

European Observatory on Homelessness

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## **EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF HOMELESSNESS**

### **Journal Philosophy**

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

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## Editorial

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Over the past decades, most EU Member States have experienced increasing migration from third countries. According to Eurostat, in 2010 there were 32.4 million foreigners living in the EU-27 Member States (6.5% of the total population). Of those, 12.3 million were EU-27 nationals living in another Member State and 20.1 million were citizens from a non-EU-27 country (4% of the total population). Since the Communication from the European Commission on a Community Immigration Policy, issued in 2000, and more recently through the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Union has recognised the potential of migration for building a competitive and sustainable economy and set out, as a clear political objective, the effective integration of regularly residing migrants. Over the last ten years, European migration and integration policies have focused on access to the labour market as one of the most important indicators of the level of integration of third-country nationals into European Member States. Nonetheless, the full and lasting integration into the labour market is interdependent on access to affordable housing.

Immigrants, and in particular recent immigrants, are a significant and, in some countries, increasing proportion of people living rough, they are also appearing among users of some homelessness services at a frequent rate in countries such as France and Portugal. A key factor affecting the vulnerability of immigrants to homelessness relates to their legal status. At present, EU law does not provide any legal right to housing support to undocumented migrants whose position in the housing market is therefore extremely precarious. Since they are excluded from the social housing sector, recourse to the informal housing market is the fate of many. It is also evident that services available to undocumented migrants differ among EU Member States, where for instance, Belgian legislation provides that undocumented families may be granted accommodation if they have a minor, whereas in Denmark, even access to publicly funded shelters is denied to irregular migrants. Similarly, access of third-country nationals to healthcare and social security assistance varies greatly among the Member States. For instance, in Lithuania, migrants obtain rights to housing and social security assistance after five years of legal residence whereas in Slovenia only migrant workers enjoy full healthcare and social assistance and in Austria, access to housing and social security assistance depends on the length of residence and is governed by the laws of the respective federal states.

To explore these issues more fully, FEANTSA's European Observatory on Homelessness, the ENHR Working Group on Welfare Policy, Homelessness and Social Exclusion, fio.PSD and CISP (Interdisciplinary Center for Peace Studies), University of Pisa, organised the 6th Annual Research Conference on Homelessness in Europe in Pisa on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011 on the theme of "Homelessness, Migration and Demographic Change in Europe". A selection of the papers presented at the conference, supplemented by other contributions, forms the basis for this edition of the European Journal of Homelessness.

The first paper in this special edition of the European is an edited version of the keynote address to the conference by Thomas Maloutas, in which he highlights that the management of deprived neighbourhoods in Southern Europe has become more difficult as new immigrant groups have greater needs and fewer resources, while public funds are coming under severe stress at the same time. This negative dynamic greatly facilitates an arbitrary shift in the discourse and hence the mystification of neighbourhood problems, as social issues become secondary to the need for economic recovery, and may easily be attributed to such things as the 'incompatible' cultural diversity of immigrants.

Immigrants have access to accommodation and housing according to their legal status. It is evident that it is more likely for third-country nationals with a permit of residence to find durable and secure housing solutions. It is also clear that among regular migrants, asylum seekers are generally the most precarious since, in the wait for a decision on their asylum request, have limited access to the labour market and often rely on the accommodation capacities of the Member State where they reside. Therefore it is clear that immigrants are not a homogeneous category anymore than homeless people are.

Fitzpatrick, Johnsen and Bramley bring this out very clearly where they explore the experience of 'multiple exclusion homelessness' (MEH) amongst migrants to the UK. Drawing on a multi-stage quantitative survey, the paper demonstrates that the MEH experiences of people who have migrated to the UK as adults tend to differ from those of the indigenous MEH population; the former are, in particular, far less likely to report troubled childhoods and multiple forms of deep exclusion. It also identifies a series of experiential clusters within the MEH migrant population, with central and eastern European migrants often reporting less complex support needs than other migrant groups using low threshold support services. The paper also considers the extent to which migrants experiencing MEH in the UK had encountered similar levels of exclusion in their home countries, and reveals that the more extreme problems this group faced tended to occur only after arrival in the UK.



Amongst the groups of immigrants who are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, are women who are escaping domestic violence. Mayock, Sheridan and Parker in their contribution present findings from biographical interviews with seventeen migrant women who are part of a larger study of homelessness among women in Ireland. Their paper highlights the structural underpinnings of the relationship between gender-based violence and homelessness, with these spanning economic, social, legal and cultural domains, and impact women's responses to violence/abuse and to the systems of intervention designed to meet their needs. The consequences for migrant women are multi-faceted, affecting their ability to leave abusive home situations, access appropriate services, and exit homelessness.

The invisibility of migrant families is highlighted in the contribution by Le Méner and Oppenheim, as public policy placed such families without access to adequate accommodation in various motels across Paris where they then merged with non-migrant homeless families and the issue morphed into a political debate over housing homeless families rather than dealing with the specific needs of migrant families. In her contribution, Nordfeldt explores the situation of homeless families in Stockholm, with the paper demonstrating that a combination of single motherhood, immigration and lack of financial resources increases the risk of being homeless and excluded from other social arenas. The paper argues that in addition to the risk of being discriminated against because of ethnic background, a restructured housing market in combination with a dismantling of social housing has raised the threshold to enter the primary housing market.

The final paper examines the configuration of homeless services in Italian metropolitan areas on the results of a number of local focus group studies, and on initial evidence from national research on homelessness and homeless services, which was conducted in Italy for the first time between 2010 and 2011 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and a number of NGOs. The article highlights how the absence of a strategic common framework to combat homelessness in Italy, at local, regional and national level, has an isomorphic effect on local service systems, such that even without an express policy, local authorities and service providers invariably configure services to allow for the containment and management of homelessness.

## Conclusion

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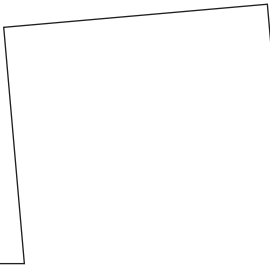
Housing of immigrants is an important challenge at European level. A number of Member States are struggling to provide affordable housing and to address the negative consequences of segregation and deprived urban areas, where immigrants tend to be over-represented. Low-quality housing and over representation of immigrants in deprived urban neighbourhoods create problems for integration in most Member States. Furthermore, the challenges faced by immigrants in the access to housing are reflected in the significant and, in some Member States, an increasing number of migrants who are experiencing homelessness. Entitlements for migrants vary across the Member States, where in some countries, most entitlements are obtained immediately upon receiving a residence permit, in others the situation differs according to the target group. However, migrants acquire them only after a certain period of time and under certain conditions.

In terms of policy and legislation, priority has been given to employment, primarily because of needs of European labour markets, but access to housing is equally important and we hope that the papers in this edition of the European Journal of Homelessness contribute to a more informed and nuanced understanding of the dynamics of migration, welfare, access to housing and homelessness.

**Eoin O'Sullivan and Mauro Striano**



# Articles





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# The Broadening and Mystified Margins of Urban Deprivation<sup>1</sup>

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Thomas Maloutas

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› **Abstract** *The focus of this paper is on the changing political perception of housing deprivation and neighbourhood decay in Europe, and particularly on recent changes in the new landscape produced by the sovereign debt crisis in Southern Europe. I mainly elaborate on the ways in which urban deprivation is mystified, as egalitarian discourses disappear and liberal positions become so hegemonic as to appear common sense to increasingly larger audiences.*

› **Key Words** *Southern Europe; urban deprivation; housing segregation; migration*

## Introduction

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Unequal housing conditions and residential areas of very different social composition and quality are certainly not new; they are older than capitalism and they are part and parcel of unequal societies. Capitalism has merely changed the ways socio-spatial inequalities are reproduced by making them the outcome of economic processes rather than the outcome of more open forms of social violence. Capitalism also changed the geography of deprivation, as the housing question and segregation developed especially in rapidly growing industrial cities. By ‘urban deprivation’ I mean the combination of housing deprivation – ranging from homelessness to housing conditions significantly below the national or regional average – and neighbourhood

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the FEANTSA Conference on “Homelessness, Migration and Demographic Change in Europe” (Pisa, September 16, 2011).

characteristics that have an obvious negative impact on the living conditions and social mobility prospects of the population.<sup>2</sup> The deprivation I refer to is, therefore, a combination of bad housing conditions and segregation.

Urban deprivation has been the subject of debate between liberals and socialists since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lees, 1985). On one side, cities were seen as expressions of the egotistical and the profit-oriented, breeding inequality and leading to acute and wide-scale deprivation among the working class masses; on the other side, cities were praised for the role they played in economic, political and cultural development, where deprivation of the working classes was the inevitable price industrial societies had to pay for economic development that would eventually profit all of their members.

Many things have changed since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, including technology, production processes, work organisation, regulation regimes and social structures, while class relations have been constantly remodelled by local and global events. These changes have produced an increasing complexity that has rendered urban deprivation potentially mystifying, especially as class divisions have become increasingly intricate and cross-cut by ethnic, racial and gender divisions. In this sense, much has changed – from the greedy landlords of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the current sub-prime housing loan crisis, and from the parallel formation of wide suburban middle class areas and inner-city slums to the much more intricate and localised processes of socio-spatial partition, exemplified by gentrification, gated-communities, and areas of deprivation and social exclusion.

The mechanisms leading to housing deprivation and segregation have become increasingly complex, but the main parameters of urban deprivation remain essentially the same. Deprivation depends, first of all, on the inequalities reproduced in the labour market and the impact on the social structure of unequally accumulated wealth; secondly on the quantity, quality and spatial distribution of the housing stock; and thirdly, on the dominant modes of housing allocation in terms of the degree of decommodification, as well as the degree to which direct or indirect discrimination (based on non-economic features such as race or citizenship) plays a role in access to housing.

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<sup>2</sup> The question of neighbourhood or area effects is quite complex if the specific spatial effect has to be grasped, i.e. excluding personal and family characteristics and their impact on neighbourhood choice. For a summary, see Buck (2001), Ellen and Turner (2003), Lupton (2003) and Maloutas (2012).

## The Mystification of Urban Deprivation

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Globalisation, at least in some accounts, has simplified deprivation patterns because it has boosted inequalities. According to the influential global city thesis (Friedman and Wolff, 1982; Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991; Sassen, 1991), it has brought about social and spatial polarisation, while following the quartered or layered city thesis (Marcuse, 1989 and 2002) it has increased the social and spatial partitioning of urban space, though in a more complex way than the dual (polarisation) mode. Some authors, like Sassen (1991), consider deprived groups as part of the functional logic of the new socioeconomic structure, while others, like Wacquant (2008), insist that increasingly large numbers of people are permanently marginalised in the labour market, and consequently within the housing market, a position that Sassen also later adopted (Sassen, 2011). In spite of this divergence, there seems to be agreement on the assumption that problems at the lower end of the social hierarchy are increasing.

However, although the situation may be becoming clearer according to globalisation theorists – in the sense of increasing socioeconomic distances and deepening social dichotomies – urban deprivation is becoming more mystified politically, as neoliberal ideas gain increasing dominance and egalitarian discourses become disused to the point of political irrelevance. With the dominance of neoliberal policies of social regulation and the prolonged crisis of the welfare state, poor neighbourhoods tend to become increasingly problematic due to the lack of resources allocated to meeting local social needs. The constant prioritisation of growth and productivity over social objectives has particularly affected those neighbourhoods that lack the means to function within the standards of their broader urban surroundings.

Neighbourhood hierarchies reflected in the uneven spatial distribution of social groups in urban spaces have become more pronounced with the shortcomings of social services that might otherwise function as equalisers. Neighbourhood hierarchies embody segregation and they contribute – to a greater or lesser degree depending on context – to reproducing social inequality and discrimination through the positive or negative neighbourhood effects they exercise on the population. What appears from an analytical perspective as a rather simple and clear depiction of socio-spatial inequality is buried, however, beneath a fivefold ‘mystification’ that obscures the social nature of the problem.

### *Levels of mystification*

The *first level of mystification* involves the conceptualisation of neighbourhood problems as spatial rather than social. This takes us back to the Chicago School tradition and the substitution of social dimensions with spatial ones, based on the

assumption that the latter can be effectively used as a surrogate in the study of the former.<sup>3</sup> In this way, features that are inherently associated with particular types of space, rather than with the underlying social processes, are attributed to different types of spaces – like inner cities in the Anglophone world or the French *banlieues*. Spatializing the problem means putting the question of social inequality aside. The focus on problematic spaces (and groups) may be witnessing social concern, but at the same time, it isolates the problem from the wider, or ‘mainstream’, society that is assumed to be working properly and thus not responsible for producing socio-spatial deprivation (Préteceille, 2012). Spatializing the problem also means inviting solutions for the improvement of the space itself rather than the problematic social content of that space. Spatialization suits a neoliberal approach in the sense that social (inequality) issues can be subjugated to policies of local development that are assumed to be socially beneficial in an undefined future.

The *second level of mystification* involves the consideration of neighbourhood problems in terms of a legal rather than a social issue. This involves a moralist and normative approach with a focus on what ought to be happening rather than on what really happens. When neighbourhoods with acute social problems are primarily identified as places of deviance and anomie, social inequality is put aside by bringing to the fore the rules and norms that should be observed by everyone on the basis of their presumed equal legal rights (and obligations), and on the assumption that, whatever the problems, rules have to be observed by everybody. The receding concern for social inequality in the name of legal equality invites reasoning in terms of individual responsibility and promotes solutions that involve the imposition of adequate behaviour on those that fail to act as they are expected and as they ought to. Neoliberal discourses are inclined to stress individual responsibility and obligations, favouring the lower cost of social regulation through workfare and zero-tolerance rather than welfare entitlements.

The *third level of mystification* involves prioritising the aesthetic over the social dimension of deprivation. Orderly, clean, pleasant and safe neighbourhoods, with some flavour of authenticity and attraction for potential new residents, form the neighbourhood model generally aspired to, rather than being seen merely as agreeable residential spaces that only the middle and upper-middle classes can

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<sup>3</sup> ‘It is because geography, occupation, and all the other factors which determine the distribution of population determine so irresistibly and fatally the place, the group, and the associates with whom each one of us is bound to live that spatial relations come to have, for the study of society and human nature, the importance which they do. It is because social relations are so frequently and so inevitably correlated with spatial relations; because physical distances so frequently are, or seem to be, the indexes of social distances, that statistics have any significance whatever for sociology. And this is true, finally, because it is only as social and psychical facts can be reduced to, or correlated with, spatial facts that they can be measured at all’ (Park 1916 [1957], p.177).



afford. Lower social groups are usually excluded from such spaces, the aesthetic of which often functions as a symbolic social barrier. Improving, for example, neighbourhood aesthetics in gentrified spaces is, therefore, at the same time an act of social appropriation in the Foucauldian sense of imposing meaning on space through dominant discourses. The transformation of the 'taste of necessity to a taste of luxury' (Krase, 2005, pp.205-8) aestheticizes poverty; it removes its contentious elements and retains only the picturesque surface, and it promotes Disneyfied spaces of gentrification (Zukin, 1995; Sorkin, 1996) following the middle class aversion to, and fear of, real cities and their aesthetic. By dissimulating social appropriation behind aesthetic improvement, it is the aesthetics of poverty, rather than poverty itself, that neighbourhoods seek to relieve themselves from. Neoliberal urban policies can use aesthetic goals to legitimate commodification, competitiveness and private initiative, as well as to relegate social objectives to a lower priority level.

*The fourth – and increasingly powerful – level of mystification* involves considering local problems of deprivation as economic rather than social. This usually takes the form of either seeing neighbourhoods in difficulty as opportunities for investment – regardless of, and often in spite of, their social content – or considering investment for their improvement as ineffective and, therefore, as wasted. The liberal economic doctrine considers social spending to be inefficient, based on the assumption that it often encourages passive behaviour and dependence on welfare. The social legitimacy of this view stems from the broader liberal assumption that any investment that immediately contributes to increasing productivity and growth will create wealth that will eventually trickle down to all parts of society; such investment should therefore replace direct social spending. Downplaying social inequality in favour of economic necessity leads to a situation in which social objectives are systematically de-prioritized and de-legitimated, and everything is subjected to an economic rationale. This becomes even more pronounced in situations of financial crisis, like the current sovereign debt crisis.

*The fifth level of mystification* – and the one directly related to migration and demographic change – involves considering neighbourhood problems as cultural rather than social. Angela Merkel has declared multiculturalism to have failed, and David Cameron has followed suit, while Sarkozy and Berlusconi were actively on the same track. Countries that used to be quite open to the 'Other' – like most North European countries and Australia – are changing their attitude, while support for parties and groups that promote intolerance and xenophobia is growing fast. The changing political attitudes of conservative parties and electorates (often not only conservative ones) towards alterity should be interpreted, in my view, in light of two aspects and functions of alterity that are, in part, contradictory.

The first is alterity's function as a dividing, and ultimately as an individualizing, principle. The postmodernist legitimation of difference and hybridity and, in fact, the acknowledgment of increasingly sub-divisible collective identities has nurtured the capacity of social and political systems to break free from the collective identities, once fundamental to the modernist project, and the associated social rights that culminated in the development of the welfare state. In this way, the broad collective identities, around which social rights were anchored, were undermined by the diverse and sometimes contradictory identities they carried internally; age, race, gender or ethnicity have had a dismantling effect on class identity and politics; this should theoretically be part of a continuous deconstruction of collective identities, a process that leads to the liberal Thatcherite ideal of society as the mere aggregation of individuals free to compete with each other, and rational in terms of the selfish disposition that drives their competitive choices. In this sense, the story of the "invention of alterity" (Tsoukalas, 2010) may be read not only as a step towards emancipation and mutual understanding, but as a device that, in emphasising difference, has ultimately served to undermine collective organization and action. In spite of the theoretical possibilities for different political outcomes offered by intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Ritzer, 2007), neoliberalism has been feeding (on) this dismantling fragmentation of national and class identities for several decades, generally prevailing as the way to restructure social and political systems.

The second, opposing facet of alterity is its function in re-forming collective identities, especially that of the 'not-Other' as the embodiment of claims on resources attributed to the Other. The increasing political significance of the 'not-Other' within national and sub-national boundaries attests to the fact that it is now the turn of multicultural identities to come under severe attack – not as in the assimilationist ethos of French republicanism, but as a redundancy and alleged threat on multiple levels to the local not-Otherness. However, not all collective identities associated with alterity are coming under attack; some have become mainstreamed. At risk are those identities whose collective organization, action or mere presence has become an impediment to the neoliberal project in claiming resources, despite the fact that such claims usually fall far short of claims for true equity and redistributive justice. Multiculturalism becomes a problem when it demotes the social rights of vulnerable groups that need resources for all sorts of social services and affirmative action, irrespective of economic effectiveness. To attack multiculturalism today is not to negate difference; on the contrary, it is to consider difference as incompatible with the local 'not-Otherness' and to deny on that basis the value of investing in large segments of today's societies, using growing political support for crisis-stricken electorates and the political weakness of the groups under attack. The attack on multiculturalism is in fact deepening the attack on the welfare state, as cheaper solutions in the form of intolerant police-states are sought instead.

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## On the Contextual Boundaries of Urban Deprivation

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The rest of the paper deals with differences in the form and approach of urban deprivation in different contexts. There are, first of all, specific contextual limits to the way I have discussed urban deprivation up to this point. The way I presented the character of urban deprivation and its multiple levels of mystification is, to a large extent, Eurocentric. Housing deprivation and problematic neighbourhoods are approached quite differently on the other side of the Atlantic, for instance.

### *A comparison of approaches to urban deprivation between Europe and the US*

The contextual specificity of approaches to urban deprivation becomes clear in the policies that are supposed to deal with neighbourhood problems. These approaches are deeply affected by the ideological substratum on which they stand. On the American side the concept of segregation is based on the dominance of economic liberalism, personal merit and on a very high rate of residential mobility.<sup>4</sup> From the era of the Chicago School's *natural areas* onwards, high rates of social and residential mobility led to an intense sifting and sorting of the housing market, and the relation of people to place became increasingly fluid and temporary. People and place formed two distinct, though interrelated, hierarchies: place according to quality, accessible to people according to merit. As the market became dominant in the allocation of housing, the belief became widespread that where people live reflects where they deserve to live, and hence that whatever residential segregation exists should not be considered a social problem.

Racial discrimination, however, has distorted the image of the meritocratic system, which prevents potentially deserving African Americans (and others) from accessing better places, while cracks in the market have created barriers for deserving poor (including Whites). Following the same ideological doctrine, segregation becomes an equal opportunity problem limited to the lower social strata. Policies devised to tackle segregation aim to provide opportunities for escape from bad areas rather than trying to improve the areas; people may be moved to less segregated residential areas or to non-segregated schools. Policies like Moving to Opportunity,<sup>5</sup> the HOPE program [[www.thehopeprogram.org/](http://www.thehopeprogram.org/)] and school-bussing fall within such a conceptual and contextual frame.

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<sup>4</sup> Comparative data show that cities of the New World were the champions of residential mobility in the 1980s with annual rates between 15 and 20 percent. European cities had much lower rates of between around 5 and 10 percent (Knox and Pinch, 2006, p.252). More recent figures for Southern Europe show rates clearly below the European average (Allen et al., 2004).

<sup>5</sup> MTO is a pilot project in the US, the rationale of which is to move people from downgraded social housing projects and control how they fare in less disadvantaged surroundings (Goering and Feins 2003; Orr et al., 2003). As a pilot program it had a rather limited size and impact, while its basic procedures in terms of choice of households to be supported and the fate of those left behind, are questionable. According to Lupton (2003) such a policy rationale would be out of context in the UK.

The tendency in the US to dissociate, in policy terms, the fates of people and places is certainly likely to be related to the contradictory coexistence of a long history of racial discrimination – which flagrantly obstructed access to the land and housing markets for a substantial part of the population – with the high rates of social and spatial mobility for the numerous others that participated in the American dream. Thus, there is an important difference between US and European constructions of segregation as a social and political problem in the continued presence of racialised segregation in the former. This called for the liberalisation of residential mobility for racial groups victimized by discrimination, and their unrestricted participation in the housing market was an obvious improvement over normative or otherwise imposed discriminatory residential space allocation based on racial hierarchy (Massey and Denton, 1993). At some point, the free movement of individuals to any residential locations they could afford became both a recommendation of economic liberalism and a progressive claim of the civil rights movement. However, this liberalisation of residential mobility, taken in conjunction with urban structures inherited from a long period of racial discrimination and the impact of economic restructuring, has led, according to Wilson (1987, pp.49-56), to further segregation of the African-American poor in inner-city ghettos with increasing levels of unemployment and social disorganisation, as Black middle- and working class households relocated.

In Europe, on the contrary, concerns about segregation were based on the negative impact of freely relocating individuals and households in land and housing markets that produce an uneven spatial distribution of social groups and, at the same time, uneven living conditions and life prospects in different localities. The major policy response in Western and Northern Europe has been extensive investment in the social housing sector that, for some decades at least, has countered segregation, particularly where social housing was aimed at a wide range of beneficiaries in an ecumenical welfare state spirit.

The perception of segregation is substantially different in the European city where the life itineraries of people are much more tied to place, regardless of whether they become attached to them or feel entrapped. This is expressed on a practical level in a much lower level of residential mobility and is mainly founded on the comparatively reduced ideological influence of economic liberalism during long periods. The quality of residential areas is a constitutive part of social equality in the French republican ethos, and of the socialist tradition and social rights in Scandinavian welfare societies, and segregated areas represent, therefore, a problem for which organised societies must provide answers. Socially-mixed residential areas have resulted from policies founded on strong welfare states in Western and Northern Europe (Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998; van Kempen 2002; Musterd *et al.*, 2006).

Häussermann (2005) claims that the interventionist welfare state originates from the autonomy of European bourgeoisies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and represents the main legacy of the European city. Scandinavian cities have long been accustomed to the regulation of both labour and housing markets in ways that avoid segregation. Framing segregation in this way has lent itself to policies targeted at places separate to people, and is, at least in part, the basis on which area-based policies were developed to combat segregation in several countries around Europe (Burgers and Vranken, 2003, cited in Musterd and Murie, 2006). In certain countries, namely France, the UK and the Netherlands, considerable emphasis is placed on anti-segregation policies; this relates to social issues and a strong social unrest that is considered the result of malignant neighbourhood effects. However, the emphasis on area-based policies and particularly on social mixing in a receding welfare state can be associated with policies that shift the focus from social to spatial issues, legitimate different objectives – such as gentrification (Lees, 2008) – and may eventually lead to increased segregation.

Contextual diversity in terms of the way segregation is perceived is also an issue within Europe. In Southern European cities, for example, segregation has only recently appeared on the political agenda. Relatively low segregation indices, infrequent social unrest related to segregation, family-centred social organisation, and very low residential mobility are all likely to be part of the explanation for this. In the family-centred welfare regimes of this region, people's life trajectories are tied even more strongly to their place of residence than in Western or Northern Europe, but not because of dedicated policies and increased public responsibility; on the contrary, public intervention is much less developed and legitimated, and is expressed in less direct ways; there is less public housing, among other things (Allen *et al.*, 2004). Families cater for the needs of their weakest members and, since family networks have to coalesce in space in order to be effective, the reduced residential mobility that results also tends to reduce the visibility of segregation as a social problem. Urban deprivation and intercultural cohabitation in the neighbourhood are, therefore, quite different issues when addressed in the European or the US context, but also in different European sub-contexts.

## **The South European Context in Crisis**

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Southern Europe, with Greece in the leading role, is lately at the forefront of international interest due to the sovereign debt crisis. The countries of this region currently operate on a discipline-and-punish mode, coerced by financial markets and dominant political powers in the EU into following specific policies irrespective of the political colour of their governments. This disciplining, part of the movement towards a specific version of capitalist regulation, is undoubtedly less savage than

that experienced some decades ago in Latin America; it bears some similarity to the transition to unleashed market economies in East European countries in the 1990s in terms of discourses urging economic efficiency and in terms of the quest for political legitimation found in reinstating democratic institutions in Eastern Europe and in doing away with clientelism in Southern Europe.

The attack of financial markets on this region is probably aiming higher; by disciplining the periphery of the European Union and the Eurozone, increased pressure is put on social policies and the welfare state at the European core. For instance, the sovereign debt in Greece is very large and perhaps unsustainable, but the policies prescribed to surmount it involve the usual assortment of remedies: privatization at any cost, reduction of the public sector, reduction of labour costs, reduction of labour protection, etc. For the time being, such measures have repeatedly been implemented and their impact has been only to deepen the recession by producing chain reactions due to decreasing demand. This does not seem, however, to be an issue for the lending institutions and their controlling bodies. Prescribed policies must be observed in order to secure the flow of the loan money. The recipe appears to make more sense in ideological and political terms than in economic terms.

