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Homelessness in Times of Crisis

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The European Journal of Homelessness provides a critical analysis of policy and practice on homelessness in Europe for policy makers, practitioners, researchers and academics. The aim is to stimulate debate on homelessness and housing exclusion at the European level and to facilitate the development of a stronger evidential base for policy development and innovation. The journal seeks to give international exposure to significant national, regional and local developments and to provide a forum for comparative analysis of policy and practice in preventing and tackling homelessness in Europe. The journal will also assess the lessons for Europe, which can be derived from policy, practice and research from elsewhere.

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Editorial

The impact of the global financial crisis on the extent and experience of homelessness was the broad theme of the 9th annual research conference of the European Observatory on Homelessness, held in Warsaw on the 19th of September 2014. A selection of the papers presented are included in this edition of the *European Journal of Homelessness* (EJH), and collectively they provide a sense of the challenges facing policy makers, service providers and most importantly the consequences for those experiencing homelessness and housing exclusion. This edition of the EJH also includes papers not presented at the conference following a recommendation from the International Advisory Committee that this edition of the journal should not be restricted to those papers addressing the theme of the annual conference.

Elsinga, in a paper based on her keynote presentation to the conference, highlights the on-going affordability issues for those on low-incomes in accessing market-based rental dwellings and the access issues facing those attempting to secure socialized housing when outputs of new units have declined. The solution in many countries is to promote the private rented sector as an alternative to home-ownership (which cannot be a housing option for all sections of the population) and socialized public housing, but Elsinga provides us with an important historical lesson, when she reminds us that a key rationale for the development of large-scale social housing was the failure of market to provide affordable good quality housing. Moving from the global to the local, Gosme and Anderson show how different cities across the European Union are responding to challenges noted by Elsinga. In scrutinizing how the process of peer review of city-level homelessness models contribute to the diffusion of evidence based policies, they show how this comparative process can identify and expose policy strengths and gaps that can then be addressed. Katisko, in a case study of Helsinki, provides evidence of the challenges facing service providers and policy makers in responding to newly emergent needs, in this case, young people with an immigrant background, that is having parents who were born in a country other than Finland. While not utilising homeless services, the paper draws attention to the precarious housing situation of these young people and the adverse consequences of not having secure accommodation in terms of their ability to participate in the labour market and education.

The costs of homelessness, being the public expenditure on homeless services and the adverse impact of housing exclusion on individuals, in particular the former, are a key concern of public authorities, particularly in those member states where external demands for retrenchment of public expenditure is evident. Demaerschalk and Lescrauwaet in a case study of Flanders contribute to the growing literature examining the limited returns achieved from the considerable expenditure on homelessness services. Acknowledging the complexity of measuring such social and human returns, they nonetheless suggest that the existing model of service provision in Flanders is both expensive and inefficient in ensuring the rapid exit of persons from homelessness.

The provision of services to homeless people in many ways reflects how policy makers and service providers think of homeless people. If they are conceptualised as excluded from housing markets as a consequence of affordability and other forms of structural exclusion, or conceptualised as having a range of pathologies largely of their own making, the response will be very different. In practice, such extreme positions are relatively rare, but as Caeiro and Gonçalves argue in their paper, the media play an important role in how the public understand homelessness. In a case study of Portugal, they argue that homeless people are utilised as ‘accessories’ by other actors promoting certain values and personality inspired services, but within an overall ideological framework that promotes assisting homeless people through individual acts of charity. They also note how homelessness is represented in media as ‘rough sleeping’ with emotive pictures of parts of bodies in public spaces. A further image utilised by the media is of homeless beggars, but this often linked with ‘foreignness’ and when so linked, rather than an object of charity, the ‘foreign’ beggar is now the object of suspicion, requiring banishment. De Coulon, Colombo Wiget and Reynaud explore how begging, particularly by Roma, was constructed as either populist, humanist or legalistic political discourse in Geneva, and despite key differences in approach, what united all three discourses was that they reinforced the ‘beggar’ as an alien in Geneva and therefore ‘othered.’

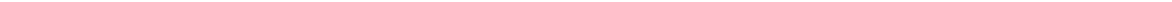
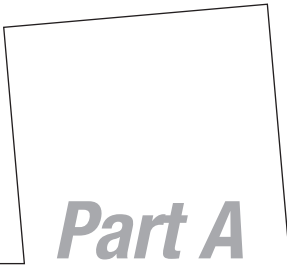
Providing an objective and accepted measurement of the extent of homelessness has proven problematic in many member states. Wygnańska, in her contribution, outlines the process of negotiation with a range of actors in Poland in devising a methodology for counting homelessness that met the concerns of these actors. The concerns included data protection and data sharing, client confidentiality among others, concerns that are regularly voiced in other member states, but Wygnańska demonstrates that they are resolvable to the broad satisfaction of all actors. Measuring the extent of homelessness is a precursor to devising appropriate responses to ending homelessness and Raitakari and Juhila provide a comprehensive audit and classification of the literature published to-date on

Housing First. Housing First, although not implemented in practice in the majority of members states, has been rigorously tested, and Raitakari and Juhila cite in excess of 200 scientific articles, the majority of which stress the success of Housing First in ending homelessness, in contrast to the weak outcomes for transitional and shelter based services which promote housing readiness. This 'state of the art' review provides a classification of the literature and a guide to the key issues, and therefore an invaluable guide for practionners and policy makers.

As ever, the editorial committee hope that our diverse audience find the papers in this edition of the European Journal of Homelessness stimulating, and wish to thank our contributors, reviewers, international advisory committee and consultative committee for their input.



Articles



Changing Housing Systems and their Potential Impacts on Homelessness

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► **Abstract_** *The causes of homelessness are many and varied. Usually they are split into two main categories: social causes and housing market causes. This paper focuses on the latter, and more specifically on the changes that have taken place in European housing systems in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) as well as on the potential impact that housing markets can have on the number of people who enter homelessness and on the likelihood of homeless people regaining access to the housing market. This paper deals first with the academic debate on housing tenures. Next, it addresses the distribution of housing tenures in different parts of Europe and concludes that the picture is mixed. It discusses policies on different housing tenures and concludes that, despite the mixed picture, home ownership seems to have become the European dream. It then elaborates on the extent to which housing markets were hit by the GFC and the lessons that can be learned from this experience. The paper concludes by reflecting on how all of this may impact on future housing systems, and, in particular, on the likelihood of people becoming homeless and the chances of homeless people getting back into the housing market.*

► **Keywords_** *Housing systems, housing policy, welfare, social housing, homelessness*

Introduction

Homelessness is intertwined with social problems and housing market problems (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Stephens *et al.*, 2010). Social problems, such as mental health issues and drug abuse, appear to play a key role in homelessness in most European countries. Housing market problems such as affordability and evictions play an important role in some countries and a minor role in others, depending on the welfare and housing systems. Housing systems seem to have changed in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and according to the responses of various governments. Some countries were hit hard, others much less so. In the case of those hit hard, housing systems are currently undergoing change that is affecting housing opportunities and the chances of eviction. This paper presents an overview of the main trends in housing systems in Europe and their potential impact on homelessness.

The paper begins with a summary of the academic debate on housing tenures, concentrating particularly on the role of home ownership and social housing. It then describes how the figures on housing tenure and housing policies differ across Europe and how the encouragement of home ownership became a key element in the policies of EU Member States. These policies are a combination of a social policy that confers more responsibility on individuals and an economic policy that aims for more market dynamics, less government influence and less emphasis on redistribution. Next, the paper paints a picture of how the GFC impacted on different housing markets in Europe. After presenting an overview of recent literature and the effects of the crisis, it reflects on lessons learned and the potential impact on housing systems. Finally, it speculates as to how changing housing systems may affect the likelihood of people entering homelessness and the chances of homeless people returning to the housing market.

Housing Tenure Systems: The Academic Debate

Governments in most European countries embrace home ownership and develop policies to assist households to become home-owners (Ronald, 2008; Doling and Elsinga, 2013). In some countries this can best be described as policy that has been developed through a logical process, in keeping with what Kemeny (1995) terms 'home-owning societies'. A good example of such a society can be found in the United States, where home ownership is regarded as part of the American dream and the social rental sector is a safety net for people in dire need. This policy has been the subject of extensive research, designed to demonstrate the benefits of home ownership. The research suggests that home-owners take better care of their houses, tend to vote more often, are more closely involved in the local community and society as a whole, have higher self-esteem, and their children achieve better

results at school (Rohe and Stegman, 1994; Rohe and Basalo, 1997; Haurin *et al.*, 2001). The potential disadvantages, i.e., the downside of home ownership, are relatively underexposed in the American literature (Rohe *et al.*, 2001). The disadvantages of home ownership have been more apparent in the European debate, particularly in the United Kingdom.

Parallel to the 'home-owning society', Kemeny identifies the 'cost-renting society'. This is prevalent in several European countries, where rents are calculated on the basis of cost price rather than according to the market forces of supply and demand. In these countries, which include the Netherlands and Sweden, the rental sector is certainly not restricted to the lower levels of the housing market. Accordingly, Kemeny (1995; 2005) refers to a 'unitary rental market', in which the commercial rental sector is forced to adjust its prices to compete, at least partially, with the often extensive cost-rent system adopted by the social rental sector. In these cost-rental societies, a rental dwelling is considered a serious alternative to home ownership.

The developments in the United Kingdom are particularly interesting in this respect. The UK can be considered a cost-rental society until 1980, when under Margaret Thatcher's conservative government a deliberate shift to a home-owning society was engineered via the introduction of the Right to Buy scheme, which offered tenants of social rental dwellings an opportunity to buy their homes at well below market price. This policy, pursued by the conservative Thatcher government, drew housing into the neoliberal discourse and prompted an academic debate about the advantages and disadvantages of home ownership among low-income groups. Saunders emerged as the main champion of those who sought to identify and communicate the advantages of ownership. In his book, *A Nation of Home Owners* (written about the UK), he demonstrates that owning one's own home has many benefits, both financial and social (Saunders, 1990). However, further research has been carried out in the United Kingdom on the drawbacks of low-income home ownership and the large-scale sell-off of council housing. These studies address the main risks vis-à-vis mortgage arrears, repossession and run-down housing as the result of poor maintenance (see Karn *et al.*, 1985; Forrest *et al.*, 1990; Ford *et al.*, 2001).

Over the years, academics have seemed to be in general agreement that, given the advantages and disadvantages of housing tenure, a tenure-neutral housing policy would be the most logical option. Despite the progress in academia, European governments largely chose to support home ownership, and the owner-occupied sector in Europe increased (Atterhog, 2005; Ronald, 2008; Doling and Elsinga, 2013). However, the universalist rental model, in which rental is seen a good alternative to home ownership, remains under discussion and will be addressed in the remainder of this paper (Elsinga and Lind, 2013).

Why Encourage Home Ownership?

Why do so many governments support home ownership in their policies? Many studies have tried to answer this question (Saunders, 1990; Elsinga, 1995; Ronald, 2008). First, there appeared to be a link with religion; home ownership is supported by Catholics in particular (Behring and Helbrecht, 2002) and considered conducive to a stable family life (Goossens, 1982; Elsinga, 1995). In other words, home-owners are thought to be more responsible and stable than tenants. This line of reasoning has been particularly prevalent in conservative circles. In addition, encouragement of home ownership is also encouragement of equity-building by individual households. This has been the explicit aim of policies in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands (Elsinga *et al.*, 2007). Home equity can be considered a private safety net and an alternative to collective welfare arrangements, as described by Castles (1998) and Kemeny (1992), who both argue that there is a correlation between the share of home ownership in a country and expenditure on welfare: the higher the rate of home ownership, the lower the welfare expenditure. Housing policies may therefore also be regarded as policies aimed at less collective welfare arrangements. Housing policy thus appears to be intertwined with social policy and ideas about the welfare state.

In the past decades, many European governments have started to take a less active role in housing, regarding it more and more as a market good. As housing became part of the neoliberal agenda, in which home ownership is seen as a typical market good, it seemed logical to encourage it. In addition, the deregulation of the financial markets in the last decades of the 20th century resulted in new products, more competition and low interest rates, not only giving households easier access to mortgages but also facilitating a considerable increase in house prices and making home ownership an attractive investment in many European countries, with Germany as an exception. These more market-oriented policies also prompted criticism in the early 2000s of broad social rental sectors, which were upsetting the level playing field in the competition with commercial housing providers (Gruis and Priemus, 2008; Elsinga and Lind, 2013). This kind of discussion undermines the support for social housing and – like the policy on financial markets – may be interpreted as a way of encouraging home ownership through stealth (Doling, 2006). Housing policy thus appears to be intertwined with economic policy.

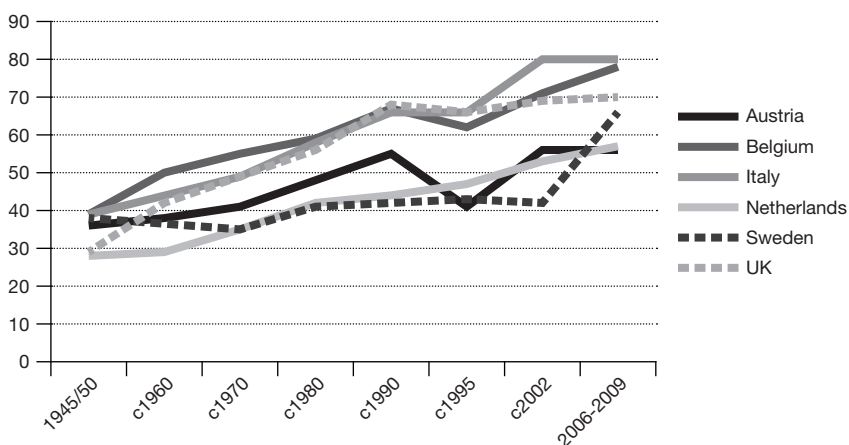
In other words, there were different opinions in the past on housing tenures – some in favour of home ownership (conservative), others inclined towards tenure neutrality (liberal) and a final group in favour of social or public renting (social democratic). The latter resulted in a number of countries with a larger rental sector, making a rental dwelling a viable alternative to an owner-occupied dwelling. This, however,

changed in the 1990s and subsequent decades. Despite huge diversity, home ownership became the norm and all governments in Europe – regardless of their political ideology – aimed to increase the percentage of home-owners.

Distribution of Housing Tenure in European Countries: A Mixed Picture

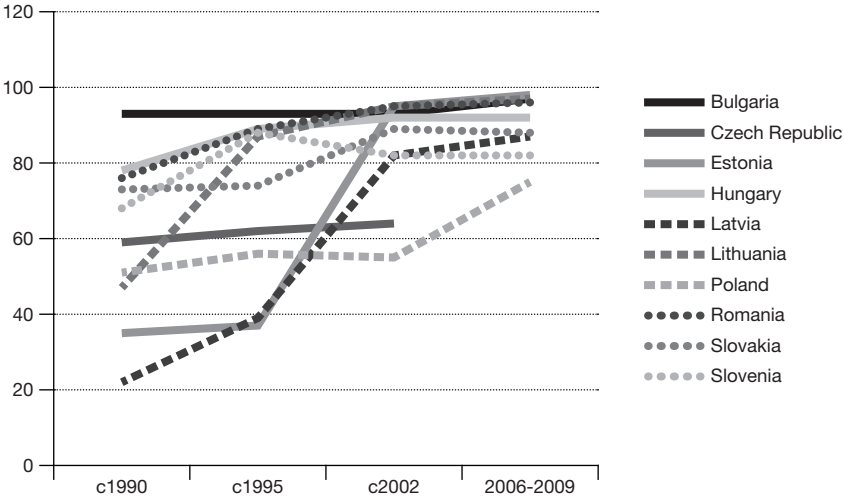
Figures 1 and 2 show that a substantial increase in home ownership has occurred in Western European countries; in the UK it went from 30 percent in the 1940s to 70 percent in 2010; in Italy and Belgium from around 40 percent in the 1940s to around 80 percent in 2010; and in Austria, Sweden and the Netherlands, the owner-occupied sector has increased to around 55 percent. Eastern Europe shows a different picture; the percentage of home-owners varied widely before 1990, from 22 percent in Latvia to over 90 percent in Bulgaria. The transition from a communist economy to a more market-based economy had repercussions on the housing market. In many countries, particularly Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, it resulted in a substantial increase in the number of home-owners, while the number of home-owners in the Czech Republic decreased slightly.

Figure 1. The development of the home ownership rate in six West European countries



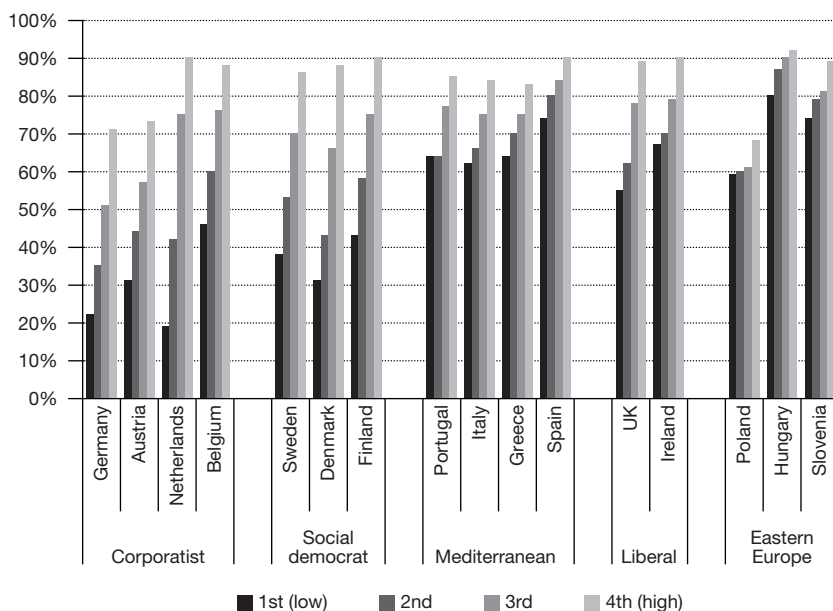
Source: Doling & Elsinga, 2013

Figure 2. The development of the home ownership rate in ten East European countries



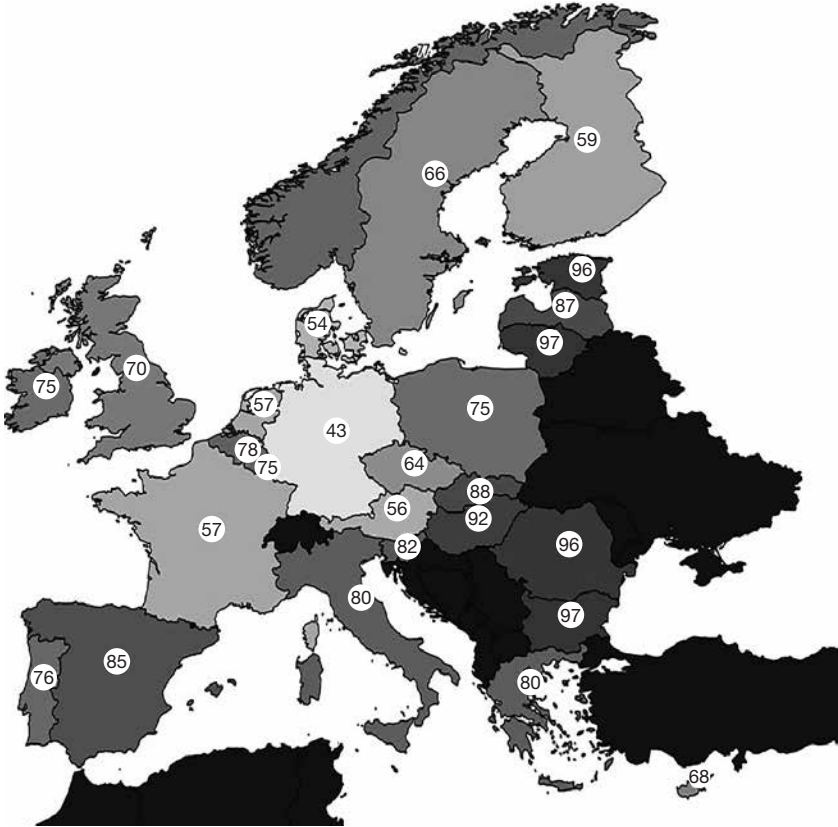
Source: Doling & Elsinga, 2013

The percentage of home ownership depends on income: the higher the income, the higher the level of home ownership. Figure 3 presents an overview of European countries and shows that in all countries the higher the income, the higher the level of home ownership. However, in some countries such as the Eastern European and Mediterranean countries in the table, the difference between the lowest and the highest income quartile is very narrow. In these countries, the majority of lower-income households are home-owners. In countries with a corporatist or a social democratic welfare regime, the majority of low-income households are tenants. In these countries, a social rental sector and/or a housing allowance scheme for tenants is part of the welfare system and makes renting the preferred or enabled option for these households.

Figure 3. Home ownership by income quartile: 16 European countries

Source: EU-SILC, 2009.

In countries with a high rate of home ownership, the norm is home-owning and it is generally assumed that those who rent are unable to buy a house. In countries with more substantial rental sectors, households might also deliberately opt for a rental dwelling (Mandic and Clapham, 1996; Elsinga and Hoekstra, 2005). Though it appears at household level that the higher the income, the greater the number of home-owners, at country level we see the opposite: the richer the country (measured by income per household), the lower the home-ownership rate. The richest country in Europe, Switzerland, has the largest rental sector, whereas the poorest countries (with the lowest incomes) appear to have the smallest rental sectors (see home ownership rates in Figure 4).

Figure 4. Home ownership rates in European countries

Source: EU-SILC 2009

We can observe some trends here, but the pattern is scattered; Poland seems to be an outlier as well as Belgium. There seems to be a link with policies on rental housing; for example, in Belgium the social rental sector and government support via a housing allowance are limited (Winters and Elsinga, 2008).

Despite such apparent connections between policy inputs and market outcomes, the overall relationship is not as straightforward as demonstrated by Atterhog (2005), who analysed a large number of OECD countries and their policies on home ownership. He concluded that there is no clear link between government efforts – in the form of policy instruments to increase home ownership in their countries – and an increase in home ownership during a certain period. However, he observed a difference between Anglophone countries (US, UK, Ireland, Canada and Australia) and the other OECD countries. In the non-Anglophone countries, there was a

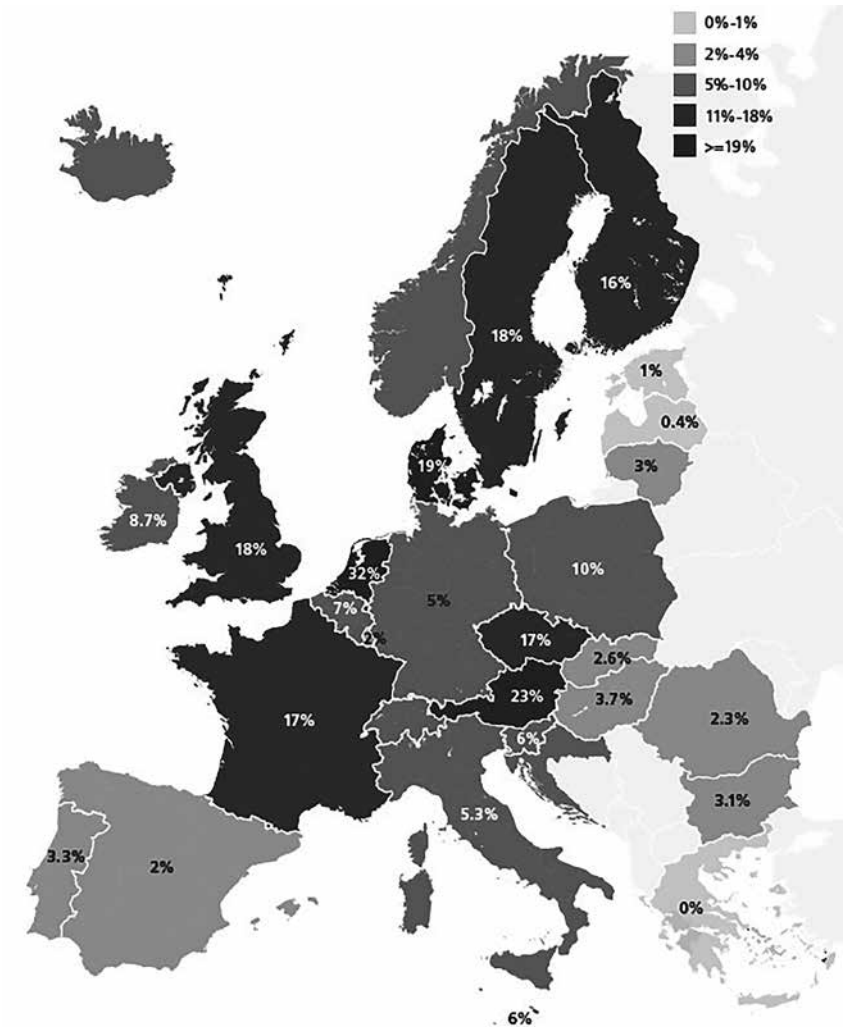
significant relationship between government support and an increase in the home ownership rate, whereas in Anglophone countries there was no relationship at all (Atterhog, 2005). He further concluded that home-ownership policies had most effect in non-Anglophone countries with relatively low home-ownership rates, and that whereas Anglophone countries with a home-ownership tradition might have reached the effective limit of growth in home ownership, there may still be room for growth in the non-Anglophone countries.

The main conclusion here is that home ownership has played an important role in housing policy. It has always done so in high home-ownership countries, and it has become more important in countries with large rental sectors. At the beginning of the 2000s, two thirds of households in Europe were home-owners, and governments in most countries had policies in place to increase this proportion further. At that moment, the global financial crisis hit and affected the European housing markets to a greater or lesser extent, in particular the owner-occupied market.

Rental Housing Policies

Alongside increases in support for home ownership, there has been a general tendency towards shifts in the type and scale of rent support. During the huge housing shortages (in the 1950s and 1960s), investment in new social housing was accorded priority in the countries of North-Western Europe (Boelhouwer and Van der Heijden, 1992). National governments implemented policies through special institutional structures developed from the beginning of the century: in the UK, local governments; in the Netherlands, housing associations; in Sweden, municipal companies; and in France, special public-private organisations such as HLM companies. The 1970s and 1980s saw deregulation, privatisation and an increase in the private sector, as policies shifted away from social sectors towards support for the home-owner. Policy changes were introduced with the intention of reducing government support for social housing. This was most evident in Eastern European countries, where mass-scale privatisation changed the picture and served partially as a shock absorber during the transition (Struyk, 1996). The same applied to the Right to Buy scheme in the UK in the 1980s. The mixed pattern is depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5. The rate of social rental dwellings in European countries



Source: Cecodhas, 2012

Although home ownership has increased in most countries, there are two main exceptions. In Finland, the home ownership rate fell from 67 percent to 58 percent between 1990 and 2000. This was largely a consequence of a severe economic recession and a housing market crash. In Germany, the home ownership rate has remained stable at a low level of about 40 percent, whereas public rental housing has been largely privatised. Here, Bausparkassen schemes are subsidised and households are encouraged to save before they buy. This strong emphasis on saving is resulting in a tendency to buy at a later age. Moreover, the large private

rental sector is fiscally supported and has a 'regulated market rent', which makes private renting an acceptable alternative to home ownership at a younger age (Kofner, 2014). Home ownership is, however, supported by the German government (*Bundesländer*) and looked upon as a source of income in one's old age.

In recent years, the social housing stock has shrunk in most European countries (Scanlon and Whitehead, 2007). Recently, countries with broad social housing models have been scrutinised by the European Commission in the context of fair competition. As a consequence, countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands have been forced to operate without subsidies and cannot target lower-income groups to justify state aid. This means that non-profit rental at below market prices is no longer available for middle-income groups, a tenure that was considered by many as an acceptable alternative to home ownership. While this was not directly intended as a policy to encourage home ownership, it may have that consequence (Elsinga et al., 2007; Gruis and Priemus, 2008).

The combination of state aid and the allocation of social rental dwellings to middle-income groups is regarded as unfair competition for the commercial rental sector. There are, in theory, three ways of preventing this. First, create and target a dual rental sector that will not be in competition with institutional investors. Second, stop state aid and move to market levels, thereby creating fair competition in a unitary rental market. And third, provide commercial investors with the same state aid as social investors.

The latter option was not even considered in the Netherlands or Sweden. Surprisingly, Sweden and the Netherlands responded very differently to the criticism of the European Commission. The Swedish government tried to prevent the EC from taking action and found their own solution to the problem, choosing option two, whereby public housing associations are to work in a 'business-like' manner from here on. In this way they will compete fairly with commercial housing providers (Elsinga and Lind, 2013). The Netherlands automatically chose option one and presented it as an unavoidable option, reflecting the criticism on the broad social rental sector in the Netherlands (Gruis and Elsinga, 2014).

The Effects of the Global Financial Crisis

Housing systems have been changing in recent decades and the rate of home ownership has increased due to government support, enabled by deregulated mortgage markets, and resulting in speculation in the housing market in some countries. One of these countries was the US, where the speculative bubble in the housing market burst in 2007 and was followed by ruptures in virtually every asset market in almost every country in the world. Each country proposed a range of

policy initiatives to deal with its own crisis. Policies that focused on stabilising the housing market formed the cornerstone of many of these proposals. Countries in many parts of the world had been players in either the financial bubble or the housing bubble, or both, but the impact, outcome and responses varied widely (Bardhan *et al.*, 2012).

Bardhan *et al.* (2012) reveal that the housing crisis in the United States was at the core of the meltdown and compare experiences across countries. In their edited volume they come up with a number of interesting conclusions and lessons. It was not only home-owners and commercial investors in the rental sector who speculated in the real estate markets – governments also took part with their land and property tax policies. It appears that the most deregulated systems were in the worst position. Countries that did relatively well were those who had learned their lessons from previous crises, such as Hong Kong and South Korea. Finally, the combination of full recourse, prepayment penalties and the absence of mortgage interest relief can help to reduce the chances of a house price bubble. In this way the risk burden is imposed on households at the cost of reducing home ownership and mobility (Bardhan *et al.*, 2012).

In a special issue of the *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* dedicated to the effects of the crisis, Priemus and Whitehead (2014) look at how the crisis impacted on housing markets and how governments responded. Some countries survived without any real problems in the housing market. Germany is a prime example; macroeconomic stability and regulatory frameworks in the economy go some way to explaining why the German system was not as badly affected by the crisis. There was, in addition, no pre-crisis excess in the German housing market, which consists mainly of private rented dwellings and thus has a low home-ownership rate, which seems to help stabilise the system (Kofner, 2014). Another example is Australia, which although initially hit was able to respond positively to limit instability and maintain an efficient finance system using established regulatory mechanisms. The French case also demonstrates that a quick recovery after the problems of the crisis was possible (Tutin and Vorms, 2014). Ireland, a country that was very severely hit, is discussed by Norris and Coates (2014) in their article 'How Housing Killed the Celtic Tiger'; the financial market was deregulated and the housing market became a speculative market, thus building up to a bubble, which burst in 2008. Ireland learned the hard way that market regulation is necessary for stability (Norris and Coates, 2014). The UK and the Netherlands were both seriously hit by the crisis; initially, both governments tried to support market recovery through incentives such as subsidies, deregulation and guarantees. However, it appeared later that reregulation of the mortgage market was necessary, and this reregulation had a serious negative impact on the housing markets in both countries. There are, however, also differences; in addition to the

reregulation of the mortgage market, the Netherlands rearranged the fiscal policy, which is why the market in the Netherlands is recovering much more slowly than in the UK (Scanlon and Elsinga, 2014).

The most important lesson to be learned from the GFC is that the housing market is closely connected with the mortgage market and the economy as a whole. The US case demonstrated that this can be beneficial as well as damaging. The sub-prime mortgage market was encouraged in the US as a way of extending home ownership to vulnerable households, and lenders were cooperating in the expectation that rising house prices would make housing secure collateral; however, the Global Financial Crisis made it clear that house prices can fall, and that full reliance on home ownership is not a feasible option.

Reconsidering Housing Systems

While housing systems were already changing, the Global Financial Crisis brought a new incentive for change. After the GFC, the emphasis was on getting the economy and financial markets back on track, and the traditional aims of housing policy disappeared from the agenda in many countries. We now provide an overview of housing tenure.

Home ownership harder to access

Overall, the evidence is that mortgage markets are tighter and accessing a mortgage is more difficult. This is true for countries with a conservative mortgage system, such as Germany and Austria, as well as for countries that expanded lending before the crisis, such as the UK and the Netherlands. In some countries, however, there were little or no changes in the regulation of the mortgage market. For example, in the Czech Republic, Sweden and Finland it seems to be 'business as usual' (Whitehead *et al.*, 2014). In countries where the economy was hit by the financial crisis, governments tended to focus on recovery in the mortgage market and the economy as a whole rather than on the problems of mortgage arrears or negative equity. The US housing market lies at the heart of the Global Financial Crisis (Bardhan *et al.*, 2012). This demonstrates the importance of the housing market for the economy.

This tight link between the housing market, the mortgage market and the economy is the reason that the initial response of the UK and Dutch governments to the crisis was to try to make the housing market work again. It is with that in mind that they introduced subsidies, guarantees and deregulation (Scanlon and Elsinga, 2014). However, the mortgage market got in serious trouble, and the recovery of the financial market was given priority at the expense of the operations of the housing

market. In many countries the mortgage market was reregulated and borrowers were confronted with more stringent lending criteria. In other words, it was harder to get access to home ownership.

Emphasis on the private rental sector

Due to pressures on the home ownership sector and on government budgets, the private rental sector is frequently mooted as a solution. But what can be expected from the private rental sector? We need to remember that the poor housing conditions in the private rental sector that came to light during the Industrial Revolution marked the start of social housing policies in many countries. At that time, the quality of the housing provided by private landlords was so poor that it constituted a serious health hazard and was undermining productivity. Private rental housing is not a magic cure for all housing needs (Elsinga, 2014). It provides solutions for households at both ends of the income spectrum. "Providing slum housing for the poorest is a highly profitable activity, but housing them in decent conditions a real challenge" (Peppercorn and Taffin, 2013). The UK and many other countries feared the reintroduction of weighty and rigid regulation. However, evidence from other countries demonstrates a link between scale and stability, and well-defined regulatory frameworks, which provide both landlords and tenants with long-term security in respect of rental returns (Whitehead *et al.*, 2012). A decent private rental sector requires a good balance between the interests of tenants and landlords.

Social housing under discussion

The size of the social rental sector varies widely across Europe. The same is true of discussions on the issue. Governments confronted with financial problems tend to launch austerity measures, with social housing often as one of the targets. As such, housing subsidies have been cut in the UK, Portugal, Poland, Austria and Greece. France appears to be an exception; investment in social rental dwellings actually increased substantially there. Another trend in the social rental sector is the targeting of dwellings occupied by the most vulnerable groups. In some countries this is a result of the economic crisis; in others, it is the result of discussions about the unitary rental model (Braga and Palvini, 2013). Cuts have also been made to housing allowance budgets – take, for example, 'bedroom tax' in the UK and the increase in the 'quality discount' in the Netherlands.

There is an increasing trend towards the privatisation of social rental housing in different ways across several European countries, through selling off dwellings to individuals and by transforming public rental housing into market-like organisations (Scanlon and Whitehead, 2014). In addition, social organisations are upping their efforts to attract private financing. This has blurred the boundary between social

and commercial housing (Haffner *et al.*, 2009). It is an on-going trend that had started before the crisis and, while empirical evidence is lacking, suggests a threat to housing affordability and that arrears and evictions are likely to increase.

Social housing: broad or targeted?

The debate about a broad social rental sector with broad societal support versus a small social rental sector that focuses on the needs of the most vulnerable groups has been on-going for decades (Harloe, 1995; Kemeny, 1995). The latter is associated with the dual rental sector (Kemeny, 1995) or residual social rental sector (Harloe, 1995). Bradley (2014) suggests that the plea by the International Union of Tenants (IUT) for a broad social rental sector and tenure-neutrality comes at a cost: higher rents in the social rental sector in Sweden, France, Austria and the Netherlands and the possible exclusion of the most vulnerable households. Bergenstrahle (2015) responds, asserting that the plea by IUT should not be misunderstood: by tenure-neutrality, in particular, they point to neutrality between renting and home owning, and a broad social rental sector that goes hand-in-hand with special supports, such as housing benefits, for the most vulnerable households, as is the case in universalist models such as Sweden.

De Decker (2011) also points to the tension between legitimacy and selectivity in the discussion on social rental housing. He describes the Belgian situation: a country with a social rental sector of 6 percent of the housing stock and a protracted debate on whether this stock should be allocated to a small or a broad target group. He says it is bizarre that the social rental sector continues to focus on segments of the population that do not want to live in social rental housing and excludes those in urgent need. The Belgian case is not the only one: the fear that social housing will become marginalised and lose societal support is causing the most vulnerable groups to be excluded from social housing. I would like to add the bizarre case of the Netherlands (Priemus and Whitehead, 2014), where social housing actually became a source of income for the Dutch government with the introduction of the landlord levy (the price of political distrust). Housing associations now have to pay around €1.7bn a year to the government. This tax is prompting social landlords to maximise rents and is resulting in affordability problems and greater risks of eviction. Both examples illustrate that this political discussion is leading to changes that are totally at odds with the core aims of social housing, which raises the question of what exactly the aim is of social housing in the first place.

The discussion is not only on target groups, but also on security of tenure. In the UK and Australia a discussion is underway on whether the safety net is too generous and is being used inefficiently. The question of whether security of tenure should

be relaxed and social housing should function as an ambulance in the housing market and be used only as a temporary facility is a topic of debate (Pawson and Fitzpatrick, 2014).

Asset-based welfare?

Another discussion in the UK and other Anglo-Saxon countries revolves around asset-based welfare. As stated by Malpass (2008), housing and home ownership, in particular, can be considered a cornerstone of welfare, and this seems to play a role in policy discourse in the UK. However, it has not yet been translated into policies that make asset-based welfare work for those who used to rely on the social rental sector (Doling and Elsinga, 2013). The social policy discussion on housing and its link to social policy will, however, continue in Europe. The debate recognises that the housing equity of home-owners equates to additional pension, which tenants seem to miss out on. Housing-including both renting *and* home ownership- has not yet been fully integrated in the discussion on the welfare state. It still seems to be a wobbly pillar (Torgerson, 1987).

Reflections on the Link between Housing Systems and Homelessness

The housing market, homeless people: a challenge

Home ownership was hit hard by the crisis. Many home-owners were left with negative equity and mortgages became harder to access, making it very difficult for first-time buyers to get a foot on the property ladder. Governments do not really provide a safety net in this market; home-owners are expected to solve their problems themselves. However, the market is currently recovering in most countries. Lower prices and low interest rates are now making access to home ownership easier, for first-time buyers in particular. This is something that might become an option for some better-off homeless people but for many, the step from homelessness to a mortgage is impossible. The private rental market is presented as an alternative. However, it is far from evident that private investors will provide an adequate housing solution for vulnerable households. The market is not an easy solution for the most vulnerable. It is the origin of all housing policies.

Social housing, social policy and homelessness: confusion

The age-old debate on the convergence and divergence of policies is also on-going in the field of housing (Donnison and Ungerson, 1982; Boelhouwer and Van der Heijden, 1992). The global watcher might see housing in Europe converging towards more market orientation, with more emphasis on home ownership and asset-based welfare, and moving away from the broad social rental sector. However, the GFC

proved that home ownership is part of the market, part of risk, and not the best way to make housing a cornerstone of a welfare state. This trend towards convergence is prompting different initiatives and alternatives in the professional as well as the academic world: new links between housing and the economy, social policy and the quality of neighbourhoods. Where do social housing systems go? It is better to focus on new solutions than on old discussions.

