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Journal Philosophy

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

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Foreword

René KNEIP, President of FEANTSA

‘Governance’ or good ‘Governance’ is becoming a very commonly used concept in the domain of homelessness, just as in the social domain in general. Even though the concept is being used in different ways, it broadly refers to the emergence of new ways of thinking about, and organising responses to policy challenges, and how these “new” policies are being integrated within existing policy frameworks. These frameworks differ from country to country, and in larger countries even from region to region, and refer for example, to national or regional cultural differences, to the boundaries between the public and private sector or to the interaction of housing support services, health and social care services.

The third edition of the European Journal of Homelessness comprises a number of articles which allow a deeper insight in these differences and show their impact on developing and implementing policies aiming to reduce or even eradicate long-term homelessness. Collectively, the articles, policy evaluations and think pieces in the Journal show that over the last 20 years responses to homelessness have radically changed. Slowly, but steadily, such responses have moved away from institutional solutions to a broader approach and the development and implementation of processes trying to overcome traditional organisational boundaries.

More and more European countries have already put into practice, or are in the course of drafting, developing and implementing so-called national strategies to overcome long-term homelessness. FEANTSA is actively supporting all these efforts and hopes that through the publication of the European Journal of Homelessness, the debate can be enriched by the evaluation of already implemented experiences.

However, and this is my personal conviction after having participated for more than 15 years in developing and implementing homelessness policies, governance is always the result of an integrative process and mainly relates to implementation and management. The goals to achieve, within each member state, but also within the European Union as a whole, must be politically driven, through national strategies but also through a general strategy on the European level. In order to achieve equality and continuity, all these political goals must lead to legislative measures ensuring that every citizen can access affordable and decent housing just as well as health and social services that enable him (or her) to become or remain as independent and as autonomous as possible.

Editorial

The *European Journal of Homelessness* seeks to stimulate debate on homelessness and housing exclusion at European level and to facilitate the development of a stronger evidential base for policy development and innovation. The first volume of this journal dealt with quality and standards in homeless services and housing for marginal groups, with the second volume focusing on the effectiveness of homeless policies and services. When reflecting on the issues covered in the first two volumes, it was evident that a concept discussed and debated, albeit not always explicitly so, in the papers was that of governance. It was also clear that the delivery of services and the frameworks deployed to enhance both quality and effectiveness required a greater discussion in terms of the instruments and agencies involved. Thus, the third edition of the journal is devoted to the theme of governance and homelessness.

The term 'governance' generally refers to emerging methods of governing where the boundaries between and within the public, private and not-for profit sectors have blurred, and discussions often highlight the importance of multi-level government structures such as the European Union for the spread of new modes of governance. 'Governance' is routinely used to describe a range of phenomena and, as a consequence, authors can be somewhat promiscuous in their use of the word. In the area of homelessness, a number of recent articles utilise 'governance' in distinct ways. For example, Arapoglou (2004a and 2004b) employs a critical discourse analysis to understand the construction of homelessness in Greece and therefore the range of possible policy responses. In this case 'governance' is almost synonymous with the 'management of the homeless'. Phelan and Norris (2008), however, refer to 'governance' as a shift from one form of governing homelessness (a fragmented voluntary sector providing disparate services) to incorporation into the neoliberal corporatist homeless agency. These examples highlight the movable nature of the term and its widespread usage. Indeed, some commentators contend that its conceptual vagueness is the secret of its success.

It is often asserted that new forms of governance are emerging in response to the crisis of the welfare state in Europe, with centralised, hierarchical command structures being replaced by more deliberative horizontal modes of policy formulation and service delivery. New modes of deliberative policy making may be evolving, but not necessarily in relation to the alleged crisis in welfare states. It is a reasonably robust finding in the comparative welfare regime literature that rather than

'racing to the bottom' with declining social expenditures, most EU member states increased spending over the past two decades and that 'rather than following the neo-liberal path towards an Americanization of the welfare state, countries in general appear to have increased their distance from the US on a number of central dimensions' (Starke et al., 2008, p.996). 'Governance' is associated with change (Rhodes, 1997; Daly, 2003) and novelty, such as a change in the meaning of government or a new process of governing, a changed condition of ordered rule or the new method by which society is governed, but the drivers of this change are multifarious rather than driven solely by a neoliberal agenda.

Interpretations and definitions of 'governance' abound in the social science literature. Rhodes (1997) offers six interpretations, van Kersbergen and van Waarden (2004) nine, but in the interests of economy, the four interpretations outlined by Klijn (2008, pp.507–508) are highlighted here:

1. Governance as *good governance* or as corporate governance. In this view, governance refers to the principles of a properly functioning public administration. Such an administration is characterized by the fair treatment of citizens and an unambiguous organization that adheres to the basic principles of the rule of law. The emphasis here is on the operation of government, rather than the manner in which it is organized.¹
2. Governance as *new public management*, as improving performance and accountability or as market governance. Based on this definition, the role of governments should be to steer rather than to row. The focus of government should be to set goals, and not on the implementation process. Policy implementation is best left to other organizations or separate public agencies, which can be held accountable through the use of clear performance indicators and other market mechanisms.
3. Governance as *multilevel governance* or inter-governmental relations. This literature stresses that networks are needed to address all aspects of the problems encountered because these problems tend to cross the boundaries of public organizations and their hierarchical levels. This literature focuses on specific types of networks in which public actors from various levels have prominent positions.
4. Governance as *network governance* (self-steering or non-self-steering). Governance takes place within networks of public and non-public actors, and the interaction between these groups makes processes complex and difficult to manage. Consequently, different steering and management strategies are

¹ 'Good governance' in the EU context can be found in the European Commission's White Paper on European Governance (2001).

required compared to more classical approaches. The focus here is on the complex interaction process and negotiation in a network of governmental organizations and other organizations, both private and not-for-profit.

While definitional clarity is a prerequisite for social scientific research, we did not attempt to limit the contributors to the journal to one particular strand of the governance debate. Rather, we empathised with the approach taken by Bevir (2009, p.29), who argues that rather than seeking a singular feature ‘we would do well to look instead for a series of family resemblances between its various uses’. Thus, the papers in this volume utilise the concept of governance in an eclectic and flexible manner and the editorial team encouraged the contributors to reflect on the concept in light of the subject under discussion. Nonetheless, the majority of the contributions employ the concept within the framework outlined by Klijn.

The journal is divided into four sections. The first comprises six peer-reviewed articles dealing with comparative dimensions of homelessness and governance in Europe. Four shorter policy evaluation pieces make up section two and provide country-specific case studies. In the third section, six think pieces cover topics ranging from user participation in homeless services as good governance to the governance of public policy at EU level in relation to the Open Method of Co-ordination and homelessness. The fourth and final section contains reviews of several recent books and reports.

Peer-Reviewed Articles

Benjaminsen, Dyb and O’Sullivan explore the governance of homelessness at the macro level by describing and comparing experiences from two distinct welfare regimes – liberal and social democratic – in devising and implementing strategic plans to reduce homelessness. A number of European countries have recently adopted national strategies to reduce homelessness and the paper discusses the degree to which convergence or divergence in approaches can be observed. In particular, it examines how the general context of national housing and other social policies influence homeless policies (e.g. how structural conditions and goals and means set out in national policies interact). Their analysis suggests that policy interventions in relation to defining and specifying those deemed to be homeless cannot be read in a linear fashion from welfare regime type. This may in part reflect the marginality or ‘awkwardness’ of homelessness within the conventional measures used to ascertain welfare regimes. It may also indicate that cultural attitudes to homelessness, in particular certain perceptions of homeless people, may be reflected in public policies and strategies.

Baptista takes us into the heart of the policy-making process by providing an insider's perspective on the drafting of the first Portuguese homeless strategy, focusing on the interplay between the emergence and operation of specific governance arrangements and the potential for new policy-making mechanisms in the homelessness arena. Rather than presenting a detailed description of the contents of the strategy, the paper focuses on the processes underpinning its drafting: identification of probable key-drivers, the emergence of the initiative, the main actors involved and their respective roles, the actual dynamics of the collaborative process and the challenges faced. Portugal's first homeless strategy represents a breakthrough in the Southern European approach to tackling homelessness and Baptista argues that the insight into governance issues and policy change gained through the drafting of this strategy, along with other lessons learned, can provide an opportunity for other countries to reflect on and analyse their processes of framing and implementing new policy instruments.

Loison-Leruste and Quilgars provide a comparative account of the only two European jurisdictions – England (and the rest of the UK) and France – that have introduced a right to housing that is enforceable through the courts. Their paper investigates whether such a right to housing increases homeless people's access to appropriate accommodation and outlines the difficulties in accessing social housing in both countries before describing how a right to housing is operated within this context. The differing, but in both cases complex, governance arrangements for implementing this right to housing are reviewed. They conclude that a right to housing does have the potential to ensure that the accommodation needs of the most marginalised households receive greater priority. However, implementation challenges, including take-up issues, fragmented governance arrangements, competing social goals such as social diversity, and an overall lack of housing may significantly restrict the impact of this right to housing.

Filipovič Hrast, Somogyi and Teller provide an insight into the governance of homeless services provision in two post-socialist countries – Hungary and Slovenia – focusing especially on the emerging roles of NGOs in service delivery. They note that with the advent of multi-tier governance in Hungary, an abundance of stakeholders have emerged within the homeless sector, while state-level regulation, financing and programming have been slower to catch up and adjust to the new service delivery structures. The Slovenian case reveals quite a different picture, with a more modest role being played by NGOs in this sector. The paper concludes that formerly similar Central and Eastern European countries have diverged in their development of homelessness provision, and that this development is closely linked to how decentralisation has occurred, how NGOs are represented in service provision and the size of these countries and their homeless populations.

Benjaminsen and Busch-Geertsema compare the dilemmas and consequences that labour market reforms (including social benefit system reforms and activation policies) may have on homelessness and those at risk of homelessness in Denmark and Germany. They argue that recent reforms have involved changes and reductions in social benefits which negatively affect the ability of socially marginal groups to find affordable housing and may thus increase the risk of homelessness. They note that homelessness in these countries mainly arises as a consequence of extreme marginalisation and severe vulnerabilities and disabilities rather than from a general housing problem, although barriers to accessing the housing market can impact heavily on the exclusion of marginalised groups from regular housing. Though homeless people are to a large extent excluded from the labour market, they are highly susceptible to changes in labour market policies due to their general dependence on public transfer benefits and the conditions placed on receiving them. Increased emphasis on workfare elements and reforms of social benefit systems run the risk of increasing social exclusion for those individuals with the weakest chances on the labour market.

Finally, in a novel and persuasive manner, Bosch Meda argues that urban planning can play a very important role in preventing and solving the problem of homelessness. Appropriate urban renewal and regeneration plans are, the paper suggests, crucial to guarantee decent housing for all, to plan the range of services needed for the homeless and, above all, to integrate housing and urban policies by means of inclusionary zoning rather than exclusionary strategies. Bosch Meda concludes that improving the urban social mix can facilitate inclusionary housing with considerable potential in the current social, political and economic context in Europe.

Policy Evaluation

The first paper in this section builds on the journal's previous reviews of national homeless strategies in Scotland (vol. 1) and Ireland (vol. 2). On 21 May 2007 the Finnish Ministry of the Environment established an expert group to draft an action programme to reduce long-term homelessness. Early in 2008 a government decision was taken to reduce long-term homelessness by developing more effective preventive measures with the objective of halving long-term homelessness by 2011. Tainio and Fredriksson provide an account of the processes that led to the realisation of this ambitious target and the policy lessons from this for other jurisdictions.

Wygnańska presents an overview of processes that have recently been taking place to establish a national homeless strategy in Poland. Although the Department of Social Welfare and Integration officially initiated the process of drafting a national strategy on homelessness in mid-2008, the process was subsequently suspended

state regulation of marginal households, which focuses on the microphysics of power and accounts for the agency of governed subjects.

Inclusionary trends are the subject of Anker's paper, which outlines the emergence in Denmark in 2001 of a national organisation of homeless people (SAND). This organisation has gained a formal platform of participation and has been recognised by the state as a serious organisation with legitimacy to participate and to seek to influence local and national policies on homelessness. Moreover, SAND provides homeless people in hostels with an opportunity to raise demands and concerns directly to the social workers. The case also pinpoints some of the ongoing challenges of this form of organisation. Lack of stability and continuity among the participants challenges the democratic ambitions of forming a truly representative organisation. Anker argues that the structural weaknesses of user organisations of homeless people (limited resources and temporarity) means that they need support from external actors (state or others). Reflecting on SAND and drawing on his experience working in the NGO sector at national and EU levels, Allen provides a sceptical, but nonetheless sympathetic, overview of user participation and organisational governance. He argues that since most people who become homeless escape from it after a short time, the resultant organisations may not in fact be representative of people who are experiencing homelessness and may lead to the advocacy of responses that do not reflect the full range of experiences.

Turning to the supranational level, Spinnewijn provides a critique of the Open Method of Coordination as a policy tool for effective interventions in the area of homelessness and housing exclusion. Seeking to provoke debate, he offers some suggestions on how to develop the Inclusion OMC further to exploit fully its potential impact on the fight against homelessness. In a response to Spinnewijn's paper, Frazer argues that a stronger overall Social OMC would be more effective and certainly better for the long-term struggle to combat poverty and social exclusion in the EU.

Conclusion

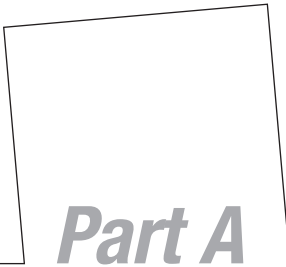
Our thanks go to all the contributors for ensuring that Volume 3 of the *European Journal of Homelessness* maintains the high standards set in the first two volumes. Collectively, the papers provide an important basis for reflection and debate on the complex issues of governance and homelessness at the macro, meso and micro levels. The diverse and stimulating application and interpretation of the concept of governance across a range of countries and domains of homelessness will hopefully allow different audiences, including policy makers, academics and practitioners, to utilise these papers to enhance practice and policy.

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Articles



Part A



The Governance of Homelessness in Liberal and Social Democratic Welfare Regimes : National Strategies and Models of Intervention

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› **Abstract_** *This paper describes and compares experiences from two distinct welfare regimes – liberal and social democratic – in devising and implementing strategic plans to reduce homelessness. National strategies to reduce homelessness have been adopted in a number of European countries in recent years and this paper discusses the degree to which convergence or divergence in approaches can be observed. In particular, it makes visible the underlying intervention models that are reflected in the strategies. In doing so we wish to understand how the general context of national housing and other social policies influences homeless policies and how structural conditions and the goals and means set out in national homeless policies interact. A clear emphasis on outcomes such as reducing the use of temporary accommodation, reducing stays in shelters, providing long-term or permanent accommodation and offering individualised services and support are present in all strategies under review. However, divergences are also evident and the paper explores why this is the case.*

› **Key Words_** *Welfare regimes ; governance ; homeless strategies ; intervention models*

Introduction

Since the publication in 1990 of Esping-Andersen's influential work on *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, researchers have attempted to verify, modify and clarify the concepts and data utilised to devise his trilogy of social democratic, corporatist and liberal (and subsequently the southern) worlds of welfare capitalism. Despite the accumulation of further comprehensive comparative data, the application of a variety of statistical techniques to explore this data and variations in the underlying concepts, the somewhat tenuous empirical basis on which Esping-Andersen originally devised his classification (Scruggs and Allen, 2006) has proven to be remarkably robust. Whether rooted in comparative analyses of social policy or more broadly classifying the varieties of contemporary capitalism (Schroder, 2008; Hall and Thelen, 2009), utilising measurements of expenditure or service provision (Castles, 2008; Jensen, 2008; Hudson and Kuhner, 2009), applying different analysis techniques (Bambra, 2007) or specific areas of social and public policy (Kemeny, 2001), distinct and robust patterns of public policy and welfare governance can be clearly identified. This is particularly the case with what Esping-Andersen termed the liberal and social democratic worlds of welfare capitalism.

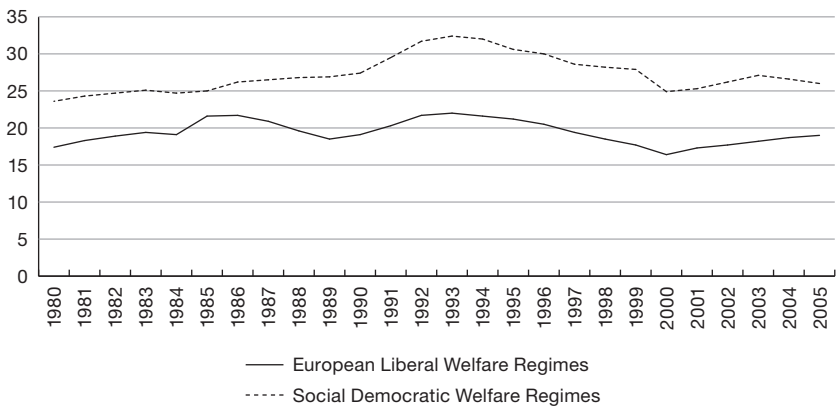
While scholars have debated the existence of a 'southern' world of welfare and the classification of certain countries of 'middle' Europe, virtual unanimity exists in respect of a social democratic or Nordic world of welfare incorporating Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland and a liberal world of welfare incorporating the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland and the Antipodes. Indeed, Castles and Obinger (2008, p.339) have argued that 'families of nations have, if anything, become more distinct with the passage of time, with only the diminishing distinctiveness of continental and Southern European outcome patterns suggestive of a blurring of cluster boundaries already clearly defined in the early pre-war decades.' In many ways, these two welfare regimes represent and articulate diametrically opposed ideologies, what Mannow (2004), tongue in cheek, terms the Good i.e. social democratic, the Bad i.e. liberal and the Ugly i.e. corporatist. It is the 'Good and 'Bad' regimes that are the focus of this paper. Importantly, as Castles and Obinger (2008, p.339) argue:

The direct evidence of territorial or family of nations clustering is simply the fact that groups of nations we know to be linked by language, history, culture and geography are so frequently identified as falling into the same clusters by a technique that is exclusively data-determined, that these clusters persist over time and that they are replicated for policy outcomes and for policy antecedents. That said, the very fact of the strong correspondence between outcomes and

antecedents demonstrated here does vindicate an important aspect of regime theory ; namely that the persistence of policy clusters is, to a significant degree, a function of the persistence of underlying structural characteristics.

Figure 1, using social expenditure data, albeit a relatively crude method of ascertaining welfare effort, clearly demonstrates the considerable and enduring gap between the European liberal and social democratic welfare regimes since 1980.

Figure 1: Total public social expenditure, 1980–2005 (% of GDP)



Source: OECD, Social Expenditure Database (SOCX, www.oecd.org/els/social/expenditure).

Welfare Regimes

In recent years all European nation states with liberal and social democratic welfare regimes have broadly adopted a ‘strategic’ approach to managing homelessness and have all published a ‘homeless strategy’. These strategies generally establish the extent of homelessness and outline a set of strategic objectives that aim to, in many cases, eliminate homelessness. For example, a recent paper examining homeless strategies in Norway, Scotland and Ireland concluded that they demonstrate ‘considerable convergence in approaches to tackling homelessness despite continuing divergence in wider housing market structures, notably in the balance of tenure’ (Anderson et al., 2008, p.52).

Given the ideologically disparate roots and contemporary manifestations of welfare governance in the nation states that comprise the liberal and social democratic welfare regimes, we are interested in understanding the context, impetus and policy interventions that different regime types have harnessed and deployed in seeking to achieve such objectives and, by expanding the range of countries, exploring the degree of convergence evident. In doing so we draw upon the perspective adopted

by Goodin et al. (1999), who argue that all welfare states have much the same policy goals, but prioritise them differently. For example, they suggest that the liberal welfare-capitalist regime gives priority to economic growth and efficiency, and attempts to design policy interventions that avoid 'welfare dependency', target welfare benefits and minimise state interventions in order to allow the market to allocate goods and services. While social democratic welfare regimes also seek strong economic performance, they claim a high priority for reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment. Universal benefits and services are characteristic of such regimes. This highly simplified account aims to capture the essence of the ideology that guides policy interventions in these regimes. On this basis, we argue, following Goodin et al. (1999), that we can assess our expectations from these regimes in terms of policies for the homeless.

Thus, we know that liberal regimes are particularly keen to minimise welfare dependency and they do this by promoting employment, restricting access to welfare benefits (particularly cash benefits) and facilitating a flexible labour market. By doing so such regimes expect to generate high economic growth rates, the benefits of which are expected to filter down to the general population and raise living standards. On the other hand, social democratic welfare regimes give higher priority to combating social and economic marginalisation and reducing inequality, so it is reasonable to expect that these regimes are considerably more interventionist in resolving homelessness than the liberal regimes. Homeless policies and interventions are therefore framed within a context of both housing policies and social policies.

Housing and the welfare state

Although not entirely self-evident, many analysts of homelessness have argued that one area of public policy intervention crucial to solving homelessness is the provision of adequate and affordable housing and this has led to demands for a right to housing as a means of eliminating homelessness. Interestingly, we only find the beginnings of a rights-based approach in some of the liberal welfare regimes. Kemeny (2001) has argued that the general welfare tone of a nation state is a good predictor of the nature of housing provision, with more miserly welfare regimes tending to have high rates of homeownership in line with a generalised tendency towards the privatisation of services, and more generous welfare regimes tending to have higher rates of rental housing (both public and private) and thus less homeownership. He termed these systems respectively 'dualist' and 'integrated' and Hoekstra (2009) has provided empirical evidence for this thesis, arguing that Denmark and Sweden have integrated rental systems, with Ireland and the UK having decidedly dualist systems.

However, the relationship between the welfare state and the housing sector is complex (Fahey and Norris, 2009). Malpass (2008), challenging the portrayal of housing as the 'wobbly pillar' under the welfare state (Torgersen, 1987), argues that the housing system has its own dynamics, rooted in market mechanisms, and housing policy should be understood as essentially supportive of the market. Malpass contends that 'housing has facilitated a restructuring of welfare, but has not driven the process' (2008, p.16). Bengtsson et al. (2006) take a similar view in their comprehensive study of the diversity of housing systems in five Nordic welfare regimes. The diversity of housing systems in the Nordic states ranges from the largely homeowner nations (Finland, Norway and Iceland) to Denmark and Sweden with substantial public and private rental sectors. The housing systems in these five countries have developed along different patterns resulting in a diversity of systems that have no parallels in their welfare state arrangements. Similar diversities are found in the liberal welfare systems addressed in this paper: the UK has an extensive (although shrinking) council housing sector, whereas Ireland remains largely dominated by homeownership.

If housing is a crucial determinant in ending homelessness, the nature of the housing tenure system, particularly the rental system, is of considerable importance and it is clear, particularly for the social democratic regimes, that rental systems cannot be 'read' from the regime type. As well as variation between welfare regimes, previous analysis suggests that there is also considerable variation within each regime. For instance, a system of municipal housing queues was widely abolished in Sweden as part of welfare reforms during the 1990s, which had a significant impact on the increased use of second-hand contracts (flats rented by local social services and sublet on special conditions to the clients) in the field of homelessness services (Sahlin, 2005).

Homelessness, poverty and welfare governance

Regimes with high levels of poverty are, on the face of it, more susceptible to higher rates of homelessness. Using data from the European Community Household Panel between 1994 and 1998, Fourage and Layte (2005) found that social democratic welfare regimes were considerably more successful than liberal welfare regimes at preventing both short-term and long-term poverty. On the basis of our knowledge of the characteristics of both social democratic and liberal welfare regimes generally, and specifically in relation to housing and anti-poverty policies, we wish to explore how these regime types have attempted to 'eliminate' homelessness and the degree to which the characteristics of these strategies reflect existing welfare arrangements. Our working assumption is that such strategies – because they in part interact with

broader issues of central–local government relations, welfare governance, housing policy, criminal justice policies, social inclusion policies, drug and alcohol policies, mental health policies etc. – reflect these dominant philosophies.

To assess these expectations, we review the ‘homeless strategies’ that have been published in recent years in the four Nordic countries conventionally viewed as social democratic welfare regimes and in the liberal regimes of the UK and Ireland. In doing so we wish to make visible the ‘strategies’ deployed and the degree to which they match our expectations. The review is largely informed by the various national strategy documents. The national strategies are at different stages of implementation, but for the majority of countries involved there are no evaluations or other forms of assessment at this point. The documents are expected to reflect the overall approach and the modes of governance within national homeless policies, which is the topic of the paper, rather than the effects and outcome of the strategies.

First, a brief comment on the use of the word ‘strategy’ is warranted. For centuries governments have devised strategies to govern vagrancy and homelessness, with punitiveness the dominant motif for these interventions (Beier and Ocobock, 2008). Rose (2000, p.187) has suggested that in understanding the techniques by which desired outcomes are achieved for citizens we see two primary mechanisms at work: ‘those that seek to regulate conduct by enmeshing individuals within circuits of inclusion and those that seek to act upon pathologies through managing a different set of circuits, circuits of exclusion’. An extensive literature now exists on the ‘circuits of exclusion’ that are utilised in many liberal welfare regimes, particularly in North America and the Antipodes, which documents the criminalisation of the homeless through civility laws, zoning ordinances and other techniques for the management of urban spaces (Hermer and Mosher, 2002; Mitchell, 2003; Walsh, 2003; Amster, 2008). It is also increasingly evident that penal populations vary by welfare regime with liberal regimes having a dramatically higher per capita prison population than social democratic regimes (Lacey, 2008). On the other hand, a number of scholars have suggested that strategies that regulate public space are not unequivocally punitive, nor are they uniformly imposed in all liberal regimes, but are a complex mixture of responses to local conditions and contain elements of care as well as control (Fitzpatrick and Jones, 2005; Laurenson and Collins, 2007; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008; Murphy, 2009). In addition, cross-national research on this issue notes that such strategies are not only applied in liberal welfare regimes but elements can also be found in social democratic and corporatist regimes (Doherty et al., 2008; Meert et al., 2006).

Thus, ‘strategy’ suggests that policies aimed at ‘managing’ the homeless may be formally inclusionary, formally exclusionary or a mixture of both. Homeless strategies in different welfare regimes may mean very different things and may have very

different ideological assumptions about the nature of homelessness and the purpose of the strategy. In other words, the governance of homelessness via homeless strategies may reflect the broader ideological temper of welfare regimes, with some national variation, and therefore may have distinct and different objectives. In summary, in this paper we aim to compare the experiences across two theoretically distinct welfare regimes and discuss the relationship between the goals and means set out in national strategies and the general characteristics of homeless policies and interventions in the different countries.

Approach

We are cognisant of the methodological difficulties in conducting cross-national research. As Quilgars et al. (2009, p.20) have argued, 'researchers need to interpret information across historical, cultural and socio-political contexts, collecting specific information within a framework that is at once flexible enough to facilitate this, as well as robust enough to allow information, there is a risk of collecting intrinsically fascinating but largely un-interpretable information'. To facilitate the generation of the required information and to avoid the difficulties highlighted above, the initial framework was agreed on by the authors at a face-to-face meeting in January 2009 and it was also decided that the initial process would be a reading of strategies that we were unfamiliar with. Thus, Benjaminsen would initially 'read' the strategies for England and Scotland, Dyb the strategies for Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and O'Sullivan the strategies for Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The rationale for this approach was both methodological and ethical. Methodologically, it would allow a fresh reading of the strategies and provide insights for a second face-to-face discussion in April 2009. Ethically, the authors had varying degrees of input in the process of developing, contributing to, commenting on, advising on or implementing the strategies in Norway, Denmark and the Republic of Ireland and were conscious of minimising any potential bias.

Extent of homelessness

Although a figure exists indicating the extent of homelessness for each of the countries under review, incompatibilities in data collection and methodology render a comparison both problematic and unhelpful. For example, for the Nordic countries and Ireland, a snapshot or stock figure is available, generally collected through survey research; whereas for the UK, the primary national level data is administrative flow data, which may be subject to extensive gate-keeping (Pawson, 2007). Without the application of adequate care, a superficial reading of the data would suggest a much higher rate of homelessness in the UK, even on a per capita basis,

than in the Nordic countries and Ireland, but this is not necessarily the case. Therefore, this paper outlines definitions of homelessness but does not engage with the issue of the extent of homelessness.

The concept of governance

As mentioned above, this paper aims to investigate homeless strategies and the mode of governance reflected in the strategy documents. In the academic discourse the word 'governance' has come into use as a description of new ways of governing and steering. The concept aims to capture increasingly complex structures of interaction between a variety of (often both public and private) stakeholders. The definition and use of 'governance' is rather ambiguous. It is quite common though to describe governance as an indicator of a decrease in the power of the state and a corresponding increase in the power of civil society (Mayntz, 2003). A core idea of governance is of cooperation and negotiation between public and civil stakeholders mobilised to solve complex problems. In particular, Pierre (2000) emphasises that the emergence of governance should not be taken as proof of the decline of the state, but rather as an indication of the state's ability to adapt to external changes. In this paper 'governance' is used in a broad sense to capture how homelessness is governed in the nine national strategies. The next two sections identify the objectives of the strategies, how they define homelessness, the key actors and partners and the basic ideas to be 'read' from the strategy documents, which are all elements of a governance structure.

Homeless Strategies in Liberal Welfare Regimes

The liberal welfare regimes covered in this paper are England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. All five strategy documents are extremely detailed. This is likely to reflect the relationship between the national and local authorities. Although the guidelines for implementation of the strategies are expressed as expectations and not obligations, there is limited room for the local authorities to make their own local plans, in contrast to the Nordic welfare states where local authorities hold far-reaching autonomy and extensive responsibilities. Table 1 summarises the strategies.

Table 1: Homeless strategies in liberal welfare regimes

	Ireland	Northern Ireland	Wales	England	Scotland
Strategy, title and period	<i>The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland</i> 2008–2013	<i>Decent Housing Strengthens the Community</i> Period not settled in the strategy document	<i>National Homeless Strategy for Wales</i> 2006–2008	<i>Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes; Changing Lives; A Strategy for Tackling Homelessness</i> 2005–2010	Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003
Objectives	Increased focus on prevention, take action to tackle a wide range of causes of homelessness Eliminate long-term use of temporary accommodation (six months+) Eliminate rough sleeping	Increase the focus on first-time prevention, stop homelessness occurring Provision of high-quality temporary accommodation with assessment of needs and support Sustain tenancies and prevent reoccurrence of homelessness	Priority to prevention Reduce repeated homelessness Eliminate rough sleeping Increase quality of temporary accommodation and reduce time in temporary accommodation Tailor services to meet individual needs	Expanding housing opportunities, including for those who need additional support and for disadvantaged groups Offering a wider range of preventive measures Increasing access to settled homes, halving the numbers living in temporary accommodation by 2010	Ending the priority/non-priority need distinction by 2012 Removing the local connection requirement Providing for households found to be intentionally homeless to be temporarily accommodated with an appropriate programme of support

	Ireland	Northern Ireland	Wales	England	Scotland
Key actors/ partnership	Cross-Department Team on Homelessness Social, health and housing authorities are key players at both national and local levels Partnerships between local public agencies, health services and voluntary sector – emphasis on involving mainstream services	Main national agency: Northern Ireland Housing Executive Others: health and social services and probation services Emphasises both formal and informal partnerships between voluntary sector and statutory agencies Addresses user involvement	Main national agency: Housing Directorate All-Wales housing advice forum comprising the Legal Services Commission, NGOs and local government representatives Relies on both public and voluntary sector on local level	Multiple agencies of central government, local authorities, voluntary sector, local communities	Scottish government, local authorities, voluntary sector

	Ireland	Northern Ireland	Wales	England	Scotland
Definition of homelessness	<p>Legal/statutory definition, Housing Act 1988:</p> <p>A person is officially regarded as homeless if the local housing department judges that they have no accommodation that they can reasonably occupy, or are living in some form of emergency accommodation and are judged to have insufficient resources to secure reasonable accommodation</p>	<p>Legal/statutory definition, The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 and Homeless Act 2002:</p> <p>A person is homeless if they have no accommodation available for their occupation in the UK or elsewhere. A person is not treated as having accommodation unless it is reasonable for them to occupy it</p>	<p>Legal/statutory definition:</p> <p>A person is homeless if he/she has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere or has accommodation but cannot reasonably occupy it</p> <p>A wider definition is recommended:</p> <p>Where a person lacks accommodation or where their tenure is not secure</p> <p>A wide definition of rough sleeping is recommended</p>	<p>Legal/statutory definition:</p> <p>People are homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them</p> <p>The 'main homelessness duty' of local authorities is owed only to those homeless applicants who are also eligible for assistance, in a priority need group, and not intentionally homeless</p>	<p>Legal/statutory definition:</p> <p>With the Homelessness Act of 2003 priority need was extended to certain groups of young homeless people, vulnerable adults with a personality disorder, individuals discharged from prison, hospitals, and the armed forces and individuals at risk of violence or harassment</p>
Basic idea/philosophy	<p>Housing-led: strengthen the emphasis on prevention and access to permanent housing</p> <p>More responsibility put on local authorities and reducing the role of the voluntary sector (compared with former intervention schemes)</p>	<p>Housing-led: increased emphasis on services – develop a range of new services to meet the diversity of needs</p> <p>Services are aiming at sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness</p>	<p>Housing-led: strong focus on structural causes of homelessness, e.g. the housing market</p> <p>Develop services, in particular to prevent homelessness and improve access to social housing</p>	<p>Reducing use of temporary accommodation, focus on prevention, individual support, housing supply, interagency work, and partnerships among local authorities and voluntary sector</p>	<p>'Housing first' based interventions: providing targeted services, individualised support, coordination of support, strengthening responsibilities of local government and adopting local homelessness strategies</p>

Ireland

Ireland has a five-year strategy (2008 to 2013) to prevent and reduce homelessness, which was launched in September 2008. It builds on an earlier strategy that was independently reviewed in 2005, which led to the reformulation of objectives (O'Sullivan, 2008). A national implementation plan was launched in April 2009 (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009). The strategy has three core objectives: eliminating long-term occupation of emergency homeless facilities, eliminating the need to sleep rough and preventing the occurrence of homelessness as far as possible. Additionally, the need to meet long-term housing needs, ensure effective services for homeless people and better co-ordinate funding arrangements is emphasised.

The homeless strategy represents a shift in the focus of Irish homeless policy in at least three ways. First, it adopts a more comprehensive approach than in the past and a key theme going through the document is the responsibility and the need of a wide range of services to participate in reducing homelessness. Second, emphasising prevention and ending long-term homelessness demand a shift in service provision from temporary services to services addressing the causes of people becoming homeless and the need to sustain tenancies. Third, the scope of the homeless policy is geographically extended to become a national issue rather than one primarily for Dublin. The strategy addresses the responsibility of all local authorities to participate and to implement the objectives. A potential consequence of strengthening the responsibilities of the local authorities and turning the interventions from temporary accommodation to permanent housing is a reduction of the traditional roles occupied by NGOs.

Northern Ireland

The homeless strategy of Northern Ireland is called *Decent Housing Strengthens the Community*. The document does not specify the duration of the strategy. A more recent document entitled *A Strategy to Promote the Social Inclusion of Homeless People, and Those at Risk of Becoming Homeless, in Northern Ireland* is far more comprehensive than the first mentioned document. The earlier document states that Northern Ireland has the highest proportion of homeless households in the UK, with a particularly sharp increase experienced between 1999 and 2003.

The main objectives set out in the homeless strategy are to increase the focus on first-time prevention to stop homelessness occurring, to provide high-quality temporary accommodation with assessment of needs and support, and the need to sustain tenancies and prevent reoccurrence of homelessness. The strategy explicitly addresses the necessity of interagency partnerships and protocols to achieve the objectives. As well as state and local authority agencies and private

stakeholders, the strategy emphasises user participation in planning the services. Although prevention of homelessness is one of the main objectives, the strategy document does not address prevention of evictions.

Wales

The Welsh homeless strategy, running from 2006 to 2008, succeeds and builds on the strategy first published in April 2003. It is part of the broader housing programme, '*Better Housing for People in Wales*', and is led by the national housing authorities. The strategy has much in common with the basic ideas of those of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The main focus is on prevention, 'to avoid unplanned moves', ending rough sleeping and reducing the use of temporary accommodation. The government sets four targets to be achieved within 2008 (with baseline 2004/5): prevent homelessness among 50 per cent of households who considered themselves to be at risk of homelessness, reduce the number of homeless households found to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need by 20 per cent, reduce the numbers of households in bed and breakfast accommodation by 50 per cent, and reduce the average length of time spent in temporary accommodation by 20 per cent.

Although visible in the other strategy documents, the Welsh strategy is the one that most explicitly addresses the structural causes of homelessness. The document is specific on access to social housing and the supply of affordable housing. It sets deadlines for when objectives and aims should be achieved. A striking feature is the announcement of statutory amendments to help implement the strategy. The strategy also addresses the need for contributions from a wide range of private actors, and in particular the voluntary sector, alongside public agencies.

England

The five-year plan *Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes; Changing Lives; A Strategy for Tackling Homelessness* from 2005 set a key target of halving the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010. The plan followed a previous programme set out in the 2002 report *More than a Roof*. It states that considerable success has been achieved in reducing rough sleeping since the late 1990s by improving support and services and almost abolishing the use of bed and breakfast style accommodation. However, the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased.

A notable characteristic of the English programme is that it addresses both personal social causes of homelessness and structural issues such as a housing supply shortage. It emphasises the provision of individualised social support. Under the Supporting People programme, funding is given to support people who have experienced homelessness – both families and single individuals – and those who are at the risk of it, such as people with drug and alcohol problems. It

also addresses the need to increase housing supply and thereby tackle a shortage of affordable housing by producing 75,000 new social rented homes. The combined focus on targeted floating support, increasing housing supply and reducing the use of temporary accommodation underlines that the English strategy is oriented towards 'housing first'.

The English strategy emphasises the involvement of a large number of stakeholders – government agencies, local authorities and NGOs. All local authorities are required to publish local homelessness strategies based on a local review of homelessness in their districts and the strategies should aim at both prevention and ensuring accommodation and support. The programme also encourages cooperation with the voluntary sector in contributing to local homelessness strategies and service provision. Furthermore, it involves setting local targets and monitoring performance on meeting those targets and on the delivery of services.

Scotland

The final report of the *Homelessness Task Force* (2000) was the main source for the Scottish strategy outlined in a 2002 action plan. A change in the Housing Act in 2001 and the Homelessness Scotland Act in 2003 introduced a new legal framework for Scottish homeless policies (Anderson, 2007). A key aim is to phase out the differential treatment of households according to priority or non-priority needs. This objective should be reached by 2012. Already by 2003 the definition of priority needs was amended to include, for instance, young homeless people and vulnerable adults with a personality disorder. The long time frame for the implementation of the strategy reflected the need for both housing supply issues and a strengthening of services to be addressed before the objectives could be realised. Furthermore, local authorities were required to assess the level of homelessness in their area and to produce local strategies, including a multi-agency response to homelessness. Even though a 'right to housing' is not explicitly mentioned in the Scottish strategy it has been widely interpreted as a 'rights-based' approach (Anderson, 2007), as an effective consequence of its aim to abolish the distinction between priority and non-priority needs will be that local authorities must provide some form of accommodation to homeless households.

A challenge to the implementation of the Scottish strategy has proved to be the insufficient provision of long-term accommodation. There is evidence that the duration of homelessness has actually increased, mainly due to a shortage of long-term accommodation. A general down-scaling of ambitions from a right to permanent accommodation to a right to settled accommodation has been identified in recent policy developments, and a 2008 government report suggested that

the duty of local authorities to provide permanent accommodation under the Housing Act should be replaced with an option to meet their duty by providing only a short-term assured tenancy in the private rented sector.

Homeless Strategies in Social Democratic Welfare Regimes

The four social democratic welfare regimes considered here have all produced homeless strategies in recent years. In common with the liberal welfare strategies they aim to reduce homelessness by various means, however, they are not underpinned by statute as is the case in a number of the liberal welfare regimes. The social democratic strategies are also noticeably shorter than their liberal counterparts and have fewer but more focused targets and objectives. The strategies are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Homeless strategies in social democratic welfare regimes

	Norway	Finland	Sweden	Denmark
Strategy, title and period	<i>The Pathway to a Permanent Home – Strategy to Prevent and Combat Homelessness</i> 2005–2007	<i>Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness</i> 2008–2011	<i>Homelessness, Multiple Faces, Multiple Responsibilities – A Strategy to Combat Homelessness and Exclusion from the Housing Market</i> 2007–2009	<i>National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Homelessness</i> 2008–2011

	Norway	Finland	Sweden	Denmark
Objectives	<p>Reducing the number of eviction notices by 50 per cent and the number of evictions by 30 per cent</p> <p>No one shall have to spend time in temporary accommodation upon release from prison or discharge from an institution</p> <p>Improve the quality of overnight shelters and no one shall be offered overnight shelter without a quality agreement</p> <p>No one shall stay more than three months in temporary accommodation</p>	<p>To halve long-term homelessness by 2011 by increasing the number of homes and places in care by around 1,000 to 1,200 and creating a well-functioning body of social, health and rehabilitation services for the worse-off groups</p> <p>To develop more effective measures to prevent homelessness</p>	<p>Everyone has to be guaranteed a roof over their head and be offered further coordinated action based on their individual needs</p> <p>Decrease the number of persons leaving prison, treatment unit, supported accommodation and care houses without any accommodation arranged</p> <p>Facilitate entry into the ordinary housing market for persons in housing ladders, training flats or temporary accommodation</p> <p>The number of evictions has to decrease and no children are to be evicted</p>	<p>No one should need to sleep rough</p> <p>Stays in homeless hostels should be reduced to three to four months for those who are ready to move to own housing eventually with support</p> <p>Young people should not be in homeless hostels but be offered other solutions</p> <p>A housing solution shall be available upon institutional release from prison or hospital</p>
Key actors/ partnership	<p>National co-ordinator: the state Housing Bank in cooperation with other welfare agencies, in particular the social service authorities</p> <p>The municipality is the main player in this strategy, NGOs play a subordinate part</p>	<p>Central government, state agencies and local government</p> <p>A basic principle in housing solutions for the long-term homeless is that the local authorities' Social services and health departments should be responsible for organising housing assistance</p>	<p>Central government: the National Board of Health and Welfare is responsible; local government and NGOs</p>	<p>Central government and local government</p>

	Norway	Finland	Sweden	Denmark
Definition of homelessness	<p>Housing-based, used in the national surveys:</p> <p>People not owning or renting their own place of residence, but who are referred to casual or temporary accommodation, who live temporarily with relatives, friends or acquaintances, or who are held in custody or in an institution and are due to be released or discharged within two months and do not have a place of residence</p>	<p>Defines long-term homelessness as:</p> <p>Long-term homeless people constitute a group of homeless persons whose homelessness is classed as prolonged or chronic, or threatens to be that way because conventional housing solutions fail with this group and there is an inadequate supply of solutions which meet individual needs</p>	<p>General definition used in national homeless surveys is almost identical with Norway's definition</p> <p>Target group for the homeless strategy is wider and includes people who currently have somewhere to stay but whose housing situation is uncertain in various respects</p> <p>Focuses on the complexity of homelessness and housing exclusion</p>	<p>Housing-based, situational definition of homelessness used in national survey of homelessness</p> <p>The definition is based on selected categories of ETHOS definition modified to the national context</p> <p>Main categories: rough sleepers, night shelters, hostel users, transitional, temporary accommodation, staying with friends and family temporarily and without a contract, institutional release from prison or hospital without a housing solution</p>
Basic idea/ philosophy	<p>'Housing first' principle:</p> <p>to phase out hostels and other temporary low-quality accommodation provisions, and offer instead permanent housing with support when needed</p>	<p>'Housing first' principle:</p> <p>solutions to social and health problems cannot be a condition for organising accommodation: on the contrary, accommodation is a requirement which also allows other problems of people who have been homeless to be solved</p>	<p>Housing as the key focus of intervention</p> <p>The strategy aims to reduce the 'staircase of transition' model, but does not abandon it</p>	<p>'Housing first' based interventions:</p> <p>providing targeted, individualised support, coordination of support, strengthening responsibilities of local government and adopting local homelessness strategies</p>

Denmark

The Danish strategy on homelessness sets four targets: that no one should sleep rough, that no young people should stay in shelters, that people should stay no longer than three or four months in a shelter and that upon a person's release from prison or hospital a housing solution should be in place. The strategy selects eight municipalities, which represent half of all people experiencing homelessness in Denmark, for an intensified effort to fulfil national goals. Each municipality involved has to pass a local homelessness strategy and the implementation of the strategy is carried out in bilateral negotiations between the state and the municipality about which interventions to put in place. Responsibility for achieving the goals lies at municipal level and local political commitment is a condition for participating in the strategy for the eight municipalities. The strategy emphasises housing first as a leading principle and aims at reducing time spent in temporary accommodation and developing more support for those in housing. It also seeks to develop more evidence-based knowledge on what interventions actually work and involves a focus on social methods. Outcomes of different types of interventions will be monitored.

The strategy mainly focuses on extending services and interventions within the existing social service legal framework, which defines a range of services such as supported accommodation and individualised support in housing. A system of municipal referral to public housing already exists in Danish housing law but there is no explicit mention of addressing local shortages of public housing in the strategy although there is room for building supported accommodation within the strategy. Thus, the Danish strategy is mainly focused on social services and individualised interventions anchored within a local municipal framework.

Finland

There are two striking characteristics of the Finnish policy on homelessness. First, the need to strengthen the housing supply is identified as the main issue, thus initiating a housing-led policy from the very beginning. Second, various private stakeholders along with public bodies were mobilised to solve the problem; their cooperation is organised in the formal framework of the Y-foundation (Kärkkäinen, 1999).

Finland succeeded in reducing the number of homeless people to a certain level, but long-term homelessness remained a persistent problem. A working group set up by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment to address the issue proposed that long-term homelessness should be halved by 2011 and eliminated entirely by 2015. Another working group was appointed to draw up more detailed proposals. The group submitted their unanimously agreed proposals in January 2008 and the Finnish government approved the programme on 14 February 2008. The agreed programme is structured around the housing first principle: 'Solutions to social and

health problems cannot be a condition for organising accommodation: on the contrary, accommodation is a requirement which also allows other problems of people who have been homeless to be solved. Having somewhere to live makes it possible to strengthen life management skills and is conducive to purposeful activity.' It further argues that 'Long-term homeless people constitute a group of homeless persons whose homelessness is classed as prolonged or chronic, or threatens to be that way because conventional housing solutions fail with this group and there is an inadequate supply of solutions which meet individual needs.' In relation to residential home accommodation, the strategy contends that they do little 'to promote the rehabilitation of the long-term homeless and help them adjust to independent living' and they will be systematically closed down. Furthermore, a basic principle in housing solutions for the long-term homeless is that local authority social services and health departments should be responsible for organising housing assistance. The programme is 'by nature a broad partnership agreement' (Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009).

Norway

Launched in 2004, the Norwegian strategy on homelessness, entitled *The Pathway to a Permanent Home*, built on the experience of an earlier national strategy (*Project Homeless 2001–2004*) and specified a number of targets for the end of 2007 (see Table 2). The strategy document emphasises the need for cooperation between a range of public and private stakeholders. It sees the Norwegian State Housing Bank as the key co-ordinator and the local authorities as the key implementers, although a host of other state agencies and non-governmental bodies also have a role. Edgar (2006, p.4) observes that the strategy 'is presented under the umbrella of a national housing policy whose aim is to ensure an efficiently functioning housing market. This indicates a structural analysis in which the aim is to provide housing for groups who are disadvantaged in the housing market and to provide measures to enable these groups to continue to live in their own homes.' In other words, homelessness is primarily targeted as a housing issue.

An evaluation of the strategy at the end of the period found that its objectives were not fully realised (Dyb et al., 2008). The evaluation report discusses the obstacles connected with implementing the national strategy in a system where local authorities have considerable autonomy. The national government can use funding as an incentive but can exercise little power to impose the strategy. Although the strategy is housing-led, the statutory duty to provide housing for households in need is relatively weak. The municipalities identify lack of housing as the vital obstacle against achieving the objectives. Paradoxically, although the housing authority is the major player at the national level, local responsibility for homelessness rests

with one of the social authorities (Ytrehus et al., 2007; Dyb et al., 2008). No new homeless strategy has been launched, however, the objectives of the 2005–2007 strategy are still in place, following an increased allocation of national funding.

Sweden

On 1 November 2007 the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs published a report entitled *Homelessness: Multiple Faces, Multiple Responsibilities: A Strategy to Combat Homelessness and Exclusion from the Housing Market*, which provides a framework for the period 2007 to 2009. The objectives specify the direction of the strategy and the means to monitor and develop the actions taken. Previously, responsibility for combating homelessness rested largely with municipal social services. The report says that social services still have a responsibility, but if work to address homelessness is to be successful in the long term, more actors must be involved. The purpose of the strategy is to establish a structure that clarifies the various roles and responsibilities of the multiple actors at national, regional and local levels in work to address homelessness and exclusion from the housing market. Its core objectives are outlined in Table 2. The strategy aims to stimulate the development of housing solutions so that homeless people shall have a tenancy in the ordinary housing market, and to build on experience from successful staircases of transition and methods from housing first. Generally the use of interventions based on the staircase of transition and of secondary contracts is widely used in Sweden, and should be seen in relation to reforms of social housing, as municipal housing queues have been abolished in most Swedish cities and the social responsibilities of housing companies have been reduced (Sahlin, 2005; Löfstrand, 2005). In this way the Swedish strategy suggests increased emphasis on housing first and the need for tenancies in the ordinary housing market, but does not propose an abandonment of the staircase model.

The National Board of Health and Welfare is to deliver a joint report from the government agencies no later than 1 July 2010 on how local development work has helped to achieve the objectives. This report will inform future government priorities. In addition, the government commissioned the National Board of Health and Welfare to outline a mechanism to monitor homelessness accurately, which was presented in March 2009 (Socialstyrelsen, 2009).

Comparing Homeless Strategies

This section considers the validity of Esping-Andersen's notion of distinct welfare regimes, of which the liberal and social democratic are included in this discussion. The paper has outlined the very different housing systems in the countries under discussion, which show distinctive features that do not fully correspond to a particular welfare regime. The review of homeless strategies, mainly on the basis of government documents, shows striking similarities in the governance of homeless policies within each welfare regime, although there are also evidently some differences.

Sahlin (2004) finds that a new way of governing homeless policies is to take control of the discourse, for example by defining and delimiting who is to be considered a homeless person. In the liberal welfare regimes under discussion, a legislative and statutory definition of homelessness is largely adopted; whereas in the social democratic regimes, definitions have evolved through experience and consensus. As a consequence, homelessness is generally defined more broadly as a housing issue in the liberal regimes, which simultaneously define who is *not* entitled to assistance with a housing problem. However, the liberal strategies also move beyond housing issues to address a wider range of problems linked to homelessness and causing homelessness. This may represent a fundamental political shift both in the definition of homelessness (in practice although not in legislation) and in the approach to dealing with homelessness, and indicates a turn towards viewing homelessness as not simply a housing problem but also as a consequence of a wide range of individual and structural deficits.

Sweden, Norway, Denmark and in particular Finland apply definitions of homelessness that derive from positions in the housing market. The first three states have a rather narrow definition compared with that of Finland and also compared with those of the liberal regimes. Despite a 'housing-led' definition, the social democratic regimes have arrived at a perception of homelessness from the perspective of individual vulnerabilities. This may reflect the increasing integration of housing and general welfare policies, the fact that homelessness is to a greater extent concentrated among people with complex social problems and that homeless populations have generally been somewhat smaller in the Nordic countries than in the liberal welfare regimes, comparative methodological difficulties notwithstanding. But it may also reflect more profound features of the welfare states, for example the difference in public social welfare expenditure as illustrated in Figure 1. The higher level of social expenditure in the social democratic regimes is likely to reduce poverty and the number of households with difficulties managing in the housing market. However, it should be mentioned that the level of homelessness in Ireland is lower than it is in Norway (Anderson et al., 2008).

Housing supply issues are only a minor aspect of the social democratic strategies, whereas aims at increasing the housing supply are explicitly mentioned in most of the liberal strategies, most notably in the English and Scottish strategies. With the exception of Finland, which has traditionally taken a housing-oriented approach to homelessness, a characteristic of the strategies in the Nordic countries is a concentration on strengthening social services and interventions for the homeless though also with a focus on developing targeted accommodation and preventing homelessness stemming from evictions.

All Nordic capitals have higher numbers of homeless people than are found in the rural/provincial districts (Benjaminsen and Dyb, 2008) and housing markets are generally tight in the Nordic capitals. Seen in this light it might be a challenge to achieve the goals set in the Nordic strategies without addressing general housing supply issues. The shortage of public housing, together with a focus on individual vulnerability and a rather narrow definition of homelessness, has created specific segments in the housing sector for those defined as homeless. Most notably in Sweden the reform of public housing has played an important role in the growth of the secondary housing market and special contracts for people defined as homeless (Sahlin, 2005). The 1.5 per cent of public housing in Norway earmarked for people in need of help creates a specific and stigmatised segment of the housing market, and a strong emphasis on developing individualised housing solutions has been a characteristic of the formulation of Norwegian homeless policy. In Denmark, which has a relatively large public housing stock, the social responsibilities of the public housing sector have been largely upheld and, unlike Sweden, public housing still plays an important role in the provision of housing for marginal groups as the municipalities make widespread use of their right to refer individuals with social needs to public housing.

Looking at the Nordic social democratic regimes it becomes clear that homelessness policies are determined by both the housing system and welfare policies. This is also evident for the liberal regimes, which perhaps explains why we find homeless policies with strong similarities within very divergent housing systems, not only within the Scandinavian countries, but also across both the social democratic and liberal regimes.

All the homeless strategies address a wide range of stakeholders that should be involved. In particular the liberal welfare states emphasise the participation of cross-department groups of housing authorities, health authorities, probation services and the NGO sector in implementing the strategy. The importance of anchoring services on the local level is emphasised in both the liberal and social democratic regimes. However, the role of NGOs is more significant in the liberal regimes. A common feature of all strategies is the emphasis put on the role of the

municipal authorities. However, local government bodies have a greater degree of autonomy and responsibility in the social democratic regimes, which might mean that they need to use incentives rather than impose statutory duties to implement the strategies. Nevertheless, the documents show striking similarities with regard to the stakeholders that are called upon to interact and form partnerships to achieve the strategic targets.

A crucial challenge to the implementation of each of the strategies is the actual transformation of goals set at the national level into practical activities and interventions at the local level. Most of the countries put emphasis on the development of local homeless strategies, for instance on a municipal level. However, the implementation of national policies on the local level also presents some important challenges. The responsibility of homelessness on the local level is mainly anchored in social authorities that have only a very limited (or no) influence on housing supply policies.

Conclusion

Despite the differences in the focus of their strategies, there are considerable common elements across the two welfare state regimes. In all the countries considered the impact of the housing first approach is clear, a finding in line with Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls (2008), albeit that the term 'housing first' is utilised in a fairly elastic manner. This demonstrates the impact of the spread of theory and knowledge among the different countries and the influence of international networks, exchanges of ideas etc. However, individual governments interpret 'housing first' in differing ways (see Dobbin et al., 2007, for a review of public policy diffusion). In the case of the homeless strategies, it would appear that the 'learning thesis' is most appropriate. A clear emphasis on outcomes such as reducing the use of temporary accommodation, reducing stays in shelters, providing long-term or permanent accommodation and providing individualised services and support are evident in all strategies under review. The case of Sweden is somewhat exceptional in this matter, as is Sweden's use of the staircase model and the secondary housing market. Despite these structural conditions, the Swedish strategy nonetheless refers to the housing first principle in an attempt to improve entry into the ordinary housing market. In most of the strategies there is also a clear focus on prevention, especially the English, Norwegian and Swedish strategies, mainly in their emphasis on reducing the number of evictions.

The analysis of the homeless strategies across the different welfare regimes reveals elements of both divergence and convergence. A focus on general housing policies and a rights-based approach in terms of the statutory definition of homelessness and the corresponding interventions seem to be predominant in the liberal regimes,

whereas a focus on the most marginal groups and extending social services and interventions for these groups is most characteristic of the strategies in the social democratic regimes. However, there are also clear elements of convergence as a housing-first-dominated approach has come into focus across the different types of welfare state, and prevention and targeted, individualised and tailor-made interventions are key objectives in developing national homeless policies.

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The Drafting of the Portuguese Homeless Strategy : An Insight into the Process from a Governance-Oriented Perspective

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- › **Abstract_** *Portugal's launch of its first national homeless strategy represents a breakthrough in the Southern European approach to tackling homelessness. This paper provides an insider's perspective into the process of drafting the strategy, focusing on the interplay between the emergence and operation of specific governance arrangements and the potential for new policy-making mechanisms in the homelessness arena. Rather than presenting a detailed description of the strategy, the paper focuses on the processes underpinning its drafting: identification of probable key-drivers, the emergence of the initiative, the main actors involved and their respective roles, the actual dynamics of the collaborative process and the challenges faced. Insights into governance issues and policy change gained through the drafting of Portugal's first national homeless strategy, along with the lessons learned throughout this process, can provide an opportunity for other countries to reflect on and analyse their national processes of framing and implementing new policy instruments.*
- › **Key Words_** *Homeless strategy; process; governance challenges; policy change; Portugal.*

Introduction

The *National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People – Prevention, Intervention and Follow-Up, 2009–2015* was launched in Lisbon on 14 March 2009.¹ This document represents the first strategic approach to homelessness at a national level in Portugal, and its adoption is an important development in the state's role in the area of homelessness, particularly when one considers the relative immaturity of the Portuguese welfare regime in a comparative European context, and the fragmented nature of traditional approaches to issues of homelessness (Baptista and O'Sullivan, 2008).

As a background to the development of this initiative, this paper briefly presents relevant recent trends in designing and implementing policies that address specific population groups and social problems, both in the Portuguese context and in relation to other Southern European (SE) countries. It highlights the concomitant influence of the EU in an evolving understanding of homelessness and ways of tackling it, and the persistence of 'old' legacies in the actual provision of services. A brief discussion on the conceptual debate regarding the interplay between governance arrangements and the potential for policy change introduced by the emergence of a new policy instrument provides the theoretical framework of the paper.

The paper then explores in detail the nature and stages of the collaborative process involved in drafting the national homeless strategy, specifically focusing on the range and identity of stakeholders, the stages of their involvement and their various responsibilities in the process; the mechanisms behind the formation of the group; the working dynamics on which the drafting process was implemented; the communication strategies adopted; the decision-making processes; and the challenges arising from issues of representativeness, recognition and power, both inside and outside the core drafting group (of stakeholders).

The Portuguese initiative follows the path initiated by other European countries in setting up and implementing national strategic plans to address homelessness (Benjaminsen et al., 2009). The singularity of the Portuguese initiative within the context of this European trend – it is the first 'southern' strategy to be adopted – should, however, be highlighted. Portugal, together with Italy, Greece and Spain, is often characterised by the underdevelopment and low efficiency of its welfare regime, by the central role of the family as the main social provider, and by a weak and highly fragmented civil society. In considering the debate around the existence of one or several southern welfare regimes, and of different political and societal dynamics in the SE countries, it is true to say that the launching of a national

¹ The original document in Portuguese is available online at: www1.seg-social.pt/downloads/iss/ENIPSA.html.

strategy on homelessness in Portugal represents an expectations rupture in countries where, in spite of a high degree of state centralisation (Ferreira, 2005), state intervention in specific societal spheres (such as education, housing, health) is selective and greatly dependent on the claims and power of different social groups (Mozzicafredo, 1997). Until now, the homeless sector in Portugal, as in other SE countries, was not one of those influential groups.

Moreover, in Portugal, as in other SE countries and some Scandinavian welfare states, homelessness has mainly been perceived in terms of social exclusion rather than housing exclusion. Measures to address homelessness have been fragmented, have centred on the emergency side of service provision, and have mostly depended on services delivered by the NGO sector and traditionally funded by the state, which until now played a very marginal role in policy orientation in this area. However, Portugal has undergone important economic, social and political changes since the mid-1970s, which have impacted on the characteristics of the prevailing social model and contributed to a gradual reshaping of the role of the state in relation to social policies.

The so-called new generation of social policies implemented in Portugal after 1996 brought about a new concept of social action, shaped by changes in the debate around social problems (such as poverty and social exclusion) and in the orientation of social policies (Pereirinha, 2006). This new social policy orientation was translated into the deepening of welfare mix solutions involving a wide range of stakeholders (public, private, NGOs), which gave priority to the territorial dimension of social policy making and implementation. Innovative forms of partnership at the local level, promoting active participation of the public and new forms of coordination, were designed and experimented with.

The adoption of a mobilising approach for eradicating poverty and exclusion led to the involvement of various bodies, including state services, local authorities, non-profit-making organisations, and groups of citizens in partnerships and networks, which represents an increased pooling of effort, will and responsibility. Several SE countries have been exposed to and have absorbed this imported EU discourse on the modernisation of policies to combat poverty and social exclusion by prioritising local partnerships and networking (Arapoglou, 2004).

The process of drafting the first Portuguese homelessness strategy reflects some of the above-mentioned developments and at the same time reveals some of the challenges arising from an evolving understanding of homelessness and from the confrontation between new forms of policy making and the persistence of 'old' legacies in the provision of services in this area. It also illustrates challenges from

existing and anticipated relationship patterns between different stakeholders (public and private), at different levels of responsibility (central and local) and in different organisational structures (NGOs and federations).

The Challenging Effects of Governance Networks in the Agenda- and Problem-Setting Conceptual Debate

Focusing on the process through which it was possible to draft the first Portuguese national strategy on homelessness leads us necessarily towards a brief discussion on the interplay between governance arrangements and the potential for policy change introduced by the emergence of a new policy instrument.

Is there a connection between the stakeholders in question, their interaction, and the possibility for change in an area not traditionally conceptualised as political? Are we witnessing a key moment in the process of governance in this field? Has the process of drafting the national strategy been able to bring the issue of homelessness to the policy agenda and – almost simultaneously – define how it may be tackled? The answers to these questions bring us directly to a broader conceptual discussion on governance, agenda setting and problem definition. Given the scope of the present paper and the abundance of literature on these issues we will focus strategically on the interconnection of these three conceptual contexts as they appear relevant for interpreting the drafting process of the Portuguese national strategy on homelessness.

