Hungarian Homeless People in Basel: Homelessness and Social Exclusion from a Lifeworld-oriented Social Work Perspective

Zsolt Temesvary

University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland

Abstract_ *Although their exact number is unknown, supposedly dozens of destitute Hungarian homeless people currently live in Basel, Switzerland. Despite their vulnerability and severe social needs, social workers and other experts know little about their living conditions. This paper aims to explore the dimensions of time and space as well as the characteristics of personal and institutional relationships of Hungarian homeless people living in Basel. The study applies Hans Thiersch's lifeworld-oriented perspective on social work that contributes to the better understanding of the affected homeless peoples` daily struggles. The study is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews carried out with both homeless people and social workers in the institutions of homeless care. The paper concludes that due to the 'protectionist' mechanisms of Swiss social policy, unregistered Hungarian homeless people are excluded from most cantonal social and health services. However, their daily routine is strictly structured by the opening hours of the low-threshold services and their human relationships are limited to other homeless people as well as social workers at soup kitchens and day-care services.*

Keywords_ *Homelessness, Hungary, Switzerland, Basel*

ISSN 2030-2762 / ISSN 2030-3106 online

Introduction

According to the latest data collection of the *Hungarian Office of Statistics*, there are 19569 Hungarian citizens in Switzerland (Gödri, 2018, p.261), the vast majority of which live in the most economically developed North-western, German-speaking cantons. Switzerland became so popular among emigrating Hungarian citizens that – after Italians – Hungary has the second largest positive migration balance, considering the population of the country (SEM, 2018, p.23). Big Swiss cities like Basel, Zürich or Bern are particularly popular among Hungarians and other EU immigrants because of the thriving industry and good working and living conditions (BFS, 2019).

Basel city is one of the richest cantons of Switzerland based on its GDP (BFS, 2018) and the city's developed economy attracts thousands of migrants every year. According to the data of the Office of Statistics in Canton Basel City (2019), 841 Hungarians lived in Basel in 2018, and the number of Hungarian citizens living in the city is four times as high as it was 20 years ago. Similar to other European countries (see Kováts and Soltész, 2018; Váradi, 2018), the vast majority of immigrating Hungarians are young, multilingual and qualified employees whose migration can be traced back to economic reasons. However, besides the many highly qualified workers, also a lot of destitute, unemployed and homeless people arrive to Basel in order to seek and find better living conditions than they previously had in their home country. The exact number of emigrating homeless people is unknown, as their migration is generally not registered either in Hungary or in Switzerland. According to the 2018 'Basel City Count' (Drilling *et al.*, 2019, p.19) only seven Hungarian citizens lived as homeless in Basel, although their real number may be much higher.[1]

The current study analyses the living conditions of Hungarian homeless people living in Basel. Doing so, Hans Thiersch's lifeworld oriented social work approach (Thiersch, 2014) has been applied for the better understanding of homeless peoples' everyday life, including activities like searching for food, looking for sleeping places as well as their relationships to social institutions and social workers. Lifeworld-oriented social work explores the current living conditions of people and considers professional social work as a method to intervene in the individuals' daily life and change the habitual behavioural patterns if necessary (Kraus, 2015). Lifeworld-oriented social work considers the social, political and economic resources of poor people and attempts to facilitate their interpersonal and institutional networks as natural resources (Thiersch, 2014, p.5). Lifeworld approach is based on the *everyday life* or *experienced reality* of people examining

[1] The Basel City Count was part of the study 'Homelessness, Rooflessness and Precarious Housing in the Basel Region'. The one-time count was conducted in the institutions of homeless care as well as on the street (night count) on March 20-21, 2018.

their daily routine as well as their available social and institutional networks (Thiersch *et al*., 2012). Lifeworld-oriented approach incorporates all habitual activities, emotions, feelings, attitudes and behaviours through which the daily life of people can be illustrated (Sárkány, 2013; Sárkány, 2015).

Böhnisch and Schröer (2012) call this *experienced reality of people,* constructed by institutional and social networks, 'life condition' (*Lebenslage*). According to Amann (1994), the 'life condition' of people is the result of a sophisticated social development and – at the same time – the starting point of the further development of both individuals and groups. Weisser (1978) states that 'life condition' is influenced by various social problems and opportunities, in which change contributes to individual development. To measure peoples' lifeworld, three dimensions must be considered at the same time, namely the role of experienced time, space and social relationships (Thiersch, 2014, p.27). This categorisation of Thiersch was supplemented by Böhnisch and Schröer with the relevance of institutional relationships. This paper follows the structure of *lifeworld* and *life condition* and explores the homelessness of destitute Hungarian people based on the categories above.

The terminology of the paper applies FEANTSA's definition on homelessness. According to FEANTSA's (2017) (an EU-wide NGO dealing with homelessness) ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) categorisation, not only rough sleepers and other people living in public places can be considered as homeless; the spectrum of people threatened by unsecured and insufficient housing is significantly wider (Schulte-Scherlebeck *et al*., 2015). This paper analyses the living conditions and coping strategies of Hungarian homeless people belonging to the first and second ETHOS categories, namely people living rough or sleeping in emergency accommodations. The reason for this limitation of participants is primarily that rough sleepers and people living in shelters are available in the institutions of homeless care, while people suffering from domestic violence, facing evictions or whose housing is 'only' endangered (ETHOS categories 3-13), often cannot be available through the low threshold homeless services (see Busch-Geertsema *et al*., 2016, Lutz *et al*., 2017). The other reason for the reduction of participants is that the homelessness of rough sleepers and people sleeping at shelters has special characteristics – considering their daily routine, coping strategies and wandering – compared to the other homeless groups (Schulte-Scherlebeck *et al*., 2015).

