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Journal Philosophy

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

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Editorial

As we near the end of another challenging year for those experiencing homelessness, the hope that mass vaccination across Europe would result in an end to the restrictions on social and economic activity that have characterised the past 18 months has receded, with a number of Member States introducing a new round of restrictions due to stubbornly high rates of infection, and in some cases rapidly rising Covid-19 case numbers. Familiar refrains to 'stay home', 'work from home' and to 'stay safe' are current once again; refrains that we hoped could be consigned to the past as we move into 2022 are regrettably to be heard across the European Union and beyond. Although extraordinarily difficult to predict what will transpire in 2022, the fact that at an individual, familial and societal level we continue to struggle to contain Covid-19, two things seem reasonably certain: firstly, Covid-19 and its variants will be with us for some time to come, and secondly, responses to Covid-19 and its variants fundamentally emphasise the centrality of secure housing to stay safe and to participate in social and economic activity.

Although seemingly self-evident, the experience of homelessness is fundamentally the absence of secure housing; that is housing which is affordable, provides security of tenure and a sense of safety, often referred to as ontological security. This fundamental understanding of homelessness is of-times lost in the cacophony of 'public noise' that understands homelessness variously as a consequence, for example, of mental ill-health, addiction and individual dysfunction. This is not to disregard those who experience homelessness and mental ill-health for example, but rather to emphasise that effectively meeting the needs of those who experience homelessness and mental-ill health is best done through the provision of secure housing as evidenced by the now robust outcomes from Housing First trials in Europe and North America.

Given the alignment of robust research evidence that points to secure housing as he most effective response to homelessness, and the realisation of just how fundamental secure housing is to protecting households from Covid-19 and its current and future variants, the provision of secure, sustainable and eco-friendly housing must be a political priority in Europe and beyond. However, despite the now considerable evidence base on how both to prevent and end homelessness, the political responses have not always aligned with the research, although the launch in June 2021 of the *European Platform on Combatting Homelessness* is a promising new development with the aim of ending homelessness in EU Members States by 2030.

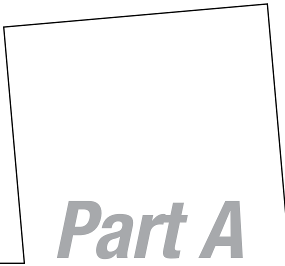
The issue of mobilising political support to drive evidence based policy responses is highlighted in the paper by Nelson and colleagues in this edition of the *European Journal of Homelessness* where researchers from North America and Europe have attempted to understand the mechanisms that social scientists can use to influence public policy. Using the framework developed by John Kingdon which sees policy change requiring convergence across three streams; the problems stream, the policy stream and political stream, Nelson and colleagues contend that social scientists have been successful in reframing homelessness as primarily a structural issue rather than viewing homelessness as rooted in individual dysfunction requiring treatment of various hues (the problem stream). Their research has demonstrated that the most effective policy response is the provision of housing, with support if necessary (the policy stream), but social scientists have not successfully shifted the political response to homelessness on a sustained basis. Even in countries such as Sweden, where historically, State intervention and investment in secure housing was considerable, as Anna Granath Hansson highlights in her valuable paper, even where local municipalities have admirable strategies to provide housing for vulnerable populations, increasingly tight housing market has put strategies under considerable pressure in some localities resulting in restrictions of eligibility.

Moving from the macro to the micro, In their contribution, Nadia Ayed and colleagues seek to discern sources of support for those experiencing homelessness, in particular through adopting a social capital lens, how people with experiences of homelessness understand their community and what aspects are important to them. They highlight the diversity of experiences of community, of power relations in the provision of services, and importantly, the dark side of community whereby those experiencing homelessness are increasingly excluded from accessing public services. Sam Ross-Brown and Gerard Leavey also explore the contextual structures that shape pathways into homelessness amongst young people in Northern Ireland, showing how the limiting structures, adverse experiences, and inequality they have endured are internalised and perpetuated resulting in the normalising of isolation and instability. Sally Mann provides a fascinating ethnographic insight into the experiences of number of adults experiencing homelessness at a circle of six benches in an innocuous urban park in East Ham, East London during the first phase of lockdown in the UK, where witnessed their communality in a site over which they managed to retain a level of control.

In this edition

Other contributions to this edition of the *European Journal of Homelessness* include a first ever overview of homelessness in Turkey, review essays exploring neo-liberalism and Housing First, ethnographic methods and homelessness as well as reviews of individuals books (and films!). As ever, we hope the diverse readership of the *European Journal of Homelessness* find these contributions to our knowledge of the experience of homelessness, the policy and practice responses that can end homelessness stimulating and constructive and can contribute to the realisation of ending homelessness in the European Union by 2030.

Articles



Part A

Housing the Vulnerable: Municipal Strategies in the Swedish Housing Regime

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Abstract_ The Swedish unitary housing regime entails that everybody should be included on the regular housing market and that there should be no housing reserved for vulnerable households. However, this regime presupposes certain additional measures such as municipal social contracts and priority in housing queues. Moreover, municipal housing companies are expected to play a larger role in housing the vulnerable than other lessors, although they formally do not belong to a social housing sector. This study describes the strategies of six Swedish municipalities to house the vulnerable. Most measures taken by municipalities in this study are in line with the unitary housing regime. However, the present tight housing market has put strategies under considerable pressure in some localities. This has resulted in restrictions of eligibility for various complementary solutions and the introduction of avoidance strategies. Alternative solutions such as an increased municipal housing ownership outside the traditional municipal housing companies are limited. The study might be of interest also to readers from other European countries, as it highlights the strengths and weaknesses of strategies within a unitary housing regime where the ideal is 'good housing for all' and there is no de jure social housing.

Keywords_ *social policy, housing provision, permanent housing, unitary housing regime, Sweden*

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Introduction

Housing market access problems for households on lower incomes have been a reality in Sweden for decades due to high purchase prices and limited access to rental housing, especially in the lower market segments (Lind, 2014). The need for affordable housing[1] has also increased through a substantial influx of households with limited possibilities on the Swedish job market. Households with a limited budget and often other difficulties such as a history of debt, payment default, dependence on social transfers, or deficient housing references, have major difficulties in solving their housing needs without assistance from the social services.

The latest national survey on homelessness counted 33 000 adults (Socialstyrelsen, 2017). However, the survey did not encompass all municipalities and only provides an on-the-spot account of the persons known to social services or certain charities during one specific week that year. The total amount of adults and children that are homeless, live under uncertain circumstances, or in deficient housing is currently unknown. Some municipalities do regular homelessness counts but face the same methodological problems as the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen). Only 13 percent of municipalities have developed homelessness strategies (Wirehag, 2019). At present, no systematic follow-up of overcrowding and housing standards is made. However, only a minority of the homeless population sleep on the streets. Almost half of the people experiencing homelessness counted in 2017 lived within "the secondary housing market" where the municipality guarantees the fulfilment of the rental contract. The municipalities are currently one of the major lessors in Sweden due to the extent of these municipal social contracts (Boverket, 2020). Wirehag (2019) notes that homelessness is no longer concentrated in the larger cities but has spread throughout the country.

Traditionally, adults with addictions and/or mental disorders have been the major groups in homelessness. These persons have, in most cases, a right to support according to the Social Services Act, a right that also includes housing. The number of homeless with other backgrounds have increased in recent years, for example, elderly without social problems and women that are victims of violence in the family. These groups are also entitled to housing assistance to some extent. However, the National Board of Health and Welfare shows that the greatest increase in homelessness is in reference to so called 'structural homelessness', that is households that do not have any outspoken social problems, but a strained economic situation

[1] Affordable housing has been defined as housing with "acceptable relationships between household income and expenditure on housing costs for housing market participants" (Worthington, 2012, p.235) and housing that is not "expensive relative to its fundamental costs of production" (Glaeser and Gyourko, 2003, p.21).

(Socialstyrelsen, 2017). Migration is also a decisive factor in changing homelessness patterns (Hermans et al., 2020). The use of acute housing solutions and other temporary accommodation has increased substantially over a number of years. The extent and form of municipal assistance that these households receive varies among municipalities. A revision of the implementation of the Social Services Act is now being made in a number of municipalities. This is made against a backdrop of increasing costs and budget deficits in social services (SKL, 2019).

Most Swedish municipalities do not have an up-to-date plan for preventing homelessness and there is no national strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness (Anderberg and Dahlberg, 2019). However, many municipalities work actively to find a solution when households in or on the verge of homelessness approach social services. An integration of the regular housing market is usually seen as the ideal solution, but with a strained housing market situation, this is not so easily attained. This paper describes and discusses the strategies of six Swedish municipalities to integrate homeless households into the regular housing market. Directly related to the integration of selected households is also the exclusion of households not deemed to be in acute need. Several studies have analysed the current development of Swedish homelessness and discussed its causes (for example, Anderberg and Dahlberg, 2019; Wirehag, 2019; Hermans et al., 2020; Sahlin, 2020). However, to the knowledge of the author, the ideals under the unitary housing regime and the reality of vulnerable households' access to the regular housing supply have not been contrasted and studied in detail in recent years. This article is an attempt to close part of this gap. The results will also be of interest to readers from other countries, as it highlights the strengths and weaknesses of strategies within a unitary housing regime where the ideal is ‘good housing for all’ and there is no *de jure* social housing.

The data in this study was extracted through a traditional multiple case study of six Swedish municipalities. The case study comprised a document study and reading of secondary literature, as well as interviews. The document study comprised municipal housing provision plans, new-build strategies, annual reports of municipal housing companies, homelessness reports, municipal policy documents and outcome reports related to social provision of housing, official statistics as well as reports and investigations commissioned by the Swedish state, and the interest organisation of municipalities and regions (SKL/SKR). Seventeen interviews were conducted between October 2019 and January 2020 consisting of one or two representatives each from the participating municipalities’ social welfare departments, property management departments, and municipal housing companies. Municipal housing companies were included as they were interpreted as the main tool of the municipality to fulfil social aims. The data was verified by the interviewees during the spring of 2020.

Case studies are useful “to examine a small number of empirical cases holistically to grasp the causal processes leading to observed similarities and differences” (Pickvance, 2001, p.15). In this paper, the cases are the strategies of two municipalities based in the larger metropolitan areas (Gothenburg and Lidingö), two regional centres (Jönköping and Norrköping), and two smaller more peripheral municipalities (Filipstad and Säter). The basic features of the chosen cases are outlined in Table 1. Besides choosing cases of a variety of sizes in different parts of the country and of different wealth compared to the Swedish average, a strategic sampling or information-oriented selection was made (Flyvbjerg, 2006), based on expectations regarding information content and maximising information utility in small samples. Thomas (2011, p.515) suggests that case studies are “about discovering and testing tools of explanation”. However, as case studies are delimited in space and time, generalisability is limited accordingly.

Table 1. Description of the cases

	Inhabitants	Location and character	Median income (SEK)
Sweden	10230185		328700
Gothenburg	571868	The second largest city of Sweden	326300
Lidingö	47818	Adjacent to the capital of Stockholm	403400
Norrköping	141676	Regional centre in the east	313500
Jönköping	139222	Regional centre in the south	332700
Filipstad	10837	Less populated area in the mid-west	287900
Säter	11123	Less populated area in mid-Sweden	331300

Sources: Statistics Sweden 2019a and 2019b.

1 SEK is approximately equivalent to 0,1 EUR.

The article is structured as follows: First, a background describing the Swedish housing regime as well as responsibilities and classifications of municipalities related to homelessness and housing are briefly described. Second, strategies adopted by the six municipalities to house vulnerable households are outlined, and third, the main pathways to housing are analysed and discussed. Last, conclusions are drawn.

Housing Provision, Legal Responsibilities and the Identification of Homeless Households

Below, the link between Swedish housing provision, the legal responsibilities of municipalities to house vulnerable households, as well as recent developments in the procedures of the identification of homeless households will be explored as a background to the study of the six municipalities.

Housing provision

The set of fundamental principles according to which housing provision operates in some defined area (municipality, region, state) at a particular point in time might be referred to as a housing regime (Ruonavaara, 2020). The Swedish housing regime has been defined as having a 'unitary social rental market', that is a rental market where private and public property owners compete on equal terms, as opposed to dual markets where the private rental sector operates mainly on market terms, while the public rental sector is highly regulated (Kemeny, 2001). There is no social housing or other long-term housing to which access is means tested (Bengtsson et al., 2013). The Swedish unitary housing regime is meant to serve all types of households and societal groups with the aim of social inclusion (Grander, 2017), although the functionality of the model has been questioned (Stephens, 2020). However, the functioning of the unitary housing market presupposes certain selective measures such as housing allowances, municipal social contracts, and investment subsidies (Bengtsson, 2017). Priority in housing queues might also be classified as a selective measure (Granath Hansson, 2020). In general, the State and municipalities make restrictive assessments of what households are to get preferential treatment on the housing market, and some measures are temporary as they are envisaged to be a bridge to a better situation when the household can manage without support. The vision is that as many households as possible shall manage on their own in the housing market.

Municipal housing companies previously led the rental market, but after a decline in its historical market dominance and legislative changes in 2011, its leading role has been weakened. As municipal housing companies are now expected to act on market-like terms, they have no explicit role as providers for weaker households (Lind, 2014; Grander, 2017). In some international literature, the stock of Swedish municipal housing companies is labelled social housing[2] (Scanlon et al., 2014), but this is contested by Swedish agents with reference to the unitary housing regime. However, many municipal housing companies take on a larger responsibility for disadvantaged groups compared to other types of property owners (Grander, 2017; Borg, 2018). Municipal housing companies have also been the main vehicle for housing refugees after 2015 (SABO, 2018). In international comparisons, such policy has been referred to as 'de facto' social housing (Droste and Knorr-Siedow,

2 Social housing might be defined as a system that fulfils the following criteria: "(1) The target group for social housing is households with limited financial resources. To make sure that the housing provided is occupied by the target group, a distribution system with that aim has to be in place. Moreover, housing must be provided long term, rather than temporary. (2) Social housing systems provide below-market rents or prices and hence are not self-supporting, but need some form of public or private financial contribution (subsidy)" (Granath Hansson and Lundgren, 2018, p.14).

2014), as it fulfils the same tasks as a regulated social housing sector, although it is not subject to regulations. Municipal housing companies own 27 percent of multi-family housing (Statistics Sweden, 2020). In addition to municipal housing companies, many municipalities also own a limited number of dwellings solely used for social purposes.

Access to housing and legal responsibilities

The two main reasons behind exclusion from the regular housing market are housing cost and housing access problems (Eekhoff, 2002). The people experiencing homelessness identified by Swedish social services face both these problems simultaneously. As most households have no or very limited income from employment, the housing cost problem is usually solved through various forms of benefits and/or municipal guarantees. The housing access problem is usually overcome through allocation of municipal housing or municipal intermediation and guarantees.

As outlined above, Sweden has a tradition of a unitary housing regime without a designated social housing stock. The availability of housing for social purposes is therefore directly linked to conditions on the regular housing market. A limited housing supply leads to prioritisation among groups. Vulnerable households are often said to come last in the queue, but as there are vehicles used by social services to gain priority to the regular housing supply, this does not apply in all geographies and at all times. Political will and considerations related to the balance between social needs and needs of households trying to directly access the regular housing market are often key to outcome. Threshold groups not deemed in need by social services, but with great difficulties on the housing market, have been identified as the real losers on the Swedish housing market today (Grander, 2017). Especially households that are dependent on benefits for their living and/or have a history of debt, payment default, or deficient housing references face major access problems, even in relation to municipal housing companies.

As in many other countries, the Swedish State has the responsibility for legal regulation and housing subsidies, while municipalities have the main responsibility for implementation of housing policy. Three laws regulate municipal responsibility related to housing provision: the Housing Provision Act (Bostadsförsörjningslagen), the Social Services Act (Socialtjänstlagen) and the Settlement Act (Bosättningslagen). The Housing Provision Act entails a general responsibility to plan for housing provision for all citizens of the municipality but does not include any specific municipal responsibility for certain groups of households. However, since 2014 the law includes an obligation to, among other things, include the housing needs of

'special groups'[3] in housing provision analysis. The Social Services Act and the Settlement Act entail a direct municipal responsibility for certain households. The Social Services Act (SoL) does not entail a specified right to housing for the citizens, but elderly and disabled persons are explicitly mentioned as groups that the municipality has to arrange housing for. Further, the right to assistance toward a reasonable standard of living might include housing. Municipalities can also give additional assistance, also towards housing, in cases of special circumstances. The resulting housing solutions offered vary between municipalities. The Settlement Act concerns newly arrived immigrants that have been assigned to a municipality according to the state fair share programme introduced in 2016. It should be noted that households assigned under the fair share programme constitutes a minority of immigrant households arriving in Sweden, as there is also the choice for households to arrange their own accommodation, which is the preferred alternative by a majority. There is an on-going process of reducing this right in areas with larger concentrations of immigrant populations, which might increase the significance of the Settlement Act. Municipal housing companies have played a key role in housing immigrants according to the Settlement Act (SABO, 2018).

New considerations when defining homelessness

The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare define a person experiencing homelessness as an adult who 1) sleeps on the street or in emergency accommodation, 2) will soon be leaving a hospital or a prison, but do not have a home to go to, 3) lives on a social tenancy with special conditions and/or supervision, or 4) lives on temporary and unsecure terms with other private persons and have been in contact with social services or charities concerning this situation (Socialstyrelsen, 2017). In relation to the ETHOS typology, it has been described as largely coinciding (Anderberg and Dahlberg, 2019) or a narrower adaptation (Wirehag, 2019).

In their latest homelessness report, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare indicates that 20 percent of the counted people experiencing homelessness do not have any needs in addition to housing that require support, assistance, or treatment (Socialstyrelsen, 2017). The increase in homelessness in recent years is largely connected to this group. The terms 'social homelessness' and 'structural homelessness' have gained certain ground and are subjects of discussion. 'Social homelessness' is described as homelessness that hits persons that have a right to support under the Social Services Act, that is mainly persons suffering from addic-

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[3] The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning explains that 'special groups' are those that, for different reasons, have difficulties in getting established in the housing market. Groups pointed out are elderly and disabled persons in need of adapted housing solutions, newly-arrived immigrants, people living in over-crowed housing, and people experiencing homelessness (Boverket, 2021).

tions and/or psychosocial ill health or are exposed to violence in the family. 'Structural homelessness' is described as homelessness affecting persons that do not have any traditional social problems, but that have limited financial capacity, for example, due to low income, payment defaults, and debt. In the directives of a state inquiry, 'structural homelessness' is defined as a situation that affects "households without social problems that turn to social services for help with their housing situation" (Regeringen, 2020, p. 1). The terms have been criticised since it is difficult to draw a sharp line between 'social' and 'structural' homelessness and 'structural' homelessness has a tendency to turn into 'social' homelessness when it last longer. However, when it comes to 'structural homelessness', some municipalities have voiced a need for a term that describes this relatively new phenomenon on the Swedish housing market that has grown over the last decade and in some municipalities includes a substantial number of households. The assessment of whether these households have a right to assistance, according to the law, have also been a subject of discussion and has led to a clarification of aid assessment in a number of municipalities. In this paper, both terms are used to understand the different housing paths these two classifications entail. For a discussion on categorisations, see Sahlin (2020).

Strategies Adopted by the Studied Municipalities

In this section, first the characteristics of homelessness in the six studied municipalities are described along with municipal strategies for housing pathways of households. Second, the three main support alternatives are outlined: access to the regular housing supply, municipal social contracts, and support in the search for housing.

Homelessness and main housing pathways

It is well documented both in academic and policy papers that mapping homelessness comes with many methodological problems (for example Socialstyrelsen, 2017; SOU, 2018; Wirehag, 2019; Boverket, 2020). In Sweden, the National Board of Health and Welfare carries out national homelessness surveys every six years. Some municipalities complement these studies with their own surveys at closer intervals. However, not all municipalities adhere to the same methodology or map the same groups as the National Board of Health and Welfare, which compromises comparability. The need for better statistics has been brought up in state investigations and by charities (SOU 2018; Stadsmissionen, 2019). There is on-going work to increase knowledge on housing shortages in general, in which vulnerable groups are especially highlighted, although it is difficult to catch diffuse groups such as the

'structurally homeless' (Boverket, 2020). As a result, it is not possible to make a quantitative comparison of homelessness in the included municipalities. However, some common traits and some discrepancies are noted.

Apart from the obligatory provision of adjusted housing for the elderly and disabled, five groups of households are receiving assistance related to housing in all municipalities: 1) households suffering from problematic substance use, and/or 2) psychosocial illness, 3) persons that are victims of violence within the family, 4) households that have been assigned to the municipality under the Settlement Act on newly arrived immigrants, and 5) lone immigrant minors. However, the length of the assistance and the kind of assistance vary a lot amongst the municipalities.

People experiencing street homelessness are rare in all municipalities included in the study. A majority of households included in homelessness statistics live in some sort of housing solution arranged by the municipality. All municipalities have their own or bought housing and care solutions for the traditional target groups of households affected by problematic drug use and/or psychosocial illness. Housing solutions for these groups are usually connected to care and last as long as the household is deemed in need of such care. Housing First is only applied by the largest municipality. In some municipalities, municipal social contracts might be converted to regular rental contracts once the care has ended. The number of persons that are victims of violence in the family is growing in all municipalities except the smallest one. Short- and mid-term solutions in the form of shelter or protected housing is offered in all municipalities, but the difficulty of arranging long-term solutions is pointed out by several municipalities.

The number of newly arrived immigrants varies significantly over the years, as does the composition of households. This entails difficulties in planning for short and most notably long-term housing for these groups. According to the Settlement Act of 2016, municipalities have to house a certain number of immigrants set by the State each year. However, municipalities have interpreted the act differently and solutions offered vary significantly. In some municipalities immigrants are provided with regular apartments in the municipal or private housing stock, sometimes with an indefinite contract and sometimes with a municipal guarantee for a certain period, where after the contract can be normalised and then runs indefinitely. In other municipalities contracts have a time limit between two and five years. Thereafter, households are expected to enter the regular housing market on their own merits. Housing solutions are, according to the Act, to be situated in the regular housing stock as far as this is possible. This requirement is met by most municipalities, but in one temporary housing in adjusted commercial premises are used.

A sixth group that has previously received assistance in all municipalities where there has been a need (typically in the four larger ones) is the so-called 'structurally homeless' group. In three of the largest municipalities, the difference between people experiencing social and structural homelessness and the difference between them when it comes to municipal responsibility has led to policy change in recent years. In the 2019 homelessness mapping of Gothenburg, 48 percent of all persons and 30 percent of all households were deemed structurally homeless. Seventy two percent of households with children are deemed to belong to this group. According to the new housing policy implemented in 2019, these households shall no longer receive assistance to housing, but, if needed, short-term monetary assistance to buy shelter or sometimes direct shelter, as well as support in the search for housing. In Lidingö, monetary assistance and support in the search for housing is also offered. Norrköping offers short-term monetary assistance for shelter solutions. In Jönköping, the structurally homeless are still given assistance to housing under certain circumstances, but as the municipality has increasing difficulties in finding such housing, a discussion regarding this policy has emerged. The two smaller municipalities have not identified any 'structurally homeless' and were unfamiliar with the term.

Housing assistance is given short-term (from one night to some months), medium-term (for two to five years), and long-term (access to the regular housing market). Below, the different alternatives that might lead to inclusion on the regular housing market are described.

Direct access to the regular housing supply

In all the studied municipalities, direct access to the regular housing supply is seen as the preferred alternative, as it is deemed socially desirable to normalise the living conditions of the households. Moreover, it also reduces municipal administration and costs. Rents in regular housing are usually lower than in alternative housing solutions arranged by the municipality and households often pay their rents from benefits. Households might then also receive state financed housing benefits.

In the two smaller municipalities included in this study, vulnerable households are to a large extent given access to the regular housing market through relatively generous letting policies in municipal housing companies and priority in their housing queues. No distinctions are made between groups. The smallest municipality gives newly-arrived immigrants assigned under the Settlement Act direct access to indefinite lease contracts with the municipal housing company. The other small municipality does not receive any assignments as it has previously received substantial amounts of immigrants and is struggling with its social cohesion. However, self-settled immigrants and vulnerable households get direct access to the local housing market as there are vacancies.

In the four larger municipalities, letting policies have been relaxed in recent years, which mainly allows for a wider range of benefits to be accepted as income. This makes it possible for more households to apply for a wider range of housing in municipal housing companies. Priority is also given in municipal housing companies under certain circumstances, but more restrictively than previously. One municipality applied state sponsored municipal housing benefits to assist households to enter the regular housing market. Gothenburg is the municipality in Sweden with the largest amount of Housing First apartments. No other municipality included in this study applies Housing First. Despite the above-mentioned measures, many households have housing market access problems.

The tension between the regular housing market and social needs are apparent in the four larger municipalities (Table 2). Vacancy rates are close to nil and average waiting times for an apartment amount to years. This applies both to municipalities with large rental and municipal housing stocks and to the one municipality with a limited share of rental and municipal housing. More generous letting policies have been applied in some municipalities to increase access potential for more households in this strained situation. The growing restrictiveness of given priority in housing queues should also be seen in this light. However, time limited municipal social contracts are used quite extensively, as will be outlined in the next section.

Table 2. Housing market characteristics of the six municipalities

	Gothenburg	Lidingö	Jönköping	Norrköping	Säter	Filipstad
Vacancy rate (%)	0	0	0	1	0	Growing*
Average housing queue (years)	5	n/a	2-3	4-5	1	0
Rental housing share of housing stock (%)	>50	>25	44	50	>25?	>40?
Municipal share of rental housing	Very large	Small Social	Large	Large	Very large	Very large
Letting policy of municipal housing companies	Generous	n/a	Generous	Generous	Generous	Generous?
Housing construction	Relatively large	Limited	Relatively large	Relatively large	Limited	Single family housing

*In municipal housing companies or foundations.

Sources: Municipal housing policy documents and annual reports of municipal housing companies

Municipal social contracts

Municipal social contracts are rental agreements supported by the municipality to enhance the credit worthiness of the household and secure the observance of other contractual arrangements toward the property owner, usually connected to care of the property and avoidance of disturbances in relation to neighbours. Security of

tenure is always removed through a separate contract. However, the removal of security of tenure is not absolute as the Swedish Rental Act strongly protects tenants and relocation and evictions cannot be made automatically but are determined by formal procedures and might be subject to trial in the Rental Tribunal (although tenants are not always aware of the legal formalities).

A municipal social contract is given after a positive decision on housing assistance by the social services. The right of disposal of the apartment has been secured beforehand through a contract between the municipality and the property owner. Apartments are owned by the municipality directly, municipal housing companies, or private property owners. Although municipalities and municipal housing companies provide the largest share of contracts, private property owners have increased their share, especially after the increase in immigration in 2015. Housing owned directly by the municipality mainly consists of rooms or apartments that are adjusted to house single or groups of households receiving treatment and/or care. Some municipalities also own tenant-ownership apartments (*bostadsrätter*) that are used for social purposes. These housing alternatives usually do not provide a pathway to normalisation of the rental contract as they have been acquired by the municipality for the sole purpose of being used for social purposes and are to stay as vehicles of the municipality. On the other hand, municipal social contracts provided by municipal housing companies and private property owners concern apartments in the regular housing stock and are offered either as 'passage' contracts (*genomgångskontrakt*) or 'transfer' contracts (*övergångskontrakt*). 'Passage' contracts are time limited and hence not a pathway to normalisation of the housing situation, but at least offer a chance to collect a good track record as a tenant, the proof of which is usually a requirement of property owners before a lease is signed. A 'transfer' contract, on the other hand, has a time limit within which the tenant's ability to meet the obligations under the contract are tested. If everything runs smoothly, the contract can be normalised, and the tenant thus enter the regular housing market. Standard times for the test period vary between municipalities, normally between six months and two years. It is quite common that property owners and sometimes social services do not deem the household to be ready to take over the contract within the time limit. Then a prolongation of the test period might be granted, or an alternative housing solution must be found. It is not unusual that both private and municipal property owners wish the mediation of the municipality as long as possible, as this provides the property owner with higher security. However, it has also been noted that different property owners have different approaches. For example, some private property owners do not wish to receive tenants unless there is hope that the contract can be normalised within a relatively

short period of time, as they do not wish to have the municipality as a long-term intermediary. Table 3 outlines the mix of housing alternatives in the six municipalities included in this study.

All of the studied municipalities use municipal social contracts, but in the two smallest municipalities the numbers are very limited and only given to households with severe social problems. In three of the four larger municipalities, the number of municipal social contracts have increased in recent years, in line with national development. Statistics on the number of apartments made available to each of the identified groups of people experiencing homelessness were not available for this study, except for certain newly-arrived immigrants whereby households arriving under the Settlement Act got social municipal contracts for two to five years in the four larger municipalities. In two of the municipalities, contracts can no longer be normalised; households are expected to arrange their own housing after the time limit expires. A change of policy to cap the use of social contracts has now been implemented or is under consideration in all four municipalities.

In the fourth larger municipality, there is no traditional municipal housing company, but the municipality has about 400 apartments that are only used for social needs. These are let to households selected by social authorities on two-year contracts without security of tenure. Additionally, some private property owners in the municipality let apartments to the municipality that are then sublet on the same terms.

It should be noted that, although apartments are let for social purposes, the municipalities in this study only pay the regular rent and no additional fees to the property owner. As Swedish rental law entails so called utility-value rents and not market rents, this usually means that rents are affordable and within reach both for the municipality when the rent is paid with benefits and for households on lower incomes from employment. However, it should be noted that this only applies to the older housing stock. For new apartments other rental clauses apply, which allows for cost based rents that are much higher than utility-value rents. When newly built apartments are used for social purposes, this burdens municipal budgets, and it is often difficult for households to pay the rent once it is able to take over the contract. The approach to using newly built apartments for municipal social contracts vary greatly between the municipalities in the study and is closely tied to availability of apartments in the older stock. In Gothenburg, newly arrived immigrants being assigned to the municipality through the Settlement Act are prioritised in new-build as their contracts are time limited to four or five years. It is argued that this is more transparent than if new apartments are given as 'transfer' contracts for households with social difficulties, as these are difficult to take over due to the high rents. In Jönköping, seven new buildings have been erected to house immigrants arriving under the Settlement Act (in addition to apartments in the older stock). This has

been made with the purpose of lessening the need for apartments in the stock so that competition between traditional groups and immigrants shall not be created. Other new-builds are not used for municipal social contracts as they are deemed too expensive. None of the other four municipalities use new-builds for social purposes nowadays.

Table 3. Supply of housing for social purposes in the studied municipalities

	Housing owned directly by the municipality*	Municipal housing company**	Cooperation with private property owners
Gothenburg	X	X	X
Lidingö	X		X
Norrköping	X	X	X
Jönköping	X	X	X
Filipstad		X	X
Säter		X	

**Housing owned directly by the municipality is used for social purposes only.*

***Municipal housing companies are used to provide 'good housing for all' inhabitants in line with the unitary housing regime. The extent to which such housing is used for social purposes varies.*

Support in the search for housing

As housing markets are tight, not all households find housing in the regular housing market. Households that turn to social authorities and present themselves as homeless but are not granted priority in housing queues or a municipal social contract, are, in an increasing number of municipalities, instead granted money for shelter (if needed) and support in the search for housing in the regular housing market.

The four larger municipalities in this study require that households actively search for housing within and outside the municipality. The level of assistance in the search varies greatly, from a mere instruction on how to join the local housing queue to a 'housing school', which includes not only different ways to enter the housing market, but also what is required to uphold a rental contract and practical advice on how to care properly for an apartment. Based on this assistance, some households manage to enter the regular housing market in the municipality where they presently reside. However, as the rental market usually is the only option for these households and housing queues tend to extend over several years, many households in an acute housing need also have to search for housing in other municipalities. In Sweden, four major lines of municipal action can be traced:

1. A sending and a receiving municipality cooperate in the transfer of a household. The receiving municipality does this to improve the demographics of the municipality, for example, through receiving younger households in a municipality with an aging population. When it comes to newly arrived immigrants, state financing during the establishment period can also be a decisive factor.
2. The municipality requires that households search for housing in a larger geographical area (for example the county) or the whole country without providing any concrete search assistance to the household.
3. The municipality requires that households search for housing in a larger geographical area (for example the county) or the whole country and provides concrete search assistance to the household. Such 'housing coaching' might include instructions on how to join housing queues and apply for apartments with different property owners.
4. The municipality requires that households search for housing in the whole country and provides concrete search assistance to the household. Additionally, the municipality maps other municipalities where there are vacancies and contacts property owners to, if possible, act as an intermediary between the household and the potential lessor. Contacts between the sending and the receiving municipality are rare.

When the household has moved to the new municipality, the responsibility to assist the household and pay benefits are transferred to the receiving municipality.

In this study, the two larger municipalities act according to point four, while the two medium-sized municipalities act according to point two. According to the mid-sized municipalities, there has been no discussions with neighbouring municipalities about their practice. Strategy number four has been adopted by various municipalities at least since the 1990s on a smaller scale, but in recent years it has been heatedly criticised by the receiving municipalities and named 'social dumping'. As many of the receiving municipalities are smaller and located in less populated areas, their economic situation is often strained. In this situation, additional households on benefits and in need of care and treatment are often seen as unwelcome. The sending municipalities refer to the practice as empowerment of the household, a chance to get education on how the housing market works and arrange one's own life instead of being taken care of by social services. Further, they point out that due to the local housing market situation, moving from the municipality is most probably the only way for the household to get a steady housing situation. One municipality also refers to reduced benefit payments as a positive effect of the strategy.

In 2020, the Minister of Public Administration commissioned the Swedish Agency for Public Management to investigate the extent of 'social dumping' and to suggest measures to stem such uses. The report confirms that 'active participation'[4] by a municipality to assist households on benefits to find housing in other municipalities (even though the household has not expressed an explicit wish to move) is a problem for a number of municipalities and individuals (Statskontoret, 2020). Four, partly overlapping, groups that are subjected to such uses are pointed out: newly-arrived immigrants, problematic substance users and other households with social problems, households in need of protected housing, and structurally homeless households. The main measure against problematic 'active participation' proposed by the investigator is cooperation between municipalities led by the county administrative boards and that the Government amends the Settlement Act.

In Gothenburg and Jönköping, a relatively high percentage (>20 percent) of vacant apartments in municipal housing companies have been used for social purposes. There is an on-going discussion on the limit for municipal housing companies' responsibilities. Parallel to this, average housing queues have become longer. Municipalities link these two events, which also has an impact on the willingness to provide more social contracts. It can be assumed that when housing queues become longer, more households that previously could find housing on their own, especially given the relatively generous letting policies of municipal housing companies, cannot anymore and have to turn to social services for assistance and a vicious circle is created in the system. Requirements to search for housing in other municipalities should be seen also in the light of this interaction between social ambitions and political implications of impacts on the regular housing market.

Analysis and Discussion

Below, first aid to access to the regular housing market and then temporary housing assistance are discussed.

Direct access to the regular housing supply and access through social 'transfer' contracts

As seen above, the functioning of the regular housing market and the number of households in need decide municipal homelessness strategies to a large extent. Where there is vacant housing or housing queues are short, the preferred policy to give households in or on the verge of homelessness access to the regular

[4] As 'social dumping' was conceived as a derogatory term, the Swedish Agency for Public Management has chosen to instead use the term 'active participation (in settlement in another municipality)' (Statskontoret, 2020).

housing supply is applied to a large extent. When an indefinite rental contract is not given from day one, time-limited social 'transfer' contracts are given. The household can then prove that it can manage a regular rental contract with the support of the social services and can then take over the contract with the property owner for an indefinite term.

However, an easily accessed housing market may cause an influx of less fortunate inhabitants from other municipalities, which put strains on municipal organisation and finance. 'Social dumping' is a growing problem. For some years, one of the smaller municipalities in the study has seen a larger inflow of inhabitants belonging to this group, but also a certain outflow, both of which make municipal planning difficult. Both vacant private housing and apartments of the municipal housing company have previously been let to such households. Today, some private property owners actively receive households on benefits from other municipalities. Smaller private property investors also have a business idea to invest in deteriorated housing in peripheral locations and let it to households on benefits that come from other municipalities. The municipality is currently experiencing a very strained economic situation and problems with social cohesion (see for example, SKL, 2019).

The other smaller municipality in the study has no experiences of 'social dumping' to date, possibly stemming from the fact that there are no vacancies in the private housing stock and the municipal housing company has a queue. Although the queue is relatively short, it might still hinder an inflow as apartments cannot be accessed directly and benefits from other municipalities are not accepted as income when signing a lease contract with the municipal housing company. However, this situation might change rather quickly in a more strained economy that causes people to leave smaller municipalities for other job markets. An easily accessed housing market might also put strains on other municipal areas of responsibility such as social support, treatment, benefits, and care of the elderly. Such experiences have also been seen in some of the larger towns in the past.

In larger municipalities where housing queues stretch over several years, direct access to the regular housing supply is given under certain conditions in the form of priority in housing queues. Priority in housing queues can also result in time-limited social contracts. Until recently, a large proportion of households turning to social services to get assistance to enter the housing market have been channelled through such priority lists. In some municipalities in the study, priority has been given to more than 20 percent of vacant apartments in municipal housing companies. Special drives to reduce homelessness have been made, for example, in Gothenburg where 700 homeless families with children were given priority to regular housing contracts. In other municipalities, no such measures have been

made. As the number of households in need have increased, priorities between households have had to be made as municipalities have not had access to enough apartments to satisfy demand. As described above, a distinction is made between social and structural homelessness. It should be pointed out that not all households deemed to be homeless for social reasons are entitled to housing. Structurally homeless households are today only entitled to housing in one of the larger municipalities, and then only under certain conditions. However, the increasing use of the terms social and structural homelessness indicates that socially homeless households *might* be entitled to housing, while structurally homeless households are not.

In the six municipalities in the study, it is clear that housing owned by the municipality plays the central role in provision of housing for social purposes, although social contracts in privately owned housing is increasing in all but the smallest municipalities. However, with increasingly generous letting policies of municipal housing companies, an increasing number of social contracts, and larger numbers of social contracts being transferred into regular rental contracts after a time limit, the share of tenants on lower incomes and possibly also social problems is bound to increase, in some municipalities from already high levels. What this means related to the financial standing of municipal housing companies, and hence their ability to provide good quality housing, is unknown. Further, the possibility to avoid concentrations of households of lesser means vary greatly between companies depending on the structure and location of their housing stocks, as well as vacancy patterns. The impact on housing queues of larger shares of vacant apartments being used for social purposes is also a point of discussion, as vicious circles where households that previously have gained access to the housing market on their own now have to ask for assistance. In all, this has raised a debate on the limits of social responsibility of municipal housing companies. The housing stock reserved for social purposes that is owned directly by the municipality (not by municipal housing companies) is not the subject of such discussions to the same extent, as it was never meant to be part of the regular housing market. However, there is a limited discussion on housing quality.