Focus on problems and solutions instead of ideologies and institutions

The discussion on housing tenure in policy and in academic arenas in the last three decades has often been more political and ideological than analytical, centring on ideologies and institutions. Home ownership and a small or a broad social rental sector are closely connected to liberal, conservative and social-democratic ideologies, whereas policy aims tend to play a minor role and even disappear from the political agenda of some Member States. The neighbourhood dimension is very much neglected in the current debate on housing policy. What is adequate housing and how can it be achieved? The quality of housing for people, or the lack of housing and the quality of neighbourhoods and their externalities seem to be on the agenda of the European Commission, which recognises the importance of housing for the urban, social inclusion and sustainability agendas. However, housing is the responsibility of individual Member States. It is therefore time for Member States to rethink their constitutions. What do they mean by adequate housing? A focus on problems and the use of empirical research on homelessness and the deteriorating quality of neighbourhoods, for example, may offer a means to untie the hands of politicians in the field of housing.

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International Learning as a Driver of Innovation in Local-Level Policy-Making: Achievements and Challenges from Peer Review of Local Homelessness Policies.

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› **Abstract_** *Analysis of housing and homelessness policies commonly focuses on the policy-making process at the national level, albeit recognising an important role for local agencies in policy implementation. This paper examines drivers for distinct local (city) level policy-making, and the potential role for international 'peer review' of local policies in sharing changing practice and enhancing the effectiveness of policy development and service delivery. The analysis reviews the first five years of annual peer reviews of city homelessness policies in Europe, mediated through the HABITACT European Exchange Forum on local homelessness strategies (2010-2014). After setting the context of EU-wide and national-level developments on homelessness policy, the paper examines the policy and practice responses of the case study cities that were subject to peer review, comparing city-level policy-making with the international research evidence base to reveal factors driving innovation at the local level. The process of peer review of city-level homelessness models is assessed through a comparison of the five reviews to date (each comprising an initial discussion paper, peer review workshop and post-workshop report) and the reflections of participating cities on the follow-up process, in order to assess the impact for both host and peer cities. The analysis confirms both the substantive role for local policy-making in meeting the needs of homeless people and the added value of a structured peer review process to support international lesson-learning and assess realistic prospects for the transferability of local policy innovations to peer cities with different national policy frameworks.*

› **Keywords_** *Homelessness, local policy-making, peer review processes, international lesson-learning*

Introduction

In the social field, local authorities in many countries are steered by the need to implement national social laws ensuring access to basic social services and benefits. However, times are changing for local social services working with homeless people. On the one hand, there are increasingly complex social problems to resolve and wider challenges linked to the housing market, migration and rising poverty (FEANTSA, 2012; HABITACT, 2013; 2014; EUKN, 2014). On the other hand, there is more demand for services in the context of budgets that have been reduced as a result of the economic crisis (HABITACT, 2013). Local authorities are under pressure, and innovation is increasingly seen as an important way out (Brandsen, 2013; European Commission, 2011; 2013; 2014a). The European Union launched a consultation process in July 2014 on the need for an EU urban agenda, which could, *inter alia*, support local authorities to better respond to complex urban realities (European Commission, 2014b). Local authorities are looking for new social policy models, new skills and new resources in order to find solutions to emerging challenges. It is no coincidence that the HABITACT forum of exchange on local homeless strategies was launched in 2009 by a core group of cities (Amsterdam, Athens, Dublin, Esch-sur-Alzette, Ghent, Odense, Madrid and Vitoria-Gasteiz), with coordination support from the European Federation of National Organisations working with Homeless People (FEANTSA). This forum now consists of a network of 80+ local civil servants keen to drive innovation and to find long-lasting solutions to homelessness in their communities. To this end, they use the HABITACT network in many ways.

One way for them to drive innovation is to organise annual peer reviews of homelessness policy and practice at city level. This draws on the PROGRESS¹ peer review method (used to compare national policies) in peer reviewing local-level policy-making, although without PROGRESS funding. The peer review essentially takes local policy as a starting point for European discussions between local authorities on what works and what doesn't when addressing homelessness, and is supported by the assessment of an independent expert. At the time of researching this paper, five peer reviews had been organised by HABITACT in cooperation with FEANTSA: Amsterdam 2010, Gothenburg 2011, Ghent 2012, Dublin 2013 and Athens 2014. This paper assesses the overall programme of peer reviews 2010-2014 in terms of three key research questions: What have been the key drivers of these peer reviews? What has been the impact of peer reviews at local level? And what are the key factors necessary for these peer reviews to lead to transfer of innovation?

¹ PROGRESS is the European programme for employment and social solidarity, replaced in 2014 by the EaSI (European Employment and Social Innovation) programme

The research method is set out in the next section before a summary of the current 'state of play' in relation to the international evidence base on homelessness policy and practice. Our empirical findings are set out in sections on: the key drivers for HABITACT peer reviews; the impact of peer reviews at local level; and reflections on the factors required for transfer of innovation, before we draw our overall conclusions on the peer review process.

Research Method

The research approach adopted can be identified as an embedded or co-productive perspective, as both authors had some direct involvement in the peer review programme (one as administrator throughout and the other as independent expert for one review). The dual-authorship of the research combined access to research participants with independent distance from the programme. The analysis draws on data from an international evidence review and publicly available peer review documents (discussion papers and meeting reports), as well as new empirical data collected through telephone interviews with a sample of peer review hosts, peer participants² and four independent experts. These interviews were facilitated through FEANTSA and HABITACT, with participant consent agreed with each interviewee. The focus of the analysis was principally on lesson-learning for the network itself, as well as on identifying any more widely transferable findings. Telephone interviews were conducted in July and August 2014 with three groups of participants: peer review hosts (representatives from Amsterdam, Gothenburg, Ghent, Dublin and Athens), peer review independent experts, and peer review participants. Interview schedules for peer review hosts and guests focused on local policy, the peer review process and the post-peer review experience, including any recommendations for the process in the future. Interviews with peer review independent experts focused on the expert role and the overall peer review process. While the co-production participants were known to each other, the interview findings are reported anonymously, identifying key themes from the data.

Interview data was analysed in relation to the other data sources, including the peer review discussion papers and meeting reports. For each peer review, a discussion paper prepared by an independent expert was circulated to all participants approximately three weeks before the peer review meeting. These discussion papers examined the national and local policy context of the host, as well as the distinct

² Most participants were formally part of the HABITACT network, though some participated in peer reviews without being part of the main network. Some participants had subsequently moved on from their functions as local policy-makers responsible for homelessness at the time of their initial participation.

homelessness policy, and set the local policy in a comparative European perspective, highlighting key factors to consider for transferability of policy to other contexts. Discussion papers also put forward a list of key questions to be considered during the peer review meeting. The discussion papers discussed how the timing of the peer review fit with the local policy cycle (e.g., if the peer review was organised at the beginning in order to gather evidence from other peers, in the middle to build momentum for policy implementation, or towards the end of the cycle to support other policy evaluations). Reports were all written after the peer review meetings as summaries of the key elements of peer discussions during the meeting. These reports gave further insight into the motivation of peer review hosts, the perspectives and questions of peers, emerging challenges in local contexts, and commonalities between different cities (e.g., in terms of their approach to homelessness). The independent expert reports and meeting reports were made publicly available on the HABITACT website at <http://www.habitact.eu/activity/peerreview>.

The analysis of these combined sources addressed the three research questions of this paper in terms of identifying key drivers of these local peer reviews, their impact at local level (both for hosts and peers), and the key factors necessary for peer review to lead to transfer of innovation. The analysis was utilised directly by HABITACT network members to participate in self-evaluation of the HABITACT peer review series so far, and to consider how to improve methods in order to make future transnational cooperation even more effective. The network decided to continue using peer review as a method, and the second phase of the peer review programme commenced in the city of Odense in Denmark in April 2015 (Busch-Geertsema, 2015). This paper facilitates the further dissemination of the achievements of, and continuing challenges for, international peer review of local homelessness policy to a wider international audience of researchers and practitioners.

Local Homelessness Policies in a Comparative European Perspective: State of Play

Political momentum on homelessness has been gradually building at EU level. In 2014, both the European Parliament and the EU Committee of the Regions called for a European homelessness strategy. These were effectively joint calls for EU support from local constituencies and authorities across Europe (European Committee of the Regions, 2014; European Parliament, 2014). After more than a decade of EU social policy-making (namely exchange of good practice and transnational peer reviews), national homelessness strategies began to multiply and the interconnection between European, national and local policy-making was increasingly present (Gosme, 2014).

Transnational peer reviews between national governments took place between 2004 and 2010 (PPMI/OSE, 2012) and were utilised to promote transfer of knowledge about homelessness policy, with results feeding into national policy reflection and into the EU policy process through the participation of European Commission officials (Gosme, 2014). A FEANTSA representative was present at each peer review related to homelessness and was able to contribute a European perspective and also a service-provider perspective to the discussions. The quality of national peer reviews varied in terms of preparation, the meetings themselves and follow-up actions taken (PPMI/OSE, 2012). However, the core peer review method was considered useful: taking one policy as a starting point for discussions, having an independent expert analyse the policy before the meeting, and then bringing together a select number of peers to discuss the policy in theory and practice (including site visits). These were the elements that were transposed to the local peer reviews in the HABITACT network.

FEANTSA's involvement in both EU social policy-making and in coordinating the HABITACT network was instrumental in the transposition of the peer review method to local policy-making, and local policy-makers were increasingly looking towards European and peer expertise to address their local challenges. This section draws on the international literature on homelessness policy and service provision to highlight some of the emerging challenges and trends in homeless policy-making, drawing on, and updating, a prior review by Anderson (2010).

The governance of homelessness services has received increased attention in relation to analysis of the changing nature of welfare provision and the identification of new ways of steering service provision, as well as direct state intervention. Governance analysis seeks to capture the increasingly complex structures of interaction between national and local government, and between government and non-government stakeholders. This paper adopts Benjaminsen *et al.*'s (2009) use of 'governance' in a broad sense of how homelessness policies are developed and services delivered in different countries and by whom. The HABITACT peer review process suggests a 'steering' role for the local authority, often combined with some direct service provision. The notion of local policy-making raises questions about the role of local leadership in policy development, as well as the extent to which local policy-makers can deliver new approaches without any strong leverage from the state. At the end of the 20th century, Edgar *et al.* (1999) identified a Europe-wide recognition of the need to tackle homelessness and an increased role for non-government providers – rather than the State – for service delivery. While the emergence of a strong NGO sector might suggest national or nationally dispersed policy development, participation in peer review at city level suggests that the local State retains an important role in co-ordinating policy and developing a coherent strategy across its local area. The local policy-making model fits with other identified

trends in the governance of homelessness services across Europe, such as increased decentralisation and regional autonomy, and a role in enabling – rather than providing – for local authorities (Baptista, 2013; Benjaminsen, 2013; Boesveldt, 2015).

The need for effective policy and service outcomes in the face of rising homelessness put pressure on local policy-makers to develop programmes that move people out of homelessness as quickly as possible or, indeed, prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. Homelessness research, then, became increasingly concerned with the relative effectiveness of different policies for providing housing and support services. Preventing homelessness requires a broad housing policy approach and a range of services to help people access social and privately rented housing, as well as service user support mechanisms to help sustain the housing situation and prevent eviction. During the 2000s, evidence from both Germany and England suggested that successful implementation of homelessness prevention policies contributed to overall reductions in homelessness (Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick, 2008). Homelessness prevention implies the aim of intervening as early as possible to avoid potential housing crises, and an emerging focus on prevention was evident in the emphasis on reducing numbers of evictions in the English, Norwegian and Swedish national homelessness strategies (Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2009).

In terms of resettlement interventions to move people out of homelessness, research evidence has broadly favoured a shift away from staged or 'staircase' models of resettlement (moving through different types of temporary accommodation with different levels of support) to 'Housing First' or housing-led models, where support for tenancy sustainment and independent living is provided in accommodation that offers full tenancy rights (Edgar *et al.*, 1999; Anderson, 2010). The staged model has been criticised as being too prescriptive in terms of assuming that all those experiencing homelessness need to make that type of transition, and temporary homeless hostels have been criticised in terms of restrictions to physical, social and legal space. Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin (2007, pp.72-3) argued that "basic temporary accommodation has often been legitimised by the sheer need of desperate people for physical shelter" (p.72), citing examples of new, large-scale hostels in Madrid and Paris and questioning why the provision of 'low threshold/high tolerance' accommodation was often of a low standard. In contrast, success in reducing homelessness among families was demonstrated in the examples of Germany and Finland, where it was possible almost to eliminate the need for temporary accommodation (Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007), and in Scotland, where Glasgow City Council closed large-scale hostels and resettled the mainly single residents in ordinary housing in the community, with support provided (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2010).

Most recently, the Housing First approach developed in New York by Pathways to Housing has emerged as a potentially effective model, placing homeless people that have addictions or other complex needs directly into permanent housing, without any prior requirement for treatment or lifestyle change (Pleace, 2008; Tsemberis, 2010). Culhane (2008) cited evidence to show that providing support in ordinary housing was better value than shelter provision in the US, and Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls (2008) concluded that initial European evidence pointed strongly to the capacity of homeless people with complex needs to maintain an ordinary tenancy, with appropriate support provided as needed. Subsequent Housing First evaluations in five EU cities also showed encouraging outcomes for tenancy sustainment (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). Housing First represents not only an example of emerging policy consensus around 'state of the art' intervention for the 21st century, but also illustrates how rigorous evaluation of local or city-level implementation can influence national and international policy shifts – especially where there is international collaboration across city-level initiatives.

Interventions that focus on putting the individual first and supporting personal pathways out of homelessness through tailored packages of housing and support have also emerged as leaders in the current state of play in responding to homelessness. The pathways approach adopted by Anderson (2010) focused on supporting routes out of homelessness, with an effective pathway being as short as reasonably possible and taking account of existing service provision as well as the needs and preferences of homeless individuals and households. Johnsen and Teixeira (2010) also concluded that transitional housing and Housing First were not mutually exclusive approaches. A flexible approach to utilising transitional housing may be a useful starting point for better integration of settled housing solutions into local contexts, where homelessness started to emerge as a challenge relatively recently and well-developed national or local policy responses are not yet in place. The more substantive question remains around how individual clients choose, or are steered into, different models of provision at the city level. The empowerment of homeless households to choose their pathways out of homelessness is a crucial point of interaction between structural constraints and the positive agency of individuals. The ability of homeless service users to defend their interests is often inhibited by the transitional nature of homelessness in addition to a lack of resources, continuity and stability (Anker, 2009), and the empowerment of homelessness service users remains underdeveloped in Europe, although evidence of increasing user involvement has been identified in Denmark, France, Hungary, the Netherlands and the UK (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2010).

While the period 1990-2010 saw significant progress in understanding and tackling homelessness, with a growing research evidence base to support developing policy and practice, the HABITACT homelessness policy peer review process commenced in the wake of the crisis of neoliberalism that engulfed much of Europe in 2008, precipitating severe austerity programmes in many EU states, which would subsequently test the emerging consensus of the first years of the 21st century. In 2010, the EU's consensus conference on homelessness sought to take forward a policy agenda on ending homelessness, while the need to protect achievements to date (in terms of providing housing and support services to prevent and alleviate homelessness) became an increasingly critical task for practice and a focus for research. The 2010-2014 HABITACT peer review process offers some insight into the efforts of European cities to sustain and enhance local homelessness policy in a period of economic crisis and to harness international exchange in the continuing effort to avoid more protracted and damaging pathways for those experiencing homelessness.

Key Drivers of HABITACT Peer Reviews

As homelessness affirms itself as a policy field in its own right, local homeless policies (formal strategic documents, which set policy and service objectives to be met by a given long-term deadline) have multiplied, and they formed the basis for the HABITACT peer exchanges over the five-year period from 2010 to 2014. The commitment to this series of five HABITACT peer reviews was substantial, given that participants received only organizational support and expertise from the FEANTSA network and no financial support from EU programmes. Participating cities and other agencies attended peer review meetings at their own cost. In this section, we explore the reasons behind this level of motivation, drawing on interviews with city hosts, peers and independent experts, to understand what drove local policy-makers to organise and attend the peer reviews.

Key facts about the peer reviews

FEANTSA staff coordinated and facilitated the peer review process from beginning to end, liaising with the host city, nominating the independent expert with host city approval, developing the peer review agenda, and inviting peer cities to attend the review. Peer cities are invited to make co-presentations during the review, providing their perspective on key discussion points related to the policy model being reviewed. HABITACT peer reviews have so far focused on homelessness policy models in large and medium-sized local authorities that function in different welfare contexts and at different stages in their policy cycle. In 2010, Amsterdam hosted the first peer review as it was entering the second phase of its homelessness

strategy (Hermans, 2010). In 2011, Gothenburg hosted a peer review in order to take stock of existing approaches to homelessness, and has now published a five-year homelessness strategy (Gothenburg City, 2014). In 2012, Ghent organised a peer review that coincided with local elections but was also in the middle of the implementation of its 2011-2013 local social policy programme (Davelaar, 2012). In 2013, Dublin hosted a peer review towards the end of its homelessness policy cycle – and during the Irish presidency of the EU – and has subsequently entered a new policy phase with the launch of a new strategy to 2016 (Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, 2014). Finally, Athens welcomed local policy-makers in 2014, as it sought to develop a new social policy model in order to address the social consequences of the economic crisis (Anderson, 2014).

The peer reviews take place over one and a half working days. In the first half day, peers are introduced to the local policy, after which site visits are conducted to see the policy in practice. This is then followed by a full day of peer discussions on different aspects of the local model, with structured interventions from peers providing their own local perspective. The peer review meetings have been composed on average of 30 participants, including the host delegation, policy-makers from the ‘peer’ cities, European facilitators and some external guests. Attendance of peers varied over the years, from six peer cities in Amsterdam to fifteen in Ghent, with an average of between eight and ten peers. Overall, local policy-makers from eighteen European countries attended the peer reviews over the five years: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and UK. While this represented reasonable geographical distribution, local authorities from the Eastern and Southern parts of Europe were under-represented among participants. Moreover, no Eastern European local authority hosted a peer review in the first five-year phase.

Key discussion points for peer review meetings over the five years included: transition from staircase to Housing First policy models; cost-effectiveness of service delivery; moving towards person-centred policies; developing the evidence base for policy-making; the coordination role of local authorities; assessing results/policy outcomes; homelessness prevention; working with hard-to-reach groups, including migrants; housing and support packages; and access to housing. This list broadly reflects the policy trends referred to in the comparative review section above, and indicates some common challenges facing local policy-makers across Europe who are responsible for homelessness programmes in their communities.

Key motivations for hosting a peer review

In general, the peer review host expects to get access to 'Europe' (expertise, contacts, external point of view) and to trigger new local dynamics at home. Athens and Dublin were capital cities that had been particularly badly hit by the financial crisis, which resulted in strict constraints on the cities' use of public money. Hosting the peer review was a way for both local authorities to attract peers and other experts to their cities and to benefit from their combined know-how. This was all the more important in the case of Athens, which was in the process of developing a new policy model to address rising homelessness. The aim was to identify the state of play in current homeless policy across EU countries. The motivation was the same for the Gothenburg peer review in 2011, thanks to which new policy-makers in the local administration were able to take stock of existing approaches to homelessness, particularly through the peer co-presentations and discussions.

Peer review, then, provides a platform to bring external European points of view to the table. Hearing arguments made by a third party can help drive strategic change and get local stakeholders on board. During the Gothenburg 2011 peer review, ongoing discussions with local researchers about the effectiveness of the Swedish staircase approach meant that a European view on the matter was important to help find an agreement on the way forward. In the case of the Ghent peer review, policy-makers were keen to create a European context for debate about homelessness in their city, creating a collective moment of innovative thinking. In other cases, there was interest from peer review hosts in gaining expertise on specific issues such as: how to deal with housing market dynamics, the coordination/leadership role of the local authority, and the impact of migration (Amsterdam and Dublin). Hosting a European delegation at a peer review event provided access to expertise and an external point of view, but was also considered an important networking opportunity for the host delegation, as it ensured that all local homeless policy-makers and implementers could benefit from the HABITACT peer network of reference (not only the main HABITACT contact for the local authority). The HABITACT peer reviews were also used to mobilise local stakeholders (such as other local authority departments, community organisations, corporate stakeholders and local politicians). Local authorities took risks by opening themselves up to peer criticism in the presence of a European delegation, but there was a general consensus from hosts that it was important to be challenged on certain aspects of the local framework and system. Hosts were able both to share the successful experiences of their local policy and have open discussions about the challenges they face in implementing the policy, in the hope that this would provide input for internal discussions with local service providers.

Key motivation for attending a peer review

As discussed in the state of play review above, the governance of homelessness across Europe often involves local authorities delegating responsibilities to voluntary organisations, though in some cases this is changing. Local authorities want more say in how budgets are used and better results in addressing homelessness, especially in countries with national, binding policy targets on homelessness. Hence the need for expertise and the importance of the peer reviews. Peer participants are keen to see a local homeless policy in practice; most local authorities interviewed highlighted the importance of the site visits, meeting the policy 'implementers' – namely the service providers – and seeing how they interact with the policy-makers. The combination of peer (policy), independent expert (scientific) and local service provider (practice) input is considered by peers a helpful way to access expertise.

The five local policy models examined in HABITACT peer reviews attracted different types of peers, depending on their interest and welfare context. Some peers were interested in peer exchange on a specific policy model that was close to their own in welfare and housing terms; for instance, there is reinforced bilateral interaction and mutual interest between capital cities like Helsinki, Copenhagen, Dublin and Amsterdam. Even in exchanges between peers working in similar contexts, however, there are many differences, and this provides inspiration, which is key to driving innovation. Most peers are interested in discovering policy models that function in very different contexts to theirs, and are keen, therefore, to have the full diversity of EU welfare contexts present in peer reviews. For instance, the Athens 2014 peer review was considered interesting, *inter alia*, as a way of seeing how a local authority copes in a crisis and what the basic requirements are when faced with these difficulties.

This is a situation in which any local authority could potentially find itself. If funding is not an issue, then a local authority might continue to fund homeless services without thinking of changing them. But if budgets are reduced, they will look at other approaches and elements, such as the importance of the family (Athens) or prevention (Glasgow). So there is a need for ideas that go beyond classic social service provision and for complementing a legal framework with a policy-based framework, with more space for innovation. The peer reviews have been useful in this respect. The challenge for many policy-makers is to keep up a high level of support for homeless people, and peer reviews help by driving innovative thinking and flagging emerging trends. Attending a peer review is like looking at one's reflection in the mirror: one meets people who are addressing similar challenges but in different ways and with new approaches to the problem. The dynamics of the peer review meeting extend beyond the meetings themselves, as peers get to know each other and build a European support network that can be called upon when new challenges emerge.

Impact of Peer Reviews at Local Level

From the interviews with policy-makers in the HABITACT network, it seems clear that the peer review process has had at least some impact. However, this impact can be subtle and local changes can happen on different levels – for example, in a change of mind-set, a change of discourse, a change of governance or a change of policy outlook. In this section, we examine the impact at three main levels: policy discourse and models; awareness of gaps or strengths in local policy; and local stakeholders.

First signs of impact on policy discourse/policy model

Peer exchanges help to enlarge the concept of 'social service', linking it to other local policy areas such as urban planning, housing, environment, community and migration. Peer review enables policy-makers to link their work to these different realities and to try and change the model if need be. Despite being mainly local social services, the housing dimension of homelessness is often a particular challenge for local policy-makers across the HABITACT network. In some local authorities, housing is already part of the policy discourse; in others this is new territory and discussions during peer reviews are contributing to a situation where greater importance is given to housing solutions (HABITACT, 2010-2014). Moreover, the impact of the economic crisis and failing housing markets has contributed to a heightened perception of the housing system as a factor in homelessness. Documentation of peer reviews has been used by some local policy-makers in preparing local policy and strategic documents, and having an external perspective was reported as useful. The independent expert evaluations and outcomes of the peer evaluation that were recorded in meeting reports were useful to send to politicians when pushing through policy changes, notably in regard to the Housing First model. One drawback was that these documents were in English and therefore not always easy to use in local contexts where English is not a working language.

In some cases, the content of peer reviews was used to spread awareness of the topic of homelessness as a living policy field or to try to move away from a rigid institutional/legal framework towards a more policy-based model. Peer reviews provide a forum where the creation of such new policy models can be inspired, or a policy model reinvented to meet new challenges. The ETHOS typology of homelessness and housing exclusion was used as a common reference base across all five peer reviews to ensure that policy-makers fully grasped the cross-country comparisons. This typology is considered by most as a useful starting point to ensure that all peers are 'speaking the same language' when referring to homelessness or homeless people, and it can be used as a benchmark against which local policies are measured. The transfer of innovation in local policy can happen on different levels: from small ideas that can be integrated in every day work, to major concepts like Housing First that require more convincing and greater political

backing before they have an impact. Housing First is a major innovation in the homelessness field that was discussed in all five peer reviews. Some local policy-makers in the network were convinced that Housing First was a useful model for addressing chronic homelessness, and referred to the time needed to get local stakeholders and politicians on board. Innovation also works on more subtle levels; for example, one interviewee mentioned that a learning point from the Athens peer review in April 2014 was the importance of the family in addressing homelessness and the need to consider how best to accommodate this in interventions, such as in the provision of temporary accommodation (visiting hours for family, rules about overnight stays, etc). Such examples reinforced awareness of how individual policy-makers can have a long-lasting impact on city-wide discussions and on the types of services funded.

Impact on awareness of gaps or strengths

When a local authority hosts a peer review, it opens up its policy to peer criticism and to the perspective of an independent expert (who prepares a discussion paper ahead of the review). But there is an understanding from participants that homelessness programmes are very much influenced by local culture and societal perceptions, which vary hugely across the EU. Consequently, any criticism tends to be constructive. All hosts have stated that the peer review was a useful exercise, which yielded fruitful reflections for strategic policy planning. By opening up their policy to discussion, hosts also discovered gaps in their policy that had not been identified locally. The concentration of expertise from other European local authorities in a 1.5-day peer review and the consequent discussions often raised questions in the minds of hosts about their policy. In the case of the Athens peer review, discussions on Housing First were welcomed, though with a degree of recognition that this concept would be difficult to put into practice in the current welfare and housing context in Greece, and would require greater national government intervention. In the case of the Amsterdam peer review, the hosts were already trying to steer homelessness policy away from group housing towards independent flats for homeless people with health care needs. The need to move further in this direction was validated through interaction with participants from the Helsinki local authority.

Peer participants have also said that the peer reviews help them better understand the gaps and strengths of their own local policy. In some cases, participation enabled local policy-makers to assess the strength of their own local policy model or innovation. For instance, continued discussions about Housing First made it clear that challenges arose when adopting this model. Moreover, it emerged that Housing First is being implemented locally across Europe in many different ways, although most agreed that it was an innovative and effective policy. This confirmed the need to continue having debates with local stakeholders about Housing First, even in a local

authority like Odense, which had introduced Housing First three years previously. Peer review is also a way for policy-makers to check they are moving in the right direction, and to compare whether others are testing similar policy ideas. Rather than policy transfer, the tendency in this case is towards international policy benchmarking, where peer review allows policy-makers to understand how policies in other countries are evolving and how their own policy compares. In some cases, site visits have actually led to slight tensions, where delegates did not necessarily consider the host services particularly innovative in comparison to their own local context.

Peer reviews have raised questions about the impact of intra-EU migration on local social services. Migration as an issue was initially raised at the Amsterdam 2010 peer review as a new phenomenon, and it acquired increasing importance in discussions over the years (HABITACT, 2010-2014). These discussions – for example, best practice as presented in Dublin 2013 – have enabled some local policy-makers to better prepare for this challenge and to respond appropriately. Likewise, the Athens peer review showed policy-makers how innovation can be driven by necessity and urgency. But policy-makers can also use the peer reviews to study and plan ahead strategically for the future. Awareness of gaps in policy is key to this planning process.

Some policy-makers have said that attending peer reviews heightened their awareness of flaws in their local policy. The importance of public perception and support in addressing homelessness was a clear conclusion of the Athens peer review, as the mobilisation of public, community and corporate stakeholders was important in addressing the impact of the financial crisis, and the general public was mobilised through a new citizens' solidarity hub (Anderson, 2014). Local policy-makers realised during their discussions that, in some contexts, the media was helpful in shaping public opinion on homelessness, and in other contexts is rather a hindrance. The Amsterdam peer review highlighted the fact that clear policy objectives combined with pragmatism and flexibility were needed to address challenges, though this flexibility did not exist in all local policy contexts. Peer discussion led to increased awareness of the need for a common vision or goal for all local stakeholders, and to the idea that the partnership approach to homelessness (through local authorities and voluntary organisations), which exists in many parts of Europe, is essential in addressing homelessness, though it can also slow the process down considerably and place pressure on local policy-makers. Following the Athens peer review, the presence or absence of a national action plan on homelessness, and the effective implementation of any national plan, was a topic that provoked discussion and reflection. Austria has no such plan, and adopting one might provide political support for the local departments responsible for homelessness and ensure common goals for all stakeholders working to prevent and address homelessness. Site visits in other cities are also useful in identifying gaps in, or the

strengths of policies and their impact on staff and service users, and they can be much more effective in this way than a presentation. For example, the positive environment of a social restaurant in Dublin (with no security guards, a high staff-service user ratio, little violence, and good relations between staff and restaurant customers) helped to underscore the importance of designing and setting up a service environment that empowers both staff and users.

Impact on stakeholders

Participating local policy-makers have reported that peer reviews contribute to energising them in their work, and they have been a key factor in building and strengthening the HABITACT network. The awareness that one's counterparts in other European cities are also trying to innovate is considered inspiring, and it is increasingly clear that cooperation and learning is possible even between local authorities that work in very different welfare and housing contexts. Bilateral visits have been organised between local policy-makers following peer reviews, and in the case of Amsterdam have led to investment in research on governance models in local authorities in different international contexts (Boesveldt, 2015). Hosting a peer review not only opens up the network to local authorities, but the English language outputs (discussion paper and meeting report) are made publicly available, meaning that information about the peer review host can be disseminated well beyond the HABITACT network. Local policy-makers who attend a peer review tend to present themselves differently than they would in their local context, where they are merely part of an institution (with budgetary, institutional and political constraints). In HABITACT peer reviews, they are individuals with responsibilities within their local communities and they have an opportunity to speak openly about the pros and cons of homelessness policy-making. They can be empowered as individual policy-makers, thus building an alliance of expertise and competence, which can in turn help justify and legitimise innovation in their local context.

Similarly, hosting a peer review with the attendance of local stakeholders can contribute to creating new dynamics locally, as spinoff networks or committees can be created or dialogue strengthened by peer review dynamics. For example, a local social housing programme was piloted in Athens in 2014 at around the same time that the peer review took place; a local social housing committee was set up a few months following the review, which was influenced on some levels by the presence of the international delegation in Athens for the peer review. The Gothenburg peer review brought local stakeholders closer, strengthened cooperation between social and housing departments, fostered closer relations with the other city districts, and led to better cooperation with local researchers and Gothenburg university (now part of a local authority-led working group on Housing First). The Ghent peer review was an opportunity to bring together all those involved in tackling homelessness

(including street workers, social rental agencies, those working in shelters and food distribution, etc.) in order to create a renewed common dynamic and vision for making a difference together. Some of the peer reviews were opened by local politicians, which has been useful in raising the profile of homelessness in local politics and raising the awareness of local politicians about the realities of homelessness policy dynamics. The Dublin peer review led, five months later, to a meeting of local European councillors from the cities of Utrecht, Odense, Gothenburg and Rimini to discuss homelessness policies. Some members of the HABITACT network considered that it would be useful to involve politicians in peer discussions, thereby enabling them also to acquire expertise and to integrate the homelessness issue into their general vision for their local community.

Key Factors for the Transfer of Innovation

The ongoing reflections of HABITACT network participants suggested that the city-level peer review process was having some impact and influence on driving innovation in local homelessness policy-making, but that this dimension of the approach could be strengthened further. On the basis of the research in this paper, it appears that a number key factors are required for international peer reviews to be real generators of local innovation.

Common language

The European typology of homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS) developed by FEANTSA in 2005 provided an important basis for the comparison of policies and services across cities. In particular, the definitions helped to understand differing target groups for homelessness policies. In contrast, other important policy concepts such as Housing First and service user involvement have emerged with no clear European consensus on definitions. Housing First as a concept was gaining ground in Europe, as different cities launched Housing First pilots. However, international benchmarking was still difficult because the concept was interpreted and applied differently across local authorities.

Practical focus

Peer reviews took place in a political context, but they aimed, first and foremost, to provide policy-makers with practical tools. Local policy-makers were often close to the frontline of service delivery and needed to be responsive to emerging challenges. It was considered that the site visits undertaken added considerable value by demonstrating policy in practice, which helped to ensure that presentations made during the meetings had been fully understood and interpreted correctly. Peer reviews started out with a presentation of the overall homeless strategy of the

host city, but they also allowed for focus on specific points in the peer exchanges. Some interviewees believed that the practical benefits for participants could have been further enhanced through highlighting some specificities of the local policy model and taking a closer look at implementation (for example, budget allocation, accommodation allocation mechanisms, staff-client ratio, or existing social housing stock). Discussions at a more detailed implementation level may better facilitate transfer of policies and practice across cities in different countries.

Open mind-set

Peer reviews tended to be attended by innovators and forward-thinkers who were keen to improve their local policies – whether looking for new policy models or seeking to benchmark their policy against others – but they also provided space for newcomers who were keen to join a European dynamic. Hence, participants had varying levels of knowledge about homelessness policy-making. Sensitivity to this dynamic was important to maximise benefit from the process and allow for effective peer exchange. There was some suggestion that peer reviews should be organised for clusters of local authorities with similar ambitions and welfare/housing contexts, but the overall consensus was that participants wished to continue being exposed to different local realities from across EU28.

Core knowledge of the host policy

While levels of expertise across participants was varied, it was important to provide all participants with basic core knowledge about the local policy being reviewed. The discussion paper prepared by the independent expert prior to the peer review meeting was important in setting the context of discussions. Ideally, local homelessness policy should be developed on the basis of clear evidence about the causes and profiles of homelessness; the availability of such evidence would further strengthen the potential quality of the peer review. While much information was provided about the host city, there was generally less information available about other peer participants and the context in which they operated prior to the peer review meeting (welfare context, policy model, services, etc.). Such additional preparation would be useful for integration into the peer review – particularly for newcomers – and could also further facilitate policy transfer amongst peers.

Key people

Peer reviews were generally aimed at policy-makers in local administrations, trying to provide them with a ‘safe place’ where they could speak openly without political repercussion or over-criticism. While this tended to work well for peer participants, the hosts were often under rather more pressure as they generally opened up the meeting to local stakeholders, not all of whom would necessarily agree with the direction of policy. While this may limit the openness of the host delegation in

discussions, it can also create positive dynamics and be the starting point for more structured cooperation between local organisations and policy-makers. It has also been suggested that including politicians in the process may be good both in increasing their expertise and because they may be in a better position than administrators to enact real change and innovation transfer in the local context.

Conclusion

This concluding section reflects on the main findings of the article in relation to the drivers and impact of the peer review process and factors influencing policy transfer. It also draws some broader conclusions on prospects for the subsequent phase of the HABITACT peer review. Although to an extent modelled on the EU national peer review exercise, city-level peer review had its own momentum, largely driven by a local desire for access to international knowledge and learning. This shift from the national to the local level reflected, at least partly, a real need for cities to respond to the changing nature and increasing levels of homelessness locally. It was a much more bottom-up process than the officially funded EU national reviews.

The peer review mechanism accelerated the process of assessing the current 'state of the art' and provided support for recommendations for policy change. The peer review process was found to improve networking at both local and international levels. In some cases participants were more able to effect actual policy change and to promote emerging initiatives such as Housing First. Participants were able to identify policy strengths and gaps that local scrutiny had failed to detect, and there were personal development benefits for individual participants. Policy transfer appeared to be nurtured through developing a common language for problem definition and analysis, ensuring a practical focus of the peer review process. The process facilitated openness to change and face-to-face discussion, building on core knowledge from prior discussion papers. It enabled key people to debate new ideas in a safe peer environment.

Notwithstanding the broadly positive self-assessment by HABITACT network participants and independent experts, a number of points of critique can be identified. The process facilitated international exchange of local policy-making but perhaps did not sufficiently incorporate the influence of the national level policy context on local implementation, or embrace national level governance issues. Such a process may not be effective for tackling high-level issues such as housing as a human right. There was divergence on what constituted good practice, and the policies presented by hosts were not always considered good practice by peers, though that said, the process takes local policy as a starting point for a constructively critical discussion. Innovation resulting from the process may be

very gradual and is often a case of 'soft' governance and exchanges, where very different local contexts influence each other. Achieving change in the post peer review period may be more challenging but the data collected was not substantive enough to draw any further conclusions. Additionally, the exclusive use of the English language may also have constrained knowledge exchange at the local level.

While cities from 18 of the 28 EU member states participated at some point in the process, cities from Southern and Eastern European countries were under-represented as participants and no Eastern European cities hosted a peer review. There is scope for the network to reflect on the reasons for this imbalance and how it might be addressed, for example by proactively encouraging an Eastern European peer review. Network participants need to be transparent in recognising the continuing diversity of experience across Europe with a view to negotiating an inclusive approach that is of value to cities with more limited resources.

Despite these shortcomings, it can be broadly concluded that initiatives such as the HABITACT peer review, with the support of a network of expertise like FEANTSA, make a valuable contribution to evidence-based policy transfer, although careful consideration needs to be given to appropriate methods for the peer review of city policies in different national contexts. While many of the challenges faced by local authorities across the EU28 in preventing and addressing homelessness are similar, cultural differences mean that approaches to the phenomenon vary. This can create both obstacles to and stimulus for the transfer of innovation.

With regards to the governance of homelessness, the peer review process demonstrated the centrality of the municipality as facilitator and co-ordinator across a range of active policy stakeholders and service providers. Although tensions did emerge in some peer review discussions, networking across sectors helped cities respond to the local consequences of the national and international context. As noted earlier, while the Anderson (2010) review acknowledged significant progress in understanding and tackling homelessness over the period 1990-2010, it was published just as the full extent of the post-2008 economic crisis and ensuing austerity programmes became evident. Despite the extreme crisis facing the city of Athens and Greece as a nation, the Athens 2014 homelessness peer review indicated that some continuing progress could be made in refining homelessness policy and practice (Anderson, 2014).

The HABITACT network was set to continue post-2014, building upon the conclusions of the review and adapting its format to meet the shifting needs of local policy-makers. While policies continue to differ hugely from one local authority to another, there were some signs of convergence in policy thinking. Moreover, common strands emerged from the five peer reviews that were useful for developing the subsequent peer review series (2015-2019). These included continued

support for a move away from emergency to long-term accommodation; the development of realistic objectives and indicators to measure progress in homelessness prevention and reduction; and increased efforts to unlock EU funding to support homelessness reduction through local services. Local authorities across Europe remain at different points in the development of homelessness policy models, with wealthier Central and Northern Europe tending to be further ahead in strategic thinking than Southern and Eastern Europe. However, despite inequalities in national and city-level resources for tackling homelessness, the HABITACT peer review process nevertheless provided a positive example of international networking across European city-level policy-makers.

