing resources, undertaken by Community Solutions. In contrast, initiatives that do provide housing resources, like the Housing and Urban Development -Veterans' Administration Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), has been able to cut the homelessness rates of veterans in the United States in half and eliminate it in three states and 71 communities, using the

Pathways Housing First approach. The most impressive example of a whole systems approach to ending homelessness is the nation of Finland. Although their approach deviates from the Pathways model, Finland has adopted many Housing First principles and practices and has nearly eliminated homelessness. What Finland did was to establish a national goal of ending homelessness and provide the resources to attain this goal.

Chapter 5 examines prevention approaches for high-risk populations. It does little good to end homelessness without simultaneously "turning off the tap" of new people becoming homeless. In this chapter, the authors review the concept of efficiency that deals with how to select those people most at risk of becoming homeless for a prevention programme. Because homelessness has a low base rate, it is difficult to predict. Nevertheless, statistical models that show that those families with the highest number of risk factors have the greatest likelihood of entering a shelter are more efficient than those guided by lay theories and rely on clinical or professional judgment. Shinn and colleagues were able to reduce the rate of false negatives from 24% to 8% in one study of families by developing a statistical model of prediction. Once identified, it is difficult to know what prevention programmes work best. Those programmes that have some research evidence to show that they are most effective in preventing homelessness include providing permanent and robust rent subsidies and cash assistance to people who are about to be evicted. Case management and CTI for people discharged from psychiatric settings have also shown some effectiveness in preventing homelessness. The authors suggest other targeted groups for whom prevention approaches may work, but that currently have not been researched, including youth leaving foster care and people leaving correctional settings. Gay and trans youth, and Black and Indigenous youth could easily be added as groups who could benefit from prevention programmes.

Whereas Chapter 5 focuses on targeted prevention programmes, Chapter 6 addresses prevention at the structural level. While daunting in scope, it makes abundant sense to change structural conditions since they are the factors that have led to an increase in homelessness, as documented in Chapter 2. A major emphasis of this chapter is on the use of rent subsidies to end homelessness and to prevent it. Various aspects of rent subsidies are considered, including how they should be targeted, what level of subsidy is needed for what group, how long the subsidies should last, and how they should be provided. Various policy options for increasing incomes are also proposed, so that people are more likely to be able to afford housing and not end up homeless. Both housing and income policies need to be coupled with broader efforts to eliminate the social exclusion of marginalised groups. The authors conclude that the types of structural changes that they recommend depend on political will and government action.

Critical Appraisal

This book is well written, well researched, and concise. While dense with research, the writing is clear. Each chapter contains an overview and a summary, which are helpful because of all the content that is packed into each chapter. The book offers evidence-based approaches that should guide policy and practice.

Among the many strengths of the book are specific chapters that make noteworthy contributions. Chapter 2 does an excellent job in making an empirical case for the structural and economic causes of homelessness. The authors review several sources of data in a thorough, well-documented analysis of the economic roots of homelessness. Equally important in this chapter is how they view individual factors as only becoming risk factors because of underlying structural factors. This is an important reframe of individual factors from viewing them as residing within individuals to viewing them as resulting from structural conditions. This reframe highlights the focus on the system rather than the individual, and in so doing challenges dominant American cultural narratives of individualism and victim-blaming. Chapter 4 makes a unique contribution in its focus on whole systems responses to homelessness. It has been said that Pathways Housing First is a philosophy, a programme, and a system. Much more is known about the philosophy and programmatic nature of Pathways Housing First and other programme approaches. In this chapter, systems-level ideas and approaches are reviewed. While the lack of research on many systems' initiatives leaves many gaps in the knowledge base, the examples of the HUD-VASH programme in the United States and the nation-wide approach in Finland are particularly noteworthy and provide concrete evidence that homelessness can be eliminated.

Chapters 5 and 6 also make a unique contribution regarding the prevention of homelessness. Many people in the homelessness sector do not know about the field of prevention with its roots in public health, and there are often vague references as to what constitutes prevention. The authors present prevention concepts and review literature on promising programmes. As shown in Chapter 5, most prevention efforts to date use the selective or high-risk approach in which individuals are identified and targeted for a prevention programme. While there is not a great deal of research on prevention, the authors do show the necessity of developing predictive models to guide prevention efforts. Rent subsidies, income assistance, and CTI have all shown preventive effects in rigorous research, and youth leaving the child welfare system, gay and trans youth, Black and Indigenous youth, families and single adults facing eviction, and adults leaving psychiatric and correctional settings are all good candidates for prevention programmes. Chapter 6 focuses on needed policy changes. Just as policy neglect since the late 1970s has led to increasing homelessness, progressive policies that address housing through rent subsidies and income assistance are needed to end and prevent homelessness. In the current United States political context, these recommendations may seem like “pie in the sky” but they provide a vision for positive movement forward on homelessness in an ever-changing political context.

The book also has some limitations. While the authors do touch on Canadian and European research and policy, the bulk of their review is United States-centric. So, European stakeholders may find limitations of the research for application to their contexts. For example, many European countries have a greater stock of affordable social housing, so that the emphasis on the provision of rent subsidies to prevent homelessness may be less germane in northern and western European nations than the United States. Also, even though there are some personal stories interwoven in some of the chapters, the authors largely rely on quantitative research. There is an ample body of qualitative and mixed methods research by Deborah Padgett and her colleagues, as well as many others, on the experiences of both people experiencing homelessness and service-providers, issues of programme planning and implementation, and other issues that would have been a valuable addition. One topic that is not covered is how programmes like Pathways Housing First can be adapted to specific populations, including Black, Indigenous, and other racialized groups. I also found the book undertheorised, when there is a growing theoretical base regarding homelessness in sources like *Housing, Theory, and Society*. What theories are best suited to understand who becomes homeless and why, what programme models work best, what systems interventions work best, and what prevention models work best received scant coverage. Shinn’s own work in applying capabilities theory to housing and community mental health is curiously not mentioned in the book. Finally, while the book is well written, the audience for whom the book is best suited is homelessness researchers. Practitioners and policy-makers will find value in the book, but those with a background in research methods will get the most out of it.

These critical comments notwithstanding, we owe a debt of gratitude to Shinn and Khadduri for putting this book together for all of us who are working to improve the lives and social conditions of people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. It is the single best source on homelessness research and what can be done to address homelessness to date.

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Review Symposium

Mike Allen, Lars Benjaminsen, Eoin O'Sullivan and Nicholas Pleace (2020)

Ending Homelessness? The contrasting experiences of Denmark, Finland and Ireland

Bristol: Policy Press, pp.198 €69.95

The title of the book *Ending Homelessness?* ends with an intriguing question mark, thus opening up the possibility of pursuing this aim, yet instilling doubt with regard to the effectiveness of the affirmation. Thinking the unthinkable has actually constituted the mainstream in policy against homelessness in the last ten years. Could it really be possible to end homelessness? What are the more forceful strategies? What can be learned from those European countries which have adopted policies seeking to end homelessness? The book aims to provide answers to these questions through the exploration of the different (and contrasting) experiences of Denmark, Finland, and Ireland.

