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

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Part A

The Significance of the Affective Sphere for Understanding and Responding to Women's Homelessness

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Abstract_ *This paper seeks to explore a number of important themes that are relevant to understanding and responding to women's homelessness, particularly recurrent and long-term homelessness amongst women. It focuses specifically on the significance of the affective sphere to explain the homelessness journeys of four mothers experiencing homelessness unaccompanied by their children. The paper reveals how the intersection of gendered class relations and affective inequalities (in love and care especially, but also solidarity) experienced during childhood and into adulthood can help to explain some women's homelessness journeys. The findings in this article emerged from a qualitative study conducted in the Republic of Ireland. The study used a critical feminist methodology and a structural equality intersectional lens to explore how homeless unaccompanied mothers with multiple needs have been cared for, and experienced care, across the affective sphere. The affective sphere consists of three intersecting sets of affective/caring relations – the intimate or primary sphere; secondary (professional services) field, and tertiary (state-related services) sphere. The study examined principally the way these three intersecting circles of nurturing (or lack of nurturing) interpolate within economic, political, and cultural relations to produce affective and other inequalities across the women's lives. A key finding from the study points to the importance of a relational framework for understanding and responding (caring for) to the multiple needs of mothers experiencing homelessness. A relational framework of care or doulia appreciates that the caregiver has care needs that must be recognised and supported, because there is nothing inevitable about the contexts within which caring takes place. This is particularly the case for mothers experiencing homelessness as they lack access to the requisite capitals needed to support love and care work under Ireland's current market-led approach to welfare relations.*

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Introduction

There has been a growing awareness in research of the frequency of lone mothers as part of the family homelessness population, and also amongst lone women presenting as homeless (Van den Dries et al., 2016; Baptista et al., 2017; Walsh and Harvey, 2017; Hearne and Murphy, 2020; Bimpson et al., 2020; Focus Ireland, 2021a). There is a prevalence of mothers experiencing homelessness unaccompanied by their children amongst the general homelessness population (Mayock and Sheridan, 2012; Shinn et al., 2015; Bretherton and Mayock, 2021; van den Dries et al., 2016; Savage, 2016; Bimpson et al., 2020). However, owing to the preponderance of women experiencing homelessness amongst the hidden homelessness population, and because research and policy responses tend to define women's homelessness into two distinct populations, family or single women's homelessness, the actual numbers of unaccompanied mothers experiencing homelessness is unclear (Savage, 2016; Baptista, 2019). Consequently, the realities of their lived experiences as mothers and their homelessness journeys are not widely understood (Savage, 2016; Bimpson et al., 2020; 2022).

This paper aims to add to the growing body of research on women's homelessness-particularly for women who experience long-term and recurrent homelessness (Pleace et al., 2016). It does this by discussing the significance of the affective sphere to understanding homelessness amongst unaccompanied mothers with complex needs, in an intersectional and structural context. In doing so, it reveals how homeless motherhood is a site of intersecting injustices including class, gender, and disability compounded by prior and ongoing affective injustices. Without recognition of the relational, intergenerational, and intersectional dimensions to nurturing, including the centrality of housing and support for nurturing, mothers experiencing homelessness can be unfairly blamed for the complex conditions they mother in, which can produce mother-child separations and cause and/or prolong their homelessness journeys (Mayock et al., 2015; Bimpson, 2020; Bretherton and Mayock, 2021).

The article is divided into five main sections. It begins with some background context to this research, including changing welfare relations in Ireland and the UK under neoliberalism, which are shaping the carescape for mothers experiencing homelessness. The next section provides a brief overview of the critical feminist theoretical framework and methodology used for the study. It then presents some of the key findings from the study. These reveal the intergenerational basis to some women's homelessness, and the disabling effects of class and affective injustices (including domestic abuse) experienced across the life course. The article considers the policy implications of these findings, particularly in terms of enabling the production of nurturing capital, a solidarity resource that supports the work of nurturing. This article concludes by asserting the importance of doulia (Kittay, 1999), a relational framework for understanding and responding to the multiple and intersectional needs of mothers experiencing homelessness.

Background Context to this Study

Growing trends of women experiencing homelessness are occurring against a backdrop of societal and changing welfare state relations under neoliberalism in Ireland (Barry, 2020; Hearne and Murphy, 2020), the UK (WBG, 2018a; 2018b; Beatty et al., 2019), and across Europe (Aalbers, 2016; Bargawni et al., 2017; Labao et al., 2018; Baptista and Marlier, 2019; Foundation Abbé Pierre/ FEANTSA, 2020; 2021). In Ireland, for example, women accounted for 35% of the total number of single people accessing emergency accommodation in March 2022. Since, 2014, the numbers of lone women accessing emergency homelessness accommodation has increased by 66% in the eight-year period to, 2022. Lone parent families now constitute over half of the families experiencing homelessness (53%) (Dept. of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2022), with 86% of lone parent families headed by a woman (CSO, 2016). Current figures, however, obscure the real extent of women's homelessness owing to anomalies in defining and enumerating women's homelessness in Ireland and across Europe (Bretherton and Pleace, 2018; Fondation Abbé Pierre – FEANTSA, 2020; 2021; Bretherton and Mayock, 2021). Thus pointing to the gravity of this issue.

Of significance to increases in women's homelessness is how changing family structures mean that women's access to housing is increasingly contingent on them being able to independently access resources to support and sustain housing, rather than rely on a male breadwinner (Doherty, 2001; Mostowska and Debska, 2020). Mothers frequently rely on public services owing to their dominant social roles as unpaid caregivers within the home (Coffey, 2020; EIGE, 2021). Yet current policy responses in Ireland (and elsewhere) increasingly place responsibility on individuals to access and 'manage' their housing and homelessness within the private market (Allen et al., 2020), thus negating the structural origins of (women's) homelessness (Watt, 2018; Hearne and Murphy, 2020).

Low income, the commodification of housing and other welfare services, and discrimination have been identified as key contributing factors to lone mother's pathways into homelessness in Ireland and the UK (Vickery, 2012; Walsh and Harvey, 2015; 2017; Hearne and Murphy, 2020; Focus Ireland, 2021a). Changes to social welfare payments for lone parents in Ireland have meant that for most one-parent families (86% of whom are women in Ireland (CSO, 2016)), the 'choice' between caring full-time for their children and working is no longer available once their child reaches a certain age (seven in Ireland). The reality of work activation measures for one-parent families in Ireland means that lone parent women cannot get state support to care full-time after their youngest child reaches the age of seven (Millar and Crosse, 2016; 2018). Such policies fail to recognise single parents as full-time carers for their children (Barnardos, 2017; Daly, 2020). Women's capacity and 'choice' to engage in full-time mothering therefore becomes contingent on economic independence from state support (Dwyer and Wright, 2015). Yet, lone parents face considerable challenges to participation in employment (Johnsen and Blenkinsopp, 2018; Millar and Crosse, 2018; Millar, 2019; Daly, 2020). Care therefore remains an individual responsibility for those without access to economic or other resources (Dodson, 2013; Millar, 2019). Recent research by Focus Ireland (2021a; 2021b) identified how mothers experiencing homelessness (many of whom are lone parents) experience considerable barriers to participation in work. Findings reveal how women's unpaid care-giving responsibilities are invisible under current welfare state relations. This acts as a barrier to their participation in paid work, producing or exacerbating their experiences of homelessness (Focus Ireland, 2021a; 2021b).

There is a commodified system of housing and welfare policy that is being maintained in Ireland (Hearne, 2017; Byrne and Norris, 2019). This is because inequality is being interpreted as an individual and not a collective experience (Mau, 2015; Dabrowski, 2021b). Emphasis "is placed on the potential for individuals to shape and steer their own biography, and success and failure are individualized" (Mau, 2015, p.19). Individualising responsibility to the person disregards the reality of intergenerational class relations and how they can affect the resources needed to provide love and care (Crean, 2018) and access to housing (Walsh and Harvey, 2017; Watt, 2018).

In the context of individual responsibilities, people (mothers) are frequently blamed when they cannot care for their children. They are blamed for not taking enough responsibility for them, or for not sacrificing enough for them (Tronto, 2013), irrespective of the materially deprived conditions in which they are nurturing (Carey and Bell, 2021; Dabrowski, 2021a). This makes mother-child separations a reality for some resource-poor and women experiencing homelessness (Featherstone et al., 2015; 2017; Mayock et al., 2015; Bimpson et al., 2020; Morriss, 2022). Contemporary welfare relations for families therefore render "invisible those who struggle with and/or need space to reject or rethink maternal identities" (Featherstone, 2006, p.308), compounding the affective inequalities that women experiencing homelessness experience (Lynch, 2007; Savage, 2016).

The Affective Sphere, Motherhood, and Nurturing Capital

The framework for this study draws from a significant body of feminist and egalitarian literature on care, motherhood, and class. Principally, it recognises the affective domain as consisting of three circles of other-centred relational realities produced through primary (love labour often associated with mothering), secondary (general care), and tertiary (solidarity) care relations (Lynch and Walsh, 2009). These relational realities influence the life chances and well-being of all human beings and animals. This is because emotions, interdependency, and relationality are central to what it means to be human and are, therefore, essential to ensuring human flourishing and agency (Gilligan, 1995; Held, 2006; Kittay, 1999; Fineman, 2004; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012; 2017).

The affective system is especially salient to this study because of the primacy given to mother love across a range of dominant discourses. A mother's love has been referred to as an innate or essentialist characteristic and a key defining feature of womanhood and femininity (Bowlby, 1953). However, for others a moral imperative to care exists for mothers, it is not necessarily natural. This suggests that mothers embody a maternal practice where they internalise the gendered ideologies of motherhood (O'Brien, 2007). This morally propels them to care regardless of what resources they have available to them to do so (O'Brien, 2009).

The quality of love and care someone gives or receives is dependent on the level of emotional, material, social, and political resources available to support it. Where women are unsupported economically, politically, and socially in the doing of love and care work, they can experience affective inequalities (Lynch et al., 2009). Affective injustices occur in two forms – either as inequalities in the doing of nurturing and solidarity work, where nurturing becomes burdensome when unsupported, or when people are deprived of receiving relations of love, care, and solidarity, where for example, they are separated from their children for various reasons or where they do not receive secondary care or solidarity relations (Lynch et al., 2009). Because responsibility for the provision of love and care relationships has been traditionally assigned to mothers, the gendered moral imperative has significant implications for the status of women in society and their health and wellbeing; particularly for poor, ethnic minority, and single mothers (Dodson, 2013; Elliot et al., 2015; Coffey et al., 2020; Carey and Bell, 2021).

In contrast to current ideologies of motherhood, which position mothers as individually responsible for their children's care (Dabrowski, 2021a; 2021b; Saar and Aavik, 2021), Kittay (1999) expands the dimensions of nurturing beyond the immediate mother-child relationship and the moral imperative to care to recognise that:

> It must be the responsibility of the larger social order to provide a structure whereby she (the mother), too, may be treated as a mother's child. Otherwise, she is treated unequally and hindered in meeting her obligation to her charge (child). (Kittay, 1999, p.70)

This connection-based model of equality, or doulia, requires that persons within the various sets of nested social relations support mothers to provide care for her child, so that a mother does not become vulnerable as she cares for her child. A doulia, therefore, supports a principle of care, which recognises the significance of material and social conditions to the production of love and care relations, and their importance for supporting the mother as she cares for her child. The metaphor of nurturing capital can be used to conceptualise the level and type of support needed for the development of doulia.

Nurturing capital refers to the levels of time and resources that people receive from others throughout their lives within and across these relational realities – be it as individuals, from within their communities, or through state activity (Lynch, 2007). Nurturing capital is accumulated individually and intergenerationally through care-rich lives and affects people's ability not only to relate to others at an intimate level through love labouring, but also to flourish and contribute in other spheres of life (Lynch and Walsh, 2009; Spiby et al., 2015; Wiig et al., 2017; Wilksinson and Pickett, 2009; 2018). In contrast, where someone experiences a lack of emotional resources, time, or energy, or where the burdens and benefits of care work are unequally distributed, they can be described as having care-poor lives or are low in nurturing capital (Lynch and Walsh, 2009). The production of nurturing capital can be disabled individually and intergenerationally in households where there is domestic abuse or other affective injustices because abusive relations negate the production of nurturing capital. Domestic abusive relations can influence the material resources available to produce love and care, as mothers are unsupported emotionally, economically, and socially with their care work (Lapierre, 2010; Kelly et al., 2016; Scott and McManus, 2016). This can negatively affect women's mental health and well-being (Quellet-Morin et al., 2015) and produce homelessness (Safe Ireland, 2016; Mostowska and Debska, 2020; Bimpson et al., 2020; Mayock and Neary, 2021).

Methodology

The fieldwork for this study took place in the Republic of Ireland between June 2016 and May 2017. The qualitative research design consisted of two phases – the first involved 12 interviews with seven unaccompanied mothers experiencing homelessness with complex needs and the second involved interviews with 12 professionals working in the homelessness sector. As this paper only relates to findings from phase 1 of the study, it will discuss the design elements of phase 1 only.

Phase 1 was designed around the mapping of care and class relations across three spheres of care relations in the lives of unaccompanied mothers experiencing homelessness. Using concentric circles of care (Lynch, 2007), the study examined women's intimate care relationships as recipients and providers of love and care; their general care relations including wider family relations and professional care relations; and relations of solidarity or 'carelessness' on the part of the State. It examined how these sets of relations have intersected with and influenced the women's experiences of mothering, professional care relations, and homelessness. The intersection of the three spheres of care and class relations were then examined through mapping the key themes to emerge for each woman across all three care spheres (across phases 1 and 2 of the study).

Sampling and recruitment

Marginalised and disenfranchised groups such as women experiencing homelessness are frequently designated as 'hard-to-reach' within a research context. The often-hidden nature of these populations produces several methodological challenges generally not experienced when researching less vulnerable populations (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997). To overcome these challenges, I used purposive and snowball sampling when seeking to recruit a cohort of women from several homelessness services in the Republic of Ireland. The main inclusion criteria for this study was that the women were over 18 years of age, that they have or had children who were/not living with them, and they (women) have experienced homelessness and additional complex needs; including problematic substance use, domestic abuse, and/or mental ill-health. Mothers who had care of their dependent children were omitted. Whilst the inclusion criteria included women with complex needs, if women were acutely unwell or struggling with serious addiction difficulties at the time of the selection process they were excluded from consideration from the study to safeguard their well-being. Furthermore, women who were not actively engaged with some form of homelessness support service were not included, as I could not guarantee a support system for women in these circumstances. See Table 1 below for a profile of the women discussed in this paper.

Table 1. Profile of four of the women included in the study

Woman's name:	Age range	Number of children	Mothering status	Employment status	Sources of income	Education status	Health status
Sorcha	25-30	Two children to two different uninvolved fathers.	Single parent. Both children are in relative foster care. Children do not visit Sorcha in the hostel. Has regular access elsewhere.	Never employed.	Disability Allowance.	Junior certificate.	Diagnosed with depression and is in recovery from heroin addiction.
Melanie	40-45	2 children to two different uninvolved fathers. The father of one child died of a drug overdose.	Single parent. Both children are in foster care. One only entering into care recently. Has access to both children.	Currently unem-ployed. Worked in a few very short-term jobs when much younger.	Lone parents/ Job seekers allowance	Inter certificate.	Problematic substance use.
Annie	30-35	One child. No paternal involvement.	Single mother. 18-year care order. Child living in foster care since just after birth. Has supervised access visits every two weeks for two hours.	Works part-time.	Disability allowance.	Leaving certificate. A student in FE at time of interview.	Post-natal depression. Mental health diagnosis.
Roisin	30-35	One child. Unsure if there is paternal involvement	Single mother. Child is in foster care. Sees her child once every two weeks.	Has never been employed in paid work.	Disability allowance.	Unsure of educa-tional attainment.	Mild intellectual disability Depression. Borderline personality disorder.

*The findings from interviews with four out of the seven women are used in this article only. This is because all four women spoke specifically about how their mothers engaged in unpaid care work within the home in exploitative conditions. The findings from the three other women will feature in a subsequent article so that an in-depth biographical account can be given for each of the women.

The interview process

Using feminist principles, I engaged with five of the women in two sets of interviews as planned, and another two participated in one interview only for different reasons, totalling 12 interviews altogether. Each interview lasted between 20-104 minutes. The interviews took place across a range of different settings including homelessness services or the women's newly acquired accommodation. The process was aided by photo-elicitation. Each interview began with me asking each woman to select an image or images from 74 photospeak cards that were scattered on the floor or table in the rooms we used. Each woman was asked to select a picture that spoke to her of her care relationships growing up, or at any stage of her life. Once she selected the number of pictures she wanted, I began the interview by asking her to talk about the pictures she had selected. The women then began to tell their stories using the pictures to guide their conversations. The interview schedule and guide were used in a relaxed manner, as the women used the pictures to tell her experiences of care relationships and homelessness. The pictures ensured the centrality of participants' voices to the study and the stories they told (Glaw et al., 2017). The photospeak cards I used were produced by Partners in Faith. They are a compilation of every day images from Irish life. [1] Because of the power of this method to elicit emotional responses, there were ethical implications to using it.

Ethical considerations

Ethics and ethical considerations were central to how this qualitative study was designed and conducted (Lewis, 2003), which is essential when carrying out sensitive research with vulnerable groups, such as women experiencing homelessness (Liamputtong, 2007; Paradis, 2000; Paradis et al., 2012). The exploitative potential of research and the researcher is a reality for vulnerable and marginalised groups (Lynch, 1999; Paradis, 2000). To overcome the exploitative potential of research and to promote the emancipatory possibilities of the study, I intentionally engaged ethically with the women throughout the whole process, beyond the initial ethical approval process. For example, I used photospeak cards and offered process consent instead of informed consent. Also, I offered to develop and use care and distress protocols designed by the women to support them through the research process and to assess their readiness and suitability for participation in the interviews to avoid further risk of upset or distress.

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1 http://www.partnersinfaith.ie/new/index.php/publications/66-photospeak.

The Material and Intergenerational Realities of Nurturing Relations for Homeless Unaccompanied Motherhood

This section explores key findings from interviews with four of the seven mothers who participated in the study: Sorcha, Melanie, Annie, and Roisin (all pseudonyms), as narrated by the women using photo-story cards. The findings reveal the (re) production of intersecting gender, class, and affective inequalities that shaped the lives of these four unaccompanied mothers. While there are differences between each woman's experiences, there are also striking similarities, which influence their positioning as homeless unaccompanied mothers, including that all four women's mothers engaged in unpaid care work in the home. By looking at the transmission of capital over time, we can elucidate how we are born into an inherited social position, which influences and limits our access to and attainment of differing levels of capitals. These inherited social positions shape our movements through different social spaces and access to associated identities, including a caring identity (Skeggs, 1997) or good (housed) mother.

Central to the construction of all four women's subjectivities are classed femininities, which they inherited from the exploitative positions occupied by their mothers, who engaged in unpaid care work in the home, in conditions of abuse and/or economic poverty. Their mother's class positions were not simply defined by their economic positions in class terms and/or as unpaid caregivers within the home, but also by virtue of the affective injustices they experienced as they performed the work of care. As the data in the next section shows, the affective losses and abuses their mothers experienced depleted the capitals needed to support love labouring (including emotional, nurturing, and economic resources). This reduced the choices available to the women on exiting the family home and shaped their journeys into homelessness and motherhood.

Melanie

Melanie, who is in her forties, is a mother of two children, both of whom were living in foster care at the time of interview. One of her children has been living in foster care since shortly after birth, over 14 years ago. Melanie's access with her first child has been inconsistent over the years, influenced by her homelessness journeys and her struggles with addiction. During periods of stability, access visits would go very well, and during other more chaotic times, contact was less frequent. Melanie's second child, who is under five, had just entered foster care because of her most recent re-entry into homelessness. Melanie spoke of struggling profoundly with her recent separation from her second child, who has lived with her since birth. Melanie hopes to be reunited with her youngest child; however, she feels that her current housing status (single woman experiencing homelessness) is a barrier to this.

Melanie first became homeless as a child fleeing to refuges with her mother and sibling. Since the age of 18, she has lived a transient life for nearly 20 years. She spent significant periods moving among different homelessness spaces, including sofa-surfing, squatting, sleeping on the street, periods in prison, in rehab, as well as moving in and out of different types of homelessness accommodation. Melanie's entries into homelessness were preceded by the breakdown of abusive relationships, including her most recent entry. Melanie has also had some periods of housing stability over the past number of years, with the most recent being approximately five years in total. Melanie, who left school at 16 years, worked in short-term, part-time paid employment for a brief period in her early twenties. Melanie is currently unemployed and has not returned to education since she left following her Junior Certificate. Melanie expresses the desire to return to education and to make herself and her children proud. However, at present Melanie is living in a high support woman's homelessness service and spoke of not being supported to find suitable or affordable housing, which she sees as a barrier to her reunification with her child.

Affective inequalities and Melanie's journey into homelessness

Melanie spoke of how family life was emotionally destructive as her father "drank all of the money, womanised and then came home and mistreated his family". Melanie chose the image of a building site to reflect her experiences growing up and the centrality of emotions and affective deprivations to understanding her early childhood experiences, which she saw as central to the development of her subjectivity and sense of self:

> And I picked up a picture of a building site because again, it's quite symbolic. That's how me life was, with all the mayhem, a building site, living in a building site. Just… not physically, but emotionally, just everything wrecked, destroyed.

Figure 1: Image of a building site

© Chris Maguire, 2004

Using the image below (Figure, 2), Melanie discusses how living in domestically abusive relations and poverty effected the emotional resources her mother had to care for her:

> I picked up this picture of a woman pushing a pram. It just reminds me of my mother, with a little girl. Going about her business, trying… There's a load of rubble by the side of the road which is quite – what's the word?…Symbolic, that's how my life was, a load of rubble, but yeah, me mother's walking straight on…

Figure, 2: Woman pushing a pram past some rubble

© Derek Speirs, 2003

Despite the abuse and the resource-poor conditions she was living in, Melanie spoke of how a range of factors colluded to prevent her mother from leaving her father (Malos and Hague, 1997; Schneebaum, 2014), prolonging the abusive relations throughout her childhood.

> But my mother was caught. She… my father was the one that was bringing money in. She did love him. She tried to maintain her marriage. Maybe she prayed that he would come right. And then I wouldn't mind. Every time my mother got rid of him, my dad… We'd cry and say, 'Bring him home.' So she was caught…

Melanie explained the reality and contradictions of living in abusive households, and how they can exist alongside relations of nurturing, as she reflected on how her mother sought to care for her and her sibling during periods of childhood homelessness.