In the Swedish unitary housing regime, the ideal is equal access by all households to the regular housing market and there is no *de jure* social housing. The shift toward more generous letting policies in many municipal housing companies, including some of the herein studied municipalities, priority given in rental housing queues and the relatively generous rules when transforming municipal social contracts into regular lease contracts are in line with this ideal as they work towards an integration of households in the regular housing market. However, an increasing restrictiveness in giving priority in housing queues has been noted in all of the four larger municipalities in the study. An increasing pressure on the regular housing market and longer queues for rental housing have a direct impact on apartments available as there are no

designated apartments for social purposes (except in one municipality). Municipal housing companies also monitor the economic and social effects of more generous letting policies, although none of them have noticed significant effects as of yet. Although private property owners have increased their share in offering housing to households of lesser means, as well as social contracts in recent years, municipal housing companies still offer the bulk of apartments accessible to the group as well as social 'transfer' contracts. As a result, tenants in the municipal housing stock have a less advantageous socioeconomic composition than tenants at large and compared to other tenures (Borg, 2018) and many would have limited chances of finding decent housing outside the municipal housing stock. Hence, parts of Swedish municipal housing might be labelled de facto social housing, as it is not regulated, but performs the duties of such a sector. However, it is important to note that Swedish municipal housing companies are not pure social housing providers, as they provide both for the vulnerable and other households. Moreover, the choice of what particular apartments that are used in priority policies vary between municipalities and between areas within municipalities.

Social 'passage' contracts and support in the search for housing

Municipal social 'transfer' contracts that in the end are not transformed into regular lease contracts and social 'passage' contracts that are time limited are often referred to as a residual form of social housing. However, as these solutions are time limited and hence do not assist the household to solve its housing problems permanently and are managed directly by social services, they are more closely linked to pure social policy rather than housing policy, and therefore might be classified as a social vehicle (which exist in many countries parallel to social housing systems). One municipality in the study has chosen to only have social 'passage' contracts that are limited to two years. As there are relatively few apartments, time limits are strict and apartments are usually assigned by social services, this housing stock is clearly a social vehicle, rather than social housing.

Two of the municipalities in the study have created new housing units to cater for immigrant households allocated through the Settlement Act. In one of the municipalities this arrangement is a temporary solution in a redevelopment area, but in the other municipality the housing is of higher quality in line with permanent housing standards. It remains to be seen if this housing will be incorporated into the municipal housing company and the mix of tenants will be larger in the future or if this housing will remain a social policy vehicle for selected groups.

As the number of households deemed not to be entitled to housing is growing, alternative measures have been taken in the form of assistance to housing. When assistance to housing is granted, the household is given money in the short-term to get a roof over the head(s) and is requested to search for housing in or outside

the municipality where it presently resides. In some municipalities they are also given advice and education on how to enter the housing market. All of the four larger municipalities apply this strategy to some extent.

'Active participation' (Statskontoret, 2020) by municipalities to arrange housing for vulnerable households in other municipalities is also in line with the unitary housing regime, as households then enter the regular housing market. However, questions of whether the housing situation or the possibility to find employment is more important have been raised (Statskontoret, 2020). Further, the quality of the housing stock offered does not always live up to regular Swedish standards.

Conclusion

The Swedish unitary housing regime entails that everybody should be included in the regular housing market and that there should be no housing reserved for vulnerable households. However, this regime presupposes certain measures such as housing allowances, municipal social contracts, and priority in housing queues. Moreover, municipal housing companies often play a larger role compared to other actors on the rental market when it comes to giving priorities in housing queues and having relatively generous letting policies, which has led to having larger proportions of socially and economically vulnerable households. It might be claimed that although there is no regulated social housing sector in Sweden, some municipal housing companies are in part *de facto* social housing, as they perform the role of such a sector.

In a housing market more or less in balance, the ideal can be implemented without creating vicious circles where other households are excluded because some get priority (which might lead to that more households need assistance to enter the housing market). When the housing market is not in balance and both demand and need exceed supply, there will naturally be competition for existing housing. Both housing cost and housing access eligibility then come into play and more households need assistance to enter the housing market. The pressure on municipal housing companies to meet demand both from their housing queues and from social services increases and priorities given to one group will influence the other. There is an expectation that municipal housing companies should master both these tasks in all market situations and still act on 'market-like terms', as well as contribute to housing construction. Doing this split has shown increasingly difficult in larger municipalities. Private property owners are increasing their share of social contracts with municipal guarantees, but not enough to eliminate the lack of supply. Construction of new housing has proven less effective in solving the problem, as it

is often too expensive to serve as a long-term solution for households on lower incomes. The influence of housing chains on the supply of lower-rent apartments has also proven to be limited.

Three of the larger municipalities in this study have made extensive efforts to prevent and work against homelessness. Generous queue rules to municipal housing companies have been combined with priority lists to both regular rental contracts and social contracts. However, these efforts have not been enough to solve problems of larger amounts of households. The limited supply of potential housing solutions might lead to municipalities resorting to other strategies, such as reducing the right to housing and the introduction of assistance to find housing in other municipalities. Alternative solutions such as an increased municipal housing ownership outside the traditional municipal housing companies are limited.

Future research could further explore the different facets of this development and the various pathways chosen by different municipalities. Today, there are indications of a certain policy convergence among municipalities, but it remains to be seen if this development prevails. Comparative research with other European cities and their pathways to permanent housing within or outside the social housing sector could also shed more light on the role of the housing regime. Last but not least, the relationship between social policy and housing policy could be further explored, preferably in a multi-country perspective.

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Community Profiling: Exploring Homelessness Through a Social Capital Lens

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Abstract_ *Efforts to redress the impact of homelessness are numerous and varied. This creates a complex space in which people experiencing homelessness inhabit and are immersed within. At times, it can be difficult to identify the plethora of stakeholders involved and discern sources of support. Adopting social capital as a lens may be useful in understanding important features, relationships, and resources embedded in environments and between individuals. Due to the context-specificity of social capital, it is important to gain greater understanding of the population and community of interest. This research aims to gain greater understanding through exploring how people with experiences of homelessness understand their community and what aspects are important to them. Focus groups are used to conduct a community profiling exercise with people with experiences of homelessness (n= 23). Through thematic analysis, three overarching themes have been identified, with corresponding subthemes: Understandings of community, affordance of community, and dark side of community. The research serves as an essential descriptive phase to social capital research in the context of homelessness. The identified themes contribute to framing*

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discussions around important features, relationships, and resources in the environment. Further, they help to elucidate potential functions and implications of membership to a community.

Keyworks_ *social capital, homelessness, community*

Introduction

Homelessness – understood as a range of precarious living arrangements – can have a profound and diverse impact on an individual's life; including housing exclusion (Abbé Pierre Foundation and FEANTSA, 2018), health inequality (Canavan et al., 2012; Groundswell, 2020a), employment issues (St Mungo's, 2020a), and difficulty accessing much needed welfare support (Downie et al., 2018; Groundswell, 2020b). As such, attempts to redress its impact often involve a multitude of stakeholders. This non-exhaustively may include local councils and governments (UK Parliament, 2017), the housing sector (Pleace, 2019), the charity sector (Downie et al., 2018), and peer-support networks (Groundswell, 2017). Due to the numerous stakeholders involved, it can be difficult at times to discern the role and the support provided by each.

Social capital may be a helpful lens to navigate this complex terrain and interrogate the resources and support available to people experiencing homelessness. In a broad sense, social capital can be understood as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.119). It may be helpful to adopt the theoretical framework from social capital research to enable a structured and nuanced exploration of support relating to homelessness.

Social capital may be theoretically subdivided into *structural* and *cognitive* capital. The former identifies observable aspects, such as the existence of and access to services (e.g. whether an individual has sufficient local facilities or access to healthcare services). Structural capital may speak to the barriers people experiencing homelessness encounter when trying to access needed services, such as problems registering at the GP, disparate services, and no recourse to public funds (Crisis, 2002; Canavan et al., 2012; Mental Health Network, 2016; St Mungo's, 2020a). Whereas the latter – *cognitive* capital – explores subjective aspects such as feelings towards individuals in a social network, sense of belonging, and perceived emotional support (Harpham et al., 2002; Kawachi et al., 2008). Perceived supportive

relationships between hostel staff and residents can promote social inclusion and well-being, whilst also assisting with improving drug and alcohol use (Stevenson, 2014). Additionally, positive connections among residents in temporary or transitional accommodation provide support, encouragement, and a sense of being welcomed, all of which were reported as important in getting through homelessness (Johnstone et al., 2016).

Distinguishing conceptually between *structural* and *cognitive* capital can promote clarity and nuance in discussion. Additionally, it is an important distinction, as there is evidence to suggest that they may have differential associations with outcomes such as mental health (De Silva et al., 2007). For example, for mothers in four low income countries (Peru, Ethiopia, Vietnam, and India), high *cognitive* social capital is associated with reduced odds of cases of common mental health problems. Whereas the association between *structural* social capital and common mental health problems is more inconsistent; in some contexts demonstrating an association with increased odds of common mental health problems.

Another common distinction is to conceptualise social capital as comprising three subcomponents: *bonding* (ties amongst individuals of homogeneous groups), *bridging* (ties amongst individuals within a heterogenous group), and *linking* (ties with institutions of authority and power such as the Government) (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). There is evidence to suggest that peer-relationships (bonding capital) are particularly compromised in the context of poverty and marginalisation (Granovetter, 1983; Wellman and Wortley, 1990; Mitchell and LaGory, 2002). This appears to be a complicated picture, as bonding capital in the context of homelessness may promote group cohesion and a sense of belonging (Stablein, 2011) whilst also being associated with drug and alcohol use (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009). In regard to bridging, evidence suggests that it can be a reliable source of support (Neale and Stevenson, 2015) and facilitate pathways out of homelessness (Robinson and Baron, 2007). Linking can contribute to increased housing tenure and increased rates of employment (Glisson et al., 2001; Thompson et al., 2002; Luchenski et al., 2019).

It is important to emphasise that social capital is a lens to understand important features, relationships, and resources *embedded* in *environments* and *between individuals*. There is evidence to suggest that the way in which social capital manifests and is understood by certain groups and communities is context-specific (De Silva et al., 2006; 2007; Agampodi et al., 2017). Thus, certain aspects of social capital present in one community may not resonate and apply to another. For example, in Vietnam, emotional help was not perceived as a form of support and thus not listed in response to questions relating to social support. Rather, participants were forthcoming in listing economic support such as donated money or rice (De Silva et al., 2006). In Peru, for example, the role of trade unions was rarely noted

as an important feature of the community (De Silva et al., 2006). In the case of group membership – a commonly cited component of social capital (Fitzpatrick et al., 2007; Irwin et al., 2008; Fitzpatrick et al., 2015; Ayed et al., 2020) – it appears important for certain groups, such as hostel residents (Johnstone et al., 2016) – but it is less central for others – such as for pregnant women in areas of rural Sri Lanka (Agampodi et al., 2017). As such, in order for social capital to serve as a useful lens, it is important to have a context-sensitive understanding of the community and population of interest.

To date, little theoretical and exploratory research has been conducted into social capital (Muntaner et al., 2001). Particularly in the context of homelessness, the research is limited and disparate, although of potential importance and utility (Ayed et al., 2020). Social capital in the context of homelessness has primarily been conceptualised across three dimensions: social relationships, services, and support (Ayed et al., 2020). Social capital has been demonstrated to play an important role in the 'pathways' framework of homelessness. This framework approaches homelessness as an experience, comprising transitions into, influences during, and routes through homelessness and resettlement (Anderson and Tulloch, 2000; Clapham, 2002; Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). For example, lack of social capital, in the form of family support, can contribute to individuals experiencing homelessness (Barker, 2012); although structural factors must also be considered. Building relationships during homelessness with others who have a similar experience contributes to a sense of belonging and provides emotional support, without judgment and stigmatisation (Oliver and Cheff, 2014). For individuals being re-housed, having family contacts and receiving support from relatives and friends is positively associated with housing satisfaction and feeling settled (Warnes et al., 2013).

Despite existing research, little attention, thus far, has been given to data-driven exploratory work identifying how social capital manifests specifically in the context of homelessness. It is important to conduct such research to challenge any assumptions and redress limitations related to applying certain understandings of social capital, rooted in different contexts, to homelessness. For example, due to the transience and frequent movement of those affected by homelessness, it is likely that traditional spatialised understandings of social capital – rooted in an assumption of locality (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2002) – may need adapting and revising.

One avenue for developing an understanding of how social capital manifests in the context of homelessness is to conduct a community profiling activity. Community profiling enables greater understanding of the spaces and communities individuals inhabit and feel connected with, through identifying characteristics, activities, services, institutions, resources, and social relationships local people consider important (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2002). Understanding community is a

prerequisite to exploring social capital as individuals are embedded within spaces which they participate in, leverage, and are influenced by. This can be highly spatialised, such as neighbourhoods, but it can also pertain to digital communities, a sense of belonging, collective identity, cultural connectedness, and symbolic meaning (Anderson, 1983; Cohen, 1985; Amit, 2002; Delanty, 2003; Castells, 2009).

Community profiling, a bottom-up approach, promotes participatory research and co-production, acknowledging the wealth of knowledge among the community and its members. To our understanding, no research thus far has been conducted directly with people with lived experience of homelessness, to explore their understanding of community and its important features. In doing so, the research provides a platform for the voices and narratives of those with lived experience to be heard. This is particularly important as individuals with lived experience often lack visibility (Luchenski et al., 2019), are historically marginalised, and continue to be discriminated against and excluded (Burrows et al., 1997; Priebe et al., 2013; Groundswell, 2020b).

In an attempt to redress the dearth of exploratory research into social capital and homelessness, this research aims to conduct a community profiling exercise with people who have lived experiences of homelessness.

Methods

Ethical approval was obtained from Queen Mary University of London (QMERC2019/29).

Procedure

Recruitment

The research was conducted in London, UK. Participants were recruited through collaborative networks with third sector organisations. Organisations were informed of the research and circulated the information to clients. Additionally, the focus groups were advertised on the wider research project's Twitter account (@H_SocCap_Study).

Eligibility criteria

Participants had to satisfy the following criteria:

1. 18 years old or above;
2. Capacity to consent to the research study;
3. Either current or previous experience of homelessness as operationalised by the ETHOS typology (FEANTSA, 2005).

Community profiling exercise

Three separate focus groups were conducted, comprising individuals with lived experience (either current or previous) of homelessness and two facilitators. In each of the three focus groups, a community profiling exercise was conducted as follows. A brief introduction was provided to participants, highlighting the focus of the research project, namely, to explore social capital in the context of homelessness. It was emphasised that in order to achieve this aim, it is necessary to develop a better understanding of what this community looks like, its parameters, services, resources, and members. Following this introduction, participants were each individually presented with a spider diagram and asked to contribute to building a visual representation of their community. All focus groups were asked the following standardised question, "how do you define your community?" (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2002). Participants were then given five minutes to work on their visual representation before re-convening to share and discuss. All focus groups were audio-recorded.

Analysis

The audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVivo 12, where they underwent thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2006) by the first and second authors. Thematic analysis was conducted inductively, placing emphasis on closely linking developed themes to the data (Patton, 1990). Thematic analysis was understood by the research team as "… a method that works both to reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.81). As such, throughout the analysis, emphasis was placed on identifying participants' realities and narratives. Whilst also further exploring these and interrogating the ways in which they may be embedded and contextualised in the broader social context.

Results

Sample characteristics

Participants (*n*=23) comprised three focus groups: focus group 1 (*n*=11), focus group 2 (*n*=5), and focus group 3 (*n*=7). Focus groups 1 and 2 were recruited through existing established peer-research groups[1], whereas the participants in focus group 3 were all recruited through an advert on Twitter. The mean age for participants was 46.74 (SD=12.32). There were 15 participants who identified as male, six as female, and two as transgender. At the time of the focus groups, eight

[1] The sample size for focus group 1 was bigger than preferred, thus making time and group management more challenging. However, it reflected the size of an existing peer-research group who were enthusiastic to participate in the research.

participants were experiencing homelessness, 12 had experienced homelessness previously, and three participants provided no information on their housing status. Further sociodemographic information is provided in appendix 1.

Community profiling

Through thematic analysis of the focus group data, three key themes were identified: *understandings of community, affordance of community,* and *dark side of community*. Each key theme will be detailed below with its corresponding sub-themes.

All names provided are pseudonyms – many chosen by the participants themselves – and are provided in brackets at the end of a quote.

Understandings of community

The first theme concerns itself with setting the parameters of what constitutes a community. This relates to questions such as, what are its notable facets? Who are the community members? What does a community contain? And what does it look like? This theme is comprised of four subthemes, which are detailed below.

Spatiality and localisation of community

Discussions across all three focus groups touched upon to what extent community is spatialised. Spatialised understandings tended to conceptualise community as the local area, or neighbourhood. 007's below comment brings attention to the power of the Government and local councils, who largely determine the *"local area connection"* of a person and where they may live and be supported. As 007 states, this has made the homeless community more spatially restricted, as there is little choice or support to move from the area where you have that *"local area connection"*: *"No, it would be geographical. It's yer-, know where your, where (laugh)… As the government would say, where your local connection is" (007).*

Others echoed similar understandings: *"I'd say about where you live… Community where you live, yeah" (Ryan).* Although, it was also noted that the extent to which a community is spatially restricted may be context specific: *"Because I believe we're all, certainly if you live in a city, maybe if you live in the tail end of nowhere like somewhere I grew up, then you're very geographically fixed, 'cos there's no mobile signal, there's no WiFi connection and the bus is on Tuesday. But, er, so you are very much your local connection" (Anna).*

As discussions progressed, participants reflected upon their understandings of community and began to conceptualise community as something that is not necessarily spatially restricted: *"I was thinking, before it was more geographical, but now it becomes more like, interest-"(Cam).* Many participants contrasted a spatialised community, to a community where one felt connected: *"I think it's a lot more fluid*

than that. I think a community is more, can be geographical, but, it's more the people that you feel connected to, the circle of people that you feel connected to, for a variety of reasons, which may or may not be geographical" (Anna). This fluidity of community and transcendence of spatiality was also highlighted in discussions around maintaining bonds with people who were no longer in the same location. *"And, I'd also add social media, adds a sense of community because I've been in touch with friends in Canada, the U.S, I've known all my life so between the two, erm, it's er, it got me through (laugh) yeah so" (Christian Loiseau).*

Who's included?

This subtheme explores who is considered to be a community member. There was an emphasis placed, throughout the focus groups on community being a place of diversity. *"Community is a diversification of all walks of life, that stand up for each other and look after each other"(007).* This diversity was conceptualised across sociodemographic factors, such as age: *"For me, community is about sort of, cohesion between very, you know, young people and very old" (Deborah).* Additionally, gender: *"… be mindful of people's age-, ages, and people's gender as well" (Barry).* Further, community related to people's religious orientation *"… I'm Jewish, but, so I have social groups at the Synagogue I go to…" (Claire)*. Nationality was also a factor noted as connecting members of a community. Although, this was accompanied by a discussion around the choices, or lack of choices, people experience in being included or excluded from certain communities: *"And erm, there's some, some groups which you're kind of voluntarily part of, some which you don't have any, er, real choice… most of us don't have any real choice as to what nationality we are, erm." (Seraphim).*

Others highlighted that community is grounded upon a sense of mutuality and shared interest. *"A group of persons with a common interests… have a group of persons with erm, the same kind of work, or same kind of recreational activities-" (Amara).* Another participant echoed how they are seeking out communities with common interests. *"So we have to find communities where there are interest, common interests" (Cam).* The extent to which people experiencing homelessness are able to attain such relationships was questioned. One participant notes that in hostels, residents are diverse with little shared interest, sharing only a common desire to exit homelessness. *"If you're, if you're homeless… most times you don't have the same interest as people whom you are with… if you are just trying to find a way out, I think your interests are different" (Amara).*

Community facilities and needed services

Throughout the focus groups, participants frequently mentioned services they felt were important to themselves and to other members of the community. *"I mean a community to me is having a lot of services that people can access to, if, if you're dealing with the homeless or vulnerable people" (007)*. There was an emphasis on having services that *"a society actually needs to, for it, just for it to run, well" (Barry).*

The services listed were numerous and varied. *"Er- community has the word domestic, social and all that comes into it… And erm relevant services-… Like emergency, and erm, health services, and-… , police, police- law as well-… Police stations" (Barry). "So like, I mean there's things like, church that people have mentioned. Er, a GP who you see regularly. Er, s- maybe a town that you're a part of, and kind of acknowledges you" (Ashley).*

One participant notes the importance of services acknowledging him as a person. "*Erm, I've always seen community as sort of like, it, it-, it, can be both like people who are like supporting you and also I guess just, institutions that acknowledge you as a person" (Ashley).* This speaks both to the importance of having services whilst also embedding individuals within these services to promote visibility and acknowledgment.

Imagined vs experienced

A difference was identified in the way participants described notions of community, from a largely theoretical angle, in contrast to narratives of lived experience. There seemed to be an evident tension between imagined communities and those directly experienced and enacted. For example:

> *For me, community is about sort of, cohesion between very, you know, young people and very old. And that community of people of different ages, working together for positive benefits of each other… what I've noticed myself, say for the past fifteen years is that community has definitely eroded… notice things like the libraries are shutting, where people go for community, where old people go in there just to keep warm, homeless people go in there to use the computer and keep warm. Post offices were shut, kinda still open a bit now, er, people, old age pensioners going in to get their pensions. (Deborah)*

This demonstrates a distinction that imagined ideas of community, for example, a place for inter-generational cohesion, may not mirror reality. Communities as they exist in reality are often undermined and dismantled by political decisions such as austerity and local council cuts, which contributes to a discrepancy between imagined communities and experienced communities.

Another participant noted a similar dissonance between what they imagined communities to be, compared to their lived experience whilst experiencing homelessness:

> *Community, I understand, is a group of people, for a kind of idea they push over. I mean, can be a community, a religious community, can be… the house association of the neighbourhood, can be. But community, in the sense of what, if you're homeless? The community of the crack people, the community of the heroin people, the community of the gambler, the community of the drunkards-That's it (laugh). It's not a community, in the homeless life to be honest…. (Frank)*

Interestingly, although Frank said he doesn't feel part of a community, following a question from Anna around whether Frank supports anyone, he notes *"I help a lot of people in the street, this is true. A lot. I feed hundred homeless every day, six o'clock in (Location in London 1), every day" (Frank).* Evidently Frank doesn't feel connected to a community, but he enacts community through building connections and supporting others. Again, this demonstrates a degree of dissonance between imagined community and experienced community.

Additionally, a noticeable contrast between narratives of experienced communities and that of imagined was that former stories were permeated with a strong sense of solidarity and compassion. *"… It was about Novemberish time, and another homeless guy, somebody had given him two packs of socks – and he just randomly gave me one. And I don't even remember his name. I'd know him if I see him, but I didn't know his name, and he didn't know me. But, we knew yeah, well exactly. And that's community-"(Anna).* Anna's comment indicates the importance of small acts of kindness, solidarity, and communication, with the common interest being survival on the streets. This contrasts accounts of imagined communities, which are described in often factual, neutral, and theoretical ways.

Affordance of community

The second theme concerns itself with what the community may afford its members and the potential implications of such membership. Here participants discussed the role a community may serve in people's lives and how it may enable them to fulfil personal and social functions. This includes ways in which people actively use and are served by the community in meeting certain needs. And also, the unintentional consequences of belonging to a community; both positive and negative.

Identity and belonging

There were discussions across all three focus groups relating to identity and belonging. Many participants outlined their experiences of forging community and belonging while experiencing homelessness. "*… I think a lot of roug-, rough sleepers consider themselves part of a community anyway" (Ryan).* Similarly, Sam notes, "*yeah I experienced that to be honest when erm, I was doing night shelters*

during the winter. Erm, when you'll be with the same people. Going for the day centres, going to another place, going to McDonald's or whatever, then going to the night shelter together-" (Sam).

Whilst participants recalled stories of forging relationships whilst experiencing homelessness and demonstrated a sense of connectedness to the homeless community, many simultaneously had difficulties around personally identifying as experiencing homelessness. For example, when Ryan came off the streets and into a hostel, he struggled with being referred to as homeless and did not initially consider that he was experiencing hidden homelessness. His comments below suggest that a label of 'homeless' can be stigmatising, damaging one's self-esteem and identity, resulting in Ryan rejecting the label altogether:

> *When I er,… Was taken off-, off the street, or came off the street went to the hostel, I had a real issue with erm, being called homeless… I found it really really difficult, 'cos I thought, well I'm not homeless anymore. I've got a roof over my head, and, you know, b-, people- *tut* – my support worker tried to explain to me, well, well you are in effect, even though you've got a roof over your head you are still homeless because you, you're not in secure accommodation. So you're still regarded as homeless. And I had a really tough-, it took me a long, long time, to, sort of get my head round, that. It's v-, it's a bit confusing to me (laugh). (Ryan)*

Recurrently, it was highlighted that homelessness was a stigmatised identity. *"No I don't, no. You're a zero in the life. You are nobody, you are as always I say, the last of the queue. Erm, and will be like that for at least, I don't know… (Frank).* This was felt so strongly by one participant, that they were unable to feel settled in their new neighbourhood.

> *I find actually the area-, the neighbourhood where I'm housed, erm, because they know it as that house, er they've been very unwelcoming. And I still spend more time, where I was actually homeless, and that's where I've developed bonds er, within the community… Yeah I feel, I still feel welcome in the community where I was actually homeless. And that's where I return to. (Christian Loiseau)*

A sense of invisibility and marginalisation permeated many people's experiences.

> *… I guess when you're homeless, you, you lose all of that, and you don't really have an identity as such. People just see you as kind of an invisible person. So erm, I guess, when you're homeless you don't really have community at all. You're just on the go and you know, you don't really erm, have a set identity. You don't have workplace. Well you tend to anyway… You're, you're very sort of temporary I guess, yeah. (Ashley)*

Meeting personal needs

Throughout the focus groups, participants touched upon a range of needs. *"I think everybody needs some protection and some certain care" (Seraphim).* Whilst communities were understood as comprising facilities and services that in principle served in meeting personal needs, this often did not occur. Rather, it was noted that when experiencing homelessness, it becomes increasingly difficult to meet one's personal needs. An example includes difficulty in meeting basic physiological needs. "*I think, we have to go back to what you said earlier, public toilets… And washing facilities… It comes down to the basic body needs really (laugh) – (Chritisan Loiseau).* Other participants discussed the continual search for safety and security:

> *"Some people like to use the night bus, for sleeping on as well-"(Sara)*
>
> *"Yep, because it's safer." (Anna)*
>
> *"And, and some people go to Heathrow and come back again." (Sara)*
>
> *"Yep." (Anna)*
>
> *"You know, they find it safer than being on the streets. Some people sleep during the day." (Sara)*

Despite the fact that community was defined as a space where there is *"a mutual, understanding of, how each and every one is valuable" (Torrito),* experiencing homelessness appears to create a situation whereby individuals' ability to meet personal needs is profoundly hampered. This is perpetuated by the instability, inadequacy, and transience of accommodation. At times, people find themselves in vulnerable settings in order to obtain some form of shelter:

> *"Where people have literally been put in prison…." (Harvey Stevens)*
>
> *"And when you're homeless you might be desperate enough that you think of that as a better option." (Claire)*
>
> *"Cos you've got a bed for the night or whatever." (Rosie)*

Seraphim explains how people experiencing homelessness struggle to meet their basic needs, due to the frequent moving around and upheaval caused by sofa surfing:

> *"So if you're sofa surfing between, like different relatives, you may still have, all those things technically, in-, in place-…"(Seraphim)*
>
> *"Yeah." (William)*

"Err, but you're having to move, every so often from one place to another to another to another." (Seraphim)

"Yes, it's annoying, innit?" (Rosie)

"… annndddd, which are-, not necessarily always in the same borough, or the borough that you're in or from, or linked to. And certain things, you may have to change your, er, your, address that you give for certain purposes, but not for others." (Seraphim)

"Mhmm." (Interviewer)

"So it becomes more complicated." (Seraphim)

Dark side of community

The third theme speaks to the darker side of community and the ways in which it may be inaccessible and exclusionary.

Changing communities

A recurring theme across all focus groups was concern over the changing face of communities. *"Communities are changing so much in cities like this. Where once you did have a community, it's now, disappearing, amongst, you know, wh-, because, everything's evolving, so fast. People are moving out, er, forced out, certainly in cities like this where, social housing is becoming-"(Harvey Stevens).* This sense of change has been felt by some participants for a sustained period of time. *"So, I've noticed a tremendous erosion of community in the last fifteen to twenty years… So hopefully there are other communities, you mentioned online communities. And I think yeah, they do exist, and erm, there's otherwise of re-building that community. But it's not as what it was" (Deborah).*

Noticeable features of change include the closure of services such as libraries and post offices. Part of this change appeared to be linked with gentrification. *"… cheap affordable housing has been replaced by, all this, all this gentrification, and things. So what we had once, a community, er, is-is-, is slowly disappearing amongst this kind of, you know, modern world of erm, of erm, where changes have to happen-"(Harvey Stevens).* The changing face of communities was noted as a difficult and frightening experience for some "*Because the fear of change factor, which is quite, can be quite scary, for some people, who live in their community, all their life and, and now, for example, say for example, now like, government is planning to shut down their community, so they, they have to kind of like, move on now, and for someone who's been there for like twenty, thirty, fourty, years can be quite, very quite, difficult*." *(William)*

Digital exclusion

Many participants recognised the numerous benefits of social media, such as sustaining relationships and connectedness with others. *"I'm also part of an online community, that, some of the members I've known for nearly twenty years" (Anna). "Cause it's [social media] really helpful for situations with people-, you've known for some time, but don't live in the same area, or even the same country as" (Sam) "*However, it was also viewed as a *"double edge sword" (Sam).*

The following quote from Deborah acknowledges the changes in communities and potential impact of digital discrimination. *"Having that community with old people, and now, everything, a lot is online. A lot of older people are excluded from that now, from online activity, you know, 'cause of various reasons" (Deborah*). Similarly, the quote from Harvey Stevens below illustrates that much communication is done through social media and for people experiencing homelessness, it's not so easy, as these platforms may be inaccessible and exclusionary.

> *It's to do with the social mobility platform, because the modern way of communication now is through social media- That's why. But for a homeless person, it's not so (exasperated laugh)- to be moved around, it's not so easy. But this is the way, this modern society uses the way of communicating with like-minded people is through social platforms, and erm, so yeah. (Harvey Stevens)*

Barriers to community involvement and participation

It appeared that numerous participants had difficulty engaging and participating in their community due to social, personal, and structural barriers. Structural barriers are embedded and entrenched simply in the phenomenon of experiencing homelessness.

> *Yes, yes, because you know, because of the vagrancy laws, erm, two hundred year old vagrancy laws or whatever it is, has been used time and time again, to try and criminalise homeless people. Moving people from pillar to post, even the police, move homeless people to the edge of the borough and say let the other borough look after you there. (Harry Stevens)*

Discrimination was experienced by many participants, contributing to great difficulty in accessing needed services and support. The following comment shows Frank's frustration having tried many times, unsuccessfully, to open a bank account. *"And they never, never do something, never. I have terrible problems for open a bank account and return to work because I'm homeless and nobody is talking about a bank account because I'm homeless. I am very tired of this shit. Very, very-" (Frank).*

007 mentions services for people experiencing homelessness and considers trauma a barrier to accessing services.

> *I mean there are some good organ-, good people that work in certain organisations, that will go to bat for other people, who wouldn't be capable of, er, making those, step forwards, because they just don't have the skills. You know? Or they might have the skills but they're so traumatised-That nothing's clicking in, and, so that they can move ahead. So community is somebody who steps up, and, helps them to, along their road. (007)*

A recurring concern was how certain forms of accommodation served as a barrier to building relationships and accessing needed services. Amara highlights the instability of the homeless community, making it difficult to form meaningful relationships. "*And then, people come and go erm, you see someone there today erm, but before you make any erm, form of meaningful association, person out and someone's in, whom you don't, not really people to be (inaudible). So it's a bit, unstable community. So you're not really able to form any meaningful relationships, most times" (Amara)*. A sense of isolation was also felt in hostel settings, *"erm, and I wouldn't call it a community, that hostel because it was a bit sort of isolated, and whatever" (Deborah).*

Reliance upon others

Whilst experiencing homelessness, many individuals were reliant on service provisions and at the mercy of others' good will. This creates a stark power dynamic, rendering those affected to a profoundly vulnerable position. An example of this includes relying on the good will of individual employees to provide safety and accommodation. *"… the security people at the (hospital 1) in (location in London 2), were brilliant… because they've got like a waiting room outside their A and E department, and homeless people sleep there at night… And there was one particularly lovely guy who made us a cup of tea at half six in the morning, before the day shift came on, and we all had to shoot" (Anna)*. One participant notes her experience being a first time mother whilst experiencing homelessness. *"Or you know, access to, you know I was even given money from the DWP for maternity clothes, children's clothes, a pram. They had to be like second hand, but you could, you got grants that you didn't have to pay back. So those stuff were available. Now, I don't think they are" (Deborah).*

Some participants had to rely on homeless organisations to provide support in gaining access to systems. *"If you join the (homeless organisation), they will help you open a bank account" (Anna).* Some reported feelings of destitutions and profound vulnerability. *"Nobody cares about me at all… You're a zero in the life. You are nobody, you are as always I say, the last of the queue. Erm, and will be like that for at least, I don't know" (Frank).*

Discussion

This research aimed to conduct a community profiling exercise with people with lived experience of homelessness. In doing so, we address the dearth of exploratory, bottom-up research relating to social capital in the context of homelessness. This echoes the need to redress critiques that researchers often undervalue descriptive phases of research and make assumptions about the 'nature of the terrain' of interest (Langdridge, 2008).

Through focus group discussions with people with lived experience of homelessness, insights have been gained regarding how social capital may manifest specifically in the context of homelessness. When thinking about social capital in the context of homelessness, three overarching themes are of significant relevance. First, clarity over *understandings of community*. This relates to who the members are, what facilities are available, to what extent community is spatialised, and consideration between theoretical understandings of community (imagined) and lived and enacted community (experienced). It has been demonstrated that understandings of community are varied and multifaceted, broadly reflecting an interdisciplinary perspective on community, which incorporates learnings from sociology, anthropology, and urban studies (Delanty, 2003). It was clear that community, whilst considered by some as highly spatialised, often relating to available tangible services, was also conceptualised as a sense of belonging, mutuality, and plurality. The distinction between imagined and experienced communities reiterates Anderson's (1983) work, illustrating that community is not necessarily underpinned by 'lived' spaces and direct social interaction.

Second, exploring the *affordance of community* particularly relates to how community may serve as a space which creates complexity, and at times ambivalence, around identity and belonging. Additionally, it is important to note the extent to which community enables its members to meet and satisfy certain needs. Affordance of community demonstrates what may be privileged and provided by participation in and membership of a community. This focus on affordance echoes a central tenant to more productive conceptualisations of social capital, which place an emphasis on the resources and support available through engagement in spaces, with individuals and groups (Ayed et al., 2020).

Third, engaging with the notion of community from a more critical perspective, moving beyond an implicit assumption that community is overwhelmingly positive and a tendency to romanticise ideas of community, such as the 'Big Society' (Deas, 2013; McKee, 2014). This speaks to the *dark side of community*, noting the temporal changes to communities and the way in which certain members are left behind through digital exclusion and other barriers. Furthermore, recognising how commu-

nities can create stark power dynamics, rendering certain members reliant and disempowered. This echoed a wider sense of marginalisation, exclusion, and vulnerabilities, which underscored all focus group discussions.

Community appeared to be dynamic and socially rooted; influenced by numerous wider macro factors. For example, it is of note how certain institutes of power colour the discourse of community and permeate peoples' understandings. A recurring example in the focus groups was the role of local councils in shaping community. This partly reflects increasing trends towards localism (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020) – the decentralisation of political power (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013). In relation to homelessness and housing, many councils require proof of local area connection (often involving a minimum time lived in the area) before accepting someone onto their social housing register. This practice poses some tension with people's realities, wherein community transcends spatial boundaries. Evidently, macro structures (i.e. the local council) construct and perpetuate certain ideas of community that appear to differ to people's understandings and experiences.

Additionally, due to the precarity of experiencing homelessness and the many barriers encountered when trying to access support (Canavan et al., 2012), people are often rendered reliant on services to satisfy their needs. Experiencing homelessness appears to create a situation whereby individuals have little control over their lives and many struggle to meet basic needs. As such, people's sense of community is influenced and determined by virtue of relying on these services for survival and safety. This speaks to an important attenuation, that for many, community is not a matter of choice but rather a reflection of their means of survival.

Furthermore, there remain ongoing stigmatising (Groundswell, 2020a) and problematic narratives around homelessness (Parsell and Watts, 2017). Much of the discourse is orientated in a debate of morality and individualisation (Desjarlais, 1997; Parsell, 2010) – negating the structural influences that cause, perpetuate, and sustain homelessness (Bramley et al., 2015; Downie et al., 2018; Clarke et al., 2019; Pleace, 2019). It is well-established that stigma has a plethora of consequences on identity, and that individuals often try to distance themselves from stigmatised identities (Goffman, 1963; Plante et al., 2014; Brener et al., 2019; Doldor and Atewologun, 2020). This de-identification and distancing were apparent throughout focus group discussions. Thus, wider societal attitudes and discriminatory practices appear an important consideration when interrogating the extent to which people identify with the homeless community or with the status of experiencing homelessness.

The three identified themes reiterate distinctions between theoretical components of social capital (Krishna and Shrader, 1999; De Silva et al., 2007). For example, the subthemes *community facilities* and *needed services* emphasise the more objective features of the environment – *structural* capital, which facilities

and resources are available and to what extent these may be accessible to the community members. Whereas *identity and belonging* for example, speaks to the *cognitive* component of social capital, emphasising the importance of individuals' subjective feelings and appraisals.

It is worth noting too, that the themes do echo, to some extent, theoretical distinctions between *bonding*, *bridging,* and *linking* capital (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004; Fitzpatrick et al., 2007; Irwin et al., 2008). *Bonding* capital can be identified particularly in the subtheme *who's included?,* where individuals reported a sense of connectedness with others through factors such as shared interests. *Bridging* appeared to be a pivotal component of community for many participants, manifesting for example, in the diversification of all walks of life and inter-generational cohesion. *Linking* is reflected by the frequent citing of institutes of power, such as charities and councils, both of which had significant influence over whether an individual was able to access needed support and resources.