Methods

The study is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews (Flick, 2014) carried out with homeless people and social workers between September 2018 and February 2019. All interviews were recorded in low-threshold social institutions (like soup kitchens and day-care services) for homeless people in Basel. These services provide shelter, warm food, possibilities for hygiene, and the access to social administration for their clients.

Participants were recruited to the interviews by snowball sampling. This method allows new participants to be found by using the available networks (e.g. the former interviewees) of the study. Snowball sampling is particularly useful when the number of potential participants is rather limited and their availability is difficult (Watson *et al.,* 2016, p.97). During the sampling, homeless people were asked for an interview if they belonged to the first (rough sleeper) or second (shelter-dweller) ETHOS categories, regularly visited the low-threshold services of homeless care and identified themselves as Hungarian. During the six months of data collection, 22 people were identified in Basel as belonging to these categories, however, two participants finally rejected the interview request. The available 20 interviews incorporated 12 semi-structured qualitative client interviews and 8 so-called walking interviews. Walking interviews contributed to the wholeness of the study and provided useful information on homeless persons who were not available for a longer interview because of the limitation of time and place (Kühl, 2016, p.37).

The interviews were carried out and transcribed in Hungarian (interviews with homeless people) and German (interviews with social workers). The transcripts were evaluated by the methodology of systematic qualitative text analysis (Mayring, 2000). The codes were created after transcribing the interviews and were processed and stored (due to the relatively little number of items) in MS Excel format. To protect the participants' identity, all names were changed and the files (charts, transcripts and audio files) were stored on the university's server according to the strictest Swiss data protection regulations.

The data collection raised several ethical issues that demanded special skills and efforts from the researcher. Primarily, I had to overcome the problem of 'multiple mandates' of social work (Payne, 2014; Staub-Bernasconi, 2016) and clarify my position as a Hungarian citizen, a researcher and a social worker. As a fellow Hungarian citizen, many homeless people sought my proximity and tried to befriend me, which was a quite natural reaction of destitute people searching for social relationships. I clarified my position to the responding homeless people, explained the goals of my research and informed all participants that their personal data were stored in a secured way, and that their names were also changed in the study.

Results

In this introduction of the study's main results, the main characteristics of Hungarian homeless people are described first. It is followed by the introduction of time and space as life-structuring factors in the lifeworld of the participants. Finally, the personal and institutional relationships of the responding homeless people are evaluated.

Main characteristics

According to a city count conducted by the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) on March 20 and 21, 2018, 206 homeless people lived in Basel and half of them were migrants. Among the migrants (104 persons), 32 people came from one of the Central and Eastern European countries, and thus CEE citizens were the largest national group among the homeless people in Basel (Drilling *et al.,* 2019, p.19). Comparing the results of the current study to the data of the 2019 'Basel Study', Hungarian homeless people lived under worse or significantly worse circumstances than the whole homeless population of the city. Fifteen of the 20 interviewees (75 per cent) did not have a residence permit, while the proportion of unregistered people was only 23 per cent in the whole homeless population. The absence of a residence permit is a huge problem among the migrants, as it means they are not eligible for social services, allowances and health care without appropriate documents. As a result, unregistered Hungarians could not use the city-run social and health care services. Since the usage of shelters and soup kitchens is tied to residence permits, only a few Hungarians (5 persons) slept regularly in the night shelter. As the majority of the affected homeless people were excluded from shelters and other social services, the number of rough sleepers (15 persons) was rather high; half of all respondents (9 persons) spent nights in public places and six more slept in other places not intended for human habitation.

The group of participants was rather heterogeneous in their age, qualifications, living conditions, medical status and other features. The youngest interviewee was only 21, and the oldest was 61 years old. There were 17 men and only 3 women among the respondents. According to their citizenship, there were four Slovakians, three Romanians and two Serbians besides the 11 Hungarian citizens. However, all non-Hungarian citizens belonged to the Hungarian minority in their countries of origin, their mother language was Hungarian, and they identified themselves as Hungarians. Thirteen people lived (slept regularly) in Basel and seven overnighted on the German side of the border, in the towns of Weil am Rhein or Lörrach. These latter often commuted to Basel because of the better resources that a larger city can offer. Three-fourths of the participants had neither Swiss nor German residence permits, the others possessed L (short-term residency for three months) or

B permits (longer-term residency up to five years). Only two people arrived from the capital, Budapest, the others came from small or middle-sized towns and villages in the countryside.

As for their qualifications, most of them had only elementary school certification and merely six people finished secondary school (a waiter, two cooks, two shop assistants and an electrician were among them), not counting various informal training. None of them had a valid work contract at the time of data collection. Homeless people earned money from begging, street music or conducted some temporary work, such as helping out in the market, loading trucks or working on construction sites. Similarly to the homeless people living in Budapest (see Pőcze, 2014), begging was the less profitable and rather despised activity among the participants, and people could earn as much as 300-400 CHF a month this way. In contrast, street musicians could earn even 1 000-1 200 CHF in the same period of time.

The vast majority of the Hungarian homeless people came from dysfunctional and broken families. Particularly, younger men often lived together with their mothers in the same household directly before leaving the country. Most of these young men missed out completely in terms of not having a father role model because their fathers had left them in their early childhood. The responding homeless women had been previously psychically and physically abused by their partners, and the experienced violence hugely influenced their emigration. Homeless women were often mocked and insulted verbally by the men and became the target of sexual harassments in soup kitchens. Other studies also confirm that homeless women often suffer from the dominance and violence of homeless men and get into a particularly vulnerable and subordinated position through partnerships (Eigman *et al.,* 2017; Lutz *et al.,* 2017). All Hungarian homeless women mentioned such former violent partnerships with homeless men; however, they were single at the time of the interviews.