Southern Europe is actually caught up in what is perhaps the final crisis of clientelist regimes, and their legacies. In the early post-war period clientelism was linked to authoritarian and often dictatorial right-wing regimes that favoured their political supporters and oppressed all others. Following political democratization in the 1970s, clientelism was no longer restricted to right-wing parties and involved much larger political audiences within bi-partisan democracies. The 'democratization' of clientelism often brought concessions to broad social categories, including on the lower social strata. The ideological dominance of neoliberalism led to the perception of these regimes as economically inefficient and corrupt, but such accusations mainly target social concessions made under these regimes.

Before the current crisis, the impact of which is still developing, urban deprivation in Southern Europe had evolved in specific ways and with specific patterns. Housing deprivation and segregation issues more generally had not, at least until recently, figured as a frequent or prominent concern on social and political agendas. There are several reasons for this.

Urbanization in this region has been much less dependent on industrial development –except in some core areas of Spain and Northern Italy – than in the classic industrial city. The spectacular population growth in large Southern European cities after the Second World War was triggered by *push* rather than *pull* factors. In most, there was an absence of the rationale and organizational patterns that heavy industry in particular imposed on the industrial city, whether in the form of activity

zoning, organized housing provision near factories for the workers, different transport infrastructures or services related to maintaining and reproducing the work force (Allen *et al.*, 2004). The lack of corporate-type requirements among large numbers of workers with specific skills and in specific places has reduced the social and political pressure to organize amenities in the classic welfare state form, and has facilitated governments opting instead for less comprehensive regulation and less expensive solutions for state funds. Authoritarian regimes and clientelism have regulated the process of urbanization, steering it away from welfarist approaches and towards partisan, discriminating, individualised and family-centred practices of welfare provision.

The outcome of these processes in Southern Europe is the residual welfare state model (Ferrera, 1996; Mingione, 1996; Allen *et al.*, 2004), with housing probably its most characteristic element. Social housing has been poorly developed with very low rates for social rented housing in particular (Allen *et al.*, 2004). New settlers in urban areas have often been left to devise their own housing solutions, encouraged to do so through self-promotion, haphazard construction or through affordable private sector schemes. In spite of the diversity of housing provision schemes in the region, the outcome has been a comparatively high rate of homeownership, which has reduced residential mobility, facilitated the establishment and reproduction of family and common origin self-help networks, and ultimately reduced the formation of socially segregated areas. It has also prevented homelessness to a large extent, as the majority of vulnerable individuals have been protected by their family network.

Reduced residential mobility in Southern Europe has also contributed to the gradual improvement of traditional working class areas through the social mobility of their residents who have not followed the expected pattern of moving to a better area as soon as their social status improved; examples can be seen in traditional working class areas in Madrid and Athens (Leal, 2004; Maloutas, 2004). The relative spatial fixity of the socially mobile – due primarily to the local social networks they depend upon – and the absence of a massive concentration of out-dated social housing projects has prevented most South European cities from developing marked pockets of segregation and deprivation. This is not only true for the first post-war decades of intensive urbanization; it is also true for the last twenty years as Southern Europe has become host to a significant wave of immigration from the South and the East.

Due to the structure of the housing market and the spatial distribution of the different types of housing stock, immigrants with low means have not been compelled to congregate in space and thus enhance segregation. In most cases they have had to rely on the private rented sector, as no alternatives were present. The outcome of this is that the significant inflow of economically deprived people

was broadly distributed within the urban tissue rather than being isolated in certain parts of it. Segregation indices for migrants in most large South European cities are rather low (Arbaci, 2007 and 2008; Maloutas, 2007; Arbaci and Malheiros, 2010). Indices for certain small ethnic groups are sometimes misleadingly high, however; ethnic groups tend to be spatially concentrated according to how they access the housing market, but also according to the spatial proximity of relatives and friends. The classic segregation index of dissimilarity measures the degree of this spatial concentration, which is not the negative aspect of segregation. Small immigrant groups are almost always a minority in their neighbourhood, which means that, even though their members can be found only in some parts of the city, they are never isolated from the rest of the population and they hardly ever represent a majority in the neighbourhoods where they live.

Migrants in Southern Europe, at least during the 1990s, were not only spatially diffused within cities, but also found niches in local socioeconomic structures, even though – contrary to the migration waves of previous periods – migration was largely based on being driven away from their countries of origin rather than being invited by the labour markets of Southern Europe. In fact, immigrants have tended to gain employment in low status jobs left over by locals in the context of relatively high social mobility; they have found employment in construction, agriculture and tourism, as well as in personal services, especially domestic work, elderly care and childcare – in a residual welfare state context replacing the traditional domestic roles of local women as these latter were increasingly taking part in the workforce. Their low wage requirements and the frequent lack of social security within the black economy made them suitable workers for small employers and family businesses, but eventually, as their numbers grew, they became a further problem for the already burdened pension funds and social services.

## **Urban Deprivation in Southern Europe**

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Southern European societies are experiencing growing difficulties as their clientelist and family-centred welfare systems become increasingly unsustainable. The ageing of the local population and the record-low birth-rate in Spain, Italy and Greece since the 1980s have impacted on the age structure of the labour market, and on the need for social services (in a context where they were traditionally underdeveloped), and have increased the pressure on the family-centred welfare system which increasingly lacks the human resources for its own reproduction. At the same time, South European societies have been experiencing a standing still or even a drawing back in the social mobility of the middle social strata for some time now; this is reflected both in the difficulties of its reproduction and the falling status of jobs, once considered prestigious, after a period of precipitated growth.



It is characteristic of these trends that, in Spain between the mid 1990s and the late 2000s, it was the salaries of professionals that increased the least within the occupational hierarchy (Dominguez *et al.*, 2012). This pressure on middle class reproduction has increased antagonism with regard to important resources such as employment, housing and local services (like schools), and has made it more difficult for the lower social strata – and even more so for immigrants – to compete. In this sense, the pressure for relative deprivation has increased, while absolute deprivation may also be on the agenda as unemployment rises sharply, small businesses close, and middle class resources, which provided immigrant employment, become restricted.

A further problem, with a negative impact on urban deprivation, is the changing profile of immigration in Southern Europe: from Eastern European or Latin American immigrants to political refugees from war zones and areas in the broader Middle-East and Africa. This means that immigrant groups increasingly have greater needs and fewer personal resources (including language skills and education), and therefore pose a greater challenge for integration, while at the same time the acute public finance crisis affects the region and reduces the means available to facilitate integration.

Moreover, if the low degree of spatial isolation is the bright side of class and ethno-racial segregation in Southern Europe, there is also a dark side in the fact that deprivation, especially for immigrant groups, may be quite significant, even without the support of intense segregation (Arbaci, 2008; Arbaci and Malheiros, 2010). Housing of very different quality may exist in the same area, the same street or even the same building, and households in the same area may be using completely different commercial and social services (such as schools), which may further differentiate living conditions and life prospects in decisive ways. Social and spatial distances are far from corresponding.

In this sense, the management of deprived neighbourhoods in Southern Europe seems to become more difficult as new immigrant groups have greater needs and fewer resources, while public funds are coming under severe stress at the same time. This negative dynamic greatly facilitates the mystification of neighbourhood problems, as social issues become secondary to the need for economic recovery, and may easily be attributed to such things as the ‘incompatible’ cultural diversity of immigrants.

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# Multiple Exclusion Homelessness amongst Migrants in the UK<sup>1</sup>

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› **Abstract** *This article examines the experience of 'multiple exclusion homelessness' (MEH) amongst migrants to the UK. Homelessness and destitution amongst migrants has become a matter of growing concern in many European countries in recent years, particularly with respect to asylum seekers and refugees, irregular migrants and, increasingly, economic migrants from central and eastern Europe. Drawing on a multi-stage quantitative survey, this paper demonstrates that the MEH experiences of people who have migrated to the UK as adults tend to differ from those of the indigenous MEH population; the former are, in particular, far less likely to report troubled childhoods and multiple forms of deep exclusion. It also identifies a series of experiential clusters within the MEH migrant population, with central and eastern European migrants often reporting less complex support needs than other migrant groups using low threshold support services. The paper considers the extent to which migrants experiencing MEH in the UK had encountered similar levels of exclusion in their home countries, and reveals that the more extreme problems this group faced tended to occur only after arrival in the UK. It*

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*concludes by considering the implications of these findings for both understandings of the phenomenon of migrant homelessness and for responses to this growing European problem.*

› **Key Words**\_ *Homelessness, migrants, UK, quantitative methods*

## Introduction

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Migrant homelessness has become highly visible in many countries across the developed world in recent years (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2007), including within the European Union (EU) (Pleace, 2010). While there have been longstanding concerns about homelessness and destitution amongst asylum seekers and undocumented migrants in EU Member States (Edgar *et al.*, 2004), more recently, following the expansion of the EU in 2004 and 2007, attention has focused on the rising numbers of nationals from new Member States sleeping rough in major Western European cities (Broadway, 2007; Horr ard, 2007; Homeless Agency, 2008), and also in some smaller cities and rural areas (Crellen, 2010).

Most migrants move country from a position of economic strength (IPPR, 2007). However, recent immigrants who lack access to welfare support can be vulnerable to homelessness if they fail to find work or lose their job, especially if they also lack local social support networks and/or have limited knowledge of the language or administrative systems in their host country (Spencer *et al.*, 2007). In a recent EU-funded study, homelessness amongst migrants was found to be a major concern in some Member States (UK, Netherlands, and Germany), but in others it was deemed a modest problem (Sweden), a declining problem (Portugal), or a non-issue (Hungary) (Stephens *et al.*, 2010). Much depends on the scale and patterns of immigration flows in different countries over time, but welfare arrangements also seem critical, and these differ in important respects across the EU, including with respect to access to emergency accommodation and other low threshold homelessness services (Stephens *et al.*, 2010; Young, 2010).

This article examines the experience of 'multiple exclusion homelessness' (MEH) amongst migrants in the UK, drawing on a multi-stage quantitative study conducted in seven urban locations where existing data suggested people experiencing MEH were concentrated. The overall aim of this study was to provide a statistically robust account of the nature and causes of MEH in the UK, and migrants were included in the survey sample alongside the indigenous population with experience of MEH. The following definition of MEH was employed:



People have experienced MEH if they have been 'homeless' (including experience of temporary/unsuitable accommodation as well as sleeping rough) and have also experienced one or more of the following other 'domains' of deep social exclusion – 'institutional care' (prison, local authority care, mental health hospitals or wards); 'substance misuse' (drugs, alcohol, solvents or gas); or participation in 'street culture activities' (begging, street drinking, 'survival' shoplifting and sex work).

The next section of the paper outlines the context for the analysis by reviewing current knowledge about migration and homelessness in the UK, and the most salient political and empirical debates in this area. The following section provides more detail on the methodology used before the results of our comparison of migrant and non-migrant experiences of MEH are presented. The implications of these findings for understandings of the nature and causes of MEH amongst migrants in the UK, and for appropriate responses, are reflected upon towards the end of the paper.

## Migration and Homelessness in the UK

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Since 2001 net migration into the UK has become much more significant and has been the main driver of population growth and increased housing demand (Pawson and Wilcox, 2011). The major new factor affecting UK migration rates over the last decade was the influx of nationals from the 'A8'<sup>2</sup> central and eastern European (CEE) countries who acquired the right to live and work in the UK after their countries joined the EU in May 2004. The UK was one of only three existing EU Member States that allowed A8 nationals free access to their labour market immediately on EU enlargement (the others being Sweden and Ireland). While A8 nationals had immediate rights to work in the UK, only those in employment registered with the 'Worker Registration Scheme', or who had already completed 12 months of continuous registered employment, were eligible for UK welfare benefits or social housing.<sup>3</sup> These transitional arrangements ended on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2011, but the existence of the 'habitual residence' test means that entitlement to UK welfare benefits is still not automatic for A8 or other immigrants. Additional

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<sup>2</sup> The A8 countries are Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

<sup>3</sup> The position for Scotland is complicated by the existence of separate housing and homelessness legislation, but the restrictions on social security entitlements apply across the UK.

transitional restrictions were placed on nationals from the CEE 'A2' countries admitted to the EU in 2007,<sup>4</sup> who generally require authorisation in order to commence employment in the UK.

The overwhelming majority of CEE migrants successfully obtain employment and accommodation in the UK (Homeless Link, 2010). However, restrictions on welfare entitlements mean that options have been very limited for the minority who find themselves without paid work. Over the past few years the growing influence of CEE migrants on homelessness in the UK has been evident: CEE migrants comprised 9% of people seen rough sleeping in London in 2006/07, rising to 28% by 2010/11 (Broadway, 2011; see also Homeless Link, 2006, 2008, 2009). Problems of destitute CEE and other migrants have been reported by homelessness services across all regions of England (Homeless Link, 2010), and also in Scotland (Coote, 2006). Poles form by far the largest proportion of CEE migrants to the UK (IPPR, 2007), and also amongst those who become homeless (Broadway, 2011), with Romanians and Lithuanians the next two most numerous groups. It has been suggested that it is rarely the younger and well-educated CEE migrants who find themselves on the streets of the UK, but is instead usually low-skilled men in their late 30s or 40s, with limited English (Homeless Link, 2006; Garapich, 2008).

Other migrant groups that appear to be at particular risk of homelessness in the UK include refugees and asylum seekers (McNaughton Nicholls and Quilgars, 2009; Smart, 2009). Refugees should be able to access social housing and welfare benefits on the same basis as UK nationals, and most asylum seekers receive accommodation and support from the UK Borders Agency (UKBA) while their claims for asylum are processed. However, UKBA accommodation has generally been provided in 'no choice' dispersal locations since 2000 (Netto, 2011), and asylum seekers may risk homelessness if they refuse to take up this accommodation. People without dependent children whose application for asylum has been refused will have any accommodation and support withdrawn after 21 days.<sup>5</sup>

'No recourse to public funds' (NRPF) is an umbrella term applied in the UK to people subject to immigration control who have no entitlement to housing or welfare benefits, or to UKBA asylum support. The main NRPF migrant groups are 'irregular migrants' (including illegal entrants, visa overstayers and refused asylum seekers) and those granted leave to remain or humanitarian protection on condition that they are not a charge on public funds. CEE migrants who are ineligible for housing and welfare benefits are also usually discussed under this broad NRPF heading. NRPF

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<sup>4</sup> The A2 countries are Bulgaria and Romania.

<sup>5</sup> Refused asylum seekers may receive limited financial support, but only if they are taking all reasonable steps to leave the UK, or in a limited number of special circumstances.

groups are at clear risk of destitution in the UK, with even most homeless hostels unavailable to them as the funding model for such accommodation relies on individual residents' eligibility for Housing Benefit.

This all has an especially high policy relevance in the UK at present because the Government is committed to 'ending rough sleeping' in England (Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 2011), with the Mayor of London making a specific commitment to end rough sleeping in London by 2012 (Mayor of London, 2009). There is an explicit acknowledgement that addressing the needs of the growing number of 'migrant rough sleepers' is essential if these goals are to be met. Given their very limited welfare protection, UK homelessness services generally try to encourage migrant rough sleepers to find employment or return to their home country via 'reconnections' schemes. There is some evidence of successful reconnections (Hough *et al.*, 2011), but these schemes can be controversial, particularly if linked to an 'enforcement' agenda associated with the threat of removal.<sup>6</sup>

As well as these political controversies, there are also some significant unresolved empirical questions with respect to homelessness amongst migrants in the UK. For example, it has been suggested that the needs of roofless CEE and other migrants differ significantly from those of indigenous rough sleepers:

Rather than having the problems usually associated with rough sleeping, such as alcohol abuse and mental health problems, these [A8] migrants faced accommodation, employment and language difficulties as well as... lack of knowledge of the UK system. (Spencer *et al.*, 2007, p.38)

However, this very 'structural' account of migrant homelessness seems somewhat at odds with accounts of the extreme circumstances of some destitute CEE nationals in London, including instances of deaths from substance overdoses and violence (Broadway, 2007; Garapich, 2010). It has thus been suggested that there may be two 'types' of homeless migrants in the UK:

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<sup>6</sup> In order to be entitled to stay in the UK beyond an initial 3 month period, all European Economic Area (EEA) nationals must be able to show that they are exercising a Treaty free movement right as, for example, a 'jobseeker', 'worker' or 'self-employed person'. It is unlikely that EEA nationals who are rough sleeping will fall into these or other relevant categories, hence their liability to removal by UKBA (though this remains a matter for legal controversy and debate both in the UK and across the EU as a whole).

Some migrants may find themselves in difficulty on arrival to the UK, primarily due to a lack of knowledge, requiring advice and language skills to find employment, but once employed are able to find a 'route out' of homelessness. Others have long-standing vulnerabilities relating to substance use, poor health, and experiences of institutionalisation... (McNaughton-Nicholls and Quilgars, 2009, p. 82).

Garapich (2011) disputes this sort of account because, he contends, it fails to acknowledge important 'cultural' factors affecting many homeless CEE migrants. In his anthropological analysis of homeless Polish men in the UK, he emphasizes the strong link between masculinity and alcohol in CEE working class rural cultures which, he argues, means that the hypothesized two 'types' of homeless CEE migrants – with and without 'preconditions' prior to encountering difficulties in the UK – 'merge into one' after a relatively short time on the streets.

Intrinsic to this controversy is the question of whether destitute migrants' problems tend to start before or after they come to the UK. Some have suggested that there is a 'scenario of downfall', whereby the precarious position of CEE migrants in the labour market, and the lack of a welfare safety, means that a single event such as loss of a job or a flat can push them onto the streets (Garapich, 2008). This account is supported by data generated on non-random samples of CEE rough sleepers in Peterborough and Southwark (London), which indicated that the majority were not rough sleepers or users of homelessness services in their home countries, were mainly in work prior to leaving their country of origin, and had worked since coming to the UK (Homeless Link, 2011). On the other hand, Stephens *et al.*'s (2010) qualitative research with homelessness service providers in London suggested that, while loss of precarious or seasonal employment was part of the problem, many CEE service users had never worked in the UK or had only ever had sporadic employment.

The study of MEH in the UK extends and deepens these existing accounts of migrant homelessness in the UK by providing detailed statistical information on the legal status, financial and other circumstances, employment histories, support needs, and routes into homelessness and destitution of migrants using low-threshold support services. It also enables comparison with the indigenous MEH population, and between different migrant sub-groups (to a more limited extent). In so doing, we are able to shed light on some of the unresolved controversies and debates outlined above. In the next section we describe the methods used to generate the data drawn upon in this article, before presenting our findings and discussing their implications.

## Methodology

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A multi-stage research design was adopted in the following urban locations where existing information (such as data on housing support services) suggested people experiencing MEH were concentrated: Belfast; Birmingham; Bristol; Cardiff; Glasgow; and Westminster (representing London). Prior to the main phase fieldwork, a half size 'dress rehearsal' pilot was conducted in Leeds in October and November 2009. The main phase fieldwork was conducted between February and May 2010 and comprised the following three stages in each location.

First, with the assistance of local voluntary sector partners, all agencies in these urban locations that offered 'low threshold' support services to people experiencing deep social exclusion were identified. The sample frame included not only homelessness services, but also services targeted to other relevant groups, such as people with substance misuse problems, ex-offenders, and people involved in street-based sex work. We focussed on 'low threshold' services (such as street outreach teams, drop in services, day centres, direct access accommodation, church-based soup runs, etc.) as these make relatively few 'demands' on service users and might therefore be expected to reach the most excluded groups. This focus on low threshold services was especially important with respect to those homeless migrants with an irregular or NRP status, as they are highly unlikely to have access to more formal services which require receipt of welfare benefits. From this sample frame, six services were randomly selected to take part in the study in each of the study locations.

The second stage of fieldwork involved a 'census' questionnaire survey undertaken with the users of these low threshold services over a two-week 'time window'. This short paper questionnaire asked 14 simple yes/no questions to capture experiences of the four 'domains' of deep exclusion specified in the MEH definition above. While the questionnaire was designed for self-completion, interviewers from the research team and staff from the relevant service were on hand to provide assistance. On the advice of local voluntary organizations, the questionnaire was translated into four other languages (these being Polish, Lithuanian, Arabic and Farsi). In total, 1 286 census survey questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 52% (based on a best estimate of the total number of unique users of the sampled services over the census period).

Third, and finally, 'extended interviews' were conducted with users of low threshold services whose census responses indicated that they had experienced MEH, as defined above, and who consented to be contacted for this next stage of the study. The structured questionnaire used was designed to generate detailed information on their characteristics and life experiences. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing technology, and lasted 46

minutes on average. Particularly sensitive questions were asked in a self-completion section. Interpreting services were made available for those whose first language was not English. In total, 452 extended interviews were achieved, with a response rate of 51%.

This paper draws on the 'extended interview survey', as it is at this stage of the study that we can distinguish between migrant and non-migrant responses. The next section of the paper describes the profile of the MEH migrant population, before comparing migrant and non-migrant experiences of MEH. We then explore the diversity of experience within the migrant population, before analysing the temporal sequence of MEH experiences amongst migrants, with a particular focus on those experiences which pre- and post-date arrival in the UK. A composite weight has been applied throughout the analysis to correct for both disproportionate sampling and non-response bias. All differences and relationships identified are statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence or above, but the margins of error on some percentages ('point estimates') exceed +/-10%.

## **A Profile of Migrants in the MEH Population**

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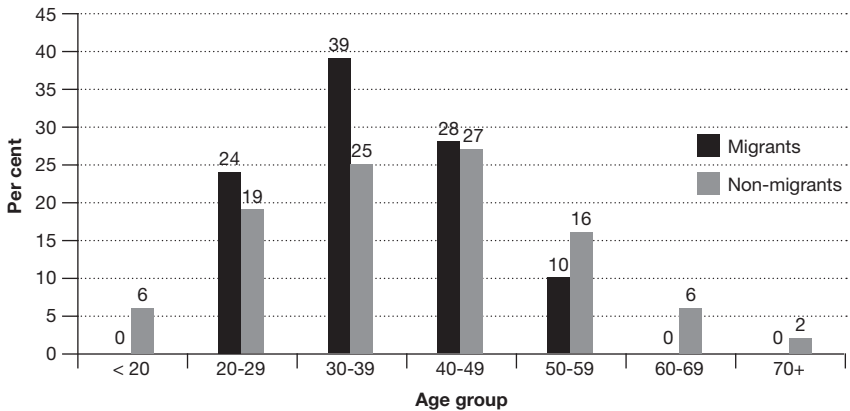
In this study we defined as 'migrants' all those born outside the UK who migrated to the UK as adults (aged 16 or older). The definition was drawn up in this way as it is a qualitatively different experience to make a decision – or be forced – to move countries as an adult than to move as a child and be brought up in a new country. Using this definition, 17% of all MEH service users were (adult) migrants to the UK. The median age at which they had migrated to the UK was 28, and on average they had come to the UK seven years prior to interview. One fifth of all MEH migrants were UK citizens by point of interview. There was a very broad spread of countries of origin, but most MEH migrants were originally from a European country (Poland and Portugal being most common), with the remainder mainly being from Africa.

This overall migrant group included a number of (partially overlapping) subgroups of particular policy concern. The largest of these was, as we would expect, CEE migrants, accounting for 7% of all service users. Respondents were asked whether they had ever claimed asylum in the UK, and 4% reported that they had. We then asked these respondents about the status of their application, and from their responses we deduced that 1% of all MEH service users were current asylum seekers; <1% (0.3%) were refugees; and 2% had been given exceptional or discretionary leave to remain or humanitarian protection. None had had an asylum application refused. Finally, 4% of all service users reported that they were 'irregular' migrants who did not have permission to live in the UK at the moment.

One of the most striking characteristics of these migrant service users as a whole was their overwhelming concentration in Westminster: 82% of all migrant respondents were recruited there. While migrants comprised 17% of service users across all seven cities, they accounted for 41% of service users in Westminster. One fifth of respondents in Westminster were CEE migrants (20%), 8% had claimed asylum in the UK, and 12% were irregular migrants.

As we would expect from previous research (Jones and Pleace, 2010), MEH service users were predominantly male (78%), and this was equally true of both migrants (78%) and non-migrants (77%). Migrants were, however, somewhat younger on average than non-migrants (see Figure 1). The marital status of migrants and non-migrants was very similar, with by far the largest category comprising single (never-married) individuals (59% of migrants, 67% of non-migrants); approximately one quarter of both migrants (29%) and non-migrants (25%) reported that they were divorced or separated.

**Figure 1: Age of MEH Service Users, by Migration Status**



Base: 71 migrants, 381 non-migrants.

Migration status was significantly associated with educational experiences: only 39% of migrants had left school by age 16, but this was the case for the great majority of non-migrants (88%). Migrants were also more likely than non-migrants to report having academic or vocational qualifications: 71% reported having acquired at least one qualification, as compared with 58% of non-migrants.

However, there were perhaps fewer distinctions between migrants and non-migrants with respect to employment histories than might have been expected (see Table 1). While migrants were somewhat more likely to report a work history dominated by casual, short-term and seasonal work than non-migrants (34% as

compared with 21%), and less likely to report spending most of their adult life unable to work because of sickness or injury (2% as compared with 14%), similar proportions of both groups had spent most of their adult life in steady, long-term jobs (around one-third) or unemployed (around one quarter).

**Table 1: Employment Histories, by Migration Status**

Employment history	Migrants (%)	Non-migrants (%)	All (%)
I have spent most of my life in steady, long-term jobs	32	34	34
I have spent most of my adult life in casual, short term or seasonal work	34	21	23
I have spent most of my adult life unemployed	28	23	24
I have spent most of my adult life unable to work because of sickness or injury	2	14	12
I have spent most of my adult life as a student / in education	0	1	1
I have never worked	0	3	2
Mixed response	0	2	1
None of these apply to me	4	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Base</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>452</b>

Migration status had little impact on current economic status, with around seven in ten migrants (72%) and non-migrants (68%) reporting that they were unemployed. Migrants were only marginally more likely to be in paid work than non-migrants (10% as compared with 3%), and less likely to be long-term sick or disabled (10% as compared with 21%).