Outstanding scholars and field researchers in the study of homelessness in Europe offer a deep understanding of policy strategies, data comparability, and general political scenarios in which this shift toward ending homelessness has developed in three small European countries. Further, they advance some possible explanations about the different results obtained. As a matter of fact, the three countries offer quite different outcomes despite similar starting points. While Finland has recently declared to have reached a state of "zero" homelessness, Ireland and Denmark still face an increase, especially among the low-income household and the young populations.

The core idea of the book, to understand the reasons for such different results, is developed through seven chapters. Starting from the change in policy regarding the management and understanding of the dynamics of homelessness, the discourse progresses with the emergence of "Housing First" and the focus on housing as a human right (Chapter 1). It ends with the final chapter concerning the lessons learned from the different countries; underlining the efficacy of housing-led

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policies, the strategic relevance in granting affordable and secure housing for lower-income households and, finally, that the cuts in public housing seem to have the greatest effect on homelessness, even more than the economic crisis.

The central part of the book offers a detailed – at times excessively – reconstruction of every country's policy, the evolution of each strategy through time, the assumptions about the phenomenon, and the way in which it is measured in each of the three countries. Chapter 2 concerns the evolution of homeless policies in the selected countries and the changes brought about in the policy approaches, progressively focusing on the goal of ending homelessness. Chapter 3 gives a deeper insight into the different strategies both in terms of the money invested and of the management structure of the services and the policies implemented. Chapter 4 analyses the variety of methodologies used in the different countries and the kind of data produced.

The last two chapters of the proposed comparative analysis are the most interesting and are focused on "explanations". Chapter 5 argues the relevance of "securing affordable housing and the targeting of those experiencing homelessness" (p.136) in successfully eradicating the most intense expression of the phenomenon. This may be considered obvious, especially in light of the emerging evidence obtained by "Housing First", but the explanation given problematises the original model and highlights the relevance of a more orchestrated, housing-led political strategy, such as in the Finnish approach. Along this line it is interesting to follow the public debate in Finland concerning the critiques received after implementing a different model, and the criticism of the American Housing First, both in terms of the definition of people experiencing homelessness and also with regard to the cultural scenario in which this model was generated. The authors clearly affirm that the effectiveness of "Housing First" is related to the availability of public housing, while the failure of the Irish strategy can be related to the fact that "utilizing the stock of the private rented sector is critical in preventing and responding to homelessness…" (p.135).

Chapter 6 offers a few (rather meagre) insights about the welfare regime and the kind of homelessness experienced, but more interestingly focuses on the cuts of welfare programmes implemented in all countries, enhancing the shift toward labour market activation policies, and the restructuring processes that focus on the exclusion of migrants or non-nationals. One of most interesting points that I strongly hope could be further developed in other studies concerns the "political and administrative decision-making structure" (pp.146-155) in which the local and national administrations responsible for the head-counting and the implementation policies are considered strategic and determinant factors for the different registered outcomes.

Methodologically, the book is a perfect example of a case-oriented study on comparative research in the field of social policy. In many studies and consequent publications, the main approach to the study of homelessness has been cross-sectional or longitudinal, focusing on people who were sheltered or without a roof at a specific time and place. This perspective has been widely used and overestimated in the study of homelessness, denying the relevance of a more complex understanding. The results of many cross-sectional studies have been used as a base for policy design and have produced simplified descriptions of people experiencing homelessness, therefore promoting a misleading picture of the phenomenon based on individual characteristics.

From a methodological perspective, this book constitutes an accurate example of what comparative research can offer to scientific knowledge and public debate. The case-oriented approach can be extremely useful in understanding differences in policy implementation and cultivating deeper knowledge on mechanisms and outcomes. This approach obviously differs from the logic of evidence-based studies and recalls the sociological, re-constructive attempt to policy analysis and outcomes that is not merely focused on head-counting and individual evaluations. This kind of case-oriented analysis is essential in social policy and especially in the study of homelessness because of the complexity of the phenomena and the simplification that is usually pursued in dealing with it; "in its simple manifestation, homelessness is a serial victim of big and simplistic solutions (…) HF may become just the latest of these total solutions" (p.176). I wholly share the authors' view on this point as well as the statement that "affordable housing supply has to be the core of any effective homeless strategy" (p.163).

Naturally, the availability of data is a pre-condition for all analyses. Especially when considering a comparative study, the data also have to be comparable. However, this is, unfortunately, not such a common feature in the estimation of homelessness and national data collection. To this end, the three chosen countries have a similar population size and have published detailed data, making the comparison sufficiently consistent. It may not be as easy to find other comparable countries, nevertheless, data collection on homelessness and the reference to the ETHOS classification system is in continuous expansion all over Europe, thus enhancing the comparability of data among countries. Hopefully more examples of this comparative approach will be available in the near future.

The book is clearly written and offers the reader a deep understanding of the various factors and possible explanations of such different results in the three European countries. For all of these reasons, the book addresses both scholars and students interested in the study of homelessness, in social policy analysis, and in policy evaluation. The lessons to be shared are strongly linked to the necessity of a deeper understanding of the causes of homelessness in national contexts, as well as to the availability of data while, on the other hand, they strongly support the offer of preventive service and of skilled public servants to be implemented in a long-term strategy alongside the supply of affordable public housing.

Ending homelessness may therefore be considered possible!

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On Counting, Accounting and Accountability

I have read this book with great interest and appreciate the analysis, which is at the same time comprehensive and concrete. The authors have managed to strike a balance between adequate country narratives and potentially generalising conclusions, which is a difficult thing, especially when data were not originally gathered for comparison. Many readers will probably relate observations and inferences to their knowledge about the development of homelessness and possible strategies against it in their own countries. I assume that this is one of the purposes of this book and the idea to invite researchers from other countries to comment on the text, and I am grateful for this opportunity to present some questions and reflections.

Put extremely shortly, the book compares the national homeless strategies and their outcomes in three European countries: Finland, Denmark and Ireland. They share in common that they in 2008 adopted national strategies to end homelessness – especially the need for emergency accommodation – through providing permanent housing primarily to rough-sleepers and long-term shelter users. All three countries included Housing First programmes in their strategies, although only in Finland as a comprehensive strategy, which differed from the Pathways to Housing-model. All three countries also suffered from the global financial crisis in 2008, but only Ireland found itself in such a difficult situation that it had to comply with loan conditions determined by institutions like the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund – including to stop producing more social housing (p.59).

Significantly, of the three countries only Finland managed to reduce – if not fully end – homelessness. In Denmark, numbers remained at approximately the same or a somewhat higher level, but in Ireland homelessness grew substantially in the decade following the launching of the strategy. The authors discuss the strategies and their different outcomes and in searching for explanations, they involve analyses of housing markets, housing policies and welfare systems.

In the comments that follow I will start with a discussion on methodology and some of the authors' more or less implicit theories and assumptions and suggest a few alternative accounts. These have been triggered by my reading of the text but also convey my personal hang-ups in homelessness research. They include the power of markets and states, images of homeless people, and the interrelated problems of housing allocation, obligations and rights.