The theoretical distinction of *bonding* and *bridging*, which is underpinned by ideas of homogeneity and heterogeneity, should be viewed with caution. As highlighted, particularly in the *who's included?* subtheme, the characteristics which individuals note as a basis for connectedness and mutuality, varied greatly; gender, age, religious orientation, nationality, and interests. As such, there still remains a lack of clarity over what constitutes a homogenous bond and which characteristics this should be decided against.

Further, greater consideration needs to be given to the utility of the distinction between *bonding* and *bridging*. By this we mean, are certain characteristics relating to homogeneity and heterogeneity more pertinent than others and helpful in understanding individual social capital? This point can be furthered by insights gained from the subtheme *imagined vs experienced*. Whilst many participants noted a sense of connectedness with people who shared certain socio-demographics, it appeared that the sharing of experiences of homelessness was particularly salient in bringing people together and colouring encounters. It was also this experience of homelessness that often led to structural exclusion, marginalisation, and barriers in accessing support and resources. This is not to imply that all people experiencing homelessness are homogenous. Rather, that *despite* the heterogeneity within this group, the shared experience of homelessness is often the root for difficulty in participating in and benefiting from a community. Therefore, it can be argued that experiencing homelessness is an important factor when considering bonding and bridging capital, as it helps to elucidate access to and leverage of resources. Adopting an intersectional lens, however, highlights the importance of simultaneously considering a range of characteristics – such as race and gender – and their compounding impact (Collins, 1990; Wing, 1997; Crenshaw, 1989).

Strengths and limitations

There are several notable strengths of this research. First, it provides a sound basis for which social capital research, specifically in the context of homelessness, can be built upon. The community profiling exercise elucidates the important features and resources embedded in the environment, as noted by community members themselves. Second, the participants comprised a plethora of experiences across the entire spectrum of homelessness, contributing to a sense of plurality and diversity in the discussion. This was supported by both facilitators in the focus groups encouraging all participants to have space to speak and creating an atmosphere to share contrary opinions respectfully. Third, through discussions in the focus groups, participants were able to modify and develop their understandings of community. This iterative dynamic reflects the appropriateness and value of the chosen research design. Fourth, the emphasis on data-driven themes attempts to provides a platform for voices that are often excluded from research. Fifth, the research highlights the entanglement between one's sense of community and wider macro factors. The reliance upon services and institutions was demonstrated in participants' accounts of their community, contributing to a recognition of this internalisation and revealing a synergistic relationship.

However, the research has several limitations. First, whilst concerted efforts were made to obtain a diverse sample, there is still an under-representation of women in the final sample; a recurring issue across homelessness research (Bretherton, 2017). Second, whilst two facilitators were present throughout all focus groups, certain participant dynamics meant that some participant voices were more prominent than others. Third, all participants were recruited in London and thus the themes may represent experiences of homelessness and social capital particularly in London.

Conclusion

This research provides a sound basis on which we can map and navigate the terrain of social capital in the context of homelessness. It helps to highlight important resources, facilities, and relationships embedded in the environment. Additionally, it elucidates certain functions the community may serve and affordances it may provide to its members. This research provides a critical lens to the discussion of community, noting the entanglement of marginalisation, exclusion, and stigmatisation. We emphasise the importance of acknowledging wider macro factors, which colour understandings and experiences of community.

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Appendix 1. Sample characteristics – Supplementary material for: Community profiling: Exploring Homelessness Through a Social Capital Lens.

Table 1. Sample characteristics (n = 23)

		Participants (*n*)
Housing status	Currently experiencing homelessness	8
	Previous experience of homelessness	12
	No response	3
Gender[2]	Male	15
	Female	6
	Transgender	2
Relationships status	Single	17
	In a relationship	1
	Divorced/separated	2
	No response	3
Ethnicity[2]	African-American	1
	Afro-Caribbean	1
	Black Caribbean	1
	British	1
	Irish	1
	Half British and half Canadian	1
	Mixed	1
	White	2
	White British	9
	White European	1
	No response	4
Country of birth[2]	Argentina	1
	Australia	1
	France	1
	Ireland	1
	Italy	1
	Norway	1
	Sweden	1
	UK	12
	No response	4
Qualifications	No formal qualifications	2
	1-4 GCSEs or equivalent	2
	5 GCSEs or equivalent	3
	2 or more A-levels or equivalent	2
	Bachelor's degree or equivalent	5
	Other qualifications	4
	No response	5

2 These item were open ended on the sociodemographic form.

Employment	Paid or self-employment (FT)	1
	Paid or self-employment (PT)	1
	Voluntary (unpaid)	3
	Sheltered employment	1
	Unemployed	9
	Student	1
	Retired	1
	Other	3
	No response	3

Understanding Young Adults' Pathways Into Homelessness in Northern Ireland: A Relational Approach

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Abstract_ *Homeless young adults are among the most vulnerable people in our society. Much of the research on homelessness has focused on risk factors, but less is known about the pathways into homelessness. Using interviews with homeless young adults in Northern Ireland, we explored the contextual structures or fields of this population and their lived experience of enforced homelessness. We use Bourdieu's concept of habitus to account for the isolated and unstable lives these young adults lead at present. We show how the limiting structures, adverse experiences, and inequality they have endured are internalised and perpetuated – we see the normalising of isolation and instability.*

Keywords_ *homelessness pathways; Bourdieu; habitus; qualitative; lived experience.*

Background

Homelessness among young adults is a growing public health concern in countries around the world, including Northern Ireland (Kulik et al., 2011; Maguire, 2011; Gaetz et al., 2013; Watts et al., 2015; Morton et al., 2020). Current figures estimate that 3 824 young adults, male and female, aged between 18 and 25, presented as homeless to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive between 2018 and 2019 (NIHE, 2019). Whilst these figures have remained relatively steady over the past decade, what has changed are the number of young adults being accepted as homeless, having met the statutory thresholds – figures for 2019 indicate that 62% of those who presented were accepted (NIHE, 2019), compared with 40% in 2015 (Murphy,

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2016), and 28% in 2005 (NIHE, 2012). The withdrawal of the Covid-19 job retention scheme and protection for private renters will likely see these figures increase further (NIHE, 2020). Furthermore, due to the "transient nature of homelessness" (Haldenby et al., 2007, p.1232), in addition to a lack of definitional consensus and the rising problem of 'hidden homelessness', more accurate numbers of young homeless adults remain elusive, with figures likely to be considerably higher (Bantchevska et al., 2008).

The impact, psychologically, emotionally, and physically, of the experience of homelessness at this age has been documented, with Anderson and Christian (2003, p.112) suggesting that "early homelessness can precipitate a lengthy experience of homelessness and associated social problems." Exposure to risky sexual behaviour and victimisation (Whitbeck et al., 1997; Bantchevska et al., 2008); criminality and anti-social behaviour (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994; Altena et al., 2010); substance misuse and low educational attainment (Mayock et al., 2013; Neale and Stevenson, 2015); unemployment (Thompson et al., 2010; Homeless Link, 2015); poor mental and physical health (Hyde, 2005); and continued relationship difficulties (Haldenby et al., 2007) are frequently cited among those who have transitioned into homelessness. Moreover, negative public perceptions of people experiencing homelessness reinforce dependence, poverty, and social exclusion (Stevenson et al., 2007; Farrugia, 2010).

Much of the early research on homelessness, both at home and internationally, has sought to identify individual and structural risk factors which lead to homelessness. These include family dysfunction and conflict (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Whitbeck et al., 1997; Williams and Stickley, 2011); mental illness and problematic substance use (Mallet et al., 2005; Neale and Stevenson, 2015; Tyler and Schmitz, 2013); relationship breakdown and lack of social support (Calsyn and Winter, 2006; Centrepoint, 2016; Maguire, 2011); histories of abuse, neglect, and experiences of being in care (Dworsky et al., 2013; Homeless Link 2015; Martijn and Sharpe, 2006); and poverty and unemployment (Anderson and Christian, 2003; May, 2000). The task of not only uncovering, but balancing both structural and individual risk factors has been described as the 'new orthodoxy' in the field of homelessness research (Fitzpatrick, 2005; May, 2000; Somerville, 2013). A common metaphor attached to this centres around the notion of 'pathways': 'pathways' into, through, and out of homelessness (Fopp, 2009).

The 'new orthodoxy'

Studies exploring pathways or routes into homelessness have tended to adopt one of two approaches: identifying characteristics to define distinct pathways (Mallet et al., 2005; Martijn and Sharpe, 2006) or identifying specific features which can aid in the development of 'typologies' of pathways (Fitzpatrick, 2005).

Various studies (Hyde, 2005; Tyler and Schmitz, 2013), using narrative and social constructionist perspectives, noted the involvement of social service agencies along pathways, often associated with family conflict and violence. Mallet et al.'s (2005) thematic analysis highlighted the significance of 'blended families', reflecting the changing relationships, roles, and societal norms within the dynamic family unit and the conflicts that can arise. Maguire's (2011) Northern Ireland study of routinely collected data (Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Health and Social Care Trusts) noted that relationship breakdown, escaping violence, and problematic substance use were most cited as factors leading to homelessness. Exposure to trauma and adversity, including multiple traumas, are cited in most youth homeless cases (Craig and Hodgson, 1998; Narendorf, 2017). Mayock et al.'s (2013) longitudinal study among young people experiencing homelessness in Dublin noted decreasing family contact, increased social isolation, and greater vulnerability to problematic substance use among their sample. The factors which assist in exiting from homelessness include engagement with drug treatment services, family support and engagement with school and disassociation with homeless peers (Milburn et al., 2007; Karabanow, 2008; Henwood et al., 2012; Mayock and Parker, 2020).

A relational perspective has begun to emerge in the domain of homelessness research (Bantchevska et al., 2008; Barker, 2012, 2013, 2016; Farrugia, 2010; Neale and Stevenson, 2015). These studies, primarily drawing upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1977, 1990, 1996; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), have begun to analyse homelessness, social capital, the role of support networks, and relations and relationships. For Bourdieu, a relationalist methodology was about uncovering and analysing the perpetuation of social inequality by transcending the structure/agency divide (Wacquant, 2013) – it is within the context of Bourdieu's theoretical framework that this research was situated.

Theoretical context

Understanding relationships and networks is fundamental to our understanding of marginalised populations. Wacquant (2013, p.275) suggests that "the stuff of social reality, and thus the basis for heterogeneity and inequality, consists of relations" (see also Tsekeris, 2010). Using his conceptual tools, the "dialogic theoretical constructs of 'field', 'capital' and 'habitus'" (Fries, 2009, p.330), Bourdieu sought to further understand the perpetuation of social inequality.

A key factor in adopting this approach is in the context of what Beck (Beck and Lau, 2005) describes as the 'second modernity'. Characteristic of this 'second modernity' is a "decline in the influence of traditional, collective sources of meaning and action" (Farrugia, 2010, p.73) – Farrugia has argued that homeless young people "occupy a particularly marginal position in the power relations" inherent in late modern social structures and:

> *In the absence of collective explanations for inequality, young people who occupy disadvantaged structural positions become individualized 'life projects' that have 'failed' due to their lack of responsibility and active subjectivity.*

It is this subjectivity which lies at the core of Bourdieu's theoretical framework and its relationship with the surrounding objective structures in the lives of individuals. Viewing young adults as 'failed' individuals, disregards the role of the objective or contextual structures along their pathways. Bourdieu's framework, and in particular his conceptual tool of *habitus,* is most useful in understanding this relationship.

Bourdieu's theoretical framework, which he termed a 'theory of practice', centres around the concept of habitus. The habitus helps us to conceptualise human practice and action. Bourdieu (1990, p.53) described the habitus as a property of social agents and is a "structured [and] structuring structure", that is, structured by an agent's past experiences, social position and present circumstances with a pre-existing structure that moulds one's present and future actions, thus either reinforcing or modifying those same structures. The habitus is "durable" in that it lasts over time and is "transposable", active within a range of contexts (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53). The habitus becomes 'second-nature', through the processes of both primary socialisation in childhood and secondary socialisation in later life (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53). Barker (2016, p.667) adds, "the regularities and constraints of external social reality are instilled and incorporated" into one's habitus through experience – structured by the conditions of its existence, habitus "mediates between the past and present, addressing new situations in similar ways."

As Maton (2008) indicates, the habitus is not independent but instead derives from the relationship between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital). Each field, or social space, contains its own pre-determined objective power and is characterised by its own 'logic', with informalised 'strategies of practice' internalised by agents, enabling, and disposing future choices and actions. Fields are areas of struggle, with agents in competition for the accumulation of various species of capital; namely, social, cultural, economic, and symbolic. Once agents have a 'feel for the game' they tend to remain within these spaces/fields.

Far from being deterministic, habitus can change over time with exposure to new experiences and external structures. This has significant ramifications for those tasked with supporting and working with homeless young adults hoping to effect change.

Research aims

To explore young homeless adults' experiences of their pathways into homelessness – with a particular focus on relations both at the micro or agency level and the macro or structural level, and the interplay between both.

Research questions

Several core research questions guided the study: How do young adults explain their pathways into homelessness? How do unique experiences and histories interact with the young peoples' surrounding social systems?

Design and Methods

We used qualitative methods to identify the characteristics of this sub section of the homeless population and explore the subjective experience of relations and relationships along pathways.

Sample

We approached 'young adults' (18 to 25 years old), males and females who were: (a) residing in temporary housing projects; or (b) in receipt of floating support services (i.e., living independently in the community with the support of outreach/floating support workers aligned with one of the participating agencies)[1]. All participants, at one time, had been deemed homeless, having met the statutory thresholds, and had secured temporary hostel/housing project accommodation. Some had recently moved on and into independent living and were no longer deemed homeless but were continuing to receive floating support services.

Posters and leaflets providing information about the study were placed in the participating agencies' housing projects and given to young adults in receipt of floating support. Subsequently, ten young adults, five males and five females, ranging in age from 18 to 22, were recruited to take part in face-to-face interviews. Our purposive sampling strategy was to select information-rich cases who could provide an emic perspective – insider accounts of becoming homeless. This process was facilitated by key workers who helped identify those most suitable for the study. Importantly, we sought participants who were deemed sufficiently confident to provide information about sensitive and/or traumatic events and issues.

1 Agencies included: The Simon Community, MACS, Barnardo's, Belfast Central Mission, Apex Housing, First Housing, and Action for Children.

Data Collection and Analysis

To conduct the interviews, we used an approach best exemplified by the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) (Wengraf, 2004). The face-to-face interviews ranged in duration from 45 minutes to two hours. Once the interviews had been transcribed, read, and reread, we entered the transcripts into NVivo software. This software allows for systematic coding, thus once all transcripts had been entered into NVivo, a preliminary coding framework was devised.

Because we were interested in both the pathways into homelessness and the young adults' perceptions and understanding of these journeys, these were used as the main codes.

In line with our coding structure, we then applied a thematic analysis to the data (Aronson, 1994; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Following Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic networks approach, the 'basic themes' of education, family relationships, adverse childhood experiences and support networks, instability, and isolation and mistrust, among others, were identified. These were then categorised into 'organising themes' such as contextual structures or fields, individual perceptions of pathways, and habitus formed within these contexts.

Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by the Queen's University Belfast Ethics Committee prior to the fieldwork commencing. Issues concerning consent, vulnerable adults, privacy, harm minimisation, and confidentiality were addressed in accordance with the Queen's University Belfast *Policy and Principles of the Ethical Approval of Research* (2014) document.

Findings

Qualitative study

The findings presented reflect the interview data collected from ten young adults, aged 18 to 22, who were living in temporary hostel accommodation or in receipt of floating support services. These interviews yielded rich, in-depth information regarding the pathways into homelessness for these young adults and can be broadly categorised into the following themes: 1. uncovering the contextual structures or fields within which the participants were a part along their pathways; 2. individual perceptions of pathways; and 3. exploring the impact on the habitus, formed within these contexts and experiences. Vignettes will be used throughout to illustrate certain issues.

Participant profile

The table below illustrates the participant profile of the young adults who were interviewed in the study.

Table 1. Participant profile

No. of participants	10
Age range	18 – 22 (mean = 20)
Male	5
Female	5
Ethnicity	all white (n=10)
Sexuality	all straight (n=10)

Five participants lived in temporary hostel/housing project accommodation (n=5) and the five others lived in the community and were in receipt of floating support. Most participants (n=8) had experience of living in some type of care (kinship care, residential care, foster care, and secure accommodation) and had multiple placements. Age of first experiencing homelessness, that is, officially homeless having been assessed and deemed so by the NIHE, ranged from 16 to 18. For several of the participants, periods of 'sofa surfing' preceded this and so, unofficially, their homelessness had begun prior to age 16.

It should be noted that for those participants living in housing projects, this was temporary accommodation and whilst living there they were deemed to be homeless. On average, these housing projects had a time limit of two years, at which point participants, ideally, would move out into the community to independent living whilst receiving floating support – crucially it is at this juncture where they would no longer be deemed statutorily homeless.

Contextual structures or fields

Almost universally, the participants described similar patterns of growing up in low-income neighbourhoods, across a sectarian divide, and often within single-parent households:

> *But with living in [deprived area] you're going to get ina fight at least once or twice. It's a thing that you do as boy growing up, like. (Michael)*
>
> *See, I grew up in [deprived area known for paramilitary activity]. (Simon)*
>
> *But ah, he [dad] left when I was two…. (Michael)*
>
> *My father left when I was a baby. (Peter)*
>
> *I haven't known him for like 18 years, my dad. (Simon)*

Low educational attainment and dropping out of school early due to poor relationships was common and attributed to the effects of dysfunctional home environments and years of sustained bullying:

> *All the special needs ones helped me, because I mostly helped them. But anyone half normal didn't care and picked on me. That went on until fifth year until I finally grew up a bit and stood up to them. (Lisa)*

> *So it's just really bad and so my parents were going through the separation, my brother was acting out, my mum was going crazy. I just couldn't handle being bullied on top of that. So even though I did want to do something with my life, I had to leave school. (Olivia)*

> *I left school half way through fourth year. I said I'm fine with doing the work, but I just don't want to be near those people anymore. (Joanne)*

> *I left school at twelve and after that there, I did not learn much out of school. (Peter)*

> *Then at tech, my background caught up with me – people found out I was homeless and so fake Facebook accounts were made to harass me. (Jimmy)*

Parental and personal problematic substance use was frequently cited in the interviews:

> *I was out sniffing MDMA and sniffing coke and just getting in really bad states. (Cath)*

> *When I was going up to the doctor I was looking for something like diazepam or something… because I couldn't afford to get any more herbal… ah legal highs. (Michael)*

> *And at the time I was sort of zoned out [on prescription medication], so then we took… like mephedrone, stimulant legal highs. They are ecstasy… the ecstasy would've broke down the barriers and then I would've been able to speak. (Peter)*

The participants discussed dysfunctional home life and strained familial and partner relationships, prior to their becoming homeless:

> *Well he's [ex boyfriend] on bail for like loads… he like, five pending domestic abuse charges so he's on bail. He's not allowed near me… no direct or indirect contact. He's not allowed nothing. I feel safe here cause if he even came onto the grounds or anything like they'll just ring the police straight away. (Cath)*

> *I had a complete and utter breakdown and ran away and that was when I was still living at home and that was the reason, one of the reasons I needed to leave as well just cause I couldn't cope anymore with my mum and me… personality clash as well so I just couldn't be bothered anymore. (Lisa)*

Yous [family] are just all mad. That's not okay, at all. They're just so, not normal and I need a normal life for a while you know… I've had enough fantasy shit. (Michael)

Yeah cause her [mum] and her boyfriend were always causing drama and like she was going out drinking, bringing home the cops. I mean you know it's bad when the cops, who are normally coming to the door to ask about your children, are… like… they bring home your mother instead. (Olivia)

Almost all of the participants (n=8) had experience of being in at least one care setting – kinship care, residential care, foster care, and secure accommodation – and some talked of having had multiple placements:

Like, grew up in care… so went into care when I was like three. (Cath)

I'm lucky to even have the same foster family I've had since I was a baby. I know a lot of people have been passed around. (Lisa)

Individual perceptions of pathways

While their stories typically illustrate the disadvantage and dysfunctional family milieu of many participants, we were interested in how the participants made sense of these experiences. Despite their histories and limited choices and life chances, most still claimed a sense of agency, taking responsibility for the decisions made along the pathways to homelessness. This is reminiscent of Beck's (Beck and Lau, 2005) 'second modernity', with young people being viewed as 'failed life projects' and thus believing this themselves; a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, if conceptualised through Bourdieu's framework, we start to understand the complexity of the factors in play here. Michael's story best exemplifies this.

Michael

Born in an area of acute socio-economic disadvantage and paramilitary presence, Michael was a child when his father left the family home, and for the next ten years, various male partners of his mother moved in and then out of the various homes they lived in. Often these relationships were emotionally abusive. Michael had been exposed to drug taking within the home, the first instance of which he recalled when he was five years old. Michael recounts there being a *"strange smell"* in the home when he was a child and one time coming across *"this box… with a big brown block in it"*, which years later he realised *"it was dope".* Michael recounted the reaction from his mother's then partner to him discovering the box as being very negative – he was *"angry".*

When Michael starting smoking cannabis, he explained that his mum was fine with it, initially:

Aye, best that I do it there [at home] than somewhere else really in her eyes.

> *We would've just sat in my room and smoked up and she woulda brought us in a big massive tray of toast… I loved it.*

By the time Michael was 15, having been excluded from school for *"not fitting in",* he would regularly spend evenings taking cocaine and mephedrone (New Psychoactive Substance) with his mother and her partner:

> *One night me [my mum] and [mum's boyfriend] were sitting sniffing… they had [cocaine] and I had meth. I didn't think that me ma was going to take meth and I was like, right [mum's boyfriend]… But aw naw, me ma got ripped into it.*

Michael's relationship with his mother's partner was fraught and he detailed his struggles in dealing with his abusive treatment towards her. Michael's drug taking, which at first his mother allowed, soon began to spiral out of control, and as addiction took hold and his behaviour became more erratic, he was asked to leave the family home:

> *And it got a wee bit out of hand then. She thought it was just going to be a phase but I got addicted to it. Can't really just drop it, it's not a choice anymore. And she just… she got fed up I wasn't going off it and I was losing the rag when I didn't have it and she was all 'You have to leave'.*

Michael's subsequent drug addiction exacerbated underlying mental health vulnerabilities such as anxiety and stress, which he stated were a result of having grown up in an abusive and chaotic environment. Despite such adversities, Michael stated that he:

> *… accepted that no one else is to blame at all in any way shape or form and it's entirely everything that I've [pauses] every decision that I've made has led to me being completely alone and there's a good reason for it.*

Michael continued to reflect that he realised he *"wasn't worth anybody's time"* and that he had to *"face facts… if you are shit, just not the best that you could be… there's a reason why people aren't looking to be around you."*

Understanding a habitus formed within these contexts

Relationship instability

For both Olivia and Jimmy, growing up in environments characterised by conflict with others, and significant social isolation because of, and exacerbated by, school bullying, led to profound mistrust in others. Instability was a key characteristic of many of their contextual fields. Thus, these regularities and constraints of social reality had been inculcated into both Olivia and Jimmy's individual habitus through socialisation and experience. Lacking the social skills to mix with others, their resulting 'strategies' were often to 'choose' to continue to lead isolated lives, free from close ties or bonds with others. In Olivia's story, we can begin to see what a

habitus formed within a history of relationship instability looks like, and how this past, and its influence on the present, can also affect future tendencies or actions at the pre-reflexive level.

Olivia

Parental conflict permeated Olivia's home life – from as far back as she could remember her parents argued and fought. When this conflict began to include neighbours when Olivia was around ten years old, she remembers this being a turning point for her in her life:

> *I was a great kid, I did my homework well, I was nice to teachers, I was nice to people. Did everything right and then as soon as P6 hit I was just going crazy.*
>
> *Honestly, it's since I got older. I was a very confident child, I was making loads of friends, it was crazy.*

The situation deteriorated further when her parents divorced. Olivia discussed her mum's litigious nature and outlined their frequent moves from one area or city to another, provoked by conflict between her mum and neighbours, friends, and family. By the time Olivia started secondary school, in a new town, she found it difficult to make friends, fatalistically avoiding friendships, knowing that they would ultimately have to move on again:

> *I didn't want friends… I didn't want to like sit down and do my homework or anything. I'd just come home from school, shove my school bag in the corner and sit and watch TV.*

She and her younger brother regularly changed schools, but due to the level of family dysfunction and involuntary isolation created by their mother's behaviour, both required counselling. When discussing the eventual relationship breakdown between her and her mother, Olivia stated that after her parents divorced:

> *… I was living with my mum for a while but then that didn't work out so I got… I moved in with my aunt then that didn't work out (laughs) and then I moved in with my dad for a year and then that didn't work out so I had to stay at my friends for two weeks before I finally got a place in here in the hostel.*

Olivia discussed the role reversal that occurred during her teens, between her and her mother, due to her mother's excessive drinking and 'partying' with her new partner: *"my teenage years were just thrown out the window."* Her mother's problems isolated Olivia further. When several placements with other family members broke down, Olivia moved into the hostel where she lives currently, having been deemed statutorily homeless by the NIHE. Her strategy to *"keep myself to myself"* and of keeping her distance from others were indicative of her lack of trust

in others, but also her lack of skills to make her own friends. When talking about socialising, Olivia stated that she wasn't very good at talking and this progressed onto how she preferred to talk to strangers:

> *Like, I moved in and I could see all the people, like, running around and they were like nice enough and said hello but I just couldn't talk… I'm not a very people person. Like, talking to you now… I'm okay cause you'll be leaving and I won't need to see you again.*

What these findings illustrate is that for Olivia, early childhood experiences of family conflict, the instability of frequent house and school moves, and social isolation had been internalised via primary socialisation. As she progressed into her teens, her isolation, lack of social skills and confidence, and the traumas in her home life were incorporated in a period of secondary socialisation. Olivia's inability to make or keep friends within the field of education reinforced the notion of instability in relationships. Thus, Olivia had 'internalised the external', and the instability in and impermanence of relationships were normalised and expected by her. Towards the end of her story, Olivia conceptualised her current situation, one in which she continued to be isolated and struggled to make friends:

> *So I feel like I'm choosing now, the right people to be in my life.*

Housing instability

Instability in the field of housing and transience were dominant aspects of the participants' narratives. Many talked about transitions, living with friends, relatives, and partners, and moving between hostel, supported, and community-based accommodation. The following extracts highlight this well:

> *Sean came when I was seven, left when I was ten and then we went to Australia at the end of my eleven plus… then we came back to [home town] again and me ma met her boyfriend and then we moved again. (Michael)*

> *… went into care when I was like three and then left when I was eighteen. Moved out of the children's home and then moved in with my sister and then moved out of my sisters and moved in with my boyfriend and then moved out of my boyfriends into a hostel and then out of the hostel to here. (Cath)*

Others discussed the chaos they found when they first entered hostels or temporary housing projects and the associated problems:

> *I kind of got used to it you know the neighbours getting drunk and shouting and stuff. (Olivia)*

> *It's known as probably the scummiest place in town. (Michael)*

> *… it was terrible, it was the worst. There's like… anyone's in it. Like paedophiles, drug addicts… anyone can go into it. It's like 36 flats so there's all sorts. (Cath)*

For those who had moved into independent community living and were no longer deemed homeless, they discussed the anti-social behaviour which at first shocked them but that they soon became accustomed to:

> *… there's a lot of problems when I moved in to the point where people were, umm, just generally… violence. But I have to say I'm lucky in the place I live in because there's a lot worse…. (Lisa)*

A closer exploration of Peter's story offers up interesting findings with regards to the effects of housing instability, in relation to other structural and individual factors, on the habitus.

Peter

Growing up in a deprived area known for paramilitary activity with the backdrop of his family's history, Peter, and his mother, experienced considerable distress. When discussing his father's past and things he had done prior to going to prison, Peter described the intense paranoia which his mother began to experience and which he eventually came to experience:

> *You see my mum thought every single person knew about so then that made me think that…. I felt very exposed. More detached and more different from other people… That was the way my mum was raising me to be… I realised that as I got older.*

> *Just the sort of hectic life I grew up in… and then the subconscious fear of, you know, a primal fear of getting killed.*

His anxieties and fears were carried with him into the school setting, and he struggled to cope academically. He was also bullied, and Peter felt that he would eventually be hurt or punished for things his father had done:

> *… then I'm thinking, is that going to come back on me. And it's been the paranoia of that over the years. You know I've sort of been conditioned that way from my mother.*

His mother experienced mental health problems and Peter, fearful of leaving her alone with her violent partner, often missed school:

> *[for as long as] I can remember I was taking in my mum's problems. Like I was being kept off school and that and sitting with her all day while she cried and that over the past, her past….*

Peter reflected on some of the traumatic things he witnessed as a child and held some resentment towards his mother for then abandoning him when his own problems became too much for her:

> *I was never around extended because they fought, internal fighting for years. I mean, I watched my mum getting the face beat off her with a knuckle duster and an uncle once took a knife out and that shocked me…. I was only a child when that happened.*

> *That's why I was angry there for a while cause she disowned me.*

Additionally, lacking a solid and consistent figure in his life, Peter stated that he 'chose' to leave at age twelve but soon returned. Shortly after this, Peter was asked to leave the family home due to his increasingly challenging behaviour. He spent some time in various residential care homes before a brief period spent 'sofa-surfing' in friends' houses and then entering the homeless hostel system and starting to experiment with recreational drugs. Subsequent brief periods were then spent in community based housing but Peter explained why he felt this often broke down:

> *Because you know, even if you get a stable place, you know a house, you still have all that stuff [trauma] you've collected, you know, picked up from all around. Like you know if you go from a… everyday house into a hostel, you know a hostel is going to be a complete smack around the face. Because you know there's going to be boys taking drugs, ones coming up tapping you fags constantly, there's gonna be all that.*

The hostel environment heightened his already anxious and distrusting disposition. Peter continued to discuss getting his first flat, in the community, and why he felt this placement broke down:

> *People will state the facts, you know 'Right, that's it you've got a house!'… and you're like sitting inside it thinking 'Well I'm not stable like' *laughs*. For example, for me you know I'm sitting there and I'm not used to this. It doesn't matter where I am because you know I'm still going to look at the world through my eyes.*

Now in his current community accommodation for seven months, he was becoming increasingly agitated and fearful of his neighbours, suggesting he may not be in the placement for much longer and that it would probably eventually break down:

> *And you know, you sorta get used to this chaotic lifestyle, where you know nowhere is permanent….*

Here, we begin to see the impact of housing inequality upon some of these young adults, illustrated through Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Thus, we suggest that early and subsequent childhood experiences in many fields – education, housing,

relationships – are internalised by the respondents to such a degree that they come to view these fields as natural and, unconsciously or pre-reflexively, these underlying and unspoken 'truths' come to influence their future thought and action.

Peter's story illustrates the complex interaction between both individual and field-level factors along his pathway: the primary socialisation created by the fear of violence and reprisal and his father's paramilitary involvement; the subsequent damaged self-confidence and unhappy school experiences and withdrawal, at a very young age; and the mental health problems and drug use that followed. Involuntarily leaving the family home at a young age, followed by years of housing instability, resulted in a habitus that came to accept as 'taken for granted' the fact that accommodation was temporary and would ultimately not last.

Discussion

The findings from this study have highlighted that far from being the result of individual pathology, homelessness for these young adults has been the result of a complex interaction between the individual and structural level factors at play within the conditions of their existence. Born into chaotic, dysfunctional, and often 'broken' families and households within deprived areas strongly impacted by sectarian conflict, the associated negative factors of these conditions became clear. Family conflict, poor housing, traumatic experiences, domestic violence, relationship breakdown, and experiences of being in care featured strongly – findings which have been reflected in the literature (Anderson and Christian, 2003; Dworsky et al., 2013; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Homeless Link, 2015; Mallet et al., 2005; Martijn and Sharpe, 2006; Neale and Stevenson, 2015; Tyler and Schmitz, 2013; Whitbeck et al., 1997).

The negative psychological impact of these early childhood experiences was highlighted. Feelings of fear, anxiety, and mistrust within participants were often exacerbated by the isolation their contextual conditions induced. These feelings, typically, were transferred into other fields in the lives of participants. Lacking the resources and skills needed to make friends, increased isolation, and the bullying which many participants reported in school, reinforced their mistrust in others in addition to heightening anxiety and mental health difficulties. As in other studies, in most cases, we noted an eventual and complete disengagement from these institutions (Anderson and Christian, 2003). Similarly, Piat et al. (2015) described a deepening negative sequelae in which individual factors interacted with salient structural factors along their participants' pathways. For example, running away from home exacerbated existing mental health vulnerabilities, leading to increased substance misuse, poor social relationships, and inappropriate accommodation.

Lacking the necessary resources to support themselves, the participants then entered the homeless hostel system and an increased exposure to harmful or risky behaviours. These findings are supported by McNaughton's (2008) study – homelessness for her participants could be explained "largely in terms of their lack of resources… and the edgework they engaged in or experienced in response to this lack" (Somerville, 2013, p.400). Crucially this 'edgework' further diminished what were already minimal resources and was not done simply out of choice but had been largely shaped by their limiting histories.

Perhaps the most alarming aspect of these narratives was the participants' unquestioning acceptance of how their lives had unravelled. Many took full responsibility for becoming homeless, with no regard for, or knowledge of, the systemic inequality that has led them to that point. For them, their lives, with the limited and limiting choices it has offered them, is simply 'taken-for-granted'. The theme of instability in the lives of respondents was a recurring one and featured in many aspects of their lives: housing, relationships, education, and the support systems they were in contact with, both formal and informal. Respondents who remained at home moved frequently to escape conflict with neighbours or because of paramilitary threats. For those who were in the care system, multiple placement breakdowns resulted in young people moving between foster, residential, and hostel accommodation.

The instability, insecurity and anxiety of childhood remained with respondents throughout subsequent years. This instability, played out in relationships and in housing, then became taken-for-granted or 'doxic'. For Bourdieu (1977, p.164), doxa is the experience by which "the natural and social world appears as self-evident." In examining the 'habitus', this external, 'natural' world becomes the internal. Respondents then learned and incorporated specific 'strategies', pre-reflexively, which in turn perpetuated this instability and isolation. When participants entered hostel accommodation, the internalisation of early childhood and subsequent reinforcing experiences became most apparent. Characterised by instability and isolation, these young adults, pre-reflexively, had internalised these experiences which had now become defining features of their own strategies or practices. 'Choosing' to further isolate themselves from others, as a maladaptive strategy for survival.

Specific strategies adopted by the respondents included anticipating housing placements breaking down or discussing their 'choice' or decision to remain isolated from others – leading to a form of pre-emptive sabotage of the placement and/or circumstances. Rejecting the situation before the situation rejects them. Peter frequently referred to the fact that housing was not permanent and discussed reasons why he felt his current placement would inevitably break down. Similarly,

Olivia referred to the fact that she 'chose' not to have friends and to isolate herself, which may be viewed as making a 'virtue out of necessity' but, nevertheless, illustrating the 'doxic' nature of her social world.

The instability characteristic along pathways can negatively affect the "relative stability of independent housing" (Barker, 2016, p.675), resulting in respondents pre-empting the service ceasing. Given the paramilitary connections in his family, Peter grew up with a pervasive sense of fear of harm from others and was evidently paranoid in his current accommodation that his neighbours were intent on hurting him. Barker (2013), in a large-scale, ethnographic study, found similar strategies used by his participants. In what he termed 'strategies of autonomy', Barker (2013) stated that due to the instability and uncertainty in their lives, respondents drew upon these strategies as a way to exert self-reliance, but that ultimately, what resulted was further isolation.

Limitations

Despite the insights obtained through the data collected, there are limitations to the results. The study relied upon participants' retrospective recall of events and experiences. As a result, the issue of reliability of information can arise here (Martijn and Sharpe, 2006), particularly given the chaotic lifestyles and traumatic experiences characteristic of the lives of many homeless young adults. As such, information or stories may be inaccurate, and accounts distorted over time.

A purposive sampling strategy was used which can be open to selection bias and error. Key workers from the housing agencies, which supported the participants, selected those they deemed eligible for the study – given that the focus of the study, nor any element of it, was not to discuss or evaluate current accommodation this was deemed an appropriate sampling strategy.

It is not intended for this study to be representative of all young adults who have experienced homelessness and therefore should not be generalised.

Conclusions

In summary, this research has demonstrated that the young adults experiencing homelessness in the study have experienced significant disadvantage from early childhood and this has taken many forms. The negative psychological impact of these experiences in primary socialisation are often compounded at many junctures as their lives progress, most notably within fields such as education, housing, and in their relationships. The instability, dysfunction, and isolation in their lives and the

fear and anxiety this evokes become internalised and these young adults come to view these limiting fields as natural or 'taken-for-granted'. These features of instability and isolation become defining features of their habitus and the strategies they draw upon, sub-consciously, in the present resulting in the perpetuation of the instability and isolation they have become accustomed to. Barker (2016, p.681) summarises this when he asserts:

> *Habitus reminds us that what can appear to be the choices or practices of individuals can obscure what is actually the structural conditions and limitations from which they have emerged and exist.*

That said, as we know, the habitus can change with exposure to new experiences and external structures. Thus, dynamic responses are needed from all those tasked with supporting these young adults if they are to have the best chance of managing transitions and working towards stability in their lives (Piat et al., 2015). Furthermore, support agencies must strive to understand and endeavour to change the structural factors which shape and compound the instability in the lives of these young adults. What the findings starkly support is the belief that these young adults should not be blamed for their current position and instead, deserve our attention, time, and resources.