Drawing on Klijn's (2008) summary of existing and varied interpretations of the word 'governance', it is particularly useful to focus on his fourth major definition, concerning network governance (self-steering or non-self-steering). :

In some parts of the governance literature, governance and the network concept are strongly related... Governance takes place within networks of public and non-public actors, and the interaction between these groups makes processes complex and difficult to manage. Consequently, different steering and management strategies are required compared to more classical approaches. The focus here is on the complex interaction process and negotiation in a network of governmental organizations and other organizations, both private and not-for-profit.

The diverse range of actors involved in the drafting process of the homeless strategy in Portugal was gradually transformed into an active and complex network of individual and institutional stakeholders, which required the adoption of different and evolving working strategies as well as active and nurturing process management techniques. It has been argued that the factors underpinning the emergence of governance networks are often linked to efficiency, resource dependency or the

need for a better integration of services. However, the nature of the issues at stake may also foster the need for a broad governance network; the multidimensional nature of homelessness goes beyond the boundaries of public responsibility and demands the engagement of various levels and areas of policy and service delivery. For this reason the emergence of governance networks in this specific domain should be analysed.

The composition of the governance network may also be an influential element in determining the position of an issue on the agenda. The debate on agenda setting will prove to be useful for the present analysis, albeit with some interesting variations. Widely acknowledged as a political process, agenda setting has often been connected with public recognition of a specific problem, which is then raised to the category of a public issue. Agenda setting has been described as the politics of selecting issues for active consideration (Cobb and Ross, 1997), as a process through which issues come to public attention (Weiss, 1989) and as a political and conflictual process through which an issue is legitimated to merit policy attention (Dearing and Rogers, 1996). This 'legitimising' element has been critically addressed by several authors (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Dery, 2000) who advise us to distinguish carefully between processes that allow some problems to attain agenda status, and processes that lead to actual policy changes.

The agenda-setting process may impact on the adoption of new policies and ultimately on bringing about social change, but it does not imply the development of an actual solution for the public issue now on the agenda. For some (Kingdom, 1984), the agenda-setting process may be envisaged as creating 'an opportunity for action', on which different interest groups (e.g. governments) may (or may not) decide to act, and may decide by which means to act. With regard to this fundamental distinction, Dery (2000 p.40) argues:

'Poverty', 'illegal immigration', 'crime', 'health insurance coverage', 'nuclear safety', are examples of suitable answers to the question: 'Which issues are on the agenda?', but such answers do not reveal the slightest hint on how these issues are defined. Problem definition answers a different question, concerning 'the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, and the means which may be chosen'.

The context within which the Portuguese national strategy was drafted raises some additional challenges, particularly regarding the timing of these processes. Agenda setting is consistently presented as coming prior to the stage of problem definition, and is closely linked to the media exposure usually given to certain social problems. The fact that homelessness in Portugal enjoys only moderate public interest – strengthened through media coverage at certain times of the year – and that it has never truly reached the status of a recognised public or political issue, not being

present on the political agenda, adds a puzzling element to the conceptual framework described above. The drafting of the national strategy seems to have simultaneously achieved the demanding task of putting the issue of homelessness on the agenda, and that of enhancing an opportunity for action and thus the decision to introduce changes in the homelessness policy arena.

The composition of the governance network, its growing-up process and the surprise element in the constructive and ongoing collaboration of this group of different stakeholders may help to explain this unusual pattern of stage development in the policy process. Whether the opening of this policy window will be successful in bringing about actual change in the delivery of services in the homelessness field will necessarily depend not only on the success of the policy design process, which will be analysed in the paper, but also on the subsequent stages of policy implementation and evaluation.

The Portuguese National Strategy on Homelessness: An Overview

The first striking element of the Portuguese strategy is to be found in its preamble, where the drafting of a national strategy on homelessness is presented as a response to national and European agreements in both the housing and social inclusion domains. The importance given to the EU agreements (the European Social Charter, the European Parliament's Written Declaration to end street homelessness, the NAPs/inclusion) at the beginning of the document is a clear sign of the impact of EU policy orientation on national policy-making processes.

The document is largely made up of a set of general aims representing agreements by the different public and private entities, which are to be implemented at a local level based on specific homelessness plans. These plans will take into account the local needs that have been identified as well as specific intervention principles and methodological orientations.

The strategy is organised around two main axes:

- To gain more evidence-based knowledge on homelessness through the use and dissemination of an agreed definition of homelessness, and of a shared information and monitoring system.
- To promote quality in the provision of homelessness services and responses by eliminating the need to sleep rough, increasing the quality of temporary accommodation, ensuring the availability of accommodation and support upon discharge from institutions, reinforcing permanent housing solutions, improving access to social benefits, improving access to health care (namely to mental health care

services), promoting training and qualification opportunities for workers in this field, enhancing the drafting of local homelessness plans and promoting the adoption of specific methodological orientations in intervention practices.

These aims are translated into operational or strategic objectives, which in turn correspond to targets and specific activities. A table is provided where the two strategic axes are broken down into objectives, targets, indicators, activities, timelines and responsibilities.

One of the central elements of the strategy is the definition of homelessness, which is considered to be the 'operational basis for defining measures to address the phenomenon that are expected to have an impact both upstream and downstream'. The definition, which was approved by all the entities (public and private) represented in the inter-institutional group responsible for drafting the strategy, identifies the state of homelessness as including all situations where there is a lack of accommodation and those of people living in temporary accommodation for the homeless.² The adoption of this definition at a national level by all services and agencies working with homeless people is one of the objectives of the strategy.

The strategy defines three specific areas to be tackled by the different measures proposed under the two strategic axes:

- Preventive action in order to avoid situations of homelessness arising from eviction or discharge from an institution.
- Direct intervention in situations of homelessness focusing on the clarification of procedures and responsibilities within a specific intervention model, and also experimentation through innovative projects.
- Follow-up of situations to ensure continuity – when needed – of support after resettlement, which is to be achieved within the local partnership networks.

In the domain of prevention, the strategy defines several measures such as:

- Providing guidelines for the identification and inclusion of risk indicators for the homeless population in diagnoses issued by local social networks.
- Promoting sensitisation initiatives addressed at school and media environments in an effort to tackle the social stigmatisation of the homeless population.
- Establishing compulsory mechanisms for identifying and addressing situations involving a heightened risk of homelessness after discharge from penal, health or educational institutions.

² The Portuguese definition of homelessness is based on the ETHOS typology developed by FEANTSA.

There is a special emphasis on enhancing qualified intervention practices in the domain of service provision for the homeless population, and the document defines different measures for:

- Promoting training initiatives addressed at workers.
- Enhancing the implementation of local homelessness units.
- Adopting local integrated intervention methodologies for addressing homelessness.

The document also establishes an organisational structure for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, both at a national level (e.g. executive and consultation bodies) and at a local level (e.g. executive units, cooperation with local social networks).

There is a clear concern throughout the document with addressing the issue of stakeholder participation in implementing the strategy; indeed the need to involve different actors (public and private) is one of the guiding principles of the strategy. It is emphasised in the discussion of challenges to be met by the strategy; it was addressed in the discussion and adoption of the definition of homelessness; it is highlighted in the intervention model proposed; and the table of objectives and targets for implementing the strategy identifies the entities responsible for their fulfilment, and the other actors to be involved.

Although embedded in a social welfare model, where homelessness has mainly been approached from a social exclusion rather than from a housing exclusion perspective, the strategy directly addresses the issue of housing needs and the provision of housing solutions, involving both the state and the local authorities as major stakeholders in the implementation of policy measures in this area. This approach represents an important evolution in the definition of homelessness policies in Portugal, where housing has always been notably absent. However, the document does not represent a shift from defining homelessness as primarily a social issue to addressing it as a housing issue. A greater emphasis is put on the housing exclusion dimension, but the document highlights the various levels of problems and causes involved in homelessness situations and processes, directly addressing areas such as health, income, social benefits and employment.

In conjunction with the reinforcement in recent years of the role of local stakeholders, namely local authorities and social networks, in creating local strategies to tackle homelessness, the national strategy recognises local dynamics and provides guidelines for the implementation of local homelessness plans. These plans are to be defined and implemented within the local social networks in accordance with the strategy's orientation. The national Group for the Implementation,

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy is responsible for disseminating the guidelines and for providing support to the local networks and units responsible for designing those plans.

The underlying philosophy of the national strategy seeks to strengthen the evidence-based nature of homelessness practices and policy making, enhance interagency cooperation and mutual responsibility, strengthen the focus on housing needs and responses, ensure the continuity and diversity of support and shift the state's role towards more strategic control over the provision of services.

The Portuguese Homelessness Strategy: Focusing on the Process

In May 2007 the Institute of Social Security³ organised the first meeting with a group of public and private non-profit entities – the so-called inter-institutional group (IG) – in order to initiate a process for the design of a national strategy on homelessness. The IG was composed of several ministerial representatives (housing, employment, immigration and ethnic minorities, drugs and drug addiction, equality and citizenship, prisons and social reintegration, health and social security, research), the institution responsible for social action in the city of Lisbon, civil society representatives (NGO federations and federations of confessional organisations), the local municipalities' representative (the national association of Portuguese municipalities) and the research centre which represents the European Observatory on Homelessness in Portugal.

An insider's perspective: the 'risky' approach

The author of this paper was directly involved in the process of drafting the Portuguese strategy, and the decision to write a paper focusing precisely on this process therefore comes with some risk of a biased analysis. In fact the author was part of the IG on behalf of one of the non-profit entities invited to take part in the process – the research institute representing the European Observatory on Homelessness – and was present at all IG regular meetings, participating in the drafting process of the strategy as a member of the IG. Conscious of these ethical limitations, the author decided to adopt a methodological approach to minimise

³ The Institute of Social Security (ISS) is a public institute, created in 2001 under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity. Its mission is to manage social security regimes, to recognise the rights and obligations arising from social security regimes and to implement social action, as well as to ensure the application of international instruments of social security and social action. The ISS carries out its activities country-wide through its eighteen district centres, the National Pension Centre, and the National Centre for the Protection against Professional Risks. It also runs a network of 352 local centres.

these risks. This approach consisted of a thorough review of all the documents filed by the IG's coordinator, which included minutes and summaries of all the different meetings, presentations, initiatives, decisions taken and media coverage of the preparation of the strategy, as well as any other relevant material collected throughout the process. This review, which took place several months after the end of the author's last IG meeting, was performed with an explicit concern to review the whole process and closely analyse details of those parts of the process in which the author was not directly involved; and to re-assess and consider the whole evolution of the process from a more distant perspective and with the specific goal of critically analysing the process of drafting a homelessness strategy. The final stage of this process was to be the clarification of certain elements of the information reviewed in conjunction with the person responsible for coordinating the IG, who was fully aware of the author's new task.

These precautions considered, the author is nonetheless aware that it was precisely her personal involvement during the different stages and her direct contact with all the stakeholders which enabled her to access components of the process that would not have been available for an outside analysis, and which were vital in reflecting upon the drafting process.

Launching a national strategy: continuities and changes in a collaborative process

In order to understand the emergence in 2007 of a specific initiative for the drafting of the first national strategy on homelessness, and more specifically the formation of an inter-institutional group that would be responsible for carrying out the whole process, it is vital to recall some important key drivers:

- The first national survey on homelessness, promoted by the Institute for Social Security (ISS) in 2004, through the direct consultation with all municipalities, local social security services and homelessness service providers.
- The first national count of rough sleepers at the end of 2005 with the direct involvement and coordination of the Ministry for Labour and Social Solidarity and a strong local mobilisation of teams throughout the country.
- The evaluation by the Ministry for Labour and Social Solidarity of shelters for the homeless population and the recognition of flaws in the coordination of different services.
- A growing awareness of European approaches to tackling homelessness, namely by the direct involvement of the Ministry for Labour and Social Solidarity, through the ISS, in the FEANTSA working groups addressed at statutory entities.

The need to adopt a more strategic approach to homelessness in Portugal was one of the main recommendations of the 2005 study (the national count and survey), based on evidence showing a scattered pattern of service provision, a lack of strategic cooperation between agencies, a lack of information sharing and monitoring and an emerging local mobilisation to tackle homelessness strategically. The ISS took the initiative in May 2007 to invite a set of organisations to form an inter-institutional group (IG) for the preparation of a proposal for a national strategy on homelessness. The strategy notes that the composition of the IG sought to involve 'different sectors and areas of public and private activity which were considered key areas for intervening in this domain'. Table 1 presents the composition of the IG, signalling in **bold** those who were invited to form the core group from the beginning. The other members joined at a later stage when the process highlighted the need for the contribution of the areas they represented.

Table 1: Composition of the inter-institutional group

Public Entities	
ACS	High Commissioner for Health
ACIDI, IP	High Commissioner for Equality and the Inter-cultural Dialogue
ANMP	National Association of Portuguese Municipalities
CIG	Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality
DGS	General Directorate for Health
DGSS	General Directorate for Social Security
IDT	Institute for Drugs and Drug Addiction
IEFP	Institute for Employment and Professional Training
IHRU	Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation
LNEC – NES	Social Ecology Unit of the National Laboratory of Civil Engineering (research institute)
PSP	Public Security Police
GNR	National Republican Guard
SCML	Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa (Social action representative for the city of Lisbon)
DGRS	General Directorate for Social Reinsertion
DGSP	General Directorate for Prison Services
ENSP	National School for Public Health
ISS, IP	Institute for Social Security
Private Entities	
CNIS	Confederation of Social Solidarity Institutions
FNERDM	National Federation of Entities for the Rehabilitation of Mentally Ill People
CESIS	Research centre, representing Portugal in the European Observatory on Homelessness (FEANTSA)
REAPN	European Anti-Poverty Network Portugal
U-Mis	Union of the Portuguese Misericórdias (not-for profit solidarity organisations)

The inclusion of those public and private stakeholders that would constitute the core group of the IG was, in addition, linked to previous key partnerships and other relevant cooperative processes that preceded the launch of the drafting process.

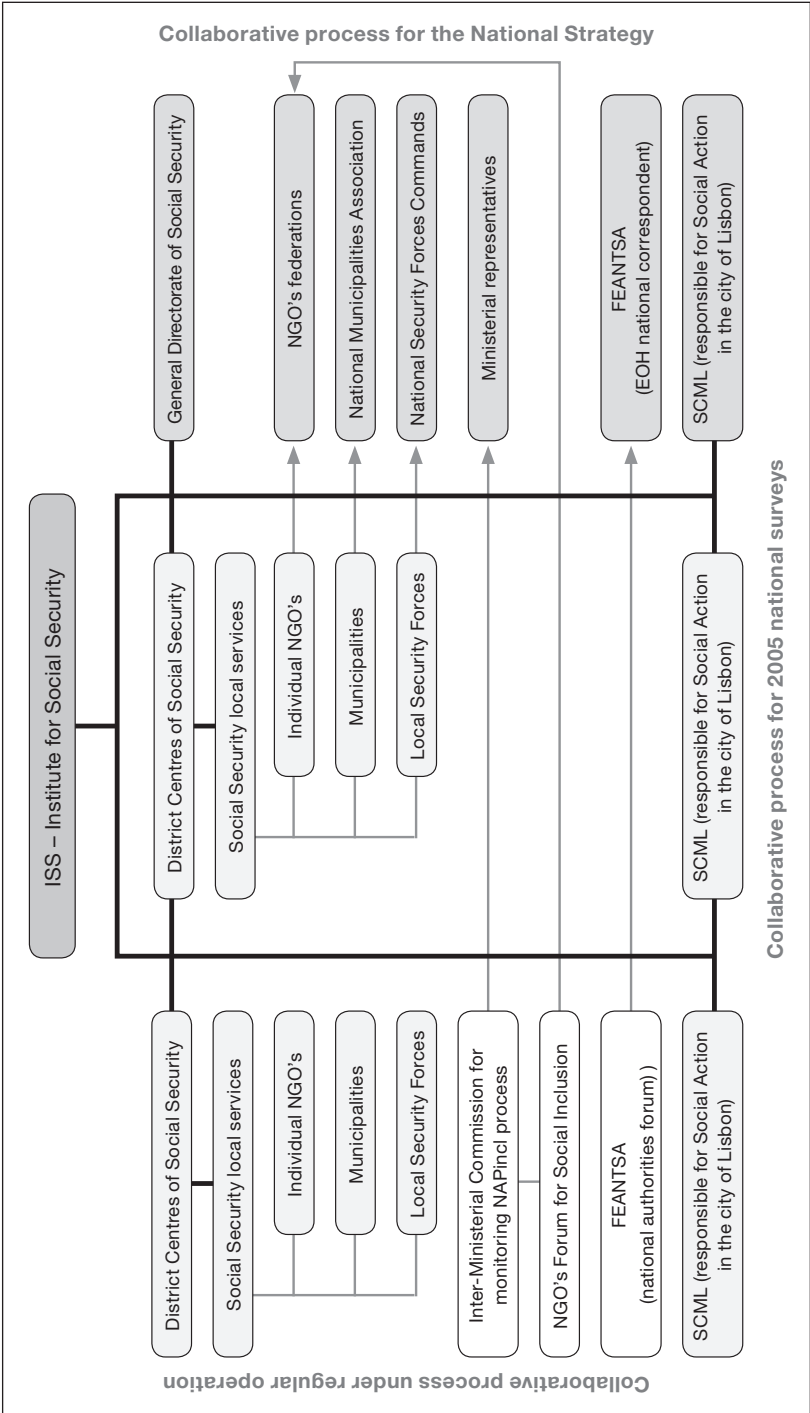
Figure 1 is an attempt to illustrate the different collaborative structures operating at different times (regular operation and key initiatives), from which it is possible to identify some links with the formation of the IG. It is particularly interesting that the partnership structure which enabled the implementation of the first national count of rough sleepers in 2005 was partly re-used in the national strategy, albeit with some additions. A notable element of the changes introduced in this structure is the increased participation of non-governmental bodies with responsibility for various public policy areas, which is a clear indication of the importance given to involving those sectors that are crucial in addressing issues directly related to the needs of the homeless population.

Another important element is the involvement of research units in the group, which reveals a concern to strengthen the links between policy and research from the very early stage of conceptualising the strategy within a cooperative philosophy rather than as a commissioned contribution. A further important shift is the replacement of local entities (municipalities, NGOs, security forces and local social security services) with their central counterparts (the national association of municipalities, national command of security forces, social security general directorate and NGO federations). Local engagement in the implementation of the national count of rough sleepers was replaced here by central decision making, or at least by representatives of national entities, which was a vital element in the drafting of a national strategy.

The collaboration of the ISS, NGO federations and other ministerial structures is also an important feature of the regular mode of operation in the framework of the Portuguese NAPs process, and it is continued in the partnership approach adopted for the drafting of the national strategy on homelessness. Finally, the pivotal role of the ISS in the two non-regular collaborative structures clearly illustrates the nature of the approach that has traditionally been taken in Portugal: homelessness viewed primarily as a social problem, the main responsibility for which lies in the area of social policy.

A closer look into the criteria that are not explicitly mentioned but which may underlie the composition of the IG reveals a concern with issues of representativeness and recognition. The express exclusion of local or individual organisations from the IG seems to illustrate the need for a nationally oriented partnership. As this arrangement corresponds to a formal requirement it becomes more difficult to ensure that each of the umbrella organisations does in fact represent its individual units. This is particularly complex in the case of NGOs in Portugal as there are no umbrella organisations in the area of homelessness, such that the

Figure 1 : Collaborative structures in the inter-institutional group



national federations involved in the drafting process of the strategy include agencies working with the homeless within their social intervention remit. Thus, recognition of the ability of these organisations to represent homelessness service providers may not be directly ensured.

The issue of public organisations, such as the municipalities or local services in different policy areas (e.g. social security and security forces), is less controversial. The national association of municipalities comprises and represents all Portuguese municipalities in spite of their diversity, and the formal and hierarchical structure of the local service organisations ensures that their central units are recognised as the correct stakeholders to represent their institution in preparing a nationally oriented policy document. One situation of a particularly hybrid nature is that of the institution responsible for social action in the city of Lisbon; although locally based, this public institution has replaced the public social action services in Lisbon with particularly strong action in the field of service provision for the homeless population, and is therefore an inevitable stakeholder.

The representatives of the organisations involved were mainly technical staff, i.e. workers who have technical responsibilities within their organisations (some changes were made during the process), although some private organisations were represented by workers who also had management and decision-making responsibilities in their organisations.

From sole to shared responsibility

The process leading to the drafting of the first national strategy on homelessness began with a decision of the ISS to gather a group of entities and organisations and to present them with the idea of initiating a collaborative process structured around an inter-institutional group. This decision was grounded in the established goals of the ISS's 2007 action plan. The initial group, created in May 2007, was enlarged during the drafting process.

Once the group was created and the process activated, the ISS representative was concerned with moving from a position of sole responsibility (in the recruitment of additional stakeholders) to one of more shared responsibility in activating additional elements within the core group. It is possible to identify three stages in the engagement of different stakeholders throughout the process, which correspond to these evolving approaches:

- *Launching of the group*: The ISS invites a first group of public and private entities, proposing the activation of a process leading to the development of a national strategy.

- *Stabilisation of the core group*: The IG decides to invite other stakeholders to join due to their relevance and specificity of practice and knowledge around homelessness issues.
- *Occasional involvement of stakeholders*: Different members of the core group propose occasional contributions by specific stakeholders at different stages of the process and with different objectives (e.g. the Director of FEANTSA was invited to present and report on FEANTSA's initiative and experience with regard to the strategy toolkit; a presentation of good practices within the EQUAL initiative regarding the re-settlement of former prisoners was made to the whole group; local networks' projects and strategies on homelessness were presented).

This three-stage approach allowed for the gradual incorporation of various contributions and the mobilisation of stakeholders around core tasks and responsibilities throughout the process, complemented by occasional contributions from outside actors with relevant knowledge and experience. It is important to stress that this consultative methodology is not a common method of policy making in Portugal, particularly at national level where the participation and cooperation of different stakeholders is difficult to achieve across such a wide spectrum.

The relative stability of the core IG achieved during the process was an important factor in enhancing internal cohesion, even though there were clear imbalances in the involvement of stakeholders and their ability to be actively engaged in the dynamics of the process.

Flexible management of the group's dynamics and levels of engagement

The drafting of the national strategy demanded a clear commitment from the stakeholders, and while this was generally achieved, there were imbalances in their levels of involvement.

Throughout the process the ISS representative clearly played an 'activator' and 'nurturing' role (Klijn, 2008) in the work of the IG. On the one hand it was possible to observe a gradual investment of institutional resources in the process, despite some administrative limitations, and on the other there was strong personal engagement from the ISS representative, which was one of the crucial elements in managing the group's dynamics.

The pivotal role played by the coordinating element of the IG in the management of the network involved different activities and additional responsibilities such as the preparation for and participation in all meetings and working groups, the dissemination of information, and the preparation of formal information to be circulated between senior officials in the ISS and other public bodies.

An important aspect of the activator's role within the IG concerned the voluntary nature of the involvement of the other actors. The engagement of the IG members was conditioned by the need to conciliate work on the strategy with their own institutional needs. Within the group, the specific arrangements varied, from those who made a formal designation of and specific time allocation to the national strategy project, to those who simply added a non-resourced project to other resourced projects. The need to address these issues – put forward by different participants – also contributed to the adoption of agreed arrangements regarding differentiated working dynamics and flexible management of the different levels of involvement at different stages.

The working dynamics on which the drafting of the strategy was implemented involved cooperation between the stakeholders. At the first level of cooperation there was a balanced involvement of all actors, achieved through the implementation of a two-fold methodological approach:

- Monthly group meetings were held throughout the process and helped to structure the cooperation of the IG and the strategy's trajectory in terms of defining objectives, tasks and responsibilities and making decisions. These meetings were particularly important during the initial phase as they allowed for the sharing of knowledge and experience in the area of homelessness and for discussion and agreement on a definition of homelessness and on the founding principles of the national strategy.
- Enlarged meetings – given the essentially technical nature of the representatives in the IG, there was agreement that involving institutional representatives with decision-making capacity at key moments of the group's work was vital for the success of the process. These other institutional stakeholders were called upon to be present, together with the technical staff (from the IG), in enlarged meetings to approve final proposals from the group (e.g. on the definition of homelessness).

A second level of cooperation was based on the need to explore specific issues arising from developments within the regular operation of the group. These more restricted meetings only involved those directly related to the issues under discussion, and they basically followed two different working methods:

- Working group meetings were held (weekly or fortnightly) for specific purposes and were initiated following the initial phases of diagnosis and joint agreement on concepts, principles and structures of the strategy proposal. These restricted meetings were considered vital to ensure a more dynamic approach to specific tasks (e.g. working groups on prevention, intervention and resettlement; groups responsible for drafting different components of the final proposal).

- Sectoral meetings were held in the final stages on specific areas (health, employment etc.) in order to ensure that relevant contributions would be made by the public sector, where necessary, to achieve the set objectives.

Participation in the working groups or sectoral meetings was always discussed during the monthly meetings and was on a voluntary basis. It was usually based on the expertise, interest and knowledge of the participants, institutional relevance and strategic importance, and it took into account the need to accommodate the availability of different IG members and their respective institutional commitments.

Decision-making challenges

The decision-making process within the national strategy drafting process was a complex one, not necessarily in its outward features, but in the context of its specific institutional structures and their ability to represent and mobilise individual organisations around discussions of strategy contents and decision making.

Decision making was mostly centred within the core group. Decisions on the contents of the strategy proposal were always taken within the context of regular IG meetings, following lengthy discussion and the drafting of different versions of the document contents. There was a specific concern throughout the process that each representative in the IG should be actively responsible for liaising with their senior officials on an ongoing basis in order to ensure institutional endorsement of the work that was being developed within the group. In cases where the scope and impact of the decision taken was seen as particularly challenging (e.g. the definition of homelessness), the methodology adopted was to gain formal institutional approval from all the entities represented in the group as soon as the group had reached a final consensus, and still within the process of drafting the strategy proposal.

Thus, following approval within the group, the process of gaining institutional (and political) approval from each member of the IG was initiated: the proposals approved by the group were brought back to the respective institutions in order to be presented at a higher decision-making level (directors, presidents, boards etc.). The IG discussed the amended versions and contributions, and an agreed new proposal was drafted that was in turn channelled through this legitimating path. In several sectors this process facilitated the introduction of homelessness-linked measures in respective plans or strategies.

This legitimating path was particularly challenging for the collective stakeholders within the IG, especially the NGO federations. All members were responsible for nurturing this communication process between the core group and the organisations they represent, which involved presenting the proposals issued by the IG to their members and bringing back their respective feedback. Some of the issues

that contributed to the complexity of this intermediate process include the different mobilisation capacities of federations, differing organisational cultures, the effectiveness of internal communication strategies, the extent of each organisations' skills and experience in policy making, and each federation's investment in promoting the participation of its associate organisations.

A closer look into the organisational philosophies, practices and structures of NGOs working with the homeless population – some of which are represented in NGO federations – will clarify some of the expected and actual difficulties in this collaborative process. One initial element regards the persistence of an individualistic approach to homelessness, and therefore a difficulty in understanding how the nature of the problem may be solved by a national strategy. Another element is a working tradition of providing for the poor within the limits of institutional capacity and funding that is difficult to adapt to the demands of actual participation and shared responsibilities that go beyond the particularities of individual situations. Finally, a large majority of homelessness service providers are still confronted with a lack of peer recognition within the field of social provision.

Communicating – from inclusive strategies to disseminating needs and opportunities

The approach to communication adopted during the drafting of the strategy served dual goals; one more immediate and operational, and one based on longer-term capacity building. With regard to the former, there was a concern with establishing efficient and inclusive communication channels adapted to the nature and objectives of the tasks to be carried out:

- Meetings were crucial for the sharing of information (e.g. on progress achieved in the working groups, on links with external stakeholders), the discussion of ideas regarding the development of work and defining tasks and responsibilities throughout the process. They were also occasions for decision making at the technical level. Minutes of the monthly meetings were drawn up, circulated and improved upon by all members of the IG, who were rotationally responsible for their preparation; it was not possible to ensure the same degree of detailed record keeping regarding the smaller and more frequent working groups. Particularly challenging was the process of providing feedback to the larger group regarding the progress and achievements of the different working groups, and the level of reporting was inconsistent in this more specific communication channel.

- E-mailing was the most commonly used communication tool throughout the process; comments on draft documents (including minutes) were circulated among members of the group (*reply to all* principle was agreed on from the beginning), who thus had simultaneous access to the comments and suggestions made by each participant, although they were centralised by the ISS representative.

With regard to longer-term capacity building, the strategy adopted (although not explicitly formulated as such) was based on recognition of the importance of access to a pool of information and knowledge on issues directly relevant to addressing homelessness challenges. Thus, participants of the IG were encouraged to share information on the development of relevant initiatives (e.g. seminars, conferences, training, projects) and documentation (e.g. studies, policy documents, statistics at local, national or international levels). This sharing and mutual engagement fuelled the content-related interest of a diverse network of stakeholders around homelessness, providing opportunities for upgrading and updating knowledge.

Another relevant feature of the communication process, which involved not only a mutual learning component but also the opportunity for gradual dissemination of the strategy's goals and relevance, was the establishment of a set of initiatives linking the IG's work with wider society. During the process several organisational members of the IG participated in activities with stakeholders that were not directly involved in the strategy. The activities were mainly promoted by outside entities, organisations and working groups, and included projects implemented at different levels (national and local); ⁴ for example, local networks addressing the issue of homelessness were invited to present their projects, and on-site visits to specific projects were organised. These activities generated relevant experience for the drafting of the national strategy.

The gradual dissemination of the strategy was also enhanced by the active participation of IG members in homeless-related initiatives, where they presented the progress and development of the drafting of the national strategy; such presentations were made at Lisbon's social network activities, to the Lisbon think-tank on homelessness and to the social security district delegations among others.

Other more strategic dissemination initiatives, which aimed at grasping opportunities to establish and sustain various links (and networks), included the working meeting held with the national coordinator of the proposal for a national housing strategy (under preparation), and meetings with the National Housing Institute to discuss the impact of adopting a definition of homelessness within the strategy, specifically the possibility of including some categories from the homeless definition in the 2011 census.

⁴ In Portugal there is no such thing as a regional level of policy making.

This sustained outside link was important in creating opportunities for cooperation and interaction, and also for gradually increasing recognition of the importance of the upcoming first national homelessness strategy. Successfully opening these communication channels may be an important contribution to the expected outcome of the implementation stage.

Conclusion

The drafting of the first national strategy on homelessness represents a shift in the traditional role of the Portuguese state in this area and may be seen as a unique initiative within the context of Southern European approaches to tackling homelessness. Focusing on the process leading to the conception of this new policy instrument, this paper highlighted the potential and the challenges arising from the mobilisation of a wide range of different stakeholders (public and private), organisational structures (individual organisations and their national representatives) and agenda priorities for policy change.

Despite the complexity of the process and the still unknown future outcome of the national strategy's implementation, there is evidence that governance arrangements in the drafting process contributed to absorbing the time gap between agenda setting and problem definition, and to opening up an opportunity for change in the homelessness policy arena. It is also evident that the multidimensional nature of the issue at stake fostered the need for the diversified and multidimensional character of the partnership structure in drafting the strategy. Nonetheless, it was possible to identify elements of continuity in this collaborative structure from previous partnership arrangements, both in the regular operation of the institutions involved and in key occasional opportunities for collaboration. These elements of continuity were further enhanced by the addition of new stakeholders, most of whom had direct or indirect links with the preceding collaborative structures.

The evolution of the partnership approach adopted by the national strategy inter-institutional group, the evolving nature of individual and shared responsibilities, the flexible management of the working dynamics, the activating and nurturing nature of the group's coordination, the adaptable levels of institutional involvement and the consultative methodology adopted were crucial elements in the group's operational performance.

This policy-making framework – unusual in the Portuguese context, particularly at a national level – was confronted with inevitable challenges. There is still a perception of homelessness as a phenomenon with complex individual components that must be tackled on a case-by-case basis. This perception does not lend itself to the notion of needing an overall national strategy, such that institutional tensions

emerged around, for example, the need to consolidate available resources for a new project in areas where other, already consolidated, national plans or strategies were being prepared. In such cases a key element was the personal involvement and persistence of the IG's members.

Moreover, conflicting perceptions of policy-making processes also made it difficult for some entities to move away from their own policy-making procedures towards a new way of working in which proposals were drafted by an inter-institutional group and presented as the output of a group of partners. A key element in this challenging context was the ability of collective organisations (e.g. NGO federations) to represent and mobilise their individual members around a discussion of the strategy contents and in the decision-making process. The organisational philosophies, practices and structures of NGOs working with the homeless population were some of the components responsible for the complexity of this intermediate communication and legitimating process.

The drafting of the Portuguese strategy challenged the traditional positioning and power balance of different institutional stakeholders within the framework of social policy making. It involved experiments within public entities in new communication and decision-making mechanisms and the introduction by public entities and not-for-profit organisations of horizontal modes of cooperation for the purpose of policy formulation. It highlighted the frailties of representativeness, trust and recognition among not-for-profit organisations; issues that are vital for actual participation in national policy-making processes.

While the opening of this policy window in a Southern European country represents a breakthrough in the well-identified trend of a strategic approach to managing homelessness in liberal and social democratic European regimes (Benjaminsen et al., 2009), the success of the Portuguese strategy in bringing about actual change in the delivery of homelessness services will necessarily depend on the policy implementation and evaluation stages that follow the design process. But actual policy change will also depend on the ability of the stakeholders to deepen – or at least sustain – the re-designed power balance built during the process of drafting the strategy.

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Increasing Access to Housing : Implementing the Right to Housing in England and France

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› **Abstract_** *The United Kingdom and France are the only two European Union member states to have introduced a right to housing that is enforceable through the courts. This paper investigates whether such a right to housing increases homeless people's access to appropriate accommodation. Focusing on England and France, it begins by outlining the difficulties in accessing social housing in each country before describing how a right to housing is operated within this context. The differing, but in both cases complex, governance arrangements for implementing this right to housing are reviewed. The paper concludes that a right to housing does have the potential to ensure that the accommodation needs of the most marginalised households receive greater priority than those without such a right. However, implementation challenges, including take-up issues, fragmented governance arrangements, competing social goals, such as social diversity, and an overall lack of housing may significantly restrict the impact of this right to housing.*

› **Keywords_** *Right to housing ; access to housing ; social housing ; homelessness ; governance ; France ; England.*

Introduction

FEANTSA has for many years advocated a 'rights-based' approach to addressing homelessness across the EU. Key arguments for such an approach are the 'empowerment' it may afford to homeless people as well as the potential for delivering improved housing outcomes for homeless households (FEANTSA, 2005). Although the right to housing has been enshrined in international and European human rights instruments for over fifty years, the EU has tended to focus on policies designed more broadly to promote social inclusion rather than enforceable rights (Alston and Weiler, 1999; FEANTSA, 2005). Nonetheless, the Council of Europe has encouraged countries to develop a comprehensive and efficient legal framework on access to housing for disadvantaged people (Daly, 2002). A recent review of eleven Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries found that England¹ and France were the only two countries that had enforceable rights linked to the provision of *settled* housing for homeless households in specified circumstances (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2007). Other countries either had no rights to housing at all, had no legal mechanism to enforce any rights or enforceable rights were only in place for emergency accommodation.²

This paper investigates the potential for a right to housing to increase access to housing for homeless households, utilising the English and French experiences. Whilst the two countries both have a right to housing, their systems operate quite differently. As described below, the English system dates back to the 1977 Homeless Persons Act, which gave local housing authorities a duty to provide settled housing (usually discharged through social housing) to homeless households assessed to be 'in priority need' for housing. In contrast, a justiciable right to housing (DALO) was introduced in France thirty years later in the Act of 5 March 2007, replacing public authorities' best-efforts obligation with a performance obligation whereby certain categories of social housing applicants can apply for legal relief if they have been waiting for housing for 'an abnormally long time'.

Whilst it is outside this paper's remit to consider in detail the reasons for these countries developing a right to housing, there are some interesting parallels. Both systems were introduced at a time that homelessness was seen to be a growing and unacceptable social problem, rather than as a way to strengthen further a working system. In France media pressure via a campaign organised by the voluntary organisation, Les Enfants de Don Quichotte, is understood to have 'forced the government's hand' into enacting a law (Loison, 2007). Political will was not a

¹ Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also have enforceable rights to housing (see Anderson, 2007) but this study only included England from the UK.

² For example, there are rights to emergency accommodation for roofless households in Germany, Hungary, Poland and Sweden.

driving force, in contrast to the enactment of the Scottish homelessness system (Anderson, 2007). The development of the French system also owes much to the 'law culture' that is a key element of civil society. Moreover, the 'right to housing' has long been integrated into the French legal system as a fundamental right (Kenna and Uhry, 2006). However, only now is this right 'justiciable' in the sense that one can take legal action against a public authority for failing to fulfil its obligation to provide housing. The English system also partly developed following pressure group activity, backed by media attention, although over a more sustained period in the 1960s and 1970s (Pleace and Quilgars, 2003a). It also aligned with the political priorities of the Labour government in 1977. Perhaps due to differing legal traditions, the English system does not provide a right to an individual under the law, rather it places an obligation on local authorities to provide housing, therefore allowing individuals to sue a local authority if it does not abide by its obligations.

The English and French systems both rely on public authorities being able to identify appropriate housing for homeless people, primarily through the social rented sector. The social housing rented sector is of a similar size in both countries: Table 1 shows that between 17 and 18 per cent of households live in this tenure in England and France. Social housing has different histories in the two countries, however, with the sector growing over time in France but reducing significantly in England. English social housing has been described as providing a 'safety net' to households excluded from other options; whereas France's social housing sector is described as performing a 'wider affordability function' within the context of overall lower levels of poverty and more generous social insurance benefits and a different employment market (Stephens, 2008).

Table 1: Main residences in 2006 by tenure (% of households)

	England	France
Owners	68.3	57.2
Tenants	31.6	37.5
<i>Social rented sector</i>	17.7	17.1
<i>Private rented sector</i>	13.9	20.4
Other occupancy status (Non-paying lodger, furnished lets, subtenants)	Not available	5.3
Total stock of dwellings (in thousands)	21,000	26,280

Source: For Metropolitan France: INSEE, Housing Survey (2006); For England: Communities and Local Government (2008, Table 1).

This paper also seeks to demonstrate that governance issues are central to the effective workings of both systems, involving complex relationships between the central government, local authorities (at various different levels) and (social) housing providers, particularly in France. For example, it has been asserted that one of the

biggest problems for France in implementing the right to housing, alongside the prevailing housing shortage that led to the need for the legislation, relates to 'institutional disarray' arising from a decentralisation process that has created multiple tiers of government (Lacharme, 2008).

This paper outlines the role played by social housing in more detail, and the governance arrangements that deliver this housing, in both countries. The detailed aims and key features of the established English 'right to housing' and the new DALO system in France are then compared. It considers the key challenges to ensuring that this right to housing leads to demonstrable improvements in housing for homeless households. Finally, it examines the extent to which a right to housing ensures better accommodation outcomes for homeless households, including a comparison of change over time and the different outcomes in the two countries.

Access to Social Housing in England and France

England

Successive British governments over the last thirty years have promoted the growth of homeownership and, at the same time, presided over policies that have reduced the social rented sector. Whilst the social rented sector represented around 30 per cent of national housing stock in 1979, policies such as the Right to Buy,³ coupled with large-scale cutbacks in new social housing developments, led to a shrinking of the sector to 17.9 per cent of national stock by 2006. This housing can be roughly subdivided into the local authority sector (9.5 per cent of national stock) and housing association⁴ stock (8.4 per cent).

The social rented sector's primary role in England is to accommodate those who find it difficult to access private housing, aiming to provide quality housing and usually at below-market rents (Hills, 2007). However, there is a tension in English housing policy as it acknowledges that those in the greatest housing need should be given priority for social housing but at the same time there may be exceptions to this for 'wider community benefit' (DETR and DSS, 2000, p.80). This tension has grown as the sector has shrunk and now comprises a growing proportion of workless and low-

³ First introduced in 1980, the Right to Buy scheme gives eligible council tenants the right to buy their property from their council at a discount. Some tenants of housing associations also hold the preserved right to buy (as they previously held secure tenancies with local authorities).

⁴ Housing associations are independent societies, bodies of trustees or companies established for the purpose of providing low-cost social housing for people in housing need on a non-profit-making basis. Any trading surplus is used to maintain existing homes and to help finance new ones. In England housing associations are funded and regulated by the Tenant Services Authority, a non-departmental public body that reports to the government.

income households (Hills, 2007). The system of housing benefit for social tenants generally means that 100 per cent of rent is paid for those unemployed (with tapered provision at 65 per cent for those with low incomes/in part-time work).

The main method of allocation of social housing is via an assessment of need. Local authorities have to publish their allocation policies, and legislation (Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996, amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) states that the scheme must give 'reasonable preference' to four main categories of applicant: homeless people (see next section); people living in unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing; those who need to move on medical or welfare grounds; and those who need to move to a particular area to prevent hardship (to themselves or others).

Until recently most local authorities operated a 'points-based' allocation system based on housing need.⁵ Choice-based letting (CBL) schemes are also currently being rolled out across England with the aim of facilitating greater housing choice by allowing housing applicants to view details, make a choice and then 'bid' for general needs lets from social landlords in a local area (within an overall framework that recognises differing levels of need). Research suggests that homeless households have been more likely to be housed in a wider range of stock, and in more dispersed patterns, under this system (Pawson et al., 2006).

Local authorities and housing associations normally work together to deliver social housing in any one area. It is usual for several or all of the housing associations, along with the local authority, to operate one CBL system. Apart from CBLs, social housing providers have also tended to operate housing registers, which pool properties from a number of providers under one scheme. However, some housing associations continue to work independently and a household is likely to be able to apply to more than one provider in any given area.

Housing associations, as well as other voluntary sector organisations, are also key providers of housing with support for homeless households. During the 1990s it was recognised that a significant minority of homeless households needed support to enable them to manage a tenancy (Pleace and Quilgars, 2003b). Introduced in 2003, the Supporting People programme in England (and wider UK) provided funding, via 150 administering authorities, to charities and housing associations

⁵ Applicants accrued 'points' for different needs, for example for medical conditions and/or unsatisfactory present housing.

and other agencies (including local authority providers) to provide housing-related support to vulnerable households.⁶ This support most commonly takes the form of supported accommodation⁷ or 'floating support' to social housing.

Accessing social housing has become increasingly difficult over time. Low levels of new social housing, plus loss of houses through sales to existing tenants, has meant that a smaller stock is available for potential new tenants. There were only 15,521 social housing starts in 2007, compared with over 108,000 in 1970 (with local authority starts reducing from 100,000 to 200 over this period). The turnover of lets has also decreased over time due to affordability issues and demographic profile change. By 2006/7 there were 222,000 new social lets per year in England compared with a high of 371,000 in 1997/8. In 2006/7, 28 per cent of all social lettings to new tenants were to homeless households, reduced from 34 per cent in 2002/3.

France

Social housing is defined slightly differently in France than it is in England, covering both the social rental stock and agreement-regulated private stock (Solidarity and Urban Renewal Act 2000 – SRU Act). There are three types of social housing operator in France: the Union Social pour l'Habitat (USH), which links together nearly 820 low-rent social housing organisations (HLMs),⁸ the semi-public corporations (SEM)⁹ and the agreement-regulated private housing providers.¹⁰ The bulk of the social rental housing in France is built and managed by HLM operators. Today, ten million people (about one in six) live in four million HLM dwellings. Seventy per cent of French households qualify for HLM properties, although half the families housed by the sector are among the poorest third of the French population. In addition to HLMs, voluntary agencies also produce their own social housing, which is essentially intended for the poorest families, for which there is a specific scheme of help and loans (see below).

But social housing is not all about the public stock. A large section of the private rental stock is regarded as social as it involves a landlord signing an agreement with central government in exchange for financial help to build or carry out works

⁶ In 2009/10 the 'ring-fence' around this funding was removed (although the grant was still named Supporting People); from 2010/11 the funding will formally become part of Area Based Grants provided by national government to each local authority.

⁷ This is usually a temporary provision for homeless households, though permanent placements are also available for those with long-term support needs.

⁸ Not-for-profit statutory bodies, public limited companies or co-operatives.

⁹ Commercial companies in which one or more local government agencies or public benefit groupings have a financial and management involvement.

¹⁰ Agreement-regulated means rent-controlled and subject to a tenant's income cap. In the case of agreement-regulated low-income or very-low-income housing, tenancies may be granted to a public or private legal entity to sublet or otherwise provide homes.

in a property. This agreement creates a statutory tenancy and an entitlement to housing subsidy for qualifying tenants. The social cohesion plan aims to expand the share of agreement-regulated housing as part of the strategy to tackle the current French housing crisis.

The purpose of the social housing stock is to house 'low-income or disadvantaged individuals' (section 55 of the Anti-Exclusion Act of July 1998). Resource caps (based on household composition), controlled rents and geographical location are the main criteria for allocating social housing. Some groups of applicants have priority (disabled people, families with a disabled dependant in unsafe or unfit housing). Homes are allocated by social landlords via a committee that includes local council and tenants' association representatives. Certain bodies (which contribute to the funding of accommodation) have the right to propose a certain proportion of applicants, including the 'prefecture' of the department (for both disadvantaged people and civil servants), local authorities or private companies (La Poste for instance).

Until recently French housing policies were primarily concerned with urban development rather than housing exclusion, to address the post-war housing shortage. However, the 1990s brought new problems, with tenants stuck in large housing estates, prefabricated temporary housing turning into permanent homes and lengthening social housing waiting lists. The main response to this was the development of 'very social housing' stock which imported 'social welfare practice' into the housing sphere (Ballain, 2002, p.11).¹¹ These schemes reflect a social assistance approach, run mostly by voluntary organisations, with part-finance from central government, to provide temporary homes with or without social support. It has been argued that this proliferation of stopgap solutions undermines the right to housing because, far from expanding the supply of affordable housing, it increases the number of non-standard situations and affords no real answers to people excluded from 'ordinary' housing (Lévy-Vroelant, 2006).

Although the number of new housing starts has risen each year since 2004, it has been estimated that public spending on housing is at its lowest level for thirty years (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009). There were 425,000 new housing starts in 2007 and the share for the lowest income groups (for means-tested tenancies) was 153,000, just 36 per cent of the 2007 output. Furthermore, the number of 'assisted social rent loan' homes, which the poorest families cannot afford, is rising faster than the output of more affordable properties for the lowest income families (via 'social housing construction loan' and 'subsidised inclusion rent loan' homes). The number of agreement-regulated tenancies has increased since 2005, but of these, the 'very low-income' tenancies almost halved in 2006.

¹¹ The 'very social housing' includes people who have no legal tenancy status.

Access to social housing is therefore beset by major difficulties that add up to a 'housing crisis'. It has been estimated by the government that over one million people living in approximately 600,000 homes are likely to be inadequately housed (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009). Rising housing costs and the gradual decline in the low-rent private stock (brought about by the national urban renewal plan¹² and the policy of social diversity) between 1988 and 2002 increased the importance of social tenancies and social housing and widened the gaps between private and social tenancy rents. Similar to the English context, limited mobility prospects are also an issue, social low-rent tenants are forced to stay in social housing stock, which further widens the social divide in certain disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods or areas.

Governing the Right to Housing

England

The legislative framework for homelessness was established in the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and subsequently incorporated into the Housing Act 1985, Housing Act 1996 and most recently the Homelessness Act 2002. Under the legislation, local authorities must ensure that accommodation is made available to certain categories of households that are 'eligible' (certain 'persons from abroad' are ineligible) and 'homeless' (those without any accommodation in the UK and those who cannot gain access to their accommodation or cannot reasonably be expected to live in it, for example, because of a risk of violence). Households also need to be assessed as being in a 'priority need' category, the main ones being households with dependent children; pregnant women; adults who are 'vulnerable' because of old age, mental illness or disability; those belonging to a specific group (e.g. sixteen or seventeen year olds); and those homeless as a result of an emergency such as fire or flood. Households also have to demonstrate that they are not 'intentionally' homeless and that they have a 'local connection' to the local authority. A summary of the key elements of this homelessness legislation, and the French system, is presented in Table 2.

If a household is eligible, in priority need and unintentionally homeless, it is provided with temporary accommodation until 'settled' housing becomes available. Temporary accommodation is generally provided in ordinary houses or flats through leasing arrangements with private landlords or in local authorities' own stock or housing association stock, though a small proportion (8 per cent in March 2008) are given a hostel place or bed and breakfast accommodation.

¹² Passed in 2003, a programme to renovate the most depressed districts and most dilapidated housing.

Levels of homelessness acceptances have fallen in recent years in England from over 100,000 households in the early to mid-2000s to 63,170 in 2007/8. The primary reason for this is believed to be the change in the approach by local authorities from one of responding to housing emergencies towards one of prevention (Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick, 2008). Local housing authorities are now required to produce homeless strategies that include their approach to preventing homelessness. There is an attempt to identify potentially homeless households early and provide them with services that will prevent homelessness (e.g. tenancy sustainment services), as well as an emphasis on working with (potentially) homeless households to review their housing options (e.g. by supporting a move to a private rented tenancy). Despite a reduction in the number of homelessness applications the number of households in temporary accommodation has remained relatively high, indicating persistent difficulties in rehousing households into settled housing, although there have been some modest falls since 2005.

The homelessness legislation provides for a two-stage appeal mechanism under public law principles. Applicants are entitled to an internal review of their application within twenty-one days of the first decision. They can also lodge a statutory appeal to the County Court (on a point of law). Homeless applicants can also challenge certain local authorities' decisions under the legislation via judicial review through the courts – this includes cases where a local authority has refused to accept a homelessness application.

Settled housing can be found by the household itself or by the local authority. In practice, housing is almost always secured by the local authority and is usually discharged via the offer of a social rented tenancy. Whilst local authorities hold the responsibility, they are expected to work with other housing providers to address homelessness in their local area. In particular, local authorities are reliant on effective partnership working with housing associations given the latter's expanded role in the social rented sector.

Up until the mid-1990s those found statutorily homeless were usually rehoused in council housing, however, this became more difficult due to increasing levels of homelessness, and a shrinking council sector following both the sale of houses (primarily via Right to Buy policies) and the transfer of council housing to alternative forms of ownership. In the early 1990s a policy of large-scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) was introduced, which gave local authorities financial incentives to 'transfer' the ownership and management of council housing to third sector housing associations. Although initially this policy was slowly taken up, increasing incentives generated greater interest and by 2006 about 45 per cent of local housing authorities had transferred their stock to housing associations (Pleace et al., 2007). Traditional

housing associations also have their own housing stock, however, LSVT housing associations are usually the predominant, if not the only, form of social landlord in an area and are therefore key to local authorities in their discharge of responsibilities.

During 2005/6, 21,470 general needs lets¹³ were made to statutorily homeless households in housing association stock, representing approximately one-third of all the households accepted as statutorily homeless in England (Pleace et al., 2007). Housing associations are required, under the current Tenant Services Authority/Housing Corporation Regulatory Code,¹⁴ where reasonable, to provide a proportion of their stock for local authority nominations, with guidance that 50 per cent or more of housing association true voids¹⁵ should be made available in areas with housing stress (and 75 per cent in London). It is also expected that nominations agreements are in place between local authorities and housing associations. However, research shows housing associations vary considerably in the proportion of housing that they provide to homeless households. LSVT associations generally make higher rates of general needs lets to statutorily homeless households than traditional housing associations, but the number of lets can vary between one and 56 per cent (Pleace et al., 2007). Housing associations also rejected some 2,490 nominations and bids from statutorily homeless households in 2005/6, about 10 per cent of the homeless households housed by the sector.

Housing associations are required to make a proportion of their stock available to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households. In practice, some housing associations are more involved in this than others (Pleace et al., 2007), sometimes reflecting different local needs. Working partnerships are also required between housing providers and housing-related support providers to ensure that households are adequately supported to ensure tenancies do not break down.

Partnership working in tackling homelessness also relies on effective links with the private sector. Local authorities (and housing associations) have for a number of decades leased properties from private landlords to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households. However, more recently, local authorities have begun to offer some homeless households a private tenancy instead of a social rented tenancy. At present, households have no obligation to accept the offer of a private tenancy and this offer does not represent a discharge of a local authority's duty under the homelessness legislation (as private tenancies almost always consist of assured shorthold tenancies of six to twelve months and therefore are not

¹³ General needs lets include all houses and flats/apartments that are ordinary housing without any support services attached.

¹⁴ Regulatory Code available online at: www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/RegulatoryCode.pdf.

¹⁵ True voids are tenancies available for re-let that represent a housing gain (i.e. they exclude transfers and mutual exchanges between existing tenants).

considered 'settled' housing). However, there is considerable momentum in policy arenas to change this requirement to make it easier for local authorities to discharge their duty via rehousing in the private rented sector.

France

The enforceable right to housing (DALO) Act, establishing the justiciable right to housing as well as other social cohesion measures, came into force on 1 January 2008 (also see Table 2). This right to housing is open to applicants who are French citizens or lawfully living in France and are unable to access and remain in decent housing of their own with their own resources, and qualify for social housing under the regulations. Usually with the help of a social worker, they can appeal if they fall into one of three situations:

- They have applied for social housing and not been offered suitable housing after an abnormally long time (which is fixed by the prefect and varies between departments).
- They are:
 - unhoused (homeless or staying with someone);
 - under threat of eviction with no possibility of rehousing;
 - living in a hostel for more than six months or temporarily living in move-on housing for more than eighteen months;
 - living in premises that are not meant for habitation, are substandard or dangerous; or
 - living in overcrowded or indecent premises (because of having a child or disabled dependant, or being themselves disabled).
- They have applied for a place in temporary accommodation and been made no appropriate offer in reply to their application.

Two types of appeal are open to applicants for housing or accommodation. Since 1 January 2008 a negotiated settlement can be sought from mediation committees¹⁶ established in each department. The committees have no power to rehouse, but have to notify the prefect of the department within three months (six months in the larger departments) of the households that are considered priority cases along with a recommendation of how the housing need should be met (e.g. they may find a case to

¹⁶ Mediation committees are made up of representatives of central government, landlord organisations, shelters, move-on facilities or housing, hostel and welfare hotel management organisations, sub-national government agencies (department, district associations and local councils) and tenants' associations and approved voluntary agencies whose objectives include integration or housing of disadvantaged groups.

be a priority but consider that an offer of temporary accommodation would be most suitable). For the right to short-term accommodation, the mediation committee has six weeks to rule on the appeal. The prefect will consult the local authorities, take social diversity objectives into consideration and refer applicants to a landlord or offer a place in short-term accommodation provision or appropriate housing. If the landlord rejects the applicant, the prefect may allocate housing directly from the reserved 'prefectoral quota'. Agreement-regulated private sector housing can also be offered if specific allocation criteria have been set or the property is on lease to an organisation for subletting to a priority applicant. Applicants cannot refuse the housing offered without forfeiting their right to housing. At this point, no remedy yet lies against the central government under the DALO Act if the mediation committee's decision is not acted upon. On the other hand, mediation committee decisions can be challenged through the ordinary procedures in the administrative court in the same way as any administrative decision.

A second type of appeal applies to households that have not been offered housing within three or six months of the committee's decision. This procedure came into effect on 1 December 2008 for priority applicants and will be available from 1 January 2012 for those not considered priority cases by the mediation committee. Here, the applicant can file an 'appeal for judicial review' to the administrative court which must give an emergency ruling within two months. Where the application is for short-term accommodation, an applicant can file this appeal if he or she has received no offer within six weeks of the committee's decision. The administrative court can then order the government (via the prefect) to (re)house the applicant, from the prefectoral quota, in agreement-regulated private stock or in temporary accommodation if that is felt to be more appropriate. It can also make its order subject to a daily default fine, the proceeds of which are paid into the regional urban development fund to finance social housing.

The DALO Act was drafted and passed as an emergency measure in early 2007 in response to media headline-grabbing events that stirred French public opinion (see Loison, 2007). Due to the short timescales involved, the Haut Comité pour le Logement des Personnes Défavorisées (2008) suggested the creation of a monitoring committee to carry out a consultation, evaluate the implementation of the Act and put proposals to the government. Through this process, it was identified that local government responsibilities with regards to housing supply need to be better defined to ensure that appropriate provision is in place. The prefectoral quota was found not to be big enough to satisfy all priority applications, especially in large towns and cities and in some departments or regions (e.g. Île-de-France). Central government therefore needs to enter into agreements with private owners to ensure that priority families are actually housed. The Haut Comité also called for unhealthy, hazardous or indecent housing to be improved to prevent occupants being rehoused to HLM homes. Finally, it was noted that the implementation of the justiciable right to housing will demand a substantial increase in the housing budget.

Table 2: Key elements of the right to housing, England and France

	England	France
Who does the legislation cover?	Categories of households 'eligible', 'homeless' and in priority need: households with dependent children; pregnant women; adults who are 'vulnerable' because of old age, mental illness or disability; those belonging to a specific group; those homeless as a result of an emergency such as fire or flood. They also have to demonstrate a 'local connection' with the local authority and that they are not 'intentionally' homeless	French citizens or people lawfully living in France, unable to access and remain in decent housing of their own with their own resources, qualify for social housing under the regulations
Who is responsible?	Local housing authority has the duty to provide settled housing for accepted households Policy directives request housing associations to assist local authorities to meet their duty	Central government (prefect)
What level of demand is expected?	No expected number but demand expected to decrease due to more proactive homelessness prevention policies	In October 2008: 100,000 appeals expected. 600,000 households could lodge an appeal
How many households are accepted?	63,000 (2007/8)	In October 2008: 50 000 appeals lodged ≈ half households rehoused
How does the household apply?	Directly to the local housing authority office	At present a social worker in associations or local authorities makes the application for the applicants and sends it to the social committee
What is provided to eligible households?	'Settled' housing has to be provided to eligible households, and temporary accommodation must be provided until this is found (this may include households who agree to stay in the present accommodation, referred to as 'homeless at home' households)	Settled housing but there is the possibility of providing temporary accommodation instead of permanent housing
Nature of legal redress if housing not provided	Applicants are entitled to an internal review of their application within twenty-one days of the first decision. Applicants can also lodge a statutory appeal to the County Court (on a point of law). Certain decisions can also be challenged via judicial review through the courts	If housing is not provided after the 'negotiated settlement', applicants can make a second appeal, the 'appeal for judicial review' to the administrative court The administrative court can then order the prefect to (re)house the applicant from the prefectural quota, in agreement-regulated private stock or in temporary accommodation. It can also make its order subject to a daily default fine

Challenges to the Implementation of the Right to Housing

Although the right to housing operates quite differently in France and in England, the implementation of this legislation has raised a number of similar issues and problems in the two countries.

Problems with housing supply

With the DALO Act, it is calculated that about 450,000 new homes a year are now needed over the period 2005 to 2010. The Fondation Abbé Pierre (2009, p.155) argues that 'a production of less than 500,000 homes a year over the period makes it highly likely that the right to housing cannot become exercisable'. However, nowhere near these numbers are being built and there is a mismatch between housing supply and needs. It has been noted that the prefectural quotas could not make more than 60,000 homes a year available at most, whilst up to 600,000 households could eventually lodge an appeal (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009, p.8). These breakdowns in the system evidence what Lévy-Vroelant (2006) has called 'the limits of the policies for implementation of the right to housing'.

Voluntary organisations fear that unless rehousing is offered, claimants will simply be bounced into hostels or short-term accommodation, or even the most dilapidated housing. There is a concern that the right to housing may turn into a right to short-term accommodation, with this risk heightened by the administrative court's power to offer short-term accommodation to an applicant granted priority housing status by the mediation committee. One leading voluntary organisation commented:

FNARS takes issue with the fact that mediation committees can offer short-term accommodation to applicants for housing. It is an unacceptable shift towards a justiciable right to short-term accommodation. Where there is a housing shortage, the mediation committee might be prompted to offer short-term accommodation because there is no permanent housing. A lack of housing supply in an area must not in any circumstances serve as an excuse for not acknowledging an applicant's priority status for housing. Short-term accommodation cannot be a substitute for housing! (FNARS, 2008, p.5)

Ultimately, in the French context, the problem lies in the lack of a detailed national picture of the supply of housing. Many have called for a joined-up, area-based system to keep track of the volume and type of housing needs (FNARS, 2008). Commentators assert that fundamentally there is a crisis in policy (Lévy-Vroelant, 2006; Mouillart, 2007), with a lack of political will to address the long waits for rehousing, evictions and empty properties.

In England there is also a severe problem with housing supply (Barker, 2004). This has been acknowledged at national level with the 2007 housing Green Paper aiming to increase social housing production to 45,000 units per year by 2010/11 and 50,000 per year thereafter (CLG, 2007). Overall, the government has a target of increasing housing production from 150,000 to 200,000 units per year over the next decade. However, the operation of the homelessness legislation is affected in different ways by housing supply problems in England compared with France. The duty on local authorities to provide settled homes to eligible homeless households does not allow them to discharge their responsibilities through temporary accommodation.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the impact of limited social stock is to lengthen the period of time that many households have to wait in temporary accommodation before being allocated a permanent tenancy. This impact is felt disproportionately in different parts of the country, with waits of over two years not uncommon in constrained housing markets such as London's (Pleace et al., 2007). The limited social housing supply has also fuelled calls to allow local authorities to discharge their duties by the allocation of private sector tenancies. Whilst legislation has not been amended to allow this yet, it is a possible future development and it would effectively dilute the right to housing from a secure tenancy to a time-limited private let.

Meeting housing needs or promoting social mix ?

Housing policies throughout Europe increasingly attempt to promote 'social mix' or 'balanced communities' in order to foster social cohesion and prevent the development of neighbourhoods characterised by a 'poverty of place' (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Although academic debates continue as to what actually constitutes a balanced community (Galster, 2007), the main aim of the policy is to prevent a spatial concentration of marginalised people in any one location. Whilst promoters of this policy argue that this reduces social stigma and promotes social justice, it may also result in blocking poor people's access to certain segments of the housing market (Busch-Geertesma, 2007).