Methodological Reflections

Homelessness research is often associated with evaluations of strategies and projects, since funding of critical studies of 'business as usual' is rare. However, if the research question is whether or not specific measures and initiatives were successful or not, this entails certain limitations. First, in evaluations the initiatives often determine the time span under scrutiny and to be able to guide further actions or policy revisions they must be completed soon after the programmes' ending. This makes it difficult to study long-term consequences. Secondly, a study of the development of the problem (here: homelessness) through evaluating measures against it implies that the targeted activities are highlighted as possible causes of wanted effects. Furthermore, subordinate objectives of the programmes, for example management, cooperation and funding vs costs are focused as well. The theory is so to speak already implied in the action plan. *Ending Homelessness?* does not suffer from these risks directly, but it may do indirectly, since a great deal of its empirical material seems to be gathered through strategy evaluations. Accordingly, the change in homelessness numbers is related to the project/strategy at stake; reduced homelessness in Finland is attributed to the national Housing First strategy, while non-change in homeless numbers in Denmark, as well as their increase in Ireland, are claimed to be due to obstacles for implementing the national strategies. Fortunately, the book exceeds these evaluation limits through also searching for explanations outside and beyond the strategies.

A related reflection is the differences between studying problem growth and problem decline. Difficulties to get funding for research into problems apart from evaluations are even greater when problems are declining. Still, I imagine that there is a lot of knowledge to gain in observing how and why problems such as homelessness decrease, possibly without any specific actions taken against it. How come that some countries (or regions or municipalities) or periods of time do not experience homelessness, sometimes even though the demand for housing exceeds the supply? Why did Finland's homelessness decrease before the national strategy of 2008? And are there political and professional mechanisms at play that "regulate" the size of a social problem so that national rates of homelessness (or unemployment or receipt of maintenance support) remain within certain frames? Are there stake-holders that have an interest in that problems are not completely solved, for instance to keep up the demand for housing, or the fear of evictions?

The *service-statistics paradox* is another methodological problem, in the book possibly relevant for the case of Ireland (see, e.g., p.42). In the comparative study of homelessness in Europe (FEANTSA 1999) and across the world by UN-Habitat (2000), this phenomenon is part of the explanation why countries with well-developed services often present higher levels of homelessness than do nations that lack such resources. "As long as most of the data on homelessness stems from service providers, the countries with the best-developed service systems record the highest levels of homelessness. This is known as the *service-statistics-paradox"* (UN-Habitat, 2000, p.29).

Hence, the more shelter beds, the more people are counted as homeless if other homeless situations are not included. A similar effect may arise from the practice in Denmark (like in Sweden) to count homeless people who involuntary and informally stay with family and friends (or illegal bed-providers) only if they complain about this situation in contact with the social services (p.77). If they are rejected and discouraged from such contacts, they are in effect excluded from the counts.

Arguably, the same paradox may interfere in a historical comparison in a single country. In *Ending Homelessness?* the Irish case might serve as an example. Here, the number of homeless people grew with the expansion of emergency accommodation, which in turn resulted from the government's ambition to live up to its promise that no one would need to sleep rough. When these places were filled, it is not quite easy to tell if this was due to increased homelessness or because already homeless people hereby became "visible" and possible to count, since Ireland did not count so-called "hidden homelessness" (p.95). Conversely, municipalities are able to deliberately reduce visible, recorded homelessness through closing such facilities and thereby force or encourage people who would need them to instead move to neighbouring communities – or enter the status of 'hidden homelessness'. Or one may turn rooms in a homeless shelter into rental dwellings – which to a certain extent is what Finland has done. I do not doubt the changes of the actual homelessness number presented in the book (and in other reports and analyses), but I think this problem with statistics is always worth considering.

I would also like to comment the emphasis put on individual actors in a few places in the book. In explaining the success of the Finnish strategies to end homelessness, the importance of certain individuals is highlighted. I do not want to downplay their significance, but Finland has had other important actors, and as claimed elsewhere in the book, the Y-foundation has been extremely important in this respect (p.120 f.). Neither do I question the idea that frequent shifts of actors leading the two other countries' strategies were problematic. But both the exchange of leaders and the achievements of other leaders, respectively, may partly be due to the roles, mandates and resources they were provided by their organisations and national governments. The Y-foundation – neither state nor a conventional NGO – is probably an institution that is especially able to provide both resources and innovations and influential individual actors.

Explaining Change and Non-change

In all the three studied countries homelessness was primarily concentrated in their capitals, the biggest cities in the country (p.125 f. and passim). Urbanisation obviously matters – the more centralised job supply, the more people will move to these cities, with or without housing. Booming economy, urbanisation and housing shortage hang together. In the book emphasis is put on the global financial crisis as an explanation for homelessness growth, as it implied less housing construction (at least in Ireland), higher unemployment rates and higher eviction risks (p.144 f.). However, economic recession also entails less tight housing markets in the cities, more vacancies and perhaps lower rents and in some countries (Denmark) government stimulus of housing construction as a means to counteract this very recession. It would have been interesting if these complex relations between homelessness, economic conditions and fluctuations and state actions had been disentangled over a longer time frame. Despite the similarities in the three countries' situation the general impression is that the financial crisis (and the policy responses it triggered) explains the Irish failure, while the strong commitment (and the Y-foundation) explains the Finnish success, and the Danish status quo is given somewhat less attention.

In explaining the outcomes of the strategies, the authors of *Ending Homelessness?* extend their discussion to also include factors that were not explicitly parts of the strategies, which helps in understanding the differences regarding the changes of homelessness rates. The following comments and reflections on markets, state actions and images of homeless people should be read as suggested complements to these very interesting accounts.

On the Role of the Housing Market

In all three countries, social housing is ascribed a very important role in housing supply for homeless people – both in the strategies and in the analyses of their outcomes. It is stated that in both Ireland and Denmark an important reason to the fact that homelessness was not reduced was that social housing was not produced to a sufficient extent, regardless of the obvious need, while Finland built (and bought) a substantial number of such units during the investigated decade after the 2008 strategy. For a reader from a country that stubbornly refuses to introduce such a sector on the housing market it is somewhat frustrating. Are there no solutions to homelessness through, for instance, regulation and governance of the private and public rental sectors, rent levels, allocation systems or grounds for eviction?