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Homelessness Among Immigrant Youth: Transitions Between Inclusion and Exclusion

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► **Abstract** *The demographic profile of the European homeless population is changing. Societies are now facing new forms of homelessness. Finland is an example of where long-term homeless people made up the 'core' of homelessness in the past. Today, young immigrants have become a growing subgroup of the homeless population. The number of homeless people has decreased in all categories except people living temporarily with friends and relatives. In recent years, homelessness among immigrants has become more widespread and increasingly complex in multicultural western countries. While the problem has historically affected urban centres, including metropolitan areas like Helsinki, incidences of homelessness in suburban areas are creating a need for new policies, services and resources. Also, the traditional way of conceptualizing homelessness fails to describe homelessness among youths with immigrant backgrounds adequately. In this article, I will discuss the paths and routes that lead to youths with immigrant backgrounds becoming homeless, drawing on first-hand experiences. Learning about homelessness from the youths themselves can facilitate the development of service systems. I use the concepts of social exclusion and inclusion as I analyse the forms and experiences of homelessness among young immigrants.*

► **Keywords** *Homelessness, youth, hidden homelessness, immigration, discrimination, multicultural society*

Introduction: Finland's societal changes towards a multicultural society

Finland is a Nordic welfare state that has experienced rapid changes over the past decade. These developments were triggered by extensive societal changes. The first change related to late but rapid industrialisation together with a relatively rapid growth in wealth. The second change came from the changing economic structure, and the third major change is related to international migration; as most immigrants have tried to settle in the largest cities, like Helsinki, this has influenced the social and spatial differentiation processes within the regions (Vaattovaara *et al.*, 2011). The late urbanization of Finland is reflected in the housing stock of the country. Home-ownership has had a special role in Finland's short urban history and over 60 percent of the housing stock is owner occupied. The share of social housing in Finland is 16.2 percent, close to the EU average. Over half of the rental dwellings in Finland are state-subsidised. These dwellings are owned directly by the municipalities or companies owned by municipalities. In this part of rental housing, tenants are selected according to the national legislation on state-subsidised housing. Priority is given to people in need – to homeless applicants and applicants in urgent need of housing. In Helsinki, 90 percent of immigrants live in apartment buildings and over 80 percent in rental housing.

Within the framework of a programme carried out in Finland to reduce homelessness, long-term homelessness and street homelessness have started to decline. (The Finnish Homelessness Strategy... 2015). In this programme, which is based on long-term research and development, a crucial aspect has been turning shelters into supported living units, as well as increasing the number of small flats and introducing preventive measures against homelessness. Prevention of homelessness has been improved by expanding advisory services, by renewing collaboration practices in eviction situations and by focusing on youth homelessness, among other things (Kaakinen, 2013). What has emerged, replacing street homelessness, is growing youth homelessness and, in particular, the drifting of people of immigrant background into living with no fixed abode. The concept of 'hidden homelessness' is also rising to the forefront of homelessness research. According to the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, the largest group of homeless people in the country are people living temporarily with relatives and acquaintances. In the year 2011, the number of homeless immigrants in Finland rose for the first time above 1 000. In 2013, there were nearly 2 000 homeless immigrants, and these made up more than 25 percent of all homeless people. In terms of geographical distribution, the growth of homelessness among people of immigrant background has been greatest in Helsinki (Katisko, 2013; Kostiainen and Laakso, 2013; Asunnottomat, 2013; 2014). However, collecting statistics on homelessness depends on the use of services by homeless people. This means that there are

individuals who fall outside the statistics, whose homelessness is not visible and who escape the attention of all authorities. Among others, immigrants have been found to fall often into the category of hidden homelessness (Kostiainen and Laakso, 2013). In this article, I define a 'youth of immigrant background' as having parents who were born in a country other than Finland.

In this article, I will discuss the paths and routes that lead to youths of immigrant background becoming homeless, drawing on their own experiences. Especially in the municipalities of the Finnish capital region, homelessness among youths of immigrant background is becoming a serious social issue with long-term consequences, both for the cities and for society as a whole. In addition to Finland, homelessness has been observed to be taking similar forms in other western and multi-cultural countries (Hulchanski *et al.*, 2009; Germain and Leloup 2010; *Report on homeless migrants...*, 2012; Gaetz, 2014; *Hidden in Our Midst...*, 2014).

The Concept of Homelessness

In Finland, as well as in other European countries, homelessness is considered to be a complex social issue. The prevention of homelessness and the rehousing of homeless people require knowledge of the paths and processes that lead to homelessness (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2010). There are different aspects to homelessness. Homelessness can mean living in the streets or it can mean moving between the houses of friends and family members, living in a shelter for the homeless or staying at an emergency shelter or a women's refuge. There are people living in prisons, substance abuse rehabilitation units and psychiatric hospitals who have nowhere to live at the end of their stay at the institution. There has been very little research into homelessness among people of immigrant background in Finland. The increase in homelessness in this section of the population, having started in the early 2000s, has been gradual and has gone largely unnoticed (Rastas, 2002; Katisko, 2014). For youths of immigrant background, homelessness often does not mean living in the street or, for example, a period of homelessness after receiving services related to substance abuse. The great majority of homeless youths of immigrant background live temporarily with friends or relatives.

The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland defines a person as long-term homeless if they are or have been at risk of being homeless for over a year due to social or health reasons, or if they have gone through multiple periods of homelessness over the past three years. However, youths of immigrant background are often not classified as long-term homeless, even if they have been staying with friends or relatives for several years. The young person's official

address may be a friend's address, while in reality they may be changing abode weekly or even daily. What was intended to be a temporary stay with friends may over the years become a permanent state.

Homelessness and the Concepts of Social Exclusion and Inclusion

'Social exclusion' is a term that became widely adopted in the social sciences in the early 1990s. It has been associated with research on poverty and displacement and the analysis of relationships between the individual and the state. The general definition of exclusion is often connected to displacement from the educational system or from working life. Compared to native Finnish youth, those whose first language is not Finnish have a much higher risk of failure both inside and outside of working life and education. Among youths who have graduated from high school, social exclusion and the risk of unemployment is almost six times higher for those with a foreign background compared to those with Finnish heritage (Myrskylä, 2011).

In this paper, I use the concepts of social exclusion and inclusion in my analysis of the forms and experiences of homelessness among young immigrants. I use social exclusion and inclusion as umbrella terms, under which *accessing*, *belonging* and *being cut out* intertwine and construct each other in a dynamic on-going process. Hence, inclusion and exclusion are shown as gradual, not mutually exclusive phenomena. The starting point in my thinking is that an individual has abilities that allow them to 'become included', even though representatives of official bodies may consider them to have fallen outside the system (Eräsaari 2005; Stichweh 2005). Exclusion is thus not 'the problem', nor is inclusion 'the solution' to it (Eräsaari 2005).

Defining the relationship between social inclusion and exclusion as dialectic means that the phenomenon's are seen as active social and economic events. Exclusion from one group or social category usually leads to inclusion in another group. This can be seen as creating the relationships between in-groups and out-groups. Only rarely does exclusion lead to complete disappearance from the sphere of social relationships (Nieminen and Kostiainen, 2011).

Social exclusion and inclusion are concepts that allow us to analyse different aspects of an individual's daily life in complex, multifaceted, globalized societies (Fangen, 2010). My aim is to analyse experiences connected to homelessness among young immigrants by showing how the youths react to social exclusion and how they cope in their life situation (as homeless youths). It is crucial to study the transitions between exclusion and inclusion in the course of an individual's life, and to analyse the issues, factors and circumstances that contribute to such transitions.

I discuss homelessness among individuals of immigrant background as a dynamic phenomenon, where different forms of, and solutions to, the housing problem alternate and change. The youths end up homeless and shift away from homelessness – for example by moving in with friends – for a period, until they are again forced to survive without a fixed abode. A crucial element is the way other factors connected to integration or inclusion relate to this process of homelessness.

The Research Data and Analysis of the Data

The data in this study has been collected by interviewing youths, using open thematic interviews and group discussions. In this context, the term ‘open thematic interview’ is used to describe an interview limited to the experiences connected to housing and homelessness, as well as experiences of applying for a flat and receiving support. In addition, the interviews were guided by issues and themes that the youths themselves brought up. The topics covered in both individual and group discussions were connected to the young person’s views and thoughts on themes such as home, housing and their future.

For the purposes of this paper, I conducted 31 individual interviews and three group discussions from January to April 2014. In total, I interviewed 41 young persons of immigrant background. The age range of the interviewees was 18 to 29 years. Most of the interviewees were male (35 persons); six were female. I contacted the interviewees through staff in social work, social advisory and education services of cities in the capital region. Most of the youths interviewed for this study come from a refugee background. In the context of this interview material, ‘refugee background’ means one of the following: a) the youth has come to Finland as an underage asylum seeker without a guardian; b) the youth has come to Finland with a family of refugee background, having been born in a country other than Finland; or c) the youth has been born to a refugee family in Finland. Only three of the interviewees did not come from refugee background.

A large proportion of the youths interviewed in this study come from families of Somali background (15 interviewees). The rest of the interviewees or their parents had countries of origin elsewhere in Africa (Eritrea, Egypt), in the Middle East (Iran, Iraq), Asia (Burma) or in Europe (Kosovo). The youths differed from each other in terms of relationship status. Most of them were single, three were married and one had children. Due to their poor housing situation, one of them did not live with their spouse and children. One of the families and one married couple with no children were temporarily sub-letting a flat together, living in very cramped conditions.

Using qualitative methods to analyse the research data gave me a better understanding of the context of the immigrant youths' homelessness. My approach to the data was deductive, as I used my research questions to group the data and look for similarities and differences in the experience of homelessness. Through the thematic analysis I looked across all the data to identify common issues and identify the main themes that summarise all the views that came out of the focus group interviews.

Research questions

This study aims to clarify what routes and circumstances are involved when a youth of immigrant background drifts into homelessness, where homelessness is defined as a process that encompasses both drifting into homelessness and temporary escape from it.

- What dimensions and characteristics of inclusion and exclusion can be found in the lives of these youths during their periods of homelessness?
- What transitions between exclusion and inclusion can be observed in the lives of these youths, and what factors contribute to these transitions?

Routes to Homelessness and Life without a Home

While observing youths of immigrant background, it is important to remember that there is no single homogeneous or clearly demarcated group that could be simply labelled as 'homeless youths of immigrant background'. Each homeless youth has his or her individual path and route that has led them into homelessness. Gaetz (2014), for example, argues that all young people without a stable abode nevertheless share certain characteristics, such as youth being the life stage they are going through and their lack of experience in independent living.

There are certain issues faced by both homeless youth and homeless people of other age groups, such as a shortage of reasonably priced flats and deficiencies in the service system. However, the consequences of homelessness are different for young people and those at other life stages. When a young person drifts into homelessness, she or he not only loses their home and housing, but often important social relationships as well, including family, relatives, neighbourhood, school, workplace and hobbies.

There are special characteristics associated with homelessness among youths of immigrant origin as compared to homelessness among native Finnish youth. Young people's relationships with their nuclear or extended family can become strained due to many factors and circumstances. Immigration and the integration process are challenging experiences for the entire family, testing both parenthood and the internal

cohesiveness of the family. A family that is going through integration is subjected to many kinds of pressure to change. For example, the roles, values and childrearing principles of family members may become a target for changes in the new country. Changes in family dynamics may show in inter-generational as well as gender relationships. Families that come to Finland as refugees or asylum seekers are in especially difficult situations, both economically and psychologically.

The situations of interviewees were quite varied. Routes to homelessness variously involved a breakdown in the immediate social circle (primarily family), gaps in the service system or discrimination in the rental flat market. On the other hand, the movement into homelessness did not happen in one direction only, and as one risk was realized, another safety network might save the youth, at least temporarily.

When a young person leaves their family, they are not generally running away from home to have an adventure; there are many different reasons for leaving. Most of the interviewees described flats too small for their families and cramped living conditions, siblings sharing rooms and tensions developing between family members.

he (stepfather) moved into our flat and the flat was too small. Everyone couldn't fit in the same room and we started having arguments. That's why I moved out. Many times I had to move back there (home) and then he (stepfather) throws me out. But that time in the fall it was the last time for sure. Two years I could take it at home and after school I went straight to work. If I went straight home from school, he (stepfather) asked me why I'm home. Eight hours I spent at school and then eight hours at work too, how can I manage that.

However, the issue is not always a breach between the youth and their parents or guardians but the young person's genuine desire to become independent and start their own life. Many of the youths interviewed for this study emphasized that without a place to live, life cannot begin. They wish to have a normal home, a place where they can rest, cook or meet friends. Many of them emphasized security and permanence, as well as having their own private space.

Stress all the time. If I had a place of my own, I could live freely, cook my own food. Do basic human things.

Those in the most difficult situations are youths who have arrived in Finland alone as underage asylum seekers. They have often been placed in small family group homes outside the capital region. As the youth turns 18, the family group home is replaced by independent living. Many of these youths wish to move to the capital region from the family group homes situated elsewhere in the country. Some of the interviewees have moved in with families of their relatives belonging to the same ethnic group.

As the families tend to be large and the flats small, the youths easily start feeling like outsiders while living with their relatives. Feelings of insecurity and lack of long-term stability drive them to move away from their relatives' families.

when you get into an argument (in the relatives' family) you have to leave, they say you can find your own flat and move out.

At the time of the interviews, most of the interviewees were living with a friend. However, life at their friends' places is hard. The interviewees have had to shift to a different place to sleep almost daily. The circle of friends and acquaintances provides a sense of security and functions as an important factor promoting inclusion. However, some youths worry that their friends' 'tolerance' as providers of accommodation may be nearing its limits.

I'm staying with a friend. Every night I sleep at a different friend's place, because one of my friends has a child and I don't feel comfortable there; then there's another friend who has a boyfriend, on Saturdays and Sundays she says to me go away because my boyfriend is coming. Even at night I go to another friend. It's a big problem. Life is hard. I can't study, I'd like to go to school. I have a lot of homework. I have stuff. What will I do? (cries)

Most of the interviewees had an official address at the home of a friend, family member or a family of relatives, though they did not actually live at that address permanently or even on a weekly basis. A few of them had an address as sub-tenants at a friend's address. In the latter case, however, they were doing so-called 'couch surfing', which means literally just sleeping on a friend's sofa at night. Five of the youths had taken a *poste restante* address in the hope of getting a city rental flat faster. However, having a *poste restante* address had no effect on their chances of receiving a flat.

These youths kept their personal items and clothes variously in the storage rooms of friends, family members or relatives. One youth describes having divided clothing into the closets of several friends and sometimes finding it hard to remember where each item or piece of clothing was.

The Roles of the Social Welfare Office and the Adult Education System in Promoting Exclusion and Inclusion

The service system run by the municipal social welfare office was sometimes referred to in the interviews, having occasionally played a significant role in solving the problem of homelessness. In the stories, distrust of the social welfare office ability and willingness to help in applying for flat alternates with experiences of having received indispensable help in actually finding one.



but luckily I had a good person from the social, one who has tried to arrange things and help. If I hadn't found help I would have gone crazy, life would have been too hard, not having any space of my own, having no flat.

Many of the interviewees had received financial aid from the social welfare office, but no actual support in finding a flat..

Despite being homeless, many of the interviewees study within the adult education system in the capital region. From the interview material it can be seen that the teachers, student counsellors and welfare officers working in the adult education system are often the only real providers of help and support for these youths. The youths feel that these professionals are an important source of emotional support in a difficult life situation. Educational institutions have become important places for receiving information and support, with staff helping students – in addition to their teaching duties – by, for example, assisting them in applying for a flat and by writing letters of recommendation to help in finding one. In a sense, the tasks of flat-finding and emotional support have landed in the sphere of adult education. Teachers and welfare officers may begin to be seen as somewhat heroic characters who will accompany their students to flat viewings and call landlords on their students' behalf.

The homeless youths' daily rhythms may be different from those of their friends in regular employment. Cramped living spaces and sleeping on friends' sofas can make studying and working practically impossible.

I don't go to school very regularly. Because my sister has children and they want to play games in the living room. I can't sleep well, or read, or write. I don't have a place where I can wake up in the mornings.

I can say it straight, if you don't have a place of your own, you can't live, how could I put it, you have no peace. It's on your mind all the time that you're a visitor, because it's not your own home. Also, you can't act any way you like. Sometimes you can't cook because you don't live there. You can't watch TV or something. You can't do schoolwork. If you live with your cousin or friend for example, and that friend isn't working tomorrow and wants to stay up all night, you just have to stay up, even if you have school tomorrow....

Symbolic and Institutional Exclusion in the Rental Flat Market and in Integration Practices

In seeking to find a home and their place in society, the youths had experienced various methods, practices and forms of exclusion. The rental companies run by the cities in the capital region are unable to offer the rental housing for youth. All interviewees had also sought flats elsewhere, for example from private owners, foundations, associations and pension insurance companies. All interviewees describe having applied for numerous flats, attended flat viewings and called landlords in the hope of finding a flat. Most of them describe situations where they feel that they have failed to get a flat because of their foreign background. This may have happened even when the applicant was born in Finland and speaks Finnish. One young woman interviewed for this study had received a text message to let her know that the landlord would not rent the flat to a foreigner, but wanted a Finnish tenant.

In interpersonal social interaction and communication, it is possible to identify many forms and practices used to exclude someone. In addition to a text message, the landlord can indirectly indicate through expressions, looks or the refusal to start a conversation that they will not even consider an applicant of immigrant background. We can talk about a symbolic form of exclusion, meaning that the person is defined as 'different' or 'other' (Vestel, 2004). Different forms of exclusion can thus be expressed as a *sense* of exclusion or as observable acts of exclusion (for example closing a door). One of the interviewees analyses their frustration and despair at realising that in reality their origin and skin colour affect their chances of getting a flat more than other factors:

yeah I suppose I've known it somehow, but I haven't understood. That it has really been my identity, what I am, rather than me having a job, regular employment for the past ten years. Everything that's required has been fine, but that you're foreign. I've always thought it somehow personal, I didn't want to accept, I couldn't believe that it can be like this. But it is the cold truth somehow that it (discrimination) exists.....//.... well I suppose I understand in some way, that it's difficult for you Finns to understand that someone is foreign, but what I can't understand is what is so damn hard about checking a person's background, what they've done and if they have a job and if they have regular income. Like the basics that are usually required.

Because of the shortage of flats, an unofficial rental flat market has developed in the capital region. Some parties try to make a profit from the difficult situations of youths of immigrant background in the general rental flat market. Youths may be charged excessive rent or the flats offered to them may be in poor repair. Flat seekers may also hire someone to apply for flats, write letters of recommendation or coach them for flat viewings.



some friend of mine said that if you want a flat, you have to first pay for someone to find one for you. Like a commission in a way, but it's not a legal company. But on top of that you have to pay the rent deposit of course.

In addition to open discrimination, there is institutional discrimination, meaning, for example, that flat-seekers are classified in the rental flat market on the basis of their background as a matter of course. Some forms of institutional discrimination can be cited as being beneficial to the applicants – for example, where it is claimed that too many people from the same ethnic group should not be housed in the same block of flats.

Of the youths interviewed for this study, many had a Somali background. In both Finnish and international research concerning segregation in residential areas, it has been found that populations of Somali origin face both institutional and general discrimination in the rental flat market (Dhalmann and Vilkkama, 2009; Huisman, 2011; van Liempt, 2011; Skovgaard *et al.*, 2014).

The officials and functionaries in charge of distributing rental flats can either strengthen or weaken the position of persons from various ethnic minorities in the rental flat market. Information can be dispensed in a selective manner or it may be generally hard to access. Housing companies, real estate agents and landlords can, for example, steer potential applicants in their search for a flat by filtering the information they make available regarding free flats (Dhalmann and Vilkkama, 2009; Vilkkama, 2011). Flats can be distributed in such a way that ethnic stereotypes are reinforced. Families and individuals from certain ethnic or religious minorities can be directed to areas where there are already more of them than in other areas. Alternatively, members of certain minorities can be restricted from moving into some areas by referring to various kinds of quotas, or by excluding them completely from a certain type of housing (Vilkkama, 2011).

Among the youths interviewed for this study there were some who had arrived in Finland alone as underage asylum seekers. As minors, they had been placed either in the municipalities surrounding the capital region or in other parts of Finland. As they reached adulthood, they all wished to move to the capital region. State authorities have started developing post-custodial services for these youths. Youths who arrive in the country alone as minors need special support and help even after reaching adulthood (*Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön... , [Publications of the Ministry of Employment...], 2014).*

In countries that receive immigrants, newcomers have generally wished to settle in urban centres, preferably cities. According to Vilkkama (2011), the ethnic and social differentiation of the urban structure is typical in the development of cities that are becoming increasingly multicultural. In Finland, like elsewhere, social and

ethnic differentiation has become a current issue; people moving to Finland want to settle in the largest cities. Hence, immigration policies should also be urban development policies.

Conclusions

Although the routes and paths to homelessness are often seen on the individual level and as involving economic and relationship problems, there are often underlying factors related to societal structures and service systems that lead to homelessness among people of immigrant background. Homelessness among families and individuals of refugee background is linked to causes related to integration policies and practices. Cramped and poor living conditions, unemployment, parents' lack of language skills, lack of information and economic factors are reflected in relationships between family members. Homelessness is a serious social issue. However, the hardest thing about homelessness is the personal, human side. The feeling that they are not considered worthy of having a flat of their own because of their origin instils a sense of powerlessness and exclusion in these youth.

The traditional way of conceptualizing homelessness does not describe homelessness among youths of immigrant background adequately. This homelessness does not show up in statistics. Even though homelessness as a life situation is extremely difficult, it was not hard to persuade the youths to be interviewed. They want the issue to be brought up in public discourse. Many of the youths I interviewed also had friends in similar situations in their social circle.

According to their interview responses, none of the interviewees had spent nights on the streets, nor are they completely excluded from society. Youths of immigrant background are supported by networks of friends and acquaintances. In a similar way, extended family and relatives, as well as the ethnic community, are important sources of support and providers of temporary accommodation. These resources are quite effective at compensating for a blind spot related to homelessness in the public service system. The adult education system has also become an important source of both emotional and concrete support for youths of immigrant background. The intertwining and dialectic qualities of exclusion and inclusion can be considered in relation to the public-private axis.

Homelessness affects the daily lives of these youths in several different ways. Uncertainty about where they will spend the next night or week means they have no foundation to build on. Their ability to study and work are compromised. The idea of having their own lives and families seem to become more and more distant. Friends and acquaintances are an indispensable source of help and support, yet at the same time the youths are tormented by uncertainty about how long the

network of friends can cope with supporting a homeless person. Considering their situation, the youths interviewed for this study were managing relatively well. They all had systems that held on and included them to some extent.

Several of the interviewees still had family members or relatives “out there”, or ones who had left Finland at a later point. It emerged in interviews that the diaspora of the Somali community in particular had relatives living in Somalia or having later moved to the United States, Denmark or United Kingdom. In the course of their journey from Somalia, some had stayed for example in Italy, along the route that most refugees of African origin take on their way towards Central and Northern Europe. Thus, the situations of these interviewees also have to be considered in the global context. Even though homelessness is a concrete issue right here and now, its roots and causes are often international.

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The Costs of Flemish Homeless Care

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› **Abstract_** *Being homeless entails costs, in the first place to the homeless person himself, whose mental and physical health suffers. But there is also a cost to society. In this article, we focus of the costs of homelessness in Flanders. We have calculated the price of the services dedicated to homeless people, such as night shelters and longer-term hostels. In addition, we look at the costs of homelessness for general services, such as physical and mental health services, the police, prisons and councils. Unfortunately, the money spent costs society but does not actually do homeless people a great deal of good. In addition, we have taken a look at the average length of stay in Flemish hostels and we have calculated the cost of several typical trajectories through homeless services.*

› **Keywords_** *Costs, shelters, hostels, (mental) health services, judiciary, Housing First*

Introduction

Homelessness¹ costs money. Not only to the homeless person himself, ² whose physical and mental health is affected by life on the streets, but also to society. Famously, Malcolm Gladwell (2006) published an article entitled 'Million Dollar Murray'. In it, he tells the tale of the roofless Murray, who lived in the streets in Reno, Nevada. Two police officers added up the cost of Murray's trips in an ambulance, his stays in intensive care, the hospital and prison costs, and they concluded that after ten years of homelessness, this expenditure made Murray a 'million dollar man'. For all this money, the taxpayer got a roofless Murray who eventually died on the streets. Murray's story inspired countless studies into the costs of homelessness in the US. Not intervening comes at a cost. Studies on the costs of homelessness are designed to galvanise policy-makers into action (Culhane *et al.*, 2007).

In this article, we calculate the costs of homelessness in Flanders. We start with a short overview of the studies carried out on this subject and the on-going debates on the costs of homelessness. After that, we give a brief sketch of the Flemish services on offer for homeless and roofless people, moving then to the costs of specific services for homeless people and the costs of general services that homeless people use. To conclude, we will pull together some typical trajectories through the homeless sector in Flanders and work out what they cost.

About Costs: Studies and Debates

The purpose of this article is not to discover what service offers the 'cheapest solution' in Flemish homeless services. Nor do we aim to discourage the more expensive forms of care. What we want to do is to compare costs. Most of all, we want to show how the costs of a preventive approach (such as preventing evictions) compares to other services (such as night shelters and Housing First).

In social services, effectiveness is more important than efficiency. An example to illustrate this: a railway company could run all trains perfectly on time by not having them stop at any stations. With the calculation of the trajectories in homeless services, we do not mean to imply that the expensive trajectories are not worthwhile or that they should be ditched in favour of the cheaper trajectories. The value and the effectiveness of the services provided are more important than the cost. This does not mean, however, that price calculations are not important. Calculating

¹ Although we use the term 'homeless' throughout, a major focus in this article is actually on roofless people – those sleeping rough in the streets. For a full typology and definition we refer to the FEANTSA typology at <http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article120&lang=en>

² We will use the male form throughout, although we realise that one third of all homeless people are women.

costs has an informative value. It can increase cost consciousness, especially when organisations have high degrees of autonomy in deciding how to organise the services they provide (which is the case in Flanders). Finally, cost calculations can also be useful for the preparation and evaluation of policies.

Studies on the costs of homelessness can be conducted in various ways. In the United States and Australia, various studies – including large-scale studies – have been carried out on the subject. In Europe, on the contrary, studies on the cost of homelessness remain scarce. Recently, the European Observatory on Homelessness collected information from experts in thirteen European countries to get an overview of the available studies and data on the costs of homelessness (see Pleace *et al.*, 2013). The study shows that eight out of the thirteen countries have little or no research on the costs of homelessness.

The methodologies of the few studies that were carried out are often very different in nature. Some merely focus on the cost of homelessness and include (Pleace *et al.*, 2013):

- the cost of providing homelessness services;
- additional costs for health and social services associated with homelessness;
- additional costs for criminal justice systems associated with homelessness;
- loss of economic productivity associated with homelessness;
- economic effects associated with visible rough sleeping/street homelessness;
- the costs of homelessness for people who experience it.

Other studies focus on how preventing and reducing homelessness can lower the costs just listed. Specific programmes and actions, such as Housing First for example, can generate cost, which can be offset against other homelessness services (such as night shelters) and non-homelessness services (such as a stay in prison or a psychiatric clinic). Looking even further, a social return on investment (SROI) can be generated, containing the entire financial costs of homelessness.

Only recently, interest has grown in the measurement of the costs of homelessness in Europe. Pleace and colleagues (2013) see three main reasons for this. The first reason for the increasing popularity of this topic is that it can help to promote services that prevent and reduce homelessness, such as Housing First. A second reason that these studies can be useful is that providing this kind of information to the wider public gives them a broader understanding of the consequences of homelessness. It is not only costly for the homeless person himself, but it also costs society money. The third reason is that offering this kind of information may help non-homelessness organisations understand how homelessness can influence

their work. Researchers who have analysed the cost-effect studies done in the United States warn of some limitations to this type of study (for instance, Rosenheck, 2000, Culhane *et al.*, 2007).

Who is the target group?

Many studies (for instance, Rosenheck, 2000; Culhane *et al.*, 2007) focus on roofless people with a serious psychiatric disorder. This is a group that entails huge costs when they are brought in off the streets, and therefore costs can be curtailed by leaving them in the streets. Investing in 'bringing them in' tends to level out. One example is the significant research done on homeless people with serious psychiatric disorders in New York (Culhane *et al.*, 2002). According to this research, this group cost €26 223 per year in welfare services, health services and judiciary costs. Once housed, the costs fall back to €15 734 per year. Add on the cost of Housing First and the total comes to €26 871. This is €647 *more* than 'not intervening'. Therefore, the cost of investing in Housing First, according to this study, is more or less the same as not investing. But homeless people with a serious psychiatric disorder are a minority in the total homeless population. This is also the case in the figures we ourselves present further on from our Housing First research. Hence, these figures may give a wrong impression. For those homeless people who do not come into contact with costly services, the intervention itself might be a more significant cost.

What and how should be measured?

Little or no guidelines exist on how to measure the cost of homelessness services. When doing the calculations for this article, we found that measuring homelessness is not that clear-cut. The organisation of specific services has a significant effect on the costs. For example, for our study we calculated the costs of night shelters in Flanders. Significant differences in prices are found depending on whether or not an organisation has its own building. Having to pay rent or otherwise creates a huge difference in costs. Another example is whether or not a shelter makes use of volunteers. Working with volunteers can significantly reduce staff costs. On the other hand, an organisation can choose to provide a strong presence of professionals, wanting to give more than 'just a bed' and trying to get people off the streets – small strategic differences that make for big differences in costs. The calculation exercise gets even more complicated when measuring other costs, for example the cost of 'being arrested and charged by the police' or the cost of an eviction. The study by Pleace and colleagues (2013) demonstrates that this shows large cost differences. The cost of 'being arrested and charged by the police', for example, varies widely from €50 in Germany to €140 in the Netherlands and even up to €461 in Sweden. Are the differences really that high? Or did the experts use a different

method to calculate them? When wanting to go on and compare services, and to see the financial effect of certain forms of (preventive) actions, it should be perfectly clear what this measurement should entail.

What is the 'cost of an intervention'?

When calculating the cost of homelessness services, the 'cost of an intervention' is not clear-cut. Is a street corner worker a 'cost' of life in the streets? Or a cost associated with the intervention of trying to get someone off the streets? There are projects, such as outreach work, that attempt to get homeless people into (health) care. This sort of intervention will probably drive up the costs: fewer nights in the street, more use of health services (Shern *et al.*, 2000). According to Rosenheck (2000) this is to be expected, as the whole point of the outreach service is to increase access to (health) care.

Should studies focus on costs or on gains?

Cost-effect analyses entail quantifying both the costs and the gains of a particular approach (such as Housing First) in financial terms (for more info on socio-economic cost analyses, see Mertens and Marée, 2012). Some researchers have undertaken this; Cebeon (2011) in the Netherlands brought out a study on the costs and gains of Dutch homeless services. But it is a tricky business to calculate gains in the social economic field. It raises several issues. Is it possible to calculate the gains of a particular approach (such as Housing First) in financial terms? What is the financial effect of a getting a homeless person off the streets? What is the gain in improved quality of life? What is the effect of better health care?

Other professionals state that it can be dangerous to look at the 'effects' of homelessness services, and recommend instead looking at 'gains'. These gains can be numerous and varied, such as staying in housing, improving quality of life, improving (mental) health, changes in drug- and alcohol use and dependency, and changes in contacts with the police and the judiciary. Researchers compare the costs and effect of Housing First to the regular stepladder approach. Even if the concrete effects are less clear-cut, experts advise including less tangible effects in the analysis. An example of this type of effect is that there are fewer homeless people visible in the streets, which is good for tourism and the economy.

Homeless People in the Flemish Context

Belgium is a federal country consisting of three regions: Brussels, Wallonia and Flanders. The regions are responsible for homeless services and for housing policies. Nevertheless, the federal authorities do undertake certain tasks: they support the winter shelters and they offer 'furnishing premiums' – a one-off benefit to fit out a home for those homeless people who have managed to find a dwelling. The Belgian Housing First experiment is an initiative of the federal government. In Flanders, there are two service providers offering services to homeless people: the local councils and the non-governmental sector, which is largely financed by the Flemish government. For a population of 6 437 680 Flemish inhabitants,³ local councils all together have a supply of 3 914 places in emergency and transitional housing. They also finance the night shelters in the cities; these have a total capacity of 154 beds during the spring/summer/autumn and 449 beds in the winter (VMSG, 2014).

Centres for General Welfare Work (CAW)

In the Flemish region there are ten Centres for General Welfare Work (CAWs).⁴ Because of their wide remit and large working areas these are relatively large organisations. The largest CAW numbers more than 500 staff. CAWs are financed with a budget for staff and working costs by the Flemish Community. They are autonomous in deciding how they fulfil their tasks. The government does not dictate how many places in what type of shelter they should have, nor how much they should invest in prevention. There are no rules on what model should be followed and whether that should be a staircase or a housing-led approach. Nevertheless, we can see some marked trends in the range of services offered.

The strong increase, both in absolute numbers and proportionally, of the number of places in various forms of assisted housing is very noticeable. Almost two thirds of the more housing oriented approach to homelessness is due to an explicit choice on the part of the Flemish authorities, which have made extra investments, as have local authorities. Quite a lot has been achieved by reconvertng existing residential capacity to ambulant assisted housing. This reversion mainly took place in the period 2000-2003, when about 10 to 15 percent of the traditional residential beds were transformed (Lescrauwaet, 2002).

³ Number on January 1st 2015.

<http://www.ibz.rrn.fgov.be/nl/bevolking/statistieken-van-bevolking/>

⁴ Plus one CAW in Brussels. Wallonia is organised differently.

In order to calculate the cost of a stay in Flemish services for homeless and roofless people, we made use of the Tellus registration data collected by the CAWs. The 'Tellus' registration system was used up to 2013 throughout the CAWs for registering client information. Since 2014, they have been doing this in an individual electronic client file.

In order to get an idea of the costs of the various trajectories, we need to take a general measurement. Therefore we use medians and averages. However, they are only indicators of a particular trend across various types of services. In reality, the figures can vary greatly between clients. While one person may spend twenty days in a men's hostel, another may be there for ninety days. The way the work is organised can also account for different costs, for instance by using a different maximum length of stay or in the shifts worked (night-time work or not; using volunteers or not).

We used the Tellus figures on length of stay and duration of care in 2011. We used the median rather than the average, as this is less susceptible to occasional extreme measures. From the 'Boordtabellen'⁵ of 2008 we calculated the caseload of the CAW social workers in every type of service, so that we can calculate the cost of social work per client. These figures tell us how many cases a social worker in a particular service typically undertakes. For the calculation of staff costs, again we used CAW data. We reckoned on €5072 per month for an ambulant worker. This is the total cost of a CAW social worker with an average of 15 years' service under their belts. The amount includes both the salary (€4611) and the extra 'overhead costs' (=10 percent of salary, hence €461) for office space, training and ICT. This is probably an underestimation for social workers in residential settings. They often work out of normal office hours, doing evening, night and weekend shifts, for which they receive extra pay. Every CAW decides how they distribute these working hours. Sometimes one particular social worker does the weekend or night shifts; sometimes there is a rota system. There are also CAWs who call on volunteers for the night shifts.

The maximum price that can be charged by a CAW for a 24-hour stay (i.e., a daily fee) in a residential hostel has been set at €25.50 (2014). This price is fixed in a protocol between the Association for Flemish Cities and Communes (VVSG) and the Steunpunt Algemeen Welzijnswerk. In some hostels the price may be a little lower. A client with an income from work will pay this daily fee himself. Clients who live on benefits (unemployment benefit, invalidity benefit or minimum income) pass this cost on to society. The daily fee only covers costs related to the accommodation itself (housing, food, cleaning and personal hygiene products). The psychosocial and administrative costs of social work are not covered in the daily fee, as CAW staff and personnel costs are paid for with subsidies from the Flemish government.

⁵ Boordtabellen contains data on the financial input for delivering a type of service.

Trajectory-cost method: possibilities and restrictions.

The method we used can be called a trajectory cost method because it starts with data about the type and duration of a (average) trajectory. The method allows us:

- To calculate the cost for an individual homeless person (micro-level).
- To calculate the costs at service level and organisational level when an organisation delivers different types of services (meso-level).
- To calculate the costs of the non-governmental homeless sector (macro-level).

A trajectory cost model has the restriction that quite a lot of data are required: number of clients, duration of the trajectory, intensity of the trajectory, staff and other costs.

For the Flemish non-governmental services, those data were available because the Flemish government obliges organisations to collect them. But for the homeless services of local authorities, those data are not available and so we could not make calculations for this type of services. Another restriction is that overhead costs cannot always be calculated exactly when a service is part of a larger organisation with very different types of services.

Belgian Housing First project

In the Belgian Housing First project, during the early winter months of 2014, the Housing First inhabitants were questioned along with 96 homeless people (35 from Flanders, 48 from Wallonia and 13 from Brussels). These people were all homeless (categories 1 and 2 in the ETHOS typology), and they slept in the streets or in night shelters during that period. The questionnaire was a list of questions that went into their history of being homeless, their use of all sorts of health- and welfare services, and their contacts with the police and the judiciary. These homeless persons lived on the streets or in and out of night shelters for an average of 59 months (nearly five years) over their entire lifetime.⁶

Illness, disability and drug use

In order to calculate the costs of general services, we used data from the Belgian Institute for sickness and disability-insurance (RIZIV), a public authority for social security. They have data available online for some social services. We were able to calculate the average costs for Belgian hospitals and psychiatric centres based on their daily fees in 2013. The costs of rehabilitation centres for drug abusers were obtained through correspondence with the 'rehabilitation' department of the RIZIV institute.

⁶ For more information and the interim report, see www.housingfirstbelgium.be.

Effects calculator

For costs on which there was no Belgian data available (yet), we used figures from the Netherlands, where a cost calculation⁷ was done recently.

Costs of the Flemish Services Offered

Costs of providing homelessness services

The first and most obvious cost is the services provided for homeless people, such as night shelters and hostels.

Night shelters

A recent questionnaire (VVSG, 2014) showed that the cost of Flemish night shelters was an average of €53 per person per night. A month in night shelters costs €1 590 per person. This includes staff, infrastructure, cleaning, light evening meal (coffee, bread, soup, cold meats) and breakfast. For further support, night shelter staff generally refer clients to other welfare services. There are considerable variations between the various night shelters, ranging from €40 to €70 per person per night. These differences mostly relate to the size of the centre, whether the shelter owns the space or has to pay rent, and the choice to employ volunteers or otherwise. These prices are more or less in line with surrounding countries, such as France (€43), Germany (€54) and the Netherlands (€78) (Pleace *et al.*, 2013).

It is not easy to pinpoint a typical or average trajectory in the night shelters because the stay is often interrupted. These interruptions can be due to a choice on the part of the homeless person himself if he decides not to use the shelter every night. But some shelters also choose to limit the number of consecutive nights allowed. Hence, we do not give an average cost per trajectory for the night shelters. In the questionnaires taken by the Belgian Housing First project, 71 out of 96 questioned roofless persons used night shelters. The people using night shelters did so on average for 112 nights.

Crisis centres

Homeless people can use crisis centres for brief periods of time. In these centres, people get their proper bedroom. Other facilities such as bathroom and kitchen are generally shared with others in the centre. Staff are present to actively help people find the optimum housing solution. This can be on the private rental market, in more long-term options in the welfare system (such as residential hostels or assisted housing) or in more specialist care (such as psychiatric services). Most charge the maximum daily fee of €25.50. As we said, this price only includes the 'hotel' costs.

⁷ For more info see www.effectencalculator.nl

If we were to include the cost of the staff, the price would quickly rise. In crisis centres, the help offered tends to be very intensive, which equates to a caseload of two – i.e., each support worker works with two people, which means a cost of €85 per client per day. The total cost works out at about €110 per day or €3301 per month. The average stay in a crisis centre is 19 days and hence, an average trajectory costs €2901.

Residential hostels

In Flanders, homeless people can use various types of residential centres run by the CAW. They exist for young adults (18-25 years old), and adult men, women or mixed adults. In these centres, staff is present to support clients on several life domains such as: housing, social relations, finances, work, (mental) health.