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How Social Science Can Influence Homelessness Policy: Experiences from Europe, Canada, and the United States – Part II: Politics and Policy Change

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Abstract_ *The purpose of this paper is to understand the roles social scientists can play to influence homelessness policy. Experiences in Europe, Canada, and the United States are used to generate lessons learned about how research can inform policy. Social scientists can have influence through different policy streams (Kingdon, 1995). In the policy stream, knowledge transfer and mechanisms to ensure fidelity to the original research model are important; in the political stream, individual leaders are important for policy change and it is important to recognise that government is not a monolith; and regarding policy windows, timing, crises, and persistence matter. We illustrate these lessons with relevant examples in which social scientists have attempted to influence homelessness policy. While policy change is a messy business, social scientists can play multiple roles and have many tools that they can use to help policy become more evidence-based in the quest to end and prevent homelessness.*

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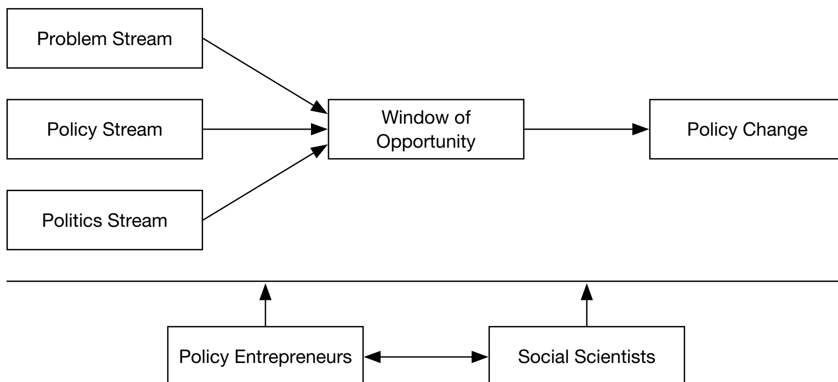
Keywords_ *homelessness policy, political stream, policy change, role of social science*

Introduction

In a companion paper, we introduced Kingdon's (1995) policy streams framework to understand how social scientists can influence homelessness policy (Nelson et al., 2021). We examined the problem component and one aspect of the policy component – the development of solutions to the problem through research. In this second paper, we examine the political context of policy-making and strategies for implementing evidence-based solutions on a more wide-scale basis through policy change (see Figure 1). We draw from our experiences and that of others in Europe, Canada, and the United States (US) in striving to change homelessness policy. Within the policy and politics dimensions of Kingdon's framework, we identify lessons learned, borrowing from and expanding on Shinn's (2007) paper on influencing homelessness policy. Furthermore, we describe roles for social scientists (Lavoie and Brunson, 2010) that can be used to influence homelessness policy.

Figure 1: A Framework for Public Policy Change



The Policy Stream – Scaling Out and Scaling Up: Can Evidence-Based Solutions to Homelessness Be Implemented on a More Wide-Scale Basis?

In the companion paper, we demonstrated the necessary first steps of problem framing and developing evidence-based strategies to address the problem of homelessness, particularly for people with psychiatric disorders, through a range of research designs and data sources. Once effective solutions are discovered and shown to be effective in different contexts, as we noted in the case of housing-based rather than shelter-based responses to homelessness in the previous paper, social scientists then face the thorny problem of how to influence policy so that these evidence-based solutions are implemented on a wider basis. Sarason (1978) observed that when striving to change policy, social scientists enter the political arena in which research evidence often takes a 'back seat' to issues of power and persuasion. Given the strong evidence that Housing First (HF) provides rapid exits from homelessness and superior rates of housing stability than treatment as usual (Tsai, 2020), we focus in particular on attempts to influence policy makers to introduce HF in North America and Europe.

Scaling Up and Scaling Out

A distinction has been made in implementation science between scaling up and scaling out evidence-based solutions to social problems. *Scaling up* refers to an expansion of evidence-based solutions to the same population and within similar settings under which an intervention has been shown to be effective. On the other hand, *scaling out* refers to adapting practices of policy for new populations and/or in new settings or systems (Aarons et al., 2017). Both scaling up and scaling out are important aspects of policy change.

In the case of homelessness, examples of scaling up would be the creation of more HF programmes for people experiencing homelessness, mental illness, and addictions following closely the Pathways HF model. Examples of scaling out would be adapting such housing based responses for youth graduating from the child welfare system before they experience homelessness (Gaetz, 2014, 2019) or delivering housing-led responses to homelessness in diverse jurisdictions such as Ireland (Tsemberis, 2020), Slovakia (Pongrácz et al., 2021), or Australia (Johnson et al., 2012) which have different housing and health policies in comparison to the US and Canada, where, for example, HF was originally shown to be effective.

Lessons Learned and Roles for Social Scientists

Knowledge transfer matters

Social scientists can assume the role of *knowledge translator* in order to move evidence into policy and practice, and several different knowledge transfer (KT) methods can be used to influence policy. For example, there were a series of peer-reviews of homelessness policies in EU Member States promoted by the European Commission *via* what was known as the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC). Commencing in the late 2000s, member states voluntarily submitted their homelessness policies to a detailed academic peer review (social scientists were the peer reviewers in all cases), followed by a range of inputs from statutory and non-statutory bodies from a small number of other member states in each case (Gosme, 2013).

In the case of the Danish peer review in 2010, a background paper was produced by Lars Benjaminsen from the Danish National Centre for Social Research and Rune Kamstrup from the Ministry of Social Affairs. Secondly what was termed a discussion paper, in effect an analysis or peer review of national policies, was produced by an external expert, in this case, Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick from Heriot-Watt University in Scotland. Finally, written submissions from a number of other member states, culminating in a two day seminar in Copenhagen in early November 2010 where the lessons that could be drawn from the Danish experience for other member states were intensively discussed.

Thus, this series of peer reviews of homelessness policies in a number of member states contributed to a heightened understanding of what was, and what was not, working in responding to homelessness and HF. Both the Pathways HF model and the Finnish approach to scaling out HF were increasingly cited as responses that worked successfully to end homelessness. In this case, social scientists played the roles of *conceptualizer-innovator* and *researcher-evaluator.*

HF projects developed largely independent of each other across different cities of EU Member States from the 2000s onwards, and Housing First Europe, a project funded by the European Commission (Busch-Geertsema, 2013), evaluated the implementation of HF in 10 cities in Europe, bringing together for the first time the accumulated lessons learned. All cities broadly adopted the principles of Pathways HF, and although there was some variation in practices, the results were largely positive with the report concluding that "the Housing First approach is a highly successful way of ending homelessness" (Busch-Geertsema, 2013, p.24). These positive findings were published in a final report and presented at a conference held in Amsterdam, giving significant momentum both to introducing HF in member states where it was not yet established and to expanding the scale of HF in member states where it was established, albeit in most cases, on a tentative basis and

usually very small in scale. To maintain the momentum on scaling up and scaling out HF in Europe, the Housing First Europe Hub was conceived in 2016 to promote and provide training for HF programmes in Europe. This Hub has developed a toolkit (Pleace, 2016), which is available in 10 languages, offers webinars, maintains a catalogue of HF programmes in European nations, and operates a Train the Trainer programme in HF.

Although trans-Atlantic in membership, the first, second, and third International Housing First Conferences, convened bi-annually, took place in Portugal (2013), Ireland (2016), and Italy (2018) respectively, providing opportunities for the knowledge exchange of research findings on HF, particularly the dissemination of the results from the Canadian At Home Chez Soi study. In addition, both the HOME-EU project funded by the European Commission on the implementation of HF in eight member states (Petit et al., 2018), and the International HF Fidelity study which included case studies in seven EU Member States (Aubry et al., 2018) have resulted in greater understanding of programme implementation in Europe.

Furthermore, a number of North American social scientists provided important contributions to the KT process by presenting research findings on the efficacy of HF at national events organised in EU Member States, and increasingly at the annual research conference of the European Observatory on Homelessness. For example, Tim Aubry from Canada was the keynote speaker at the 13th Annual Research Conference in 2018 in Budapest, with his address on *Housing First as an Evidence-Based Practice for Ending Chronic Homelessness: The Current State of Knowledge and Future Directions for Research,* and Deborah Padgett from the US was the keynote speaker at the 11th Annual Research Conference with an address on *Consumer Choice Meets Street Level Bureaucracy: Social Work in the Housing First Era.*

In some countries, for example Italy, KT is very much filtered through the NGO sector (Lancione et al., 2018); in Ireland a municipal authority first piloted HF in Dublin (Greenwood, 2015); and in Finland it was a national state-led project, but a model of HF that developed organically and is increasingly influential across Europe and the Antipodes (Allen et al., 2020). Only in Finland and France is HF operating at scale in Europe. For example, Ireland launched a national HF implementation plan in 2018 (Government of Ireland, 2018) that aims to provide 663 tenancies by the end of 2021. It is likely that this target will be achieved, with 539 adults in HF tenancies across the country at the end of March 2021; however, there were a further nearly 5900 adults in temporary and emergency accommodation, demonstrating the limited scaling up of HF in Ireland. In a review of HF in Europe, Pleace et al. (2019, p.6) concluded that HF was “a relatively new development in much of

Europe, is sometimes operating on a small scale, is present in some areas but not others, and differs in how it is used alongside other homelessness services, with variation both within and between different countries."

France provides a powerful example of how a research demonstration project can influence homelessness policy and be scaled up across a nation. The beginning of a paradigm shift from relying on emergency or temporary accommodations based on a continuum of care leading to independent living appeared initially in public policies in 2009. Specifically, the Minister for Housing, Benoist Apparu, attempted to overhaul the system serving people who were experiencing homelessness in response to a citizen protest and the occupation of the Saint Martin canal in Paris by the Don Quixote and Médecins du Monde non-governmental associations who distributed tents to those experiencing literal homelessness. The shift in policy, from shelter-led to housing-led policies, combined with plans to reduce funding for emergency accommodation, was not well received by the managers of emergency shelters, and while the shift failed to produce results, it did lead to the creation of the DIHAL (Délégation Interministérielle pour l'Hébergement et l'accès au Logement – an inter-ministerial body intended to address the issue of homelessness on behalf of the National Government in 2010).

DIHAL led to the development of a HF demonstration project in 2011. At the time of the 2017 Presidential elections, DIHAL, having already designed a scaling up plan of 'logement d'abord', presented it to the new Government, which adopted the plan as a central part of its five-year strategy from 2018 to 2022 to combat homelessness. The main elements presented in the plan were developed by DIHAL based on the key principles of the provision of immediate access to affordable housing, flexible and individualised support, separation of housing and support, and challenging the notion of a lack of 'capacity to be able to live independently' for this population.

The French Government commissioned and funded the "Un chez soi d'abord" project that we described in the previous companion paper. Once the positive outcomes, that included cost offsets that exceeded the costs of the HF programmes, were communicated by the research team to the Government in a preliminary report, the Government decided to not only sustain Un chez soi d'abord programmes in the original four sites, but also to create and fund four new sites per year over the five-year period from 2019 to 2022, resulting in HF programmes in 20 new cities.

The work of DIHAL illustrates the important role that social scientists can play in policy implementation as *partnership-makers.* Evidence of this collaboration is the summary of the qualitative report (Gesmond et al., 2016) produced under the joint direction of the National Coordinator of DIHAL and the National Coordinator of Qualitative Research for the project Un chez soi d'abord. However, even with the goal to scale up HF in communities, its actual operationalisation is difficult to achieve.

In brief, there was no single model of knowledge transfer or singular means of transmission, but rather a heterogeneous series of events and interactions between social scientists (North American and European), policy makers, and practitioners that contributed to KT about HF to different cities and countries of the EU.

In Canada, social scientists also played the roles of *knowledge translator*, *training and technical assistance consultant*, and *advocate* to scale out and scale up HF. First, the leaders of At Home / Chez Soi kept in regular contact with senior staff and politicians in the Federal Government who provided funding to update them on the project and its findings (Macnaughton et al., 2017). The relationships between the social scientists from the At Home / Chez Soi project and policy-makers in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) were important for policy change at the end of the project, which we discuss later in the paper.

Second, training and technical assistance were used following the end of the At Home / Chez Soi project to scale up and scale out HF in communities across Canada. The Federal Government provided funding to the Mental Health Commission of Canada to provide a three-year training and technical assistance programme to 20 new Canadian communities. This programme consisted of education of relevant stakeholders in the HF approach, training the staff of HF in relevant practice skills, consultations related to planning and implementation, and fidelity assessment to ensure that new HF programmes adhered to HF principles. A study of six of the 20 sites showed that 14 new HF programmes were created and nine existing programmes shifted to more fully adopt the HF approach (Macnaughton et al., 2018).

Third, HF communities of interest, including provincial networks in Alberta and Ontario, were formed to use a networking approach to the expansion of HF (Worton et al., 2019). Rather than relying exclusively on experts in HF, networking uses a peer learning and mutual aid approach (Worton, 2020). Both the Alberta and Ontario networks hold annual conferences and provide training as the European Hub does.

Fourth, knowledge synthesis tools, like the Canadian National Film Board (Here at Home, 2012) and the HF toolkit (Polvere et al., 2014), were developed and used to scale up and scale out HF. The Ontario Housing First Regional Network Community of Interest has also developed policy briefs, evidence syntheses, and research snapshots, and the networks also used the media, and in particular social media, to communicate with various stakeholders. For example, the Ontario network leaders write opinion pieces for newspapers, provide interviews for television and newspapers, and use Twitter and Facebook to communicate about HF and homelessness.

In the US, the Pathways Housing First Institute plays a similar role, with biannual conferences and a website that summarises research on the HF approach and offers on-line courses and webinars to provide guidance to service providers and communities. The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) also uses conferences and a website to promote additional efforts to address homelessness for different populations who may need less support than the group targeted by Pathways to Housing. NAEH tries to work with Congress and the Administration to promote policies and set a research agenda. Its work is similar to the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) in Europe, or the Homeless Hub in Canada. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) also offers technical assistance to local continuums of care on such topics as creating coordinated entry systems and high-quality homelessness management information systems to make homeless services more effective.

Mechanisms to promote adherence to the principles and practices of evidence-based programme

When an evidence-based programme is scaled out and adapted to new settings, a central problem in implementation is 'drift' from principles and practices of the model (Greenwood et al., 2013). However, there remains a lively debate on how "the tension between programme fidelity and adaptations to local conditions be best managed to ensure that programme outcomes remain high?" (Johnson et al., 2012, p.14). HF researchers have developed tools to assess the fidelity of a programme to HF principles and practices (Gilmer et al., 2013; Stefancic et al., 2013), as previous research has shown that the greater the fidelity of a HF programme, the better the outcomes that are achieved for participants (Davidson et al., 2014; Gilmer et al., 2014; Goering et al., 2016). Social scientists can play the role of *training and technical assistance consultant* to help programmes maintain model fidelity.

A multi-country study of fidelity of HF programmes located in nine countries, namely Belgium, Canada, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and the US was completed in 2018 (Aubry et al., 2018). In the study, HF programmes followed a common research protocol that included a self-assessment of fidelity followed by focus groups and interviews with programme staff identifying facilitators and obstacles to achieving high levels of fidelity. Overall, the programmes in the multi-country study reported moderate to high levels of fidelity in their self-assessment of their programmes. In fact, the average item score across all the programmes was 3.5 out of 4, which is the cut-point between moderate and high levels of fidelity (i.e., 3.5 and higher). Programmes in five of the countries had average fidelity scores 3.5 or higher. The highest levels of fidelity across the programmes were in the domains of *Separation of Housing and Services, Service Philosophy,* and *Housing Process and Structure.* Average scores across all of the

programmes on these domains fell in the high level of fidelity range. The average scores on the other two domains, Service Array and Programme Structure and Operations reflected a moderate level of fidelity (Greenwood et al., 2018).

The most common systemic facilitator of achieving high fidelity across the programmes was the availability of partnerships with community-based services that could be accessed by programme participants. Other common systemic facilitators for HF programmes in the study were having a positive reputation in the community and landlords' cooperation with the programme and support of programme tenants. At the organisational level, the commitment to HF values by the organisation delivering the HF programme and by programme staff, and training and technical assistance contributing to strong programme teams were considered key facilitators (Greenwood et al., 2018).

The biggest systemic barrier experienced by almost all of the programmes was inadequate access to affordable housing. As well, poor links to community-based services in key areas such as employment, education, vocational training, income support, and health care were a systemic barrier to achieving a high level of fidelity. A lack of funding from government proved to be both a perceived systemic and organisational barrier affecting staffing levels and supervision and thereby lowering programme fidelity standards in relation to service array and programme structure and human resources (Greenwood et al., 2018).

Fidelity assessments of the Canadian At Home / Chez Soi HF programmes were conducted three times, once early in implementation (between nine and 13 months after the programme had started), once in later implementation (24 to 29 months after the programme had started), and once later yet after the end of the demonstration phase (five to seven years after the programme had started). The results of these assessments showed a high level of fidelity to the HF model and improvement over time (Macnaughton et al., 2015; Nelson et al., 2017). Importantly, the results of this research show that the fidelity of the original At Home / Chez Soi HF programmes was sustainable. In the study of scaling out HF programmes across Canada, Macnaughton et al. (2018) found high levels of fidelity for 10 new or revised HF programmes that were comparable to the fidelity levels of the original HF programmes in At Home / Chez Soi.

In the US, Kertesz et al. (2017) conducted a study of eight VA medical centres that offered HUD-VASH programmes in which they assessed fidelity twice, once early in implementation and again one year later. All programme participants had a housing voucher and the programmes achieved high levels of fidelity on the two housing domains of fidelity: no preconditions and rapidly obtaining permanent housing. Lower levels of fidelity were obtained on service domains of fidelity: sufficient supportive services and adoption of a modern recovery philosophy.

The Political Stream

The political context of homelessness

Politics is the third stream of Kingdon's (1995) framework. The political climate, national values, and public opinion are key components of this stream. Understanding and working within changing political contexts is important for social scientists seeking to influence homelessness policy. As we noted in the conclusion of the companion paper, the political context of homelessness policy has become more challenging since the original formulation of the policy streams framework in the 1980s. Growing economic inequality and a shortage of affordable housing has led to increases in homelessness in many countries, particularly in Canada and the US. Thus, it becomes more imperative for social scientists to partner with advocates to address the economic and housing roots and solutions to homelessness (Shinn and Khadduri, 2020a).

Lessons Learned and Roles for Social Scientists

Individual leaders can matter

Shinn (2007) pointed out that there are politicians and policy-makers who have a particular commitment to a social issue. In such cases, social scientists can play the role of *policy advisor*, serving as a consultant to policy-makers. Bogenschneider and Corbett (2010) underscore the importance of the relationship between social scientists and policy-makers for evidence-based policymaking.

In Canada, Senator Michael Kirby and Dr. Paula Goering were instrumental in the integration of HF into homelessness policy at all levels of government and its implementation across Canada. Senator Kirby launched and co-chaired a special study on mental health and mental illness for the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology between 2002 and 2005 (Kirby and Keon, 2006). The study led to the creation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) in 2007, a national organisation dedicated to the development and dissemination of innovative mental health programmes and strategies. Senator Kirby served as the first Chair of the MHCC and negotiated with the Federal Government to commit $110 million dollars for the At Home / Chez Soi Demonstration Project. He designated Dr. Paula Goering to lead the project (Goering et al., 2011; Goering et al., 2014).

Goering was a mental health services researcher whose work had helped develop community mental health services across Canada in the context of the closure of psychiatric hospitals. As a result, she was well known in the mental health sector and her reputation gave credibility to the launching of a complex pragmatic randomised controlled trial requiring the creation of 13 new HF programmes in five

Canadian cities and the development and implementation of research on them. With the participation of over 50 researchers located at 11 different universities, the project has produced over 100 articles in peer-reviewed journals. This research productivity advancing HF in Canada and internationally, along with the impact of the trial on policy discussed previously in this article, is a testament to the effectiveness of Goering's leadership. As a policy influencer, Goering possessed a wide repertoire of skills that enabled her to play many roles: *conceptualizer-innovator, researcher-evaluator, partnership-maker, policy advisor, knowledge translator, training and technical assistant consultant,* and *advocate*.

While it is helpful when the values and assumptions of social science advisors align with those of politicians, sometimes there are surprising connections between unlikely allies. Macnaughton et al. (2017) described how federal homelessness policy in Canada changed to emphasise HF during the conservative administration of Prime Minister Harper (2006-2015). Government insiders reported that there was a dissatisfaction with policy that seemed to have little to no impact on rates of homelessness across Canada, and leaders were encouraged by the positive impacts of the At Home / Chez Soi project in reducing homelessness and the cost offsets created by reductions in hospitalisation associated with the HF programme.

A similar story in the US concerns the agenda of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) under the leadership of Phillip Mangano during the President George W. Bush administration. Mangano was a government insider but also what Kingdon (1995) calls a policy entrepreneur who sought to change homelessness policy from a crisis response to a focus on ending homelessness through HF. While federal funding for the new approach lagged behind the idea, states and cities across the US developed 10-year plans using HF to end homelessness.

Mangano (2017) emphasised the primacy of research leading to this policy change. Stanhope and Dunn (2011) described this policy shift as a 'curious case', because an approach based on progressive values was adopted by a conservative political administration. The approach was successful, they argue, because of the work of Dennis Culhane whom they describe as "a researcher with close ties to policy makers and an unusual adeptness at translating research findings to policy imperatives" (Stanhope and Dunn, 2011, p.280), and the charisma of Mangano and Sam Tsemberis, the founder of Pathways HF.

They also assert that the policy shift was possible because it was able to appeal to conservatives (emphasising cost offsets, the engagement of the private rental market, and the values of choice and self-determination), liberals (emphasising social justice, evidence-based models, and housing), and the general public who were becoming increasingly concerned about more visible homelessness (empha-

sising ending and not managing homelessness), thus creating a broad coalition of support for policy change. However, the administration did not support Mangano's policy proposals with funding and the 10-year plans had, at best, a modest impact.

Shinn (2007) also points out that over time decision-makers change, which can either create new opportunities for change or can constrain progress on homelessness policy. The changing foci of US homeless policy with different administrations are an example. In particular, the most successful effort to end homelessness using HF was implemented for veterans experiencing homelessness promoted by Eric Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans' Affairs, and Shaun Donovan at HUD during the Obama administration, they succeeded in cutting homelessness among veterans nearly in half from 2009 to 2016 (Henry et al., 2021). Crucially, this was supported by research on veterans experiencing homelessness *via* the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans spearheaded by the aforementioned Dennis Culhane of the University of Pennsylvania and Centre Director Vince Kane. However, this singular focus was not enthusiastically supported by the next administration that proposed a return to the use of large shelters and housing readiness, and not surprisingly progress slowed until the recent arrival of the pandemic which immediately rendered the proposal of a return to congregate shelters obsolete.

In Europe, the role of the European Observatory on Homelessness (EOH) is an example of how social scientists can play the role of *policy advisor*, serving as a consultant to policy-makers at the national and trans-national level. Following a seminar on homelessness in the EU held in Ireland in 1985, the participants recommended that:

> The European Commission fund an association of organisations working with homeless people in the member states so that they may consult regularly on issues affecting homeless people, on methods that will secure improvements in the conditions of homeless people and advise the Commission on policy that will improve the conditions of homeless people. (National Campaign for the Homeless, 1986, p.2)

The recommendation was accepted by the Commission and led to the establishment of the Federation Europeenne d'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans Abris (FEANTSA) in 1989, and in 1991 the *European Observatory on Homelessness* with core funding coming from the Commission. Comprised of social scientists from different members states, the EOH over the past 30 years has published a range of monographs and reports on aspects of homelessness, including reviewing statistics on homelessness in Europe. In 2007 the EOH launched the *European Journal of Homelessness* which is now in its 15th Volume and

published two to three times a year. Thus, the publication and dissemination of the body of research, analysis, and commentary has contributed to shaping how policy makers and services conceptualise and respond to homelessness in Europe.

At a country level, taking as examples the experience of Ireland and Finland, where in the case of Ireland the number of households experiencing homelessness has grown very significantly over the past six to seven years (O'Sullivan et al., 2021). In contrast, in Finland the numbers have declined just as significantly (Shinn and Khadduri, 2020b), and consistency in policy, allied to stability, and longevity in terms of key personnel seem crucial to embedding evidence-based responses to homelessness (Allen et al., 2020). In the case of Finland, two individuals, one in the Housing Ministry and one in the Y-Foundation, worked collaboratively with their respective organisations over a 30-year period to advance a common agenda to end homelessness, based on a vision of providing housing for people experiencing homelessness and a determination to close congregate shelters (Fredriksson, 2018; Y-Foundation, 2017).

The continuity of key personnel, and the institutional embeddedness of both in a shared political vision and policy principles in Finland, resulted in significant reduction in homelessness, allowing for the majority of congregate facilities to close, with only one emergency shelter remaining open in Helsinki with a bed capacity of 52 in 2020 (Allen et al., 2020). The politics of homelessness in Finland are largely settled, with the focus instead on implementing and refining the policies and practices to achieve an ending of homelessness by 2027 – an absolute zero rather than a functional zero, following a review of their policies by domestic and international social scientists (Pleace et al., 2015).

In Ireland, key personnel in the Housing Ministry with responsibility for homelessness rarely had a tenure of more than two years, approaches to ending homelessness were politicised and fragmented in a way never experienced in Finland, and regular changes in the Minister with responsibility for Housing and Homelessness were not conducive to consistent policy. Alongside the incrementally expanded HF programme noted above, there was also a massive expansion of the congregate shelter system for adult only households, and the development of new congregate facilities for families introduced in 2016, known as Family Hubs (O'Sullivan, 2017), with 29 such hubs now operating across the country. The politics of homelessness in Ireland are fractious, and though considerable success is evident in securing housing for the majority of those who enter emergency accommodation and preventing households entering emergency accommodation in the first instance (O'Sullivan, 2021), the lack of policy coherence, and a specific target to end homelessness, suggests a lack of ambition and political leadership. In the Irish case, social scientists had some influence on shaping a *Homelessness Policy Statement*

in 2013 (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013) that aimed to end homelessness via a housing led-approach, but this influence had waned substantially by the second half of the 2010s, as demonstrated by the introduction of non-evidence based interventions such as the introduction and expansion of congregate facilities for families experiencing homelessness (O'Sullivan, 2017).

In the case of France, the role of the aforementioned DIHAL was important in providing *training and technical assistance* and creating a community of practice through the creation of training tools and other common tools. It also facilitated the involvement of professionals across sites, supported the exchange of practices, and created a network of mutual support (Laval and Estecahandy, 2019). In addition, DIHAL was in a position to take advantage of every legislative and political 'window of opportunity' available to embed HF in legislation on a long-term basis. For example, it is in the context of the launch of the 'prevention and fight against poverty' strategy (2018-2022) that DIHAL proposed to implement HF for youth (Gaetz, 2014). The proposal was adopted because it was a concrete solution of 'placing a key in one's hand'. In the case of Europe, leadership matters, perhaps less so in terms of 'big personalities' as in the case of North America, but rather individuals in public and civil society organisations embedded often in corporatist type structures that have driven HF.

Government is not monolithic

In fact, there are several levels of government and several different government departments that may have different missions and approaches. Sometimes these levels of government or agencies work at cross purposes. For example, the US Interagency Council on Homelessness attempts to coordinate policy across federal departments, but most resources are distributed by HUD to local communities, which set priorities for the use of funds. A large portion of homeless services are delivered by religious organisations and other NGOs with different value systems, so local administrators are often beholden to these groups.

HUD offers *training and technical assistance* to communities who apply for it, and tries to influence communities by changing incremental funding on the basis of their adherence to priorities HUD sets. The resulting patchwork of jurisdictions has led to far less coherent policy than in France. In many communities, 'Housing First' means little more than removing barriers to entry, and HUD uses the term to describe short-term rental subsidies as well as supportive housing programmes with low fidelity to the original model. The Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) is a notable exception, where leadership and funding from the top nearly halved homelessness among military veterans, as described above.

Playing the role of *partnership-maker,* social scientists can work to align policy from different levels, sectors, and agencies. In the training and technical assistance programme to expand HF following At Home / Chez Soi, Tsemberis typically began the programme by educating the whole community about HF. Following this, he convened a smaller group to plan a HF programme. While the types of partners varied from community to community, there were typically partners from multiple sectors, including housing, mental health, non-profit service providers, philanthropic organisations, and advocates, among others. In addition to facilitating the creation of new HF programmes, this initiative also had systems level impacts on policy and led to increased coordination and collaboration among partners from different sectors (Nelson et al., 2019).

Policy Windows and Policy Entrepreneurs

When the stars align

When the identified problem, policy, and optimal political conditions converge, there are windows of opportunity for change, a fourth dimension of the framework. Key lessons here are that timing matters; crises present opportunities for policy change; and that persistence is important.

Lessons Learned and Roles for Social Scientists

Timing matters

The At Home / Chez Soi project underscores the importance of timing for creating change. On the front end of the project, Michael Kirby, the first Chair of the brand new Mental Health Commission of Canada, received a phone call in 2008 from a senior member of the Federal Government about what could be done about homelessness. The concern was the visibility of homelessness in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver that would be on display for the world to see during the upcoming 2010 Winter Olympics. As a policy entrepreneur, Kirby proposed and was able to secure $110 million in funding for the At Home/Chez Soi multi-site project. Playing the role of *conceptualizer-innovator,* Paula Goering worked with Kirby to frame the project as an evaluation of the HF approach for people experiencing homelessness with mental illness (Macnaughton et al., 2013).

Timing was also important on the tail end of the project. The Federal Government's Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS) that provided funding to communities across Canada to address homelessness was up for renewal in 2014. The renewal date coincided with the end of At Home / Chez Soi, and the positive impacts of the HF

programmes led to a repurposing of HPS (Macnaughton et al., 2017). Going forward, HPS was to devote the majority of its funding to HF programmes – a major shift in policy. The multiple roles of *researcher-evaluator*, *knowledge translator*, and *policy advisor* were all important for influencing this shift.

Crises present an opportunity for change

The COVID-19 pandemic poses high risks to people experiencing homelessness, particularly for those individuals staying in shelters. The congregate nature of shelters with their shared living space, crowding, unsanitary conditions, and high turnover contribute to making it an environment that is conducive for the spreading of the virus (Perri et al., 2020). In addition, people experiencing long-term or entrenched homelessness are at higher risk of experiencing severe symptoms, being hospitalised, and dying because of the high prevalence of chronic health conditions in the population that include heart disease, respiratory conditions, liver disease, and high rates of smoking (Alridge et al., 2018).

Research conducted to date on testing shelter residents for COVID-19 infections has shown variable rates depending on the shelter. Mosites et al. (2020) conducted universal testing in shelters in five American cities and found the rate of infection to vary from a low of 4% for residents in two shelters in Atlanta to a high of 66% for a shelter in San Francisco. A consequence of the pandemic has been the creation of encampments across the US and Canada as people who are homeless attempt to avoid staying in shelters because of the fear of being infected (Stueck, 2020).

In the context of the pandemic, researchers and advocates are calling for governments to move from temporary solutions of reducing crowding in shelters, creating isolation centres, and housing individuals in hotels to addressing homelessness on a more permanent basis by scaling up HF programmes and moving individuals into permanent housing (Latimer et al., 2020; Nelson and Aubry, 2020). Recognising the opportunity for governments needing to address homelessness in the midst of the pandemic crisis, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness launched an advocacy campaign called 'Recovery for All' a set of policy initiatives to address homelessness (Pomeroy, 2020). These range from creating more and larger rent supplements, expanding the supply of affordable housing, and strengthening homeless prevention.

In response to the highly visible vulnerabilities of the homeless population in the context of the pandemic and the calls for injecting resources toward more permanent solutions to homelessness, the Canadian Federal Government launched the Rapid Housing Initiative entailing an immediate investment of $1 billion intended to create 3000 new permanent affordable housing units in cities across the country

(Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2020). This new initiative represents a front loading of resources committed in Canada's National Housing Strategy (Canada Mortage and Housing, 2017).

In the case of the UK, there was some optimism in the homelessness sector that the crisis could result in "making a decisive break away from communal and inappropriate forms of homelessness provision" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020, p.17), and in the case of Australia it has been argued that "COVID-19 has shown that governments can act to address homelessness, even if only temporarily, and to do so requires a framing of the problem that locates its source in housing and social policy failure, and not in the individuals to whom society fails to provide access to adequate affordable housing" (Parsell et al., 2020, pp.10-11).

Across Europe, Pleace et al. (2021) have shown that COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on some people experiencing homelessness, but has also seen some European countries put a new level of resources and political will into preventing new homelessness and attempts to end street-based homelessness.

Persistence is important

While it is important for policy change agents to recognise and take advantage of windows, timing and crises are not the only factors that are important for change. It is equally important to have a long-term vision, have prolonged engagement in the issue, and be persistent in pushing for change. The At Home / Chez Soi project and its impacts on policy and practice occurred over a 10-year period (Nelson et al., 2020). It is important to have not just a goal but a plan and a timeline to reach that goal, and for communities/municipalities/states that aspire to end homelessness, there must also be identified resources and key individuals that can be accountable for the outcomes of the plan. Social scientists can play the role of *advocate* for evidence-based policy and *partnership-maker* to engage advocates, various stakeholders, and people with lived experience in the quest to influence policy to end homelessness.

In 1987, which was the 'International Year of the Homeless', the Finnish Government announced its first plans to end homelessness in Finland. At that point, it was estimated that Finland had some 20000 people experiencing homelessness and one of the most crucial policy decisions taken was to start enumerating and estimating that population via an annual survey on the extent of homelessness first conducted in 1987 (Karkkainen, 1996). Although these data have some limitations (Benjaminsen et al., 2020), they nonetheless have provided a consistent measurement of homelessness for over 30 years. The data show a constant reduction in the numbers experiencing homelessness over this period, and as noted above, the aim is to have 'absolute zero' people experiencing homelessness by 2027, 40 years after

the initial plan was launched. Crucial to reducing homelessness in Finland was the establishment of the Y Foundation in 1985, and what was, in effect, the creation of a dedicated supply of social housing targeted towards adult-only households experiencing homelessness. The example of Finland shows conclusively that ending homelessness is possible, but even with clear ambition, stability of key personnel, and a dedicated stream of housing, it takes time.

Policy Change

Finally, we consider some other examples of policy changes that have been realised in Europe, Canada, and the US. In the case of Norway, the numbers experiencing homelessness declined significantly between 2012 and 2016, from 6 259 individuals to 3 909 and is attributed to a 'long-term investment in social housing policy' (Dyb, 2017). Significantly this resulted from policy makers re-conceptualisation of homelessness as a housing issue rather than as a moral or medical issue (Dyb, 2020). The reconceptualisation of homelessness as a housing issue coincided with the critique of the Swedish staircase model by the sociologist Ingrid Sahlin (2007) and this critique was drawn on by the Norwegians when formulating their strategy. This development of a Housing-led approach to homelessness was facilitated by surveying those experiencing homelessness, commencing in 1996 and every four years thereafter. The survey was initially borrowed from the Swedish survey of those experiencing homelessness, but now has broadened from 13 to 31 items, covering emerging topics such as women's experience of homelessness.

As we noted earlier, the relationships that were formed between the social scientists from At Home / Chez Soi and policy-makers in the PMO in Canada were important for policy change at the end of the project. Following the successful demonstration of the programme's effectiveness in ending homelessness and resulting cost-savings for acute care services, national government policy was changed and mandated that as of 2015, 65% of federal funding allocated to homeless programmes in Canada's largest 10 cities must be invested to develop HF programmes (Macnaughton et al., 2017). Thus, the Federal Government explicitly adopted HF as its approach to homelessness.

This has been a shift in federal policy in recent years. Prior to 2015, communities were given considerable discretion in how they used federal homelessness funding. Local community entities and community advisory boards decided annually how to use federal funding. The result was a patchwork of services that included shelters, transitional housing, and other initiatives, but rarely evidence-based programmes like HF. The Harper Government reported dissatisfaction with the federal HPS programme that seemed to do little to reduce homelessness in Canada.

The results of the At Home / Chez Soi project, Alberta's success in reducing homelessness using HF as its centrepiece, and the adoption of HF under the Bush administration in the US catalysed this shift in policy.

As was noted earlier, the Federal Government also provided the Mental Health Commission of Canada three years of funding for *training and technical assistance* in HF to 20 new communities that led to the creation of more HF programmes across Canada. Continued funding was provided after the initial three years to reach even more communities, as the training and technical assistance programme shifted from MHCC to CAEH.

The HUD-VASH programme for veterans experiencing homelessness is the largest HF initiative and the best example of scaling out in the US. It began in 2008, during the Obama administration, when a troubling report from the annual national Point in Time (PIT) count estimated that there were approximately 75 000 veterans in the US experiencing homelessness. This resulted in an unprecedented interdepartmental collaboration and resource allocation for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and HUD with the aim of ending homelessness among veterans by 2015.

This initiative, called HUD/VASH (the SH stands for supportive housing) provided ongoing rental assistance through Section 8 or Housing Choice vouchers that hold rental expenses to 30% of income, and support services through the VA. In its first two years, some 30 000 vouchers were issued and funding for support services was made available. Yet, in the following year the annual PIT count did not show a decrease in homelessness among veterans. In 2010, the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans decided to implement the Pathways HF approach for HUD-VASH.

At the outset, the National Center selected 14 cities with the largest number of veterans experiencing homelessness. The VA Medical Centers in each city implemented the HUD-VASH programmes and were responsible for identifying veterans who had long histories of homelessness and had complex needs. Results of the 14-city HF initiative showed improved outreach to veterans with long histories of homelessness, housing retention rates between 84% and 92%, and reduced use of costly inpatient hospitalisations. By 2013, the PIT count showed an 8% decline from 2012, and a 24% decline from 2010. By 2014, there were reports of cities reaching zero for homeless veterans (Padgett et al., 2016).

Building on these successes, the VA announced in 2014 that HF, as developed by Pathways, was the official policy and programme approach for all HUD/VASH programmes. Given this directive for large-scale system change, the VA expanded its partnership with Pathways to help train VA staff to implement and effectively operate the model in an additional 25 cities and eventually across all 135 VA Medical

Centers (VAMC). A VA report on cost savings related to HUD-VASH showed that veterans in the programme had substantially reduced their use of medical and behavioural health services and the decline in inpatient care was "especially steep" (Byrne et al., 2014, p.5).

The VA also instituted short-term rental subsidies for households deemed not to need ongoing supportive services, and a prevention programme, whereby every veteran who came to the VA for medical services was screened for housing instability and referred to services. In 2014, the Interagency Council on Homelessness called on cities to participate in a 'mayor's challenge' to end homelessness among veterans. These combined efforts reduced the PIT count of veterans experiencing homelessness by 47% from 2010 to 2016 at the end of the Obama administration, and another 3% thereafter (Henry et al., 2020). The campaign has ended homelessness for veterans in 73 cities across the US.

Conclusion

In brief, we argue that social scientists can play multiple roles in bringing evidence to bear on policy responses to homelessness. Kingdon's (1995) policy streams framework provides a useful lens for understanding entry points for social scientists into the policy process. In the policy stream, social scientists can play the roles of knowledge translator and provide training and technical assistance to translate research into policy and to help ensure that programmes maintain fidelity to the original research model.

In the political stream, social scientists can provide leadership and can be partnership-makers with policy and practice stakeholders who are motivated to base policy on evidence. Regarding policy windows, both timing and persistence matter. Social scientists can act as advocates and educators to take advantage of openings for change, as well working with partners over the long-term. While policy change is a messy business, social scientists can play multiple roles and use the many tools that they possess to help policy become more evidence-based in the quest to end and prevent homelessness.

Our two papers show how Kingdon's (1995) policy stream approach is relevant to homelessness policy. The problem stream focuses on how homelessness is framed; the policy stream addresses evidence-based solutions to homelessness; and the political stream draws attention to the complex context in which policy is formulated and enacted. Our review suggests that social scientists are most influential in defining the problem and contributing evidence-based interventions in the

policy streams. However, these impactful contributions to the problem and policy streams have not been fully embraced in the political stream in incorporating evidence into policy.