In *Ending Homelessness?* the housing market outside the social sector sometimes figures almost like a force or an actor that cannot be regulated or affected and it is rarely considered in strategies and action plans to end homelessness, as if it were uncontrollable. Still, this market looks very different in the three countries. In Ireland, like in England and Scotland, private rental housing seems to imply insecure tenancies and high rents. While the Irish households have been protected from high rents through special housing allowances, the definition of this system as 'social housing support' has entailed that they loose their access to regular social housing. There is an apparent risk that this system implies even higher rents and that this kind of support actually benefits private landlords more than low income households. In addition, the higher rents entail more rent arrears and evictions, and eventually more homelessness (O'Sullivan 2020, p.18, 115). In Finland, the majority of households own their dwellings directly or indirectly. The private rental market was deregulated in 1994, but according to Ruonavaara (2013, p.339 f.) the Finnish housing policy still follows a traditional "path" of social responsibility and public housing is distinctively "social". More important in this country, according to the authors of *Ending… ,* is the special "stream" of social housing for homeless people that the Y-foundation provides and controls. In Finland, like in Denmark, there appears to be more owner-occupied and less private rental dwellings and my impression is that the private rental market is not considered important for the provision of housing for homeless people in these countries. The authors themselves comment: "… the private rented sector plays a pivotal role in the Irish story, raising complex questions of regulation, investment and public subsidy, but the entire private rented sector merits little mention in the stories of Denmark and Finland" (p.160). This reader wonders why – is this segment of the housing market not accessible for homeless people? If so, then why? Is it too small? Are the rent levels too high? Or is it considered as 'holy' – uncontrollable for political reasons?

States Matter – But How?

In the book *Why so different?* Bengtsson and colleagues (2013) account for lasting differences between the Nordic countries' housing markets and housing policies through an analysis of path dependency. Among the five Nordic countries, only Finland and Iceland are claimed to have a "selective" housing regime by tradition, but around the turn of the century Norway shifted its previous general orientation into a more selective approach. Besides that both Norway and Finland – unlike Denmark and Sweden – in the last 20–30 years have a more selective, and thereby 'social', housing policy, they stand out as the only European countries that have indeed managed to reduce the rate of homelessness in recent years. In the end of her book on homeless policy and practice, Norwegian researcher Evelyn Dyb (2020) notes that these two countries are also the only ones in Europe that not only chose a housing-led approach in their strategies against homelessness, but also made central housing authorities responsible for implementing theses strategies and saw to that they were anchored in the national housing policy (Dyb 2020, p.173f.). According to *Ending… ,* the ministry responsible for housing in Ireland was indeed involved in the homeless strategy, but the creation of a Cross-Departmental Team in 1998 and similar committees thereafter may have facilitated that homelessness was decoupled from the national housing policy, especially in the context of the financial crisis when external actors and international bank institutions gained strong influence over state actions. Hence, national policies matter, and states matter, but it is also important what *parts* of the state are involved in, and in charge of, strategies against homelessness. Perhaps that observation might contribute to the explanations of the different outcomes in the three countries in focus in *Ending homelessness?*

Furthermore, state funding matters. For a Swede, comparing funding of homelessness strategies is quite embarrassing. Sweden has no social housing and the municipal housing companies are obliged to act business-like and cannot receive public support from the central state or the municipalities. And the state will not spend money on counteracting homelessness. While the Irish Government provided €100 million per annum 2009–2018 on social housing, a share of which was used for implementing the homelessness strategy (p.54), Denmark spent €65 million on its first strategy 2009–2012 (p.48) and Finland in total €420 million on its successive strategies 2008–2015 (p.87), the Swedish state spent in total €4.5 million on its short-lived homelessness strategy 2007–2009 (NBHW 2010, p.7).

The authors put great emphasis – rightly, in my view – on the supply and allocation of social housing. A short section on the ethnic composition of the homeless population in Ireland indicates that private landlords' prejudices and racism may contribute to growing homelessness in the country. But some Danish municipalities' resistance to use their legal opportunity to allocate 25% of vacant public housing to people with housing needs (pp.114, 174), and the local authorities' unwillingness in Dublin to give homeless people precedence to social housing (p.130) might reflect negative attitudes to homeless people even within the social/public sector. These observations cast doubt over the authors' conclusion that "greater autonomy for local government" contributed to the good results of the Finnish strategy even during the financial crisis (p.172). Autonomous municipalities are also able to refrain from social housing or from combatting homelessness in times of austerity.

For a central government that is dedicated to reduce homelessness there are other options than to design and fund strategies and expand the social housing sector. As the authors note, only Ireland among the three nations tried to use legislation as a means to counteract homelessness. In 2015, it required local authorities to allocate a substantial part of social housing vacancies to homeless people (pp.62, 70). Other legal measures in Ireland concerned tenancy protection (p.132) which made it harder to evict tenants. Possible additional means would be legislation to increase the public control of allocation of vacant flats in private rental estate, at least if they are partly financed by the state, and directives to adapt to the UN Convention of Children's Rights. However, the studied strategies in the three countries appear to be based primarily on 'carrots' in terms of funding and attention. It could also be worth investigating whether the involved governments revised laws and taxes that counteracted the goals of the homeless strategies, which was the case when the one and – so far – only strategy against homelessness was launched in Sweden in 2007 (Sahlin, 2015).

The authors suggest on several occasions, maybe especially in the Danish context, that homeless people in well-developed welfare states tend to have more complex problems like substance abuse and mental problems than in countries with weaker safety nets, such as the U.S. (see, e.g., pp.139, 155). The logic behind this reasoning is that welfare states in general protect their citizens from crude poverty and have mechanisms in place to see to that also low-income household have access to conditions necessary for a reasonable standard of living – social housing is but one of these means, social insurance and health care are other ones.

However, one could just as well expect that in a welfare state, people with mental or addiction disorders would have been taken good care of, just like people who are unable to work because of other illness, disabilities or old age. Why does substance abuse and mental health problems appear to be more common than physical diseases or intellectual disabilities among the homeless ones in Europe? Perhaps this overrepresentation should not be interpreted as residual homelessness that will fade out when the housing supply increases, and not as a sign that only such people remain because all others are housed, but rather as an indication of categories that are both excluded from the housing market and deliberately neglected by welfare states of today.

Images of Homeless People

An additional possible explanation of the overrepresentation of mental illness and addiction among the homeless in Denmark (pp.115, 116) is the national discourse on homelessness. Almost 30 years ago, Danish sociologist Margaretha Järvinen reviewed homelessness research in the Nordic countries 1980–1992. Among other important observations, she found that the discourses on homelessness differed substantially between the countries:

“While the Finnish – and the Swedish – homelessness discourse often has dealt with the correlation between alcohol problems and homelessness, the Danish discourse on homelessness has to an extreme extent been about the correlation between mental problems and homelessness” (Järvinen 1992, p.38).

In a comment to Järvinen’s study, Preben Brandt agrees and explains: “Danish research into homelessness is to a high extent characterised by utility research and has a strong element of health policy, primarily focused on the areas of psychiatry and substance abuse. Throughout the past 10 years, the research has overwhelmingly been about the scope of mental problems among the homeless” (Brandt 1992, p.75). Brandt further explains that Danish psychiatry, as well as the media and user organisations, by that time were engaged in the housing situations of mentally ill persons due to worries about the consequences of deinstitutionalised mental health care. Just like Järvinen claims, substance abuse has long been closely associated with homelessness in the Swedish discourse. In research of the 1970s and 1980s, homelessness was approached as a kind of lifestyle or subculture, centred around alcohol, and people who did not fit in with this stereotype were not counted or described as homeless.

My point is that the perception of homeless people as characterised by mental illness and addiction might result partly from the fact that their problems by tradition are recorded and attended to differently than, for instance, the qualities of brokers' customers or people on the waiting lists for public housing. In Sweden this tendency is reinforced today by the fact that such 'social' problems with the individual in some cities have become a condition for access to temporary accommodation.