**Table 2: Sources of Income in Past Month, by Migration Status\***

	Migrants (%)	Non-migrants (%)	All (%)
(UK) benefits	43	93	85
Paid work (incl. cash in hand work)	18	5	8
Friends or relatives	20	11	12
A charity/church	8	1	2
Selling the Big Issue	18	4	7
Begging	6	5	5
Illegal activities	0	8	7
Busking	2	<1	1
Pension	0	1	1
Other	6	<1	2
No source at all	16	2	4
<b>Base</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>452</b>

\*Multiple responses were possible



Nonetheless, current sources of income for migrants and non-migrants differed significantly (see Table 2). In particular, while almost all non-migrants (93%) had received UK benefits in the past month, this was true for only 43% of migrants (53% of migrants reported having never received UK benefits, as compared with only 5% of non-migrants). Also note that 16% of migrants reported having received no money at all from any source in the last month, with this being true for only 2% of non-migrants. Their greater risk of destitution is also reflected in migrants' current accommodation status at time of interview: one third (33%) were sleeping rough, as compared with only 8% of non-migrants.

### **Comparing MEH-relevant Experiences amongst Migrants and Non-Migrants**

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Table 3 presents the overall reported prevalence of the range of MEH-relevant experiences investigated amongst both migrants and non-migrants. Some of the 28 experiences noted were selected as specific indicators of the 'domains of MEH' identified above (i.e. homelessness, substance misuse, institutional care, and street culture activities), whereas others are 'adverse life events' that qualitative research has indicated may trigger homelessness and related forms of exclusion. A number of indicators of 'extreme exclusion or distress', most of which were explored in the self-completion section of the questionnaire, are also included.

As Table 3 indicates, while migrants were more likely than non-migrants to have slept rough, they were significantly less likely to report experience of virtually all other indicators of MEH, including the other forms of homelessness. These findings on homelessness may be explained at least in part by many migrants' ineligibility for housing and welfare benefits in the UK. This is likely to account for the lower incidence amongst this group of hostel and shelter use and applying as homeless to local authorities, and may well contribute to their particular vulnerability to rough sleeping.

However, the other distinctions between migrants and non-migrants presented in Table 3 are not explicable in such straightforward practical terms, and instead indicate a profoundly different set of characteristics, personal histories and experiences amongst these two groups within the MEH population. This is made clear with respect to overall experiences of each of the (non-homelessness) 'domains of deep exclusion' investigated: 82% of non-migrants reported some form of substance misuse, as compared with 51% of migrants; 74% of non-migrants had engaged in street culture activities of some kind, as compared with 51% of migrants; and 72% of non-migrants reported at least one form of institutional care experiences, as compared to 32% of migrants. Note also the responses on the selected

indicators of extreme exclusion and distress, with suicide attempts, self-harm, and being charged with a violent crime, all of significantly lower reported incidence amongst migrants than non-migrants.

Interestingly, though, Table 3 also indicates that migrants and non-migrants tended to report fairly similar levels of experience of adverse life events such as divorce, eviction, redundancy and death of a partner. Bankruptcy was actually more common amongst migrants than amongst non-migrants. This may suggest that these sorts of more 'mainstream' (albeit highly distressing) life events are more influential as triggers of MEH amongst migrants than non-migrants.

**Table 3: MEH-relevant Experiences, by Migration Status**

	Prevalence of experience		
	Migrants (%)	Non-migrants (%)	All (%)
<b>Homelessness</b>			
Stayed at a hostel, foyer, refuge, night shelter or B&B hotel	66	88	84
Stayed with friends or relatives because had no home of own	69	79	77
Slept rough	88	75	77
Applied to the council as homeless <sup>7</sup>	42	78	72
<b>Substance misuse</b>			
Had a period in life when had six or more alcoholic drinks on a daily basis	37	68	63
Used hard drugs <sup>8</sup>	35	46	44
Injected drugs	20	28	27
Abused solvents, gas or glue	4	26	23
<b>Institutional care</b>			
Went to prison or YOI	14	52	46
Admitted to hospital because of a mental health issue	16	32	29
Left local authority care	8	18	16
<b>Street culture activities</b>			
Involved in street drinking	26	59	53
Shoplifted because needed things like food, drugs, alcohol or money for somewhere to stay	20	42	38
Begged (that is, asked passers-by for money in the street or another public place)	26	33	32
Had sex or engaged in sex act in exchange for money, food, drugs or somewhere to stay	6	11	10
<b>Adverse life events</b>			
Divorced or separated from a long-term partner	45	44	44
Evicted from a rented property	26	25	25
Made redundant	28	22	23
Thrown out by parents/carers	16	39	36
A long-term partner died	10	10	10
Home was repossessed	2	6	6
Experienced bankruptcy	16	4	6
<b>Extreme distress/exclusion</b>			
Had a period in life when very anxious or depressed	65	82	79
Victim of violent crime (including domestic violence)	24	46	43
Attempted suicide	20	41	38
Engaged in deliberate self-harm	18	33	30
Charged with a violent criminal offence	6	31	27
Victim of sexual assault as an adult	10	15	14
<b>Base</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>452</b>

<sup>7</sup> The UK has a 'statutory homelessness system' whereby local authorities are required to secure accommodation for certain categories of homeless households.

<sup>8</sup> A list of 'hard drugs' was not specified in the questionnaire because drugs markets differ across the UK, as do 'street names' for drugs, and any attempt to be comprehensive would have led to a question that was far too long and complex. We did, however, ask a follow up question on definitions of hard drugs and this confirmed that virtually all respondents understood this term (as intended) to denote drugs such as heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine, and did not include 'soft' or 'recreational' drugs such as cannabis or ecstasy.

Data on relative levels of exposure to traumatic childhood experiences reinforces this picture of quite profound differences in the profiles of migrant and non-migrants facing MEH (Table 4). In particular, migrants were less likely than non-migrants to report having experienced: problems at school (e.g. frequent truancy, suspension, etc.); running away; domestic violence in the home; and parents having drug or alcohol problems. In fact, whereas 43% of all migrants reported having experienced none of the difficulties during childhood specified in Table 4, this was true of only 15% of non-migrants.

**Table 4: Experiences in childhood (under 16 years old)\***

Experience	Migrants (%)	Non-migrants (%)	All (%)
Truanted from school a lot	29	54	50
Suspended, excluded or expelled from school at least once	24	39	36
Ran away from home and stayed away for at least one night	16	38	34
Didn't get along with parent(s)/step-parent/carer(s)	20	30	29
Violence between parents/carers	16	29	27
Parent(s)/step-parent/carer(s) had a drug or alcohol problem	14	26	24
Sexually abused	19	24	23
Badly bullied by other children	10	25	22
Physically abused at home	16	23	22
Brought up in workless household	12	21	21
Family was homeless	9	16	16
Spent time in local authority care	8	18	16
There was sometimes not enough to eat at home	12	15	15
Neglected	12	16	15
Parent(s)/step-parent/carer(s) had a mental health problem	16	15	15
<b>Base</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>452</b>

\*Multiple responses were possible

While this analysis is suggestive of profound differences between the migrant and non-migrant MEH population, it does not reveal whether there may be 'diversity within difference', that is, whether there may be substantial distinctions in the experiences of different migrant groups who experience MEH (Pleace, 2010). This issue is explored in the next section.

## Diversity of Experiences within the MEH Migrant Population

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Distinctions in MEH-relevant experiences amongst migrants were investigated in two ways. First, we explored variations in the overall level of *complexity* of MEH-relevant experiences amongst migrants; and second, we investigated the existence of distinct *clusters* of MEH-relevant experiences amongst migrants.

Regression modelling was used to explore the prediction of the general level of complexity within the MEH migrant population, as measured by the number of these MEH-relevant experiences reported by individual respondents. This is a continuous variable and was modelled using OLS regression. It is important to bear in mind that, given the confines of our sample, the regression analysis presented here did not seek to predict the likelihood of a migrant to the UK experiencing MEH. Rather, it investigated: amongst members of the MEH population who are migrants, which factors had an independent effect in predicting the most complex experiences of MEH? The explanatory variables used in the regression modelling included a range of aspects of migration status, as well as key demographic and other characteristics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, city, type of service recruited from). The modelling was also designed to investigate the significance of a) 'structural' factors (e.g. childhood poverty and adult labour market experiences), and b) 'individual' factors (childhood trauma in particular).

Similar multivariate analysis on the whole MEH population indicated that migration status was a key explanatory factor in predicting complexity: as you would expect from the descriptive statistics presented above, migrant adults had fewer MEH-relevant experiences than non-migrants, other things being equal (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, forthcoming). Here we are looking at varying levels of complexity *within* the migrant MEH population. Most of the results presented in Table 5 echo the findings of this earlier regression analysis on the whole MEH population (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, forthcoming). Thus, the more complex MEH experiences amongst migrants were associated with being male, being homeless as a child, not having enough to eat as a child, poor experiences of school, long-term dependency on (UK) welfare benefits, and having children of your own. But perhaps the most interesting result emerging from Table 5 is that CEE migrants reported *less* complex MEH experiences than the other migrants interviewed, other things being equal.

**Table 5: OLS Regression Model for Complexity amongst Migrants, Measured by Number of MEH-relevant Experiences**

Variable description	Coeff B	Std. Error	Signif	Freq
(Constant)	8.025	1.212	**	
Female	-2.898	1.039	**	0.208
CEE migrant	-2.223	0.840	**	0.437
Sometimes not enough to eat at home	2.731	1.140	*	0.113
Homeless during childhood	5.929	1.386	**	0.100
No qualifications	-1.683	0.795	*	0.297
Poor experience of school (truanted, excluded, bullied)	2.257	0.818	**	0.376
Been on UK benefits most of adult life	2.281	1.097	*	0.187
Have children	2.029	0.741	**	0.426
Dependent Variable: nexp				7.594
Weighted by rescaledweight				
Model Summary				
Model	R	R Sq	Adj R Sq	S E Est
	0.812	0.659	0.602	2.813
Model	SS	deg frdm	Mn Sq	F
Regression	918.4	10.0	91.842	11.609
Residual	474.7	60.0	7.911	Signif F
Total	1393.1	70.0		0.000

Variables tested and not statistically significant: age; having no permission to live in the UK; having ever sought asylum in the UK; being a UK citizen; a parent died during childhood; being brought up in a household where 1+ adult was in paid work all/most of time; physical abuse as a child; sexual abuse as a child; parents had problems (substance misuse, mental ill-health, domestic violence); having had steady long-term jobs; being recruited in Westminster; being recruited via a homelessness service; brought up by one biological parent; local authority care as a child. Significance levels = \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

We then explored whether there were subgroups – or ‘clusters’ – within the MEH migrant population with distinct sets of particular experiences. The cluster analysis was performed using the SPSS Two Step Cluster procedure, designed to handle a combination of continuous and categorical variables. This uses a hierarchical agglomerative clustering procedure, which first determines the cluster centres and then assigns cases to clusters based on a log-likelihood distance measure. Clustering solutions were investigated using a variable set including six continuous variables (overall number of MEH-relevant experiences; number of experiences within the domains of institutional care; substance misuse; street culture activities; and adverse life events/extreme distress; and age), together with the 28 individual experiences as binary variables.

When cluster analysis was conducted with the whole MEH population, migrant service users were heavily concentrated in one particular cluster (out of five), whose members reported the least complex set of experiences overall (5 out of the 28 MEH-relevant experiences on average) (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, forthcoming). When we investigated in detail the existence of clusters *within* the migrant MEH population we found that three clusters could be distinguished. Table 6 shows the prevalence of different experiences for these three sub-groups.

**Cluster 1: High complexity:** This group reported 13 MEH-relevant experiences on average (out of 28), including a higher than average incidence of virtually all of the individual experiences investigated. Nearly all had used hard drugs and experienced anxiety and depression, with four-fifths also reporting problematic alcohol use. Suicide attempts, self-harming, and admission to hospital because of a mental health issue were each reported by substantial proportions. All had slept rough and the great majority had also stayed with friends/relatives and in hostels or other temporary accommodation. This cluster was mainly aged over 35, with relatively few CEE migrants.

**Cluster 2: Medium complexity:** This cluster reported an average of 7 MEH-relevant experiences. While anxiety/depression and all forms of homelessness were very prevalent in this group (except applying to the council as homeless), use of hard drugs was rare. Cluster 2 was younger than average and one-third female, with CEE migrants slightly under-represented.

**Cluster 3: Lower complexity:** This third cluster reported the lowest overall number of MEH-relevant experiences (3 experiences on average). With respect to homelessness, only rough sleeping was common, and anxiety/depression was far less prevalent than in the other clusters. Substance misuse was reported by relatively low numbers. All in this group were male and most were CEE migrants.

**Table 6: Prevalence of Experiences by Three Cluster Groups of Migrants**

Experience	3-groups			Total
	1	2	3	
Stayed with friends or relatives ('sofa-surfed')	0.891	0.874	0.273	0.692
Stayed in hostel or other temp accomm	0.854	0.906	0.164	0.661
Applied to council as homeless	0.601	0.483	0.169	0.419
Prison	0.377	0.000	0.114	0.143
Victim of violent crime	0.317	0.370	0.000	0.240
Very anxious or depressed	0.967	0.729	0.264	0.652
Admitted to hospital with mental health issue	0.325	0.163	0.000	0.158
Used hard drugs	0.951	0.061	0.175	0.350
Injected drugs	0.653	0.000	0.055	0.203
Abused solvents gas or glue	0.135	0.000	0.000	0.038
Problematic alcohol use	0.798	0.288	0.086	0.370
Divorced or separated	0.568	0.488	0.290	0.449
Long-term partner died	0.266	0.063	0.000	0.101
Made redundant	0.499	0.297	0.031	0.272
Slept rough	1.000	0.845	0.795	0.873
Street drinking	0.389	0.180	0.225	0.253
Begged	0.378	0.252	0.139	0.253
Shoplifted	0.447	0.071	0.135	0.198
Bankrupt	0.101	0.297	0.000	0.149
Eviction	0.433	0.278	0.055	0.253
Home repossessed	0.000	0.071	0.000	0.029
Thrown out by parents or carers	0.294	0.203	0.000	0.166
Local authority care as a child	0.119	0.063	0.055	0.077
Survival sex work	0.231	0.000	0.000	0.066
Charged with a violent criminal offence	0.142	0.000	0.077	0.064
Victim of sexual assault as an adult	0.157	0.111	0.000	0.090
Attempted suicide	0.454	0.184	0.000	0.204
Self harmed	0.376	0.100	0.085	0.174
Number of Experiences	12.721	7.376	3.185	7.594
	1	2	3	Total
Frequency	17	30	24	71
Percent	28.4	40.5	31.1	100



## Sequencing of MEH Experiences amongst Migrants and Non-migrants

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Having explored the overall prevalence, complexity and clustering of MEH experiences amongst migrant service users, the next and final step of analysis comprised an interrogation of the sequencing of these experiences.

In a forthcoming paper we demonstrate that substance misuse and mental health issues consistently preceded homelessness and adverse life events amongst the MEH population as a whole, strongly implying that the latter are more likely to be consequences than originating generative causes of deep exclusion (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, forthcoming). Here we consider whether the sequences experienced by migrants differ from those of non-migrants. As noted earlier, one important area of controversy is whether migrants experiencing homelessness and exclusion in the UK had similar problems in their home countries, or whether these problems arose only after moving to the UK.

We initially examined the median age of *first* occurrence of each MEH-relevant experience, as reported by affected individuals.<sup>9</sup> As Table 7 demonstrates, the median age of first occurrence was generally higher amongst migrants than non-migrants with respect to the homelessness, substance misuse, institutional care and street culture domains of deep social exclusion, whereas the picture was more mixed with respect to adverse life events. Note also that the median age of first occurrence of homelessness and many other MEH-relevant experiences tended to be higher for migrants than their median age of arrival in the UK (28 years old), but this was less true for the various indicators on substance misuse.

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<sup>9</sup> Bear in mind that the percentages affected by specific MEH experiences differ significantly across these groups, see Table 3 above. In particular, some of the experiences noted in Table 7 were reported by only very small numbers of migrants. In those cases where the base number fell below five cases, the observation on median age of first occurrence was excluded from Table 7. This led to the exclusion of the following experiences from Table 7: abuse of solvents, glue and gas; engagement in survival sex work; repossession; and bankruptcy.

No data is available on the age of first occurrence for the following experiences: being charged with a violent criminal offence; being a victim of sexual assault as an adult; having attempted suicide; and having engaged in deliberate self-harm. This is because these experiences were asked about in the self-completion section of the questionnaire where, in the interests of brevity, this information was not sought (except with regards to survival sex work).

**Table 7: Median Age of First Occurrence of MEH-relevant Experiences, by Migration Status**

Experience	Migrants (years)	Non-migrants (years)	Difference (migrants minus non-migrants)
1. Left local authority care	17	17	0
2. Thrown out by parents or carers	17	17	0
3. Street drinking	25	18	+7
4. Used hard drugs	23	19	+4
5. Problematic alcohol use	26	19	+7
6. Sofa-surfed	29	19	+10
7. Survival shoplifting	34	19	+15
8. Victim of violent crime	21	20	+1
9. Prison	30	21	+9
10. Very anxious or depressed	28	20	+8
11. Injected drugs	23	22	+1
12. Slept rough	34	25	+9
13. Admitted to hospital with mental health issue	34	26	+8
14. Made redundant	25	27	-2
15. Applied to the council as homeless	37	26	+11
16. Stayed at a hostel or other temporary accommodation	30	26	+4
17. Begged	31	28	+3
18. Evicted	28	29	-1
19. Divorced or separated	36	32	+4
20. A long-term partner died	30	43	-13

The chronological order in which experiences occurred was then examined more rigorously by focusing on the actual sequential ranking of experiences within individual MEH cases, according to migration status.<sup>10</sup> The mean sequential ranking used here controls for variations in the number of MEH-relevant experiences reported by service users. As Table 8 indicates, the sequential ordering of experiences reported by individual respondents tended to be quite similar between migrants and non-migrants. This means that, while migrants' pathways into MEH tended to 'start' later than for non-migrants (see Table 7), they then appeared to follow a fairly similar 'route'. Thus, *if* they occurred at all, substance misuse and mental health problems tended to precede any experience both migrants and non-migrants had of street culture activities and the various forms of homelessness.

<sup>10</sup> As with the median age of first occurrence analysis in Table 7, data limitations mean that the MEH experiences specified in footnote 9 cannot be included in the sequential ranking analysis in Table 8. In addition, leaving care – while included in the age-based analysis – cannot be included in this rank order analysis as it was asked about in a different part of the questionnaire.

**Table 8: Frequency and Relative Order of Experiences, by Migration Status**

Experience	Non-Migrant	Migrant	Overall	Non-Migrant	Migrant	Overall
	freq	freq	freq	order	order	order
Thrown out by parents/carers	0.39	0.17	0.35	3.0	3.2	3.0
Used hard drugs	0.46	0.35	0.44	3.9	3.0	3.8
Street drinking	0.59	0.25	0.53	4.0	3.6	3.9
Problematic alcohol use	0.68	0.37	0.62	4.0	3.8	4.0
<b>Came to UK</b>	-	<b>1.00</b>	-	-	<b>4.1</b>	-
Very anxious or depressed	0.82	0.65	0.79	4.2	4.3	4.2
Survival shoplifting	0.42	0.20	0.38	4.1	5.3	4.2
Victim of violent crime	0.46	0.24	0.42	4.6	3.0	4.4
Sofa-surfed	0.79	0.69	0.77	4.4	5.2	4.5
Prison	0.52	0.14	0.46	4.6	4.1	4.6
Made redundant	0.22	0.27	0.23	5.0	4.1	4.8
Slept rough	0.75	0.87	0.77	4.9	6.2	5.1
Injected drugs	0.28	0.20	0.27	5.5	3.8	5.3
Begged	0.33	0.25	0.32	5.9	5.6	5.8
Hospital mental health issue	0.32	0.16	0.29	5.9	6.0	5.9
Divorced	0.44	0.45	0.44	6.2	5.0	5.9
A long-term partner died	0.10	0.10	0.10	6.1	6.0	6.1
Stayed in hostel or other TA	0.87	0.66	0.84	6.2	6.9	6.3
Applied to council as homeless	0.78	0.42	0.72	6.4	6.5	6.4
Evicted	0.25	0.25	0.25	6.8	7.6	6.9

Table 8 also notes the mean sequential ranking of ‘came to the UK’ in migrants’ MEH histories. As with the median age analysis above, this suggests that first occurrence of substance misuse at least sometimes came *before* migrants’ arrival in the UK, but most other MEH-relevant experiences – in particular homelessness and street culture activities – tended to occur only *after* arrival in the UK (see also Homeless Link, 2011).

Given that this sequence analysis focuses on the question of, *if* an event occurred, when it occurred on average, it is important to bear in mind that most individual MEH-relevant experiences were reported by relatively small numbers of migrant interviewees, especially with respect to when they were still in their home country. Only 18% of MEH migrants reported any experience of homelessness before coming to the UK (100% had had this experience by point of interview), only 16% reported any pre-UK experience of institutional care (32% by point of interview), 18% had pre-UK experience of substance misuse issues (51% by point of interview), and 12% had pre-UK experience of street culture activities (51% by point of interview). Thus insofar as migrants using low threshold services in the UK reported experience of these deep exclusion ‘domains’ at all, this was generally after rather than before their arrival in the UK.

## Discussion

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Migration patterns are continually evolving and it is, for example, an open question whether the UK will continue to experience significant net migration from CEE given the ending, in May 2011, of transitional arrangements which restricted A8 migrant workers' access to the labour markets of other major European economies. The robustness of some continental European economies, such as Germany and Austria, mean it is likely that Britain will become relatively less attractive to A8 migrant workers in the future (Pawson and Wilcox, 2011). Combined with the easing of welfare restrictions on A8 migrants from May 2011, this might be expected to diminish the scale of homelessness amongst CEE nationals in the UK, but it is possible that there will be a corresponding increase in destitute CEE migrants elsewhere in the 'old' countries of the EU (Pleace, 2010; Stephens *et al.*, 2010). This reinforces the relevance of these UK research findings for other EU Member States facing a potential increase in homelessness and destitution amongst new CEE migrants.

With respect to the unresolved controversies outlined in the opening sections of this paper, the evidence presented above is clearly consistent with a predominantly 'structural' account of the underlying causation of migrant homelessness, in sharp contrast to the more 'individual' pathways into MEH apparent amongst the indigenous population (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, forthcoming). The prevailing pattern across our entire dataset was very striking indeed: while migrants were more likely than non-migrants to have slept rough, they were significantly less likely to report experience of virtually all other indicators of the four domains of deep exclusion investigated, with the most extreme forms of distress and exclusion such as suicide attempts, self-harm, and being charged with a violent crime also much less common amongst migrants than non-migrants. These findings point strongly to a lower overall 'threshold' of personal problems and associated support needs amongst migrants than non-migrants who find themselves experiencing MEH in the UK. This interpretation is reinforced by the lower reported rates of childhood trauma amongst migrant than non-migrant interviewees. On the other hand, the heightened risk of serious material deprivation faced by MEH migrants in the UK is evident from their disproportionate experience of complete destitution.

As previously noted, intrinsic to the controversy surrounding homelessness amongst migrants in the UK is the question of whether their problems tend to start before or after they come to the UK. Our sequence analysis is quite clear on this point: the first instance of most MEH-relevant experiences, in particular homelessness and street culture activities, tended to occur for migrants at a later age than for indigenous service users and generally *after* arrival in the UK. The overall pattern is therefore one of high rates of rough sleeping and high risk of destitution amongst people who have very often not faced homelessness or other forms of deep

exclusion in their home countries, albeit that some will have pre-existing substance misuse problems. It seems that some vulnerable migrants, able to just about 'manage' in their own countries, find this much more difficult in countries of destination such as the UK, where they may lack access to 'buffer' support networks and to welfare protection, and can find their vulnerability compounded by practical difficulties such as language barriers (Spencer *et al.*, 2007).

This study also pointed to a diversity of need within the migrant MEH population, with both the logistic regression and cluster analysis revealing less complex MEH experiences amongst CEE than other migrant groups. This result has to be treated with some caution, given the relatively small sample numbers when one is looking at migrant subgroups, and it is somewhat surprising given the much publicized extreme circumstances of some CEE migrants in the UK (Broadway, 2007; Garapich, 2010). However, it does suggest that, while a great many CEE migrants using low threshold services are sleeping rough and destitute, they are less likely than both the indigenous MEH population and other MEH migrants to have troubled family backgrounds or to experience the more extreme forms of multiple exclusion in adulthood. This insight has important implications for service responses to this group, as now discussed.

So far, it has mainly been voluntary sector services that have borne the costs of migrant homelessness in the UK, but a survey of homelessness and refugee agencies across England in 2010 revealed that most felt unable to meet the needs of their migrant clients:

Traditional solutions to homelessness don't work [with migrants], as these are typically structured and funded around the needs of the population that are entitled to claim benefits and housing support. (Homeless Link, 2010, p.6).

Based on the findings of this MEH research, we would go further and argue that these 'traditional solutions' will not work because MEH amongst many migrant groups – particularly CEE migrants – is a fundamentally different phenomenon to that of indigenous MEH and requires a bespoke service response. Moreover, hostility from other service users has been reported as an issue for some migrants using mainstream homelessness services in the UK (Garapich, 2010), while at the same time there is evidence of negative impacts of 'migrant demand' on the 'usual' client groups of these homelessness services, both in the UK (Homeless Link, 2006; Spencer *et al.*, 2007) and elsewhere in Europe (Pleace, 2010). As Young (2010) has commented:

... scarcity of resources puts strain on service providers and risks creating a situation where a choice between national and non-national service users is made. Moreover, many service providers have difficulty in supporting service users with different needs from their "traditional users". (p.2)

With respect to destitute CEE migrants in particular, it has been argued that a pan-European response is now required (Garapich, 2008; Stephens et al., 2010), with the recent 'European Consensus Conference on Homelessness' (2011) calling on the EU to '... take up its particular responsibilities concerning the relationship between homelessness and destitution and the free movement of EU citizens' (p.21). Our evidence with regard to the relatively low level of support needs amongst homeless CEE migrants in the UK is suggestive of positive ways forward for at least some in this group. If basic levels of material assistance and support with job searches could be secured, it may be possible for some of them to take up paid work, as a supplement and/or alternative to reconnections approaches (though the latter may well remain the most appropriate outcome for others (Hough et al., 2011)). This is consistent with the Consensus Conference 'Jury' recommendation that a basic level of guaranteed support for homeless migrants should be funded via the European Social Fund:

... no person in the European Union, regardless of their legal status, should face destitution... people must be able to meet at least their basic needs until a sustainable solution to their situation which is in line with human dignity is found; either in the host Member State or the country of origin. (p.19)

The Jury further argued that: 'Homeless[ness] services must not be systematically used to compensate for inconsistent migration policies that lead people to situations of destitution and homelessness' (p.2). However, at the same time they cautioned that: 'Homeless[ness] service providers should not be penalized for providing services to people presenting in need' (p.2-3). This rather uncomfortable formulation highlights the profound dilemmas inherent in determining the appropriate role for the homelessness sector in meeting these emerging and distinctive needs.