> And because my mother and father's relationship was quite destructive, because of alcohol, my mother was always trying to keep it normal, so she'd… I mean, we'd have to stay in hostels, or bed and breakfasts, so she'd always try and keep our lives normal. So she used to bring us down to the pond in [….] and feed the swans and-…" (Melanie).

Figure 3: Child feeding swan

Nurturing practices performed by Melanie's mother reveal insights into how the affective sphere "occupies a discrete space between mother and child in which they perform affective roles and relations intrinsically linked to their desire to exist, belong and feel love and care…. But also, these relations of love and care can exist alongside relations of abuse and neglect" (Crean, 2018, p.3) producing affective injustices. Despite Melanie's mother's desire to protect and care for her children unsupported, the effects of living in the abusive family relations became too much for Melanie. At the age of 16 she moved in with some friends and then progressed into homelessness at 18. Reflecting on her subsequent homelessness journey and entry into problematic substance use, Melanie recalls:

> I feel like the reason why I done it is because it was my only way out at the time, or I'd've gone completely insane. But then again, I could have channelled that energy into going to school and saying, 'You know what? I'm not fucking having this.' But when you know no different, you say, 'I just can't cope. I need to do something.'

Sorcha

Sorcha, who was in her late twenties at the time of interview, is a mother of two children. Both of Sorcha's children were living in relative foster care, the first child for over five years and the second since birth, which was less than a year. Sorcha maintained a good, regular relationship with both of her children, seeing them weekly outside of the mixed-sex hostel she was living in at that time. Sorcha hoped to be reunified with her youngest child, but needed suitable housing before this could occur. However, Sorcha was unable to access any stable, affordable housing at that time. Sorcha was living in a mixed-sex hostel, which often accommodates people experiencing enduring addiction and mental health issues at the time of interview.

Sorcha has been homeless since her early twenties, for approximately 6-8 years. Her first entry into adult homelessness occurred following a violent relationship break-up not long after she gave birth to her first child and first tried heroin. Sorcha has remained without long-term, stable accommodation of her own since then. During her homelessness journeys, Sorcha returned to the family home or a relative's home for short periods. She then moved through a variety of homelessness spaces including sleeping on the street, in derelict buildings and squats, sofa surfing, in hostels and supported homelessness accommodation, B&Bs, and in rehabilitation centres. During Sorcha's second pregnancy, she spent a period homeless on the streets, with no viable option of accommodation available to her. According to Sorcha, she was separated from her second child as she was homeless following the birth and there was no suitable accommodation available for her and her child:

> Now, the minute I get [long-term housing], I'll get the access overnight, back straight away with my [baby]. That's all it is. The only reason the [baby] is gone is no stable accommodation. So they wouldn't let me leave the hospital with […], with me having to go from B&B to B&B. It's not fair on the child, so young and all that. It's not – what's the word – it's a part of neglect that would be. That's signed down as part of neglect, even though there's no neglect going on there, but hopping from B&B to B&B, there's no stable place.

Although Sorcha first became officially homeless in her early twenties, she was regularly taken from the family home by her mother as a child because of domestic abuse. It was during this time that a close relative abused Sorcha. Therefore, it could be argued that Sorcha, like two of the other women featured in this article first experienced homelessness in childhood (Mayock et al., 2016).

Affective inequalities and Sorcha's journey into homelessness

Figure 4: Person walking alone on a hill

© Derek Speirs, 2004

In reflecting on her care experiences across her life, Sorcha selected the image in Figure 4 and reflected:

> This picture now caught my eye, because of my many struggles before. It would… See the way he's on his own and he's walking. That would feel like me, being alone.… miserable and lost and lonely…It would be like as if it was me after been gone out of home… And I'm on my own… I have no one.

As she began to talk about her experiences, Sorcha discussed how the exiting of her father from the family home had several significant repercussions both for Sorcha and for her mother. Because nurturing is a form of work, it requires time and resources. Nurturing can be burdensome when unsupported economically, emotionally, physically, and socially; depleting instead of producing emotional and nurturing capitals (O'Brien, 2009; Elliot et al., 2015; Coffey et al., 2020). The material effects of the absence of nurturing capital in childhood were expressed by Sorcha (and the three other women), as she (and others) spoke of taking on care responsibilities within the home, helping financially and in performing other mothering duties for her mainly older siblings:

> **…** I'd hear my mam cry at night and I'd run into her, and all things like this. Even financial ways, my mam would find it hard, buying things and stuff. Say now she wanted a fry-up in the shop, I done it.… I'd take her money and stuff and go off… and I'd rob the fry-up, and I'd bring her back the change… I thought I could help my mam and all, and stop looking at her the way she was, depressed and all that, I would have done anything to cheer her up, anything.

In talking about the ways she took on other examples of 'mothering' responsibilities, Sorcha describes "So I think I was put to be an adult way beyond my years, having mother figure things to do: cooking dinners, washing clothes, making sure that there's stuff there for them, running baths. Down to running a bath." In the absence of any support for Sorcha's mother to care for her children, Sorcha was forced into taking on the role performed previously by her mother.

Sorcha's recollection of her early childhood experiences also reveals how her mother experienced not only economic inequalities, owing to the sexual division of labour within the household. Her household had "a lot of anger as well in my family… like, violence". At times when it was particularly bad, Sorcha's mother would run away with her and her sibling to a close relative's house for safety. Their mother would then leave them there while she returned to the house. It was during the time that Sorcha's mother sought to protect them from the effects of witnessing the domestic abuse that Sorcha was sexually abused over several years. Without access to support to help her to deal with this trauma, Sorcha began to use drugs and entered into a violent relationship from a young age. Reflecting on her journey into homelessness and addiction, Sorcha recalled how:

> It was really, I wanted to be gone from […..]I wanted to get out of there after what happened…So I just wanted out of there. It was too much, too much of memories, too much history behind me down there, so I just wanted out of there. And I'd nowhere to go, nowhere. How would I get out of here?"… The drugs. It was a big part of it then, drugs

Annie

Annie, who was in her early thirties at the time of interview, had been homeless on and off since she was 18 when she left her family home due to abuse within her family. She initially moved to relatives in the UK. This family arrangement broke down a short time after she arrived there. Annie therefore first entered homelessness as an adult in the UK. Annie previously became homeless in Ireland as a child with her mother and siblings fleeing domestically abusive relations. Annie subsequently returned from the UK while pregnant because she was experiencing domestic abuse herself. She re-entered homelessness in Ireland following the birth of her child and a breakdown in family relations, which resulted in her child's subsequent removal into foster care. Annie had regular access with her child and spoke of strong hopes for reunification, even though she was homeless and her child was subject to a long-term care order (until the age of 18).

At the time of interview, Annie was living in a mixed-sex hostel for the past approximately five and a half months. Before this, Annie lived in a night-only emergency hostel, and previously in short-term tenancies. She also lived in hotel homelessness accommodation, as well as probation accommodation. Annie spent some time in prison and lived in aftercare accommodation upon release. Annie is the only participant to have completed her leaving certificate and to be engaged in further education at the time we met. Annie, unlike the three other women in this article, has engaged in paid employment in recent years. Annie experiences enduring mental health issues and spoke of using alcohol and drugs in the past. However, Annie does not currently have any problematic substance use issues.

Affective inequalities and Annie's journey into homelessness

Annie described life as "tough" being "dragged up" in economic poverty in an area of high disadvantage and of experiencing several moves during her childhood. Annie's mother was a lone parent and from a young age Annie became a carer to her two younger siblings:

> I grew up without a dad. Me ma was… Me ma's nuts. She has some serious issues. But she's in denial there's something wrong with her. We were beaten as we were growing up…

Annie described how she endured roughly four years of sexual abuse from her mother's partner, who was also domestically abusive towards her mother. Several of Annie's accounts of her childhood recount the prevalence of physical abuse perpetrated either towards her mother by her stepfather or by her mother against her.

Annie's experiences in childhood differ from Melanie and Sorcha because Annie's mother was physically and emotionally abusive toward her. Annie's narrative reveals several examples of violence and abuse performed by her mother that stand in stark contrast to examples of nurturing performed by Melanie's mother. Under contemporary gendered welfare relations, a hierarchy of motherhood is engendered, as support for nurturing is made invisible to the needs of the economy (Fraser, 2016; Oksala, 2016). Nurturing is privatised for people who cannot afford to pay for care or for support to care, without regard for whether they have the capacity to perform the work of nurturing. The gendered moral imperative to care creates a further bind for lone mothers who do not have the resources needed to perform care work, so they struggle with love labouring, resorting to violence in the absence of the requisite capitals. This produces negative outcomes for their children, which for Annie led her into homelessness and becoming separated from her child.

Roisin

Roisin was in her early thirties and has one child who was living in long-term foster care at the time of interview. Roisin sees her child regularly and spoke of having good relations with her child's foster carers. Unlike the three other women discussed in this article, Roisin spoke of being happy with the present status of her relationship with her child and did not speak of plans for reunification. At the time, she was seeing her child once every fortnight. Owing to her mental health diagnosis and her own childhood experiences, Roisin stated that she is not in a position to look after her child "… I can barely look after myself. I can't even look after a fish".

Roisin became homeless just one month previously, following an admission to a psychiatric hospital because of a "mental breakdown" (Roisin suffers from mental illness and has a mild intellectual disability as well). Roisin left the hospital and entered homelessness, following what had been the culmination of a range of intersecting inequalities that shaped her life. Like Melanie's experiences, Roisin's entry into homelessness was triggered by the actions of an ex-partner. This man was squatting in Roisin's rental accommodation when she was in the hospital, without Roisin's knowledge, and he destroyed it. This led to Roisin's eviction from the property while she was in the hospital. During her time experiencing homelessness, Roisin occupied the category of invisible homelessness, as she was staying with friends and family (FEANTSA, 2007). Roisin's experience of being homeless was a source of stress for her. She described how she was "bothering" people and "felt so alone", feelings she had experienced throughout her childhood. At the time we met, Roisin was waiting to move to a new tenancy offered by the local authority.

Roisin's experiences reveal the deeply traumatic effects that deprivations in love and care have on people. Roisin described her childhood as horrible, growing up in an abusive household where alcohol abuse was prolific. Roisin's family did not experience economic resource inequalities like the other women in this study, yet the affective injustices she experienced in childhood produced material outcomes in adulthood.

Affective inequalities and Roisin's journey into homelessness

Roisin described her life as "horrible" growing up. The picture of a child crying (figure 5 below) takes her back to her childhood:

> On the outside, me and my family seemed like the perfect family, but inside, it was a different story. My mother was an alcoholic. My father was an alcoholic. My mother… You'd hear about men abusing.. you know..women, but my mother abused the life out of my father. And if we got in the way, we were attacked.

Figure 5: Child

© Frank Stapleton

Roisin "hated" her life, citing examples of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse that she experienced across her childhood perpetrated by family members. She described how her "… father just went to work, came back. My mother got drunk and bet the crap out of him. He was drinking and fell asleep. It was all drink-related". It was Roisin's younger sister "who took the role of mother, being mother" within her family as there was no other wider support available to the family.

Roisin uses the next two pictures, of a young woman looking out a window and a man walking in an alley, to reflect on the intersection of affective deprivations she experienced at that time. Looking at the teenage girl, she reflects on how:

> That's like me growing up. Confused, don't know what to do. Depressed, life is horrible… it speaks to me as if she's looking out on life, contemplating is it better than what she is already going through.

Figure 6: Teenage girl looking out the window

© Chris Maguire

The next image of the man walking alone symbolises the powerlessness and aloneness she was experiencing, as there was no external support for her, or no one there to help her: “And it’s like you’re the only one there and no-one is actually there to help you. It’s… so dark and lonely. It’s horrible…”.

Figure 7: Person walking down a dark alley

Motherhood as a site of intersecting gender, class and affective inequalities

The gendered moral imperative to care and nurture are considered innate to women, as opposed to forms of work, which require resources (Lynch, 2007; Lynch and Lyons, 2008; O'Brien, 2008). Roisin's descriptions of her family environment reveal critical insights into what happens when mothers who are struggling with deep emotional needs, such as alcoholism and anger, are unsupported with care work. Because emotional capital is a relational resource, it can only be activated when support is available (O'Brien, 2007). Lack of support or lack of nurturing capital for caregivers when performing the work of care limits the transfer of emotional capital from mother to child (Reay, 2000; O'Brien, 2007). This was evident from Melanie's, Sorcha's, and Annie's stories, where a combined lack of emotional, nurturing, and economic capital available in childhood reduced the options available to the women to escape from the abusive relations they were living in, thus shaping their journeys into homelessness. Roisin's narrative also provides insights into the dynamic effects that inequalities in these gendered capitals can have on women and girls intergenerationally; as Roisin spoke of struggling to know how to care for herself or her child. While this is also true of men, they are far less likely to be carers, as the moral imperative does not apply to them in the way it does for women.

An important contribution these findings make to understanding women's homelessness journeys relates to the intersectionality of gendered class relations and affective injustices, and their disabling effects on women and girls. Specifically, the findings reveal how consciousness of class inequalities evolve not just through the economic relations that produce their class position, but also through the affective relations that frame their lives (Crean, 2018). Specifically, the data shows how owing to the sexual division of labour and unpaid nature of care work, women occupy a structurally subordinate and exploitative position of power to men (Muller, 2019), often leaving them dependent on men for economic resources. These exploitative conditions are exacerbated for women living in domestically and economically abusive relations (Sharp, 2008), diminishing the emotional, nurturing, and economic capital needed to produce love and care relations. These exploitative and alienating conditions produce affective formations of class injustices, as mothers lack resources, control, or choice over the conditions within which they perform the work of care. Owing to the gendered moral imperative to care and the privatised nature of caregiving under contemporary welfare relations, resource-poor mothers are frequently compelled to care within unequal conditions, regardless of whether they have the resources or the capacity to do so.

The findings therefore reveal how the affective sphere is the primary site through which women experience exploitation. Intersecting with the economic, political, and cultural spheres, the inequalities recur intergenerationally (Skeggs, 1997), preventing the women from accumulating the capitals needed to access alternative positions to the exploited positions occupied by their mothers. This had disabling consequences for them. The affective and gendered class injustices the women experienced in childhood were embodied and experienced as addiction and mental illness. Furthermore, all four of the women experienced abusive relations, mother-child separations, and homelessness in their adult lives – with three of the women experiencing long-term and recurrent homelessness (Pleace et al., 2016).

Conclusion – The Significance of the Affective Sphere for Understanding and Responding to Women's Homelessness and the Policy Issues Arising

The findings in this article have important implications for current discussions on the gendering of women's homelessness and policy responses to this invidious issue (Bretherton, 2017; 2020). This is especially so because, as Bimpson et al., (2022, p.275) point out, "social policy is inexorably implicated in (re)producing dominant visions of mothers, mothering and home". Contrary to dominant discourses of 'good mothers', which position mothers as individually responsible for nurturing (Hays, 1996; Manne, 2005), the findings here reveal how primary care relations/mother love is contingent on access to gendered capitals, emotional and nurturing. These are the outcome of love, care, and solidarity relations experienced individually, at a community level, and a societal level (Lynch and Walsh, 2009; O'Brien, 2009). Primary care relations are also highly resource dependent, materially, politically, and socially. When absent, they produce unequal outcomes for resource-poor and mothers experiencing homelessness and their children.

The exclusion of the affective domain from research about mothers experiencing homelessness means that under current welfare relations, in Ireland and the UK, discussions and policy responses to mothers are often framed by professionals and by wider society within the language of 'choice' or individual deficits. This disregards the intersectional structural forces shaping their experiences (Featherstone et al., 2017; Watt, 2018; Bywaters et al., 2019; Morriss, 2022). However, as revealed in this article, individualising problems in mothering to specific women masks the depth of inequalities that many women go through on their journeys into motherhood and homelessness (Veenstra and Keenan, 2017; Bimpson et al., 2020; 2022; Luttrell, 2020). The themes in this article revealed how all four women's subjectivities were formed as classed femininities, which describes the processes through which specific sorts of women are formed (inherited) and gendered (Skeggs, 1997). The pathologising or blaming of homeless and resource-poor mothers (and their children) is therefore exacerbated by a failure to recognise the significance of the affective sphere to understanding human production and well-being (Lynch et al., 2021) and its relation to the economic, political, and cultural spheres. There is a policy failure to recognise the relational, intergenerational, and structural origins of women's homelessness and mother-child separations.

The findings therefore point to the importance of a relational framework for understanding and responding to women's homelessness. This relational care framework is underpinned by a principle of equality, doulia. This recognises the importance of supporting the person caring with the work of care, both as a caregiver and as an individual in their own right (Kittay, 1999). The need to incorporate all four spheres of social action – the economic, political, cultural, and affective spheres in frameworks for understanding, defining, and responding to homeless motherhood therefore must be recognised. Doing so can identify policy responses to homeless motherhood which can enable the production of nurturing capital. Nurturing capital is central to supporting the work of nurturing for both women and their children. A relational framework for responding to women's homelessness matters. All generative sources of inequalities need to be made visible under current neoliberal welfare relations to ensure socially just responses, which can prevent homelessness, for resource-poor women and their children.

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Does My Vote Matter? The Electoral Behaviour and Attitudes of People Experiencing Homelessness

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Abstract_ *People experiencing homelessness (PEH) are a highly marginalised group who often experience an intersection of associated social disadvantages, including civic exclusion. Yet there has been little research into their patterns of, and attitudes towards, political participation. To partly address this gap, we conducted fieldwork among PEH in central Adelaide, South Australia during Australia's 2019 Federal Election. We used a mixed-methods approach involving 164 unique participants in order to uncover perceived obstacles to enrolling and voting, and to ascertain what might make voting easier or more appealing. The research also produced higher-level insights into the worth and value of voting for PEH. We were particularly interested in understanding the psycho-social aspects of their voting exclusion and the symbolic significance of electoral participation for PEH. A key finding is that, although the study participants had much lower enrolment and turnout rates than the general population, this was not obviously due to lower levels of political interest. Rather, PEH face barriers to voting that are closely tied to their lived experience of disadvantage and marginalisation. In this context, reform of electoral policy and practice (such as greater flexibility in enrolment practices) is a key element of addressing the civic exclusion of PEH.*

Keywords_ *homelessness; voting; electoral inclusion; political equality; belonging, citizenship*

Note on data: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Introduction

People experiencing homelessness (PEH) are among the most marginalised members of society. This marginalisation extends to their electoral participation, with PEH invariably turning out to vote at much lower rates than the average for voting age populations.[1] This is especially so in Australia, where compulsory voting ensures that turnout rates among the general population are very high at around 90% of registered voters (AEC, 2022). However, little is known about the voting behaviour and experiences of PEH. To partly address this gap, we conducted fieldwork among PEH in central Adelaide, South Australia in order to investigate their levels of electoral engagement and their experiences of, and attitudes towards, voting. We were also interested in learning about perceived obstacles to enrolling and voting and in ascertaining what might make voting easier or more appealing. The research represents one of the most extensive investigations of electoral participation among PEH ever conducted and, among other things, it produced higher-level insights into the worth and value of voting for PEH. We pay particular attention to this dimension in the first half of the paper.

We begin by reviewing the limited existing data on the electoral participation of PEH in Australia and elsewhere, after which we reflect on why the electoral participation of PEH is so important. We then report on the findings of our own fieldwork undertaken with PEH in Adelaide before and after Australia's 2019 Federal Election. A key finding of the study confirms that although participation rates of PEH citizens are indeed low, political interest is high. Emphasising that electoral policy is also social policy, we consider the implications of the fieldwork findings for democratic legitimacy, political representation, psycho-social wellbeing, and social cohesion more generally.

1 Precise figures are elusive but in Adelaide, for example, the turnout rate for people experiencing homelessness has been estimated at around 25% of those eligible to vote (Coram et al., 2019).

What We Know About Homelessness and Voting

Before proceeding, it is important to appreciate that ‘homelessness’ denotes more than street-based sleeping, encompassing insecure and temporary housing, couch surfing, and overcrowding. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition is broader than some other formulations and includes living in inadequate dwellings, having limited tenure (housing security), and/or lacking access to or control over ‘space for social relations’ (ABS, 2012). On this definition, more than 116,000 Australians, including over 25,000 children, were identified as experiencing some form of homelessness at the time of the 2016 census (ABS, 2018). While a proportion of PEH would be non-voters (for example, children and new migrants, some of whom may live in overcrowded dwellings), PEH still represent a potentially disenfranchised cohort of significant size.

As in other settings, homelessness in Australia affects some groups more than others; for example, it disproportionately affects the young and we already know that there are important connections between youth disenfranchisement and homelessness (Edwards, 2006). Homelessness also disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who comprise 3% of the population but 20% of PEH (and as high as 88% in the Northern Territory, where overcrowding is a significant issue) (Louth and Burns, 2018). Veterans of the Australian Defence Force experience homelessness at considerably higher rates than average (DFAT References Committee, 2016; Hilferty et al., 2019). Therefore, the civic exclusion of PEH is especially concerning because it adds to – and exacerbates – their other forms of exclusion

Notably, declining turnout in established democracies tends to be concentrated among the most disadvantaged citizens. Homelessness intersects with a range of other social issues, including poor mental health, disability, poverty, problematic substance use, and family and domestic violence (Flatau et al., 2021; Coram et al., 2022). Accordingly, while PEH are a heterogeneous group, they also represent a bellwether population for the disadvantaged more generally. If PEH are disengaged from electoral participation, this suggests broader and deeper issues with political representation. Homelessness is an artefact of deep structural networks of disadvantage, marginalisation, and vulnerability. Yet, voting is a primary means by which citizens can assert their equality with other citizens while also protecting themselves from government neglect (Dahl, 1998; Hill, 2017). It is therefore vital to understand the links between homelessness and electoral engagement.

There is very little prior research in Australia or elsewhere on how PEH perceive and experience voting, and the factors that encourage or deter their electoral participation. The scant literature that does exist suggests a number of practical barriers to both enrolment and voting by PEH, including: low levels of information and lack of awareness that elections are taking place (Guerra and Lester, 2004; Lynch and Tsorbaris, 2005, p.20); that they were eligible to enrol; and that options like silent enrolment were available to them. Other practical concerns — such as not having transport to reach a polling booth and being unaware that assistance with voting may be available — have also been identified as obstacles (Thompson, 2004). It is well known that social isolation, which is particularly acute among PEH, erodes the inclination to vote (McAllister and Mughan, 1986; Eagles and Erfle, 1989; Langenkamp, 2021).