None of the responding people had any form of partnership at the time of data collection, however they all shared their experiences regarding former broken marriages or other forms of failed cohabitations. Most of them had children at home, however their relationship with them was rather irregular and superficial. Twelve of the 17 homeless men experienced divorce at least once in their lifetime, after which they moved out and left the house to their children and former wives. The homelessness of men after a divorce is a particular problem in Hungary. According to Győri and Maróthy (2008, p.18), two-thirds of all homeless people ended up in shelters or directly on the street because of a divorce, conflict with partners or domestic violence.

Table 1. Participants` Characteristics (n=20)

Variable	n	%
Age		
<25	1	5%
26-49	15	75%
>50	4	20%
Gender		
Male	17	85%
Female	3	15%
Family status		
Divorced	12	60%
Widow	1	5%
Single	7	35%
Citizenship		
Hungarian	11	55%
Romanian	3	15%
Slovakian	4	20%
Serbian	2	10%
Residence permit		
Without permit	15	75%
Short-term permit	2	10%
Long-term permit	3	15%
Qualifications		
Elementary school	14	70%
Secondary school	6	30%
Children		
0	6	30%
1-2	9	45%
>3	5	25%
Source of income		
Social allowance	5	25%
Begging	7	35%
Street music	3	15%
Other	5	25%

Dimension of geographical space

Most Hungarian homeless people in Basel were experienced travellers who had already explored many European cities before their arrival. The interviews revealed that they quickly learned the local social systems and used the visited cities and their social services 'functionally'. For example, some homeless people travelled to Southern France or Spain in the cold winter months. Others travelled to Luxemburg where the local Red Cross provided them free health services, such as dental and dermatological care.

It was rare for homeless people to arrive to Basel directly from Hungary. They regularly travelled first to European big cities (primarily to Vienna or Munich) that were closer to their home country. They spent a few weeks or months in these cities, and then travelled further to the West. Several Hungarian homeless people mentioned as a reason for further migration that there were a lot of Eastern European destitute people in Vienna, therefore they had only limited possibilities for begging, playing street music or doing temporary work (Szurovecz, 2018). Consequently, they had serious conflicts with the other homeless people for the scarce resources. Three-fourths of the Hungarian homeless people had lived in Vienna and one-third of them had turned up in Munich for a while before moving further to Switzerland.

In Basel, just a few Hungarian homeless people used the city's only night shelter regularly, because of its relatively high fees. All shelter users complained about thefts and regular conflicts with other homeless people, particularly with addicted and mentally ill tenants. Therefore, the majority of homeless Hungarians spent nights on the streets or in parks, burgled garages or abandoned industrial buildings, particularly in the summer. At the time of data collection, a group of Hungarians (5-6 men) overnighted in a burglarized garage in Weil am Rhein, Germany. Rough sleepers also visited the old city wall and its cave-like small holes, which was a rather uncomfortable and dangerous sleeping place.

Buying and processing food was a huge challenge for people without permanent housing. Since Basel is one of the most expensive cities not only in Switzerland but in the world, purchasing food in some supermarkets is a serious issue for poor and homeless people. Therefore, they bought food from the relatively cheap discount food stores like Lidl and Aldi. Even there they sought the cheapest products and bought quite low-quality food such as pre-packed cold cuts and sliced bread, which contained a lot of salt, fat and so-called 'bad' calories.

Sometimes they ate in fast food restaurants like McDonalds and Burger King, where they could buy relatively cheap hamburgers and sandwiches; they often chose these restaurants for warming-up during the winter days. Waste food collection from trash containers (a scene often seen in Eastern Europe) was not widespread among the Hungarian homeless people living in Basel. The participants suffered a lot in winter, when they attempted to find relatively warm and safe places to survive the cold. People who could not find a shelter received sleeping bags from the day-services and soup kitchens. Some churches in Basel allow homeless people to spend the night inside; they lay mattresses and covers on the benches that homeless people could use at night.

In the winter the personnel of railway stations and the airport were more tolerant to homeless people and allowed them to spend the night in waiting rooms. Two Hungarian homeless men overnighted at the airport (Euro Airport), where they were

allowed to sleep in the arrival side and could use the bathrooms too. Homeless people could stay in the terminal between 11pm and 4am when the airport was closed, however they had to leave the building early in the morning.

In the last few years there were lethal attacks against homeless people in Basel (two years ago a Croatian man was beaten to death and last year a Portuguese homeless person was killed), therefore several rough sleepers left the city centre and looked for a sleeping place in the more secured outskirts (Rudin, 2018).

Table 2. Trends of Migration and Places Used (n=20)

Variable	N	%
Arrival to Basel		
Train	13	65%
Bus	4	20%
Plane or car	3	15%
Spending the night in Basel city		
Yes	13	65%
No	7	35%
Current sleeping place		
Night shelter	5	25%
Streets and parks	9	45%
Other	6	30%
Sleeping place in the last year (multiple mentions)		
Night shelter	15	75%
Garages, cellars	11	55%
Streets and parks	18	90%
Other	7	35%
Eating in… (multiple mentions)		
Soup kitchens	20	100%
Buying food in groceries and eating it in parks	20	100%
Fast-food restaurants	12	60%
Planning to leave Basel in the next year		
Yes	7	35%
No	13	65%
Visited their families in the last year		
Yes, in Hungary	8	40%
Yes, in other country	4	20%
No	8	40%
Cities abroad where have stayed more than 3 weeks (multiple mentions)		
Vienna	16	80%
Munich	7	35%
Berlin	6	30%
Other	9	45%

Dimension of time

The daily routine of the homeless Hungarians was regularly well organised and followed a more-or-less planned structure, considering the opening hours of various institutions. This organised way of living incorporated the targeted usage of both social institutions and public places and contributed to the transparency and predictability of everyday life. In the morning, they regularly met next to Gassenküche (a soup kitchen where they could have some breakfast) in Kleinbasel (an area of Basel), where some people arrived from the nearby night shelter, and some came directly from the street, parks or their hidden sleeping places. After breakfast, particularly in summer, they stayed during the day in the city's parks or on the streets, where they begged, played music or collected reusable waste.