To sum up: if people with substance abuse and mental health problems are indeed overrepresented among the homeless, this indicates gaps and shortcomings in the welfare state, rather than its maturity, and the idea that homeless people to a great extent suffer from these problems might in part result from research traditions that have contributed to a discourse that could have made it even harder for homeless people to access private or social housing.

Housing First and Housing Rights

I am fully convinced by the conclusion in *Ending homelessness?* that "the key element of Finland's relative success" is "a broad 'Housing First' philosophy rather than a particular programme that can be bolted onto an existing housing and homelessness system" (p.165). Still, the problem of housing supply for homeless people in general and for Housing First programmes remain in most other countries.

A Note on Housing First

All the three countries honoured Housing First and housing-led approaches to ending homelessness, but only Finland used Housing First as an overall strategy for all kinds of homelessness. Despite ambitious investments and organisation Denmark only succeeded in involving 5% of the homeless and 14% of its specific target group, long-term shelter users, in its Housing First programme (p.116), and in Ireland the scope was even smaller (p.118). There is an implicit assumption that the concept of Housing First should only be used for homeless people with complex needs, addiction, mental illness etc., and that it requires very ambitious forms of intense and multi-professional support à la Pathways to Housing. However, the occupation with individual problems and professional support, involves a risk that secure and permanent housing is being downplayed as less significant. The attraction of the Finnish version of Housing First – and maybe a part of its success – is that it does not seem to fall into this trap (p.106).

Personally, I have been convinced of the merits of Housing First since its introduction, even before I heard of and read about the Pathways to Housing model. In the H13 project in Hannover, Germany, 13 “chronically homeless” men were offered permanent housing and support when they wanted it. It was a success – in the short run as well as in the follow-up study after seven years (Busch-Geertsema 1998, 2002). However, the consistent emphasis on massive professional support in the Pathways approach, as well as the success stories about single individuals with complex needs and problems, who against all odds have managed to keep their housing, have a flip side: they might reinforce the image of homeless people as very sick, difficult and different people, unlike ordinary neighbours and tenants. The repeatedly told experience of the difficulties to scale up Housing First and to acquire dwellings for such programmes may have something to do with this image.

In my view, Housing First should emphasise housing, rather than support, and homeless people without complex needs should also be offered secure housing. Likewise, floating support by professionals should be available for everybody. If support and housing were truly detached, support would not be a condition for housing, and conversely, support should be available for people who want it, even if they are not participants in specific Housing First-projects. Such an approach to support may also be a way to “mainstream” eviction prevention.

The Problem of Legitimate Allocation

In all three countries of the study, housing is allocated primarily through the market but also through waiting lists and – to a lesser extent – through more or less organised prioritising according to need. The balance in this mixture differs across countries and might change over time, but as housing is a scarce, place-bound market resource as well as a necessary living condition, the scope for each one of these principles is necessarily limited.

Although most dwellings are allocated through the market, that is, the households that can pay most will “win” the vacant homes, social housing is mostly allocated through a mixture of waiting lists and precedence criteria that, in turn, are often controversial and open to interpretation and negotiations. These problems are well known and in a way unavoidable. In Ireland the homeless strategies were to some extent counteracted or hampered by politicians who argued that it was unfair to prioritise homeless people, or feared that people would claim that they were homeless without actually being in that situation (pp.156, 173). In Denmark, several municipalities refrained from using their option to suggest tenants for a share of their public housing (pp.114, 124, 156). Accordingly, local politicians appear to prefer allocation on the basis of fortunes and income or waiting time before precedence based on needs. If this represents the public opinion, and it might do so, it is of course a problem. But at least in Sweden, this position seems to mirror – also, instead or rather – some politicians' expectation that people in severe need of housing will not contribute to the wealth of their municipalities or the local tax revenues. This is an even more critical problem, which may result in a vicious circle of reinforced hostile attitudes and actions towards people who are homeless, poor and/or immigrants and refugees.

There is a risk that some households are not able to qualify for any of the allocation mechanisms – competition, queuing, precedence according to need – but are bluntly excluded. It might appear easier for landlords, and departments of central states and municipalities, to turn to such a "solution" if there is no general right or obligation involved. Municipalities may hope for that other municipalities can give room for their homeless families and singles, and governments may try to reject non-citizens or persuade refugees to move back to the countries they have fled from. In an interesting attempt to distribute migrants more evenly across the country, the Swedish Parliament in 2016 adopted legislation that obliged municipalities to provide housing for a specific number of newly arrived refugees with residence permits. Although they claimed that they had no vacant dwellings, most municipalities managed to house these newcomers. However, when the Supreme Court in 2019 found that the legal obligation only covered two years, many local governments decided to terminate the contracts of these tenants, and encourage them to move out of town.

It is this reader's conviction that to counteract homelessness effectively, the right to housing that is the basis of the Housing First philosophy must be taken seriously and encompass all kinds of homeless people. Through individual rights and public obligations the question mark in the title of this important book may eventually be removed.

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The book's main message is spelled out in its title: *Ending Homelessness?* The question mark is significant. The book does not offer an unambiguous answer as to whether, within the political framework and strategies of the three countries, it is possible to reach a zero point of homelessness. The justification for the choice of the three countries Denmark, Finland and Ireland is that they represent similarities in size, adoption of homeless strategies, and availability of comparable data on homeless persons and households in homeless shelters or other types of emergency accommodation.

The subtitle of the book points to the differences and that the countries are three contrasting cases. One essential contrast lies in the extent of homelessness and the trends in the number of homeless people over the past decade. Finland, as one of very few European countries, has succeeded in reducing the number of homeless people, Ireland has seen an increasing problem and in particular the number of homeless families has gone up, while Denmark finds itself in a middle position with a reasonably stable rate of a homeless population. The study establishes a baseline of 2008 for comparing the cases, around a time when the three countries initiate strategies to reduce homeless. These strategies, which are thoroughly described in the book, have both similarities and dissimilarities. The book outlines the three countries' strategies to address homelessness and discusses the premises and frameworks for implementing the policy and to achieve the goals set by each country.

Who is the target reader and what is the purpose of writing the book? What do the authors want to achieve? "The book seeks only to provide limited generalisability, rather than a broader generalisability as in the case with variable-oriented comparative research, and to provide a narrative that relates 'concrete knowledge about specific processes' (Della Porta, 2013 p.203) in relation to the formulation and implementation of policies that sought to end homelessness in Denmark, Finland and Ireland." (p.24). That is what we learn, or at least what the authors clearly phrase, about the purpose of the publication. Is this a text that solely applies to readers with particular interest in one or all of the three countries? I choose to interpret and expect that the book contributes some universalistic elements, and a few stories that are transferable to other settings and countries, that motivates further reading and a wider audience. A more explicit statement of the purpose of the book would have been more inviting. And there are transferable lessons.