In France the Urban Planning (General Principles) Act of 13 July 1991 approaches social diversity as a means of reducing exclusions and the 'social divide'. France's country-wide policy uses housing acquisition and improvement policies to bring down barriers, avoid the stigma of social housing and avoid ghettoisation in target districts. However, the success of these policies is open to question as immigrants and people living in poverty tend to be segregated into certain districts (Maurin, 2004). There is also a creeping top-down ghettoisation where the French upper middle classes attempt to ring-fence certain areas from 'invasion' by other social

¹⁷ The Housing Act 1996 in England reduced local authorities duty to one of providing temporary accommodation for two years but this was later repealed by the Homelessness Act 2002.

groups (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlon, 2007).¹⁸ Section 55 of the SRU Act also requires local councils to have 20 per cent social housing to prevent poverty clusters forming. The DALO Act extends this statutory requirement to a further 273 local councils. In reality, however, some local authorities would rather pay the fine for breaching their statutory duty than house groups that are 'undesirable' to the other residents. Others have little choice but to pay the fine because of the housing shortage in their area. Local councils have a right of reservation over allocations to the social housing in their area, whilst the requirement of social mix and the reference to diversity (Exclusions Act) are weak laws.

The DALO Act also raises questions about the priority criteria for applications: there are non-DALO priority housing applications on file that are now competing with DALO case files, including emergency cases. The new legislation has therefore added another priority category for accessing social housing: there are fears that the increasing number of criteria could result in DALO applicants being stigmatised and discriminated against, and throw the universality of the new right into question. The success rate of appeals is also low. At the end of October 2008, 45 per cent of the case files considered had been approved and 47 per cent rejected, with a higher approval rate for appeals relating to housing than to short-term accommodation (raising a question about the options for short-term accommodation open to applicants who have not been assigned priority status). The approvals rate also varies by category of applicant and by region.

Finally, DALO implementation is very much based on using the prefectural quota of 60,000 families a year, but with an estimated 600,000 potentially priority households, the enforceability of the right to housing could end up in practice as a reshuffling of priority cases in waiting lists, and referrals towards short-term accommodation or housing provision. The Fondation Abbé Pierre (2009) fears that the 'use of the prefectural quota could also end up increasing the social specialisation of the HLM stock and worsening segregation between areas'. Households that qualify for the DALO could be steered towards the most decrepit parts of the social housing stock, running directly counter to social diversity policies and quickening the rate at which the social low-rent stock turns into poverty housing.

In England it has been shown that a reduced social housing sector has concentrated poverty rather than dispersed it (Hills, 2007) and there remains a trend towards more socio-spatial segregation rather than less (Dorling et al., 2007). English housing and welfare policy is increasingly being developed on the assumption that concentrations of poverty and worklessness in any one area impede the development of 'strong and prosperous communities' (CLG, 2006). Planning policy places an obligation on spatial strategies at regional, local authority and site levels

¹⁸ Some commentators suggest that this is also starting to occur in the UK (Atkinson, 2009).

to plan for a mix of housing. Social landlords, including both local authorities and housing associations, are increasingly expected to promote sustainable communities at the same time as meeting the housing needs of marginalised groups:

Tackling homelessness is not just about providing accommodation for homeless households accepted by local authorities. It is also about building sustainable, mixed and balanced communities. Balanced communities help promote social cohesion and equality, avoiding concentrations of deprivation and addressing social exclusion and community cohesion. (Housing Corporation Strategy Tackling Homelessness, 2006, p.10)

Recent research has shown that housing associations are often resistant about housing statutorily homeless households, particularly without support being in place, on the basis that these households will undermine their capacity to build and sustain cohesive and socio-economically mixed communities (Pleace et al., 2007). There are also general concerns about pushing up the numbers of economically inactive households within neighbourhoods or specific developments:

If we are getting homelessness applicants all the time through the nominations and if we have only a small estate in an area, it will gradually fill up with those people and become difficult to manage, difficult and expensive to maintain... (housing association respondent in Pleace et al., 2007)

Both the French and English experiences suggest that a right to housing may be more difficult to operationalise in a context where there are other competing policy priorities. This may be particularly the case where the housing law is weak (as in the French case). In contrast, a stronger law means that homeless households in England have to be rehoused, however, there may be challenges around whether the local authority or third sector providers rehouse these households.

Accessing the right to housing : Information, procedures and take-up

Part of the effective implementation of any social policy involves ensuring that those targeted for assistance are able to take-up the support offered (Titmuss, 1968). This relies on a number of factors, including potential applicants having information on their rights and systems that are easy to access for applicants (without agency 'gate-keeping' provisions or complex and/or intrusive procedures).

In the French case there have been a very low number of DALO appeals lodged relative to the estimated number of eligible households. By October 2008, ten months after the Act was introduced, some 50,000 appeals had been lodged compared with the 80,000 to 100,000 expected (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009, Table 2). The reasons for this are unknown; it is possible that the original calculation was inflated or that many households in need have decided not to lodge an appeal

(e.g. due to stigma, delaying seeking help or resolving issues through reliance on family or friends). There were also wide geographical differences, largely reflecting differing levels of housing deprivation, with two-thirds of the appeals lodged being in the Île-de-France and 90 per cent in six regions, while some departments had fewer than ten appeal case files lodged. The Fondation Abbé Pierre argues that the low number of appeals is partly due to potential applicants not being fully informed – the ministry published a leaflet (also put on the Internet) and sent information to department housing information agencies and the odd government agency, while documents and forms were sent to a few partners for passing on to the target groups, but there was no real communication policy, especially on how to lodge an appeal. Secours Catholique and Fondation Abbé Pierre tried to remedy this by setting up a mobile outreach team (the 'DALO bus') to promote the justiciable right in nine towns across France. An information website was also created (www.infodalo.fr). However, overall it is likely that many people eligible for the DALO will not be adequately informed to lodge an appeal.

In addition, the appeal procedures are very complex, making it difficult to put together case files for vulnerable groups and to know who is able to help them to appeal. Further, some departmental authorities set their own lists of required paperwork for appeals in order for a case to be procedurally admissible. There is also a clear inconsistency between the DALO eligibility requirements and those for accessing HLM housing. The bodies authorised to help applicants were given no training or additional resources to help them deal with requests. While Section 7 of the Act requires applicants to be assisted by a specifically approved voluntary organisation, few agencies have applied for approval as this would mean a significantly increased workload without additional resources (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009). In effect, this means that lodging an appeal is likely to be a difficult procedure for many potential applicants.

In England, following many years of operation, the homelessness legislation is well-known by most agencies that may refer an applicant to a local authority, although the level of knowledge of potential applicants may be more variable.¹⁹ While NGOs in France have been given no new funds (and the prefect quota has also remained the same), local authorities in England receive public monies to carry out their duties. They are required to process all the relevant paperwork so this should not be a barrier to a homelessness application. However, there are two issues of concern that potentially impact on take-up of the right to housing. First, research suggests that some homeless households may be put off applying due to the stigmatising experi-

¹⁹ For example, a recent survey of homeless families (Pleace et al., 2008) found that 40 per cent of applicants approached the housing department for general help but without knowing that they were going to apply as homeless.

ence of applying as homeless. In particular, young people have reported that they often feel confused, misunderstood and/or powerless, and sometimes intimidated, when navigating the homelessness system (Quilgars et al., 2008). Second, whilst the homelessness prevention agenda has been widely welcomed, there have been some concerns about the 'gate-keeping' of services by local authorities. Under a new 'housing options' approach, households are interviewed and offered advice on the full range of housing and support options, including services such as family mediation or the rent deposit guarantee scheme, designed to prevent the need to make a homelessness application. This approach is generally seen as the right way forward to addressing homelessness but some local authorities are so committed to this approach that they may sometimes discourage or block people from making a homelessness application (Pawson and Davidson, 2007).

The fragmentation of housing responsibilities

In France decentralisation and fragmentation of responsibilities are casting uncertainty over the outcomes of the right to housing policy. As far back as 2005 Fondation Abbé Pierre pointed out that central government was outsourcing the implementation of social housing construction and social diversity objectives to social communities without creating obligations. Fondation Abbé Pierre's 2009 report again emphasises that the local enablers without whom the DALO cannot be implemented are not doing enough. In addition, whilst the statutory performance obligation lies with central government, it is the local authorities that are in fact responsible for urban planning policy and financing social housing:

The allocation of housing responsibilities reveals the wide and likely widening gap between a demanding State which has a performance obligation but no real means to perform it, and the first line players (local authorities, social low-rent housing operators) who have the tools to act with but are not under the cosh of a penalty. (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009)

Further, the daily default fine imposed by the administrative court in an appeal for judicial review to force the central government to execute its judgement is optional, and so waters down the state's performance obligation. Both housing and short-term accommodation policy (Dyb and Loison, 2007) illustrate the more general difficulty of orchestrating public policy interventions:

France can be divided into five or six area-specific tiers, each of which has a housing responsibility. This division of responsibilities is a requirement of equity and creates a manifest difficulty in running public policies. (Uhry, 2008)

In England the operation of the homelessness legislation has increasingly relied on effective partnership working between housing providers as the housing association sector has grown and taken on some of local authority responsibilities, particularly following housing stock transfers. This means that the statutory authority for the delivery of both the housing strategy and homelessness legislation often does not house the homeless household directly. Research has shown that housing associations often do not have a central role in the development of housing strategies and that views on the success of partnership working between local authorities and housing associations in tackling homelessness are mixed, for example only 42 per cent of local authorities report that this works 'quite' or 'very' well (Pleace et al., 2007). Some housing associations feel that their autonomy as independent housing providers is being undermined by the expectations of local housing authorities and that they are being made to take more than their 'fair share' of statutorily homeless households (Pleace et al., 2007). Whilst miscommunication and lack of trust is not typical of all relationships in the social sector, it has the ability to undermine the smooth operation of the homelessness legislation. However, the fact that the local authority has a duty to find settled housing for a homeless household ultimately means that accommodation will be found for the applicant, but makes the job of the local authority more difficult. Overall, governance issues appear to be less of a problem in England when compared with France due to less complex structures.

Conclusion

It is important to note that a rights-based approach is not necessarily the best or only way to achieve positive housing outcomes for homeless households (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2007). For example, Ireland has adopted a consensus-based 'social partnership' model (O'Sullivan, 2008), which has demonstrated that alternative governance arrangements can also lead to successful outcomes for homeless households. Similarly, countries may successfully adopt inclusive housing policies (addressing the supply and affordability of housing options) that enable the vast majority of householders to secure housing without recourse to statutory mechanisms (e.g. Denmark). It could be argued that a right to housing may therefore be of a higher priority in countries with poorer overall housing provision. It is interesting to note that the right to housing was introduced in both France and England at times of a perceived crisis in homelessness, where a radical approach was seen as urgently required by pressure groups and in media campaigns.

The introduction of an enforceable right to housing in both France and England has been associated with increased positive outcomes for eligible homeless households (as well as to households that fall outside the legislation). In England the more established homelessness legislation rehuses thousands of homeless households

each year (63,000 in 2007/8). Importantly, recent research has also shown the benefits of the system in terms of improved outcomes for homeless families who had been rehoused, including better housing standards, health and overall quality of life (Pleace et al., 2008). In France the numbers of people helped by the DALO Act to date has been less than expected, rehousing 4,159 households in housing or short-term accommodation by October 2008. However, it has also helped to overcome the invisibility around those suffering housing deprivation, who had hitherto been largely disregarded in policies on housing exclusion. Likewise, the nature and effects of the housing crisis are clearer to see through the DALO appeals lodged by households in difficulty. It also gives better information to those working against housing deprivation and helps them hold the central government, local government and social and very-low-income housing operators to account over their obligations (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009).

This paper has highlighted a number of challenges to the successful implementation of a right to housing, including take-up issues, fragmented governance arrangements, competing social goals such as social diversity, and an overall lack of housing that significantly restrict the impact of any right. In the English context it can be argued that an enforceable right to housing provides a strong and effective framework for prioritising the housing needs of the most vulnerable. This confirms previous research that having homelessness legislation in place, along with an appropriate framework for the allocation of social housing, can make it more difficult for social landlords to exclude the most vulnerable households from the social rented sector stock (Stephens et al., 2002). However, a comparison of the French and English systems also highlights how important it is for this law to be a 'strong' one, ensuring that the responsible authorities have to find settled housing for applicants (as well as the system being accessible to applicants). In November 2006 FEANTSA lodged a collective complaint to the European Committee of Social Rights²⁰ arguing that, 'Despite ambitious laws and policies, France had failed to effectively implement the right to housing for all, especially for the most vulnerable' (FEANTSA, 2008). The European Committee of Social Rights reached the unanimous decision that France is in violation of the European Social Charter with regards to housing rights. It acknowledged that the DALO was one of a number of encouraging initiatives since 2006, but that, 'Further action and progress are crucial to ensure that everyone's right to housing is fully and effectively implemented' (FEANTSA, 2008). The experiences of both France and England also reveal the centrality of governance arrangements to the effective delivery of enforceable rights to housing, and the need for clear lines of responsibility for both housing providers and different levels of local and national government.

²⁰ The European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) is the Council of Europe body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the European Social Charter.

It can be concluded that the implementation of an enforceable housing right provides considerable potential to increase access to housing for homeless people, however, the detailed mechanisms for achieving this need to be carefully considered. Further, such a system should not detract from the importance of ensuring that the general housing system should allow most households to access appropriate accommodation without recourse to the right to housing. Arguably the best system would be one where an enforceable right to housing is in place but has to be used rarely as the vast majority of households are well housed.

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The Role of NGOs in the Governance of Homelessness in Hungary and Slovenia

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› **Abstract** *This paper offers some insights into the governance of homeless services provision in two post-socialist countries – Hungary and Slovenia – focusing on the emerging roles of NGOs since the transition. The analysis is carried out within the complex framework of changes in social welfare service delivery and the emergence of multi-level governance (national, county and local) in homeless services provision. The paper addresses the current roles of, and relationships between, NGOs in the homeless sector, highlighting differences and similarities between the two countries. We conclude that two formerly similar Central and Eastern European countries have diverged in their development of homeless services and that this divergence is closely linked to how decentralisation has occurred, how NGOs are represented in service provision, and the relative size of the countries and their homeless populations.*

› **Key Words** *Non-governmental organisations; homeless; social welfare state; Slovenia; Hungary; governance.*

Introduction

After the fall of the Soviet regime, Central and Eastern European (CEE) welfare systems based on full employment had to transform and adjust to the new social and economic circumstances. There have been several attempts to classify the post-socialist countries' newly developed welfare systems in relation to the Western European welfare models and recent studies have reached quite different conclusions. One study argues that some CEE countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) have returned to their common pre-war, historical and cultural

roots and thus, from an ideal-typical point of view, follow a Christian Democratic welfare regime model (Aspalter et al., 2009). Another study says that CEE countries neither followed a single welfare regime model nor established a CEE welfare state model, but rather developed heterogeneous systems involving the further hybridisation of the existing welfare regimes (Hacker, 2009). A third study contends that, despite micro-level diversity, there are strong macro-level similarities between CEE countries, such as a high take-up rate of social security coupled with relatively low benefit levels and a low level of public trust in state institutions; these similarities allow for the definition of an ideal-type post-communist regime (Aidukaite, 2009). All the studies agree, however, that examining the development of welfare regimes in CEE countries reveals a quite heterogeneous picture and a serious lack of data and detailed analyses. Further examination is needed in order to reach a less ambiguous definition and classification of the welfare regimes in CEE countries.

Studying CEE countries and their welfare regimes is important for understanding development within the region and the circumstances under which these countries operate as compared with the more developed (although also continuing to evolve) welfare states of the West. This paper aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on third sector development in the region, with an emphasis on homeless services provision, and to illustrate how specific forms of governance are linked to the specific circumstances of individual countries. While hoping to contribute to academic discussions on the topic of homeless services provision, we also seek to address issues that are relevant for policy makers and practitioners in the field.

By examining such a narrow slice of the welfare regime (homeless services provision) from a governance point of view in just two CEE countries (Hungary and Slovenia), we do not intend to draw far-reaching conclusions in respect of welfare regime classification. Rather we hope to contribute to formulating a more detailed picture of the social provision systems in these countries, highlighting possible divergent and convergent developments in a region that is too often seen as homogeneous. This is also the reason for choosing two neighbouring, but possibly quite different, countries as case studies. We do not intend to deliver an in-depth comparative analysis, but we raise questions about the similar conditions that may have existed in the emerging roles of NGOs in Slovenia and Hungary. To put this approach into Pickvance's (2001) typology, this paper aims at avoiding a juxtapositional analysis (Kemeny and Lowe, 1998) and seeks to identify plural causations.

Given their socialist past, CEE countries are often analysed in the context of their similarities. In the transition period they have also all gone through privatisation and liberalisation processes, market deregulation and the general withdrawal of the state. Their shared experiences should not, however, cloud the differences that existed in the past and which have been accentuated in the period of transition.

CEE countries have often taken different developmental paths 'at different speeds and intensities, with different interior and exterior actors with their different interests and ideologies, which led to different results' (Kolarič, 2009, p.3). Keeping this in mind, we seek to show the similarities and differences that emerged in the homeless sector and its governance in Hungary and Slovenia.

Homelessness was a new phenomenon in both countries when it emerged at the very beginning of the transition period, such that subsequent service provision had no roots in the socialist system and had to be newly developed. Despite the absence of exact data, it is clear that the level of homelessness in relation to the total population is considerably higher in Hungary than it is in Slovenia. Different starting positions, the state of the economy and past policies are further influential factors when observing how the two countries have differed in their development and organisation of social service provision. A notable divergence is the level of decentralisation. By the mid-1990s Hungary had developed a solid decentralised local governance structure, whereas decentralisation has continued at a slower pace in Slovenia and has not yet been fully realised. In Hungary a strong incentive for decentralisation was the deep economic crisis of the 1990s, during which the central state wanted to cut back radically its much-extended social support system. Another difference, which is also relevant for the question of decentralisation, is that Hungary is five times the size of Slovenia.

The level of decentralisation has affected the structure of social services. In Hungary various options were developed for the delivery of local government services, and many local authorities opted to contract out service delivery in the area of homelessness. This led to the emergence of new actors: many NGOs stepped in and developed partnerships at the local level. Subsequent conflicts brought to light discrepancies between demand and local- or state-funded service supply, difficulties regarding the role of the state at the local level and – last but not least – problems within the NGO sector itself. In Slovenia the role of the public sector remains strong and it was among the first to respond to new and growing needs in the social domain. NGOs had only a minor role in general social services provision, but played a greater part within the homeless sector, primarily through church-based organisations, and the demand for these services is constantly growing. The governance of homelessness remains a challenge in both countries. This paper is concerned with examining these challenges, focusing particularly on possible strategies for NGOs in the framework of (de)centralisation and multi-level governance, as well as potential roles in the homeless sector.

In order to understand the roles and strategies of the different actors in homeless services provision we rely on several theoretical approaches from the vast literature on governance (Rhodes, 1997 and 2008; Goodship and Cope, 2001). We use the

word 'governance' to describe 'a change in the meaning of government, to a new process of governing' which relies on 'self-organizing, interorganizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state' (Rhodes, 1997, p.15). In describing the changes in, and challenges for, the governance of homelessness we refer to the features developed by Rhodes (1997 and 2008) to discuss the role of government, to the work of Goodship and Cope (2001) on issues of joined-up governance and to a recent paper of significant regional relevance by Osborne et al. (2008) on how NGOs represent their interests by 'whispering at the back door'. Some useful additional explanations are drawn from Salamon (1987) and Hradecky (2008).

Using this framework, the paper analyses the role that NGOs have been playing in the homeless sector since transition, considers how NGOs are included in policy formulation and implementation and examines the ways in which their interests are represented. The methods used are mainly desktop research and reference to primary research in the homeless and NGO sectors in both countries, though in the case of Hungary an interview was also carried out with a leading NGO. The authors have been researching homelessness and housing exclusion for many years and conclusions also draw on their deep general knowledge of this area.

The paper begins by examining how social welfare services developed in Hungary and Slovenia, before taking a closer look at their systems of homeless services provision and the levels of NGO participation. The cases are first presented separately to allow for a clear understanding of the divergences of the (de)centralisation processes and the emerging systems of provision. An analysis of developments from a governance perspective considers the two countries together and highlights the different strategic roles that NGOs play in each. Finally, conclusions are offered on the similarities and differences of the two countries in relation to governance in the homeless sector.

Decentralisation of Social Welfare Services in Hungary and Slovenia

Hungary

The transformation of the socialist state involved the division of public and private services. Public services were reorganised and decentralised to the local level in the early 1990s, partly because of the lack of central financial resources (Somogyi and Teller, 2003). Other motives for decentralisation included increasing local accountability and public participation in order to match the local articulation of needs with decisions on services (Hermann et al., 1998).

Hungary's three-tier governmental system is based on local governments, county governments and central government, and responsibilities are divided between these tiers. Social services are mainly the responsibility of local governments. Since 1993, however, municipalities are not obliged to perform certain tasks or to establish particular institutions (including most homeless services) if the population is below a certain level. As well as local government institutions, any other contracted firm, including for-profit companies in municipal ownership and NGOs, may become a partner and receive national and local funding to deliver municipal services. Besides a strong belief that contracting out is more cost-efficient, municipalities aim to ensure a higher quality of services through such market solutions, though this reasoning is not evidence based (Zupkó, 2001). Funding is divided equally among service providers, though church-based organisations receive slightly more.

The central budget finances 90 to 100 per cent of eligible service costs through social subsidies and allowances governed by state regulations. Specialised service provision (including per capita financing of residential homes, homes for the elderly and homeless services) is based on a per client parameter that normally covers between 60 and 100 per cent of the emerging costs, depending on service type and location (State Audit Office, 2008). Additional social tasks, which are the decentralised tasks per se, are financed entirely by local government budgets. For example, social housing is funded entirely from local budgets (approximately 4 per cent of all housing in Hungary is municipally owned social housing), while the most important housing allowance scheme is 90 per cent centrally funded. Other state-run programmes include family benefits, child benefits (nurseries, temporary homes, child care etc.), benefits and services for the elderly, family mediation services, debt management services, services for the disabled, services for addicts, diverse services for the homeless, unemployment benefits and so on (Hegedüs and Teller, 2009).

The question was and is how to develop incentives to organise and carry out quality control of local services under heavily underfinanced circumstances. Recent attempts at standardisation have tried to move the system towards more equalised provision of local government social services, but the process is rather slow. As with other post-socialist countries, the social welfare sector is further characterised by a prevailing inability to reach those most in need. Poor targeting in social welfare programmes is related to large-scale tax evasion, informal labour market activities that have been increasing since the late 1990s and ineffective assessment of income in social programmes (Semjén et al., 2008).

Among social services, homeless provision has always been distinctive. On a practical level, it had to be newly established after the transition; homelessness had been considered a crime in Hungary and many of those who began to appear on the streets during the economic restructuring and the narrowing down of social

and health systems had previously been 'invisible' in hostels for workers and other social and health institutions. Services have largely emerged from civil and church charitable initiatives aimed at bridging the welfare gap that became slowly institutionalised in the early 1990s.

As homelessness is perceived to be an urban problem that mostly affects large cities, the regulations stipulate that only municipalities with more than 30,000 inhabitants have to establish night and temporary shelters for the homeless and temporary homes for families. County governments must organise homeless services that fall outside the competence of local municipalities. These responsibilities include homeless rehabilitation institutions and permanent homes for homeless elderly people and the county governments must ensure the spatial coordination of such services. As these county responsibilities concern the whole social services sector and not just homeless services, seven regional methodological centres were set up in 2004 under the Social and Labour Ministry to ensure the coordination of the operation of homeless institutions, a higher professional standard in the sector and the efficient allocation of available funds.

Slovenia

Since transition Slovenia has introduced a single level system of local government. Municipalities are defined as the basic socio-economic, political and administrative units (Dimitrovska and Ploštajner, 2001), with practically no obligations delegated to them from central government (Grafenauer, 2000). There are ongoing discussions about decentralisation through the formation of regions as political and administrative units, but this has not yet occurred. The reasons for this include reluctance to transfer public functions to municipalities and future regions, the small size of the municipalities, the absence of recognised regions and most particularly a lack of political agreement on the future reform of local government (Vlaj, 2005).

Under the Local Government Act 2007, the municipalities are responsible for the regulation and maintenance of water and power supply facilities; protection of air, soil and water resources; protection against noise pollution; provision of waste collection and disposal services; preservation of natural and cultural monuments of local interest; provision of public transportation; maintenance of local roads and public spaces; management of community assets; and preparation of spatial development plans. The provision of social housing is also the domain of the municipalities, and partly linked to this is the issue of housing subsidies.¹ In several

¹ Housing subsidies for young families for profit rents are granted at the national level by the Housing Fund of the Republic of Slovenia. Housing subsidies for non-profit rents are provided by municipalities, which can decide whether to provide housing subsidies for those in the profit rental sector.

other areas the role of the municipalities can be described as an enhancing or enabling one (e.g. to enhance conditions for the development of social services, education associations, cultural activities or sport and recreation facilities).

Slovenian municipalities range in size from 400 to 270,000 inhabitants and half have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. Due to their size many lack the financial resources and administrative capacity to perform their functions successfully (Dimitrovska and Ploštajner, 2001). In the field of social and health services, municipalities often share functions with central government; for example, municipalities are responsible for primary health care where they are able to provide it, otherwise responsibility falls on central government.

The Slovenian social welfare sector has not been decentralised and public services are coordinated by central government under the Social Security Act 2007. The Act stipulates that services be delivered directly by a public network of social care services in which public institutions as well as private institutions operate under the same conditions on a concession basis. Services catered for by the public network include social work centres, residential homes for the elderly, special institutes for adults, social care institutes for the training of young persons with severe mental development disorders, occupational activity centres and crisis centres for children and adolescents.² Exceptionally, family assistance in the home is provided entirely by the municipalities. The Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MLFSA) can grant working licences for the provision of these services outside the public network. Homeless services are not specifically mentioned in the Act, or regulated, although it is stated that under certain conditions shelters can be organised as public social welfare organisations.

In the past the state was the primary provider of services in all sectors (social, health etc.) and the well-developed public network left little room for civil society organisations to act as service providers, meaning that their role was primarily complementary rather than substitutive (Kolarič and Rakar, 2007). After transition the civil sector began to develop quite rapidly. However, in comparison with other CEE countries, Slovenia still has one of the least developed civil society sectors (based on the level of sector professionalisation as measured by employment within the sector). Consequently, it could be said that no major changes have been made in Slovenia in the pluralisation of the welfare system. The governmentalisation process, or the process by which civil society organisations become service providers for the welfare state, has not really begun (Kolarič, 2003). This also meant that Slovenia did not experience the so-called welfare gap that other post-socialist countries experienced during the transition period (Kolarič and Rakar, 2007, p.13).

² See the MLFSA's website for further information:
www.mdds.gov.si/en/areas_of_work/social_affairs/social_security_services/.

Provision of Homeless Services and the Role of NGOs

*Hungary*³

There are only estimates of the number of homeless people in Hungary.⁴ Higher estimates range from 25,000 to 30,000 persons, while others fall between 15,000 and 20,000 persons. Homelessness is highest in Budapest at about 10,000 persons.

The provision of homeless services mainly involves specialised institutions such as night and temporary shelters, rehabilitation homes and day centres, which have not changed significantly since they were first developed during the 1990s. Two more recent services are street social work and medical centres for the homeless, which gained a normative financing base in 2005. Additionally, regional dispatch centres were set up to ensure better coordination and capacity use among the institutions. NGOs, including religious charities, play a very substantial role in the provision of homeless services. In 2005 they operated 48 per cent of night and temporary shelters, 65 per cent of rehabilitation homes and 69 per cent of day services (State Audit Office, 2006). Local governments often prefer to contract out homeless services to NGOs, which have more experience in dealing with marginalised groups and may be a cheaper option.

Homeless services are primarily financed from three sources: the central budget, local government contributions and an annually defined central grant. The majority of service provider revenue (on average around 70 per cent) comes from the central fund, financing the homeless institution on a per capita basis. Local governments contribute about 17 per cent, giving greater support to their own institutions than they give to NGOs, which received only one-fifth of local government support in 2005 (State Audit Office, 2006). A further 5 per cent is derived from the central grant, which is distributed by a tendering process and finances sectoral development activities, winter crisis interventions (e.g. beds, tea and food services to meet increased capacities) and innovative pilot projects. The size of the central grant is determined annually in an ad hoc manner according to central budget capacities and other central policy priorities. Unfortunately the grant continues to decrease each year. This financing system means that the NGO sector strongly depends on the central budget.

³ With thanks to Márta Maróthy, Director of the Foundation for Homeless, who provided us with valuable information on the operation of public foundations.

⁴ The concept of homelessness means groups of those who literally have no homes and includes the following subgroups: rough sleepers, people living in places not appropriate for human habitation (e.g. abandoned buildings, doorways) and people staying in homeless institutions (e.g. shelters, temporary homes).

The roles and responsibilities of state authorities and other service providers are legally regulated. However, regulation is still mainly focused on crisis intervention services and does not ensure appropriate coordination with other sectoral services that play a significant role in preventing homelessness, nor does it provide sufficient solutions for eliminating homelessness. The prevention and elimination of homelessness would require more efficient cooperation between homeless service providers and the social, labour, health and housing sectors. Innovative programmes that aim to strengthen such cooperation are mainly funded through the central grant, which means a very unpredictable financial situation for maintaining such programmes in the long term.

This level of dependence on central resources creates great uncertainty for the operation of NGOs as the per capita funding does not sufficiently finance their services and there are very limited alternative resources. The primary alternatives are the one per cent personal income tax (taxpayers can transfer one per cent of their tax to registered foundations) and EU programmes. Voluntary unpaid work is not very common in Hungary but the numbers of volunteers are beginning to increase. Material donations (e.g. food, clothes, medicine) are in fact the most significant contributions to the operation of NGOs. Despite these difficulties, it is the NGOs that initiate and run the majority of innovative programmes.

Although some elements of this complex approach to homeless services provision have produced concrete results (e.g. a street social work programme received normative financing, and a separate grant has been designated to finance move-on housing programmes), there is still no overall national homeless policy. This reflects the central government's attitude to homelessness: while it acknowledges the importance of systematic solutions to homelessness, in reality it has other higher policy priorities. Within the Social and Labour Ministry there is a department that also deals with homeless issues, but its tasks are mostly related to the legal regulation of the sector. Between 2002 and 2008 a State Commissioner of Homeless Affairs, who had been the head of one of the most important NGOs, was assigned to the area, but no institutionalised mechanisms for the formation of a homeless policy were defined.

An important step was taken in 2003 when the State Commissioner designated two public foundations with different territorial relevance, the aim of which was to move professional debate outside the ministry, which lacked the capacity to maintain a balance among different stakeholders within the sector. The main tasks of the two foundations are to coordinate and develop the performance of homeless services in Hungary. The members are former NGO activists that formed two small 'elite' groups from the most active NGOs, and the boards comprise professional service providers and ministry officials. The foundations operate the above-mentioned

annual central grant, for which they have to develop a yearly programme that is accepted and approved by regional partners and the Social and Labour Ministry. They distribute the resources through tendering procedures (either open or by invitation). It is basically these foundations that finance that part of the sector not covered by per capita financing or additional resources (e.g. from local government). As the NGOs provide approximately 60 per cent of homeless services, the two public foundations are crucial in maintaining their operation.

The foundations were established with the intention of including the most active NGOs in central decision making and policy formulation. Backed by charismatic members of dominant NGOs and fed by their field experiences, the foundations define new policy lines and render them acceptable both to central government and to the wider circle of service providers. A good example of this is the Development Programme of Homeless Provisions 2007–2013.⁵ The main elements of the programme (e.g. move-on housing and medical centres) had already been 'tested' through the central grant process. The government accepted the programme but only some elements gained normative financing, others must depend on longer term funding for which EU resources will be used in the coming years. Clearly with the creation of the programme, the related EU support and the involvement of a wider circle of service providers, the consultation process has developed considerably in the sector.

The programme is based on the idea that there should be more emphasis on preventing homelessness and more cooperation between the concerned sectors (Foundation for Homeless, 2004). It promotes alternative solutions for rough sleepers. It aims to develop the quality of existing night and temporary shelters through physical renovation and decrease overcrowding. It is underpinned by the belief that the reintegration of homeless people can be achieved through increasing access to move-on and affordable housing, and through individually tailored social work elements. Based on stronger cooperation with the health sector, the programme includes initiatives for homeless people who need permanent care or have other specific problems such as a psychiatric illness or cancer.

To sum up, the state delegated the development and control of homeless programmes to two public foundations, which have direct links to the ministry but operate outside central government. In this way the state saves on capacity, as the ministry has only a small number of personnel dealing with homelessness. The public foundations have strong links to the dominant NGOs and, due to the growing significance of consultation processes, to other service providers. They have a

⁵ A recommendation for a national homeless policy has also been made by the two public foundations, although it has not been discussed by the government and its future is uncertain.

coordinating and mediating role, transmitting the problems and interests of the sector to central government and other stakeholders. They also have a significant role in policy making.

Slovenia

In Slovenia, during the socialist era, civil society organisations existed mainly in the form of associations that were not professionalised (Kolarič et al., 2002; Kolarič et al., 2006; Kolarič and Rakar, 2007). The third sector in Slovenia today still manifests these characteristics (Kolarič et al., 2006). In the CEE region in general the social service function of civil society tends to be less developed than the expressive function, which is the member-serving section of civil society. This tendency is accentuated in Slovenia, where development falls significantly behind the majority of other CEE countries, including Hungary (Kolarič and Rakar, 2007, p.8). However, it should be noted that almost one-quarter of all people employed in civil society organisations work in organisations that are active in the field of social services, even though these represent less than 4 per cent of all organisations (Kolarič et al., 2006). This indicates that this is one of the third sector fields with the most professionalised structure.⁶

There is no exact data on the number of homeless people in Slovenia, as no comprehensive national research has been done and official statistics are not regularly gathered. Slovenia does not have a national homeless strategy or a clear definition of homelessness. Consequently, we must rely on professionals in the field for estimates on trends in homelessness, as well as for some limited information on the number of service users.

In 2007 the number of users of homeless shelters was 540⁷ (Smolej and Nagode, 2008) and estimates of the number of homeless people ranged from 300 to 800 in Ljubljana (Dekleva and Razpotnik, 2007, p.111) and from 1,000 to 1,200 persons nationwide (Filipovič Hrast, 2007). Programmes for the homeless usually involve counselling or other work with individuals and focus on social aid, reintegration, motivation for job seeking, improving hygiene and nutritional habits, resocialisation, help in accessing health institutions, public information services and the provision of free meals and shelter (Smolej and Nagode, 2008).

⁶ It is a consequence of the special position held in the past by organisations for the disabled and humanitarian organisations, which received, and still receive, extensive financial support from the lottery fund – the Foundation for Financing Disabled and Humanitarian Organizations in Slovenia (FIHO) (Črnak Meglič and Rakar, 2009).

⁷ The number refers only to shelters co-financed by the MLFSA and includes specialist shelters for homeless drug users.

There is no comprehensive overview of organisations working with the homeless in Slovenia, however, a description of the situation in the municipality of Ljubljana illustrates the type and numbers of organisations in existence. According to Dekleva and Razpotnik (2007), relevant institutional systems of governmental and non-governmental organisations working with the homeless population include:

- A shelter for the homeless (which operates within the Centre for Social Work) offers clothes, food (daily meals) and long-term or short-term shelter. It is financed mainly by the MLFSA and the municipality.
- A shelter for homeless drug users (operating through the NGO Altra) offers counselling, a day centre and a night shelter. It is a low-threshold programme financed by the MLFSA, the municipality and FIHO.
- An association of volunteers of VZD⁸ offers food (from a mobile unit), clothes and a day centre. It is financed by the MLFSA, the municipality, FIHO and voluntary contributions (mainly from covenants).
- Karitas, which has numerous branches, offers food and clothes and facilitates basic hygiene.
- Red Cross Ljubljana offers food and clothes and facilitates basic hygiene.
- The Shelter of God's Mercy enables stays for up to a maximum of three months.
- The Kings of the Street association organises street newspapers, runs a day centre, offers food and clothes and organises workshops. It is financed by the MLFSA, the municipality and other sources.

Two other relevant organisations are a clinic for people without health insurance (offering basic health care) and the Stigma Association (a day centre that aims to reduce the damage caused by drugs). The majority of the above organisations offer food, clothes and basic hygiene to the homeless. There are three shelters, the largest and oldest among them being a shelter that operates from within a public institution, the Centre for Social Work Ljubljana, with forty-six sleeping places⁹.

The MLFSA has co-financed social welfare programmes since 1993. Funds, which have been increasing over this period, are distributed based on public tender. In 2007 the public tender called for programmes for maternity homes, supported housing for people with mental health problems or with disabilities, housing communities for drug users, therapeutic programmes for those with alcohol abuse issues and psycho-social problems, and shelters for the homeless and for homeless

⁸ Vincenzijeva Zveza Dobrote (Vincent's Association of good will).

⁹ There are twenty-eight beds in the long-term shelter, and eighteen beds in the short-term shelter for overnight stays only.

drug users (Smolej and Nagode, 2008). Financing is provided both on a short-term (one year) and on a long-term (five years) basis, with long-term financing usually being reserved for shelters with programmes that offer overnight stays. In 2007 the MLFSA financed seven programmes for homeless persons; three on a yearly basis (Association of Volunteers of VZD, Kings of the Street and Diocesan Karitas Koper) and four on a longer term basis (Centre for Social Work Ljubljana, Centre for Social Work Maribor, Public Institute Socio and Diocesan Karitas Maribor). In addition to these, it co-financed three programmes for homeless drug abusers for one year (Smolej and Nagode, 2008).

The majority of the long-term programmes are in public institutions, such as social work centres, which is also where the largest numbers of users are. This shows that the public network of institutions responded to the needs identified and offered new programmes that were not part of their basic services. The prevalence of public organisations in social service provision has been explained as follows: 'Only entry into the public network enables the non-public providers equal financial possibilities for performing services as for the public institutes. In this way non-public service providers only take part in the implementation of the complementary programmes, for which there are only limited public sources' (Črnak Meglič and Rakar, 2009, p.18).

Church-based organisations also constitute a significant sector within homeless services provision and have a widely dispersed network. The NGO sector in general has been important and, although its programmes often fall into the category of short-term financing, it has been responsible for some innovative initiatives, a good example of which is Kings of the Street.¹⁰ Established in 2005, this association has initiated projects such as the street newspaper that homeless people sell and help to produce, and a pilot resettlement programme started in 2008, which is financed by the municipality, EGP financial mechanisms and Norwegian grants.¹¹ National funds were thus not used for this new initiative, whereas local funds were very important.

In general, public funding is more common in the social care sector than in other sectors, and is therefore also very important for NGOs working in the field of homelessness. According to a report on the implementation of social protection

¹⁰ The organisation is financed mainly by the MLFSA and the municipality of Ljubljana, and also by FIHO, Office of Youth, Office of Equal Opportunities, Employment Office and others.

¹¹ It should be noted that the transition from shelters to more permanent housing is very difficult due to a small non-profit sector, and that there has been until now no programme in Slovenia to target this transition. The organisation rents apartments for the homeless and additional support is offered by professional workers through regular weekly meetings, 24-hour availability for crisis intervention and regular contact and visits.

programmes (Smolej and Nagode, 2008), of seven MLFSA-funded programmes targeting homelessness, the share of national funding was 43 per cent, with a further 30 per cent from municipalities. Additional sources included service users, FIHO, own resources and donations. Programmes for homeless drug abusers showed a similar pattern, with the share of national funding at 47 per cent, and the rest mainly financed by municipalities (Smolej and Nagode, 2008, p.59). The importance of local financing illustrates the increasing role of local governance in the provision of these services.

Governance Issues

As can be seen from the above descriptions, development during the period of transition was quite different in both countries; in Hungary it led to strong decentralisation, while in Slovenia the public welfare system remained centrally organised although most provision is actually at municipal level. The set-up of social services in the two countries differs, particularly when it comes to the institutional options for the delivery of homeless services. The history behind the divergence is complex. In Hungary private and charity organisations were the first to respond to the sudden emergence of homelessness and the government later established the legal regulatory framework and institutional system. There was no corresponding welfare gap in Slovenia, where the state continued to provide general social welfare services. In the homeless sector this is perhaps less obvious, although there is a strong presence of public institutions providing shelters for the homeless, church-based organisations are also very important.

As a result, while multi-tiered governance exists in both countries, with homeless services on the lowest level, there is a divergence of roles at the central and local level. Central government has a crucial role in financing homeless institutions in both countries, but in Hungary it has no direct role in service delivery as the institutions are owned by local governments or NGOs, whereas in Slovenia the majority of the system is part of a public network of institutions. Table 1 sets out the current situation.

Table 1: Actors and tasks related to homeless services at different levels of governance

	Hungary	Slovenia
State/central government level	Basic regulation Capitation financing of services and financing yearly central grants Representation in the two public foundations that run homeless programmes	Basic regulation Financing, and part provision based on a public network of institutions
Regional level	Methodological centres in the seven regions Representatives of the regional service providers form part of an advisory board for the public foundations	Non-existent
Local level	Local governments are responsible for homeless provisions; service providers are owned by local governments and NGOs Local governments co-finance service delivery	Service delivery: local service providers of state and NGOs Local governments (municipalities) co-finance service delivery

The transition period in the region brought about immense institutional changes, which relied heavily on models from Western countries due to a belief in their workability and the influential role that international and donor agencies played in reforming public administration and the structure of service delivery. In addition, the absence of existing players in certain service areas facilitated the emergence of a market for alternative stakeholders. Countries also experienced ‘a change in the meaning of government, to a new process of governing’ that relies on ‘self-organizing, interorganizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state’ (Rhodes, 1997, p.15). The role of central government is also an important element of the model: ‘its relationships with other units of government and with policy networks are “asymmetric”; for example, the centre has more legal resources than any domestic actor’ (ibid.). Thus, it seems relevant to apply the term ‘governance’ to the emergence of NGO roles in the homeless services sector. There has been, in addition, privatisation of utilities, contracting out of services to the private sector, introduction of quasi-markets through purchaser–provider divisions where services could not be privatised, and transferral of operational management from central departments to independent agencies; all examples of what Rhodes refers to as a ‘hollowing out’ of the state (ibid.). The price paid is high: the government loses its

hands-on control in return for a control over resources and the centralisation of financial control (Rhodes, 1997, p.16).¹² Accountability becomes an important issue among the players, the clients and the institutions.

While in Slovenia only the first steps in this process have been taken, it is obviously under way in Hungary. As new methods of governance emerge, there is a bargaining process between network members (Rhodes, 2008), of which there is a now a large number for each area of service delivery (e.g. welfare); in Hungary this is especially true of the homeless sector both at local and central levels. At a local level NGOs are responsible for carrying out a substantial proportion of services and they often initiate new local solutions for which they then try to get funding, while at central level the most dominant NGOs try to influence policy making.

In Slovenia the role of NGOs is formally recognised as an important part of the bargaining process. The Ministry of Public Administration has created a set of priority tasks in the pursuit of NGO cooperation, including the streamlining and adoption of an agreement on cooperation between NGOs and central government; the implementation of the governmental strategy for NGO cooperation; and the implementation of measures for the cooperation of interested public bodies through the adoption of regulatory and strategic documents. The government has also established a permanent inter-sectoral working group for the harmonisation of open questions on government cooperation with NGOs. However, there is no formal cooperation between NGOs and central government as there is in Hungary by virtue of the two public foundations. To coordinate the results of increased fragmentation, however, a new role had to be invented at central level to promote 'joined-up governance' (Rhodes, 2008, p.8). This very much corresponds to the decentralisation-related phenomena observable in Hungary over the last two decades. Although decentralisation has not occurred to the same degree in Slovenia, the idea of 'joined-up governance' has nonetheless been promoted and can be observed in the co-financing of programmes and sharing of responsibility between central and local government.

The regulatory and financing powers of central government have become a key factor in both countries. The balance is delicate: too much regulation may result in more fragmentation and a lack of trust, and if those being regulated are professionals, which they mostly are as service deliverers, the state then comes under their control and influence. This might be against the interests of the state in terms of joined-up governance, as sectoral interests could become dominant (Goodship and Cope, 2001, p.41). In Hungary the centrally established public foundations coordinate and develop homeless services whilst sponsoring cross-sectoral activi-

¹² Salamon (1987) would take a different perspective: the state steps in only where the second (market) and third sector (NGO) are not efficient.

ties carried out at local level by NGOs and municipalities. There was no other choice as the integration of sectoral interests within a 'real' joined-up governance model facilitated by central government was not feasible. However, with two public foundations that are strongly connected to the dominant NGOs, the state has formalised the strategic role of NGOs in policy making and sector coordination, and reduced its own role to that of legal regulation, defining the financial framework and having a final say in policy decisions. In Slovenia no such coordination exists, which leaves a situation where the main role is played by central government and its funding conditions, priorities and interests are supplemented by local initiatives that try to respond to the needs and capabilities of individual municipalities.

In both Slovenia and Hungary there are some path-dependent elements of the current governance models, although the homeless sector as such is relatively new. Osborne et al. (2008) describe this path-dependent element as one of the mechanisms that has had a substantial effect on the operation of the NGO sector in Hungary (which they call VCOs – voluntary and community organisations) and relate it to lack of trust and accountability towards VCOs on the part of local governments and the reestablishment of the legitimacy of VCOs for service delivery. They state that VCOs are 'developing their own policy alternatives, and services, and commencing a dialogue with political decision makers on this basis (the "alternative paradigm" approach)' (Osborne et al., 2008, p.337). The reason for this is that 'first establishing the service-providing organization and then seeking to attract government support "step-by-step" is successful in the Hungarian context, where direct lobbying often proves to be futile' (Osborne et al., 2008, p.338). Similarly, it seems that NGOs working in the social service sector in Slovenia could largely be described as independent of government, and also as having low levels of communication and contacts.

In the Slovenian case, the whole welfare sector could be described as a well-developed national public network, with NGOs as complementary organisations filling gaps in service provision. The system is governed hierarchically by public authorities that finance and evaluate public, as well as third sector, organisations. However, there are policies in progress that aim to improve contact between central government and NGOs, including the creation of priority tasks, drafting a strategy of cooperation and the setting up of working groups. Basically, however, cooperation between civil society and the Slovenian government is poor, and only somewhat better at the level of NGOs and local government (Kolarič et al., 2006). Research has shown that Slovenian NGOs consider their influence on policy making and government decisions to be low, whereas Slovenian public servants report cooperation between civil society and the government to be good, and NGOs' influence on the formation of policies to be high (Government Office for European Affairs, 2004). In Hungary cooperation differs according to subsectors of social services, and NGOs are present at each level of homeless services provision. In both

countries, however, cooperation is generally less demanding and informal, involving personal or telephone communication, writing letters and so on, and in Hungary it is mainly carried out by a small 'elite' group of NGOs.

We can conclude that Slovenia still follows a classical welfarism strategy path where the public sector plays the main role in reducing social inequalities, while the third sector, whose role is small and largely complementary, bridges the gaps¹³. The system is governed hierarchically by public authorities, which finance public as well as third sector organisations. Hungary, on the other hand, seems to be moving in the direction of empowerment and participation strategies where the goal is to empower individuals and give greater responsibility to the third sector. The welfare system is governed in a way that allows third sector organisations to participate in policy making, but with serious limitations.

In Hungary the result is that the third sector has moved ahead of the regulating and sponsoring state level in terms of providing new solutions for preventing and ending homelessness, which it can achieve by finding partners at the numerous levels of governance. The two public foundations established by the state to coordinate joined-up governance are indeed 'captured by the deliverers' as they are run by former representatives of NGOs and still have strong links to them. On the one hand such professionalism increases the legitimacy of state-run actions, while on the other it results in a blurred governance model with arbitrary and non-accountable solutions and 'whispering at the back door' policy processes (Osborne et al., 2008) at all governance levels relevant to homeless services provision. However, through the two public foundations this 'whispering' is really at the front, rather than the back, door. This is the framework within which the heavily state-dependent NGOs operate in Hungary.

Conclusion

Hungary and Slovenia have taken quite different developmental paths in homeless services provision. This divergence can be ascribed to variations in the development of social welfare services in general, development in the third sector and the extent of the homelessness issue. It confirms that countries in the CEE region, while sharing some common history and development in recent years, are quite diverse and cannot be seen as the same. In the decentralised Hungarian system local government is mainly responsible for the delivery of homeless services, whereas in Slovenia the central state responded to the need for services partly through its own institutional network and financing mechanisms, and partly through NGOs, mainly church-based organisations that continued or broadened their charity work.

¹³ On classical welfarism strategy see Evers (2008).

The role of the state and levels of decentralisation (with the consequent role of local governments) have influenced the way services for the homeless are provided in both countries, which may also affect the developmental potential of these services, their proper implementation, standards and so on. The important gap-filling role of the NGOs in homeless services provision is apparent in both countries, though again there are significant differences. In Hungary the majority of services are delivered by NGOs as they were the first to respond to the emerging needs in question and local governments later remained willing to contract out related tasks due to their lack of resources and professional staff. NGOs play more of a complementary role to the 'public' service providers in Slovenia, though their role in providing basics such as food and clothing is strong. In both countries NGOs deliver new and innovative programmes that aim to handle the problems of homelessness in a more integrated way by fostering cross-sectoral cooperation.

Financing is one of the central issues affecting the development of this sector and the way it is governed. With regard to the funding of NGOs, it is common in both countries for a strong financial dependence on public resources to mean limitations on the scope of their activities. It seems that in Hungary the financial constraints of central government present a more severe problem, especially given that the extent of homelessness is significantly greater in Hungary than in Slovenia in both absolute and relative terms. At local level both countries face a lack of financial resources, and short-term financing, which is particularly common for the more innovative NGO programmes, presents a significant problem for the development and planning of services.

Financial constraints often mean that central and local governments are willing to transfer service provision tasks to NGOs, which are in a position to respond more flexibly to emerging needs, while the government retains only the regulatory and financing roles. This reallocation of tasks may promote the emergence of new forms of governance in the observed countries, where direct state roles of provision and regulation can be substituted by a kind of 'joined-up governance'. This reallocation of tasks can thus allow for the development of closer cooperation between central government, local government and the NGO sector, something that can be observed to at least some degree in both countries. Bargaining processes, informal networks and interdependency of actors have all been important factors in the process of forming concrete joined-up governance structures in the homeless sector in Hungary. The strong presence of the NGO sector in homeless provision and its substantial influence on policy making, particularly through the establishment of the two public foundations, is especially striking when compared with the Slovenian case.

As the bargaining and lobbying role of NGOs in Hungary became more visible and structured, the state 'got captured' by its own service deliverers; coordination of actors within the sector and policy formulation became the tasks of the public foundations and the state lost a large part of its direct control over the sector's actors. This form of governance of homeless services provision has the potential to have a significant effect on the development of services. It can be anticipated that in the future, through the broader consultation processes required by strategy formulation and EU programming, the negotiation and bargaining processes will become more transparent and accountable.

In Slovenia welfare services have remained mainly in the public domain, but the process of joined-up governance is developing along with the increasing role of the third sector. The trend towards an enabling role for the state as opposed to a providing role is demonstrated by the MLFSA funding programmes for the homeless. The role of municipalities as additional funding bodies is very strong. Public institutions, as well as NGOs, can compete for these funds. The small but growing role of NGOs in the provision of services for the homeless can be linked to Slovenia's relatively slow development of the NGO sector, relative to other CEE countries. No outside or international NGO has stepped in and influenced service development in this sector, as was the case, for example, with the Salvation Army in the Czech Republic (Hradecky, 2008).

Unlike Hungary, where joined-up governance is evident even to the degree that the state 'got captured' by its own service deliverers, in Slovenia the role and relationship between central government and service providers, especially those in the NGO sector, is less clear and there are varying views on the relationship. NGOs see their role as small, while central government sees their involvement in policy making as significant. At the local level, mainly in city municipalities where there is a stronger need to respond to the problem of homelessness, closer cooperation between NGOs and the local government seems to have developed and NGOs have generally described these relationships as improved. The role of NGOs seems to be strengthening at this level, and central government is also aware of the importance of including all stakeholders in the policy-making process. However, since the homeless sector is not to the fore of the policy agenda, and no special policy in this field has yet been developed, it is unclear what future trends here will be.

Finally, it should be noted that, despite the significant differences, there is a slight convergence between the two countries in terms of governance of the homeless services provision sector: Hungary, from a very decentralised system, tends to foster the coordination of homeless services through new forms of joined-up governance, while Slovenia is moving towards greater responsibility at a local level both in terms of financing and service delivery. NGOs play a substantial role in both

processes. Examining the policy consequences of the new forms of joined-up governance and the crucial role that NGOs play in them, the main result, though on different scales, is that a more integrated and complex approach is evolving in the development of systems of homeless services provision, although this approach has not appeared in formal homeless strategies in either country.

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Labour Market Reforms and Homelessness in Denmark and Germany : Dilemmas and Consequences

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- › **Abstract_** *This paper discusses the consequences of labour market reforms on homelessness by comparing reforms in Denmark and Germany. It focuses on the dilemmas and consequences that reforms of social benefit systems and activation policies may have on homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. Recent reforms have involved changes and reductions in social benefits, which may negatively affect the ability of socially marginalised groups to find affordable housing and may thus increase the risk of homelessness. The coverage of housing costs is different in the two countries, but both systems are vulnerable to local variations in housing markets and administrative practices, with subsequent unintended consequences. This paper looks at how activation policies involve a potential for both social inclusion and social exclusion in the balance between enabling elements and social and economic sanctions. Finally it analyses how policies aimed at young people may unintentionally equate to a high-risk strategy for the socially vulnerable, as lower benefits may increase the risk of extreme marginalisation in terms of homelessness when social vulnerabilities are not taken into account.*
- › **Keywords_** *Activation ; labour market reform ; social benefits ; homelessness ; Denmark ; Germany.*

Introduction

No European country has escaped the general trend of labour market reform of the 1990s and early 2000s, which aimed to reduce public spending on transfer benefits and increase labour market participation through individual incentives and activation policies (Lødemehl and Trickey, 2000; Hanesch, 2001; Konle-Seidl, 2008; Spross and Lang, 2008). These reforms involve the enforcement of labour market participation and the conditioning of rights and growing obligations of the individual on one side, and an increase in services for the promotion of employability and the restoration of social equity on the other. However, despite moving in a similar direction, the detailed arrangements in European countries show significant differences, and some experts argue that one cannot even assume a trend towards convergence (Dingeldey, 2007).¹

This paper compares the (intended and unintended) effects of labour market reforms on homelessness in Denmark and Germany. From a relatively different starting point – a tight labour market in Denmark and mass unemployment in Germany² – both countries have reduced individual benefits and introduced targeted measures for the long-term unemployed, including homeless persons. The move towards greater activation efforts and enforcement of activation for those fit to work started earlier in Denmark, and Denmark was often promoted in Germany as an example of good policy alongside arrangements used in the Netherlands and the UK.

Before analysing the dilemmas and consequences of these reforms in greater detail, it is worth exploring the broad differences and similarities of the two countries under comparison. Obviously they are two countries of very different population

¹ As this paper focuses on the consequences of the reforms for a specific group (persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness), it will not go into any detail on the background and origins of the labour market reforms in general. Recent literature on the influence of the European Employment Strategy, inaugurated in 1997, and of the Open Method of Coordination on national employment policies and social welfare systems, shows the methodological challenges and the variety of possible perspectives for analysing the influence of the EU on these reforms (Heidenreich and Zeitlin, 2009). There is a consensus that the influence of the EU and the OECD on the direction of national reforms was considerable, but the debate about the degree and the varying mechanisms of this influence and about convergence and 'Europeanisation' versus divergence, path dependency and the limitations for institutional changes on the national level is still ongoing. This debate is not the focus of this paper.

² Since 2000 unemployment rates (annual average as a percentage of labour force) have never been higher than 6.3 in Denmark, with annual rates as low as 3.3 in 2007, and have never been lower than 7.8 in Germany, with a peak of 11.7 in 2005 (OECD data). However, the population share of persons on early retirement pension is far higher in Denmark than in Germany. Whereas in Denmark 6.6 per cent of the population aged fifteen to sixty-four was inactive because of illness or invalidity in 2007, this was only the case for 2 per cent of the German population (Konle-Seidl, 2009). This difference between the two countries is even more pronounced among the homeless.

size, Germany being the EU country with the largest population (82.3 million in 2007) and Denmark being among the EU member states with the lowest number of inhabitants (5.4 million in 2007). However, the countries are very relevant for strategic comparison. On one hand, they are geographical neighbours, with strong cultural similarities, export-oriented economies and relatively high wages. On the other, in terms of welfare-state regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990), they are 'typical' representatives of two different regime-types: the social democratic regime (Denmark) and the corporatist/conservative regime (Germany),³ although it has been argued that labour market reforms in Germany mark 'a critical moment in the departure from the conservative welfare model' (Fleckenstein, 2008, p.178; see also Busch-Geertsema, 2004).⁴ In terms of labour market policies, a recent comparative analysis of labour reforms in Denmark, Germany and the UK on a more general level shows that by 2007 Denmark was scoring rather highly on enabling policies but showed a relatively low score on workfare policies; in the UK the opposite was true (strong on workfare policies and weak on enabling policies); while Germany held an intermediate position relative to the other two countries, with a slight tendency towards stronger workfare policies (Dingeldey, 2007). Furthermore, some specific changes in benefit systems and particularly the coverage of housing costs make Denmark and Germany suitable to illustrate possible unintended consequences of reforms and changes for marginal groups in terms of the risk of homelessness.

This paper discusses the consequences of the reforms in social benefit systems and activation policies for homeless persons. It examines the reforms in relation to income profiles and income sources among the homeless population, and considers how the coverage of housing costs is organised within the social benefit systems and how changes to this can alter the ability of people affected by, or at risk of, homelessness to cover housing costs. The paper then discusses changes and dilemmas in social activation policies, which encompass the potential for both social inclusion and social exclusion of marginal groups; and highlights particular policy changes aimed at young people – one of the main target groups of labour market reforms and workfare programmes across Europe (Trickey, 2000, p.260; Serrano Pascual, 2004; European Commission, 2006) – and how these policies may be described as a high-risk strategy when it comes to the risk of homelessness for socially marginalised young people.

³ For the use and limits of the welfare regime typology for comparative analyses of housing (exclusion) and homelessness see Edgar et al. (1999) and Stephens and Fitzpatrick (2007).

⁴ But note that this move followed the British (liberal) example much more than the Scandinavian one (Fleckenstein, 2008). 'Germany seems to be moving towards the neo-liberal model' (Dingeldey, 2007, p.845). 'From Bismark to Beverdige' (Konle-Seidl et al., 2007).

Reforms of Social Benefits

Changes in social benefit schemes in Denmark and in Germany have been aimed at increasing labour market participation and reducing dependency on social benefits. In both countries the reforms have addressed various aspects such as eligibility, duration and benefit levels.

The share of homeless people who can rely on employment and a wage as their main income is only about 5 per cent in both countries. A large majority of homeless persons have no attachment to the labour market, though we cannot say whether individuals now relying on public benefits may have had a labour market attachment in the past. Only a small fraction of the homeless population receives benefits from insurance-based unemployment schemes dependent on prior labour market attachment. The category of unemployment benefit in the statistics available for Germany does not distinguish between those who receive insurance-based unemployment benefits and those who receive *Arbeitslosengeld II*, the basic benefit introduced by Hartz IV (see below). The former will only be a very tiny minority and the latter the vast majority of those classified under this category (unemployment benefit of both types), on which half of all homeless people rely.

Most importantly, the share of homeless persons receiving some sort of pension is considerably lower in Germany than in Denmark, which reflects the differences between the countries in defining people in and out of the basic income schemes for the unemployed. The fact that a relatively large proportion of unemployed homeless people in Denmark receive comparatively generous permanent retirement pensions without any additional demands of labour market activation measures may reflect an underlying difference in the welfare regimes. However, the fact that this group is still found among the homeless shows how the most vulnerable groups can fall through the social safety net, and points to the need for individualised tailor-made services for this group.

Denmark

After a long period of economic recession and with an unemployment rate standing at 12 per cent, a reform of labour market policies in 1994 strengthened the focus on activation policies already present in the previous Danish employment legislation. Keynesian fiscal policies kick-started the economy and together with rising external demand marked the start of an economic boom which lasted until 2001, and which resumed in 2004. At the onset of the global financial crisis in autumn 2008 the official unemployment rate in Denmark had reached a minimum of 1.7 per cent (Statistics Denmark, 2008a). It has since increased to 3.7 per cent (Statistics Denmark, 2009) with the progression of the crisis. In the fourth quarter of 2008 approximately 55,000 people were officially unemployed. However, this figure

excluded people who were involved in a wide range of activation measures and supported employment. Thus, the real number of people outside the ordinary labour market was estimated at 261,000 people between the ages of sixteen and sixty-four, excluding students and those receiving early retirement benefits, on sickness benefits, on maternal or paternal leave and so on. This figure included 44,000 people in various kinds of instruction or screening courses, 82,000 people in supported employment and about 72,000 other receivers of social benefits classified as being outside the labour market (Statistics Denmark, 2008b).

The main pillars of the Danish support system for the unemployed consist of two types of benefits. The first is an insurance-based unemployment benefit where participation is optional for people in employment, and where a condition for receiving support is a period of one year of full-time employment in the three-year period prior to an unemployment spell. For the uninsured and people without any labour market attachment and who do not qualify for other social benefits, there is a means-tested cash benefit system. Apart from a gradual reduction in the relatively long period in which unemployment benefits can be received, from nine years to four years, recent reforms of social benefit systems have mainly been aimed at those in receipt of the so-called 'cash benefit' (*køstanthjælp*).

The cash benefit system for the uninsured unemployed has undergone some important changes. In 1994 a general reform of social laws introduced a change from net payments to gross payments so that cash benefits along with a number of other social benefits were made taxable. One aim of this reform was to make the transition from receiving benefits to working life easier and more economically transparent to the individual benefit recipient. The change also involved abolishing the distinction made in individual welfare benefits between expenditure earmarked for housing and residual cash benefits, which was replaced by a unitary payment from which the benefit recipient is supposed to pay for all expenditure including housing (although an additional, means-tested subsidiary housing benefit for low-income groups including recipients of cash benefit remained).