In the winter months, they rathered stay during the day in one of the several day-care centres maintained by local NGOs. In these institutions they could wash their clothes, have a shower, watch TV, play pool or simply talk with each other. They regularly spent the evenings in various soup kitchens, like Soup and Chill or Café Elim, where they could have a dinner for free or a reasonable price. A lot of homeless people attended these soup kitchens, even those who avoided other services, for warm food, friendly environment and the community itself. If they earned some money during the day, they preferred to use fast-food restaurants as an alternative solution to soup kitchens, where they could spend a whole night if they bought some cheap food. Street musicians and beggars often visited supermarkets for a few hours to warm up and use the toilets during the winter months. Security personnel regularly tolerated homeless people and allowed them to spend some time in the supermarkets.

Homeless people spent relatively a lot of time processing and eating food, and waiting for meals in soup kitchens. As they were unable to store food, they always had to purchase their daily supply fresh. Finding a proper sleeping place was always a huge challenge, particularly for the rough sleepers. Even people using regular sleeping places had to organise their place, for example packing their equipment in and out every day, before and after sleeping. Although homeless people are often considered 'idle' unemployed persons by the public (Hobden *et al*., 2007; Tsai *et al.,* 2018), they spend relatively much time earning money through begging, collecting reusable waste, doing temporary works and playing street music. They slept relatively little due to the unfavourable sleeping conditions they coped with, for instance they spent nights under noisy bridges, were afraid of attacks on the street or were disturbed in the parks by people walking by. Their leisure time was limited to the time spent together with other homeless people; they played cards, watched TV in the day-care facilities or talked with each other in parks or shelters.

Their administrative duties involved the arrangement of daily affairs at the police station or in social institutions. However, most of their administrative issues were related to telephone and internet subscriptions, as smartphones were often their only connections to the outer world. They often travelled by tram or bus within the city and used trains or regional buses to approach their sleeping places, if they were outside Basel.

Table 3 – Average Daily Time Spent on Various Activities (n=20)

Variable	Number of hours
Average time spent on various activities	
Finding, processing and eating food	2.8
Seeking appropriate sleeping place	1.3
Working (incl. begging, street music, etc.)	6.4
Sleeping	6.7
Leisure time and entertainment	3.4
Administrative duties	0.2
Travelling	1.2

Interpersonal relationships

Personal relationships of homeless people were regularly limited to each other and they often used institutions, mostly soup kitchens and day-care services, as meeting points. In the soup kitchens, homeless people regularly sat in closed groups strictly separated from each other based on their nationality. The largest 'national' groups – like Romanians, Hungarians and Ethiopians – always kept together, while other people (outsiders) attempted to join them or rather sat alone in one of the corners. The distance between these nationality-based groups was rather large and people practically never sought the proximity of other groups. Although a common language was the main group-building factor, other Eastern Europeans (Poles, Czechs and Slovakians) were occasionally admitted into the Hungarian group since they were too few to create their own groups.

The experienced members of the community had their own places at the tables of soup kitchens and the others respected their 'expert' position, and often turned to them for advice and support. These 'old' members had already gotten to know the social workers, enjoyed some advantage in the distribution of donated goods and were among the first ones to receive hotel vouchers in the cold winter days. These experienced homeless persons could help the younger ones a lot, teaching them how to use the system of homeless care and introducing the newcomers into the hidden world of the city's homeless people. However, even the experienced people kept their sleeping places secret because they feared being robbed and attacked at night. They also kept it secret if they found a service or institution that supported them with money, clothes or food.

Friendships and close relationships were quite rare among the homeless people in the study. Relationships were often superficial and interest-based. For example, they could find food and sleeping places easier and were able to defend themselves from violence better if they kept together. Although all participants visited the institutions of homeless care, only a little more than half of them had regular relationships with social workers. The others only dropped by and left the institutions without receiving counselling or other forms of social care. The main reason for this non-cooperation was a lack of language skills that hugely hampered communication with professionals. The participants' family relationships were mostly limited to weekly telephone calls; only half of them could afford to visit family members in their home country. In the absence of their families and friends, the vast majority of homeless people often felt lonely and they missed quality human relationships. Their social relationships (excluding family members and other homeless people) were often institution-based relationships with social workers and other helpers, and only one-third of the participants mentioned regular connections with Swiss non-homeless people. Most people with relationships were street musicians and beggars, who got to know some local residents during their work.