Australia is unusual in being one of the few advanced democracies to use compulsory voting. One of the effects of this is that Australian jurisdictions (via electoral commissions)[2] assume a high degree of responsibility for ensuring that voting is as accessible as possible for all citizens, regardless of social location (Hill, 2017). Australian citizens are required to enrol to vote once they turn 18 (and are then required to vote in all state and federal elections).[3] Reviewing available data on the voting participation rates for PEH yields estimates varying from between 10 and 67%, although these data are subject to both imprecision and a number of other limitations due to the nature of the datasets (see Chamberlain and Mackenzie, 2003; Mundell, 2003; Lynch, 2004; AEC, 2005; ABS, 2018; Coram et al., 2019). Even the most optimistic figure for PEH, however, compares badly with the turnout rate of around 90% of the overall voting population. Therefore, in Australia, failure to vote is a truly marginalising event, despite the fact that PEH are both eligible and encouraged to vote, especially by electoral commissions (Coram et al., 2019). A typical example is the Victorian Electoral Commission which has established a Homelessness Advisory Group to develop “a best practice to engaging with people experiencing homelessness” (VEC, 2021, p.35).

The apparent low levels of enrolment and turnout by PEH in Australia therefore indicate high rates of informal exclusion. This is despite a number of measures currently in place to facilitate the voting participation of PEH. Section 96 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 permits voters of no fixed address to enrol (Orr et al., 2002, p.389), although doing so is relatively unusual: there were just 42 people enrolled under this provision in South Australia at the time of the 2019 Federal Election (AEC, personal communication, 16 August 2019). There are mechanisms for assigning these voters to an electoral division, such as using the address at which they were last living. Enrolment is via a hard copy form and requires identity verification by another elector (amplifying the potential for factors such as social isolation and literacy issues to act as barriers to enrolment). The accuracy of the

2 Australian state and federal governments have their own electoral commissions with separate but shared electoral rolls.

3 Voting in local council election is not compulsory in all Australian jurisdictions.

roll in Australia is enhanced by its continuous electoral roll whereby the rolls are assessed and updated on an ongoing basis. Recently, the AEC introduced a process of direct enrolment and update to consolidate the completeness and accuracy of the roll, a capacity that both enhances electoral integrity but also helps to guarantee high levels of electoral inclusion (for a fuller discussion of this and other relevant aspects of Australian electoral history see Hill, 2021).

Unlike the majority of Australians, PEH enrolled under the provisions of s.96 are not fined if they fail to vote, an exemption that is intended to encourage their enrolment. Note, however, that many PEH, to avoid stigmatisation, would not self-identify as such, potentially limiting the efficacy of the exemption (Walter et al., 2015). To facilitate voting accessibility, pre-polling is offered via postal voting and mobile booths at locations such as hospitals, residential aged care facilities, and specialist homelessness service providers and assistance is available for those who need it. These factors *formally* address some of the obstacles to electoral participation. However, while these interventions are vital to facilitating inclusive electoral opportunities, they have not produced turnout results that are significantly closer to mainstream voting populations.

It is possible that parity is unlikely to ever be achieved; nevertheless, this electoral participation gap can be reduced through ensuring that meaningful and proactive engagement practices are deployed alongside any such interventions; approaches that have been central to social and community development work practices for many years. Through our data collection phase, it was clear that there is still considerably more work to be done by electoral commissions wanting to engage with PEH more effectively (Coram et al., 2019).

What's Wrong with Low Turnout Among People Experiencing Homelessness?

The right to vote protects other rights, including welfare and economic rights (Hill, 2017). The formal, universal right to vote is a minimum condition for democracy but not a *sufficient* one if we wish to properly satisfy the procedural values of democratic equality, inclusivity, and therefore, legitimacy. Accordingly, it is important that everyone *actually exercises* their right to vote. High rates of electoral inclusivity and participation are vital to legitimise, not only election processes and outcomes, but also the authority of governments. Elections must be free and fair and obstacles to exercising the right to vote must be minimised where possible. Political equality is undermined if there is asymmetry in electoral influence, or too many citizens are either formally or informally excluded from the franchise or participation itself.

Voting provides the means to hold governments to account and is the mechanism by which substantive representation is achieved. Not surprisingly, governments tend to pay more attention to the interests of groups who vote habitually; in, other words, in the distribution of government attention and resources, the preferences of voters are prioritised over those of non-voters (see Bullock, 1981; Hill and Leighley, 1992; Martin, 2003; Malkopoulou and Hill, 2022). As Walter Dean Burnham once said, "if you don't vote, you don't count" (Burnham, 1987, p.99). It is well established that the electoral participation rates of particular groups influence public policy in areas like health, housing, and education (see, for example, Verba et al., 1993; Verba, 2003; Gallego, 2010). We also know that welfare policies tend to be more generous when turnout is higher among the disadvantaged (Fowler, 2013; see also Bennett and Resnick, 1990; Hicks and Swank, 1992; Hill et al., 1995; Mueller and Stratmann, 2003).

These government spending and attention patterns make it particularly important for marginalised people to vote and thereby exert some influence over government policy. People experiencing disadvantage arguably stand to benefit more from voting than the better off because their marginal utility gains from policies that favour their interests are greater. Unfortunately, however, there is a strong positive correlation in democracies everywhere between voting abstention and lower socio-economic status (Lijphart, 1999, p.284; Brennan and Hill, 2014).

Survival and securing a home or shelter is, understandably, likely to be of more pressing concern for PEH than voting. However, these two things are neither opposed nor unrelated because greater electoral participation will increase the likelihood of the material interests of PEH being represented and protected. The voting mobilisation of greater numbers of PEH may also activate latent support for their interests in the broader community. Australian research has found that a substantial majority of citizens would like to see governments do more to address homelessness (Hanover Welfare Services, 2006; Launch Housing, 2016).

When certain groups of people do not vote, the opportunity for their unique experiences and perspectives to have political influence is lost (Demleitner, 2000). The electoral process itself also suffers when diverse and unique perspectives are missing (Estlund, 2007; Misak, 2008). There is evidence that the political preferences of PEH are, in fact, distinctive. For example, one qualitative study carried out across the US found that while PEH had strong political opinions, their policy views were not influenced by ideology in the same way as those of the general public. Rather, the lived experience of lacking secure accommodation had a more significant impact on their policy attitudes (Colin Morrison and Belt, 2014). Elsewhere, a study in the UK revealed a greater focus among PEH on present rather than longer-term goals compared to those who had secure housing (Iveson and Cornish, 2016).

Why voting matters: Creating social meaning

Voting is a key form of social inclusion and in every established democracy the entitlement to vote is the primary marker of full citizenship status. The vote is a form of power, and the act of voting can be empowering. It can also help people feel more connected to their communities (Philips, 1995; Shineman, 2020). Electoral participation has the potential to help PEH (re)engage with mainstream public life; as James Fishkin has noted, the "significance of the vote as a mark of civic inclusion is greatest for those whose inclusion might otherwise be in doubt" (Fishkin, 2011, p.1353). Notably, the UK study cited above found that PEH were more likely than non-PEH to value activities that offered an immediate sense of inclusion and agency (Iveson and Cornish, 2016).

For less privileged social groups, the potential for voting to act as a source of meaning is particularly significant (Shineman, 2020). Therefore, voting is important, not only for obvious political reasons, but because it offers important symbolic and psycho-social benefits. Treating marginalised people as fit to vote and of equal status to all others on polling day counters the damaging perception that they are social and political outsiders and even 'outcasts' (Mansbridge, 1999, pp.648-52). The use of the term 'outcast' is no exaggeration in this context: in one Australian study, the reported sense of marginalisation among PEH was so acute that only half of the respondents said they thought of themselves as Australian citizens. This was despite the fact that 96% had, in fact, been born in Australia. Furthermore, 38% felt excluded from participating in social life and 58% said they did not enjoy the same rights as everyone else (Walsh and Klease, 2004). Of the respondents in the survey who were eligible to vote, 50% said they had never voted and 65% never discussed political issues with anyone else. PEH are routinely ignored and rendered invisible in ways that make it hard for them to be valued by others; voting offers an avenue for PEH to achieve or enhance social recognition and inclusion.

Another benefit of voting is that it may promote pro-democratic attitudes and behaviours. We already know that people who vote tend to be more satisfied with their democracy than those who abstain (Hill, 2011). Recent work with disenfranchised felons in the US found that the restoration of their voting rights on release from prison was associated with higher levels of trust in government and a greater willingness to cooperate with other members of society and authorities (Shineman, 2020). Voting encourages people to construct themselves as democratic citizens whose voice matters and it helps shift marginalised individuals from "a stigmatized status as outsiders to full democratic participation as stakeholders" (Uggen et al., 2006, p.283). While PEH in Australia are not formally disenfranchised as many prisoners are, they frequently face obstacles to electoral participation that are structural, driven by social attitudes and policy settings outside their control.

PEH, not surprisingly, have lower subjective quality of life (SQoL) than the general population or those who are adequately housed (Hubley et al., 2014). An Australian study of homeless and 'at risk' youth found that they reported lower levels of personal meaning than other social groups and this was the strongest predictor of low SQoL (Bearsley and Cummins, 1999). Another Australian study exploring wellbeing among PEH found that health contributed surprisingly little to their overall perception of wellbeing. Instead, feeling safe and having positive social connections and opportunities to participate in 'normal' life were the key factors contributing to subjective wellbeing (Thomas et al., 2012). Voting is one of these 'normal' activities, especially in Australia where it is a routine part of civic life for almost every adult.

Ensuring that all eligible voters, and particularly those experiencing disadvantage or marginalisation, can exercise their right to vote is vital for democratic legitimacy, political equality, and effective representation, as well as for empowering individuals and enhancing their sense of inclusion. Just as supportive housing contributes to meaningful material outcomes, so encouraging and enhancing the voting rights of electors experiencing homelessness should be viewed as an "optimistic mechanism to directly improve disadvantaged people's lives" (Parsell and Marston, 2016, p.195). Actively promoting the voting rights of this group is therefore an appropriate and warranted intervention that offers benefits for PEH (Parsell and Marston, 2016; Watts et al., 2018).

Against this background we now turn to our fieldwork which set out to investigate the attitudes of PEH towards voting, the barriers they face to exercising their right to vote, and what can be done to ameliorate these barriers.

Methodology

Our project was funded by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and the research was undertaken in partnership with three providers of specialist homelessness services.

Study design

The research design comprised four components structured around the May 2019 Australian Federal Election as described in Table 1. The target participant population was people accessing specialist homelessness services in the Adelaide CBD, including through outreach activities in the field. It is estimated that the sample of participants was split relatively evenly across people sleeping on the street, people in crisis or transitional accommodation, and people who had progressed to more secure housing such as supported accommodation following recent experience of being insecurely housed.

Table 1: Components of data collection

	1.Voter information sessions	*2.Pre-poll survey*	*3.Exit survey*	*4.Interviews*
Participant n	59	66	53	18
Location	Service centre A.	Service centres A and B and outreach in the field.	Service centres A, B and C.	Service centres A and B.
Timing	4 weeks prior to election.	2 weeks prior to election.	Week of election.	2 weeks after election.
Format	Two 90-minute interactive sessions involving presentations and small group discussion facilitated by researchers.	5-minute surveys administered by researchers (interview style) at four sessions across three locations.	5-minute surveys administered by researchers (interview style) at six sessions across three locations.	15 to 45-minute semi-structured interviews.
Participant recruitment	Posters on site at service centre A, plus active on-site recruitment by researchers immediately before sessions.	Active on-site recruitment by researchers during meal periods at service centres, and via outreach with a field team visiting rough sleeping locations at night.	Active on-site recruitment by researchers during mobile polling booth hours at each service centre.	Recruitment from pre-poll participants expressing interest, plus active on-site recruitment by researchers at service centres.
Content	Participants were given information about enrolling and voting. They were invited to discuss barriers to enrolling and voting and the perceived benefits of voting in small groups. Data on the barriers and benefits identified by each group were collected via researcher notes and participant-completed worksheets.	In addition to demographic questions, survey content covered: whether participants were enrolled; why they were not enrolled if applicable; whether they voted if enrolled; why they did not vote if enrolled; awareness of 'no fixed address' and 'silent elector' enrolment options; intention to vote at the May 2019 election; level of interest in elections; sources of information about elections; and importance attached to voting.	In addition to demographic questions, survey content covered: whether participants had voted in a previous election; whether voting was important to citizenship; whether voting made them feel more accepted; whether voting made them feel more equal; whether voting made a difference to their lives; and importance attached to voting.	Participants were asked whether they were enrolled to vote; about their past experience of voting; whether they had just voted in the election; what their recent experience of voting was like if applicable; why they were not enrolled or didn't vote if applicable; the importance they attached to voting and their views on voting generally.

Source: Authors

Participants

The number of unique participants in the study was 164, making it one of the largest-scale investigations of electoral participation by PEH ever conducted anywhere in the world. Thirty-two of the 164 participants were involved in more than one of the data collection exercises; for example, 10 participants in the voter information sessions also participated in the exit poll survey and five in the interviews, while eight participants in the pre-poll survey also participated in the exit poll survey and four in the interviews. The demographic characteristics of the pre-poll and exit poll survey participants are set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Characteristics of survey participants

Characteristic		*Pre-poll survey*	*Exit poll survey*
Age bracket	18-30	4%	6%
	31-40	18%	11%
	41-50	29%	17%
	51-60	24%	21%
	61-75	17%	28%
	Over 75	5%	11%
	No answer	3%	6%
Gender	Male	77%	77%
	Female	23%	23%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander		32%	15%
First language English		89%	87%
Identify as having a disability (inc. psychosocial)		53%	66%

Source: Authors' data analysis

Participants received gift vouchers to compensate them for time spent participating in the information sessions, pre-poll survey, and interviews (but not exit polls, to avoid the perception of being financially compensated for voting). While the vouchers incentivised participation, nearly all participants were keenly engaged with the data collection process, gave considered opinions and were happy to participate for as long as was helpful. In fact, queues formed to participate in the information sessions and interviews and some prospective participants had to be turned away. This echoed the experience of a US study which reported that PEH lined up to participate, eager to be asked about their political views instead of the health issues more commonly researched in this population (Colin Morrison and Belt, 2014). Participants in our research reported that it was empowering to find that their views were important enough to be the focus of a study.

Data analysis

Interviews were recorded with participants' permission and transcribed by the researchers. Basic descriptive statistics were used to analyse the survey datasets. Qualitative data from the voting information sessions and interviews were analysed thematically through content analysis. Key themes and sub-themes were identified, and data coded accordingly at progressively granular levels. This process included identifying typical quotes that reflected the key themes.

Limitations

There were limitations associated with the project due to the tight timelines driven by the Federal Election and the challenges of recruiting participants from the PEH population. The participants were not representative of the overall PEH population in suburban, regional, or remote locations, or even within the city centre. Groups such as women and young adults were underrepresented in the participant sample, partly because these groups are less likely to access the homelessness service centres where the research was conducted. PEH who are disengaged from services were also underrepresented, although five of the pre-poll survey participants were recruited via outreach at street-based sleeping locations in central Adelaide. The focus of the data collection was on participants' perceptions and experience of voting. To ensure that participants perceived the study as apolitical, we intentionally refrained from asking them to disclose their political preferences or which parties or candidates they favoured, although some volunteered this information.

Results and Analysis

Key results from the pre-poll survey, exit poll survey, and interviews are outlined in this section. The following section integrates findings from the four data collection methods, discusses the findings in relation to key themes that were identified, and considers the implications of these results for the voting experience and behaviour of PEH.

Pre-poll survey

The pre-poll survey asked participants about their knowledge and experience of voting, and their views towards elections and voting. A summary of the results is set out in Table 3. Notably, 47 respondents (71%) said voting had 'a good deal of importance' and another eight (12%) said it had 'some importance'. Respondents had relatively high levels of interest in elections and most commonly sourced information about elections from television, followed closely by newspaper and radio, with the Internet used much less. Nearly a third of respondents had been encouraged to vote by a friend or family member.

Table 3: Pre-poll survey results

n=66	*Yes %*	*No %*	*Don't know or no answer %*
Enrolled to vote	58	36	6
Of those enrolled, failed to vote in a Federal election at some stage	65	30	5
Of those enrolled to vote, enrolled as no fixed address	32	65	3
Aware of being able to enrol as no fixed address	30	62	8
Of those enrolled to vote, enrolled as silent elector	11	84	5
Aware of being able to enrol as silent elector	18	80	2
A good deal or somewhat more likely to vote with the silent elector option	25	73	2
Previously voted in a Federal election	68	30	2
Voted in the last Federal election	44	54	2
Intends to vote in the 2019 Federal election	59	35	6
Some or a good deal of interest in what is going on with an election	64	36	0
Some or a good deal of attention paid to reports about elections	59	41	0
Some or a good deal of interest in elections overall	60	40	0
Voting has some or a good deal of importance	83	17	0

Source: Authors' data analysis. Note: Where questions were scored on a 1-5 Likert scale, the two positive and two negative responses have been combined for the purposes of reporting in the table.

Exit poll survey

Not surprisingly, the exit poll survey respondents had a stronger voting track record than the pre-poll survey respondents; all had just voted in the 2019 election and 49 of the 53 (92%) said they had previously voted in a federal election. A summary of the exit poll survey results is set out in Table 4. Interestingly, the level of importance the exit poll survey respondents ascribed to voting was similar to that of the pre-poll survey respondents, with 36 (68%) exit poll respondents agreeing voting was a 'very important' part of being a citizen and another eight (15%) describing it as 'somewhat important'. Thirty-nine exit poll survey respondents (73%) agreed it was 'very important' that everybody voted and another eight (13%) agreed it was 'somewhat important'. While caution should be exercised when comparing such small samples, the pre-poll survey respondents appeared to place as much importance on voting as the exit poll survey respondents, despite the pre-poll group being much less likely to actually vote. The exit poll survey results on whether voting had generated psychological benefits were particularly interesting, suggesting that around half of the respondents experienced some positive psycho-social effects as a result of their electoral participation.

Table 4: Exit poll survey results

n=53	*Yes %*	*No %*	*Don't know or no answer %*
Voting is a somewhat or very important part of being a citizen	85	15	0
Voting generates a somewhat or good deal greater feeling of acceptance	47	53	0
Voting generates a somewhat or good deal greater feeling of equality	54	42	4
Voting makes some or a good deal of difference to my life	51	47	2
It is somewhat or very important that everybody votes	89	11	0

Source: Authors' data analysis. Note: Where questions were scored on a 1-5 Likert scale, the two positive and two negative responses have been combined for the purposes of reporting in the table.

Interviews

The 18 interviews were used to explore attitudes towards voting in more detail. Eight of the interviewees had never been enrolled to vote and 10 were enrolled, of whom five were regular voters. Seven interviewees said they had voted at the 2019 Federal Election around two weeks earlier. Of the eight interviewees who had voted in 2019 or in another recent federal election, half reported modest positive psychological benefits: feeling 'satisfied', 'empowered', and like 'they'd had their say'. The other half reported negative psychological effects such as feeling 'sad', 'disillusioned', and that 'voting was pointless'. As one participant reflected:

> I felt sad… I looked at those pieces of paper and I folded them up and I put them in the box and I walked away in disgust.
> (Participant 84, male, age 50s)

Four interview participants said they had on at least one occasion lodged an intentional informal vote or abstained because of how they felt about voting (and/or how voting made them feel). The interview results were more equivocal on the psychosocial benefits of voting than the exit poll survey results. In both the interviews and exit poll survey, around half of participants with experience of voting reported that it was positive, but in the interviews, it was clear that, for those who did not report positive effects, the experience was quite negative, rather than merely neutral.

Notably, however, 13 of the 18 interviewees, including a number who did not vote, had some positive things to say about voting, including that it was important to 'have a say', 'be represented', 'make a difference', and 'influence policy'. Several interviewees said it was especially important for them to vote as an Aboriginal person or someone experiencing homelessness. More than half of the interviewees thought voting was important in principle, even if they did not vote themselves.

Several interviewees referred to the importance of voting for self-protecting representation and holding governments to account:

> That was one of the main things for me, the politicians knowing that okay, we are constituents, members of society, the homeless are actually coming out to vote, that my vote matters.
> (Participant 85, male, age 30s)

Logistical and ergonomic issues contributed to many of the interviewees failing to vote regularly. Transience was a common issue, discouraging both enrolment and voting by those who were enrolled. People said they were more likely to vote if they had a connection with a particular place and local issues. The most significant obstacles to participants' voting irrespective of enrolment status were (in order of magnitude):

1. Not having much knowledge of or interest in elections/politics.
2. Believing voting was pointless or that there was no one worth voting for.
3. Seeing politicians as untrustworthy and self-interested.
4. Not knowing where to vote or being unable to access a polling place.
5. Believing that politicians don't listen or care.
6. Not wanting their name on the electoral roll.
7. Finding voting too complicated or burdensome.

For participants who were enrolled to vote, the most significant obstacles to turning out were:

8. Not knowing where to vote or being unable to access a polling place.
9. Not having much knowledge of or interest in elections/politics.
10. Being unaware an election was taking place.
11. Forgetting to vote.
12. Isolation/feeling disconnected from society.

Seven interviewees wanted more information about enrolling, voting, and the candidates they had to choose from; some were worried that they would 'muck it up' because they felt they did not know what they were doing. Notably, the informal vote rate (11%) for these booths was double the national average of 5.5% at the same election (AEC, 2019). Several non-voting interviewees said they had observed the presence of the mobile polling booth at the specialist homelessness provider but did not see it as being there for them, which is, itself, telling. Notably, becoming homeless and other associated losses (health, work, family, social networks) had caused several of the interview participants who were once regular voters to disengage.