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## Conclusions

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While the survey drawn upon in this paper was UK-specific, the issues it illuminates are relevant well beyond the UK, with many other European countries reporting growing problems with homelessness amongst migrants. The UK (together with Ireland and Sweden) might be viewed as ‘further down the road’ in attempting to cope with the difficulties faced by vulnerable CEE migrants in particular – challenges that may increasingly affect other European economies as they, too, open up their labour markets to nationals from the new Member States. The analysis presented in this paper adds to a growing body of evidence on the differing balance between individual and structural factors in the generation of homelessness and exclusion amongst indigenous populations and CEE and other migrants, and as such is relevant to both understandings of these phenomena and potential responses. In particular, it indicates that migrant MEH is less about complex support needs and childhood trauma than about the structural barriers that vulnerable migrants face in meeting their immediate practical needs in countries of destination such as the UK. It points strongly to the need for bespoke services tailored to the specific needs of homeless migrant groups, and to the inadequacy of a policy response which simply leaves ‘traditional’ homelessness agencies to cope as best they can.

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# Migrant Women and Homelessness: The Role of Gender-based Violence

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› **Abstract\_** *A distinct Europe-wide problem of migrant homelessness has become increasingly apparent. However, the available evidence base on migrant homelessness remains relatively weak and there is a particular dearth of research on the homeless experiences of migrant women. Internationally, research has established an association between gender-based violence and homelessness among women, including migrant women. However, the dynamics of this association, as well as the range of issues that surround it, remain largely unexplored. This paper presents findings from biographical interviews with seventeen migrant women who are part of a larger study of homelessness among women in Ireland. It specifically aims to explore the relationship between the experience of gender-based violence and homelessness, including migrant women's responses to their abusive home situations, their interactions with services, and their perspectives on their situations. The findings highlight the structural underpinnings of the relationship between gender-based violence and homelessness. These span economic, social, legal and cultural domains, and impact women's responses to violence/abuse and to the systems of intervention designed to meet their needs. The consequences for migrant women are multi-faceted, affecting their ability to leave abusive home situations, access appropriate services, and exit homelessness. The implications for structures and services, particularly those with responsibility for meeting the needs of migrant women, are discussed.*

› **Keywords\_** *Homelessness, migrant women, gender-based violence, Ireland, biographical interviewing*

## Introduction

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There has been growing evidence over the past two decades of a specific Europe-wide social problem of migrant homelessness (Daly, 1996; Edgar *et al.*, 2004; Harrison *et al.*, 2005; Pleace, 2010). This phenomenon is undoubtedly linked to the recent migration experience in Europe, which is characterised by increasing levels of immigration and a growing recognition of its importance in driving population change (Edgar *et al.*, 2004). The determinants of migrants' experiences in, and impacts on housing systems include many factors such as migrants' characteristics (e.g. age, income level, type of visa, length of time living in host country), preferences (e.g. household size, renting versus owning, quality of accommodation), and restrictions of access to social housing (Vargas-Silva, 2011). Therefore, different types or categories of migrants, with different rights, opportunities and resources are likely to have very different experiences in, and degrees of impact on the housing system of their host countries. It is nonetheless clear that migrants face considerable obstacles within housing markets, which may lead them towards undesirable and unsafe housing circumstances as well as housing instability (Somerville and Steele, 2002; Edgar *et al.*, 2004; Robinson *et al.*, 2007).

Discrimination in housing among migrants has been documented in the European context for some time. For example, a comparative analysis of disadvantage and discrimination against migrants and minorities in the housing sector across fifteen EU countries found that ethnic minorities live in comparatively poor housing conditions, which contribute to entrenched patterns of social and economic inequality (Harrison *et al.*, 2005). In the Irish context, Pillinger's (2009) research on the experiences of migrants living in a large suburb of Dublin city found that they had different patterns of housing from those in the general Irish population, with the majority living in privately rented accommodation, often of poor quality, overcrowded, and in a poor state of repair. Similarly, in the UK, Robinson *et al.*'s (2007) research on newly arrived migrants in Sheffield reported poor living conditions, particularly for those first arriving in the UK. Some new immigrants also reported problems of insecurity and poor living conditions in more permanent, longer-term housing.

Migrants, like other individuals, can experience homelessness in all its various forms, from rooflessness to insecure and inadequate housing, insecure and inadequate housing (Edgar *et al.*, 2004). Possibly to a greater extent than indigenous groups, migrants may not use hostels or other homeless services, and instead rely on couch-surfing, or draw on their own social networks for temporary, and often precarious, accommodation (MacNaughton-Nicholls and Quilgars, 2009). 'Hidden homelessness' is a recognised feature of migrant homelessness (MacNaughton-

Nicholls, 2009; Stephens *et al.*, 2010) and, consequently, the available statistics may not present an accurate picture of the extent and nature of homelessness among migrants (FEANTSA, 2002).

There are different categories of migrants who experience housing instability and homelessness (FEANTSA, 2002; Edgar *et al.*, 2004; Pleace, 2010). Pleace's (2010) typology of migrant homelessness in the EU includes the following broad groups: people seeking asylum and refugees; failed asylum seekers and undocumented migrants; women and children from outside the EU who lose their immigration status when escaping domestic violence; A-10 economic migrants who have become homeless in EU-15 member states; and ethnic and cultural minorities who appear to be at a disproportionate risk of homelessness but who are not recent migrants. Nonetheless, across the EU, the extent to which each of these categories of migrants is at risk for housing instability and homelessness remains unclear, although it is widely acknowledged that migrants without immigration status, asylum seekers and refugees, and new immigrants are particularly vulnerable to homelessness (Edgar *et al.*, 2004; Spencer *et al.*, 2007; MacNaughton-Nicholls, 2009; Stephens *et al.*, 2010). Although the evidence base on migrant homelessness remains relatively weak across Europe, a 'hierarchy of vulnerability' has been suggested, highlighting the possibility that migrants may often, but do not necessarily, face a heightened risk of homelessness (Edgar *et al.*, 2004).

Migrants' vulnerability to housing instability and homelessness depends on their legal status, personal characteristics and resources, as well as the welfare regimes and immigration policies of their host countries (Edgar *et al.*, 2004; Stephens *et al.*, 2010; Pleace, 2010). It is also recognised that migrant women's particular circumstances and experiences may render them acutely at risk of homelessness (FEANTSA, 2002). For example, there are spouses and children who have no personal rights of residency, and who would lose their legal status in the host country if family breakdown were to occur. Family breakdown has been identified as a primary cause of homelessness among migrant women (FEANTSA, 2002; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (OPDM), 2005) and the role of domestic violence in homelessness among women is well documented, even if the dynamics of this relationship remain unclear (Jones, 1999; Edgar *et al.*, 2004; OPDM, 2005; FEANTSA, 2007; Robinson *et al.*, 2007; Jones *et al.*, 2010; Quilgars and Pleace, 2010).

## Migrant Women and Homelessness: The Role of Gender-based Violence

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There is increasing recognition that women's experiences of homelessness differ from those of men and that there is an important gender dimension to the problem of homelessness (Watson & Austerberry, 1986; Watson, 1999; Edgar and Doherty, 2001). Nonetheless, gender remains a lesser explored dimension of homelessness in the European context (Young, 2010), and the literature has only recently expanded to include or focus on women's experiences (Baptista, 2010). It is perhaps unsurprising in this context that there is a dearth of dedicated research on homelessness among migrant women in Europe, and that their routes to homelessness are poorly understood.

In North America, where research has focused to a greater extent on the experiences of female immigrants, migrant women are claimed to face multiple issues in addition to those confronted by indigenous populations, which make them vulnerable to homelessness. These include increased risk due to poverty, unrecognised employment and education credentials, isolation, and discriminatory rental and accommodation practices (Baker *et al.*, 2003, 2010). Migrant women may face particular vulnerabilities, and their need for access to housing may be more pressing because they often do not have established support systems (Sev'er, 2002; Graham and Thurston, 2005). They also face disadvantages in social status and basic human capital relative to immigrant men (Erez *et al.*, 2009), which make them particularly vulnerable in contexts of victimisation.

Numerous studies have demonstrated a relationship between gender-based violence and female homelessness. Gender-based violence is defined as "any act of... violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering for women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (United Nations, 1993). According to COSC, Ireland's National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, "[t]he term gender-based violence acknowledges that such violence is rooted in gender inequality and that the majority of severe and chronic incidents are perpetrated by men against women and their children" (COSC, 2010, p.21). Understood in this way, the violence is gender-based since it is targeted at women because of their sex and/or their socially constructed gender roles.

In the European context, research in the UK in particular has highlighted an association between domestic violence and women's homelessness. In one study domestic violence was found to be the reason most commonly cited by women to explain their present episode of homelessness (Jones, 1999). More recently, Reeve *et al.* (2006) found that 20% of the 134 homeless women they surveyed had become homeless because they were experiencing violence from someone they knew, whether a

partner or a family member. For the women aged 41-50, domestic violence was the most common trigger for homelessness, with 40% of women in this age group reporting that they had left their last settled home to escape violence from a partner. Recent research in Ireland has similarly documented high rates of gender-based violence among homeless women (Mayock and Sheridan, 2012). In England and elsewhere throughout Europe, recent years have seen the introduction of policies aimed at tackling the issue of domestic violence and preventing victims from entering homelessness (Quilgars and Pleace, 2010). These have given rise to targeted initiatives such as local 'Sanctuary Schemes', which seek to maintain victims of domestic violence in their homes by removing the perpetrator and providing and installing additional security measures and supports (Jones *et al.*, 2010).

Women who are victims of domestic and other forms of gender-based violence typically face more housing barriers than other impoverished or marginalised women (Richards *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, migrant women who experience gender-based violence may not disclose their abusive home situations to family members or friends (Thurston *et al.*, 2006), and those who are economically reliant on their spouses or partners may remain in violent relationships for far longer than would otherwise be the case (Latta and Goodman, 2005). Women reporting a history of domestic violence also face numerous economic and housing difficulties once they enter the homeless service system which, in addition to the effects of domestic violence, appear to decrease their chances of making a successful exit from homelessness (Metraux and Culhane, 1999).

While an association between domestic and other forms of gender-based violence and homelessness among women has been reasonably well established internationally, there is a need for additional research 'that moves beyond simply documenting the association between the two but also attempts to understand why such an association exists' (Baker *et al.*, 2010, p.431). Indeed, it appears that a complex range of issues surrounds the link between violence and homelessness and that the relationship may not necessarily be a direct one (Baker *et al.*, 2010). This paper specifically explores the relationship between gender-based violence and homelessness among migrant women, drawing on data from biographical interviews with seventeen migrant women who are part of a larger study of women's homelessness in Ireland. The experience of gender-based violence was a dominant and recurring theme in the life stories of a large number of the migrant women interviewed. In the sections to follow, we attempt to unravel the dynamics of gender-based violence and the impact of intimate partner violence, in particular, on the housing situations and homelessness of migrant women.

As a starting point, however, it is useful to provide an overview of immigration trends in Ireland and to review the available, albeit limited, data on migrant homelessness in the Irish context.

## Setting the Scene: Migrants and Homelessness in Ireland

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While Ireland has traditionally been a country of mass emigration, from the early 1990s a period of rapid economic growth saw a reversal of migration flows for the first time. According to the Central Statistics Office, Ireland's foreign-born population increased from 6% of the total population in 1991, to 10% in 2002, and reached 15% in 2006 (Ruhs, 2009). Following EU enlargement in 2004, Ireland (along with the UK and Sweden) offered citizens of the ten new accession states of Eastern Europe full and immediate access to the labour market with no restrictions (Mac Éinrí and White, 2008). This led to a large number of young, economic migrants from Eastern Europe, particularly from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, often entering into relatively unskilled, temporary jobs in response to Ireland's labour shortage in the construction, services and other employment sectors (Barrett *et al.*, 2002). According to Census 2011, 17% of the population were born outside of Ireland – a significant increase since the previous census of 2006 (Central Statistics Office, 2012).

Since 2008 the negative impact of the global recession, combined with a spectacular decline in the housing market, has had a dramatic negative impact on the Irish economy. The unemployment rate currently stands at 14.3 percent nationally (Central Statistics Office, 2012). While 18000 migrants were signing on the Live Register of unemployed persons in December 2006, this figure had risen to just over 76200 by December 2011 (Central Statistics Office, 2012). These latest figures are likely to underestimate the number of migrants affected by rising unemployment, since unemployed migrants with no entitlement to social welfare are not accounted for in the official live register of unemployed persons.<sup>1</sup>

Even before the economic downturn, there had been a recorded increase in the number of migrants utilising food and homeless accommodation services in the Dublin area (Bergin and Lalor, 2006). The Homeless Agency's official count in Dublin in 2008 found that 303 people, or 13% of the homeless population, were 'foreign nationals', roughly two-thirds of them EU citizens. A further 104 foreign national households were reported to be using homeless food and day services (Homeless Agency, 2008). Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have also reported increases in the number of migrants accessing their services, highlighting the economic crisis as a major precipitating factor in their homelessness (Stanley, 2010). Although the available data provide only a very partial picture of migrant homelessness in Ireland, they nonetheless suggest that a greater number of

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<sup>1</sup> Migrants who do not satisfy the requirements of the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) have no entitlement to social welfare payments. Introduced in 2004 by the Irish state, the HRC is a stipulation pertaining to the length and continuity of residence in Ireland, as well as to the employment history of migrants. Individuals must satisfy the HRC in order to qualify for social welfare payments.



migrants are accessing homeless services than previously. This broadly mirrors the picture throughout Europe where there has been a documented increase in migrant homelessness (Edgar *et al.*, 2004; Pleace, 2010).

## Methodology

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This research integrated biographical interviewing with ethnographic observation in a study which aimed to conduct an in-depth examination of the lives and experiences of homeless women in Ireland with specific attention to their homeless 'pathways' – that is, their entry routes to homelessness, the homeless experience itself and, possibly, their exit routes from homelessness.<sup>2</sup> Fieldwork began in late 2009 with a 'Community Assessment' phase, an approach that proved valuable in our earlier cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of youth homelessness (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007; Mayock and Carr, 2008). A strategy developed to enhance 'control' over the types of selection bias that often undermine research on 'hard-to-reach' populations (Clatts and Sotheran, 2000), it involved a period of intensive engagement with professionals involved either directly or indirectly in the provision of services to homeless women. This phase of the research served to inform the community of professionals working with homeless women about the research, and it also facilitated access to numerous sites for the purpose of recruitment. We gained the co-operation of twenty-one services nationally, including permission to use these settings as recruitment sites.

In total, sixty women were recruited for interview from these strategically chosen sites, which included emergency homeless hostels (both single and mixed gender), domestic violence refuges, long-term supported housing, and transitional accommodation. The eligibility criteria for entry to the study included: (1) a woman who is homeless or has lived in unstable accommodation during the past 6 months; (2) aged 18 years and upwards; (3) single and without children *or* a parent living either with, or apart from, her children; (4) Irish or of other ethnic origin. Interviews were carried out in the Dublin metropolitan district and in two other urban locations in the South and West of the country known to have a significant homeless problem. Women were recruited through a combination of purposive, snowball, theoretical and targeted sampling. This combined sampling strategy helped to circumvent the risk of bias that can arise from an over-reliance on one approach, and it also contributed to the study of variability (in terms of age, ethnicity, duration of homelessness, and so on). From the outset of the study, we aimed to recruit a significant

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number of migrant women – approximately one-quarter of the total sample. The proportion of migrant women interviewed (n=17 or 28% of the larger sample) meant that this aim was realised.

The biographical interview was the core method of data collection. An approach to interviewing deemed ‘the most appropriate method for unpacking the more sophisticated explanations of homelessness’ (May, 2000, p.633); it is particularly suited to researching sensitive dimensions of people’s experiences. It allows participants to tell their stories in their own words and to weave parts of their past, present and future as they recount their experiences (Atkinson, 1998). Rather than tracing *only* a person’s housing and homeless history, the interview thus attempted to construct *multiple* biographies by capturing transition and change, along the same timeline, in the women’s personal, social and economic circumstances. Interviews commenced with an invitation to women to tell their life ‘story’ and several specific issues were then targeted for questioning. Examples of these interview topics include: housing/homeless history, family circumstances; children; drug/alcohol problems; health and mental health; and women’s perspectives on their situations, past, present and future.

Throughout the data collection phase, ethnographic observation was undertaken at four homeless service settings including two homeless hostels (one female-only and another mixed-gender) and two food centres, all located in or adjacent to Dublin’s city centre. This use of ethnographic observation aimed to capture the daily experiences of homeless women within ‘natural’ settings by ‘being there’ and experiencing ‘their worlds’ first-hand (Agar, 1997; Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). The ethnographic data also helped to supplement and triangulate the data garnered from the biographical interviews. We interacted with migrant women in two of the four selected settings over the course of the study. In order to further enhance ethnographic engagement, it was decided during the data collection process to introduce an ‘auto-photography’ dimension to the research. Auto-photography is increasingly viewed as an effective method of examining how participants understand and interpret their worlds (Radley *et al.*, 2005; Noland, 2006). Sixteen women initially agreed to take part in the photography project but due to the transitory and sometimes chaotic nature of their lives, a total of seven, one a migrant woman, were final participants in the project. These photographs captured many aspects of the daily lives of participating women and also provided opportunities for critical engagement on the part of the researchers with what it *means* to women to be without a home.

Although guided primarily by a biographical approach, the study utilised several complementary data collection methods in order to capture multiple aspects of the everyday realities of study participants (Denzin, 1978). The overarching aim was to

produce a rich and nuanced understanding of the lives and experiences of homeless women. The findings documented here draw on the narrative data generated through the conduct of biographical interviews with seventeen migrant women. All identifying information (the names of family members, friends, and places) has been removed from the narrative excerpts and pseudonyms have been assigned to the women to protect their anonymity.

### **The Study's Migrant Women**

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The seventeen migrant women interviewed were aged between 25 and 52, with an average age of 32.5. Ten came from the Eastern European countries of Poland, Latvia, Slovakia, Estonia and Romania, and one woman was from Southern Europe. The remaining six women were born outside the European Union. Of the six non-EU migrant women, four had no immigration status and therefore no right to work, study or to access social welfare benefits. Two of these women had a valid work permit based on their husband's immigration status at the time of their arrival to Ireland but their immigration status was no longer considered valid because they had left these relationships. Five women who originated from different areas of Europe did not satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) and therefore had no entitlement to social welfare payments.

The women were relatively well educated, with sixteen having completed Leaving Certificate (A-Level) equivalent educational level or higher. Eleven reported strong employment histories in Ireland (for example, full-time work with the same employer for more than one year), albeit in low-paid jobs, usually either in the hospitality or manufacturing sectors. However, only one had paid employment at the time of interview. Fifteen of the seventeen women had children. Most of their children were young, many under the age of 10, and several had children under the age of two. Two of the women were the mothers of adult children who resided in their countries of origin, and eleven were the full-time carers of children under the age of eighteen.

The duration of the women's homelessness ranged from one week to three years. Three had been homeless for less than six weeks and a further three for between six weeks and five months. Thus, six of the women would be classified as 'newly homeless'. Eight had been homeless for between six months and two years, and the remaining two women had homeless histories of over two years.

## Migrant Women's Journeys to Homelessness

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The events and circumstances surrounding migrant women's first and/or subsequent homeless experiences were multifaceted and complex. Nonetheless, a number of dominant themes or strands of experience did emerge from the narrative data. The first of these was the experience of gender-based violence, which triggered homelessness in the case of a considerable number of participants. These women's stories also point to their economic dependence on their partners as significantly impacting their ability to leave abusive home situations. Job loss, as well as barriers to labour market participation, simultaneously featured in their accounts. It is important to note that these experiences were not mutually exclusive but rather overlapping and recurring within migrant women's stories of becoming homeless; together, they compromised migrant women's ability to secure and/or maintain housing and simultaneously created vulnerability to housing instability and subsequent homelessness.

### *Gender-based violence as a 'trigger' to homelessness*

Thirteen of the seventeen migrant women had experienced violence or abuse in the context of an intimate partner relationship.<sup>3</sup> Both the nature and duration of these experiences varied, although most of the women reported a combination of physical (e.g. hitting, slapping, punching or choking), emotional/verbal (e.g. intimidation, name calling, manipulation, threats of violence), sexual (e.g. forced sexual intercourse, sexual assault, rape), and financial/economic (e.g. controlling the household budget and financial transactions, confiscation of immigration documentation) abuses. All thirteen women had experienced emotional abuse as well as at least one incident of physical abuse or violence, while six also reported sexual abuse or violence by an intimate male partner. The women's narratives almost always referenced the negative and long-lasting impact of domestic abuse on their lives.

"I was really weak, like powerless and without my will and anything... So my whole life changed, all the ambitions... At the moment I am not able to do anything what I want. I am not able to be fully free, you know..." (Tereska, 25 years).

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<sup>3</sup> Intimate partner violence was the form of gender-based violence most commonly reported by the study's migrant women. High levels of intimate partner violence were also reported by the study's non-migrants, with 45% reporting violence and/or abuse by a male intimate partner. Non-migrant women were more likely than migrant women to report other forms of gender-based violence including child sexual abuse (23 of the 43 non-migrant versus 5 of the 17 migrants) and rape during adolescent or adulthood by an individual *other than* an intimate partner (11 of the 43 non-migrants versus 1 of the 17 migrants).

Ten of the thirteen who had experienced gender-based violence attributed their homelessness either directly or in large part to intimate partner violence or abuse. Irene, like others, talked of becoming homeless as a direct consequence of her partner's violent behaviour.

"I mean the things that comes from your partner, the person that you love, the person that you share your life with and you find, out of the blue, after two years that this is not the person... and I lost complete faith in myself. I said I have bad judgement, I start blaming myself. He turn everything against me and then I found myself, out of the blue, homeless, living under a stairway" (Irena, 55 years).

Maria, who had come to Ireland to join her husband approximately four years earlier, explained that she had become homeless "because of domestic violence".

"I just came here because he [husband] applied for a visa for me to join him but everything was just suddenly changed and that's what made me homeless, because of domestic violence" (Maria, age 29).

Many of the women's accounts were therefore suggestive of a clear link between the experience of gender-based violence and housing instability. However, close examination of the narratives uncover a range of realities and experiences that significantly influenced women's responses to intimate partner violence and, thus, the process of their becoming homeless. Indeed, these same factors affected their risk of homelessness after separating from their partners. While intimate partner violence triggered homelessness in many cases, the women's stories highlight a host of economic, social, cultural and legal factors that impacted their 'journeys' to homelessness. These particularly came to the fore in women's accounts of the process of leaving abusive relationships.

### *The process of leaving abusive relationships*

For most of the women interviewed, leaving an abusive relationship was a process rather than an abrupt event. A majority articulated an awareness of the negative consequences of violence and abuse for them (and their children), as well as a desire to escape their abusive partners, for a considerable period prior to leaving their homes. Many had appraised their situations at various junctures, particularly at times when the violent behaviour of their partners escalated, but confronted many obstacles in their attempts to leave these relationships. A number felt "trapped" in their relationships while others had returned following initial or early attempts to flee because they had "nowhere to go"; yet others feared for their personal safety in the event of leaving an abusive partner.

"I say I leave you, he will kill me... the police can only take you one night from the house... so I was scared, I turn and I go back to house" (Immanuela, age 29).

Problems surrounding the loss of immigration status, as well as economic dependence on their partners, were the most commonly cited barriers to exiting abusive home situations.

“It was difficult [to leave], you know... you don’t have anything, you don’t have assistance...” (Maria, age 29).

“My husband have job and me same had job. It’s not fair because he have my money” (Dominikia, age 39).

Women’s reluctance to expose violence to ‘outsiders’, including family members, also emerged strongly from their accounts and contributed to a perception of violence as something to be endured rather than escaped. Indeed, a considerable number described a set of community or cultural values that acted as obstacles to seeking help. Particularly strong for some was a fear of negative repercussions in the event of family knowledge of their leaving an abusive relationship. A smaller number conveyed an expectation on the part of family members that they would remain in an abusive home situation.

“They [my family] don’t want to listen to me that he was hitting me... they said the wife must stay with the husband even if one time he hit you... they say to me that I must pray, maybe he change” (Immanuel, age 29).

When reflecting on her situation, one woman framed her current experiences using her home country as a key reference point. As her account suggests, some migrant women arrive from countries where domestic violence may not be reported because of a lack of legal protection or cultural prescriptions that prevent women from reporting violence.

“I would say the root of my problem is the patriarchal culture in [country of origin]; the lack of development there; women are victimised so much and we are made to believe that this is normal, that our husbands will always treat us badly and hit us and that we must endure this. This is what the problem is. If I could change the situation, I would try and solve the problem of poverty and violence, this is the root of all my problems and the reason for which I am here...” (Sofia, age 34).

The absence or lack of social support, coupled with women’s economic dependence on their partners, significantly hampered their ability to envisage or plan a ‘way out’ of abusive relationships. However, there were other barriers to help-seeking. Women typically stated that they did not “know the system” or how to go about seeking help, advice and support. This resulted, in many cases, in women remaining in abusive home situations for far longer than might otherwise have been the case.



“I had no idea a place like this [refuge] exist. I had no idea the guards would help you. I had no idea the school would understand, the GP would understand. I had no idea about anything. I felt alone and just because of that I didn’t leave him [husband] earlier” (Alexandra, age 30).

Most relied on some form of ‘supported escape’ from abusive home situations but these sources of support were unpredictable and it took time to establish connections with people whom women felt they could approach for help. The individuals highlighted by women as having encouraged and enabled them to exit abusive situations *over time* included the police, parents or teachers at their children’s schools, friends or neighbours, and a social worker in fewer cases. However, not all women found themselves in a situation where they could avail of either formal or informal support, and many depended to a far greater extent on a chance encounter. Indeed, three of the women had approached a stranger whom they believed to be of the same ethnic origin to seek help in relation to their homelessness and/or domestic abuse. Sofia explained that she had walked the streets of Dublin’s city centre “looking for people who looked like me” who might be able to provide her with temporary accommodation. Maria had likewise approached a man of the same ethnic origin on the street for help.

“I just found him [person who helped] on the street, you know, we are the same [ethnic origin]... he knew I was really scared. I didn’t know where to go, I didn’t know the system in Ireland... I was just living two days with [him], you know, because he just offered me. He gave me information about the [refuges] and that made me go to that emergency accommodation” (Maria, age 29).