Table 4. Interpersonal Relationships (n=20)

Variable	n	%
Regular (daily) relationship to… (multiple mentions)		
Other homeless people	20	100%
Family members	6	30%
Social workers	12	60%
Others	14	70%
Social relationships to…		
Swiss non-homeless people	7	35%
Social workers, priests, administrators	20	100%
Others	13	65%
Irregular (periodical) relationship to… (multiple mentions)		
Other homeless people	20	100%
Family members	16	80%
Social workers	18	90%
Others	20	100%
Feel alone		
Often	16	80%
Sometimes	2	10%
Never	2	10%

Institutional relationships

All participating Hungarian homeless people used at least one of the low-threshold social services. However, most of the city's services either charged some money for the food and shelter or demanded an official residence permit from their guests. Thus, unregistered homeless people, who neither had a permit nor enough money for food, were practically excluded from these social institutions. Only one soup kitchen (Soup and Chill) provided free food for homeless people, however it was open only for the winter months.

In the low-threshold institutions, none of the responding homeless people received professional social work such as individual casework, advocacy or empowerment. Social workers only registered them in the institutional administration, occasionally gave them some clothes and food or filled in a voucher to the night shelter.

Almost all participants used soup kitchens at the time of data collection, particularly the free Soup and Chill. Homeless people liked to combine the services of various institutions; for example, they could receive free cocoa in a soup kitchen, dessert in a day-care service and a whole evening meal in another soup kitchen. Thus, more than three-fourths of the participants used two or more services regularly. As almost all day-care services were tied to residence permits, therefore only half of the participants could use them. However, some homeless people (particularly the elderly and ill ones) were allowed in without permit in the winter months.

The Swiss health care system is based on private insurers, which finance the treatments in both the public and private services. People must choose a medical insurer and pay the insurance fees individually (Wang and Aspalter, 2006). In the case of poor people registered in Basel, the canton pays the insurance fees directly to the companies. Apart from four men and a woman, Hungarian homeless people did not have any health insurance as they were unable to pay for it on the market of private insurers and (in the absence of registration) they were not eligible for the support of the canton. Although homeless people were also eligible for emergency care, several respondents did not dare to go to the clinics because they feared deportation and that their 'illegal' residency status would be discovered.

Similar to the homeless population in Hungary (Fadgyas-Freyler, 2017), the majority of homeless people in Basel suffered from various chronic diseases. Physical and mental diseases as well as substance abuse were common in the group. Some men suffered from digestive problems, while others had untreated psychiatric illnesses. An elderly man lost one of his legs in a car accident, and another man had a missing eye because of a childhood accident. Diagnosed and undiagnosed mental illnesses like paranoia, depression and anxiety often occurred among the Hungarian homeless people. Loneliness, the lack of friendships and intimate relationships endanger the psychical balance of people even without homelessness and social

exclusion (Gruebner *et al.,* 2017). However, the constant stress factors and the constant striving to secure daily existence amplified the probability of various mental and psychosomatic illnesses for homeless people (Parker and Dykeman, 2013; Watson *et al.,* 2016).

Frozen limbs and injuries from physical attacks also occurred among the participants, but only rarely. For instance, a middle-aged man sleeping on the street was stabbed by young people with a knife. Another young man fell from the scaffolding in a construction site and his knee was seriously injured. A middle-aged man had an inflamed tooth that he tried to operate himself causing a serious infection in his mouth. Since none of them had health insurance, they did not receive professional medical care.

Consumption of alcohol, marihuana and synthetic drugs occurred regularly among the Hungarian homeless. Some of them not only used, but sold drugs, too. Homeless men sometimes dealt drugs even in the soup kitchens, where they sold it in small plastic bags to provide for their own consumption.

The participants had good or at least satisfactory relationships with the Basel police. Although, as EU citizens, they could stay in the city for three months without a long-term residence permit, police often turned a blind eye on the expired documents, if there were no other problems with the affected people otherwise.

> *Only those are arrested and expelled who cannot behave. I have been living here for four years without papers, they know me and leave me alone. (Elek, 41)*

Conflicts with the police because of minor criminal activities like theft, drug consumption and street fights occurred relatively often. However, according to social workers, larger crimes like robbery or homicide had never occurred in the Hungarian homeless community. Although police were generally tolerant of the homeless people, some younger Hungarian men experienced confrontation: policemen took them to the Swiss-French border and forced them to go towards France. Despite the general tolerance, some Hungarians were deported from the country. In such cases, the city court decided about the deportation and the police enforced it. They purchased bus or train tickets for the affected people and put them on the vehicles directly, since people slated for deportation had sold their tickets earlier and remained in the city. Nonetheless, these extraditions were not really effective, as one of the deported homeless men returned to the city in two weeks, and another man got off the bus in Vienna and soon appeared in Basel again.

> *At home? This is my home, I live here, and I am already at home.* (Miklós, 57)

Table 5. Institutional Relationships (n=20)

Variable	n	%
Regular (daily) relationship with… (multiple mentions)		
Soup kitchens	17	85%
Night shelters	5	25%
Day-care services	11	55%
Other services	7	35%
Number of used services…		
1	4	20%
2	10	50%
3 or more	6	30%
Seen by a doctor in the previous year		
No	12	60%
Once	6	30%
More than twice	2	10%
Imprisonment or arrest experienced		
Yes	7	35%
No	13	65%
Health insurance		
Yes	5	25%
No	15	75%
Deportation experienced		
No	16	80%
Yes	4	20%
Bank account		
No	6	30%
Yes, in Switzerland	5	25%
Yes, abroad	9	45%