Notwithstanding the impact of logistical issues, by far the most common obstacle to enrolment and voting for the interviewees was disillusionment with the political system. Sixteen of the 18 participants, including some of the regular voters, made comments along these lines. Fourteen said they did not think their voices would be heard through voting, and for most this was specifically related to their circumstance as someone experiencing homelessness. There was a pervasive view that no-one really wanted to hear what people in their position had to say:

> It got to a period where oh, I've become interested in voting, and now it's at the stage where nobody's interested in my vote.
> (Participant 34, male, age 50s)

Other interviewees said that they would be more likely to vote if issues affecting them were on the political agenda and their views were treated as important. Comments such as the following were typical:

> I don't think politicians and politics pay much attention to the homeless
> (Participant 161, male, age 40s)

> If you ask me, they don't seem to want to help the homeless.
> (Participant 158, male, age 50s)

Most interviewees felt their votes would have little effect and expressed some dissatisfaction with the choice of candidates and policies. As one participant said:

> Voting's not hard; it's trying to find someone you want to vote for, *that's* what's hard.
> (Participant 162, male, age 50s)

Several interviewees expressed an intense sense of social exclusion that discouraged them from voting, such as the following participant:

> Why should we vote for someone who doesn't want us? Who doesn't want to look after us?…All of us felt left out, we felt like we're nothing. And we're human beings, not animals to walk on just because we're poor… Some of us Australians don't want to vote because the homeless are on the street, we don't want to live like this.
> (Participant 71, female, age 50s)

Discussion

Voting and enrolment rates

The study did not attempt to definitively measure enrolment or turnout among PEH generally, but the findings add to the limited knowledge about voting rates among homeless populations in inner urban settings in Australia and other developed nations. Participants in the pre-poll survey and interviews were asked if they were enrolled to vote and 47 out of 84 participants (around 56%) said they were, with 16 (19%) reporting that they were regular voters. This apparent low enrolment rate suggests a voting turnout rate for PEH in central Adelaide that is much lower than the 90+ rate for the Australian voting age population as a whole (AEC, 2022), providing further evidence that PEH comprise a significant cohort of invisible, unheard citizens. Efforts to engage groups experiencing barriers to electoral participation (such as enrolment with no fixed address and mobile polling booths at homelessness service providers) are likely to be less concerted in voluntary voting jurisdictions. So, although turnout rates for PEH in Australia's compulsory voting setting appear to be very low, the situation in non-compulsory voting jurisdictions is likely to be worse.

Barriers to voting

Taking together the data from the information sessions, pre-poll survey, and interviews, the study found that PEH encounter a range of obstacles to enrolling and voting, many of which are directly related to their housing circumstances. These obstacles are not specific to the Australian setting and are likely to be relevant to people experiencing homelessness in other developed democracies. Some issues were not as problematic as expected: only four participants cited literacy difficulties, three said they had been in prison at previous election times, and one said health issues had made it hard for him to vote. An undoubted exacerbating factor here is the high rate of mental illness among PEH (Lawn et al., 2014). This not only makes it unlikely that PEH citizens will vote but is actually a legal disqualification for their voting (see s 93(8)a of the *Commonwealth Election Act 2018* (Cth)).

Enrolment. The most significant reported obstacle to voting was not being enrolled. Apart from the problems associated with not having a stable address and the requirements for updated identification and a witness, privacy concerns were a major issue for PEH. This was especially true for those with a history of family violence. Participants were keen to avoid having their names appear on the electoral roll and many were unaware that they could be silently enrolled.

Interest/Trust/Relevance. The other barriers to electoral participation most commonly cited by participants were: not knowing about or being interested in elections/politics; believing that voting was pointless or that there was no one worth voting for; believing that politicians were untrustworthy or self-interested; and believing that politicians did not listen or care.

Lack of Information. Having insufficient information about voting and elections emerged as a common concern for participants across the data collection exercises. For those who were enrolled, commonly cited obstacles were: not knowing where to vote; being unable to access a polling place; being unaware an election was taking place; forgetting to vote; and isolation or feeling disconnected from the rest of society. There is scope here for electoral commissions, working with specialist homelessness services, to enhance the information and assistance (for example, with completing enrolment forms and ballot papers) they provide to PEH before elections and at mobile polling booths. Most participants who attended an information session appeared to be engaged and provided feedback that it was a useful experience, and nine took the opportunity to enrol to vote. Some exit poll survey respondents and interviewees said they would have liked more information about how to vote (and candidates' policies) at the mobile polling booths.

Informal Voting as a De facto Barrier to Participation. The rate of informal voting at the PEH-specific booths (11%) was double the base rate of informality for the House of Representatives vote across Australia (AEC, 2019). This is concerning because an informal vote is a lost vote and therefore a lost voice. Lacking information about how to lodge a meaningful vote may have contributed to this high rate. It is also possible that some of the informal votes were intentional as a way of registering disillusionment, a well-established strategy for disaffected electors in compulsory voting regimes (Hill and Rutledge-Prior, 2016) and one that some of our interviewees said they had employed.

Transience. Moving around regularly had a multi-faceted effect on participants' electoral engagement. It made it harder for people to access a polling place, especially one in the electoral division in which they were enrolled, but more fundamentally, it made participants less motivated to enrol or vote because they did not feel a strong connection to a particular community and the political issues affecting it. A number of interviewees spoke of feeling some sense of identification with the inner-city area where they spent time, including nights, and accessed services. For clients of specialist homelessness services, a centre's address may therefore be a more appropriate address on which to base an electoral enrolment than one of their previous addresses. Voters of similar circumstance (e.g., age, education, median income) are already unevenly distributed across electoral divisions, so any clustering of PEH in particular electorates would only align with what is already the case for other voters. Relatively minor changes to electoral policy and practice in areas such as information provision and allocation to electoral districts have the potential to make a significant contribution to the voting inclusion of PEH.

Attitudes towards voting

One of the most significant findings of the research is that participants displayed high levels of political interest and sophistication. Notwithstanding very low enrolment and turnout rates, partly due to barriers to voting arising from their housing circumstances, the majority of participants had considered opinions about politics and voting; most also expressed the view that voting was important and had a range of benefits. Taking together the discussion in the information sessions and the interview data, the reasons for, or benefits of, voting most commonly cited by participants were: 'to give people a voice'; because it was 'important in principle'; to 'influence who formed government and their policies'; and 'because it was a right or civic duty'.

A number of participants who said they lacked knowledge about elections and politics also said they were interested in accessing more information so they could vote in a meaningful way. The most significant disincentive to enrolling and voting was not that voting lacked meaning, but that it lacked meaning *for them* because their interests and the issues affecting them most (such as emergency relief services, social housing, rent support, poverty, welfare benefits, structural unemployment, and mental health) rarely figured on the policy agenda. The information session and interview participants, who were representative of a cohort experiencing chronic homelessness, generally saw themselves as part of a distinct constituency of 'the homeless', with common interests coalescing around the issues identified above.

Participants also tended to view themselves as set apart from the mainstream voting population; voting was important, but it did not, and could not, carry the same meaning for them as it did for others. Participants' sense of both internal and external political efficacy was therefore low. As two of our respondents observed:

> They do what they like anyway… you can see that the people don't really matter too much… so there's no point.
> (Participant 22, male, age 20s)

> I feel that I've had my say but in another way I don't because they're never going to listen to us, the small people.
> (Participant 81, male, age 50s)

Further, being stigmatised and shut out of mainstream activities leads some PEH to internalise their exclusion as disqualifying them from voting:

> There was a long period of time when I felt like I didn't even deserve to vote, because of my transience.
> (Participant 34, male, age 50s)

Nevertheless, the study found evidence that voting is regarded as an important activity by most and can have positive psychological benefits for some PEH. Among the pre-poll survey participants, a sample with quite low levels of electoral engagement, 83% said voting had some or a good deal of importance. Around half of the most electorally engaged sample — the exit poll survey participants — said voting gave them a feeling of equality or acceptance or made a significant difference to their lives. The interviews yielded more equivocal results, with most participants having some positive things to say about voting but remaining sceptical about how much attention policymakers would pay to their voices.

Our findings suggest that while PEH may have a low sense of political efficacy, their levels of political interest are high. When we contextualise the results of this study in light of those of the Australian Election Study, it is clear that PEH are just as interested, if not *more* interested, in elections and the idea of voting than the broader population. In the 2016 Australian Election Study, 30% of Australians said they had 'a good deal of interest' in the election that had just taken place, 34% had 'a good deal of interest' in politics, and 25% paid 'a good deal of attention to election reports on television' (Cameron and McAllister, 2019). By contrast 44% of PEH participants in our study said they had 'a good deal of interest in what was going on with an election', 36% 'a good deal of interest in elections overall', and 33% paid 'a good deal of attention to election reports on television'.

Therefore, it should not be assumed that low enrolment and turnout rates mean PEH are apathetic, disengaged, or lacking interest in politics and elections. In fact, experiencing homelessness may catalyse political interest. Low turnout for this group is more likely to be attributable to the range of barriers to voting they encounter because of their housing circumstances and intersecting social and health issues. While logistical and practical issues certainly figure, this study identified low political efficacy and disillusionment with the political system as the greatest obstacles to electoral participation among PEH.

In sum, while some participants were simply not interested in voting, most were, but did not act on that interest. Despite being interested in politics, elections, and democratic inclusion, most saw themselves as democratically excluded due to their homelessness. There was a gap between their level of interest and reported political beliefs and intentions, on the one hand, and their democratic practice, on the other. Although the compulsory nature of voting in Australia is associated with provisions specifically designed to promote the electoral participation of PEH, these were not sufficient to bridge this gap for our participants.

Having the formal right to vote was not enough to make participants in our study feel empowered or included, and some saw no reason to engage until they were actively *engaged with*. Several of the interviewees said they did not vote, or deliberately voted informally, because a formal vote would make them complicit in a system in which they no longer had any faith. Abstaining for these citizens was one of the only forms of resistance available to them and delivered a greater sense of agency than voting. However, abstaining is an ineffective and indecipherable form of 'participation' compared to voting formally, which has demonstrable benefits in terms of attracting government attention.

Conclusion

This study has added to the small literature on the electoral attitudes and behaviours of PEH in Australia and elsewhere. Our findings provide insights that are relevant across jurisdictions, including voluntary voting settings. But further research is required, especially in relation to particular cohorts of PEH such as women, youth, and Indigenous citizens.

Political equality and inclusivity are key elements of any robust democracy, but our findings suggest that those who experience homelessness do not feel they count as much as others and that no one is listening to their voices; therefore, many believe that, for them, voting is pointless. These perceptions did not arise from a lack of interest in politics or voting but were specifically related to feelings of marginalisation and exclusion from civic life as a result of their housing circumstances and associated experience of disadvantage. Some of the practical obstacles to electoral participation by PEH could be addressed relatively easily by electoral commissions who could expand their outreach and information provision programmes and enhance polling accessibility. Some regulatory reforms would also help. For example, flexibility around allocating voters of no fixed address to electoral divisions would contribute to promoting the electoral participation of PEH. However, the greatest barriers to the electoral engagement of PEH — disillusionment with the political system and a low sense of political efficacy — are more serious and harder to tackle because they are informal and cultural.

It is desirable to stimulate higher turnout rates among society's most marginalised and disadvantaged citizens, not only to promote democratic legitimacy and subjective well-being, but also because of the potential to hasten structural and policy reforms that serve the objective interests of such groups. Higher levels of electoral participation by people experiencing homelessness would make it harder for mainstream political parties to ignore their needs, concerns, and priorities.

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Networking and housing advocacy in the homelessness sector: a path towards social sustainability? A study of the Housing First Europe Hub

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Abstract_ *This paper investigates the potential of pro-Housing First advocacy conducted by international and inter-organisational homelessness coalitions to realise social sustainability ambitions in the homelessness sector. In particular, it delves into the transformative potential of the Housing First Europe Hub – a coalition of governmental and non-governmental organisations in Europe – in changing the governance of homelessness and promoting the Housing First model as a socially sustainable approach to (re-)house homeless individuals. In doing so, the paper seeks to answer the following two research questions: (1) How do international and inter-organisational homelessness coalitions (such as the Hub) improve social sustainability in homelessness systems by advocating for long-term housing solutions for the homeless? (2) Which internal and external governance arrangements do they produce, and to what extent do these novel arrangements realise social sustainability ambitions in the homelessness sector? Informed by theories of social sustainability, social innovation, and bottom-linked governance, and grounded on empirical evidence collected during an eight-week ethnographic study of the Housing First Europe Hub, the paper studies social sustainability through the lens of (the politics of) homelessness. It concludes that international and inter-organisational homelessness coalitions foster social sustainability through the promotion of housing needs satisfaction and the formation of new bottom-linked governance structures, especially in the (local, regional, national) contexts where Hub members are based. Albeit these novel governance structures remain highly susceptible to political opportunities and the will of influential decision- and policy-makers, they enhance democratisation and participation in decision-making and promote more socially sustainable responses to homelessness.*

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INTRODUCTION

For more than three decades, the concept of sustainable development has grown in popularity and guided public policy action towards the construction of a viable world where both humans and nature thrive (Du Pisani, 2006). The first definition of the concept is found in the famous report *Our Common World*, also known as the Brundtland Report, submitted by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) to the United Nations in 1987. In the text, the Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p.43).

Since 1987, the world has witnessed a proliferation of definitions of sustainable development (Hopwood et al., 2005). The quintessence of the term has nevertheless remained the same, with sustainable development being founded upon three intertwined dimensions, or pillars: economy, environment, and society. Economic sustainability refers to the pursuit of growth that generates profits without imposing a burden upon environmental resources. Similarly, the environmental dimension seeks to ensure a balanced relationship between the use of natural resources by humans and the ability of ecosystems to regenerate. Finally, social sustainability translates into the achievement of goals such as democracy, social cohesion, and inclusion, promoting equal opportunities and a just world for all (Dempsey et al., 2011; Duran et al., 2015).

In spite of noble intentions by national governments to execute and realise sustainable development through policy initiatives, the realisation of social sustainability remains fragile since rates of poverty, inequality, polarisation, and injustice continue to rise worldwide. A number of academics have stressed the systemic neglect by decision- and policy-makers of socially sustainable goals (e.g. happiness, equality, community development, democracy, inter- and intra-generational justice, social cohesion) (Littig and Griessler, 2005; Dempsey et al., 2011; Parra, 2013; Shirazi and Keivani, 2017; Paidakaki and Lang, 2021). As a result of such negligence, social phenomena such as homelessness have become all the more evident, especially in dense urban centres. According to the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) and Fondation Abbé Pierre, in Europe alone around 700,000 people experience homelessness on any given night—a 70% increase since 2010 (FEANTSA and Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2020).

Albeit homelessness is not a new social phenomenon, the policy response so far has been inadequate and largely fruitless. Most European countries still base their homelessness strategies upon institutionalised emergency solutions such as overnight shelters, which are often overcrowded and unable to accommodate all individuals in need of a bed (FEANTSA and Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2018). Additionally, the majority of (re-)housing programmes remain centred upon so-called 'staircase' services that often deliver unsatisfactory results in terms of housing stability (Tsemberis, 1999; Stefancic and Tsemberis, 2007; Collins et al., 2013). This ineffective policy response calls for the implementation of long-term, sustainable housing alternatives that focus on providing rapid access to housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. An example of such an alternative is the Housing First approach that has become increasingly popular in Canada, the USA, and Europe, gaining visibility in academic and governmental circles and being widely recognised as "the major recent innovation in homelessness service provision" (Baptista and Marlier, 2019, p.104). Housing First is considered an innovative model because it gives homeless individuals immediate access to independent housing, keeping people away from rough sleeping while providing a sustainable alternative to the mainstream institutionalised approaches described above.

In the last five years, an increasing number of governmental and non-governmental organisations in Europe have coalesced into the Housing First Europe Hub (in brief, the Hub) to advocate for the upscaling of Housing First in the local, regional, and national contexts where they operate, striving to change the ways homelessness is traditionally governed and managed. This paper aims to study and unearth the transformative potential of this coalition towards social sustainability in the homelessness sector, shedding light on the internal and external governance structures built by the Hub. Specifically, the paper seeks answers to the following two questions: (1) How do (inter-organisational) homelessness coalitions, such as the Hub, improve social sustainability in homelessness systems by advocating for long-term housing solutions for the homeless? (2) Which internal and external governance arrangements do they produce, and to what extent do these novel arrangements realise social sustainability ambitions in the homelessness sector?

To answer these questions, we first draw from theories of sustainable development, social sustainability, social innovation, bottom-linked governance, and transnational advocacy networks. We then analyse empirical evidence from an eight-week ethnographic study of the Hub conducted between February and March 2021 by the first author. To collect empirical data, the following research methods were used: (1) web research (websites of FEANTSA, Housing First Europe Hub, and Y-Foundation); (2) document review (*Housing First Guide: Europe*, 2016, *Housing*

First in Europe report, 2019 [1]); (3) participant observation in four Hub meetings (including the annual coordination group meeting and steering group meeting); and (4) six semi-structured interviews with seven participants from the Hub (the two Programme Coordinators, the coordinator of the Advocacy work cluster, representatives from three Hub member organisations, and the Director of FEANTSA). The data collected during this study served two main purposes: (1) to document the history and unique features of the Hub (genesis, internal structure, membership, division of tasks); and (2) to empirically identify novel governance arrangements shaped by the Hub and its members when interacting with each other and with decision- and policy-makers at multiple levels (local, regional, national, international).

The paper continues with a brief introduction to the Housing First model and its main characteristics, setting the background of the research. It then proceeds with the theoretical foundations upon which the study was based, followed by the empirical findings of the ethnographic study. At the end of the paper we reflect on the potential of international and inter-organisational homelessness coalitions in leading transformative change in how the homelessness issue is governed and addressed.

THE HOUSING FIRST MODEL

The Housing First model was created in 1992 by the American psychologist Dr. Sam Tsemberis, and implemented through his New York City-based organisation Pathways to Housing. It is promoted as an innovative approach to (re-)housing for chronically homeless individuals, focusing on the satisfaction of housing needs of rough sleepers suffering from mental illnesses or addictions (Baptista and Marlier, 2019). Specifically, the model is based on the following eight core principles: (1) housing as a human right; (2) choice and control for service users; (3) separation of housing and treatment; (4) recovery orientation; (5) harm reduction; (6) active engagement without coercion; (7) person-centred planning; and (8) flexible support (Tsemberis, 2010).

The success of the Housing First model in North American and European policy circles over the past thirty years can be attributed to its innovative approach, dealing more holistically with the homeless and recognising their agency (Baker

1 The *Housing First Guide: Europe* (Pleace, 2016) is a document designed to explain what Housing First is and how it works, as well as how it can be used for pro-Housing First advocacy. The *Housing First in Europe: An Overview of Implementation, Strategy, and Fidelity* (Pleace et al., 2019) is a comparative report describing the level of diffusion of Housing First practices in various European countries.

and Evans, 2016). Homeless individuals (also referred to as 'users' or 'clients') are given immediate access to an independent home, in addition to which they receive targeted support in their transition to self-sustained living. This support is offered by Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams or – depending on individual needs – through an Intensive Case Management (ICM) approach [2] (Greenwood et al., 2013).

A key feature of the Housing First philosophy is the emphasis placed upon individual choice and control, which is perhaps where the Housing First model and institutionalised responses to homelessness differ most. In staircase services, users achieve a series of milestones that bring them towards acquisition of an independent home. Within this process, they transition through different forms of housing: from community residences to supervised single-room occupancy to (finally) independent housing. Additionally, users are required to comply with certain rules such as maintaining sobriety, demonstrating they are 'housing ready' in order to progress to the next step (Tsemberis, 1999). By contrast, Housing First provides housing as a *first* stepping stone in the recovery process (Figure 1), encouraging users to actively work towards their recovery by engaging with their support teams as many times as they wish, rather than when they are required by the programme (Hansen Löfstrand and Juhila, 2012). In the words of Sam Tsemberis:

> The general philosophy and practice of traditional mental health care systems, at the core, is to tell clients, 'This is what you *need* to do'. In stark contrast, [Pathways Housing First] continually asks, 'How can we help?' and then listens to the answers.
> (Tsemberis, 2010, p.41, emphasis in original)

Freedom of choice is one of the main reasons for the considerably high housing stability rates in Housing First as compared to traditional (re-)housing models (80% of Housing First users typically remain housed after two years, whereas 59% do so in institutionalised staircase services) (Tsemberis, 1999; Stefancic and Tsemberis, 2007; Collins et al., 2013). Low housing stability rates have in fact led some authors to shun traditional approaches to homelessness, suggesting they might even "contribute to chronic homelessness for many individuals" (Greenwood et al., 2013, p.648).

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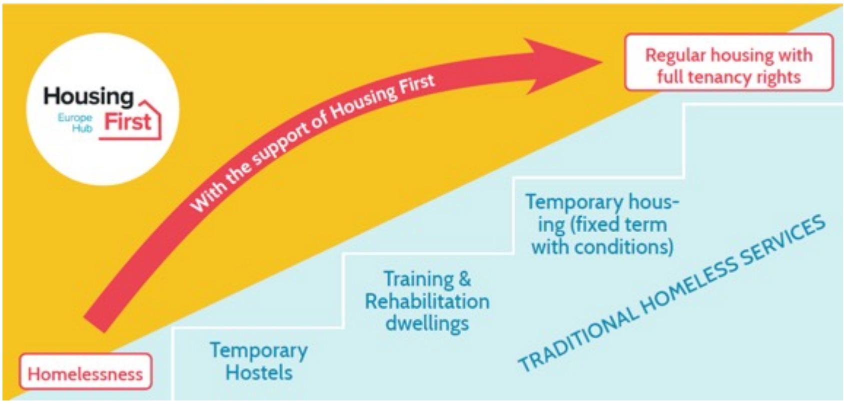
2 The ACT team is an interdisciplinary group of experts from the health and social work fields (e.g. psychiatrists, doctors, nurses, peer-support workers) assisting Housing First users with very complex support needs—for instance, those affected by serious mental illnesses. The ICM approach couples a Housing First user with a support worker, who assists the former in accessing health and welfare services, sustaining housing, and reintegrating into society through, for instance, budget counselling (Pleace, 2016).

In addition to a high level of choice for service users, a point often mobilised in favour of Housing First is its cost-effectiveness when compared with emergency solutions to homelessness. This should not be confused with cost savings, since Housing First services do not engender a reduction of the public budget allocated to the homelessness issue, but simply use it more efficiently (Culhane, 2008). The most substantial piece of evidence cited in this regard is a study conducted by Culhane et al. (2002), which demonstrated that moving homeless individuals with severe mental illnesses into permanent housing costs taxpayers only $1,000 more per person (in comparison to previous costs related to this group living on the streets, and touring repeatedly between expensive public services such as shelters, hospitals, and the criminal justice system). The efficacy of Housing First thus rests upon the dual success of (1) moving homeless individuals into permanent housing while (2) vacating shelter beds that would otherwise be occupied (Culhane et al., 2002; Culhane, 2008).

Figure 1: Housing First versus traditional homelessness services.
Source: Housing First Europe Hub (2020a, p.4).