In 2003 a so-called ceiling for individual cash benefits was introduced. This ceiling sets in after a period of six months of receiving cash benefits, and it limits the total amount of cash benefits and additional cash subsidies the individual can receive per month. The ceiling includes the additional means-tested housing benefit given to low-income groups. One aim of this reform was to create a difference between benefit levels and working income, thus increasing the incentive to work. To date, there has been no documentation of the consequences of this benefit ceiling for increasing the risk of homelessness. However, a recent study showed that the number of evictions increased in the period between 2002 and 2006, but no direct

link between the benefit ceiling and the rise in evictions can be established as the number of evictions has also risen among waged employees in the same period (Christensen and Nielsen, 2008).

If we look at income sources among homeless persons in Denmark (see Table 1), most homeless people are recipients of cash benefits (60 per cent) or early retirement pensions (23 per cent). Five per cent are in waged employment and only 3 per cent receive the insurance-based unemployment benefit, which emphasises the fact that few homeless people have an attachment to the labour market. Within a two-year period from 2007 to 2009 the percentage with income from waged employment has fallen from 9 per cent to 5 per cent. This suggests that individuals in a marginal social position are the most vulnerable to the labour market contraction that has taken place with the onset of the economic crisis.

Table 1: Income sources of homeless people in Denmark 2009 (%)

Age	Income source							Total (N=4,384)
	Wages	Unemployment benefits	Cash benefits	Early retirement pension	Old age pension	Other income	No income	
18-24	5	2	80	2	0	8	6	100
25-29	5	3	75	9	0	6	4	100
30-39	6	2	68	17	0	4	4	100
40-49	5	3	56	29	0	5	3	100
50-59	4	3	40	45	0	6	4	100
60+	2	2	23	37	27	5	6	100
Total	5	3	60	23	2	5	4	100

Source: Benjaminsen (2009). Percentages may not total 100 % due to rounding.

Among homeless persons in Denmark, a relatively high proportion are recipients of early retirement benefit, which can be granted after the age of eighteen due to illness, disability or severe social problems. This high proportion mainly reflects the many homeless people who have been granted a pension due to mental illness, long-term substance abuse and other social vulnerabilities. While cash benefits have been exposed to the benefit ceiling described above, benefit levels for early retirement pensions were increased in 2003 and are generally higher than the level of cash benefits.

Germany

In Germany the most fundamental reform of the benefit system was the Hartz reform, particularly part four of this series of reforms (Hartz IV), which was named after the chairman of a commission on modern labour market services, Peter Hartz.⁵ The Hartz reforms have been judged to be the most substantial social reform in Germany since World War II. A number of new measures were introduced by four different national Acts, Hartz I to Hartz IV. Hartz IV, which comprised the new social legislation on minimum benefits, was enacted in December 2003 and came into force in January 2005. The new second part of the German Social Code (*Sozialgesetzbuch II* or *SGB II* for short) merged two types of benefits for the long-term unemployed (unemployment assistance, *Arbeitslosenhilfe*, and social assistance, *Sozialhilfe*).

Since 1 January 2005 all people who have been unemployed for more than twelve months (or less, but who have not paid sufficient contributions to unemployment insurance) and who are able to work for at least three hours a day are entitled to the new subsistence benefit *Arbeitslosengeld II*, in so far as they are not able to procure their subsistence by other means. The same applies to an increasing number of 'working poor', who earn less than the minimum benefit and are entitled to supplement their income with this benefit.⁶ The new minimum benefit is strictly means-tested and the level is very similar to that of the former *Sozialhilfe*, so that a large proportion of those previously entitled to the income-related *Arbeitslosenhilfe* were faced with a substantial loss of income.⁷

The old system of *Sozialhilfe* remained as a sort of residuum provision (with almost exactly the same amount of money being provided) covering a relatively small number of people in need who are not able to work but who do not yet qualify for

⁵ At the time Dr Hartz was the personnel director of Volkswagen and of very high prestige. In 2005, however, he resigned following a scandal involving prostitutes and bribery of leading members of the works council. In 2007 he was fined and sentenced to two years in prison. For governance analysis it is interesting to note that while the reforms were publicly announced to be the implementation of the Hartz commission's recommendations, the Bertelsmann foundation was even more influential in formulating the cornerstones of the reform, see Fleckenstein, 2008.

⁶ In November 2008 the number of recipients in some type of employment was 1.3 million (26.7 per cent of all recipients capable of work) according to official statistics of the Federal Employment Office.

⁷ A recent study of the Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (German Institute for Economic Research) showed that more than half of those in receipt of *Arbeitslosenhilfe* or *Sozialhilfe* before the reform had a lower income under the new regulations. The proportion of benefit recipients who are defined as poor according to international standards has grown from about one-half to two-thirds (DIW, 2007, pp.753ff.). Eleven per cent of those formerly in receipt of *Arbeitslosenhilfe* lost any entitlement to subsistence benefit through the reform (Wagner, 2007; Bruckmeier and Schnitzlein, 2007), mainly because they were considered to be living from their partner's income (it was predominantly women who lost their entitlement).

a pension, be it an early retirement or an old age pension. Some people in need who are capable of working are nevertheless excluded from receipt of SGB II payments, for example foreigners who are not allowed to work in Germany (mainly asylum seekers and other refugees who are entitled to another type of subsistence benefit with lower rates, but also tourists and seasonal workers who are not entitled for a longer term stay in Germany), students entitled to other types of financial support and persons in 'stationary institutions' including prisons and some institutions for homeless people (those involving full-time residence with full boarding and a high level of supervision).

As in Denmark there is still a system of unemployment insurance but the maximum period of entitlement for (wage-related) insurance benefits for those qualifying has been cut down to one year.⁸

After more than four years in practice it is clear that expectations that these reforms would result in the reduction of unemployment have not been met.⁹ On the contrary, registered unemployment in Germany rose to more than five million persons in the first months after the new legislation came into force in 2005. It took until April 2007, and an economic boom mainly caused by external demand, for registered unemployment in Germany to sink to under four million (the level in 2002 when the Hartz commission had published its report).

Meanwhile the numbers of those unemployed have further decreased as a consequence of the economic boom, but a large proportion of the long-term unemployed and recipients of minimum benefits are excluded from the statistics, and increased levels of unemployment are expected in the months following the economic downturn. At the end of December 2008 the number of persons registered officially as unemployed in Germany was 3.1 million. About 1.6 million persons were in some kind of employment or training scheme and not registered as unemployed for this reason. At the same time 4.8 million persons were receiving *Arbeitslosengeld II* (most of them long-term unemployed, and all capable of work), and a further 1.8 million household members were getting subsistence benefit (*Sozialgeld*) under the same Act (SGB II) as dependants who are not fit to work.

Accordingly the total number of persons relying on the strictly means-tested minimum benefit of Hartz IV in December 2008 was more than 6.6 million. In addition there were almost one million short-term unemployed persons (usually

⁸ However, time restrictions were changed again in 2008 for the unemployed aged over fifty: now the period of entitlement is 15 months for those aged fifty to fifty-four, 18 months for those aged fifty-five to fifty-seven and 24 months for those fifty-eight and older who have paid contributions for a prolonged period of time.

⁹ In 2002 it was announced that the reforms would reduce unemployment by half (from four million to under two million) within three years.

unemployed for less than twelve months) in receipt of income-related unemployment benefit as insurance payments. While the number of short-term unemployed persons entitled to insurance payments has been decreasing substantially, especially since 2004 (the number reduced by more than half from 2.07 million in January 2005 to a little under one million in December 2008), the number of people relying on the minimum benefit under SGB II does not seem to have been affected by the economic upswing in Germany. Their number increased from 6.12 million in January 2005 to more than 7 million in October 2005, and did not fall under this figure again until September 2007, peaking at more than 7.4 million in some months (Federal Employment Agency data).

While it is true that point-in-time data do hide a considerable dynamic of people entering and leaving the benefit system, it is also true that a large percentage of those persons who were not registered as unemployed under SGB II temporarily (due, for example, to getting a place in an employment scheme) were back after one year at the most (according to the Federal Employment Agency this is the case for more than half of those taking up a job). And at the end of 2006 more than half of all recipients had been receiving SGB II payments since January 2005 without any interruption (IAB, 2007; Koch et al., 2009).

Data on the main income sources of homeless people in Germany are only available for clients of NGO service providers that work with (primarily single) homeless persons. The most recent available data are from 2006 and are annual prevalence data showing the main income of clients at the point of entry into support services.

Table 2: Income sources of homeless people in Germany, 2006 (%)

Wage	Unemployment benefit	Social assistance	Pension (old age and early retirement)	Support by relatives	Assets, interests, lettings etc.	Other public support	Other income	No income	Total (N= 14,300)
4.7	49.9	12.2	7.6	1.3	0.4	1.4	3.4	19.1	100

* Clients of NGO services for single homeless people.

Source: Schröder (2008).

It should be noted that some of the recipients of social assistance might be capable of work (and in principle also entitled to unemployment benefit II) but are excluded from SGB II payments because of their stay in a 'stationary institution' (hostel with highly regulated day structure, supervision and full boarding).

Housing Benefits and Benefits for Other Living Expenses

An important factor that may contribute to the risk of homelessness is the way in which payment of housing costs is organised within the benefit system. In Germany the Hartz reforms of 2005 meant that the separation of benefits covering housing costs and those covering all other living costs, a separation which had also existed in the old system of *Sozialhilfe* (social assistance), was now extended to affect a much larger number of long-term unemployed people, including those who had been entitled to the wage-related *Arbeitslosenhilfe* until the end of 2004. In Denmark, in contrast, a similar separation of housing benefits and benefits for other living costs was abolished as part of social reforms.

As described in the previous section, reforms and reductions in social benefit levels have been introduced in both Denmark and Germany in recent years. It is difficult to document any direct effects on the risk of homelessness but reductions of benefit levels may increase the risk of homelessness by reducing people's ability to find affordable housing.

Both the system of unitary benefits in Denmark and the system of divided housing and cash benefits in Germany can be shown to have possible unintended consequences for increasing the risk of homelessness. Neither system (sufficiently) incorporates local variations in either housing prices or administrative practices. The German system seems to be susceptible to local variations in the administration of what is deemed to be appropriate housing costs, whereas the Danish system is vulnerable to variation in rent levels between urban and rural areas and to a possible disincentive for rough sleepers to use homeless hostels.

Denmark

The separation in individual welfare benefits between expenditure earmarked for housing and residual cash benefits was replaced in 1994 by a unitary payment from which the benefit receiver is obliged to pay for all expenditure including housing. This change aimed to increase the economic transparency of social benefits (and the comparability with labour income) for the individual and to strengthen the position of benefit recipients. However, unintended consequences of the system of unitary benefits (with no separate allowance for housing costs) can be identified.

First of all the unitary system creates a vulnerability in terms of the possibility of finding affordable housing as housing costs must be met directly out of benefits. In particular the system of unitary payments is vulnerable to geographical variations in rent levels, as the possibility for additional support to meet housing costs is limited and does not vary among municipalities with varying rent levels. However, it is difficult to assess the actual impact on the risk of homelessness as structural conditions in the housing market have changed more or less in parallel with the

reform of the benefit system. Most especially, housing prices have increased rapidly since the mid-1990s and, particularly in Copenhagen, socially vulnerable groups are to a large extent dependent on the allocation of public housing; the municipality has a right to refer a percentage of housing units that become vacant to vulnerable groups. A study, albeit slightly dated, has shown that stricter criteria for referral to public housing through the prioritised municipal lists apply in the capital than in provincial municipalities (Anker et al., 2003).

Besides the interplay between the benefit system and structural changes in the availability of affordable housing there are also effects which are mainly felt on an individual level. It can be especially difficult for those with severe addiction problems to manage their finances and pay rent out of unitary monthly benefits. However, it is possible for benefit recipients to have their rent payment administered by municipalities on a voluntary basis.

Unintended consequences of the unitary payment system also appear in the use of emergency services. The number of rough sleepers remains relatively high, with 174 rough sleepers in the Danish capital and 506 rough sleepers nationwide in the homelessness count week of 2009 (Benjaminsen, 2009). Parallel to the introduction of the system of unitary payments, user fees were introduced at public homeless hostels. One reason for user fees is to ensure that staying in a homeless hostel competes favourably with paying rent in a private dwelling, and user fees are generally set in relation to the level of individual cash benefits. However, an unintended consequence of this system may be that the inclination to sleep rough instead of using a hostel is reinforced if the individual has high cash needs due to substance addiction.

As we saw in Table 1, quite a high proportion of the homeless in Denmark are recipients of early retirement benefits. Here it should be recognised that the unintended consequences of the unitary benefits (with no separate housing allowance) apply to those in receipt of early retirement benefits too. Of the rough sleepers in the national count, 24 per cent were recipients of early retirement benefits, indicating not only that a large proportion of this group is affected by complex mental or substance-related conditions but also that unintended effects of the use of services may be at play. In this way the separation of benefits to exclude a specific housing allowance may unintentionally contribute to a higher level of rough sleeping.

A comparison can here be made with the British system, where cash benefits earmarked for housing can also be used to pay hostel fees etc., and where considerable success has been achieved in reducing the number of rough sleepers as services have been strengthened (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005).

Germany

In contrast to the Danish system, the separation of housing benefits and cash benefits has been upheld in Germany, and has even been extended considerably to include those who were entitled to *Arbeitslosenhilfe* before 2005. The legislation stipulates that housing costs will be paid for recipients of the minimum benefit under SGB II, but only to the extent that is considered 'appropriate'. If the rent (or the costs of owner-occupied housing) is above the ceiling for appropriate housing costs, recipients can be asked to reduce these costs either by moving to 'appropriate' housing within six months or by other measures (letting to a lodger, bargaining with the landlord for a lower rent). If they cannot reduce the costs they must pay their excess housing costs from their minimum income after six months at the latest. The upper limits for 'appropriate' rents are fixed by municipalities, which has led to considerable regional and local variations (Busch-Geertsema and Evers, 2007).

While there are substantial and increasing disparities in rent levels across Germany, a recent nationwide study shows that the large variance in municipal regulation of criteria for 'appropriate' housing costs for benefit recipients seems not to follow this pattern (BBR, forthcoming). Differences in local political priorities have a considerable influence on the generosity of existing ceilings. There is also some evidence that regulations in rural counties are on the whole more restrictive than those in large cities (Holm, 2006; Busch-Geertsema, 2008).

For some of those entitled to Hartz IV benefits, it is now easier for local authorities to transfer their housing benefits directly to landlords than it was before 2005, and this has counteracted some of the negative effects of the reform that led to an increased risk of eviction. The risk of eviction is increased by virtue of the fact that most recipients living in housing that exceeds the appropriate cost ceiling bear part of their housing costs themselves. Very little data are available so far, but a special analysis of the Federal Employment Agency for April 2006 showed that 12.7 per cent of recipients (accounting for almost one million persons in more than half a million households) did not have their actual housing costs fully covered (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2006; Busch-Geertsema, 2008).

If those living in housing deemed 'too expensive' by local authorities accumulate rent arrears, the threat of homelessness is even higher for them because those rent arrears cannot be paid by prevention offices (as the rents are not appropriate, intervention is therefore not mandated by the existing legislation).¹⁰ However, until recently there has been no empirical evidence of a nationwide increase in evictions. On the contrary, the figures available from several municipal prevention services

¹⁰ For more details on prevention in Germany, see Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick, 2008.

show a decrease in cases of eviction, which might be explained by the improved provisions for direct payments to landlords mentioned earlier (Busch-Geertsema and Evers, 2007; Busch-Geertsema, 2008).

Activation Policies

In both Denmark and Germany there has been increased emphasis on active labour market policies. The Danish system has generally been more oriented towards enabling elements and the German system has been more oriented towards workfare elements. However, in both countries the move has been towards increased demands for the unemployed to be at the disposal of the labour market. Thus, reforms of activation policies in both Denmark and Germany encompass strong workfare elements aimed at increasing incentives for labour participation. The increased emphasis on labour market activation has been particularly evident in Denmark.

The use of sanctions has come to play a stronger role in both countries, though the Danish system places more emphasis on the enabling elements. Labour market activation programmes generally create potential for social inclusion, as access to the labour market also means access to new social networks, income etc., but at the same time activation programmes, and particularly the classificatory and punitive elements, involve the risk of reinforcing social exclusion. The examples from both Denmark and Germany suggest that most homeless people are in a marginal position with regard to the labour market. For these groups the challenge is not only to improve labour market accessibility but also to avoid situations in which the punitive elements may actually reinforce social marginalisation. Establishing alternatives for social activities in everyday life for those who do not have the personal resources to participate in activation programmes is an important element of inclusionary social policies for the most marginal groups.

Denmark

The reforms carried out by the social-democratic government from the mid-1990s onwards were generally characterised by strong enabling elements with a focus on training, activation courses and re-qualification of low-skilled workers. The general course of active labour market policies remained unchanged following a change in government in 2001 when a liberal-conservative coalition came into power, but an increased focus on workfare elements can also be identified.

The unemployed were categorised into five 'match groups' in 2004. Match Groups I to III consist of individuals who are labour market ready, whereas Match Groups IV and V consist of individuals who are found not to be labour market ready. One aim of the classification system is to match people to activation interventions

according to both individual resources and limitations. However, tighter measures of duties and sanctions have also gradually been imposed. For individuals who refuse to undergo obligatory activation schemes, cash benefits can generally be withdrawn. More specific measures have also been taken, including the so-called 300-hour rule, which states that couples in which both persons are cash benefit recipients must have completed at least 300 hours of ordinary work within a period of two years in order to benefit. Failing this, one person will lose the cash benefit and only the person who is considered 'closest' to the labour market will receive the remaining benefit (Law of Active Social Policy).¹¹

Though policies contain strong workfare elements it has also been recognised in official government documents that the road to employment can be long, and that for the most vulnerable groups social activation will often start outside the labour market. This was expressed in the programme Social Responsibility II, where one of the aims was to strengthen alternatives for social activities in everyday life for the most marginal groups, for instance by strengthening social activities in drop-in cafés on the local level.

The increased emphasis on activation involves certain dilemmas for marginal groups, as activation policies have potential for both social inclusion and social exclusion. Targeted intervention allows those with a long history of exclusion from the working sphere the chance to re-enter the labour market, however, there is a risk of putting increased pressure for activation on people with relatively weak personal resources, especially if classification procedures are not sufficiently efficient and misclassification occurs. There is also a risk of classifying people as unfit to work and thereby excluding them from more intensive interventions mainly aimed at people with higher job chances.

In a recent survey 51 per cent of the interviewed recipients of social cash benefits belonged to Match Groups IV and V (Bach and Petersen, 2007). Match Group V (to which 16 per cent of cash benefit recipients belonged) is defined as pertaining to people with such severe limitations in their competence and resources that they have no work capabilities that can be used in the labour market. In this group 28 per cent were found to have a mental illness and 34 per cent had problems with alcohol and/or substance abuse.

Another report concluded that the most intensive activation efforts were aimed at people in Match Groups I to III; those who are closer to the labour market in terms of their personal resources etc., and that only sparse efforts were made to improve the labour market skills of those classified into Match Groups IV and V (Hohnen et

¹¹ <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=113596>

al., 2007). In 2008 it also became mandatory to activate people classified as belonging to Match Groups IV and V, with interventions such as substance abuse treatment, physical rehabilitation and so on now counting as activation.

There are no specific studies that show the distribution of homeless persons within the match groups, but it is reasonable to assume that many people experiencing homelessness are categorised in Match Groups IV and V. The national count of homeless persons in Denmark in 2009 showed that 14 per cent of all homeless persons were in activation programmes, up from 10 per cent in 2007 (Benjaminsen, 2009). However, the rates are still low, suggesting that exclusion is a predominant factor. A study of substance abuse treatment found that 29 per cent of active substance users had undergone job-related activation during their current treatment course: 25 per cent said that they benefited from the activation while 41 per cent said that activation had harmed their situation (Benjaminsen et al. 2009). Of those substance users who were employed, 63 per cent found that activation had improved their social situation; whereas of those still receiving cash benefits, only 21 per cent said that activation had improved their situation.

The changes in activation laws have been accompanied by organisational changes, for instance in job centres, and in many cases the individual now has to face several social workers, job consultants etc., each of whom has partial discretion over aspects of the individual's life.

The dilemmas underline the challenge to ensure that activation measures do not interfere negatively with other kinds of social interventions and they illustrate how there may be underlying conflicts between the intentions of activation laws and other social laws. In this way activation policies involve potential for both social inclusion and social exclusion as seen from the level of the individual, and the result depends on how activation policies are administered and how well they are integrated into the provision of other social services and interventions.

Germany

In Germany the implementation of the Hartz reforms was announced under the slogan '*Fördern und Fordern*' (Promoting and Demanding). Many experts agree that the demanding part has been taken much more seriously, and is more dominant in legislation and practice, than the promoting element (Völker, 2005; Dingeldey, 2006 and 2007). Promoting activation and quick job placement is difficult in a country where the number of unemployed people fit for work amounts to several million while the number of regular job vacancies is less than a few hundred thousand at any point in time (in 2008, while still in the economic boom, there were never more than 400,000 job vacancies per month). Lessenich (2005) called this promotion of 'activation without work' the new dilemma of the conservative welfare state. While

'incentives to work' and active search efforts are promoted and demanded there are no complementary efforts to create an active and wide-ranging labour market policy offering regular jobs. The unemployed are kept 'in search of the lost employment', and unemployment as a structural problem is 'subjectivised' by the constant assumption that individual searching efforts have to be improved (Ludwig-Mayerhofer et al., 2009).

While Hartz IV was introduced with a promise to open up all instruments for the promotion of employment to the long-term unemployed, in reality qualification schemes were cut down to a large extent and the main type of employment schemes available to SGB II recipients are short-term training courses for job applications and the so-called 'one-euro-jobs'. The reason for this name is that participants in these employment schemes do not earn a wage; instead they continue to receive their minimum benefit but with a small supplement of about one euro per hour (increasingly nowadays €1.50 to €2.00) added as 'compensation'. By law these jobs, usually time restricted to six to twelve months and explicitly exempt from usual labour regulations, have to be of public utility and must not replace regular jobs, though the reality is that they do in at least some cases (Wiedemeyer and Diemer, 2007). Originally presented as a last resort for those not able to find regular employment by any other measure, this job offer has become the predominant type of provision offered to recipients of SGB II payments. At the end of 2008 almost 300,000 persons were working in 'one-euro-jobs'.

The success rate of these schemes in transferring participants into the regular job market is relatively low (between 5 and 15 per cent). Nevertheless many recipients are very eager to get one of these jobs, as they wish to work and supplement their existing benefit. This also demonstrates that the widespread assumption about most needy people being unwilling to work is not grounded in empirical evidence (Wiedemeyer and Diemer, 2007; Ludwig-Mayerhofer et al., 2009).

Administrative attempts to categorise the unemployed in Germany are similar to those already described for Denmark: since 2007 unemployed recipients of SGB II payments have been separated into four 'support categories' (*Betreuungsstufen*; see Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2007; Ludwig-Mayerhofer et al., 2009, pp.45–46) and most homeless people will probably be categorised under the category called IF (*Integrationsfern*: not ready for regular employment – several severe restrictions, no orientation (yet) on the labour market).

Section 15 of the legislation (SGB II) stipulates that an inclusion agreement (*Eingliederungsvereinbarung*) should be made with all benefit recipients able to work. If they fail to comply with their agreed duties (e.g. of actively applying for jobs), fail to accept a job offer or fail to give a reason for dismissal from a job or training scheme, they face potentially harsh sanctions. Usually benefits are cut by 30 per

cent over a period of three months. In repeat cases (during a period of one year following the beginning of the first sanction) the cut is increased to 60 or even 100 per cent. Young people will have their benefit for living expenses other than housing completely cut by a first sanction. In repeat cases the sanction extends to housing costs. The sanction period may be reduced to six weeks instead of three months in cases where young people clearly demonstrate willingness to comply with regulations after being given the sanction (this is only possible for young people under the age of twenty-five).

According to a special statistical analysis of sanctions under SGB II in October 2006, more than 125,000 sanctions were 'activated' during this month. As some recipients had more than one sanction it was calculated that about 95,000 recipients who were fit for work had at least one sanction.¹² Of all unemployed persons receiving benefits under SGB II, 2.5 per cent had at least one sanction, while the share was 7.2 per cent among the unemployed recipients aged under twenty-five. Unemployed men had considerably more sanctions than women (3.2 per cent versus 1.5 per cent, see Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2007). By September 2007 the share of recipients who had been given a sanction had increased considerably (overall by about 30 per cent since October 2006, see Deutscher Bundestag, 2008). It is clear that increased pressure to reduce the total amount of financial benefits is a driving force in the growing number of sanctions.

There has been no specific analysis of sanctions against homeless people, nor has there been any systematic evaluation of the impact of sanctions on rent arrears and evictions. As many homeless people have several severe disabilities and very low chances of integration into the regular job market, a 'one-euro-job' is often the only realistic option for them (Busch-Geertsema and Evers, 2007). Interviews with service providers for homeless persons regarding the effects of the new legislation on homeless people show diverging assessments: some state that efforts to provide adequate schemes for this target group have improved, and that homeless people are less excluded than before from approaches 'to providing something meaningful to do'. Others state that, among the huge numbers of job seekers in receipt of benefits under SGB II, homeless persons are still one of the groups with the lowest chances of getting an adequate offer. It is clear that homeless people are particularly vulnerable to sanctions, and the 'big hole' that is experienced after the completion of a time limited 'one-euro-job' is often reported as being very

¹² Note that not all sanctions imply a cut of 30 per cent or more of the benefit. There are also sanctions for failing to keep appointments with the SGB II administration, medical services and so on. In these cases the first sanction reduces the benefit by 10 per cent, in repeat cases it is reduced by 20 per cent etc. About half of all sanctions are sanctions of this type.

frustrating. The predominant target of SGB II (placement in regular employment) is unrealistic for the majority of homeless people, many of whom need long-term job opportunities which need to be heavily subsidised by public money.

2007 saw a clear paradigm shift in German employment policy and the legislation was changed to provide long-term subsidised employment to a very restricted target group of unemployed people with extremely low chances of integration into the regular labour market. Many homeless persons would fit the definition of the target group for this type of provision, but there is widespread criticism among NGOs that the regulations for creating such jobs still require co-funding of at least 25 per cent of wage costs by employers, while the productivity of members of the target group is, in many cases, actually lower than that.

High-Risk Policies for the Young ?

The labour market reforms in Denmark and Germany involve specific measures aimed at young people to increase incentives for labour market participation and education. In both countries reduced benefits and the increased use of sanctions have been aimed at the young unemployed. It is probable that an unintended consequence of this for socially vulnerable young people is an increased risk of homelessness, as the likelihood of finding affordable housing will decrease in tandem with reduced benefits. From a preventive perspective, the harsher policies aimed at the young equate to a high-risk strategy, which for the most marginal groups may actually increase the risk of social exclusion.

Denmark

In Denmark reduced social benefits for people under the age of twenty-five were introduced in 1996. Both the unemployment benefit for the insured and cash benefits for the uninsured under twenty-five years were set at a lower rate than for recipients aged over twenty-five. The cash benefits for young people under twenty-five without dependent children have been set at the same rate as study benefits for students in order to motivate young people to participate in education. However, whereas most students have additional employment to supplement their study benefits, any additional income will only reduce the benefit to cash benefit receivers except for a small retention.

A criticism of this legislation was that the opportunities for education and employment are lower for socially vulnerable young people than for other young people, and that the law actually creates a poverty trap for them rather than increasing incentives (for education and employment). This led to a change being introduced into the law in 2007, providing a higher level of benefit for young people under the

age of twenty-five who have been diagnosed within the spectrum of schizophrenia. The benefit level for this group was raised to the same level as adults over twenty-five years.

The effects of reduced benefits on educational and employment opportunities among the young are generally difficult to identify. However, youth unemployment in Denmark is generally quite low with an official unemployment rate among the sixteen to twenty-four year olds of 3.1 per cent (Statistics Denmark, 2009). The Danish national count of homeless persons in 2009 showed that 23 per cent of the homeless population is between eighteen and twenty-nine years of age and that 13 per cent are aged between eighteen and twenty-four (Benjaminsen, 2009). It also showed that the highest number of 'couch surfers', those living temporarily and without a lease in the homes of friends or family, is found among young homeless people. In addition there is a lower prevalence of substance abuse among homeless young people, and a higher prevalence where a 'housing shortage in the local municipality' (rather than individual vulnerabilities) is cited as an important reason for an individual being homeless.

These results indicate that structural conditions, including the interplay of benefit levels and a shortage of affordable housing, particularly affect young people. Furthermore, in an evaluation of the so-called 'city programme', which aimed at improving social services for vulnerable groups in the six largest Danish cities, many local service providers and other local actors argued that it was particularly difficult for young homeless people to find affordable housing (Benjaminsen et al., 2006).

Germany

As we have seen, sanctions for young people aged under twenty-five are significantly harsher than for others under the SGB II legislation. On the other hand this is the only group whose members must, by law, be immediately offered a place either in a qualification or employment scheme on their application to the Federal Employment Agency. Generally the ratio of case workers per job seeker is also much better than for other SGB II recipients, the target being one case worker for seventy-five unemployed young persons.

Young people under twenty-five years can only have housing costs for a home of their own covered if they are found to have special needs that justify their inability to live with their parents. The majority are forced to live with their parents until the age of twenty-five. Previous periods of homelessness will generally qualify a person to get housing costs covered as long as local authorities do not suspect that homelessness was chosen as a route to independent living.

Many experts criticise the 'Bermuda Triangle' of provision for vulnerable young people in difficulties (being referred from one legal provision to the next between SGB II, VIII and XII; Claus, 2008; Steinbrenner, 2008): as clients of SGB II job or training schemes they often fail to comply with the regulations and face severe sanctions. The provision of youth welfare should be the priority (individual entitlement to 'support for young adults' according to Section 41 of SGB VIII), but provision is very often denied using the argument that young people reject education and are only interested in financial support. Provision of 'support for people in special social difficulties' (the 'homeless section' of SGB XII) is also denied because of the legal priority of youth welfare measures until at least the age of twenty-one and because many young homeless people are very clearly in need of education. So they are often referred back to the youth welfare agencies that reject(ed) them because of their alleged resistance to accept pedagogical intervention.

There are several indicators pointing to a small but growing number of young people who drop out of the system completely and try to secure their subsistence by other means (selling street papers, begging, prostitution, drug dealing and other illegal activities). According to service providers the share of young people among their homeless clients is still increasing despite general demographic developments in the opposite direction (an increase in the number of older people and a decrease in the number of young people; see Szyńska, 2008). In the city of Hamburg the number of young people aged under twenty-five using municipal emergency shelters was 340 at the beginning of 2008 compared with 200 in 2006.¹³

Conclusion

In both Denmark and Germany the homeless population is generally characterised by very weak ties with the labour market. This suggests that homelessness in these countries mainly arises as a consequence of extreme marginalisation and severe vulnerabilities and disabilities, rather than from a general housing problem, although barriers to accessing the housing market can impact heavily on the exclusion of marginalised groups from regular housing.

Statistics on sources of income among the homeless population in both countries show that very few are in receipt of any income from work-based activities or insurance-based unemployment benefits. Instead, most homeless people belong to groups receiving means-tested cash benefits (Hartz IV in Germany). However, in Denmark we see a relatively high proportion of homeless persons on early retirement benefits and who thereby receive a higher benefit level and are not exposed to the demands of active labour market policies. This may reflect the underlying

¹³ *Hinz und Kunzt* 193, March 2009, p.17.

divergence in welfare regimes between the two countries as a higher proportion among the most marginalised groups are covered by permanent economic support and are not required to be at the disposal of the labour market in Denmark. However, the fact that some of these individuals are still homeless suggests that there remains a challenge to provide sufficient social support for this group, many of whom are mentally ill substance users.

Though homeless persons are to a large extent excluded from the labour market, they are highly susceptible to changes in labour market policies due to their general dependence on public transfer benefits and the conditions placed on receiving them. Examples from policy developments in both Denmark and Germany illustrate the possible adverse effects of changes in labour market policies on socially marginal groups. Active labour market policies have the potential to foster social inclusion, as the enabling elements of such policies may bring new possibilities and resources to individuals with a weak attachment to the labour market. However, increased emphasis on workfare elements and reforms of social benefit systems run the risk of increasing social exclusion for those individuals with the weakest chances on the labour market.

The way in which housing costs are covered within the social benefit system is a crucial aspect when it comes to the risk of homelessness. The comparison of Denmark and Germany shows how both a unitary benefit system (in Denmark) and a system that separates payment of housing costs and other living expenditure (as in Germany) can lead to unintended consequences in terms of how housing costs are met by benefit recipients. Both systems are susceptible to local variations in housing costs. In Denmark the system does not take into account the considerable variations in rent levels between urban centres and provincial areas, and in Germany the system is vulnerable to local variations in administrative practices in setting what are deemed to be appropriate housing costs. The examples also show how adverse effects may work on different levels; from direct structural effects such as the difficulties of finding affordable housing on reduced benefits, to more subtle mechanisms and the interplay of individual vulnerabilities such as the example in the Danish case of a possible disincentive for rough sleepers to use hostels.

In both countries particular labour market policies have been aimed at the young and reduced benefits apply to the young unemployed. The aim is to provide increased incentives for young people to participate in the labour market or educational activities. This paper does not assess the broader success of these policies for the young, but shows that for young people in a socially marginal situation the question may be raised of whether these policies actually increase the risk of

extreme marginalisation and may therefore be characterised as high-risk policies for socially vulnerable young people. The introduction of reduced benefits for the young points to a convergence in policies.

There are also points of divergence. In Germany housing costs cannot generally be covered for young people living on their own if they are not found to have extenuating circumstances. In Denmark there are no specific conditions attached to the housing costs of young people but the costs must be paid out of reduced benefits, which poses a general challenge for the young to find affordable housing. At the same time the Danish case shows that it is possible to differentiate policies according to the conditions of the most vulnerable groups, as young people with the most severe psychiatric diagnosis are exempt from reduced benefits.

For the majority of homeless people in both countries the focus of activation policies on integration into the regular job market is not realistic. Long-term subsidised job schemes and alternative social activities in everyday life for those who do not have the personal resources to follow activation programmes are important elements in inclusionary social policies for the most marginal groups.

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How Urban Planning Instruments Can Contribute in the Fight against Homelessness. An International Overview of Inclusionary Housing

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- › **Abstract_** *This paper reviews the role of urban planning in ensuring the provision of adequate affordable housing through the method of ‘inclusionary housing’, also known as ‘inclusionary zoning’, and considers its potential as a tool in the prevention and solution of homelessness. Whilst the complexity of homelessness means that it cannot be explained fully or solved solely by the provision of affordable housing, such housing is nonetheless a vital requirement in the fight against homelessness. Inclusionary housing, first developed in the United States, requires that a given share of new housing has to be affordable to low- and moderate-income households. It is not common in Europe at present but is being considered as a way of increasing the supply of affordable housing. Although the value of inclusionary housing is contested internationally, and it has a number of technical, legislative and governance-related difficulties, its low costs and ability to improve the urban social mix arguably endow it with enormous potential to help address homelessness in the current social, political and economic context in Europe.*
- › **Keywords_** *Homelessness; urban planning; inclusionary housing; inclusionary zoning.*

Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to explore how urban planning can contribute to the prevention and solution of homelessness, through the supply of affordable housing as a result of inclusionary housing.

Like every public function, the ultimate aim of urban planning is to deliver a certain level of quality of life for citizens and thus ensure the security and well-being of a city's inhabitants. Nowadays, these social objectives are included in concepts of sustainable development and sustainability, which have become basic principles in the urban planning field. Sustainable urban development planning requires that land use, transportation, housing, community development, economic development and environmental planning are all woven together (Wheeler, 1998). In other words, economic, social and environmental issues must be considered in urban planning, and, consequently, urban planning cannot be limited to addressing only the physical planning of the city. The physical fabric is inseparable from the economic and social needs of its inhabitants, so these variables must also be considered in town planning (Bosch and Gibaja, 2004). Residential use (i.e. housing) is the primary use of land in our cities (Bramley et al., 2004), and thus guaranteeing access to decent and adequate housing to the entire population is arguably one of the main social objectives that all urban planning must set and achieve.

The reality is, however, very different. The existence in our cities, to a greater or lesser extent, of a segment of the population faced with problems of economic accessibility to decent and adequate housing, living in overcrowded conditions or in dwellings with serious deficiencies, or simply lacking housing altogether and thus either living on the streets or in shelters or similar facilities, can be seen as a failure of the social objectives of urban planning. Despite this, the needs of homeless people do not usually appear in the objectives of urban planners and urban planning instruments are rarely used to promote preventive and intervention measures. In fact, urban planning is more likely to exacerbate the homelessness problem. The development of so-called 'exclusionary zoning' measures, which (through land-use legislation) attempt to achieve homogeneous wealthy communities free from 'undesirables', has increased the concentration of homeless people in downtown areas, limited the number and type of community-based service facilities and restricted the development of affordable housing projects (Akita et al., 1988; Oakley, 2002).

Urban planning that is more sensitive to the homelessness problem would:

- Help to alleviate the documented scarcity of homelessness services across Europe (Edgar, 2005) through a supply of land designated for specific public facilities for homeless people. One of the objectives of regulating land use is to

guarantee an adequate supply of public goods (Whitehead, 2007), and homelessness services, owing to their public utility and social welfare purpose, could form part of the community facilities in a similar manner to schools, hospitals etc.

- Counter inadequate housing situations (cf. FEANTSA's ETHOS typology in Edgar and Meert, 2006) through urban regeneration and renewal operations. Commonly, such buildings constitute part of urban environments characterised by widespread physical deterioration, as well as a high incidence of social problems. Urban renewal has not been spared criticism, particularly for being geared almost exclusively to the physical renewal of a neighbourhood rather than also pursuing social sustainability objectives. More specifically, it has been argued that such actions must attain a social mix by combining non-subsidised and affordable housing (Fitzpatrick, 2004) and must also be accompanied by additional social programmes (Edgar, 2005; Tsenkova, 2008).
- Increase the supply of affordable housing (i.e. housing at a selling or rental price that entails an economic burden that the occupants are capable of assuming) through inclusionary zoning.

Inclusionary housing attempts to fulfil two objectives: to create affordable housing and to remove affordability barriers in communities with a poor supply of affordable housing as a result of exclusionary policies (CMAFP, 2008). The basic approach is to require that a certain percentage of housing units in new residential developments or renewal operations are affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Inclusionary housing has aroused growing interest among urban planners and housing policy makers throughout the world in recent years. At present, it is applied in such diverse countries as India, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand (Calavita and Mallach, 2009). We shall consider in greater detail below how it originated and developed in the United States and how it has been implemented in Canada and Europe, the ways it can contribute to efforts to prevent and solve the homelessness problem, and the advantages, limitations and challenges that its implementation entails. The paper starts by reviewing the need for inclusionary housing for tackling homelessness, as well as the technical approaches that can be utilised to increase the supply of affordable housing, in more detail.

This international overview is based on a comprehensive literature review. However, the paper seeks to present paradigmatic examples rather than to document all European inclusionary housing experiences to date. It is also important to note that the majority of research on inclusionary housing has been carried out in the United States; the European bibliography is much more limited. Further, there is very little research that considers the relationship between homelessness and inclusionary housing.

The Need for Inclusionary Housing

The complexity of the problem of homelessness cannot be explained only in terms of a shortage in affordable housing and thus the needs of homeless people are not limited to affordable housing; they are numerous and closely related to a number of causes that generate exclusion. Social work and the reintegration of homeless people into wider society requires emergency and transitional accommodations, including ad hoc residential alternatives for certain groups with specific needs – homeless people who are victims of domestic violence or have drug addiction problems, single-parent homeless persons, migrants and asylum seekers etc. – as well as support services – psychological, health, counselling, reintegration into the world of work, floating support to help maintain tenancies etc. – (Doherty et al., 2000; Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006; FEANTSA, 2007).

Recent literature on homelessness consistently highlights a wide range of contributing factors such as economic, employment, psychological, relational and institutional crises, the scarcity of affordable housing, low levels of social protection, the breakdown of the family and loss of friends, family and social networks etc. (Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Doherty, 2005; Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006; Shinn, 2007; Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2007a). Among this wide range of factors, the availability of a sufficient supply of affordable housing, although not *the solution* to the problem, is nonetheless an absolutely vital requirement for preventing (Shinn et al., 2001), tackling and minimising the problem of homelessness (FEANTSA, 2004; Edgar, 2005; NAEH, 2007). In other words, ‘making housing affordable... seems a key component of any solution to homelessness, and may have benefits for other outcomes’ (Shinn, 2007). There is a clear connection between weak welfare states, low levels of affordable housing and a large homeless population (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2007a). In these cases, ‘the homeless population is made up predominantly of households facing access and affordability problems, rather than particular personal needs arising, for example, from alcohol or drug dependency, or mental illness’ (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2007b).

In the current European context, there is every indication that the need for affordable housing has increased and that it is not adequately addressed by most public authorities (Mandič, 2006; Scanlon and Whitehead, 2007). In general, the Southern European countries and the newer Central/Eastern European Union member states have weaker welfare and housing systems. Unfortunately, in all the new EU member states the transition to a market economy has been accompanied by a worrying rise in homelessness (Edgar, 2005; Toro, 2007) and a mass privatisation of public housing (Pichler-Milanovich, 2001; Dandolova, 2003;

Mandič, 2006). In these states, urban planning tools for improving the supply of affordable housing, such as inclusionary zoning, may play a crucial role in preventing and solving the homelessness problem.

Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing through Inclusionary Housing

How can the supply of affordable housing be increased? Technically, public authorities may increase the supply, directly or indirectly, in two ways: by acquiring housing that already exists or by building new dwellings. Under the first option, which is completely disconnected from urban planning, public authorities purchase non-subsidised housing at market prices and then provide a subsidy (to the buyer or tenant) to cover the difference between the market price and the affordable price. This policy ultimately comes at a high economic cost, which, given the generalised restraint – if not reduction – of public spending on housing policies in the current European context, seems patently unfeasible to cover all the existing needs.

The second option – the development of new affordable housing – requires sufficient availability of land. But, how can such land be obtained? Broadly speaking, there are four ways:

1. Encourage private initiatives to supply affordable housing.
2. Buy land on the property market that is suitable to build on.
3. Acquire land (through purchase or expropriation) that is not suitable to build on, and make it suitable for house building.
4. Undertake operations connected to urban planning, which, in one way or another, involve inclusionary housing.

The first approach is based on establishing economic incentives and cost-offsets for private developers, to cover all or part of the difference between the market price of non-subsidised housing and the lower price of affordable housing. It is therefore an instrument that requires sizeable public financial resources, and the participation of the private sector, but one that usually produces very limited results when the difference between the market price and the price of affordable housing is substantial.

The second approach involves direct action by the public authorities (central, regional or local governments, public undertakings etc.) on the land market just like any other agent. In this case, the economic loss entailed in allocating plots of land for affordable housing for non-subsidised housing acquired at the market price is considered as an intrinsic cost of the policy.

The third approach is what is commonly known as land policy. It is similar to option two but with one significant difference. Rather than acquiring land that is ready to build on, the aim is to acquire land that requires urban development before it is suitable for house building. The cost of such land is substantially lower, which makes it possible to use the increment in value generated by urban development to cover the costs of the future intended use of the land for affordable housing. This approach requires a degree of integration of housing and land policies with urban planning policies at a stage prior to urban development.

The fourth approach, analysed below, is the complete integration of land and housing policies with urban planning. It is based on the employment of urban planning instruments that are geared to the development of affordable housing. According to Whitehead (2007), there are at least three key economic reasons for supplying affordable housing through urban planning: it improves the distribution of resources that govern public intervention, it helps counter the problems of economic accessibility to housing, and it taxes the enrichment of land owners who see the value of their property increase only as a result of urban planning, i.e. it is a way of recovering planning gains or increments in land values (Crook et al., 2002; Crook and Whitehead, 2002 and 2004; Calavita, 2006; Calavita and Mallach, 2009). This technique is known as inclusionary housing or inclusionary zoning.

Origin and Development of Inclusionary Housing in the United States

Inclusionary housing, also known as inclusionary zoning, incentive zoning or mixed-income housing programmes, consists basically of establishing a certain percentage of affordable dwellings (for sale or to let) in new residential development projects at prices below market rates, for lower-income households. In 1971 the US County of Fairfax (Virginia) enacted the first inclusionary zoning ordinance (NHCAHPR, 2004). Since then, this technique has been used in numerous other US cities and counties mainly in California (e.g. San Diego, Sacramento and San Francisco) and more recently in major cities such as Boston, Washington, New York and Chicago. It is aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing, particularly in response to the steep increase in the cost of housing in the 2000 to 2007 period (and the consequent affordability crisis), without increasing public spending on housing policy.

It can be mandatory or voluntary for new housing. In both cases there are usually incentives for the developers, such as density bonusing,¹ lowered development fees and fast-tracking permits. In general, the inclusionary percentage in the US (also known as the set-aside percentage) ranges between 10 and 30 per cent of the total new housing, and may include certain regulations on the tenure system of inclusionary housing based on income targeting. Normally, rental units are geared to low-income households, and for-sale units to moderate-income households.

There are a number of aspects that need to be defined in any application of inclusionary housing: the percentage of inclusionary housing to be built, the tenure system, the price and target group, the length of affordability of these dwellings (for sale or to rent), and the alternatives offered to developers, if they later consider that it is best not to build (CAHPL and WCLP, 2002; MHFA, 2002; CCRH and NPHANC, 2003; Institute for Local Self-Government, 2003; SPPRIDA, 2004; NHCAHPR, 2004; Mukhija, 2009).

The length of affordability of these dwellings varies depending on the locality, and may range from only ten years to perpetuity. Alternatives to construction on site also differ depending on the area. The most common is payment of a certain amount of money, known as the in-lieu fee, so as to forego the obligation of having to build such affordable housing. This payment is used to finance other housing programmes, including actions for homeless people such as homelessness assistance, transitional housing or special-needs housing (Calavita et al., 1997, 1998; Brunick, 2007). Other alternatives usually available are: off-site construction, i.e. construction at another location; and land dedication, i.e. handing over to the local government the equivalent in land so that it assumes, directly or indirectly, the construction of such housing. Similarly, the development of housing for more vulnerable groups tends to require additional subsidies in order to be viable, chiefly in sites with strong urban pressure and high land prices (McIlwain, 2003).

Research on the effects of inclusionary zoning in the US show that it contributes to increasing the supply of available housing (Been et al., 2007; NPHANC, 2007; CMAFP, 2008). This contribution is greater when the programme has been implemented for a longer period, when it is mandatory and when it includes measures that make it flexible, such as density bonuses (MHFA, 2002; American Planning Association, 2004; Been et al., 2007; NPHANC, 2007). There is also a certain consensus on the need to diversify the target and the tenure system, by including housing to let for households with very low incomes. Other aspects that the studies highlight include the complexity of these measures and, by extension, the need to

¹ A density bonus is an incentive-based tool that permits developers to increase the maximum allowable development on a property in exchange for helping the community achieve public policy goals.

prepare local governments to implement and manage them correctly, as well as doubts as to the effectiveness, destination and calculation of the in-lieu fees (NPHANC, 2007; Mukhija, 2009).

It is therefore unsurprising that inclusionary housing is advocated by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH, 2003, 2006 and 2007), a non-partisan organisation committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States, and other entities with similar objectives (e.g. BAFAGEH, 2006). Indeed many ten-year plans to end homelessness that have been drawn up since 2002 under the political and economic aegis of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (City of Long Beach, 2005) have included proposals (among other measures) to implement inclusionary zoning programmes in order to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Inclusionary Housing in Canada

Canada does not have a national inclusionary housing policy, so obtaining affordable housing through urban planning is generally limited (Purchase and Smit, 2006; Thibert, 2007; Gurran et al., 2007a, 2007b). However, certain provinces and cities have implemented inclusionary zoning programmes at the local level. Most of these programmes are concentrated in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia. In British Columbia Section 903 of the Local Government Act empowers local authorities to adopt inclusionary zoning policies in cases of rezoning, i.e. when they are planning to make urban zoning changes, and when Section 904 explicitly authorises density bonuses in exchange for a percentage of affordable housing. The city of Vancouver, for example, has since 1988 required that 20 per cent of dwellings in major development projects be affordable (Metro Vancouver, 2007; Tsenkova, 2008).

However, the production of affordable housing through urban planning in Canada has been rather insufficient, and the number of homeless persons has increased at an alarming rate. Faced with this situation, and probably also because of awareness of the US experience, many reports and organisations have called explicitly for more and better distributed mandatory inclusionary housing programmes (City of Toronto, 1999, 2001 and 2003; Poverty Reduction Coalition, 2007; Cowans and MacLennan, 2008; Wellesley Institute, 2008; Snow, 2008; Cormier, 2009).

Inclusionary Housing in Europe

The first European experiments with inclusionary housing date from the 1990s. European programmes tend to differ substantially from their North American counterparts, most likely reflecting the urban planning tradition and regulation of property rights in each country (Calavita, 2006). The later application in Europe, twenty years after its inception in the United States, is due to the fact that, historically, affordable housing in Europe has been generated essentially through direct interventions by the public sector in the financing and production of social housing, and it was not until the European social housing programmes were significantly reduced that the use of inclusionary zoning was considered (Mallach, 1984; Bramley et al., 2004; Calavita, 2006).

England

The regulatory framework in England is the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act and the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act. Under Section 106 of the 1990 Act, local authorities are empowered to require, according to need, either a percentage of affordable housing (for sale or to let) in new urban development projects or in-lieu fees. There is no fixed percentage or pre-established requirement, as the technique is based on negotiations between the local authorities and developers.

After some twenty years of application, a significant proportion of the new supply of affordable housing has been obtained through Section 106 and, in many cases, the availability of additional subsidies (social housing grant) has played a key role in this outcome. Numerous studies have detected problems in negotiations due to the poorer negotiating capacity and market awareness of the local authorities. Furthermore, the number of affordable housing units built was found to be substantially below the forecast figures. The lack of appropriate monitoring of written agreements, deficiencies in the formalisation of agreements and the rather recurrent renegotiations of the terms thereof are some of the reasons that explain this imbalance (Crook and Whitehead, 2000 and 2002; DCLG, 2003; Crook et al., 2006; Gurrán et al., 2007a; Whitehead, 2007; Scanlon and Whitehead, 2007).

Ireland

Part V of Ireland's Planning and Development Act 2000, amended in 2002, requires the local authorities to guarantee that a maximum of 20 per cent of new development projects are intended for affordable housing. Developers have the option to offset this obligation by paying in-lieu fees or providing land or housing units in other locations. Data on the effects of this policy seem to show that its implementation is gradually contributing to an increase in the supply of affordable housing (Norris, 2004 and 2006; Williams, 2005; Gurrán et al., 2007a; Scanlon and Whitehead, 2007).

Spain

The first experiments with inclusionary housing in Spain were undertaken in the mid-1990s. By virtue of their urban planning responsibilities, many autonomous communities revised their legislation to fix a certain percentage of affordable housing in urban development projects. The first were the Basque Country (1994), Navarra (1994) and the Community of Madrid (1995); followed by Castilla La Mancha (1998), Castilla y León (1999), Cantabria (2001), Extremadura (2001) and Catalonia (2002), among others. In spite of the differences between communities, Spanish inclusionary housing adopted the terminology of legal standards for protected housing (or officially protected housing) and consists essentially of fixing a percentage of the new residential housing, or the number of units, that must be affordable. The government fixes the maximum price at which these protected housing units can be sold or let below the market price and provides subsidies for the developer and the buyers alike. Protected housing has historically been the pillar of Spanish social housing programmes, which encourage homeownership through this type of housing.

However, given the shortage of affordable housing in Spain, the growing crisis of economic accessibility to the housing market and the absence of any mandatory percentage of affordable housing in some autonomous communities, the government approved the Land Act in 2007, which stipulates that a minimum of 30 per cent of newly built housing throughout the country must be affordable.

In keeping with the high volume of affordable housing built in application of these standards in those communities with a higher level of requirement and longer regulation period (mainly in the Basque Country, Madrid and Navarra), some autonomous communities have revised their legislation in recent years, increasing the percentage of protected housing to be built and dividing protected housing between moderate-income households (housing at controlled prices) and lower moderate-income households (protected housing). A good example is the Basque Country, where legislation from 1994 had already fixed levels of 65 per cent for new development projects and 20 per cent for urban land operations, raising them to 75 per cent and 40 per cent respectively in 2006.

As regards the target, and despite the fact that protected housing can be for social rent, in many autonomous communities (the Basque Country is again an exception), housing developed according to these standards has been predominantly for sale to moderate- and lower moderate-income households, as the Spanish inclusionary zoning system has scarcely given consideration in its target to the needs of the more vulnerable households.

Another particular feature of the Spanish inclusionary housing system is that it lacks flexibility, as no consideration is given to in-lieu fees, and cases of off-site construction are exceptional (Ponce, 2004; Izquierdo, 2004; Bosch and Gibaja, 2004; Burón, 2006).

Other European inclusionary housing initiatives at local level

In other cases, in the absence of a required national legislative framework for inclusionary zoning, certain European cities, usually by virtue of their urban planning responsibilities, have introduced such zoning in their urban planning regulations. They include Rome and Florence in Italy, the Rotterdam region in the Netherlands, and Munich and Frankfurt in Germany (McIlwain, 2003; Purchase and Smit, 2006; Calavita, 2006; Scanlon and Whitehead, 2007).

Advantages of Inclusionary Housing in the Fight against Homelessness

Putting the needs of homeless people on the urban planning agenda in order to develop sensitive policies such as inclusionary housing has two major advantages: low costs and an improved social mix in the city. Such housing, or where appropriate the plots of land on which to build it, or the in-lieu fees, are obtained at no cost to the authorities, other than the corresponding development and administrative costs (Center for Housing Policy, 2000; MHFA, 2002; Institute for Local Self-Government, 2003; Brunick and Webster, 2003; Brunick, 2007; Been et al., 2007; CMAFP, 2008). They do not entail isolated, occasional operations, but concerted actions for urban development in which the costs of the operations are compensated for by the benefits generated, i.e. by the generation of increments in the value of the land where the non-subsidised housing will be built.

Although this low cost is obvious in new projects, the situation in urban renewal operations is more complex. Such operations usually entail far higher costs such as those for rehousing residents, compensation for related rights, high costs of reurbanisation etc. Often, these higher costs diminish the economic viability of the project to the point of it becoming a loss-making operation, and thus requiring public funding. Nevertheless, there are different urban planning techniques that can minimise the costs relating to urban renewal operations by connecting such costs to the increments in value of the new development projects.

Furthermore, urban planning, through land use regulation, has an impact on the composition of the population of each neighbourhood. Charting housing and urban planning policies together makes it possible to distribute affordable housing, and thus households on low and very low incomes, throughout the city,

thereby avoiding segregation and the concentration of poverty and improving social cohesion. In the European context, the aim of 'social mix' has been generalised in urban policies in one way or another (Minton, 2002; Musterd, 2003; Scanlon and Whitehead, 2007) and has been explicitly enshrined in the legislation of several countries such as the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, Finland and others.

Clearly, urban planning can contribute to the social mix and the decentralisation of poverty (Brown, 2001; Minton, 2002; Institute for Local Self-Government, 2003; Brown et al., 2003; NHCAHPR, 2004; Calavita, 2006), however, the question that now dominates urban planning discussions in Europe and North America is whether social mix really creates social opportunities. According to Andersson and Musterd (2005), 'the relations between housing mix, social mix and social opportunities are insufficiently tested'. A detailed examination of this debate is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is certain that the integration of housing policy with urban planning inevitably calls for decisions on the social composition of the different neighbourhoods of the city, i.e. as to where the affordable housing units will be located and where the socio-economically better-off segments of society are going to live. It can be argued that these decisions should be based on the social mix objective, for the following reasons:

- The possible overestimation of the positive effects of the social mix by comparison with other variables such as the level of education in no way implies that the social mix is something negative.
- There is no evidence that social segregation in general is beneficial; quite the contrary, there is a growing consensus among academics and policy makers that certain concentrations of social housing and poverty have (with time) led to hyper-segregated areas, with high stigmatisation of their residents and, consequently, a strong negative impact on their social opportunities (Minton, 2002; Friedrichs et al., 2003, 2005; Wacquant, 2008; Musterd, 2008).
- Adequate planning of the affordable housing supply for all needy segments of society and in all urban planning actions under the social mix criterion counters the NIMBY ('not in my back yard') neighbourhood reactions against social housing for the most vulnerable households with low, if any, income.

Limitations and Challenges of Inclusionary Housing Implementation

Inclusionary housing is not exempt from technical, legislative and governance-related difficulties that limit its effects. For example, urban planning tools are slow and complex processes, the first results of which do not appear until perhaps three to five years after implementation. Initial investment is needed for urban development and private participation is conditional on the economic situation and prospects for generating a profit. Putting the needs of homeless people on the urban planning agenda and implementing inclusionary housing are complex tasks that demand adequate training of all the actors involved. Further, considerable economic, political and social coordination is required.

In relation to legislative development, each country's use of inclusionary housing will depend, as can be expected, on such variables as urban planning traditions, the regulation of property rights and how social goals are included in the urban planning legal framework. Furthermore, it is important to understand that the extent of the diversity of existing planning systems entails that the implementation of inclusionary housing must adapt in each context, bearing in mind factors such as the welfare regime, the political and governmental system, the housing system and the nature and scale of the homelessness problem.

Based on the analysis of international experiences, a number of generic recommendations on how to improve the implementation of inclusionary housing programmes can be made:

- The main requirement for the development of inclusionary housing is the existence of an adequate legal framework. In order to guarantee its application in the entire territory, minimise the intrinsic difficulties between local authorities and developers, achieve greater transparency and fairness between the different national urban areas and develop the highest number of social housing units possible, this legal framework should be enacted at the national level and be mandatory for all municipalities.
- The regulation of the basic parameters of inclusionary zoning (set-aside, targets etc.) should be based on rigorous studies of current and future needs for affordable housing in the short, medium and long terms. The legislative framework should stipulate these parameters according to the objectives and needs at the national level, while studies at the local and metropolitan level should make it possible to adjust them in accordance with the particular features of each urban area. The availability of land that can be used for urban development on the

residential market and the socio-economic characteristics of its population are some of the key aspects to be considered in the development of affordable housing supply at the local level.

- To overcome the dependence on the private sector, urban planning legislation should include mechanisms to promote new urban development and renewal operations, and consequently new affordable housing, despite the lack of interest of landowners and private developers in times of crisis. These urban planning tools should logically be complemented with the corresponding public resources to cover the initial investment needed for the development. However, this cost would be recovered later through planning gains or increments in land values. This is often the function of public sector companies with responsibility for urban planning and housing policy at the local, regional or national level.
- Part of the success of inclusionary housing depends on its coordination with national, regional and local urban planning policies, and with plans for housing and the eradication of homelessness at every government level. Such coordination must not only cover the political-legislative and budgetary issues (e.g. the forecast of the public subsidies needed for the effective development of social housing for lower income households in certain urban areas), but also extend to the management and monitoring of the results.
- The affordable housing developed within the inclusionary zoning programme must be segmented for the different levels of income of households excluded from the residential market, including homeless people, and, in accordance with these segments, must consider both housing for sale to households with lower-moderate incomes and social rented housing for households with very low incomes or even for households temporarily without income.
- The introduction of a certain flexibility in inclusionary zoning regulations (e.g. in-lieu fees or off-site construction) may have positive effects, but also entails a risk to achieving the desired social mix and to the volume of social housing units actually built, as well as the opening of complicated negotiations between local authorities and developers. To that end, such options should be limited beforehand under the required premise that a certain minimum percentage of affordable housing must be exempt from such flexibility, and thus outside any negotiations or economic conversions.
- The debate on the length of affordability of housing obtained through the inclusionary programme boils down to a discussion as to who will appropriate the increments in value generated and in part materialised in the housing and

when they will appropriate them. Given the scarcity of affordable housing, and considering that it is a public good, it would be most appropriate to consider its affordability for perpetuity.

- Inclusionary housing, in each of its possible variants, entails technical difficulties that cannot be overlooked. Putting the needs of homeless people on the urban planning agenda is not an easy task and appropriate training for all actors involved – especially local government staff (Institute for Local Self-Government, 2003) but also town planners, policy makers and property developers – is essential for the proper application and development of these policies.

Inclusionary housing is essentially about recovering, for social purposes (affordable housing), the increments in value generated from the development of urban land. Therefore, it should not be so demanding as to discourage private investment. Furthermore, it is worth bearing in mind that its implementation will always be opposed by private developers and other economic agents and related lobbies because it ultimately reduces their profits.

Conclusion

Homelessness is a complex problem involving much more than a shortage of affordable housing. There is a wide range of other contributing factors such as economic, employment, psychological, relational and institutional crises, low levels of social protection, the breakdown of the family and loss of friends, family and social networks etc. However, a sufficient supply of affordable housing, although not the solution to the problem, is an absolutely vital requirement for preventing, tackling and minimising the problem of homelessness, particularly in weak welfare states with low levels of affordable housing and a large homeless population.

Urban planning, like every public function, must consider the social needs of all the inhabitants of the city, including homeless people. A more sensitive and inclusive urban planning process can contribute to the fight against homelessness in three different ways:

- An adequate supply of land for the construction of public facilities may help to alleviate the deficit of services for homeless persons.
- Urban regeneration and renewal operations can ostensibly reduce the number of people housed in unsuitable accommodation.
- Above all, the development of inclusionary zoning programmes can ensure a sufficient supply of affordable housing.

Inclusionary housing is an urban planning tool that attempts to fulfil two objectives: to create affordable housing and to remove affordability barriers in communities with a low supply of affordable housing as a result of exclusionary policies. The basic approach to this technique is the requirement that a certain percentage of new housing units in new residential developments or renewal operations be affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Its main advantages lie in the low public expenditure it entails and in its capacity to improve the social mix in the city.

Although the number of European countries that have introduced inclusionary housing or similar techniques in their urban regulations increased in recent years, the fact remains that this technique is still not very developed in Europe. In the current social and economic context, marked by a shortage of affordable housing and an economic downturn, a greater use of inclusionary zoning could help reduce homelessness. Arguably, this is particularly true of those states with weaker welfare and housing systems such as the Southern European countries and the newer Central/Eastern European Union member states.