The first type is the hostel for young adults. Here, the caseload is, on average, two. Thus, the total cost works out at €110 per day or €3301 per month. With 71 days as the median length of time spent there, an average trajectory totals €7812. A second type of hostel is that for men. These are either general, or targeted at acute or chronically homeless people, former prison inmates, drug addicts or ex-psychiatric patients. The caseload in men's hostels is less intense, at an average of four. The total cost for a men's hostel is €68 per day or €2033 a month. The median length of stay is 58 days. This brings us to a total of €3931 for a typical trajectory. The third type is the hostel for women. Because children also stay in these hostels, the caseload is a little lower than in the men's hostels, at three (adult) clients. The total costs are €82 per day or €2455 per month. The average length of stay is 45 days, making a total of €3684 per trajectory. A fourth type of service offers the client temporary housing in a CAW-studio. Here, the caseload is eight and the typical length of stay is 141 days. The average cost is thus €1399 a month or €6575 per trajectory.

In order to come to a general figure for the cost of residential hostels, and taking into account that men are more strongly represented in the residential services, we assume an average caseload of four and, hence, a daily cost of €68. This price is in line with other Northern and Western European countries, such as Germany (€71), the Netherlands (€45) and Finland (€60) (Pleace et al., 2013). A typical trajectory in an integral residential service takes 53 days and costs €3604.

Various forms of assisted housing

Assisted housing is on the rise in Flanders. Clients rent their own room or studio, and help is provided separately. In these schemes, the client does not pay a daily fee but a fixed rent for the dwelling. The housing itself can be a room or studio in a CAW building; an apartment or studio rented through the social housing rental agency, who acts as an intermediate between private owners and clients with social needs; social housing provided by statutory bodies; or it can be a rental in the

regular private market. Because staff no longer needs to spend time running the centre, the caseload is considerably higher than in residential hostels. Therefore, in the following calculation, we have only calculated the social service cost.

Assisted housing is offered to homeless people who have few, if any, competences in living independently. These tend to be long-term trajectories. For young people, the caseload for assisted housing is fixed at eight and the duration of the help at 235 days. This brings the cost of an average trajectory to €634 a month or €4966 per trajectory.

For adults, the caseload is somewhat higher, i.e., twelve and the cost of help comes to €423 a month. The average trajectory is 463 days – longer than for young people – and brings the total cost up to €6523.

For older homeless persons who also need extra medical care, there is a special type of service: care hostels. We assume a caseload of eight. The trajectory for this type of care averages 932 days (about 2.5 years) and is considerably longer than a (temporary stay) in a hostel. This brings the total cost up to €19696. The cost of the extra (medical) care is not included. The care is provided by visiting GPs, visiting nurses and other paramedics, and is largely refunded by the social security system. Physical problems can resemble those of elderly but appear at a much younger age because of their tough time on the streets.

Prevention of eviction

Since 2002, Flanders has had a programme to avoid evictions. The first CAW figures on these services refer to a caseload of about 15 and indicate a typical term of slightly over 180 days. That brings the cost of a trajectory for preventing eviction up to €2029.

Housing First

Housing First in the Flemish homeless care started in 2013 and is thus very new. It is too early to say what the average caseload and the typical duration of care will be. In order to make some comparisons, we assume a caseload of eight for the general overview.

Outreach and day care centres

There are also quite a few welfare services that are not specific to homeless people, but where homeless people make up a large portion of the target audience. These services include day centres, street corner work, specific welfare services (OCMW/CPAS) and outreach teams. The cost of these services is far harder to quantify.

Not every homeless person uses these specific services in coping with homelessness. During our interviews we met people who prefer not to use the night shelters, for instance. The reasons are diverse, such as not being prepared to share a room with a stranger, not being willing to leave behind a pet, not wanting to conform to the rules and regulations that night shelters invariably have (such as being in at a certain time and rules on alcohol- and drug use). There are people who prefer to avoid the night shelters and choose instead to sleep in squats, in the streets or in a tent.

A residential hostel is a temporary solution for someone who is still considered homeless while there, and great efforts are made to find a more 'permanent', housing-based solution.

	Caseload	Length of stay (trajectory)	Max daily fee	Cost of care per client per day	Total cost per client		
					Per day	Per month	Per trajectory
Night shelter	/	/	/	/	50	1 502	/
Crisis centre	2	19	25.5	85	110	3 301	2 091
Residential care							
young people	2	71	25.5	85	110	3 301	7 812
men	4	58	25.5	42	68	2 033	3 931
women	3	45	25.5	56	82	2 456	3 684
studio	8	141	25.5	21	47	1 395	6 575
Assisted Housing							
young people	8	235	/	21	21	634	4 966
adults	12	463	/	14	14	423	6 519
elderly people in need of care	8	932	/	21	21	634	19 696
Prevention of eviction	15	180	/	11	11	338	2 029
Housing First	8	/	/	21	21	634	/

Costs of health and social services

Homeless persons obviously also use general services in the welfare and health systems and they come into contact with the police and the judiciary. It is difficult to estimate the costs incurred in the use of these services. The first problem is that the services generally do not register whether or not their patient/client is homeless. This lack of data makes it difficult to judge the number of homeless people who use the services, nor can we be sure whether they use them proportionally to the rest of the population. We cannot give clear-cut answers to questions such as: how often do the police have to intervene in an incident in which a homeless person is involved? How many homeless people come into emergency services or psychiatric units? Therefore, studies, such as the Belgian Housing First study, are often dependent on self-reporting, whereby the homeless person tells us how often he made use of such services over a given period of time.

A second problem in the calculation of the costs by homeless people in these general services is comparability. Is it possible to calculate to what extent these services were needed due to living on the streets? Would someone have wound up in prison anyway if he had not been homeless? Is the contact between a homeless person and police services due to an addiction? And did that addiction start or get worse during life on the streets? What is possible, however, is to ask homeless people what services they have come in contact with. This was done as part of the Belgian Housing First study. Ninety-six homeless people were asked how many days in the past year they stayed in particular welfare and care services and how many nights they spent in the police station or in prison.

Table 3. The cost of general services: prices for Belgium (€)

	Per day	Per month
Health care services		
General hospital	438	13 140
Psychiatric centre	293	8 790
Rehabilitation centres for drug abuse	293	8 790
Police and judiciary		
Prison	130	3 900

Costs to general physical health

Homelessness affects a person's physical and mental health. Fifty-five out of 96 homeless persons in the Belgian Housing First study indicate they have one or more problems with their physical health. The most common afflictions are breathing problems such as asthma (14 persons); cardiovascular problems (14 persons); neurological problems such as epilepsy (12 persons); joint or muscular pains (14 persons); and hepatitis (15 persons). The findings in our study are in line with the results of a

recent study in the US (Khandor *et al.*, 2007). They showed that compared to non-homeless people, homeless people run 29 times as high a risk of hepatitis C, 20 times the risk of epilepsy, five times more chance of heart illnesses, four times more of cancer, and a 3.5 times higher chance of arthritis and rheumatism.

Poverty and the general circumstances of homeless people have a hugely negative impact on their health, entailing a substantial cost. Twenty-eight persons in the study spent 19 days in hospital during the past year. Homeless persons also tend to use the more expensive forms of healthcare, such as emergency services (Kushel *et al.*, 2002) and their stay in hospital is often longer (36 percent longer according to Salit *et al.*, 1998). In some cases these hospital admissions could have been avoided. Both the development of epilepsy and acute attacks are linked to chronic and excessive alcohol- and drug abuse. An epilepsy attack can be very costly, involving an ambulance (average cost €500, according to the effects calculator) and two days in hospital (2 x €438), bringing the total cost up to nearly €1 400. These costs could have been avoided with a bit more stability and a more regular intake of medication.

Costs in general health care

Life on the streets is a strain on mental health. People with psychiatric problems also become homeless. Thirty-five out of 96 roofless persons in the Belgian Housing First study indicated that they suffered from a recognised psychiatric condition. Depression is the most common problem (18 persons). Thirty-four persons reported having once stayed in a psychiatric institution, and 11 having stayed there in the past year. The length of a stay in a psychiatric ward varies from a few days to a few months. The average was 44 days. The average daily fee in a psychiatric centre is €293 per day or €8 790 per month, a price that is similar to the other Western European countries such as the Netherlands (€229) and France (€300/400) (Pleace *et al.*, 2013).

Of the 96 persons in the Belgian Housing First study, 52 reported problematic drug/ alcohol use. Nineteen persons reported alcohol misuse, 31 to heroin misuse, and 15 people to cocaine misuse. Seven persons were admitted into a rehab centre in the past year. The average length of their stay was 73 days.

There are 28 RIZIV-approved rehab centres in Belgium. Residential services include eight crisis centres (stays of four to six weeks) and 14 therapeutic communities (stays of three months up to a year). Daily fees are calculated per centre and are dependent on the specific cost of wages and treatments. The indicative prices proposed by RIZIV are: €250-350 for a day in residential centre; €200-250 for a full day in a day centre; €100-150 for individual one-hour sessions in a day centre; and €100-150 for a week of rehabilitation in a socio-medical hostel (as charged to clients who spend a week there). The average cost for a week's stay is similar to psychiatric centres at €293 (RIZIV personal communication, 2014).

Costs for Criminal Justice Systems

Costs for policing

Homeless people frequently come into contact with the police and judiciary. Some aspects of life on the streets are criminalised and life on the streets can lead to criminal activity in order to survive. Typical arrests include nuisance to the public, often provoked or reinforced by drug/alcohol misuse or psychiatric problems. Sixty-eight participants in the Belgian Housing First study reported at least one arrest by the police and 17 persons had spent at least one night in a police station, with an average of 4.8 nights. The Dutch effects calculator gives us the following sums for crimes that homeless people tend to commit: opium-related, €670; trashing a public space, €730; and theft or robbery, €1 400. Data on the cost of actions by police officers is scarce. In the study by Pleace and colleagues (2013), only four countries were able to give a number for the cost of 'being arrested and charged by the police system' in their country. And those who did, note very variable numbers, going from €50 in Germany to €461 in Sweden.

Costs for the judiciary

Many homeless people in the Belgian Housing First study (46 people) once stayed in prison. In 2013 this was the case for 14 people, with an average stay of 99 days. At €130 a night or €3900 a month, a stay in prison is an expensive business. This cost is in the middle of the prison costs in other Western European countries. Some report being a lot cheaper (e.g., France at €60 per night), while others give higher costs (e.g., the Netherlands at €229). The prison cost is especially high when homeless people deliberately seek imprisonment. Some see prison as a route to help or a warm shelter during the cold winter months.

Cost for local authorities

Homeless people living in the streets create costs for towns and cities too. Flemish cities mete out so called 'GAS' fines (GAS stands for communal administrative measures) to persons who break certain rules in the police codex. Cities decide themselves what they give GAS fines for. In Antwerp you can get a fine of up to €350 (€175 for minors) for things such as urinating in public, disrupting the peace or ignoring the alcohol rules in certain areas of the town. Towns and cities keep no record of the share of GAS fines given to homeless people, and no record of how many of these are paid, which we estimate to be low. In some cities they have tried to estimate what percentage of GAS fees are given to homeless people. CAW Antwerp estimates that there are some 400 persons in greater Antwerp with severe and complex needs. This group might well be responsible for some of the nuisance

in the town. City services sometimes try to offer mediation and counselling in relation to these fines. People without an official address often do not receive this correspondence or invitations to discuss their problem(s).

The Cost of not Resolving Homelessness

Specific services for homeless people can be expensive. This is the case for health services, police and the judiciary too. So the annual cost of someone who spent eight months in a shelter and four months in prison adds up to €28 320. Someone who spent six months in a shelter and six months in a psychiatric ward will have cost €62 280 over the year. As well as showing the costs that homelessness entails, we should note that not every homeless person brings such costs to the community. Not every homeless person uses night shelters, stays in psychiatric wards or spends time in prison. Some research shows that precisely those homeless people who have certain problems (such as psychiatric problems) are actually *less* likely to make use of general services than the housed population (Sullivan *et al.*, 2000).

The Costs of 'Social Rent'

In the past ten years, the CAWs have been investing more and more in supported housing. Clients rent in the social or private rental markets and get ambulant support from CAW social workers. Housing First is part of this shift away from residential services and into assisted housing. Many renters have a low income. They are therefore entitled to social housing or they can claim a rent benefit from the Flemish authorities. We calculated what this costs society to 'socially' house people.

Costs for social housing societies

The rent for a house/apartment from the Social Housing Societies (SHM) is calculated according to the renter's income. This rent consists of a fixed basic rent, supplemented with a variable part, which is calculated according to income. The Flemish Society for Social Housing (VMSW) estimates that a social housing society needs an average rent of €382 (per month) to cover costs. This amount is calculated for newly-built housing and includes the plot, rental costs, the lift and maintenance. The cost of administration and social services on the part of the social housing company is not included in the calculation. For instance, Ghent Housing First inhabitants pay an average of €260 per month for their social housing. Based on this calculation, housing in social apartments can cost the housing company €122 per month.

Costs of the Flemish rental benefit

Persons who rent on the private market or with a social rental company (SVK) can apply for a Flemish rental benefit. They must comply with a number of income, rent and removal conditions.⁸ The rental benefit is calculated according to income. The benefit may be paid out for a maximum of nine years and the amount decreases during that time. The rental benefit is equivalent to one third of the rent, up to a maximum of €120 per month. This amount is increased by €20 per person, depending on the head of the family, and in some (expensive) communities it is increased by an extra €10 per person.

Prevention as a Cost Saver?

Trajectories in homeless care tend to be expensive. As we stated earlier, we are not arguing for cheaper alternatives. We would like to point to some forms of help that can avoid an introduction into homelessness and homeless services, or reduce the length of time spent in specific services, or which can prevent a return to homelessness.

Prevention of evictions

A form of cost control in homeless care is to invest more in avoiding evictions. This avoids costs at a number of different levels. The first cost avoided is the eviction itself. The effects calculator reckons that an eviction costs €6 000 in costs including judicial, bailiff, police and repossessed goods. The second set of costs avoided is the trajectory in homeless care. And the third set is the indirect costs: avoiding the loss of a job, depression and so on. In 2002, the Flemish authorities started financing the CAWs to set up services aimed at avoiding eviction. These services are often set up in conjunction with social housing companies. However, data suggests that 85 percent of the requests for eviction are made in the private housing market.⁹ Research¹⁰ that involved questioning people who had been through an eviction as to their needs showed that an outreach approach is essential.

⁸ For more details, see:

https://www.wonenvlaanderen.be/premies/vlaamse_tegemoetkoming_in_de_huurprijs

⁹ Minister of Housing, Ms. Van Den Bossche's answer to written question Nr. 18 of 12 October, 2012 from Mrs. Cindy Franssen shows that in 2010 a total of 1 539 eviction procedures were started by the social housing companies.

¹⁰ See: http://www.samenlevingsopbouw-oost-vlaanderen.be/uploads/documenten/Publicaties/pdf__dossier_uithuiszetting_sintniklaas.pdf

The cost of residential care

It is often more expensive to offer residential care than ambulant services. In residential centres, staff have not only their individual cases to look after, but they also have a centre to run: meals must be organised, conflicts amongst inhabitants resolved, and tasks must be shared out and checked up on. In residential centres more people leave prematurely. Centres have a lot of rules in order to make them liveable. These rules are about things like alcohol and drug use, taking part in household tasks, doors closing at certain hours, etc. Breaking these rules repeatedly can lead to a termination of the homeless person's stay there. In ambulant care, there are no such household rules, so the social worker can focus on more important issues.

Conclusion: Cost Increases and Cost Decreases

Getting homeless people off the streets means saving on general services; both American and European Housing First projects find a decreased use of psychiatric wards. The Housing First project in Lisbon, for instance, reports 90 percent less use of psychiatric help once in housing (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). This is due to the security that housing brings, but also due to the ambulant help for psychiatric problems, which is easier to organise in a housed situation. Research shows that Housing First tenants also came into contact with police and the judiciary far less than roofless people. For instance, in Lisbon 20 out of the 74 Housing First tenants had spent a night in a cell in the year before they were assigned their home. Once housed, this did not happen to any of them. These costs apply to all the years someone would have lived on the streets if they had not entered a Housing First programme. The difficulty, of course, is to estimate how many years that would have been.

Housing people who have been homeless for years inevitably entails costs. Seventeen out of 96 homeless persons in the Belgian Housing First study say they have no income at the moment. If they apply for Housing First, the social workers will sort out their benefits (€817.36 for a single person) so that rent can be paid. Many are entitled to a one-off furnishing benefit ('furnishing premium') of €1 068.45 so that they can kit out their new home, and many can claim an energy benefit as well. The launch of the Belgian Housing First project sadly led to newspaper articles headed: 'Give the homeless a house before they even get a job'. However, getting homeless people into jobs is not the main aim, nor the most important result of Housing First. The European projects (Busch-Geertsema, 2013) show that many Housing First tenants are active with voluntary work or other worthwhile activities. Very few, however, have a real, let alone a lasting, job.

Once housed, the physical health of Housing First tenants improves. People sleep better, and because they can cook, the quality of their food improves too. Research shows that the number of acute admissions, for instance in emergency services, decreases. Housing offers stability. This improves regular medication intake, so that certain hospital admissions (for instance for epilepsy) can be avoided. Having housing also means that people can take time and pay attention to themselves and their health. Some finally make their first dental appointment in years, or start up treatment for a long lasting problem.

In the context of how high the costs that homelessness entails, it is remarkable how little society gets in return for spending so much money. Every extra year on the streets increases the likely costs for the following year. All this, while offering a home might well work out cheaper. The costs, however, are complex. Housing-led solutions, such as Housing First, save money in some areas, but generate costs in other areas. Money is obviously saved on specific homeless services. It is no longer necessary, or it is necessary for a shorter period of time, to make use of night shelters or hostels; these costs are then replaced by the cost of a team of ambulant social workers. On top of that, we have to add up the cost of social housing or Flemish rent benefit, if the tenant does not effectively pay market value. Rigorous case studies of the costs of homelessness are essential in developing an evidence base for determining how best to allocate scarce resources, and this case study of Flanders contributes to this discussion.

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Homelessness – Press, Policies and Public Opinion in Portugal

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► **Abstract_** *The incessant demands on audiences by the media, allied to a greater or lesser extent to the prevailing political ideology, decisively influences the perception or depiction of reality. This phenomenon has been the subject of several studies, the results pointing to the influence that narratives constructed by the media in general and the press, in particular, contributes to the development of stereotypes around certain individuals and social groups. Newspapers comply with the construction of social reality through the way they broadcast the news, whether favourable, tolerant or stigmatizing, especially with regard to vulnerable groups of people including homeless people. Furthermore, newspapers mirror the way that actors face and reinforce (or otherwise) this reality in the context of society and social intervention. The proliferation of social and charitable groups targeting homeless people is also observed; this increasing social mobilization movement to provide assistance is not necessarily resulting in an improved quality of life for homeless people. It involves distributing food and clothing on the streets, which effectively perpetuates the situation of homeless people by reproducing and extending the exercise of charity. It even involves politicians who ‘use’ homeless people to highlight their campaigns, even in the face of diminishing social support policies. This study aims to provide a qualitative content analysis of the treatment that the press gave to homeless people over two distinct periods: before and after the period of austerity imposed by the adjustment programme. It aims to analyse and understand whether there are changes to how homeless people are presented by type of news broadcast, and to frame this analysis in the political context prevailing at the time.*

► **Keywords_** *Homelessness, homeless people, media/press, social representations, exclusion*

Introduction

The exploration of relationships between press, policies and public opinion in forming social representations regarding people experiencing homelessness must be framed by theoretical axes that allow a conceptually oriented reading and a possible interpretation of the content of the collected news. The aim of this paper is to draw a first portrait of the representations of homeless people by the Portuguese press online between 2009 and 2013. It aimed to obtain concrete images of: how much news was published; what kind of facts, events and themes had been written about and how they had been treated; which sources these came from; and who were the protagonists of the news. Given the size of the survey, a thorough textual analysis of all journalistic writing became unfeasible and it was decided that as a first approach, some initial questions were to be answered:

- What happened in the press in terms of the quantity of news articles on homelessness in the two distinct periods – before and after the period of austerity imposed by the adjustment programme (and in which there was a different government programme)?
- Were there any changes during this period in the way that people experiencing homelessness were referred to in the news?

During the analysis, which was framed in the political context, the importance of some of the pictures being published, which sometimes contradicted the textual narratives, became clearer. Taking into account the influence that photos may have on a reader's perceptions of social reality, it was important to pay attention to these visual representations, whether explicitly political or otherwise. This article starts by framing the problem under discussion – the relationship between the role of media and representations on homelessness – followed by a brief overview of social policies in Portugal in the era post-April 25, 1974 and in the latest period of change (2009-2013) that is relevant to the analysis of the news collected. Then, using qualitative methodology based on thematic and categorical content analysis techniques, the study tries to answer some of the initial questions and points to emerging evidence that supports the new working hypotheses.

Press, Policies and Public Opinion

The approach of many existing studies is guided by conceptualizations of poverty and social exclusion and they adopt the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion – ETHOS. The definition of homeless persons used within the Portuguese National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People (2009-2015) is also based on ETHOS, although it is more restrictive: “A homeless person is considered to be an individual who, regardless of nationality, age, sex, socio-economic status and mental and physical health, is roofless and living in a public space or insecure form of shelter or accommodated in a emergency shelter, or is houseless and living in temporary accommodation for homeless people.” (GIMAE, 2010, p.18).

How phenomena such as homelessness are represented socially or legally influences collective and individual behaviours and the public policies designed to address them. The media contributes to the construction of such representations. It cannot be said that homelessness is new to the media, research, to the IPSSs (Private Institutions of Social Solidarity) / NGOs, to political speeches or to national and international policy. And yet, the social representations associated with it are assuming a somewhat negative and often stigmatized charge.

As Sousa stated: “although the news represents certain aspects of daily life, its mere existence contributes to the social construction of new realities and new referents” (1999, p.2). In Portugal, it can be said that the late 1980s and the early 1990s were decisive in terms of the design and implementation of social policies, and regulatory relations between state, market and citizens, in particular those addressing the needs of people and vulnerable social groups, including those experiencing homelessness. The media, in turn, brought greater importance to the perpetuation or reformulation of social representations which, according to some studies (cf. Martins, 2007; da Silva, 2011; Torres, 2013) tend to reproduce negative stereotypes about people who are vulnerable and in situations of poverty, and about homeless people in particular, because as McKee (2001, cit. by Torres, 2013) notes: it is constructive to understand stereotypes because they are a dominant form of representation.

Newspapers (paper and online) play a role in constructing reality through the way they spread the news – whether in a manner that is favourable, tolerant or stigmatizing, especially with regard to vulnerable groups such as homeless people. On the other hand, they also reflect how actors (in the context of social intervention) and society in general stand with regard to this reality, as they reinforce – or don’t reinforce – this construction.

According to Larsen (2014), the media influence what people think about the poor in general and about beneficiaries of social protection in particular. In his study, *The Poor in Mass Media: Negative Images in the US and UK versus Positive Images in Sweden and Denmark* (2014), carried out between 2004 and 2009, stories about poor people were ranked as 'negative', 'positive' and 'other'. The stories about homeless people were typically framed as positive ones, though there were some differences between countries (the UK and the US were less positive, while Sweden and Denmark were more positive). In the stories ranked as negative, the most obvious topic was the fraudulent abuse of benefits.

Larsen considers that the differences in poverty levels and the universalism of the social protection system influences the number of negative stories about poor people. In Portugal, da Silva (2011) included an analysis of the press (542 news articles) between 2005 and 2009 in her doctoral thesis, concluding that the issue of homelessness has been gradually gaining increased coverage in the news since 2005; that 74 percent of the news collected between 2005 and 2009 originated in homeless organisations; that the districts of Lisbon and Porto are those that produce the most news on the phenomenon of homelessness; that the homeless organisations are distinct from each other; that the municipality of Lisbon and religious institutions share news with each other that relates to the phenomenon of homelessness; and that it is unclear whether it is the marketing by the homeless organisations is feeding the press or whether the media are collectively using the same sources of information.

The author also points out that the media convey especially negative social representations about people experiencing homelessness, often linking them to the use of psychoactive substances. According to this author, only a few articles report on daily routines or sociability issues related to homeless people, and she highlights the potential contribution of this kind of news article to mitigating negative stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness.

Another issue is the proliferation of charitable partner groups that aim to help homeless people by distributing food and clothing on the streets, but who actually contribute to maintaining homelessness rather than contributing to any real change. A further issue is that of politicians who use the homelessness theme as one of their campaigns. In the current environment, while social support is being reduced, there is social mobilization in favour of welfare support and a sense of achievement from supporters, though without any direct effect on the life quality of homeless people. The media seems to contribute to an increasingly paternalistic view, labelling people in situations of homelessness as victims or as responsible for their situation. This label seems to depend upon the ability of 'service providers' or journalists to relate to socially vulnerable groups.

The Social Policy Context

Informal networks and partnership within the social arena have a long tradition in Portugal, particularly among social work professionals. Portugal's accession to the EU on January 1, 1986 was a particularly important turning point that increased political incentive for partnerships, particularly social and employment partnerships. These were strengthened by the emergence of European Programmes against Poverty (PELCP II, 1986-1989), which involved research projects on vulnerable groups, and PELCP III (1989-1994), with its focus on territorial projects. This programme launched a more comprehensive use of the concept of social exclusion.

From the mid 1990s, the government, recognizing the importance of existing informal networks, headed a set of territorial social policies based on working partnerships. A number of programmes arose from this, including the Regional Employment Networks, the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI), Children and Youth Protection Committees (CPCJ), the Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour (PECL), the Educational Territories for Priority Intervention (TEIP) and the Social Network Programme. These helped develop new local skills in terms of participation, knowledge, planning and models of organization and helped promote a new relationship between the Central Administration and local and Private Institutions of Social Solidarity (IPSS).

Up until 2009, a favourable political context existed in which the Open Method of Coordination introduced by the European Council helped to boost social policies in each European country, with the aim of promoting social cohesion and the knowledge society. The growing size of the homeless population in the country and the fact that the Portuguese National Action Plan for Inclusion referenced homelessness were crucial elements leading to the National Strategy on Homeless People in 2009, following a national study by the Social Security Institute in 2007. Despite the fact that the National Strategy was designed and implemented by a group of public and private entities from different sectors, all of which committed to the strategy in a public signing by the Minister of Social Security, it had weak political commitment (Baptista, 2014).

Although the implementation process was begun eagerly by local authorities, which opened Centres for the Integration of Homeless People, there has been a marked decrease in implementation and central coordination since 2011, at which point there was not only a change of government but the national and international socio-economic crisis (according to Eurostat data, people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU27 grew from 116 million in 2008 to 121 million in 2013), the intervention of the Troika in Portugal (advocating austerity measures) and a regression of investment in social policies.

The summary table below gives an outline of the stages in the research process.

It was decided to analyse the textual discourse of collected news through a simple investigation of either the titles or the text itself, a procedure already used by other authors, such as Torres (2013). The analysis looked at themes and sub-themes, fonts, protagonists (homeless people, institutions/leaders, public figures), geographic location (national, regional and international), and numerical data or statistics. We then proceeded to a further categorization of news using a typology proposed by other authors, which involved the categories of news, reportage, interviews and other (e.g., Sousa and Almeida, 2001).

The variety of journalism and news about homeless people allowed us to discover, in some way, who is behind the news – who has the capacity and the power to produce and convey this type of information. Knowing the sources of news also provides a pattern in terms of protagonists and themes; sometimes the sources are the same as the protagonists. Furthermore, news articles often appeared accompanied by images, the so-called ‘iconic symbols’ referred to by Lampreia (2008), making otherwise invisible messages turn into visible ones, sometimes contradicting the textual narratives. Photos are visual representations that can influence the reader/viewer positively or negatively, shaping their perceptions of social reality.

Presentation of Results

In presenting the results of the study, the first part is a brief quantitative characterization of the sample obtained through Google alerts. The second part is the qualitative consideration of titles and contents of the same news, looking to synthesize a profile for homeless people and a profile for the institutions that support these people.

Brief quantitative characterization of the news

News from 69 newspapers was received through Google alerts. These were grouped geographically and thematically, as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Number of newspapers according to newspaper type

Newspapers	Number	percent
National	16	23 percent
Regional	14	20 percent
Local	6	9 percent
Specific sectors (sports, religious)	6	9 percent
Newspapers/TV/radio (Media Capital, SIC, TVI24, iOnline, TSF)	15	22 percent
Foreign press	2	3 percent
Other	10	14 percent
Total	69	100 percent

The highest number of news articles on homelessness were seen in national newspapers (16) followed by newspapers/TV/radio (Media Capital, SIC, TVI24 iOnline, TSF) (15) and regional newspapers (14), allowing that there has been news with considerable territorial coverage.

The distribution of news over time points to a smaller number of article in 2010 and 2011, with a noticeable increase in articles online, arising from television news reports in 2012 and 2013 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Number of news articles/type of newspaper /year

Newspaper	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
National	22	11	15	26	46
Regional	13	6	7	6	12
Local	11	2	0	6	0
Specific sectors (sports, religious)	3	3	2	3	1
Newspapers/TV/radio (Media Capital, SIC, TVI24 iOnline, TSF)	6	4	1	20	18
Foreign press	1	0	0	0	3
Other	1	5	0	4	0
Total	57	31	25	65	80
258	22 percent	12 percent	10 percent	25 percent	31 percent



News articles were further categorized according to the journalistic style in which they were written. Some fell into two categories, particularly where news articles were accompanied by interviews of some description but where the interview was not the principal subject of publication (see Table 3).

Table 3. Typology of news (2009-2013)

Typology	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
News	45	28	17	50	59
Reportage	9	3	3	4	7
Interview	18	3	2	8	5
Opinion	3		3	0	7
Fait-Divers	1	1	0	9	2
Total	76	35	25	71	80
287	26 percent	12 percent	9 percent	25 percent	28 percent

‘Protagonists of the news’ were considered those elements that were directly targeted in the news article, regardless of how the subject was expressed (interview, keynote address). Here, there is greater constancy over the different years in terms of institutions and institution leaders, while homeless people themselves only play a major role in 2009 and 2013 (see Table 4).

Table 4. Protagonists of news (2009-2013)

Protagonists	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Homeless people	40	4	21	26	48
NGO institutions/directors	42	23	12	35	30
Public services	28	16	1	18	3
VIP	5		1	8	9
Other	30	14	4	41	6
Total	145	57	39	128	96

Using a simple grading scale for the representation of protagonists (positive, negative, neutral), homeless people are represented most frequently in a neutral manner, which is in clear contrast to the significantly positive representation of institutions or their directors and other stakeholders. Moreover most news articles represent homeless people as a relatively homogenous group, especially those published in 2009 (27) and 2012 (31) (see Table 5).

Table 5. Representation of protagonists (2009-2013)

Protagonists		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
People in situations of homelessness	+	23	3	1	13	15
	-	10	3	4	8	10
	Neutral	25	12	18	28	50
	as a group	27	16	0	31	7
Institutions/directors	+	32	22	7	30	25
	-	2	0	1	1	5
	Neutral	3	1	3	0	5
Other	+	37	12	0	26	2
	-	9	1	0	4	4
	Neutral	4	0	0	0	1

The themes of the articles were categorized based on the framework used in da Silva's (2011) study, using the following themes: cold, Christmas, poverty day/NGO anniversary of National Homeless Strategy, solidarity, economic crisis/unemployment, homelessness count and 'other' (news that is not 'news' in the strict sense of the word, cultural and sporting events, campaigns for donations and the collection of goods, violence and discrimination against people in situations of homelessness, and violence by persons in situations of homelessness).

Discourse and the Representation of People in Situations of Homelessness

There are different approaches in news articles about people experiencing homelessness. In general, they appeal to the emotions of readers through titles that are not always as objective as they should be. For example, the headline 'The Reality of Homelessness is Worse than was Thought' suggests a dramatic reality in terms of poverty and social exclusion, while the actual aim of the article is to highlight the concerns of institutions in Coimbra that work in this field. The article goes on to say: "the first count and characterization of homeless people in Coimbra, developed at the initiative of (...), corresponds to a more serious scenario than was thought," said the Director of the Association. In the first two days, almost 180 cases were identified.' (Diary of Coimbra, 02.02.2013).

There are several stories written on the changing profile of homeless people and the characteristics of this profile, as well as on concerns about initiatives for counting homeless people, which were probably written to justify the funding needs of institutions. One article reported on a survey carried out under the National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People (Lusa, 28.03.2011), which showed that 2 133 people were homeless; sleeping on the streets, in cars or in abandoned houses; or staying in temporary shelters. It further showed that this population was

In 2013, fourteen Local Homelessness Planning and Intervention Units (NPISA) provided data on 4 420 homeless people; 76 percent were male, and geographically the highest percentage of cases were in Oporto (31 percent) and Lisbon (18 percent), followed by Faro (11 percent), Setubal (9 percent) and Aveiro, Braga, Coimbra and Leiria (4 percent in each district).

A qualitative profile of homeless people was derived from the analysis using categories involving 'not being...', 'not having...' and 'no power' (see Table 6).

Not being	Not having	No power
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invisible • Faceless • In a group • A victim • An object/instrument • On good/bad behaviour • Dead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family/friends • Networks • Housing • Income • Health • Employment (far from labour market dynamics) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No voice • No capacity to claim rights • No means of social participation

NOT BEING

In a group: 'Homeless People Sleep Anywhere, In Any Corner. There is Total Insecurity' (DN Portugal, 25.05.2009)

An object/instrument: 'We Bring Them to Shelters' (AO, 17.10.2009)

On good behaviour: 'Homeless Person who Returned Engagement Ring has Already Won over 151 Thousand Dollars' (DN Portugal, 26.02.2013)

On bad behaviour: 'Remand for Homeless Man who Killed his Wife with a Stick' (Correio da Manhã, 13.12.2012)

A victim: 'Homeless Person Convicted of Stealing Octopus and Shampoo' (Jornal de Noticias, 31.01.2012)

Some examples:



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Sources: 1. Jornal de Noticias, 30.12.2009; 2. Destak, 20.10.2010; 3. Público, 22.11.2012.

These iconic pictures show only the bottom of the anonymous bodies of homeless people in public spaces, clearly referring to the invisibility of the individual and reinforcing the stereotype of a homogeneous group that must ultimately be removed from public spaces. In addition, faceless people do not appeal to the humanity of readers/viewers and the textual content of the accompanying news articles refers to slightly different matters than those suggested by the images.

The first photo, which the news article refers to as 'Homeless People to be Surveyed Nationwide by March', discusses the counting process of homeless people in seven of the country's district capitals (Lisbon, Porto, Aveiro, Braga, Coimbra, Faro and Setúbal). The stated aim of the count is to get to "know the weaknesses of each individual, the temptations, trends or dependencies, the conditional but also the potential that can be exploited in the future (...) in charting an alternative life plan (...) in the sense of social inclusion" (Jornal de Noticias, 30.12.2009). The title of the second photo is: 'Majority of the Homeless Suffer from Mental Illness'. The narrative

focuses on Preben Brandt, a Danish psychiatrist that was one of the speakers at a workshop on 'Mental Illness and Homelessness' that took place at a forum on combating poverty and social exclusion held in Brussels. The psychiatrist said that "poor people are more likely to suffer from mental health problems (...). This idea is reinforced by several international studies, which indicate that between 30-80 percent of homeless Europeans suffer from mental illness" (Destak, 20.10.2010).

The third news item, with the title 'Homeless Census A 'Missed Opportunity'', notes the fact that for the first time, official statistics from the National Statistics Institute included homeless people and it criticises how the census took place and how homeless people were defined – hence the idea of a 'lost opportunity' as can be seen in the following fragment: "(...) to the 2011 Census, the homeless are those who, at the time of the census, were living on the street or in other public spaces such as gardens, subway stations, bus stops, bridges, viaducts or arcades buildings. Because of 'operational issues', they excluded people living in hospitals, pension rooms funded by Social Security or community centres"; thus, it goes on, "the Census 2011 was a long way from represented the numbers of those who live on the streets." (Público, 22.11.2012).

These situations, including the invisibility issue highlighted in the Census in terms of the quantification of homeless people, is illustrated by photos of homeless people as undifferentiated individuals, isolated and faceless. In the case of mental illness, the image seems to jar with the textual content of the news. All of the images reveal a clear view of the world – a judgment on the reality being presented – that reproduces and shapes social beliefs. Images like these, at a time when homelessness is becoming more visible, influence how the issue is perceived and understood by readers/viewers. The images easily overlap with the text. In fact, they show "a problematic reality of the social world politicized, for good and for evil, and their receptors." (Machado, 2013, p.2)

NOT HAVING

Housing: 'The Streets of Ponta Delgada Host about a Dozen Homeless People' (AO, 17.10.2009); 'Arcades Serve as Shelter For the Homeless of Braga' (Diário Minho, 7.11.2011)



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Sources: 1. DN Portugal, 17.12.2010; 2. DN Portugal, 22.1.2011; 3. DN Portugal, 20.07.2011;

4. <http://pt.dreamstime.com/imagens-de-stock-sem-abrigo-desempregados-com-fome-image8340134>, no date.

The most common news articles relating to 'not having' are about exclusion in the housing sector and the cold that gets worse in winter (especially in the Christmas season), bearing in mind that this type of exclusion also reveals other kinds of exclusion. The photos match this theme, revealing the permanent presence of homeless people on the streets caused by multiple forms of exclusion. The first news article is entitled 'Cold Means Extra Help is Needed for Homeless'; relating particularly to the cities of Lisbon and Viseu. It refers to the need to ensure that homeless people are given extra help during the low temperatures, with a meteorologist adding details such as: "cold air intake with some precipitation, which, from December 23rd, may mean snow for altitudes above 600 meters" (DN Portugal, 17.12.2010).

The second news item entitled 'Contingency Plan for Homeless Remains in Place' refers to the plan put in place in the city of Lisbon due to very low temperatures; authorities organised temporary reception centres with hot food and drink where homeless people could escape the cold. (DN Portugal, 22.1.2011).

"Housing First" Helps 65 Homeless People To Get Off the Streets' is the title of the third news item, referring to one of the success stories. The article mentions Anabela, a 45-year-old poet who had never organized her poems in a book and who "returned to life" after making the decision to participate in the Housing First programme that helped 65 mentally ill homeless people to get off the streets of Lisbon (DN Portugal, 20.07.2011). The fourth image refers to the increase in unemployed and hungry homeless people (no date).

These images show homeless people in urban public space. Their purpose is to reinforce stereotypes about homeless people – people without any of the reference markers of social integration in contemporary society: family and social networks, housing, food, health, income and employment. The invisibility of the individuals' faces, serving to omit any distinguished traits, seems to legitimize the status quo and reproduce or create the apprehension, understanding and feelings of readers/viewers.

NO POWER

No voice: 'One of the Hardest Jobs is to Convince Them to Get off the Streets' (Destak, 3.11.09)

No voice: 'There is no Appropriate Law to Protect People who Live on the Streets' (a person who experienced homelessness) (DN Portugal, 6.12.13).

No capacity to claim rights: "When the homeless person comes back for a second meal, he will be presented with the life plan that the association has prepared for him and he will have some time to think about whether he wants to accept it. (...) If he doesn't, he will have to leave. We will not feed his situation" (Jornal de Noticias, 19.12.09)

Not only the titles but the news articles themselves show how homeless people are deprived of a voice and the power of decision-making, and how the objectives of integration and inclusion get confused with that of clearing the streets. In a report entitled 'Social Security Centre Identifies 60 Homeless', about a programme that included residential accommodation, it was stated that "one of the most difficult jobs is to convince these people to get off the street."

More than just being deprived of the power of decision-making, the help being offered is often conditional upon accepting the proposals and decisions of others, as in the article 'Dining Rooms Offer Lunch and Life Alternatives': "A card that entitles them to ten meals was created, and during the time that they are here, we try to collect all the information we can about them. After getting to know their stories, we'll create an alternative life plan. When the homeless person comes back for a second meal, he will be presented with the life plan that the association has prepared for him and he will have some time to think about whether he wants to accept it. If he does, when he gets to his tenth meal, he has to decide to embrace this alternative. If he doesn't, he will have to leave. We will not feed his situation." (Jornal de Noticias, 19.12.2009).