Inspired by the Pathways to Housing model, different versions of Housing First began to develop outside of the United States as the approach gained popularity. One well-known example is the Canadian *At Home/Un Chez Soi* programme, introduced in the early 2010s (Allen et al., 2020). Another example of a country adopting a comprehensive (re-)housing programme is Finland, where the 'housing first' philosophy was made a core element of the national homelessness strategy in 2008 (Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009; Pleace, 2017).

More specifically, in the Finnish program, housing is coupled with psychosocial support depending on users' individual needs, and provided as the first step for the reintegration of homeless people into society (Y-Foundation, 2017). By virtue of a comprehensive policy and strong political will, the country has successfully lowered the numbers of homeless people and remains the only country in Europe where homelessness rates are in decline (Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009; Pleace, 2017). The Finnish model differs, however, from the American one in the organisation of rent payments and support. In the Finnish model, tenants pay rent themselves (if necessary, through housing allowances) and greater emphasis is placed on the principles of personal choice and harm reduction (Y-Foundation, 2017), whereas the American model focuses on behavioural change and users' recovery from their (mental, physical) ailments (Hansen Löfstrand & Juhila, 2012; Allen et al., 2020).

In the rest of the European continent, Housing First strategies were acknowledged as valid tools to reduce homeless numbers in the European Union (EU) from 2010 (Houard, 2011). At supranational level[3], the first Housing First pilot project (2011–2013) was directly funded by the European Commission and had the goal of testing whether the model could be implemented in European cities. Nationally, the well-known French *Un Chez Soi d'Abord* programme was rolled out in four cities (Lille, Marseille, Paris, Toulouse) in 2011 (Estecahandy et al., 2015). This momentum drove FEANTSA and the Finnish Y-Foundation – two leaders of the European homelessness sector – to establish the Housing First Europe Hub, a network of governmental and non-governmental organisations working on Housing First in Europe, in 2016.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

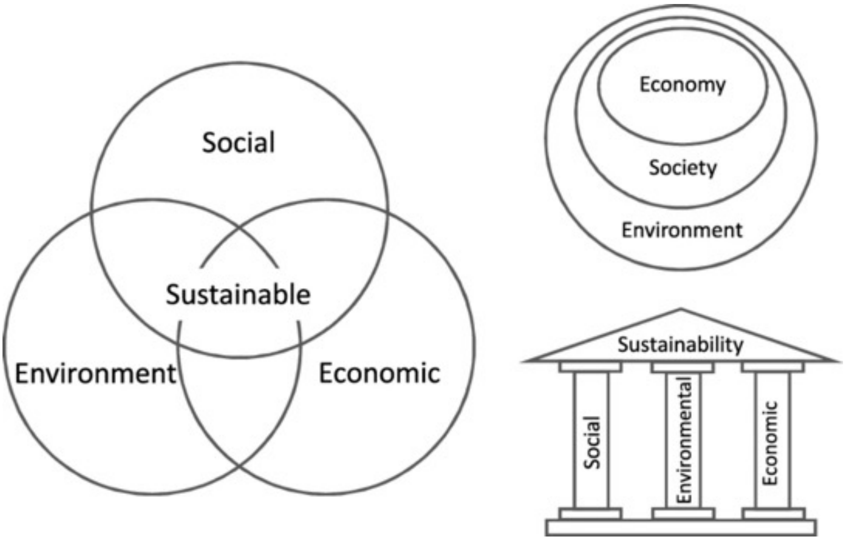
This section outlines the theoretical foundations of our investigation of the transformative potential of pro-Housing First international and inter-organisational homelessness coalitions to promote and realise social sustainability in the homelessness sector. It draws from theories of social sustainability, social innovation, bottom-linked governance, and the transnational advocacy networks (TANs) framework, in order to bring to the fore key aspects of social sustainability linked to the homelessness sector.

3 With the term 'supranational' we refer to policy circles revolving around the European Union and its institutional bodies.

Social sustainability: the forgotten pillar of sustainable development

The historical evolution of the sustainable development concept can be traced back to the eighteenth century, when academics began to question the impact of human activities upon natural resources in Europe (Du Pisani, 2006). In recent history, the 1987 Brundtland Report popularised the sustainability concept, inducing a proliferation of sustainability-oriented policies and measures, a vivid academic debate, and a plethora of conceptualisations of sustainable development picturing the three pillars of sustainability as being intertwined in different ways (Giddins et al., 2002; Purvis et al., 2018). Examples of such conceptualisations are the so-called nested, ring, and three-pillar models (Figure 2). The nested model views the three dimensions of sustainable development as interwoven with one another, with the economy depending on society, which in turn depends on the environment for subsistence. The ring model depicts the three dimensions as separate yet interconnected, with sustainability being the connubium of all three. Finally, the three-pillar model treats each dimension as the backbone of sustainability (Giddins et al., 2002; Purvis et al., 2018).

Figure 2: Different ways of conceptualising sustainable development, from the three-ring sector (left) to the nested model (upper right corner), to actual support pillars. Source: Purvis et al. (2018), p.682.



In spite of its prominence, the sustainable development concept has also been subject to much criticism related to its meaning and efficacy. Mehmood and Parra (2013), for instance, criticise the lack of an integrated approach to the three (economic, environmental, *and* social) goals of sustainable development, claiming that the three dimensions are not as inseparable and intertwined as originally conceived, resulting in policies that focus on one or two aspects of the concept only. This selectivity leads to trade-offs between the three pillars, especially undermining the social one, since decision- and policy-makers tend to prioritise pro-growth economic and environmental goals, overlooking social goals such as justice, inclusion, and democracy (Giddins et al., 2002; Littig and Griessler, 2005; Dempsey et al., 2011; Boström, 2012; Mehmood and Parra, 2013; Parra, 2013; Shirazi and Keivani, 2017; Paidakaki and Lang, 2021).

Social sustainability thus emerges as a critically unaddressed issue or the "weakest pillar of the triad" (Parra, 2013, p.142). Such a neglect partly lies in the vague definitional contours of the social sustainability concept (Vallance et al., 2011) and the difficulty in measuring and assessing immaterial results in the fields of justice, participation, democracy, and social inclusion—all falling under the social dimension of sustainable development. As a consequence, an overarching definition of social sustainability is still missing today.

In this paper, social sustainability is approached from the dual perspective of sustainability as an *outcome* and a *process*, a view that has already appeared in the literature. Boström (2012), for instance, states that:

> [S]ocial sustainability often refers to *both* the improvement of conditions for living people and future generations *and* the quality of governance of the development process… The social pillar of sustainable development could thus be seen as including both *procedural aspects*, such as the role of democratic representation, participation, and deliberation, and *substantive aspects*, that centre on "what" is to be done (i.e., the social goals of sustainable development).
> (Boström, 2012, p.5, emphasis in original)

Boström argues that policies and governmental action should not only aim to achieve socially sustainable *goals*, but should also address background *processes* that ultimately make communities more (socially) sustainable, such as political participation, transparency, access to decision-making, and citizen empowerment (Boström, 2012). Parra (2013) further stresses this argument, claiming that social sustainability should be approached from the perspective of governance. She asserts that rather than restricting the social dimension to the achievement of a specific set of goals, a governance approach would allow a more integrated view of sustainable development that pursues socially just outcomes while paying attention to *how* those outcomes are achieved, i.e. the governance processes they create (Parra, 2013). Gruber and Lang (2019) reflect this vision in their analysis of collaborative housing models in Vienna, emphasising how these models pursue rent affordability outcomes while encouraging processes of tenant participation, collaboration, and the construction of solid community ties.

From these contributions, it can be inferred that social sustainability is strengthened by the inclusive and just outcomes it pursues *as well as* the governance dynamics it fosters in the process. The literature on social innovation and bottom-linked governance allows further unpacking of the governance structures that are part and parcel of the realisation of social sustainability in (urban) development.

Social sustainability as a process: insights from social innovation and bottom-linked governance theories

Social innovation is a concept based on three axes: (1) the satisfaction of previously unmet social needs; (2) the construction of new social relations; and (3) the empowerment of disadvantaged groups (Moulaert et al., 2013). Similarly to social sustainability, it proposes a different approach to development focused on pursuing social goals that revolve around the principles of equality, solidarity, cooperation, and inclusion (Moulaert et al., 2007; Nussbaumer and Moulaert, 2007).

This scholarship has focused on civil society organisations that initiate and lead socially innovative initiatives by utilising resources and their networks in novel ways to satisfy human needs, developing new forms of collaborations among each other. These collaborations usually take the form of formal or informal solidarity-based coalitions for advocacy strategising, participatory/collective visioning, and information exchange among their members (Paidakaki, 2017; Paidakaki et al., 2022).

Other forms of collaboration involve bottom-linked governance configurations (García and Haddock, 2016; García and Pradel, 2019); namely new, deeper, and more productive modes of interaction between socially innovative actors (governmental and non-governmental advocates) and decision- and policy-makers across territorial levels (local, regional, national, international), creating a more favourable policy environment for the former to reach their objectives (Gerometta et al., 2005; Pradel et al., 2013). When decision- and policy-makers are open to interact with socially innovative actors and encourage and enable social innovation (e.g. through policies, legislation, programming, funding), the new bottom-linked relationships that arise enhance the participatory, inclusive, and democratic character of decision- and policy-making (Eizaguirre et al., 2012; Paidakaki and Parra, 2018).

Such coalition-building structures and bottom-linked governance creations take place at different levels: local, regional, national, and international. Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999) conceptualise international coalitions as TANs, or groups that gather "actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services" (Keck and Sikkink, 1999, p.65). These networks assemble a wide range of stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental organisations, foundations, the media, and religious organisations from different countries (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, 1999), all adding their unique resources and capabilities to the table, benefiting all members involved and strengthening the network as a whole (Yanacopulos, 2005).

Embedding social sustainability in the homelessness sector

Informed by the concepts of sustainable development, social sustainability, social innovation, bottom-linked governance, and transnational advocacy networks, and following Boström's (2012) dual definition of social sustainability as an outcome and as a process, we understand social sustainability in the homelessness sector as follows:

… Social sustainability as an outcome refers to the actions taken by governmental and/or non-governmental organisations in the homelessness sector to decrease the number of homeless people through housing needs satisfaction. Conversely, social sustainability as a process refers to governance structures within the homelessness sector; namely, the construction of novel (inter-organisational) coalitions and bottom-linked governance arrangements for a more democratic design of socially innovative responses to homelessness.

With this definition of social sustainability in mind, the next section studies the Hub, a new European homelessness coalition of governmental and non-governmental organisations from different European countries working together on the issue of homelessness from a Housing First perspective.

A STUDY OF THE HOUSING FIRST EUROPE HUB

The Housing First model had been gaining popularity in Europe by the time the Hub was created in 2016 (Houard, 2011; Busch-Geertsema, 2014). This shift can be partly attributed to the vast success of the 'housing first' philosophy in Finland, where it led to substantial results in curtailing homelessness rates (Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009; Pleace, 2017). A key actor in this process has been Y-Foundation – a leader of the non-governmental homelessness sector and core promoter of the Housing First approach in Europe – which has played a substantial role in defining the Finnish Housing first principles upon which the country's homelessness policy is still based today (Y-Foundation, 2017). Motivated by this success, the Foundation aspired to replicate the model on a wider scale (T. Hytönen, personal communication, 5 March, 2021) with the support of FEANTSA, a European umbrella organisation with over 100 national organisations in different European countries.

For the establishment of the Hub, the widespread scepticism that gravitated around the Housing First approach at the time was an important hurdle that had to be first overcome. Before Housing First gained the popularity it enjoys today, in fact, it was often subject to doubts regarding feasibility in a different national context than its original:

> "[P]olitically at that time in Europe, in the homelessness sector, there was not a consensus that Housing First and housing-led strategies were the right way forward… and certainly there was resistance in making [Housing First] a priority, and on focusing policy and advocacy action on Housing First."
> (S. Jones, personal communication, 5 March, 2021)

Among several sets of concerns found in the European homelessness sector, one in particular questioned the implementation of the Housing First (American) model in Europe, expressing doubts about the feasibility of the model's adaptation to a different welfare system than the American one––particularly considering that Europe presents a multitude of welfare and social policy systems (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). This scepticism was reinforced by resistance among FEANTSA's membership and board, who were against the idea of carrying out specific work on Housing First and thus vetoed the allocation of funds for the creation of a satellite network working exclusively on this approach (F. Spinnewijn, personal communication, 2 April, 2021).

To overcome this hurdle, the CEO of Y-Foundation, Juha Kaakinen, offered to finance a separate venture in which FEANTSA could be indirectly involved without putting a strain on its resources, thus respecting the veto imposed by its board (S. Jones, personal communication, 5 March, 2021). The Housing First Europe Hub was created as a joint venture between the two organisations, albeit fully funded by Y-Foundation.

Once the aforementioned hurdle was overcome, FEANTSA and Y-Foundation began canvassing potential partners within the homelessness sector with the goal of building a diverse group of like-minded organisations from different countries. However, finding willing members to be part of the Hub was a difficult task which presented yet another challenge:

> "We wanted to have a mixture of NGOs, foundations, public authorities, local authorities, national authorities, etcetera; so we approached some,

> and some others knocked on the door of the Hub… In the beginning it was not so easy to find organisations that were keen to do stuff on Housing First; you know, it's not like they say in French '*embarras du choix*', it's not like there were hundreds of organisations that we could choose from."
> (F. Spinnewijn, personal communication, 2 April, 2021)

The Hub was finally established in July 2016 by FEANTSA and Y-Foundation, along with 13 allies from various sectors and European countries. In 2022, six years after its inception, the network counts 37 founding and associate partners coming primarily from the governmental and non-governmental sector (e.g. the Belgian Ministry for Social Integration, the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, the Lyon Metropolitan Area, as well as Crisis UK, Fondation Abbé Pierre, Focus Ireland) (see Appendix). Since its inception, the Hub provides a platform where like-minded actors come together to work on a shared objective (the promotion of Housing First in Europe), each bringing their own expertise to the table and gaining back valuable resources (e.g. training opportunities, advocacy tools, knowledge exchange).

The Hub's unique alliance features and bottom-linked governance leadership

The Hub primarily focuses on increasing its visibility as a network working on Housing First in Europe, while stimulating the debate around the model and its potential to change and improve traditional approaches to homelessness. The division of tasks within the network coincides with the Hub's five work clusters: *Advocacy* (spreading awareness about Housing First and the Hub), *Community of Practice* (where Housing First practitioners come together and share experiences from their daily jobs), *Housing First for Youth* (centred around the Housing First model for youth aged 13–24), *Research* (producing regular updates such as the quarterly Research Digest), and *Training* (for organisations, professionals, and housing providers who are qualified to deliver Housing First-related training modules to a variety of audiences). Each cluster is headed by one coordinator elected through voluntary participation, and consists of an undefined number of participants (between five and ten on average) who are assigned to the cluster depending on their personal interest and professional expertise.

The Hub benefits from its members' unique assets. Each Hub member brings with them a unique set of knowledge, tools, and connections that benefit peer members and the Hub as a whole. As the ethnographic study conducted at the Hub in early 2021 showed, one example of how Hub members contribute to the overall strength of the alliance includes their links to local networks and political contacts, as well as their long-term experience in implementing the ‘housing first’ approach. For example, Hub member FEANTSA enriches the network with its political connections within the EU, as well as its expertise on advocating for homelessness issues at the supranational level. Y-Foundation brings to the Hub notable experience on the ‘housing first’ approach, considering the organisation’s long track record in significantly reducing homelessness in Finland and the prominent role it played in defining the Finnish Housing First principles.

The Hub is an international and inter-organisational coalition consisting of governmental and non-governmental members coming from local, regional, and national levels. Through the Hub, liaisons and alliances are created among unlikely partners (e.g. national ministries and local NGOs), which allow access to a pool of contacts and resources in other countries and contexts. From the perspective of non-governmental organisations, being in the same network with high-level governmental bodies legitimises and validates their cause as they become affiliated with – often hard-to-reach – political actors. At the same time, governmental organisations who are Hub members benefit from the expertise of non-governmental organisations in conducting work on the ground. For example, the Spanish organisation HOGAR SÍ contributes with extensive know-how of managing a large number of Housing First units across the country (300 out of 500 specifically) (V. Cenjor del Rey, personal communication, 24 March, 2021).

Furthermore, participant observation at internal Hub meetings and semi-structured interviews carried out during the 2021 ethnographic study revealed that Hub members also benefit from the network by gaining access to *advocacy* and *vocational training*. A first example of such benefit is the Hub’s informational resources (e.g. infographics, reports, webinars, videos) which are made accessible to all members and used by them as tools to further their own advocacy work at local, national, and international levels. The *Housing First Guide: Europe* is an illustrative example of such an informational resource, frequently used by the Hub for the alliance’s advocacy work and which was translated from English into other languages by certain members of the Hub (M. Schmit, personal communication, 29 March, 2021). A second example is the *Train the Trainer* programme, where staff members from Hub member organisations learn to train a variety of audiences (e.g. civil servants, service workers, other Housing First practitioners) on Housing First. Finally, a third example is the recently published *Evaluation Framework* (Housing First Europe Hub, 2020b), a template used to evaluate whether a certain programme can be classified as Housing First.

During participant observation in internal Hub meetings, it became apparent that the most valuable assets the Hub offers to its members are the *networking opportunities* and the chance to establish new linkages with peer members. These connections are essential in (1) stimulating new contacts between organisations working on the same issue; and (2) enhancing the credibility of Hub members at home through their association with a high-profile network.

> "Maybe the biggest part of the worth for me [is] meeting people across Europe that are *all* doing this with the same spirit, the same mentality, and the same energy. And that really motivates [you] to keep going, because it can be quite a hard battle… Also the connectedness, [being] part of something that is not just you and the Municipality trying to get something done, but it's a bigger movement."
> (M. Schmit, personal communication, 29 March, 2021; emphasis in original)

The linkages created as a result of these networking opportunities have considerable impact upon members' advocacy work in the local, regional, or national contexts where they operate, allowing them to accrue their influence vis-à-vis their target policy- and decision-makers. By showing their participation in an international network working exclusively on Housing First, and providing hard evidence of the model's success and modes of application in various territories, Hub founding and associate partners use their Hub membership as a tool to advocate for sounder homelessness policies and strategies.

> "If you say that this is something that works all over the world and you have proof of that, and you are part of that group… When you say: 'We are members of FEANTSA, of the Hub which is working only on Housing First; look at the data, look at the reports, look at the results in other countries. We are part of this and we can give you all this experience and all this information', it's a very good key to entry."
> (V. Cenjor del Rey, personal communication, 24 March, 2021)

On top of building productive relationships with their peers and in their process of building bottom-linked governance structures, Hub members seek allies in local, regional, national, and supranational policy circles who are considered essential for the successful promotion of Housing First. This governance formation process is largely performed by members as individual organisations, rather than by the network as an umbrella actor. As a result, founding and associate partners build ties at home on their own, supported by the Hub's resources and expertise when necessary. For instance, Hub member Crisis builds liaisons with politicians and civil servants in the UK by directly contacting them and inviting them to conferences and other events (M. Downie, personal communication, 19 March, 2021). Likewise, Hub associate Housing First Berlin has established cooperation with the current administration of the Department of Integration, Labour and Social Affairs in Berlin (I. Bullermann, personal communication, 16 March, 2021). At the supranational level, pro-Housing First advocacy is carried out mainly by FEANTSA due to its extensive knowledge of the European policy context and established political connections (S. Jones, personal communication, 5 March, 2021).

According to three interviewees, their respective organisations have forged collaborative relationships with target policy- and decision-makers, which suggests bottom-linked governance structures may be created as a result of these interactions.

> "[O]ften the term [Housing First] opens a lot of doors, but… we notice that always, when we try to argue and discuss it: 'Let's make it bigger. Let's make it more normal as an approach in the health system', then the discussion becomes more difficult."
> (I. Bullermann, personal communication, 16 March, 2021)

However, two other interviewees shared a different experience, mentioning an abrupt end of discussions on the possibility for upscaling Housing First from a pilot project to a fundamental element of a national homelessness strategy.

> "I think the difficulty of Housing First is that if you tell the story it's hard to say that you do not approve, because how can you say no to that? But if you then have a conversation on how to get to such a place, that is where the difficulties begin. They say: 'The political climate is not good', or 'We have a lack of housing'; you get all these kinds of conversations. So they are very open to the story and they also think it's very good, but it's very hard to get the political support and really do something. It's very hard to get beyond the point of 'Oh wow, what a great story'."
> (M. Schmit, personal communication, 29 March, 2021)

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has aimed to uncover the transformative potential of international and inter-organisational homelessness coalitions, such as the Hub, in realising social sustainability ambitions in the homelessness sector, specifically shedding light on the bottom-linked governance structures steered by the Hub's members.

By analysing the internal features of an international and inter-organisational homelessness alliance and its governance-building potential, some important conclusions are drawn. An initial conclusion suggests that the Hub and its members further social sustainability in homelessness systems through the *goals* they pursue (e.g. the satisfaction of permanent housing needs for the homeless) and the *processes* they mobilise, fostering a culture of productive interactions and exchanges between and across members in terms of access to information, resources, political connections, advocacy tools, and training opportunities. By providing a platform for founding and associate partners to connect with like-minded organisations from the governmental and non-governmental sector situated in different countries and contexts, the Hub enables its members to explore and create new linkages with their peers through networking. The alliances that arise from these new connections benefit all members through information exchange, practical know-how, advice and training, and experience in conducting advocacy and field work at multiple levels. Specifically, Hub members coming from the governmental sector gain the practical knowledge of their non-governmental partners in how homelessness work is conducted on the ground. Conversely, non-governmental members of the Hub benefit from their association with a far-reaching, international network working solely on Housing First, which bolsters the credibility of their advocacy work when interacting with policy- and decision-makers at home. Supported also by evidence-based successes of Housing First in a variety of countries and contexts, non-governmental advocates hold better potential in convincing decision- and policy-makers to review existing homelessness strategies and develop more comprehensive, socially sustainable policies, promoting the implementation of Housing First in their community.

To further expand its socio-spatial and politico-institutional reach and pursue its socially sustainable goals in the homelessness sector, the Hub also catalyses a series of external (bottom-linked) governance structures led by different members at various levels that enhance democratisation and participation in decision-making and promote more socially sustainable responses to homelessness. Although the potential for bottom-linked governance to achieve said goals remains limited when Housing First advocacy efforts stumble upon an unfavourable political climate, novel governance structures can materialise in public-private partnerships with political actors (e.g. between Crisis UK and local civil servants, or between FEANTSA and EU institutions). In such bottom-linked governance structures, socially innovative organisations in the homelessness sector aim to consolidate their relationship with decision- and policy-makers and thus unlock opportunities (funding, political connections, new legislation) that allow them to challenge conventional responses to homelessness, promote socially sustainable solutions to homelessness such as the Housing First model, and enhance the democratic, inclusive, and participatory character of the governance process within the homelessness sector.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Overview of Housing First Europe Hub members, listed in alphabetical order. Source: authors.