Several were confused about their residency rights and about the impact of their immigration status on their eligibility for support services, while others were misinformed or relied on partial or inaccurate information. Indeed, the fear of telling *anyone* who may have been able to intervene or offer advice, including medical professionals, was perceived as a significant barrier for migrant women.

“So it [the violence] started when I was six month pregnant and then was very, very often because he know that I don’t tell anybody this, I was so scared of talking. I never go to doctor to show my bruises” (Immanuela, age 29).

A majority of migrant women were initially anxious about approaching homeless or domestic violence services for assistance. These feelings were strongly associated with a perceived shame surrounding domestic abuse. Women also worried about the stigma of a homeless status and identity: “I don’t like the word homeless... it shows a picture of somebody sleeping in the streets and everything, not really nice picture” (Tereska, age 25). A number were reluctant to use homeless services due to negative perceptions of homeless hostel accommodation, while others expressed

safety concerns for themselves and their children in these contexts. For a majority there was a powerful stigma associated with being homeless and this impacted on women's willingness to access services.

### ***Job loss and economic marginality***

For five of the women in the sample, financial strain arising from job loss and unemployment emerged as a dominant reason for their homelessness. Cecylia, for example, had moved to Ireland five years earlier and had worked full-time until one year prior to her interview. She was made redundant quite unexpectedly and, unable to sustain rental payments, she reluctantly presented herself to an emergency homeless hostel a number of months later. She described the consequences of her sudden redundancy notice.

“So, I was shocked, I lost my job. You know everything was OK and then they said people are just redundant, you know... Yeah, it was a shock for me because then I checked my balance and I said, ‘Jesus Christ, I have no savings, nearly no savings’. Because if I knew the recession would come I would save, but I didn’t...” (Cecylia, age 27).

Income poverty was a significant challenge for all of the migrant women interviewed and was particularly acute for those with no immigration status. Delilah had been living in emergency hostel accommodation with her daughter for nineteen months at the time of interview. She had experienced abuse by her husband over a lengthy period, both prior and subsequent to her arrival in Ireland, and was not eligible for labour market participation or welfare benefits because she had no immigration status. She survived by seeking charity donations, and sporadically earned cash payments from cleaning the home of an acquaintance. Her perceptions of “existing” and of feeling “invisible” reveal the impact of this ongoing situation on her life.

“I called [name of charity] sometimes, sometimes they come and sometimes they don’t, it just depends. I call them for food, I ask friends... I feel like I have been abandoned now, you know when you don’t have nothing and you keep calling friends and sometimes they visit or you want to visit them but you think maybe they think I want money. So I have been living basically like a beggar, not living, I call it existing in Ireland because I feel like I am invisible” (Delilah, age 30).

Nala's account similarly highlights the economic, social and emotional consequences of having no immigration status.



“For two years, I’m just wasting my time, I cannot go for work, I cannot do study, I cannot do [training] courses and I feeling like I am just wasting my time... and then with the children and feel sometimes lonely as well because of not any friends...” (Nala, age 30).

Others, including those who were eligible for labour market participant, reported additional difficulties as constraining their efforts to gain employment. Immanuala, who had a one-year-old son, described the problems she experienced when seeking work, which included a lack of English language proficiency.

“I want to find job but always they say to me that it’s too much, you know, the language barrier is too high and I cannot [work]. I have lots of experience, I have ten years experience with my job but I don’t have English perfect” (Immanuala, age 29).

Financial strain was particularly evident in the women’s narratives of motherhood. Several experienced difficulties in meeting their children’s needs, typically reporting that they felt unable to adequately provide their children with basics including clothing, food, toys and social outings. Their child care responsibilities in turn compromised their ability to seek or maintain employment since labour market participation necessitated child care support. A number had been forced to quit their jobs due to the financial strain of maintaining employment without housing and child care support. Katia described how she had previously had to leave her job because of the absence of affordable child care.

“How can I go [to work] without a house, without a babysitter or there wasn’t a crèche. So I went away from the job and stayed in [a homeless hostel] till I find something else” (Katia, age 25).

The impact of ongoing economic insecurity was severe for a majority of the migrant women. Despite high educational attainment and strong employment histories in many cases, a combination of problems with the cost of child care and a lack of English language proficiency posed a significant barrier to labour market participation. Women with no immigration status, as well as those who were ineligible for social welfare assistance because they did not meet the Habitual Residency Condition, lived with a great deal of uncertainty, and their paths out of homelessness were seriously constrained.

## Barriers to Exiting Homelessness

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Women's lack of access to affordable housing and their income poverty combined to act as significant barriers to their exiting homelessness. Those who were living in a homeless hostel or refuge and in receipt of welfare payments, particularly those with dependent children, struggled to save money for the payment of a deposit for private rented accommodation. Several others had applied for supported housing but this transition was reported to involve long waiting periods. Women who waited for move-on options invariably felt "stuck", "trapped", or "left behind" in emergency accommodation.

A majority of the women were dependant on some form of state income support. However, four had no immigration status and, consequently, no welfare entitlements, and an additional five did not meet the Habitual Residence Condition. All of these women struggled to make ends meet and depended primarily on emergency payments, donations from charities, and/or casual and unpredictable low-paid work. A number worried that their emergency payments would cease, highlighting the impact of persistent financial insecurity.

"So always you are terrified that, Oh my God, if the payments [emergency payments of €100 per week to support her and her two children] stop, then what will happen because I am not allowed to work in this country as I have no status and I don't have any social welfare help. So I am always worried" (Bina, age 32).

A range of other factors affected the women's ability to find secure housing and live independently. These included problems related to their physical and mental health. These health problems had often resulted from poor eating habits, sleep deprivation and/or high levels of anxiety. Women also attributed their health difficulties to the trauma of intimate partner violence and to the experience of homelessness itself, which had resulted in income poverty, lack of social interaction or support, insecure housing, and uncertainty about the future.

"I have too many problems, no school for kids; [services] have not help me nothing you know? I'm very, very tired I don't know, I'm not happy... I have problem 'cause no house, no money, not have passport..." (Monika, age 39).

"Last two months I am having kind of breathing problem, there is no asthma so maybe there is subconscious stress... maybe [it has gotten worse] because I become lonely again, I'm not lonely actually, but not doing anything [active]" (Aisha, age 31).

The health problems described by many women affected their ability to enter the labour market, seek help and support, and function productively in everyday life. Additional barriers to housing stability were reported. These included abusive ex-partners who engaged in 'stalking' behaviour, forcing them to move repeatedly in an effort to ensure their safety. Social isolation and the absence of family or friendship networks also hampered the women's ability to exit homelessness, since many did not have close family members living in Ireland and struggled to maintain regular contact with family members in their countries of origin. Those who did have contact with parents and siblings often had not informed them about their experiences of domestic violence and homelessness because of stigma or feelings of shame; others did not want to burden their family members with knowledge about their situations.

"Seeking help in a refuge is like a stigma for our community and people are too ashamed to say these things... whenever they know about my situation, they just step back" (Bina, age 32).

"My family doesn't know what is going on and I am living this life, do you know, of nothingness. I feel my pride is being crushed" (Delilah, age 30).

It is important to note that, despite the challenges they faced, migrant women did not see themselves as victims and a very considerable number expressed strong self-determination in relation to their situations. Others clearly perceived a 'victim' role as an undesirable and inaccurate portrayal of their lives, situations, and experiences.

"I don't want to go and spread the word around that I was abused, I don't want people to look at me and think 'oh the poor thing, the victim', you know? Because I am more than that" (Delilah, 30).

Migrant women were proactive in their efforts to resolve their homelessness. Many, for example, had established positive relationships with service staff members, and had tried to access education and to improve their English language skills. However, they faced numerous structural barriers related to welfare, the labour market and housing structures. These restrictions impacted strongly on their ability to access housing.

## Conclusion

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As highlighted earlier in this paper, an association between gender-based violence and homelessness is relatively well documented throughout Europe (Jones, 1999; Edgar and Doherty, 2004; OPDM, 2005; FEANTSA, 2007; Robinson *et al.*, 2007; Jones *et al.*, 2010; Quilgars and Pleace, 2010; Mayock and Sheridan, 2012). However, there has been little attention dedicated to the dynamics of this relationship for either migrant or non-migrant women who experience homelessness. This paper specifically sought to move beyond simply documenting an association between gender-based violence and migrant women's homelessness by focusing on broader issues and experiences that surround the relationship. The findings presented uncover a complex mix of social, economic, legal and cultural factors as impacting migrant women's 'journeys' to homelessness.

The analysis has limitations as well as strengths. In terms of the latter, migrant women were well-represented in the study's larger sample. The interviews conducted sought to provide women with opportunities to articulate their experiences in their own words, and the analysis was grounded in their life stories. Nonetheless, the sub-sample of migrant women is relatively small and does not claim to 'represent' the experiences of all migrant women who experience housing instability and homelessness in the Irish context. Although never the aim, this is an important caveat, and draws attention to the need for additional and ongoing research and monitoring of housing and homelessness among migrant women. In terms of the broader European context, the dynamics explored in this paper are clearly illustrative in nature but are nonetheless relevant to other countries with a documented problem of homelessness among migrant women. Migrant women are a lesser researched sub-group of the homeless population; their experience of gender-based violence, and its impact on their homeless pathways, is poorly understood.

Gender-based violence was a prominent 'trigger' of homelessness among the migrant women interviewed, and an experience that had far-reaching economic, social and personal consequences. The experience of intimate partner violence interacted in powerful ways with broader factors, and these in turn influenced women's responses to their abusive home situations, serving to prolong their exits from abusive relationships in many cases. Economic stability, food and housing were primary considerations for the women and, for most, the economic consequences of leaving an abusive home were severe. Those whose immigration status depended on that of their spouses were particularly vulnerable as they lost their legal status upon leaving these relationships and also faced exclusion from both the labour and housing markets.

While economic factors strongly mediated women's responses to gender-based violence, there were other significant influences on women's responses. For example, women's experiences in their home countries sometimes shaped their perceptions and influenced their responses to intimate partner violence. It appears that a considerable number risked being socially isolated by their communities, family members and friends in the event of disclosing abuse by an intimate partner, while others did not perceive that they could approach a relevant authority or social service for help. Women's lack of knowledge about available support services emerged strongly from their accounts and made their experience of becoming homeless more daunting, intimidating and frightening. This was particularly evident in the case of women who relied on strangers for advice on seeking help, highlighting women's lack of knowledge about available services and supports, and their fear of approaching services directly. Migrant women frequently occupied a space in which they acknowledged their need for help and advice but were simultaneously uncertain about their eligibility for support.

Many of the issues and experiences that impacted migrant women's paths to homelessness continued to act as barriers to their exiting homelessness. Their marginal economic positions and their limited access to housing were the strongest obstacles to housing stability. The women also identified problems with English language proficiency, as well as challenges associated with balancing child care responsibilities, while searching for and/or maintaining a job. Dealing with the aftermath of gender-based violence also compromised their ability to seek employment and housing since many had to prioritise their own and their children's physical and mental health needs on separating from their abusers.

The findings demonstrate that homelessness among migrant women was strongly connected to their socio-economic positions. For example, all who reported experiencing gender-based violence also experienced economic difficulties related to their immigration status, and/or economic dependence on their partners. This concurs with previous research which suggests that women are more likely to report economic-related issues as a major factor leading to their homelessness (Baker *et al.*, 2003). The structural underpinnings of the relationship between gender-based violence and homelessness are therefore highlighted, demonstrating migrant women's responses as intimately linked to broader factors – economic, social, legal, cultural – within which their lives are played out and ultimately bound. The findings also demonstrate that migrant women's experiences of gender-based violence interact in powerful ways with factors such as immigration law, welfare and domestic violence policy. Women can gain independence from abusive partners by seeking support from housing and welfare systems. However, the social and legal position of many of this study's migrant women excluded them from these

systems of support. Consistent, then, with other research and commentary, the intersection of welfare regimes and immigration policy is critical to understanding migrant homelessness (Edgar *et al.*, 2004; Harrison *et al.*, 2005; Pleace, 2010).

Arising from the study's findings are several implications for the provision of services that are responsive to the needs of migrant women who experience homelessness. Perhaps most obviously, migrant women need better access to information about available services. Furthermore, information and communication about services and access to services needs to be culturally mediated in gender-sensitive ways. Women's understanding of systems and services is clearly of great importance and will determine what services they access and whether they may access services at all. The findings also highlight the need for culturally competent service provision as well as an emphasis on empowering migrant women. Other important implications include the need for gender issues to be taken into account in planning and monitoring homeless services, so that services are gender-proofed for their impact on women in general and women in migrant communities specifically. Finally, and importantly, gender perspectives need to be incorporated into all areas of homeless policy (Edgar and Doherty, 2001) and access to housing for migrants needs to be an integral part of national integration policies and strategies (Edgar *et al.*, 2004).

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# The Temporary Accommodation of Homeless Families in Ile-de-France: Between Social Emergency and Immigration Management<sup>1</sup>

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› **Abstract** *In France, an increasing number of homeless people are immigrants. Since the late 1990s in the Paris region, some homeless immigrant families with children have been looked after by a care and temporary accommodation system in motels. This article focuses on the development and functioning of a public policy that brings the management of migratory flows and the world of social emergency closer together.*

› **Keywords** *Families; migrants; motels; temporary accommodation*

We are heading for the stadium with Amadou. On our way, we walk past a nursery and primary school. I ask him whether he has ever tried to register his daughters here. He says: “No, the city council doesn’t want motel children. Also, if we are ‘moved’ by the Samusocial, it means we’ll have to put them down for another school. That’s why we are keeping them in their school in the 13<sup>th</sup> district in Paris”. Amadou adds that he is waiting to be granted a dwelling by the APTM (Association pour l’accompagnement social et administrative des migrants et leurs familles – an organization that assists migrants) before enrolling his children somewhere else.

(Field journal, November 2011, a Parisian suburb).

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## Introduction

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The number of homeless families with children represents an increasing proportion of the homeless population in Ile-de-France, a Parisian Region; <sup>2</sup> there are now estimated to be at least 20 000 such homeless families. Parents with children under the age of 18 are entitled to be taken into care as a family, and they are also eligible to be granted accommodation, whatever their administrative status (Guyavarch and Le Méner, forthcoming); this is contrary to what happens in other European countries, where public services for homeless people are not always accessible to foreigners and undocumented migrants (Sprakel, 2010). These families are essentially made up of immigrants, asylum seekers, undocumented individuals, and those with residence permits.

The link between homelessness and immigration in EU member States was explored by Edgar *et al.* (2004) and the accumulated research evidence demonstrates that immigration modifies the profile of homelessness (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2010). This is notably the case in France (Brousse, 2009). It remains the case, however, that in comparison with the USA, migrant and homeless families are under-researched in the European context (Toro, 2007). This is particularly notable in the French specialized literature (Le Méner, forthcoming). The limited documentation of homeless families in the academic world and the low visibility of the issue in the public space – at least until relatively recently, as shall be seen later – raise a question that needs to be discussed, and that acts as an invitation to explore the complex mechanisms of public policy with regard to homeless families.

Thus, the purpose of this article is to more adequately document the structures of contemporary homelessness, as well as the actors involved in providing services for homeless families in Ile-de-France. The first aim is to provide a descriptive account thereof, inasmuch we do not know how the homeless families are taken into care. Using a political sociology of public policies perspective (Duran, 2010), the aim is to identify the actors involved, their interests, objectives and means of action, as well as the consequences of their actions. Thus, this article particularly probes the relationships between the State, the associative sphere and the private sector in a context of the transformation of homelessness on the European scale.

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<sup>2</sup> The ENFAMS project is also under the supervision of a multidisciplinary scientific committee and it is financially supported by various partners: the Institut de Veille Sanitaire, the Macif Foundation, the Regional Health Agency of Ile-de-France, the Fondation de France, Sanofi, the Observatoire National de l'Enfance en Danger, the Caisse Nationale des Allocations Familiales and the French unit of Unicef. More information at: <http://observatoire.samusocial-75.fr/index.php/fr/nos-enquetes/familles>.

## Context and Methodology

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An expansion in services for homeless people occurred during the same period that the 'social exclusion' issue appeared on the political agenda (Paugam, 1996) – when the economic crisis and unemployment were beginning to affect hitherto protected social classes. The increasingly visible presence of homeless people in public spaces was perceived as a call to action, particularly by physicians who established emergency services. Day and night centres, outreach teams, and emergency telephone contact points were created and managed by associations, which were amply funded by the State, as was the case for the Paris Samusocial, created in 1993 by Dr. Xavier Emmanuelli. Along with the institutionalization of social emergency, the emergency accommodation sector that targeted the most destitute among the population (Damon, 2001) moved progressively away from integrated accommodation, which was mostly dedicated to people experiencing difficulties in finding social housing (Houard, 2011.) The innovative Housing First policy broke with the idea of the staircase model and it demonstrated that immediate access to housing is the primary answer to homelessness (Houard, 2011). Social or private rented accommodation was then acquired by the authorities (the State or town councils) for homeless couples, and notably for families. For those who would otherwise not fulfil the required conditions to remain in their accommodation, special terms of access were devised. Associations and social services, through collaborative relationships set up in 2010 (SIAO, Integrated Systems of Reception and Orientation), settled people in long-term accommodation as well as in vacant lodgings.

Homeless families could then benefit from these measures, but with certain conditions, such as the possession of a residence permit. Moreover, supply appeared not to be meeting demand as a result of the structural shortage of social housing. Indeed, many families still had to be accommodated by the social emergency sector. More accurately, they were mainly taken into care by 'social' motels that were owned and managed by private actors, but had commercial relationships with, or booking services through various homeless associations – of these the Paris Samusocial was predominant in Ile-de-France.

The paper is based on recent multidisciplinary action research on children and homeless families led by six researchers: two sociologists, two epidemiologists, one demographer and one statistician. The research includes fieldwork that began in September 2011 in a Parisian suburban motel that accommodates homeless families; an epidemiological and sociological survey of a randomized sample of 1000 families living in Ile-de-France; and finally, an analysis of relevant policy. This paper mainly relies on the latter, which is based on about fifty interviews – begun in July 2010 – of major actors involved in the provision of temporary accommoda-

tion and the social follow-up of families in Paris. Analyses of institutional archives and a corpus of press articles are also included, and other materials from observations of families and social contributors are employed selectively.

The paper commences by identifying various actors within the care system for homeless families: a homeless family; a provider of temporary accommodation; the Samusocial of Paris, which is commissioned by the State; an accommodation site (in this case a motel); a city in Seine-Saint-Denis; a school located in another department, namely Paris' 13th district; a social service that provides access to temporary accommodation for certain immigrant families; the APTM (Association pour l'accompagnement social et administratif des migrants et de leurs familles), an organization specialized in the integration of migrants, notably migrant families other than asylum-seekers. This list suggests a noticeable transformation of French policy on homelessness, which has moved away from a singular focus on single homeless people to include immigrant families, who should be dealt with *a priori* under immigration and asylum policies. How can we account for the fact that these families have ended up in the charge of structures usually targeted at single homeless people? This question becomes even more significant when one considers that it goes beyond the French frame alone; at the European level, there is a discernible increase in reliance on homeless services within migration management policies (Edgar *et al.*, 2004.)

To answer that question necessitates looking first at the historical circumstances that established the Samusocial of Paris as having a central role in the care of these predominantly migrant families, when the skills and reputation of the organization were developed around outreach work for single homeless people considered to be isolated. The paper will examine how motels have become the almost exclusive accommodation model for these families. Next, it will show that taking these families into care results in a division of labour between specialized organizations and a central accommodation operator. We shall call the specialized organizations 'platforms', as those in the field do; these are involved in the social, and sometimes legal, affairs of families, depending on their administrative status. The central accommodation operator, the PHRH (Pôle d'Hébergement et de Réservation Hôtelière), an accommodation and booking service that is integrated within the Samusocial, is responsible for assigning families to, or moving them between, available motels. Finally, it will be suggested that this work division, in a context of increasing demand, is a source of complexity and emerging problems for those involved.

## **Increasing Numbers of Families in the Accommodation System: the Samusocial and Motels as Front Doors and Modes of Accommodation**

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The Samusocial of Paris (SSP) was created in November 1993 in order to help “those who do not ask for anything.” Mainly administered by the State and the City, the organization was the spearhead of a medical emergency intervention shaped by Xavier Emmanuelli. Until recently, the public action undertaken by the organization in addressing homelessness was mainly inspired by the ‘social emergency’ model (Cefai and Gardella, 2011). It first defines itself through a matrix analysis of the desocialization of single people living on the streets (Damon, 2001), yet today, while continuing to underscore the importance of social emergency and of directing its communication to the roofless, the SSP devotes more than three quarters of its budget to the housing of families. It is the principal housing provider for homeless families in Ile-de-France. For the first time ever, more than 17 000 parents and children have been taken into care by this organization since the beginning of winter 2011. In addition, the families who are allotted temporary accommodation by the SSP are mainly immigrant families that should more logically be the responsibility of migration and asylum seeker services, not of through social emergency services. Remarkably, 90% of the heads of family accommodated after having dialled the Parisian 115 number for emergency accommodation<sup>3</sup> state that they were born abroad.

According to those working in the Parisian Samusocial and Parisian social services, families began to appear in the social emergency structures on a large scale at the end of the 1990s, though social establishments have been accommodating families for a long time; for instance, the CHRS was open to families with children as early as 1974, while there are also the centres specifically for mothers with children under the age of three who are experiencing financial difficulties and educational problems with their children. Such families could also, however, be sheltered in unregulated structures or in cheap motels, which led to anxiety that was made public by a number of organizations at the end of the 1980s when ATD Quart Monde, for example, set up a colloquium concerning the fate of homeless families. The presence of families on the streets then became perceived as the new face of a poverty (Wodon, 1992) that affected people who lost their rental accommodation, or women who had been through a divorce or suffered spousal violence. The families that field workers were encountering by the end of the 1990s were different, however, in being foreign. This flow of families into the social services occurred during the increase in immigration that began in 1997 (Thierry, 2004). In 1997, the Samusocial started to take a small number of families into care, some of which had

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<sup>3</sup> The 115 are free emergency call-centres, open 24/7, that enable homeless people to request temporary accommodation. In Paris, the 115-centre is administered by the Samusocial.

irregular immigration status, yet it would be another two years before the increasing number of families accommodated, and the alerts that ensued, led to the institutionalization of admitting these families. It was only under exceptional circumstances that the Samusocial officially became the 'front door' for families seeking temporary accommodation, when on a particular October night, approximately forty parents and children were met on the street and taken into care by outreach teams. The central administration decided then to entrust the emergency accommodation of families to the SSP.

As an answer to an out of the ordinary and yet predictable situation, the State granted the responsibility for homeless families to an organization dedicated to humanitarian intervention that, while having experience in providing temporary accommodation and emergency care, had traditionally targeted isolated individuals. The way in which this new policy was integrated into the sphere of social emergency services is not unique, but is another case of a humanitarian response to exceptional conditions, where the State then resorts, on a long-term basis, to systems already in place.

As early as 1999, the 'Paris 115 services' (as interviewees call them) became the front door, portal, screen or filter for the accommodation system. This necessitated an overview and adjustment of their modes of operation, as instead of having to reach isolated individuals on the streets, they now had to find temporary accommodation for families. Some of the 115 staff progressively improved their competencies in accessing temporary accommodation (primarily motels at this point) and in the provision of advice for families, thus favouring the formalization of a 115 family centre.

This was undoubtedly an opportunity for that organization to reach out to a swiftly expanding population that was only a marginal focus of public action at that time. It was also an opportunity that could not be refused as it came directly from the State – the main funder of SSP. Today, some members regret that the focus of their organization was diverted from its original mission to tackle the issue of street homelessness. Conversely, others consider that the change allowed the organization to target one of society's most underprivileged groups, namely people with children who immigrated under constraint, who are mostly undocumented and whose administrative status is uncertain. Be it as it may, the Paris 115 services have become, for a growing number of primarily foreign families, the road by which to access housing through temporary accommodation.

As figure 1 shows, the numbers and the length of the stays of the families have increased considerably since the end of the 1990s. In 1999, families represented 13% of 115 service users, and 15% of overnight stays. The number of families



accommodated by 115 services therefore saw an increase of about 500% between 1999 and 2009, while the average annual length of stay jumped from 18 to 130 days. In 2009, families represented 52% of the users and 76% of overnight stays.

**Figure 1: Evolution of services and overnight stays between 1999 and 2010**



Data source: Paris 115 services

The families in question consider the temporary accommodation provided as a step towards housing. It remains the case that their being taken into care, as happens today in the Paris region, owes much to the emergency action model in place when they entered the system at the beginning of the 1990s. The State thus left the defining and administration of the issue to local associations, when it was, in fact, the State's domain. In doing so, it was following a pattern of delegation that was thoroughly analysed through the political sociology of public action (Duran and Thoenig, 1994), as well as shrewdly described by Damon who studied the issue of homelessness (Damon, 2001). A feature, albeit little recognised, of that care is temporary accommodation in motels. From 1999 onwards, motels became the almost exclusive mode of temporary accommodation for homeless families, as the accommodation structures that had been used until then could not cope with the constant increase in requests. In the 1990s, homeless families were either taken into care through a structure designed for asylum seekers or through a 'non-specific' structure that addressed the homeless issue.

On the one hand, accommodation capacity grew in the 1990s through the multiplication of emergency shelters in large collective centres where accommodation was distributed on a nightly basis; these aimed at first to meet the needs of single men (Damon, 2001) and were rarely open to families. In theory, they provided accommodation unconditionally, but they were considered poorly adapted to families both

by social workers and the State. As a former manager of accommodation for asylum-seeking families puts it, sheltering children in these places was “simply unthinkable”; “we would find a direct solution, even in a motel.” Indeed, some families were then accommodated in motels for short stays – families stayed for an average of 18 nights in 1999 – or in centres designed for long-term stays. On the other hand, the accommodation of asylum seekers was assured by specialized centres, reception centres for asylum seekers (Centre d’Accueil pour Demandeurs d’Asile (CADA)), which were created in 1991. Theoretically, people were accepted according to the degree of emergency involved (Kobelinsky, 2010), and families with children were given priority over single people.