The roughly 200 pages address a number of different aspects of both politics, strategies to end or reduce homelessness, and prerequisites for implementing the policy. As a reading guide, here is a brief resumé of the book's chapters. I begin with Chapter 2 (and return to Chapter 1), which describes the policy before the objective of ending homelessness was introduced. The big picture and the long lines of the development of the welfare state, the housing system and politics to address homeless are drawn. Finland introduced its first initiative to reduce homelessness in the 1980s, while Denmark launched its first strategy against homelessness in 2009. Ireland introduced the first distinct homeless policies in 1996 with the Homeless Initiative. The chapter illustrates the close relationship between the production of figures on homelessness and the initiatives being launched. The figures and monitoring of trends through point-in-time measurements organised in time series have released political initiatives to address homelessness.

Chapter 3 provides a fairly straightforward description of the countries' respective strategies for reducing the number of homeless people in the second decade of the 2000s. The description is organised in three phases starting with the initial phase from around 2008, with a quick look back at the situation before baseline, and goes on to phase 2 from 2012 to 2015. The third phase is set in the period from 2016 to 2018. The following chapter (4) presents methods for surveying the homeless population and through the figures follows trends in the development of the scale of homelessness. Although the three countries collect statistics by using different methods and apply different definitions of homeless people, they have reasonably good comparable figures for large groups in the population. Here, the authors make it somewhat unnecessarily cumbersome for the reader by referring to ETHOS[1] categories, which are only partially described and defined, while the map, namely the overview of ETHOS' many categories of homelessness are listed in Chapter 1.

The next two chapters (5 and 6) are devoted to explanations under the headings "housing matters" and "welfare and policy matters." These two chapters serve as necessary summaries and the application of perspectives to the more descriptive, and at times well detailed, presentations in the preceding chapters. The final chapter, Conclusion, draws together the threads from primarily Chapters 5 and 6. It is probably necessary to provide some details of each of the three countries to bring about differences and similarities, and to explain the structural and political conditions for increases and decreases in homelessness, such as the increase in family homelessness in Ireland, and for implementing the strategies. The question is whether the descriptions are too detailed, so that the most important implications may slip away in the details. Therefore, the last three chapters are both necessary and the part that provides the most insight into the individual case. After what I experience as a tardy start, I read with rising interest throughout the chapters.

Let us then return to Chapter 1, where it is natural to start reading. The chapter includes many interesting aspects, such as the historical review of how homelessness is administered in the 20th century and a discussion about – the lack of – empirical evidence of the connection between de-institutionalisation in the 1960s and 70s and homelessness. For example, a reasonably detailed review of shelter

1 ETHOS: European Typologies of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

users and long-term versus short-term homelessness and what characterises the different groups is interesting, but a bit too lengthy. There are too many pages before the main theme signalled in the book's title is launched, and too many topics. One of many topics is based on references to studies from particularly the US, among others summarising that "cross sectional research failed to capture the dynamics of homelessness" (p.12), and further, "our understanding of entries to and exit from homelessness has been shaped by increasingly sophisticated methodological approaches, in particular, the use of longitudinal administrative data (Culhane, 2016), and in addition to randomized controlled trials (RCT), particularly researching the effectiveness of Housing First versus Ready Housing" (p.13).

The studies conducted with longitudinal data, particularly in the US and Australia, provide valuable insights that European countries can draw on. On the other hand, US represents a landscape unlike most Northern and Central European countries both in terms of welfare schemes and the scope of homeless people, not to mention access to large administrative data sets on homelessness, which facilitate sophisticated analyses. As demonstrated in the book, Finland, one of the few countries that has experiences a marked reduction in the number of homeless, uses cross sectional data in time series to monitor the trends. I can hardly see the justification in characterising cross sectional research as "distorting" "in terms of policy design and service provision" (p.9). The scale of the populations of homeless people in Finland, and in Denmark and partly Ireland, are such that the service providers often know what kind of problems the various subgroups have, and can solve or mitigate the problems, given the right framework, including political prioritisation, funding and, not least, a direction on how homelessness can be dealt with given that the goal is to reduce it. The necessity of having these elements in place is also an important message in the book.

The concept *Housing First* is a pervasive theme in the book. It occurs on average twice per page. What the term covers is, however, not always as clear. The spelling varies. The most accomplished is Housing First, with capital letters as in proper names and brands, but the term also appears in the form 'Housing First' and housing first. The latter is often associated with *housing-led* approach or orientation. In some contexts, a housing-led policy and Housing First are referred to as identical – or almost covering identical content – and in the next few paragraphs it refers to "Housing First in the North American sense." In Chapter 1, the North American relates to Sam Tsemberis' *Pathways Housing First*, established in New York in 1994. The authors also discuss faithfulness to and deviations from the New York model, however, there is no comprehensive description of the various elements of the model, and explanation of which elements to be faithful to versus deviant from therefore remains incomplete. It is stated that Denmark is largely faithful to the original model. Finland, on the other hand, has given Housing First radical new content. The Finnish Y-Foundation, which has a central role in reducing homelessness, declares on its website that the foundation has developed Housing First (capitalised) since 1985, a decade before the North American Pathway Housing First model was established.

Possibly, the authors have chosen not to clarify different contents of the term Housing First, precisely because the meaning of Housing First and housing first (or housing-led) has become plural, and faithfulness to the New York model may not be the only and perhaps not the fastest pathway to the objective of reduced homelessness/zero vision. Imprecision also occurs in the use of other essential concepts. It is particularly prominent in the mentioning of contrasting models or interventions to variants of Housing First, such as “staircase”, “housing ready” and “treatment first”. The “staircase of transition” was first described by Ingrid Sahlin as a term for the Swedish “model”, in which homeless people are expected to get ready for independent housing by moving up the steps with gradually increased independence. The housing staircase is qualitatively different from “treatment first”. The staircase model has been described in the term “no treatment at all”; the person should him/herself deal with problems with dependency and mental issues before deserving a tenancy. Perhaps the lack of definition of these concepts (also) is a conscious choice, the authors want to illustrate a general mindset that is opposed by the idea that homeless people need a place to live. But conceptual clarifications, especially of the central and most commonly used terms, help the reader’s access to the text.

The authors pose a question about the importance of individuals’ effort in maintaining focus on the goals and providing the means and capacity to implement the strategy. The question is legitimate and important. In the case of Finland, to which the question relates, it is suggested that a couple of strong personalities have had a decisive impact on politics and the progress of reducing the number of homeless people. Contrary to Ireland, where there has been several political shifts of government officer in charge of homelessness politics in the period from 2008. The text also shows that deeper social structures and institutional arrangements have at least as much explanation both to understand the choices made by the three countries and the results they have achieved. The Y-Foundation in Finland was established 35 years ago and was a direct response to an increase in the number of homeless people. The pronounced purpose of the foundation was to provide housing with young homeless people as a particularly designated target group. It is interesting to take a closer look at the broad composition of the stakeholders behind the foundation. These include, among others, the Finnish Construction Trade Union and the Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries, which represent the housing supply side, and the largest municipalities, which are responsible for implementing the policy.