Member	Status	Country	Organisation type
Agence Nouvelle des Solidarités Actives (ANSA)	Associate partner	FR	Non-governmental
Asociación Provivienda	Associate partner	ES	Non-governmental
Belgian Ministry for Social Integration	Founding partner	BE	Governmental
Crisis	Founding partner	UK	Non-governmental
Danish Board of Social Services	Associate partner	DK	Governmental
Depaul	Associate partner	IE	Non-governmental
Dihal	Founding partner	FR	Governmental
EST Métropole Habitat	Founding partner	FR	Governmental
FEANTSA	Founding partner	EU	Non-governmental
fio.PSD	Associate partner	IT	Non-governmental
Focus Ireland	Founding partner	IE	Non-governmental
Fondation Abbé Pierre	Founding partner	FR	Non-governmental
Grand Lyon	Founding partner	FR	Governmental
Greater Manchester Housing First	Associate partner	UK	Governmental
HOGAR SÍ	Founding partner	ES	Non-governmental
Homeless Link	Associate partner	UK	Non-governmental
Homeless Network Scotland	Associate partner	UK	Non-governmental
Homelessness Australia	Associate partner	AU	Non-governmental
Housing Finance and Development Centre	Associate partner	FI	Governmental
Housing First Berlin	Associate partner	DE	Non-governmental
Housing First für Frauen	Associate partner	DE	Non-governmental
Housing First Nederland	Associate partner	NL	Non-governmental
Husbanken	Associate partner	NO	Governmental
HVO-Querido	Associate partner	NL	Non-governmental
Limor	Associate partner	NL	Governmental
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	Associate partner	UK	Governmental
Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030	Founding partner	ES	Governmental
Respond	Associate partner	IE	Non-governmental
Rock Trust	Founding partner	UK	Non-governmental
Sant Joan de Déu València	Founding partner	ES	Non-governmental
Simon Communities	Associate partner	IE	Non-governmental
Simon Community Scotland	Associate partner	UK	Non-governmental
Stadsmissioner	Founding partner	SE	Governmental
Strasbourg Eurométropole	Associate partner	FR	Governmental
Turning Point Scotland	Founding partner	UK	Non-governmental
World Habitat	Associate partner	UK	Non-governmental
Y-Foundation	Founding partner	FI	Non-governmental

Re-Orienting the Turin Reception System to Address Homelessness. Findings from an Italian Participatory Action-Research Study

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Abstract_ *This paper presents the initial analytical findings from a multidisciplinary participatory action-research study that aimed to reorient and improve the public services system for people experiencing homelessness in Turin, Italy. Sociologists, designers, and anthropologists from the University of Turin and the Polytechnic of Turin coordinated the research in agreement with the municipality of Turin and with funding from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The action-research study has been conducted since 2018 through co-design activities and qualitative research techniques that have involved policymakers from the city administration, frontline workers from third-sector organisations, and the beneficiaries of public services for people without housing. This article focuses on some of the critical aspects of Turin's reception system that emerged from the action-research process, such as the tension between the standardisation or personalisation of the city's public services and the need to further diversify the housing solutions available for those facing homelessness. At the methodological level, the collaboration and prolonged discussion between the university researchers and local administration was significant. This action-research study encouraged the actors in the local reception system to develop their reflexivity and promoted the development of more diverse policies and interventions.*

Keywords_ *homelessness, local homeless service system, participatory action-research, Italy.*

Introduction and Context

Housing hardship is widespread in Italy due to traditionally limited public investment in housing options. This situation worsened following the Great Recession of 2007/2008 and the subsequent slow recovery, which resulted in the impoverishment of a number of households and persons in need of housing (Baldini and Poggio, 2014; Jessoula et al., 2019). Historically, Italy, like other Southern European countries, has very high levels of home ownership and low levels of social housing and state involvement in housing regulation (Poggio and Boreiko, 2017; Tosi, 2017; Baptista and Marlier, 2019). In this context, the situation of people experiencing homelessness, defined in Italy as being "roofless" and/or "houseless" (ISTAT, 2012; Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2015), the first two macro-categories of the "ETHOS Light" classification (Edgar and Meert, 2005), is particularly critical. In recent years, the issue of homelessness has garnered increasing attention due to its spread and because of the new heterogeneous configurations of housing exclusion and poverty (Consoli and Meo, 2020).

The last national survey on homelessness completed by ISTAT in 2014 launched a debate in Italy on policies to be put in place to address homelessness that would fall in line with the European Strategy EU 2020. The debate involved the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Italian Federation of Organisations Working with People experiencing homelessness (fio.PSD), and various regions and metropolitan cities, and it led to the drafting of the *Guidelines for Tackling Severe Adult Marginality in Italy* in 2015 (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2015). This was a very important step in order to reinvigorate the methods and tools of intervention to deal more effectively with the complex phenomenon of 'homelessness' in Italy. By giving priority to the 'right to housing', the *Guidelines* were the first official document to outline a national programme in the sector and to set referential parameters for regions and municipalities implementing social services for people experiencing homelessness. The *Guidelines* aimed to promote the adoption of a new policy strategy based on the Housing First (HF) and a 'housing led' approach, by overcoming the traditional 'emergency' and temporary accommodation infrastructure.

In Italy, the services to tackle homelessness and housing exclusion have traditionally been driven by an emergency approach; in other words, the prevailing policy has been to 'manage homelessness' by providing temporary shelters and street-based services to meet basic needs (Baptista and Marlier, 2019). In the absence of national policies and programmes directed toward regulating services for people experiencing homelessness (Lancione et al., 2018; Gaboardi et al., 2019), public interventions at the regional level have been limited and poorly funded, and municipalities have traditionally been responsible for planning, managing, and delivering services, thereby generating an inefficient and territorially differentiated system.[1]

Regional and local authorities promoted the introduction of national guidelines in 2015 and funding as part of the National Plan for Fighting Poverty, which was reserved for support services and initiatives targeted at people without homes, as it allowed for the implementation of a new strategy (Avonto and Cortese, 2016). Thanks to the allocation of structural funds for homelessness that integrated national resources and European capital, as well as the introduction of a national minimum income scheme (Inclusion Income – Reddito di Inclusione) in 2017, many Italian regions and municipalities began to plan and implement a wider range of services, including support for greater social inclusion. The debate on homelessness also stimulated researchers to take a more careful look at the changes in policy paradigms and at services to tackle homelessness (e.g., Bianchi, 2013; Campagnaro and Porcellana, 2013; Porcellana, 2019; Porcellana et al., 2020).

In the context of these recent transformations affecting Italian local welfare systems, this article presents and discusses some core findings that have emerged from a multidisciplinary participatory action-research study in Turin on homelessness service innovation. It was commissioned in 2018 by local authorities and was coordinated by anthropologists, sociologists, and social service designers from the University of Turin and the Polytechnic of Turin, in agreement with the municipality. The mandate from the municipality was to reorient the local system of public services for people experiencing homelessness in order to improve the well-being of all the actors involved (both social workers[2] and people without homes) by adopting a more comprehensive and integrated approach.

1 In Italy, the system of service provision varies greatly at the local level. At the national level, the first legislative reference to social policies in favour of persons in serious severe marginality is found in Law n. 328/2000 (art. 28). However, this provision only financed limited interventions in the two years following the adoption of the law. Therefore, it did not introduce wide-ranging public institutional responsibilities for the support of people experiencing homelessness, nor did it guarantee continuity of funding in this area of intervention over subsequent years. Furthermore, with the reform of Title V of the Constitution in 2001 (Constitutional Law n. 3/2001), social assistance policies fell under regional competencies. Italy's regions were thus authorised to draft laws on extreme poverty, while the Government lost its primary role in providing social assistance (Saraceno et al., 2020).

2 By social workers, we are referring to a wide range of welfare professionals.

Through co-design activities and different qualitative research methods, the action-research study involved policymakers from the local public administration, frontline workers from third-sector organisations, and final beneficiaries of public services for people experiencing homelessness. The researchers supported the various actors involved in the local network to provide services for people without homes using a logic of participation and co-design, bringing light to the ambivalences, critical features, and weaknesses in the city's existing supply of services and reception facilities, in order to increase the reflexivity of both social workers and policymakers and to re-think the local service system.

The city of Turin represents an interesting case study because of its long and consolidated tradition of policies against poverty and in support of people experiencing homelessness. It was one of the first Italian cities to establish a municipal office in the 1980s that had the function of planning, managing, and delivering services and interventions aimed at tackling severe poverty and marginality. It was also one of the first cities to adhere to the fio.PSD and to have created, in the 1990s and 2000s, an articulated and differentiated model of shelters and accommodations that corresponded to what many in the field call the *staircase approach.* [3]

Furthermore, in 2014 in Turin, fio.PSD launched the "Italian Programme for Implementing Housing First (HF) in Italy" with the aim of promoting the HF [4] approach by coordinating pilot projects and driving policy change in the homelessness sector (Consoli et al., 2016). The Turin municipality was one of the first to join the Italian HF Network and to take part in the first experimental programme with its own pilot projects. Consistently over the last decades, the city's system of services for people experiencing homelessness has focused its efforts on shifting from a predominantly emergency logic to a greater diversification of services. Furthermore,

3 The prevailing approach to addressing homelessness in Italy and in Europe can be described as linear: it essentially involves 'progressing' people experiencing homelessness through a series of stages that correspond to different residential services. It is based on the philosophy of 'treatment first', which indicates people experiencing homelessness enter the homelessness service system through drop-in facilities and shelters that have low barriers to entry, and then progress through transitional housing arrangements to settled housing, by adhering to a range of behavioural conditions that ostensibly prove their 'housing readiness'. This approach was designed to prepare the homeless for living independently in their own home (Sahlin, 2005; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007).

4 HF is arguably the most important innovation in homeless service design in the past 30 years. Developed by Sam Tsemberis in New York City, the HF model has found application primarily with people experiencing homelessness with high support needs in the United States and Canada and in several European countries. HF uses housing as a starting point, a prerequisite to solving other social and health problems, rather than an end goal. This is very different from homeless services that seek to make people experiencing homelessness 'housing ready' before they are rehoused (Tsemberis, 2010; Padgett et al., 2015).

it has maintained an important role in coordinating and planning and has been in a key position to bring different public and private actors together to provide more effective responses to homelessness.

In Turin, and across Italy, the use of the staircase approach is widespread, although its limitations are well known (Sahlin, 2005; Pleace, 2011). However, by benefitting from new funds, local authorities have developed some innovative housing projects. The Turin HF approach is not considered to offer merely an 'incremental' change to the system, but to serve as a concrete opportunity for the whole system to experiment with the feasibility of systemic evolution.[5] The participatory action-research study discussed here provided the framework for local stakeholders and social workers to reflect together on this transformation, in order to reorient and improve the system of public services for people experiencing homelessness.

This article is structured as follows: the first section briefly outlines the main features of the local reception system and then goes into detail on the research procedures, activities, and methods used. The second part highlights some limitations of the city's reception system identified through this action-research study, such as the tension between the standardisation and personalisation of services and the need to further diversify housing solutions to better meet the needs of beneficiaries. The third part discusses the new perspectives launched as a result of the investigation of the local welfare system, and traces some of the experiments that are currently in progress in reorienting the services for people without housing. These represent the most concrete outputs of this study. Finally, a brief conclusion discusses the remaining work to be done.

The Participatory Action-Research Study: Procedures and Methods

Homelessness is a complex and multifaceted problem and there is a growing awareness of the limitations of the staircase model. It has become clear that an integrated and comprehensive response to homelessness requires the involvement of a wide range of local actors who play a role in supporting people experiencing homelessness. The service system for people without homes in Turin is mainly

5 This incremental and systemic approach is in line with the perspective suggested by the Housing First Europe Hub in his last publication about the implementation of HF policy (2022). They state that HF programmes are more effective if they are developed considering, and integrating them with, the whole (local) homelessness supporting system: "Housing First works best when it functions as part of an integrated, multi-agency homelessness strategy, alongside prevention, and low intensity emergency accommodation services" (Housing First Europe Hub, 2022, p.5).

public. Indeed, there are many third-sector organisations that actively support the homeless population at the city level, and they receive a fair amount of cooperation from the municipality. However, they are not strictly part of the network of public service actors. The most up-to-date figure for the estimated number of people experiencing homelessness in the city of Turin in 2021 is 2500.[6] Between 2018 and 2019, the period in which the work of reorienting services began, there were approximately 1880 people who requested public assistance.

The municipality manages the public service system through the Service for Adult in Difficulty (SAD), which is comprised of policymakers, technicians, and social workers. The main functions of SAD are: i) to support people experiencing homelessness in need of social, economic, and housing help; ii) to manage and organise the emergency shelters (1577 people hosted in 2019; 1838 in 2021), temporary housing support system (145 people accommodated in 2019; 174 in 2021), and HF services (40 people in 2019; 70 in 2021); iii) to coordinate actions to enhance the social inclusion of people experiencing homelessness through internships and by providing support for job placements. In addition to this, the SAD acts as a hub at the political level, acknowledging and implementing guidelines and directives, drawing and disbursing funds, observing and monitoring the phenomenon of homelessness within the city, and giving updates and requesting responses concerning the issues at hand.

Temporary and emergency housing is offered inside buildings and housing owned by the municipality. Until 2020, shelters were defined as 'night hospitality houses' because they were open from 18: 00 to 08: 00. In conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic prevention provisions, today the shelters are open 24 hours a day. HF projects are hosted in public or private housing units. The concrete and operational management of residential accommodation and of services for social inclusion is contracted out through public procurements to non-state bodies that are specialised in working in the social sector and, in particular, with people experiencing homelessness.

This is the system of public and non-state actors that, together with the beneficiaries of these services, has been involved in the participatory process of homeless service re-orientation. This interdisciplinary research group decided to adopt an action-research approach to examine this process. Action-research is grounded on research and analysis and on transformative actions within the context in question. As Müllert and Jungk (1987) discussed, it is characterised by three phases: a 'critical' phase, a 'creative' phase, and an 'implementation' phase. This

6 This kind of data is not public domain. The quantitative data shown below were provided to the research team directly by the Turin Municipality's Service for Adult in Difficulty.

sequence allows those involved in the action-research to imagine different future scenarios, to experiment with ideas of change, and to “reopen possibilities” (Pellegrino, 2019, p.183).

In the present case study, the action-research approach responded to the Turin municipality’s transformative aims and to the idea that this process of change relies on contribution from all actors in the system. In fact, action-research necessarily calls for the involvement and participation of the community at the core of the research (Reason and Bradbury, 2008), and it combines intentional transformative actions with the production of shared knowledge and reflections regarding the change (Deriu, 2010). This allows the municipality, and all actors involved, to better understand the critical issues and to explore the potentialities related to the (transformation of the) system.

In line with *service design* literature (Sangiorgi, 2011; Yang and Sung, 2016), the participation of system actors in the analysis process and in the construction of transformative proposals is a fundamental element. In this sense, the work we have carried out aimed not so much at a radical redefinition of the service. Instead, with dialogic and collaborative modalities, we reflected collectively on the system’s practices and objectives in order to create proposals for incremental, feasible, and progressive system transformations. This is what Björgvinsson et al. (2012), in the field of participatory design, defined as ‘staging’ and ‘infrastructuring’, which is oriented not so much at defining a perfectly performing ‘definitive’ project as at constructing a common workspace and sharing theoretical and practical tools that facilitate collaboration between actors to develop transformative projects.

To do this, in 2018 the research group launched the study by combining co-design activities and various qualitative research tools, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups with privileged witnesses and with some recipients of housing services. Furthermore, it conducted a series of participatory activities with the various actors of the system: SAD policymakers and social workers, frontline workers, and managers of the third-sector organisations that operate the services.

In the first phase of the research, we aimed to produce a shared vision of the system, identifying any peculiarities and limitations. Subsequently, we focused on elaborating possible transformations of the system that could improve the services to better support people experiencing homelessness and to better recognise and enhance the efforts and commitment of the various actors managing the housing services.

All of the group activities were facilitated by the use of visual devices, such as maps, diagrams, and graphics, as well as presentations and discussions of case studies and role-playing activities. These tools proved useful in making knowledge and experiences within the system explicit, in socialising data and concepts, in facilitating the comparison between the participants, and in sharing complex reasonings to create a synthesis that did not simplify and trivialise the various and sometimes conflicting points of view (Tassi, 2009; Meroni et al., 2018). On some occasions, these activities were useful to abstract the participants from everyday working life with the service recipients and to try to make new connections and ideas by comparing their experiences with case studies related to other policy sectors/ categories of recipients.

During this work, the researchers organised several dozen participants into work units, which were led by one of the researchers as a facilitator. The presence of facilitators on the work tables was useful for collecting and organising data and in order to 'feel' the working group, to interpret the different attitudes, glances, feelings, difficulties, and irony among the participants. It was also important to give voice to the more 'silent' actors and to understand if the tools made available to the participants and the methods designed for the group works were effective. In relation to some specific issues that emerged from the participatory process, we combined the group-work activities with in-depth interviews and focus groups in order to also include the perspectives of the actors that were not directly involved in the collective activities, like the beneficiaries of the housing services.

Throughout the process, the researchers collected and analysed the data recovered from each participatory activity at frequent research-group meetings that had organisational and analytical aims. The researchers' different disciplinary gazes and sensitivities intertwined constantly, both to guide these processes and during the analysis phases, producing articulated, complex readings that resulted from a dialogic synthesis of the different disciplinary observations. The results that emerged served to establish the themes and objectives of the subsequent participatory meetings. The visual tools facilitated the analysis and synthesis work within the research group and were fundamental to the collective reporting activities and for sharing the intermediate results with the various groups of actors.

In general, the participants recognised the process to be an opportunity for confrontation between entities who viewed each other as competent bearers of experience and reliable points of reference on policies and services for people experiencing homelessness, even though the relationships between these actors could be competitive in nature (as in the case of private social entities periodically competing for tenders for services) or of a client/supplier nature between managing non-state bodies and the public administration. In this sense, the municipality's decision to involve third-sector entities to reorient the public service – enhancing their experience in the field and recognising them as experts – opened the way for a reflective, critical, and imaginative approach to the diverse actors involved. This made it possible to overcome, even if temporarily, the positions linked exclusively to specific social and institutional roles, giving all participants the opportunity to express themselves not only on the fundamental aspects of the system and on the difficulties of their daily work but also with a proactive emphasis on change.

This action-research study developed in four macro phases. The first had the objective of mapping the system (Lenskjold, 2011), both in terms of the function and articulation of the different system services and in terms of the mandates of the various bodies involved. During this phase, the researchers also analysed how the social workers intercepted and redefined the diverse characteristics of the recipients in terms of their economic, social, relational, and health issues and in relation to the resources and weaknesses of the services offered. This step aimed to problematise how the rules and regulations of service impacted the perception and definition of the beneficiaries.

The second phase focused on investigating certain characteristic and problematic nodes in the system, including: the effectiveness of the actions envisaged to support users in emerging from the condition of homelessness; the integration with other citizen welfare services; and the ability to respond to some of the beneficiaries' relevant needs that were not fully addressed by the current system of services (e.g. access to food, stay in reception facilities in case of health-related needs, the accompaniment of people leaving temporary housing services).

The third phase was instrumental in defining the strategic drivers for the possible reorientation of the service. The researchers identified diverse directions for transformation, but they all aimed at a greater degree of autonomy and self-determination for people in a state of homelessness and at soliciting the system to respond in more adequate and flexible ways to their citizenship rights. Finally, the fourth phase, which is still in progress, entails experimentation with some projects presented by various non-state bodies engaged in the fight against homelessness in response to a 2019 public notice.[7] The public notice called for proposals for projects and was written by the SAD starting from the defined and shared transformative solicitations that emerged in the third phase.

The next section offers some observations and critical reflections that emerged from the first two phases of the action-research study. The last part of the article then discusses how the system is prototyping its transition towards innovation.

7 http://www.comune.torino.it/bandi/pdf/files/servsoc/abitatlav/Scheda_2_Area5.pdf.

Findings on the Local Homelessness System in Turin

The first phase of the action-research study included a participatory mapping activity. The map helped visualise the entire reception system, as the various services are often not completely aware of the links between the different constituent entities. As some of the participants remarked, it "was a way to recognise each other." At the same time, the mapping activity offered local service actors the opportunity to identify and debate some critical issues in the system. In this sense, the map created a 'common ground' on which the participants could agree, express different perspectives, and discuss issues, concerns, and contrasting views. One particular issue emerged during this activity: there was a tension between the standardisation and personalisation of housing services, and concerns regarding the ability to actually emerge from a condition of homelessness through the housing service system in place.

The tension between standardisation and personalisation

The first issue on which the participants agreed is related to the unavoidable tension between standardisation and personalisation in the welfare systems (Dubois, 2009). Since the creation of the welfare state, standardisation has both offered protection and been a problem for the people it supports. On one hand, standardisation protects welfare beneficiaries because it enables them to receive support without having to prove that they deserve it or making them dependent on social workers' discretion, attitudes, or personal will (Dubois, 2019). On the other hand, it tends to make services, measures, and recovery projects difficult to adapt to individual lives, goals, and needs.

This participatory action-research study highlighted that the Turin system was based mainly on the *staircase approach*. According to this model, beneficiaries should advance through progressive steps from low-threshold structures to first- and second-level structures, where they are expected to demonstrate, develop, and increase their autonomy in several dimensions (e.g., house chores, the ability to pay bills). Researchers and practitioners have debated the limitations to the staircase approach at length, as it has been the core pillar of 'housing readiness' for some time (Sahlin, 2005; Tsemberis, 2010; Pleace, 2011). The local actors involved in this study acknowledged them as well. The system mapping activities provided a way to overcome the staircase approach, though the methods identified are not easy to implement in daily practice, even if the HF approach is now part of public services for citizens experiencing homelessness, creating a tension between the *status quo* and the new model.

During one of the system mapping sessions, a local policymaker suggested overcoming the representation of the system through ‘steps’, much like in the staircase model, because the system was moving towards a softer structure. Instead of the many steps of the linear staircase model, the policymaker suggested two main ‘clusters’ of services: a ‘low threshold’ cluster and a ‘first-level’ cluster. HF was a third cluster, the narrowest, and it was drawn in the map as crossing the former. It was envisaged as a solution to be activated from the first moment a person appeared to be in need and as one that would accompany them throughout the entire time they benefited from the welfare services (Tsemberis and Eisenberg, 2000; Padgett et al., 2015).