The two national structures combining temporary accommodation and the social follow-up of families were inundated by the constantly increasing number of requests. Even if capacity was markedly increased in the CADA, it was still insufficient to contain the demand. The saturation of these establishments was one of the major reasons that motels became the chief source of temporary accommodation for families in Ile-de-France at the end of the 1990s. The ‘social motels’ (furnished motels, former tourism establishments converted for the reception of homeless people, and motel residences) were then used as a supply of temporary accommodation in place of the non-specific structures and reception centres for asylum seekers. At the end of the 1990s, social motels were called ‘hotels secs’, a phrase that can be found in interviews with the protagonists of the time, in the archives of the associations, or in the reports of meetings between the associations and the supervising administration. The phrase expresses quite well the function of the motels: basic temporary accommodation intended to provide help but without any other supplementary services. These establishments were declining in number, though were still relatively numerous compared to the other types of temporary accommodation (Jankel and Lévy-Vroelant, 2007), but their commercial nature and their locations allowed temporary and flexible use, which had the consequence of involving the State to a much lesser level than specifically adapted centres and services. The motels, as they were used then and continue to be used today, were seen by the State as emergency temporary accommodation catering to needs created by the unavailability of places in more adapted centres. As the number of furnished, temporary accommodation centres began to decrease dramatically, the state acknowledged their *de facto* social function.

That function of ‘transitory accommodation’ (Lévy-Vroelant, 2004) as provided by the motels is not new. In the large French cities and the Paris region first, motels have been receiving migrants and destitute people since the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Roche, 2000; Faure and Lévy-Vroelant, 2007). Since the 1980s in Paris, associations have provided motel accommodation to individuals who, in some circumstances, have lived there for whole years, and, on a more limited basis, to families in dire straits.

Yet, from 1999 onwards, the massive recourse to social motels to accommodate asylum-seeking or undocumented families contributed to the coming together of, and even the cross-over between, asylum policy and homelessness policy (Noblet, 2000; Frigoli, 2004). The temporary accommodation of these families, even those in irregular immigration situations, was perceived as an obligation by the ministries in charge of immigration and asylum – a humanitarian obligation arising due to the presence of children. Yet, these families became the beneficiaries of social emergency because there were no more places available in the structures dedicated to the reception of migrants. This is another well-documented phenomenon at the European level (Edgar *et al.*, 2004): the strong influence on homeless services of migration management policies. While homeless services have compensated for deficiencies in the reception structures for migrants, according to European recommendations, installations for homeless people should not be considered adequate substitutes for dedicated asylum-seeker services.

The confusion between asylum policy and action for homeless people corresponds to the confusion between asylum policy and the management of migratory flows. In Europe as in France from the 1980s, the increase in the number of asylum seekers has been a matter of debate (Düvell and Jordan, 2002), and asylum seekers have been treated with growing suspicion. In France, this meant restricting the entry of foreigners, whatever their motivations, to French territory, such that the State then took the risk of failing to differentiate between the management of migratory flows and asylum policy; this risk has been growing since the end of work immigration in 1974. When one considers the number of foreigners that were accommodated in such motels, it is surprising that this type of accommodation is largely absent from research on contemporary places in which foreigners are ‘enclosed’ (Kobelnisky and Marakemi, 2009).

Temporary motel accommodation was almost exclusively used for immigrant families and therefore became a substitutive solution both for homeless centres and centres designed for asylum seekers. Notably, being able to receive families without the need to demonstrate a residence permit or asylum request receipt meant that this type of temporary accommodation also enabled the ‘protection’ of families with children, famously known as the ‘neither-nor’, as they were barely in a position to be sorted out and scarcely in a position to be deported. Different from CADA or reception centres for other homeless people; temporary accommodation in motels did not involve a follow-up by social workers. Coupled with an increase in the numbers of homeless families, the perpetuation of that temporary accommodation solution then led to a progressive separation of temporary family accommodation by the Samusocial and social follow-up on those families, depending on their administrative status, which was looked after by associations specialized in helping migrants.

## **The Progressive Separation of the Social Follow-Up of Families and their Temporary Accommodation**

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Three channels were created in the early 2000s in order to cope with the increasing numbers of foreign families calling the Paris 115, and to ensure social follow-up with families according to their administrative status, and not related to emergency or exclusion criteria, as was the case for individuals. These three channels were the Coordinating Agency for the Reception of Asylum-Seeking Families (CAFDA), which was administered by CASP (Centre d'action sociale protestant/The Protestant Social Action Centre); the 'family platform' of the Order of Malta; and the Reception and Support Platform of the APTM (Association pour l'accompagnement social et administrative des migrants et leurs familles).

Though the Paris 115 services were used at that time by families as a front door into structures of care, the staff had no, and remain without, training in the social follow-up of these families, whose needs differed from the usual requirements of the few families previously resorting to the 115 services. As a current manager of the 'family service', who also took part in its development, says: "we all cracked up when we started to take the families seeking asylum into care." The high numbers of homeless families seeking asylum justified the creation of a second platform in August 2000: the CAFDA, the mission of which was to ensure the social follow-up with, as well as the social and legal support of, these families. From March 2001, it also looked after their temporary accommodation. That platform was entrusted to CASP, an association dedicated to the support of the most destitute. The CASP had already been responsible for the reception of Kosovar families, who arrived in the context of an emergency and because there was nowhere else to accommodate them. It seems that this experience was the deciding factor in entrusting CAFDA to CASP.

For the asylum seeking families, the Paris 115 services still remained the front door to the temporary accommodation structure, but after a few nights in a motel reserved through 115 services, their temporary accommodation was theoretically ensured by CAFDA. This platform was, however, rapidly confronted with a triple problem. First, according to an activity report of the time, there was a lack of places in CADA on the national level; second, some families became stuck within the structure, largely because of the lengthening of the time necessary to be acknowledged as an asylum seeker and because of the presence of families requesting territorial asylum who could not be granted their request (this difficulty was later reinforced by a hindrance to domiciliation and the increasing time necessary to conduct the investigations). Finally, the third problem was the presence of families unconcerned with seeking asylum, which meant that some requests for care addressed to CAFDA were left unsatisfied. A current general manager of the CASP reports that they "realized that there were not only asylum seekers in the popula-

tion. There were refugees, who therefore had a status. There were also people who were not eligible for asylum. There were even French people who were lost there for reasons we knew nothing about.”

That difficulty led to a further division of families according to their administrative statuses. In 2002, two new platforms were then created: one for the ineligible families and another for families in an ‘irregular’ immigration situation, or in the midst of being processed (depending on how their situation was viewed).

The family platform of the Order of Malta was therefore organized specifically to provide temporary accommodation, and the follow-up and support of families definitively ineligible for asylum.<sup>4</sup> The choice of that organization can first be explained by the social activities it had been developing over a number of years with homeless people, notably in partnership with the SSP. It also had the advantage of existing in a number of countries from which, it was thought, many people ineligible for asylum came. According to the personal archives of the former manager of that platform, “the Order of Malta was asked to become the operator of a ‘family’ mission. It would be a public service mission either aiming at the integration of certain families in France or at the organization of their departure (training, amount of money necessary, return to the home country) according to the choices of the families”.<sup>5</sup> The Order hesitated to accept the proposal, however, as it had no experience with migrants, but the Board accepted the mission submitted by the government, connecting it with one of the secular missions of the Order, that of assisting ‘displaced families’. Nevertheless, the platform quickly understood that assisting the return of families to their home countries would not be very successful, and it then focussed on the first aspect of its mission – assistance with the integration of families.

Another platform was created at the same time to help undocumented families who had not applied for asylum. It was administered by the Association pour l’accompagnement social et administrative des migrants et leurs familles (APTM), an association created in 1967 to facilitate the rehabilitation of migrant workers, and according to its current manager (and former temporary accommodation manager), this platform is “a support unit dedicated to foreigners in precarious situations. That activity was created in 2002. So, at that time, the State had appealed to the APTM, since the SSP was coping with quite a number of foreigners, that is to say undocumented foreign families. So, as for temporary accommodation, the Samusocial had indeed an answer, but there was a problem with the social follow-up.”

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<sup>4</sup> The French Office for Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons; then by the National Court of Asylum.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Sep 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002 meeting, which took place at the Ministry in charge of the fight against exclusion.

At the beginning, the procedures for shifting between platforms seemed to be working quite well. The division of people and care seemed to be fully achieved, and migrants then came under these three new channels for both temporary accommodation and social work. Contrary to the Paris 115 services, which oriented families towards sectorized social services or adequate actors, these platforms initially offered migrant families 'comprehensive care', ensuring not only their social follow-up, but also their temporary accommodation. However, almost ten years later, one service of the SSP – the temporary accommodation and booking service (Le Pôle d'Hébergement et de Réservation Hôtelière – PHRH) – today regulates the temporary accommodation of families within the jurisdiction of the Paris 115 services, but it also receives families that fall within the jurisdiction of the three channels. How can one account for this evolution, which resulted in the centralization of temporary accommodation for families and a refocus on finding shelter?

Centralization resulted from the professionalization of temporary accommodation provision. In interviews with various platforms, the "amateurism", the "absence of formalization" and the "rushed job style" characterizing temporary accommodation work over the first years was denounced. Each platform had developed its own group of motels without any outside consultation, and without harmonizing the selection criteria of comfort, healthiness, safety and prices. Negotiations with motel owners were also done directly to the best of their ability, and prices fluctuated from one place to the other, as did the quality of motels, where some 'slum landlords' made a prosperous business out of the reception of families.

One particularly tragic event, which was given wide media coverage, led to a change in the way these platforms approached temporary accommodation. It was a fire that occurred in March 2005 in the Paris Opéra Motel, and which killed 20 of the 79 people then accommodated by the SSP for the City of Paris -10 were children. After that fire and after other fires that occurred the same year, several measures were taken by the State to control the use of motels (Revenue Court, 2007). The most important objective was to make sure that motels were safe, healthy and in good financial standing, thereby creating a quality chart. The Prefecture, or the state administration in charge, drew up a list of rejected motels, which was sent to the platforms. The motels of the Paris 115 services, those of the APTM and those of the Order of Malta were audited, with the audit being carried out by the 'motel service' of the SSP, which had started its own internal securization of the motels right before the Paris-Opéra fire. It took six months for four people to visit all the motels. Jobs such as 'mediators' and 'checkers' were created; mediators would visit the families in motels and ask them about their living conditions, while checkers would make sure that the services charged for were, indeed, the services provided.

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This experiment was the brain-child of the PHRH, which was born in January 2007. The acknowledgement of the work done by the SSP motel services on the occasion of that experiment led to this organization being entrusted with the temporary accommodation of families from the APTM and the Order of Malta in 2007, while these platforms had obvious problems with accounting for overnight stays in motels. The temporary accommodation of the CAFDA was absorbed in 2009. The PHRH recruited for, and attached a 'commercial and development' service to its existing services, and subsequently became "a very big social tour operator", as one of its members put it.

That service fits perfectly in the SSP's culture of social emergency, which was the organization under which it came. The PHRH was thus in charge of a simple mission, that of finding shelters without any discrimination and without having to do any social follow-up. For the State, with a logic based on safety and rationalized costs, the temporary accommodation of families became a matter of booking, managing and controlling motels. The PHRH was to consider all families on the same grounds, whatever their association of origin, the instruction being not to favour any platform. "This is as if we had, indeed, mixed the asylum seeking families with the homeless population without any distinction," a manager of an association says. Another manager agrees: "what's more, as it's administered by the same service, by the Samusocial, we treat them as we treat the homeless. Let me repeat myself, this is not at all derogatory for the homeless but I do think that some things are mixed up and that it's not making sense." Emergency temporary accommodation, administered by the PHRH, thus became autonomous from the social work done by the platforms for immigrant families. That division of work, in a context of increasing demand, then engendered new problems that the various actors working with homeless people would have to face.

## **A Source of Difficulties for Actors**

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The division of social work and temporary accommodation, in a context of constantly increasing requests, notably increased the issue of geographical distance, as it raised the problem of the different professional cultures between actors working with the families. The geographical scattering of the PHRH places of temporary accommodation was all the more crucial in that it established the importance of cities and departments in the care system. The importance of the part played by local communities made it harder, once again, for the platforms to work. It also, naturally, made the daily lives of the families more difficult.

The increase in the number of people accommodated necessitated the platforms, and subsequently the PHRH, to increase the number of motels that were more and more spread out geographically. It also led to their working “relentlessly”, as one booking agent put it. The rooms provided had to be adapted to the structure of the families in question, and owing to the scarcity of available places, families might well be sent quite far away from where they expected to be accommodated.

When each platform managed temporary accommodation independently, there were arrangements between the social workers and the families to maintain the families in a favourable environment, even if they were staying in ‘over-occupied’ rooms. The orienting towards temporary accommodation appears to have been discussed more with the families, and the social workers proved to have been more sensitive to the wishes of their interlocutors than the current bookers are. The most directive and least opposable aspect of the PHRH temporary accommodation decisions was justified by the restrictive and non-dispensatory conditions that any accommodation in a motel must fulfil (safety, health, and comfort). The State supervisor regularly reminds the PHRH of these shelter conditions while demanding that exceptions be made in answer to particular circumstances, such as media-covered evacuation of squats, families followed by accommodation rights associations etc.; as such, the technical normalization of accommodation seemed to become increasingly imperative. The difficulty in meeting requests certainly reinforced that proclivity, but it led to ever increasing opposition between the professional ways of the PHRH and those of the platforms in charge of the social follow-up of families. What follows is testimony to that fact.

At the beginning of 2011, two people accommodated by the SSP in a Parisian motel died in a fire. The State asked the PHRH for explanations on the spot: was it a case of over-occupation? Did the motel comply with the norms? The motel had been visited a short time before, it had been judged to be in conformity with the safety standards, and no case of over occupation had been detected. Yet, everyone in the PHRH, whether on the platforms or in the bureaucracies or cabinets, was aware that, due to children being born during stays in the motels, there were some over-occupied rooms. Everyone was also aware that some motels were dysfunctional.

This episode legitimized intense and on-going work in the identification of problematic situations. Consequently, numerous families were moved from one motel to another for reasons of safety or over-occupation, as decided by the State. These forced movements caused problems for the platforms’ social workers and for many families, who often saw the orientations as damaging. Moving away from their places of work, social networks, schools, and sometimes having to find another job and/or other schools in the middle of the year, upset the lives of these families. While acknowledging the necessary traceability of accommodation – prescribed



by the State – and the necessary consultations involved between the platforms and the PHRH, the manager of one platform considers that these “structures sheltering people are as expeditious as they are sometimes perilous. Not only perilous in connection to the safety norms, but perilous also as far as the continuity, the admission, the reception and the sanitary situations related to the temporary accommodation conditions are concerned.”

The geographical scattering of the PHRH motels, often outside the reference department of the families, also signalled the appearance of a new actor in the system of care – the City, which reinforced the weight of another actor – the Department (Trostiansky, 2010). The part played by these actors were likely to make things harder for the platforms and, obviously, for the daily lives of the families. The sudden arrival of families in a city, at times in their hundreds, did not necessarily go unnoticed. As one commercial and development manager (formerly in charge of tariff negotiations and of extending the number of motels), put it: “at a given time, we sped up, some things were done at the beginning to answer the important needs. In Seine-Saint-Denis, we have settled on two sites and we’ve had to orient almost 800 people!” Some cities are well known by the PHRH and by platforms for deterring the establishment of some motels in order to make it more difficult for the ‘Samu children’ to join the city’s classrooms.<sup>6</sup> The PHRH learnt to show more diplomacy, as underlined by the same speaker: “so, today, we try not to overdo it, we must be clever, for if we behave just like brutes, we are going to undermine the cities and there’s no interest in that, I mean no interest in putting them into tremendous debts because of school canteen bills.” Yet, the hospitality of cities tends to fluctuate, no matter what their political tendencies. As a consequence, even if cities did not play a direct part in the evolution of motel availability, they could play a determining role in the regulation of the market, as they possess a centrality of position, to use the sociological terms of social network analysis.

The extension of the number of motels located outside Paris also gave increased importance to the Department. In principle, for families in France, whether refugees or of stable immigration status, social follow-up must be performed in the Department and in the sector where the families have an address; the Departments balked at accommodating ‘Samu families’ based on the assertion that these families were not the Department’s responsibility, though some of them had been living there for years. They chose to consider them as the responsibility of the City of Paris, as they had been managed by the Paris 115 services. Characteristically, the Departments put a limit to the “pouring of Parisian misery” into their territories; these families would create a considerable cost for the Departments, which were

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<sup>6</sup> A city cannot legally refuse to enrol a child in a primary class, yet it has the power to delay his/her integration.

already dedicating large amounts of money to temporary accommodation in motels for families residing in their own territories – almost 90% of the departmental budgets for childcare may be used for the accommodation of families.

The increase in the number of people to be accommodated thus raised a financial question, and it was up to each payer, whether the Department or State, to curb expenditure. The average price for an overnight stay has decreased, but the number of stays was constantly increasing. On one side, the platform quotas had risen, while on the other, the temporary accommodation of the 115 services had been provided with an 'open envelope', that is to say, with no financial restrictions, and the budget rose well beyond the budget initially allotted. That profusion notably allowed for the accommodation of families pending their shift to other platforms. The managers of the SSP confirmed that the State had been warning the 115 services for years that, just like other departments, Paris 115 had to work with a closed envelope and as such so, that it had to limit the temporary accommodation for families. Leaving the motels to go to asylum seeker reception centres or housing was difficult. An ever larger number of families had to be accommodated. The warnings were ignored until last spring.

In May 2011, the minister in charge of accommodation, Benoist Apparu, announced the reduction by one quarter of emergency accommodation funds, which directly concerned the families in motels. That announcement provoked uproar in the associative world, and a severe reaction from Bertrand Delanoë, Mayor of Paris and President of the Paris Department. The other mayors and presidents of Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-de-Marne and Val d'Oise reacted similarly. 'Homeless families', 'families without shelter', and 'families on the streets' were discussed in the public space as well as the media, and their accommodation became a public concern. A fight ensued in the media between the State – responsible for emergency accommodation – and the Departments – responsible for child care, and thus likely to accommodate some families.

Benoist Apparu intended to facilitate access to housing for families not considered to be in a social emergency along 'Housing First' lines.<sup>7</sup> Bertrand Delanoë identified the risk of families returning to the streets because of a lack of available social housing and budgetary cuts in the temporary accommodation sector. Indeed, the unanswered requests of the 115, once rare, had become part of their daily reality. The platforms were faced with the discontent of the families. The lobby of the

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<sup>7</sup> Created in 2006, the Don Quichotte movement shook the social emergency intervention (Cefai and Gardella, 2011). The measures that were taken afterwards symbolized a redirection of public action addressed to the homeless, less dedicated to answering immediate needs, and more interested in the access to rights, particularly housing rights: homeless people must get into permanent housing as soon as possible.

CAFDA became a place where homeless families were allowed to stay for nights on end. Police stations and the emergency wards of hospitals also sheltered families. The outreach work of the SSP met some of these families without being able to provide them with shelter. A social movement led by SSP workers and the DAL (Droit au logement/Right to Housing, an advocacy organization) made a big splash. Xavier Emmanuelli resigned from the presidency of the SSP, denouncing the short-term decisions of the “little men in grey” and creating a sensation. Paris released exceptional funds and thought about replacing the State. The State replied that the presence of children obliged the Departments to handle the families. The State and the City stuck to their guns while re-crediting the accounts of accommodation. In a pre-electoral year, the conflict took a political turn between a right-wing minister and a socialist elected member. The news was fuelled by the opposition between the State and Paris: in conflict on the question of responsibility when a newborn baby died on the street after its parents had failed to find temporary accommodation; at war again at the SSP board of directors when the City refused to vote for the budget for the coming year as it was considered “insufficient to handle the homeless families”, as was published in a press release from the city council. In terms of temporary accommodation, the question of responsibility – whether of the State or of Departments – had never been so important.

## Conclusion

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Describing the construction of the system of temporary accommodation for families brings to light the close link between the social emergency sector, and immigration and asylum policies. The emergency accommodation provided by SSP via the 115 services first became, at the end of the 1990s, the front door for families to the social work of various organizations targeting different categories of migrants. The platforms dedicated to supporting migrant families initially took charge of accommodation and social follow-up, but they externalized the accommodation function after the tragic fires of 2005. Accommodation in motels became professionalized and was entrusted to the PHRH as sole operator, as well as SSP, the mission of which was restricted to providing shelter without regard to the diversity of the people involved. The division between accommodation and social follow-up engendered difficulties for those working with the families, particularly due to the rising numbers of motels and people being accommodated.

In this context, the accommodation issue seems to have taken on a different status. Until recently, accommodation was presented as a means to act in favour of the families, in the hope of finding a solution to their administrative problems and also hoping to facilitate their access to housing. Now, it has become an end in itself in the public action arena, raising the issue of sharing funding and responsibility

between the State and the Department. Put another way, the issue that public powers were ostensibly seeking to solve was less the social follow-up of migrants and asylum seekers than the treatment of an excessive homeless population. One may wonder, then, if homeless families, mainly foreign families, did not end up being treated as homeless persons for whom shelter must be found when there was no solution to house them. That sudden visibility of the families, seen as homeless, in the public debate raises the question of their former invisibility as migrant families. The increased difficulties of regularization of status and of asylum seeking in terms of lengthened paper work, hardened social work and delayed exits from motels may lead one to think that problems are far from being solved and that, on the contrary, they are in a process of perpetuating themselves. We could then talk about a process of invisibilization of foreign families amongst homeless families as temporary motel accommodation mixes and scatters people first defined by public powers as asylum seekers, as people ineligible for asylum, or as migrants in an irregular immigration situation. Thus, social emergency could be seen as recycling the older issue of the reception of migrant families into a new problem – that of accommodating homeless families on whom an audience and a legitimacy are conferred that did not exist previously. It would be interesting to determine whether this recycling is relevant to other European countries as in most of them there is a clear increase in the numbers of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants amongst the homeless population.

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# A Dynamic Perspective on Homelessness: Homeless Families in Stockholm

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› **Abstract\_** *This article focuses on homelessness among families with children in Sweden, and particularly on the situation of homeless families in Stockholm. The objective is to contribute to the understanding of homelessness by suggesting an intersectional analysis that both includes different levels of analysis – that is, at structural, institutional and household levels – and allows gender, class and migration parameters to be taken into consideration. On the structural level, a restructured housing market in combination with a dismantling of housing policy has raised the threshold for entering the primary housing market, especially for individuals and families with limited economic resources. In addition to the risk of being discriminated against based on ethnicity, this restructuring has appreciably raised the difficulty of entering the market on a more general level. At the institutional level, local social authorities offer solutions to homelessness that have been developed for more traditional groups of homeless people, namely, single men with alcohol or drug problems; they lack the means to change the structural conditions of the housing market or the distribution of housing, and can only expand the secondary housing market, in which people are at risk of becoming 'trapped' as the gap between the primary and secondary housing markets becomes increasingly large. On the individual/household level, a combination of single motherhood, immigration and limited financial resources clearly increases the risk of homelessness and exclusion from other social arenas.*

› **Keywords\_** *Homeless families, Sweden, intersectional analysis, ethnicity/ migration, gender.*

## Introduction

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During the 2000s, the existence of homeless families became a focus of attention in Sweden. The term 'homeless families' implies children living in situations of homelessness, something that prior to this had been regarded as non-existent in Sweden, considered a society that places a high priority on children's wellbeing. This attention was first generated by an official report published in 2001, which stated that a considerable number of children, approximately 2000, lived in families that had been evicted from their homes. Since then, a governmental commission has looked into this issue further (SOU, 2005), and a policy of not evicting children from their homes has been a feature of the government's strategy against homelessness since 2007 (Socialdepartementet, 2007). A report from Stockholm University in 2010 stated that there were children in almost 75 percent of the households that had received eviction notices (80 percent in female-headed households and 27 percent in male-headed households). Of the households that had already been evicted, there were children living permanently in 30 percent of them and children living periodically in 50 percent. In 90 percent of cases, the formal reason given for eviction was rent arrears (Stenberg *et al.*, 2010).

Subsequent studies have suggested that, although evictions are *one* reason for families lacking housing of their own, much less research has focused on other factors (such as obstacles barring entrance to the regular housing market), which affect the ability of economically disadvantaged groups and persons/families with a previously recorded eviction to obtain housing (Nordfeldt and Olsson, 2006; Stockholms stad, 2009; Nordfeldt, forthcoming). Higher thresholds to the housing market suggest that homelessness among families is more of an entrance than an exit problem.

This article focuses on homelessness among families with children in Sweden, and particularly on the situation of homeless families in Stockholm. The overall objective is to contribute to the understanding of the complexity and dynamics of homelessness by adopting an intersectional analysis, combining factors on structural, institutional and individual/household levels, as well as stressing explanatory parameters such as ethnicity/migration, gender and class (see de los Reyes and Mulinari, 2005).

The article is based on a case study conducted in Stockholm between 2007 and 2008; the qualitative aspect of the study involved using records of interviews with representatives of the local housing market in Stockholm, local social authorities (LSAs) and homeless families. This material is supplemented with statistical information from surveys conducted by The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) in 2005 and 2011. In the first section below, the theoretical framework for the article is outlined. After that, statistical data from the above-

mentioned NBHW survey is presented. The empirical data from the case study is introduced by moving from the micro- (individual/household), via meso- (institutional), to the macro- (structural) level.

## **Towards an Intersectional Analysis on Homelessness**

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Homelessness is a complex issue, and one element of this complexity is the difficulty of defining it. How to define and determine situations in which a person or a family should be regarded as homeless differs over time and space. Homelessness is defined in relation to current living conditions in a country, but whom to consider homeless also differs between municipalities within a country, for example, and according to which agent and with what purpose information on homeless people is presented. Definitions are, thus, not neutral, and ways of defining homelessness are related to which explanatory factors are emphasised and which policies and measures are used to deal with this issue (Sahlin, 1992; Burt *et al.*, 2001; Hansen Löffstrand and Nordfeldt, 2007; FEANTSA, 2009).

The developing theorisation of homelessness has involved ever more complex and dynamic explanations, discussing, for example, 'pathways to homelessness' from a dual structural/individual division of explanatory factors (see e.g. Wolch and Dear, 1993; Swärd, 1998; Burt *et al.*, 2001; Anderson and Christian, 2003; Clapham 2003). In the early 1990s, the North American geographers Wolch and Dear developed a theoretical model that combined structural and individual explanatory factors. The model takes as its departure point structural factors such as welfare state restructuring and economic marginalisation, in combination with changes in housing policy and the housing market that led to a rise in the number of individuals/households at risk of becoming homeless, namely, 'protohomeless'. The path from protohomelessness to homelessness can be explained by structural factors in combination with individual trigger factors (Wolch and Dear, 1993).

This way of combining influential conditions corresponds with the theoretical perspective of *intersectionality*. De los Reyes *et al.* (2002) stress that people's living conditions are shaped in the intersection between several power structures. These power structures are constituted by socially constructed differences that are embedded in each other, and that are active and changing in different spatial and historical contexts. These dominating power structures are articulated in the unequal distribution of material resources, dominating ideologies and the construction of language itself, and the ways in which everyday life is lived.