Finland is the only EU member state to reduce the number of homeless people over the past decade. It must be said that Norway, even though the country is not a member of the EU, but careful to adopt most directives and regulations issued by the European Commission, has seen a larger reduction in the the homeless population in the same period. The relevance of mentioning Norway are some of its similarities to Finland. The housing system in both countries is dominated by homeowners. The share of homeowners is highest in Norway (80 per cent), but the share is larger in Finland, for example than in Denmark (70 versus 60 per cent). The second parallel is that in Finland and Norway the homeless policy is embedded in the housing policy area and has been since its inception. Finland succeeded from the mid-1980s to reduce the number of homeless people by providing housing, but it took some time to acknowledge that there was a group of long-term homeless people, who needed more than a dwelling. Finland extended (or reinvented?) its housing-led policy or created a distinctive Finnish variant of Housing First, which has proved successful in reducing the number of homeless people. To the question of the importance of individuals, whether it be ministers or other key figures and the political will to prioritise, the authors deliver a strong argument that this is the case, however, the text demonstrate that deeper societal structures is fundamental in the policy formation and in the implementation phase.

The book is 200 pages long. The content might have been tightened up and the scope somewhat reduced. There are too many details especially in the first part. The reader does not get help in sorting the details in the form of tables or other visual aids, which could sum up some significant contrasts and similarities between the three cases. I think it would have invited more readers to come along, and this book deserves many readers, and many potential readers need the book. The message is essentially quite simple. If the goal is to end homelessness, homeless people should be assisted to acquire a home. Some in Denmark and in Finland many, in Ireland fewer, need services and help to deal with social and health issues as well. It is that simple – and so complicated. The book is, thankfully, no manual or recipe on how a state should reduce homelessness and possibly reach the zero vision. That would be to simplify the challenges. Historically, even through the construction of the modern welfare state, homeless people are treated as outcasts, and it takes something to change such grounded structures.

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Kovács, Vera (2019)

Utak az erdőben [Routes in the Forest]

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The stepwise criminalisation of homelessness has been ongoing in Hungary since 2011, and the explicit criminalisation of people experiencing street homelessness was included in the Fundamental Law of Hungary as of 2013. From autumn 2018, based on the Law on Misdemeanours, people experiencing homelessness have been targeted by several restrictive measures, including obligatory referral of people experiencing street homelessness into shelters by the police, and penalising and suing people experiencing homelessness who could not be put into emergency shelters or other facilities for people experiencing homelessness[1]. At the same time, (partly illegal) demolition of informal housing and a closer watch of squats by local municipalities and the police was ongoing, which hit dozens of households hard, who, for example, hid in public parks or private lands in abandoned former industrial areas in the capital city. These are painful outcomes of periods of scapegoating and ever fostered exclusionary discourse of people experiencing homelessness for years (Misetics, 2014), with an ongoing polarisation of welfare arrangements at the expense of serving the poorest (Scharle and Szikra, 2015).

It was these experiences, based on a series of 22 life-stories, that Vera Kovács, the head of the NGO 'From Streets to Home' published the volume 'Routes in the Forest'. By that time, the NGO already had some experience with housing people who were formerly experiencing homelessness in small scale projects in refurbished municipal social flats, and has maintained contact with various other families and individuals who were moving through temporary shelters and emergency shelters, or were moving back and forth to shacks in one of the 'forests' of Budapest for several years.

The life stories told in the volume are narratives of the homeless and formerly homeless families about their life paths and ins and outs into welfare services, jobs, schools, partnerships, employment, and housing. There are a few aspects that are common to all: they all experienced street based homelessness repeatedly and for many years, and they all learned the deficiencies of welfare services and social

1 https://utcajogasz.hu/en/resources/information-materials/the-criminalisation-of-homelessness-in-hungary/

housing measures within Budapest. Most of them come from the poorest pockets of poverty in Hungary, segregated neighbourhoods in small villages, growing up in multiple exclusion, and a few of them fell into homelessness after long years of stability and promising work careers.

In the introductory chapter, Zoltán Lakner, a social policy analyst, invites the reader to watch for the narrative of traumas and blurred time horizons in life stories, the lack of public and private safety nets, the fragile health conditions of the interviewees, and how decent, affordable and safe housing is shifting step-by-step further away from the possibilities interviewees could think of. This guidance is useful to follow the sometimes chaotic and unstructured dialogues, as these are included in the volume as they were recorded by volunteers and social workers. Many times the data collectors' questions are left out, thus, the reader is effectively shifted into co-constructing the recorded dialogue. In these cases, the responses prompt questions from the reader on the go, and the personal life paths unfold step-by-step, while some aspects and periods remain shaded. In other interviews, the self-narration of the interviewees is more coherent, and rich in details, which develops the impression that those stories have been told many times, and interviewees had the chance to be confirmed and being listened to by social workers along their pathway.

In the majority of cases we are invited to 'sit together' and 'talk' to people in newly refurbished social housing. Other conversations were recorded in one of the largest temporary shelters or in one of the forests in shacks where Vera Kovács and her NGO have worked to move as many couples and individuals to safe housing as possible. Most stories are about couples in their forties or older, while the paths of individuals talk about struggles with abuse, loss of autonomy, and painful fights for independence. Women fleeing violence are recurring in all life paths, and they appear either as the interviewees' or their mothers' affliction.

The last chapter by Vera Kovács explains the title of the volume: the Forest is the common point/space in the life paths of the interviewees in that they have all lived in one of the parks/forests for period of time, in some cases for upwards of 20 years. 'Routes' stands for depicting being lost in the insecure and looking for the paths to move on, which sometimes resulted in further destitution. The intergenerational nature of housing insecurity and homelessness is also striking. Most interviewees have families, children, and grandchildren, but they are not able or reluctant to keep contact. For some, siblings and children seem to be there as last resort, but only for issues beyond solving housing. As the stories unfold, it becomes clear that all have already exploited larger social and family networks' resources for a long time, and new friendships and acquaintances can provide sympathy and endurance, but cannot handle shocks and solve difficulties effectively.

Kovács states that she wanted to present the dramatic interplay of deterministic life situations, personal tragedies, and false decisions, framed by systemic failures through these 22 life stories. In the ever worsening public discourse about homelessness, she wanted to show the human behind the stories, and foremost, she wanted to pay tribute to clients she has been visiting in the forest by presenting the value of their individual stories in a book which is only about them. This goal is nicely fulfilled: the reader is invited to discover real lives of real people, and the reader may wish to come back to them later to learn whether their dreams to settle could finally come true.

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Eoin O’Sullivan (2020)

Reimaging Homelessness for Policy and Practice.

Bristol: Policy Press, pp.128, €15 or open access
https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/reimagining-homelessness

The central tenet of O’Sullivan’s book is uncontroversial, that understanding homelessness defines how you respond to it.

The growth in homelessness across Europe is evidence that the actions that are being taken to address homelessness are, in the main, not working. O’Sullivan argues that governments, policy makers, and service providers have been acting on homelessness, but impact has been blunted because they have been working within a construction of homelessness where ‘we *imagine* that homelessness is the consequence of individual failings and dysfunctions’ (p.16).