Challenges in the political stream present stubborn obstacles to achieving transformative policy change. Some jurisdictions that use a top-down approach to policy, such as France, or adopt a steadfast commitment to ending homelessness, like Finland or the US HUD-VASH programme, have been successful in effectively influencing the political stream. However, in other contexts, the changing political context and a regression to old policies that have been shown to be ineffective have been an impediment to change. After Obama's success with HUD-VASH, Trump returned homelessness policy to a punitive approach that blames the victim and emphasises "treatment first". Canada made some progress with the Harper Federal Government in repurposing the Homelessness Partnering programme to emphasise HF (Macnaughton et al., 2017), but the Trudeau successor government abandoned the language of HF and proposed only a 50% reduction in long-term homelessness over 10 years. The momentum and focus on evidence-based solutions that had been gained with the At Home / Chez Soi research seems to have dissipated over the last few years.

Perhaps a factor in the lack of success in leveraging the political stream is due to social scientists' narrow focus on ideas and evidence and a reluctance to engage in knowledge mobilisation and advocacy. The need to inform and collaborate with political advocates becomes even more important in a context of rising poverty and economic inequality.

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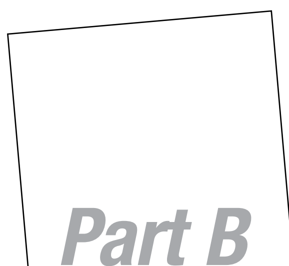
Research Note



Part B

Parklife: Stories and Spaces in Lockdown

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Introduction

The Coronavirus Act received Royal Assent on 26 March 2020 placing all UK residents into a legally enforced 'stay at home' order which would last until 23 June. When eventually lifted, it was replaced by waves of localised lockdowns and periods when social distancing restrictions were relaxed and tightened, before two further nationwide lockdowns on 5 November 2020 and 6 January 2021. In total, 'stay at home' orders were in place in England for 92 days in 2020, 99 days in Wales, 68 days in Scotland, and 50 days in Northern Ireland (Tatlow et al., 2021). This period of British history will no doubt receive immense academic scrutiny. What is less well-known (until now) is what was happening at a circle of six benches in an innocuous urban park in East Ham, East London.

The Coronavirus Act (2020) permitted one hour of outdoor daily exercise. At a stroke, the demographics of inner-city parks, like my own, shifted massively. Almost overnight the professional classes became home-workers. Many who had benefitted from short commutes to the City of London or Canary Wharf from the relatively cheaper housing prices in the East End of London, faced months of actually 'living' in these neighbourhoods. As community centres, pubs, and shops closed, urban parks experienced the greatest increase in use of any public space (Eadson et al., 2020). "At a time when communities were under stress and nobody knew how serious the pandemic was going to become, parks provided a lifeline and a breathing space" (Eadson et al., 2020, p.50).

A new cohort began to partake in what the British band *Blur* described as *parklife.* Blur's hit single conjures up the secret life of city parks. *Parklife* is a place to suspend social norms: public sunbathing, loud music, playing with dogs. In an interview explaining the origins of their 1994 hit, band member Coxon said, "it wasn't about the working class, it was about the *park class*: dustbin men, pigeons, joggers – things we saw every day" (Sullivan, 2012). My local park became ripe with potential to observe, in Hubbard and Lyon's (2018) terms, embodied encounters which are essentially unmediated; a place with wonderful potential for 'mis-meet-

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ings' which make cities full of risk and liveliness (Stevens, 2007). Despite the middle-class incursion, I noticed the former regular *park class* of street drinkers retained a distinct space, occupying six benches in a circle around a memorial cenotaph. How had the original *park class* managed this? What was happening at the benches and what stories could those there share about life in lockdown? This small research project was born to discover insights into homelessness and belonging, stories and identity, and the attraction of *parklife.*

A quiet day at the circle of benches

G ‘claiming space’ at this bench more than four times a week

Method

After months of casual observation during the first and second lockdowns, I began a formal small-scale research project. I spent at least one afternoon every week at the six-bench circle, often more frequently. At first, I simply observed interactions there and chatted to people. I noted the socio-spatial regulation of the area. I recognised that the physical spaces for *parklife* vitally ‘set the stage’ for social interactions, and later investigated their different meanings to the variety of cultures using the same space – “the litter, lights, trees, wind, buildings, pavements, billboards, cars, kerbs, dogs, drains and so on” (Amin and Thrift, 2002, p.292). The park’s geography shaped both the interactions I observed and my personal sociological imagination as I moved into them. Mobilities matter too (Sheller and Urry, 2006). I noted the time people spent in different spaces and the speed at which they moved through them.

Later, when I had become a familiar figure, and formal research agreements were in place, I began to interview those who came over to talk to me, building a picture of what this place meant to the regular bench sitters. This project was happening in a new context for me, but I already knew many of my participants. For the past seven years I have volunteered in local grass-roots projects addressing homelessness and food poverty. More recently, through a methodology of walking interviews,

I had begun to interrogate what keeps people street-sleeping and what it takes to transition into settled accommodation and a new identity (Mann, 2019). In terms of Covid protocols, ethnography does not sit well with social distancing. Thus, I adapted my approach and undertook a biographical *sitting* method rather than a walking one. I was outside once again with all the benefits of an intentionally embodied interaction, drawing attention to the physicality of the location. This method was similarly time-intensive to enable genuine participation in the co-production of knowledge and grounded in a narratological epistemology. Knowing a few of the 'locals' facilitated a snowballing method, whereby I was introduced to others with stories to tell. It seemed that my willingness to listen was appreciated. I did not approach potential participants. My bench conversations were directed by the participant and, once we got past the processes of research consent, felt genuinely like informal chats about life. The data produced was transcribed and thematically appraised.

Undoubtedly, being a familiar face within local advocacy projects helped foster trust with the *parklife* participants. A similar ethnographic approach is adopted by Moran and Atherton (2020) who describe themselves as 'participant observers' within homeless communities in Chester. They collect accounts of individual life courses, including the hopes and disappointments of a cohort they came to know well. Moran and Atherton found that with such a long-term involvement with these communities they became passive actors in the 'practice stories' they collected over five years. Their research frames the narratives they collected in a series of philosophical reflections proposing a philosophical exploration of homelessness as the ontological state of 'being without'. There are even greater similarities between my paper and Atherton's earlier study (2016) of a group of people experiencing homelessness who gathered regularly at 'The Cross' – a cluster of benches outside St. Peter's Church in Chester. Her findings on social disgust chime with the practices of social exclusion and invisibility I witnessed in my own local park. Although my research project is small, its findings confer with many others from a rich field, including that of Padgett (2007) and Waldron (1991; 2000) who both suggest that the experience of acute homelessness disrupts the secure basis for identity construction. In each of these studies, 'being without' is not only an experience of the lack of basic material provisions, such as having shelter, a place to wash, and somewhere to prepare meals, but it is also a lack of "meaningful agency; without being able to participate in society… without identity or prospects; without 'ways of being' that we (the housed) routinely take for granted… and significantly without the 'right to be'"(Moran and Atherton, 2020, pp.2-3). These deficits combine to undermine an individual's 'ontological security' (Padget, 2007). This goes

someway to explain the pull of communal street culture in familiar spaces which take on some of the attributes of ‘home’. These existing studies have helped situate my own investigation into *parklife.*

I appreciate Jones’ paradox of *everyday* and *exceptional* in researching street life (Jones et al., 2008). Six months of fieldwork offered the opportunity to study huge numbers of everyday interactions and some exceptional ones. Exceptional moments are “numerically rare, but often provide illumination of more mundane phenomena, by throwing the latter into sharp relief and by providing important information based on how social actors respond to them” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.169). This is a study of everyday life in an exceptional time; a snapshot of *parklife* which may well have been replicated internationally, but which confines its scope to the particularity of a place and the stories of a certain group of ‘the park class’.

Twelve participants, nine men and three women, took part in the *parklife* project. Two of the women had their children with them. All 12 had experienced homelessness in the last 18 months according to the UK Government’s definition (Gov.UK, 2021), which includes:

- Rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping on the street);
- Houselessness (with a place to sleep but temporary, in institutions or a shelter);
- Living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence, or staying with family and friends known as ‘sofa surfing’); and/or
- Living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding).

Four were in the ‘roofless’ category for some of the time during the project. Of these, three had spent some months in hotel accommodation as part of the *Everyone In* pandemic response in London, which saw 40 000 people affected by homelessness offered immediate, temporary accommodation in hotels and ‘Bed and Breakfasts’. One of the participants had refused to engage in the scheme and remained roofless or ‘sofa surfing’ for the duration of the project. Of the reminder, six of the group were ‘houseless’ for most of the project and living in temporary hostel accommodation. Another two were currently living in insecure housing, for example one woman and her child were living with her grandparents and sister in a two bedroomed flat. Alongside the formal participants of this project were a wider group of mainly ‘street drinkers’ whose housing classification I did not come to know; the majority of whom appeared to be migrant workers who came to the park after their shifts. This group did not give formal consent to participate but had

stories to share, which due to ethical guidelines cannot be included here. Nine of the 12 participants reportedly spent at least part of everyday (defined as more than five times a week) at the park. The rest spent at least part of more than one day a week there. Most were recurrent contributors to this project, meeting me repeatedly, and adding new chapters to their stories or sometimes just passing time and watching people use the park with me.

Importantly, the park bench users, who are the focus of this study, represent a small subset of people experiencing homelessness in the UK. This cohort often have complex needs, including problematic substance use and/or mental illness, alongside often persistent or recurrent experiences of homelessness. Their visibility results in the public and media treating this form of homelessness as representative of all forms of homelessness, which is far from the case.

Parklife, Stories, and Identities

My methodological decision to listen to stories was quickly confirmed as an appropriate way to enter *parklife*. I soon learned that stories were currency. Many people were introduced to me as 'having a good story to tell'. Over the months, some stories were repeated, and I noticed how aspects of them were rehearsed – the repetition of exact phrases, and even pauses, especially in stories intended to be humorous. Some at the benches had previously heard the stories I was being told. They would interject to complete another's sentences and were often corrected "I'm telling this. Who's telling this story?" Telling a good story was a status marker.

The narratives had two prevalent themes: stories of victimisation and heroism. Stories of battling 'the system' were expected. I have heard many of these accounts in my voluntary work. Here, I was struck by the personalisation of systems and governmental departments – 'the social', 'the housing' – and how the narratives inferred the storyteller was pitched against a personified adversary, one which both knew and cared about aspects of their life and was bent on denigrating them:

> "Don't tell the social I'm here"
>
> "They didn't win. I got that claim"
>
> "Four and half years they had me"

Encounters with statutory systems seemed to frame many of the life-stories I was told. Stories of other conflicts were abundant too and while I did not witness a single act of violence during my fieldwork, I did meet people with noticeable injuries which they explained to me had come from fights. There was an acceptance of violence

as part of their everyday life. These incidents were not usually defined under the 'victimhood' category but usually shrugged off as 'one of those things' or not explained at all.

Almost as prevalent as the victimisation narratives were the heroic ones. I heard of how individuals had 'saved the life' of others by preventing or joining in fights, lending money, and sharing accommodation. These stories were usually told in groups, "Remember that time when I saved his life…." Or where the recipient could be pointed out, "See him, I saved his life…."

The stories seemed 'larger than life' and were often retold to me as others arrived in the group. It reminded me of the self-authoring narratives theorised by Ricoeur (1984; 1985; 1988). The active interpretation of the narratives evidenced how the participants organised their sense of time – these were the important and framing events of their lives, and they could be cast and recast in ways which helped them understand themselves. Ricoeur's 'emplotment' was at work as people drew together disparate events and created meaning and identity from them – as people who took on systems, who won against the odds, who helped each other. This narration may not have been wildly accurate, but importantly, as Ricoeur identifies, the narratives imply autonomous acts of moral responsibility, which casts the individual, at the point at which they tell the story with opportunity and potential for an 'inchoate narrativity' – if they were heroes or over-comers once, they might well be that again. This is Ricoeur's 'semantics of action', whereby actions and their consequences are woven into stories which are rich with meaning and provide worldviews which help situate us. Ricoeur himself noted the power of hero and princess stories (I did not encounter the latter at the benches) and make up a sense of self that is illusory. However embellished these tales may be, they are used to provide a sense of subjectivity. The ability stories have for 'emplotment' can shift the subject's actions in the future. This was something I had seen for myself in previous walking interview's whereby Dean retold his five-year journey of moving from street sleeping to settled accommodation and integration into wider society through becoming a 'tea angel' – a volunteer in a charity which gave him purpose, belonging, and the pull of a new identity (Mann, 2019).

Alongside the victim and hero stories were others of loss and bereavement. There was a quietness to these, and they were usually told to me on my own. These stories were often prefaced with "Do you remember…" or "You know… (this person)?". It was clear that the loss might only be shared if I knew who they were speaking about. I heard stories of three deaths in the duration this project – of people's close friends, all of whom seemed to have died from the long-term health effects of problematic substance use. These stories seemed less rehearsed, and I could not tell how they were being incorporated into any larger system of meaning. They were

sad stories. I did not experience them being cast in the victimisation narratives. The deaths were not explained in that way, but simply as sad losses. The context of these deaths needs to be situated in the fact that homelessness and street life too often have fatal consequences. The UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated that 726 people experiencing homelessness died in England and Wales in 2018. This is a 22% year-to-year increase and the highest since estimates began in 2013. Data suggests that most deaths among people experiencing homelessness were caused by drug related poisoning, suicide, and alcohol-specific deaths (Aldridge, 2019).

There were many other stories gathered from the six benches. A few were childhood and teenage recollections, sometimes prompted by the presence of children among the group. But the prized stories were the ones about taking on systems, and of being a 'face', a known figure who resolved other's problems and kept things in order. Who knew the park had so many sheriffs?

Claiming and Maintaining Space

Among its claims for the enormous contribution urban parks made to wellbeing during lockdown, the 'Parks for People Report' (2020) found some felt their local green spaces had become overcrowded. Some respondents reported feeling their park was characterised by incidents of antisocial behaviour such as outdoor drinking and drug-taking and said that their access to the park was limited by fear of it. I felt this deserved further interrogation. Since its inception, the sociology of deviance has pointed out that it is the social status of the drug user, rather than the threat posed by any drug, which leads to its use being labelled as deviant (Becker, 1955). Attitudes to 'outdoor drinking' are ultimately contextual. Public fears of 'outdoor drinking' in parks coexisted with widespread calls for pub gardens to be allowed to reopen, and an increase in the private consumption of alcohol among single adult households, households with three or more adults, and students (Stevely et al., 2021). More than one in three adults in the UK increased the amount they drank during the first lockdown and the greatest indicator of increased alcohol consumption was stress and enforced isolation (Sallie et al., 2020). People with no access to private space, or living in very crowded and chaotic environments, undoubtedly experienced more stress during the 'stay at home' order. Fears of 'public drinking' are therefore complex and most likely fears of aggression and the othering and pathologising of street cultures. I became interested in the relationship between deviance and claiming space in parks.

Accessing green space is complex and may even bring social groups into contest. There is much evidence that lower socioeconomic groups have access to fewer acres of parks per person, and that that these are of lower quality with poorer maintenance and safety than privileged groups (Rigolon, 2016). In Great Britain, one in eight households (12%) had no access to a private or shared garden during the coronavirus lockdown. Regional and ethnic differences are also relevant. In London, more than one in five households (21%), have no private or shared garden; easily the highest percentage of any region in Great Britain. Moreover, in England, 37% of Black people have no access to outdoor space at home, whether it be a private or shared garden, a patio, or a balcony, compared with 10% for White populations (ONS, 2020). Furthermore, proximity to green space does not always equate with access. ONS data suggests that more than a quarter of people (28%) in Great Britain live within a five-minute walk (300m as the crow flies) of a public park, while 72% live fewer than 15 minutes away (900m) (ONS 2020). Jones et al. (2009) discovered that while British people living in more deprived areas lived closer to green spaces, they reported having poorer access to parks, felt less safe using them, and therefore visited parks less frequently than other groups. Holland (2021) suggests that some groups dominate the use of parks and keep its benefits to themselves. This can involve claiming space through harassment. Self-exclusion also happens when groups fear other's anti-social behaviour, such as adults avoiding parks they feel to be dominated by young people. In this, parks can amplify social divisions and hierarchies.

I wondered if the competition for space in urban parks would exacerbate the tendency to label and marginalise those at the six benches in my own, or whether the social changes brought about by the pandemic might create new bonds of social cohesion. Before the pandemic hit, Dobson et al. (2019) made an optimistic proposal in their report *Space to Thrive*:

> Parks and green spaces can create opportunities for social interaction, inclusion and cohesion, which may be particularly valuable for marginalised groups. (Dobson et al., 2019, p.20)

Given the issues around contestation of space, I investigated social interactions in the park between the *parklife* regulars, and between this cohort and other users. The data divided into several categories. Firstly, there was the outright avoidance of the group by other park users. Paths criss-crossed the circle of six benches, but these were rarely used by other park visitors. The circle of benches acted as a shibboleth. As well as circumventing the physical space, other avoidance techniques included not looking in the direction of the benches, passing by quickly, and avoiding eye contact. These were very apparent to me but not commented on by any of the bench participants. Despite this, I believe that their behaviour at times

might be best understood as a reaction to practices of social marginalisation, and most particularly that of social invisibility, which is a persistent, stigmatising, and dehumanising phenomenon affecting people who experience homelessness and other severe deprivations. There has been much written about social invisibility (Omerov et al., 2020) and how it contributes to the potentially fatal effects of exclusion through increasing the likelihood of unnatural death (Slockers et al., 2018). I witnessed ostracising practices many times in the park. Perhaps the very act of gathering as a loosely defined group countered this to some extent? It is much harder to ignore a group of a dozen or so people. I wondered if the loud greetings among the group, which seemed exaggerated at times, and the frequently shirtless chests of the men, went some way to counter feelings of invisibility.

Alongside the active avoidance of interactions, much of what I observed in the park might be described as a separate but calm co-existence as park bench regulars and the newer visitors carved out their own spaces and practices alongside each other. I was aware that the spaces in the park held different meanings for its users and that this was especially noticeable in the length of time people spent in given areas and how quickly they passed through others. For many of my afternoons in the park, the six benches were fairly quiet places with people scattered, often equidistantly, frequently alone, or in pairs. Dramaturgically speaking, it was often a place for 'backstage' relaxation. People experiencing homelessness may not have the physical boundaries between the front and backstage settings Goffman (1959) describes. Their performance of identity may take place in the same physical and often public spaces. The boundaries between being 'front stage' or not, therefore relies on other means of separation, such as marked differences in *habitus*, to enable an individual to rest from the performance of their identity. This adds to the experience of stress and is just one of many less-considered ways that people experiencing homelessness are excluded from "ways of being" that people with adequate housing routinely take for granted (Moran and Atherton 2020, p.2-3). The lack of the ability to withdraw at will into a private 'backstage' site is another example of how people experiencing street homelessness significantly live without the 'right to be' (Waldron, 1991; 2000; Moran and Atherton, 2020).

The ability to 'get away from it all' may well rely on strong social cues prohibiting interaction, or of course, through inebriation. I saw how thresholds for 'backstage' and fully 'front stage' performances of identity were maintained through social cues which invited or prohibited interaction, and these were usually respected. Much of the time at the park seemed to be spent visiting others' benches and retreating again to one which seemed to serve as a 'home base'. Music and rowdiness seemed to work as an invitation to gather, as did the new arrival of friends. The usual social cues of eye contact avoidance seemed to maintain space for individuals at other times. There was some sleeping and private drinking, but smoking seemed

to be the usual way to fill quieter times. I followed these cues for space and waited for people who recognised me to come over and start chatting and allowed them to call others over in a loose snowballing technique to find participants willing to share a story and a bench with me.

The third category of encounters occurred when the group made their presence felt through, it seemed, intentional displays of deviant behaviour, primarily rowdiness, which appeared to be used to claim and maintain space within the park. Although infrequent, these disturbances forced other park-uses into interactions with those on the six benches – by their noise or the way they dominated space there. Much of what I witnessed at these times reminded me of Downes and Rock's "flowering of expressive deviance" (2003, p.178). Public drunkenness, appearing to teeter on outbreak of a fight or other forms of rowdiness received the expected informal sanctions from other park users. I did not witness any formal sanctions, nor did anyone approach the group to complain about their behaviour. Being bare-chested was another expression of deviance, as were the sporadic loud shouts across the benches and occasional bursts of dance. What was clear, however, was that deviant behaviour seemed to be expected from the group, who were largely avoided by other park users, even when everything was very quiet. I witnessed other park visitors strike up interactions and conversations between themselves: at the park gates, in the playground, at the tennis courts, or as they passed each other on the paths. It was noticeable that the group at the benches were left, almost entirely, to interact only with each other (and sometimes, me). And yet there were good conversations to be had there. This confirmed that being identified as "one of the homeless" (as the group were described to me by an onlooker who enquired about my research) or as a 'street drinker' is indeed a *master trait*, just as Becker described (1963, p.32). Other traits such as being a mother, a worker relaxing after a shift, or a local seeking company, were clearly auxiliary traits. Even sitting quietly alone did not remove the master trait identity. I noticed this most profoundly in the behaviour of the two women participants who brought their children to the benches quite regularly (one was there with her son for part of every day). She rarely took her son to the playground and I did not see her interact with any of the many other parents there. Instead, she stayed at the benches and limited her interactions to that group. Homogenising, excluding, and labelling people who experience homelessness, or are otherwise part of street culture, was very noticeable to me, although not once commented on by the participants themselves.

Everyone In and Importance of Particular Place

At the beginning of the pandemic, the UK Government charged local authorities with getting *Everyone In* and initially committed £3.2 million to this. This saw nearly 15000 people experiencing street homelessness housed in emergency accommodation such as hotels (Gov.UK, 2020). More recently the UK Government announced a further £105 million in dedicated funding for emergency accommodation for people at risk of people experiencing street homelessness, and support to find alternative housing, under a taskforce led by Dame Louise Casey. The national picture was one of resolve and described as an 'extraordinary opportunity' to tackle the crisis in homelessness:

> However this terrible crisis has also given us an extraordinary opportunity to build on the success of bringing 'everyone in' and to try to make sure they don't go back to the streets. (Dame Louise Casey, Gov.UK, 2021)

At my local park, three of the four *parklife* participants who had been roofless at the start of the pandemic were moved into accommodation as part of *Everyone In*. One man had decided not to engage with the effort and spent the whole of lockdown in a mixture of homelessness states – sofa surfing and street-based homelessness, sometimes in the park itself. This young man in his 30s had been homeless since he was 16 years old. It was difficult to tell why he had not engaged with the national programme. It was similarly hard to keep track of how and where people were being accommodated during lockdown. One participant told me about the extreme restrictions in place in their hostel where they had to comply with a curfew and had very limited social interaction. Another was relieved to be offered somewhere away from the streets and saw this as an opportunity. I learnt that some of the park regulars had travelled across one or more London boroughs to continue their *parklife* during the *Everyone In* months. The benches seemed to be more than a replacement for accommodation. Were they providing something more akin to 'home'?

'What happens here?' became a useful opening question for my fieldwork. Invariably the theme of meeting and 'being with' emerged as the most important function of the six benches. It was a place of belonging: 'meeting', 'seeing who's out', and 'banter'. It was also a place of escape: 'getting away', 'can't be stuck indoors', and 'clears my head'. It was a place to return to see the same faces daily and sometimes 'things happened'. Much of this fits with prominent themes from the phenomenology of place first codified by Relph (1976; 1996; 2000). Relph states that spaces should be explored in terms of how people experience them. The process of memories and repeated encounters build a social form of place identity – the identity of groups *with* places. Relph's phenomenological approach describes why a particular place is special and can be used to *prescribe,* through practices of place-making, ways to provide spaces which foster a sense of belonging, and so turn spaces into

places. His original work (1976) and later critical reflections (1996; 2000) throw light on much of the data around the particularity of place and the draw of the six benches. The persistent pull to gather there is based perhaps on the way in which this familiar place provides a thread of continuity in lives which are otherwise chaotic. Relph refers to the "persistent sameness and unity which allows that [place] to be differentiated from others" (1976, p.45). Relph describes the implications and potential of a place to build individual and group identity in three ways: firstly, there is the stability and influence of the place's physical setting; secondly, the activities and events which happen there; and thirdly, the meanings created through people's experiences in regard to that place. One outcome is that a chosen, familiar place, as opposed to a place where an individual feels like an 'outsider', provides a sense of safety rather than threat, of being at ease rather than stressed. The more profoundly 'inside' a place a person feels, the stronger her or his identity with that place will be. This can lead to a sense of 'existential insideness' where a person feels unselfconscious and at home in their own community and place. The opposite is 'existential outsideness'—a sense of strangeness and alienation. All of this is immediately and obviously relevant to the experience of homelessness and dis-location. Relph himself (1996; 2000) corrected some of the dualism inherent in the dialectical opposites in original work and stressed the spectrum of 'placedness and placelessness' and how an individual can journey between these experiences within a very small setting. I believe the mothers at the six benches were experiencing just this: a sense of belonging and 'insideness' at the benches but an 'existential outsideness' at the playground. The use of the benches as a place to confer a sense of belonging is very close to the notion and characterisation of 'home'. Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* claims that "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (1994, p.5 [Orig. 1958]). Spaces which provide a sense of belonging and a shared way to confer meaning from shared activities are homely. Similarly, Liotta (2009) writes: "A place takes on meaning as a result of the sensations and emotions elicited and the consequent attachments formed… External space becomes interior space, a subjective space and time of experience, memory and emotions" (p.6). Shared, familiar places have psychic content. While the *parklife* participants described the place they gathered in everyday terms 'hanging out', 'being with', and 'seeing who's out', they acted in ways which conferred deeper, psychic, and social meanings; all of which can be summed up in the word 'home'. This explains why so many participants spent some part of each day there, even when 'housed' elsewhere. Tenuous attachments and chaotic histories can make place of belonging more attractive. While there are positives to this in the sense of identity and countering social invisibility, the 'pull factor' of street culture can prevent individuals transitioning to new identities (Ravenhill, 2008; Mann, 2019). This may have been the case for the man who refused accommodation through the *Everyone In* initiative and explains why many participants travelled significant distances when they were relocated to return to this

significant place. Its attraction is in the sense of identity and belonging but also because other places may signify what Rose (1995) describes as 'identification against a place' – places which are 'we' verses 'them'. Rose also describes the 'non-identification with places' with its feelings of estrangement and displacement, which may be powerful even where accommodation is offered if it is in an unfamiliar area or where a person has opportunities to make new, replacement connections.

Conclusion

As the UK moves out of national lockdowns, and the *Everyone In* programme is phased out, there is a genuine risk that street-based homelessness and other forms of homelessness will dramatically increase in the UK. This is not only because those receiving temporary accommodation may not receive sufficient support or opportunity to transition into more settled housing, but also because of job losses or reduced pay caused by the coronavirus crisis, particularly as the furlough scheme and legislation banning evictions end. Furthermore, the charity St Mungo's (2021) warns that a high number of people currently in emergency accommodation will be unable to access ongoing support due to their migration status. A perfect storm is brewing if the call to seize the 'extraordinary opportunity' to end street-based homelessness which Dame Louise Casey (2021) described is ignored. The findings of the project reported here suggest that there is far more to successful transition from street-based homelessness than appropriate accommodation. Intentional place-making to support communities to be resilient, hospitable, and have safe spaces to interact are all part of the equation. Furthermore, the contribution of grassroots charities to provide long-term therapeutic communities of healing and transition should not be overlooked; wisdom from these contexts needs a better hearing in policy decisions.

For this research I listened to the stories of those already caught up in the crisis of homelessness in the UK and witnessed their social invisibility and marginalisation in the context of one specific urban park in the East End of London. But I also witnessed their communality in a site over which they managed to retain a level of control. There is conviviality here, as well as the constant black-marketing transactions of goods and information. There are many reports of violence, none of which I personally witnessed, several arguments, and a surprising number of interventions to settle and resolve them. There is drama and rest. As I watch and listen, I am becoming convinced that many people fail to make the transition from street-sleeping because 'mainstream' society is lonelier, less liveable, and altogether less fun than *parklife*. The vital importance of being in a place where you are seen and known is the strongest lesson from my time listening to stories at the six benches. The research project provided me with much needed social contact and a summer of listening to stories. In Blur's words, there is more 'hand-in-hand' about *parklife*.

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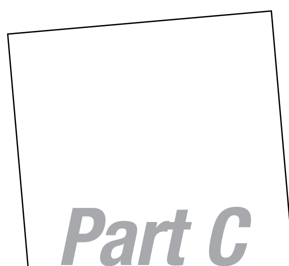
Country Review



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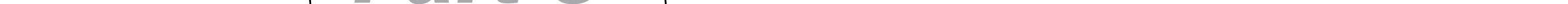

Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Policymaking: Managing Homelessness in Istanbul

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Abstract_ *The increasing phenomenon of homelessness in Istanbul has become a political concern. Yet the socio-political response to the issue does not go beyond providing limited-term shelter service. Therefore, this research aims to understand the reasons for the lack of social policy in the field of homelessness and the indifferent attitude of public institutions toward people experiencing homelessness in Istanbul by drawing on the intersecting concepts of stereotypes and prejudices that have come to the fore in the discrimination literature in recent years. This approach will enable inclusive social policies and services and advocacy activities in the field of homelessness. The research is based on 27 expert-leader semi-structured interviews and informed by phenomenological-interpretative and discourse analysis. Based on stereotypes and prejudices about the homeless, the interviewers define people experiencing homelessness as 'free, refusing the system and taking responsibility, choosing the street' and characterising only chronic-long term homelessness as 'real homeless'. These are the leading causes for the lack of social policy in the field of homelessness in İstanbul.*

Keywords_ *Homeless, Social Policies, Stereotypes/Prejudice, Istanbul*

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Introduction

There is a consensus that homelessness is increasing in metropolitan areas from internal and external migration (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019; FEANTSA, 2017; Serme-Morin, 2017), which raises an academic and political interest in the topic. Contrary to the general trend observed worldwide, being homeless does not draw sufficient interest in Turkey neither in policy-making nor in intellectual academic discussions. For instance, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the public body responsible for social assistance and family services in Turkey, does not have a social policy for the homeless or offer a general definition of homelessness. People experiencing homelessness are often excluded from eligibility for social assistance and the services offered by local governments, charity, and civil society activities. The services that are offered are generally limited to shelters provided by metropolitan municipalities in winter.

The research on being homeless is still limited despite the official records revealing that the number of people experiencing homelessness has been increasing in Turkey's globalizing city, İstanbul. For example, according to the shelter services provided to the homeless by İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), only 500-600 people benefited from this service in 2005-2006; whereas this number increased to 4592 in 2016-2017 (IMM, 2018). The number of people experiencing homelessness benefitting from this shelter has increased by approximately ninefold in 11 years. Another service provided by IMM that gives an estimation of the number of people experiencing homelessness in Istanbul involves the studies of The Poor Referral and Reverse Migration Office.

The Reverse Migration Office provides funds for transportation and relocation to families who are in Istanbul and cannot return to their hometowns due to financial difficulties. The Poor Referral Service helps citizens who came to Istanbul for military service to study or to find employment. As part of the scheme, these citizens are entitled to short term, free accommodation and financial help to return to their hometown. The Reverse Migration Office served 558 families in 2007, and this number increased to 5256 in 2016. Accordingly, the number of people benefiting from The Poor Referral Service increased from 3828 in 2007 to 8188 in 2017. The number of families that were at risk of homelessness and left Istanbul increased by nine times within 10 years, while the number of people who became homeless and wanted to return to their hometown doubled (IMM, 2018). Even though the NGOs that were contacted during the research, who provide services to people experiencing homelessness, provided different figures regarding the number of people experiencing homelessness, they also highlighted the increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness. One NGO officer noted that there may be around 10000 people experiencing homelessness in Istanbul.

Despite these indicators, the city administration of Istanbul has not given a social political response, except for limited-term shelter service, nor does it accept the homeless as one of the vulnerable groups that 'deserve' regular assistance and support. The inadequacy in social policies in the field of homelessness, or 'lack of social policy', is one of the structural factors that directly determine the daily experiences of the homeless (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Stephanz et al., 2010; Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007).

The aim of this research is to understand the reasons for the lack of social policy in the field of homelessness and the indifferent attitude of public institutions towards people experiencing homelessness in a metropolitan area, like Istanbul. To realise this aim, the intersecting concepts of stereotype and prejudice in the literature of discrimination are used instead of macro structural analysis that are influential in homelessness policies. This perspective, which puts emphasis on the role of agency rather than structure, will enable more inclusive social policies and services and advocacy activities in the field of homelessness. Therefore, the aim is to analyse the intersection of the participants' definitions of homelessness and their thoughts about people experiencing homelessness with stereotypes and/or prejudices and their effect on social policy making processes. Attitudes toward homelessness and political responses to homelessness are directly related to how people experiencing homelessness and homelessness in general are understood and evaluated (Willse, 2015; McNaughton, 2008). Additionally, definitions and regulations designated through administrative structures and social policies are one of the main determinants of the experience of being homeless.

The study is based on qualitative methods and aims to reveal the micro dimensions of the reasons for the lack of social policy in the field of homelessness in Istanbul, in the Beyoğlu district. Qualitative methods have an epistemologically semantic/subjectivism and ontologically interpretive approach. Therefore, they aim to comprehend the perspectives of research subjects and their worlds of meaning (Kus, 2003). In this study, the experts and leaders of the public institutions/NGOs serving, or those expected to provide services, in the field of homelessness in the Beyoğlu Region were first interviewed to explore their conceptions of homelessness. In this way, a more realistic and comprehensive social policy and service proposal was developed, and further areas related to research were discovered.

Twenty seven expert-leader interviews were conducted using the semi-structured interview protocol. Semi-structured interviews aimed to identify whether there were any services provided to people experiencing homelessness in Istanbul, other than homeless services and aids known by the public, and to elicit the perspective of institutions and individuals on homelessness/homeless/homeless social policies.

The framework of the semi-structured interviews was determined by the following questions:

- Who is a homeless person, what is homelessness, what are the causes of homelessness? What are the views on the number of homeless and their qualifications?
- What are the services provided to the homeless in Istanbul and the strategic goals of these services? Are there any new service models targeted by institutions? What should be the role of central government, local governments, and non-governmental organisations in developing social policies about homelessness?
- Is homelessness a social problem for Istanbul? If so, what should be done to solve this problem?

Two sets of interview were conducted. The first set of interviews were with the institutions of central and local administrative bodies: the Manager of Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation of İstanbul, the Deputy Secretary General of İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, the Head of İstanbul Public Security Services, the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Head of European Side Public Security Services for Beggar Rehabilitation, the Darülaceze Hospice Manager, the Governor of Beyoğlu District, the Beyoğlu Social Service Centre Manager, the Head of Beyoğlu Community Health Centre, the Manager of Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation of Beyoğlu District, the Chief of Police of Beyoğlu District, the Beyoğlu Municipality Social Affairs Manager and Chief, the Head of Mukhtars in Beyoğlu District, and the Head of Taksim Tuberculosis Dispensary.

The second interviews were conducted with NGOs: founder and volunteers of the Soup Kitchen Association, the Responsibles of the Șefkat-Der Foundation, the founder and volunteers of the Children of Hope Association, the President of the Çorbada Tuzun Olsun Association, the founder of the Dervish Baba Association, the President of the Erdemliler Solidarity Association, and the Hasan Pasha Mosque Imam. In addition, semi-structured interviews were held with three experts working as field workers in different institutions pertaining to people experiencing homelessness.

The findings of the field research conducted between April 2016 and April 2017 were evaluated using qualitative analysis methods, namely phenomenological-interpretive analysis and discourse analysis.

Homelessness in Istanbul

As stated previously, there are only a limited number of academic studies conducted on homelessness in Turkey. Therefore, it is very difficult to study factual history of homelessness in Turkey and the ability to make a comparative analysis of the structural dynamics of Istanbul and homelessness, on the basis of data available from the past to present, is not feasible.

There are only 18 studies conducted across Turkey over the last 20 years. Some of these studies are based on field research while others are systematic reviews of literature. Quite a number of them are quantitative and focus on the sectional, momentary situation. These studies, in general, explore socio-demographic characteristics of the homeless, which include prevalence of problematic alcohol use, illegal drug use, psychiatric hospitalisation, mental disorder, crime rate, and the frequency of data related to the health of people experiencing homelessness. There is a dearth of studies conceptualising the process of homelessness, and those that do employ a critical perspective towards excessively generic research that discriminates against the homeless and confines them to being out of the norm. These studies also approach homelessness through concepts such as globalization, urban poverty, migration, underclass, and deep poverty, and consider homelessness as an interaction of structural, individual, and institutional reasons.

There are three important studies in the field of medicine. The research by Altun (1997) on the deaths of people experiencing homelessness in Istanbul between the years 1991-1995 is the first academic study conducted on the subject. A large number (95%) of the cases in Altun's (1997) research included men, while 3% were women, and 2% were transsexuals. In most cases (75%), the bodies were found in open spaces like streets and parks, while in 25% of the cases, the bodies were found in confined spaces like abandoned buildings and construction sites. Deaths in 82% of the cases took place between October-April from 1991 to 1995. According to predicted ages determined during external examination of the cases, 87% of whom were not found to have an identity card on them, the age of death was most common in the age group of 41-50 years, while 61% of the cases were between the ages of 31-50 years. Further, 78% of deaths were recorded to be natural deaths and 22% of them were recorded as violent deaths. Yagan (2009) examined the cases of 127 deaths of people experiencing homelessness in Ankara and found similar results in parallel with Altun's (1997) work.

Isikhan (2002) is the first study from the field of social sciences that sets forth socio-demographic characteristics of people experiencing homelessness living in Ankara. The research was carried out with 58 people experiencing homelessness between the ages of 9-65, with an average age of 21. The research found a problematic drug, cigarette, and alcohol use rate of 33% among the adults experiencing homelessness

with a low educational status. Further, it revealed a problematic drug use depending on solvent and glue at a rate of 92% among the children experiencing homelessness. According to the research, the people experiencing homelessness who have different health problems do recycling work from time to time such as collecting papers and plastics. Participants stated that since they did not have a permanent place of residence, they used bus terminals, entrances of buildings, and cash points to spend night as they found them to be relatively less dangerous.