However, inclusionary housing does present technical, legislative and governance-related difficulties and putting the needs of homeless people on the urban planning agenda is not an easy task. Urban planning tools are slow and complex processes. Initial investment is needed and private participation is conditional on the economic situation and profit prospects, which means that additional subsidies are usually required for the effective development of housing for low-income households. But it is the contention of this paper that these obstacles can be overcome. An adequate legal framework, an appropriate definition of its basic parameters based on rigorous studies of needs, implementing coordination mechanisms between the different government levels and agencies involved, adequate training of all the actors involved, and planning the needed public funding to boost new urban developments with inclusionary housing in case of lack of private sector interest are key aspects for a successful implementation.

It is worth adding that further research is needed to improve the knowledge, efficacy and efficiency of inclusionary housing instruments in the fight against homelessness. For example, little is known about: the impacts of inclusionary housing as a preventive tool; the management of housing stock for homeless people obtained through inclusionary zoning; the coordination at the local level between social and health services and urban planning departments; and how the key aspects of inclusionary zoning (tenure system, price and target, the length of affordability etc.) can be defined in each case. Whilst it would currently be difficult to undertake such research because homeless people are rarely included among target households, there would be substantial value in homelessness researchers and policy makers arguing for the incorporation, and evaluation, of a specific focus on homelessness in future developments of inclusionary housing.

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Policy Evaluation



Part B

The Finnish Homelessness Strategy : From a 'Staircase' Model to a 'Housing First' Approach to Tackling Long-Term Homelessness

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› **Abstract_** *This paper reviews the Finnish government's recently established Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness, which is attempting to halve long-term homelessness over the period 2008 to 2011. It outlines the current homeless situation in Finland and describes the development of the present system of provision. Despite change over time, the emphasis has tended to remain on the 'staircase' model of provision for long-term homeless people, common across Nordic countries, which requires people to demonstrate an ability to move from one level of accommodation to another by addressing lifestyle issues, particularly problematic alcohol use. In contrast, the new programme focuses firmly on the extension of 'housing first' principles, already in use for some groups, to homeless people with high levels of support needs. We argue that this emphasis is to be welcomed but that there is a need for a more detailed analysis of the elements required in successful 'housing first' solutions.*

› **Keywords_** *Long-term homelessness; homeless strategy; the staircase model; housing first; support services.*

¹ This paper has been co-authored by an independent academic and a Ministry of Environment representative who was involved in the development of the programme. As such, it incorporates both 'insider' and 'external' perspectives on the new strategy.

Introduction

In February 2008 the Finnish government approved a Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness with the central objective of halving long-term homelessness over the period 2008 to 2011. The programme is based on a report by a special working group involving key actors in the field, established in October 2007 by the Ministry of the Environment and charged with the task of designing a programme of activities. This working group was informed by a report written by a group of 'wise people' appointed by the ministry.

As will be detailed below, the new programme utilises a comprehensive partnership approach to develop a range of provisions for people experiencing long-term homelessness in ten cities across Finland and to improve preventive homeless services. Importantly, the programme represents a significant shift in Finland's approach to long-term homelessness by drawing on 'housing first' principles. Although such an approach was already being utilised for some parts of the homeless population, until this point, the prevalent view amongst key players in the homeless sector was that the rehabilitation of a service user should be envisaged as a series of stages (staircase model), where a permanent home is something of a 'reward', earned via positive behavioural changes on the part of the homeless person. In contrast, provisions based on the housing first principle view appropriate accommodation as the starting point and as a prerequisite for solving other social and health problems (see Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008, for an overview of 'housing first' approaches).

This paper reviews the movement from the staircase model towards a housing first approach in Finland's attempts to tackle long-term homelessness. It begins by outlining the nature and extent of homelessness in Finland, before moving on to describe the existing pattern of services. The paper then examines the new programme in some detail and evaluates the likely successes and challenges of this approach to addressing long-term homelessness.

The Context: Homelessness in Finland

Homelessness in Finland has fallen dramatically in the past twenty years. In the mid-1980s the number of homeless people was estimated at around 20,000, but by the end of 2008 it was approximately 8,000 individuals and 300 homeless families (see Table 1). These figures indicate the success of recent programmes to reduce homelessness, although a slight increase in homelessness is evident since 2006. The data suggest that the typical homeless person is someone over the age of twenty-five, who is on his or her own, poor, an urban dweller, a native Finn and staying with friends temporarily. Despite the overall reduction in homelessness, the

measures are not believed to have helped the 'long-term' homeless, who, according to reports and estimates by local authorities, account for up to 45 per cent of homeless people on their own (about 3,600 individuals).

Table 1: The extent of homelessness in Finland, 1987–2008

Year	Outdoors/ shelters	Institutions	Relatives/ acquaintances	Single	Families
1987	4,700	4,760	7,650	17,110	1,370
1988	4,400	4,000	7,600	16,000	1,200
1989	4,170	4,400	7,620	16,190	870
1990	3,610	3,690	7,950	15,250	800
1991	3,370	3,340	7,390	14,100	700
1992	3,030	3,030	6,820	12,880	570
1993	2,560	2,410	6,700	11,670	250
1994	1,760	2,170	6,630	10,560	380
1995	1,710	2,110	6,610	10,430	560
1996	1,720	2,110	5,780	9,610	360
1997	1,720	2,450	5,650	9,820	600
1998	1,770	2,350	5,870	9,990	820
1999	1,750	2,390	5,850	9,990	780
2000	1,790	2,420	5,790	10,000	780
2001	2,160	2,080	5,720	10,000	780
2002	2,060	2,080	5,420	9,560	770
2003	1,990	1,640	4,560	8,190	420
2004	1,910	1,550	4,190	7,650	360
2005	1,620	1,560	4,250	7,430	360
2006	1,650	1,570	4,180	7,400	300
2007	1,480	1,590	4,460	7,530	300
2008	1,520	1,640	4,800	7,960	300

Source: ARA, The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, Housing market surveys.

Long-term homeless people – people whose state of homelessness is classed as prolonged, or threatens to be that way, for social or health reasons – make up the 'hard core' of homelessness. People are classed as long-term homeless in Finland if their homelessness has lasted at least a year or they have been homeless several times in the past three years. Such individuals commonly suffer from serious social and health problems, particularly those relating to substance abuse and mental health, and are consequently deemed to be in need of services and support if they are to be successfully housed.

The Development of the Present System of Services for Homeless People

In the 1960s homelessness was mainly associated with alcoholism and unemployment, and a broad range of housing solutions related to social care was developed to meet the needs of such persons. These included nursing and care homes, temporary residential homes and night shelters. Since then shelter accommodation and housing services under the Finnish Social Welfare Act have functioned in parallel, overlapping and complementing one another. Throughout, shelter accommodation has mainly been developed by faith-based organisations and other charitable bodies. However, the number of shelter places has declined significantly in the last four decades. For example, in 1970 there were 3,665 such places in Helsinki, but this had reduced to only 558 by 2008 (Fredriksson, 2009). This downward trend in shelter provision, combined with the lack of substitute housing solutions, has meant that there is often an unmet need for such provision, especially during harsh winters. Seasonal emergency accommodation has therefore often had to be put into place, for example over the winter of 2005/6.

The present system was largely built during a process of change that began in the late 1980s. The elimination of homelessness was made a government programme objective for the first time for the period 1987 to 1991. Special measures established to reduce homelessness operated alongside existing housing and social policy instruments. Cooperation was enhanced between the housing, social welfare and health authorities and services for the homeless started to be seen as a core part of a local authority's services (Kärkkäinen et al., 1998, pp.17–24.) For example, the social services for the homeless in Helsinki were centralised at one social services office.

In many respects the principal innovation, and one that has effectively prevented social segregation, has been decentralised supported accommodation for homeless people in rented accommodation acquired from private owner-occupied housing companies. The Y Foundation,² established in 1985, and other similar organisations let small flats to local authority social services, which re-let them to those in need of accommodation. Establishing a stock of supported accommodation and small flats – around 30,000 apartments in 2009 – would not have been possible without public sector financial assistance.

² The Y-Foundation was founded to help people who have difficulties finding a home. The founding bodies were the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities; the Cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere and Turku; the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland; the Finnish Red Cross; Oy Alko Ab; the Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries RT; the Finnish Construction Trade Union; and the Finnish Association for Mental Health. The main focus is on urban centers that are growing rapidly.

The sector has seen the emergence of a significant number of new actors and service providers in the past twenty years or so and new service concepts have come into being. The Act on the Development of Housing Conditions of 1985 obliged local authorities to ensure that measures were targeted particularly at improving housing conditions for homeless people and those living in unsatisfactory circumstances. A common definition of homelessness and the establishment of the Housing Fund of Finland, together with the work of the local authorities, created a monitoring system for homelessness based on data collected every year. In 1995 a new section was added to the Constitution of Finland stating that it is the task of public authorities to promote the right of everyone to housing and to the opportunity to arrange their own housing.

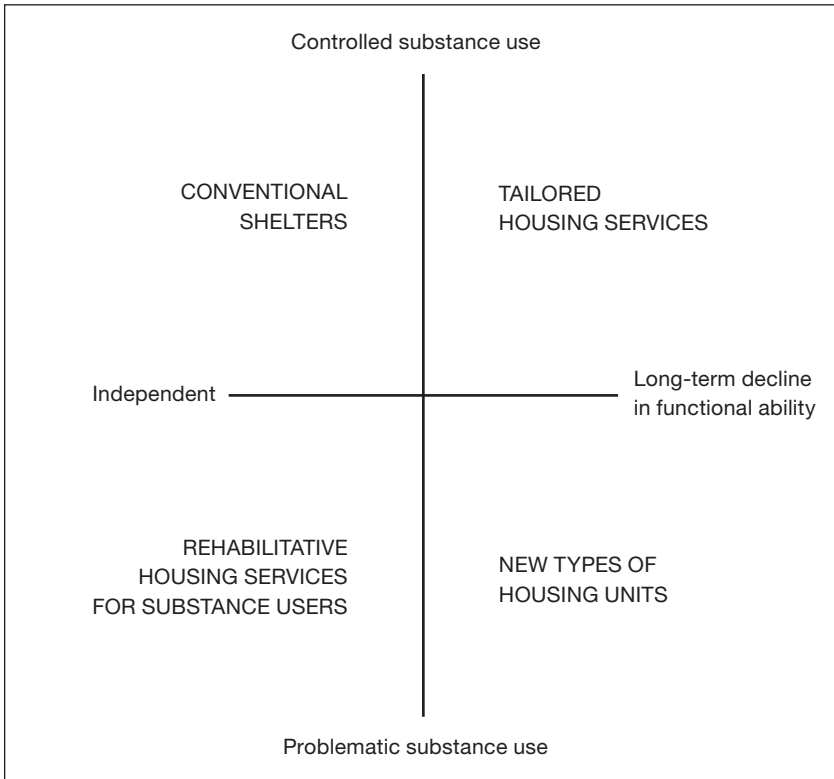
The 'staircase' approach

Clearly there has been considerable development and change in the provision of services to homeless persons over the last thirty years. However, the data suggest that the present system has been less successful in meeting the needs of homeless people with multiple problems, particularly in helping them out of homelessness. The system that has traditionally catered for homeless people in Finland has been based predominately on a staircase approach, providing accommodation in a series of stages. The social welfare system for housing the homeless is structured around a housing model where homeless service users demonstrate their ability to move from one level of accommodation to another, either as part of the rehabilitation process or by acting in accordance with the targets that have been jointly laid down. It is based on legislation and the end goal is independent living. This gradual approach has been universally applied throughout the Nordic countries, especially in Sweden (Löfstrand, 2003).

Some studies suggest that a high proportion of long-term homeless people have problems with alcohol and/or other drugs (Särkelä, 1993). Some of these chronic substance users need and could benefit from available care services, but studies show that they tend not to avail of the current substance abuse care or other available medical/care services. The system of substance abuse care services has become one where homeless substance abusers with multiple problems are expected to demonstrate certain forms of behaviour, such as abstinence, when they seek care. The services, furthermore, are becoming more difficult to obtain without an appointment or if an individual is intoxicated (Nuorvala et al., 2007). Under the existing system, life's other basic needs can therefore only come into play when the substance abuse spiral is broken in some way, either by institutional care or the person's own determination (Nuorvala, 1999; Törmä and Huotari, 2005; Forssen, 2005).

The way the present system of housing services relates to the problems of long-term homelessness can be seen in Figure 1, which locates housing units in a matrix according to how they view substance use and how they are able to respond to a temporary or permanent decline in the functional ability of residents. Although many long-term homeless persons have reduced functional ability and they would be entitled to make use of tailored housing services, problematic substance use is often a barrier to these services. In housing services relating to substance abuse care, problematic substance use signals a need for such care, which then can be addressed. However, there are major shortcomings associated with most rehabilitation and housing in connection with substance abuse care when it comes to working with service users with cognitively and physically reduced functional ability.

Figure 1: Accommodation of homeless people and present system of services



Source: Tainio, 2008, SOCCA. The Centre of Expertise on Social Welfare in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area

Conventional shelters, the first of the four types of services, have mainly responded to the housing needs of homeless people who are independent and whose use of intoxicants is deemed by service providers to be under control. Under the Programme to Reduce Homelessness (see below), these shelters are having basic improvements carried out to convert them into supported accommodation units. In future they will only provide rented accommodation or a housing service referred to in the Social Welfare Act.

Tailored housing services target those homeless people whose functional ability has declined temporarily or permanently. The service involves the use of motivated, trained staff and is based on small unit sizes. The general rule with these units is that substance use must be controlled. The tailored services are intended for a precisely demarcated target group, entailing a selection mechanism with the purpose of choosing the right service user for the right location at the right time (and therefore excluding other potential service users).

Rehabilitative housing services for substance users are either reception centres from which service users are referred for detoxification or institutional rehabilitation, or units for continued care and treatment following institutional rehabilitation. A number of long-term service users whose use of intoxicants has reached chronic proportions have settled into reception centres. Restricted cognitive or physical abilities make it difficult for the service users to access rehabilitative services in connection with substance abuse care. It is also difficult for those with disabilities to find a care or housing service unit offering substance abuse care because accommodation is often not accessible for people who use wheelchairs or have severe mobility problems (Nuorvala et al., 2007).

Towards the end of the 1990s there was an attempt to solve the problem of service users who were difficult to house by establishing new types of housing units, the fourth category in Figure 1. This was the first time that accommodation was developed on the housing first principle, without insisting that service users are intoxicant-free. The residents tend to be the most excluded/marginalised in society, in poor health (physically and mentally) and difficult to house because of their lifestyle or for other reasons. The new housing units are no different from conventional solutions in terms of their physical settings or the size of their staff, but there is a clear difference in the qualifications of staff, who all hold at least a school or college vocational qualification in social and health care. The early results of this new type of housing are mixed. The most successful have been the smaller units (twenty to thirty service users) for older homeless people who have used alcohol for a long time, where there is a high staff–resident ratio, a broad range of professional skills and the work with the service users is based on close interaction. The results have been more inconsistent in the units for younger

homeless people, who often have more diverse backgrounds, are less motivated and move around more from place to place; these units have also tended to be larger in size with a lower staff–resident ratio.

The experience of the present system indicates that a staircase approach to homeless services can work well with those who have opted for substance abuse rehabilitation and can cope with shared housing. However, the insistence on service users being intoxicant-free and able to take control of their life has proven to be an insuperable barrier for many homeless people with multiple problems. They face immense difficulties finding the motivation to receive care or change their lifestyles and need considerable support with everyday life (Granfelt, 2003; Pitkänen and Kaakinen, 2004).

The New Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness

The full detail of the new Programme to Reduce Long-term Homelessness is provided in the Appendix. Under the programme, over the period 2008 to 2011, a total of 1,250 housing units, supported housing units or places in care are being allocated to the long-term homeless in the ten cities included in the scheme. The programme's implementation is based on letters of intent jointly drawn up by the state authorities and the ten largest cities where there is a problem of homelessness. These contain concrete plans for projects during the programme period.

The programme is by nature a broad partnership agreement. Responsibility for financing the programme is shared between the state and the local authorities, with each generally contributing 50 per cent. The state has set aside €80 million in structural investment for the programme and €10.3 million for the hire of support personnel. Furthermore, the Finnish Slot Machine Association³ has set aside €18 million as financial assistance for basic renovations for shelters and for converting them into supported accommodation units. The programme also includes a broad development project to arrange supported accommodation for recently released prisoners and for the prevention of homelessness among the young. Its other objective is to prevent evictions, for example by developing and expanding housing advisory services.

³ Raha-automaattiyhdistys (Slot Machine Association), which is generally referred to as RAY, was established in 1938 to raise funds through gaming operations to support Finnish health and welfare organisations. RAY has an exclusive right in Finland to operate slot machines and casino table games, and to run a casino. In 2008 RAY's revenue was €659.5 million. Of this figure, health and welfare organisations will receive a total of €302.5 million in funding grants.

Extending and developing the housing first approach

The government statement accompanying the new programme asserts:

The programme is structured around the 'Housing First' principle. Solutions to social and health problems cannot be a condition for organising accommodation: on the contrary, accommodation is a requirement which also allows other problems of people who have been homeless to be solved. Having somewhere to live makes it possible to strengthen life management skills and is conducive to purposeful activity.

With regard to the housing first principle, most studies examine experiences in the United States (e.g. the Pathways to Housing project in New York) rather than in Europe. Also, it is difficult to draw any general conclusions regarding the results because the housing first concept has spawned projects that differ from one another greatly in the range of problems associated with the client base, the ownership of the housing stock, the organisation of services and the size and skills of staff (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008).

The basic idea behind the housing first concept, as developed in Finland, is the provision of a housing package where accommodation and services can be organised according to the individual's needs and abilities and social welfare and health requirements. A person is allocated independent accommodation – a 'home' – and services that differ in their intensity are established around this. Services are implemented via partnership working between the accommodation provider and public social and health services. Important aspects of this concept include community living and civic participation. The main elements of the Finish approach are:

- Providing secure permanent accommodation with a tenancy agreement.
- Reducing the use of conventional shelters and converting them into supported, rented accommodation units.
- Preventing evictions by means of housing advice services and financial support.
- Drafting plans for individual rehabilitation and services.
- Offering guidance on the use of normal social welfare and health services.
- Encouraging civil action: greater initiative, peer support and community building.

One's own home and privacy

Each resident/family has their own flat, with a combined living room/kitchen, a bedroom and adequate storage space. The units offer residents a home according to their abilities and their needs for services, which may change over time. Former homeless persons are allowed to continue to use intoxicants in their home, although this it is not permitted in common areas and in the yard or garden.

Conversion of shelters

Although shelter accommodation is essentially supposed to be temporary, for many homeless people it has become a long-term placement. Under the programme, the use of such accommodation to house the long-term homeless will be phased out and replaced with housing units that promote independent, supported and supervised living. For example, plans have been drawn up for basic renovations and functional conversions of all shelters in Helsinki. The scheme is a collaboration between the city and the organisations that maintain the shelters. After the renovations have been carried out, the number of places in the shelters will halve. By then the shelters will have become units of improved supported accommodation with a very different function. In the main, the accommodation will be based on a long-term tenancy agreement or a care agreement. The arrangements will not be temporary or fixed term, where, once the resident has been through a programme of rehabilitation, he or she would have to move into some other form of accommodation. Neither will residents be expected to commit to any rehabilitation targets, although the aim is to provide them with as much support as possible. All the same, living in improved supported accommodation offers a far better chance of service user rehabilitation than would be the case with shelters.

Housing advice and the prevention of eviction

The housing advisory service attempts to preserve existing living arrangements by responding rapidly to any tenancy problems that arise. There are two main objectives of this service: to cut the number of problems experienced with rent arrears and, hence, the number of evictions; and to reduce the extent to which residents disturb others and, as a consequence, to improve relationships between neighbours. The service has already reduced the number of evictions, the incidence of rent arrears and problems relating to accommodation and general living (Asumisneuvonta – asukkaan ja asuinyhteisön tukena, 2003).

The housing advisory service has also proven to be cost-effective. The biggest saving is in social and health costs because the service has resulted in less frequent use of emergency accommodation (e.g. for evicted families with children), less need for institutional care among older service users and those with mental problems, and less homelessness among those with substance abuse problems.

Furthermore, social housing corporations have also made huge savings as evictions cost them money (in repairs and renovations, lost rent and the upkeep of flats and common areas).

The housing advisory service is a new area of work for the property and social services sectors, however, early assessments suggest that it has a clear role in the system, particularly as the growing financial difficulties of local authorities and the lack of resources in social services exclude those who need help. Moreover, property and maintenance companies are unable to respond to the ever-increasing number of social problems (Asumisneuvonta – asukkaan ja asuinyhteisön tukena, 2003.).

Individual support, care and rehabilitation service

The primary objective of the individual support, care and rehabilitation service is to address a resident's problematic behaviour, including his or her substance misuse and/or antisocial behaviour. Giving up substance use is not a prerequisite for access to accommodation or the organisation of support, however, residents are actively encouraged to reduce or end substance use if they are willing.

The basic principle is that residents should be treated humanely, their basic needs should be catered for, they should receive nutritious food on a daily basis, they should be able to rest and their underlying conditions should be treated. When their basic needs are satisfied, experience shows that substance use and other problematic behaviour declines. A decline in substance use already constitutes rehabilitation. Residents are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and act as fully competent members of the community. Rehabilitation takes place with reference to a written rehabilitation and service plan drawn up with the resident. Its implementation is assessed and monitored together with the resident and his or her institutional/social network.

Guidance in the use of mainstream social welfare and health services

The basic principle behind the service concept is that it responds to a resident's individual need for services and reacts flexibly when these needs change. The service provider's staff maintains a range of services (the 'service tray') according to the needs of the residents. This includes the service provider's own services, public social welfare and health services, and, if necessary, the services of other actors. For the concept to succeed, partnership working is required – the 'service tray' must be jointly agreed beforehand and the partners must coordinate services.

The concept strives for the least complex model, where the main role of staff is to provide housing-related support and guidance on the use of mainstream services. The aim is for the housing unit to integrate flexibly with the public system of services and for the residents to receive the services they need at the right time and cost-

effectively. Each resident deals with an appointed social worker, who is involved in the planning of the individual's rehabilitation programme and in determining the level of services he or she receives.

As a general rule, residents use public health care services. It is the job of the housing unit's staff to guide and support residents to ensure that the services are used successfully and at the right time. Residents see to their own needs at their own health centre, if necessary they may be accompanied by staff. The units also provide care services equivalent to those found in service accommodation for residents in need of medical care on a daily basis and for those with disabilities.

Civil action : Taking responsibility, peer support and building communities

The essence of civil action is the participation of service users in their life and wider community. Staff employed in these units occupy the role of 'life-coach' as they encourage residents to become more actively involved, take the initiative more and assume greater responsibility in everyday life. Staff are trained in community coaching and community strengthening methodologies. Another core value in civil action is peer support. Part of the process where residents take responsibility involves coaching each other, and staff promote the establishment of such peer support. A third aspect of civil action involves outside volunteer support. Volunteers are mainly recruited for their particular skills and expertise in project-like recreational and creative activities, for example in cookery, music, art or sports/physical exercise. Art and culture can aid community living among residents and staff and contribute to community building.

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the shift in Finland's approach to long-term homelessness from one where homeless people had to work their way 'up' or through a series of stages to gain accommodation, to the present emphasis on the provision of suitable accommodation at the outset accompanied by appropriate tailored support services along with access to mainstream health and welfare services. Some limited research evidence in Finland, along with international evidence, suggests that this new approach is likely to be more successful in meeting the needs of people who have been homeless for a long time. Nonetheless, it has been pointed out that the housing first approach remains poorly understood at the European level and that different methods have been utilised in attempts to transfer this policy to new countries.

We argue that this change in emphasis is to be welcomed but that there is a need for a more detailed analysis of the elements that are required in successful housing first solutions. We need more evidence on housing packages, where accommodation and support can be organised according to an individual's needs and abilities, on effective ways of integrating mainstream social welfare and health services, and on the wider impacts in terms of community building. The Finish Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness will run to 2011 and will hopefully provide the European community with useful evidence on this approach.

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› Appendix

Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness

On 14 February 2008 the government took the following decision regarding a Government Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness in the period 2008 to 2011 and decided on the implementation of measures under the programme.

Introduction

Key housing policies are to be decided in a housing policy action programme during the government's term of office under Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's second cabinet's government programme. A programme to reduce long-term homelessness is to be drawn up as part of this housing policy programme for the period 2008 to 2011.

Objectives of the programme

The objective of the government's housing policy is to reconcile people's housing needs and wishes with the needs of society and sustainable development. The government is proposing a solution to ensure that housing meets everyone's needs and requirements.

Long-term homeless people constitute a group of homeless persons whose homelessness is classed as prolonged or chronic, or threatens to be that way because conventional housing solutions fail with this group and there is an inadequate supply of solutions which meet individual needs.

It has been estimated that around one-third of homeless people are long-term homeless persons, i.e. approximately 2,500, of whom 2,000 or so live in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Because of all the reasons there are for long-term homelessness, if it is to be cut there need to be simultaneous measures at different levels, i.e. the prevention of homelessness and targeted action to reduce long-term homelessness.

The programme's objectives are:

- To halve long-term homelessness by 2011.
- More effective measures to prevent homelessness.

Measures

A. Targeted action to reduce long-term homelessness

1. To make it possible by 2011 to allocate around 1,000 homes, subsidised housing units or places in care to the long-term homeless in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, of which 750 for Helsinki, and 125 for both Espoo and Vantaa. The goal for Tampere, Turku, Lahti, Kuopio, Joensuu, Oulu and

Jyväskylä is to allocate a total of 150 homes, subsidised housing units or places in care by the same year.

2. The cities involved in implementing the programme to draw up plans of execution for reducing long-term homelessness. The plans to specify the need for housing solutions and support and preventive action and to identify and schedule projects and other measures. The plans should cover use of the stock of social rented accommodation to assist the homeless. The cities to produce their plans by 31 March 2008. After that letters of intent to be drawn up between the government and the cities. The letter of intent to specify the contribution the state makes to funding. Letters of intent to be drawn up by 30 May 2008.
3. Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland to allocate investment grants for groups with special needs in respect of projects approved under the programme. Grants to be allocated during the period 2008 to 2011 at a maximum of €20 million per annum.
4. Use of residential homes as referred to in the Finnish Act on Accommodation and Catering (2006/308) for long-term housing of the homeless gradually to be abandoned in favour of residential units which allow for independent, subsidised and supervised living.
5. The Finnish Slot Machine Association to be involved in implementing the programme by allocating investment grants to eligible associations, organisations or foundations responsible for residential homes, for basic renovation work and for converting them unto subsidised housing units. The Slot Machine Association to set aside approximately €18 million used with discretion in assistance for suitable projects under the programme in the period 2008 to 2011 with reference to an annual appropriation. The Association to determine on a case-by-case basis the maximum amounts approved for projects receiving grants and approve the targets for its funds as appropriate.
6. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to finance the production of support services for new serviced accommodation units under the programme. The money to go on increases in personnel needed to produce such services, enabling the implementation of approved programme projects. This to be done in such a way that projects undertaken as the cities' own or outsourced services receive state funds to the tune of 50 per cent of these salary costs.
7. In the period 2009 to 2011 the Finnish Slot Machine Association to support, through a system of operational and development grants, organisations which develop and arrange subsidised accommodation for clients of the probation service. In addition, with reference to an annual appropriation and taking account of the funds available in a tentative assistance plan for procuring

accommodation for special needs groups, €2.5 million of the whole amount for 2009 to 2011 may be spent specifically in the procurement of subsidised housing for recently released prisoners.

8. The Criminal Sanctions Agency, in collaboration with the cities involved in the programme and the organisations producing housing services, to undertake a development project to produce viable local and client-specific practices for the subsidised housing of homeless prisoners. The local authorities involved in this development project to be responsible for organising accommodation and support services, and the Criminal Sanctions Agency to contribute to the coordination of the project and offer expertise in the area of criminal sanctions. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Environment to be jointly responsible for implementing the project.

B. Prevention of homelessness

9. A Young People's Subsidised Housing project run by the state, the cities, the Church, businesses and organisations to be started to prevent homelessness among the young.
10. National guidelines and development regarding the prevention of homelessness and advice on better housing conditions to be among the tasks of the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland in 2008.
11. State funds to be granted to local authority housing advisory services in council estates by launching a programme for estates in the period 2009 to 2011. The local authority must have practices jointly agreed by the social services and housing actors in place to prevent eviction and to help them cooperate in eviction situations.
12. The Ministry of the Environment, Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES), the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Tampere to hold a national concept competition in 2007 to establish new types of accommodation unit and services for the long-term homeless. The cities to reserve the necessary construction sites and/or properties for the competition. The Ministry of the Environment to have overall responsibility for the project. The competition to be co-financed by the state and the local authorities.

The Development of a National Homeless Strategy in Poland : Achievements and Challenges

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› **Abstract_** *While several Western European countries have national homeless strategies in place, to date, no Central European country has fully adopted such a strategy. Poland has been developing a strategy on homelessness since 2008 but only a draft version has been produced so far and the publication date of the final strategy is not available. This paper explores the policy-making process in Poland and highlights challenges that make the effective adoption of a national homeless strategy more difficult than it is in Western countries. It reviews the drafting stages of the strategy in detail and contrasts this experience with other national developments, including local strategies, on homelessness. The paper identifies a number of learning points that would help the development of future strategies, including greater transparency, a broader involvement of stakeholders and a heightened role for NGOs (as well as the media and researchers) as advocates of a national homeless strategy.*

› **Key Words_** *Homeless strategy ; policy formation ; Poland ; homelessness.*

Introduction

In the last decade, and particularly over the last five years, there has been a trend for European countries to develop and adopt a national strategy on homelessness. Some of the earliest documents appeared in the United Kingdom, with a new Scottish strategy (and accompanying legislation) developed in 2001, followed by England (2002 and 2005), Wales (2006) and Northern Ireland (2007) (Benjaminsen

et al., 2009). Other countries developed strategies in the mid-2000s, including Norway (2005), Netherlands (2006), Sweden (2007) and France (2007). Most recently, Finland (2008; see Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009), Denmark (2009 – completing the Nordic countries; see Benjaminsen et al., 2009) and Portugal (2009 – the first Southern European country; see Baptista, 2009) adopted strategies.

The creation and adoption of a national strategy requires each country to undergo a policy-making process that involves: placing the issue of homelessness on the political agenda, engaging a range of stakeholders or actors in developing and testing the strategy, publishing the strategy document and putting measures in place to ensure its delivery and effective monitoring. National strategies require a strong government lead at the centre, but also rely on effective network governance (Klijn, 2008) involving complex interactions (and possibly, though not necessarily, negotiations) with a network of governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Whilst most Western European countries have national homeless strategies in place (although not all; only one region of Germany, for example, has one in place),¹ to date, no Central or Eastern European country has fully adopted a strategy. Many post-communist countries are yet to place the idea of a homeless strategy on the political agenda (Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania). Two countries (Hungary and Poland) have attempted to develop a strategy but both are struggling to complete this process. It is difficult to elaborate on the situation in these countries as there are very few resources available to researchers. However, both countries enjoy good access to European resources and networks – such as FEANTSA – which promote exchange of information on the most recent solutions towards homelessness and housing problems. They also enjoy access to relevant funding and good practices in service provision have been successfully transferred in the past (Wygnańska, 2008). Nevertheless, such policy transfer does not seem to be happening with regard to the development of comprehensive national homeless policies.

Using Poland as a case study, this paper explores the reasons for this situation. Is there a link between lack of a strategy or difficulties in the process of drafting it and the post-socialist tradition of undemocratic policy-making procedures? What are the challenges that might be preventing the effective transfer of appropriate mechanisms for the design and adoption of a strategy? In order to begin exploring these questions, the paper provides an overview of the policy-making process in Poland that informs current homeless service provision and development, including a description of the main stakeholders in the homelessness arena. It then reviews the attempts by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to design a national homeless

¹ See www.feantsa.org/code/en/pg.asp?Page=1169 for a list of published strategies.

strategy in 2008 (renamed the ‘National Programme for Reducing Homelessness and Developing Social Housing’ in 2009). The paper contrasts this experience with the development of other high-priority national initiatives on homelessness and the adoption of local-level homeless strategies. Finally, it discusses the challenges observed in the policy-making process in the design of a national strategy and identifies learning points that need to be addressed to aid the development of Polish policy on homelessness.

Policy Formation

In Poland, as in other post-communist countries of Central Europe, state activity in the field of homelessness started to develop after the transition of the late twentieth century (Policy Reviews, 2005, 2006). The existence of people without any place to live was officially acknowledged, services started to be established and NGOs gained capacity. Legislative changes were introduced, such as regulations on social welfare and the division of public tasks between tiers of government (which assigned the responsibility for homelessness to the lowest level of local government, the *gminas*); these reforms were common within countries of the post-Soviet bloc (Filipovič Hrast et al., 2009). Groups started to specialise in running homeless services, and shared their grass-roots expertise with others. New public departments to address the problem were established and private foundation and European institution funding programmes were introduced.

However, after twenty years of development, Poland does not have a comprehensive policy on homelessness. Rather, there are a few regulations scattered in various pieces of legislation (Social Welfare Act 2004, Rights of Tenants Act 2001), a few governmental programmes – national grant programme ‘Return to Society’ (MPiPS, 2006) and national subsidy programme (2006) for *gminas* constructing social housing – a diverse range of local solutions and good practices and a heterogeneous third sector providing services funded from multiple sources (Human Capital Operational Programme, MRR, 2007). The majority of services target people sleeping rough or in crisis situations, whilst wider housing and preventive measures are in an embryonic stage. There is no national picture on the scale and needs of the homeless population and no national research to monitor progress (although good regional and local examples exist). Clearly, recent developments undertaken by both state and NGO stakeholders towards drafting a more comprehensive strategy were much needed.

To understand the policy context in Poland it is necessary to understand how the word ‘policy’ operates in the national context. There is no direct translation of ‘policy’ in the Polish language. The closest word is ‘politics’, which has two meanings. The

first is politics in the Weberian sense where the goal is to gain political power as well as politics on particular issues like housing politics, social politics etc. The second meaning can refer to a general ideology and long-term objectives in certain fields or it can be used in a narrow sense in regard to, for example, a national grant programme for NGOs dealing with homelessness. The direct transfer of policy-drafting models, successful in other countries, may be difficult in Poland without an adequate vocabulary that local stakeholders can utilise.

It is also important to understand the nature of the legislative process and how it tends to foster an array of regulations rather than strategies. Governmental activities towards solving social issues are usually regulated by one or more laws passed by the Parliament. The Constitution defines the following stages of the formal legislative process:

- High-level ministerial officials accept the need to prepare regulations in a certain field.
- The relevant ministry drafts a document that is accepted by all departments (ministerial consultations).
- The document is accepted by other ministries especially the Ministry of Finance (inter-ministerial consultations).
- Formal announcement of the opening of the social consultations.
- The document is accepted by the Council of Ministers and sent to Parliament.
- The document gains parliamentary acceptance (favourable vote).

As well as the drafting of Acts, the Resolution on the Council of Ministers (RM, 2002) provides an option for adopting a long-term programme, which is an 'individually specified project of government document'. Any ministry that would like such a programme to be developed by the government needs to present its plans, long-term goals and expected funding sources to the Prime Minister and gain the Prime Minister's approval.

Present state regulations on homelessness are based on single paragraphs across various Acts passed according to the first procedure. Intentionally, the drafting of the national homeless strategy/programme was based on the second procedure to allow various regulations to be captured in one document, which would, if successful, order the activities of different institutions into a long-term plan where goals could be achieved and the overall effectiveness of state activities towards homelessness could be improved.

The process of drafting the strategy was initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPiPS) but other actors were also involved. These stakeholders were drawn from three key groups that operate in Poland: ministerial bureaucracy and Parliament (the regulative group), the third sector (implementation and consultative roles) and researchers and media (potential consultative and monitoring roles).

A major role within the ministerial bureaucracy is played by the Department of Social Welfare and Integration (DSWI) at the MPiPS. The DSWI is responsible for homelessness, although dealing with homelessness is not explicitly mentioned in the ministerial statute (MPiPS, 2008c), rather, homeless people are one of the 'chosen categories of groups at high risk of social exclusion'. Ministerial duties include: standardising services, creating ministerial and governmental long-term programmes, establishing special task groups and designing as well as reviewing legislation. The DSWI has been operating the national programme 'Return of Homeless People to Society' (MPiPS, 2006), which, through national and regional administration, provides grants for NGOs dealing with homelessness. It was also responsible for initiating the Ministerial Order on Standards for Services for the Homeless (see below). Since 2008 it runs the National Register of Services for the Homeless, which is available online. It is the department consulted by other ministries and departments of public administration on homelessness issues.

Among other important departments within the ministerial bureaucracy are those responsible for preparing diagnoses and forecasts regarding important social issues, particularly those required by international organisations such as the EU and OECD; and those responsible for setting priorities and the allocation of structural funding. On the parliamentary side, the Commission of Social Policy and Family is responsible for initiating and drafting legislation on welfare issues as well as giving opinions on draft legislation prepared by the government. It may oblige ministries to prepare long-term programmes on certain issues.

Major actors in the non-governmental sector include national or regional networks of service providers. Their size varies, from a few dozen to hundreds of local branches running up to two hundred different kinds of services each (mostly night shelters and shelters). The five biggest networks are members of FEANTSA. The performance of this network is complemented by local NGO services in one or more *gminas* or municipalities (e.g. the Warsaw Council for the Homeless, which is a platform of local service providers). Local organisations run many innovative and high-quality programmes, which are often recognised in the media, but their voice is not given the same priority in the national policy-making arena.

In terms of other commentators, the media's interest in homelessness is restricted to reporting on individual events (e.g. a riot in a shelter) and seasonal matters (e.g. preparedness for winter) rather than on policy or governance of the issue of homelessness at the national level.

Finally, researchers and research institutes are also present with a reasonable amount of academic and applied research on homelessness and housing exclusion being undertaken.

The network established for the process of drafting the national homeless strategy included a few ministerial departments (most importantly the DSWI) and some NGO networks of service providers. The process is described in more detail below based on information gathered through informal interviews with stakeholders, participation in relevant events as well as analysis of resources made available through Internet sites. Overall, however, the transparency of the working process was poor, for reasons outlined below, making it difficult to ascertain all relevant details.

Drafting the National Homeless Strategy

In mid-2008 the DSWI officially initiated the process of drafting a national strategy on homelessness. It had been initiated by the Parliamentary Commission of Social Policy and Family, which, after listening to ministerial information on the 'Support to the Homeless and Those Threatened with Homelessness in Winter 2007/2008' (Sejm, 2008), obliged the MPiPS to prepare a draft strategy for exiting homelessness and developing social housing. The Secretary of State at MPiPS declared that he would provide the Commission with the major points of such a strategy in April 2008. It is not clear whether this happened. In mid-2008, however, the Secretary of State appointed a working group to draft the strategy. The DSWI organised a meeting and invited a few chosen NGO leaders (from three networks) to prepare the draft. The team decided to invite major networks and a few local organisations to take part in drafting particular sections of the strategy, contributing a chapter on the issue that it particularly specialised in. For example, Pomeranian Forum would write on research on homelessness, MONAR Association on drug and alcohol rehabilitation, Barka Foundation on labour reintegration and social economy, Caritas Kielce on health. It was also decided to organise an open conference to present the draft sections and consult more broadly.

The conference was held in July 2008 and many new stakeholders took part. Seven different sections of the draft strategy were discussed. However, the sections were quite different in style and perspective, which made it difficult to combine them into one cohesive strategic document. During the conference, participants agreed to provide the DSWI with final versions of the sections by a certain date. After the

conference a short note was posted on the website of one of the networks, and for some time a working draft was available on the MPiPS website. However, there is no information regarding further developments, it is not known whether any alterations were submitted and about two months later the draft strategy was removed from the MPiPS website.

It later became clear that a new draft was being prepared by the DSWI, organised around a different structure and with a new title, 'National Programme for Reducing Homelessness and Developing Social Housing'. It includes a short history of ministerial activities to address the issue of homelessness. Its mission is to force stakeholders from other ministries – most importantly the Ministry of Infrastructure, which is responsible for the construction of social housing – to recognise their role in addressing the issue of homelessness, which currently is assigned exclusively to MPiPS. The programme also describes a number of 'strategic fields' that are needed for existing homelessness projects and identifies issues in need of regulation (e.g. standards for services). New activity is proposed under the heading 'Real statistics on homelessness', based on locally managed empirical research and a methodology used in the Sociodemographic Portrait of the Homeless in Pomerania, rather than on administrative data from existing welfare and shelter services. The history of activity in each field is described briefly and expected results are outlined. Little mention is made of the methods that would be used to achieve these goals or of how the programme would be evaluated. No new funding is outlined, however, reference is made to structural funding for 'Local Standards for Exiting Homelessness'.

The draft programme was put under ministerial consultation and posted on the MPiPS website with a note outlining that inter-ministerial and social consultations had begun. In the meantime the strategy was mentioned in the Polish *National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008–2010* (MPiPS, 2008a):

By the end of 2008, the National Strategy for Preventing Homelessness and Development of Social Housing will have been adopted. The Strategy project provides for, inter alia, working out standards for providing services to the homeless and the implementation of mechanisms coordinating the activity of various institutions for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

However, up to May 2009, nothing had changed on the website. Informal information from the DSWI suggests that the process of drafting the programme had to be cancelled because it had not formally followed procedures for establishing long-term governmental programmes (as defined by the Statute of the Council of Ministers) in its early stages: the Prime Minister was not presented with its objectives and planned funding and his permission was not requested to start the drafting process. The DSWI is currently working on a possible solution to this situation.

Whilst the draft programme remained available on the website, it was informally admitted that the draft had been further revised since it was posted.

The NGO networks that were engaged in the process do not appear to have commented on the ongoing process and none of their websites provide any relevant information. Some members have explained that they were asked to review the document during the social consultations but were given only two days to do this and therefore refused as it did not seem feasible. The homeless strategy has not been covered by the media.

In mid-2009 the programme is still at the drafting stage. The consultation process was quite limited, it appears that it did not properly follow legislative procedures, it did not generate much interest from stakeholders and it is unknown to the broader public. Whilst its content is to some extent innovative in the Polish context as it encompasses all-important processes that influence the homelessness arena, it fails to set long-term policy goals and put in place instruments that would allow real achievements to be made.

Other Policy Developments

In 2008 and 2009, parallel to the development of the national strategy/programme, a number of other policy developments took place. These included the preparations for the implementation of one of the streams of structural funding dedicated to Local Standards for Exiting Homelessness (LSEH) and the preparation and adoption of local homelessness strategies.

The LSEH initiative was conducted at the national level and was treated more like the implementation of a private grant than a policy initiative. It is described here because its potential impact and role in shaping national policy in the near future seems substantial and comparable to that of the national strategy – not only because of its planned budget of 30 million PLN (€6.9 million) but also because of its substance, which comes down to designing, testing and implementing patterns for local strategies or policies towards homelessness and promoting them further as universal ‘good practices’ to be implemented across the country. Interestingly, implementation of this project is one of the strategic fields of the national programme, whilst creating a national strategy on homelessness is one of the outcomes mentioned in the action plan as a result of the implementation of the LSEH project.

The process of drafting the LSEH was similar to that of the national strategy, with participation limited to as small a group of actors as possible and little transparency, perhaps in the belief that a more closed approach would strengthen the process and make it faster. Even though the network of partners was established

and draft projects created in early 2008, according to official information it began one year later when the call for partners for the project was published in an official bulletin. The call was won by a partnership of five networks and one local organisation – all participants in the 2008 activities. Participants were initially invited via the FEANTSA membership. Minutes were not taken at these meetings.

In late March 2009 the final project for the implementation of local standards submitted by the official partnership was accepted. So far it has not been made available to the public. Arguably, the use of a rather closed process involving future beneficiaries (NGO service providers) only will have reduced its chance of designing an effective method of implementation. Certainly, money that could have been working to address homelessness has remained unspent for many months.

The attitude to drafting important policy at the national level can be contrasted with a few successful initiatives to draft and successfully adopt modern social strategies at the local or regional level. These processes overcame the barriers that challenged the national initiatives especially the reluctance towards transparency and the restrictive attitude to the participation of stakeholders. The Warsaw Strategy on Social Problems was adopted in December 2008 and prepared under the patronage of the Warsaw President and the direct supervision of the Deputy President. It was drafted by almost ten thematic working groups in a process open to all stakeholders – in fact more than seven hundred actors participated, providing over one hundred expert opinions and evaluations. It was transparently described on a website that presented dates of important meetings, minutes of meetings and working and final documents. It was also extensively covered by local media. The strategy's component on homelessness includes specific proposals for the standardisation and coordination of services, monitoring the homeless population based on usage of service providers' and administrative data, legal regulations allowing for better coordination of homeless and housing services and the establishment of a coordinating platform of all stakeholders.

Similar processes also took place in other regions giving high-quality results and producing long-term strategies capable of making the necessary change in the condition of the homeless population of the area. These local examples show that a reluctance towards transparency and broad engagement of stakeholders can be overcome and that there is potential to apply more political and public pressure to other authorities to adopt similar strategic documents. In contrast, efforts at the national level (strategy and local standards) failed to integrate the public pressure factor to strengthen the effectiveness of the drafting process. Interestingly, NGOs did not show any interest in advocating publicly for their development.

Discussion

This paper has outlined the difficulties experienced in designing a comprehensive national policy on homelessness in the Polish context. Given that no other Central or Eastern European country has successfully devised such a strategy, it is important to investigate the possible underlying reasons for this.

First, it is necessary to consider the characteristics or attitudes of the Polish ministerial bureaucracy. This term comes from the report prepared on corruption risks and management of Polish public administration at the ministerial level (Heywood and Meyer-Sahling, 2008). The report, while analysing anti-corruption reforms of the public sector undertaken by a previous governing party, concluded that among its consequences were unwanted changes in policy-making procedures, including a general preference for informal, personalised forms of coordination and control. This conclusion seems to be confirmed by the attitudes of those officials who participated in the processes observed in the homelessness arena. They tended to use informal and personalised forms of coordination and withdrew from organising open consultations, publishing draft documents, distributing information on planned agendas for policy design etc. Often they had no procedures to follow. For example, when choosing partners for LSEH, they preferred informal connections to other stakeholders and it was perhaps easier to use the 'Polish FEANTSA membership' than to organise an open call for partners.

A preference for informal contacts was in part obscured by assigning certain roles to chosen partners. For example, NGO activists were referred to as experts. Whilst they are experts on their organisations, they face a conflict of interest in being the experts who design the project from which they will be direct institutional beneficiaries. It seems that a more appropriate label would be 'practitioner' as it would underline their grass-roots experience and would not overestimate their independence or objectivity. Treating NGO leaders as the only rightful experts on homelessness might also be due to the withdrawal of researchers from the policy-making arena. In all the processes described, researchers only took part if they were involved in the activities of participating NGOs.

The attitude of NGO stakeholders is another possible obstacle as they appear reluctant to openly contradict proposals coming from the ministerial bureaucracy. For understandable reasons, including future funding considerations, their priority seems to be to maintain good relationships with key officials. This situation, however, prevents NGOs from holding the government responsible for the declarations it makes. For example, the draft national homeless strategy as well as the draft ministerial order on services were declared to be ready many times – dates were cited in official documents (minutes from the meeting of the Commission of Social Policy and Family, *National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social*

Inclusion 2008–2010 etc.) The implementation stage of LSEH was initially promised to take place in March 2008 and later other dates were given. Yet there was no open comment or reminder from NGO actors when these promises were broken.

NGOs do not appear to be motivated to create a formal representative platform that could powerfully advocate on the national level, as exists in many other countries (e.g. Shelter in the UK). An informal network does exist and its establishment started around FEANTSA activities (preparing national reports on thematic issues such as health in 2007 and housing in 2008) and was further reinforced by usage of the ‘FEANTSA key’ for establishing governance networks for processes described in this paper. However, the role of NGOs could be further developed in this area.

In Poland we can observe an acceptance of the ‘whispering at the back door’ phenomenon as described by Osborne et al. (2008) with regard to NGO service providers in Hungary seeking to access governmental funding for services on a local level. However, in the Polish case, it seems that this kind of whispering would not be accepted if used for the same purpose. Access to public funding for local contracts is fully transparent and has well-established control mechanisms (Public Benefit and Volunteering Act 2003) that prevent individuals from informal influence over allocation of such funds. Nonetheless, such whispering seems to flourish on the policy design level in Poland. Both NGO activists and ministerial officials appear to prefer ‘whispering’ to, for example, public campaigns and open consultations.

The final explanation may come from the lack of interest in using media events to put homelessness on the national public agenda. The art of using the media to direct the public’s attention to certain issues and to create pressure on the government seems to be unfamiliar to Polish homelessness NGOs. There are many examples of such strategies from across the EU (see, for example, Loison-Leruste, 2008) and within Poland (e.g. a tragic fire in a former workers’ hostel near Szczecin that had been used by the local government as social housing for families attracted extensive media coverage and drew attention to the very low physical standards of municipal housing for the poorest citizens). However, none of the NGO service providers has used frontline news to put homelessness issues on the public agenda in order to force changes in the relevant regulations.

Conclusion

This paper illustrates that Poland has a dynamic homelessness arena. The country has made significant progress in recent years as it moves from centralised, undemocratic policy making, with no freedom of association and party officials dominating processes. Stakeholders have managed to work many useful policy-making mechanisms into a post-communist reality, but further mechanisms can and should be applied to address the remaining challenges. Their application should guide future developments in the preparation of a national strategy on homelessness.

Three key aspects stand out as in need of attention. First, a greater transparency of process is desirable. Publishing minutes from meetings is useful not only for transparency but also for the process itself. Promoting information on the drafting process may attract stakeholders whose knowledge and expertise can fill gaps in content and shed new light on issues under discussion. Transparency also creates more public pressure on authorities, which are ultimately responsible for adopting the policy documents. Second, access to the policy drafting stage should not be restricted to too small a group of actors. The experience of drafting local homeless strategies shows that large groups can effectively work together to develop one coherent policy document. A broad involvement of actors also strengthens the legitimacy of the final document. Third, it is crucial for NGOs to recognise and make use of their potential in advocacy. They have an important role to play in forcing governments to improve policies to benefit NGO clients. Public campaigns pointing out both the pitfalls and achievements of governmental policies should be encouraged. Sometimes governments have to be openly contested.

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Social Rental Agencies : Still a Splendid Idea ?¹

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› **Abstract** *Social rental agencies (SRAs)² are non-profit organisations that operate on the Belgian housing market. They rent dwellings from the private rental market, which they then sublet to poor households, often made up of formerly homeless people. The first SRAs were set up by labour migrants and they engaged middle-class Belgians at the end of the 1970s to deal with discrimination against migrants on the housing market. The housing crisis of the 1980s encouraged a further expansion. SRAs are recognised by all regional governments and their staff and working costs are funded. Despite the formula – once described as a splendid idea – seeming to function well, the SRA sector remains small. In the Flemish region SRAs today sublet approximately 4,400 dwellings. This paper deals with the legislative framework of the SRAs in Flanders, and in particular with the results of research conducted with private landlords working with SRAs. It considers some issues that determine how SRAs may further develop, including a tentative reflection on some features of the governance debate.*

› **Key words** *Private renting ; social rental agencies ; homelessness.*

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² 'Social rental agency' is the translation of '*sociale verhuurkantoor*', which has also been translated as 'social renting office' (see Silkens, 2008).

Introduction

In the nineteenth century unregulated private renting dominated the housing market. Since that time private renting has experienced a steep decline in most Western countries and has been gradually replaced by owner-occupied housing, social housing or a combination of the two. Private renting was often equated with slum landlords and a bad rent-to-value ratio for the (often) poor tenants. With regard to rental policies, governments have compromised over the years between more regulation and liberalisation, though often without success and so the decline has continued (although there are exceptions such as Germany and Switzerland). Problems such as poor quality, high rents and discrimination remain, sometimes to such an extent that commentators, including Hubeau et al. (1985) in Belgium, have pleaded for the abolishment of the private rental sector.

The private rental sector is here to stay. As O'Sullivan and De Decker (2007) illustrate, the private rental sector is increasingly viewed as a crucial element in the variety of housing services that can provide accessible accommodation for those households that are unable or unwilling to enter into homeownership or socially rented housing, and that are therefore at risk of homelessness. In addition, governments increasingly consider the sector capable of assisting homeless households to exit homelessness and maintain a long-term reasonably secure tenancy. Various access programmes and projects to sustain tenancies in the private rental sector are operative in a range of countries. The integration of intermediary agents between government(s) and tenants is crucial to these schemes.

In their examination of the housing first model, Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls (2008) took stock of these initiatives, including the Belgian SRAs. They found that the Belgian SRAs are not the only organisations that have developed the capacity to support clients both with housing and with wider social services, and they referred to examples in Denmark, Norway and the UK. Busch-Geertsema (2001) earlier pointed to the rise of *soziale wohnraumhilfen* (housing assistance agencies) in Germany, as having very similar roots to those of the SRAs in Belgium. It is their role as new non-state and non-profit agents in the management of the diverging interests of vulnerable potential tenants, private landlords and the (welfare) state that makes the SRAs of special interest in the debate on governance, a debate which claims that there has been a change of boundaries between the public, private and voluntary sectors (Rhodes, 1997).

SRAs, which are recognised and subsidised in each Belgian region, are non-profit housing institutions that deal with the housing problems of poor and vulnerable people. They are rooted in the services dealing with homelessness. The idea behind an SRA is as 'splendid as it is simple' (Silkens, 2006). An SRA contacts a private landlord and offers to rent his or her property. In this way the landlord gets an

'official tenant', which ensures the payment of rent and the housing quality, and the practicalities of letting are transferred from the landlord to the SRA without any risk. SRAs choose the tenant, deal with any paperwork (including providing descriptions of the dwelling and registering the contract), organise collection of the rent, arrange fire insurance and organise repairs and maintenance. In exchange for agreeing to a 'lower' rent, the landlord's revenue is guaranteed.

Each SRA rents dwellings in order to sublet them, thereby focusing on vulnerable households and individuals in the housing market. Singles and families with low incomes are prioritised. The SRA helps the subtenant since tenant support is at the heart of its mission, and if necessary creates links to other welfare organisations for help in other areas, such as in the case of addiction or for administering paperwork. The SRAs were originally founded by welfare agencies in order to 'socialise' the quasi-unregulated private rental market (De Decker, 2001), but this ideological strand later diminished into a more pragmatic position. As a consequence, alongside private non-governmental services, public welfare services (OCMW) also started to organise SRAs. At the end of 2007 fifty recognised and/or subsidised SRAs were renting out 4,368 dwellings. Although the number of SRAs has risen continuously since their introduction in 1970, not all municipalities have been served; at the end of 2006 SRAs had dwellings on the market in only 67.5 per cent of Flemish municipalities (Vlaams Overlegbewonersbelangen, 2007 and 2008).³

Although SRAs operate on the private rental market, the interests of those landlords considering working with an SRA had never been researched. As a consequence little was known about the relationship between SRAs and private landlords. Already in 1988 Neirinckx called for research to determine what the considerations are for landlords working with SRAs, but it was nearly twenty years before the Flemish housing minister ordered research on the profile of landlords working with SRAs. The research would also examine how the landlords and SRAs became acquainted and the experience of landlords who have worked with SRAs. In considering whether the SRAs have been validated, this paper looks at the tasks of SRAs, before turning to some of the results of the aforementioned research (De Decker et al., 2009b) and debating the future of SRAs.

Current Legislation

According to the current Flemish governmental decision on the recognition and subsidising of SRAs (Governmental decision of 16 March 2004), the tasks of an SRA are (Silkens, 2006):

³ For the historical context of the rise of SRAs, see De Decker (2002).

- Renting, or acquiring on a long lease, dwellings from private landlords in certain areas in order to sublet them to households and single occupants in need of housing at a reasonable rent, and therefore providing greater security of tenure.
- Offering participation to the subtenants, and advising them with regard to tenancy rights.
- Working together with local housing and welfare agencies, particularly taking the initiative to set up networks.
- To be open to all applicants, regardless of sex, nationality, ethnicity and ideological, philosophical or religious inclinations.

SRAs differ from classic social housing companies in that they do not own the houses.⁴ They behave as tenants on the private rental market and negotiate lower rents to compensate for guaranteeing the payment of rent, the continuity of the tenancy and the quality of the dwelling. This negotiated rent is the rent that the subtenant must pay. The average SRA rent is by implication higher than the average social rent. The affordability gap can occasionally be narrowed by using a rent allowance.

SRAs are regulated by the regional governments, but they also function within the framework of private rental legislation, which is the responsibility of the federal government. So it is the federal framework that determines private market rents (a matter of free negotiation between landlords and tenants), the length of a legal lease (nine years, but shorter contracts are possible) and the conditions of contract termination. This leaves the regional governments with a limited 'policy space'. Basically then, the regional governments pay the wages of SRA staff and some working credits, foster additional tasks (e.g. participation of subtenants and negotiation of rents) and oblige the SRAs to use nine-year contracts for subleases.

The View of the Landlord

This section deals with the findings of a survey of private landlords, both individuals and companies, that rented at least one dwelling to an SRA between August and December 2007 (De Decker et al., 2009b). All 1,615 landlords known to be working with SRAs received a postal questionnaire consisting of 81 questions over 28 pages; 724 useful questionnaires were returned. The response rate of 45 per cent is satisfactory. The research steering group comprised members of the Housing Minister's Cabinet, the Flemish Housing Administration and representatives of the SRA sector.

⁴ Although this possibility is not excluded, and may occur, for example, through donation.

Profile of the landlords

In conformity with the information held by landlord associations and echoing earlier findings (Heylen et al., 2007), the survey found that landlords working with SRAs own on average 3.2 dwellings, with 60 per cent of respondents letting only one dwelling. Among landlords who let more than two dwellings, only 16 per cent do this exclusively with SRAs, the remainder therefore using a double rental strategy⁵. Landlords working with SRAs tend to be older: 36.5 per cent are over sixty-five years of age, and 20 per cent are aged over seventy-five (compared with 10 per cent of all landlords).

Concerning professional status, a distinction between landlords working exclusively with SRAs and those using a double strategy emerged. The share of self-employed persons is considerably higher among the latter group, although in both categories wage-earners form the largest proportion. Nevertheless this supports to some extent the popular thesis that, because of their separate pension system and consequent lower pensions, the self-employed save for old age through acquiring (and letting out) property. Concerning income distribution, SRA landlords are less well-off than landlords generally, but this can partly be explained by their age, with retirement generally accompanied by a decrease in income. A majority of the landlords say they deliberately purchased the dwelling(s) either to move into later in life or for one of their children to move into; meanwhile they let it out.

Motivation to work with SRAs

SRAs historically offer two major advantages: rent is paid on time even during periods of vacancy and the upkeep of the dwelling is guaranteed. On top of that (some) SRAs take initiatives to increase the housing quality. The motivation to work with SRAs was surveyed using a motivation topic list. The overwhelming majority of respondents stated that it is precisely because of the guaranteed and timely payment of rent (97 per cent) that they wanted to work with SRAs. A second important factor is the guarantee that the quality of the dwelling is maintained or even enhanced (96 per cent). Additionally, 80 per cent of respondents prefer working with SRAs as it is 'easy': they are not obliged to look for tenants and they are not confronted with the inconveniences of private renting. Seventy per cent of the landlords work with SRAs because of their expertise, and where the distance between the landlord's place of residence and the rental house is large, working with an SRA becomes more interesting for 47 per cent of landlords.

⁵ If they own more than one rental house they let via SRAs as well as via other channels: difficult-to-let properties are passed on to SRAs; better quality dwellings in good locations are let directly or via real estate brokers because these dwellings get higher rents and usually cause less trouble.

It is clear that 'security' in all its forms (payment of rent, succession of tenants and housing quality) together with the ease of renting via SRAs are the most important reasons for using the SRA model. Landlords do not tend to use SRAs for social reasons (offering an affordable dwelling) or because of negative experiences with private renting. With regard to the latter, and contrary to the views of landlord associations, only a small number of the landlords involved solely in private renting in the past had experienced problems, and where they had, these were restricted to a single case. The most frequent problem was non-payment of rent.

Evaluating collaboration

To assess the levels of satisfaction of landlords working with SRAs, the survey focused on the SRAs' guaranteed payment of rent, monitoring of housing quality, renovations if necessary and monitoring of tenants. The research shows that without exception the rent is paid on time, which is widely appreciated by landlords. On the monitoring of housing quality, no clear conclusions can be drawn as few SRA landlords have yet experienced the termination of a lease. However, it was revealed that landlords have no objection to quality norms and are prepared to adapt the house to meet those norms. What is probably at play here is that in 72 per cent of cases SRAs organised the renovation process themselves out of necessity (letting the landlords off the hook) and, consequently, very few landlords intend to stop working with SRAs notwithstanding the existence of quality rules.

These findings challenge the negative reputation of private landlords with respect to housing quality being equated with slum landlordism and a mismatch between rent and quality. This can be linked to the fact that both federal rental legislation and Flemish housing law have introduced minimum quality standards. In addition each SRA, as a recognised and subsidised housing institution, is obliged to work only with minimum standard housing.⁶ One of the findings of the preliminary research was that by letting a dwelling to an SRA, landlords would experience a loss of control over their property, particularly in terms of the selection of tenants. This statement is not supported by the survey findings, which show that although landlords have little control over the evolution of the tenancy they are content to trust the SRAs. The survey also shows that landlords are very satisfied with the

⁶ In contrast to the past, the risk of being caught for letting out bad housing has risen, and with that the risk of punishment, although one should not exaggerate the risk of being caught. According to federal law, the enforcement of basic housing quality is still a matter of negotiation between landlord and tenant (and by extension the court) and so the federal government does not organise quality control here. At the Flemish level, inspection work has started, but its impact is still very minimal. With regard to housing quality control – following media exposure of scandalous housing for asylum seekers – the law and the penalties have become more severe (including imprisonment), but enforcement remains weak.

different aspects of how services are rendered by the SRAs. This includes capability of doing the job, accessibility of offices, quality of reception and ease of making appointments.

More than two-thirds of respondents state that letting a dwelling to an SRA entails only advantages; just 3 per cent of current landlords working with SRAs see only disadvantages. The guaranteed payment of the rent is the most important advantage, with others following at a distance (see Table 1). The different responses dealing with security (income, tenancy and security in general) total nearly 80 per cent, making security the main attraction of the SRA model.