When the issue was the controversial count or census, immediately that the results were available (23.03.2011), there was an increase in the number of articles in which the institutions drew attention to the increase in homelessness caused by the economic crisis (See News institutions of 5: 05: 11, 24.05.11, 08.24.11 (CASA), 16: 10: 11 (ADRA), 1: 11: 11 (AMI) 21: 11: 11).



'More than Five Thousand Homeless in Portugal'

The title of this Public Journal clearly refers to the count of homeless people. However, the picture chosen seems to refer to something completely different.

“At least 4420 people lived in gardens, underground or trucking stations, bus tops, parking lots, sidewalks, overpasses, bridges and shelters emergency in Portugal in 2013. This is the number of people surveyed within the framework of the National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People coordinated by the Social Security Institute.” (JP, March 2014)

This article reveals the uncertainty of numbers. The title (over five thousand) does not match the news (4,420), then reports two facts using neutral language: that homeless people are helped within the National Strategy, which is coordinated by the Institute of Social Security.

But the photo suggests other things. What stands out? Faded colours (almost monochrome), night, supposedly illustrating the sleep of a homeless person (no face, as with the statistics). Where is it? On the street with no access to housing; in a typically urban space, but... in front of a bank. Note the chosen framework: a homeless person sleeps under a message from the bank: “first you must save” is the advertised message located at an ATM. Ultimately, this appears to be a veiled message: anybody can become homeless if you don’t save. Signs such as these iconic images contribute not only to the construction of reality, but also to its reproduction, within a neo-liberal framework.

In fact, as Larsen (2014, p.6) states, “stories and pictures in the media form an important basis for creating opinions about ‘the poor’ and welfare recipients.”

Discourses and Representations On Homeless Institutions

As stated above, this paper started from the hypothesis that the media not only constructs reality (according to the political context), but also that social actors ‘use’ their relationships with homeless people to ‘fit’ this new reality, collecting dividends and reinforcing leadership. An example of this is the news articles in which organisations working with the homeless take the opportunity to report on their history and activities, in most cases through interviews given by the leaders of the organisations (reinforcing the idea already presented in previous studies that they might be the original source of the news). The positioning of the organisations in news articles is at a distance from people experiencing homelessness, and underlining their decision-making capabilities, often using expressions that, apart from indiscriminately homogenising homeless people as a group, reference the homeless person as being in a subordinate position with no voice other than through the filter of the institution.

Some examples:



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Sources:

1. <http://www.asbeiras.pt/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/04-SEM-ABRIGO-CJM.jpg>;
2. <http://www.regiaodeleiria.pt/blog/2010/02/21/peca-musica-para-sem-abrigo-para-ver-hoje-ao-teatro-jose-lucio-da-silva/>
3. <http://liberdadeexpressaoelvas.blogspot.pt/2014/02/elvas-cidade-de-sem-abrigos.html#!1/2014/02/elvas-cidade-de-sem-abrigos.html>

The Relationship between Existing Social Protection Policy and the Profile of Institutions for Homeless people as Conveyed by News Articles

It was observed through analysing news articles that the attitudes of the organisations have changed in the current political situation, with charitable intervention (as proposed in the National Strategy) replacing participation-oriented intervention based on partnerships. This attitude, more visible in 2012 and 2013, corresponds to an actual decline in individual support in the field of social protection. However, it was already visible in 2011 through increased references to the economic difficulties of institutions and the numbers of people needing their help increasing far beyond their capacity to help:

‘Solidarity Meals Already Becoming Insufficient for The Homeless’ (Diário das Beiras, 13.05.2011)

‘Official Bodies Cannot Create Rules to Stifle Social Institutions’ (Diário das Beiras, 24.12.2011)

‘NGO Fears that Help Might not be Enough for Everyone’ (TVI24, 17.10.2012)

‘Volunteers Have Been Giving Hot Food to the Homeless for a Year’ (DN Portugal, 10.06.2013)

‘Cuts in Social Protection Support may Push Unemployed People to the Street’ (DN Portugal, 10.04.2013)

Self-Protagonism and The Instrumentalisation of Homelessness

In addition to the main topics, highlighting the role of some of the players in the news was considered important. This is visible, for example, in interviews with leaders (or Ministers) carrying out charitable actions such as Christmas dinners (“I’m here only for personal reasons”, Minister of Social Affairs, *Jornal de Noticias*, 21.12.2009); former footballers associated with football matches with homeless people (‘Former Football Manager John Barnabas Honoured at the Presentation of the 2009 Selection’, *Barlavento*, 1.09.2009); singers that decide to help people in shelters (‘Mónica Ferraz Sings for Solidarity in Faro’, *Barlavento*, 26.10.2012); or actors that are inspired in a role by the lives of homeless people. This trend of certain personalities appearing in the news for these reasons is more apparent from 2012:

“Amy Winehouse invited a homeless girl to go live with and let her stay in her apartment for six months.” (22.11.2012);

‘Gene Hackman Slaps Homeless Man in Legitimate Self-Defence’ (*Correio da Manhã*, 31.10.2012)

Public service representatives (municipalities): ‘Our City is a Good Host for Homeless People’ (*Diário das Beiras*, 4.12.2012)

‘DJ Party Helps Centre for Homelessness’ (*Diario Ionline*, 12.03.2012)

Sometimes homeless people are highlighted over other marginalized groups in distress:

“The profile of those who come here is varied; there are drug addicts and homeless people”, showing how institutions themselves discriminate in highlighting the favours being done for these people: “we give them what we happen to have here. For example, today, there is yoghurt” (*Jornal de Noticias*, 22.10.2009).

It is also noteworthy that the photos and text highlight the differences between the group of vulnerable people and the group of technical and smiling volunteers, gratified by their good deed: “almost a thousand disadvantaged people passed through to the sound of a musical band as dinner was served by highly motivated and effective volunteers.” In the article, ‘Minister Served Dinner to the Poor and Homeless’, the Minister, “Questioned about what she saw in the eyes of those who served, refers to ‘joy and sweetness’, saying that it is very rewarding as a human being, because people are not alien to what we are doing” (*Jornal de Noticias*, 21.12.2009). This kind of self-gratification appears in most articles about volunteers – the chance to feel like better people, regardless of what subsequently happens to the people they are helping. The act of generosity is what seems to motivate the practice and articles about charity events may function as a means of motivation and improvement of self-esteem, or as an element of personal development.

'Piece 'Music for Homeless People' Showing Today at Teatro José Lúcio da Silva' (Região de Leiria, 21.12.2010)

'Exhibition in Solidarity with Homeless People' (DN Portugal, 24.09.2010)

'Theatre D. Maria II Gives Tickets to Those who Bring Food for The Homeless' (TVI24, 22.01.2013)

Another example of the instrumentalisation of homeless people to achieve other aims appears in the article 'Modern Pentathlon Club Helps the Homeless': "Sport is not limited to training athletes, it also involves an obligation to train young people for that awaits them in life and this is a reality that we cannot and must not turn our back on." (Jornal das Caldas, 30.12.2009) and other articles:

'Hostel Supports Homeless People and Invites Guests to Contribute' (22.10.2012)

'Homeless Person Presents Weather on TV' (DN Portugal, 31.01.2013)

Conclusions

The analysis of the Portuguese press online shows that it gives regular attention to homeless people and to their needs and vulnerabilities in terms of themes and protagonists in various journalistic genres. In terms of the journalistic approach to homelessness, there were no significant differences in the number of news articles, their regularity, or in the variables analysed. However, some differences were found in the depth of treatment of the themes. Despite the diversity of papers considered by this analysis, there were no remarkable variations in journalistic approaches. On the contrary, many of the news articles, even when they seem to use homeless people as their protagonists, tend to convey the reality through the eyes of others (politicians, volunteers, institutions, technical officers), thus reaffirming the role of the media, both in the "social construction of reality" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) and in the transmission and expansion of social representations. It can be said that newspapers followed the homelessness issue with remarkable regularity during the period of analysis (2009-2013).

It was further observed that studies and scientific/academic research on homelessness are rarely referenced in the news. The most frequent articles on studies relate to counts/censuses of homeless people. As regards the words used to describe homeless people, neutral descriptions were found to be more prevalent than negative or positive statements.

On the other hand, organisations working with homeless people seem to promote themselves through news articles consisting of short interviews with directors or other professionals advocating the quality of its activities and the provision thereof.

Each one considers itself to be the best provider of support to homeless people and it use news articles to describe its activities, request donations and recruit volunteers. It also promotes its identity and corporate image in this way.

Such organisations are generally positioned some distance from homeless people; people are indiscriminately and homogenously grouped as homeless, and the homeless person is referred to as being in a subordinate position – their voice is rarely heard, or heard only through the filter of the institution. The phenomenon of ‘othering’ was quite evident in the articles, as was the commodification of people, where these are made objects or instruments for the purpose of staff training, leadership or recognition. These phenomena represent more than just the language of journalists; rather the institutions themselves, through the voice of their leaders or professionals, reinforce the gap between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

In summary, and to answer the main research questions (namely: what happened in the press in the period 2009-2013? and; Were there any changes, during this period, in the way that homeless people are referred to in the news?) it can be said that between 2009 and 2013, there were enough increases in news articles about homeless people that two coexisting profiles simultaneously emerged: homeless people with low skills and low levels of education and homeless people with significant skills and education levels/graduates. Despite the various institutions whose work focuses on this area of intervention and despite the existence of ENIPSA (the first Portuguese National Strategy on Homelessness), a number of articles in 2011 and 2013 reference the worsening of the homelessness situation as a result of the socio-economic crisis, unemployment, austerity measures and decreased investment in social policies. The analysis also shows that homeless people are ‘used’ by specific professional groups as a way to promote themselves, including: police, army, doctors, artists, football players, journalists, politicians and public servants. It further demonstrates a clear and growing revival of values related to charity and welfare in the dominant ideology and increased articles about volunteers. Finally, there is no evidence of news articles reporting on successful stories and/or improvements in the living conditions of homeless people.

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Measuring Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Poland: The BIWM Data Collection Standard

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› **Abstract_** *Data collection on homelessness in Poland has come a long way since the first national review of statistics on homelessness was undertaken for the Fourth Review of Statistics in Europe. The need for national data on homelessness has been recognized by the authorities. National homeless counts were conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy from 2010 to 2013 leading to a planned national count in January 2015. A dedicated survey was conducted during the 2011 Housing and Population Census. Regional homeless counts, including the pioneering Pomeranian Survey, produce data on a regular basis (Dębski, 2011). Both the BIWM Data Collection Standard on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion and the methodology for aggregating service providers' data on service users were created and pilot-tested in Warsaw and the Mazovia Voivodship to support these goals. BIWM is an acronym that comes from the Polish for 'homelessness and housing exclusion': bezdomność i wykluczenie mieszkaniowe. The BIWM standard is based on core and non-core variables on homelessness that were put forward by the European research project entitled 'Mutual Progress on Homelessness Through Advancing and Strengthening Information Systems' (MPHASIS) and by the ETHOS typology of homelessness and housing exclusion. BIWM tested methodology allows all types of data to be generated, including stock for any given day and flow for different periods of time. The standard and methodology were created within two projects implemented by the Foundation for Social Innovation and Research 'Shipyard' in 2010 and 2011.*

› **Keywords_** *Data collection, BIWM data collection standard, measuring homelessness, evidence-based policy, ETHOS, MPHASIS, Poland*

Introduction: National Data Collection Context

A number of factors need to be mentioned in introducing the data collection context in Poland at the time of the creation and testing of the BIWM (*BIWM is an acronym that comes from the Polish for 'homelessness and housing exclusion': bezdomność i wykluczenie mieszkaniowe*) standard and methodology, many of which are still in place today. They include: relatively strict personal data protection regulations (*Ustawa z dnia...*, 1997); dispersed management of homelessness services; a view, taken by some stakeholders, that data-sharing and human dignity are incompatible; and a lack of funding for computer specialists and technical development within NGO homelessness service providers. These factors will be described in more detail below.

Poland has relatively strict data protection regulations that are defined in the Personal Data Protection Act of 1997 and are overseen by the General Personal Data Protection Inspector and very active non-governmental organizations. Any information collected by an institution that allows for the unique identification of a person is considered to be personal data, even if identification would require additional actions. For example, if the dates of stay and the sex of a shelter user are revealed, and the registry book of the shelter is available, it means the data is not protected because it is possible to identify the person using these two sources. Personal data cannot be shared between data administrators unless it is made anonymous in a way that does not allow for identification or the identification would require too much effort and/or cost.

The Act defines rules for data processing (*przetwarzanie*), including on 'providing data' to the person or researcher processing the data, but a 2010 Amendment removing a specific paragraph on data provision means the Act no longer obliges institutions to reveal any information, but states only that under certain conditions there are no restrictions on revealing certain information. Thus, provision of data is at the institution's discretion, and rarely shared. The regulations were made purposely strict to protect valuable information from being used for commercial or political purposes, but they make it very difficult for valuable administrative data to be used for public goals – for example, research for evidence-based policy.

NGOs are independent bodies that shape their activities according to their missions and insights on how things should be done. This universal feature of the third sector is taken very seriously by many Polish NGOs active in the field of homelessness. They face difficulties in finding a balance between independence and cooperation. Even in 2014, after finalizing the implementation of a long-term systemic project called Local Standards for Exiting Homelessness, which was implemented by a partnership of six major service providers and numerous homelessness stakeholders, a lack of cooperation was mentioned as one of the barriers to creating

effective policy on homelessness: “There is lack of cooperation between subjects directly engaged in homelessness. Organizations treat each other as competitors (especially in access to funding) which brings about the tendency rather to rivalry than dialogue and cooperation.” (Browarczyk *et al.*, 2014, p.18)

A negative attitude to data-sharing, understood as revealing client data in an anonymous but client specific format that allows for aggregation of other organization's data, is just another illustration of the above point. That the vast majority of services for people experiencing homelessness in Poland are provided by NGOs is an important factor shaping the data collection context. In data protection language it means that data on service users is collected by many different ‘data administrators’ who are obliged to fulfil data processing rules. Misunderstandings of independence and dispersed management of homelessness services were, and still are, important factors that have to be taken into account by anyone wishing to research the homelessness phenomenon in Poland in a way that involves more sophisticated indicators than simply stock at one point in time in a two-year period.

Another important factor in the overall attitude to collecting information on homelessness is the perceived success of the headcount survey conducted bi-annually since 2001 in the Pomeranian Voivodship by the Pomeranian Forum in Aid of Getting Out of Homelessness. As the Pomeranian Survey was widely known as the only such effort in the country – in 2010 there were no national headcounts conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – it dominated thinking about the methodology for assessing the scale of the homeless population. The mimetic isomorphism described by Powell and DiMaggio (1983) may be a good framework to explain this process. Using administrative data, in particular data collected by homelessness service providers, was not considered because other options were on the table. The fear that it would be against data protection regulations seemed to play a supporting role in this. Besides its popularity, in 2010 the Pomeranian region was the only one in which a headcount survey was conducted; Warsaw stakeholders, for example – including both the Municipality and third sector – never seriously considered conducting such research.

When the need for the on-going collection of client data – and the awareness that much of it is collected by service providers – was recognised, some stakeholders proposed the creation of a central database on homeless people. The goal of such a central or local database would be to enable social workers to check quickly the history of a client's service use. The inability to share such data between service providers has been mentioned as a barrier to social work with homeless clients, many of whom move frequently between different services. The database idea had supporters among NGO service providers and local authorities, who considered it a way of monitoring and evaluating public spending. However, the proposal was

strongly rejected by other stakeholders on the grounds that this knowledge would be used to refuse further support for any person that had 'misused' a service in the past – for example, having had to leave a shelter due to breaking the rules (for example, by being drunk). Prominent activists and service providers saw such a database as a threat to the dignity of people in very vulnerable living situations. Thus, a central database was never created.

The abovementioned features of data collection context played and still play an important role in the capital city of Warsaw, which has the biggest homeless population in the country. Warsaw has a unique local government system, defined in the special Act on the Polity of the Capital City of Warsaw (2002), which disperses responsibility for homelessness across different levels and departments of a three-tiered local government structure. Since 1990, homelessness service provision, involving emergency accommodation, shelters, specialist shelters and food distribution, has been monopolised by NGOs. There is no single service provided directly by the Municipality of Warsaw, although, of course, the Municipality is a major funder. Public Welfare Centres, responsible for granting welfare benefits and subsidies to individuals, are dispersed over eighteen districts and have no power to demand anything from NGO service operators, including data, bed space, etc. As a result, data on the same people is collected by many separate institutions. This is not the case in some local communities where the welfare and shelter systems are managed by the same department and data collection is centralized – for example, smaller towns in the Mazovia Voivodship like Plock, Ostrołęka and Radom. Their data collection systems have been evaluated during Local Seminars of Homelessness Stakeholders organized by the Camilian Mission of Social Assistance.

Last but not least, data collection requires adequate technical means, such as computers, software and database administrators. More sophisticated means are required for keeping personal identification data, including protected servers and an authorization system for specific levels of access. Whilst hardware is widely available – software can be accessed quite easily thanks to initiatives like the Techsoup Nonprofit Technology programme – NGOs experience difficulties in securing funding for professional database administrators, who have to be hired to maintain client databases. Although there is generally quite a lot of funding for the 'informatization' of public institutions, this does not seem to reach NGO service providers.

In 2010, the vast majority of homeless client registration systems were paper-based and consisted of a registration book and some kind of 'inhabitant's card' containing basic socio-demographic details and the notes of social workers (Wygnańska, 2011b). Cards differed between organizations but they had common core variables, and in Warsaw a standardized card had been used by all the services that were receiving funding from the Municipality. Some service providers claimed having an

electronic database, but further inquiry revealed that these were spreadsheet files rather than databases. Still, at least some data was collected electronically and systematically as opposed to being kept in ingeniously systematized binders in solid steel security containers.

This context obviously impacts the availability of proper data on homelessness in the country on all levels: national, regional and local. To date there are neither flow nor prevalence indicators for the population of people experiencing homelessness and housing exclusion over a certain period of time. This is true even for the commonly accepted situations of homelessness, defined by ETHOS as living in emergency accommodation and in accommodation for the homeless (operational categories 2 and 3). The national stock indicator – meaning the number of people who were inhabitants of homeless institutions – is available for 2010 (MPiPS, 2012), 2011 (GUS, 2013) and 2013 (MPiPS, 2013). Specific numbers can be found in the latest EOH comparative study 2014 (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2014), but they differ substantially from each other, which is enough to justify questioning their relevance. Regional research is not widely available and the Pomeranian Voivodship still stands as a solitary example.

Although the availability of point-in-time stock indicators should not be undervalued, the fact is that in 2014 as well as in 2010 the real scale of homelessness in Poland – measured by the flow and characteristics of the population of people who experienced even the most obvious situations of homelessness (living in the public space or in institutions for the homeless) – was, and remains, unknown. There are hardly any stakeholders who feel the need to generate all the indicators recommended by the European institutions.

Projects on the BIWM Standard: Goals and Implementation

The context of homelessness data collection in Poland, along with European recommendations on measuring homelessness, led to the idea of creating and pilot-testing a methodology for using homelessness service providers' data to generate the flow and prevalence indicators of homelessness, as well as more reliable characteristics of the population experiencing homelessness over a certain time-period. Two half-year projects were undertaken by the Foundation for Social Innovation and Research 'Shipyard' after securing funding from the Mazovian Voivodship Office through a competition for NGO grants. The overall cost of both projects was 70 000 PLN (€15 700), 84 percent of which was provided by the Voivod Office and the rest by 'Shipyard'.

The goals of the projects were as follows:

- To demonstrate that data-sharing between independent NGOs is possible without violating personal data protection rules and the independence of institutions.
- To demonstrate the nature of the *flow* indicator to service providers and other stakeholders (elimination of double-counting of the homeless population over time).
- To demonstrate that generating flow and prevalence indicators is possible.
- To show how this can be done technically through creating and applying methodology and relevant software.
- To test European recommendations on homelessness data collection – in particular the MPHASIS core and non-core variables on homelessness and the ETHOS typology of living situations – by creating the BIWM Data Collection Standard on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion and asking service providers to work with it.

Implementation consisted of a number of stages: the analysis of personal data protection regulations and finding appropriate solutions; engagement of service providers; creation of the BIWM standard; creation and distribution of the BIWM database; data aggregation and statistical analysis; and results. These stages are described in the paragraphs that follow. In order to test proposed methodology against data protection regulations, a feasibility study was commissioned from the Panoptykon Foundation, a rigorous watch-dog of the right to the protection of personal data. They endorsed the methodology but suggested very strict procedures for making the client data anonymous before sharing it with researchers. Their expertise assured service providers and 'data administrators' that participation in the project would respect personal data protection regulations. It was also a starting point for designing the procedures and software for making data anonymous and correctly formatted for aggregation.

The next stage was the engagement of homelessness service providers. The goal of the projects was to demonstrate the nature of the flow indicator: the number of people who experience homelessness over a certain period of time. Experiencing homelessness was defined as being a user of a service 'for homeless people' – e.g., a shelter, night shelter, health clinic, or being a user of the service 'due to homelessness' as defined by the service provider – e.g., in a local welfare centre and municipal hospital. The period covered was three years: from the 1st of July, 2007 to the 30th of June, 2010. As it was a pilot study to test the methodology using administrative data, it was crucial to engage different kinds of institutions: the third and public sectors, social welfare and health, specialist and generalist, long and short term (ambulatory). Luckily, there was one district in Warsaw, namely Wola, on

whose territory all such kinds of institutions existed and these were willing to participate in the project. Although representativeness of the collected data was not crucial for the project and it was not a criterion for choosing institutions, the fact that residential institutions participating in the study provided one third of all the spaces in the municipal system and that their health clinic was the only such service available in the whole town meant that the gathered data was worth considering, as it potentially captured quite a big population of users of homelessness services in the town.

As only standardized data can be aggregated, the third stage of the project was the creation of a common framework, namely the BIWM data collection standard. The BIWM standard is a set of variables describing the situation of users of services for homeless people, those using services due to homelessness and those experiencing homelessness in general. Variables/questions are closed-ended with a limited list of answers. As one of the goals of the projects was to test European recommendations on data collection, namely MPHASIS core and non-core variables on Homelessness (European Commission, 2008) and the ETHOS typology of homelessness and housing exclusion, these were used as the framework for creating the standard.

However, the framework differed from the local data collection tradition and had to be adjusted based on the assumption that the European recommendations are evidence-based, while there are also good reasons behind the local tradition. It also had to be kept in mind that the kind of the information being collected was strictly tied to the process of social work and supporting clients. Altering questions and lists of possible answers might influence some elements of the social work process. As the participating institutions were informed that only the data they had already collected would be needed for the project, the differences couldn't be too overwhelming. As it was impossible to remove all of them, the workers had to deal with them. The way in which the tradition data collection and the European recommendations interplayed is discussed in later sections of the article. The BIWM standard is outlined in Appendix 1.

Next was the creation and distribution of the electronic BIWM database for collecting client information from participating institutions using the BIWM standard. The MS ASSESS database was created and distributed for free among participating institutions. It consisted of four sections: personal data and the situation of the service user at the beginning of using the service; register of services/support provided during the stay or visit to the service; and situation of the service user at the point of leaving the service. The fourth section allowed for the automatic generation of basic statistics, as well as for exporting data in the format necessary to make it anonymous and ready for aggregation. Participating institutions were

instructed on how to receive inexpensive legal software within the TechSoup Non-Profits Technology Program. Service providers were instructed and trained on how to use the database and how to work with the BIWM standard. They were provided with technical and/or financial support to enter retrospective data, which in most cases meant simply paying a worker to enter data from paper forms.

The final stage consisted of data processing (anonymising and aggregation) and statistical analysis. According to data protection expertise (Szymielewicz, 2010), any data allowing for the unique identification of a person had to be made anonymous before leaving the institution in which it had been collected. To meet the goal of the project – i.e., the generation of the flow indicator, which is the number of unique people who used various services over a certain period of time and on a certain territory – the anonymised data still has to uniquely identify each service user. A computer program was designed that exchanged the first name, last name, sex and date of birth of a service user with a unique code. The same code was used for the same set of variables: first name, last name, sex, date of birth – no matter which service provider the data came from, so, for example, Jan Kowalski, as characterized by male sex and a birth date of 1st of January 1970, would be given the same code by any service provider's coded register if he had used the service and was registered as a service user. Participating institutions were provided with the program and they used it to code data exported from the BIWM database, which they passed to project researchers. With the use of a second set of software, tables with anonymised but still uniquely coded client data were aggregated into final tables, where one record/row contained all information that had been collected on any given unique service user in participating institutions. The tables were the basis for the statistical analysis in SPSS. It has to be emphasized that researchers were not able to identify the real names of service users at any stage of the process unless they were asked and authorized by the service providers to support them in entering data from a previous stage. The computer program for aggregation was designed to work one way only.

The five-stage process resulted in the positive verification of the methodology as applicable and useable by various kinds of service providers; it was in compliance with the personal data protection regulations and made it feasible to generate all the basic indicators of homelessness, including stock, flow and prevalence for given dates and periods. Some barriers that were identified included the fact that the registers of most service providers were paper-based and the substantial financial and time cost of the data-entering stage, as well as substantial gaps in data for some variables/questions and some difficulties in using the BIWM standard.

Although it was not the direct goal of the project, interesting and previously unavailable information was obtained on the relatively large population of people who had experienced homelessness in the Municipality of Warsaw over the three year period from the first half of 2007 to the second half of 2010. First of all, 4 380 unique people were identified as users of the homelessness services located in the Wola district. This number was much bigger than the number usually given in response to questions on the scale of homelessness in the town based on the data collection system run by the Municipality since 2005. The Municipal system is based on quarterly reports from service providers. These reports include summarized sets of variables, including the number of people who used the service on the last day of the quarter. Marginal numbers were summarized and treated as the number of homeless people in town. As most of the time all the shelter beds are taken, the number remained stable and mirrored the overall number of shelter beds in the town. As it is totally logical that the point-in-time stock indicators generated from residential services are lower than the *flow* indicators, even if generated from the same services, it is not logical to use just the first one as the only number to describe the scale of the population of service users. And this was demonstrated by the project: the average quarterly *flow* was counted as being twice as big as the average stock at the end of each quarter.

Another fact that could not be obtained from municipal and other data systems but was supported here by hard data, was that only one third of all service users registered in Wola homelessness services were clients of the local welfare centre. It had always been believed that this particular centre was excessively burdened with homelessness cases due to the concentration of services on its territory. Shipyard's data was interpreted as confirming the major role non-governmental service providers play in supporting homeless people in the district and a lesser role for public welfare centres.

The most original information gathered was in relation to chronic homelessness. Over 200 unique service users were identified as having been registered for four or more stays in the Wola shelters over the three-year period – this is consistent with other analyses of shelter use that show that a small minority of shelter users utilise a disproportionate amount of the shelter beds (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998). Some service users stayed in one particular shelter for an excessively long period of over five years. One-hundred and twenty users of the Day Centre declared being homeless for over five years, many of whom declared being homeless for more than ten years.

Apart from the number of unique clients, complete data on the dates of contacts with service providers and periods of stays was gathered, which enabled the analysis and calculation of migration between services, the stock for each day and

the flow for any given period. Data on sex, age, administrative and geographical origin, family status, and declared length of homelessness was also collected. All the gathered data is summarized in the final report (Wygnańska, 2011a).

BIWM Standard Mainstreaming in Poland

Broad mainstreaming of the BIWM standard was not a direct goal of Shipyard's project. The goal in 2010 was to create, test and demonstrate the effectiveness of this innovative methodology. The goal for 2011 was to inform Mazovian stakeholders about the BIWM standard and implement it in five institutions. These goals were met: ten institutions received relevant software and training and officially declared using the BIWM standard. By the end of 2014, five of them were still using it, despite not receiving any stable funding for this activity. Based on the collected data, a number of reports were prepared providing evidence on the known but neglected issues of chronic homelessness and service avoiders in Warsaw. This data was used as justification for the 'Housing First – Evidence-based Advocacy' project, which aims at gathering evidence on the necessity of programmes based on the Housing First idea in Poland. Research is an important part of this project and it is planned to use the methodology created and tested by Shipyard.

The BIWM standard and methodology for the aggregation of service provider's data has been offered to the Municipality of Warsaw as a framework for improving the local data collection system in order to produce necessary indicators for policy planning. The standard has been mentioned in the CMSA position on Measuring Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Poland (KMPS, 2013a) as an example of a framework for the national data collection standard for service providers. Recently, this position was given full support by the Polish National Federation for Solving the Problem of Homelessness in its appeal to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on measuring homelessness, published in December 2014.

Unfortunately, no recommendation for a data collection standard on homelessness was given by the project on 'Local Standards for Exiting Homelessness', implemented by lead NGO service providers and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy between 2008 and 2014 (Browarczyk *et al.*, 2014). It is unclear what the position is of the major service providers – in particular the biggest networks – on using methodology for the aggregation of service providers' data to assess the scale and major characteristics of the homelessness phenomenon in the country. The National Federation supported the CMSA's Position (KMPS, 2013a) in its appeal to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to improve the national data collection on homelessness by using the BIWM standard and methodology, but in fact it is up to its members to simply exchange data using the methodology established in

Shipyard's projects. Even exchanging uniquely anonymised data on a few variables like sex, age, dates of visits and stays and type of service (e.g., emergency, shelter, day centre) would bring tremendous added value to what is already known, especially in assessing the scale of long-term homelessness and the proportion of service users experiencing it, the remaining types of homelessness as defined by Kuhn and Culhane (1998), age and sex distribution among different types of homeless people geographical migration and the patterns of service use.

Due to the methodology currently used, the picture of homelessness in Poland is based on the characteristics of a model homelessness service user – someone who is seen most often by service providers and is most easily caught by point-in-time research. The following picture was given in the Manual for the LSEH Model (Browarczyk *et al.*, 2014) based on expert evaluation of fragmentary data from national, regional and local research: homeless people are male in 80 percent of cases; the biggest number fall into the age group of 40-60 years; 80 percent are single in terms of marital status; the average period of homelessness is seven years for men and five years for women; the majority of homeless people have vocational or primary education; usually homeless people are unemployed/inactive and, if working, are not usually on long-term contracts; welfare benefits are a major source of income; 60 percent of homeless people live in institutions and most are in metropolises and big cities.

Groups that were excluded or not adequately included due to the methodology used and whose features are, therefore, not likely to have influenced the above picture to the extent they should have include: people experiencing homelessness in the short term; young people who usually sofa-surf or squat; families, as there are no institutions for homeless families unless they are single mothers; newly-homeless people with social capital and good social networks; women using the support of their families; and people who are experiencing homelessness but for various reasons are not present in institutions 'for the homeless' but in other institutions – e.g., for drug addicted refugees. The aforementioned are good reasons to support a claim that the real picture of Polish homelessness is substantially different to the one based on current point-in-time research. As is known from established research conducted in other national contexts (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998), in the traditional support system for homeless people, namely the staircase system, the most frequent service users may represent as little as 10 percent of the overall service user population.

BIWM Standard Evaluation

As the BIWM standard was based on European recommendations 'married' to the local tradition, service providers had to adjust to the new framework. The way they did this was evaluated firstly in the 2010 project in its fourth stage of entering existing data to the BIWM database, and secondly through observations on how the data was entered by service providers who decided to continue using the Standard up to the 2011 project and later. Some of these produced reports based on data collected using the BIWM standard, including the Camillian Mission for Social Assistance (Wygnańska and Cieplak, 2012; KMPS, 2013b) and the Day Centre run by the DOM Foundation (Wygnańska, 2012). Additional information has been obtained by the author at the Caritas AW shelter 'Haven' and the Specialist Health Clinic for homeless people run by the Doctors of Hope Association.

Difficulties or discrepancies between the local tradition and the standard observed include: the classification of alcohol dependency as 'support need' versus 'reason for homelessness', the assessment and classification of mental health problems, the necessity of collecting information on the administrative origin, and the application of ETHOS in the definition of homelessness. These problems are described in more detail in the paragraphs below.

Social workers usually marked alcohol dependency as the 'reason for homelessness' not as a 'support need' as defined in MPHASIS (European Commission, 2008) and the BIWM standard. This may be the consequence of the fact that local tradition doesn't include collecting systematized data on support needs but it is common to research causes of homelessness on both the individual (inhabitant cards) and the population level (Census 2011, National Count 2013). Users of the BIWM standard frequently registered a client's declaration of being an alcoholic as a 'reason for homelessness' under 'personal reasons', for example in the qualitative report of the Saint Lazarus Boarding House (KMPS, 2013b). When asked about this, one of the social workers answered that the clients themselves declare alcohol dependency as a cause and it therefore has to be registered as such. In some cases it was unclear to social workers whether they should register information as declared by the client or as evaluated by themselves. For example, what should be marked if the client was obviously alcohol dependent (e.g., "it was written on his face", as was noted in one of the inhabitant cards) but declared not being dependent at all – just having one beer because it was hot outside?

Differentiating between various 'strange' or unwanted behaviours and suspected or diagnosed mental health problems was reported as problematic. It seemed to be difficult to correctly distinguish symptoms of mental health problems from the actual decisions and choices of the service user; for example, the fact of refusing to cooperate with a case-worker was frequently interpreted as a choice. There was

one question/variable, which is neither part of MPHASIS nor ETHOS but which was very important to service providers testing the BIWM standard: 'administrative origin'. 'Administrative origin' is defined as the full registration address for permanent stay, its status being marked either 'current' or 'last'. For many service users, their administrative origin is different to the actual place of stay, but as the former is crucial for obtaining important public services and benefits, it has to be collected. It was reported to be very important to founders of services – in the case of Warsaw, the Municipality – because it demonstrated how many of those supported were the 'responsibility' of other local governments.

The BIWM standard uses the ETHOS typology to define the fact of being homeless. According to ETHOS, which is an operational typology, there are thirteen living or housing situations in which one is defined as homeless or housing excluded. So, if a person lives on the street or in a homeless shelter, both ETHOS categories, she/he is automatically considered homeless. In the Polish tradition, the subject of the definition of homelessness is a 'person', as stated in The Act on Social Welfare of 2004 and in the most recent Manual for the Model on Local Standards for Exiting Homelessness, put together by major NGO service providers in cooperation with the national government (Browarczyk *et al.*, 2014). The Model recommends using three definitions at the same time: the descriptive one (see below), the administrative one as outlined in the Act on Social Welfare (2004), and the operational one based on ETHOS; however, it is not clear how they interplay. The descriptive definition of homelessness is as follows: "A homeless person is a person who due to various reasons, using her own capabilities and entitlements, temporarily or permanently is not able to provide herself with a shelter that meets minimal conditions for naming it a living/housing quarter/unit (...)" (Browarczyk *et al.*, 2014, p. 23)

Based on this definition, one should evaluate a person's homelessness as being her/his fault or not, and as something that can be resolved by her/his own actions. By this definition, it is not obvious that every inhabitant of a homeless shelter is really homeless; for example, some of them might be workers living far from the town who do not want to commute on work days, and who sleep over in shelters while at weekends they go back to their family homes. According to ETHOS they are homeless and according to the descriptive definition they are not. Another example that was given during one of the discussions on the BIWM standard is of a person who has a home but is in a conflict with members of the household, where if there were no conflict (which is considered something she could resolve) she would not be homeless. The consequence for the BIWM standard was that the ETHOS type was treated as an additional question/variable that does not necessarily confirm the homelessness status of the service user.

In addition, there were questions over some of the options listed in the BIWM standard for the living situations of homelessness or housing exclusion, as service providers considered them situations where there was a stable and real home. One such option was that of 'being accommodated in a social apartment', which is a very small studio apartment of a very basic standard (some amenities are shared between a number of tenants) that is provided to a person by the local government for a certain amount of time and at a very low rent. Only people with low incomes are eligible, and once their income grows they have to leave the place. In terms of the social, physical and legal domains of FEANTSA's conceptual definition of homelessness, living in such an apartment equates to a very unstable situation, but some BIWM standard testers saw it differently.

The last difficulty with ETHOS was an unclear distinction between the operational category of 'living in the public space' (ETHOS 1) and 'living in temporary/non-conventional structures' (ETHOS 11). Some housing situations could fit into both or either, namely 'living in abandoned buildings' ('pustostan') and 'living in gardening allotments' ('działka'). To correctly assess the operational category involved, a deeper interview would be necessary to establish the conditions of the places under discussion. Some abandoned buildings and allotments are inhabited for a long time by the same people, who experience relative stability in terms of a legal domain (for example, through a verbal agreement with the owner) and some privacy in terms of the social domain (for example, they can live in a relationship with a partner). Other such locations might be totally different; for example, they may be screened and cleared by the police on a regular basis, vulnerable to threats from neighbours and passers-by, or inhabited by many people who claim the right to be there. Service users who declare spending the night before staying in the shelter in a 'pustostan' or 'działka' might be coming from substantially different housing situations and the BIWM standard was not helpful in differentiating between them.

The above observations of differences in the European recommendations and local tradition do not represent major clashes, but rather issues that necessitate some education and training with respect to the two exceptions identified: defining homelessness as the living/housing situation versus defining it as the features of a homeless person; and an unclear distinction between the operational category of living in the public space and living in temporary/non-conventional structures. These observations justify the need for debate on the classification of particular ETHOS types to conceptual categories of homelessness and housing exclusion as well as the need to create clearer instructions on how to use the criteria of exclusion in the three domains to assess the nature of ETHOS-defined living situations in a reliable manner.

Relevance for European Stakeholders

Shipyard's projects on the BIWM standard and methodology for aggregating service providers' data were designed to meet specific goals in the local context. However, they also have some relevance for a European audience, firstly with regard to the methodology for aggregating data, and secondly in defining homelessness and housing exclusion. The methodology for aggregating data was tested in order that it should be:

- acceptable in the strict personal data protection context imposed by national legislation;
- functional in a dispersed service provision context, where people who experience homelessness are supported by many different kinds of independently managed institutions: welfare, health, mainstream, specialist, public, non-governmental, ambulatory/residential; and
- inexpensive in the processing stage, although effort was required at the data-entering stage in services with paper-based registers.

It was also intended that it should:

- potentially produce otherwise unavailable data, especially on long-term homelessness, as research on homelessness that is developed tends to concentrate on point-in-time headcounts that are of various quality
- produce the data necessary to assess the effectiveness of the traditional shelter-based homelessness support system by revealing the existence and scale of the population that circulates in the system, never exiting it to a stable and sustainable housing situation.

The last point might be useful for national stakeholders striving to meet European recommendations on housing-led policies and Housing First programmes aimed at chronically homeless people with a dual diagnosis. The methodology allows for finding evidence that among service users are people who need such programmes.

The BIWM standard is based on European recommendations for data collection on homelessness, namely MPHASIS core and non-core variables (European Commission, 2008) and the ETHOS typology. They were created to provide a common framework for research on homelessness and the production of comparable data needed for designing effective evidence-based policies. During its creation, there was broad consultation with many European stakeholders from multiple national and institutional settings. In Shipyard's projects, these recommendations were put to the test by front line social workers employed by homelessness service providers in Poland.

Two aspects of ETHOS were found to be unclear: first, whether there was a contradiction between defining homelessness as being in any one of a number of housing situations and defining it as a set of features/conditions of the homeless person themselves. There were questions around how these two approaches interplay. The second aspect was the distinction between two ETHOS living situations: living in the public space and living in unconventional dwellings, as some living places may match both and can only be differentiated by a deeper analysis of the situation. Such analysis requires a diagnostic interview and cannot be done through merely describing the living place, for example, a gardening allotment as an unconventional dwelling and an abandoned building as part of the public space. A lack of clarity was reported by social workers testing the BIWM standard, but it was also visible in the national counts conducted by The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and in the 2011 Census, which did not differentiate between the two situations and classified all non-institutional homelessness under 'living in the public space'.