The theoretical perspective of intersectionality was developed as a criticism of the perceived failure of feminist theories to connect gender to a more multidimensional and dynamic understanding of power relations. However, the researchers emphasise that

an intersectional perspective is also applicable outside the feministic field of research, where it can be used to develop analyses with a wider and more historical understanding of power and inequality in other fields (de los Reyes *et al.*, 2002). Mattsson (2010) stresses intersectionality as a way of analysing power structures, and understanding how different social categories relate to and interplay with each other.

In an intersectional approach, the individual is considered an acting subject, but the scope of the individual is limited and controlled by the category of belonging that is attributed to the individual. De los Reyes and Mulinari (2005) discuss Charles Tilly's concept of *durable inequality* in relation to intersectionality. Tilly argues that boundaries between different categorical belongings, allowing various levels of access to resources and control, provide the bases for durable inequality. These systematic differences between groups and individuals are maintained over time. It is therefore stressed as necessary that different socially and culturally constructed categories be examined empirically, and that how these interrelate to create a system of discrimination be considered (de los Reyes and Mulinari, 2005; Mattson, 2010).

For this study, an intersectional analysis provides a way to interrelate various levels of explanations. First, there is the individual/household level, which in this study includes the following: (1) descriptions of the families' socio-economic structure and (2) individual experiences. Secondly, there is the institutional level; the structural level contains the framework for the institutional level, but it is on this level that the responsibility lies for providing different types of housing solutions to individuals/families who are excluded from the regular housing market – this makes it crucial for this level to be included in the study of homeless families. Thirdly, there is the overall structural level encompassing housing policy, the structure of the housing market, and mechanisms of allocating housing.

## Homeless Families: The Statistics

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In 2010, a survey of homeless families was conducted by the social authorities in Stockholm. In this survey, 225 families were reported as being homeless by the Local Social Authorities (LSAs) around the city of Stockholm, and the total number of children (under the age of 18) in these families was 455. This is an increase on an earlier (2008) survey, which indicated that 160 families were homeless, with a total number of 347 children (Stockholms stad, 2011).<sup>1</sup> These surveys cover families

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<sup>1</sup> The types of temporary housing included in the surveys changed between 2008 and 2010, and more types of temporary housing are included in the latter. These surveys are therefore not fully comparable. At the same time it was suggested in the 2010 survey that reporting from city councils was inadequate, and that at least 95 more families should have been reported (Stockholms stad, 2011).

in contact with social authorities, and families that lodge, for example, with relatives or friends, or are renting an apartment on a second or third hand basis – these are captured neither by the statistics on homelessness, nor by the statistics on evictions if ejected from this type of housing. This is also the case for refugees that have gone underground after the rejection of asylum applications. Families with no or loose ties to the housing market are therefore not fully visible in the statistics.

The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW), which is responsible for the issue of homelessness at the national level, has conducted several nationwide surveys on the clients of social services and shelter residents since the early 1990s. In the 2005 survey, homeless families (with children under 18) were included for the first time in the questionnaire (Socialstyrelsen, 2006).<sup>2</sup>

According to the 2011 NBHW survey (Socialstyrelsen, 2012), of the total homeless population of approximately 34 000 individuals, 36 percent were reported to be parents of children under the age of 18, 46 percent of these were born abroad. Around half of the parents were caring for their children on a daily basis. The parents are reported to have fewer problems of mental health and/or drug and alcohol problems compared to the population as a whole. Reported causes of homelessness include family problems, and no known problems other than a lack of housing. These findings are in line with studies of homeless families in other countries that indicate economic conditions as a dominating risk factor (see e.g. Gould and Williams, 2010; Hulse *et al.*, 2010).

Around 25 percent of the families had been evicted, and a large number of families have different kinds of special rental contracts: 50 percent were in the so called ‘secondary housing market’ and around 20 percent were lodging with relatives and friends, or sub-letting temporarily (Socialstyrelsen, 2012).

The results from the NBHW surveys correspond with the findings of local surveys that have been carried out in Stockholm and in two districts in the city of Malmö. Single-mother families constituted the largest group of homeless families in Stockholm, making up 60 percent of the 225 homeless families. Single-father

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<sup>2</sup> The NBHW define homelessness in different situations. (1) Persons in acute homelessness, i.e. in emergency and sheltered accommodation / hostel, short-term accommodation or sleeping rough. (2) Persons admitted to institutional care of living in different forms of category housing. (3) Persons staying in long-term housing solutions, i.e. the so called secondary housing market, provided by the social services in the municipalities. (This category has been significantly broadened in the latest survey from 2011). (4) Persons living in short-term insecure housing solutions that they have organized themselves, e.g. subletting or living temporarily and without a rental lease with friends, acquaintances, family or relatives. A fifth category was added in the 2011 survey that included children and young people “in the grey area” between the family and community care (Socialstyrelsen, 2012).

families constituted 10 percent, and couples 30 percent. 74 percent of the homeless families had an immigrant background and had migrated from countries outside of the EU, while 18 percent were of Swedish origin. 6 percent of the homeless families had immigrated from non-Nordic EU countries and 2 percent from Nordic countries (Stockholms stad, 2011). Thirty families with children were identified as homeless in the districts of Malmö under consideration; seventeen of these consisted of a single mother with children, and all adults in the families were born outside of Sweden (Andersson and Swärd, 2007).

A feature that is not particular to homeless families is a lack of income from work, support from different types of allowances, and means-tested financial support. However, there are some differences: eleven percent of families with children have income from work, while only four percent of the entire homeless population has an income from work.

## **Gender and Immigration Experiences in Intersection**

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Thus, two distinct categories, plus a combination of both, appear in the statistical data: single mothers and immigrants. This raises questions about immigration/ethnicity and gender in relation to homelessness that will be further developed below. A common feature of homeless families is also a lack of income from work and a heavy dependence on different kinds of allowances, which indicates that it is also relevant to include a class dimension in explanations of homelessness. It is of course very simplistic to use the category 'class' in merely economic terms. Class has a long history as a topic of scientific and political debate (Gramsci, 1971; Bourdieu, 1984) and, through the development towards a more heterogeneous and complex society, social classes have also become more diverse (Eriksson-Zetterquist and Styhre, 2007). However, a fundamental determinant of class is access to resources. In Bourdieu's (1984) theoretical work on class, he identifies three dimensions of capital with their own relationships to class: economic, cultural and social capital. These forms of capital, which are both concrete (economic means) and abstract (cultural and social capital), represent resources that are core factors in defining the positions and possibilities of various actors in different fields. Cultural capital is connected to education, working life experience, language knowledge and manners learnt in childhood; social capital is connected with group membership and social networks (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1996).

Previous research has indicated that the immigrant population lives to a higher extent in rented housing, in less attractive neighbourhoods and in more overcrowded conditions than the Swedish-born population (Integrationsförvaltningen, 1999; Popoola, 1999; Sahlin, 2002). Research by FEANTSA indicates that families with an immigrant

background also run a higher risk of becoming homeless (FEANTSA, 2002; Edgar *et al.*, 2004). Immigrant families also reside to a higher degree with relatives and friends than the majority of the population and more often hold insecure housing contracts. Studies on housing segregation in Sweden have led to the conclusion that neither income nor education/occupational title can explain the disadvantaged positions that new immigrants and foreign-born Swedes face in the housing market. Molina (2005) relates their weak position in the housing market to both structural and institutional elements. In general, immigrants have lower incomes than people born in Sweden and little or no accumulated capital, and they also face the risk of discrimination by landlords and housing enterprises.

To a substantial degree, homeless families consist of households with a single female breadwinner, which implies that there is a clear gender dimension to this issue. Of the homeless families in the 2005 NBHW survey, 73 percent were single-parent families, and 78 percent of these were single mothers. A report on child poverty in Sweden (Salonen, 2006) points out that children living with a single parent (usually the mother) run three times the risk of being economically disadvantaged than children in two-parent families. Single-parent families lagged behind economically during the 1990s, especially in the larger cities, while children with an immigrant background or born in Sweden to foreign-born parents face four times the risk of being poor than children with a Swedish background.

These findings correspond to British studies that point out that single parents and their children are one of the most disadvantaged groups in today's society in terms of income and housing standards. Webster's (2000) study from the mid-1990s showed that a high proportion of single parents were claiming income support or had no income support, and that their housing standards were clearly below those of two-parent households.

In international research, a feminisation of poverty is emphasised as one explanation for homelessness among women. The fact that women have become breadwinners to a higher degree than before, and are often the sole supporter of a family, can lead to great economic vulnerability. The combination of part-time work, low-paid labour and a labour market moving towards a higher proportion of temporary jobs has increased the risks of becoming homeless (see e.g. Gunnarsson, 2000; Edgar and Doherty, 2001). Another reason for homelessness among women is domestic violence, with the consequent problems for women forced to leave/run away from their homes of finding new housing (Andersson and Swärd, 2004).

## At the Household Level: What Obstacles do Homeless Families face on the Housing Market?

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In this section, the experiences of homeless families are presented and the obstacles they experienced in the housing market are outlined.<sup>3</sup> Of a total of twelve families interviewed, seven were single mother families and five were couples; ten of the families had an immigrant background. There were between one and six children per family. The families lived in hotels, in training apartments, in emergency apartments, and in so-called transitory apartments.<sup>4</sup> One family, by the time of the interview, had recently managed to obtain a first-hand contract – that is, a direct contract with the owner of a dwelling, instead of subletting.

The experiences of homelessness are unique to each family, but there are also some common aspects to their stories. The causes of homelessness among the interviewed families were evictions due to rent arrears or disturbances; the cessation of second-hand (subletting) contracts; or, more commonly, losing the possibility of lodging with acquaintances or friends. A frequent reason for the latter was the arrival of asylum-seeking family members of a person with a residence permit, leading to overcrowding and the need to find somewhere else to stay. Typically, the person in the family who arrives first to Sweden rents a room in a shared apartment;<sup>5</sup> however, when the spouse and children arrive some years later, it is no longer possible for everyone to stay in the shared apartment and the family is forced to move out, often in situations where no other housing has been arranged.

For some of the women interviewed, their housing problems had begun following a divorce. This cause of homelessness among women also arises in the Stockholm survey, where 41 percent of participants cited this as a cause of homelessness among single mothers.

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<sup>3</sup> Eight of the interviews stem from a pilot study where interviews were conducted with homeless families taking part in a local project in a Stockholm suburb. Only the adults in the families were interviewed. The project was run by an LSA in co-operation with the local diaconal centre. The background to this project was that the LSA was incurring rising hotel costs for shelter for families lacking a roof over their heads. As a part of the project, the LSA offered emergency apartments to the homeless families and was actively working to help these families get long-term first- or second-hand rental contracts.

<sup>4</sup> Training and emergency apartments are administered by the LSA, while transitory apartments are provided by a foundation run by Stockholm City Administration.

<sup>5</sup> Since 1994, asylum seekers are entitled to arrange housing of their own outside of the asylum camps. In 2003, half of all asylum seekers lived in accommodation that they had arranged by themselves, instead of in the asylum camps, which are often situated outside the large cities where many asylum seekers prefer to live (SOU, 2003, p.75, s.40). One can, for example, lodge with family or friends while waiting for the decision concerning a residence permit.



Some families had children with an illness or handicap, which had affected their capacity to improve their economic situation or to use their energy to search for housing. There were also families where one parent was ill, which equally affected the capacity to search for housing actively.

The dominant shared feature among the families was limited economic means. The families' economic status depended on various kinds of allowances: social security benefit, child benefit, sickness benefits, housing allowances and others. One family comprised a single mother and two children; they were living in shared emergency housing with two other single mothers with children where each family had one room, and they all shared a living room, kitchen and bathroom. The woman interviewed described her housing problems as stemming from an old debt that had grown over the years. The debt originated from selling an apartment in the early 1990s at a substantial loss, and she describes how the growing debt made it impossible for her to get a first-hand contract: "I have tried a long time, many times. [Housing] companies don't want to let to somebody that has debts and records [of unpaid debts]. I also have no steady income, so it is almost impossible".

Stockholm is one of the few cities in Sweden that has a publicly organised waiting list for housing. Of the families with an immigrant background that were interviewed, several had been in Sweden too short a time to have had the chance to obtain a first-hand contract through this waiting list, but respondents see a rented apartment as their only option since they are aware that, while living on allowances, they have no chance of getting a housing loan. Many families describe what one could call a Catch-22 situation; not being able to fulfil the requirements to get a first- or even a second-hand contract (regular employment and a sufficiently high income), they have to rely on temporary housing, and the temporary housing situation, in turn, becomes a (further) obstacle to finding a job. It is hard to be an efficient job applicant when you have a chaotic living situation, and even if you manage to get as far as a job interview, not having a permanent address is definitely not considered an asset.

Another obstacle is the situation of the children. Living in a series of temporary dwellings, sometimes only for a couple of months at a time and not always in the same district of the city, it can be hard to arrange childcare. Many parents do not want their children to change kindergarten several times and therefore refrain from applying for childcare, or else the waiting lists for childcare are so long that they never receive a place for their children within the time that they remain in a given neighbourhood.

Most of the interviewed families wanted to stay in Stockholm; because of the problematic housing situation, moving to other places was not an option. The interviewees describe the importance of living near relatives and friends, and the

importance for the children of staying near their friends. Another reason mentioned by some of the interviewees is the labour market in Stockholm. The chance of getting work in Stockholm is considered to be higher than in smaller cities.

### **At the Institutional Level – the Secondary Housing Market of LSAs**

Owing to the deregulation of housing allocation, the issue of homelessness has become the responsibility of LSAs, which administer what has been termed by researchers as the 'secondary' housing market (Sahlin, 1996, 2006). This segment of housing consists of different kinds of shelters, monitored or supported housing, and various forms of 'social contracts' – for example, those for emergency housing and training flats, and transitional contracts. The terms used for these types of housing differ between different municipalities, but the procedure is that the LSAs hold the contract for the property, which is then subleased to homeless clients. These different kinds of shelters and dwellings are often organised in a so-called 'staircase of transition'. This has become a common way for LSAs to manage assisted housing, and it builds upon the logic that homeless people should advance stepwise upwards to housing with better conditions in terms of physical standards and space, integrity, freedom and security of tenure (Sahlin, 1996, 2005a). The idea of the staircase of transition was originally developed as a means for homeless substance abusers to return to independent living, where individuals, through the 'staircase', could get training in independent living while being monitored by social workers (Sahlin, 1996, 2005a).

The housing support offered by the LSAs to homeless families is at the upper end of this staircase and consists of different kinds of emergency, training and transitional apartments. Sometimes, the LSAs offer apartments with shared facilities, where a family has a bedroom, and shares the kitchen and bathroom with other families. A case study in one of Sweden's larger cities showed homeless families living on campsites, in hostels and hotels (the largest group in this study), with relatives or friends, in apartments with social contracts, in category housing, in emergency apartments or simply moving around (Andersson and Swärd, 2007). According to research from the early 2000s (Sahlin, 2007), the secondary housing market in Swedish municipalities expanded by 58 percent during the 1990s.

The secondary housing market constitutes something of a dilemma for the LSAs, especially in relation to homeless families. The LSAs focus on individual social problems, of which housing may be only one. An LSA has no means of affecting or controlling the allocation of housing on the housing market or the rules and regula-

tions that govern the ability to obtain a first-hand contract. With a rising threshold of entry into the housing market, therefore, the LSAs are becoming landlords to a growing number of people who are not, in fact, in their primary target groups.

### **At the Structural Level – a Restructured and Tougher Housing Market**

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Many of the families in Stockholm that lack housing have never been able to establish themselves on the regular housing market (Stockholms stad, 2009). Structural changes in the housing market over recent decades have made it more difficult to gain a foothold, especially in the larger cities. The emphasis on market orientation has grown stronger, with a concomitant decrease in public control over the allocation of housing. Simultaneously, there is a growing shortage of housing in larger Swedish cities, which is especially pronounced in the Stockholm area where there is a shortage of housing both within the city itself and in surrounding municipalities (Boverket, 2009). In particular, there is a shortage of rental apartments, and specifically, affordable rental apartments. An on-going trend of rental apartments becoming owner-occupied apartments has been most pronounced in Stockholm where a numbers of apartments, especially in the centre of the city and the inner suburbs, have been converted in this way.

The commercialisation of the housing market has also resulted in a changing role for the publicly owned segment of the housing market – the so-called ‘allmännyttan’ – that has resulted in the homogenisation of publicly owned and private housing companies. Today, there is no social responsibility inherent in the actions taken by owners of housing companies, and this holds for the publicly owned as well as the private companies. As a representative of a private housing company said: “One must not forget that our task is to manage property. We can sometimes, however, help economically or through cooperation when it comes to social issues”.

Landlords in Sweden are relatively free to set their own requirements for new tenants. They often claim to make individual assessments, but some requirements seem to be of a more general character (Nordfeldt and Olsson, 2006). The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (NBHBP) has made a list of requirements that are typically placed on new tenants (Boverket, 2005), which include a clear record in terms of rent arrears or other non-paid debts, long-term employment, and a salary that is at least three times the rent in question. Social security benefits are usually not considered sufficient as income. Furthermore, requirements can include a maximum number of children (in relation to the number of rooms in the apartment) and a clean record in terms of earlier neighbourhood

disturbances. Interviews with landlords in earlier research by The Institute for Housing and Urban Research at Uppsala University confirm these requirements (BråmÅ *et al.*, 2006).

One interviewed representative of a housing company stated the following: “Economic demands are foremost... We want to see that there is an income that can cover the rent, and therefore the income demands stand in relation to the level of rent. We are strict on records of unpaid debts, like everybody else. In certain cases, we demand references from previous landlords”.

It seems that there are some differences among the housing companies in Stockholm in terms of whether they regard social benefits as an acceptable source of income for a first-hand contract. One housing company accepts these in all parts of Stockholm, while others accept social benefits only in some districts. In practice, the effect of requiring an income that is three times the rent differs according to the rent levels of different neighbourhoods.

A view expressed by one representative of a private housing company in Stockholm is that there is a lack of knowledge among [ordinary] people about how to apply for housing – such as the fact that there is a range of private housing companies that advertise apartments on their own websites. Given the existing housing shortage, it is beneficial for individuals to have knowledge about different ways to apply for housing, and also to have contacts.

Some representatives of local authorities expressed the opinion that publicly owned housing companies have somewhat lower demands than private companies. However, another view was expressed that some of the smaller private companies do not necessarily have the same formal demands as the larger housing companies, but could sometimes be more flexible, while the experience among some interviewees was that demands differ between local areas, being lower in less popular neighbourhoods and, conversely, higher in more popular, that is, more central, areas.

In summary, increasing demands by landlords for guaranteed income from employment, an absence of previously unpaid debts, and personal references, have become increasingly significant, with the effect that economically disadvantaged households, and households that lack references from previous housing (such as refugees and other newly arrived immigrants, see Sahlin, 2002), experience great difficulties in being approved for a first-hand rental contract. Rented housing is, in many cases, the only option for individuals and families that do not possess the economic resources to purchase a house or an apartment, or that do not have a sufficiently high income to be able to get a housing loan from a bank.

Another obstacle is discrimination in the housing market; this is something that has been debated intermittently over recent years, but less intensively than issues such as labour market discrimination or discrimination within the educational system, for example. In the general requirements for tenants set by landlords, there is no ethnic dimension. However, the shortage of housing in the larger cities means that landlords have several possible tenants from whom to pick when apartments become vacant, and although ethnic discrimination is difficult to pinpoint, the requirements mentioned particularly exclude new immigrants who are dependent to a large degree on social security allowances (BråmÅ *et al.*, 2006), and who lack references from previous landlords in Sweden.

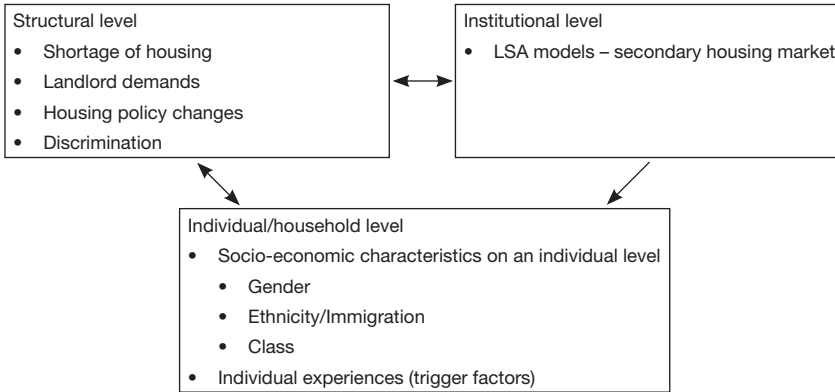
None of the families with an immigrant background that were interviewed cited discrimination as a cause of their problematic housing situation. However, studies on discrimination show that it can manifest in very subtle ways, such as slight differences in reception, offers and advice. For example, some landlords state that it is reasonable to reject an immigrant family based on the fact that there is a high concentration of immigrants in a neighbourhood; while this can be motivated by a wish to counteract ethnic segregation, it is a form of discrimination because it is an act of negative special treatment (Hyresgästföreningen, 2007).

Reports of discrimination to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (*Diskrimineringsombudsmannen*) have increased since the early 1990s, and the housing market actors that have been reported are both public and private landlords. Legal protection for people who are discriminated against in the housing market is weak, and it is difficult to prove discrimination since it is often indirect and not overt (Molina, 2005; Sahlin, 2002, 2005b). The absence of organised housing wait lists, for example, makes it difficult to assert that somebody else has been allowed to jump the queue and been ranked higher (Sahlin, 2002).

## **Conclusion: The Need for Dynamic and Intersectional Analyses of Homelessness**

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To capture a complex issue like homelessness, it is necessary to develop an analysis that takes several perspectives into account and considers the intersections between these perspectives. In this article, I have emphasising obstacles on the structural, institutional and individual levels that, intersecting, can leave families at risk of being homeless. Following the theoretical model developed by Wolch and Dear (1993) as described above, and an intersectional analysis (de los Reyes *et al.*, 2002; de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005), the discussions are summarised in the following figure.

**Figure 1: An intersectional perspective on homelessness**

There are clearly families that face a high risk of homelessness, or who find themselves in a marginal situation in relation to the regular housing market. The intersecting socio-economic characteristics of gender, immigration/ethnicity and class undoubtedly affect a family's risk of becoming homeless. Being a single mother and having recently immigrated are two significant factors that increase the risk of being in a marginal position or wholly excluded from the housing market. The class dimension in relation to homelessness is clearly related to a lack of economic resources, but entrance into the housing market can also be affected by resources like cultural and social capital in this field, such as lacking a social network, the right sort of references or knowledge on informal ways of finding housing.

On the structural level, a restructured housing market, in combination with a dismantled housing policy, has further raised the threshold for entering the primary housing market, especially for individuals and families with limited economic resources. Booming prices in the large cities, fewer rental apartments, and high requirements being placed on new tenants with regard to income and personal references, have added to the risk of being discriminated against because of one's ethnic background, and have appreciably increased the difficulty of entering the market.

There is a close connection between housing and labour; this is something that has only been touched upon briefly in this article, but it is an area that needs further research. There is, for example, a risk of being caught in a Catch-22 situation, where excluded or marginal positions in relation both to the labour market and to the housing market reinforce each other in a negative 'circle of exclusion' (Olsson and Nordfeldt, 2008).

On the institutional level, LSAs offer solutions to homelessness that have been developed for a more 'traditional' group of homeless people, namely, single men with an alcohol or drug problem. LSAs have no means by which to affect the struc-



tural conditions of the housing market or the distribution of housing, but can only expand a secondary housing market, in which people are at risk of being trapped as the gap between the secondary and the primary housing markets becomes increasingly large. Given the complexity of homelessness, it is an issue that cuts across several levels of explanatory factors. Intersectional thinking offers a framework for developing a dynamic understanding of homelessness and combining different levels of explanatory factors.

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# Control and Contain: a “Hidden Strategy” where a Common Strategy is Lacking: Perspectives from Italy

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- › **Abstract\_** *This article examines the configuration of homeless services in Italian metropolitan areas from a neo-institutional perspective based on the results of a number of local focus group studies conducted by fio.PSD, and on initial evidence from national research on homelessness and homeless services. The article highlights how the absence of a strategic common framework to combat homelessness in Italy, at local, regional and national level, has an isomorphic effect on local service systems, such that even without an express policy, local authorities and service providers invariably configure services to allow for the simple check, containment and management of homelessness.*
- › **Keywords\_** *Services for homeless people, strategies to combat homelessness, control*

## Introduction

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The international debate on strategies for combating homelessness and housing exclusion, which was started in Europe by FEANTSA, has been ongoing for a number of years (see for example, European Consensus Conference 2011; European Parliament, 2011; European Economic and Social Committee, 2011). In particular, the point has been highlighted that “[t]he most successful strategies display effective governance with strong co-operation between all involved. There is also

a need for thorough information and evaluation (...) but accurate and consistent data on homelessness is still lacking in most Members States. Strategies are generally made more effective with targets” (European Commission, 2010, p.10).

In this respect, the Jury at the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness stressed how these elements “should be monitored and reported upon: clear targets (...); an integrated approach covering all relevant policy fields; proper governance; proper data collection; a strong housing dimension; taking account of changing profiles of the homeless population, and particularly the impact of migration” (European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, 2011, p.24). However, in Italy this recommendation has received very little practical attention to date, although “a plan for tackling extreme poverty and homelessness” was announced as a top priority in the last Italian National Strategic Report on social protection and social inclusion. In addition, for a number of reasons, housing exclusion in Italy is not subject to specific policies, nor is homelessness and housing exclusion taken into consideration by political decision-makers in their portrayal of homelessness – more attention is given to the significant social and relational distress related to homelessness.

Various cultural, financial and methodological factors have undoubtedly contributed to the unwillingness of institutions to implement a strategic programming of homelessness and housing exclusion services. Italy is a country unused to planning its social policies in an accountable and evidence-based manner; social policies have instead always been strongly linked to the family unit and left to the organisational competence of local administrations, in most cases getting less than 50% of their financial requirements from central and regional government. The economic crisis, which since 2009 has significantly affected a country whose public finances were already in a precarious state, has led the current government to undertake repeated and systematic cuts in all areas of social policy, effectively removing the financial support needed for the relevant services to operate in an acceptable manner. This has created a difficult situation with regard to national and local programmes, and in the area of homelessness and housing exclusion, this absence of strategy has been further exacerbated by the almost complete absence of reliable data on homelessness and related services.