Table 1: Advantages of working with an SRA, answers to an open question

	N – first answer (1)	N – second answer (2)	N – third answer (3)	N – total (4)	% of (4)
Income security	232	63	3	298	57.2
Less work and fewer worries	88	14	–	102	19.6
Guaranteeing the dwelling quality	25	41	8	74	14.2
Continuity of renting out/no vacancy	46	16	5	67	12.9
Avoiding problems with tenants	31	29	2	62	11.9
Guaranteeing control	24	23	6	53	10.2
Security in general	31	4	1	36	6.9
Reliability/professionalism	20	5	4	29	5.6
A form of social renting	9	10	4	23	4.4
Follow-up legal features	5	2	1	8	1.5
Possibility of renovation	7	–	–	7	1.3
Good for both parties	3	–	–	3	0.6

Source: De Decker et al (2009b)

Landlords who see disadvantages in working with SRAs (see Table 2) refer to rent as being too low (36.8 per cent of the complaints).

Table 2: Disadvantages of working with an SRA, answers to an open question

	N – first answer (1)	N – second answer (2)	N – total (3)	% of (3)
Low(er) rental income	156	4	160	36.8
None	106	–	106	24.4
No/little participation, control over subtenant	61	5	66	15.2
No/little participation, control in general	31	3	34	7.8
Restriction on rental agreement	20	3	23	5.3
Bad service	21	2	23	5.3
Type of subtenant	15	2	17	3.9
Obliged renovation	2	2	4	0.9
Problems with neighbours	2	1	3	0.7
No warranty	3	–	3	0.7
Necessity for collaboration	3	–	3	0.7
Too costly	2	–	2	0.5
Too many troubles in general	2	–	2	0.5

Source: De Decker et al (2009b)

The rent is also the element landlords referred to when asked for initiatives to ameliorate the SRA model. The main proposals/suggestions concerned (rent) income: landlords would prefer, and suggest, other types of financial support such as a decrease of real-estate taxes or renovation grants, instead of increasing the rent. As Table 3 shows, approximately half of the respondents say that the rent received is lower than the rent they wanted (51.5 per cent), and in 70.5 per cent of cases it is lower than the market rent for a comparable dwelling.

Table 3: Appreciation of the SRA rents by the landlords

Is the obtained rent lower, equal or higher than the desired rent?		
	N	%
Lower	304	51.5
Equal	276	46.8
Higher	10	1.7
N	590	100
Is the obtained rent lower, equal or higher than the rent you could get when renting out via a channel other than an SRA?		
	N	%
Lower	407	70.5
Equal	125	21.7
Higher	45	7.8
N	577	100

Source: De Decker et al (2009b)

Future collaboration with SRAs

Almost nine out of ten landlords indicate that they will work with SRAs in the future. The most important reasons are: less work and fewer worries (25.9 per cent), good experience (21 per cent) and income security (19.5 per cent). When we aggregate the motives, security (in general; of income; no vacancy), good experiences and less worries are the most important. One in six respondents intends to let more dwellings to SRAs. It should also be stressed that 94 per cent of landlords who 'inherited' a lease with an SRA, for example after a purchase, are (very) satisfied. This is an important finding since these landlords had not intentionally chosen to rent through an SRA.

From this survey one can conclude that the disadvantages of SRA letting, often referred to by landlord associations and including the loss of control over the dwelling, are outweighed by the advantages. That these advantages are linked to conditions like minimum housing quality or restrictions on the terms of contract termination is found to be normal. This appreciation is possibly linked to the fact that the dwellings in question are situated at the bottom end of the housing market: for this kind of dwelling the disadvantages do not outweigh the advantages of being guaranteed rent security and handing over management of the dwelling. Although it was not one of our research goals, it was no surprise to find indications of a double rental strategy: dwellings let to SRAs are older, of poorer quality and charge lower rent than dwellings let directly or via real-estate brokers. Some respondents clearly indicate that these are the reasons they work with SRAs.

On the Future of SRAs and Some Concluding Remarks on the Governance Debate

Social rental agencies grew out of grass-roots welfare organisations that dealt with, among others, homeless persons, and that aimed to house vulnerable people who found it difficult to access the regular housing market in general, and social rental housing in particular. After an initial period wherein working conditions were precarious, SRAs became institutionalised by the different governments and are now seen as indispensable housing agents.

As Silkens (2008) shows, of all new tenants taken on each year, three out of four survive with some form of income support and 50 per cent of them live on absolute minimum benefits.⁷ More than half of new tenants are single individuals, and one-quarter are lone parents with children. Many city tenants are foreigners, with large shares of asylum seekers; many have housing-related needs. One out of ten new

⁷ 462 out of the 682 applicants for an SRA dwelling in Ghent lived on a subsistence income (Baeck, 2005).

tenants in Flanders had no home previously or had stayed in a shelter. The fact is that conditions on the private rental market today hardly differ from thirty years ago. Ownership is not an option for vulnerable people (De Decker et al., 2009a), social housing waiting lists are increasingly long and private renting is less and less affordable (Heylen et al., 2007; De Decker et al., 2008). In addition, local authorities hesitate to build new social rental housing and a substantial rental allowance⁸ is not (yet) in sight. So, vulnerable and/or poor people are left out in the cold, a fact underpinning the need to enlarge the SRA sector.

This study of landlords adds to the existing support for the SRA model. In the run-up to the regional elections of 7 June 2009, the 'popularity' of the SRA model among political parties⁹ and lobbyists¹⁰ was surprising, with many pleading for an expansion of the model, as did the new governmental agreement negotiated after the elections (Vlaamse Regering, 2009). Nevertheless, despite this growing social basis, the question remains whether a strong growth for SRAs – which today account for a share of less than one per cent of the shrinking private rental market – is possible in the (near) future.

SRAs operate within the private rental market. The fundamental structural problem here is the division of responsibilities between federal (Belgium) and regional (Flanders, Brussels, Wallonia) governments. The Belgian government is responsible for the private rental sector, including the regulation of rent setting, contract terms and quality criteria. The regional governments are responsible for determining both the conditions of regulating and subsidising SRAs and the eligibility criteria of SRA tenants. Since federal private renting law allows for the free determination of private rents and relatively easy termination of contracts, regional governments must take care when intervening in order to avoid unwanted effects such as a rise in rents or an increase in short-term contracts. This need for caution

⁸ In preparation for the regional June elections 2009, a working group with representatives of the real-estate sector, tenant associations, civil society organisations working with the poor, the Flemish housing administrations and experts – brought together by the Housing Administration – advised in a joint paper the introduction of a sound rent allowance scheme (Woonbeleid, 2009).

⁹ The Christian Democrats (CD&V), the Socialists (SP.A), the Greens (Groen!) and the Democratic Flemish Nationalists (NVA) are in favour of the expansion of the SRA model, as is the current Flemish Prime Minister K. Peeters (2009).

¹⁰ The memoranda of the following organisations, advisory boards and networks contain pleas for an expansion of the SRA model: Christian Workers Movement (ACW), Flemish Housing Council (Vlaamse Woonraad), organisation of municipalities (VVSG), Knowledge Centre of the Cities (Kenniscentrum Grote Steden) and the organisation of the poor (Flemish Network of Organisations working with the poor; Steunpunt tot bestrijding van armoede, bestaansonzekerheid en sociale uitsluiting).

renders regional governments less keen to speed up their efforts, which leads to the call for a reshuffling of housing responsibilities, including the transfer of private rental legislation to the regions.

A second problem concerns rent levels. Our research shows that low landlord incomes from rent constitute the Achilles heel of the model. For landlords working with SRAs this means limited rental income, which undoubtedly prevents landlords from entering, or remaining in, the system. The demand for reasonable rent conflicts in a structural way with the necessity of SRAs to offer rent at affordable prices, since (very) poor people are, after all, the end users. In order to solve this structural problem pleas have been made for tax exemptions and/or an enforcement of the now very modest rent allowance scheme. None of these is yet in sight, however, which brings us back to the problems previously described.

When analysing the rhetoric, one can conclude that there is broad societal support for SRAs, but due to the aforementioned issues there is some reluctance to proceed without a great degree of caution. Or is it more likely that the division of responsibilities creates a good means of limiting efforts? After all, Belgian governments do not have a good track record with regard to the regulation of private renting (De Decker, 2001). In addition, even more so now than before, Belgian governments are first and foremost, almost to the point of obsession, advocating homeownership (De Decker et al., 2009a).

A critical success factor for SRAs is the role played by local governments, which are the directors of housing policy under Flemish housing law. The largest Flemish SRA, De Poort (Kortrijk) is deeply embedded in a local social service and housing network, and links its success both to that and to the existence of a local rent allowance. Given the fact that this is the only municipality (out of 308) that has such a policy,¹¹ an overwhelming majority of the SRAs are largely left on their own, which can hamper, for example, the renting of dwellings and finding of landlords.

Another concern involves the regulatory environment. SRAs and landlords are subject to federal and local legislation, which creates a bureaucratic overload that can hamper activities. It is stipulated, for example, that the rent SRAs pay to a landlord may not exceed a certain amount. For a long time this rent ceiling was not connected to fluctuations on the rental market, such that the ceiling remained impossibly low, and even where an offer was made by a landlord and the willingness to rent existed, it was not legally possible to rent it.¹²

¹¹ A recent study revealed that an overwhelming majority of municipalities have no housing policy at all (Tratsaert, 2009).

¹² After years of advocacy, this has now changed and the new ceilings are connected to the evolution of consumer prices.

The same holds true for the workload. Subsidies for staff are linked to the number of dwellings and not to the number of dossiers. Lately, the number of dossiers rose as a consequence of more applications, all of which must be dealt with, and a rise in turnover, implying that the staff must invest more time per dwelling. As a consequence some SRAs delay the rental of new dwellings, and even introduce periods without new hires.

A final feature concerns the objective to which SRAs are dedicated. The average SRA is small and the sector as a whole has a minor market share, as a consequence of which waiting lists are long and continue to grow. The result is a situation that sees SRAs now confronted with the problems their founders originally wanted to solve. SRAs are rooted in small-scale welfare services in which welfare work methods dominate. Originally they were not housing agents, but they became so out of necessity. Their success, in combination with the failure of general housing policies to offer enough affordable housing places, means that SRAs are facing a difficult choice. Either they stay small, keeping welfare work as their core business but consequently risking undermining their built-up legitimacy, or they can become real housing agents with the risk of phasing out welfare work altogether. This debate has not yet begun.

On governance

Coming back to the debate on governance, which in the literature is very much linked to the increased role of non-state agents, private companies and not-for-profit sectors working with public bodies to realise certain goals (Vranken et al., 2003), there are doubts about whether this should be presented as a new development. In the case of Belgium and Flanders it is not new at all, but a well-established practice (Huyse, 2003).

In Belgium all housing partners and numerous welfare services started out as local grass-roots organisations aimed at solving a problem, often without government support, subsidies or rules. Depending on the circumstances and their embeddedness in one of the ideological pillars, some were able to set their own agenda, and later became recognised and subsidised, often as a sector. The origins of health insurance organisations go back to the nineteenth century and the first social housing company was founded in Ghent in 1904, long before the sector became recognised in 1919. Community work, welfare work, different types of homeless services and the SRAs grew in the same way: they started as voluntary organisations, enduring financial austerity for years, and later – if lucky – gained recognition and structural subsidies. If this happened they became a kind of subcontractor for the government. Thus, if working with non-state organisations is typical of 'governance', then governance has a long history in Belgium.

A second comment concerns the new and/or changed relationship(s) between the partners involved, which are often presented as a new element and as part of a reduction in bureaucratic procedures in the governance debate. Are they really less bureaucratic? Has autonomy risen? For Flemish SRAs – and also for the social housing companies – this is not the case. On the contrary, they complain, as does the Flemish Housing Council, about the huge increase in legislation imposed on all housing institutions (Vlaamse Woonraad, 2009). As such the ‘new’ SRAs are, like many other players, confronted with ‘very old’ top-down, bureaucratic government structures.

Although these last paragraphs are not a profound elaboration of the debate, we can conclude that, with respect to the field within which SRAs are working, there is little new, and government definitely rules over governance. The opposite conclusion would have been sensational, since in the end – and this echoes the conclusion of Imrie and Raco (1999) with regard to local governance in the UK – ‘new’ policies cannot be disconnected from history or from former policies, since policies very often become locked in past policies and the institutional structures that were set up to implement them.

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Governance and Joined-Up Services: The Case of Housing Support Services in England

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› **Abstract** *This paper presents findings from the evaluation of three English pilot programmes designed to support people living with complex health and social needs who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. The services were set up as part of the Supporting People Health Pilot Programme, which seeks to improve policy links between housing support services and health and social care services by encouraging the development of joined-up services. The process of working across organisational boundaries is, however, rarely as straightforward as policy implies and the evaluation highlighted a number of challenges in relation to the governance of homeless services that, if unresolved, had the potential to undermine the credibility and continuation of services. These challenges included ensuring the accountability of joined-up services, creating appropriate mechanisms for involving people who use services in governance arrangements and developing systems to monitor the impact of joined-up services.*

› **Key Words** *Housing support; homelessness; health; joint working; governance.*

Introduction

The election of the new Labour government in England in 1997 signalled the beginning of an era notable for the emphasis given to joined-up government and multi-agency working (Painter and Clarence, 2001), particularly as a means to deliver welfare services (Clarke and Glendinning, 2002). The joining-up of services across organisational boundaries is thought to offer an effective way to address

problems which require input from a range of organisations (Wilkins, 2002), recognising as it does that the boundaries between agencies can act as barriers to the provision of services (Rankin and Regan, 2004).

Huxham et al. suggest that recent years 'have seen a world-wide step change in the emphasis on inter-organisational arrangements as a mainstay of governance regimes'(2000, p.338). This approach stresses the interdependence of governmental and non-governmental agencies to implement and deliver policy objectives (Rhodes, 1997 and 2007; Cloke et al., 2000; Bode, 2006) and is considered to be a helpful strategy by which to combat complex social issues, such as homelessness, which have evaded traditional hierarchical approaches to governance (Newman et al., 2004). Painter and Clarence (2001) suggest that partnerships between agencies offer the potential to create particular 'synergies' or 'transformations', implying that partnerships themselves have a form of creative energy. As such, partnerships between agencies are thought to have the capacity to achieve greater results for individual service users than if the agencies acted separately (Huxham et al., 2000).

Although the logic of joining-up services as a means to provide welfare services to individuals with complex needs has an appeal, the challenges associated with this approach should not be underestimated. Indeed there is a vast literature on the difficulties associated with working across boundaries, which has predominantly focused on matters such as the need to have clear aims and objectives, communication issues and differences between professionals working in different agencies and sectors (Sharples et al., 2002; Cameron and Lart, 2003). Arguably less attention appears to have been paid to the governance of joined-up services; however, authors increasingly suggest that these challenges should not be underestimated (Huxham et al., 2000; Glasby and Peck, 2004).

This paper explores the potential challenges of delivering joined-up services through a case study of the UK's Supporting People programme, which was designed to bring together statutory and non-statutory agencies in order to commission and develop services that will work together to meet the housing and support needs of vulnerable people. The paper first outlines the nature of the Supporting People programme and the commissioning of a specific initiative, the Health Pilot Programme, to address the links between health and housing issues, before moving on to describe the challenges to the successful delivery of joined-up homeless services.

The Supporting People Programme and the Role of Housing Support

The Supporting People programme was introduced in England in 2003 as a means of facilitating independent living in the community for groups that require low-intensity support and also for those that are socially excluded, at risk or hard to reach through existing service provision, of which homeless people are one group. Its broad aim is to provide housing-related support to enable people to stay in their own homes or to move towards having their own homes, and to increase independence and the capacity for self-care (ODPM, 2005). As such, the programme has the potential to play a vital role not just in relation to the prevention of homelessness but also in offering a supportive/ameliorative service to those who are homeless (Edgar and Doherty, 2001).

The Supporting People programme brought together into one fund a number of complex benefit and grant schemes that were previously administered by different parts of government and statutory agencies. These funds were ring-fenced in order that they would be allocated solely to housing-related support, although from 2010 the ring fence will be removed and funds will be placed in an area-based grant and overseen by local strategic partnerships. The programme is managed by local authorities and is designed to be delivered through a working partnership of local government, housing associations, health services, probation services and voluntary sector organisations. Together these organisations commission a range of services, centred on the delivery of housing support, as a means to enable vulnerable people to develop and sustain their capacity to live independently. One of the fundamental principles of the Supporting People programme is a recognition of the importance of interagency cooperation as a strategy to address the complex nature and interconnectedness of the needs people using services may have (Cameron et al., 2007).

The concept of 'housing support' originates from debates about how best to support vulnerable people to live in the community. It builds on an understanding of the relationship between housing and welfare and recognises that some groups may require extra support in order to live independently. Originally housing support services in England were established as a means of providing practical support to specific groups, such as older people and people with learning difficulties, to live in the community. These services have evolved to encompass the provision of extra support to enable people to develop the skills necessary to maintain their independence. Importantly, attention has recently turned to groups who historically have been poorly served by housing services, including teenage parents and people 'deemed vulnerable due to an institutionalised background' such as adults leaving prison and care leavers (Fitzpatrick and Jones, 2005), as well as groups for

whom there is little tradition of statutory sector provision such as sex workers (Cameron et al., 2006).

The Supporting People programme has linked housing support services with wider debates about social inclusion and focused attention on groups that are 'at risk' or hard to reach through existing service provision, thus mirroring trends seen across Europe (Edgar and Doherty, 2001). Additionally, by creating services that cross organisational boundaries such as housing and health, local Supporting People partnerships have developed innovative services to meet the sometimes complex and multifaceted needs of groups of people who are homeless or living in insecure tenancies (McNaughton and Sanders, 2007; Wolf and Edgar, 2007; Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008). For example, services have been created to support people to access generalist as well as specialist health services (e.g. drug and alcohol services and HIV services) as a means to address specific problems that may have contributed to an inability to maintain a tenancy. Such an approach to homelessness in England fits with the current emphasis on partnerships seen across Europe (Wolf and Edgar, 2007), allowing local government to work with other organisations within the statutory and non-statutory sectors that have expertise in homelessness (Cloke et al., 2000) and/or factors that may contribute to an individual's homelessness (Cameron et al., 2007).

The Supporting People Health Pilot Programme

The Supporting People programme aims to promote collaboration across sectors, however, these relationships, particularly with health care services, have proved fragile in practice (ODPM, 2002). The Supporting People Health Pilot Programme was launched in 2003 to illustrate how Supporting People services could be developed to allow agencies to work together to support the housing, health and social care needs of particularly vulnerable groups. Of the six pilots supported by the programme, three developed housing support services specifically targeted at people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and who also had health needs that were largely unmet and were undoubtedly affected by their housing status (see Table 1). These health needs either prevented them from registering with general or specialist health services or made ongoing engagement with services and/or compliance with health regimes problematic.

Table 1: The Supporting People health pilots

Project title	Nature of pilot	Partnership agencies
On Track	Provision of floating support to young people with dual diagnosis (mental health and substance misuse needs) to enable them to find and/or sustain a tenancy and engage with relevant health and social care services	NHS Healthcare trust Community mental health services Substance misuse service Local Supporting People team 'On Track' (a collaboration between two housing associations, a mental health voluntary group and a mental health service user involvement project)
SWAN NEST	Provision of supported housing and support for women wanting to exit the sex trade, including help to engage with relevant health and social care services	Primary care trust* Borough council Police A general practice A voluntary sector drug and alcohol service
Housing Support Outreach and Referral	Provision of floating support to people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to find and/or sustain a tenancy and engage with relevant health and social care services	Supporting People administering authorities from two London boroughs Primary care trust* Terrence Higgins Trust/Lighthouse

* A primary care trust is a local organisation that forms part of the National Health Service (NHS) in England and provides primary and community health care services to its local population.

An independent evaluation was commissioned by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and undertaken by the School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol. This evaluation illustrated a number of challenges for the governance of homeless services, particularly those services provided across organisational boundaries.

Evaluation methodology

The methodological design for the evaluation sought to explore both the process and the outcome of joint working. Two main sources of data collection were used: quarterly project evaluation reports and interviews. The evaluation reports recorded progress against aims and objectives related to housing targets (including the number of people for whom they had arranged a tenancy and whether these tenancies were sustained) as well as health targets (including the number of clients registered with local primary health services and local drug and alcohol services).

The pilots were visited on three occasions: at their inception, at the mid-point and towards the end of the initiative. Interviews were conducted with representatives from between six and eight partner agencies as well as with those working in the new services. All interviewees were centrally involved in the development of the pilot and/or in the work of the pilot. Interviewees were asked whether the pilot was

achieving its aims and objectives and to describe the factors that supported or hindered efforts to work across organisational boundaries, including issues related to the governance of the new services. Additional interviews were held with people who used the services at each of the pilot sites (six people at On Track, four at SWAN NEST and nine at Housing Support Outreach and Referral). Interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically (Ritchie and Lewis, 2004). To increase the authenticity of the analysis, the emerging themes were discussed with representatives of the pilots at regular workshops. Ethical review was provided by members of the School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee.

Challenges to the Governance of Joined-Up Services

Three broad themes associated with what Huxham et al. (2000) refer to as the complex features of collaborative governance emerged from the interviews with professionals. These were the accountability of joined-up services, the involvement of people who used the services in governance processes and the monitoring of joined-up services. It is the contention of this paper that if these challenges had remained unresolved they had the potential to undermine the future of these services.

The accountability of joined-up services

Despite the current emphasis placed on partnerships in the UK involving both statutory and non-statutory agencies, official guidance pays little attention to how these complex arrangements should be managed. However, these arrangements are fundamental to new forms of collaborative governance and as such deserve to be explored (Wilkins, 2002). Significantly, the development of joined-up services and use of partnerships has led to concerns over the emergence of what Edwards has termed 'multiple accountabilities and ambiguities' (2001, p.82). These concerns were evident in the evaluation and demonstrated the need for joined-up services to be based on clear arrangements in respect of the governance of such ventures and in particular the management responsibility for new services.

The governance arrangements at the Housing Support Outreach and Referral pilot, although potentially very complex, were clearly articulated and effective from the outset. Although this pilot involved two Supporting People administering authorities as well as the primary care trust, ultimate accountability was located with the lead commissioning authority for the pilot and regular reports were made to the commissioning group, which met monthly and was described as being 'very active'. The pilot's progress was also reported to significant committees within the strategic partnership. This meant that partner agencies were kept aware of key issues and could support the pilot appropriately but it was clear that the joint initiative was

accountable to one organisation acting on behalf of all of the agency partners. In this way the pilot was able to mandate individual elements of work to specific organisations with clear lines of internal and cross-agency accountability. Similarly, locating management responsibility with one agency ensured that staff, as well as the commissioners of the service, were clear about who was responsible for day-to-day delivery, bringing difficulties to the attention of the relevant committee and addressing performance issues.

Work within the pilots also underlined the need for partnerships to be based on joint working at both strategic and operational levels, a theme consistently identified in the literature (Cameron and Lart, 2003). New services that depend on joint working are unlikely to be effective if those working at an operational level do not understand why they need to work together. Similarly, without the support of those working at a strategic level, joint working at an operational level is unlikely to be successful. All three of the pilots set up steering groups to provide the linkages between the strategic and operational levels. Each steering group included representatives from all partner agencies as well as the support workers. It was clear that members of these groups understood the aims of the pilots and appreciated that these could only be achieved by working together. The meetings acted as the forum at which operational problems could be discussed and solutions identified and were reported to be 'essential to the partnership agencies' by representatives of the SWAN NEST pilot. These steering groups also became the forum in which strategic issues could be addressed, such as planning how services could be 'mainstreamed' in the future.

The balance of power between agencies working together is important and can have an impact on the effectiveness of governance arrangements, particularly when both statutory and non-statutory sector agencies are involved (Huxham et al., 2000). Despite the apparent success of the steering groups in co-ordinating and managing activities, imbalances in power were apparent at two of the pilots. For example at the Housing Support Outreach and Referral pilot, steering group meetings were chaired by Supporting People officers, with project workers presenting a highly structured progress report that gave activity information, referral data and user feedback. The formality of this process led representatives of the voluntary sector to reflect that the relationship between partners had never been portrayed as one of equals, however, they accepted that as commissioners of the service the Supporting People officers took ultimate responsibility for the initiative. Even though this hierarchical relationship was noted, representatives of the voluntary sector commented that the contribution of all partners was valued and that the service developed in light of these contributions.

Clear and effective governance procedures are indicative of a well-managed service providing good outcomes for those using the service (Glasby and Peck, 2004).

However, in practice such procedures are hard to establish. Despite the lack of formal guidance provided by the UK government the experience of the pilots suggests that transparent arrangements, agreed by all partners, can help ensure that joint services are held accountable at a strategic level and that staff at an operational level understand to whom they are accountable and therefore enable the work to be managed effectively.

Involving people who use services in governance arrangements

The process of joint working is typically thought of in relation to how different agencies and/or professionals work together. However, there is growing recognition of the importance of service user involvement and as such the partnership agenda offers the potential for representatives of service user groups to participate in governance arrangements, ensuring that issues of significance to users are addressed (Cloke et al., 2000; Zeldin, 2004). Barnes argues that the developing role of user organisations within new patterns of local governance helps improve the legitimacy and credibility of services and contributes to the process by which services are held accountable and therefore 'implies an important shift in the balance of power between users and providers' (1999, p.84).

The pilots reflect this trend but also illustrate the difficulties of involving people who use, or may use, services in their development, management and evaluation; particularly when, as in these pilots, service users are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and have complex physical and mental health needs. Although each of the pilots regarded the involvement of people who use services as an essential means of ensuring that their work was grounded in issues of immediate concern to service users, the means by which they encouraged participation varied.

Given the complexity of the problems facing those people using the services developed by the SWAN NEST and the Housing Support Outreach and Referral pilots, neither thought it appropriate to involve service users in the initial development and ongoing management of their work. For example during discussions about the setting up of the SWAN NEST pilot, the agencies were concerned that the involvement of potential service users might raise unrealistic expectations that would then prove difficult to manage if, as was the case, the development of the supported housing scheme was delayed. Instead, once the service was established they held regular meetings with tenants to discuss their experience of living in the house and any suggestions they might have for improving the service.

In contrast, the On Track pilot decided from the outset that user representatives would play a prominent role in the development of the service. The original bid included plans for an evaluation to be undertaken by a local service users' group. A representative of this group took part in initial discussions about the service and

became a member of the steering group. As the service user evaluation progressed the evaluators made regular presentations to the steering group and their findings informed the subsequent development of the service. As a service user representative commented, their participation in the pilot was 'very much on equal terms'. They went on to say 'everyone can have a say and can participate'. Not only did this approach improve the credibility of the service but it may, indirectly, have contributed to the high levels of user engagement with the service. As one health partner commented, 'Service users' views are very high on the agenda, feedback informs service developments... it's always been participatory.'

Cloke et al. (2000) suggest that despite the wish to give homeless people a voice within partnerships very often this voice is not heard because of the louder and more powerful voices of professional elites. The experience from the pilots suggests that this eventuality need not always be the case. They demonstrate that the involvement of service user groups in the management of homeless services helps ensure that governance processes are more inclusive and both professionals and users considered that it helped improve the effectiveness of services. Significantly, the On Track pilot was able to capitalise on a long tradition of service user involvement within the field of mental health services, which meant that professionals involved in this pilot were accustomed to, and supportive of, service users participating in the governance of services.

Governance and the monitoring of joined-up services

Current policy emphasises the importance of a clear demonstration of outcomes as a means to ensure that services are developed that have a positive impact on the lives of those who use them. Consequently, the monitoring of outcomes has an important part to play in holding services accountable (Wolf and Edgar, 2007) as well as providing evidence to potential commissioners of services. However, this is not a straightforward process and is made more complex by the joined-up agenda, which requires a 'clearer articulation of the causal relationships regarding the sharing of outcomes and a fuller consideration of the multiple relationships in the partnership arrangements involved' (Wilkins, 2002, p.114). Each pilot was required to specify what outcomes they sought to deliver and how these would be measured. Their experiences illustrate the challenges inherent in framing work in terms of measurable and realistic outcomes, particularly when the outcomes relate to targets associated with a number of different agencies and when those using the services have complex and chaotic lifestyles.

To evaluate the impact, information needed to be gathered about the likely contribution of the pilots to those who would use the services. To this end the pilots collected information about the number of people accessing the services, the number of service users for whom a tenancy was arranged, whether these tenancies

were sustained at three-monthly intervals and additional information about specific health targets. However, a number of difficulties with this approach emerged. Attempts by the On Track pilot to follow up on young people after they had moved on to independent housing, sometimes in different cities, proved difficult because it required other agencies to collect additional data that had little relevance to their own organisation. Concerns also emerged at each of the pilots about the interpretation of data protection legislation and whether agencies could share information. For example, attempts at the SWAN NEST pilot to record whether service users were accessing and engaging with sexual health services failed because the primary care trust was unwilling to share this information even though they were a member of the partnership.

Finally, even when the pilots were able to provide information about the impact of services, some partners, particularly those with little experience of working with these specific groups, questioned the efficacy of what they regarded to be the small numbers of people receiving services. In these instances it was important for the steering groups to revisit their aims and objectives and to remind partners of the need to be realistic about what could be achieved in such a short time with groups of service users who lead complex and chaotic lives. As one partner at the SWAN NEST pilot reflected, 'We never deluded ourselves that this was an easy group to work with. People don't understand how difficult a job it is just to get women to a position of wanting to exit [the sex industry], it is a very long haul, getting other organisations to understand the complexity and the time that it will take.' This realistic approach meant that the pilot was able to withstand setbacks, for example when individual tenants left the supported housing scheme before they could be rehoused in long-term housing or when statutory sector partners questioned the worth of the intervention. However, this lack of understanding underlines the difficulties of evaluating services designed to support people who have complex lives, whose individual development and transition out of 'disordered lives' does not conform to the 'linear trajectory' imagined by policy makers (McNaughton and Sanders, 2007, p.898).

Conclusion

The development of joined-up services has led to the emergence of new patterns of collaborative governance within welfare services. Evidence from the Supporting People Health Pilot Programme in England suggests that this approach offers an effective means of providing support services to people with complex housing and health needs (Cameron et al., 2007), which is consistent with developments elsewhere in Europe (Edgar and Doherty, 2001; Wolf and Edgar, 2007). However, whilst these forms of governance may do much to improve the effectiveness of publicly funded services they also create a number of challenges, many of which are to do with what Huxham et al. (2000) have termed the 'structural complexity of partnerships'. The challenges presented are such that they have the potential to undermine the credibility and sustainability of innovative services designed to meet the housing and health needs of some of the most marginalised members of society. It is therefore important that the challenges of collaborative governance are recognised and strategies developed to overcome them, particularly when services such as these are potentially more vulnerable to funding cuts than mainstream services. The experience of the Supporting People pilots offer some examples of how these challenges can be successfully met and suggests potential models of how joined-up services can be developed that meet the complex needs of people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

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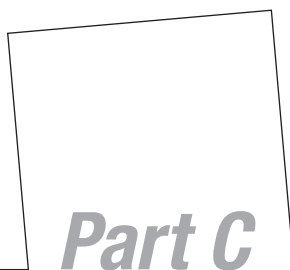
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Think Pieces



Part C

Governing Marginalised Populations : The Role of Coercion, Support and Agency

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› **Abstract_** *This paper seeks to locate homelessness within governance processes that utilise access to housing as a site for regulating conduct, particularly in relation to antisocial behaviour. It explores specific mechanisms being used in the United Kingdom, including Family intervention projects and housing benefit sanctions, and their relationship to mechanisms of eviction and homeless status. It argues that as these rationales and techniques of governance comprise a complex combination of conditionality, coercion and support they require a more nuanced debate about inclusionary and exclusionary trends in citizenship and the state regulation of marginal households. Such a debate would focus on the microphysics of power and account for the agency of governed subjects.*

› **Keywords_** *Agency; antisocial behaviour; conditionality; family intervention projects; homelessness; housing benefit sanctions.*

Introduction

Housing is centrally linked to the governance of antisocial behaviour, incivilities and other social problems in many European nations (Flint, 2006) and the management of marginalised populations is related in diverse and complex ways to the development of homeless legislation and policies (Fitzpatrick, 2008). Many commentators have described a coercive shift (Fitzpatrick and Jones, 2005) characterised by an increasingly intensive surveillance and regulation of homeless people and a punitive and disciplinary actuarial programme of removing homeless individuals from public

spaces and clamping down on activities such as rough sleeping, begging and street drinking. It is argued that these developments reflect governance rationales that view homeless people as 'out of place' in public arenas within a wider context of reduced notions of their citizenship and a diminished faith in rehabilitation (Mitchell, 1997; Fitzpatrick and Jones, 2005; Whiteford, 2008; Moore, 2008; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008; Hermer and MacGregor, 2007 Millie, 2009; Squire, 2009). However, this analysis tends to neglect the diversity and inconsistencies of policy developments across Europe, where nations such as Belgium, France, Norway and Ireland have repealed legislation in order to decriminalise vagrancy or begging and nations such as Scotland have strengthened the rights of the homeless (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2008). Academic accounts also require a more rigorous assessment of whether homeless individuals who are 'squeezed out' of some public spaces are being offered 'systematic compensatory support' (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008, p.192). In other words, we may be witnessing the production of new or reformed 'local spaces of public welfare' (Whiteford, 2008, p.90) with complex interactions between exclusionary and inclusionary governance motivations and uncertain outcomes of policy interventions.

It is apparent in the United Kingdom that across a range of linked social problems, including homelessness, antisocial behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, neglectful parenting and prostitution, there is a complex interplay between welfare support and criminal justice sanctions (Phoenix, 2008). Within what is termed state-sponsored 'coercive welfare' (Phoenix, 2008, p.282) the separate analytical categories of supportive inclusionary counselling or punitive and exclusionary legal approaches (Measham and Moore, 2008, p.298) have collapsed as a range of legal orders relating to parenting, drug misuse and prostitution make non-compliance with counselling or other forms of support an offence liable to fiscal or custodial sanction.

This paper suggests that housing remains a central site of the governance of marginalised households, with a specific relationship between homelessness and the regulation of antisocial behaviour. It argues that governance mechanisms are increasingly focused upon the failure of subjects to engage with welfare agencies and support mechanisms (Parr and Nixon, 2008, p.165) resulting in new forms of sanction, coercion and conditionality. It puts forward the case that critiques of these interventions often give an overly simplistic account of the motivations, techniques and outcomes involved and underplay the importance of agency. In order to advance these arguments, the paper focuses on two recent policy instruments in the UK: family intervention projects and housing benefit sanctions. Following a brief description of these instruments, it examines the microphysics of power and agency within them and reflects on the implications of these for projects of inclusion and exclusion in contemporary governance in Europe.

Family Intervention Projects

Family intervention projects have a long history in, for example, the UK and the Netherlands (Garrett, 2007; Welshman, 2008). The current interest in family intervention projects in the UK arose from a positive evaluation of a project in the Scottish city of Dundee, where families at risk of eviction from social housing on the grounds of antisocial behaviour were subject to intensive support and surveillance in order to enable them to change their behaviour and thereby sustain a social housing tenancy. Such projects may comprise outreach support to families in their existing homes, outreach support in dispersed tenancies managed by the projects or support in core residential accommodation involving intensive contact and surveillance. The projects are staffed by workers from a range of professional backgrounds, complemented by partnerships with key agencies, including local authority housing, education and social work departments and the police. The projects aim to address some of the underlying causes of antisocial behaviour, including parenting issues, family dynamics, neighbour disputes, mental health problems, domestic abuse and drug and alcohol misuse. The initial localised development of these projects has been more recently accompanied by national programmes of government funding and support for fifty-three projects in England and three projects in Scotland (for an overview of policy development and evaluations of these projects see Dillane et al., 2001; Nixon et al., 2006; White et al., 2008; Pawson et al., 2009). Housing and homelessness are central to these projects, as the threatened loss of a social housing tenancy is the most prominent criteria for households' referral to the projects, the loss of home remains the most powerful sanction against households for their failure to engage with the projects and the future sustainability of a tenancy is a key anticipated positive outcome of the projects' programme of work with families.

Housing Benefit Sanctions

Housing benefit is a means-tested social security benefit that is administered by local authorities in the UK on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. Housing benefit can cover the entire cost of a rent in the social or private rented sectors. It enables the majority of tenants in the social rented sector and one-fifth of tenants in the private rented sector to afford their rent and accounts for around half of the rental income of social landlords (local authorities and housing associations) in the UK (see Stephens, 2008, for a fuller discussion).

The Welfare Reform Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to apply a housing benefit sanction in cases where a household had been evicted from a tenancy on the grounds of antisocial behaviour, where members of the household

had been offered a package of support and had failed to engage with this support and where members of this household made a subsequent claim for housing benefit from a new address. Eight local authorities are currently piloting a housing benefit sanction scheme where households will be subject to a tiered reduction of their housing benefit payment if they meet the above criteria and do not engage with support packages offered to them (see Flint et al., 2008a, 2008b, for a full description and interim evaluation of the pilot schemes). As with family intervention projects, the issue of homelessness is central to the scheme: households will have lost their original home as a result of antisocial behaviour and one consequence of a future housing benefit sanction is the risk of them being evicted from their new property on the grounds of rent arrears.

Micro-Regulation and the Microphysics of Power and Agency

Family intervention projects and housing benefit sanction schemes represent programmes of intensive supervision and surveillance (McIntosh, 2008). They also contain a coercive element through the threat of loss of home or fiscal penalties in which the non-compliance with offered support becomes the defining feature of the relationship between the subject and governing agencies (Measham and Moore, 2008; Holt, 2008; Parr and Nixon, 2008). It is also evident that these techniques of governance produce new local spaces of welfare and centres of calculation for intervening with marginalised households (Garland, 1997; Whiteford, 2008). Both programmes prioritise the domestic sphere as an arena of governance and have ambiguous relations with homelessness (Parr and Nixon, 2008). For family intervention projects, the presence of a physically bounded domestic sphere is a prerequisite for their operation. The rationales for family intervention projects are premised precisely on the notion that eviction from a tenancy does not in itself change behaviour or resolve problems and indeed lessens the control and opportunities for engagement that agencies have with individuals or households (Parr and Nixon, forthcoming). The outreach work of these projects takes place in a home environment and, in some cases, the provision of alternative residential accommodation (which may also be a condition of parenting orders) enables the intensive surveillance of households (Parr and Nixon, 2008; Holt, 2008).

Critics such as Garrett (2007) and Rodger (2008) argue that these rationales epitomise a draconian, punitive and overt intervention in the private realm of domestic life, akin to Foucault's notion of the panopticon, and that the residential 'sin bin' element of the projects is primarily motivated by a logic of spatial exclusion within the wider cleansing of public spaces (Whiteford, 2008, p.97). Structural factors such as housing, poverty and domestic violence are ignored and the

apparent voluntary nature of engagement with family intervention projects masks the coercion involved through the alternative to participation being a loss of the family home (Garrett, 2007; Holt, 2008; Whiteford, 2008).

The rationales of housing benefit sanctions are somewhat different, in that they apply following the loss of home on the grounds of antisocial behaviour and the future application of sanctions is likely to increase the risk of subsequent homelessness. Therefore the space and centrality of home as an arena of intervention is not accorded the same priority, although the provision of intensive support, and sanctions for not engaging with this support, still applies. It should be noted that a major criticism of the housing benefit sanctions is that they are a post- eviction measure rather than facilitating support linked to a sanction whilst households remain in their existing property. This situation is exacerbated by the increasing use of probationary or demoted twelve-month tenancies, which enable social landlords to end tenancies without recourse to eviction action. However, as with the other measures discussed in this paper, the more punitive and disciplinary mechanism of such tenancies, which reduces the rights and security of households, is to be balanced, at least in theory, by additional responsibilities upon landlords to provide the support required to individuals to enable them to sustain a tenancy (Flint, 2006; Flint et al., 2008a and 2008b).

I would argue that, within the local 'calculus of the new politics of conduct' (Whiteford, 2008, p.97), some of the academic critiques of programmes such as family intervention projects are inaccurate and overly simplistic. The projects were in part a result of an understanding that the eviction of antisocial households (i.e. the spatial exclusion of households from specific neighbourhoods) did nothing to resolve their problems (Parr and Nixon, forthcoming). A second important point is that family intervention projects, and indeed the support packages to operate alongside housing benefit sanctions, are precisely aimed at addressing underlying factors such as housing, education, mental health, domestic abuse and substance dependency problems, albeit within the constraints of a focus on individual households rather than wider issues such as poverty. One further consequence of both measures is the need for agencies to resource and deliver comprehensive and appropriate packages of support to individuals. There is a pressing need for academic commentators to acknowledge this, and the potential positive outcomes, as well as negative consequences, of coercive forms of support (Fitzpatrick and Jones, 2005; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008; Holt, 2008).

In order to achieve this more nuanced analysis, we need to consider to what extent the micro-regulation of individuals (Holt, 2008, p.210) is inherently problematic and to have a greater understanding of the 'micro-physics of power' (Holt, 2008, p.217) that play out in these interventions. Far from seeking merely to discipline, exclude or

silence marginalised individuals, the efforts to 'grip' households (Respect Task Force, 2006) are actually attempts to open up the lives of individuals and to challenge and influence what these individuals may become (Foucault, 1978; Holt, 2008). It is evident that family intervention projects, housing benefit sanctions and other measures including parenting orders and support orders linked to drug misuse or prostitution seek to cultivate certain desirable subjectivities as defined by either state policies or local interpretations of these policies (Parr and Nixon, 2008, pp.166–167). But it is also the case that these interventions open up new possibilities for subjectivity and produce new forms of agency, in which the interventions and support may prompt reflection and engagement on the part of individuals with support services (Nixon et al., 2006; Holt, 2008; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008; Pawson et al., 2009) and may result in individuals wishing to change 'who they are and who they've become' (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008, p.198).

There is a tendency in some critical literature to play down the voices of the individuals subject to these interventions or to suggest that their reflections on the outcomes of support, particularly where these are positive, result from the coercive nature of these interventions and the lack of any alternative option given the threat of punitive sanctions such as the loss of one's home or one's children being taken into the care of local authorities (Garrett, 2007). However, these observations also neglect the centrality of the agency of the subjects of governance. A number of important recent studies have attempted to 'write agency back in' to accounts of homelessness (Parker and Fopp, 2004; Casey et al., 2007; Whiteford, 2008; McNaughton, 2009). This agency plays out at many levels, including homeless individuals' management of their presence in public space; their resistance to, or engagement with, support services; their independence or reliance upon institutional provision; and their own reflections upon their conduct (Stokoe, 2003; Nixon and Parr, 2006; Casey et al., 2007). Crucially, this agency plays out in the (limited) spaces of manoeuvre available to homeless individuals and therefore indicates that processes and outcomes of governance attempts to manage marginalised individuals are far from certain.

There is also a corresponding need to examine the motivation and agency of local service providers (Parr and Nixon, forthcoming). Whilst it may be argued that interventions play out on a wider 'landscape of morality' or sermonising based on middle-class norms of behaviour informing governance practices or wider discourses of homelessness as a degraded form of citizenship (Holt, 2008; Whiteford, 2008), it is precisely the lack of moral judgements made by (often working-class) workers in family intervention projects that households value (Nixon et al., 2006; Pawson et al., 2009). It is evident therefore that although mechanisms for referral and funding may be channelled through a focus upon antisocial behaviour, such projects contain a significant social welfare ethos, based on finding

long-term sustainable solutions to individuals' problems, including their housing circumstances (Parr, 2008).

The evaluations of family intervention projects reveal two key dimensions of contemporary governance that are sometimes overlooked in academic debates. First, that mechanisms for managing marginalised populations have inclusionary as well as exclusionary motivations and outcomes even where they are accompanied by a coercive element that makes support conditional on certain forms of engagement and acceptable conduct. Second, the interface between state power and the subjects of that power is characterised by negotiation, limitation and resistance. This is evident in the differential experiences and outcomes for individual families and the fact that no individuals have yet been subject to an actual housing benefit sanction in the pilot local authority areas (Nixon et al., 2006; Flint et al., 2008b; Pawson et al., 2009; see also Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008).

Governing Rationales of Citizenship and Inclusion

Although I have argued that the complexity and positive outcomes of new mechanisms for governing marginalised populations should be recognised, there is still a need for critical reflection on some of the central rationales underpinning the architecture of citizenship (Whiteford, 2008) that influence policy developments in European states. For example, the continuing focus upon the domestic sphere of 'the family' risks limiting the support provided to homeless individuals or couples without children, as is evident in both family intervention projects and housing benefit sanction schemes. Providing support primarily through addressing antisocial behaviour also risks denying access to this support for marginalised individuals who are not classified as being engaged in such conduct.

There is a further need to challenge the econometric rationality underpinning behavioural models informing governance policy interventions. The UK government argues that sanctions, including fiscal sanctions, would 'provide a very strong incentive to encourage those households to undertake rehabilitation when they have refused other offers of help' (Respect Task Force, 2006, p.23). Although the evidence for this is weak, the power of financial incentives is conceptualised as providing the ultimate traction for the 'thin rationality' (McNaughton, 2009) of marginalised individuals when other forms of engagement have failed. Indeed, the housing benefit sanctions are entirely premised upon this. Similar notions of financial determinants of behaviour are evident in the 'Killing with Kindness' (killingwithkindness.com) campaign that discourages individuals from giving money directly to homeless individuals and promotes the financial self-management of homeless individuals, for example through charging them for a meal in a homeless

centre. Even a recent research report (Business in the Community, 2009) that argues against welfare benefit sanctions suggests that a financial incentive should be paid to homeless people to encourage them back into work. However, focusing on financial measures, either as sanctions or incentives, negates the diverse range of motivations and challenges facing homeless individuals and marginalised households. More broadly, the focus upon economic rationality is linked to the pre-eminence of paid employment and financial autonomy as the primary characteristic of legitimate citizenship. Indeed, in several European countries, citizenship status and the social rights of this status (such as welfare payments and access to public housing) are becoming increasingly conditional on the employment position of the individual concerned.

To return to this paper's opening discussion of the governance of homeless individuals in public space, new mechanisms of coercive welfare will continue to be strongly influenced by how we imagine our citizenship and public realm. Johnsen and Fitzpatrick (2008) and Fitzpatrick and Jones (2005) are correct to identify the high-risk nature of coercive policies towards street homelessness and to question the extent to which coercive policies provide 'compensatory support' to those marginalised individuals increasingly denied access to public space. However, a broader question is whether intensive support to individuals may actually be provided without an accompanying punitive regulation of public spaces. Garrett (2007) argues that intensive support could be provided to vulnerable individuals in their neighbourhood without requiring them to move into what he terms the 'sin bin' accommodation of family intervention projects (although this argument is not supported by the research evidence). Research in England has found that dispersal orders, which grant the police powers to disperse groups in designated public spaces, resulted in more proactive and effective support mechanisms being considered for these groups, which could in theory have been provided without any need for a punitive legal measure (Crawford and Lister, 2007). Similarly, the threat of a housing benefit sanction was also viewed by local policy officers as potentially ensuring that a range of agencies developed comprehensive and effective support services for marginalised individuals (Flint et al., 2008a). At the individual level, the question is therefore to what extent coercion is a prerequisite for some marginalised individuals to engage with welfare support or for this support to be made available to them in the first place.

At a broader societal level, the question is whether the provision of enhanced support to marginalised populations can only be delivered as a compensatory mechanism within a more punitive and disciplinary governance of public space. A forthcoming comparative study of New York and Bogota shows that a reduction in crime, incivilities and antisocial behaviour does not necessarily require zero tolerance policing techniques, but may also be achieved through an inclusionary programme of public

investment in urban spaces and support services to marginalised populations. Which approach, or combination of approaches, is adopted by European nations matters because of their wider political and social consequences. Removing the visibility of marginalised populations from public spaces reduces the daily encounters and interactions that are important determinants of our sense of shared citizenship and mutual obligations. Generating a punitive political discourse emphasising sanctions, punishment and exclusion also masks the inclusionary motivations and positive outcomes that continue to be achieved through policy interventions. This in turn weakens the political case for providing the considerable public resources required to bring about beneficial changes in the lives of some marginalised individuals. For example, the UK government discourse has sought to highlight the punitive, disciplinary and 'community protection' dimensions of the core residential units in some family intervention projects, whilst the media and critics such as Garrett (2007) define these accommodation units as 'sin bins'. Such a definition plays down the essential welfare and rehabilitation goals of these projects.

Conclusion

Using the examples of two UK policy programmes – family intervention projects and housing benefit sanctions – this paper has illustrated how housing and homelessness remain central to the regulation of conduct and the management of marginalised populations. Although it focused on the UK, the implications of simultaneous strategies of conditional inclusions and exclusions within policy measures (Edwards and Hughes, 2008, pp.58–59) are applicable to the different contexts of individual European states. In particular, I have argued that the intensifying surveillance and supervision of marginalised populations in both public and domestic private spaces is not simply a project of exclusion. Rather, it involves the construction of new local spaces of welfare provision (Whiteford, 2008) in which coercion in the form of sanctions is linked to the take-up of (often-enhanced) support programmes.

Critiques of coercive welfarism need a more nuanced understanding of the micro-physics of power within these new spaces of welfare provision (Holt, 2008), with a specific account given to the agency of the subjects of these new programmes and those involved in delivering them. These accounts need to be located within broader debates about the underpinning rationales of citizenship and welfare in European states that are strongly influenced by governance approaches to the presence of marginalised groups, including homeless people, in public spaces. Governance attempts to eradicate homelessness and other social problems from 'both urban landscapes and public consciousness' (Whiteford, 2008, p.96) mask significant, if less visible, supportive interventions in other spaces, including family homes, schools, support centres and accommodation units. But these 'hidden' interven-

tions should be accompanied by a far more explicit policy promotion of the supportive and rehabilitative elements of these measures and a political commitment to address the needs of the most vulnerable individuals and households. Whilst this may be challenging, the new policy frameworks for addressing antisocial behaviour and homelessness in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2009a, 2009b) provide examples of how building a consensus for such an approach is possible.

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Homelessness and the 'Exclusive Society' Thesis : Why It Is Important to 'Think Local' to 'Act Local' on Homelessness Issues

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› **Abstract_** *A number of scholars have recently suggested that the West has turned neoliberal and thus become increasingly punitive in its attitudes and responses to the homeless and other marginalised groups. This paper offers a critique of this view. Using the examples of San Francisco and Edinburgh, it deconstructs some of the fallacies inherent in the recent spate of theorising on social exclusion to support the argument that such 'big picture' views hinder rather than help our understanding of the complexities that one finds on the ground. When we attend to the 'smaller picture', the paper suggests, we can see not only different modes and styles of governance across the West, but also varying degrees of social inclusion and exclusion.*

› **Keywords_** *Exclusion ; neoliberalism ; punitive turn ; homelessness.*

Introduction

Over the past few years a number of eminent scholars have written extensively on what they perceive to be a troubling phenomenon: the rise of neoliberal ideology across the West and a concomitant increase in exclusionary attitudes. Such attitudes are said to be manifest in a variety of forms of treatment aimed at excluding, regulating or punishing the behaviour of the so-called 'under-classes' – that is, the homeless and other marginalised citizens. From zero tolerance policing to declining shelter beds, from 'workfare' to anti-camping by-laws, each has been variously held up as exemplars of this trend.

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, to offer a critical assessment of the core claims upon which the 'exclusive society' or 'punitive turn' thesis hinges. Second, to offer a counter-thesis: that the West has not been experiencing a singular, uniform rise in either neoliberalism or in exclusionary attitudes towards the homeless; rather, if we turn our attention closely to how homelessness is viewed and responded to within individual locations, what is seen is an amazing diversity of inclusionary and exclusionary responses both within and across nations. This second aim follows in the footsteps of previous scholars in this journal (Tosi, 2007; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008), who drew on empirically grounded analyses of the treatment of the homeless in the European context to demonstrate the diversity and complexity of responses. Like these authors, I do not see a 'punitive turn', but rather variations of inclusion and exclusion that are the result of important local cultural differences; the culture within a given city or region is shaped by unique combinations of historical, social, geographical, political and economic factors that find expression in varying social attitudes. By examining the local context, we can trace out not only those areas that are deeply resistant to change, but also openings and spaces for new possibilities.

New York Is Not an Exemplar of Anything but New York

I want to begin by sketching out a rather general overview of the thesis that has appeared in various iterations over the past decade. In essence, the 'exclusive society' or 'punitive turn' thesis can be deconstructed along the following lines:

1. In the post-war era (1950 to 1973) there was a golden age of prosperity that provided the masses with improved standards of living and an expansive social safety net (Young, 1999; Garland, 2001).
2. In the early 1970s an economic crisis ushered in the rise of a political ideology in the United States, the United Kingdom and other Western nations: neoliberalism (Young, 1999; Garland, 2001).
3. Neoliberalism privileges the economic over the social; all social relations are viewed as subordinate to the workings of the free market. Social policies implemented under neoliberal regimes have profoundly altered social and economic relations in the West (Young, 1999; Bauman, 2000).
4. One of the major casualties of this alteration of relations is the welfare state. Under neoliberalism, the welfare state and the various programmes it administers are viewed as inefficient, responsible for a culture of dependency and an unnecessary tax burden and so on. The poor are to be reintegrated into

the workforce through 'workfare' programmes and other coercive means intended to end their dependency (Young, 1999 and 2007; Bauman, 2000; Garland, 2001).

5. The social safety net is increasingly made less accessible to a wider section of the population through spending cuts and restrictive legislation and policies, while industries are deregulated, public services are privatised and unionised jobs are de-skilled and sent overseas. As individuals in the West begin to realise the precariousness of their social and economic positions, anxieties manifest in an increased intolerance of the 'under-classes'. The poor are cast as dangerous parasites who benefit themselves – through crime and manipulation of weak social policies – at the expense of hard-working citizens (Jordan, 1996; Taylor, 1999; Gray, 1999; Young, 1999 and 2007; Bauman, 2000; Garland, 2001).
6. These attitudes find expression in a variety of punitive measures aimed at regulating the conduct of the poor and excluding them from public and private spaces (Gray, 1999; Young, 1999 and 2007; Garland, 2001).

When these premises are re-assembled, what emerges is the argument that as a consequence of neoliberalism the West is becoming uniformly more exclusionary and punitive towards the poor.

Elsewhere I have offered a more detailed critique of each of the premises above (Huey, 2007), thus I am going to limit myself here to an examination of those features most relevant to the core argument.

In the preface to *The Culture of Control*, Garland acknowledges a significant problem faced by social scientists: 'in our attempts to make sense of social life, there is an unavoidable tension between broad generalization and the specification of empirical particulars' (2001, p.vii). Clearly there is a role in discussion and debate for theoretical analyses that rely on broad brush strokes. However, these 'big picture' accounts have come to dominate discussions of homelessness and contemporary social responses to this problem. Every social ill imaginable is now routinely attributed to a mode of governance that is, in actuality, unique to the United States. And this is where the problem comes in: neoliberalism is perhaps the most abused and least understood of political concepts, and social scientists have been as guilty of this misuse as anyone. What we see in various accounts is a conflation of different social-economic-political forms under the rubric 'neoliberalism' because particular cities or countries share some policies and/or features in common with the US. To be clear: practices in the US routinely attributed to neoliberalism actually refer to the variant developed by the Chicago School (Huey, 2007). There are other models or political ideal-types that have been categorised

under the umbrella of neoliberalism because they share as a central philosophical premise the belief that the market is the best means of ensuring the health of a democracy; however, these models differ in key respects (see below).

Some scholars have stated that there is a degree of convergence in response to perceived crime problems (which the homeless are unfortunately counted among) because of globalising trends in criminal justice policy. Within these accounts, the US is frequently depicted as a hegemonic power whose policies are seen as the successful model and therefore are adopted by other nations (Young, 1999; Garland, 2001; Jones and Newburn, 2002). As an example, much has been made of the fact that representatives from France, Italy, the UK, Australia and other countries visited New York after it implemented a repressive set of policies aimed at 'cracking down' on visible signs of disorder (of which the homeless were seen to constitute a significant part) (Young, 1999; Wacquant, 2009). This repressive drive against the homeless earned New York its status in theoretical and popular accounts as the emblematic neoliberal space. Thus, the conclusion to be drawn from these visits is that punitive attitudes were spreading (Young, 1999; Wacquant, 2009). As it happens, such 'big picture' theorising has been contested by 'smaller picture' analyses that reveal significantly more complexity on the ground. While it is the case that some (not all) of the places represented by those who visited New York did subsequently adopt elements of the 'broken windows' approach, the approach was not wholly adopted but rather hybridised (Dixon and Maher, 2004; Huey, 2007). Why? Again, because cities, provinces/states and countries are cultural products shaped by unique combinations of geography, climate, history, demographic shifts, economics, politics and so on. Thus, while policy approaches, and even aspects of the ideology from which a given approach springs, can be transferred to a new site, the content of such transfers will necessarily be adapted to fit the local culture (Stenson and Edwards, 2004).

The focus on globalising trends tends to obscure the 'bigger picture' that it purports to illuminate for another reason. Some nations, states/provinces and cities constitute what Savelsberg (1999) has termed 'spaces of exception' – sites where policies and practices significantly deviate from the punitive policy trends that theorists point to in the US. For example, Australians were among those who visited New York to observe the purported wonders generated by 'broken windows' policing, but Australia has been at the forefront of harm reduction policies that have greatly benefited those homeless individuals who number among the addicted. Indeed Australian harm reduction policies have been imported to Vancouver, Canada. Vancouverites drew not only from Sydney, but also from Amsterdam and Frankfurt when formulating approaches to addiction in one of Canada's poorest communities, the Downtown Eastside (DTES). Today, the DTES houses North America's first safe injection site. Even the US is not exclusively punitive towards the homeless. In a bid to end home-

lessness in Portland, in 2005, city officials began a flexible funding programme that allows outreach workers to offer permanent accommodation immediately to people living on the streets (NLCHP and NCH, 2009). Another exception can be found in the actions of city officials in Cleveland. In opposition to the growing trend in the US to enact prohibitive food sharing by-laws, this city sponsored a coordinated effort to bring individuals and groups together to improve food distribution to the homeless while addressing issues related to food sharing that were seen as divisive within the larger community (NLCHP and NCH, 2009). In short, when we adjust our frame of reference, we capture a significantly more complex picture, one that frequently includes intertwining elements of inclusion and exclusion.

Homelessness in San Francisco and Edinburgh: A Tale of Two Cities

To bring this point into sharper relief, this paper examines, albeit briefly, the treatment of homelessness in two cities: San Francisco and Edinburgh. Why compare these sites? Commentators have variously suggested that the US and the UK are neoliberal and that the neoliberal tendencies of each are reflected in punitive public policies directed at the poor (Young, 1999 and 2007; Wacquant, 2009). To be clear: I have no intention of contradicting my previous point that a city should *not* stand as an exemplar of an entire nation's attitudes and practices; rather, I am using these two cities to try to undo the belief that such abstractions can and should be easily made.

San Francisco might seem an odd choice given its reputation as a liberal city. A fairly conservative estimate of the number of homeless persons in San Francisco is some 6,500 (Begin, 2009). This figure is notably lower than the estimate of 8,024 cited by city officials in 2002 (Office of the Controller, 2002). The drop in homelessness can be directly attributed to a hostile environment, with the homeless increasingly regulated through harsh civic ordinances, repressive policing practices and restrictive aid programmes.

When I first began to study San Francisco in 2000, the city had implemented a series of 'quality of life' by-laws intended to repress those activities associated with homelessness (such as panhandling, camping in public spaces and so on). The by-laws resulted in police officers issuing \$100 tickets to 'offenders'. When the tickets remained unpaid, a warrant would be issued for the individual's arrest, creating a revolving jail-door cycle for many of the area's poor. In an interview conducted in 2003, a homeless resident of the city's Tenderloin district described the process:

The Mayor and his program, it was like sweep all the homeless under the rug. Basically, people who were living on the streets, sleeping on the streets, were waking up with German Shepherds in their faces. Then you get a citation. They write us a ticket and tell us we can't do this again. Then they turn into warrants, and then the warrants... just enough evidence to get us off the street again and keep us in jail.

In other interviews conducted with homeless San Franciscans, the experience of living under constant threat of being ticketed for a status offence or picked up for outstanding warrants was similarly referenced. For example, in the following exchange two homeless males are discussing their experiences with a particular police officer who is notorious for harassing people with tickets.

Respondent 1: There was a blind man begging in front of a no trespassing sign and he gave him a ticket because of the sign...

Respondent 2: He arrested him?

Respondent 1: He arrested him. He arrested Eddie.

Respondent 2: He arrested him? He took him in?

Respondent 1: A blind guy in front of a no trespassing sign. With the stick and the glasses and everything. Legally blind.

In 2007 the informal police practice of aggressive enforcement of status-related offences was endorsed by Mayor Gavin Newsom when he announced an 'outreach plan' that would entail cracking down on 'quality of life' issues: 'Any person committing a crime (littering, encampment, trespassing, urinating, defecating, dumping, blocking sidewalk, intoxication, etc.), will be asked to cease the behavior and enter into services... If the individual resists services, the officer will issue a citation' (cited in Elsinger, 2007).

The creation and enforcement of status offences and other similarly harsh responses to the city's homeless issue can be traced to underlying public attitudes towards both the issue of poverty and the question of social spending. In various respects, San Francisco can be seen as exemplifying key elements of the US variant of neoliberal ideology. For instance, if we look at voting patterns in public referenda on various spending issues, San Franciscans are seen to be particularly loathe to fund public assistance measures or other social programmes for those in need. Indeed, a similar pattern can be seen across California as a whole; throughout the early part of the 2000s, Californian voters repeatedly denied requests for funding to social programmes that would improve the lot of those on lower socio-economic rungs (Elsinger, 2007). While polls cite the source of simmering public frustrations in San Francisco as the apparent intractability of the homeless problem (Lelchuk,

2002; Knight, 2009), some commentators are more candid. The root cause of the homeless problem in San Francisco is routinely ascribed to a 'culture of dependency', with the city's 'generous' welfare programmes cited as an enabling factor (Knight, 2009; Anderson, 2009). Indeed, in various public fora, civic officials, business leaders and residents express the view that their expensive programmes lure homeless individuals from across the country to come and take advantage of San Franciscans' generosity.¹ In a recent newspaper column, editorialist Ken Garcia (2009) echoed the views of many other San Franciscans in decrying 'the hundreds of millions of dollars that were spent on so-called homeless programs that only brought more homeless people to San Francisco looking for free cash'.