The last observation can be linked to the debate on ETHOS started by Amore *et al.* (2011) in their article for the *European Journal of Homelessness* followed by the response of Edgar (2012). Amore *et al.* challenged the validity of the three-domain conceptual definition of homelessness and housing exclusion in terms of the arbitrary threshold between homelessness and housing exclusion. According to the original conceptual definition, homelessness occurs when the living situation lacks all three domains or lacks two domains, but only if these two are legal and social. Any living situation that is lacking two domains – either legal and physical or social and physical – should be classified as housing exclusion. Such a threshold is questioned by Amore *et al.* as being unclear and lacking 'face validity', as it is not clear why the situation of a person who lives in a homeless shelter (exclusion from three domains) should be classified as homelessness while the situation of a person who moved from the homeless shelter to a makeshift shelter on public land (exclusion from physical and legal domains) would be classified as housing exclusion. Another concern raised by Amore *et al.* regards the unclear application of the criteria of exclusion from the relevant domains with respect to the ETHOS operational categories. They give an example of people living temporarily with family or friends due to the lack of other housing, which is classified as housing exclusion, while it could as well be considered homelessness due to the lack of security of tenure and private space.

In the opinion of the BIWM standard testers, for those people who should be classified as homeless according to ETHOS (living in the public space, using a night shelter) or housing excluded (living in gardening allotments) stability and access to adequate housing was the same, and it was unclear why they should be classified

differently. They complained about the lack of clear instructions on how to assess the housing situations of people living in a 'działka' (gardening allotment), which by generic definition should be classified as a 'non-conventional structure'.

As Edgar (2012) pointed out in his response to Amore *et al.*, the conceptual definition and ETHOS operational typology of homelessness and housing exclusion were created for a specific (European) context. As he writes: "The challenge was to provide a definition of homelessness and housing exclusion that could address the diversity of experience, governance and policy frameworks to allow national governments and the European Commission to monitor progress in this vital social policy arena." (Edgar, 2012, p.220)

As civil sector bodies – namely NGOs – were active stakeholders in the field of homelessness, filling the gaps in provision not covered by public institutions, it was vital to include their voice in the debate on defining homelessness, and this was done through the FEANTSA network. Thus, establishing ETHOS was not purely a research experience conducted for the ultimate purpose of conceptual validity; rather, to a certain extent it was the process of negotiation between a variety of stakeholders with established attitudes to the meaning of homelessness. This challenge has been met, as a growing number of countries (not only European) are currently using ETHOS as a framework for their policies on homelessness. However, the experience with BIMW standard has shown that there are still some clarifications to be made in order to improve the statistical reliability of ETHOS in measuring homelessness and for international comparisons between countries and continents.

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Appendix 1. BIWM Standard – Data Collection Standard on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

Questions:	Lists of answers:
Name and surname	
Date of birth	
Sex	male/female
Town and country of birth	
Address of permanent registration	street and street number; zip code; town; voivodship
Citizenship	Polish/non-Polish/undefined
Marital status	never married/ married/ divorced/ separated/ informal /widowed
Education (highest educational attainment)	primary or lowest obligatory education; vocational; high school or technical high school; unfinished higher education; higher education
Declared length of homelessness	less than 2 months; 2-6 months; 6 months to 1 year; 1-3 years; 3-5 years; over 5 years
Household structure	single; single with children; couple; couple with children; other
Relationships – close people	father; mother; sibling/s; children; partner; wife/husband; none
Kind of service	stay; visit; rejection
Date of beginning of stay	or date of visit
Date of end of stay	
Housing: living situation based on ETHOS operational category and/or living situation: the night before beginning of stay	living rough; in emergency accommodation; in accommodation for homeless people; in women's shelter; in accommodation for immigrants; due to be released from institutions; in temporary/ non-conventional structures; with friends/family due to lack of other housing options; social apartment (communal); unstable accommodation; home – not homeless; other
-after the stay, as declared upon leaving	
Length of stay in ETHOS operational category above before stay	Less than 2 months; 2-6 months; 6 months to 1 year; 1-3 years; 3-5 years; over 5 years
Reasons for most recent episode of homelessness	landlord action; end of tenancy agreement; conflict in a family/ household; violence in a family/household; problems with employment; no success in looking for employment upon migration; personal; financial; discharge from an institution; immigration; force majeure; other
Support needs	disability; long term sickness; other physical health problems; mental health problems; alcohol dependency; other substance dependency (e.g., drugs); gambling; debts; rent arrears; mortgage debts; debts due to unpaid alimonies; lack of occupation/training; experience of domestic abuse; helplessness; other
Main activity: before stay	paid employment; subsidized/supported employment;
-after stay, as declared upon leaving	voluntary work; school or training; unemployment; retired; long term sickness/disability
Source/type of income: before stay	no income; paid employment long term contract; paid
-after stay, as declared upon leaving	employment; short term contract; black market employment; registered business; unregistered 'business' (e.g., collection of recyclables, begging, sex work); pension; regular welfare benefits; unemployment benefits; alimonies; educational grants; family support; other

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Housing First Literature: Different Orientations and Political-Practical Arguments

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► **Abstract_** *Over about twenty years, Housing First (HF) and its adaptations have become internationally promoted housing models for long-term homeless people with mental health difficulties or/and substance abuse issues. The model called Pathways Housing First (PHF) created in New York by Sam Tsemberis, the founder of the Pathway to Housing organization, is the most well-known. PHF model is depicted in the research literature as the original implementation of Housing First (HF). In addition to a housing model, HF has been defined as a philosophy and it is a rapidly growing research branch. In this review article, HF is approached first and foremost as a diverse research branch and the aim is to map HF literature from 1990 to 2014. The article is based on 184 publications. The main criterion for including a publication in the database was that it takes as a starting point and/or comments on the original PHF model. The following research questions were asked: 1) what are the research types that are represented in HF literature? (we call these 'literature orientations'), and 2) what kind of political-practical arguments and objectives are expressed within each type i.e. orientation? The review found nine different types of research: 1) comparative studies, 2) guidelines and text books, 3) evaluation reports, 4) commentaries, 5) reviews, 6) implementation and outcome studies, 7) the development of scales and tests, 8) experiences and interaction studies and 9) critical social science research. As a conclusion, possible future directions of HF research are discussed.*

► **Keywords_** *Housing First, literature orientations, review, future directions and argumentation*

Introduction

Homelessness is a globally persistent social problem. Long-term homelessness, in particular, is an indicator of extreme exclusion, poverty and human vulnerability. Long-term homelessness is often intertwined with severe mental health problems and substance abuse issues (e.g., Waegemakers-Schiff and Rook, 2012; Watson *et al.*, 2013). It is a major burden on individuals and societies (Whittaker *et al.*, 2015). In order to understand long-term homelessness and tackle it successfully, we need to scrutinize and influence societal structures, organization-level policies and practices, and human agency (e.g., Watson *et al.*, 2013). In Western societies, governments and non-governmental organizations have made great efforts to diminish long-term homelessness. For example, the Finnish government recently launched two programmes to reduce long-term homelessness (running 2008–2011; 2012–2015) (Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009). Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands also launched national level homelessness strategies and targeted initiatives to decrease homelessness (Benjaminsen, 2013b; Whittaker *et al.*, 2015). Van Wormer and van Wormer (2009) describe nationwide developments in US. These initiatives, programmes and strategies are seen to represent a homelessness policy shift from the linear residential treatment (LRT) model (also called the continuum of care or the staircase model) to the Housing First (HF) model

Over the last twenty years or so, HF and its adaptations have become internationally promoted housing models for long-term homeless people with mental health difficulties and/or substance abuse issues. It is often argued that the original model called Pathways Housing First was created in New York by the Pathway to Housing organization, founded by Sam Tsemberis (for a history, see Felton, 2003; Waegemakers-Schiff and Rook, 2012). PHF is depicted in the literature as the original and truest way to implement HF. In addition, it has been presented as an evidence-based practice and, as a result of this research evidence, it has received a great deal of international recognition (Johnsen and Teixeira, 2012; Johnson *et al.*, 2012; Pleace, 2012; Pleace and Bretherton, 2012a; b; Greenwood *et al.*, 2013b) and has been widely adopted across the US, Canada, Australia and Europe (Greenwood *et al.*, 2013b).

The aim of the HF model is to provide immediate access to permanent housing and sufficient, sustained support for former long-term homeless people with their special support needs. The HF model comprises the following principles: housing is a human right and a precondition for a decent life and recovery; to be housed should not require adherence to treatment and care and, thus, housing and support are to be separated; and residents are to be encountered with empathy, respect and patience without coercive practices. Freedom of choice and self-determination are important preconditions in successful housing and recovery. Scattered housing

is to be the primary option. Both recovery-orientation and harm reduction are to be combined in support services (e.g., Tsemberis, 2010a; Busch-Geertsema, 2013; Gilmer *et al.*, 2013; Kaakinen, 2013).

In addition to a housing model, HF has also been defined as a philosophy and it is a rapidly growing research branch. Some scholars even talk about a paradigm shift in homelessness and mental health policy and practices (Nelson, 2010; Bostad först som., 2013; Kaakinen, 2013). As stated by Greenwood *et al.* (2013a; b), research was a crucial precursor to the implementation of HF from the 1990s in the US and Canada, and from the 2000s in many European countries. Commonly, HF initiatives are demonstration projects with strong research and evaluation components and political-practical objectives (Greenwood *et al.*, 2013a).

In this review article, we approach HF first as a diverse research branch and our aim is to map and give an overall view of the HF literature, from the 1990s to 2014. The review identified nine different types of literature: 1) comparative studies, 2) guidelines and text books, 3) evaluation reports, 4) commentaries, 5) reviews, 6) implementation and outcome studies, 7) the development of scales and tests, 8) experiences and interaction studies and 9) critical social science research.¹ HF has thus generated a wide range of homelessness research and societal discussion on homelessness. The starting point of this review is the idea that, after twenty years of HF research, it is worth taking the time to analyse and classify the growing number of publications that relate to applying, translating, evaluating, examining and discussing HF across many Western countries. By doing this, the review also captures future directions of HF research. Before presenting the nine different types of literature identified, we clarify how the literature was collected and mapped in the database and how the analysis was conducted.

The Review: Data and Research Questions

In this review article, the aim is to map HF literature from 1990 to 2014. The first objective is to classify publications according to the scientific genre they represent – i.e., what kinds of research tasks are set and data and methods used. The review covers HF literature broadly, and includes e.g. policy reviews, debate papers, reports and textbooks. The second objective is to study the publications in terms of the political-practical arguments and objectives they set forth. This aim is grounded in the assumption that the HF literature is linked to promoting the HF model itself as a practical and working solution to homelessness, and that the

¹ Waegemakers-Schiff and Rook (2012, p.11) categorize HF literature in the following way: a) quantitative studies, b) qualitative studies, c) program descriptions, d) program outcomes, e) policy review, f) health outcomes, g) cost-effective studies, and h) population studies.

literature thus primarily produces knowledge and arguments that are useful for political decision-making and for implementing local HF models (Stanhope and Dunn, 2011; Waegemakers-Schiff and Rook, 2012; Greenwood *et al.*, 2013a). Accordingly, scrutiny of the political-practical arguments contained in the literature constitutes the core conceptual framework for this review. The following research questions were asked: 1) what are the research types that are represented in HF literature? (we call these literature orientations), and 2) what kind of political-practical arguments and objectives are expressed within each type i.e. orientation?

The database of the review was created and reported on in two phases. The first publication search was conducted in November 2013 (in total, 77 publications) and reported on as a Finnish review article (Raitakari and Juhila, 2014). In the second phase, a supplementary data search was done in November 2014, which increased the total number of publications to 184. This article is based on the 184 publications identified by these first and second publication searches. We included a variety of literature produced within different genres and using different research designs, and also literature that represents non-scientific contributions, such as policy reviews and debates. The main criteria were that a publication was officially published (at least on the internet) between 1990 and 2014 and that it takes as a starting point and/or comments on the original PHF model. Accordingly, the database comprises academic research articles, evaluation reports, literature reviews, textbooks, manuals, policy reviews and debate papers. In the publication search we used 'Housing First' and 'Asunto Ensinnä' ('Housing First' in Finnish) as keywords. Only one key word was used to find a wide range of HF literature types (academic and policy literature) that explicitly use the term Housing First. We searched publications from different sources and used search engines, such as Google Scholar and Academic Search Premier. Important sources turned out to be the reference lists of previous publications. They led us to new publications and ensured that we had relevant literature included in the database. Although we aimed for a comprehensive review, there are certainly publications missing. This is mostly due to the fact that we only read publications in English and Finnish (excepting two texts in Swedish) and that the search engines used are not all-inclusive. Another major challenge has been the accelerated speed at which new HF publications are appearing. Despite these notable limitations, the large data corpus makes it possible to specify the different orientations of literature on HF, and the political-practical arguments expressed by each of them to a sufficient extent.

In practice, the review was conducted in the following way. We spent a great amount of time reading through the publications from the angles of the different scientific genres and research questions, and eventually grouped the texts according to: a) what kind of data was used, b) what kind of research design and method was established, c) how the text was written, and d) for whom and for what

purpose the publication was intended. Nine 'literature orientation charts' were created to document the publications within each orientation; these charts included the names of the authors, the year of publication and the political-practical arguments expressed.

Each of the orientations represents a different way of doing HF research and discussing HF. Thus, the content of the publication was not the criterion for the grouping, but rather the way the publication was composed and the scientific genre it represented. When categorizing the literature orientations, we were influenced both by established methods of naming different publication types and by the terms used in the HF literature itself (e.g., in evaluation reports and reviews), and we applied them to the specific purposes of the article (Waagemakers-Schiff and Rook, 2012; Publication Characteristics, 2014). Categorizing was not a straightforward task. For example, only fine-grained differences exist between some qualitative evaluation reports, implementation studies and experiences and interaction studies, as they all are based on grassroots-level experiences and views of HF. Thus, in some cases a publication could straddle two orientations and we were forced to choose one over the other, depending on the publication's dominant features. In so doing, we concentrated on the main features of each orientation and the factors that differentiate the literature orientations from each other, thus bypassing many details when sketching the 'big picture' of the HF literature.

The order of the literature orientations displayed in the article shows how HF publications have changed over time; the 'comparisons' orientation is the 'root', from which the current diverse HF literature sprouted. Research orientations are built on previous research, inspired by perceived gaps and deficiencies. The orientations also move from less critical modelling, testing and evaluating of HF to more critical research. As HF practice and research diversifies, the vocabularies become richer; alongside the original PHF come many different applications and translations of the HF model, and this produces new concepts including 'housing-led', 'light HF' and 'mixed-model'. This trend in HF research literature also brings conceptual variety to the article.

Comparative Studies

Table 1. Comparative Studies

PUBLICATIONS (36)	POLITICAL-PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS	OBJECTIVES
Tsemberis 1999; Tsemberis <i>et al.</i> , 2002; Gulcur <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Tsemberis <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Tsemberis <i>et al.</i> 2004; Greenwood <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Padgett <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Gulcur <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Stefancic and Tsemberis 2007; Yanos <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Gilmer <i>et al.</i> 2009; Larimer <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Robbins <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Gilmer <i>et al.</i> 2010; Tsai <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Edens <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Goering <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Henwood <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Padgett <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Appel <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Collins <i>et al.</i> , 2012b; Hwang <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Padgett and Henwood 2012; Watson 2012; Collins <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Henwood and Shinn <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Montgomery <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Palepu <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Patterson and Moniruzzaman <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Patterson and Rezansoff <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Somers and Patterson <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Somers and Rezansoff, 2013; Srebnik <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Tinland <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Patterson <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Russolillo <i>et al.</i> , 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. HF clients' housing is more sustainable than LRT clients' and thus HF is a more effective solution to long-term homelessness2. HF decreases the use of emergency and inpatient services more than LTR and is thus a more cost-effective option3. HF clients use alcohol and they have mental health difficulties to the same degree (or less) than LRT clients4. Permanent housing, client choice and self-determination decreases mental health symptoms and increases quality of life; HF thus supports mental wellbeing better than LRT5. Social integration is an essential element in successful housing, yet multifased and complex process6. The essential principal of HF i.e. adherence to mental health treatment is not a requirement of obtaining housing is well met in practice according to the residents' accounts	<p>Convince the politics, civil servants, managers, practitioners and researchers worldwide that HF is more cost-effective way than LRT to tackle with long-term homelessness, and that individuals with major deficiencies in daily functioning can live in a scattered housing if sufficient support is available</p> <p>Advocate for support services based on permanent housing, voluntariness, client choice, long-term support and harm reduction and recovery</p>

In the 'Comparative Studies' orientation we included publications that are based on comparative research designs. The publications make use of different types of experimental designs to compare LRT and HF housing models and their client outcomes, including pre-test and post-test designs, quasi-experimental designs and true experimental designs, or RCTs. Studies commonly utilize administrative documents (registers), client surveys and different kinds of ability-to-function tests

as data.² A common way to collect data is to do baseline survey-interviews with the clients and renew them every three to four months for a one- to two-year period. As seen in the forthcoming sections, the data of the comparative studies can also be used in other kinds of research designs and publication types (e.g., in evaluation reports and in outcome and implementation studies).

The HF model itself and comparative studies concerning it are motivated by the critics of the LRT model (e.g., Tsemberis and Henwood, 2011). The early HF literature was almost solely about comparing HF to other treatment/housing models or to existing services. In the LRT model, the basic idea is to build a continuum of treatment-accommodation units (such as a hospital-shelter, group home, supportive housing or normal apartment) to help people recover from mental health and substance abuse problems and homelessness. Thus, adherence to treatment and recovery endeavours are embedded in accommodation solutions. The transition from homeless to housed is thought to require abstinence and, at the beginning of the continuum (more or less), professional control and regulations. Many contributors (e.g., Tsemberis and Asmussen, 1999; Atherton and McNaughton-Nicholls, 2008; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010; Pleace, 2011; Haahtela, 2013; Granfelt, 2014) have brought up that the LRT model is not suitable for those categorized as the 'most difficult to house' and 'having severe mental health and substance abuse problems', and that it has many deficiencies, including the fact that many individuals with severe conditions have difficulties going along with the restrictions, fulfilling recovery expectations and moving forward in the continuum. Thus, the model easily excludes those with the greatest needs. In contrast, the HF model is argued to serve the most needy individuals. Long-term homelessness is not perceived as being caused by 'difficult to house' individuals but rather by unsuitable housing solutions and structural obstacles (Tsemberis and Asmussen, 1999).

'Comparative studies' is a strong research orientation in the HF field (36 publications). From the 1990s, the Pathways to Housing organization was successful in arguing for the (cost-) effectiveness of PHF compared to LRT, or 'treatment as usual' (TAU). Tsemberis' article 'From Street to Home: An Innovative Approach to Supported Housing for Homeless Adults with Psychiatric Disabilities' (1999) started a series of articles that constituted the foundation of the international debate on PHF. In this way, PHF grew from a small-scale, innovative experiment to an acknowledged programme model with the status of an evidence-based practice (Pleace and Bretherton, 2012a; Greenwood *et al.*, 2013a). This research

² The following studies represent exceptions to this: Patterson *et al.* (2013) carried out the first study "to use longitudinal, narrative data from adults with mental illness who were randomly assigned to HF or TAU." Henwood *et al.* (2013) conducted a mix-method comparison of the perspectives and values of HF and LRT providers. Watson (2012) compared HF and LRT by using interviews of HF clients and staff members.

orientation achieved a major reinforcement in 2009 when the Mental Health Commission of Canada funded a five-year, randomized controlled trial (RCT) study called 'At Home / Chez Soi', which implemented and evaluated PHF in five Canadian cities (Goering *et al.*, 2011).

The 'comparative studies' research orientation is based on the making of a distinction between the HF and LRT models. It reinforces the idea that the models are clearly separable and ideologically different. In recent studies, comparison is additionally made between different applications of HF – i.e., between scattered and congregate housing (e.g., Somers, Patterson *et al.*, 2013; Patterson, Moniruzzaman *et al.*, 2013; Russolillo *et al.*, 2014). The other, more recent research publications utilize, repeat and expand this polarized view and also the main political-practical arguments of this orientation (e.g., Johnson *et al.*, 2012; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2012).

The main political-practical arguments of this research orientation are: 1) HF client housing is more sustainable than that of LRT clients and HF is therefore a more effective solution to long-term homelessness (e.g., Tsemberis, 1999; Tsemberis and Eisenberg, 2000; Tsemberis *et al.*, 2004; Stefancic and Tsemberis, 2007; Collins *et al.*, 2013); 2) HF decreases the use of emergency and inpatient services (more than LTR/TAU) and is thus a cost-effective option (e.g., Gulcur *et al.*, 2003; Gilmer *et al.*, 2009; Larimer *et al.*, 2009; Gilmer *et al.*, 2010; Padgett *et al.*, 2011; Srebnik *et al.*, 2013; Russolillo *et al.*, 2014); 3) HF clients use alcohol and they have mental health difficulties to the same (or lesser) degree than LRT clients (Tsemberis *et al.*, 2003; Tsemberis *et al.*, 2004; Padgett *et al.*, 2006; Robbins *et al.*, 2009; Collins *et al.*, 2012a; b; Padgett *et al.*, 2011); 4) permanent housing, client choice and self-determination decrease mental health symptoms and increase quality of life – HF thus supports mental wellbeing better than LRT (e.g., Greenwood *et al.*, 2005; Patterson, Moniruzzaman *et al.*, 2013); 5) social integration is an essential element in successful housing, yet it cannot be expected to mean the same thing for everyone, or for HF clients to be more integrated than people in general in urban life – social integration is a multifaceted process, influenced by the neighbourhood, the form of housing (the model), daily activities and the resident's characteristics (Yanos *et al.*, 2007; Patterson *et al.*, 2014); 6) the essential principle of HF – i.e., that adherence to mental health treatment is not a requirement of obtaining housing – is well met in practice, according to the accounts of residents (Robbins *et al.*, 2009).

In this research orientation, the objectiveness of experiments and the practical mission are combined to support the dissemination and development of the HF model. The objective is to build up evidence for an evidence-based practice and, through doing this, convince politicians, civil servants, managers, practitioners and researchers worldwide that HF is a cost-effective way to tackle long-term homelessness and that individuals with major deficiencies in daily functioning can live in

scattered housing if sufficient support is available (e.g., Tsemberis, 1999; Tsemberis and Eisenberg, 2000; Gulcur *et al.*, 2003). In addition, the authors of literature within this orientation advocate for support services based on voluntariness, client choice, long-term support, and harm reduction and recovery (Greenwood *et al.*, 2005; Larimer *et al.*, 2009; Padgett and Henwood, 2012).

A critical reading of the orientation's publications requires special knowledge about register-based designs, RCTs and quasi-experimental research designs. In contrast, the political-practical arguments and objectives come across easily to a wide range of audiences, as is evidenced through the circulation of these arguments in other research orientations.

Tackling long-term homelessness means asking the question: which housing/treatment model is the most (cost-)effective for those categorized as the 'most difficult to house'? The following literature orientation gives tools and guidelines to plan and run such a housing project effectively.

Guidelines and Textbooks

Table 2. Guidelines and Textbooks

PUBLICATIONS (11)	POLITICAL-PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS	OBJECTIVES
Tsemberis and Asmussen, 1999; Lanzerotti, 2004; Tsemberis, 2010a; 2010b; McManus <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Tsemberis and Henwood, 2011; De Decker, 2012; Bostad först som ...2013; Gaetz <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Goering and Tsemberis, 2014; Polvere <i>et al.</i> , 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guidelines and exemplars are needed in developing and implementing HF in practice. 2. HF possesses the values, ingredients and practical means to tackle long-term homelessness so it is worth taking seriously and making it known to a variety of audiences. 	<p>Model HF's values, ingredients and practices into clear ways of doing homelessness work.</p> <p>Generate and distribute knowledge about HF and to enhance proper ways of implementing it.</p>

In the 'guidelines and text books' literature orientation we included HF textbooks, book chapters and toolkits (11 publications). The publications included follow the professional textbook tradition, presenting proper professional practices in an educational and idealistic way. In addition, they are written in an introductory and practical style, and HF is depicted as a successful intervention that transforms long-term homeless with mental health and substance abuse difficulties into responsible residents. The guidelines and textbooks are based on the practical/personal knowledge of experts groups, researchers, practitioners and clients, yet references to this knowledge are not always made in an exact and explicit way.

The textbooks and toolkits in this literature orientation offer practical guidelines to putting PHF into practice, and they can be identified by the simplified and educational way in which they present PHF (Tsemberis and Assmussen, 1999; Lanzerotti, 2004; Tsemberis, 2010b; McManus, 2011; De Decker, 2012; Gaetz *et al.*, 2013; Polvere *et al.*, 2014). Tsemberis and his co-authors have described the PHF model's core principles, implementation processes and current research evidence (Tsemberis and Assmussen, 1999; Tsemberis, 2010a; b; Tsemberis and Henwood, 2011; Goering and Tsemberis, 2014). The guidelines and textbooks are addressed to those who plan, establish, develop, provide, run and engage with HF – i.e., to the actual 'doers' of HF projects. Book chapters (Tsemberis 2010b; Tsemberis and Henwood, 2011; Goering and Tsemberis, 2014) comprise overall introductions to HF's background, principles, research evidence and successes. Book chapters are aimed at a wide range of societal and scientific audiences and they are written in more academic language than guidelines and textbooks. Yet they can be read as 'advertising' HF's particularities and the advantages to 'outsiders' of the HF field (e.g., Tsemberis and Henwood, 2011).

The orientation's main political-practical arguments are that: 1) guidelines and exemplars are needed in developing and implementing HF in practice; and 2) the HF model contains the values, ingredients and practical means to tackle long-term homelessness, so it is worth taking seriously and making it known to a variety of audiences. The main objective is to model HF's values, ingredients and practices into clear ways of doing homelessness work. Another objective is to generate and distribute knowledge about HF and to enhance proper ways of implementing it.

Tackling long-term homelessness requires making the best use of existing knowledge about HF when planning and running local HF projects. HF research evidence comes very much from demonstration projects that have strong evaluation research components; these are presented next.

Evaluation Reports

Table 3. Evaluation Reports

PUBLICATIONS (27)	POLITICAL-PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS	OBJECTIVES
Perlman and Parvensky, 2006; Toronto Shelter Support..., 2007; Pearson <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Pearson <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Busch-Geertsema, 2010; Goering <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2012; 2013; Kristiansen and Espmarker, 2012; Mental Health Commission... 2012 a, 2012b; Stergiopoulos <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Benjaminsen, 2013a; Busch-Geertsema, 2013; Fehér and Balogi, 2013; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2013; Nelson and Macnaughton <i>et al.</i> , 2013a; Ornelas, 2013; Wewerinke <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Aubry <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Busch-Geertsema, 2014; Currie <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Distasio <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Wewerinke <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Goering <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Latimer <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Stergiopoulos <i>et al.</i> , 2014	1. HF generates cost savings, increases wellbeing and is an effective route out of homelessness 2. In successful implementation of HF it is crucial to have sustainable resources and skilled practitioners 3. Scattered housing is to be preferred 4. Clients value HF principals, scattered housing and long-term support, and report their life situation being improved 5. To achieve the best outcomes, HF programmes should demonstrate high fidelity to the core aspects of the PHF model 6. HF can be effectively implemented and disseminated in Canadian and European cities of different size and with different 'ethno-racial' and cultural composition 7. To overcome stigmatization, social isolation, poverty and unemployment, structural level measures are needed	Document and display the pivotal elements of each individual demonstration project and thus to prove the advantages of HF and to promote its development, funding and research. Take a stance on the issue of adapting and disseminating HF in a different contexts Call for national and EU-level responsibility to enhance and support HF research and practice Support the implementation of demonstration projects by constructing the success and hindrance factors when putting HF into practice

Evaluation reports typically involve qualitative data (or both qualitative and quantitative), and carefully describe implementation processes, client characteristics and housing stability rates. In addition, they assess changes in the wellbeing and life situations of clients. This literature orientation is based on an evaluation research tradition, although methodological commitments and decisions are not commonly reflected in depth. Mostly methodological considerations are embedded in the final reports (Busch-Geertsema, 2013; Goering *et al.*, 2014). (Evaluation) research has long been a crucial element in advocating for, and disseminating the concept of HF in the US, Canada and most recently in Europe. As Greenwood, Stefancic *et al.* (2013b, p. 310) state: "Many European HF initiatives are demonstration projects with strong research or evaluation components that stakeholders hope will build a strong European evidence base for HF." There have been several (some remarkably large-scale) HF projects, which have produced a major number of evaluation reports). 27 reports were included in the 'evaluation reports' literature orientation.

The first three reports (Perlman and Parvensky, 2006; Toronto Shelter Support and Housing Administration, 2007; Pearson *et al.*, 2007) are evaluations of HF models in the US and Canada.³ More recently, the world's largest trial of HF – i.e., Canada's 'At Home / Chez Soi' five-year (2009–2013) implementation and research project with RCT and mixed-method research design – has made a significant contribution to the HF literature.⁴ As stated by Goering and the team (2014, p.11): 'At Home / Chez Soi' was designed to "help identify what works, at what cost, for whom, and in which environments." Evaluation was carried out by examining various aspects of the lives of HF clients, such as housing stability, quality of life, community functioning, recovery, employment, inclusion and costs. In addition, the researchers conducted assessments of fidelity to the original PHF, documented the local implementation processes, and provided extensive training and technical assistance at the sites (Nelson, Macnaughton *et al.*, 2013a; Goering *et al.*, 2014). The data used includes both quantitative and qualitative components and thus facilitates a variety of research publications from different research orientations (Goering *et al.*, 2014).

A major boost to European HF projects and evaluation research has been 'Housing First Europe' (HFE, 2011-2013), funded by the European Commission. HFE was a demonstration project, which promoted mutual learning across several European cities that were implementing HF, and synthesized the findings of local evaluations (Busch-Geertsema, 2011; 2013; Greenwood, Stefancic *et al.*, 2013b).⁵ As stated in the final report (Busch-Geertsema, 2013), European HF projects have been

³ Pearson and his colleagues (2007) conducted a multi-site, descriptive, implementation-outcome evaluation of three HF sites that were: 1) Downtown Emergency Service Center, Seattle, Washington, 2) Pathways to Housing, New York City, New York; and 3) Reaching Out and Engaging to Achieve Consumer Health, San Diego, California. Perlman and Parvensky (2006, p.1) carried out a "Cost Benefit Analysis focused on examining the actual health and emergency service records of a sample of participants [N=19, *number added by the authors*] of the DHFC (Denver Housing First Collaborative) for the 24-month period prior to entering the program and the 24-month period after entering the program."

⁴ Local demonstration projects of 'At Home / Chez Soi' in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montréal and Moncton are documented in several evaluation reports (Aubry *et al.*, 2014; Currie *et al.*, 2014; Distasio *et al.*, 2014; Latimer *et al.*, 2014; Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2014). The final evaluation report, which summarizes the cross-setting implementation processes and general outcomes, was conducted by Goering and the research team (Goering *et al.*, 2014). 'At Home / Chez Soi' research was based on the following data types: a) interviews with clients at baseline and every three months for up to two years of follow-up, b) information from the demonstration projects (such as the number of clients and conducted service encounters), and c) national and provincial administrative data sources on the use of health and justice services before and after the beginning of the study.

⁵ HFE comprised five 'test site cities' (Amsterdam, Budapest, Copenhagen, Glasgow and Lisbon) and additional partners – i.e., 'peer site cities' (Dublin, Ghent, Gothenburg, Helsinki and Vienna) (Socialstyrelsen/Housing First Europe). The final report summarizing the implementation processes and outcomes was written by Busch-Geertsema (2013).

pioneering attempts to implement HF in an environment dominated either by the LRT model or by emergency sheltering services. Only Copenhagen's demonstration project was part of a national homelessness strategy to promote HF on a national scale. Danish and Finnish endeavours to eliminate long-term homelessness and to implement, study and stabilize HF at a national level have encouraged literature and discussion on HF (Busch-Geertsema, 2010; Benjaminsen, 2013a; b). None of the HFE test sites were an exact replica of the original PHF, although they did follow the core ideas of PHF in many aspects. The 'fidelity test' was not conducted and it was difficult to verify implementation of some of the principles in practice (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). There was diversity between test sites in terms of scale and implementation, data collection and evaluation methods. Administrative data and interviews with the participants were important sources of information. Both of these large-scale demonstration projects support and give grounds to argue that HF can be successfully carried out outside the U.S context with significant outcomes in housing sustainability and the well-being of clients.

The evaluation reports often end up with political-practical arguments that are similar to those of the comparative studies, although the literature orientations differ from each other in terms of research design and data types (evaluation reports are mostly based on qualitative data and descriptive analysis). The main political-practical arguments of the evaluation reports orientation are: 1) HF generates cost savings, increases wellbeing and is an effective route out of homelessness (e.g., Perlman and Parvensky, 2006); 2) for successful implementation of HF, it is crucial to have sustained and sufficient resources (e.g., affordable apartments) and skilled practitioners (Busch-Geertsema, 2013; Goering *et al.*, 2014); 3) scattered housing is to be favoured as much as possible, yet other options are possible if they are in line with client choice and expressed needs (Benjaminsen, 2013a); 4) clients value HF principles, scattered housing and long-term support, and report their life situation as being improved (Kristiansen and Espmarker, 2012; Benjaminsen, 2013a; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2012; 2013; Wewerinke *et al.*, 2013); 5) to achieve the best outcomes, HF programmes should demonstrate high fidelity to the core aspects of the PHF model (Goering *et al.*, 2014); 6) HF can be effectively implemented and disseminated in Canadian and European cities of different size and with different 'ethno-racial' and cultural composition (Goering *et al.*, 2014; Busch-Geertsema, 2013); 7) to overcome stigmatization, social isolation, poverty and unemployment, structural level measures are needed (Busch-Geertsema, 2013).

The aim of the 'evaluation reports' orientation is to document and display the pivotal elements of each individual demonstration project (and/or those of multi-site totalities) and thus prove the advantages of HF and promote its development, funding and research. The intent is to take a stance on the issue of adapting and disseminating HF in different contexts. The orientation calls for national and EU-level

responsibility to enhance and support HF research and practice. It also supports the implementation of current and future demonstration projects by documenting the factors leading to success and hindrance when putting HF into practice. Hindrance factors include difficulties in getting proper apartments (delays in access to housing), in integrating clients into society and in engaging them in meaningful daily activities. Endeavours to quit substance abuse and scattered housing increase the risk of isolation and loneliness (Busch-Geertsema, 2013; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2012; 2013). Having provided an apartment, the question of 'what next?' arises. Recently, social integration has become a strengthened theme in HF literature. The publications in this orientation make it possible to assess and discuss the following: What is HF in different contexts? Who are HF clients? What are the effects and client outcomes of HF? How are demonstration projects implemented and what are the critical factors leading to success and hindrance? The knowledge in this orientation is aimed at those who fund, plan, establish, develop, provide, run and engage with HF projects.

The homelessness issue leads to questions of what works in what context and how to balance PHF fidelity with adapting the initiative to local circumstances. These issues are also central in the following literature orientation: 'Commentaries'.

Commentaries

Table 4. Commentaries

PUBLICATIONS (32)	POLITICAL-PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS	OBJECTIVES
Fitzpatrick, 2004; Jensen, 2005; Atherton and McNaughton-Nicholls, 2008; Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009; Housing-led Policy... , 2011; Busch-Geertsema, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Kettunen and Granfelt, 2011; Pleace, 2011a; 2011b; Busch-Geertsema, 2012a, 2012b; Hansen Löfstrand, 2012; Johnsen, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Johnson <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Pleace and Bretherton 2012a; 2012b; Raitakari and Juhila, 2012; Tsai and Rosenheck, 2012; Tsemberis, 2012; Tsemberis <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Benjaminsen 2013b; Culhane <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Kaakinen, 2013; Kettunen, 2013; Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2013; Padgett, 2013, Pleace, 2013; Stefancic <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Tsemberis, 2013; Cornes <i>et al.</i> , 2014	1. More research is needed on HF and other housing models in a European context 2. Previous research evidence on HF is not unquestionable nor totally robust 3. HF has shown outstanding outcomes on housing sustainability but less promising results concerning recovery and social integration 4. There are many structural and cultural constraints to be taken into account when transferring HF from one locality to another 5. Most important is to hold on to the PHF ethos, i.e. strong housing rights, scattered housing, off-site and intensive support, client choice, self-determination, a resilient and compassionate attitude 6. HF is not an all-powerful solution to long-term homelessness and structural changes are crucial in the fight against poverty and marginalization 7. HF has lot to offer, but critical thinking and research is essential	Advance the academic discussion and research on HF Make HF better known to a variety of administrative/professional/academic audiences

The 'Commentaries' literature orientation covers texts that are not empirical studies, reviews or text books. Thus, these texts do not include empirical data or any systematic way of going through previous literature or presenting analysis. The orientation includes a variety of text types, including debates, (critical) discussions, policy reviews and descriptions of on-going HF projects. These texts are usually quite short and they offer particular input into on-going (academic) discussions on HF, relying on the author's existing knowledge of the HF field. In the database, there are 32 such publications in total. Texts in this orientation can be identified on the

one hand by arguments that call for 'orthodoxy' and on the other hand by arguments that set forth the need to modify HF to different contexts. The texts can be either positive towards or critical of HF.

The HF model is applied in different contexts and in many different ways. Unlike the original PHF model, HF projects may include such elements as 'light support', congregate or on-site housing (a well-know example of this is the Downtown Emergency Service Center in Seattle), fixed-term housing, limited client choice, or the use of social housing and existing support services (e.g., Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009; Johnson *et al.*, 2012; Pleace, 2012a; Kettunen, 2013). Raitakari and Juhila (2012) discuss the dilemmas embedded in both the LRT and HF models, while Kettunen and Granfelt (2011) raise the issue of how demanding it is to do support work by relying on the harm reduction principle. As HF has become more popular, the risk has been highlighted of projects drifting away from the core elements of HF and of the term 'Housing First' being used loosely (e.g., Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). As such, housing projects may be labelled as HF without major, transformative changes in the practitioners' LRT-related patterns of thinking and acting (e.g., Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2013). Accordingly, there are great numbers of discussion texts in HF literature that deal with the problem of 'drifting away' from PHF, and how to apply HF and scale it to different contexts. The puzzling question is as to what a HF project is and what is not (e.g., Hansen Löfstrand, 2012). As Tsemberis (2013, p.236) asks: "which project components are flexible enough to be adapted to new localities as well as serve new populations, and which components are core principles that must remain constant?"

For example, in relation to scaling HF to different contexts, Atherton and McNaughton-Nicholls (2008) state that client groups, national and local differences in legislation, social and health services, and housing markets have a crucial impact on the implementation and outcomes of HF (see also Johnson, 2011; Johnson *et al.*, 2012). Accordingly, it is important to scrutinize the local constraints and possibilities of a particular HF project and evaluate its outcomes according to that knowledge (e.g., Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2013). Atherton and McNaughton-Nicholls (2008) conclude, as do many authors in the texts of other orientations, that in order to adapt HF successfully to different societal contexts, we need more European research on the success and hindrance factors in HF models.

Pleace (2011) also sets forth cautionary arguments concerning the translation of HF to different contexts, in particular the 'drifting away' phenomenon and about the term 'Housing First' being used in a loose way. It is also likely that for some clients, better outcomes can be achieved using models other than HF (see also Culhane *et al.*, 2013), and there is a risk of HF dominating the social discussion on homelessness, which may lead to an overemphasis on the vulnerabilities and

troubles of particular individuals instead of an emphasis on the structural and societal barriers that sustain long-term homelessness in Western societies (Pleace, 2011). In addition, Johnson and his co-writers (2012) bring up the possibility that, in political-practical discussions, the research evidence of HF may be interpreted in a simplified and overly positive way, thus setting too high expectations on it. It should not be forgotten that setting up a proper HF project requires major and sustained resources.