Menevis' (2006) research looked at the socio-demographic characteristics of the homeless in Ankara; their study included 206 people experiencing homelessness, consisting of 147 men and 59 women. According to the study, 25.7% of the people experiencing homelessness were over 46 years old; 26.2% of them had been experiencing homelessness for less than a week; 29.6% were primary school graduates; 32.5% were single, 33% had divorced; and 54.4% did not have a social security identification. Menevis (2006) also mentioned that 36.4% of the people experiencing homelessness interviewed had criminal records, 66% of them did not have any physical or mental disease, and 66% did not have any regular income.

Results of the study carried out by Erbay (2013), including 79 people experiencing homelessness staying in two shelters in Ankara and in the Ankara Bus Terminal, show similar results with the research of Isikhan (2002) and Menevis (2006). Educational levels, income status, marital status, employment status, social insurance status, health status, and drug use frequencies did not differ significantly among the studies. However, Erbay (2013) addressed causality perceptions of people experiencing homelessness according to their self-reports and found that 57.7% of the participants indicated unemployment and poorness as the fundamental causes, while 49.3% of them noted family and domestic crises.

It is observed that all three studies in general prioritised treatment/rehabilitation and focused temporary housing/shelter regulations in the centre when considering which services could be provided to the homeless (Erbay, 2013; Isikhan, 2002).

The study carried out by Bektas (2014) consisting of 101 convicted people experiencing homelessness using quantitative methods is different from the bodies of work discussed above. Even though Bektas, like his antecedents, used the data related to the current state of the participants regarding problematic substance use, crimes, etc. and their socio-demographic characteristics, emphasis on structural reasons like migration and poorness is much more salient and prioritised in the data analysis. Bektas (2014) argues that the people experiencing homelessness are exposed to social exclusion and left outside formal and informal support mechanisms. Migration history is a common experience in the life history of the homeless and the reason for migration is generally the economic condition. Poorness is a common experience before one becomes homeless. The

triggers of homelessness are domestic violence, death in family, stepparents, physical and mental health problems, and drug use. According to the results of the study, the people experiencing homelessness are of low educational status and there is a significant relationship between family relationships and literal homelessness. A large number (75%) of the interviewed people experiencing homelessness have a profession; however, chronic unemployment is a common occurrence in their life histories. Drug use was common among the sample (76%). Among the sample, 33% had been experiencing homelessness for more than seven years, 25% of them reported a homelessness period of 1-3 years, and 21% reported a period of six months or less. Among the sample, the ratio of those involved in crime is high compared to mainstream society; accordingly, the high ratio of being exposed to crime is also high. For instance, 66% of the interviewees stated that they were exposed to injury, 52% were exposed to extortion, and 9% were exposed to sexual abuse.

The research of Kucuk (2014) looks into the framework of new homeless[1], poverty and underclass conceptualisations, socio-economic dimensions, and structural determinants of homelessness. Kucuk (2014) worked with 80 people experiencing homelessness using a qualitative method and considered the homeless as one of the disadvantaged groups that communed with deep poverty and social exclusion, namely a reflection of urban poverty. Kucuk (2014) found that the people experiencing homelessness experience poorness that makes the state of being homeless permanent and leads them to a worse and more complicated situation. This causes the homeless to get marginalised in the social space and unable to hold on to the system. Arguing that the number of people experiencing homelessness in such a situation is gradually increasing, Kucuk (2014) mentions that lack of policies and practices push this group of people who already live on the margins of life further to their fate.

Gumus (2016), who made biographical interviews with 11 people experiencing homelessness in the area of Istanbul/Tarlabasi, which is under urban transformation, tried to understand the homeless and thresholds of the process of becoming homeless in her study. Gumus (2016, p.51; 77; 93-94) defined homelessness as “an urban poverty experience that emerges when the poor bodies placed in the boundaries lose their family and market protection for various reasons and when their basic needs are not met by the public”, “a lifestyle that occurs in the metropolis.” She highlighted the determinative role of safety in daily experiences of the homeless.

1 “The new homeless were much younger, more likely to be minority group members, suffering from greater poverty, and with access to poorer sleeping quarters. In addition, homeless women and families appeared in significant numbers. However, there were also points of similarity, especially high levels of mental illness and substance abuse.” (Rossi, 1990, p.954)

> Safety, on the other hand, is a determinative factor for positioning of the homeless within the city. For stigmatised homeless bodies, areas that are used as public places during the day such as parks, hospital yards, under the counters, water fountains become a place for accommodation at nights. In this context, homelessness creates a new topography in the city… (Gümüş, 2016, p.94)

Bekaroglu Dogan (2018), analysed the relationship of individual and structural dimensions of homelessness in the context of causality. According to Bekaroglu Dogan (2018, p.276,277), there are certain structural similarities encountered in the biographies of the homeless, these include: low financial and social capital of the family; lack of education and widespread domestic violence; poverty and deprivation patterns experienced in certain rural areas of Turkey; negative social capital acquired in the region migrated to; failing to continue education due to poorness and necessity of working at a very early age; unsafe and improper housing homelessness experienced starting from the young ages before occurrence of literal homelessness; working in informal sectors without social security for years and in return being deprived of social security in case of inability to work; and a lack of institutional protection mechanisms to protect children and youth against domestic violence. She also discovered the presence of common patterns shared by almost all of the participants as they entered into the period of homelessness. According to Bekaroglu Dogan, there are more similarities between the homelessness that is visible as a part of the process starting with rural poverty and continuing with migration and urban poverty and the homelessness that emerges as a result of urban poverty. The process of stepping into homelessness for the participants from families of small business owners and government officers is partly different.

According to Bekaroglu Dogan (2018, p.182), apart from being in a low income group, which is considered a universal risk factor for homelessness and being structurally excluded from a habitable/low cost housing system, especially in societies in which public social protection is poor and mostly built through the family, non-existence of family and protective relationships leads to failure in managing informed or uninformed risks. Another important finding of Bekaroglu Dogan (2018, p.215) is that the people experiencing homelessness are involved in unsafe and improper housing for years before the literal homelessness process begins.

According to the results of the field research by Akyildiz (2020), new homelessness is becoming widespread in Istanbul. The research emphasised that domestic problems and financial incapabilities underly the transition to homelessness. According to the results of the research, the circumstances that challenge the homeless most are financial incapability, security concern, exclusion, rooflessness,

health problems, and unemployment issues. For Akyildiz, insufficiency of the services provided and cultural viewpoint towards homelessness are determinants in highly difficult daily living experiences of the homeless.

As also mentioned in the limited literature on homelessness in Turkey (Akyildiz, 2020; Bekaroglu Dogan, 2017; Gumus 2016; Kucuk, 2014), the Ministry of Family and Social Services responsible for social aids and services in Turkey does not have any services aimed directly at the homeless or any regulations at the constitutional and legal level regarding homelessness. In the circular letter regarding social services issued in 2003 by the Minister of Interior, the intention regarding “ensuring cooperation of civil and local administrations and non-governmental organisations for the purpose of establishing shelters or shelter centers for citizens who do not have a place to stay overnight or for a certain period” (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior Office of Press and Public Relations, 2003) was noted. In 2003 and 2007, two more circular letters from the Ministry were released to the public that were aimed directly at the homeless and included an instruction for providing the homeless with temporary sheltering at places like hotels and guesthouses during the course of “heavy winter conditions” (Anadolu Agency, 2013; 2017).

The circular letter published in 2003 focused on the establishment of shelter services providing service throughout the year by means of cooperation of different institutions; however, subsequent circular letters highlighted a service understanding focused on providing these services only during the winter months and only meeting basic needs. These circular letters show that the Ministry does not handle the issue of homelessness as a problem that falls under the scope of its responsibility but acts with a minimum service understanding by preventing freezing to death in winter and ensuring basic survival of people experiencing homelessness. However, there are women’s shelters, nursing homes, child support centres, and caring centres for the disabled that are affiliated with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies for women experiencing homelessness, children who have to live on the street, helpless elderly people, and the disabled citizens in Turkey. Considering the services in other EU countries, Turkey takes into consideration people who are doubly vulnerable, and the elderly, disabled, women, and children experiencing homelessness are prioritised.

These services and the circular letters of the Ministry show that especially males between the ages of 18-60 experiencing homelessness in Turkey are neither regarded as a welfare nor a housing problem, but only left to the responsibility of the individual and civil society. As for the services provided to the homeless in the city of Istanbul, only one service is encountered that involves the concept of ‘homelessness’; the sheltering service provided by IMM in winter that starts upon the alarm given by AKOM for cold weather and ends in spring when the weather

gets warmer. Local administrations in different metropolitans other than Istanbul also provide limited-period sheltering provision to the homeless, particularly in winter (Akyildiz, 2020).

When looking at the official websites of the most widely known NGOs in Turkey, there is no information indicating that they operate in the field of homelessness. There are seven small and local NGOs operating in the field of homelessness in Istanbul (Erdemliler Dayanışması, Şefkat-der, Çorbada Tuzun Olsun Derneği, Aşhane, Hayata Sarıl Lokantası, Umut Çocukları Derneği, Derviş Baba). Only three of them provide temporary sheltering facilities and social support to the homeless with their limited capacity, while the remaining four provide street-based services that will support the homeless to cope with difficulties of daily life, such as provision of food or distribution of blankets.

The people experiencing homelessness are not the target audience for social aids and services and are deprived of any regulations and applications aimed at provision of the constitutional right to housing. Even though housing is accepted as a constitutional right in Turkey, according to the Constitution of 1982, there are no legal regulations for the homeless to benefit from the right to housing. The right to housing in Turkey is secured in the Constitution of 1961 with the provision which reads as "the state shall take necessary measures to meet the housing needs of the poor or low income families in accordance with health conditions" and with the provision in the Constitution of 1982 which reads as, "the state, within the framework of a planning that considers the characteristics of cities and environmental conditions, shall take measures to meet housing needs and also support housing initiatives." Despite the fact that the Constitution of 1982 removed the emphasis on meeting the housing needs of the poor and low-income communities as a priority, the right to housing is still a constitutional right.

In Turkey, during the 1950s-70s, the state could not find a solution to the housing problem of those coming to major cities, including Istanbul, by internal migration; the social policy vacuum was filled by condoning the slums, with an implicit agreement between the state and the voters (Bugra, 2011). In the 2000s, shanty towns and wrecked parts of the city that provided suitable shelter opportunities, eliminated sheltering costs, and were a source of informal social support were no longer an opportunity for the low-income citizens of the city due to 'urban transformation projects'. This is indeed similar to the fate of the shanties all over the world (Davis, 2010). The 'shanty' in Istanbul, which is sometimes in tune with and sometimes differentiating from the examples from around the world, has been effective during different periods in coping with poorness, which is one of the fundamental structural reasons of homelessness and in preventing of widespread homelessness.

The state developed TOKI (Housing Development Administration) to address the social housing need in the 2000s when informal housing support facility for the poor was annulled. The current activity report of TOKI reported that 18.9% of the houses produced so far were for the lower income group and the poor, while 44.73% of them were built for the low- and middle-income group (TOKI, 2017). TOKI also has projects aimed at providing housing for the high income group based on a cooperation under the name of 'Income and Resource Development Projects' described as income generating by TOKI. The number of houses produced within the framework of both social housing and income and resource development projects for Istanbul is as follows: 766 houses from two projects for the lower income group and the poor, 15 815 houses from 24 projects for the low and middle income group, and 19 195 houses from 31 projects for the high income group within the scope of income and resource development (TOKI, 2017).

It is observed that the number of projects produced by TOKI for the new middle and middle-upper class of Istanbul is considerably higher compared to others. In total, 35 776 houses were built. The ratio of houses allocated for the poor and lower income group is found to be 2.14%, 44.21% for the low and middle income group, and 53.66% for the high income group.

This indicated that TOKI deviated from its purpose and became a means of production of luxury houses and an entity operating for setting up the infrastructure required by neo-liberal economic policy of the global city. In global cities where it is required to set up the infrastructure to attract global capital, more clearly, where it is required to meet the demands of the new elite professionals to reside in the city for luxury housing, shopping, education of their children, entertainment, and recreation, TOKI is criticised as being the mechanism that fulfils this task. TOKI also leads to settlement of the upper- upper middle classes in the city centres, which pushes the lower classes to the outskirts of the city. It is asserted that TOKI, in its current position, protects the property right while impairing the right to shelter and reshapes the space to the detriment of the lower income group and the poor to comply with the requirements of a global city (Keles, 2012; IMO, 2011; Yilmaz, 2014; 2016; Karasu, 2009).

Power of identification: defining the state of being homeless within the framework of stereotypes and prejudices

Defining the state of being homeless and determining its causes is an important topic of discussion and, indeed, struggle among charities and advocacy groups as well as academic and administrative structures. In fact, the definition of being homeless is often an extension of certain theoretical or political perspectives. In other words, it

encompasses the reflections of public, political, and epistemological benefits and interests. On the other hand, definitions have the potential to affect public and political practices and discourses (Farrugia and Gerrard, 2016; Neale, 1997).

Identifying social problems is critical in many ways. Identification primarily determines the population that academic research is targeting, the homeless. Politically, it determines the target population of social policies and who can benefit from the services offered (Jacobs et al., 1999; Rossi, 1989).

When defining the state of being homeless from this perspective, we see that the simplest, but essentially the most common, expressions in all different definitions of being homeless include the absence of a shelter, sleeping in public places, and the absence of a regular home of the person (through rent or property) Although the common expressions included in the definitions typically take this form, there are different, and almost always negative, meanings attributed to the phenomenon of 'being homeless' in mainstream society. People experiencing homelessness are likewise associated with pathological 'deviation', such as begging, crime, addiction, or some vulnerability, almost as though they form some new lower class or poverty that threatens mainstream society (Cronley, 2010; McNaughton, 2008; Pleace, 2000; Bauman, 1999; Fooks and Pantazis, 1999; Neale, 1997), so homelessness and being homeless are defined on the basis of its various stereotypes and prejudices.

Administrative structures and social policies become the main determinants of the experience of being homeless through the definitions and regulations they designate, which then become the common stereotypes and prejudices shared by the majority of society about the state of being homeless. Here, the act of becoming homeless may result in being categorised as undeserving and being excluded from social assistance and services, or as the state of being homeless within the framework of individual preference. Thus, the concept is excluded from social policies altogether.

As a result, people experiencing homelessness do not only struggle with the problems, difficulties, and risks in everyday life inherent to the state of being homeless, they also have to deal with all the disadvantages of being homeless, the meanings socially imposed on being homeless, and the negativities created by stereotypes and prejudices. These can be material/physical as well as psychological/emotional (the sense of 'deviation' from main society, the negative emotions created by stigmatisation, and othering). These discourses and definitions often consider being homeless as the absence of a roof in its narrow sense, but deal with individual pathologies or vulnerabilities within the context of causality.

Findings and Interpretation

When analysing the interviews, the stereotypes were mostly focused on the definition of being homeless, the features of the homelessness, evaluating the services provided for the homeless, and the use of the public spaces by the homeless. Building the concept of being homeless as defined by the leaders of public institutions and experts began with an emphasis on the characteristics of being homeless and homelessness and continued by interpreting existing services and combining them with stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness. Ultimately, it was found that this process was the reason for the absence of social policies addressing the needs of the homeless and even the lack of a permanent shelter service. This section of the analysis was discussed under the headings of (1) Defining the state of being homeless: 'people experiencing homelessness are already…', (2) Services (not) provided to the homeless in Istanbul within the framework of definitions, and (3) Pollution displacement and the use of public spaces, respectively, in order to reveal the logical fiction of this construction process.

Defining the state of being homeless: 'people experiencing homelessness are already…'

The interviewees have defined people experiencing homelessness as 'free', 'refusing the system', 'emotional', 'avoiding staying in institutions and closed spaces', 'not satisfied with the opportunities offered', 'preferring the streets', 'avoiding taking responsibility', and 'preferring to live daily'. As in the case of Mu.K, an NGO leader, NGO leaders and experts have not attributed a negative meaning to 'free, people experiencing homelessness'.

> The homeless are very romantic people. They are emotional people; they live from the heart. But they place much emphasis to feelings in their life cycle, there [is a] lack [of] such a balance between feelings and reason. Then they lose their temper, and look, you're on the streets…. (Soup Kitchen Association, Mu.K.)

On the other hand, the leaders of the public institutions have defined the state of being homeless by referring to a preference and lifestyle such as 'avoiding living indoors and obeying certain rules' and subsequently that has characteristics that are considered socially negative.

> I observe that it is a preference. Actually, as I said before, it is not because they have no place; it's a matter of preference. Maybe because of the desire to get away from a familial problem; maybe because of the desire to get away from liabilities… Once I tried to place a homeless person in an institution. He said, 'I cannot stay there, I should be free' and 'I can't survive there, I have to go in and out when I want; nobody can interfere with me'. So, we see that this is a little bit

> about people's expectations of life. 'I think it is not only a necessity, rather a lifestyle created in their own minds and imaginations…. (Beyoğlu Municipality Social Affairs Manager)

With this definition, some leaders consider the homeless themselves to be responsible for the state of being homeless, as it is considered that they do not want to receive public service-based alternatives such as winter shelters or sheltered housing/nursing homes. As a result, this perception and definition of the state of being homeless provides a basis for the viewpoint that there is no public responsibility to shelter the homeless on the grounds that the housing opportunities offered will be declined. However, rejection of sheltering alternatives, such as a temporary shelter or nursing homes, as might be offered by local governments to the homeless or to those at risk of being homeless should not be interpreted as refusing to have a 'home'. What is being rejected is, in fact, a concrete 'shelter' or 'nursing home', with their physical, hardware, and security-related reality.

'Home' and an 'indoor shelter that can be used for accommodation' have entirely different meanings. Such a distinction was also noted in the responses of the leaders and experts interviewed to questions like 'what is the meaning of 'home' to you?' Only three of the 27 interviewees defined 'home' as a 'shelter' by emphasising its physical meaning and facilities. The remaining 24 participants defined 'home' with expressions such as home, family, privacy, peace, happiness, warmth, freedom, trust, stability, and order, based on meanings associated with physiological, emotional, and belonging aspects.

A significant proportion of the interviewees also referred to different categories while defining the state of being homeless, therefore emphasising that the question of 'who is homeless?' does not have a single answer, as there is no homogeneous 'homeless' population. The classification of the heterogeneous population of homeless by the interviewees is similar to the classification in the literature, namely 'the long term homeless', 'the episodically homeless', and 'the first-time homeless' (May, 2010, p.622-633). According to all expert interviewers who are actively communicating with the homeless in the field, the proportion of 'temporary homeless' who come to İstanbul for employment or treatment purposes, and who are waiting in line for institutional inpatient care services, is much higher than those of the 'long term homeless' who have been staying on the streets for a long time. This view overlaps with the information provided by İstanbul's Darülaceze Hospice Manager, who stated that "there are an average of 300 people benefiting from the winter service regularly every year among a chronic homeless population consisting of 3000 homeless." Provincial Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation field staff also emphasised that the number of 'guest homeless' (those who came to

Istanbul for work or other reasons and became homeless for the first time or temporarily) who applied to them for temporary or one-time assistance was higher than the homeless population (long term homeless) who received regular help.

Another remarkable result is that although the rate of long term people experiencing homelessness on the streets is emphasised as being relatively low among the entire homeless population, more than half of the interviewees noted the problems of being homeless over individual problems, which are claimed to be common among long term people experiencing homelessness in general. In this context, new categories of having 'psychiatric/mental illness', 'mental retardation', 'alcohol and substance addiction', and 'severe trauma' come to the fore. This generalisation dims the notion that more people are in danger of being homeless due to structural problems such as unemployment, poverty, and absence of social services. In general, it leads to the individualisation and pathology of the problem of being homeless.

As a result, none of the interviewees answered the question 'Who is a homeless person?' as being 'one without home'; rather they preferred to identify the concept by referring to the causality of being homeless and the negative characteristics of the homeless person.

Services (not) provided to the homeless within the framework of definitions

For services provided for the homeless in Turkey, as in other European countries, multiple vulnerabilities are taken into account; old people, disabled, women, and children experiencing homelessness benefit from public social services as those most deserving of assistance (Dwyer et al., 2014; Pleace et al., 2011; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Pleace, 1998; Burrows et al., 1997). Institutions affiliated to the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services and İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, as well as many private establishments for the disabled and the elderly, offer temporary and permanent housing services for the women and children experiencing homelessness who have to live on the streets, as well as orphans and people who are disabled and need help in İstanbul.

However, even the most basic sheltering services for the homeless are not provided sustainably and regularly, particularly for men experiencing homelessness between 18-60 years old and who have experienced the state of being homeless temporarily or chronically. Shelters, day care centres offering facilities similar to shelters, and bed and breakfasts and/or hostels for the homeless have been heavily criticised recently in the literature studying the state of being homeless for their lack of hygiene, being non-secure, depressive, dangerous (McNaughton, 2008), and exclusionary places (Evans, 2011) where individual and real needs are ignored, medical rehabilitation programmes are executed (Gowan, 2010), and as places where there

is no sense of trust (Arnold, 2004). Nevertheless, shelters still have their place in services provided for the homeless, especially when considered in terms of coping and survival strategies.

The need for service centres and shelters that can serve men who have long term experience of the state of being homeless, particularly between the ages of 18-60, was expressed by all experts and leaders in the interviews. However, the need for shelter services for those who are temporarily experiencing the state of being homeless were particularly emphasised by associations and experts working in the field. These categories included those who started to stay on the streets for economic reasons only; patients in need of treatment and their relatives (those who came to Istanbul for treatment and did not have a place to stay); those who could not find a job for a while after coming to İstanbul as seasonal workers and who are in financial deprivation; those who have no place to go in the period of adaptation and convalescence after leaving boarding institutions such as prisons/hospitals/orphanages/child support centres; and those who are in the evaluation process in order to receive institutional inpatient care services. The data obtained through the interview held with the İstanbul Darülaceze Hospice Manager also confirmed this need.

> We have nearly 3000 guests there Zeytinburnu Sports Complex [where winter services are provided to the homeless] every year. Those who are truly homeless number between 200 and 300. Those whom we define as real homeless… And if you question where we have obtained this solution? We calculated the percentage of those who stayed here every year and figured out this number.

The centres offer food, cleaning, and clothing services, as well as the shelter service itself. The dates for providing this service are determined in accordance with the weather conditions. According to the data reported by the İstanbul Darülaceze Hospice Manager, the shelter, which starts to offer service on days when the temperature drops to 4-5 degrees, is closed in the first week of April. Considering the content and the time period of this periodic shelter service, it is clear that the target of this service is to prevent widespread death amongst people experiencing homelessness due to the cold. The Deputy Secretary General, responsible for the health and social service-related activities of the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, expressed the benefits and the temporary accommodation services provided to the homeless as follows:

> You should also have heard the people who died due to cold up to date. But today you cannot get to know such news in İstanbul. We embrace them too. We host them in the facilities we have allocated for these services.

Consequently, İstanbul Darülaceze Hospice Manager stated that such a service is not used for solving the problem of homelessness, but only aims to protect such individuals from risks. "(What is targeted with this service is) firstly, to ensure the health and life safety of the person, that is to protect them from risks. What is this? Let's say the risk of freezing, or similar factors." (İstanbul Darülaceze Hospice Manager)

Apart from this service, there are no other public institutions that provide shelter services for men experiencing homelessness over the age of 18 in İstanbul. Despite the insufficiency of temporary and limited shelter services and the need for shelter models that can serve temporary and long term homelessness throughout the year being emphasised theoretically in all leader-expert interviews, the reasons for the actual absence of these services are hidden in the definitions, qualifications, and judgments of public leaders regarding people experiencing homelessness.

Based on their experience of the Temporary Accommodation Service for the Homeless, İstanbul Darülaceze Hospice Manager state that the homeless do not require shelter services throughout summer, and hence even if a shelter is opened, it would not otherwise be used by people experiencing homelessness.

> The people there [benefiting from the shelter service provided in the winter] are real people [chronic people experiencing homelessness] who do not want to live indoors, get bored and who want to get away as soon as possible. When the temperature gets gradually higher, the shelter begins to become automatically empty. But at the last moment we completely empty the place. (İstanbul Darülaceze Hospice Manager)

The opinion of institution leaders is that the shelters would not be used during summer. Although a permanent shelter is offered, this service is based on stereotypes and judgments that categorise the homeless as the people 'avoiding staying indoors' and 'preferring the streets'. However, the need for shelters and their temporary use by people experiencing homelessness is relatively high according to some leaders. The stereotypes about people experiencing long term homelessness are generalised to the entire homeless population. These stereotypes do not have any scientific basis apart from the estimates and experiences of the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Temporary Shelter Services; therefore, the quality of the service provided is not included in the inferences made by their leaders as a variable. However, this discourse becomes one of the factors that determines the associated structural conditions in terms of experiencing and surviving the state of being homeless; for this reason, the shelter service, which is one of the fundamental services offered to the homeless, is not provided throughout the entire year. Still, shelters have a very important place in the services offered to the homeless, provided that they are accepted as an emergency service (Birelma, 2014) and offer humanitarian conditions.

There are many critical studies on the shelters (Evans, 2011; Gowan, 2010; McNaughton, 2008; Arnold, 2004; Stark, 1994). According to the results of the field survey conducted with the homeless in Istanbul in 2016, the shelter service provided during winter was described as 'life-saving' by the people experiencing homelessness (Bekaroğlu Doğan, 2020, p.1013). Nevertheless, the homeless emphasised that they leave this service as soon as the danger of freezing and death disappears. This service is the last choice of the homeless. The reasons for the attitudes and thoughts of homeless participants included in the study toward this service are quite different from 'avoiding staying indoors', that is, the reasons reported by expert/public leader participants. Ultimately it is not a closed area or a shelter that is not preferred by the homeless in Istanbul, it is 'Zeytinburnu'.[2] The basic criticisms offered by the participants about temporary winter shelter 'Zeytinburnu' were with regard to the physical conditions.

> The participants who stated that between 500 and 1 000 people might be staying together simultaneously in the centre further reported that there has always been a heavy and bad smell in the centre… that the number of camp beds supplied was insufficient and hence people have been sleeping on the ground or on the tribune seats and that the toilets were too dirty to enter. The absence of any health control or screening against infectious diseases when entering the shelter is another issue that worries the participants… Another criticism and concern of the participants using the centre is about security issues. Participants reported that they could not sleep any longer at night in the centre than they could sleep on the street due to security concerns and constant quarrels and fighting, and they stated that staying in Zeytinburnu was not particularly different from staying on the street in terms of security. (Bekaroğlu Doğan, 2020, p.1013)

Another issue that arose throughout the interviews held with the leaders is the provision of alternative services to housing, which have a very important place in maintaining the daily lives of the homeless, but which can in no way be considered an alternative to shelter and housing supply services. The rationale underlying the view that the street-based services constituting an alternative to shelter and housing services is the stereotype that argues the homeless do not use shelters outside winter because they prefer to avoid staying indoors and that they in general 'prefer to live outdoors'. The Beyoğlu Municipality Social Affairs Manager stated that none of the homeless who live in Beyoğlu region is not the resident of the Beyoğlu and added that they offer alternative services to meet the daily needs of people who prefer to live on the streets. She said that:

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[2] Since the service has been provided in Zeytinburnu Sports Complex for almost 10 years, until the winter period of 2017-2018, it is referred to as 'Zeytinburnu' by the homeless.

> …When we question the main needs and requirements of a preferably homeless, who actually made it his own lifestyle, we found out that it was food… Well, he needs to wash up, cleaning is one of the main needs. And, cleaning of the clothes, if he has any. These needs of the homeless are met by Beyoğlu Municipality in Tophane and Dolapdere District Governorates.

Finally, the opinion emerging from the leader-expert interviews on the grounds of the definition, categorisation, and characterisation of the homeless by public institution leaders and the stereotypical judgment about their choices is that the limited-term shelter service and street-based services currently offered in İstanbul represent an adequate socio-political response to the problem of the homeless.

The Secretary General of İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality has stated that İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality carries out a lot of work that is not specifically its responsibility in accordance with the legislation, works within the framework of the 'citizen/voter expectations', and that the municipality has intervened in new problem areas emerging in parallel with the changes in the city. This however must be viewed with that of the discourse of the İstanbul Darülaceze Hospice Manager stating that 'people experiencing homelessness prefer to live on the streets as long as the weather conditions permit'. It is clear that the idea indicating that İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality has fulfilled all its responsibilities toward people experiencing homelessness still prevails.

> It is the local government that the citizen perceives as the first addressee. Whether legal regulations are present or not, are not important for them [citizens]; in this context, the state of being homeless is, for sure, a problem. This seems to be a bigger problem particularly in the winter months. In summer, the situation is more comfortable. So, people may not need that much. Therefore, in the winter months, we try to meet every need what we call as the need of the age and exist wherever people need us. Regarding the homeless… we embrace them too. We host them in the facilities we have allocated for these services. (İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Deputy Secretary General)

Expressions such as 'responsibility of being a protector for the outcast', as used by Deputy Secretary General to draw attention to the services provided by the Metropolitan Municipality for the homeless, as well as concepts such as 'citizen expectations', 'preventing deaths due to freezing', 'embracing', and 'hosting' referred to in the quotations above indicate that the municipality does not perceive that services for people experiencing homelessness should be offered to those who deserve it. Further, the services provided for the homeless are focussed on managing the state of being homeless in relation to citizen expectations, rather than being based on the state of being homeless and the demands of the homeless themselves. After all, the limited-term shelter service offered to homeless who do

not use the shelters when the weather gets warmer but protects them from dying from cold in winter meets the demands of the voters. This service is also regarded as sufficient for the local governors of İstanbul within the framework of stereotypes regarding the accommodation preferences of the homeless.

'Pollution displacement': the use of public spaces

There are certain policies regarding the use of public spaces, which are the only alternative for people experiencing homelessness in Istanbul where there is no permanent shelter service and no housing-oriented public social services.

The head of İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Public Security Department and the Chief of Police state that they 'do not intervene' with the homeless or people living on the streets provided they are in secluded and out of sight places and do not disturb the environment; however, they do intervene with those who occupy the 'parks, squares, boulevards, streets, and main arteries', particularly when they build temporary structures there. Public Security Department officials further stated that they intervene with the person in cooperation with law enforcement officers if there is a bad smell or problematic alcohol and substance use. They pointed out that the basis of their intervention is related to articles associated with 'environmental pollution', 'environmental disturbance', and 'behaviour disturbing the public' under the Law of Misdemeanour. The head of the Public Security Department referred to this practice as 'disposal' and 'postponing' pollution from prestige venues and main arteries.

> Roma Park is maybe one of the most scenic places in İstanbul and perhaps everyone who visits İstanbul goes to see it. If you say you can see such a profile there, this may be true. If you say they shouldn't be there, we have just talked about the methods [disposal, postponing]… I told you we do not intervene as long as they stay in other places [invisible, isolated places] and do not cause disturbance to others.

The Beyoğlu District Police Chief, on the other hand, stated that the homeless and people begging create an 'anxiety factor' in terms of security and cause 'visual pollution' in prestigious places like İstiklal Avenue.

> … If you see a homeless, tacky person on İstiklal Street in this way… If you need to walk around on İstiklal Street with your spouse and your children among those who give such a view, would you feel safe as a mum? You may not feel it, but people are afraid of things and people whom they do not know, because they do not know the homeless. If you think collectively, maybe there are 5 or 10 such prestigious streets at a maximum in Europe. These and similar images, as I said

> before, cause image pollution and make people chill… Those images do not present a beautiful image. Beggars and homeless… The majority of those homeless are addicted to alcohol, substances, and so on.

One of the points that drew attention in the narratives of the interviewees is that the homeless, in some cases, may be intervened with indirectly through the arrangement of the urban area.

> We have a bus stop in Fatih; with a wooden bench, 'u'-shaped and covered. There is no gap between the benches; it is in the form of a 'u', 50-55 people lie there. They turned the bench forms to a normal bank; they opened the roof and left the spaces in between blank. No one has been there since then. (Mu.K., Soup Kitchen Formation Volunteer)

One of the results of using public spaces is that people experiencing homelessness, even when they have money, avoid entering places where other 'people having a house/shelter' socialise, and cannot even buy services due to the signs indicating that they are considered physically homeless after staying on the street for a certain period of time. Bauman (1997, p.28) referred to this situation as an 'anthropoemic strategy',

> … vomiting the strangers, banishing them from the limits of the orderly world and barring them from all communication with those inside. This was the strategy of exclusion – confining the strangers within the visible walls of the ghettos or behind the invisible, yet no less tangible, prohibitions of commensality, connubium and commercium; 'cleansing' – expelling the strangers beyond the frontiers of the managed and manageable territory; or, when neither of the two measures was feasible – destroying the strangers physically.

H.Ö. reported this situation, based on the death of a homeless person he witnessed, as follows:

> I saw that there is a crime scene investigation team under the bridge. There is a man wearing a mask. The age of the man is between 35 and 40. Eyes are black, beard and hair are elongated; it is clear that the man is a homeless, living on the street. He died on the street. The man's eyes were shining bright, but he was dead. They started to undress him and there was some money out of his pocket. They encountered a more interesting picture as they undressed him more. The man tied cardboard all over his body to avoid getting cold. Cardboard injured his body. Now, if this man goes to the hotel in that outfit, the hotel does not let him in. If he goes to the bath, they don't let them in; if he goes to a restaurant, they don't let them in either. In other words, the money in your pocket has no power…. (Şefkat-Der Volunteer, H.Ö.)

To sum up, there are both formal regulations and informal patterns related to the use of public spaces by the homeless and they also prevent the homeless' from using public spaces, even though they have no alternative other than these public spaces.

Conclusions

The interviews showed that social policies carried out at the macro-level and social practices at the micro-level to combat the state of being homeless are directly related to the public leaders' definitions of the state of being homeless and are influenced by stereotypes and prejudices.

According to the public institution officials and civil society leaders interviewed, a homeless person is not a 'person without a place to stay', but rather a 'free person, who rejects the system/order and who avoids assuming responsibility'. In this case, the state of being homeless is a 'lifestyle' and a 'choice' that is influenced by the character and preferences of the person experiencing homelessness. In particular, the leaders of the public institutions depicted the homeless as 'people who avoid living indoors and obey certain rules' and portrayed the homeless as being mainly responsible for the very state of being homeless. For example, the fact that Zeytinburnu is not preferred by people experiencing homelessness is interpreted by experts and leaders as 'people experiencing homelessness do not want to stay indoors'. This causality correlation established on the basis of prejudice and stereotypes of the leaders is highlighted as substitutes offered instead of the housing-based public service responsibilities that should be offered to the homeless. However, many studies show that the quality of the service provided in shelters plays an important role in the choice of shelters by the homeless.

Another noteworthy result was that although leaders and experts do not consider the homeless homogeneous group and categorise them accordingly, they tend to neglect short-term homeless in their policy. As a result of this categorisation/classification, which coincides with the long term-chronically homeless, the short-term-periodic homeless definitions that we encounter in the literature, especially from the leaders of public institutions, describe the long term homeless as the 'real homeless' and construct all their social policies addressing the issue of the homeless through this group. From the viewpoint of public leaders, this category of the homeless population is few in number, that is, it represents a very marginal segment of the population, and characterised by the rejection of the use of the existing shelter services, especially when the weather gets warm. This causality correlation and definitions based on stereotypes about the individual characteristics, characters, and preferences of the homeless results in missing the focus on the structural causes of being homeless and excludes different categories of the

homeless such as the short-term, periodic homeless, and the secret homeless from being the subjects and targets of social policies. Ultimately, the leaders of the public institutions consider street-based services and temporary shelter services provided via different institutions and civil organisations representative of an adequate social political response to homelessness within the framework of the causality correlation that they have established. Unlike public institution leaders, field experts and NGO leaders emphasise the high number of temporary people experiencing homelessness through the same classification and highlight the necessity of a permanent shelter service that should be offered for this category.

In the current situation, the only living space that people experiencing homelessness can use continuously is ‘public space’. However, there are some direct and indirect restrictions on the use of such public spaces. Although there is no legal regulation regarding the use of public spaces by people experiencing homelessness, public security officials may intervene with the homeless in the form of ‘discharging’ them from prestigious venues and main arteries and ‘displacement’ within the framework of legal regulations regarding ‘environmental pollution’, ‘environmental disturbance’, and ‘public disturbance behaviour’. These interventions were justified by the leaders of public institutions in the form of ‘image pollution’ and ‘creating social anxiety’. Urban management can also restrict the use of public space by the homeless through changing the design of urban space. People experiencing homelessness are also unable to benefit from the public places used by each citizen in return for their fees, even if they are able to afford it, as they are rejected due to their appearance and clothing.

People experiencing homelessness are considered a disadvantaged group who do not want to receive assistance on the basis of the stereotypes and prejudices held by leader-experts, and thus, are excluded from shelter/housing-oriented social policies and services. Problems with the everyday life facilities built in İstanbul for people experiencing homelessness, who are affected by stereotypes and prejudices and stigmatised within the scope of using public spaces, remain increasingly unsolved, although they are managed by the different coping strategies enacted by people experiencing homelessness themselves.

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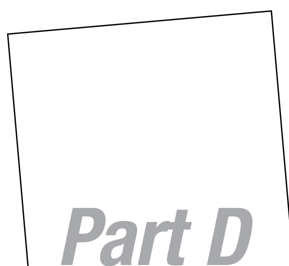

Part D

Neoreaction and Housing First: A Review Essay

Nicholas Pleace

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Close to Home: Delivering a national Housing First programme in England

London: Centre for Social Justice.

This review of two short American papers that are highly critical of Housing First and one British report that is, on the surface, highly supportive of the idea, will adopt a slightly unorthodox approach. The reason for this is that providing an accurate review of some of this material necessitates harsher criticism than is usual, even allowing for this piece appearing in the pages of an academic journal. I think it necessary to ground this criticism by explaining what my experience and perspective is, making it clear that, while an active advocate of Housing First, I would never present it as without limits and flaws and because before looking at these publications, it is useful to briefly review the state of the evidence.

My initial reactions to Housing First were mixed (Pleace, 2011). In the UK, there was some evidence of a small population with high and complex needs, experiencing long-term and recurrent homelessness. The UK data were limited, but suggested a

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situation broadly mirroring the picture in the USA, in which the bulk of homelessness was transitional and closely associated with the extremes of socioeconomic marginalisation, while a small high cost, high risk population, characterised by addiction, severe mental illness, and high contact with the criminal justice system experienced episodic (repeat) and chronic (sustained) homelessness (Culhane, 2018).

The realisation that homelessness existed in this form in the USA was crucial in the adoption of Housing First. The analysis of Culhane and others showed that only around 20% of the people experiencing homelessness were taking up a lot of capacity in homelessness services because they did not leave those services or kept coming back to them. If the needs of people experiencing sustained and repeat homelessness could be met, both the terrible human costs and the high public spending associated with these forms of homelessness could be reduced. Existing interventions for people experiencing homelessness with complex needs, centred on linear residential treatment (LRT) or 'staircase' services, which in North America were likely to be abstinence-based and set strict behavioural requirements on people using them, and had only achieved limited success, whereas Sam Tsemberis's Housing First appeared to be far more efficient (Pleace, 2008; 2011).