Given that such views are also repeatedly expressed through the measures that San Franciscans support at the ballot box, civic officials have responded accordingly by trying to restrict eligibility for social programmes, cutting and/or modifying public assistance payments to limit the amount of cash that a recipient can receive,² paying homeless people to return to cities of origin and so on (Lelchuk, 2002; Jouvenal 2006; Nevius 2008). They have also responded by supporting police crackdowns on homeless encampments, initiatives that force homeless people into using what community activists describe as substandard facilities (COHSF, 2007) and any number of other tactics that drive the homeless away. Thus it is not surprising that in 2009 two national homeless agencies cited San Francisco as one of the ten 'meanest' cities in the US. Notably, New York did not make the list.

A city that is not easily counted among the 'mean' is Edinburgh. In 2002, when I first began researching the treatment of the homeless in this city, I discovered that the rate of shelter beds available was over double what was required (Huey, 2007). Temporary beds were going empty because both the city and the Scottish Executive

¹ Mayor Gavin Newsom's administration has publicly blamed an influx of 'outsiders' for the city's homeless issue, suggesting that San Francisco is 'a magnet because of its good weather, tolerant residents and wealth of services' (Knight, 2009). This rhetoric is, however, confounded by the fact that the 2008 homeless count revealed that '78 percent of homeless people said they were living in San Francisco when they became homeless' (Knight, 2009).

² According to a report released by the Office of the Controller (2008), the number of homeless individuals receiving aid under the County Adult Assistance Program dropped by approximately one thousand persons within a year of the 2004 implementation of the 'Cash Not Care Program', which cut direct aid to individuals. Funds cut were replaced with a guarantee of food and a shelter bed.

had made concerted efforts to move people into permanent residences.³ I do not want to suggest that no one was without accommodation within the city; in fact, a core population of 'hard to house' individuals continued to use shelters or sleep rough because of a lack of integrated housing (Huey, 2007). However, this gap in services was recognised by officials and sites that could address more complex issues – such as a 'wet hostel' for active drinkers – were being developed.

Today the system in Edinburgh is under strain. The number of homeless people has increased and temporary beds are filling, while the city scrambles to find permanent housing in an expensive real estate market (Shelter Scotland, 2009). The rise in homelessness can be attributed not only to the recent financial crisis, but also to an influx of EU migrants (Orchard et al., 2007). When we interviewed community service providers in 2008 they expressed concerns about the challenges of making sure that different communities have access to resources. As one shelter worker explained of the new homeless, 'they need to understand that they are entitled to [shelter and other assistance]'. Despite reported problems with ensuring that there is sufficient quality temporary accommodations and permanent low-income housing stock for those in need, the number of people sleeping rough in Edinburgh (n=39) is a fraction of those found sleeping on the streets in San Francisco (n=2,709) (Homeless Outreach Project, 2008; Begin, 2009).

Shelter provision is, however, only one means by which to measure the treatment of the homeless; income provision is another. A comparison of 2003 rates of income assistance for homeless residents of Edinburgh and of San Francisco found that recipients in Scotland were not only guaranteed housing, but received a slightly higher level of income from the state (Huey, 2007). Rather than simply relying on numbers and observations of the resources available to homeless residents, I also interviewed community service providers about Edinburgh's standard of care. Although one or two raised concerns about the needs of the 'hard to house', most echoed the view of a long-time anti-homelessness campaigner who stated that 'provision for homeless people in Edinburgh is very good, it passes the rest of Britain'. Such views were echoed in a follow-up study conducted in 2008 (Huey and Quirouette, forthcoming).

³ Since 1998 the Scottish government has developed a number of initiatives aimed at tackling poverty, including enacting a bill that requires local authorities to provide shelter, funding shelters and other services through its Rough Sleepers' Initiative, and enacting a scheme to convert vacant properties into spaces for the homeless, among others. The City of Edinburgh, through its social inclusion initiative, One City, has funded a variety of services to the homeless, such as community food programmes, café facilities for the homeless, a retail training programme for homeless youth and school snack programmes.

I have argued elsewhere that the treatment of the poor reflects the values, cultural aspirations and fears of the larger society, which are articulated in the style of policing that one finds in a given city (Huey, 2007). In two different studies of the policing of the homeless in Edinburgh (Huey, 2007; Huey and Quirouette, forthcoming), the consensus among residents was that, while they occasionally encountered a police officer who gave them a hard time, asked them to 'move on' or arrested them for a 'breach of the peace', for the most part respondents did not feel harassed, mistreated or otherwise abused by police. The term most frequently used to describe local police was 'alright'. From an interview with a homeless female:

A: Aye, there are some that are alright. I won't say that here.

[Office door opens and an outreach worker walks in.]

Outreach worker [*joking*]: All coppers are bastards!

A: I won't say that... There are a few of them that are alright like.

From an interview with an elderly homeless man:

Q: How do the police treat you guys?

A: Through the year certainly alright. You get the odd one now and again.

In contrast to the views of homeless San Franciscans, who largely depicted the police as enemies, homeless interviewees in Edinburgh were more likely to state, as one respondent did, that the police 'are there to help me'.

One of the ironies of examining Edinburgh's treatment of the homeless is that there is an almost automatic temptation to assume that the city represents a welfarist outlier on an otherwise neoliberal UK grid. And yet, that is not the case. A close examination of the political economy of Edinburgh reveals that it is, in many ways, a highly illustrative example of neoliberalism, just not of the form that is typically called to mind when the word 'neoliberalism' is bandied about. As noted earlier, there are other models or ideal types of neoliberalism. In Edinburgh we see elements of the *ordoliberalan* variant, a form that recognises the vagaries of the unfettered market and privileges a more socially oriented approach, with a role for both public and private sector involvement in responding to the social problems that the market inevitably produces. The result is a style of governance that falls under the umbrella of neoliberalism but produces something that looks very different on the ground from, say, neoliberal San Francisco or that vaunted exemplar of neoliberalism, New York.

Conclusion: 'Thinking Locally' to 'Act Locally'

This paper has attempted to demonstrate that it is only when we move away from 'big picture' accounts that we can begin to trace, in ever finer detail, the ways in which inclusive and exclusive strands of thought, belief and action play out in local communities. I realise that in casting my lot for analysis that focuses on the local, I am bucking a trend; however, I suggest that 'thinking locally' permits us the ability to assess more accurately the current state of affairs in our cities in relation to effecting critical changes, as well as finding and shoring up strands of inclusivity within local communities in order to frame contributions to public discourse on homelessness more effectively ('acting locally'). Such tracings will surely yield difficult challenges that need to be faced by advocates for the homeless, but more importantly they will also shed light on potential, as well as very real, openings for change. How so? Let me provide a final illustration.

In response to the problem of high levels of victimisation and under-reporting among the homeless in Edinburgh, in 2002 the police and community service providers implemented a third-party reporting system intended to facilitate victims' access to justice. In 2003 I conducted preliminary research on the Homelessness Remote Reporting Project (Huey, 2008). In 2008 a follow-up study was conducted in conjunction with a larger research programme aimed at assessing whether this model programme could be successfully implemented in two Canadian cities: Vancouver and Toronto (Huey and Quirouette, forthcoming). These cities were selected as potentially viable sites to explore adopting this programme for one simple reason: previous research suggested that, despite some variations in levels of inclusivity, there were very real avenues through which change could be fostered. This view was further supported when we interviewed police leaders in both cities and they generally expressed interest in the programme. Indeed, some commanders offered their districts to test a pilot project. This is not to suggest that the homeless are necessarily treated as well in, say, Vancouver as in Edinburgh, but rather that there is sufficient scope for effecting a positive change in that treatment. We knew this not from a blanket acceptance of the routine characterisation of the West as uniformly neoliberal and thus uniformly exclusive, but from examining the political economy of the local environment. It is from 'thinking locally' that the possibility of 'acting locally' in meaningful ways emerges.

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Speaking for the Homeless : Opportunities, Strengths and Dilemmas of a User Organisation

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› **Abstract_** *In Denmark a national organisation of homeless people (SAND) was formed in 2001. Its existence improves the opportunities for democratic participation by homeless people, who are normally excluded from the spheres of decision making. SAND has gained a formal platform of participation. Recognised by the authorities as a serious and reliable organisation, it has acquired the legitimacy to participate and to seek to influence local and national homeless policies. It also provides homeless people with an opportunity to raise demands and concerns directly with social workers at hostels for the homeless. SAND is an example of how an organisation of people with limited resources is able to emerge and consolidate. The case also pinpoints how ongoing challenges (such as lack of resources, stability and continuity among participants) pose a challenge to the democratic ambition of forming a truly representative organisation. This paper argues that interest organisations of marginalised groups need support from external actors (state or others) to survive because of their structural weaknesses, limited resources and transience. Moreover, programmes of capacity building may enable the survival and consolidation of this type of organisation.*

› **Keywords_** *Homelessness ; User organisations ; Social movement organisations, participation, welfare state.*

Introduction

SAND is a user organisation for the homeless or the formerly homeless in Denmark. We speak the case of those who otherwise have nobody to speak their case. We provide a social and political platform for marginalised people, and actively support the establishment of tenants' councils in all hostels for the homeless.¹

Homeless people have limited opportunities to influence social policies. Belonging to a minority group in a welfare society and facing a number of personal problems, homeless people often lack both the resources and the capacity to unite and gain access to the media or circles of decision making.

Studies of homeless social movement organisations² in the United States show that these organisations often: are locally based, city-level phenomena (even while gaining national attention through coordinated protests); have problems maintaining a viable structure; and emerge and act in repressive environments where they face a number of attempts at delegitimising their very existence (Cress and Snow, 2000; Williams, 2005). However, in Denmark, a national organisation of homeless people (SAND) formed in 2001 has since gradually gained more legitimacy, increased its annual budget and employed professionals to speak in the interests of homeless people. This paper briefly outlines some of main lessons to be learned from the first eight years of SAND's existence and some of the challenges facing the organisation.

SAND is the national organisation of homeless people in Denmark, organised by and for homeless people. The organisation is unique in the sense that only people who are or have been homeless are members, though staff members of the secretariat have not, themselves, been homeless. SAND seeks to act as the mouthpiece for all homeless people in the country. The organisation consists primarily of people who are currently staying at hostels for the homeless (which are called section 110 accommodation residences in Denmark) or people who were homeless at an earlier stage of their lives.

In a structure that resembles that of a traditional trade union, SAND aims to have a representative at each hostel for the homeless and has regional councils and a national committee. This structure ensures that it is represented both regionally and nationally and may enter into dialogue and raise claims with local authorities and government bodies. SAND is deeply committed to maintaining cooperation and

¹ From SAND's website: www.sandudvalg.dk/Service/UK.

² In the literature, these organisations are often called social movement organisations. However, the terms that are normally applied in Denmark when speaking of organisations formed by client groups of the social service system are 'user organisation' and 'interest organisation' and these terms will be used interchangeably when speaking of SAND in this paper.

constructive dialogue with the authorities, and its democratic ambition is further reflected in the representative structure of the organisation, in the internal processes of decision making and in the education of its activists.

The overall aim of SAND is to seek to counteract the causes and consequences of homelessness. In its mission statement, the organisation stresses that it cooperates with the relevant organisations and authorities to ensure sufficient assistance for homeless people and other excluded groups. In addition SAND strives to ensure acceptable conditions at hostels for homeless people. SAND is financed and also actively supported by the national authorities.

From Local and Specific Initiatives to a National Organisation

The formation of SAND followed a number of local initiatives that together increased belief in the opportunities that could be created by a user organisation (Anker, 2008). The initiatives grew out of local grievances and attempts to increase awareness of homelessness in Denmark. Local radio-stations for homeless people, produced by social workers and homeless people, street newspapers for homeless people, exhibitions focusing on homelessness, and other local initiatives created awareness of the need for a national user organisation. Specific and local initiatives created the opportunity for activists to play a concrete role in transforming individual experiences and grievances into a collective public expression.

A number of key people and events provide the very specific background for the emergence of SAND (Anker, 2008); however, the importance of four broad dimensions is emphasised here:

- Different, and to some extent opposed, ideological currents increased the interest in user involvement in the 1990s; neoliberal ideas concerned with free choice for service users combined with democratic concerns for participation and empowerment. The two different ideological currents ensured broad political consensus around the ambition to improve user involvement in social work. The ideological climate was thus favourable for the emergence of a user organisation of homeless people.
- The institutional structure of the Danish welfare state is relatively open so that it is possible for interest organisations to emerge and there are relatively good opportunities for collective actors to make their voices heard. Authorities' strategies with regard to interest organisations in Denmark are normally integrative and cooperative and follow a long tradition of involving organisations in the political-administrative process (Torpe, 2003, pp.42–43). When officially recognised, associations often receive public financial support. Sympathy for user organisations is also

inscribed in the legal framework: the Social Service Act stipulates that service users from municipalities must be given the opportunity to influence the organisation of service provision. Moreover, hostel residents have the right to organise and elect representatives (Socialministeriet, 1998, p.165).

- Alliances between central actors in the field ensured support and resources from the Ministry of Social Affairs. Non-users often have a strong involvement in the formation of user movements (Crossley, 1999, p.657), and the formation of SAND was inspired and supported by progressive professionals; these 'non-users' were themselves inspired by ideas of user involvement, empowerment, democracy and social capital, and a critical concern for socially excluded people. Their thinking and influence was essential in the development not only of the organisation but also of the legal rights to form user organisations. Supporting the user initiatives, these actors promoted the ideas of user organisations within the Ministry of Social Affairs, which gave financial support to develop the organisation.
- The existence of a group of homeless people who were willing and able to take up the challenge to form a user organisation is also important. Without activists who are able to speak up, formulate visions and gain recognition for the organisation, SAND would not have attained the position it has today.

Combining Visions: Local and National Perspectives

Although a series of specific initiatives (homeless radio, street newspaper etc.) led to the formation of SAND, the organisation is today influenced strongly by its ambition to be a democratic and representative organisation of homeless people. Activists are recruited when they stay at a hostel for the homeless, which means that it is basically users or former users of these that make up the membership of SAND. This is reflected in the profile of the typical member: approximately two-thirds are men, mostly between the ages of thirty-five and sixty, and many have experienced some kind of 'social de-route' such as divorce, unemployment or problems with alcohol, possibly followed or accompanied by psychological problems.³ However, very few persons from ethnic minorities are members of SAND, although these account for an increasing proportion of the users of homeless hostels. People sleeping rough are another category not integrated as activists on boards and committees around the country. The queries and interests of those who

³ This description is not based on a formal membership record, but rather on observations from participation in meetings and general assemblies in SAND.

stay at homeless hostels dominate the work of SAND, which explains why in its first years of existence SAND concentrated to a large degree on ensuring decent conditions for homeless people at the hostels.

The user councils and the elected spokespeople at the hostels form the backbone of the organisation. Their most important daily task is to serve as representatives of the homeless, presenting and forwarding problems, dissatisfaction and new ideas to the director and staff of the hostels. The problems experienced at hostels for the homeless are then occasionally dealt with by SAND on a regional or national basis. In this way SAND has addressed how hostels deal with the use of drugs or alcohol, the obligations of residents at specific hostels to become involved in work-related activities, and the issue of ensuring that people who are thrown out of hostels due to conflicts are still treated decently and informed properly about their rights.⁴

In personal interviews, SAND activists tend to describe themselves and their ideas of SAND in two different ways. For one group, the main priority of the association's work is the efforts at the local level. It is at the local level that they feel recognised and successful as activists. This group is primarily concerned with social activities that are carried out by local associations, such as bingo, pool, excursions and so on. Discussions among these activists often concern the food and rations served at hostels and how rules are implemented, including questions around why some people are not confronted with consequent sanctions when breaking the rules. They are also concerned with how the staff treat homeless people and what the rights and responsibilities of homeless people are during their stay there. The formation of an association of homeless people thus provides a channel for critique of, and reactions to, discriminatory practices – and perceptions of practices – in the field. In short, it entails a call for recognition and decent treatment in everyday life as it is experienced by homeless people coming into contact with the system.

For another group of activists, the main aim is to create a national and politically important association. These activists hope to see the organisation strengthened and they struggle to improve conditions for the most marginalised segments of the population. A former president of SAND expressed the ambition in this way:

The aim of SAND is to do our best to help create a mouthpiece for the ones who are not able to speak themselves. That those who feel like shit, those at the bottom, the addicts, the ones who scream and shout so that no one wants to listen to them... That these people have a proper voice, which the system will take seriously. So, SAND must be respected for its opinions and as an advocate

⁴ The concern of homeless social movement organisations with shelter policies can also be seen in Williams (2005). The situation at treatment facilities for drug users has led to the setting up of a similar organisation for drug users (Anker, 2006).

for the poor, the excluded and the vulnerable. And that is what SAND is supposed to do... The main task is to draw attention to those who are not well, and who should have better conditions. It is quite easy to become the mouthpiece of those who are not able themselves. (personal interview)

SAND is still (as any collective actor) in the middle of the process of defining itself and its aims. Most important in this process are the attempts to combine and link the experiences and concerns of individual activists with the broader and more general conditions of homelessness. So far, SAND has been able to incorporate the different personal interests of activists, and to combine both a social and more local emphasis with a broader national (and to some extent international) political dimension. The combination of the two is essential to interest organisations, and it is one of the most important strengths of SAND.

Recognition

SAND, like other interest organisations in the field of health and social policy, seeks to construct the conditions of homelessness as a genuine social problem (Spector and Kitsuse, 2001 ; Henriksen et al., 2001). The public side of this work can be seen at conferences and in the media, while another part of the work takes place in more delimited political and administrative networks through participation in councils and commissions. In this way, SAND is quite similar to other and more established interest organisations in the social policy field (Henriksen et al., 2001).

The national authorities recognise SAND as a legitimate interest organisation for the homeless. When new legislation or initiatives are being created, information/documents are circulated to SAND for consideration, and SAND also provides input into the NAPs/inclusion process. More differentiated responses to SAND have been observed at hostels, which are not always open to changing their specific methods of intervention for homeless people (Ramsbøl et al., 2007).

A recent example that illustrates that SAND is taken seriously and recognised in the field is the pilot, The Homelessness Strategy – a strategy to reduce homelessness in Denmark. The Minister of Social Welfare invited SAND, together with representatives from the political parties and the eight municipalities, to a meeting in the ministry to question and comment on the strategy. The Homelessness Strategy is still in its initial phase, with eight municipalities working on specific homeless plans defined according to four overall goals: to bring the number of rough sleepers to zero, to ensure that there are no young people in hostels, to ensure that people do not stay more than three or four months in hostels as after that time a proper housing solution should be available, and to create a situation whereby accommodation is available for all those leaving prisons or hospitals.

Afterwards, SAND decided that its annual thematic seminar should be dedicated to discussing and gaining influence over the national strategy for preventing and combating homelessness. Representatives from the eight municipalities were thus invited to the seminar to discuss local homeless plans. At the seminar, representatives from local authorities met and discussed the details of local authority plans with activists from the regional SAND committees. Both activists and representatives from local authorities described the meeting as a great success because it provided the opportunity to meet and to share views and understandings of homelessness from a local perspective.⁵

The seminar thus appeared to strengthen the focus on user participation in the municipalities, while also giving local SAND committees a focus for discussion and involvement. This example demonstrates how the institutional structure of the Danish welfare state provides good opportunities for user organisations to gain influence. Moreover, it shows that the user organisation is recognised and taken seriously by the authorities. Activists in the organisation are encouraged by this recognition as they see and feel that they are being invited to take part in decision-making processes.

Transience Threatens Organisational Continuity

The image of organised, enduring associations of leaders and followers pursuing deliberately chosen strategies in opposition to others (Buechler, 2000, p.156) does not apply to organisations of homeless people. The constant challenges facing such organisations are related to homeless people's unstable lives and limited capabilities, combined with the fact that to most people homelessness is a temporary experience, in contrast to, for example, user organisations of people with disabilities.

In Denmark staying at a hostel for the homeless is temporary. In other words, activists who are recruited at hostels should – within a few months – make the move to more permanent accommodation. Some activists also leave SAND when they are no longer homeless. Others use SAND as a social network and a meaningful activity in a period during which they try to build a new life under a new set of circumstances.

Managerial and organisational skills are limited among homeless people (Cress and Snow, 1996). Participants often have limited personal resources due to their struggle to survive under difficult living conditions while also facing different personal problems. Organisational work is thus usually the domain of a small number of active persons. When few people are actively engaged in the organisational proce-

⁵ Based on personal conversations with representatives from local authorities and with SAND activists.

dures of associations, it becomes more difficult to establish and sustain democratic procedures and practices, and to control the management of assets. This phenomenon has often been experienced in local SAND organisations, where problems have arisen after the withdrawal of charismatic local leaders or when assets have disappeared due to insufficient internal controls and procedures for the management of assets. Local organisations thus occasionally disappear when activists retire or when internal matters make it too difficult to continue.

Essentially, the constant flow of people in and out of the state of homelessness constitutes a structural challenge for organisations that are made up of homeless people. It limits the possibility of ensuring organisational stability and continuity, which is necessary to form an organisation that can enter into dialogue and negotiations with the authorities. It also represents a challenge for democratic procedures. It is thus interesting that SAND has been able to consolidate itself as a reliable and stable organisation in the field. What are the reasons behind this success, and are there any lessons to be learned from SAND?

Strategies to Ensure Continuity

As a way of dealing with the problem of the constant flow of people moving in and out of a state of homelessness, and thus also moving in and out of the organisation, SAND has adopted a number of specific mechanisms. While these mechanisms help to increase the stability of a fragile organisation, some of them also create dilemmas or latent conflict.

First, SAND has defined the organisation as being not only for people who are currently homeless, but also for people who were previously homeless. In this way SAND seeks to gain increased stability among activists by ensuring that they do not have to leave the organisation when they are no longer homeless. This mechanism increases incentives for activists to become involved as they will be able to stay in the organisation for a longer time. It also makes it possible to build a career as a homeless activist within the organisation. By facilitating a structure wherein a number of experienced people continue to sit on various local committees, on the board of SAND and in working groups, this mechanism appears to have played a vital role for SAND. However, it can also create tension and internal criticisms where homeless people feel that the activists are too distant from the reality of homeless people in the hostels or on the streets. When activists remain in the organisation for a long time, they also risk losing credibility vis-à-vis homeless people due to the close relationship that tends to evolve with representatives of the system.

Second, to ensure that new homeless people are recruited, SAND continually seeks to engage new activists at the hostels. Hostel users are invited to the regional meetings of SAND, and local committees are asked to send new activists to give them an understanding of the organisation. At the regional meetings, participants share experiences and individuals begin to see themselves not only as persons with individual problems, but also as persons with common problems, who can join a group with shared interests and ideas. However, the recruitment and education of new activists is costly and requires a vast amount of resources and energy. Also, activists in SAND sometimes find it hard to contact hostels for the homeless seeking to engage new activists, and new activists occasionally find it difficult to become fully integrated in the circle of more experienced activists. These are some of the main organisational problems in creating unity and continuity among people who are defined by transience and a lack of stability.

Third, SAND runs capacity-building programmes every semester for both new and experienced activists. These programmes serve as additional incentives for activists as they are an opportunity to learn new skills. Most importantly, however, the programmes increase continuity and stability in SAND. Through ongoing training seminars, activists gather and learn how to run an organisation, how to run a meeting, how to gain access to the media and so on. Experiences garnered from SAND's first years of existence are shared in these seminars with the new activists, ensuring that a collective understanding of SAND is created and maintained in the organisation. Moreover, the seminars provide a space in which homeless people are able to make contacts, create new networks and develop a sense of sharing a collective identity (Melucci, 1996).

Fourth, SAND employs people without a user background to ensure continuity and stability in the organisation. These staff members take care of, for example, administrative and organisational matters and practical arrangements for meetings and activities. Importantly, they ensure that it is always possible for others to get in contact with SAND. However, this professionalisation of the organisation forms a barrier to developing a homeless organisation that is completely owned by homeless people themselves. Within SAND, there is a strong commitment to ensuring that it is the members of the board that act as spokespersons for SAND in public. The role of those employed in the secretariat is thus that of 'civil servants', while the board makes decisions about aims and strategies. On occasion tensions arise between the board and the staff if decisions are made which have not been approved by the board. On a day-to-day basis, staff members are often told – through jokes and rude humour – that they have to work hard for the money they earn and that they must behave if they want to keep their jobs. In this way, informal control regulates the relation between the paid employees and the homeless activists in SAND.

It is obvious that manipulation can take place when employees have been in the organisation much longer than most of the activists. But in the case of SAND, field-work data⁶ show that activists widely respect and accept the role of non-users. It is also the case that employees perceive their role as being concerned with ensuring and improving democratic practices and user influence in SAND.

Given the structural barriers facing homeless people's organisations, a lot of work is required to develop and maintain an organisational structure that facilitates democratic ambition in the most effective way possible. Indeed one might ask whether a traditional representative interest organisation (which matches the institutional structure of the welfare state and which follows the rules of associated democracy) is the most obvious way to administer a user organisation for homeless people. In Denmark this has been the solution, simply because it is the traditional way of influencing social policy in a rather regulated welfare state, where almost every client group also runs an interest organisation. In countries with different structures and mechanisms of interest mediation, more informal, ad hoc and horizontal forms of organisation could be better alternatives, especially where the state is not open to this kind of user organisation.

Important Lessons

The emergence of SAND shows that it is possible to develop new fora and arenas for the participation of some of the most marginalised, dispersed and isolated groups in society, especially if they are supported by progressive professionals and central authorities. However, SAND also illustrates the difficulties of forming and stabilising organisations of homeless people because of the temporary character of homelessness and the continual flow of activists. The lesson seems to be that while it is possible to form and maintain an interest organisation of homeless people, it takes resources, dedicated effort and ongoing programmes of capacity building.

It takes resources to organise marginalised groups

Resources are needed if homeless people are to succeed in the formation of formal, enduring interest organisations which are recognised by the authorities as trustworthy entities, and which have the capacity to take part in the decision-making procedures of the welfare state. It is important to acknowledge that if traditional interest organisations depend on resources to succeed, an interest organisation of homeless people needs perhaps even more resources to overcome the structural hindrances and the limited administrative capacity of its members.

⁶ The field work included observations at meetings and gatherings and qualitative interviews with activists in SAND over a period of three years (2003–2006), see Anker (2008).

Programmes of capacity building are essential

Homeless people often lack experience of organisational work and therefore cannot be expected to form a well-functioning organisation without training or support. If this kind of organisation is to survive, there must be an ongoing programme of capacity building to improve homeless people's skills in forming and running an organisation. This could be seen as empowerment at an organisational level, which may also provide the individual participants with new insights and capabilities as they gain new skills and opportunities. Having well-functioning programmes of capacity building may help such organisations to consolidate and grow in spite of the challenges they invariably face.

Organisations (run by and for the) homeless can make a difference

Interest organisations of homeless people are important both politically and socially. Politically, the case of SAND indicates that interest organisations of homeless people can gain access to the policy-making process and influence the planning and implementation of policies. Moreover, the existence of an interest organisation for the homeless increases the public focus on, and awareness of, homelessness as a social problem. Socially, an organisation like SAND offers a space where former and currently homeless people can meet, exchange experiences and create new bonds and networks. In this way an organisation of homeless people can support the individual activist in creating new bonds, networks, structure and meaning in his or her life. Organisations of homeless people may thus also contribute to increasing social capital and to ensuring the inclusion and recognition of marginalised groups.

Conclusion

Homelessness is often related to situations of isolation, loneliness and exclusion. For the individual, the failure to get or live in an ordinary dwelling is often experienced as a personal failure and an individual problem. The user organisation attempts to change this situation by providing a space for the exchange of personal experiences and for the formation of a collective understanding of, and response to, homelessness. In this sense, one of the most important aspects of the organisation is in fact its ability to enable, and to serve as a catalyst for, the establishment of interpersonal relations among the members.

Homeless people's organisations face many of the same dilemmas as any other organisation that seeks to represent publicly a group of citizens. They must decide on strategies, aims, how to obtain resources, who to cooperate with and so on. In addition, however, they face some specific challenges related to a lack of resources

and dependence upon social service agencies or hostels for the homeless (Williams, 2005, p.497). This may limit the range of strategic options available, as well as the ability to ensure stability, continuity and representativeness in an organisation.

It should be mentioned that other forms of organisation are also possible. One might imagine, for example, that more horizontal, ad hoc, protest-oriented and locally based movements (as suggested by Piven and Cloward, 1979) would better fit the transience that characterises the situation of homeless people. Even so, the case of SAND tends to support US studies indicating that it is often co-operation and representation, and not conflict and mobilisation, that are aspired to by homeless social movement organisations (Williams, 2005; Cress and Snow, 2000).

SAND illustrates that in a welfare state with a relatively open and facilitating institutional structure, homeless people may be able to form and sustain a viable organisation. With programmes of capacity building, with support and resources from the state or other friendly actors, and with employed staff, an organisation of homeless people may be able to consolidate itself as a reliable and recognised interest organisation in the field.

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The Political Organisation of People who are Homeless: Reflections of a Sympathetic Sceptic

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Introduction

Any exploration of how poverty and social exclusion might be eradicated, and conversely of how they persist, must come to terms with the question of how people who are themselves poor are to contribute to that eradication. This contribution can be divided into two main themes: the framing of the sorts of solutions that are required and the political momentum that is necessary to put these into action. People coming from a wide range of political and conceptual positions see social movements of the poor (or representative organisations comprising the poor) capable of achieving both these objectives as the ideal manner in which poverty will be eliminated. Organisations that oppose poverty but do not involve participation of the poor at their core are open to the criticism of contributing to deeper impoverishment, not only through proposing the ‘wrong’ solutions, but also by disempowering those who experience poverty. They run the risk of being characterised as part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

Experience, however, shows that the poor are unlikely to organise around their interests in any persistent manner, and when they do come together in short-term alliances, the goals they seek to achieve are frequently short term and rarely address the underlying causes of their exclusion (Piven and Cloward, 1979). The conditions which we understand to comprise poverty – lack of resources, social isolation and powerlessness – are deprivations of the very requirements of successful organisation and of long-term thinking. Among the ranks of the poor, homeless people experience the ‘lack’ of these capacities most extremely and are therefore among the least likely candidates to create a self-representing organisation. This situation makes the emergence of SAND the Danish national organisation for homeless people a welcome and remarkable phenomenon.

Anker's (2008 and 2009) analysis of SAND as a progressive development overcoming many of these constraints provides the prism for my broader reflections on the timely topic of participation.

Expectations of such representative organisations can be so broad that there is a danger that we may overestimate their potential role when they occur. I believe some of these expectations can be counterproductive to the fight against poverty and social exclusion and harmful to the organisations and the people who comprise them. I argue that the tendency to apply either identity-based or pluralist models of organisation is problematic. When organisations move away from participation in processes and events that are close to the individual and towards 'representation' in broader governance, problems arise that are not always fully addressed. I want to explore this issue both from the perspective of academic research on homeless organisations and other social movements particularly from the United States and from my experience of organisations of the unemployed primarily in Ireland, but also in other European countries (Allen, 1998).

Organisation and Power

Before looking at the difficulties that homeless people experience in establishing and maintaining representative organisations, it is useful to take an overview of the motivations and benefits of such organisations and why they are important.

The most basic motivation for organisations of homeless people is to redress fundamental imbalances of power. Anker presents the situation in the Danish homeless shelters, prior to SAND, as an almost textbook case of a severe power imbalance that can be redressed through organisation. The authorities in the shelters have amassed power from a variety of sources. One of the key dimensions of this power disparity can be described as 'persistence against transience'. Workers in the shelter can draw on not only the long tradition of the shelters but also the power of being full-time workers who are part of a bureaucracy. Shelter authorities, faced with demands from a shelter user, know that even if they cannot dismiss these demands through applications of rules all they have to do is wait. The demanding user will move on and the administration will prevail.

User organisations shift this power balance in two significant ways. First, they create a continuum between the demands of changing individual service users. Demands can no longer simply be ignored until the complainer moves on; changes conceded can be maintained. In this way user organisations can be said to contribute to an equality of persistence. Second, they allow shelter users to draw on resources from beyond the individual in the particular shelter. The shelter user is no longer alone in his or her conflict with the authorities, but can call on the valida-

tion and solidarity of a wider group. Perhaps more significantly, this wider reference shines light upon the exercise of power within the shelter, allowing the standards of dignity and citizenship that apply in wider Danish society to be invoked in an area where – going by Anker’s description – they were not commonly found.

If this was all there was to the matter all that would need to be said is that organisations such as SAND promote justice, and perhaps to note that there are other ways of organising shelters that do not generate quite such a disparity of power in the first place. But, of course, the application of rules in the shelter is not the cause of homelessness. One view of homelessness is that it is the result of much greater societal disparities of power. These can be found somewhere in the power relationships that underpin the housing market or more broadly in how society treats people who are vulnerable or just different.

Also, it is not just the powerless who seek to organise, the relatively powerful and the powerful also organise to gain and maintain their power and they tend to be rather better at it! So the simple achievement of having an organisation does nothing to repair these structural disparities.

Anker makes clear that SAND recognises these larger questions and includes addressing them as part of its objectives. But it is in this transition from participation in events in the immediate environment to broader structural questions that the claims and expectations of organisations of homeless people become problematic. Does the particular way that SAND and similar organisations overcome the enormous barriers to organisation create an organisational base capable of tackling these larger questions? Are structures established to impact on what are essentially managerial decisions also capable of engaging in conflicts over resource allocation? And are these necessary or even reasonable questions to be asking of an organisation comprising the most marginalised in our societies?

Resources

Lack of resources is one of the primary barriers facing organisations of homeless people. SAND overcomes this barrier by receiving state resources. To those of us unfamiliar with the tolerances of Danish democracy, this in itself seems unusual and creates a degree of scepticism about what constraints are implicit in this financial support. In Ireland, for instance, it would be quite common for organisations representing poor people or disadvantaged communities to obtain money from the state for one purpose (e.g. employment schemes, community development, policy analysis) and to use it to generate representative structures as a by-product of this work. This source of funding, however, creates constraints, real or self-imposed, on the extent to which these organisations feel able to criticise government policy. Governments

recognise this situation. For example, in 1993 the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU) sought support from the incoming Labour Party Minister for Enterprise in order to strengthen the INOU's role in representing the 20 per cent of the labour force who were then unemployed. The Minister's succinct response, 'Why would I pay for a stick to beat me?', sums up the view of every government.

The relationship between receiving state funding and the capacity to challenge inequalities within the state is not straightforward. Research in the US on the impact on homeless organisations of their decision to incorporate as non-profit companies provides an interesting analogy (Cress, 1997). Whether the goals and tactics of the homeless organisations were moderated by the decision to incorporate was highly influenced by the timing and reasons for incorporation. Homeless organisations which had incorporation forced upon them as the outcome of a conflict were often destroyed by it, whereas organisations which had this structure in place from the outset tended to be more moderate in their tactics and 'very unlikely to engage in disruptive tactics'. This is in keeping with SAND's clear characterisation of itself as not a protest movement.

In the US social movement literature, social movements of poor people are generally categorised (if not judged) by their willingness to engage in 'disruptive tactics', and those that are disinclined to do so are characterised in language that implies they are less effective ('moderate') (Snow et al., 2005). However, this is not necessarily applicable in a country where the state is committed to recognising the validity of organisations of the marginalised. This view is supported by the fact that the funding of SAND does not arise from a crisis. It is not a 'pay-off' to discourage further disruptive behaviour and become co-opted. Allocation appears to be a proactive choice by government. Anker argues that the interaction of divergent ideologies which 'favour participation' were important in the emergence of SAND, however, neither of these ideologies can be seen as radical in the context of the structural causes of social exclusion.

Anker's description of the regionalised structure of social services administration in Denmark reveals that central government has responded to its loss of control over local social services by providing funds to create representative organisations that will police standards in those services on its behalf. From this perspective, SAND's scrutiny of standards in shelters (and other responses to homelessness situated at a local level) is not only unthreatening to the central state, but is actually an arm of its administration. The central government is not paying for a stick to beat itself, but rather a stick to beat its local counterparts. The question then arises as to what would be the response of central government if SAND subjected its role in tackling the structural problems underlying homelessness to effective scrutiny?

Transience

The second great barrier to organising homeless people is the generally transitional nature of the condition. Anker tells us that people cannot stay more than six months in the shelters and that SAND uses two strategies to overcome this turnover: retaining the involvement of key activists after they cease to be homeless and employing paid staff. The tactic of maintaining organisational stability by retaining activists who have moved on from the experience of homelessness is almost inevitable in maintaining any form of consistency in such an organisation. However, it has two fairly obvious implications. The first is that it undermines one of the central claims of the organisation that people who are experiencing homelessness understand it best and shifts it to a claim that people who have experienced homelessness *at some time* know best. This inevitably raises the problem of what period of homelessness entitles you to how many years of 'representation'. Are those who wish to continue to speak on behalf of a condition they experienced in the past in any way representative of all those who have not moved through and on? This reinforces the second implication that charismatic individuals may come to dominate the organisation.

In employing staff, SAND travels a route taken by most successful voluntary organisations and therefore faces the same challenges. Essentially it runs the risk of reconstructing within its own organisation the power disparity it seeks to address in the homeless shelters. This is in no way a reflection on the individuals employed by SAND; it is a danger that necessarily emerges in the relationship between full-time staff and a voluntary board – made more acute by the fact that the board comprises people who face all the problems of being homeless. There is now a substantial body of literature discussing these tensions (for an overview, see Salamon and Anhier, 1998). Many homeless organisations founded by non-homeless citizens have also faced these challenges to their initial radical intention as they professionalise.

The INOU responded to this challenge by making its most senior staff post (the general secretary) subject to re-election on a three-year basis. Thus for the period in which I was general secretary whatever authority I held depended less on having experienced unemployment and more on accountability to a broad and open membership. My re-election was contested on two occasions and while an outsider may take the view that the contest was balanced in my favour that is not what it felt like to me at the time. The system was abandoned after I left the post, partly because Ireland was experiencing near full employment and partly because of the difficulty of recruiting senior staff on these conditions.

In some senses, the mechanisms which SAND might adopt to ensure that its original purpose and the primacy of homeless experience are sustained through the appointment of full-time staff will be one of the most important parts of the SAND story.

Social Networks

The third barrier that socially excluded groups face in organising themselves is the absence of a social network – people not only move in and out of homelessness, but tend to move around within and between population centres. In the case of SAND this is overcome by selecting the enforced social network of the homeless hostel as the basis for organisation. The membership is defined by being resident in a shelter and has a range of immediate shared interests arising from this. However, this membership base raises serious challenges when extended to the wider structural goals. In the first place, the membership is representative when dealing with shelter issues, but is lacking when dealing with broader issues. By definition, it does not include rough sleepers and tends not to include non-Danish nationals or women.

Anker (2008: 33-34) states that the 'authority and legitimacy of SAND is precisely contained in the fact that it is driven by people with a lay experience of homelessness'. Basing the claim to legitimacy on 'experience' in this way may delegitimise the organisation when it moves away from the personal experience of its shelter-based membership. This claim also has the effect (intended or unintended) of delegitimising the views of other organisations that advocate on homelessness, which draws attention to the difficulties that a homeless organisation faces in using broader ideas of common identity when moving beyond the localised shared experience of the shelter.

Many of the organisations which have been successful in achieving social progress for excluded groups over the past forty years have been based on the politics of identity and it is tempting to draw on these successes when exploring how an organisation of homeless persons can challenge its circumstance. The women's movement, the gay and lesbian movement, black power and disability organisations are the success stories in many countries from the 1960s onwards. These groups use the cement of a unifying celebrated identity, with shared symbols and a common language, to transform their circumstance. Such groups often take a point of common identity which has previously been used to oppress or marginalise them and transform it into a badge of honour. 'Gay pride.' 'Black is beautiful.'

However, models of organisation that depend upon identity as their organising principle are problematic when applied to conditions of powerlessness that are essentially socio-economic, even more so when they relate to extreme socio-economic deprivation. The most widespread dis-empowerment based on socio-economic condition is social class. If being 'working class' was a form of personal identity sufficient to build effective organisations the history of the twentieth century would have been very different. Too much has been written on the difficulty of maintaining class-based organisations to add anything useful here, except to note that while the rhetoric of organisation is based on shared class identity, the

successful practice of trade unions is the shared community of a workplace. Piven and Cloward (1979) argue that trade unions persist as the most successful form of 'poor people's organisation' because they can enforce membership and membership fees. Within the community sector the strongest organisations emerge on the basis of solidarity built around deprived neighbourhoods.

It is important to acknowledge that a number of disempowered groups have had to assert that the objective of public policy should not be to 'assimilate' them into society, but to recognise and accommodate their diversity. For example, in the case of Traveller organisations in Ireland, where, over the past twenty-five years, largely self-organised groups have contested the previous orthodoxy, maintained by well-intentioned non-Travellers, that integration into the settled community was the policy solution for this historically nomadic group. A similar conflict has been fought concerning the approach to the issue of physical disability. Self-organisation led to a transformation in the approach to solving the problems faced by these groups.

On the other hand, homelessness and unemployment are not just problematic organising 'identities' because they are socio-economic conditions but more significantly because they are, or should be, transitory. Furthermore, both are transitory conditions from which the individual wishes to escape, rather than stable identities to be celebrated or sustained. This is a significant assertion and one that has been contested in ways which are relevant to the current discussion. During the early 1990s credence was given to the argument that the then high levels of unemployment were not a result of bad policies or the economic cycle, but rather an historic 'end of work' caused by new technology (Rifkin, 1995). The unemployed as 'unrecognised pioneers of a future workless society' (Waters, 1992) should therefore cease to demand employment and instead seek a Basic Income.

Individuals who held this view became quite common in organisations of the unemployed in a variety of countries, in particular Germany (Federal Republic), the Netherlands and parts of Italy. Some moral authority was given to 'unemployed' people who supported this claim. This shift in the understanding of unemployment had very far-reaching impacts on policy demands, which moved away from issues such as quality training, job creation and fair distribution of work and towards issues of Basic Income and the 'right to be unemployed'. Because they were less likely to find work, and largely came from middle-class backgrounds and were well educated, the voices of the 'end of work-ers' were more frequently heard than the 'jobless' who tended to be working class. Those who had built their sense of self around the identity of 'unemployment' inevitably remained involved for longer and gained greater recognition. One leading member of the European Network of the

Unemployed memorably argued against the goal of full employment on the basis that 'if there was full employment I would have to get a job and would not be able to continue my important work with the unemployed'.

In this case the authenticity of the unemployed voice becomes inauthentic. Those people who speak on behalf of the unemployed (or the homeless) may become untypical of the vast majority who have experienced it and escaped from it.

The Poor and Pluralism

Concern about the need for organisations of marginalised people derives from an underlying attachment to achieving pluralism. In open democratic societies, the outcome of many decisions concerning the allocation of resources depends upon the interplay between organised interest groups. Any section of society that does not have an organisation to defend its rights ends up getting a bad deal. Taken to its logical conclusion, this perspective means that poor people are in part marginalised because they do not have organisations to promote their interests effectively. This is not only true in respect of the conflict of interests between the rich and the poor, but also between different sections of the poor. In the Danish case, Anker (2008) refers to the problem that 'more affluent and powerful groups may easily come to dominate local struggles over priorities and allocation of resources'. Thus, because mentally ill people and elderly people had representative groups, it became important for homeless people to form such a group if they were not to be further neglected.

On the face of it, the desire that people living in poverty should have their own representative groups seems progressive and fair, but this extended free-market pluralism of organisations can also be used to add another reason why the poor are responsible for their own plight. Former British Conservative Party Minister for Employment Norman Tebbit expressed the moral condemnation of the Right when he said of his father, who had been unemployed in the 1930s, 'He didn't riot. He got on his bike and looked for work.' I remember well that many on the Left during Ireland's mass unemployment of the 1980s were greatly frustrated that the unemployed did *not* riot. The vast majority of poor people neither 'get on their bike' nor 'riot' – leading to moral disapproval from both the Right and the Left. Similarly, Wagner (1993) point out how well-meaning descriptions of homeless people as 'vulnerable victims' by US liberals in the 1980s had the effect of rendering the homeless 'absolved of responsibility for their condition'.

The vast majority of homeless or unemployed people want a place to live or a job. It is simply another imposition for society to add an additional expectation that they should participate in a representative organisation before they get it. We should remember that most settled people decline to participate in a wide range of activi-

ties from voting to trade union membership to residents' associations. One of the strongest claims made for organisations of homeless or unemployed people is that they have a better understanding of the answers. People have a better understanding of their own needs than do bureaucracies, and therefore listening to them results in better services and better outcomes. There is great truth in this, but less truth the further you move away from the immediate personal experience. At the extreme level, there is the fairly obvious point that you do not necessarily have a greater insight into, say, the ideal level of economic stimulus needed to get the best job growth for the least inflation just because you are unemployed. It is not just that a great deal of expertise is required to understand many of the causes that we call 'structural'. If asked, the unemployed person might be more inclined to risk a bit of inflation, but this is an expression of interest not understanding. The problem is that, for the most part, homelessness persists not because of questions of expertise but because of questions of interest.

Take, for instance, a fairly typical basic demand from a homeless service users' group that shelters should not close their doors during the day, throwing people into hours of exposure on the streets. Where this demand is resisted because of the inconvenience it causes staff, the role of the group is clear. It is both asserting the users' preference and improving practice. However, if the change is resisted because of lack of funding, it is more complex. If the group engages in a conflict with the service provider will it undermine the work of the service provider in seeking more support or strengthen its hand? If the group enters into an alliance with the service provider what can it actually do to strengthen the service provider's case?

This brings us back to the issue of mobilisation and protest. The organisational challenges facing homeless people is only one dimension of their weakness, another is their relative lack of capacity to threaten to do things that oblige others to listen to them and distribute resources differently. While knowing some of the answers will bring you so far in counterbalancing these weaknesses, it is only through building alliances that they can be overcome. In this context SAND's 'alliance' with central government can be understood as a way of giving authority to their position when dealing with local municipalities.

Conclusion

The growing attention which homeless organisations are paying to the participation of homeless people in the planning and delivering of services is profoundly welcome. But the models of participation that are adopted, and the expectations that are promoted for them, need to be approached with great caution.

Models based on identity are attractive because of the success of such approaches for many other groups suffering social exclusion in recent decades. However, they run the risk of locking homeless people into states of exclusion rather than contributing to their escape. Furthermore, since most people who become homeless escape from it after a short time, the resultant organisations may not in fact be representative of most people who experience homelessness. This may lead to the advocacy of responses that do not reflect the full range of experiences. Organisations of excluded people are also unlikely to be capable of both framing broader solutions and generating the political momentum to carry them out. Expectations that homeless people will combine to form such organisations are misplaced and can serve to stigmatise the poor further and to absolve broader society of its responsibility to address this form of exclusion.

For organisations of homeless people to have a genuine impact on the structural and distributional causes of homelessness they need to seek allies. Among the most significant of these will be service providers that are committed to the same objectives. This raises challenges for both sides, as the immediate locus of demand for organisations of homeless people must inevitably be inadequacies in provision of services.

Anker likens SAND to a 'trade union', which could imply a characterisation of service providers as 'employers'. If homeless organisations and service providers were to get stuck 'sitting across the table from each other' they would run the risk of undermining the credibility of service providers in seeking structural reform, without generating a new homeless movement capable of taking on that role.

All this suggests that the way forward for both homeless activism and service organisations lies in investment in mechanisms for participation and accountability at every level – from shelter to advocacy and governance. These efforts must not be overwhelmed or undermined by the decision of homeless people to decline to be involved. There is progress to be made in this direction, but there is no transformative well-spring waiting to be tapped. As former US activist for homeless people Tim Harris' (2007) description of his earlier romanticised expectation reminds us:

These radicalized homeless people, who possessed special knowledge and wisdom borne of their experience in the streets, would eventually so threaten the status quo that concessions would eagerly be made. This movement would at some point be co-opted, but not before significant wins were made in terms of housing, jobs, benefits, etc. This is the sort of thing that occurs when one reads too much social theory in college.

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How to Use the Open Method of Coordination to Deliver Policy Progress at European Level : The Example of Homelessness

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Introduction

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC)¹ allows the European Union (EU) to develop policies in areas where it has no competence to legislate. In 2000 the EU decided to use the OMC to advance policies in the area of social inclusion. Since 2000 the EU has developed a range of instruments to make the Inclusion OMC work effectively. The national action plans (NAPs) – renamed national strategy reports in 2006 – are the central and most visible instrument of the Inclusion OMC. Member states are expected to draft NAPs around commonly agreed EU objectives on a regular basis (initially every two years and currently every three years). It is the role of the European Commission, the executive branch of the EU, to analyse the policy progress of member states on the basis of a common set of social inclusion indicators. The analysis of the NAPs and the policy progress of member states towards the common objectives are then translated into policy conclusions and recommendations, which are published in the annual EU joint report. This report is adopted every year by the Spring Council, which is an annual gathering of the heads of government or state of each EU member state and is devoted to social and economic questions.

In 2006 the thematic scope of the Inclusion OMC was broadened to include health, long-term care and pensions, and the common objectives were substantially revised and simplified. But the process in itself remained largely unchanged.

Most academic research on the Inclusion OMC has focused on the impact of the visible policy process described above (e.g. Zeitlin and Pochet, 2005), but the Inclusion OMC goes beyond this visible process. It has created dynamics which

¹ For more information, see the Inclusion OMC pages of the European Commission website: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/the_process_en.htm.

are only related in a superficial way to the NAPs process, and which originate from activities that the European Commission funded under the Community Action Programme Social Inclusion (2001–2006) and its successor, PROGRESS (2007–2013). Most of these funded activities are aimed at strengthening the visible parts of the OMC by raising awareness of and increasing participation in the NAPs process. But there has always been some limited flexibility around using the funding to develop activities that can exploit the potential of the OMC beyond the NAPs.

Under these funding programmes, several European NGOs have received core funding. At the start of the Inclusion OMC, five NGOs were funded, and at present around ten receive funding. Some NGOs, such as the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), concentrate heavily on the NAPs process; while others, such as FEANTSA, have developed a more independent course of action over the years, and concentrate on the NAPs process only in as far as it can help advance the cause they are working on.

This paper focuses on homelessness in the Inclusion OMC and seeks to trace how homelessness became part of the EU agenda, and indeed became a priority issue, and the role FEANTSA played in this process. It will also look at the less visible elements of the OMC and conclude with suggestions on how to develop the OMC to exploit fully its potential impact on the fight against homelessness. This paper is written as a think piece. It seeks to provoke and raise debate, and should be read in that context.

The History: Getting Homelessness on the EU Agenda

It was during the Portuguese Presidency in the first half of 2000 that the EU decided to use the OMC to have a more visible impact on the reduction of poverty. The EU set itself ambitious goals and expectations ran high. In a short time the EU reached an agreement on common objectives (commonly referred to as the Nice objectives) and on a set of inclusion indicators that would measure progress in the member states. The NAPs process was thus launched, with the first NAPs covering the period from 2001 to 2003.

Common objectives, NAPs, and indicators: a weak basis for action on homelessness

The common objectives, adopted by the Nice Council in 2000, were ambitious and precise enough to be relevant for the fight against homelessness, and they included two clear references to this issue. One of the overarching objectives was to ensure access to resources, rights, goods and services for all, and within the ambit of this the EU agreed to guarantee access to decent and sanitary housing. A second

overarching objective was to reduce the risk of exclusion, as part of which the EU agreed to put in place policies to prevent life crises such as homelessness. While homelessness was not amongst the issues considered most important, the common objectives provided a sufficiently strong basis for EU intervention.

The EU has not yet been able to agree on a common indicator related to homelessness. The list of common indicators covers complex areas such as health, employment and education, but not homelessness. The EU recognised from the beginning the importance of having indicators on homelessness and housing exclusion, but reaching an agreement turned out to be more difficult than expected. It was only in 2009 that housing was added to the list of areas covered by the indicators, but a common indicator on homelessness still seems far off.

Member states were expected to integrate the Nice common objectives into their NAPs. In the first round of NAPs (2001–2003) only a few states referred to homelessness as an urgent and important problem. It was not until the third round of NAPs (2006–2008) that homelessness emerged as a priority issue for many member states. It is quite interesting to note that the focus on homelessness grew stronger after the EU's decision to revise the common objectives making them much more general and taking away all direct references to homelessness and other forms of severe exclusion. It was as if member states wanted to compensate for the lack of focus in the revised common objectives by increasing their thematic focus in the NAPs.

Nonetheless, homelessness remained only one of a large number of priorities in the NAPs and was not really pushed on the EU agenda by the Social Protection Committee (the intergovernmental body representing the interests of the different member states in the Inclusion OMC). The NAPs have until now remained under-exploited as a basis for ambitious EU action on homelessness.

The reasons for homelessness remaining a weak element of the visible part of the OMC are very much related to its institutional set-up. The Social Protection Committee (SPC), together with the European Commission, is the most important actor driving the NAPs process. The SPC consists of government representatives, who are usually from the national ministries of social affairs and/or employment, few of which have the issue of homelessness amongst their responsibilities. In most EU member states it is the ministry of housing or health that leads on the issue of homelessness, and in some countries homeless policies have been decentralised to the regional level (Spain, Belgium, Austria) or to the local level (especially in Eastern Europe). It is therefore very difficult to find natural interest and support for an issue such as homelessness in the SPC, despite two of the common objectives being directly related to homelessness. This is less of a problem for issues such as child poverty, which relates more easily to the direct competences and natural interests of SPC members.

Furthermore, an increasing number of SPC members are delegates from the international affairs department of their ministry, which further impacts on the lack of thematic leadership in the SPC. These members usually have a thorough knowledge of EU processes but are not necessarily well placed to push for particular themes such as homelessness because of lack of relevant knowledge. It is clear that the composition of the SPC is not in line with the ambitions of the Inclusion OMC, as it covers areas which largely fall outside the responsibilities of the government delegates involved. The SPC has thus become a rather weak body, which is not really able to take up the role of leader of the Inclusion OMC.

The power gap resulting from the lack of SPC leadership has been filled by the European Commission, though this role has remained largely overlooked by academic researchers examining governance of the OMC, which is striking as the Commission is probably the single most important player in the OMC. Initiatives seem to come almost exclusively from the Commission; and most of those suggested by the Commission get almost automatic support from SPC members. Strong leadership is indeed necessary to make the OMC work and the Commission is probably best placed to take up this role. However, a significant problem is raised by the lack of thematic expertise in the Commission; the social inclusion unit, which is responsible for the Inclusion OMC, consists of around ten people and is mandated to cover a very wide range of policy areas including employment, housing, health and education.

Responsibility for certain social problems that have been identified as EU priorities, such as child poverty, homelessness and overindebtedness, tends to fall on the shoulders of individual civil servants in the Commission. Progress on a certain issue thus often depends on the individual characteristics of the civil servant in question, including personal interest in the issue, knowledge and understanding of the issue, the career perspectives a focus on a particular issue might bring, and relations with his or her hierarchy.

Because of the lack of resources and expertise on most specific social problems there is a tendency in the Commission to select 'easy' issues to work on. These issues are often related to the OMC process rather than its content. It is no coincidence that much attention has been given in the OMC to issues such as stakeholder participation, with a special focus on the participation of people living in poverty, and on awareness raising to promote the involvement of stakeholders. These are relatively consensual issues that require little expertise and that can be easily translated into concrete actions. For some European NGOs with similar difficulties accessing expertise on specific social problems, a focus on stakeholder participation and awareness raising helped strengthen their role in the Inclusion OMC. As a

result the OMC has been much more process driven than content driven. This lack of content has the effect of driving away stakeholders who could have an impact on actual policy development for certain social problems.

It must be noted that the Commission tried to compensate for the lack of expertise on some of the priority issues of the Inclusion OMC by setting up its own scientific network with experts from all EU member states. However, this network also concentrates heavily on the NAPs as the main tool of the Inclusion OMC and does little to increase expertise on current and future priority issues.

The continuation of the NAPs process is increasingly at the centre of discussions on the future of the OMC after 2010. In several member states the drafting of the NAPs has become a bureaucratic process with too little policy relevance. Although it is true that the NAPs process has played an important role in setting the anti-poverty agenda in some member states, it is important for the Commission to move beyond agenda setting and really drive policy progress on certain issues. If not, there is a risk that member states and other key stakeholders will lose interest in the Inclusion OMC.

Mutual learning : an interesting but shallow basis for progress on homelessness

Some years after the launch of the Inclusion OMC the Commission realised that it needed to strengthen the focus on content in order to maintain the interest of stakeholders. It became clear quite quickly that the NAPs were too vague and diverse for use as a tool of transnational policy learning and benchmarking. For this reason the Commission increased the commissioning of thematic studies and began thematic peer reviews. These reviews were particularly aimed at compensating for the lack of detail in the NAPs and at answering a growing demand from member states for concrete policy learning.

To date, four peer reviews on homelessness have taken place, the first of which focused on the English Rough Sleepers Strategy. The second examined a controversial Danish policy initiative, 'Alternative housing for alternative life styles', which provided very basic accommodation for extremely marginalised homeless adults. Norway hosted the third peer review on the recently launched Norwegian homeless strategy ; and the fourth peer review took place in Austria in 2009 and concentrated on data collection on homelessness.

All reviews were interesting but did not get the expected reaction or follow-up, one of the main reasons being that the selection of issues for the reviews seemed to happen without a clear plan on how to advance the fight against homelessness in the Inclusion OMC. The reviews remained small, isolated seminars, and the results could not be easily brought together to stimulate follow-up actions amongst key

stakeholders. The selection of peer countries and of the participants in the reviews could also have been more strategic. Some of the people attending the seminars had no or little connection to homelessness. The fact that the SPC plays an important role in the design of the peer review process possibly contributed to the lack of strategic focus.

The Commission also tried to strengthen the content of the Inclusion OMC through supporting transnational projects. Initially several dozen small projects received funding, but for reasons of manageability and concern about the actual impact of small projects, the Commission began funding a smaller number of large projects. Many of these concentrated on evaluating the NAPs, but some aimed at deepening the understanding of certain social problems. A handful of projects focused on homelessness; to a certain extent they contributed to a better understanding of homelessness and reached out to a wider group of stakeholders interested in European cooperation on homelessness, but they had little impact on actual policy progress at EU level or in the different member states. The lack of strategic intervention by the Commission is striking; there was no attempt to cluster the projects and peer reviews in order to create an EU stream of action on homelessness.

Financing studies was a third instrument that the Commission used to deepen knowledge on social exclusion and to build a European body of expertise to drive the Inclusion OMC. About twenty studies were financed by the Commission, including two studies related to homelessness: one on access to housing for migrants and a second on the measurement of homelessness. It seems that strategic considerations were important in the selection of the studies. This is certainly the case for the study on the measurement of homelessness, which contributed substantially to concrete progress on homelessness under the Inclusion OMC.

Most research on homelessness at EU level has been carried out by FEANTSA's European Observatory on Homelessness as part of the organisation's annual work plans which are funded by the Commission.² Generating knowledge on homelessness has always been an important priority for FEANTSA, which in the early 1990s created its own research network. The Commission, however, has not really shown great interest in the research work of the Observatory, and only recently started using research findings to advance the homelessness cause at the EU level.

Homelessness was and remains one of the many issues covered by the mutual learning programmes and activities of the Inclusion OMC, but the focus has not been strong enough, or strategic enough, to create a European dynamic on the issue of homelessness.

² For access to Observatory publications, please visit the research pages of FEANTSA's website: www.feantsaresearch.org/code/en/hp.asp.

***Relations between the Commission and FEANTSA:
an unstable basis for progress on homelessness***

As mentioned above, the Commission is probably the most important driver of the Inclusion OMC, such that good working relations between the Commission and FEANTSA are essential to moving homelessness up the EU agenda. Homelessness had been an important issue of concern for the Commission since the launch of the Inclusion OMC, and the structural financial support FEANTSA receives from the Commission since 2000 is proof of this. But there has always been some reluctance in the Commission to go beyond the funding of FEANTSA and to really push homelessness as a distinct policy issue on the EU inclusion agenda.

The Commission, and to some extent also the SPC, has never been very enthusiastic about targeted EU action on a limited number of specific social issues under the Inclusion OMC. This scepticism has been even more pronounced with regard to issues of extreme forms of poverty. The fear that a focus on very marginal issues, such as homelessness, could marginalise social policy ambitions for the EU was and still is very present amongst certain key Commission officials and members of the SPC. Some believe that an excessively strong thematic focus on extreme poverty would drive the attention of member states away from the protection and strengthening of the European social model, and pave the way for an even stronger, free-market-driven, European integration process. Therefore they want the primary objective of the Inclusion OMC to be the establishment of a strong and ambitious social pillar in the EU structure. This pronounced position on the role of the Inclusion OMC complicated FEANTSA's relations with the Commission and led to disagreement about possible EU interventions on homelessness.

The position of the Commission is predominantly an ideological one, which ignores to some extent the current political reality. It is inspired by the universal approach to poverty and social exclusion that exists in several EU member states, but it is often forgotten that the EU has little competence in the area of social policy and that the OMC is unlikely to be a sufficiently strong policy instrument to develop a role for the EU as a real social policy actor. In the EU of twenty-seven member states there is little hope that its power in the area of social policy will substantially increase in the near future.

FEANTSA has always called for the Inclusion OMC to have a more realistic and pragmatic approach that is focused on specific themes where progress is possible in the present difficult political context, and with strategic mutual learning between member states and other stakeholders as its primary objective. There is a real risk that the dream of building a strong social Europe through the Inclusion OMC prevents EU policy makers from seizing opportunities where the OMC can be used to have more immediate impact on policy progress in certain areas.

The demand for more targeted action on homelessness has been an issue of dispute between FEANTSA and the Commission since the launch of the Inclusion OMC in 2000. Targeted action is not only potentially beneficial for the Inclusion OMC, it is also important to guarantee the added value of a network such as FEANTSA to its members and to the Commission as its main source of funding.

The members of FEANTSA are involved in European cooperation because they look for inspiration and support to strengthen the fight against homelessness in their respective countries. Therefore access to knowledge and expertise from other countries and the creation of a favourable EU policy context are important priorities. It was FEANTSA's hope to achieve these objectives within the visible NAPs process, but it turned out that progress was easier through pursuing a more independent course of action concentrated on the other tools of the Inclusion OMC, such as peer reviews, studies and key events.