Some of the publications in this literature orientation present endeavours to promote HF as a national-level policy (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2004; Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009; Benjaminsen, 2013b; Culhane *et al.*, 2013) while others introduce and summarize on-going demonstration projects (Busch-Geertsema, 2011; 2012a; b). Yet there are also articles that reflect more critically on translating HF to local contexts and on its potentials and constraints (Pleace, 2011; Hansen Löfstrand, 2012; Johnsen, 2012; Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2013).

From the publications in this orientation, the following main political-practical arguments can be summarized: 1) more research is needed on HF and other housing models in a European context (e.g., Atherton and McNaughton-Nicholls, 2008; Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009; Tsai and Rosenheck, 2012); 2) previous research evidence on HF is not absolute nor should it automatically be considered robust (Johnson *et al.*, 2012); 3) HF has led to outstanding outcomes in terms of housing sustainability but has shown less promising results in terms of recovery and social integration (Pleace, 2011; Johnson *et al.*, 2012); 4) there are many structural and cultural constraints to be taken into account when transferring HF from one locality to another (Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2013); 5) the most important thing is to hold on to the PHF ethos – i.e., strong housing rights, scattered housing, off-site and intensive support, client choice, self-determination, and a resilient and compassionate attitude; 6) HF is not an all-powerful solution to long-term homelessness, and structural changes are crucial in the fight against poverty and marginalization; 7) HF has lot to offer, but critical thinking and research are essential (Padgett, 2013; Pleace, 2013; Pleace and Bretherton, 2013).

The objective of the orientation is to advance academic discussion and research on HF. Texts are meaningful in making HF better known to a variety of administrative, professional and academic audiences. They are based on previous research and discussion papers, yet references to these are often made in implicit ways. Previous research is made much more explicit in the 'reviews' orientation that is presented next.

In a review report, Pleace (2012) makes an interesting grouping of different kinds of HF applications. There are housing projects, which are very much exact replicas of PHF. In addition, some housing projects can be defined as Communal Housing First (CHF), as they are based on congregate housing and on-site support. By Housing First 'Light' Services, Pleace (2012) refers to living in ordinary apartments and receiving less intensive floating support. This classification extends the 'boundaries' of the concept of HF, yet also makes it clearer what the original PHF is and what the different ways of mixing it with other housing models are.

Groton's quite recent article (2013) scrutinizes studies that compare the effectiveness of various HF programmes with the effectiveness of LRT programmes – i.e., studies included in the 'comparative studies' orientation. Client outcomes related to housing retention, substance use and mental health are compared. The article concludes that, while HF provides strong promise, existing studies contain methodological deficiencies and, thus, a reserved attitude towards HF should be maintained. Waegemakers-Schiff and Rook (2012) include a much more comprehensive range of HF literature in their review report than Groton (2013), but the authors, similarly, seek and critically evaluate evidence on HF. They (2012, p.17) come to the following conclusion: "given the paucity of highly controlled outcome studies, we examined the process whereby HF had so rapidly become accepted as a 'best practice'. Declaring the Housing first model a best practice appears to be a political decision rather than a scientific research decision."

The political-practical arguments of the 'reviews' literature orientation are the following: 1) it is essential to gather, compare and critically evaluate the existing research evidence of different housing models and to make informed choices concerning services for homeless people (Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010); 2) existing research evidence is incomplete and, in part, not sufficiently robust methodologically, but it supports adapting and implementing HF in different contexts (Waegemakers-Schiff and Rook 2012; Groton, 2013); 3) it is essential to do more research on housing models and also to develop the methodology of such research (e.g., Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010; Groton, 2013). The objectives of this literature orientation are to develop existing HF research and to provide bases for informed decision-making in homelessness services and policies. These objectives are also essential in the following, and sixth, research orientation: 'implementation and outcome studies'.

Implementation and Outcome Studies

Table 6. Implementation and Outcome Studies

PUBLICATIONS (28)	POLITICAL-PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS	OBJECTIVES
Felton, 2003; Falvo, 2009; Pearson <i>et al.</i> , 2009; van Wormer and van Wormer 2009; Stergiopoulos <i>et al.</i> , 2010; McNaughton and Atherton, 2011; Wideman, 2011; Collins <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Goldbloom and Bradley, 2012; Zabkiewicz <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Bean <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Clifasefi <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Gilmer <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Greenwood and Stefancic <i>et al.</i> , 2013a; Greenwood and Stefancic , <i>et al.</i> , 2013b ; Keller <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Macnaughton <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Nelson <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Palepu <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Watson <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Davidson <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Gilmer <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Granelli <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Henwood and Matejkowski <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Henwood and Melekis <i>et al.</i> 2014; Nelson <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Stergiopoulos <i>et al.</i> , 2014; West <i>et al.</i> , 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Describing and exploring programme implementation is central to a better understanding of the critical ingredients and practices that help clients to achieve positive outcomes and life changes2. High fidelity to PHF associates with better housing stability and quality of life outcomes3. The combination of research, 'evidence-based' practices and advocacy will foster new programmes in the future that will continue to expand the use of PHF with new client groups and localities4. Especially important in successful implementation is the recruiting of staff whose technical and interpersonal skills, and personal values are congruent with the HF model	<p>Document and display the implementation of HF projects</p> <p>Study the relations between planning, implementation, local contexts, fidelity and outcomes – and thus to strengthen the understanding and credibility of the HF initiatives</p>

The publications within this literature orientation are academic, empirical research articles based on implementation-outcome research. They describe and scrutinize a particular HF project (or HF projects) in its (or their) own right – the HF project is not compared to other housing models or evaluated in such a context. Both qualitative and quantitative data, such as interviews, surveys and documents are used. Research articles that deal with the following were included in this orientation: a) the outcomes and success/hindrance factors of a particular HF project (e.g., McNaughton and Atherton, 2011; Bean *et al.*, 2013; Nelson *et al.*, 2014); b) the implementation of a particular HF project (or HF projects) and its (or their) fidelity to the original PHF (Greenwood, Stefancic *et al.*, 2013b; Nelson, Macnaughton *et al.*, 2013b; Nelson *et al.*, 2014); and c) a description of a particular research design used in HF research (Zabkiewicz, 2012). There are 28 publications in literature orientation ‘implementation and outcome studies’ and it is a rapidly expanding

area. This kind of research has been generated by HF demonstration and research projects in particular (see the section 'evaluation reports') and these two literature orientations are therefore very closely related.

For example, with regard to the outcomes of a particular HF project, Clifasefi and his co-writers (2013, p.291) state that "[m]onths of project-based HF exposure – not prior criminal histories – predicted significant decreases in jail days and bookings from the two years prior and subsequent to participants' move into HF." Similarly, Collins, Malone and Larimer (2012) conducted a quantitative secondary study to shed light on the potential mechanisms associated with improved alcohol-use outcomes following engagement in a HF project. The study utilizes data gathered in a HF context. It is common for implementation and outcome studies to be based on data gathered in large-scale and multi-site comparative (and/or evaluative case study) HF research projects (e.g., Palepu *et al.*, 2013a; b). In such studies, a particular research question, preliminary observation or theme, which has come up in the original 'host' study, is analysed in more detail. For example, Henwood, Matejkowski *et al.* (2014) focused especially on quality of life and community integration outcomes, which are the rising themes in current HF research.

Some studies depict and reflect on the implementation of HF *per se* (e.g., Henwood, Melekis *et al.*, 2014). For example, Greenwood, Stefancic *et al.* (2013a) tell the 'triumph story' of HF moving from exile to mainstream. The article explains how research was used to persuade key stakeholders to support funding for and dissemination of HF. It also presents strategies to maximize social change impact, as well as the key challenges that were faced along the way to triumph. Van Wormer and van Wormer (2009) describe the policy shift from a sobriety-first requirement to a Housing First philosophy in the US through a case study from Portland. Felton (2003) describes and analyses the implementation – both barriers and facilitators – of a particular HF project as understood by stakeholders in the change. As she concludes (2003, p.321): "The narrative method reveals on-going concern with interagency relations and, possibly, ambivalence about the values and assumptions of the new practice, and thus offers a richer and more content-based picture of the change process." Nelson, Macnaughton *et al.* (2013b) describe the planning process of the 'At Home / Chez Soi' demonstration project and the challenges associated with it.

Other publications investigate the relationship between the implementation and outcomes of housing projects and their fidelity to PHF (e.g., Davidson *et al.*, 2014; Gilmer *et al.*, 2014). The need to examine the fidelity of a particular HF project to the original PHF arises from the dilemma of PHF being a flexible model for dissemination in different locations, yet being on the other hand a clearly articulated procedure with its own premises, practices, 'rules' and values (Stefancic, Tsemberis *et al.*, 2013; Gilmer *et al.*, 2014). In addition, outcomes are seen as being bound to implementation

processes. If there are major differences and flaws in implementation between HF projects, it makes it difficult to compare the results and argue for the 'evidence base' of HF (Watson, Wagner and Rivers, 2013). Watson, Wagner and Rivers (2013, p.169) define the following six critical ingredients of a successful HF project: 1) a low-threshold admissions policy, 2) harm reduction, 3) eviction prevention, 4) reduced service requirements, 5) the separation of housing and services and 6) consumer education.

Greenwood and co-authors (2013b) describe and evaluate the fidelity to the PHF model of HF initiatives in six European countries (Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Scotland) and they examine the larger social and historical factors that may foster or impede model fidelity. Key stakeholders representing six European HF initiatives completed semi-structured phone interviews. Greenwood, Stefancic *et al.* (2013b, p.307) summarize implementation challenges as involving "skepticism and resistance from existing services, availability of affordable private-market housing, and moral judgments about worthiness for housing." The 'At Home / Chez Soi' demonstration project's fidelity, and the factors facilitating or hindering its implementation, were assessed in a large qualitative study using key stakeholders as informants (Nelson, Macnaughton *et al.*, 2013b). Both studies (Greenwood, Stefancic *et al.*, 2013b; Nelson, Macnaughton *et al.*, 2013b; Nelson *et al.*, 2014) find that, although local context meant the need for unique adaptations of HF, the principles of the model provided the foundation for a common approach across sites and nations.

The main objective of the literature in this orientation is to document and display the implementation of HF projects and to study the relations between planning, implementation, local contexts, fidelity and outcomes – and thus to strengthen the understanding and credibility of the HF initiatives. The publications are research articles and are addressed primarily to academic readers. They include the following political-practical arguments: 1) describing and exploring programme implementation is central to a better understanding of the critical ingredients and practices that help clients to achieve positive outcomes and life changes (Davidson *et al.*, 2014); 2) high fidelity to PHF is associated with better housing stability and quality of life outcomes; 3) the combination of research, 'evidence-based' practices and advocacy will foster new programmes in the future that will continue to expand the use of PHF with new client groups and localities (Greenwood, Stefancic *et al.*, 2013b); 4) especially important in successful implementation is the recruiting of staff whose technical and interpersonal skills, and personal values are congruent with the HF model (Nelson, Macnaughton *et al.*, 2013b; Nelson *et al.*, 2014). In this literature orientation, looking at how to tackle long-term homelessness comes back to the question of how to implement a housing project that is sufficiently in line with PHF principles yet fits well in the local context, in order to produce outcomes as remarkable as those reported from the original PHF model (see section on 'comparative studies').

An interesting observation is that the term ‘fidelity’ is increasingly used and circulated in the most recent HF literature; fidelity is to be defined, assessed, measured and put into practice. The next, quite marginal (at this time) literature orientation concerns the development of fidelity and outcome tests. The viewpoint shifts from implementation of HF projects to developing reliable research instruments and data to assess fidelity.

Development of Scales and Fidelity Tests

Table 7. Development of Scales and Fidelity Tests

PUBLICATIONS (6)	POLITICAL-PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS	OBJECTIVES
Clifasefi <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Raphael-Greenfield, 2012; Gilmer <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Stefancic <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Watson <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Adair <i>et al.</i> , 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fidelity scale is to be used as a guide in programme development and training, and as a research tool 2. It is necessary for researchers, policy makers and practitioners to have tools for measuring the extent to which a housing model is implemented according to PHF principals and procedures 3. Fidelity tests help to assess the relations between model ingredients, implementation and outcomes 4. Point 3 promotes a broader understanding of how to facilitate stable housing and recovery from homelessness and other adversities at a grass roots level 	<p>Provide a tool to define and measure in a reliable way the elements and practices of particular HF initiatives</p> <p>Enhance dissemination of more consistent and accurate replicas of PHF</p>

The research articles in this literature orientation describe and make explicit the making of a measuring tool. The aim is to develop a tool to define and measure in a reliable way the elements and practices of particular HF initiatives, and through this to enhance dissemination of more consistent and accurate replicas of PHF. Authors make use of mostly qualitative data produced during the development process, such as interviews and focus groups of wide range of stakeholders. This orientation is quite new and marginal within the HF research field and it contains six publications.

Debates surrounding the implementation, outcomes and dissemination of HF have prompted the creation of ‘fidelity tests’, which measure the fidelity of housing projects to the PHF model along both structural and philosophical dimensions (Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010). As Watson, Orwat *et al.* (2013, p.1) argue, “[a] lack of clear fidelity guidelines has resulted in inconsistent implementation.” They continue (2013, p.3) to say that “[n]o fidelity instrument had been created at the time we

started development of the HFM (Housing First Model) Fidelity Index.” This research orientation includes descriptions of creating and validating fidelity measuring tools, and texts that address use of the Observer-Rated Housing Quality Scale (Adair *et al.*, 2014) as well as use of the Executive Function Performance Test to assess executive and community functioning among homeless persons with substance use disorders (Raphael-Greenfield, 2012).

Gilmer, Stefancic *et al.* (2013) describe the development and validation of the HF fidelity survey; the 46-item survey was created to measure fidelity across five domains: housing process and structure, the separation of housing and services, service philosophy, service array and team structure. The staff and clients of 93 supported-housing programmes in California validated the survey. Similarly, Stefancic, Tsemberis *et al.* (2013) conducted a study to develop and test a PHF fidelity scale. In the article they (2013, p.241) describe the process of making the scale and summarize it in the following way: “The PHF model’s guiding principles and prospective ingredients were identified through reviews of PHF literature and relevant fidelity scales, interviews with PHF administrators and a survey administered to HF providers. An expert panel developed the items into a fidelity scale, which was field-tested as part of two large-scale research initiatives in California and Canada.” Watson, Orwat *et al.* (2013, p.3) argue that they have conducted “a bottom-up approach to the development of the index that sought to identify and operationalize the critical elements of the HFM that differentiate it from the abstinence-based approach”. They come up with a five-dimensional index (staff, client enrolment, flexible policies, low demand, and intensive case management and housing arrangements) by which to assess and measure project implementation.

The texts are written primarily for researchers, funders, planners and those running HF projects. The following political-practical arguments are contained in the articles: 1) the fidelity scale is to be used as a guide in programme development and training, and as a research tool (Stefancic, Tsemberis *et al.*, 2013); 2) it is necessary for researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to have tools for measuring the extent to which a housing model is implemented according to PHF principals and procedures; 3) fidelity tests help to assess the relationships between model ingredients, implementation and outcomes, and, thus, they 4) promote a broader understanding of how to facilitate stable housing and recovery from homelessness and other adverse situations at a grass roots level. Next we will turn to the research orientation that examines the grass roots level of HF – i.e., the joint encounters and experiences of practitioners and clients.

Experiences and Interaction Studies

Table 8. Experiences and Interaction Studies

PUBLICATIONS (22)	POLITICAL-PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS	OBJECTIVES
Yanos <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Padgett, 2007; Padgett <i>et al.</i> , 2008; Burlingham <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Collins <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Padgett and Henwood, 2012; Piat <i>et al.</i> 2012; Stefancic <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Granfelt 2013a; 2013b; Haahtela 2013; Henwood <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Polvere <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Tiderington <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Austin <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Balogi and Fehér 2014; Henwood and Padgett <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Juhila <i>et al.</i> 2014; Kirst <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Ornelas <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Zerger and Pridham <i>et al.</i> , 2014a; Zerger and Pridham <i>et al.</i> , 2014b	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is important to study HF as the local, mutual and interactional accomplishment of clients and practitioners 2. Stakeholders construct and realize HF 'in-action' and in particular settings 3. The extent to which macro-level conceptualizations and ideals are able to make social changes are dependent on the transfer processes at the micro-level 4. HF is to be understood and studied as societal, local, interactional and situational social practice and experience 	<p>Scrutinize how macro-level ways of thinking and policies are transferred and understood in micro-level practices and in personal experiences</p> <p>Make visible the relations between current politics, policies and everyday practices, and by doing this to inform the development of HF initiatives and support work more generally</p>

The 'experiences and interaction studies' literature orientation involves qualitative methods and data. We included research articles in this orientation that focus on everyday interactional practices and the experiences of clients, practitioners and policy-makers in HF contexts. The purpose of these studies is to scrutinize how macro-level ways of thinking and policies (e.g., recovery and harm reduction) are transferred to and understood in micro-level practices and in personal experiences. The research agenda is to make visible the relations between current politics, policies and everyday practices, and by doing this to inform the development of HF initiatives and support work more generally (Juhila *et al.*, 2014). Only after a housing model has been planned and implemented can its micro-level practices be studied – i.e., as a joint endeavour accomplished in practitioner–client interaction, producing and being affected by particular experiences and emotions. Thus, it is not surprising that the 'experiences and interaction studies' orientation is quite recent, though rapidly expanding and strengthening (22 publications). It overlaps with the qualitative evaluation reports, which are based on stakeholders' accounts (e.g., Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2012; 2013; Kristiansen and Espmarker, 2012; Piat *et al.*, 2012; Polvere *et al.*, 2013; Balogi and Fehér, 2014), and as this orientation is a rapidly growing one, the publications included in this review likely do not cover this research field properly.

Researchers within this orientation analyse the realization of HF initiatives in terms of practitioner–client interaction and from the viewpoints and experiences of practitioners (e.g., Collins *et al.*, 2012a; b; Granfelt, 2013a; b; Haahtela, 2013; Henwood, Padgett *et al.*, 2014), clients (Collins *et al.*, 2012a; b; Granfelt, 2013a; b; Haahtela, 2013; Kirst *et al.*, 2014) and civil servants (Johnsen and Teixeira, 2012). There are also texts that more generally map the experience of transferring from homelessness to having an apartment, being at home and experiencing ‘ontological security’ (Padgett, 2007; Henwood, Hsu *et al.*, 2013). Kirst and her colleagues (2014) use clients’ narratives of ‘hopes for recovery’ and see housing as a pivotal condition in creating hope for future recovery. Yet, they mention (as do the other researchers, including Johnsen and Fitzpatrick (2012; 2013) and Granfelt (2013b)) that there are risks such as isolation, boredom, poverty and insecurity, which might temper the success of independent living and recovery. Accordingly, housing is essential but is not on its own a sufficient resource for living in the community and for recovery. Burlingham *et al.*’s (2010) phenomenological study analyses accounts of women with alcohol issues who become homeless, and examines how personal life histories explain decisions to stay or leave (HF) housing.

Granfelt (2013a; b) has developed the concept of ‘housing social work’. This working method comprises the following dimensions: interactional skills (particular skills involved in negotiating with, for example, tenants, neighbours, social housing authorities and other stakeholders); ‘therapeutic’ skills for genuine and empathic presence in support work; and the ability to set boundaries and to support (often severely traumatized) persons in converting apartments into secure homes (rather than a distressing trap). Tiderington *et al.*’s (2013) ethnographic study, based on observations and interviews, explores how the principle of harm reduction is interpreted as an element that enhances trust in a practitioner–client relationship. The article is a good example of the mission of this literature orientation to make sense of how HF principals and procedures are talked into being and understood in everyday encounters with clients and practitioners.

The common political-practical arguments set forth in the publications within this orientation are: 1) it is important to study HF as the local, mutual and interactional accomplishment of clients and practitioners; 2) stakeholders construct and realise HF ‘in-action’ and in particular settings; 3) the extent to which macro-level conceptualizations and ideals are able to make social changes are dependent on the transfer processes at the micro-level; 4) HF is to be understood and studied as a societal, local, interactional and situational social practice and experience; accordingly, the essential question in the fight against homelessness is: how is HF (to be) accomplished as an everyday practice, and how is it conceptualized and experienced by different stakeholders?

Next we turn to the final literature orientation, which approaches HF as an exemplar of Western thinking and is ready to question it.

Critical Social Science

Table 9. Critical Social Science

PUBLICATIONS (6)	POLITICAL-PRACTICAL ARGUMENTS	OBJECTIVES
Kertesz <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Kertesz and Winer, 2009; Willse, 2010; Stanhope and Dunn, 2011; Hansen Löfstrand and Juhila, 2012; Lindovská, 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HF is based on liberal values and premises 2. Alliance between HF research and politics is strong, yet not unproblematic 3. We need to be cautious about the ways research results and political-practical arguments are used in homelessness policy and in making decisions about housing, health and social services 4. HF research and practice is a creation of our time and it must be both questioned and promoted 	<p>To question common premises, norms, expectations and values</p> <p>To open up our minds to doing things differently, in a new way</p>

This literature orientation approaches HF as a case exemplar, which informs us about our time and Western thinking patterns. The research articles included draw from the critical research tradition that questions and deconstructs our common ways of thinking and acting as citizens in Western societies. By doing this, the aim is to open up our minds to doing things differently, in a new way. All articles have strong theoretical frameworks and most of them are based on and scrutinise previous HF writings and documents. Texts are written for academic and professional audiences and for those interested in questioning common premises, norms, expectations and values.

This research orientation is at the margin of the HF literature with only six publications. These texts critically scrutinise the presumptions of HF, including intertwined practices of evidence-based research and evidence-based policy (Stanhope and Dunn, 2011), (restricted) client choice (Hansen Löfstrand and Juhila, 2012) and support for liberal economics and individualized interpretations of social problems (Willse, 2010).

Willse (2010) shows how HF leans on and is in line with liberal thinking – how it takes as self-evident the primacy of economics. Homeless persons are not housed for ethical reasons but for economic ones. HF is not advocated by using an ethical-humanistic argument but by using economic arguments. Accordingly, HF is not targeted at changing society or dismantling the inequalities that are causing and maintaining long-term homelessness in the first place. This makes it very understandable that, although HF is shown to be successful in securing sustained housing, the total number of homeless people may not decrease (or it even may increase) in

Western societies due to, for example, high unemployment rates. Hansen Löfstrand and Juhila (2012) analyse the consumer discourse in Tsemberis' (2010) textbook: 'Housing First'. They discuss how on the one hand, the textbook emphasises client choice and self-determination, yet on the other hand, in the HF model (as in the society as a whole) the client's choices are limited and restricted. The client is expected to make the 'right choices' and if he/she does not comply, the possibilities for making choices become scarcer. Accordingly, HF does not totally solve the question of what happens to those who are not able to, or do not want to, conform to 'normal' life and to its demanding expectations and rules of acting.

Stanhope and Dunn (2011) outline HF's assumptions about (scientific) knowledge, and power and influence on political decision-making. HF research is depicted as an apparatus for making policies and advocating 'what works' initiatives. As Stanhope and Dunn (2011, p.276) argue, "[f]or EBPo's (Evidence Based Policy) proponents, the search for 'what works' is guided by survey research, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, cost-benefit analysis and system analysis." HF offers the possibility for reflection on the relationship between knowledge claims, research and policy, and on the place that values have in this bigger picture. There is the risk that the triumph of the 'evidence base' simplifies the understanding of decision-making, which in real life involves moral issues, conflicting interests and difficult negotiations of power. Also, Kertesz, Crouch *et al.* (2009) warn about the risks associated with the close alliance of HF research and policy-making; there is a possibility that policy actors overreach, interpret the research findings too positively and place exaggerated expectations on HF initiatives. There is no quick, easy or inexpensive fix for social problems or ethical injustices.

Publications in this literature orientation present three pivotal political-practical arguments, which are: 1) HF is based on liberal values and premises; 2) alliance between HF research and politics is strong, yet not unproblematic; 3) we need to be cautious about the ways in which research results and political-practical arguments are used in homelessness policy and in making decisions about housing, health and social services – HF research and practice is a creation of our time and it must be both questioned and promoted.

Conclusions and Discussion

In this article, we have introduced and mapped out nine different literature orientations, which approach HF from different genres and research designs, pursue different audiences and set forth a variety of political-practical arguments. The teasing out of the political-practical arguments made it clear that the majority of HF research is practice-oriented and motivated by promoting the HF model at interna-

tional, national and local levels. The analysis also shows how contributors within different literature orientations end up with quite similar political-practical arguments, such as: HF generates cost savings, increases wellbeing and is an effective route out of homelessness; high fidelity to PHF is associated with better housing stability and quality of life outcomes; and there are many structural and cultural constraints to be taken into account when transferring HF from one locality to another. Although there are doubtful and questioning voices in the HF literature, there is considerable agreement that HF is a promising, (cost-)effective and client-friendly housing solution for long-term homeless people with special needs and barriers in life. However, analytical and questioning arguments are crucial and valuable in further developing HF discussions, research and practice. It is essential to evaluate existing HF literature critically and, most importantly, to develop the conceptual-theoretical frameworks, methodological grounds and methods employed within each orientation.

It can be concluded that HF research has both expanded and developed enormously in the last few years; HF literature has grown quantitatively, new orientations have appeared and traditional ones have been made more solid. New texts have been published since our literature search, from which we include some examples in this conclusion section (and which are not included in the database). Yet research is never completed; new questions are asked, new directions and critical stances taken. This is how research orientations develop and go from exile to mainstream or in the opposite direction (see for HF research's future directions Nelson and MacLeod in progress). The main body of HF literature consists of: quantitative comparisons between the HF and LRT/TAU models (Nelson, Patterson *et al.*, 2015); evaluations of HF demonstration projects and national strategies and descriptions of their implementation processes (Nelson, Macnaughton *et al.*, 2015; Macnaughton *et al.*, 2015; Pleace *et al.*, 2015); and discussions on the transferability of PHF to different contexts and societies.

Theoretically oriented research has a valuable role in deconstructing taken-for-granted HF discourses and thereby advancing societal thinking (and endeavours). For example, HF provides many possibilities to study current macro-level discourses and ideals (and their realization in practice), such as, for example, responsabilization, consumerism and deinstitutionalization. Thus, there is much potential within the (critical) social sciences for HF research and practice. There are also increasing numbers of qualitative studies on the experiences of clients, practitioners and other stakeholders on everyday HF practices (e.g. Aubry *et al.* 2015). This line of research is particularly valuable in unpacking the dilemmas of translating abstract principles (like choice, harm reduction, integration, resilience and recovery) into everyday practices and interactions between the clients and practitioners who apply these principles (Raitakari *et al.*, 2015). There is much untapped potential for

research on experiences and micro-level interaction. For example, outcome evaluations and qualitative studies on HF are usually done separately rather than being integrated. However, there is a call for mixed method approaches that integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches (and current research is going to this direction) as well as macro-micro level analyses. In addition, there is a need for innovative research projects that concentrate solely on grass roots level HF experiences and practices.

Another rising direction for research lies in comparing different ways of putting HF into practice – i.e., scattered and congregate housing sites and the variety of ways to provide support services (e.g. Stergiopoulos *et al.*, 2015; Whittaker *et al.* 2015). There is also a call for long-term follow-up studies, as most studies follow clients for only one or two years at most (Nelson and MacLeod in progress). Greater attention should be devoted to examining the variety of ways in which support can be offered (e.g., informal and formal; peer- and professionally driven; intensive and less intensive; short- and long-term; practical and therapeutic).

The development of fidelity tests is also an interesting future direction for HF research, yet this should also be approached with caution. This direction has major advantages since fidelity has been shown to be critically important for successful client outcomes. However, there is a risk that we start to rely on fidelity tests too much, as they can only inform us about the realities of housing projects from a narrow, specific point of view. There is also the dilemma that while effective professional support work requires (ethical) guidelines and procedures, it also requires autonomy, discretion and the ability not to go by the book. In addition, fidelity tests do not tell us how HF is actually put into practice in situ.

Since HF is not implemented in a vacuum, it is also vital to examine further what contemporary policy trends in relation to public services (such as active and responsible citizenship discourse) mean for the implementation of HF in different contexts and for the life conditions of the people with severe mental and substance abuse difficulties. When value for money and demonstrable client outcomes are increasingly emphasized in society, this might bring undesirable consequences for homelessness services, such as ‘creaming’ and tightening eligibility criteria. That is why research on client selection processes as well as ‘client failures’ is topical. As stated in the HF literature, a minority of clients cannot yet be helped or housed through HF; they are important for research, as there are valuable lessons to be learned from them and their situations, although they are hard to reach. Eligibility criteria, and failures and successes should be studied, for example in regard to differences among long-term homeless people. Are some client groups more vulnerable (women, former prisoners, young people, immigrants), and do they become dropouts from the HF models more easily and, if so, for what reasons?

Alasuutari (2009, p.70) uses the concept 'domestication' in examining how "supra-national policy models are introduced within a nation-state." He claims that the actual implementation of new models at a national level is always culturally bound and the result of compromise between different stakeholders. The concept of domestication might be useful in analysing how HF models are applied in different countries and in more local contexts (municipalities or service providers with certain histories and cultures of working with homelessness). How the culturally strong LRT approach is present and mixed in the ideas of HF in local homelessness work practices should be studied more closely, even though the HF model is widely accepted as the new approach to be applied. When analysing the possibly mixed housing practices, the starting point should not be that the practices are divided into 'bad' (old) and 'good' (new). Mixed models might include innovative practices to tackle long-term homelessness.

As a final remark, we conclude that the HF literature seems to be a rather internal research field in the sense that the publications refer to each other a lot. However, there is range of research conducted in other fields, especially in mental health studies, that might produce new insights for both HF research and practice, and support the research findings presented in the HF field. For instance, research done on deinstitutionalization and home-based services includes many relevant themes for HF, among others – scattered housing, community integration and support work based on home visiting or floating support. Also, literature related to recovery and citizenship (in mental health and substance abuse studies) and desistance (in criminal studies) would probably be useful. Some social work studies also come very close to the topics dealt with in HF research (e.g., topics related to client choice, involvement and participation). Without doubt, HF research would also have a lot to offer these other research fields. Research develops through reciprocal, respectful dialogues between different disciplines and through innovative crossing of the boundaries of research fields.

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Begging in Geneva in Times of Crisis: Multi-layered Representations of Beggars, Begging and Cohabitation in the Public Space

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› **Abstract_** *This paper presents results from the first part of a study on representations of various actors concerned by the prohibition of begging in the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland. Parliamentary debates on the passing of this legislation were scrutinized in order to understand how this public space management strategy has been legitimized in political terms. Three different types have been identified among the discourses of Geneva High Council Members: the populist, the humanist and the legalistic. Although these discourses may seem to be opposed, it is interesting to note that commonalities exist between the three positions and that they reveal general representations of what public space-sharing means today. Our analysis shows that the prohibition of begging stems from representations of an elaborate image of foreign beggars – visible, ever more numerous and acting in groups – that seems to be shared by Council members from different parties. Such representations, based on a normative categorization of these marginalized populations, contribute to their being treated differently.*

› **Keywords_** *Begging, representations, public space, Switzerland, foreigners*

Introduction

Crystalizing fears in periods of economic and social change, beggars and vagrants have always been a focus for laws regulating those deemed deviant (Damon, 2007). Depicted as representing instability and a lack of control, these social archetypes of poverty are perceived as threatening the regulation of the State. As outlined by Rullac (2008), these ancient figures of poverty raise questions about society because they depend on it for their subsistence. They call on society's responsibility towards a part of itself. Questions such as these raise the issue of social identity, and the responses given by society reveal social choices on moral, religious and political levels. Indeed, even though beggars have been figures in (and have contributed to) the public space through the ages, legislation concerning their presence and their practices has not always been regulated in the same way in all places. Beggars are characterized by their practice of asking for money without providing any formal service, but they are not necessarily homeless people.

Some European cities chose to regulate the authorization of begging according to specific places and times. One recent example is the Belgian city of Charleroi, where beggars are tolerated only in the city centre and may not carry out their activities on Sundays. Many French cities have similar rules; for example, from 2013 in the town of Bagnères-de-Bigorre, in summer time, people are only allowed to beg between 1 and 2 PM.¹ Since February 2013 in Lausanne, Switzerland, begging has been forbidden on public transport, in markets, squares and cemeteries and at less than five meters from any cash dispenser. Other regulations concern the way begging is carried out, the most often criminalized being when it is aggressive, in groups or with children. In several European countries, this last type of regulation is nevertheless more often seen in national legislation than in local contexts. Finally, some specific contexts simply prohibit all forms of begging, as is actually the case in Geneva – the focus of this article.

This article is based on the first part of a qualitative study carried out in Geneva over twelve months in 2013/2014.² For the study as a whole, we were firstly concerned with how this aspect of public space management has been legitimized in political terms and, secondly, with the effect it has on begging, and begging practices. In order to answer these questions, we first analysed parliamentary debates in Geneva. The second part involved qualitative interviews with people who beg in Geneva,

¹ Erard, L. (03.07.2013) Les 'mancheurs' de Charleroi devront se délocaliser tous les jours, *Tribune de Genève* [on-line]. Available from: <http://www.tdg.ch/monde/europe/mancheurs-charleroi-devront-delocaliser-jours/story/16536237> [19.12.2014]

² Colombo Wiget, A., Reynaud, C. and de Coulon, G. (2013-2015) *L'adoption de la loi anti-mendicité à Genève: une mesure de gestion de la cohabitation urbaine. Représentations des acteurs concernés*, Research financed by the RECSS, one of the former research networks of the Social Work domain of the HES-SO.

despite it being a prohibited activity. The idea is to understand the representations of the different actors concerned as to how and by whom public space is used. Social representations demonstrate the symbolic processes present in social relationships. They constitute principles engendering specific stances (Doise, 1990). We propose to analyse the prohibition of begging as a way of regulating how public space is shared, by deterring a marginalized population from coming to stay in the city. Several authors have shown that, in the current context of globalization, the appropriation of space by homeless people and other marginalized populations is seen as an obstacle to the development of city centres, which must be 'positioned' in the 'city market place' through the 'selling' of images of themselves, as part of a process known as 'city branding' (Rosemberg, 2000; Intartaglia, 2010; Mager and Matthey, 2010; Noisette et Vallérugo, 2010). Economic pressure tends to lead to the privatisation of public space, which is considered a consumer space for goods, entertainment and services (Ghorra-Gobin, 2000; Parazelli, 2009; Perraton and Bonenfant, 2009), and a number of studies have showed that socio-spatial and judicial measures are increasingly being used to disperse, evacuate or expulse marginal populations living in public and semi-public spaces (Doherty *et al.*, 2008). Leresche (1998) shows that Switzerland has not escaped from this fragmentation process and the territorial dissociation linked to globalization.

The aim of this article is to describe what representations of begging practices tell us about issues related to the sharing of public space with marginalized populations. The position of the Canton of Geneva prior to creating new legislation to prohibit begging is examined. Indeed, the law prohibiting begging in Geneva gave rise to rich parliamentary debates at the communal and cantonal level, which form the core of our analysis. This methodology was chosen because, first, as a similar study also shows (Tabin and Knüsel, 2014), the arguments expressed by politicians constitute a rich database from which to access what underpins the positions of politicians. As Rosemberg (2000, p.2) puts it: "Actors that produce [or regulate] space, to produce [or regulate] it, talk about it. This discourse, because it carries representations and geographical views of actors acting in the project, because it highlights importance given to representations, can't be ignored if we want to understand how they 'manage' to produce [or regulate] this space". Unlike data collected through interviews, this type of material has the advantage of demonstrating change in how a problem is represented over time.

As a supplement to the use of parliamentary debates, a review of Swiss media (articles, as well as readers' letters to the editors) on the subject showed that even though an anti-begging law was adopted in 2007, this political choice did not win unanimous support among all those concerned – only very few politicians took public positions and engaged in public discourse. This law, representing a specific view of begging and the regulation of public space, has been the subject of an

appeal at the Swiss Federal Court, brought by the Mesemrom association.³ However, in its decision of May 9, 2008, the Federal Court confirmed the prohibition of begging in Geneva. While this association is not the only one to denounce a process of 'poverty punishment', few express it publicly.

The article is organised in four different sections. Following a rapid overview of European regulations on begging practices, we present the specificities of the Geneva case study and the data resulting from it. A short presentation of the methodology used to analyse the data follows. The remainder of the article presents the results. We have distinguished three different types of positions, which we have termed the populist, humanist and legalistic discourses. These types represent Weberian idealistic positions, intended to depict the main tendencies identified in analysing the political discourses. The last part of the article summarizes the principal findings and reflects on the new social understanding developed through the analysis. Finally, a short conclusion serves to reflect on the main interests of the study.

National and International Regulation: How Public Space is Becoming Sanitized by Local Authorities

Concerning the regulation of begging practices, three levels of legislation can be distinguished at the European level. Firstly, although the European Union has not officially formulated ordinances on begging practices, it is worth mentioning the EU Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. According to this Directive, forced begging should be understood as a form of forced labour and therefore fall under the criminal practice of trafficking in human beings. In addition, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is often used by State Parties, including EU Member States, to equate begging with human trafficking (article 4), as many beggars are victims of organised criminal networks. On this basis, many countries have prohibited organized begging. Secondly, EU Member States, including France, Ireland, Slovenia, Lithuania, Germany and Great Britain have national legislation that prohibits group or aggressive begging. It is interesting to observe that no country prohibits begging *per se*, but rather forms of it that supposedly lead to human exploitation. Thirdly, as suggested above, almost all major European cities have some form of restriction on begging, with a number, like the Canton of Geneva, prohibiting all kinds of begging. Most of them make use of measures of differing degrees of intensity aimed at deterring begging. Three types of measures can be

³ Mesemrom (www.mesemrom.org) was created in June 2007 in reaction to the intense politicisation of the conflation of begging practices and the presence of the Roma community. It aims to protect the rights of Roma.

distinguished: legislative prohibition, land settlements (such as the remodelling of public parks or street refitting to enhance mobility, for example) and the use of technical devices. This overview of the various ways of legislating on begging is a reminder of the fact that the phenomenon is more present and visible in urban areas. Tabin and Knüsel (2014) show, indeed, how since the end of the Middle Ages, socio-economic changes and consecutive migratory moves have contributed to the creation of a population of urban poor differentiated from traditional vagrants by the fact that they lack charitable status. Because of the lack of opportunity to farm in cities, this new category has had to develop strategies in order to get money to buy goods. At present, European cities tend to favour the broad prohibition of begging rather than other legislative measures, as Potts and Martin (2013) mention explicitly with reference to homeless people in Belgium.

In Switzerland (which is not member of the European Union but maintains strong bilateral agreements with it), Geneva is the first French-speaking canton to have re-opened the debate on begging and to have recently passed legislation in this area, although land settlement measures aimed at discouraging begging can also be observed in many Swiss cities. A review of Swiss legislation at the three political levels (federal, cantonal and municipal) shows that while the Federal Penal Code does not explicitly refer to begging, 9 of the 26 cantons forbade begging in the first decade of this century, introducing anti-begging laws at cantonal or municipal level (or extended or adapted existing laws or articles). Indeed, the Swiss political system – a federal directorial democratic republic – allows its 26 cantons a high degree of political autonomy.