The answer is ‘… to rethink homelessness as a pattern of residential instability and economic precariousness regularly experienced by marginal households…’ (p.19).

In this slim volume, O’Sullivan primarily focuses on the Irish experience, but locates that in a European context. In five chapters and just over 100 pages he makes the case for a systemic and housing led response to homelessness. The case he makes is compelling drawing on a wide range of sources.

In the first chapter O’Sullivan sets out his early views of homelessness. It is based on his interaction with people experiencing homelessness and homeless services as a volunteer and then as an employee in a shelter in Galway as a young man. This is a writer’s conceit common in social texts, I am certain that I have been guilty of it, and it can often seem superfluous and self-indulgent. However, aided by an honest reflection of his own thinking at the time and a focus on the services available all juxtaposed with a wide range of informed sources that he is now aware of, O’Sullivan ensures that it is not the case here.

Rather it builds a picture of what services and homelessness ‘looks’ like, while drawing on the knowledge he has acquired in the intervening years to expose the misconceptions that flow from an inherited view of homelessness. These misconceptions stem from what we do not see, notably women, thus we have an absence of an appropriate gendered analysis of homelessness. The understandable focus

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of time and energy on those most entrenched in homelessness who on any given night are the more numerous lead us to lose sight of the fact that the majority of people who are experiencing homelessness only do so for a short time.

In the second chapter O'Sullivan builds on this theme. He sets out a brief historical reflection on responses to homelessness. He might have edited down much of the first seven pages as the contemporary focus and the pace of piece are slightly dented by the time given to this broad historical perspective. Though that might leave the reader missing out on discovering the differences between a rogue and an incorrigible rogue.

It is when he starts to explore the growth of congregated shelters we return to the meat of the argument. Drawing on contemporary research he forcefully makes the case that '… there is no convincing evidence that….large congregated shelters…. achieves anything other than a temporary and generally unpleasant, respite from the elements…'(p.31).

The alternative and proven approach to entrenched homelessness as O'Sullivan sets out is 'Housing First', whereby the person is provided with a home and then given the support they require to maintain that home. Here he shows again that we have the answers if we have the will.

O'Sullivan continues to build on the theme of the contemporary view of homelessness and highlights that it is much the same as the old view. This is problematic because if we see homelessness as a consequence of a personal failing, mental health, or substance use problem, we see it as something to be responded to rather than something to be prevented. Warming to his theme, drawing on groundbreaking research, he discusses the varying experiences of homelessness and the prevalence of each. Here he highlights that entrenched homelessness in the Global North is far from being the majority experience, it '… accounts for roughly 10 per cent of those experiencing homelessness over time' (p.36).

These facts are not widely understood and O'Sullivan highlights the reasons for this. Namely that the bulk of research over the last 50 years has taken a cross sectional view of homelessness leading to an equating of homelessness with entrenched homelessness that ill serves everyone. The other significant actors are the service providers or NGOs whose fundraising leans heavily on the image of street based sleeping.

This distorted version of homelessness has led to policy and practice not meeting the needs of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We lose sight of the facts that '… the generosity and comprehensiveness of welfare systems shape the degree to which households will experience homelessness…' (p.29), 'alcohol, drugs and mental health issues are not in and of themselves causes of homelessness, and to suggest that they are is to underrepresent the importance of the economic drivers' (p.40), and 'effective responses to homelessness require housing' (p.45). Further, 'outreach coupled with the provision of housing with support is an effective way of addressing rough sleeping. While providing short-term accommodation in congregated settings is not' (p.43).

It is in the third chapter that O'Sullivan takes a deep dive into the relatively comprehensive data on homelessness that is available in Ireland. Here he builds again on his theme that a comprehensive analysis of the flow and true experience of homelessness leads to real solutions. Again, he returns to the fact that housing is the answer to homelessness. Noting that 'it is the number of households who are unable to exit emergency accommodation that have swelled the point in time figure' (p.59).

The importance of the analysis comes to the fore in his artful deconstruction of the ambition in the Housing and Homeless strategy discussed in the fourth chapter and the number of services and policies that react to homelessness.

The housing crisis in Ireland over the period under review, 2016-2019, saw a 150 per cent increase of households in emergency accommodation. This in turn has seen a growth in the number of congregated services, particularly for families. This growth happened despite successful homeless prevention, diversion, and move-on supports that served more than 12 000 households.

In an insightful deconstruction of the Irish Government policy 'Rebuilding Ireland', O'Sullivan sets out that while the actions in the strategy on homelessness are useful in themselves, they do not disrupt the structural failings of the system' (p.76).

In the final chapter O'Sullivan sets out again the case for his thesis and outlines what a reimagined response to homelessness would entail. The actions taken have to be informed by 'understanding homelessness as a relatively predictable event in the lifecycle of those who experience entrenched housing instability and labour market precariousness' (p.101).

Flowing from that understanding and citing local and international research he argues,

> Homelessness can be ended through the large scale provision of state-funded social housing tenancies provided by both local authorities and AHBs,… It will also require the restoration of social housing to a 'wider affordability role', rather than 'a safety net'…. (p.113)

That is the crux of it. Housing is the answer to homelessness, it is as simple and as difficult as that. This book, in particular because of its focus and accessibility, should be widely read and acted upon. Those at risk or experiencing homelessness will be well served if we do.

If, for the purposes of review, I had a quibble with this piece it is a sense of imbalance in the analysis. Here I have to be mindful of my prejudice, and the reader should be too. I have worked and represented three of the largest providers of homeless services in Ireland over the last 16 years. While O'Sullivan sees the construction of homelessness by NGOs as problematic, he does not take proper account of the advocacy by those same NGOs that has led to government action and public support for action on homelessness. There is also relatively scant recognition of the fact that homeless organisations in Ireland have been championing exactly the sort of change that he eloquently advocates for in the fifth chapter of this book.

If we are to address homelessness we need to provide a housing system, a social protection system, and a health system that meets the needs of the people. From where we stand today that will be a very expensive and long-term project. The scale of that challenge, how daunting it is for a political system that thinks in five year cycles, and how that might be overcome could have been explored. It does not go unaddressed. Former civil servant turned academic Eddie Lewis, who is well placed to understand these issues, is quoted noting that governments can be reluctant to meet the issues face on.

In this context, the omission of the positive social and political influence of homeless NGOs is important given that the ambition of the piece set out at the start is to influence how we think about and respond to homelessness. A more expanded examination on the drivers of the changes in thinking that have occurred, such as the roll out of Housing First in Ireland, as well as what stayed the same would have been a useful addition. This could also be extended beyond NGOs. As an example, the drivers of the decision of Dublin City Council to scale back on allocations to those in homelessness could have been given more in-depth attention (p.89). Having engaged closely with local authority representatives at the time, many, though not all, dismissed the idea of people 'gaming the system' but were torn and put under significant pressure from constituents due to the difficult decisions around the allocation of scarce resources.

Those quibbles aside, it stands repeating that O'Sullivan has produced an excellent and important contribution.

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European Observatory on Homelessness

European Journal of Homelessness

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