As argued above, the NAPs became quite quickly a bureaucratic exercise for a growing number of member states, and few plans had any real strategic value for domestic policy development on the issue of homelessness. For a significant portion of FEANTSA's membership it therefore made little sense to invest time and energy in the NAPs, as they had little or no bearing on the problem of homelessness.

At the start of the NAPs process FEANTSA counted on the support of the Commission and the SPC to develop a strong stream of action on homelessness within the NAPs. This did not work, probably due to the governance problems described above, and a few years into the Inclusion OMC FEANTSA found itself in a difficult situation. The Commission, supported by the SPC, wanted to strengthen the process underpinning the NAPs by increasing the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, including the general public, and by investing in public awareness-raising activities. The thematic focus of the NAPs process therefore had to be as wide as possible. FEANTSA, on the other hand, wanted to strengthen the thematic focus on key issues such as homelessness to make the NAPs process more valuable to its members and other stakeholders involved in the fight against homelessness and to obtain concrete policy outcomes. The Commission counted on FEANTSA and other European NGOs to help strengthen and promote the OMC process. FEANTSA, as an EU-funded NGO, was expected to concentrate on the development, implementation and evaluation of the NAPs, rather than on the development of a homelessness agenda for the EU, independent of the successes or failures of the NAPs process. This split attention between a stronger NAPs process and a more solid focus on homelessness has framed FEANTSA's work plans for several years and led to a specific strategy for the promotion of stronger EU intervention on the issue of homelessness.

For the EU to take a more proactive approach it was necessary for homelessness to appear as an important issue of concern in the NAPs. FEANTSA invested a lot of time and energy in making sure that there was sufficient reference to homelessness in the NAPs, which it then pointed to as a clear mandate from member states for the Commission to develop a more strategic EU intervention on homelessness, independently of the NAPs. In spite of the governance weaknesses inherent in the Inclusion OMC, FEANTSA was able to make progress during the different rounds of NAPs and homelessness appeared gradually as an important issue of concern for most EU member states. In the 2005 joint report, homelessness appeared for the first time as a key priority for some member states, and in the 2009 joint report the EU calls for sustained efforts to combat homelessness.

Involving other actors: a wider basis to make progress on homelessness

FEANTSA realised that it was important to include other actors in its efforts to develop an EU stream of action on homelessness under the Inclusion OMC. FEANTSA was viewed as the sole source of demands for an increased focus on homelessness and the demands were losing strength as a result. In 2006 FEANTSA reached out to other stakeholders outside the voluntary homelessness sector in order to build a broader alliance calling for stronger European cooperation on the issue of homelessness, and the European Forum to Combat Homelessness was set up. The forum includes public authorities and actors from neighbouring sectors such as health and employment. It not only strengthened lobbying for a stronger EU involvement, but also gave more credibility to the claim that a stronger EU focus on homelessness could deliver policy change.

In 2008 FEANTSA managed to get support from the European Parliament, the only EU body which is directly elected by EU citizens. The Parliament called for an end to street homelessness by 2015 in a Written Declaration, and, probably even more importantly, called upon the European Commission to be more active and ambitious on the issue of homelessness in the Inclusion OMC. The call from the Parliament gave FEANTSA's request for a strong EU intervention on homelessness clear democratic legitimacy.

A focus on data collection: a breakthrough for progress on homelessness

There was consensus at the start of the Inclusion OMC on the need to have better data on homelessness and housing exclusion as a basis for effective policy intervention. In 2001 the SPC agreed a list of social inclusion indicators, but agreement on indicators specific to homelessness and housing exclusion was not possible at that time. The SPC called, however, for strong efforts to improve the available data on homelessness and housing exclusion, especially at member state level. Following

this call the European Commission asked Eurostat to study possible methods for measuring homelessness, which could then be promoted across the EU and eventually lead to an EU indicator on the number of homeless people.

Eurostat set up a small working group in which FEANTSA, together with representatives of five national statistical institutes, took part. The feasibility study was subcontracted to the French statistical institute INSEE, which was problematic due to INSEE's strong preference for, and extensive experience in, large point-in-time surveys of the homeless population. FEANTSA and some representatives of the national statistical offices preferred the method of continuous data collection through administrative registers or NGO-managed data-recording systems, as this would be cheaper, more effective and provide more useful data. FEANTSA successfully argued for the feasibility study to look at the variety of existing data collection methods in Europe in addition to testing the feasibility of conducting large surveys in the different EU member states.

This led to a clash of opinions between FEANTSA and the Commission, which went beyond the methodological issues to other highly relevant issues for policy progress such as the definition of homelessness, the link between data and effective policy intervention, EU involvement on homelessness and FEANTSA's role therein. The clash probably led to increased interest and willingness amongst certain Commission officials to deepen the work on homelessness under the Inclusion OMC.

INSEE produced an interesting study, but it was clear to the Commission and other stakeholders that a follow-up study was necessary to come to practical conclusions. As Eurostat was not interested in continuing to work on the issue of homelessness, the Commission was obliged to take the lead and the follow-up study was carried out under William Edgar, who was also the lead coordinator of FEANTSA's European Observatory on Homelessness. The study tried to define what kind of data collection and information strategies should underpin effective homeless policies, and the seemingly objective and policy-neutral focus on data collection delivered important and practical conclusions for policy progress. It led to explicit support from the Sub-Group on Indicators of the SPC, and therefore also from the Commission, for a definition of homelessness based on FEANTSA's ETHOS typology. It also resulted in the implicit recognition of the dynamic nature of homeless population profiles, which requires a holistic policy approach where rehabilitation and prevention play important roles. The result of the study was a practical toolkit for building solid information strategies on homelessness.

FEANTSA knew that the study was a key tool that could be used to enhance EU intervention on homelessness, especially having been endorsed by the SPC and the Commission. Together with the scientific coordinators of the study, FEANTSA set up a European transnational exchange project to spread and promote the

results of the study in EU member states, the Mphasis project, which received funding from the Commission. The project helped to broaden the network of stakeholders interested in enhanced European cooperation on homelessness and to increase awareness of the potential added value of such enhanced cooperation.

The Future : Moving from Words to Action

Increasing attention in the NAPs to the issue of homelessness and the concrete results of the work on data collection led to greater receptiveness to the issue of homelessness in the Commission and amongst certain SPC members. Scepticism did not fully disappear, but there was less resistance to proposals for strategic EU intervention on the issue. Indeed a number of Commission officials saw it as their individual responsibility to push some proposals for concrete action through the heavy EU decision-making process.

In 2008 the SPC decided to make homelessness and housing exclusion the thematic focus of the Inclusion OMC for 2009 on the basis of a Commission proposal. So-called 'Light Years' were introduced in 2007, after the reform of the Inclusion OMC, their purpose being to allow for progress on specific social problems during the years that member states were not drafting their NAPs. The first Light Year focused on child poverty and was the key factor in the EU's renewed ambition to make progress on this issue.

As part of the 2009 Light Year, SPC members drafted reports on the state of homelessness and housing exclusion in their respective countries. These reports provide, for the first time, official, comprehensive information on the issue of homelessness. As state reports they will be publicly available and it goes without saying that they provide a solid and authoritative basis for stronger EU intervention on homelessness in the future. The reports are currently being analysed and conclusions will be integrated into the joint report to be adopted by the Spring Council in 2010. Conclusions need to go beyond the mere recognition of homelessness as a priority issue for the Inclusion OMC and they are expected to include a series of clear commitments for EU action on homelessness in the coming years.

At the time of writing there is, however, already some indication that the Commission and certain members of the SPC wish to downplay the importance of 2009's thematic focus. In 2008 there had been some opposition to having a single focus on homelessness and the SPC decided to enlarge the focus to include the wider issue of housing exclusion. This decision is difficult to understand as it stretches the focus further away from the actual areas of competence of SPC members, but the decision seems to have been prompted by an attempt to avoid targeting issues

at the extreme end of poverty for the reasons explained above. The reports now cover a vast and diverse policy area, which will undoubtedly complicate the process of making concrete recommendations.

In order to ensure that the EU moves away from simple agenda-setting and into concrete action on homelessness, FEANTSA is seeking EU support to extend opportunities for EU intervention to all relevant stakeholders that are not currently involved in the NAPs process in an official capacity. This is important as, regardless of the outcome of the thematic Light Year, the SPC and the Commission will depend on these stakeholders for instigating actual progress. As highlighted previously, the current governance structure of the Inclusion OMC does not allow for policy implementation on specific issues like homelessness.

But aside from the governance structure, it is important to have a common understanding of homelessness at the EU level that is based on solid expertise and knowledge. It is not beyond imagining that it will be impossible to distil a coherent line of EU action on homelessness from the SPC reports (due to the broadened focus they are extremely diverse and even contradictory in places). This might jeopardise future strategic EU action as the Commission is unlikely to take the lead on an issue without a sufficient basis of consensus from member states. That is why FEANTSA has lobbied strongly for a European consensus conference on homelessness to take place in 2010.

The established methodology of consensus conferencing allows for the building of a common basis for policy progress on issues that are somewhat controversial, such as homelessness. The consensus conference includes three important steps. First, the preparation of the conference. Representatives of all relevant stakeholders sit on a preparatory committee that selects a few key questions on which there is no European consensus, and for which a consensus would be required to allow for policy progress. Second, the actual consensus conference. The conference is a sort of public hearing in which a number of experts, selected by the preparatory committee, are heard on the key questions. Finally, the making of a consensus by the jury. The jury consists of charismatic figures who are not involved in the fight against homelessness and who are known and respected for their wise judgments. The jury attends the conference and, on the basis of the intervention of the experts and the discussion at the conference, makes a European consensus. All stakeholders agree before the start of the preparations to use the consensus to be presented by the jury as the basis of a strategic EU intervention on the issue of homelessness (see Loison-Leruste, 2008).

FEANTSA managed to find the necessary support at EU level for the consensus conference. In October 2008 the Round Table on Social Inclusion, the most prominent event of the Inclusion OMC, called for a consensus conference on home-

lessness. In November the Ministers of Housing of the different EU member states concluded that the organisation of a European consensus conference was necessary. The French Presidency in the second half of 2008 also strongly supported the call for a European consensus conference. In January 2009 Commissioner Vladimir Spidla confirmed that the Commission would be involved in the organisation of the consensus conference and agreed to support it politically and financially. It will be the first consensus conference under the OMC.

FEANTSA is hopeful that the Commission and the SPC will relate the conclusions of the thematic Light Year to the expected results of the consensus conference, as this may help to overcome scepticism about ambitious EU intervention on the issue of homelessness.

Conclusion: An OMC on Homelessness

As described above, the EU context has changed dramatically over the last few years and a new approach on the issue of homelessness is required of the European Commission.

The joint report adopted by the Council in March 2009 clearly identifies homelessness as a priority and calls for sustained efforts to tackle it as one of the most extreme forms of social exclusion. The SPC selected homelessness and housing exclusion as the thematic focus of the OMC in 2009. The European Parliament called for an end to street homelessness by 2015 (in a Written Declaration adopted in April 2008) and also called for more attention to homelessness as an urgent policy issue both at EU and member state level.

The EU Round Table on Social Inclusion in October 2008 called for the EU to be more proactive in addressing homelessness and suggested the organisation of a European consensus conference on homelessness in 2010. The Ministers of Housing of all member states called upon the EU in November 2008 to ensure significant progress on homelessness by means of a clear and sustained focus in the OMC. There is also a growing concern about homelessness within member states and a widespread consensus, at least at the level of the responsible civil servants in the different ministries, that the EU has a role to play in the fight against homelessness. This less visible 'public' demand for EU action on homelessness is often overlooked by the Commission and the SPC. It is clear that the relatively superficial attention paid to homelessness in the NAPs hides the growing interest of relevant public stakeholders for engagement in a European dynamic around the issue of homelessness.

The political momentum to take a big step forward on the issue of homelessness is undoubtedly present at the EU level, but it seems there is still a degree of hesitation within the Commission around converting this momentum into an actual plan. The tendency remains in the Commission, especially in its higher ranks, to anticipate a lack of support by member states' delegates in the SPC for a focus on homelessness, although this seems to be slowly changing.

It is also possible that the Commission has its own reasons for not being entirely supportive and is hiding behind the presumed lack of support from member states to cover another agenda. It is well known that some people in the Commission, supported by certain member states and European NGOs, do not want a focus on homelessness because such a focus is not in line with their social policy ambitions for the EU.

The lack of ambition in the Commission might also be the result of fear and uncertainty about how to steer a focus on homelessness in the OMC. It is true that there is not yet a common understanding of what homelessness is and how to address it most effectively. It is extremely difficult for the Commission to take up the role of promoter and evaluator of homelessness policies when there is no explicit common understanding of certain basic questions, such as what the aims of public policies addressing homelessness are or what progress has been made in the fight against homelessness.

This is why FEANTSA suggested organising a European consensus conference on homelessness. The conference is a much stronger and more strategic instrument than the peer reviews introduced a few years ago to strengthen the OMC. It allows for the effective participation of all stakeholders without losing focus on outcomes, which was sometimes a problem with the participatory processes under the OMC. It also promotes ownership of the results amongst all relevant stakeholders, which has not always been the case with decisions of the Commission and SPC under the Inclusion OMC.

The Commission and the SPC must accept that the NAPs can no longer be the sole basis for policy progress in the Inclusion OMC. During the first phases of the OMC the NAPs allowed for the identification of themes of common interest in different member states, such as child poverty, homelessness and overindebtedness. Prolonging the agenda-setting phase makes little sense; it will blur the focus and complicate the effective management of the OMC. There is an urgent need to move to the implementation phase to show that the OMC can offer more than vague commitments to defending the European social model and can have a real impact on policy development in the different member states.

If this step is not taken, the most relevant stakeholders – those who can bring about progress on social inclusion policies in the member states – will lose interest and cease being involved. In fact, this process has already begun in spite of efforts in previous years to raise awareness about the OMC. We must not be blind to the fact that involvement in the OMC is limited to a relatively small inner circle of stakeholders, several of which depend heavily on the continuation of the OMC in its current format for their survival, and to ensure that they do not lose power.

Progress on specific themes is possible and will help to raise the social profile of the EU. Focusing on specific themes might even be a more effective way to develop the role of the EU as a serious social policy player. To make such an approach work, the Commission and the SPC have to involve the European NGOs that have been funded under PROGRESS as real, strategic partners; they must develop and actively support new tools under the OMC, such as the consensus conference, which are separate to the NAPs, common objectives and common indicators; and they must take on a more ambitious role in the development, implementation and evaluation of social inclusion policies in different member states.

Specific EU strategies around those themes that have been identified as priorities should therefore be developed. These strategies should have clear common objectives and involve the development of clusters of (European) stakeholders and of activities such as studies, peer reviews and data collection around the different themes. Why not strengthen the Inclusion OMC by launching a limited set of thematic OMCs? FEANTSA is certainly ready for an OMC on homelessness.

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Response to ‘How to Use the Open Method of Coordination to Deliver Policy Progress at European Level : The Example of Homelessness’

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Introduction

Freek Spinnewijn’s paper ‘How to Use the Open Method of Coordination to Deliver Policy Progress at European Level: The Example of Homelessness’ (hereafter referred to as ‘the article’) is a stimulating and timely, if controversial, critique of the European Union’s Open Method of Coordination on Poverty and Social Exclusion (Social OMC). I share several of his criticisms of the failure of the OMC to have as much impact as many of us hoped, if not always his reasons for this, and some of his suggestions in relation to the future are also helpful. However, the article seems to be based on a rather idiosyncratic interpretation of the origins and purpose of the OMC and a certain amount of wishful thinking that it should have been something different from what it was precisely intended to be. This leads to some exaggerated criticisms of several aspects of the process. However, Spinnewijn states that his paper ‘seeks to provoke and raise debate, and should be read in this context’. My response should also be read in this context.

The OMC as Part of the Lisbon Strategy

Launched in 2000, the Social OMC was never designed to be a narrowly focused strategy addressing only a few ‘extreme’ aspects of poverty and social exclusion such as homelessness. It was developed in the context of the Lisbon Strategy’s overarching objective of achieving sustained economic and employment growth and greater social cohesion. At the heart of this formulation was the recognition of the interdependence and mutually reinforcing nature of economic, employment and

social policy – what became known as the Lisbon policy triangle. The Social OMC was established in recognition that social cohesion could not be achieved without addressing the continuing scandal of high levels of poverty and social exclusion across the EU. It was intended as a means of spreading good practices and achieving greater convergence towards policy objectives agreed by the EU as a whole as well as helping Member States to develop their own policies. A strategic goal agreed by Member States was to ‘make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010’. Even though this goal included, of course, addressing aspects of extreme poverty such as homelessness, it was clearly intended to be much broader and more ambitious than just that. Thus, when the article criticises the European Commission for trying to use the Social OMC for ‘the establishment of a strong and ambitious social pillar in the EU structure’ and blames this for complicating FEANTSA’s relations with the Commission, it is in fact blaming the Commission for trying to do exactly what was intended by the Lisbon European Council.

Universal Versus Targeted Approaches

The article also criticises the European Commission for taking an ideologically driven universal approach to poverty and social exclusion and seems to imply that this somehow rules out some element of a more targeted approach. This I would suggest is not necessarily the case. First, there is a very good reason for encouraging universal policies which ensure access to opportunities and services for all. The evidence tends to show that the countries with the more universal approaches tend to be the most successful in both preventing and reducing poverty and social exclusion (see, for instance, Frazer and Marlier, 2007, p.6). Second, universal and targeted approaches are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, it is striking that the Commission realised this from the outset of the Social OMC. The first *Joint Report on Social Inclusion (2002)* recognised the need for a combination of universal and more targeted policies. In this regard it identified three types of policy approaches:

- **Universality**: ensuring increased levels of adequacy, access and affordability of mainline policies and provisions with the view to improving their coverage, uptake and effectiveness.
- **A level playing field**: addressing specific disadvantages that can be overcome by the use of appropriate policy (e.g. lack of skills).
- **Solidarity for human dignity**: compensating for disadvantages that can only be partially (or not at all) overcome (e.g. disabilities).

In my view a combination of all three approaches is necessary to ensure effective social inclusion policies that both prevent and reduce poverty and social exclusion.

I would thus be concerned by the implication of the article that strengthening the Social OMC is somehow a distraction from tackling (extreme) poverty in general and homelessness in particular. It is worrying if FEANSTA sees efforts to tackle housing exclusion and homelessness as somehow separate from the wider struggle against poverty and social exclusion. Surely both can and should reinforce each other.

Limited EU Competence in the Social Field

The article also criticises the Commission's approach as being unrealistic because the EU has little competence in the area of social policy. It is of course, in part, true that the Commission has limited competence in the area of social policy. However, it was undoubtedly a step forward for the Member States to agree common social objectives in 2000 and to establish the Social OMC, even if the main competence for delivering on agreed objectives remains almost exclusively at country (national and sub-national) level. Also, the Commission's approach at least created some space for addressing poverty and social exclusion issues that might not otherwise have been on the EU social agenda. This has meant that organisations like FEANTSA have had opportunities to raise issues such as housing exclusion and homelessness and to receive significant funding to help them to do so. This might not otherwise have been the case as these issues were even less an area of EU action. Indeed, the Commission, contrary to what the article suggests, has adopted a quite pragmatic approach within an overall fairly comprehensive approach to issues of poverty and social exclusion. From the very first Joint Report in 2002 core social inclusion issues were identified around which work could be built. These included 'Ensuring good accommodation for all' within which 'developing integrated responses both to prevent and address homelessness is another essential challenge for some countries'. This focus on key issues has led to increasingly effective and useful initiatives in areas such as child poverty, active inclusion and, now, on housing exclusion and homelessness. Of course, this does not mean that there are not some valid criticisms to be made about how effectively and strategically some of these issues have been followed up. As the article clearly points out, there are.

One could reasonably argue that because housing, never mind housing exclusion and homelessness, is not a competence of the EU and because compiling data on this sector has thus not been a priority for decision makers at EU level then the creation of a broader focus on social policy and its interactions with other policy areas can only be helpful in this regard. It creates an opportunity to show that there are increasing interactions between housing and EU policies and that there thus needs to be a more effective monitoring and analysis of the main issues and trends taking place in this area, including on housing exclusion and homelessness.

The NAPs/inclusion

I would strongly agree with the criticism in the article that the National Action Plans on social inclusion (NAPs/inclusion) 'became quite quickly a bureaucratic exercise for a growing number of Member States and few had any real strategic policy development on the issues of homelessness' or, I would add, on other aspects of poverty and social exclusion. This echoes the analysis of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, which concluded:

In only a small minority of countries, not more than a quarter according to the experts, can the process be said to have become an important part of the policy making process in relation to social inclusion issues and to be having a significant impact. The key determining factor in the countries where the process is having a significant impact is a high level of political importance and leadership in relation both to poverty and social exclusion generally and to making use of the Social OMC in particular. However, in most Member States it would appear that the process has a very low political priority and status and is considered to be mainly an administrative reporting exercise. (Frazer and Marlier, 2008, p.3)

However, for all their limitations, the NAPs/inclusion still remain the key tool within the Social OMC requiring Member States to address poverty and social exclusion in a comprehensive manner and to report regularly on the progress that they are making. The challenge is thus not to abandon the NAPs/inclusion but to strengthen them. This, of course, requires greater political commitment.

Indeed, low political priority is probably the core point that is underdeveloped in the article. While there are a range of criticisms of the effectiveness of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and of the role of the European Commission, some valid but others a bit simplistic, the article does not give sufficient attention to the diminution in political commitment that has taken place in the EU since 2001 – in many Member States and also in some parts of the Commission. This has severely curtailed the potential of the Social OMC in general and the national action plans on poverty and social exclusion in particular and has limited what the SPC and supportive officials within the Commission have been able to achieve.

Process Versus Policy

An area where I would strongly disagree with the article's analysis is the suggestions that the Commission has tended 'to select "easy" issues to work on' and that this has led to an undue focus on process and especially on stakeholder participation. I think this is mistaken on a number of grounds. The suggestion that working on process or on content are somehow mutually exclusive alternatives does not

tally with my experience. Both are necessary and this was recognised from the outset in the common objectives agreed by Member States.

I cannot think of a policy area in relation to poverty and social exclusion, including housing exclusion and homelessness, where the involvement of stakeholders, and in particular the involvement of those experiencing poverty and social exclusion, is not essential to arrive at better policies, better implementation and better monitoring of those policies and to ensure the empowerment of those experiencing poverty. Furthermore, 'participation' is not a straightforward issue. Anyone who goes back to read the early NAPs/inclusion would realise just how weak many Member States were in this area and how resistant they were to making progress on this issue. The progress that has been made since then, though still far from perfect, is one of the most positive outcomes of the Social OMC to date.

The suggestion that the Social OMC has been concerned only with 'easy' issues conflicts with reality. For instance, when the OMC started there was significant resistance, especially within the Commission, to focusing part of the effort on child poverty. The significant progress that is now being made on this issue is the result of effective and strategic efforts by a range of key NGOs, several academics and a number of supportive officials within the Commission and some Member States (Frazer, 2006). Indeed, it shows just how progress can be made when a strategic and cooperative approach to using the Social OMC is adopted by key actors. In this respect, the SPC's report *Child Poverty and Well-Being in the EU*, whose analysis and concrete recommendations were endorsed in 2008 by the Commission and all the Member States, was a major step forward.

There are also a number of other issues that have been prioritised within the process that are certainly not easy. The major effort made over the past year by the Commission and other actors on active inclusion was motivated by a real desire to make progress on the issue of adequate minimum income, which is a very difficult and sensitive political issue. Likewise, the Commission has recently been to the fore in trying to give more attention within the process to the situation of migrants and ethnic minorities; again, not an easy issue. Also, those people in the Commission actively involved with the Social OMC have tried very hard to put the issue of the interconnections between social inclusion policies and economic and employment policies on the agenda. Again, this is most certainly not a 'soft' issue either within or outside the Commission. Nor are the current efforts of the SPC and Commission to strengthen the monitoring of the impact of the economic and financial crisis on people experiencing or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Access to Expertise

The article is certainly correct to highlight the lack of resources and expertise in the Commission on issues of poverty and social exclusion. When I worked in the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (DG EMPL) it was my experience that there were too few of us allocated to work on the EU's social inclusion process. This undoubtedly limited the capacity to develop detailed content on specific issues. There has been some improvement since then but there are still probably insufficient policy analysts in the social inclusion unit to do justice to all the issues satisfactorily. However, there was always recognition of this constraint and this was a major reason to resource external expertise from European networks such as FEANTSA, European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), European Social Network (ESN) and Eurochild, to fund thematic studies, to support peer reviews and to enable exchange projects. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly true that a persistent practical weakness of the process has been the failure to bring together or cluster efforts sufficiently around a number of key issues such as child poverty and homelessness and housing exclusion in a really strategic manner so as to maximise the impact and learning.

The creation of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion early in the process was also a deliberate effort to increase the expertise available to the Commission. However, it is not the case that 'this network also concentrates heavily on the NAPs as the main tool of the Inclusion OMC and does little to increase expertise on current and future priority issues'. In fact, from 2006 to 2009, the network will have written thirteen reports for the Commission, only two of which were assessments of the NAPs/inclusion. Other topics have included child poverty, active inclusion, minimum resources, feeding in and feeding out (i.e. the synergies that ought to be sought by countries between the three pillars of the EU Lisbon Strategy), integrating immigrants, the impact of the financial and economic crisis, minimum income schemes and housing exclusion and homelessness. Given the knowledge and track record of the experts on many of these issues it seems surprising that the article concludes that they do little to increase expertise. Any one in any doubt should actually read their reports.¹

¹ More details about the network can be found online at www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts or on the Commission's social inclusion website.

Role of Networks

I was surprised to read the view that ‘Some NGOs, such as the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), concentrate heavily on the NAPs process; while others, such as FEANTSA, have developed a more independent course of action over the years, and concentrate on the NAPs process only in as far as it can help advance the cause they are working on.’ If that is the approach of FEANTSA, then such a detached attitude to the NAPs process may help to explain why, according to the article, FEANTSA has often found it difficult to establish an effective working relationship with the Commission officials responsible for the process. Among other things, involvement in the NAPs process has always been a key reason, if not a condition, for the Commission funding such networks. While it is appropriate that FEANTSA should first and foremost be concerned about its own agenda, it is surprising that working to make the whole EU process function as well as possible in partnership with all the other stakeholders would not also be a concern for reasons not only of solidarity but also, in effect, of self-interest.

I was also very surprised to read the interpretation of EAPN's role. I have certainly always found EAPN to provide a very independent voice. Also, my impression is that EAPN has very effectively tried to make the Social OMC, including the NAPs/inclusion, work as a process and also to focus on particular issues. For instance, EAPN's work on the content of both active inclusion in general and minimum income provisions in particular has been a very important contribution to trying to advance efforts to address poverty and social exclusion at EU level. Other areas that also stand out as being very important and which go well beyond the NAPs/inclusion include EAPN's efforts to strengthen the social inclusion dimension of the Structural Funds; to promote the participation of people experiencing poverty; to link tackling poverty to addressing issues of inequality and discrimination; and to work constantly to influence the wider Lisbon process on growth and jobs so as to have a stronger social dimension.

Likewise, if I look at the work of Eurochild, it seems to me also a good example of how it is possible for a European network to combine both a focus on the NAPs/inclusion with a wider approach to the issue of child poverty. Such an approach ranges from working on the Commission's initiative on children's rights to developing very specific ideas in areas such as early years education and care, family and parenting support, child and youth participation and children without parental care. This has resulted in considerable progress being made on the measurement and monitoring of child poverty and on the identification of policies that work. It has led to greater political commitment on this issue.

Data Collection

The importance attributed to improvements in data collection on homelessness and housing exclusion by the article is something I would strongly concur with. In my view, until recently, the lack of up-to-date, comparative European data on all aspects of poverty and social exclusion (not just homelessness) has been the process's Achilles heel. It has greatly limited the possibility for using the process to monitor progress and to put pressure on those Member States lagging behind. The work to get agreement on common indicators has been very important, as have the improvements to data resulting from the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) though there is still some way to go on documenting the position of those not covered by these data who are often experiencing extreme poverty. Of course, the article is right to point out that progress on indicators on housing exclusion and homelessness was for a long time disappointingly slow, particularly the failure to agree an indicator on homelessness. However, the July 2009 agreement on EU indicators in the field of housing (covering overcrowded households and households overburdened with housing costs) is an important step forward.

The article also rightly highlights the very important work done by FEANTSA in developing the ETHOS typology on housing exclusion and homelessness and the success of its efforts to encourage and support the Commission to undertake important studies in this area. These studies (particularly the measuring homelessness study and Mphasis project) are leading to a further important step forward and show just what can be achieved on issues like housing exclusion and homelessness when the EU process is used effectively. Also, the ETHOS definition has the important strength of ensuring that there is not only a focus on extreme situations of rooflessness and homelessness but rather a broader approach that also addresses other key aspects of poverty such as inadequate and insecure housing and social isolation. It helps to put the focus on prevention as well as on helping people who are already homeless.

Several OMCs?

Finally, I am not convinced by the article's conclusion that the best way forward is to replace the Social OMC with a series of separate OMCs on different thematic issues. I have five particular reasons for this view:

- Most importantly, it would be a mistake to break down the issue of poverty and social exclusion into a series of separate boxes. If there is one thing above all else we have learned from the EU process since 2001 it is that poverty and social exclusion are multidimensional phenomena which need to be addressed in an integrated and coordinated manner. Issues such as homelessness, inadequate

income, child poverty, poor access to services, exclusion from the labour market and discrimination against minorities all overlap. While at certain moments focused action may be needed to assist particular groups, such action needs to be set in the broader context of effective overall social inclusion policies.

- The separation into a variety of different little OMCs does not address the core problem that has bedevilled the Social OMC: the lack of political commitment to take real action to build more inclusive societies.
- A series of separate OMCs would not be very practical or effective. The result would be to dilute and weaken the overall social inclusion dimension in relation to the jobs and growth strands of the EU just at a moment when it is possible to envisage strengthening this dimension by, first, developing strong links between social inclusion and environmental/sustainable development issues and, second, taking advantage of the Lisbon Treaty, which, for the first time, makes the combating of social exclusion and discrimination and the promotion of social justice and protection objectives of the Union. The likely overall result of the limited and narrow approach advocated in the article would, in fact, be to weaken the SPC and to reduce its political status within EU structures. In the end this would be damaging for those concerned about homelessness and housing exclusion.
- By downplaying the importance of the NAPs/inclusion instead of insisting that they become what they were originally intended to be (i.e. strategic planning tools leading to real action at national and sub-national levels to address issues of poverty and social exclusion) one would be in danger of removing the one potentially concrete aspect of the process. The NAPs/inclusion are the only part of the EU process that puts pressure on Member States to take action on and report regularly on the broad range of poverty issues in their country. The likely consequence of downplaying the role of the NAPs/inclusion would be to end up with a very soft process that would just facilitate the exchange of learning and good practice and the collection of data.
- There is a real danger that by only focusing on what is perceived as 'extreme' poverty the EU's attention would become limited to alleviating the problem rather than focussing on ensuring the policies that create an inclusive society which prevents, as far as possible, the problems arising in the first place. In any case (as the ETHOS definition demonstrates) 'extreme' poverty is not somehow separate or different from poverty more generally. Rather it is more useful to think of a continuum of interconnected situations, some more severe than others, that need to be addressed in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

In my view, it would be more effective and certainly better for the long-term struggle to combat poverty and social exclusion in the EU to argue for a stronger overall Social OMC. This would build on the progress that has been made to date. At the same time it should also be possible, within the framework of the Social OMC, to consolidate the work on a series of key themes such as child poverty, active inclusion, the integration of migrants and ethnic minorities and housing exclusion and homelessness. Thus, the useful concept outlined in the article of 'clusters of (European) stakeholders and of activities such as studies, peer reviews and data collection around the different themes' would be possible as part of the wider process. Such an approach is already in use in the Commission, for instance in the Research Directorate-General (DG RTD) framework programmes. Indeed, clustering could be a very useful way of going beyond the confines of the social inclusion process. For instance, one could use it to build on existing research – whether this research was funded by DG EMPL, DG RTD or other Commission bodies. However, an emphasis on a thematic and clustering approach within the OMC would not, and should not, be at the price of sacrificing the vital requirement for Member States to prepare NAPs/inclusion and to report regularly in a comprehensive and integrated fashion on what they are doing to prevent and address poverty and social exclusion.

If a stronger overall Social OMC is to be achieved post-2010 it will need to be strengthened in six key and closely interrelated areas. Only then is it likely to be able to truly contribute to meeting the objective of making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion. The six areas are:

- Ensuring that the EU overall adopts an integrated and sustainable approach to development in which a strong social dimension is developed alongside economic, employment and environmental policies.
- Raising the political status and importance of the Social Protection and Social Inclusion OMC.
- Making the process more rigorous, more challenging and more comparative.
- Strengthening governance in relation to social inclusion issues.
- Increasing awareness of the process at both EU and (sub-) national levels.
- Enhancing the exchange of learning and good practices.²

² See Frazer and Marlier (2008) for an elaboration on how these areas can be strengthened.

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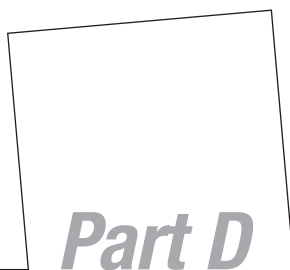
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Reviews



Part D



Pedro Cabrera, María José Rubio, Jaume Blasco (2008)

¿Quién duerme en la calle? Una investigación social y ciudadana sobre las personas sin techo [Who sleeps rough? A social and civic research study on the homeless]

Barcelona: Fundación Caixa Catalunya, 234 pages.

http://obrasocial.caixacatalunya.es/osocial/idiomes/2/fitxers/solidaritat/duerme_calle08.pdf

Under the title “*Who sleeps rough?*” the Fundación Caixa de Catalunya has published what is undoubtedly one of the most extensive studies on the problem of homelessness in Spain, especially as regards people who sleep rough in Madrid and Barcelona.

The study, conducted by Professor of Sociology Pedro Cabrera in coordination with a team of sociologists from the Universidad Pontificia Comillas [Comillas Pontifical University] of Madrid and the Universidad Autónoma [Autonomous University] of Barcelona, is based essentially on a census taken on the night of 12 March 2008 in Barcelona in which, in addition to the Obra Social de Caixa Catalunya [Caixa Catalunya Charity], numerous organisations and institutions and some 1000 volunteers took part. These results were compared with those obtained in Madrid in the census of 26 February of the same year, organised by the City Council and other entities of that city. The study is further supplemented, at national level, with the presentation of the characteristics of homeless people according to the results of a survey conducted in 2005 by the National Statistical Institute, and at local level, by another census of people sleeping rough, conducted in this case in the city of Lleida on 28 April 2008.

The book comprises six chapters and various appendices. The first chapter contains a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the phenomenon of homelessness in Spain based on the results of the aforementioned survey of homeless people, taking as frame of reference the European Typology on Homelessness (Ethos). The main socio-demographic variables used to analyse the problem are gender, age, family situation, employment situation, nationality, period of homelessness, health, drug use, aid received from the social services, and employment

instability. The second chapter, to put the census operation carried out in Barcelona in perspective, describes the more recent development of social work with homeless people in that city, both from the political and institutional perspective, as well as in terms of the actual socio-demographic and care situation. After setting out the methodological questions of the census taken in Barcelona (geographic scope, observational and survey protocol, and limits of the census, timing, etc.) in the third chapter, the fourth chapter presents the results thereof in comparison with the data obtained from Madrid. The fifth chapter focuses on the role of the 1000 or so volunteers that made the census in Barcelona possible, essentially their function and experience. The final chapter of the study presents the main conclusions drawn from the research action carried out for the benefit of homeless people in Barcelona.

To summarise the results, the censuses revealed that 658 people were sleeping rough in Barcelona and 651 in Madrid. The data revealed that the vast majority of people sleeping rough were male (in 89% of the cases), they were relatively young (with an average age of 41) and predominantly of foreign background (in 53% and 62.2% of the cases in Madrid and Barcelona, respectively). It was also noted that one out of two homeless people spend the night in the more central parts of the city, and that in general, the period of homelessness is longer than one year (in 61.8% and 45.7% of the cases in Madrid and Barcelona, respectively). Likewise, most of them do not have a partner (between 72% and 78%), and their main sources of income are the sale of junk, begging, or benefit or subsidies. The main reasons cited for finding themselves homeless are lack of employment (25%) and its direct logical consequence, lack of money (22%), together with problems with their partner or family of origin (16%). Likewise, owing to the high percentage of migrants among these people, 10% cited their illegal immigration status, and consequently, the obstacles they encountered in finding employment, as the root of their problems.

The process and results of another census of people sleeping rough are contained in an appendix, i.e. the night census of 28 April 2008 in the city of Lleida. Unlike Madrid and Barcelona, Lleida is a medium-sized city of a little more than 130,000 inhabitants, though its size has not exempted it from homeless people. A total of 70 people were found to sleep rough in the city centre (mostly men (97%), predominantly foreign (75%)). The majority of males and the high percentage of migrants among the people sleeping rough in Lleida is undoubtedly due in large measure to the importance of the agricultural sector in the city's economy, and consequently, its capacity to attract unskilled labour, in many cases illegal migrants.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the value of the book extends further than analysing the problem of homelessness in Spain, as it constitutes a valuable practical, amply documented example -- inasmuch as it refers to methodological questions of a practical nature -- of the ever so difficult process of undertaking a census and study of people sleeping rough, i.e. of what is referred to in the American literature as street-night or survey-night count. And as the authors point out, these efforts must continue to be improved, not only for our knowledge of the problem of homelessness and thus the efficiency in eradicating it, but also to provide information for awareness raising among the citizenry about this serious social phenomenon.

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***Wohnungslosigkeit und Wohnungslosenhilfe
in Österreich – eine aktuelle österreich-weite
Erhebung [Homelessness and Services for
the Homeless in Austria – An Up-To-Date
Austria-Wide Investigation]***

Vienna: BAWO Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe, 132 pp., €10.00,
available online at: [www.bawo.at/fileadmin/user_upload/public/Dokumente/
Publikationen/Grundlagen/BAWO-Studie_zur_Wohnungslosigkeit_2009.pdf](http://www.bawo.at/fileadmin/user_upload/public/Dokumente/Publikationen/Grundlagen/BAWO-Studie_zur_Wohnungslosigkeit_2009.pdf)

The added value of reliable data for establishing criteria, assessments and identifying innovative ways of development at both the national level and for international comparative research and exchange cannot be overestimated. Finally, after ten years, the Austrian BAWO (Federal Association for Organisations Working with the Homeless) has succeeded in presenting a definitive nationwide picture of persons using homeless services. The study, which provides a quantitative assessment of the extent and profile of homelessness, as well as the services available for homeless people, was carried out by Heinz Schoibl (BAWO and 'Helix Forschungsberatung' in Salzburg) and colleagues in BAWO, commissioned by the BMASK Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

The study mainly relies on reports from administrative departments in the laender (regions) on services for homeless people, and provides prevalence data for one year (2006) and a snapshot of service use on a reference date (end of 2007). Information is also included on the prevention of eviction, extending the coverage from those affected by homelessness to those threatened by housing loss. This highlights the importance of prevention for future homelessness policy.

The book comprises eight chapters (including numerous tables and graphs) and several appendices. It is preceded by a thirteen-page summary of the results and an abstract of the final report. The first three chapters provide a concise insight into the cross-linking of the project within the Austrian field of experts and stakeholders, the quantitative and qualitative homelessness problem, as well as into the methods of data collection used. Based on the reports from the laender, Chapter 4 describes homelessness and services for homeless people in the nine

federal laender, which, due to the federal structure of the state and the strongly decentralised benefits and services resulting from it, is of great importance. Chapter 5 analyses laender-specific data in the Austrian national context and relates them to additional material, such as data and facts on poverty and on housing shortage and homelessness, as well as earlier studies in this area. To ease verification and comparability, the presentation of results also takes into account the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), as can be seen in Chapter 6, which also highlights the limits of direct transferability. The profile of homelessness in Austria using socio-demographic variables (gender, age, migration, socio-economic activity, access to diverse services, housing status and so on) can be found in Chapter 7. The qualitative dimension was developed in workshops in the respective laender and results on 'municipal models in the services for the homeless', regionalisation and development of standards for the homeless are presented in the final chapter.

The investigation shows a stock of more than 37,000 sets of customer data of 'cases using services' (from 2006). The additional reference date inquiry presented almost 10,000 sets of customer/client data. The services for the prevention of eviction document 15,000 persons (among them one-third accompanying children and young people) per year (2006), and 1,200 on the reference date (end 2007). Slightly less than 13,500 persons (2006) / nearly 4,400 (end 2007) used outreach assistance. Night shelters or emergency accommodation were used by approximately 1,100 persons, and other forms of temporary accommodation and/or floating support by 8,400 (2006) / 5,000 (end 2007).

Due to the complexity of the data and the problem of double-counting, the authors are careful not to provide overall figures about the proportion of the population who were threatened or affected by homelessness in 2006. However, a rough calculation in relation to the 8.3 million inhabitants of Austria in 2007 suggests that a maximum of 0.45 per cent of the 2006 population could be known as 'cases using services'.

The study found that users of homeless services (except for the eviction prevention services) were predominantly middle-aged male Austrians. The rate of women was low in both outreach and housing services (21 per cent and 31 per cent respectively), whereas information from the services for the prevention of eviction indicate that men and women were almost equally affected by precarious and insecure housing provision. The share of clients without Austrian citizenship in services for homeless people mostly averaged at just under one-quarter, and one-third in the housing support services.

The age groups were relatively equally distributed among the various segments of assistance. Their socio-economic situation was particularly affected by the fact that the clients are strongly disadvantaged in accessing employment and only a few have stable employment.

The attempt to base the outline of results on the ETHOS typology highlights the various flaws in the Austrian structure of data collection and assessment. And this study provides another incentive to integrate broader perspectives at the national level.

The comparison within the laender shows a distinct variation in both the extent and type of documented homelessness, which, among other things, depends on the different level of progress in the homeless services. While some possess a wider regional distribution of services, others still suffer from a distinct divide between rural and urban areas. Most laender, however, have established comprehensive services for the prevention of eviction. The qualitative workshops clearly demonstrated that urban agglomerations with well-developed systems of assistance act as 'motors' for the development of standards, while other regions still clearly exhibit developmental deficits.

The provision of a solid inventory of homeless services, and service users, in this study is invaluable. However, there are still distinct gaps in our knowledge due to the limitations of present data collection methods. Correspondingly, the authors correctly interpreted the data prudently and critically. Nonetheless, the study is clearly beneficial for wider housing research that aims to put the phenomena of precarious living conditions, housing threats and housing loss into a broader context of housing policy and housing provision. It is important that the study provided data on both a personal and a household level, and took account of the gender dimension.

The study was strengthened by access to specific data on legal proceedings from the courts, which represents a positive Austrian initiative allowing the coverage of housing threats and providing a system to get in touch with people affected. This forms the basis for the services to prevent eviction in Austria, which are already extensively installed and which may be of interest to other European countries.

The comparison of the quantitative data analysis and the results of the qualitative workshops are a useful conclusion to the study. Beyond this snapshot, the challenges, flaws and promising concepts, which deserve political support within Austria, become visible. The integration of the European development of indicators and of surveys on housing data (ETHOS, EU-SILC 2007 with a focus on housing issues) provides an important linkage to the European context.

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This reviewer hopes that current and future research into homelessness will also include those people not in touch with services (on the streets, rough sleepers etc.) and those affected by hidden homelessness (a subject matter especially relevant for women). The authors acknowledge this gap in the present study. At the same time, it is also hoped that institutional documentation will be further improved based on the clear analysis of this study.

Heidrun Feigelfeld

Paula Mayock, Mary Louise Corr and Eoin O'Sullivan
(2008)

Young People's Homeless Pathways

Dublin: The Homeless Agency, 178pp. (available from www.homelessagency.ie)

This is the second volume of a report on a qualitative longitudinal study of forty young homeless people in Dublin. Volume 1 (reviewed in *European Journal of Homelessness* 2, 2008) covered their routes into homelessness and their experiences of being homeless. Volume 2 reports on the pathways through homelessness of the young people interviewed at the second sweep. The initial study was conducted in 2004/5, follow-up interviews were held in 2005/6.

The first chapter presents a review of the literature on homeless careers and pathways drawing on US, Australian and UK studies. In the US Piliavin et al. (1993) identified the importance of institutional support in exiting homelessness and this is the major theme of this second volume, which develops the distinction between 'dependent' and 'independent' exits based on Sosin et al. (1990) and Piliavin et al. (1996). From their review of US literature the authors also draw the conclusion that the majority of people exit homelessness relatively quickly, particularly those who have access to affordable housing (whereas transitional housing schemes are relatively ineffective).

Chapter 2 describes the initial recruitment of the sample of forty young people aged between fourteen and twenty-two including twenty-five young people staying in short-term hostel accommodation for those under eighteen years of age. Chapter 3 presents the circumstances of the thirty young people interviewed in the second sweep and of a further seven young people on whom some information was collected. At the time of the second study young men were more likely than young women to be staying in adult hostels, on the streets or in prison (ten of 20 men; two of 17 women); young women were more likely to be living in residential care or foster care. Five young people had returned home (2 men, 3 women), one young man was private renting and one young woman had died.

The authors used cross-sectional analysis and case profiling to analyse both first and second sweep interviews for this volume. From this analysis the authors identify three homeless pathways of young people in relation to the use or non-use of

housing support and services to exit homelessness. Pathway 1 (Chapter 4) is titled the independent exit from homelessness but these exits are only independent of housing, social and welfare services support as the majority of young people (six of seven) returned to their family home. In three cases of family returners parents intervened directly to support their daughter or son undergoing detoxification or in prison, whilst in two cases family reconciliation was mediated by services. Young people involved in returning home also distanced themselves from their previous circles of drug users and/or criminals. The sixth case involved a young person who returned to an abusive family home against service advice. The seventh case was the only young person to exit to the private rented sector.

Dependent exits from homelessness (Pathway 2, Chapter 5) included ten exits into transitional or supported accommodation and three into residential long-term care (all young women). Young people moving to supported housing reported some contact with their families and, whilst some were still involved with drugs and alcohol, most were also seeking to distance themselves from their previous friendship networks or to contain those friendships to outside their accommodation. The authors report that an important aid to this transition was involvement in education or training whereas the personal support they received from their key worker was less valuable. Most young people in this study identified their transitional housing as a 'home' for them, comparing it with the uncertainty of not having a bed when they were 'homeless'. Of the three young women who entered residential care, two had experienced physical abuse at home and considerable disruption in their care placements but were more settled at the time of the second interview.

Pathway 3, continued homelessness (Chapter 6), describes the experience of thirteen young people (11 men, 2 women) the majority of whom reported short-term multiple living situations including sleeping rough, periods in prison (11, including one young woman), failed attempts to return home (6) and temporary stays with friends (8). One young woman had temporarily entered the private rental market but lost her accommodation.

In the final chapter the authors identify five issues in relation to services that are shared with many other European societies. First, the transition from child welfare to adult homeless services at the age of eighteen prevented a speedy exit from homelessness and therefore more fluid models of provision are required. Second, young people leaving substitute care are particularly vulnerable to homelessness and aftercare provision requires further improvement. Third, the criminal justice system plays a particular role for young men in perpetuating homelessness. Fourth, services for young homeless people are based on ideas of 'responsibilisation' but create institutions that break young people's links with their previous social networks. Fifth, the expansion of the private rental sector and 2004 legislation

controlling tenancies and extending rent allowances have allowed more young people, particularly young women, to access the private rented sector; however, agencies have been reluctant to encourage such moves, preferring social housing for their clients.

Overall this study presents a particular view of pathways out of and through services but leaves many other themes reported but unexamined. Some of these themes may well be addressed after the third sweep interviews have been analysed. Themes of particular importance that are embedded within the report include the dynamic of family relationships, the importance of welfare support in relation to the restoration of family relationships, gender differences, service provision, friendship networks, drug and alcohol dependency, criminalisation and young men, and parenthood.

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Deborah Quilgars, Sarah Johnsen
and Nicholas Pleace (2008)

***Youth Homelessness in the UK:
A Decade of Progress ?***

York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation (www.jrf.org.uk), 168pp. £9.95

This study from the Centre for Housing Policy, University of York is a review of the progress on youth homelessness in the UK over the past decade (a previous National Inquiry into Youth Homelessness was undertaken by the voluntary sector in 1996). National databases are used to report on the scale of youth homelessness and data from a government-funded representative sample survey are used to analyse the profile and nature of young homeless people. Six case studies in different localities were also undertaken to assess service provision and an additional consultation with young people produced maps of each young person's journey into and through homelessness. Using these methodologies the report draws conclusions on the impact of current policy and practice development and directions for future policy and practice priorities in the UK.

Chapter 1 reviews the policy and legislative changes in the UK and Chapter 2 provides an estimate of the number of young homeless people. Both these chapters require some knowledge of UK homeless legislation and the Supporting People framework that funds supported accommodation (the explanations offered may be too brief for European readers). In particular the expansion of priority need categories in the homelessness legislation of 2002 to include young people aged sixteen and seventeen and those leaving an institution including care, prison or hospital increased the rights of young people to housing support from their local authority.

Young people accepted under homeless legislation by their local authority are described as 'statutorily homeless' and 43,075 young people aged between sixteen and twenty-four were accepted in 2006/7, including more than 8,000 sixteen and seventeen year olds, and 2,000 young people from social care or at risk of exploitation. Young women were more likely to be accepted as statutorily homeless and one-fifth of the statutory homeless young people in England were from an ethnic minority background.

Chapter 2 also reports on the number of young people in supported accommodation. In 2003 Supporting People was established providing centralised funds for the support costs of supported accommodation, replacing a range of previous grants, whilst housing costs were met through local rent allowances. Using the Supporting People database to identify non-statutorily homeless young people, the research team found that the number of young people non-statutorily homeless living in supported accommodation in England in 2005/6 was 21,000 and, through estimates, 31,130 for Great Britain as a whole; a further 2,000 were placed in housing association lets.

Based on these two figures, the York team conclude that 75,000 UK young people experienced homelessness annually (one per cent of sixteen to twenty-four year olds) in the period 2005 to 2007, although this figure does not include any estimate of 'hidden homeless' young people. In the European context it is important to stress that the majority of the identified young homeless people were never street homeless (the proportion of young people in street counts in the UK is currently very low – 7 per cent in London) although one-fifth of young people in a government survey of statutorily homeless young people reported that they had slept rough at one time. Moreover the estimate is based on administrative data. By 2006/7 the number accepted under the homeless legislation had halved since 2003/4, following the launch of the government's prevention agenda. If this estimate had been made three years previously it is likely that it would have found over 100,000 young people experiencing homelessness annually.

Chapter 3 uses data from a government survey¹ of statutorily homeless young people to report on pathways into homelessness, or at least the major reasons young people gave for their homelessness. The survey drew two representative samples of young people accepted as homeless by local authorities: one sample of sixteen and seventeen year olds, and one sample of young homeless families whose head was aged between sixteen and twenty-four. A majority of both groups reported that their parents were separated or divorced and, as with all other experiences except personal violence/abuse, rates were higher for the sixteen and seventeen year olds. The most common reported difficulties were family disruption, school exclusion/absence, mental health, step-parent, running away and no settled home as an adult, family financial difficulties, domestic violence in the family, their criminal behaviour, their use of alcohol and drugs, and violence against them.

The most common reason given by single young people aged sixteen or seventeen for their homelessness was parents (55 per cent) or other relatives (13 per cent) no longer willing to accommodate them. The most common reasons for young parents

¹ A summary is available online at:
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessresearchnumber7.

were violent relationships and loss of tenancy (social and private). Particular groups of young people were more susceptible to experiencing youth homelessness: care leavers, ethnic minorities, young offenders, runaways and young people with criminal records. Chapter 3 also reports on outcomes of homelessness in relation to health, safety and risk of violence and future employment prospects; more than half (57 per cent) of homeless sixteen and seventeen year olds in the survey were not in employment, education or training compared with 11 per cent of their age group.

Chapter 4 reviews the development of services in six localities: Belfast, County Durham, Edinburgh, the London Borough of Lambeth, Leicester and Swansea. The report found that the 2002 homeless legislation, the requirement to produce homeless strategies and the Supporting People funding arrangements have all led to a greater uniformity of provision across local authorities. It also found that although in principle young people have greater rights to housing support the government's homelessness prevention agenda has led local authority providers to seek alternatives, principally family mediation, for young people. This chapter also considers different types of supported accommodation and the role of transitional accommodation, which is perceived as more beneficial here than in the Mayock et al. study reviewed above. There were the same issues as in the Dublin study with respect to the increasing promotion of the private rental sector and the belief amongst agency workers that social housing is a better option for their group of clients. This chapter also considers the role of floating support in tenancy sustainment and the non-housing needs of homeless young people.

Chapter 5 reviews the importance of the requirement on local authorities to produce homeless strategies, considers the development of joint working between government agencies and draws attention to problems of joint working with the welfare benefits/job seekers' agency. Chapter 6 provides policy suggestions based on the review.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 several 'journeys' are displayed, drawn by young people at a homeless consultation event. These journeys are not analysed but present, from the perspective of the young person, problem childhoods, frequent moves, moves between homeless agencies and family/friends, the intervention of many agencies and difficulties in finding training or sustaining work or affordable housing.

The report is too short to do justice to the huge range of material at the authors' disposal. However, it is a review based on rich and complex primary data that will be exceptionally useful to researchers in other European countries as a report on the state of homeless youth services in the UK and an assessment of the development of services in the past decade. Notwithstanding this, the authors' hoped for future developments in services may not be realised. Subsequent to this report, Supporting People funds were absorbed into general local authority funds and

service provision may have become more variable once again. Many agencies have already experienced cuts in the funding available for the support costs of supported housing, increased intervention by local authorities in their referral and acceptance processes and particular pressure on funds for their holistic services including family mediation, work in schools and extensive floating support.

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Suzanne Fitzpatrick and Mark Stephens (eds)
(2008)

The Future of Social Housing

London: Shelter, 167pp., £15.00

Something is clearly ‘wrong’ with social housing. This was the consensus that emerged in the United Kingdom after the publication of a high-profile government-commissioned report, *End and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England* by Professor John Hills in 2007 (the ‘Hills report’), which critically reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the present social housing system. Since then this view has been reinforced by numerous political pronouncements, think tank reports and magazine articles. In England it seems that council housing estates have been reduced through the level of knife crime or drug abuse to a ‘societal problem’ that requires stridently advocated new ‘solutions’. Yet, the proposed solutions often appear tenuously linked to the available research evidence about the characteristics of tenants or of life within estates, with proponents instead relying on ideological assumptions that they regard as self-evident or following logically from the Hills report, which it sometimes appears they have not read.

Against this background, Shelter has compiled a very digestible short book, edited by Suzanne Fitzpatrick and Mark Stephens, called *The Future of Social Housing*. Its title is misleading. Very little of it is about social housing’s ‘future’ – in only a few places does it look at alternative scenarios for the sector or at some of the varied prescriptions for its problems now on offer. Instead, the book is an assessment of the state of play in social housing, looking at a range of recent government initiatives and presenting the evidence about their consequences. Where initiatives or policy changes have no evidence base, are aimed at conflicting objectives or have not done what they claim, the book says so. It also gives us useful reminders about how social housing policy in the UK compares with evolving policy in other countries.

The original context for the book was a planned housing reform Green Paper in the UK. The present Labour government has since announced that the Green Paper will not proceed. However, the Conservative Party, which hopes to form the incoming government in 2010, has issued its own Green Paper. This book review looks at some of the diagnoses of the ‘problem’ or the ‘solutions’ that have been

advanced by a series of 'new thinkers' in this area, who tend to hold similar political positions to those of the Conservative Party, and ask how these fare when judged against the evidence presented in the Shelter book.

Some of the new thinkers about social housing assert that it should no longer have a role at all. Peter King (2006) calls his book *Choice and the End of Social Housing*. Others clearly believe that, at best, social housing is highly undesirable in its present form. The Smith Institute, for example, in *Rethinking Social Housing* (Dwelly and Cowans, 2006) says that 'social housing isn't working'. The Conservative Party Public Services Improvement Group (2007) refers to council estates as 'dead-end ghettos' and the Centre for Social Justice's Housing and Dependency Working Group (2008) talks about social housing as a 'terminal destination' (both descriptions suggesting that social housing might have fatal side effects).

Not surprisingly for a book published by Shelter, a national campaigning organisation for homeless people, the opposite case is convincingly argued. David Robinson dismisses the notion that social housing is a 'tired brand', citing survey evidence that nearly all social tenants (and many private ones) believe it to be superior to the private rented sector for those on low incomes. Fitzpatrick and Stephens point out that social housing also has advantages over marginal homeownership, especially in a recession, when many owners are running into difficulty paying their mortgages.

The book acknowledges the problems highlighted by the Hills report, but presents evidence to show that social housing does indeed 'work', and in several different ways. Perhaps the most convincing evidence is offered by Fitzpatrick, where she considers some of the results of a government-commissioned survey on family homelessness. The survey involved a large sample of households that had been accepted as homeless – most of them rehoused in social housing – and showed a 'substantial net improvement in the quality of life of both families and young people' resulting from the help they received. While if you are poor in Britain you are likely to be much worse off than in many other European countries, Jonathan Bradshaw and others show that in housing terms, especially if you live in social housing, you are likely to be better off (except, notably, in respect of whether you feel safe in your local area).

The Conservative Party's housing Green Paper (2009) accuses social housing of having 'a major and negative impact on people's aspirations and mobility'. However, Robinson finds no evidence for this or for any culture of 'worklessness' among tenants. Although enhanced mobility to enable tenants to take up work opportunities may be desirable, it is 'unlikely to have much impact on levels of worklessness' since 'job-related moves are typically made from a position of economic strength'. Social housing tenants of working age who do not have jobs tend to have multiple disadvantages in the jobs market, and in most cases are only able to consider

low-paid or insecure work. Many might conclude that work of this kind is 'unaffordable', but those that do have such jobs point in surveys to the benefits of social housing in providing security and a more supportive environment (e.g. when dealing with rent arrears).

Many of the new thinkers put their pens to paper before the demand for social housing began to go through the roof. Some even call for a complete end to new social housing programmes. The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) wants no more national targets for social house building.¹ The think tank Localis (Greenhalgh and Moss, 2009) questions any policy based on 'building more homes' and proposes a reduced role for social housing based on a 'small, residual need to physically house those in the very worst circumstances'.

In response, Glen Bramley points out in the Shelter book that even if the present government achieved its target of 50,000 new social homes per year, it would barely meet new needs. It would still leave a major needs backlog from earlier years and would not address the level of demand reflected in current waiting lists. The new thinkers are irresponsibly unclear about how these needs will be met without significant new building programmes. For example, the CSJ says that there are immense benefits in 'helping the most vulnerable escape' social housing. Yet, as Bramley demonstrates, it is precisely the most vulnerable who cannot afford anything else.

A talisman of the new thinking on social housing is the ending of security of tenure. This is called for by Localis, the CSJ and the Conservative Party Public Services Improvement Group (2008), which claims that social housing 'should be viewed as a transition during which support is temporarily required'. In response, Robinson argues in the Shelter book that tenure security can be the most important characteristic of social housing for vulnerable tenants, for whom other aspects of their lives are often in flux. He also notes that removing such security (so that tenants can no longer determine for themselves how long they want to stay in their house) will not only reduce the popularity of social housing but will affect the ability of tenants to get and keep a job. Similarly, Hal Pawson points out that ending security 'surely conflicts with aspirations for social housing as a tenure of choice'.

One failing of social housing recognised by both the Shelter book and the new thinkers is that there is insufficient 'social mix', but naturally they disagree on the causes of and remedies for this. The Shelter book makes the all too obvious (but necessary) point that if you tightly constrain supply, and provide incentives for better-off tenants to leave, then you will inevitably have a sector that becomes an

¹ The CSJ report is edited by a social housing practitioner, Kate Davies, and is cited several times in the Conservative's housing Green Paper (2009). The CSJ was established by Iain Duncan Smith MP in 2004.

'ambulance service' (like the social sectors in the United States and Australia). The irony is that, as the chapter by Sarah Monk and others shows, the low number of households on moderate incomes in the social sector is not a result of lack of demand: plenty of working people on low wages would like to move in to social housing if there were enough houses available.

The Localis report makes perhaps the most radical proposal. Arguing that housing vulnerable households in areas of concentrated deprivation will only magnify their problems, it calls for them to be 'housed in more supportive, opportunity rich neighbourhoods, with access to good schools, transport etc'. But as Keith Kintrea points out in the Shelter book, radical attempts at social mixing run counter to long-standing market processes. Better-off people look to 'put as much distance as possible between themselves and the disadvantaged'. It is difficult not to reach the conclusion that some, if not all, of those calling for radical overhaul of social housing, really do want it reduced to an 'ambulance service' meeting acute needs on a strictly temporary basis.

The contradictions emerge again in discussing allocations. Most of the new thinkers want an end to national allocation policies, but are then unclear as to whether social landlords should concentrate on those 'genuinely in greatest need' (Conservative Party, 2009) or be 'free to use new social housing, and existing social housing as it becomes vacant, as they see fit' (CSJ, 2008). Localis claims there are 'perverse incentives encouraging households to present themselves as being in greater need' which 'results in social outcomes such as high levels of teenage pregnancies and family breakdown' (Greenhalgh and Moss, 2009).

Fitzpatrick notes, however, that it is difficult to find any evidence for 'perverse incentives' to become homeless, especially in London and other high-pressure areas, where being accepted as homeless means long stays in often unsatisfactory temporary accommodation. Pawson and Stephens observe that the greater social mix in social housing in some other European countries results from allocation policies that exclude the poorest households. A progressive policy for social housing to have a 'wider affordability' role depends on adequate supply (in the Netherlands, the social sector is 35 per cent of the stock, or twice the size of the UK social sector). The scope for social landlords to provide more choice and accommodate more middle-income families is now very limited: the competition for existing houses is already intense in most areas.

In just 160 pages, the Shelter book makes a compelling case that any reform of social housing should not be based on prejudice but on a thorough understanding of the sector, and the book provides a concise summary of much of the relevant

research. Those who are sure that they know the ‘answer’ to the problem of social housing should be required to read it. Perhaps they would then feel obliged to produce the evidence in any future attempts to refute its arguments.

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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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