This graphic representation was not solely an accurate description of the system, but it expressed the desire of those who worked in the Turin reception system to move toward a more flexible system of services. While drawing the map, the participants agreed on the current emphasis on standardisation. They recognised that standardisation might result in the failure of individual projects and generate frustration among all the actors involved, mainly because it forces them to underestimate the effective living conditions of recipients and their backgrounds. Indeed, the social workers voiced that, in their daily tasks, they had to propose solutions selected from “a limited range of available resources rather than following the needs/desires of the beneficiaries.” The needs of the person at the centre of the system tended to remain ‘on paper’ (Leonardi, 2019). This desire for greater personalisation and flexibility contrasts with a serious difficulty in translating it operationally. During the participatory activities, the social workers stated that “it is impossible to imagine a project that differs from the pre-established ones” and that “the projects activated always follow a unique direction.” To sum up, in daily practice, the Turin service system tends toward standardisation, and people experiencing homelessness have to adapt to the rigid shape and rules of the system.

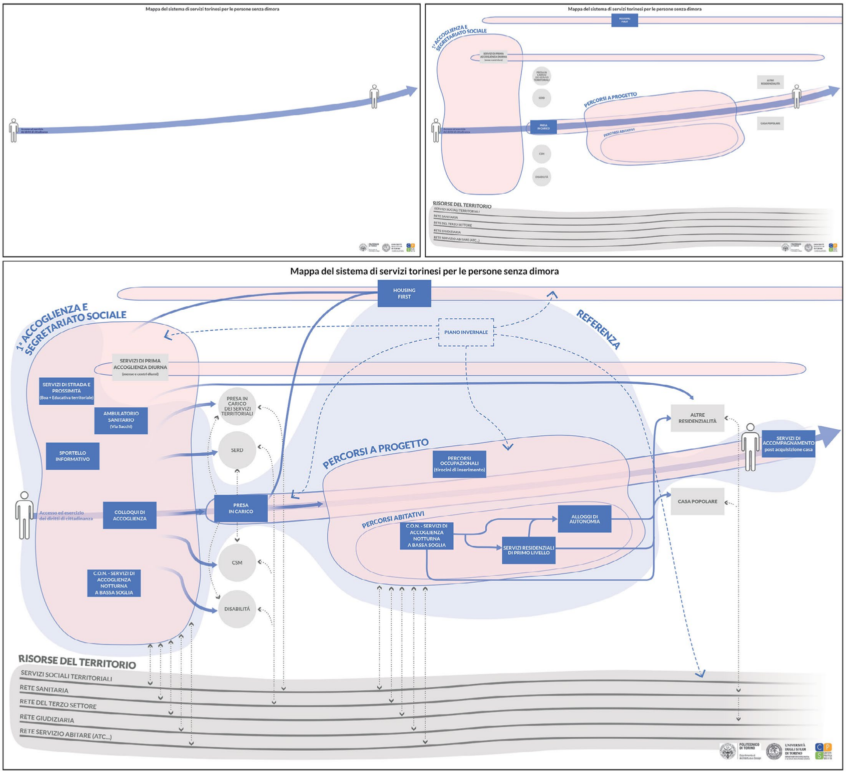

Image 1. *The images represent the outcomes of the mapping activities. The mapping activity was initiated using the first image on the top left, which shows the path of the individual person experiencing homelessness, up to the exit from homelessness. The second image is the result of the first phase of work. It is remarkable that the policy-makers, from the very beginning, represented the person's pathway through services without using the classic staircase representation but by identifying two main clusters of services: the low-threshold services, at the beginning of the pathway, and the first level housing services. Note how the HF cluster on the top was represented with a smaller size but across the whole pathway. In the last graphic the two clusters were filled in with the respective services/actions in blue and the links between the system of services for persons experiencing homelessness and other public services in grey (socio-educational, health, legal, housing) have been represented.*

The following sub-sections examine two factors that emerged from the action-research study as enhancing and maintaining standardisation: what we call 'institutionalised procedures' and the 'homogeneity of solutions'.

Institutionalised procedures

The first factor that contributes to the standardisation of the system is represented by what we call 'institutionalised procedures'. The organisation of the system is based on eligibility criteria and operating rules defined in a standard way to ensure equity in access to public services, as stated above. However, the rules often become 'procedures'; the system follows them, with few opportunities to reflect upon or to discuss their original meanings and aims. In some cases, they thus become 'institutionalised procedures' to work *according to*, not to work *with* or to reflect on.

The strictness of rules and criteria is even more critical considering the wide heterogeneity of the population experiencing homelessness. Its diversification in recent years has increased due to impoverishment, migrations, labour market transformation, and the tightening of migration policies (Consoli and Meo, 2020). Moreover, social workers recognise this strictness in their work: they tend to focus on people's features that fit in the service eligibility criteria, rather than considering the beneficiaries' other characteristics.

During the analysis, this element emerged often in the interviews with people experiencing homelessness and through long-lasting participant observation within the system. Those who directly experienced the contradictions generated by these institutionalised practices were in the best position to challenge and question them, unlike the social workers who were often accustomed to working with the rules. For instance, during an interview, R. told us that he had arrived at the services after his small enterprise went bankrupt. At that time, he was evicted from his house and was living with his dog in a garage equipped with a bed and a toilet. He had a specific aim: he wanted help finding a new job. However, to benefit from the support of the local service system, he had to follow the standardised path: he had to sleep in the shelters and go to soup kitchens. This solution added new problems to his situation: he could not (and did not want to) bring the dog to the shelters, so he had to cross the city every afternoon to take care of the dog. "A place to sleep was the only thing I had and didn't need", R. stated during the interview. He asked for a job or a house, but the standardised path could not match his needs.

The requirement to reside in shelters and other sites is an example of an 'institutionalised procedure'. It was originally designed to ensure that (insufficient) resources were directed to those who were *truly* homeless. They must sleep in shelters because it is a way for the reception system to prove that people are *really* unhoused (Leonardi, 2020). This rule, however, does not recognise the specificities of people's individual backgrounds and lives or the legitimacy of their opinions, requests, and preferences. From R.'s point of view, the garage was an unsustainable long-term housing solution – the reason why he requested support – but it was better than a shelter. This requirement also ends up assigning resources in an ineffective way, forcing a person to occupy a bed that they do not need as an inevitable criterion for being able to receive other types of support.

This regulation has become an operating practice, a key element of the framework for intervention, and one that is taken for granted. However, the participatory process discussed here has opened space for reflection, as it has created concrete opportunities for discussion between social workers and other professionals involved at different operational levels. Moreover, it has allowed participants to debate key welfare and social service features, such as shelters. Through recourse to co-design tools and qualitative research methodologies, it has also given voice to people without homes, who often have less power in the system.

A unique exit point

While the experiences of homeless people were fundamental in focusing on institutionalised practices, the views of the social workers highlighted the second major discussion point: the homogeneity of solutions. They recognised the need for the system "to propose differentiated [recovery] educational projects, according to peoples' features, desires, opportunities, and will." They stated that they struggled to develop personalised projects because they had access to too few and too homogeneous kinds of resources in terms of housing, jobs, and social domains. From their points of view, the lack of resources prevented the construction of more personalised projects for inclusion instead of a standardised path for all recipients.

An example the participants discussed was the case of the final departure from the reception system of shelters. Almost all people experiencing homelessness who succeed in exiting the service system end up gaining access to a social housing apartment. This is perceived as the most accessible housing solution because it is almost the only affordable solution, considering this population's typical income and because it is a permanent solution. However, there are no alternatives for those who do not want a social house and, above all, for those who do not have the criteria to access the social housing candidate dwellers' directory. For instance C., a middle-aged man interviewed in a Turin shelter told us "I'm stuck here [in the shelter] because they don't know how to help me. I have a debt with the ATC that I can't solve." Indeed it is not possible to benefit from social housing for those who in the past contracted an unpaid debt with the regional agency (ATC, the Territorial Agency for Housing), which manages the social housing units.

Moreover, the uniqueness of this final 'successful exit' dictates the path of people experiencing homelessness in the services, and ultimately affects the whole system. To explain how this works, it is useful to return briefly to the participatory mapping; the participants expressed criticism towards the similar size of the two clusters – the ‘low threshold’ cluster and the ‘first-level services’ cluster – in the graphic representation. In their opinions, the ‘low threshold’ cluster was significantly larger than the ‘first-level services’ group. Indeed, in Turin’s service system, the ‘low threshold’ services attract a wider number of resources and host more people than the ‘first-level’ cluster services. Due to the differentiated occupancy of the two levels, Turin’s system of services works as a funnel: a lot of people can be stuck in ‘low threshold’ services for several years, or never even access the ‘first-level services’ aimed at housing autonomy.

However, this is not just a question of resource allocation but also of a lack of other types of affordable housing solutions for people who do not match the requirements for access to social housing. Often, they are not allowed to advance beyond the ‘low threshold’ services; they then get stuck in the shelters because, if they move to a first-level structure, they could occupy it for an undetermined time, with no need to exit, putting them at odds with the principle of the staircase model (Leonardi, 2019). This creates a situation where the ‘low threshold’ services are overcrowded and cannot respond to the increasing demand for support, while, in the ‘first-level’ services, not all the places available are fully booked.

During this action-research study, the participants highlighted and reflected on both the problem of the homogeneity of resources available for people who had access to these services, and on its critical outcomes. They expressed their desire to shape a local network with more diverse resources in order to increase the opportunities for individuals in need, to create a wider and more inclusive network, and to overcome the limitations of the current homelessness system in Turin.

Beginning from these findings, the next phases of the participatory process have created opportunities to imagine different future scenarios and to test new solutions.

A System in Transformation

As mentioned, a creative third phase and an experimental fourth phase have followed the first two critical and analytical phases. In the third and fourth phases the public-private-academic group adopted more transformative and change-oriented postures. The interdisciplinary tools and methods remained the same as in the previous phases. At this stage, the researchers used them to promote a more generative reflection, to mould possible transformations, and to analyse the outcomes that emerged from an implementation perspective.

Despite the obvious freedom in design, the team focused on concrete, actionable, and feasible solutions and options for change. The results of the third and fourth phases, respectively, were: a system of drivers for service reorientation, and two experimental projects with services aimed at housing support. The latter are complementary to the existing housing solutions, and several local third-sector organisations are experimenting with their prototypes and will identify and share their findings on the strengths and weaknesses.

The transformative drivers for the reorientation of the system respond to the needs and requirements for the well-being, self-determination and social inclusion of people experiencing homelessness. However, they do not neglect the quality of work or the functionality and effectiveness of the system. They seek to qualitatively define a change of framework and identify its prerequisites. They also contribute to questioning institutionalised procedures, one of the major problems that emerged during the research. The drivers translation into concrete actions and new services, which are oriented by these very axes, is in the hands of the different actors of the territorial system. They must move within the system, according to its limitations and the freedom and autonomy their roles grant and prescribe. The transformative drivers across the range of needs of persons without homes and the priorities established include: the need to multiply the housing solutions in order to lighten the reception pressure within shelters and to guarantee greater well-being for all; to protect the right to housing adapted to the abilities, possibilities, and will of every person; the full exercise of the right of self-realisation, self-esteem, and security; to welcome each individual in a personalised way and to integrate them into other city welfare services; to strengthen the actions for social inclusion; to increase investments for primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention work; and to provide access, in non-stigmatising forms, to goods and material aids that supplement the weak public economic support measures. Each individual and their right to self-determination and status as one citizen among many is the heart of this vision of change. Moreover, all the actors agreed on the need for a new logic by which to frame the relationship between the person experiencing homelessness and the local welfare system to better support populations in need.

Prototyping the change

The availability of public funds to support these experiments and easier access to these funds, especially compared to the traditional contracts through which public services have been entrusted, has made it possible to launch the creative and experimental implementation steps of this participatory action-research study. This phase is currently underway, and its objective is to design and test service solutions that, in compliance with the agreed transformative framework, respond to the unmet needs of people experiencing homelessness.

The municipality of Turin, in the framework of the co-design process for welfare services, has promoted a call for projects in favour of the homeless population that aims at “the inclusion of citizens in the challenges of paths of activation, capacitation and well-being, and to counteract, in parallel, the different forms of stigma that risk affecting the paths of exit from the condition of serious social marginalisation.”[8] Within this co-design environment, which involves social services, health services, third-sector bodies, associations, social cooperatives and voluntary realities, foundations, and ecclesiastical bodies, this research study group identified several transformative areas through which to promote projects and innovative synergies that aim at:

1. An increase of opportunities to exercise the right to domicile for homeless citizens, guests in dormitories, or on the street, by offering a wider and more diversified housing resources inspired by the principle of rapid rehousing (Cunningham et al., 2015; Byrne et al., 2021).

2. Secondary prevention and social inclusion interventions to address the chronic status and deterioration of living conditions within the welfare services, with particular attention to the preservation and exercise of skills and abilities.

3. Experimental projects of tertiary prevention (Culhane et al., 2011; Dej et al., 2020) aimed at supporting citizens who have gained access to housing but who, if not adequately supported, risk ‘falling back’ into the previous condition of marginality and losing their homes.

In these creative and implementation phases, the work the research team has done is twofold. At first, we supported participants in defining the transformative drivers according to previous critical readings and the state of the system, in order to orient the organisations towards developing their proposals for innovation. In the next phase, which was particularly crucial for the scalability of the projects, we experimented with new services by collaborating in them, monitoring their impact on beneficiaries, and by evaluating the effectiveness of the projects and the economic sustainability of these proposals with respect to the costs the municipality faces.

The team paid particular attention to the proposals concerning new experiences of supported housing; we recognised their novelty and their ability to equip the system with additional and alternative tools to those present in the current binary system, which is split between the staircase approach and the HF model. Indeed, the projects inspired by the principles of rapid rehousing and tertiary prevention were unprecedented solutions for the local system and thus seemed to warrant a critical reading and participant observation. The results and the words used to tell the human and educational experience suggest that the directions of change under-

8 With these words the aim of the call for project promoted by the Municipality of Turin was presented.

taken are viable and promising; they respond to persistent problems and seem to offer concrete answers to the challenges people experiencing homelessness face, precisely by working to move away from the standardisation of the system.

These experiments also removed some of the economic 'alibis' that have seemed to curb the drive for innovation. In this way, they nourished the design capacity of the participants in a context of collective and communal work. They also made it possible to concretely experience change and to drive it. Above all, they have allowed us to see people experiencing homelessness within new contexts of life and new possibilities in order to empower and support their rehabilitation.

Conclusion

Most generally, we can see how useful participatory action-research has been for the innovation of the local system. We believe that this work has laid the foundations for an effective transformation of the system, particularly with respect to the expansion of housing options that go beyond the standardisation of accommodation services and support services at the end of the persons' pathway.

This study has shown that all the actors involved wish for a transition to more person-centred services that seek to promote better living conditions and more personalised designs and social inclusion. Nonetheless, the feasibility of this transition is less immediate than the will of people and operators represents. Indeed, the limitations, contradictions, and difficulties in the system become most apparent when they are challenged. This also shows how systemic the resistance to change is, as resistance is rooted in the same behaviours, ideas, and stereotypes that the system promotes, often unconsciously or framed as a need for precaution and care for the people.

However, this action-research has also made it possible to detect a collective awareness of these sources of resistance and, above all, a desire for concrete, participatory change. From the mapping, interviews, focus groups, and roleplaying, and through the discussion and analysis of the results and limitations of this study, we found words of appreciation for the diverse community of social workers who confronted each other in an open way, who valued difference, and who recognised the centrality of the lives of people experiencing homelessness.

A final observation concerns the interdisciplinary contribution of social science and design discipline. In general, the interdisciplinary approach has proved fundamental in driving the public administration to give form and substance to the various phases of the complex service reorientation process. In particular, it has been useful in combining an analytical and critical approach with a design and transformative one, in order to stimulate processes of change within the service system in terms of ideas, perspectives, and practices. The research activities here were particularly useful in constructing a vision of the system that the actors recognised and shared, identifying the relationships among them and with other territorial services, bringing to light the strengths and limitations of the system, and defining the transformative goals. This work of understanding and sharing awareness and reflexivity is the first step in generating change. Still further, the interdisciplinary approach helped stimulate the idea in all actors that change was not only necessary but possible, defining the concrete ways the system could be reoriented to take new shape. To do this, the team encouraged the design of punctual and innovative projects, aiming not so much to transform the services already in place, but to increase the opportunities for people currently serviced by the systems. The experimental nature of the projects pushed the policymakers and social workers involved to pay greater attention to their progress through processes of verification and collaborative monitoring alongside the researchers, with the aim of understanding whether they could be adopted as real services and become a permanent part of the system.

This incremental approach of continuous design, testing, and monitoring can also ensure that the reorientation of the system results in a steady process over time that can respond more dynamically to the challenges, both old and new, that homelessness continues to pose.

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Two-Year Post-Housing Outcomes for a Housing First Cohort in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract_ *Housing First (HF) is an approach that improves outcomes for people who have experienced homelessness. Housing provision in HF is immediate, non-conditional, and permanent, with open-ended wraparound support offered. This paper reports one-year and two-year post-housing outcomes for 387 people housed by the first HF programme in Aotearoa New*

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Zealand. We linked the de-identified cohort to Statistics NZ's (StatsNZ) Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI). This database contains administrative data on services provided by the New Zealand Government. This paper reports on interactions with government services by the cohort both before and after being housed. We focus on the domains of health, justice, and income. The cohort experienced a sizeable drop in healthcare service interactions. Average bed-nights in both mental health inpatient (-59%) and residential units (-50%) more than halved in year one and maintained the reduced average in year two (-41% and -51%). Outpatient events increased 15% in year one and 31% in year two. The average person in the HF cohort had almost NZD$3 000 more in overall total income across benefits and wages/salaries in the two years after being housed. Our findings show promising early changes in mental health outcomes and income rates for those housed, demonstrating that the HF approach is likely to have had early positive impacts. In a dynamic policy context, support and coordination of services is still needed at two years post-housed.

Keywords_ *Housing First, homelessness, integrated data, Aotearoa New Zealand, outcomes, policy*

Introduction

This paper presents one and two-year outcomes for people housed by a Housing First (HF) programme in Aotearoa New Zealand (henceforth referred to as Aotearoa NZ[1]). This programme, The People's Project (TPP), has made a demonstrable impact on the lives of those they have housed, and this paper quantifies this impact in terms of the rate of government service usage. TPP was New Zealand's first large-scale HF programme, established in 2014 (The People's Project et al., 2021). This paper is an outcome of a research partnership between TPP, He Kāinga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme at the University of Otago in Wellington, and the University of Waikato. It focuses on the first cohort of people who were housed by TPP in Kirikiriroa-Hamilton, between October 2014 and June 2017, prior to central government funding. HF has now been funded for $430m[2] by

1 We use 'Aotearoa NZ' to acknowledge the central place of Te Reo Māori and Te Ao Māori in Aotearoa NZ.

2 All dollar amounts are in NZD.

the Central Government across 10 regions in Aotearoa NZ, and the HF approach is a central component of the Government's overarching Homelessness Action Plan (Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020a).

The People's Project was established in 2014 to address concerns about the growing number of people living and sleeping on the streets in Kirikiriroa-Hamilton, Aotearoa NZ's fourth largest city. A large health and wellbeing provider, The Wise Group, initiated a collective approach that involved government agencies, local government, local iwi (indigenous Māori tribal authority), and local businesses. At the time, HF was not funded by government, so TPP was able to take a local-specific approach that aimed to assist anyone who sought help, combined with a widespread outreach effort. At this time, TPP was funded by the Wise Trust Board, philanthropic funding, local businesses, and support from the local council through provision of premises in the central city. When focused government funding to alleviate homelessness was introduced in 2018, TPP became funded to deliver a Rapid Rehousing approach to supporting single adult homelessness in Kirikiriroa-Hamilton, specialising in supporting adults 18 years of age or older, without dependent children, and with high and complex needs. TPP utilise a VI-SPDAT survey (Vulnerability Index and Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool) to assist in assessing the level of immediate and ongoing support a person may need. Even if people do not meet the criteria for funded intervention, TPP offer a free advisory service (The People's Project et al., 2021). Despite the evolution in focus, TPP's model has consistently been to provide housing without preconditions first, and then provide wraparound support, in accordance with the five principles identified in the Pathways HF model. TPP's staff have a combination of skills, with experience and expertise, including social work, psychology, occupational therapy, mental health, and problematic substance use. Drawing from the clinical and housing expertise of staff and management, TPP primarily operates with an Assertive Community Treatment approach to service delivery, with 70% or more of support being provided in the community by specialist care managers. Individuals from relevant government agencies and the local iwi have spent time based in TPP offices working directly with case managers and clients to ensure that wider systems are responsive and involved. TPP houses most of its clients (approximately 60%) in scattered site private rental housing. The remainder are housed in governmental public housing provided by Kāinga Ora, in housing provided by community social housing providers, and other types of housing. In this respect, TPP is an outlier amongst HF providers in Aotearoa NZ, the majority of which are also community housing providers. TPP works to actively support tenancies, leveraging off strong, well-established relationships with local landlords.

HF is a model of providing support for people who are experiencing homelessness; it works by housing people in permanent housing and offering wraparound support (Tsemberis, 2011; Tsemberis et al., 2004). Internationally, HF has been shown to deliver greater security of tenure and improved outcomes across a range of domains, such as health and justice (Aquin et al., 2017; Aubry et al., 2016; Baxter et al., 2019; Groton, 2013; Patterson et al., 2013; Rezansoff et al., 2017). HF is effective in improving wellbeing, reducing use of acute services such as emergency department usage, reconviction rates, and improving housing stability (Baxter et al., 2019; Leclair et al., 2019; Somers et al., 2013). HF can positively impact recovery trajectories and provide enhanced access to care and services (Patterson et al., 2013). There have been only a small number of studies that evaluate the short-term (up to 24 months) impacts of HF on its participants' social and health outcomes. So far, these reviews (Baxter et al., 2019; Leclair et al., 2019) did not find significant differences in health and social justice outcomes for HF participants.