Discussion

To understand the scarce number of social services that migrant, unregistered homeless people can use in Basel, it is important to examine the fundamental characteristics of the Swiss social system. The Swiss welfare state cannot be clearly categorised according to Esping-Andersen's widespread welfare state typology (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Although the country has an undisputed conservative welfare state heritage and its institutions rooted in the so-called Bismarckian social state (see Dallinger, 2015; Dietz *et al.,* 2015), the modern welfare services of Switzerland are rather close to the liberal welfare model. This liberal welfare model incorporates a pay-as-you-go health care system, a social care system mostly dominated by low threshold services, a social policy based on conditional in-cash allowances as well as a pension system in which the first, state-run pillar is rather scarce (Wang and Aspalter, 2006). As the cantons have relatively strong independence in social legislation (see Bundesverfassung, 1999),

and they regulate their social systems in their own constitutions and social acts, 26 different micro social systems work in the country with various services and financial supports (Armingeon *et al.,* 2004). Basel city is an independent canton with its own constitution and social legislation (Verfassung des Kantons Basel-Stadt, 2005). However, neither the constitution nor the social act regulates exactly the definition of homelessness and the services of homeless care. Both legal documents reflect the social political principles of less eligibility, subsidiarity and locality (see Zombori, 1994; Dallinger, 2015). Consequently, almost all social services and allowances, even the low-threshold services, are tied to residence permits, thus unregistered people are practically excluded from the usage of in-cash and in-kind supports (see Kanton Basel-Stadt, 2018a; Kanton Basel-Stadt, 2018b).

In the area of homeless care, the city co-finances the low-threshold social institutions (soup kitchens, day-care services, night shelters and street work), however these services are almost always maintained by civil organisations. The only city-run institution is the night shelter that provides accommodations for 75 men and 28 women, however the fees are so high (40 CHF for a single night), that many unregistered homeless people rather avoid the shelter and sleep rough. Therefore, around one-third of all places in the night shelter were unused even in the winter (Drilling *et al.*, 2019, p.40). In the winter months, homeless people were sometimes allowed to sleep at the Salvation Army's temporary shelter, or they received some vouchers from the social department to spend the frosty nights at a discount hotel.

Most of the homeless care institutions often provide similar services, and they are rather close to each other in location. They have different opening hours (some of them are open only in winter, at night, at weekends, etc.), fees (some places ask money for food, coffee or washing, while some do not), requirements (some of them require residence permits, some do not) and serve various target groups (designated institutions for refugees, sex workers or substance users), so that homeless people often do not know where to go. For example, there are a lot of soup kitchens in the city, however psychiatric services for mentally ill people or gynaecological care for homeless women are only rarely available. A deficiency of the system is that homeless families cannot be placed together, and (unless they receive emergency apartments) children must be separated from their parents and sent to institutions of child care in case of family homelessness.

The system of social housing is not available in Basel; the city provides only 156 so-called emergency apartments, where people are allowed to reside up to six months (Drilling *et al.,* 2019, p.44). However the usage of such apartments is not explicitly based on social needs; they are available in the case of housing crises (e.g. natural disasters or fire damage). Only families with children are allowed to use the two to four-room emergency apartments, childless adults and couples must go

directly to the institutions of homeless care. Because of the strict requirements, emergency apartments are almost unavailable for the Hungarian (and even for many local) homeless people.

Social workers in the low threshold services were regularly overburdened and they could focus only on the most urgent problems due to the lack of time. The most significant obstacles in the development of a supportive procedure were the lack of language skills and the general mistrust of Hungarian homeless people towards the Swiss social workers. Homeless people often considered the practitioners as official persons who can control or report them to the authorities any time, therefore they rather keep their distance from the helpers. Unfortunately, social workers of soup kitchens, night shelters and day-care services hardly knew anything about the Hungarian homeless people.

> *We do not know too much about them. We do not speak their language and they do not speak ours either. Sometimes people disappear and then new ones appear in the group, but we cannot really get in touch with them.* (Social worker of a soup kitchen)

A progressive reform in Basel's social policy would be important for the adequate risk mitigation of non-Swiss homeless people. Through the current restrictions the city attempts to protect its social services and allowances from the migrating poor and favours domestic homeless people to the migrants. This protective social policy aims at tackling 'welfare tourism' from the developing EU countries and the poorer Swiss cantons. However, due to these structural restrictions, dozens of destitute homeless people remain without any essential social care and shelter (despite their eventual social needs), even if there is a significant vacant capacity in the system of homeless care.

The primary task for the city's social policy should be to redefine and reshape the system of low-threshold services. These institutions should function as needs-based instead of residence-based services in order to protect the most vulnerable social groups of the city. Doing so, it would be necessary to determine an overall social minimum that would cover the most essential needs of people by guaranteeing the minimum-level of shelter and food to all. Thus, these generally available low-threshold services (such as night-shelters, soup kitchens and street work) could function as access points to the higher-level facilities.

Conclusions

The paper applied Thiersch's lifeworld oriented social work approach to examine the role of time and space in homeless people's everyday life as well as their personal and institutional relationships. Doing so, twenty Hungarian homeless people were interviewed in the homeless institutions of Basel, focusing on their current living conditions.

In the case of Hungarian homeless people living in Basel, time has a huge importance as the structure of community is constantly changing and forming: old members leave, and new ones join the group relatively frequently. During the six months of data collection, 22 people were present among the city's Hungarian homeless. Half of them left after a short period of time: they either moved further to other Western European countries or returned home. However, the core of the community remained together during this period of time: people got in touch and cooperated with each other, occasionally defined mutual goals (e.g. to find a temporary job or a shelter) and supported the newcomers with advice. Time was of huge importance in structuring homeless peoples' everyday life from breakfast through the daily activities to seeking sleeping places at night. This time structure was largely based on the opening hours of various institutions in homeless care.