While I was impressed by some of the North American evidence, I was also sceptical because there were inconsistencies in how Housing First was defined. Debates about fidelity were still developing, but in the early 2010s, looking at North American evidence, it was still difficult to be certain whether the success of one 'Housing First' service was really the same as the reported success of another 'Housing First' service, because those two services might be quite different.

I was also concerned by the apparent emphasis on individual characteristics, on a need to change sets of behaviours, through a process of 'recovery'. This sounded like Housing First was doing the same thing as the services it was intended to replace, albeit with a greater emphasis on service user choice. This concern that was later expressed much more clearly and effectively by Hansen-Löfstrand and Juhila in this journal, questioning whether Housing First was really just another intervention based on behavioural modification, treating homelessness as individual pathology, rather than as a more complex and at least a partly *systemic* social problem (2012).

One concern was that an emphasis on individual 'recovery' (an individual changing their behaviour) meant Housing First could be weaponised to support a longstanding Thatcherite narrative. In the UK, there was (and is) a longstanding political narrative which 'explained' homelessness as being only a few 'rough sleepers' who were (mentally) ill or had 'chosen' a life of criminality and addiction (Anderson, 1993).

While apparently *very* successful in ending homelessness among people with complex needs, it was also clear that Housing First did not work for everyone. While this gap in effectiveness was only around 10-20% (and quite often less), I was worried that questions about where these people would go, which were really wider questions about where Housing First fitted into European homelessness strategies, were not being answered. Outcomes in mental and physical health and social integration also looked variable in the early 2010s. It was not clear that the 'recovery' was always being delivered by Housing First in the sense of consistent evidence of gains in economic and social integration, reductions in mental illness, addiction and offending, or improvements in physical health, the clear success was ending homelessness at a high rate, but questions were being asked about what else was being consistently achieved beyond that (Kertsez et al., 2009; Stanhope and Dunn, 2011; Johnson et al., 2012).

Housing First was also being presented as the reason why Finland was successfully reducing homelessness among people with complex needs, with broad talk of the Finns adopting Housing First as an approach. This was not what had happened. Finland developed a highly integrated, multiagency, housing-led approach using an array of homelessness services, emphasising prevention, and increasing social housing supply. The Finnish Housing First homelessness strategy clearly reflected Housing First in the North American sense, but also went way beyond it and, rather than being based on North American ideas, had come from a quite different starting point. Finnish Housing First was not a single type of service or a programme, but a housing-led, highly integrated national homelessness strategy with strongly developed preventative and social housing supply dimensions, alongside flexible, strength-based, housing-led services for people experiencing homelessness with high and complex needs (Pleace et al., 2015; Allen et al., 2020).

The narratives in the mid to late 2010s about Finland having a Housing First strategy in the North American sense, something that Tsemberis (2011) himself saw was not the case, reflected a certain evangelicalism about Housing First that was sometimes evident. Housing First became a banner for reform, a way to 'end homelessness' with the older service models that Housing First was designed to replace increasingly being described as unequivocal failures, ineffective, costly, and dehumanising. The evidence suggested a more complex reality. LRT/staircase services were *less* successful, but they were not complete failures. Alongside this, the somewhat draconian imagery around how LRT/staircase services operated did not properly reflect what was actually a more diverse and rather more humanitarian sector in the US and beyond. In countries that included Finland and the UK, aspects of Housing First that were still controversial, even challenging in the US context, such as harm reduction and choice and control for people using homelessness services, had

been mainstream for decades and many homelessness services bore little, if any, similarity to some of the LRT that Housing First had reportedly outperformed in the USA (Pleace, 2008; Rosenheck, 2010; Tsai and Rosenheck, 2012; Pleace, 2018).

Combinations of ordinary social housing, mobile case management, and support had been used in the UK since the 1980s, both in programmes to close down old, very large shelters (regarded as costly and inefficient) (Dant and Deacon, 1989) and in response to the realisation that lone homeless adults, rehoused under the homelessness laws, with high and complex needs required additional support beyond access to social housing (Pleace, 1995). I looked at these services and saw them work, but I also saw limitations linked to the relatively low level and limited duration of support that was offered, as well as variable effectiveness of interagency cooperation in case management (Pleace, 1995). In the early 2010s, this experience made me hesitant about the utility of Housing First for the UK, because Housing First meant higher and, particularly, more sustained spending than was typical of homelessness service design or commissioning practice among local authorities.

My conversion from sceptic to enthusiast and then, being honest about it, a transition to active advocacy for Housing First, happened over the course of 2013-14. With my colleagues at York, Joanne Bretherton and Deborah Quilgars, I have spent the best part of the last decade looking at Housing First services in England. Our research looked at the initial English pilot, Camden Housing First and then the next eight English services to go live. We then went on to conduct two longitudinal studies of small services in Manchester, one of which is focused on women with high and complex needs and, in cooperation with Canadian and UK colleagues, has looked at how to develop Housing First for vulnerable young people, alongside a project on how the strategic integration of Housing First might work (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013; Bretherton and Pleace, 2015; Blood et al., 2017; Quilgars and Pleace, 2018a; Quilgars and Pleace, 2018b; Pleace and Bretherton, 2019; Blood et al., 2020). At the time of writing, I will be contributing to two further evaluations of seven English Housing First services over the next three years and am involved in research on how to manage transitions when support, care, and treatment needs fall below, or rise above, the levels that Housing First is designed for.

Housing First in England is closer to Housing First in Italy (Lancione et al., 2018) than in some other North Western European countries, as resources are tight, often time-limited, and projects have, until quite recently, often been small scale. As in Italy, the homelessness sector itself, including Homeless Link, the national membership charity for homelessness organisations in England and the *Housing First England*[1] network it developed, which has parallels with *Housing First Italia*[2], led by fio.PSD, was instru-

1 https://hfe.homeless.org.uk

2 http://www.housingfirstitalia.org

mental in advocating wider use of Housing First. The UK national homelessness charity, Crisis, has also become very active in promoting the development and strategic integration of Housing First.[3] Local housing authorities, the elected local/municipal governments with responsibility for homelessness strategy, and central English government were slightly late to the party but are now actively commissioning and experimenting with Housing First services. England is still developing national strategy in relation to Housing First and service provision remains uneven, whereas Scotland has moved more definitely towards a national programme and Housing First is integral to homelessness strategy in Wales and Northern Ireland (Wilson and Loft, 2021).

Growth has been rapid, fuelled in part by the successes reported by research and in part by the homeless sector and commissioners sharing positive experiences in adopting Housing First. In 2017, according to Housing First England, there were around 32 Housing First services operational in England (where around 80% of the UK population live) compared to around 115 by early 2021.

Experiencing the human dimensions of what Housing First can accomplish has left a deep impression on me as an academic and as a policy researcher, who has now spent the best part of 30 years working on ways to try to end and prevent homelessness. In part, my ideas about Housing First have been influenced by how English homelessness research generally tends to get done, i.e., usually pretty cheaply, and reflecting practice in the homelessness sector itself, largely based on talking to people about their experiences of using services, emphasising participant-led and co-productive research techniques that are designed to enable them to talk about what is important to them.

My views of Housing First were, therefore, primarily influenced by what the people using the 11 English services I have looked at, so far, have told me. Working on the ground, as I always have, I saw people with complex needs who were in their 40s, who had *never* held any sort of tenancy, being successfully housed, alongside people who had been stuck in emergency and temporary supported housing for years and years, or who had been kicked out of every homelessness service in an area at one time or another, also being successfully rehoused. In talking to around 120 people using Housing First services in England, over the course of eight years or so, I found their opinions about Housing First were overwhelmingly (if not exclusively) positive.

Over time, my initial doubts about the coherence of Housing First have started to be addressed by ever increasing attention being paid to fidelity (see for example, Issue 12(3) of this journal). The Canadian (Goering et al., 2014) and French (DIHAL,

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3 https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/the-plan-to-end-homelessness-full-version/solutions/chapter-9-the-role-of-housing-first-in-ending-homelessness/

2016; Estecahandy et al., 2018) experimental trials have also shown clear positive impacts on health and wellbeing, alongside reductions in emergency health and mental health service use. These impacts were not uniform, but they were tangible, and in a smaller and more limited way, were echoed by our own research in England.

By the mid 2010s, the global evidence base, in relation to Housing First's effectiveness in ending homelessness among people with complex needs, had reached a point where disputing it started to look irrational (Pleace, 2018). Fidelity was also more clearly on the agenda in the UK than I had worried would be the case, which meant that the idea of Housing First as a relatively intensive service, providing support for as long as was needed, was mainstream.

Housing First is not perfect. Some issues with fidelity, consistency of outcomes and some questions about service design remain. However, the weight of evidence, including that I have gathered myself and with colleagues, shows that Housing First very often presents a practical, effective solution to homelessness among people with high and complex needs. In the mid 2010s, I began to work with Homeless Link and Housing First England and, with support from Sam Tsemberis and colleagues across Europe, wrote the *Housing First Guide Europe*[4] (2016), and thus my pivot from sceptic to active (albeit still not entirely uncritical) advocate was completed.

The first two papers on Housing First reviewed here, one by Eide and one by Rufo, were published, respectively, under the auspices of the Manhattan Institute and the Heritage Foundation. The Manhattan Institute dates from the late 1970s and has longstanding links with the Reaganite (or for Europeans, Thatcherite) Monetarist policy agenda. This means reducing the scale and scope of the state, cutting taxation, implementing drastic cuts to welfare/social protection spending, combined with deregulation of markets, and privatisation of state-run programmes and activities. Their website notes:

> *The Manhattan Institute is a think tank whose mission is to develop and disseminate new ideas that foster greater economic choice and individual responsibility.*[5]

The Heritage Foundation, dating from the early 1970s, has a broadly similar outlook, but there is a more explicit link to the American far-right conception of individual freedom, framed by a emphasis on minimising the role of government and extent of taxation. More explicit alignment with current Republican Party messaging is also evident, at the time of writing, the website notes:

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4 https://housingfirsteurope.eu/guide/

5 https://www.manhattan-institute.org/about

Our country is under attack from radical Leftists who have hijacked protests, created violence and division, and undermined the rule of law that ensures peace and security.[6]

Eide's paper begins by asserting that Housing First has been an unqualified failure in the USA. One of the arguments presented reflects earlier criticism of Housing First, that positive outcomes are largely confined to higher residential stability, with outcomes in terms of health, wellbeing, and socioeconomic integration being much weaker. The papers referred to do indeed record both variations in outcomes and limitations in effectiveness. Most are papers with which I am familiar and, in some instances, have authors who I know and have worked with. None of this work calls Housing First a simple, outright failure. Papers that suggest areas for improvement to, or better evidence on, different aspects of Housing First, an approach that frequently ends homelessness among people with complex needs, are presented as saying Housing First is nothing short of being a disastrous policy. Eide asserts that Housing First, while still effective on a case by case basis in terms of delivering residential stability, is inherently ineffective in reducing homelessness. He notes:

… no community has truly ended homelessness using Housing First, and certainly not any community facing crisis-level homelessness. We would not say that a community has ended murder based upon a qualitative analysis of its police department, but rather the absence of murder. (Eide, 2020, p.11)

Another argument, again drawn from earlier academic criticism of Housing First, is that cost savings fall away quite quickly if someone using Housing First was not a very high cost, high risk individual. This means that someone must be in the 'Million Dollar Murray' (Gladwell, 2006) group of people experiencing homelessness presenting with multiple needs and very high rates of contact with emergency health, mental health services, and the criminal justice system.

A $1 investment in Housing First may be offset by 30 cents in savings on other service systems, but that still means that the government is 70 cents larger. (Eide, 2020, p.14)

Cost effectiveness in a wider sense, i.e., as public spending that represents a good return on investment because Housing First often ends a uniquely damaging form of human distress including mitigation, if not always removal, of the negative effects of homelessness on health and wellbeing, is not considered. Nothing about Housing First is described as effective, although at various points the paper records both success in residential stability (ending homelessness) and, albeit it argues that it is only in relation to high cost, high risk individuals, significant savings in public expenditure. Eide notes:

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6 https://www.heritage.org

> *Housing First has not been demonstrated to be capable of saving costs for entire systems any more than it has been demonstrated to be capable of ending homelessness for entire communities.* (Eide, 2020, p.15)

For Eide, solutions to homelessness must centre on correcting behaviours that are self-destructive, which means treatment, behavioural modification and labour market activation must all be prioritised:

> *Housing First is the dominant policy framework for homeless services. Yet, after years of implementation, communities are not close to ending homelessness. If homeless services systems can't focus as much on substance abuse, unemployment, and other social ills as they do on residential stability, those challenges will simply be left to other social-services systems. In light of these facts, a certain reorientation is justified.* (Eide, 2020, p.17)

Rufo (2020) mirrors these arguments. The scale of expenditure on Housing First and related services by Federal government is noted and, again, expenditure on these kinds of service is described as inherently ineffective.

> *Progressive political leaders have insisted that homelessness is caused by lack of affordable housing, but in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, the number of people on the streets has increased year over year despite large-scale investments in subsidized and permanent supportive housing… In order to reduce homelessness, policymakers at all levels must understand that chronic and long-term homelessness is not primarily a housing problem – it is a human problem.* (p.2)

The next step in this dance is easy to predict:

> *Housing First has housing-retention rates of 80 percent, but does not improve substance abuse, mental health, or employment outcomes. Treatment First has housing-retention rates of 40 percent, but significantly improves substance abuse, mental health, and employment outcomes – and moves many people into self-sufficiency and private-market housing.* (p.7)

And:

> *While there is still a need for permanent supportive housing for the severely disabled and chronically homeless, the vast majority of the homeless would be better served in treatment and recovery programs that promote self-sufficiency.* (p.8)

We are told that there is 'devastating evidence' from the Canadian RCT about the ineffectiveness of Housing First in Canada (there is not, on the contrary the programme was a success that has been expanded upon, see Goering et al., 2014), alongside an assertion that Housing First has *no* impact on drug/alcohol use, mental health, or general well-being (also untrue). As the paper continues, we are told:

In Executive Order 13828, President Donald Trump recognized that the welfare system, which would include many Housing First programs, "still traps many recipients… in poverty and is in need of further reform and modernization in order to increase self-sufficiency, well-being, and economic mobility. (p.9)

Rufo also disputes data from Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Federal department with responsibility for national homelessness strategy, suggesting that numbers of people experiencing long histories of homelessness have fallen because of a mix of Housing First, housing-led, and preventative strategies, by disputing the quality of the data. Eide takes a similar line with veteran homelessness, asserting that falls in homelessness associated with the use of Housing First/housing-led models by Veteran Affairs are a misrepresentation, because the 'real' cause is that the total number of veterans has fallen. A later paper (Rufo, 2021) offers more of the same:

Moreover, as a large body of evidence demonstrates, Housing First programs generally do not reduce substance abuse, psychiatric symptoms, and (in some studies) even the rate of death—the very human factors that are central to the experience of homelessness. Many Housing First programs simply transfer the dysfunction of the street to subsidized apartment complexes. (p.2)

These two papers are not works of systematic analysis, Eide's runs to 24 pages including references and Rufo's to only 14 pages, so in terms of actual material, there is not a great deal to review. Neither paper contains any original research but are instead put together via haphazard referencing to a mix of some academic research and some policy documents and reports. Neither paper employs a rapid evidence review or systematic review methodology nor presents any sort of framework for the analysis that is offered.

The portrayal of the evidence base around LRT is highly distorted, suggesting a lot more evidence and opinion in favour of treatment led models, over and above Housing First, than is actually the case. This is not to suggest that Housing First does not continue to have its critics in North America, including those who advocate greater use of LRT and who dispute the strength of the evidence, but those critics do not feel the need to pretend that Housing First is simply a disaster (Baxter et al., 2019; Tsai, 2020). As is the case in some other recent American criticism of Housing First, positive overseas evidence, including from the Canadian and French experimental trials, is ignored.

The point at which both papers really go off the map is in relation to the claims that Housing First is ineffective because homelessness still exists and has increased in some areas of the USA. To be clear, the argument is exactly the same as saying you should not keep spending money on a hospital because building one and

funding it did not stop people getting ill, or to employ the criminal justice analogy used by Eide, it is pointless to spend any more money on a police department, because you already did, and yet crime is still happening.

Neither paper feels the need to engage with the possibility that someone might use the data on success in residential stability to argue that if there were *less* Housing First there might be rather more homelessness among people with complex needs, or, indeed, that *more* Housing First might reduce overall levels of long-term and recurrent homelessness in the US. Both papers start from the premise that Housing First is irredeemably, unquestionably bad, so no case can possibly be made for retaining or expanding it.

Tying themselves into illogical knots, where Housing First does reduce homelessness through enhancing residential stability, but also has no effect on homelessness levels, simply does not matter. If you are looking for logical, evidence based homelessness policy, you are not the constituency that is being appealed to, and, should this malign nonsense offend your 'progressive' sensibilities, then so much the better, as that is precisely the point.

These papers do not simply contain elements of deliberate misreading and misrepresentation of the existing evidence base, they are both *comprised* of deliberate misreading and misrepresentation of the evidence base. Almost nothing asserted in either paper is backed by any evidence in the unqualified way that the authors assert. When actual data and results are referred to, the results are taken out of context and their implications are distorted. These papers contain no real analysis, neither represents a well-informed or thoughtful Conservative critique of the limitations of Housing First, which it would be entirely possible to construct. Both papers are Trumpian agitprop.

The poor quality of the work and of the arguments employed are in some senses immaterial. The actual narrative is that all social problems are individual in nature, caused if not by illness, then by criminality and deviance; what Gowan (2010) calls the 'sickness' and 'sin' narratives about homelessness. The other goal is to constantly reinforce narratives that anyone who 'fails' in unregulated capitalism has only themselves to blame and that discipline and correction are the answer, that 'big' government, particularly liberal or socialist big government must, by its very nature, be inefficient and repressive. These ideas are not merely a smokescreen for rapacious billionaires who want to live untaxed and unregulated lives, there is ideology, one might even say philosophy underpinning elements of the alt-right, particularly in relation to Neoreaction or NRx ideas (Burrows, 2019).

In what turned out to be one of the last gasps of Trumpism, for the time being at least, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, which had long advocated Housing First, began to move away from it. The Director, Robert Marbut, appointed in late 2019, described himself as an advocate of 'housing fourth', in which assistance must be 'earned' by people experiencing homelessness and advocated LRT.[7] It seems unlikely that Federal funding for Housing First would have survived a second Trump administration.

From a European perspective, this might all seem rather remote. Housing First appears to dominate European debates about what an effective homelessness strategy should look like and the shape that homelessness services should take. Housing First has shifted European discussions about how to end homelessness among people with high and complex needs from the best way to provide treatment followed by housing, to a dialogue about how to solve these forms of homelessness by providing Housing First.

Housing First lies at the core of Danish, Dutch, and French policy, is prominent in debates about homelessness in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, is significant in Ireland and, increasingly, in the now politically distant, but still physically proximate, UK, particularly in Scotland.[8] Finland's version of 'Housing First' is and always was distinctly Finnish, a home-grown ethos and philosophy that has produced a uniquely strong, housing-led, integrated strategy that has greatly reduced long-term and recurrent homelessness. However, while the Finns did not copy the idea from America (Allen et al., 2020), they share the same direction of travel as is found across much of Northern Europe, i.e., the solution to long-term homelessness among people with complex needs is seen as being simultaneous provision of settled housing and intensive, integrated case management that combines housing, social, and health services. Even in those European countries where Housing First services are not yet operational, or where only a handful of services are functioning, the *idea* of Housing First is often being discussed, with a view to building services and programmes (Pleace et al., 2019).

On the surface, *Close to Home: Delivering a national Housing First programme in England* produced by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) (2021) seems very different indeed from the criticisms of Housing First examined above. CSJ is, like the Manhattan Institute and the Heritage Foundation, a 'think-tank' and was founded by a Thatcherite member of parliament Ian Duncan Smith and associates in 2004. CSJ differs from the two American 'think tanks' in recognising structural disadvantage and social issues like racism and sexism as barriers to equality and social justice, does not present the same simplified narrative that all social problems are

7 https://nlihc.org/resource/robert-marbut-confirmed-head-us-interagency-council-homelessness

8 https://homelessnetwork.scot/housing-first/

the result of 'sin' or 'sickness', nor does it reject government intervention out of hand. Rather, CSJ works within a narrative that presents social problems as people facing behavioural barriers, alongside some systemic barriers, to success within a low tax, low regulation free market system with limited social protection/welfare systems, never questioning the fundamental validity of this form of economic and social organisation.[9]

It is not an exaggeration to say that CSJ's report on Housing First is extremely enthusiastic about the approach. Building on its earlier, equally positive report (Gousy, 2017), CSJ's verdict on Housing First could not, on the surface, seem more different from that advanced by Eide (2020) and Rufo (2020; 2021):

> *The CSJ is therefore calling on Government to deliver a national Housing First programme and dramatically increase the number of Housing First places in England. Housing First should become the principal approach for people whose homelessness is compounded by multiple disadvantage.* (CSJ, 2020, p.11)

Key recommendations include dedicated, sustained funding to facilitate a national programme in England, mirroring developments in Scotland and an increase in social housing so the right form of adequate, affordable housing with security of tenure is available to allow Housing First to operate well. Rather than criticise Housing First's operation and ethos, the CSJ report presents a clear summary of how a service should operate, drawing on *Housing First England's* guidance on fidelity, which in turn draws on the Housing First Guide Europe. The report notes that Housing First needs to be understood as a service model for people with high and complex needs, not as a homelessness strategy in and of itself, citing me (Pleace, 2018) as it does so, which at a quick count, it does around another 16 times.

Brexit notwithstanding, it is tempting to react with an element of European smugness to the differences between the attitudes of a right-wing British think-tank compared to some of the American versions. The disregard for evidence and illogic is absent and instead the political right is making an evidenced case for Housing First and is advocating significantly *more* government spending to get it into place. Of course, CSJ is hardly akin to the *Rassemblement national,* or even *UKIP,* and while those and other popular social and political movements are (arguably) skirting around the edges of Neoreaction, the political right within the European establishment, manifested in CSJ, is saying:

> … *Government should build on the foundations laid by the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Housing First pilots and commit an annual budget of £150.3 million* [€174.6m/ $211.7m] *for three years to deliver 16 450 Housing First places in England.* (CSJ, 2020, p.12)

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9 https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/about/the-five-pathways

To put this into context, the Government had committed £28m to three national Housing First pilots in 2017, influenced in part by the first CSJ report on Housing First (Gousy, 2017). So, the argument was that there should be an almost fivefold increase in spending. The estimate of places needed was based on research commissioned by the homelessness sector, albeit at the lower end of a range of between 16 450 and 29 700 places (Blood et al., 2018). The CSJ report is also 115 pages long, contains original research and extensive referencing, compared to the 38 pages of the Eide and Rufo papers combined.

Trumpian attacks on Housing First seem remote, because the European – or at least European adjacent – mainstream political right is a fan, not an enemy of Housing First. On the surface, even if the American Right is trying to get rid of Housing First, indeed is openly attacking it, it might not look like this is something that should concern us from a European perspective.

Hansen-Löfstrand and Juhila (2012) criticised Housing First from a Nordic perspective because they saw the same emphasis on individual pathology, the same emphasis on behavioural change, albeit through a decidedly more relaxed and harm reduction based model of 'recovery orientation' and 'active engagement', as characterised LRT services and their European equivalents. Rather than representing something truly progressive, Housing First was posited on the same logic as earlier services, there was something wrong with people experiencing homelessness, something they had at least to some extent brought upon themselves, and it was their behaviour that needed to be changed.

Asked to comment on the Hansen-Löfstrand and Juhila paper, I criticised it, not for the central thesis, which I thought had substance, but because I thought Housing First was, at its heart, progressive. I argued that in the cultural and political context of the USA, completing a paradigmatic shift away from the idea of the individual and individual responsibility had been too big a step to make. This meant that while elements of language and practice remained, Housing First was not centred on behavioural 'correction' in the way some earlier services had been, it recognised the human rights and humanity of the people it was working to support (Pleace, 2013).

In the early 2010s, I was worried about a Thatcherite weaponization of Housing First to portray homelessness as individual pathology. These concerns were rooted in the decades-long approach of successive governments to present homelessness *as* street based homelessness and to highlight the high and complex needs of people living on the street, including behaviours that could be portrayed as individual choice, particularly addiction and mental illness (Anderson, 1993). Thus, in the 2010s, 2 000 or 5 000 or so people experiencing street homelessness in England would be presented as 'homelessness' and relatively large (and often very expensive) programmes mounted to meet their complex needs (Wilson and Barton,

2021), while the 120 000 statutorily homeless children in emergency accommodation at any one point (whose parents tended to be poor, but neither mentally ill or addicted to anything), would not be the subject of any press conferences or announcements about special programmes (Barton and Wilson, 2020).

By the mid 2010s, these worries about distorted use of Housing First had started to fade. There was evidence that the ideas and ethos behind the original Housing First, and the ways it was being implemented in Europe, were progressive and had quite a degree of fidelity to the original American model (Greenwood et al., 2013).

The CSJ report presents a progressive front, but it focuses on Housing First as a solution to street based homelessness in England among people with high and complex needs in England, not to long-term and recurrent homelessness in a broader sense. In this, it reinforces longstanding narratives that homelessness is, or is largely accounted for, by people sleeping on the streets. This is an unusual position because it adopts a narrower definition not only of homelessness, but of the population of people who experience long-term and recurrent homelessness. For example, this does not include women with complex needs who may often avoid sleeping on the street and services instead making their own, precarious arrangements with friends, relatives, or acquaintances (Bretherton, 2017). Nor does it explicitly encompass populations with high and complex needs 'stuck' in homelessness services, who do not sleep on the street, a population for whom one of the first UK pilots, Camden Housing First, was designed for (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). Specific targeting of Housing First is not unique, for example, the Canadian and French national programmes are designed for people experiencing homelessness with a psychiatric diagnosis, but nowhere else in the world that I am aware of uses Housing First as a service only for people experiencing street based homelessness. A chapter is also devoted to the high and complex needs of people experiencing street based homelessness. Focusing on reflecting narratives around homelessness as 'sin' and 'sickness', the wider, generally structural, and social causation of the (much larger) issue of family homelessness is not mentioned, although Housing First models can be used where a parent or parents have high support needs. Notwithstanding, lone women (experiencing street based homelessness) with support needs linked to domestic abuse are mentioned. Through individual vignettes and across a wider narrative, the nature of homelessness is repeatedly presented within the same framework:

> *The lives of the most entrenched rough sleepers are frequently marked by early experiences of trauma, as well as substance dependency, family breakdown, poor health and sometimes criminality. For this group, the path to stability is a steep and often treacherous hill to climb.* (CSJ, 2020, p.6)

Now, this kind of stuff is problematic on several levels. First, while there are limitations in UK evidence, the global evidence base raises severe doubts about how 'sin' and/or 'sickness' leads to homelessness (again presented as street based homelessness) narratives. The work of Culhane and others in the US is interesting here, because it disputes the narrative that addiction and mental illness are the precursor and/or trigger for homelessness despite clear evidence that they can arise after homelessness occurs. Culhane and others also noticed something else about long term and repeated homelessness, which was everyone was a similar sort of age (Culhane et al., 2013). Long-term and recurrent homelessness associated with high cost, high risk populations was divided into similarly aged cohorts, cohorts who would have been in early adulthood during major recessions, if these forms of homelessness were being consistently triggered by individual characteristics, needs, experiences, and choices, the flow would be steady. But it was not, other factors were at play and one of them was what happened to mental and physical health, social connections, and life chances when poor people fell into homelessness and could not get quickly out of it. Over time, the ageing nature of homelessness among people with high and complex needs in the US has created new challenges (Culhane et al., 2019).

Beyond this, the terminology is a narrative construct, not something based on evidence. 'Most entrenched rough sleepers' is not defined, but the idea that there is a group of somehow deliberately persistent long term people experiencing street homelessness in the UK is not supported by data. Taking the example of the CHAIN database, which provides longitudinal data on service contact by homeless and street using populations, including outreach, shelter, and supported housing services, the chief characteristics is *churn* with people moving in and out of street based homelessness. Government initiatives including *No Second Night Out* have reduced the time people spending more than one or two nights on the streets (Wilson and Barton, 2021). 'Entrenched' people experiencing street homelessness are pretty difficult to find, and always have been (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004), because the reality was always that people generally try to get a roof of some sort over their head, or at least get into shelter, whenever they can. The idea, however, of the 'entrenched', the deviant, addicted, mentally ill individual is crucial to right wing narratives of homelessness, that homelessness is about sin and sickness, not systems. The realities of British homelessness are quite different, most of it is not street based sleeping and the common characteristic is not mental illness or addiction, but poverty (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018).

One point here is that the Devil hath power to assume a pleasing shape, that the hard right might, figuratively speaking, be sipping a cocktail on the terrace, rather than wandering about with a shotgun and its MAGA hat on the wrong way around. Housing First has been processed and presented in a very different way, in a rather

more subtle way, as a compassionate, respectful, as well as economically and socially efficient, policy, very different from the tendency to discipline and punish, which was the British response until well into the twentieth century, and which is still mainstream in some parts of the USA:

> *Houston, Texas, is the untold homelessness success story. Democratic mayor Sylvester Turner has argued that the city must balance the provision of services with enforcement of the law against street camping—a combination he refers to as "tough love." This approach has paid dividends. Between 2011 and 2019, the city reduced homelessness by a remarkable 54 percent as it continued to sky-rocket in cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. The mayor consistently enforced the law against camping and drug consumption, even fighting and winning a lawsuit against the American Civil Liberties Union, which had attempted to hamstring enforcement efforts.* (Rufo, 2021, p.3)

One will not find the CSJ advancing Houston's (alleged) homelessness policy as the way to end street based homelessness in England. It advocates the antithesis of this, or its European equivalent of Hungary effectively seeking to make homelessness illegal. CSJ instead commends Housing First. The narratives, however, that homelessness is addiction and mental illness, bad parenting, poor choices, and an unwillingness or incapacity to make positive personal changes, are in essence the same. Housing First is being used to present homelessness in a certain way, to downplay the systemic causes, to downplay the responsibility of the State and, above all, to create a disconnect between the idea that homelessness could – at least in part – be not about sin or sickness, but instead be linked to systems and to what the consequences of a deregulated, highly unequal, free market society with limited social protection actually are.

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Review Essay: Ethnography and Understanding Homelessness

Maeve McGlenaghan (2020)

No Fixed Abode: Life and death among the UK's Forgotten Homeless

London: Picador, pp.361

Paul Moran & Frances Atherton (2019)

The Philosophy of Homelessness: Barely Being

London: Routledge, pp.184

Introduction

No Fixed Abode and *The Philosophy of Homelessness* are impressive and innovative additions to the established body of ethnographic work on homelessness. Both give voice to people experiencing homelessness, narrating frank and revealing individual accounts of life experiences. There is much regret and some hope in these accounts, but mostly it is resignation. For 18 months Maeve McClenaghan, an investigative journalist, traversed the UK – from Belfast to Glasgow to London to Brighton – gathering firsthand information. As the subtitle of her book indicates, her research, at least initially, was driven as much by a concern with the deaths of homeless people as with their lives: when, where, and how many died, what were their back-stories, the entanglements of their lives that led to their often premature death, or – in too many cases – suicide? Paul Moran and Frances Atherton spent five years researching the homeless communities of Chester, an historic, touristic town with a population of c. 80 000, located in the northwest of England, 16 miles south of Liverpool. They focused on teasing out individual life courses and giving expression to personal experiences, hopes, and disappointments; and in a wholly innovative approach they seek an understanding of homeless behaviour and experience in the work of philosophers (more on this later).

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Telling 'Practice Stories' and Ethnographic Method

In the Author's Notes which preface her book, McClenaghan states without elaboration or explanation, 'This is a work of non-fiction' (p. xi).[1] In making this declaration, McClenaghan and the publishers ensure that there is no obfuscation regarding the deplorable life and death experiences she documents; these are real events, not the invention of a novelist's imagination. McClenaghan's literary style is characterised by a first-person narrative that powerfully conveys the intimacy and immediacy of the personal 'stories' she records. 'Story-telling' (as opposed to 'telling-stories' i.e., fabrication) has a long and venerable history in ethnography. James Clifford (1986), along with many scholars before and after (e.g. Geertz, 1988; Heikkilä, 2020; Narayan, 1999), was comparatively relaxed about the use of 'ethnographic fiction': the use of 'literary techniques to craft conventional ethnographic materials… into a compelling story' (Jacobson and Larsen, 2014, p.179).[2] For McClenaghan, her investigation 'was a project to get to the truth and to tell stories that were being forgotten – or worse ignored' (p.338). To the best of my recollection, the word 'ethnography' never appears in McClenaghan's book (there is no index), yet evidently, she is up to date with modern ethnographic practice. Indeed, in a concluding chapter (pp.364-368), she details her methodological practices re participant observation: informed consent, reflexivity, anonymity, and transparency; thereby formally demonstrating her conformity to the best ethnographic traditions (see Hoolachan, 2016).

Moran and Atherton also employ first person story telling to great effect. Their lengthy 3-5-year immersion in the space and places of Chester's homeless communities afforded them privileged insight and familiarity with the quotidian routines of many of Chester's homeless people, allowing them to develop trusted and close friendships. As a consequence, Moran and Atherton's stories often have a depth which rivals those of McClenaghan whose homeless contacts were, as a consequence of her itinerant fieldwork, generally more purposeful and fleeting. In contrast with McClenaghan's concern to demonstrate her ethnographic *bono fides*, Moran and Atherton deploy their ethnography with a surety that comes with familiarity, they are academics well versed in this methodology. The evidence of their expertise in this regard is apparent throughout their book.

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[1] Matthew Desmond (2016, p. xi) makes the same declaration at the beginning of his acclaimed book *Evicted*, an account of poverty and homelessness in the USA that closely resembles *No Fixed Abode* in approach and content.

[2] It is a moot point as to whether the fictional accounts of homelessness in say William Kennedy's 1983 novel *Ironweed* or John Berger's 1998 *King: A Street Story* are any less evocative and 'true-to-life'. Stories are a form of knowledge, they often have as much potential to inform and instruct as many more academic, non-fictional ethnographic accounts.

There is a further sense in which the ethnography on display is sound in that the authors of both books demonstrate a keen sense of 'context'. Theirs is an interpretative ethnography that complies with Clifford Geertz's (1973) concept of 'thick description' in that their writing is sensitive to the subjectivities of the intentions and motivations of the homeless people participating in their research. Additionally, McClenaghan, Moran, and Atherton have a tenable claim to compliance with what O'Reilly (2015) has labelled 'practice stories'.[3]

> Practice stories pay attention to people's feelings and emotions, their experiences, and their free choices, but also to the wider constraints and opportunities within which they act. More than that, practice stories take account of how these different features of social life interact, and thereby how structures… get produced or reproduced (O'Reilly, 2015, pp.15-16).

For O'Reilly, practice stories are the 'the central emerging trend' in ethnography. In assembling such stories ethnographers not only provide remarkable accounts of individual and community life, but also engage with the perennial debate regarding the agency-vs-structure dualism; a debate that has rumbled on in social sciences over the past several decades.[4] Practice stories set ambitious and encompassing targets. The sensitivity of all three authors to 'context'- to the problematic interpretation of agency/structure intersections – are palpable and clear. McClenaghan, for example, demonstrates an acute awareness of the failures of successive UK governments in dealing with homelessness. Indeed Leilani Farha, a UN special rapporteur on adequate housing, is full of praise in her endorsement of *No Fixed Abode*:

> '[while] (t)elling rich and varied personal stories of the path to homelessness… [McClenaghan]… keeps a steady gaze on the societal structures and government policies that make homelessness part of the UK's socio-economic fabric'. (copied from the back cover of the book)

Following the publication of *No Fixed Abode*, McClenaghan recalls,

> While researching the book I was often shocked at just how fragile the system is, how easy it is to fall through the net. Budget cuts to mental health services, and substance abuse treatment programmes, the freeze on housing benefits, the hostile immigration environment and spiralling private rents have all culminated in a perfect storm, leading inevitably to the homelessness crisis that we see today (McClenaghan, 2020).

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3 Practice stories are a formulation derived in part from Bourdieu's (1972) work on practice theory. Friedrich Engels' (1987) *Condition of the working class in England 1844* – described as an 'ethnography of the proletariat'- is sometimes cited as a precursor (see Magubane, 1985).

4 See also Wacquant (2002) and Pleace (2016) for consideration of these issues in homelessness studies.

Moran and Atherton are similarly categorical,

> …while the daily events of the homeless people that populate this work are arresting enough in themselves, it is their implications, their ontological and political implications that are most shocking and telling about the brutal and parlous state of contemporary first world society and the growing number of marginalised and dispossessed people it begets (p.x).[5]

These convictions pervade the story telling of all three authors.

No Fixed Abode: Life and Death Among the UK's Forgotten Homeless

> *No Fixed Abode* is the product of nearly three years of research. Through the stories of those living homeless, their families and the people working to support them, the book charts how the safety net we expect to save us all fails time after time (McClenaghan, 2020).

Dying homeless

McClenaghan's interest in homelessness had already been piqued by news reports of alarming increases in homelessness in London and by her own encounters with people experiencing street homelessness on her daily commute to work, when in the winter of 2017 she read of the death of 'Tony' (a pseudonym) from exposure in the garden of the house from which he had been evicted a few months previously. As a campaigning journalist of some repute, [6] McClenaghan's reporter instincts homed in on the question, how many people were dying homeless in the UK and were their numbers increasing (McClenaghan, 2020)? After several weeks of research McClenaghan realised what many already knew, that there was no central official facility systematically recording the deaths of people experiencing homelessness. Shocked and incredulous, she set about constructing her own database. With the help of Bureau Local – an arm of the London based Bureau of Investigative Journalism – McClenaghan set up the 'Dying Homeless' project. Between October 2017 and March 2019, Dying Homeless documented the deaths of 800 homeless people, recording (when known) the name, age, and gender, as well as the location and circumstances of each death (Bureau Local, n.d.).