This rapid cross-cutting description enables us to document how representations of begging have evolved. Indeed, although core representations of begging exist and seem to remain quite unchanged across time (Bertrand, 2003), some may be more fluid and sensitive to daily context and to differences between individuals (Frayse, 2000). Damon (2007) documented the transition from a penal issue to a social issue in the sixties and seventies in France, as the perception of homeless people evolved from assisted beggars to persons who should be rehabilitated. Homeless people were perceived at that time as disorganized and irrational, but friendly. However, the most recent trend in the European context is a return to the criminalization of begging practices. Criminalization is understood here as: “the use of laws and practices to restrict the activities and movements of people who are homeless, often with the outcome being fines and/or incarceration” (Fernández Evangelista and Jones, 2013, p.16).

Nevertheless, as normative and contemporary ethical issues call into question the legitimacy of punishing the poor, political discourses focus on practices that are presented as deviant. Recent legislation in Europe criminalises certain forms of

begging; it often alludes to 'simple' begging, which may be tolerated, as opposed to 'organized' and/or 'aggressive' begging, which is not. Indeed analysis shows that begging is often directly associated with deviant, morally reprehensible practices. Beggars are thus often depicted either as victims of human trafficking ('organized' begging) or as strategic and perfidious actors when their attitude is judged too enterprising ('aggressive' begging). The recent tendency towards making the public space secure seems key to understanding the phenomenon, and also applies to other marginalized groups; "the notion of 'security' in a more general sense is frequently invoked by city governments and other agencies as justification for the implementation of restrictions on the use of public space" (Doherty *et al.*, 2008, p.293). As a corollary, the notion of insecurity is often used by politicians seeking to restrict the use of public space by marginalized groups. Sanders (2007) identifies a similar process of criminalization of prostitutes in the United Kingdom, as does von Mahs (2005) in Berlin and Los Angeles. This tendency may be associated with the contemporary tendency towards a 'sanitizing of public space' (Amster, 2003). As the following section will show, all of these recent trends that have developed to regulate public space are also present in Geneva.

What Makes Geneva an interesting Case Study?

In 2007, in Geneva, the introduction of the new cantonal Penal Code entailed legal modifications, which caused journalists to question the validity of the prohibition against begging. In response to public demand, the State Councillor for Institutions declared, during a television interview in June 2007, that begging must be permitted because legal instruments could no longer be used to forbid it. Indeed, begging had previously been prohibited in the 1941 Penal Code, but since the new Penal Code was introduced in January 2007, there was doubt about whether or not begging could be prohibited and a public debate ensued. For a few months, begging was once again tolerated; however, this was short-lived. In reaction to the declaration of the State Councillor, two draft bills were brought before the Geneva High Council by right-wing parties, which at that time represented the majority in the Council. In June 2007, the first one was explicitly to allow the prohibition against begging to be reinstated, while the second, in September 2007, detailed various types of punishable social incivilities – along with soiling and damage to public property, begging was added to the list.

In the first draft bill, council members referred to a feeling of insecurity among the city's population with regard to the rising numbers of foreign beggars acting in groups. A number of factors are likely to account for the perceived upsurge in beggars, including the coming into effect of the first agreements on the free movement of persons (FMP), the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the

European Union in January 2007, and the suppression of the visa obligation between Switzerland and Bulgaria and Romania since 2004.⁴ There are no clear figures on the actual increase in foreigners begging in Geneva, but the representations by politicians that were analysed converge on a tangible and rapid increase in the so-called Roma population⁵ in Geneva that threatened the use of public space. Nowadays, the only numbers available are those that are collected by the police.⁶ A police report prepared at the request of the government of Geneva in October 2007 stated that 92 percent of beggars that had been arrested came from Romania or Slovakia. In a period of one week, the police carried out 328 checks on beggars, of which a small majority (184) were men. Most of them were approached while begging and were found to be behaving 'correctly'; only 45 were described as disabled. The average age was between 25 and 40. The State's intention in counting and classifying beggars at this point was to act on the issue of begging without formally prohibiting it. Indeed the government, together with the city authorities, planned a number of concrete initiatives to contain the use of public space by the targeted populations – that is, principally the Roma community; these included evacuating camps, promoting community policing and promoting public structures for emergency help. Some politicians criticised the allusion to the insecurity that was allegedly being created by foreign beggars, accusing the groups initiating the prohibition of creating that insecurity through a rhetoric of fear. Indeed, according to some of them, the Roma community invoked, rather, feelings of sadness and pity.

However, at the end of November, the Geneva High Council partially accepted the two draft bills by voting for a new prohibition on begging, which came into effect as of January 2008. This criminalization established administrative sanctions, including fines, and the possibility for the police to seize monies gained through begging, which was a new element not present in previous legislation. The next section looks at the three main positions identified in the Parliamentary debates leading to the prohibition of begging.

⁴ Although liberty to enter the country does not yet mean the freedom to work, as restrictions on these two countries will remain in place until at least 2016.

⁵ We use the term 'so-called' in order to make clear that we are alluding to a social representation; as Tabin and Knüsel (2014) point out, the use of the categorization 'Roma communities' only recently came into common use, mainly as a result of political effort. It should be understood, for the remainder of the article, that in referring to 'Roma communities', we are referring to the social and political representation of that community.

⁶ Due to the fact that numbers are collected in a certain political and social context, they have a number of limitations. Nevertheless, as they have been used in parliamentary debates, we considered it important to mention them.

A Typology of Positions: Populist, Humanist and Legalistic Discourses

The aim of this article is to understand how begging gained traction as a socio-political issue and how its prohibition was legitimized on the political front. In order to do this, we centred our analysis on debates among members of the Geneva High Council from 2006 to 2012, with the aim of identifying how they discussed beggars, begging and the public space. This Council can vote on laws that fall under the purview of the canton of Geneva. It is an elected Council made up of 100 members, who are representatives of seven political parties.⁷ Its role is to survey the administration of the Executive and oversee the production of legislation.⁸ Our data comes from about fifty transcriptions of oral debates that took place during parliamentary sessions, but also from motions, official questions and draft bills that were put forward in the same political arena.

We conducted our analysis in the ethnomethodological tradition, which considers discourse as a social practice that both reveals social constructs and allows their construction (Garfinkel, 1967). This is complemented by the sociology of representation (Jodelet, 1989), which holds that to understand individual conduct, we need to understand the social representations that underpin it. From a methodological point of view, it is impossible to interview someone directly about how he or she represents a particular issue, because they are often unaware of it. That is why studying representations involves reconstructing them by analysing discourses on particular situations or practices.

In order to classify the representations used by Council members, we used an analytical grid developed by Parazelli (2013), on the basis of research carried out by Karsz (2004), which enabled the identification of three different perspectives of the representations: the cognitive, the ethical and the political. The grid allowed us first to identify the cognitive perspectives, or how political figures have taken up the question of begging – through the description of the parties concerned and their activities, the causes of begging, etc. Ethical perspectives are identified from the way Council members formulated the problematic nature of the issue. Finally, the political perspectives are how those members then went on to position themselves with regard to the type of intervention required by the situation.

⁷ Secretary-General of the Council (2014) Statistiques électorales: Grand Conseil de la République et canton de Genève [on-line]. Available from: http://ge.ch/grandconseil/data/divers_publication_pdf/statistiques_electorales.pdf [05.05.2015].

⁸ Secretary-General of the Council (2013) Grand Conseil de la République et canton de Genève. Grand Conseil Mode d'emploi. [on-line]. Available from: http://ge.ch/grandconseil/data/divers_publication_pdf/2013_11_08_mode_emploi_gc.pdf [05.05.2015].

The results of our study highlight three positions or political perspectives on the issue of begging and its legal prohibition – populist, humanist and legalistic. These come from how Council members describe the practice of begging (cognitive perspective) and how they judge it as problematic or not (ethical perspective), and they are partially associated with the political orientation of those involved; the populist and legalistic positions are mainly held by right-wing party members,⁹ while humanistic discourse is often used by left-wing party members.¹⁰ However, as individual positions are often more complex, the typology we propose goes beyond a classification by political party (Schnapper, 1999) and highlights the dominant representations that led to the decision to prohibit begging. A better understanding of these representations makes it clear why this type of regulation of the public space was chosen in Geneva. Starting from the analysed debates, which preceded the decision to prohibit begging and which took place at the cantonal government level, we explain below how the perspectives that underpin each discourse hang together, to better understand how the prohibition was legitimized as the solution to an identified problem.

The populist discourse

In this discourse, from a cognitive perspective, the beggar is understood in terms of an old-style dichotomy between the good and the bad; the worthy and the unworthy; the real and the fake; and the lawful versus the unlawful. These are historical representations linked to the duality of poverty (Damon, 2003). Tabin and Knüsel (2014) show how this distinction between ‘real’ and ‘false’ poor people has a long history and that it is used today precisely to determine who is worthy of being helped and who is not.

In the discourses we analysed, people who are begging are depicted as ‘false’ beggars, in particular because they are presented as foreigners acting in strategically organized groups. “We all know it, these are not individual initiatives, but rather perfectly well-organized and structured networks...” (S.B., T.C., E.S., S.B., Mouvement Citoyen Genevois, 23.05.2006)¹¹

Even if the so-called Roma community is not always explicitly named, expressions such as ‘those people’ may be understood as a way of constructing a normative border between natural and fundamental differences. This ‘us and them’ dichotomy

⁹ The original names in French of the right-wing parties in question are: Union Démocratique du Centre (UDC), Mouvement Citoyen Genevois (MCG), Parti libéral (PL), Parti Radical (PR) and Parti Démocrate Chrétien (PDC).

¹⁰ The original names in French of the relevant left-wing parties are: Parti socialiste (PS) and Les Verts (V).

¹¹ In these references to parliamentary debates, the initials at the beginning of the reference indicate the name of the Council member uttering the sentence.

has been constructed over time based on the idea that social welfare and assistance must first of all be provided to the residents and citizens of Switzerland (Tabin and Knüsel, 2014). The distinction is also made in connection with the way begging is supposedly operated collectively by this community, which leads to a discourse using threats of the multiplication of foreigners, with words such as ‘troops’ and ‘invasion’ often being used to describe their presence. This type of discourse evokes images of strategic, rationalized and organized begging practices, which are directly opposed to the ‘requirements’ of humility and shame in the traditional image of poverty. An emphasis is placed on the dimension of economic profit by referring to begging as an ‘industry’. It is a commonly-held idea about Eastern European beggars that they are nomadic and supposedly organized in a clan system; this network-style organization is then easily associated with Mafiosi-style structures, even though they may simply be family-oriented groupings (Rullac, 2008).

The discourses analysed reveal little interest in the lot of individual beggars and few calls for pity and charity, but rather they actively depict a collective figure that is presented as responsible, organized and criminal, and is thus more easily identified as an unlawful and dangerous presence in the public space in Geneva. Begging activities, viewed as ‘criminal’, are described as being constantly on the rise, and as making the population of Geneva feel unsafe, creating squalor and disturbing the peace through an ‘increased use’ of public space. ‘Aggravated begging’ is singled out through mention, for example, of the exploitation of human beings (even children!), aggressive behaviour or criminal acts conducted in parallel.

“In addition, I think that we should not confuse things: there is begging tourism, which is practised by travellers – all those gypsies who settle in camps just outside our borders, who hold out their hands by day and, by night, brandish the screwdrivers and crowbars they use to rob our homes – and then, there are the real beggars, those who have been moved on as a result of the State Council and City of Geneva action plan, at least from our territory.” (R.G., Mouvement Citoyen Genevois, 30.11.2007, Debate PL 10106A)

This ‘rhetoric of evidence’, using the ideas of insecurity, invasion and deception, consists of asserting facts without providing proof (Tabin and Knüsel, 2014). In outlining the unacceptable nature of their practice, it contributes to the labelling of a specific category of beggars in Geneva as problematic.

In order to make clear why this kind of begging is unacceptable, Council members often contrast it with another form of begging considered as legitimate – that is, begging carried out by poor Swiss people, depicted as solitary and vulnerable individuals who do not pose a threat.

|||||

“We are not speaking about racism, anti-racism or any other kind of -ism! It is just that those kinds of people are not real beggars, in the majority. Still, if someone is really in need, then we would help them. Poor people do truly exist among us.” (C.J., Mouvement Citoyen Genevois, 30.11.2007, Debate PL 10106A)

Begging is seen as particularly unacceptable because of its negative impact on the appeal of the city, resulting in negative economic consequences.

“For me, and for those who earn their living from business people, tourists and the diplomatic corps, I must say that we have been immediately penalised: a number of conferences have been cancelled, because people feared what they were seeing in the streets!” (P.G., Union Démocratique du Centre, 30.11.2007, Debate PL 10106A)

The fact that cantonal elections were due to take place the following year is an additional key to understanding how the ‘Roma issue’ became characterised as problematic. As outlined by Kuehne (2010), positioning oneself against a poor and visible population of foreigners is a good way to gain votes, in particular in a context of crisis that favours feelings of anxiety and xenophobia.

This analysis of how these Council members understand and judge beggars and begging shows that they position themselves on a political level with respect to the prohibition of begging. The rhetoric of insecurity and deception used in this discourse depicts a type of begging that is considered unacceptable in Geneva due to the public safety issues it brings – these are the reasons that it must be prohibited. In other words, populist discourse at the political level is used to call for a highly repressive intervention against certain kinds of begging practices in Geneva. Beyond prohibiting begging, it is also used to promote the expulsion of the Roma population.

The humanist discourse

On the cognitive level, the humanist discourse does not create a very detailed picture of beggars or of begging. Compared to populist discourse, which is replete with facts and figures, in this discourse a general claim is made about growing levels of poverty all across Europe by actors who are particularly scattered.

“You see, begging is really just another way of seeking to meet one’s needs.” (A.V., Parti Socialiste, 30.11.2007 Debate 10106-A)

In this discourse, the conflation of begging and the Roma community that has been constructed by right-wing parties is denounced. Paradoxically, however, in drawing attention to the stigma, the discourse actually results in an increased focus on the

population. The few attempts made to show alternative versions of the reality of the situation tend, in fact, to repeat the stereotypical descriptions of foreigners coming to beg in Geneva.

“You have stigmatised certain populations, in particular the so-called “Roma community”, but we know that among beggars in Geneva, even if Roma people are present, there are also people from other East European countries. We can also see Romanian people begging who are not part of the Roma community.” (V.K., Parti Socialiste, 30.11.2007, Debate PL 10106-A)

In the humanist discourse, this population is seen as being discriminated against and stigmatised, and a particular emphasis is placed on the historical aspect of this discrimination and on the economic and macro-social factors that have led to the presence of the community in Geneva.

“The bilateral negotiations currently underway between Romania and a number of European countries mean that we cannot go on ignoring Roma or refuse to accept them as we would any other citizen of the European Community. Whether we like it or not, their story has become our story”. (Parti Socialiste, 13.11.2007, PM 1793, p.2)

The links between the Roma population and beggars is further reinforced by the fact that, even as these humanist arguments were being raised, two draft bills were posted by members of left-wing parties aimed at providing financial support for the Roma populations in their countries of origin.

For these Council members, the begging in question is legitimate from an ethical perspective, and should not be associated with criminal activity – begging is viewed as necessary for survival, particularly in the face of economic inequalities. However, the depictions of begging used in this discourse do not often address the effects of such practices on how public space is shared and they struggle to counter the public safety arguments put forward in populist discourses. They tend, rather, to reify this practice as *natural* for the Roma community.

“These Roma claim the right to not live as others do, yet they do not seek to impose their way of life.” (Parti Socialiste, PL 10106-A, report)

Council members adopting this discourse put forward arguments based on respect for the Roma population, but end up avoiding the subject of begging and therefore failing to respond to the concerns raised by those using populist discourses. Some of the descriptions seem, paradoxically, to support populist arguments – for example by confirming the existence of organised, criminal begging.



“With regard to organised begging, which could additionally involve robbery, the exploitation of children or of handicapped people, existing legislation on such criminal matters is adequate to deal with it (...)” (M.C., Verts, 30.11.2007, Debate 10106-A)

Given that begging is not considered to be problematic in itself (from an ethical perspective), those using the humanist discourse oppose the prohibition on begging because they believe it would not be a solution (from a political perspective). Nonetheless, the alternatives that they propose focus on international humanitarian aid and fail to address issues identified in the other discourses in relation to the use of public space.

Legalistic discourse

From a cognitive perspective, this third type of discourse involves questions related to political and legal positions, including criticism of the various political mistakes that have been made in the regulation of begging practices, and the discourse involves a view of people begging as victims – not as in the humanist discourse, but as victims of the political error that was made in removing the prohibition on begging, which is seen to have created a ‘magnet’ effect.

“But if they are coming to Geneva, there must be a good reason! Why aren’t they going to Zurich, Basel or Lausanne? That is the question we should ask. It is clearly because the department gave up applying regulations that we have become something like a magnetic pole, favouring this activity on the streets of Geneva.” (G.C., Union démocratique du centre, 30.11.2007, Debate 10106A)

As in the populist discourse, beggars in legalistic discourse are perceived as foreigners, specifically Roma, and as responsible for all kinds of damages. It is interesting to note that within this discourse there is little attempt to de-stigmatise the Roma community and that only a few voices raised the issue – mostly following the vote to prohibit begging in 2007; it was pointed out, for example, that “among the beggars, there are also poor people from here” (PR, debate M1794, 19.09.2008) and that the concept of beggars and representatives of the Roma communities were being used interchangeably (PDC, debate M2073, M2067, 8 June 2012).

Council members who adopt this position view the links between begging and crime as more complex (without dismissing them) than those using a populist discourse, while also referring to concerns about public safety among the general population.

“Many citizens are complaining about aggressive begging which is taking place near the Bank dispensers or near to Bank offices. Old people and women feel unsafe because of beggars or shady characters.” (E.S., H.R., S.B., Mouvement citoyen Genevois, 13.11.2007, M1794, draft bill)

From an ethical perspective, if legalistic discourse presents the situation as problematic in terms of the increased use of public space and public safety, it is nonetheless a call for the previous prohibition to be reintroduced without any real debate on the merits of the question.

“The draft bill which we are bringing before you this evening does not aim to “ruin beggars’ lives” – to use the expression which has often been coined in relation to the plan for begging – it simply, more simply and more humanely, aims to make clear that begging is not permitted in Geneva.” (O.J., Parti Libéral, 30.11.2007, Debate PL 10106A)

In this discourse, what is considered most unacceptable is that the prohibition was lifted arbitrarily. An analysis of the political perspective within this discourse clearly shows that the prohibition of begging is justified on the grounds that the prohibition has always existed in some form. After a period of perceived political fuzziness towards the toleration of begging, this discourse wants a clear message on prohibition.

“I believe that it is important not to confuse the sadly problematic question of the Roma – the sad problematic of the thousands and thousands of beggars around the world – with this draft bill which seeks to re-establish this regulation.” (F.H., Parti Radical, 30.11.2007, Debate PL 10106A)

For those using legalistic discourse, the prohibition of begging is justified by the fact that it has always been prohibited.

Three Positions Leading to One Prohibition

The following table summarises the principal tendencies of the three positions detailed above, in order to make our analysis clearer.

Table 1. Summary of the three positions, presented from the various perspectives

	POPULIST	HUMANIST	LEGALISTIC
Cognitive perspective	Begging by foreigners, in particular the so-called Roma population, is presented as organised, criminal and causing social insecurity	Process of ostracising and discriminating against so-called Roma population; begging as a necessary and legitimate practice	Political problem and 'magnet effect' attracting beggars
Ethical perspective	This particular form of begging (by the so-called Roma population) is unacceptable	It is unacceptable to stigmatise the so-called Roma community	It is unacceptable to suppress the prohibition against begging
Political perspective	Proposes prohibition, validated by a rhetoric of insecurity	Against begging being prohibited as this will not solve the problem (pointless, inefficient); begging is not seen as being problematic	Prohibiting begging is justified by the fact that it has always been prohibited

At first glance, the political debates that led to the prohibition of begging in Geneva seem to be articulated within the traditional right-wing – left-wing opposition, which reinforces the entrenched, almost caricatured, nature of the discourses; when the former call for more repressive actions in relation to begging practices, members of left-wing parties argue against what they perceive as the new criminalization of poverty.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the viewpoints expressed in the discourse of Council members enables us to present a more nuanced understanding of the debate. Even if the discussion is partially determined by political standpoints and the defence of political interests, the adoption of the anti-begging law in Geneva in November 2007 was due to multiple factors.

The arguments used by Council members, from a cognitive and ethical perspective, contribute in different ways to the creation of a common image of a specific type of beggar. From a cognitive perspective, all three discourses reinforce the image of beggars as foreigners and, more precisely, as belonging to the Roma community. Indeed, the great majority of the Councillors make explicit (or sometimes implicit) mention of the community or refer, more generally, to beggars from Eastern Europe. In many of the representations within populist or legalistic discourse, all so-called Roma people are beggars and are involved in different types of illegal networks; beggars create insecurity and are all foreigners. Astonishingly, the humanist

discourse has trouble in countering this depiction. In seeking to show how Roma are stigmatised and discriminated against, those using a humanist discourse have in fact contributed to focussing the debate on this community and have thus tended to reinforce this connection. They have sought to change how the community is depicted without proposing an alternative description or understanding of begging practices in Geneva and by stereotyping the culture of the Roma community.

The tendency to conflate this population has been noticed elsewhere: all over Europe Roma communities are subject to a kind of strangeness, linked to moral depreciation and rejection, which leads to the normalisation of differential treatment.¹² They are supposed to live and act according to other values and norms. Indeed, there is little space for pluralisation in how the Roma community is represented by Council members.

The lack of contestation of the image of a threatening alien beggar enables, in the discourse we have called 'populist', the construction of hierarchical normative ideas about begging: some types of begging are seen as legitimate, and therefore tolerated, in sharp contrast to other practices that are presented as scandalous. The distinction is principally based on a rhetoric of concern for public safety and the increased use of public space on a normative and symbolic level. This normative categorisation of marginalised populations contributes to their being treated differently.

Another common cognitive perspective involves a rhetoric of insecurity. Due to a period of confused and contested political discourses on the regulation of begging practices (prohibition-authorisation-repression), the legalistic and populist discourses converge on the importance of sending a clear message. In the populist discourse, the principal argument against begging as it is described (organised, criminal and carried out by foreigners) is that of public safety concerns. To respond to concerns over public safety, strong decisions need to be taken. These arguments are founded in the rhetoric of invasion and the 'rhetoric of evidence', which depict (so-called Roma) beggars as a threat to social peace. In parallel, the legalistic discourse calls for the protection of 'our population' in relation to concerns about public safety. Additionally, in order to ensure that the need for security is felt, the legalistic discourse heavily emphasises the need for a clear message to be given, following the somewhat confusing legislative changes of the past (prohibition-authorisation-repression). Finally, the 'magnet' effect (where permitting beggars attracts them to the city) is significant in both populist and legalistic discourses. As previously indicated, the humanist discourse has trouble countering these points, focussing its rhetoric on repairing the image of the Roma community and bringing

¹² Tommaso Vitale, *Vers des permis de mendier?* [interview by Sophie Dupont] *Le Courrier*, 13 juin 2013.

in structural factors like globalization and social injustice to explain their presence. Paradoxically, this discourse reinforces a sense of insecurity by reinforcing the idea of a mass arrival of foreigners in difficulty, despite the objective of denying it.

The two main cognitive perspectives examined above reveal a representation of a collective group of threatening foreigners begging in Geneva. Indeed, from an ethical perspective, even where begging is not perceived as a problem *per se*, the depiction of begging practices in the discourses suggest that beggars are an unacceptable presence in the public space – in the populist discourse because of the threat to public security; in the humanist discourse because begging as a necessity to fulfil basic needs is unacceptable and evidence of social inequalities and poor living conditions. In the humanist discourse, opponents are accused of attempting to expel foreigners without resolving this issue, but rather than suggesting alternatives for how public space might be shared, criticism of the prohibition is focussed on its discriminatory nature and the criminalisation of poverty. This failure may have contributed to the notion of begging as an unacceptable practice.

Indeed, from a political perspective, even if some begging practices in Geneva at the time were considered problematic, what is more striking in the analysis is the lack of alternatives proposed to regulate the situation. Few possible courses of action were proposed or discussed, including less repressive measures such as the use of permits, restricted areas or specific hours, or the control of identities, all of which have been tried in the European context. The importance of delivering a clear message was highlighted by a majority of Council members as essential, yet a strategic and comprehensive plan by the municipality and cantonal authorities has been missing for too long.

Conclusion

The analysis of these three typical discourses reveals that the majority of positions are based on common normative references on the way public space should be shared. The discussions held over several months by the members of the High Council of Geneva were less concerned with the significance, symbolism and values of begging than with a shared perception of the excessive use of public space by a group of people described as foreign and stigmatised for acting according to different and incompatible cultural norms. Many representations by Council members focus on the presence of beggars – mainly presented as organized in groups – as visible and disturbing, and as presenting a threat to Geneva's population and its image as a wealthy city.

Moreover, despite the fact that begging is presented as the core topic, the parliamentary debates analysed here are not really focused on the practice itself or on whether it is acceptable or not. Regardless of the discourse involved, and whether beggars are perceived as a threat to security or as victims of globalisation or judicial error (cognitive perspective), the representations made within these three types of discourse converge on the fact that the issue of a certain population begging in the public space remains unresolved. There is a shared understanding that the main begging problem that Geneva faces – and that politicians feel compelled to resolve – is the presence of so-called Roma on the streets. As observed by Rullac in French parliamentary debates on the same topic, whether beggars are considered victims in need of help or offenders who require punishment, their integration into society is not a given and requires significant further negotiation (Rullac, 2008).

According to our analysis, these are the main elements that have contributed to the decision to implement a complete prohibition on begging in the streets of Geneva's canton. Beyond a mere discourse on the toleration of begging or otherwise – which seems largely irrelevant here – Council members were addressing normative issues related to the presence of poor foreigners, the city's reputation and how public space should be used.

Our study reveals that scientific understanding can help to move beyond a simplistic interpretation of political decisions as only being concerned with local political interests. Our focus on how begging was depicted and represented within the debate on begging enables the identification of more fundamental issues, such as how contemporary society sees the moral and symbolic regulation of public space, which leads to broader reflection on daily interaction with marginalized populations. Finally, it allows a better understanding of shared reference points and common normative values, which favours the formulation of innovative and alternative forms of regulation, accentuating more democratic and participative types of public space sharing.

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Book Reviews



Part B

Éva Tessza Udvarhelyi (2014)

(In)justice On The Streets (Answers to Hungary's Housing Crisis)

Napvilág Kiadó, 2014

Éva Tessza Udvarhelyi belongs to the new generation of urban sociologists who openly espouse a structuralist (or, more precisely, Marxist) sociological approach. The book deviates from traditional urban and housing sociology analyses as it is not content with simply mapping social problems, but undertakes to explore the possibilities of political agency from the perspective of the victims of the central conflict. In this sense it transcends the traditional structuralist approach, which merely explores the root causes of social conflicts, and proposes methods of dismantling their causes. The author focuses on homelessness in Hungary, or the broader 'housing crisis', which is not only a crucial social issue, but also an excellent field for understanding the possibilities and limits of structuralist analysis.

In *Part 1*, the author defines the framework of the analysis (chapter 1), provides a brief historical overview of Hungary's housing problems, including homelessness (chapter 2), and evaluates policies related to homelessness, particularly the question of criminalizing homelessness (chapter 3). *Part 2* presents housing-related social movements before, during and after the transition to a market society (chapters 4 and 5). Finally, *Part 3* focuses on the structure and possibilities of the social movement for eradicating homelessness, with a particular emphasis on participatory action research and the responsibility of the social sciences (chapters 6 and 7).

The book covers a wide array of problems and analyses housing in a broad historical and theoretical framework, the presentation and thorough assessment of which goes beyond the scope of this review. Nonetheless, three particular issues discussed in the book deserve closer scrutiny, as we oppose the author's standpoint with the approach of mainstream sociology. These are: 1) the structural theory explaining the existence of homelessness (macro-sociological theory); 2) the historical and sociological analysis of homelessness (micro-sociological theory); and 3) the role and possibilities of social movements related to homelessness (political science analysis).

Structuralist Approach and its Limitations

The author bases her analysis on a deliberately simplified version of capitalist democratic class society, composed essentially of oppressors and the oppressed, where the situation of the oppressed can only be effectively influenced by public policy. The latter is largely shaped by political parties, which also represent the interests of the main social groups (the ruling class and their allies), while the interests of the oppressed are represented only by civil society, in alliance with the oppressed. The aim is, therefore, to change the exploitative nature of society through the inclusion of the oppressed and civil society.

The author's key assertions are most certainly compelling: "homelessness is best defined through the structural factors of social subordination", such as exploitation, cultural imperialism, physical violence and powerlessness (pp.29-31). At the same time, a 'sensitive spot' of structuralist approaches is that they do not provide a clear image of an exploitation-free society. A key argument proposed by the author is that (housing and social) movements aiming to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged groups can be divided into two sub-types (on the basis of Fraser, 1995): 'affirmative' and 'transformative' programmes. Affirmative programmes, while helping particular groups and solving a given crisis situation, essentially reinforce the existing (exploitative) structure, while transformative programmes target the factors that were the underlying cause of the crisis. The book contains references to a desirable social order, which – based on Fraser – is probably, in fact, closest to socialism (p.133). This perspective is hardly attractive to social researchers who spent their formative years in Hungary's socialist 'Kádár-era', as socialism did not prove to be a viable social order.

The structuralist approach hides a critique of neoliberal capitalism for which the authoritarian capitalist model is not an acceptable alternative (be it the Chinese, the Russian or the currently forming Orbán model), but neither would a more regulated variety of capitalism be acceptable, where welfare regimes are assessed and chosen according to their usefulness from the viewpoint of the least privileged groups. In the view of the author (and the sociological approach she represents), such a choice does not question fundamental power relations; therefore, it cannot resolve the root causes of social conflict. In other words, choosing between varieties of capitalism, even if directly helpful to the most vulnerable groups, will result in the reinforcement, and not the transformation, of capitalism. The problem with this approach is that the author has no clear vision of the more advanced social order that should replace capitalism, and so it seems extremely difficult to arrive at 'transformative' programmes that truly transcend mere housing issues.

Nonetheless, in examining homelessness and housing poverty, the author has a clear-cut idea of where the boundary lies between affirmative and transformative programmes. The critical analysis of housing policy development is very interesting and an outstanding read, resulting largely from its structuralist approach – namely, that the author connects the explanation of actors and institutions with the current power relations. The most compelling and original part is the critical analysis of the homelessness-related policies of the past two decades. Although this was arguably not the original intention at the early stages of its development, homeless provision services and its specialists have created a sort of ‘paternalist’ system between clients and social workers, clearly indicating a new kind of dependency. As Péter Győri, one of the most renowned experts on the subject puts it: homeless people move into institutions “as free persons”, and then swiftly transform into clients (pp.157, with similar quotes on pages 184-5). This problem is highlighted in the book in multiple instances, and the author formulates a clear criticism of mainstream studies in this area:

“The aim of most current research is to improve homeless services by better understanding the populations they serve. While these studies offer important insights, they continue to operate within the dominant paradigm that manages rather than *prevents* homelessness and treats homeless people as *clients* rather than *citizens*.” (p. 249, author’s emphasis)

The question is: which of the programmes that were launched to manage homelessness transcend the boundary set by structural causes and treat the underlying problems rather than the symptoms? In the housing system, the author considers all programmes to be affirmative if they “do not undermine the existing power relations” (p. 133), while transformative measures include mass squatting, which “problematizes the commodification of housing” (p.134). In my opinion the author has come up against a limitation of structuralist analysis: a new social order should be drawn up against the existing one, which would guarantee the just distribution of goods and thus eliminate the root causes of homelessness and poverty. We have no knowledge of a single modern society that tolerates mass squatting and fully decommodifies housing (that is, entirely removes it from the range of private goods, which provide the basis of capitalism), which leaves us with no existing macroeconomic model in which these elements could be introduced.

The Historical-Sociological Analysis of Homelessness

The author provides a serious critique of traditional sociological approaches, which means that to a great extent the book itself is an examination of the history of sociology. For instance, the longest chapter of the book is an overview of Hungary's housing policies and programmes for dealing with homelessness (housing poverty) in various historical periods. The basis of the historical sociology analysis is the definition of homelessness. Most social science analyses understand homelessness as a special – extreme – form of poverty: a correct understanding in my view. The author reviews homelessness definitions used in the literature (UN, FEANTSA, etc.) without offering an alternative definition that could be used in different periods and housing market situations.

At the same time, the analytical chapters delineate a well-formulated understanding of homelessness. While homelessness is an extreme form of poverty, poverty itself is a social-structural problem, not only a social one (p.256). The author uses the term 'housing poverty', although I find no substantial difference in this context between this term and 'homelessness'. Housing poverty is a special case of poverty, affecting households with insufficient income to cover the costs of a socially acceptable housing solution and where such income is not granted to them through housing allowances or general (non-targeted) income transfers. Homelessness is not simply an outcome of accumulated individual misfortunes, but a product of social and power relations, and it is not 'only' characterised by poor and unstable housing conditions.

As far as I can tell, the wagon-dweller migrants after the border revision of World War I, the rural-to-urban migrants living in workers' hostels during the extensive industrialisation under socialism, and the mass of homeless people that appeared in the 1990s could hardly be classified in one and the same sociological category. The nature and causes of poverty change from one historical period to the next, which makes the historically decontextualized analysis of homelessness highly problematic, as the sociological nature of homelessness is different in the *fin de siècle*, after World War I, under socialism and after the transition.

The overview of the programmes of historical periods is sound and interesting. However, the sociological explanations behind the housing policies do not provide an overarching frame in which the various periods could be placed, and the main elements of the programmes could be connected to the period's key economic and social characteristics. In short, the structuralist explanation for the existence of housing programmes is that they are the concessions of the ruling classes, made in order to pacify political pressures and stabilize the system, and although the analysis shows that the reasons behind such concessions and the nature of the 'solutions' may be very different in the various periods, the socio-economic bases

of these differences remain unexplained. *The simple reason behind them is that socio-economic orders, welfare systems and housing policy were very different during these different periods, which cannot be overlooked in the historical analysis of homelessness.*

The historical analyses and descriptions are compelling, although the sociological and economic analysis of the conflicts examined often remains incomplete. This is, of course, also due to the – often incomplete – source material, as the historical chapter of the book is largely based on the overview of existing literature. This latter is dominated by descriptive studies, making the analytical approach of secondary reviews extremely difficult. The author includes a number of very interesting cases, which could be used to draw important conclusions (or establish important hypotheses) going beyond the simplified structuralist explanations.

- Rent strikes prior to WWI led to institutional solutions, which were a compromise between tenants and landlords, setting limits to rent raises for landlords while also regulating the consequences of the non-payment of rent. Mediatory committees were set up to manage conflicts.
- Controlled housing management¹ during WWI set back housing investment for a prolonged period and even affects current housing issues. (The private rental sector ceased to be a safe investment target for capital, which led to the dominant role of owner-occupied housing.)
- A more in-depth analysis of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic's housing policy could have shown the structural problems of socialist housing policy – namely, the socially-embedded conflicts inherent in the redistribution of housing.
- Housing policy under socialism can be classified into distinct periods, explained by structural changes in society and the economy, but even if analysed separately, housing policy played a clearly detectable role. Some policy elements increased social and income divides; others decreased them.

The analysis of the transition period and the developments of the 1990s is crucial to understanding the current situation, and this part of the chapter truly is well-structured and of high quality. Housing privatization, income inequalities and the increase in unemployment (and particularly the drop in the number of persons active on the labour market) played a central role in the expansion of poverty and of homelessness. The author correctly points out that post-transition housing policy interventions did not only fail to strengthen security of tenure but had the opposite effect, increasing the probability of losing one's home (p.72).

¹ In this period, strict control measures were introduced not only for rent levels, but also for the conditions of terminating a tenant's contract.

The chapter also presents some points inaccurately, however. Rents did not rise in the early 1990s. After a centrally-defined increase in 1989, municipalities did not increase rents in proportion to consumer prices, although utility and household energy costs did grow dramatically in the 1990s (p.72). Arrears in the rental sector were partly explained by the fact that better-off tenants were more likely to purchase their apartments. (A similar process played out recently in relation to Forex mortgage loans, when an early repayment scheme was constructed in such a way that it only remained accessible to wealthier debtors, which pushed the rate of non-performing loans up further.) Furthermore, mortgage loans for housing were only backed by state subsidies until 2004, while mortgage loans between 2004 and 2008 – directly prior to the crisis – were not centrally subsidized (p.83). Also, there was no real demand on behalf of municipalities for the repurchase or return of privatized housing units (p.71).

Empowering the Homeless – Class Struggle

The originality of the author's approach lies in the fact that she is actively looking for solutions to the structural root causes of homelessness. In her reasoning, policy is managed by political parties embedded in capitalism; therefore, any movement that aims to redefine the position of the oppressed within the power structure can only be built on the alliance between the oppressed and a civil society institutionally independent from this power structure. This approach considers the actors of institutional homeless provision as part of the power structure, which is clearly indicated by the critique of these institutions, formulated in various parts of the book.

In a simplified summary (for clarity's sake), the book is a manifesto of the inevitable struggle of homeless people as a class, which also critically analyses previous attempts at such manifestos and provides guidance for the movement on how to use the social sciences and research, as well as how to create contacts with those in power.

The understanding of homeless people as a social class seems questionable to me, as their situation is not only defined by the loss of their homes but also through a mix of socio-economic and individual factors, including low incomes (wages and transfers), unemployment, illness, the dismantling of family relations, and untreated personal crises. Housing policy is an important mediator and additional variable but it is not in itself the sole cause of homelessness. The category of 'housing class' did briefly surface in the 1970s urban sociology, but its use here does not seem well-founded.

At this point, there is no sense in returning to the criticism of homeless provision institutions, the main message of which is that these have created a service provider-client relationship with the representative of power on one end (the service provider) and the dependent party on the other (the client). From the point of view of structural

relations producing poverty and homelessness, the movement itself is just as important as the behaviour (and subordination) of homeless people. From a socio-logical viewpoint, Győri's statement (Csongor, 2011) holds true: the client-service provider relationship is the basis of homeless provision in modern societies, and the movement must take this into consideration. The book dedicates a full chapter (6, on action research) to presenting the methodological tools that aim to remove homeless people from this relationship and return them 'from clients to citizens'.

In the view of the author, only civil movements (in alliance with the oppressed) have the potential to pressure those in power into making structural changes. In the historical and social analysis chapters, the author strives to emphasize the role of movements and to justify the impossibility of social change without movements (and citizens taking action). In the socialist period, sociology examined homelessness in relation to poverty, as the former was not separable from the latter. A major piece of research in this field in the 1970s led by István Kemény, as well as the related political movements (SZETA, the democratic opposition, etc.), compelled the government to admit that the socialist system was unable to resolve poverty, an extreme form of which is homelessness. As the author puts it, civil movements have always formed at times of large-scale structural transformations, such as the transition from feudalism to capitalism or the transition from state socialism to new capitalism (p.171). The real question is: can civil society (in alliance with the oppressed) change the underlying structure for the benefit of the oppressed?

In her search for substantial professional solutions, the author states (with truly compelling reasoning) that the basic cause of homelessness is poverty (as a product of social and power relations) and neglect by the housing regime of the issue of poverty, such that homelessness should not be treated within the social provision system, but separately, as a housing problem. A further consequence of this is that broader social strata must be mobilized for the cause of the movement. And, she argues, if homelessness became widely recognized as a housing – rather than social – issue, many more citizens would understand their own role in pressuring their government into making meaningful and systematic changes (p.259). While it is easy to identify with the book's conclusion, according to which a housing movement based on wide social cooperation is absolutely necessary, it is harder to accept its identification of squatting as one of the most outstanding achievements of citizens' movements. In her words, "there is no housing movement without squatters" (p.263).

This is the narrative that the book is attempting to underpin with historical analyses and research findings, and it is presented to both researchers and lay readers as a well-written and compelling read.

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