Mutually experienced space also had a huge importance in structuring the everyday life of Hungarian homeless people. Basel is a middle-sized European city with a rather small city centre. All responding homeless people spent their days in the old town (even those who overnighted in the outskirts) where the majority of social services could be found. Soup kitchens, night shelters and the day-services of NGOs were relatively close to each other, so that people could easily walk from one institution to another. Hungarian homeless people mostly used these services in the morning and evening hours, while they stayed at public places like parks and the main train station during the day. Other public services, such as post offices, administrative services and medical facilities were also within walking distance. This concentrated institutional and spatial infrastructure could contribute to stronger relationships between homeless people, compared to a really big city environment, where people are geographically separated from each other. The alienating effect of a big city environment in the case of homeless people was explored by studies carried out in Berlin (Schulte-Scherlebeck *et al.,* 2015), Los Angeles and Tokyo (Marr, 2015).

The limited geographical area significantly influenced the intensity and frequency of interpersonal relationships, too. In the absence of families, colleagues and friends, homeless people sought each other's proximity and spent a lot of time together. The common cultural identity and language made these relationships even stronger (see Eigmann *et al.,* 2017). Mostowska (2014) and Kastanje and Hoff

(2019) observed and identified similar trends among Polish homeless people living in Brussels and the Eastern European homeless people living in Copenhagen. Nonetheless, these interpersonal relationships cannot be considered friendships; all interviewees mentioned that they did not want to have friends among the other homeless people because they feared being deceived, robbed and exploited. They often talked about their previous negative experiences and general disappointment in the interviews.

References

Amann, A. (1994) Offene Altenhilfe [Open Elderly Care], in: H. Reimann (Ed.) Das Alter: Einführung in die Gerontologie [*Aging: Introduction to Gerontology*] (Stuttgart: Enke).

Armingeon, K., Bertozzi, F. and Bonoli, G. (2004) Swiss Worlds of Welfare, *West European Politics* 27(1) pp.20-44.

BFS (2018) *GDP by Canton 2008-2016* (Neuchatel: Bundesamt für Statstics).

BFS (2019) *Quality of Life in the Cities* (Neuchatel: Bundesamt für Statstics).

Bundesverfassung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft [Constitution of the Swiss Federation], valid from 18. April 1999.

Busch-Geertsema, V., Culhane, D. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2016) Developing a Global Framework for Conceptualising and Measuring Homelessness, *Habitat International* 55 pp.124-132.

Böhnisch, L. and Schröer, W. (2012) *Sozialpolitik und Soziale Arbeit* [Social Policy and Social Work] (Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa).

Dallinger, U. (2015) *Sozialpolitik im internationalen Vergleich* [Social Policy in International Comparison] (Konstanz: UVK Verlag).

Dietz, B, Frevel, B. and Toens, K. (2015) *Sozialpolitik kompakt* [Social Policy Compact]. (Wiesbaden: Springer VS)

Drilling, M., Dittmann, J., Bischoff, T. and Temesvary, Zs. (2019) Obdachlosigkeit, Wohnungslosigkeit und prekäres Wohnen: Ausmass, Profil und Bedarf in der Region Basel [Homelessness, Rooflessness and Precarious Housing: Magnitude, Profile and Need in the Basel Region], *Lives Working Paper* 76. pp.1-65.

Eigmann, M., Friedrich, B. and Gerull, S. (2017) EU-Migrant_innen in der niederschwelligen Wohnungslosenhilfe [EU Migrants in the Low-Threshold Services for Homeless People], in: S. Gillich and R. Keicher (Eds.) *Ohne Wohnung in Deutschland: Armut, Migration und Wohnungslosigkeit* [Without Housing in Germany: Poverty, Migration and Homelessness] pp.287-297. (Freiburg am Breisgau: Lambertus Verlag).

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: University Press).

Fadgyas-Freyler, P. (2017) A hajléktalan emberek általános jellemzői és egészségi állapotuk egy adminisztratív adatbázis alapján [General Characteristics and Medical Conditions of Homeless People based on an Administrative Database], *Esély* 3. pp.102-122.

FEANTSA (2017) *ETHOS European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion* (Brussels: FEANTSA).

Flick, U. (2014) *Sozialforschung: Methoden und Anwendungen* [Social Research: Methods and Applications] (Hamburg: Rowohlt).

Gödri, I. (2018) Nemzetközi vándorlás [International Migration], in: J. Monostori, P. Őri. and Zs. Spéder (ed.) *Demográfiai Portré 2018* [Demography Portrait 2018], pp.237-270. (Budapest: KSH).

Gruebner, O., Rapp, M. A., Adli, M., Kluge, U., Galea, S. and Heinz, A. (2017) Cities and Mental Health, *Dtsch Arztebl Int* 114(8) pp.121-127.

Győri, P. and Maróthy, M. (2008) *Merre tovább? Egy nemzeti hajléktalanügyi stratégia lehetséges keretei* [Which Way Forward? Possible Frameworks of a National Homeless Strategy] (Budapest: Pro Domo).

Hobden, K.L., Tompsett, C.J., Fales, A.K. and Toro, P.A. (2007) Comparing Public Opinion and Prevalence of Homelessness in Canada to the United States, *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 16(1) pp.76-92.

Kanton Basel-Stadt (2018a) *Informationen zu den Unterstützungsleistungen der Sozialhilfe* [Information on the Supports of the Social Allowance System] (Basel-Stadt: Department für Wirtschaft, Soziales und Umwelt).

Kanton Basel-Stadt (2018b) *Unterstützungsrichtlinien des Departments für Wirtschaft, Soziales und Umwelt des Kantons Basel-Stadt* [Supporting Guidelines of the Department for Economics, Social Affairs and Environment of Canton Basel City].