5 Extracted from the *Foreword* which, in departure from tradition, is written by the authors themselves.

6 McClenaghan has an impressive journalistic reputation: https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/profile/maevemcclenaghan

Paralleling the collection of data, 180 articles were published in a variety of newspapers and other media (Bureau Local, 2020). Alerted to her project, the ONS (the UK's Organisation for National Statistics) made contact. Chapter 7 records the meeting between the ONS statistician responsible for death records and McClenaghan. The statistician was acutely aware of the lack of systematic recording of homeless deaths and had been working on ideas for their official counting for some time; this was a meeting of the minds. Within a matter of months of this meeting, the ONS produced its first experimental[7] data for England and Wales on the deaths of people experiencing homelessness between 2013 and 2017 (ONS, 2018); shortly afterwards the NRS (National Records of Scotland) produced similar data for Scotland (NRS, 2020).[8] Since then, updated estimates for 2018 and 2019 have been published (ONS, 2020; NRS, 2021). The advisory contribution of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (i.e., McClenaghan) is prominently acknowledged by the ONS. The experimental data produced by the ONS and NRS provides a provisional answer to the question McClenaghan posed at the beginning of her research. Year on year, there are more people living on the streets (an estimated 169% national increase, 2010-18), more people are dying homeless (a 7% increase in England and Wales, 2018-19), and their proportion has been increasing (6.5% increase in deaths per million, 2013-19).

At the conclusion of her research in 2019, McClenaghan handed her Dying Homeless database of 800 records to the London based Museum of Homelessness. The Museum has embraced the spirit of McClenaghan's project and continues her work. Data published on the Museum's website takes the form of a virtual memorial wall on which the name, date of death, and age at death for each homeless person is displayed. Of the 2 466 deaths documented at the time of writing this review, 1 626 were unnamed and 70 were recorded as anonymous, together they accounted for 69% of the total.[9]

Homeless in Britain[10]

By her own admission, McClenaghan had little knowledge of the history or causes of homelessness when she embarked on her study. Her 18-month investigation of homelessness in Britain, sparked by her Dying Homeless project, changed that. Her ethnographic fieldwork encompassed a meticulous search of local newspaper

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7 ONS employs capture-recapture stochastic modelling using death certificate data – see ONS, 2018 for details; the methodology is undergoing evaluation and awaits verification.

8 At the time of writing the Northern Ireland Housing Executive had not produced equivalents.

9 Recently the Guardian newspaper has emulated the Museum in publishing its own *Tributes to Homeless People who have Died*: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/ng-interactive/2019/dec/20/your-tributes-to-homeless-people-who-have-died

10 McClenaghan uses 'Britain' interchangeably with 'UK', reflecting common parlance.

reports and archive material, attending funerals and court proceedings, checking coroner, police, and medical records together with freedom of information requests, interviews and conversations with people experiencing homelessness and their families, visiting squats, shadowing support workers, and taking part in an overnight count of people experiencing street homelessness (in Islington, London). Shaping this evidence into a coherent account, McClenaghan has produced an unrivalled compendium of frequently tragic, though occasionally heartening, narratives recounting the lives and deaths of people experiencing homelessness in twenty-first century Britain -- a portrait of Britain unknown to many, ignored by others, and contested by some.

McClenaghan's portrayal of homelessness captures the complexities and 'messiness' (McClenaghan, 2021) of the day to day lives of homeless people whether rough sleeping, in overcrowded temporary accommodation, in communal shelters or in insecure squats, where the routines of survival (food, ablutions, sleep, security) can be disrupted by mental malaise (depression, poor self-esteem, fear, disorientation) and the impediments of physical disabilities; where resolve and ambition are undone by poor decision making often associated with substance use; where the camaraderie of the homeless community – though often 'more honoured in the breach than the observance' – contrasts with public indifference and hostility; where homeless lives are made tolerable – at least for short periods – by the kindness of strangers and the support offered by charities, volunteer workers, food banks and street kitchens; where fortitude and resilience are sorely tested by a dysfunctional social welfare system and by the seemingly insurmountable obstacles and constraints imposed by hostile legislation and indifferent political decision making.

McClenaghan is a talented journalist and an accomplished writer with a surfeit of empathy and compassion. As her book demonstrates, she is well able to capture the human stories that lie behind bland reports and stark statistics: *No Fixed Abode* is exposé of the highest order.

Given McClenaghan's achievements it seems a bit invidious to introduce some critical observations. Yet there are times when she falls short of the demanding standards of O'Reilly's 'practice stories' in that she is guilty of falling into the 'trap' of what has been identified as the 'ethnographic fallacy' (Burawoy, 2013). The ethnographic fallacy has several dimensions of which the most prominent in this context is that McClenaghan's emphasis on relaying the individual stories of people experiencing homelessness tends to overshadow her analysis of the systemic/structural causes that perpetuate homelessness. The most pervasive illustration is McClenaghan's focus on the failures of the social safety net (i.e., the welfare state) to the detriment of the operation of the housing market and housing

policy. For example, in her perfunctory examination of the 1997 Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU, 1997-2002) introduced by Tony Blair's Labour government, McClenaghan simply recounts that,

> 'Funding was pumped into prevention initiatives and given to councils to pay for local support services. Rough-sleeping numbers dropped dramatically… *a decade later the cardboard camps were springing up again*' (p.37, italics added).

The reasons for the failure of the 1997 RSU to halt the re-emergence of street homelessness are never explicitly examined. There is no further reference to the RSU which ceased operating in 2002, or any reference to the 'Rough Sleepers Initiative' (1990-99) that preceded it, nor to the 'No Second Night Out' programme of 2011 or the more recent 'Rough Sleepers initiative' introduced in 2018. Each of these policy programmes are examples of systemic failure. Characterised by limited objectives and short termism, they are little more than 'sticking plasters' for a haemorrhage in the social fabric of society. Accounting for the prevalence and permanence of homelessness in modern Britain (which incudes sheltering in various forms of temporary accommodation as well as rough sleeping) certainly requires examination of austerity cuts to support services – McClenaghan's safety net, but also and more fundamentally necessitates confronting the disfunctionality of a housing market dominated by rentier capitalism (Christophers, 2021).

McClenaghan's inability (or is it reluctance?) to draw out the lessons of the various rough sleeper initiatives is also detrimental to her assessment of the prospects of Housing First to 'solve' the homelessness problem in the UK and elsewhere (Chapter 25). Unduly influenced, perhaps, by a visit to Amsterdam to check out its Housing First programme, McClenaghan's enthusiasm for Housing First lacks informed evaluation. Many studies, and indeed much operational experience, have shown that Housing First, though undoubtedly a very progressive policy, is no silver bullet for the eradication of homelessness (e.g., Allen et al., 2020). Here, perhaps, is the key to understanding McClenaghan's short sightedness. If her citations are a true reflection, she has not consulted any of these 'many studies'. Indeed, her citations are curiously, even alarmingly, devoid of academic references. Only two papers from academic journals are included in her endnotes (there is no bibliography) and the publications of the half dozen or so named academics quoted in her book are exclusively reports for government departments or homeless organisations. Burawoy (2013) attributes the ethnographic fallacy to 'inadequate attention to theory' (p.533) and the absence of academic literature in McClenaghan's text strongly suggests that this is the root of the problem.

The Philosophy of Homelessness: Barely Being

As pointed out in the introduction to this review, while *No Fixed Abode* and *The Philosophy of Homelessness* share a similar ethnographic approach, Moran and Atherton's 'practice stories' are fewer in number but typically more detailed and penetrating in content, reflecting sustained contact and multiple meetings with participants over several years. A further difference between the two books is the extent to which the authors themselves are part of the 'dramatis personae' of their narratives. While McClenaghan is for the most part an 'observer', Moran and Atherton are 'participant observers' in that they are often embedded as passive actors in their practice stories. Additionally, while McClenaghan's narrative, focusing on constraints and prospect, mostly looks 'outwards' exploring the ways homeless people relate to and experience the external (institutional) world of 'the housed'; Moran and Atherton look 'inward', to the 'quotidian level of realisation' (p. x) examining, through the prism of philosophy, motivations, feelings, and personal relationships within Chester's homeless community. Of course, this distinction is not absolute, there is plenty of scrutiny of interpersonal relationships in *No Fixed Abode* and equally Moran and Atherton have much to say, for example, about homeless people's interaction with the criminal justice system. However, I think it fair to say that *No Fixed Abode* – as befits an exposé – is more of an invitation to 'action', [11] while *The Philosophy of Homelessness* – as befits its title – is more 'contemplative'.

The Philosophy of Homelessness is an erudite book, cleverly conceived and eclectic in its coverage of philosophy.[12] In a notable introduction (pp.3-5), Moran and Atherton capture the essence of the homeless 'condition' by juxtaposing the quotidian routines of 'homeless people' with those of 'the housed'. They frame their analysis of homeless routines around the concept of 'being' or more precisely 'being without' – without shelter, money, privacy, belongings, food, certainty, and warmth; without somewhere to wash and sleep; without meaningful agency; without being able to participate in society… without identity or prospects; without 'ways of being' that we (the housed) routinely take for granted… and significantly without the 'right to be' (pp.2-3). And herein lies a conundrum that sporadically surfaces throughout the book, namely the absence of reference to significant published research on homelessness that sometimes overlaps with and mirrors that of Moran and Atherton.

The concept of 'the right to be' is precisely the phrase which the political philosopher Jeremy Waldron used two decades ago to encapsulate his understanding of what it is to be homelessness. Waldron's views and analyses (1991; 2000) bear an

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11 McClenaghan ends her book with instructions on 'What can I do' to help prevent homelessness (pp.339-340).

12 Moran and Atherton's 'philosophy' routinely elides with psychiatry and sociology, with the likes of Lacan and Bourdieu grouped together with Socrates, Kant, Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Derrida.

uncanny similarity to those of Moran and Atherton, yet there is no reference to Waldron in their book. A further omission relates to the concept of ontology, the branch of philosophy which studies, among other things, 'being', 'becoming', and 'reality'- the very essence of Moran and Atherton's research. The first reference to ontology by Moran and Atherton is in their summary statement of the book's objectives on the inside of the front cover:

> *The Philosophy of Homelessness* explores the daily experience of chronic homelessness from a perspective that renders its ontological impress in ways that are explicitly felt, often in forms that are overtly political and exclusionary in character, especially in terms of identity and belonging within the city.

The relevance of ontology for homelessness research links back to the 1960s and the work of R.D. Laing, the psychiatrist who coined the term 'ontological security', a concept that was introduced in the 1990s to Anglophone social research by the sociologist Anthony Giddens. Subsequently it has been adopted as a critical construct in many homelessness studies). As Padgett (2007) suggests, "markers of ontological security such as constancy, daily routines and privacy" are "closely related to having a secure base for identity construction"- that is, a home (see also Stonehouse et al., 2020). While the word 'ontology' frequently occurs in Moran and Atherton's text, there is no overt recognition of the notion of ontological security nor of its importance in relation to homelessness research. Moran and Atherton's apparent unfamiliarity with the work and insights of researchers such as Waldron, Laing, Giddens, and Padgett is symptomatic of their lack of attentiveness to published homelessness literature, an indifference they share with McClenaghan. Among their 100+ cited references, only nine are directly related to homelessness and housing research.

While there is much of interest to students of homelessness in *The Philosophy of Homelessness,* all too often it can be hard to find. Moran and Atherton identify three themes that 'emerge' from their research: 'the economy of chronic addiction and its impact upon the body; the relationship between chronic homelessness and the law; and chronic homelessness and identity and desire'. However, none of these can be easily sourced. Neither chapter headings nor index entries provide much guidance. Coverage of these themes is fragmented and scattered throughout the book, making it difficult for the reader to grasp them in the round. Further, on numerous occasions the book's homelessness message is stymied by prolonged philosophical exegeses. The authors are clearly well schooled in philosophy and cognate disciplines, but for the untutored reader the links between their philosophy and homelessness can be opaque and occasionally border on the perverse. For example, when Socrates ('the father' of Western philosophy who committed suicide) is considered to be 'pretty much the same' (p.104) as Alex (a man experi-

encing homelessness on the streets of Chester with a reputation for saving lives and a severe drug use problem). This judgement was arrived at following a somewhat convoluted discourse on 'mimesis'[13] juxtaposing the work of Leslie Kurke, a distinguished professor of classics, with that of the 'controversial' psychoanalyst Jacque Lacan. It is not at all clear how this discourse is of much or any relevance to the stated aim of the book – elucidating the quotidian routines of Chester's homelessness population. The tendency of Moran and Atherton to 'overplay' their philosophical hand in seeking understanding of people with long histories of homelessness is apparent throughout their book, this can be incredibly frustrating and is frequently irritating, though, it must be admitted, it is also almost always challenging and sometimes enlightening and informative; as with their deliberations on alienation (ref: Marx), abjection (ref: Kristeva), habitus (ref: Bourdieu), and gender relations (ref: Butler, Braidotti).

Beneath the welter of philosophical rumination there are practice stories of the homeless lives of Carrie, Ella, Alex, Sean, Eddie, and others that the authors befriend during their years of research. Moran and Atherton are good story tellers – a talent they share with McClenaghan. Their character vignettes vividly capture the mediations, the motivations, and the good and bad decision making that constitute the homeless experience*.* For example: Carrie, a single woman experiencing homelessness, an anguished substance user, and sometimes dealer with 'a pallid, clammy, pot marked face and a gaunt body' (p.73), has

> '… remarkable fortitude, she meets aversion frequently and crippling administration regularly, but she also encounters philanthropy in many guises'. For Carrie, 'homelessness is existence laid bare… it is full of lack…to wake up in the morning is dependent upon surviving the night… if [she] can avoid being urinated upon, set on fire, beaten, robbed, raped or arrested, a new day will dawn'. [She] 'wears homelessness… when she wakes up she is already dressed… homelessness has a uniform, a particular style, it is a distinctive brand purchased from the [Chester] Share Shop, a mecca for the impoverished'. (Chapter 3, passim).

[13] Mimesis is defined as 'the deliberate imitation of the behaviour of one group by another as a factor in social change'.

Afterword

For a taught course on homelessness in the UK, *No Fixed Abode* and *The Philosophy of Homelessness* would provide worthy bookends. McClenaghan as the accessible introductory and course text with Moran and Atherton providing a challenging conclusion. Matthew Desmond's book *Evicted* – with which *No Fixed Abode* can be compared – has been adopted in North America as a teaching text with a published 'pedagogic guide' (Hudack, n.d.); McClenaghan's work has similar potential.

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Nomad women – America’s houselessness hidden in plain sight

Jessica Bruder

Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century

New York: W.W. Norton, 2017

***Nomadland*, directed by Chloé Zhao, 2020**

Only a few minutes into my first post-lockdown night in a movie theatre, the main character of *Nomadland*, a 60 -year-old or so Fern, played by Frances McDormand, explains: “I’m not homeless, I’m houseless. That’s not the same thing, right?” As a researcher of homelessness, I suddenly felt perplexed. The film is an Academy Award-winning piece indeed, but I didn’t know much about its origin. I read the book straightaway and realised that the film is actually a quasi-documentary, where the events from the book are dramatised and condensed. Linda May, Charlene Swankie, Bob Wells, and others portray themselves in the film. Jessica Bruder followed them for three years, way after the initial report ‘The End of Retirement. When you can’t afford to stop working’ appeared in the Harper’s Magazine in 2014.

The book is about Americans, mostly boomers, who lost their life’s savings and homes in the Great Recession and live in ‘recreational vehicles’ (RVs). They take on seasonal, low-paying, and usually very physically demanding jobs across the country. They staff the peak season in the Amazon warehouses, harvest sugar beet, and work as hosts at campsites and amusement parks. Employers expect them to come with their own housing, which does not mean that the nomads don’t have to pay for a parking spot or commute to work. This mobile workcampers labour force consists mainly of older single people who otherwise can rely only on a Social Security payment of around $500 a month, way too little to even pay the rent.

Throughout the book we learn a number of those life stories. What is not surprising to poverty and homelessness researchers, this precarious housing and employment situation is often not new to them. Many were struggling with poverty, temporary jobs, health problems, and family conflicts all their lives. They have exhausted the kindness of their kin to sleep on a couch and put the rest of their savings in fitting a van. Now

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their lives revolve around basic necessities – finding a safe space to park for the night, a place to take a shower, surviving yet another day of low paying excruciating physical labour with no benefits, health insurance, or time-off.

The severity of these experiences and the unknown scale of the phenomenon is shocking. Even if the HUD-measured extent of homelessness has not changed much since 2008 (Shinn and Khadduri, 2020: 23), the van-dwellers seem not to be the only group of precariously 'housed' Americans that grew after the Great Recession. There is also, for instance, a 'permanent credit underclass', disproportionately Black, which was forced out of their homes due to intensified surveillance of poor people by the credit bureaus. They rely increasingly on 'extended stay' hotels, which offer around 500 000 rooms across the country (Frazier, 2021). Families live there in overcrowded conditions, without basic amenities, and overpay week by week. Work is no escape from the situation. Jobs in the gig economy mean not only a low pay, but also no fixed hours and work-on-demand, so people are sometimes forced to sleep in their cars in between shifts (Lapore, 2021).

All these situations escape the official HUD definition of homelessness and are not included in the 580 466 people reported (in uninhabitable places and in shelters) in a point in time count in 2020 (HUD, 2021). For people portrayed in the book, homelessness is almost always a stigmatising term, a concept from which they want to distance themselves. They are worried that the reporter will depict them as 'a bunch of homeless vagabonds'. Homelessness is called 'the H word', though they themselves prefer the term 'houseless'. After all, they have their pride, they are not 'whiners', and they are free. Many of them also utilise the all-American coping mechanism – positive thinking.

Some of the most interesting parts of the book for me were the descriptions of the mobile living: strategies of stealth parking, using electricity (boondocking), mounting solar panels, and methane detector, and using a plastic bucket for a toilet. Bruder uses the term 'subculture', and it seems right, as the RV dwellers have their own customs (naming their vehicles), own vocabulary, literature, daily routines and annual rituals, camps, get togethers, barter economy, special places, sense of community, and social media. There are fairs selling all the essentials (and especially non-essentials) for living in a van, catering especially for a population of older people (i.e., hearing-aids, Viagra, and dental work). There seems to be a strong sense of a nation-wide community, part of which exists on social media. Many of the people portrayed in the book write blogs or Facebook fan pages (earlier they used discussion groups). Bob Wells runs his YouTube channel and publishes books.

The book is in a sense a page-turner, there are no deeper arguments or long narratives. It follows a number of characters, abandons them, then comes back; the story line is not linear, and it is not always clear when the meetings and conversations take place. In a way, this perhaps reflects the yearly cycle of temporary jobs and seasonal movements of nomads, but it does not make the book particularly easy to follow in detail. Bruder's own experiences of fitting her van and work camping are surprisingly bundled in two chapters (8 and 9) in the middle of the book. Especially here, but also in other places, the book resembles a news reportage more than an ethnography. With the publicity around this book, Bruder is perhaps following a generation of American female journalists-social scientists whose books made it to the syllabi on poverty in America, ethnographic methods, and journalism all around the world (Katherine Newman's No Shame in My Game, 2000; Barbara Ehrenreich's Nickel and Dimed, 2001; or Arlie Hochschield's Strangers in their Own Land, 2016). The authors all went native, were hanging out or hit the road to see 'how the other half lives', and to break through the 'empathy wall'. Still, Bruder is not a social scientist and the fragments on poverty or race seem a bit superficial and textbook-like. Obviously, there is lack of data on van-dwellers, but Bruder does not seem to extensively search for it either. For instance, she does not check how many 'extra' residents are registered is South Dakota, where obtaining an address is exceptionally easy. Throughout the book there is perhaps more scattered data on the mobile RV workforce than their housing situation.

Bruder notices that at an older age, more women than men live in poverty. Most people portrayed in the book are also women. Still, women are a minority of the homeless population in the US. Over the course of a year, more than a third of people experiencing homelessness in the US are women. With the exception of families, this population is aging and suffers from ill health and disabilities (Shinn and Khadduri, 2020). Unfortunately, the gender aspect is not explored in the book. Bruder observes however the 'unbearable whiteness' of van living. She attributes this to the white privilege of being on the move without really appearing threatening or suspicious. I would add that it is also a privilege of age and gender.

Reading *Nomadland* from a European perspective, I cannot help but wonder how different Europe is with much tighter institutional safety nets and relatively lesser impact of the economic crisis after 2008, not to mention contrasting political context with some of the European populists advocating and actually lowering the retirement age. Still, there are probably similar precarious housing situations that are hidden in plain sight from homelessness researchers in Europe. For instance, in Belgium, the issue of 'holiday parks' has been somewhat studied in the previous years. Some campsites are 'permanently inhabited'. People live there in a large part illegally, far away from any services, and in poor conditions because

of a lack of other options (Meert and Bourgeois, 2005). But in a recent count in the Flemish city of Leuven, despite many problems in the community, trailer park inhabitants were not included in the 'houseless population' but treated as a separate category since their addresses were recognised by the city (Demaerschalk and Hermans, 2020).

The book is not only about living on the road and working at Amazon. It is also about the aging society. An entire branch of economy seems to be directed towards this group. There are even care services for older people living in RVs. However, most van-dwellers from the book could not afford them. They talk about death on the road, including by suicide, as they have no prospects of really retiring anywhere. Eventually, Bruder quits her temporary jobs and drives her van back to the East Coast. Linda May is left dreaming of building her Earthship on a patch of desert she bought. The book ends there. There is much less of these bodily aches and physical hardship in the film. The main character, Fern, seems particularly fit. She actually has two options to stay in a comfortable house, but she turns both of them down. There seems to be something else that she is seeking. For me, the film ends with a very different message than the one in the book. The film adaptation seems to have added a paradoxical epilogue. Things have turned around for Charlene Swankie and Linda May. All of a sudden, they found themselves on the red carpet. The making of the film did make this American dream come true for them. For me the story unfolded as usual. After my resent searches, Amazon keeps sending me ads for books such as *Your First Year on the Road. Tips for You, Your Van, and Having the Adventure of Your Dreams*.

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Teresa Consoli and Antonella Meo (Eds) (2020)

Homelessness in Italia, Biografie, Territori, Politiche

Milano: FrancoAngeli, pp. 253, €32

In Italy, the public and academic debate about homelessness is not wide-ranging. For many years, the periodical Reports of the Italian Commission on Poverty and Social Exclusion have placed the issue of homelessness at the forefront of the policy agenda as an extreme condition of poverty. Housing exclusion was identified as one dimension of an extreme poverty which can be tackled by institutions and charities primarily through income support policies and emergency food assistance and shelter programmes. However, much of the theoretical and empirical research has suffered from serious methodological flaws. In the major part, it focused on variations of poverty intensity – extreme poverty or the near-poor, absolute, or relative poverty – and its incidence among different typologies of households. The process of impoverishment was described as the progressive effect in a process of accumulation of negative events. Studies showed significant results in detecting the dimension of homelessness in many towns, but in many cases did not possess a solid framework that brings together a description of the observed phenomenon to the following generalisation of the research findings.

In the 1990s, theoretical and empirical research and the Reports of the Italian Commission on Poverty and Social Exclusion began to propose a more solid theoretical framework. The years that followed were extremely important both for the development of academic studies in this field and the introduction of new theoretical approaches, and for the definition of welfare responses to individuals living in severe housing deprivation.

Compared to previous studies, the interesting and timely publication edited by Teresa Consoli and Antonella Meo presents a useful conceptual map which allows for a more accurate reading of the processes and changes in the field of homelessness, eliciting the attention of politicians and scholars on the topic (p. 12). This edited collection includes contributions from 20 authors, mostly members of the scientific committee of fio.PSD, the Italian Federation of Organizations Working with Homeless People (Consoli et al., 2016). The book is divided into three sections, plus introductory and concluding chapters. Moving beyond the limits of much of the

previous research, the introductory chapter proposes a shift of attention from economic and social deprivation to the growing housing deprivation involving several social groups – not only the poor people- and to the inadequacy of housing policies adopted by many European governments (pp.8-9). People experiencing homelessness are a heterogeneous social group, characterised by very different life trajectories, divergent lengths of deprivation, as well as variations in routes into and out of poverty. People experiencing homelessness may remain in the same condition for many years or may leave it after a few months. The trigger events which lead to the begining, or the end of poverty or periods of housing deprivation spells can be very different.

The first section, with four chapters, provides a detailed analysis of the organisation of services in four Italian cities, reconstructing the life trajectories of service users and the relationships they have established with social workers. The second section focuses on the conditions and processes that favour or hinder social integration. The authors use life history interviews for detecting the particular life events which increase the likelihood both of entering and exiting poverty. The third section presents the results of a survey on households receiving assistance from FEAD programmes (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived). Two other chapters explore the differentiated territorial impacts of national and regional programmes and provide an evaluation of the Housing First and Housing Led models.

In the concluding chapter, it is noted that most services are organised in such a way as to deal with chronic housing deprivation, and thus do not provide intervention programmes for less severe forms of housing deprivation. In Italy, the Guideline for Tackling Severe Adult Marginality remains the primary reference for the definition of welfare responses to individuals living in severe housing deprivation. The chapter underlines the need to initiate the third national research on the homeless population.

It can be said that the book is underpinned by three primary theoretical premises that link all chapters in a sort of 'red thread'. Firstly, in all chapters, the different forms of poverty and housing deprivation are observed not as a state but as a dynamic process with significant variations in intensity across time. This can evolve not only into a deep social drift for an individual or household, but may also include frequent fluctuations and exits from poverty and housing exclusion. Such a dynamic approach is becoming more consistent in Italy (Alcock and Siza, 2003) as in many European countries (Nolan and Whelan, 2011) and in studies of people with a high need of housing support (Busch-Geertsema, 2010; O'Sullivan, 2020). In many cases, this approach adopts research methods and tools that should be able to understand the route of a life process, such as longitudinal research and administrative data that refers to many years. In others, it is applied through

qualitative cross-sectional interviews which grasp the development of the processes of impoverishment in a specific time, or the end of a crisis and thus the phenomenon's fluidity.

Secondly, much research shows that the boundaries between 'the poor' and 'the non-poor' are becoming more unstable and precarious. Those that have shared a condition of economic deprivation in certain periods of life may reach sufficiently good life conditions or slip into even more severe levels of poverty; a smaller number, which differs from one context to another, reaches an irreversible social drift or manages an emergence out of deprivation once and for all. The concept of poverty is extended and includes very different social groups, in terms of professional qualifications, possible inclusion in the labour market, resources in a network of informal relations, and the ability to manage critical situations. The growing food insecurity of some social groups which many charities face coexists with precarity and economic hardships that hit a large number of households.

Thirdly, strategies defined over the years as active welfare, new risk policies, and social investment welfare have spread in all European countries with the aim to increase autonomy, mobilise the individual's resources, and secure a better future for people facing conditions of severe poverty.

These three re-conceptualisations shift the terms of the debate on homelessness by placing emphasis on blurred social identities and unstable social positions and the widespread diffusion of fluid and mobile lives. In addition, they highlight the need for activation of personal resources to create opportunities for changing people's life trajectories and establish a recovery orientation in welfare services. These re-conceptualisations have a notable influence in defining the principal European documents on this issue and contribute to reframing the public discourse.

In the last decade, the economic and cultural context has been changing drastically, and certainly not in the direction hoped for by many social groups. Conditionality and harsher sanctions are changing the nature of welfare, the persistence of poverty and social divisions between 'the poor' and 'the non-poor' are increasing throughout towns and cities in Europe, and housing politics are progressively weaker. In many European countries, people experiencing homelessness, particularly those involved in antisocial 'street culture' activities such as street based sleeping, problematic substance use, public drinking, and begging, are a key group targeted by conditional welfare interventions and other social control measures (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018, p.73). Welfare conditionality requires people to behave in a certain way to access welfare goods, such as cash benefits, housing, or support services. These behavioural conditions tend to be enforced through penalties or 'sanctions' that reduce, suspend, or end access to these goods (Dwyer, 2019). In Italy, this scheme intends to respond to changes in attitudes and interests of a large part of the middle and

working class and many economic and political actors. These social groups think that being more selective, increasing the degree of conditionality in housing programmes, social assistance, and lowering the level of benefits for immigrants and traditionally undeserving groups are priority measures of a new welfare. This welfare configuration intends to reinforce public protection for 'deserving' Italian citizens and reduce competition with ethnic minorities and refugees on access to housing programmes, social assistance, and health services.

This publication is product of an extensive network of associations that has been able to build collaborative relationships with local and national institutions over time. I hope it can contribute to countering the aforementioned drift of European welfare systems.

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Right to Housing in the Transition of Young Adults from Foster Care into Independent Living

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Young adults leaving foster care are at high risk of homelessness. In fact, this experience has also been reflected in ETHOS typology of homelessness and housing exclusion, which recognises people due to be released from institutions, and in particular children's homes, as at risk of becoming part of the homelessness population when there is no housing available prior to their release. In Slovakia, this issue seems especially urgent when considering the fact that even in total population, the vast majority, 92.6% of young people aged 18-25, and more than a half, 55% aged 25-34, were still living with their parents, which is more than in any other EU Member State apart from Croatia (Eurostat, 2020a).

In this context, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights prepared a report on the implementation of the right to housing for young adults leaving foster care in Slovakia. In its five chapters, various barriers, as well as supportive tools, in ensuring access to housing, based on the administrative data analysis, as well as a qualitative survey with social workers at children's homes, are discussed. Within the survey, 14 interviews were conducted in November – December 2020 – the authors of the report consider it rather a small sample, also due to the coronavirus pandemic – therefore the findings should be approached with some caution.

When and How Many Young People Leave Foster Care?

Based on the administrative data analysis, the report summarises that in December 2020, there were 68 public and 35 non-public children's homes (set up by NGOs, or church-based organisations). In these, substitute care was provided for 4922 children – 3528 in institutional settings and 1394 in foster families.

Concerning the release from foster care, it can take place in three different age categories:

1. Below the age of legal adulthood (in Slovakia 18 years) – if children are reunified with their families or relatives or go into adoptive families;

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2. At the age of legal adulthood – this is usually happening when young people themselves want to leave foster care, e.g., because they find living in institutional care traumatising;
3. After legal adulthood, usually no later than 25 or maximum 27 years of age – this is only possible provided that a person has been studying, no matter whether at secondary or higher education.

The most at risk of housing exclusion are those leaving foster care at the age of legal adulthood. During 2019, provision of foster care was terminated for 1 377 children in all three age categories. The most frequent reason (32%) for termination was reunification with family or other relatives. The releases due to legal adulthood represented 24% of all terminations, i.e., 330 young adults were released from foster care because they reached 18 years of age.

Available Housing Options for Young Adults Leaving Foster Care

It is determined by law that no person leaving foster care may leave without a place to stay. In fact, within six months before release, the children's home, together with a young adult and a local municipality, prepare an independent living plan. Apart from other issues, this plan states what would be the first place of residence after the release of that person. Still, options for secure and stable housing are very limited, especially due to low availability of rental housing in the country. In fact, in 2019, 91% of the population in Slovakia lived in a household they owned, while only about 1.6% lived in reduced-rent accommodation (Eurostat, 2020b).

Given these circumstances, young people leaving foster care, especially those at the age of legal adulthood, may then wish to return to their families (often living in inadequate housing), rent an apartment together with their friends, or stay at a worker's hostel. All these options seem rather insecure, as they include sharing a place with other persons due to a lack of affordable housing.

There are also two crisis options to prevent their homelessness. One is the so called 'half-way home', a social service including accommodation, although mostly again in congregate rather than scattered housing. In 2019, there were 26 half-way homes with a capacity of 278 people, which is less than the annual number of young people leaving foster care at the age of 18. Another option since April 2018, is that a young person can come back to the children's home within two years of their release and live there until being independent (until a maximum of 25 years of age), i.e., having a place to stay at and having an income.

There are no exact estimations in what types of housing young people leaving foster care at the age of 18 end up in and how many of them experience homelessness. Provided that young adults (no matter whether they leave at the age of 18 or later) give consent to children's homes to stay in contact with them, children's homes follow their pathways for four years after their release. Out of 770 young adults with whom children's homes were in contact in December 2019, 34 (4.4%) were roofless. The prevalence of other forms of housing exclusion, e.g., living with family or friends, is currently not known since the administrative records do not distinguish various housing arrangements in detail. However, one of the findings of the National Centre for Human Rights is that crisis intervention measures, such as temporary accommodation in half-way homes, which should be the last resort to prevent homelessness of these young people, often become common if not the only housing option for them. Even if they manage to transition from a children's home into some secure accommodation (tenancy), many of them are at risk of falling into housing exclusion in the few months following their release.

Success Factors in Housing Retention

Finally, the report summarises several factors having impact on the ability of young people leaving foster care to retain their housing from a viewpoint of social workers in children's homes.

In particular, they highlighted the importance of relationships with family, not only due to a potential place to stay, but also as a support network in overcoming various emotional or other difficulties after the release which might lead to crisis situations. Therefore lots of effort is made to strengthen family relationships before the release, whenever possible. Another key element for successful housing retention, in their view, is good preparation before the release. Currently, such preparation is mandatory and includes topics such as financial skills, but still, there is a space for improvements. Finally, having a stable job was identified as another success factor for young people to be able to retain housing.

Conclusion

Obviously, there are significant gaps between the needs of young adults leaving foster care in Slovakia, especially when they are released at the age of legal adulthood, and the available measures to support their successful transition into independent living. The report of the National Centre concludes that so far, the right of these people to housing has not been sufficiently reflected in local or national policies. As a result, many of them experience homelessness and housing exclusion.

Further steps are needed to achieve progress in this area. In doing this, it will also be important to improve data collection to gain better insight into housing trajectories of young adults after their release.

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Mean Streets: Homelessness, Public Space, and the Limits of Capital

University of Georgia Press (Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation Ser. Book 47) pp.225, $26.95 / €23.02

Criminalization of homelessness, where local responses to homelessness center upon law enforcement and displacement, is universally condemned as bad policy. Mayors and police chiefs regularly affirm that “you cannot arrest your way out of homelessness,” and numerous studies show how criminalization is fraught with constitutional issues, disproportionate public costs, and substantial personal harms. Even the Trump Administration, as it championed a greater role for police in responding to homelessness, asserted that “policies intended solely to arrest or jail homeless people simply because they are homeless are inhumane and wrong.”[1]

Despite this, criminalization continues. In 2018, Los Angeles police arrested 14 000 people experiencing homelessness for life-sustaining activities. San Francisco spent $20 million targeting people experiencing homelessness with laws against loitering, panhandling, and other quality of life offenses. And, in 2017, the majority of the 19 730 arrests (54 percent) in Portland, Oregon were of people experiencing homelessness (three percent of the overall population).[2] Only in the face of a pandemic has momentum slowed, with some prison and jail systems reducing populations of low-level offenders as a public health measure against the spread of COVID-19.

Against this backdrop, Don Mitchell provides a Marxist take on the dialectic of homelessness in public spaces. The clash between homelessness and the state is essentially a conflict over space, manifested in microcosms like panhandling in downtown business areas, hanging out in public parks, and subsisting in encamp-

1 Council of Economic Advisors (2019). The State of Homelessness in the U.S. Accessed at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/The-State-of-Homelessness-in-America.pdf

2 Joseph W. Mead & Sara Rankin (2018). “Criminalizing Homelessness Doesn’t Work. *Citylab* (June 20), available at: https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/06/how-not-to-fix-homelessness/563258/; and Melissa Lewis (2018). “Take a Deeper Look at the Numbers Behind Portland Police Arrests of Homeless People” *The Oregonian* (June 27), available at: https://www.oregonlive.com/news/erry-2018/06/79b61635fd4450/portland_homeless_arrests_data.html.

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ments. Taken together, these show a fundamental cleavage in capitalism, where, as wealth accumulates and interstitial urban spaces disappear, deprivation becomes more extreme and more exposed. Capitalism has no tools to resolve this conflict beyond reflexively responding to the underlying threat this poses "to property and the values it represents, to bourgeois sensibilities, and to city administrations' abilities to control and regulate space within their jurisdictions" (p.68). Thus the punitive responses continue.

To gain a better understanding of this dialectic, Mitchell looks back to the early 20th century, which was the closest that homelessness got to a golden era in the US. This was when the itinerant labor of hoboes and tramps helped to settle the West and their cause anchored the radical part of the nascent labor movement. This suits Mitchell's Marxist analysis well. The homeless take on the mantle of working-class heroes, while their exile from the city is necessary to maintain orderly flow and accumulation of capital. Mitchell lays out this fundamental dynamic in 1913 Denver (chapter 2), and updates it with contemporary clashes between localities and encampments (chapter 3). The "space of the tent" is crucial not only for survival, but also for "autonomy and organizing" (both 73). As such homelessness in public space represents both injustice and resistance:

> *Tent cities, though they must be eliminated if a just city is to arise, provide a model: as a taking of land, as a noncommodified and cooperative form of property and social relations, as (potentially) an organizational space tent cities and their progenitors like the hobo jungle have much to teach us about what it will take to create a city that does not express the limits of capital but overcomes them. (74)*

Here radical aspirations meet capitalist fears, so that public spaces become the battleground for the criminalization of survival itself. Homeless people regroup and fight back, while local authorities use legal, administrative and technological means to escalate their push towards "banishment from the right to *inhabit* and to *make* the city" (p.90, italics in original). This point of conflict represents the vanguard – exposing both the limits of capital and the struggle for survival.

This culmination of Mitchell's argument finishes up the first part of the book; the second part shows how the criminalization of homelessness has "metastasized" to broader segments of the urban milieu. In chapter 5, Mitchell argues that laws and court decisions on panhandling and other public interactions between classes have provided a foundation for an "SUV model of citizenship," which privileges an individual's right to insularity from exchanges they may find threatening. In chapter 6, Mitchell goes one step further and lays out the legal framework for how undesirable people, regardless of housing status, become banned outright from contested spaces. Then, in chapter 6, this is taken to a dystopic extreme in which people carry with them the status of trespasser and transgressor, existing at the mercy of

increasingly hostile and capable legal and technological apparatuses. By the end of the second part, capitalist dynamics, which are most visible in the context of homelessness, become manifest as central to capital itself.

Mitchell casts the criminalization of homelessness as a canary flitting about the urban coal mine, where its fate signals much larger geographic and economic upheavals in the making. Mitchell's eye here is on contradictions in capitalism, and homelessness is the setup. He is unapologetic in his role as a prophet who offers admonishments instead of solutions. Ultimately, "if we want to abolish homelessness, we must abolish capitalism" (p.160). In this respect, the book is an all or nothing Marxian take on homelessness which renders it of limited use for a more pragmatic approach to confronting the criminalization of homelessness. Mitchell's romantic, sepia version of homelessness as a legacy of early 20th century union activism suits his needs well, but is a poor fit for a more unwitting contemporary resistance borne from a position of submission and disenfranchisement. Here wins rarely come from individual victories and more from their lasting presence in the face of unceasing efforts at displacing them. The struggle is less heroic and class-based and more a humble search for dignity, to be left alone, and to regain housing.

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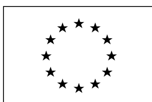

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European Observatory on Homelessness

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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