Over the years, government institutions have formally adopted the strategies needed to combat homelessness and housing exclusion, for example in the various National Action Plans for Inclusion, and the National Strategic Reports on Social Protection and Social Exclusion, which were implemented over the years within the Open Method of Coordination among European States. All but one proved disappointing; starting in 2008 and concluding in February 2012, fio.PSD, with the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (the Italian Statistics Agency, ISTAT, 2011), the Director

General for Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, and Caritas Italiana, conducted research, which provided for the first time a dataset on homelessness and housing exclusion services and homeless people in Italy.

While waiting for the complete dataset, relying on the first evidences of this research, fio.PSD started some qualitative and more focused in-depth analysis to better understand the whole pictures of services against Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Italy.

For practical reasons, primarily due to the limited means available, the focus was only on Italian metropolitan areas, but the interpretation of data was enhanced through focus groups and discussions within the auspices of the fio.PSD and some local policy-makers. The views of people considered to fall within the sphere of homelessness and housing exclusion were collected, and findings from work groups with homeless people that had been held in preparation for Italian participation in the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness in 2010 were taken into consideration.<sup>1</sup>

## Background Information

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The Italian welfare system has been defined as ‘Mediterranean’ (Ferrera, 2005; Gal, 2010); that is, while its features approximate the fundamental features of the Corporatist welfare regime devised by Esping Andersen (1990), due to the much greater role given to the family in care-giving (the State has a subsidiary role); the non-universal, fragmentary and largely inefficient nature of social protection devices and their relative public cost; the preponderance of money transfers (mainly male breadwinner oriented) over services; and the individual-client nature of access to social protection, a separate regime type is warranted.

According to ISTAT, around 23.5% of the Italian population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion (a Eurostat summarised indicator) against a European average of 23.1%. All data are characterized by large territorial differences between the centre, north and south of the country; in the south, poverty rates can be up to six or seven times those of the more northerly areas. For example, the rate of relative poverty, which according to the calculation threshold adopted by ISTAT is around 10.8% in Italy overall, is slightly above 4% in Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Veneto, and rises to 25% in Sicily and 27.5% in Calabria.

Expenditure on social protection, on the other hand, is 25.7% of GDP, in line with the European average, but its distribution is grossly imbalanced with a clear preponderance of pension costs over other components (51% of the total) and a

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<sup>1</sup> The project, including its methodology, was managed by the author.

negligible, to the point of irrelevance, investment in the direct fight against poverty (0.1%). This 0.1% includes the direct public expenditure for Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (HHE), which, with little more than 400 million euro per year, is a small part of the budget, also further reduced in recent years.

It is clear that policies aimed at reducing homelessness and housing exclusion in Italy are considered as residual and irrelevant in social policy planning, even though the attention paid by the media is certainly greater than that given to other categories of distress and there is good general public awareness of the homelessness issue; the result of this awareness tends, however, to be public participation in charitable deeds rather than in any express acknowledgement of rights in this area.

Housing-related costs are equally invisible at national, regional and local level, being almost totally absent from Italian public balance sheets. In cultural terms, this helps in establishing – in Italy and Mediterranean countries in general – a widespread portrayal of homelessness and housing exclusion as a type of ‘fatal adversity’, or a misfortune that occurs in the lifetime of a person and his/her family, and in the face of which not much can be done, except to offer temporary relief from the difficulties it can cause.

This situation is very different from countries with a liberal or corporate model, where homelessness and housing exclusion is culturally perceived as being mainly a fault; or from social-democratic countries where homelessness and housing exclusion is seen as a risk against which there must be welfare protection as for any other type of social risk (Pezzana, 2009), and where, in activation or protection terms, policies and social funds for homelessness and housing exclusion exist, are more adequate, and appear to be more effective.

## **Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Italy: A Brief History and Overview**

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The Italian legislator officially recognised homelessness and housing exclusion as an area for specific intervention in the field of social-welfare services in October 2000, with Law N. 328 regulating the integrated system of welfare services and intervention in Italy. Art. 28 of this law established the need to adopt specific measures against homelessness and housing exclusion in a temporary but uniform manner throughout the country, and to integrate these with a system of local measures and social welfare services in order to outline the issue of homelessness and housing exclusion in a progressive and structured way.



Constitutional reform in 2001, which was federal in origin, established that all expertise in matters of social intervention should be dealt with only by the regional councils, leaving the head of central Government the sole task of determining the basic level of civil and social entitlements to be guaranteed throughout the national territory (Art. 117(m), Italian Constitution). This reform removes the powers of strategic direction from the central Government, assigning them to the regional systems of service and social intervention, thus depriving Law 328 of its main potential. Some extraordinary allocations were made in the area of homelessness and housing exclusion between 2001 and 2004, but the basic levels of social welfare benefits designed to combat homelessness and housing exclusion were not defined, suggesting that it was not considered a specific priority and was not subject to strategic planning in any of the regional legislation subsequently adopted in Italy.

Nonetheless, welfare services for homeless people do exist and have been in place in Italy since the Middle Ages, most notably those run by religious congregations and municipal administrations – such services were created both for reasons relating to religious and humanistic piety and for the control and protection of public order. A large part of these services, which arose as private charities, were nationalized in 1865, a few years after the creation of the Italian state (1861), but they effectively remained public charity organisations, operating within institutions that were not uniformly distributed and that were outside any public structural plan. It was only during the 1970s, due to pressure from, and the experience of a number of social welfare organisations, that the system was subject to some sort of planning, with the establishment of different types of public professional social services at a territorial level, created to deal with all forms of social distress, including homelessness and housing exclusion.

New private non-profit initiatives have arisen in recent years, flanking public services but rarely coordinating with them, promoted by volunteer associations and the social cooperatives that have been appearing in Italy. The financial crisis of the 80s and 90s, the increase in the complexity of social distress, and the influx into the country of a growing number of migrant workers have progressively led to a situation where public social services are unable to meet demand on their own, which has created two fundamental dynamics in the area of homelessness and housing exclusion. The first is an increase in statutory activity in the field of homelessness and housing exclusion, with a progressive limitation of activity by public social services in dealing with primary needs – use is mainly made, instead, of the old, large receptive structures that traditionally provided services to homeless people. The second is increasing collaboration between the public sector and various private, non-profit organisations that have established self-financed services for combating poverty and exclusion over the years, very often advocating strongly for social justice.

This has led to increasingly diminished public commitment in the direct management of services and an ever increasing assignment to the non-profit sector of public tasks and operations, for payments that were insufficient *per se* to cover management costs, but which were useful to the private services in allowing them to integrate their own financial resources – the assignment was thus very welcome, even at the cost of a subsequent limitation of their original social criticism mandate. Thus, in the years 1990 to 2000, various formal and informal networks of social welfare services dedicated to homelessness and housing exclusion were set up within a framework of mixed welfare, though services were not always uniform territorially, and were badly coordinated at a supra-local level.

As we have seen, Law 328/2000 tried to rationalise this group of services, make their programming more coherent, and increase their coverage across the country; this was not entirely successful, however, despite the fact that many civil society organisations such as *fio.PSD* put pressure on the authorities for almost ten years to find suitable definitions of welfare, poverty and social exclusion. Beyond primary levels of welfare, no other strategy has been adopted to date, whether at national level or regionally, and the various measures against homelessness and housing exclusion outlined by the government in the National Reports sent to Brussels within the framework of the Open Method of Coordination are clearly considered inappropriate; such measures include the reduction of property taxes and a food stamp system for poor families with three or more children.

## **Current Service Provision**

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Up to the end of 2011, no official public data on homelessness or homeless services were available in Italy. The first dedicated homeless survey was conducted by ISTAT (the national statistic office), *fio.PSD*, Caritas Italiana and the Welfare Ministry in 2011 (ISTAT 2011). From the available results it is clear that services are heterogeneous and geographically fragmented, with a greater concentration of users in larger metropolitan areas but a continuing imbalance between supply and demand, particularly in terms of inconsistencies between meeting primary needs such as food, hygiene and clothing, and meeting the need for adequate housing solutions. Against this background, the survey reveals a marked presence of assistance, care-taking, guidance and social counselling services, but fails to outline how local service networks deal with human promotion and social inclusion. Clearly, the lack of suitable and accessible facilities cannot provide basic security for those who decide to embark on a social inclusion project.

Since the Italian welfare system does not envisage provisions such as a guaranteed minimum wage or the right to accommodation (nor are there sufficient government housing schemes to meet current needs), the lack of dedicated facilities cannot be remedied via other welfare provisions. Moreover, the surveys shows that there is no strategic approach to the definition of local services, as shown both by the quantitative imbalance among various activities and the poor contribution of public administration to the structuring of local service networks in terms of direct management and financial contributions. The data also shows that just 50% of the dedicated services receive public contributions. This means that Italian public institutions cannot ensure interventions based on state funding and competences, providing evidence of the government's lack of strategic interest in the area.

### **A Neo-institutional Perspective on a Strategic Issue**

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The overall data reported above, together with daily experience in service management, led *fi.o.PSD* and its 80 member organisations, both state-run and privately owned (together accounting for approximately 70% of total service users), to investigate further the factors and trends actually determining the overall configuration of the system, so as to resume the effective promotion of an evidence-based strategic approach aimed at overcoming homelessness and housing exclusion according to FEANTSA guidelines.

In addition to data, the managers of many *fi.o.PSD* member organisations agreed that the scope of services aimed at overcoming homelessness and housing exclusion has weakened over the years. Many providers believe that the increase in demand for services aimed at meeting primary needs, the growing institutional and environmental pressure on the sector, decreased welfare resources, and the weakened social consensus on the use of public finances to fight serious poverty have all contributed to the recent development. The frustrating result is a tendency to privilege the “management” of homelessness and housing exclusion rather than working to overcome it, as evidenced by increasingly homogeneous operational procedures.

Consequently, a model was sought that would be capable of interpreting current processes in order to examine the forces interacting in the sector and how they may impact on the explicit or hidden strategies upon which the structure of the sector is based. An organisational and institutional approach was chosen. In particular, the “institutional paradox of change” devised by Di Maggio and Powell (1983) proved helpful as an interpretative device. The authors noticed that when groups or organisations are structured as a “field”, rational players try to change the organisations in which they operate, making them increasingly similar to one another.

This paradox proves true from several perspectives. To begin with, it is useful to understand and explain similarities rather than differences among the organisations operating within any sector, which was the objective of our work. In fact, it is revealed that in the Italian context of homelessness and housing exclusion services, in spite of many differences and fragmentation at macro level in the organisation and effectiveness of “local service networks”, at micro level, the service units (which is the level we focused on) present a lot of similarities and a growing rate of homogeneous functioning. The empirical requirements of the model aimed at outlining the organisational field are best suited to the Italian structure of “local service networks” fighting against homelessness and housing exclusion. For the field to exist, the authors require that it be institutionally defined through increased interaction among organisations in the field; the emergence of inter-organisations dominance structures and defined coalition models; and the development – among organisations – of the mutual awareness of being involved in a shared task. As was shown before, what we call “local service networks” for the prevention of homelessness and housing exclusion in Italy have undergone a transition since the 1990s, incorporating all those steps: state bodies, and formal and informal coordination bodies run by the state, started playing a role as aggregators of legitimating inter-organisational coalitions, whereas local and multi-regional associations of organisations started consolidating mutual awareness and collaboration processes.

The concept of institutional similarity introduced by Di Maggio and Powell proves useful to understand how mutual adjustment trends emerge among organisations, even in a relatively uncompetitive sector, which is characterized by free demand, non-profit and largely self-funded organisations lacking an explicit shared strategic commitment. Thus, the services surveyed by ISTAT in 12 metropolitan areas were considered not according to their functional objectives but their prevailing strategic intentions. The latter were derived from both the nature of the service and the initial mission of home organisations, as reported in institutional presentations and by managers interviewed.

The 32 functional macro-types included in the ISTAT research were re-classified into five strategic clusters as follows:

- *Services for the management of homeless social “emergency” in the short term (EST)*; this cluster includes so-called low-threshold services which envisage temporary stays with low levels of psycho-social and educational support, such as services to meet primary needs, street units, emergency night shelters, dormitories and a significant number of day shelters.
- *Services for the management of homeless social “emergency” in the medium-to-long term (ELT)*; this cluster includes services characterized by temporary care-taking connected to primary needs, which envisage, however, a higher level

of relational intensity and longer accommodation time than the aforementioned cluster, and those receiving assistance, if “compliant” with the requirements of the local service network, are more likely to benefit from concrete access to a social inclusion process. Those services include semi-residential communities and parts of residential communities, smaller canteens and those with indirect access mediated by an operator, daytime centres equipped with laboratories or structured activities, information and guidance services managed by professional staff trained to propose access to customised inclusion projects.

- *Services for the social accompaniment of homeless people in the short term (AST)*; this cluster includes many social counselling and assistance services, and is characterized by the drive to provide concrete guidance and support in accessing local services more broadly, although services in this cluster lack their own resources and act, rather, as mediators in supporting access to other services. This is the case in many counselling centres and assistance structures managed by volunteers, which are often connected to centres catering for primary care needs as well as social offices in many local administrations not specifically engaged in homelessness and housing exclusion services.
- *Services for the social accompaniment and promotion of homeless people in the medium-to-long term (ALT)*; this cluster includes services envisaging longer stays connected to the implementation of a structured approach to social inclusion professionally supported by local operators. They include the majority of residential communities, protected homes and self-managed homes, structured and professional social care-taking and social assistance, job and therapeutic structured services.
- *Services for the enforcement of homeless people’s basic rights and for the correct assessment of their situation (BRA)*; this category includes services exclusively or mainly dedicated to helping homeless people recover their civil rights and exercise them on a permanent basis.

Like all classifications, these are ideal types and there is no assumption that all services will fit perfectly within any particular cluster; it is likely that it will need to be developed and improved in the future, as more data become available.

With the assistance of managers in public and private services, the forces operating in the organisation of homelessness and housing exclusion services were analysed and classified, according to the proposal made by Powell and Di Maggio, as *prescriptive forces, mimetic forces and compulsory forces*, in an effort to reconstruct institutional isomorphism. Forces leading to *prescriptive isomorphism* were considered, including organisational change taking place as a result of cultural pressure from the actions of other organisations and/or the external environment,

including political and social institutions. The forces leading to *mimetic isomorphism* included all changes deriving from the imitation of other organisational models, and change occurring when current organisational technologies are not sufficiently clear, objectives are ambiguous, and symbolical uncertainties are generated by the environment (all particularly apparent in the evolution of this sector in Italy, especially in the 1990s and 2000s). The forces leading to *normative isomorphism* included all the often contradictory pressures faced by homelessness and housing exclusion services as they grew more aware that their tasks were being delegated by the public administration, with the ensuing need, in spite of poor resources, to strengthen the professional standing of services and operators, quality and accountability, and managerial efficiency. The final stage envisaged the combination of both processes and was aimed at understanding the development of local homelessness and housing exclusion service centres' strategic approaches over the last number of years as a result of the interaction of such forces.

## Findings

Although both types do not overlap directly, the new classification of services according to the strategic and intentional scheme proposed here, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, led to the following distribution of services, relatively different from the functional one presented in the ISTAT survey:

**Table 1: New classification according to the strategic objectives of the HHE services surveyed by ISTAT in Italy.**

Municipality	Types of services according to their strategic and functional objectives				
	EST	ELT	AST	ALT	BRA
Bari	14	5	2	0	1
Bologna	34	11	8	16	6
Catania	31	13	13	14	6
Firenze	31	20	12	28	9
Genova	42	17	8	43	4
Milano	86	69	27	109	17
Napoli	32	18	1	18	5
Palermo	32	10	0	9	2
Roma	94	22	12	38	3
Torino	28	10	1	18	3
Venezia	27	9	6	15	3
Verona	19	3	0	11	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>59</b>

Source: Revision of ISTAT 2011

**Table 2: Macro-functional aggregate of Italian HHE services in ISTAT 2011**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Night shelters</b>	<b>Primary needs</b>	<b>Daytime accommodation</b>	<b>Social counselling</b>	<b>Care-taking</b>
Bari	2	13	1	3	4
Bologna	15	33	5	15	6
Catania	6	25	8	14	24
Firenze	22	33	4	24	17
Genova	18	40	9	21	25
Milano	42	78	21	70	100
Napoli	9	28	1	16	20
Palermo	4	24	3	12	12
Roma	27	66	6	53	19
Torino	20	19	6	6	8
Venezia	5	26	4	15	11
Verona	8	14	2	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>251</b>

Source: ISTAT 2011

The micro-data which would allow attributing the users' access of individual sets included in the new classification are still unavailable, but it may be presumed that their distribution would reflect that of the functional classification, with the majority of users accessing EST and ELT services and much fewer using AST and ALT services. In contrast, the distribution among BRA services would probably differ, for example in the case of those used where legal, bureaucratic or judicial needs exist, both by users participating in social inclusion projects and users who simply benefit from primary need services. The most striking figure is related to social counselling and assistance, and caretaking services – these are mostly grouped among ALT and ELT services, where they account for over 70% of the total, instead, as one might expect, of more “hard services”, such as housing or employment support, making up the bulk of services.

The unequal and fragmented distribution of the various strategic service types among the various regions of Italy is confirmed, and there appears to be greater readiness to structure ALT services and local systems in a more balanced way in northern cities. An empirical survey showed that in the cities of southern Italy, local service networks have been set up more recently, and most EST and ELT services have been opened recently. While data were being analysed, the isomorphic forces being deployed were also identified. This required the analysis of a number of items, which may be summarised as follows:

**Table 3: Forces operating in the HHE inter-organisational field in Italy**

<b>Coercive Forces</b>	<b>Mimetic Forces</b>	<b>Normative Forces</b>
Public procurement strategic planning of HHE service procedures and terms / prevalence of formal over substantial criteria	Lack of shared definitions and representations of HHE also among services	Progressive formalisation of the skills of social operators
Networking approaches among organisations and role of the state in local service coordination	Difficulties in assessing the results of interventions on HHE in terms of social inclusion / mere quantitative measurement of output	Cultural approach to public procurement
Media representation of HHE services as positive services if they are “charities” addressing primary needs	Markedly relational and subjective nature of the intervention / difficulties in checking operators	The technical assessment procedures of the quality of services are mainly based on formal output requirements rather than on outcomes consistent with social inclusion
Security pressure from the external environment on HHE	Difficulties in achieving a standard identification of the causes of individual HHE	Professional associations among organisations
Insufficient funding to support adequate operational budgets for complex actions against HHE /marginalisation of the sector	Uncertainty deriving from the lack of a stable system of measures comparing HHE services (basic assistance levels – minimum wage – claiming the right to a home)	Multi-dimensional, integrated and complex approach to HHE
Immigration laws forcing most migrants not immediately working with a permanent contract to move to HHE	Lack of a shared culture on the strategic planning of services among the organisations operating in the sector	Incidence of a culture based on assistance rather than promotion for many services, particularly on a voluntary basis
Continuing widespread representation in public opinion and by decision makers of HHE as “fault” or “choice” and public order issue.	Pressures deriving from the economic and financial crisis and ensuing reduction of the innovation capability/possibility of organisations	
Difficulties in obtaining private funds from donors for services not leading to immediate tangible results (canteens, dormitories, etc.)	Main focus on the local situation and poor European “vocation” of local service networks	
Difficulties in claiming the right to a dignified existence also for the “outcast” in a social and economic system based on capitalism and laissez-faire		

Source: fio.PSD 2012



As shown above, from the viewpoint of coercive forces, the Italian situation seems to be particularly affected by cultural aspects, such as the institutional representation of homelessness and housing exclusion. Also from the viewpoint of mimetic processes, cultural aspects and the lack of precise regulatory instruments and definitions relating to homelessness and housing exclusion are the main sources of uncertainty, ambiguity and bewilderment, i.e. one of the main reasons – along with the pressure resulting from the economic and financial crisis – that leading public and private organisations consider existing operational models as their main points of reference. Meaningfully, the majority of Italian organisations, with a few notable exceptions, focus almost exclusively on local or neighbouring contexts, without expanding the range of their “mimetic inspiration” to wider European contexts. Such parochial attitudes are also present when regulatory pressure is considered, since the growing professionalization of social work dealing with homelessness and housing exclusion, and the increasing bureaucratic nature of public procurement processes and accountability, are not counterbalanced by an equally great ability on the part of organisations to show their stakeholders the real needs of such operational approaches, given that they are not, themselves, fully convinced of their strategies.

In this context, the lack of an evidence-based strategic planning culture within local service networks in Italy seems to have a significant and transversal impact on how organisations tackle changes, both inside the organisations themselves and at network level. Although local territorial and cultural differences hinder the acceptance of different experiences within highly comparable approaches, the organisational changes underway seem to reveal at least three different trends, of which one plays a secondary role. They are described below.

### **1) *EST* → *BRA/AST* → *ALT***

A large share of traditional organisations that have been operating for over 40 years are faith-based and focussed on the supply of services to meet primary needs, although they were originally based on assistance and charity. Over the last number of years, thanks to their inclusion in the formal and informal networks of local organisations, a process seems to have begun leading to professionalized interventions and greater guidance in inclusive and promotional terms. This does not mean that such organisations have abandoned their traditional operations, nor have they relinquished volunteer work. Rather, it means that many have experienced a strengthened professional and specialist component, and have taken on social inclusion as an element of their core mission, starting to offer services that are more complex and assistance-intensive, and envisaging local integration. Of course there are exceptions, but it is not by chance that recently developed BRA and ALT services are among such organisations.

Despite this trend, operators have noticed over the last 2-3 years that those organisations have resumed focussing on primary needs, clearly still perceived as their core function by the external environment. In this respect, recently activated BRA services may be understood as signalling the need for new and specific advocacy actions and for confirming the right to social inclusion for homeless people, something that cannot be effectively exercised through the existing social and assistance processes

### **2) BRA → ALT → EST/ELT**

A different trend – one which appears on the surface to be of an opposite nature – is acknowledged by many organisations arising from social movements after the 1970s and with marked advocacy and promotional characteristics. These organisations have mainly started small-scale services with strong relational, cultural and planning intensity and are deeply involved in local networks, which they have often promoted. Since the very beginning, their core business has been in advocacy-care and over the last number of years, with the growing demands of homelessness and the external environment, they seem in most cases to have expanded to include services meeting primary needs, as well as emergency night shelters, street units and low-threshold professional activities. In Italy, this is undoubtedly connected to the lack of universal welfare mechanisms capable of meeting primary needs, for example a minimum wage or sufficient government housing schemes; this imposes stronger demand for survival on operators in this sector. However, it should be noted that this kind of organisation, rather than focussing its attention on new advocacy objectives, has largely opted for strengthening interventions aimed at meeting needs.

In the final analysis, this trend seems to be complementary to, rather than opposing the previous trend. Pragmatically, the final result is the same, leading to increased resources devoted to emergency care and the containment of emergency.

### **3) BRA/EST → AST**

This trend is less common than the other two and seems to have developed among the few homelessness and housing exclusion services still directly managed by the state. Those services were initially focussed on two not always consistent directions: meeting needs through large traditional structures, and the enforcement of rights through professional social services. Today, they seem to be more integrated. Their integration is marked by a qualitative improvement of services, but they seem less capable of responding from a quantitative viewpoint and in terms of duration, thus leading to an increase in the share of users approaching other networks with the resources to meet their needs. The financial crisis in the public sector and the high cost of direct public management have had a significant impact in this respect.

## Consequences of the Lack of a Strategic Approach

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None of those participating in this research had ever been involved in a strategic planning action organized by local homelessness and housing exclusion services as per the proposals made in this paper, nor had they heard of such an approach being taken in any of the 12 cities in question or their respective regions. At national level, the lack of this kind of strategic process is well known. The participants declared that they had only ever been involved in elementary attempts at coordinating different services, with this having limited repercussions for the choices of their respective networks – choices were mainly determined by the growing needs of users and the changes in available local resources, rather than by an intentional strategy aimed at tackling homelessness and housing exclusion at the local level.

It may be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the analysis and trends above, and the lack of an intentional strategy for planning local homelessness and housing exclusion service networks. Certainly, an intentional, planned strategy based on the criteria illustrated in this paper would not have led to an isomorphic reorganisation of the services according to the two extremes illustrated above, unless it involved the deliberate relinquishment of a focus on social inclusion in favour of meeting and containing the primary needs of homeless people. If the plan were simply to focus on management and control, it would be difficult to explain why so many resources have been devoted to care-taking and social assistance. In contrast, provided that social promotion and inclusion are the final objectives, the clear prevalence of structures to meet primary needs leads one to think that achieving real social inclusion approaches, accessible for all, would be difficult with such a configuration. The great number of facilities where services are being supplied, including protected homes (the only locations which may be classified as actual housing resources) account for only 5% of the facilities and 0.5% of users, which also means that in addition to influencing the inter-organisational change in this sector, the availability of existing facilities and human resources has played a major role in determining the conservative set-up of organisations.

The absence of innovation in how individual services have been conceived, designed and managed in Italy over the last 10 years is further evidence of the tacit isomorphic adjustment of the system to functions aimed at controlling and containing homelessness and housing exclusion.

Over the last number of year it seems that some sort of unintentional “hidden strategy” has been implemented in Italy to control and contain homelessness and housing exclusion. A “hidden strategy” here means a real strategy made by real actors (often hidden themselves), but outside of a declared and accountable framework. A hidden strategy relies more upon conscious omissions than upon particular acts or a lack of resources; stereotyped discourses and the inertial power

of traditional practises are the main leverages used by its strategists to pursue their goals. By considering the homelessness and housing exclusion field in the light of these goals, the isomorphic effect among service units becomes evident. One of the most obvious results of such a hidden strategy was the weakening of services promoting assistance, care-taking and support from the inside and by preventing services from providing structured responses.

## Conclusion

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In the absence of an effective universal welfare system, in a context where specific intentional and shared strategies are not implemented, the local and national inter-organisational field of homelessness and housing exclusion services cannot produce effective solutions. It is isomorphically limited, instead, to a homelessness and housing exclusion management function at local level, merely aimed at controlling and containing the issue of homelessness by meeting primary needs at a socially acceptable level. This outcome is not only ineffective in terms of the promotional objectives declared by the organisations in this sector, but also with reference to the objectives of mere control and containment. A vicious circle emerges, in which the access of homeless persons to emergency services is not subject to substantial preventive mechanisms, the possibility of moving away from assistance services is very limited, and the total expenditure needed to deal with the emergency is likely to grow. If increased expenditure is not available, the only remaining option would be to stop meeting the needs of an increasing share of the population, with all the social and political consequences that are implied by such an 'exclusion within exclusion.'

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# European Journal of Homelessness

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

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