Kastanje, M. and Hoff, N.M. (2019) *Unregistered Homeless Migrants in Copenhagen: Experiences from Danchurchsocial 2017* (Copenhagen: Kirkens Korshaer).

Kováts A. and Soltész, B. (2018) *Mit tudunk a kivándorlásról? Műhelybeszélgetések* [What Do We Know about Emigration? Discussions] (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadói Kör).

Kraus, B. (2015) The Life We Live and the Life We Experience: Introducing the Epistemological Difference between Lifeworld (Lebensworld) and 'Life Conditions' (Lebenslage), *Social Work and Society* 13(2) https://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/438/816 (accessed: 02.10.2019).

Kühl, J. (2016) Walking Interviews als Methode zur Erhebung alltäglicher Raumproduktionen [Walking Interviews as Methods to the Production of Space], *Europa Regional* 23(2) pp.35-48.

Lutz, R., Sartorius, W. and Simon, T. (2017) *Lehrbuch der Wohnungslosenhilfe: Eine Einführung in Praxis, Positionen und Perspektiven* [Textbook of Homeless Care: An Introduction to the Practice, Positions and Perspectives] (Weinheim/ Basel: Beltz Juventa).

Marr, M. D. (2015) *Better Must Come: Exiting Homelessness in Two Global Cities* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

Mayring, P. (2000) Qualitative Content Analysis, *Qualitative Social Research* 1(2) http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1089/2385 (accessed: 13.09.2019).

Mostowska, M. (2014) Homelessness Abroad: "Place Utility" in the Narratives of the Polish Homeless in Brussels, *International Migration* 52(1) pp.118-129.

Office of Statistics Canton Basel City (2019) *Wohnbevölkerung des Kantons Basel-Stadt nach Staatsangehörigkeit seit 1990* [Population of Canton Basel City by Citizenship since 1990] (Basel: Statistiches Amt).

Parker, R. D. and Dykeman, S. (2013) The Reality of Homeless Mobility and Implications for Improving Care, *Community Health* 38. pp.685-689.

Payne, M. (2014) *Modern Social Work Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Pőcze, F. (2014) *A Moszkva tér gyermekei* [Children of the Moscow Square] (Budapest: Libri).

Rudin, P. (2018) Angeklagter nach Obdachlosen-Mord in Basel: "Habe gespürt, dass ich diese Person umbringen soll", [Accused after Homeless Murder in Basel: "I felt that I have to kill this person] *BzBasel* 13.11.2018, https://www.bzbasel.ch/basel/basel-stadt/angeklagter-nach-obdachlosen-mord-in-basel-habe-gespuert-dass-ich-diese-person-umbringen-soll-133712322 (accessed: 19.08.2019).

Sárkány, P. (2013) *Theorie und Praxis Sozialer Arbeit* [Theory and Practice of Social Work] (Baden-Baden: Tectum Verlag).

Sárkány, P. (2015) *Szociálpedagógiai elméletek* [Theories of Social Pedagogy] (Budapest: Jel Kiadó).

Schulte-Scherlebeck, C., Lange, C. and Kletzin, T. (2015) *Lebenswege und Wohnungslosigkeit: Eine Analyse biografischer Interviews in Berlin* [Ways of Life and Homelessness: An Analysis of Biographical Interviews in Berlin] (Berlin: Logos Verlag).

SEM Staatssekretariat für Migration (2018) *Statistik Zuwanderung: Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in der Schweiz* [Statistics of Immigration: Aliens in Switzerland] (Bern: Embargo).

Staub-Bernasconi, S. (2016) Social Work and Human Rights: Linking Two Traditions of Human Rights in Social Work, *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 1(1) pp.40-49.

Szurovecz, I. (2018) Aki itt éhen hal, az meg is érdemli [Who Starves Here, Deserves it], *Abcúg* 26.06.2018, https://abcug.hu/aki-itt-ehen-hal-az-meg-is-erdemli/ (accessed: 19.08.2019).

Tsai, J., Lee, C.Y.S., Shen, J., Southwick, S.M. and Pietrzak, R.H. (2018) Public Exposure and Attitudes about Homelessness, *Journal of Community Psychology* 47(1) pp.76-92.

Thiersch, H., Grünwald, K. and Köngeter, S. (2012) Lebensweltorientierte Soziale Arbeit [Lifeworld Oriented Social Work], in: Thole, W. (Ed.) Grundriss Sozialer Arbeit: Ein einführendes Handbuch [*Basics of Social Work: An Introductory Manual*], pp.175-196. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag).

Thiersch, H. (2014) *Lebenswertorientierte Soziale Arbeit: Aufgaben der Praxis im sozialen Wandel* [Lifeworld Orientation in Social Work: Tasks for the Practice in Social Change] (Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Juventa).

Váradi, M. M. (2018) *Migráció Alulnézetből* [Migration from a Different Perspective]. (Budapest: Argumentum).

Verfassung des Kantons Basel-Stadt [Constitution of Canton Basel City]. valid from 23. March 2005.

Wang, D. and Aspalter, C. (2006) The Austrian and Swiss Welfare State System in International Comparison, *Journal of Societal and Social Policy* 5(2) pp.25-49.

Watson, J., Crawley, J. and Kane, D. (2016) Social Exclusion, Health and Hidden Homelessness, *Public Health* 139 pp.96-102.

Weisser, G. (1978) Über die Unbestimmtheit des Postulats der Maximierung der Sozialprodukts [About the Uncertainty of Postulates of the Maximization of Social Products], in: G. Weisser (Ed.) *Beiträge zur Gesellschaftspolitik* [Contributions to Societal Policy] pp.542-574. (Göttingen: Öffentliches Leben).