Previous research showed a large unmet need for this HF cohort before they were housed by TPP, and inequities in the prevalence of experiencing homelessness were starkly visible, with a very high proportion of clients identifying as Māori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa NZ (Pierse et al., 2019). With over 200 000 recorded and linked interactions with government services before being housed, this cohort had been seeking help for an extended period, and were therefore far from the commonly described 'hard to reach' population. Instead, they had been failed by inadequate, poorly co-ordinated systems. The most common interaction with government services was with the health sector, with far higher rates of interaction than a random subsample of the general population (NZpop). Rates of service interaction by the HF cohort in the mental health and justice sector services were more than 10 times that of the NZpop in the five years leading up to being housed. In this study we examine the short-term (up to two years) outcomes after 387 clients were housed by TPP in Aotearoa NZ, providing early insight into potential medium and long-term outcomes.

Methods

This is a before and after cohort study of 387 people in a HF programme in Kirikiriroa-Hamilton, Aotearoa NZ, using linked government administrative data. The Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) is a large-scale database containing linked microdata about people in Aotearoa NZ. It consists of administrative records of services provided by various government agencies, Statistics New Zealand (StatsNZ) surveys including the New Zealand Census, and data collected by multiple non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The IDI is maintained and regularly updated by StatsNZ, the government data agency (Black, 2016; Gibb et al., 2016).

Within the IDI, individuals are assigned unique, anonymised identifiers that researchers can link across interactions with government agencies. TPP was one of the first NGOs to link data into the IDI. Through our research partnership, the authors were granted access to a de-identified list of the first 387 clients of TPP in order to analyse their interactions with government agencies before and after being housed. Ethics approval was granted by the University of Otago Human Research Ethics Committee, reference HD16/049.

This paper builds on our 2019 baseline study of TPP clients, which offers a more detailed description of our methods[3] (Pierse et al., 2019). The results below summarise service interaction rates in the one-year and two-year periods before and after the clients were first housed. For comparison, the same analysis of the estimated Aotearoa NZ resident population (NZpop) is presented (n=3 388 338). The NZpop includes everyone who resides in Aotearoa NZ in the same age range as the HF cohort (18-67). The analysis periods for the NZpop were the periods before and after the median date when TPP first housed the HF cohort (9 June 2016). The pre and post two-year outcomes were compared between the two groups using Wilcoxon rank sum test in R. A total of 21 people in the HF cohort passed away during the data period, and they are included in the rate calculation until the day after their death is recorded, as they would not have had any service interactions beyond this point. The September 2020 version of the IDI datasets has been used for this paper.

Outputs are grouped into three domains: health, justice, and income and social development. Health outputs include hospitalisations in publicly-funded hospitals (Manatū Hauora – Ministry of Health, 2021; Telfar Barnard et al., 2015), injuries recorded in Aotearoa NZ's no-fault universal accident insurance scheme, attended outpatient events (excluding emergency department visits), and pharmaceutical prescriptions filled in community pharmacies. Mental health outcomes are reported in three categories: community-based activities attended, inpatient unit bed-nights, and residential unit bed-nights. Justice outcomes include interactions reported to the police as victims or offenders of crime, police charges laid, criminal court sentences received, and corrections events such as remand and sentencing. Income outcomes were counts of the month in which the client received government benefits or wages, and the gross income received from each source.

3 The cohort in our 2019 paper (n=390) is slightly larger than this current paper; this is due to a refresh of the IDI, which resulted in data linkages for some people being lost. The 2019 comparison group was only a subset of the Nzpop; however, this paper uses the whole NZpop as the comparison cohort for greater coverage.

Results

Table 1 presents the demographics of both the HF cohort and the NZpop comparison group. Compared to the NZpop, the demographics of this cohort reflect known health and socioeconomic inequities, yet challenge existing perceptions about people who experience homelessness. For example, there are slightly more females in the HF cohort than in the NZpop, whereas populations of people experiencing homelessness are often perceived to be mostly male (Fraser et al., 2021; Hagen and Ivanoff, 1988; Phipps et al., 2019). The cohort is somewhat younger than the NZpop, which could in part be due to the younger age structure of the Māori population, and of people who have experienced homelessness (Amore et al., 2020; Statistics New Zealand, 2018). As described, Māori are significantly over-represented in the HF cohort, reflecting structural inequities that systemically disadvantage Māori (Lawson-Te Aho et al., 2019).

Table 1. Demographics of the HF cohort and NZpop

Variable		**Relative percentage (%)**	
		HF (n=387)	**NZpop (n=3 388 338)**
Sex	Female	53.5	50.2
	Male	46.5	49.8
Age	Under 25	14.7	14.9
	25-44	52.7	36.1
	45-64	31.8	34.6
	65+	S [4]	14.5
Ethnicity (total response, multiple ethnicities allowed)	Māori	71.3	14.8
	European	38.8	71.4
	Pacific	7.8	6.9
	Asian	2.3	14.5
	MELAA [5]	2.3	1.6
	Other	S	2.2

Table 2 shows interactions with government services for the HF cohort. [6] The average number of bed-nights in mental health facilities is more than halved in year one (-59% in inpatient facilities and -50% in residential units). This reduced average was maintained in year two (-41% and -51%). The average number of attendances to community-based mental health activities also decreased in the first year (-16%) and the second year (-18%) post-housing.

4 'S' indicates a suppressed number below the minimum count (6) that is able to be reported from the IDI for confidentiality reasons.

5 MELAA is the StatsNZ ethnicity classification 'Middle Eastern/Latin American/African.'

6 See Appendix A for the same results for the general population.

Changes in physical health measures (i.e., changes in hospitalisations, emergency department visits, injuries, and pharmaceutical prescriptions) were relatively small. However, outpatient events (such as diabetes and outpatient clinic attendance) increased significantly with a 15% increase after one year of housing than the one year prior, and a 31% increase in the two years comparison.

In the first year after being housed, there was a decrease in the average number of encounters with police and courts. The number of police offences and charges also decreased in both years. However, the overall number of people appearing in these data showed no change by the second year after being housed, and rates of events with corrections systems increased both years after being housed. It is worth noting that interactions with services are not evenly distributed between individuals in the study cohort and further breakdown within the cohort could provide a more accurate picture. Reported victimisations also showed an increasing trend, despite a slight drop in the first year; two years after being housed, the average number of victimisation events increased by 14%.

Income from wages/salaries increased after being housed. Table 2 presents the cumulative means for the two-years pre- and post-being housed. Before being housed, income from wages/salaries dropped from $5 100 in the second to last year before being housed to $2 500 in the year before being housed (with a mean of $7 600 total in the two years before being housed). There is an increase to $3 000 in the first year after being housed and a more significant jump to $5 400 in the second year after being housed (with a mean of $8 400 in the two years after being housed). For welfare benefits, there is an immediate and sustained rise of nearly 10%. Overall, the average person in the HF cohort had almost $3 000 more in overall total income across benefits and wages/salaries over the two years after being housed compared to the two years prior ($p < 0.01$).

Table 2. Changes in rates of service usage (HF, n=387)

Data domain	Data source	Mean from 2 years before being housed	Mean from 1 year before being housed	Mean from 1 year after being housed	Mean from 2 years after being housed	Rate of change between 1 year before and after	Rate of change between 2 years before and after
Health	Hospitalisations	1.4	0.8	0.7	1.5	-6%	5%
	Injuries	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.9	3%	1%
	Outpatient events	4.6	2.8	3.2	6.2	16%	34%
	Pharmaceuticals	62.5	32.2	34.1	65.4	6%	5% **
	Mental Health—Community-based activities	30.9	16.6	14	25.4	-16%	-18%
	Mental Health—Inpatient unit bed-nights	5.6	3.9	1.6	3.3	-59%	-41%
	Mental Health—Residential unit bed-nights	12.1	8.8	4.4	5.9	-50%	-51%
Justice	Police offences	1.6	0.8	0.7	1.4	-20% *	-11% *
	Criminal charges	1.5	0.7	0.7	1.5	-4%	-2%
	Corrections events	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.5	23%	21%
	Victimisations	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.5	-6%	14%
Income and Social Development	Months in which tax paid on wages and salaries	3.6	1.4	1.6	3.8	10%	4%
	Income received from wages and salaries (cumulative over the whole period)	7600.00	2500.00	3000.00	8400.00	20%	11%
	Months in which a benefit was received	18.2	9.6	10.0	19.3	5% **	6%**
	Income received from benefits (cumulative over the whole period)	22200.00	11900.00	12600.00	24300.00	6%**	10%**

* Indicates $p < 0.05$; ** indicates $p < 0.01$;

Table 3 shows the differences in the one- and two-year changes for the HF cohort over and above the changes in the NZpop. The HF cohort has markedly high service interaction levels before and after being housed compared to the NZpop. The biggest difference between the two groups is the much greater fall in the mental health service usage, especially for inpatient unit bed nights and residential bed nights ($p < 0.01$) for the HF cohort. There are relative improvements in the HF cohorts' level of income ($p<0.01$) and outpatient events ($p<0.01$), and an increase in criminal victimisation ($p<0.01$).

Table 3: Difference between the changes over one and two years for both the HF and NZpop cohorts

Data domain	Data source	HF 1 year difference	HF 2 year difference	NZpop 1 year difference	NZpop 2 year difference	HF-NZpop 1-year difference	HF-NZpop 2-year difference
Health	Hospitalisations	-6%	5%	8%**	12%**	-14%**	-7%**
	Injuries	3%	1%	-1%**	0%	4%**	1%**
	Pharmaceuticals	6%	5%*	8%**	14%**	-2%**	-9%**
	Outpatient events	16%	34%	7%**	13%**	9%**	21%**
	Mental Health—Community-based activities	-16%	-18%	-1%	-2%	-15% **	-16%**
	Mental Health—Inpatient unit bed-nights	-59%	-41%	-4%	-10%	-55%	-31%
	Mental Health—Residential unit bed-nights	-50%	-51%	-16%	-29%	-34%**	-22%**
Justice	Police offences	-20%*	-11%*	-2%	-5%	-18%**	-6%**
	Criminal charges	-4%	-2%	-3%**	-5%**	-1%**	3%**
	Corrections events	23%	21%	7%**	15%**	16%**	6%**
	Victimisations	-6%	14%	-2%	-3%**	-4%**	17%**
Income and Social Development	Months in which tax paid on wages and salaries	10%	4%	2%**	3%**	8%**	1%**
	Income received from wages and salaries (cumulative over the whole period)	20%	11%	6%**	11%**	14%**	0%**
	Months in which a benefit was received	5%**	6%**	-2%**	-5%**	7%**	11%**
	Income received from benefits (cumulative over the whole period)	6%**	10%**	-7%**	-4%**	13%**	14%**

* Indicates p < 0.05; ** indicates p < 0.01;

Discussion

Our results show both substantial and subtle changes in service interaction in the short-term period post-housing for a HF cohort in Aotearoa NZ. It is important to acknowledge that 21 people passed away in the HF cohort during the study period.[7] These deaths represent the ongoing cumulative burdens of systemic failures, and a lack of early support for people experiencing multiple challenges such as homelessness and poor health (Charvin-Fabre et al., 2020; Fransham and Dorling, 2018). For those remaining in the cohort, health issues remain a significant issue. The most striking result in these analyses post-HF intervention is the substantial and rapid reduction in the length of stays in inpatient and residential mental health facilities. This considerable drop suggests that mental health needs are both being increasingly met by TPP services and that being housed and supported is alleviating acute mental health crises. Additionally, housing with TPP support may be facilitating discharges from mental health facilities that might otherwise keep a person 'housed' if the only alternative was homelessness. A drop in service interactions at this scale is rarely seen at two years post-HF intervention in international literature; however, mental health improvements are consistent with international findings (Aquin et al., 2017; Aubry et al., 2016; Baxter et al., 2019; Groton, 2013; Patterson et al., 2013).

Despite a promising drop in mental health service interactions by the HF cohort, there has also been a modest drop in the general population's use of the same services, indicating that there may be a wider context influencing mental health service usage. There has been consistent underfunding of the mental health sector in Aotearoa NZ over two decades. A governmental inquiry into mental health and addictions services, commissioned in 2018, reported significant failings including: a lack of continuum of care; difficulty accessing services; a lack of cultural competency; under-capacity; and over-reliance on medicated responses (Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction, 2018). Given this context, the overall drop in inpatient and residential service interactions in both the HF cohort and the general population could indicate improvements in mental health, but could also indicate greater reliance on outpatient services which are generally cheaper (Parthasarathy et al., 2003; Zentner et al., 2015), or even greater difficulty accessing specialist services. One of TPP's strengths is that it is led by an experienced provider of community mental health and addictions services that had pre-existing relationships with local District Health Boards and other relevant health and

7 The most up-to-date number from the IDI at the time of writing (per the September 2020 refresh), which we used throughout this paper, says 21 people have passed away. Since then, TPP have confirmed a further five people have passed away. That will not be visible in these results, but we still wish to acknowledge their passing.

wellbeing services. Whether TPP has been able to bridge services and provide continuum of care, even in the context of systemic underfunding, will be more apparent in longer-term results.

A subset within the health domain results is an increase in outpatient events, which is the most notable physical health result. Outpatient events usually refer to specialised healthcare and is most often provided in a hospital setting; it is important for early and ongoing management of acute and chronic health conditions. The long-term care of chronic disease amongst people experiencing homelessness is typically lacking, despite their increased risk for physical illness (LePage et al., 2014; Wiersma et al., 2010). Earlier results echo this trend, showing a high level of health need for a long period of time, with increasing use of acute services (Pierse et al., 2019). A major difficulty in providing healthcare to people experiencing homelessness is that they do not necessarily have the resources or capacity necessary to engage with appointment-driven health care services (Chelvakumar et al., 2017; Lewis et al., 2003; Ramsay et al., 2019). Lack of engagement with outpatient care leads to poor ongoing management of chronic conditions, difficulty providing care continuity, and increases the likelihood people will present to emergency and acute services (Han and Wells, 2003; Moe et al., 2017). TPP enabling their clients to engage with ongoing outpatient healthcare is a notable achievement.

There was a small initial drop in offending in the justice sector. Once the HF cohort has been housed, it is potentially easier for the justice system to find and interact with them, which could be why there is only a small reduction in charges, and why victimisations increased in the two years post-housing. Increases in victimisation is in line with a recent report by Vallesi and Wood on a similar HF programme in Perth, Australia; they note the increased victimisation as unsurprising considering the vulnerability of HF clients (Vallesi et al., 2020). TPP also support clients to report and seek redress for victimisations where they might not have otherwise done so prior to being housed. Additionally, there is a high proportion of Māori in this cohort, who are generally over-represented at all levels of Aotearoa NZ's justice sector, including charges, sentencing, and incarceration (Bold-Wilson, 2018; Fernando, 2018; Jackson, 1987; Lambie and Gluckman, 2018). This systemic issue means that the high proportion of Māori in the cohort and the racism they face are likely to influence justice interactions.

The wages and salaries data we have presented shows a steep decline from already inadequate income levels ($5 100 per year) two years before the cohort were housed by TPP to a very low $2 500 in the year before being housed – which was a time of acute housing crisis for this group. The small but increased income level in year one post-housing ($3 000) shows how difficult an immediate recovery is, but there is a rise to $5 400 in the second year. The income received by benefits between two years also increased by 10% ($2 100) ($p< 0.01$) and an increase in months the benefits were received by 6% ($p<0.01$). However, this is still an inadequate income, even when combined with benefit receipt.

The increase in the amount of welfare benefits for the HF cohort signals that TPP have been able to link people with more appropriate financial support. Significant changes were made to the benefits system just prior to the establishment of TPP in 2014. These changes made it more difficult for people to access benefits, and made the welfare system more punitively-oriented (Kia Piki Ake Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019). Further, discrimination against women and Māori in the benefit system and the service agencies involved in assessing and delivering benefits and social supports have been demonstrated (Gray and Crichton-Hill, 2019; Kia Piki Ake Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019; Satherley, 2020). The rise in benefit receipt we observed indicates the vital role of advocates for people interacting with government agencies that are difficult to navigate and discriminatory (Hodgetts et al., 2013). In 2019 the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) recommended benefits rates be increased by up to 40% in order for people receiving benefits in Aotearoa to be able to live dignified lives (Kia Piki Ake Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019). A recent assessment of the Government's progress in implementing the 42 key recommendations made by the WEAG found that none of the recommendations have been fully implemented; and of the WEAG's 126 detailed recommendations, only 11 have been fully implemented (Neuwelt-Kearns et al., 2021). The combined average income from wage/salaries and benefits of the HF cohort in the second year of being housed ($17 100.00) is still just under 40% of the living wage salary.[8] International literature indicates that countries with less-extensive welfare regimes see higher levels of poverty and homelessness (Benjaminsen and Andrade, 2015; Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2010). While countries with more-extensive welfare regimes do still see homelessness, it is often less as a result of poverty and more arising from an individuals' personal needs which require specific support (Stephens and Fitzpatrick, 2007).

As described in the preceding paragraphs, a significant part of TPP's work has been coordinating and effectively linking people with the range of services the clients are entitled to receive. Affecting wider systems change is also a strong focus of TPP's model, consistent with the wider paradigm shift that HF thinking advocates (Demos Helsinki and Housing First Europe Hub, 2022; Padgett et al., 2016). Senior manage-

8 Based on the Living Wage 2020/2021 in Aotearoa NZ. Assumed 37.5 working hours per week.

ment and governance of TPP, including their Governance Group[9], directly engages with policy agencies with the explicit intent of affecting systems change. Ongoing commitment from TPP's Governance Group has been instrumental in shaping TPP's policy, and has, in turn, embedded knowledge within their member organisations about the importance of housing to health and broader wellbeing. As discussed earlier, TPP is also subject to top-down policy changes that affect the services their clients can access, indicating that systemic policy and operational change is required to support the greatest possible outcomes from an intervention like HF.

In order for systemic change to have the greatest possible impact, it is necessary to understand the demographics and life circumstances of those who experience homelessness and require housing support. In contrast to populations identified in international literature on homelessness that largely focus on single adult males, over half of this cohort is female (Pierse et al., 2019). Statistics on the wider severely housing deprived population in Aotearoa NZ also show a higher proportion of females than is commonly seen in international literature (Amore et al., 2020). In addition, a significant proportion of this cohort are Māori, the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa NZ, far in excess of the general population. Again, statistics on the wider severely housing deprived population show a significant overrepresentation of Māori; however, not to the same extent (33%) as this cohort (71.5%). Intersectional and systemic drivers for homelessness such as poverty, discrimination, and the ongoing effects of colonisation are likely contributors to the notable proportions both of females and of Māori in this cohort (Lawson-Te Aho et al., 2019; Pierse et al., 2019). Previous research has looked at the experiences of women in this cohort, showing that they were more likely to be younger, Māori (78%), and have children (81%) (Fraser et al., 2021). They tended to be heavily reliant on government support, making them vulnerable to the effects of the neo liberalisation of the welfare state. In contrast to men in the same cohort, they had fewer justice interactions and far less income from wages and salaries. For the women in this cohort, who are largely Māori, parenting responsibilities combined with low welfare provisions, may have contributed to housing insecurity, and ultimately homelessness (Perry, 2022).

In many cases, these two-year outcomes are indicative of a larger picture that will continue to emerge over time. The overarching policy context over the period covered in this paper saw significant policy changes that impacted the ways in which TPP were able to support their clients, as well as how government services

9 On their governance board, TPP has representatives from the organisations that interact with people experiencing homelessness in various capacities: the Ministry of Social Development, Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, Te Puni Kōkiri—Ministry for Māori Development, Kāinga Ora Homes and Communities, the Waikato District Health Board, New Zealand Police, the Department of Corrections, Waikato Tainui, Hamilton City Council, Hamilton Central Business Association, and Pinnacle Midlands Health.

interacted with this cohort. The mental health care context discussed above is one example. Additionally, some welfare payments were increased slightly in 2016 (Tolley, 2016), and minimum wage payments were raised each year that we are looking at (Employment New Zealand, 2020). However, larger structural changes to the welfare system were mostly seen to have moved toward a more punitive system which was antithetical to the HF model. Similarly, pressures on the housing market and rising homelessness were under-acknowledged and only began to be addressed due to increasing public pressure before the 2017 election (Schrader, 2018). Our next set of findings will bridge a change in government, from a centre-right government to a centre-left coalition government, as well as the introduction of a Homelessness Action Plan (Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2020b) by the Central Government. Any differences between the results presented here and subsequent results will highlight the impact of HF, as well as the ways in which policy changes and advocacy from groups like TPP, can impact on people's lives.

Conclusion

This paper presents short-term post-housing outcomes for people who have experienced homelessness and consequently been housed by a HF programme. These early results indicate promising changes in mental health outcomes and income rates for those housed. Consistent with international findings, the results we present show that HF has led to an improvement in service interactions particularly in mental health. However, most gains in wellbeing are likely to take longer than the two years we have been able to look at so far; our previous work showed this group had very high and increasing needs for the 15 years prior to engagement with TPP. It is thus likely that, for most, any wellbeing gains will continue to improve with longevity of HF support, consistency of funding for HF programmes, as well as supportive structural policy changes. Longer-term, positive impacts of HF will come from enabling a shift in the trajectory of people's lives and enabling government services to work effectively.

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Statistics New Zealand Disclaimer

These results are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), which is carefully managed by StatsNZ. For more information about the IDI, please visit https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/.

The results are based in part on tax data supplied by Inland Revenue to StatsNZ under the Tax Administration Act 1994 for statistical purposes. Any discussion of data limitations or weaknesses is in the context of using the IDI for statistical purposes, and is not related to the data's ability to support Inland Revenue's core operational requirements.

Data Sharing

The data is available to those who have access to the StatsNZ IDI. The IDI can be accessed in Aotearoa New Zealand by researchers working on public good projects.

Appendix A: Changes in rates of service usage (NZpop)

Data domain	Data source	Mean in 2 years before 9-June-2016	Mean in 1 year before 9-June-2016	Mean in 1 year after 9-June-2016	Mean in 2 years after 9-June-2016	Rate of change between 1 year before and after	Rate of change between 2 years before and after
Health	Hospitalisations	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.5	8%**	12%**
	Injuries	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.7	-1%**	0%
	Outpatient events	2.3	1.2	1.3	2.6	7%**	13%
	Pharmaceuticals	26.2	13.6	14.7	29.7	8%**	14%
	Mental Health—Community-based activities	2.1	1.1	1.1	2.1	-1%	-2%
	Mental Health—Inpatient unit bed-nights	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	-4%	-10%
	Mental Health—Residential unit bed-nights	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.2	-16%	-29%
Justice	Police offences	0.1	0.06	0.06	0.1	-2%	-5%
	Criminal charges	0.1	0.06	0.06	0.1	-3%*	-5%*
	Corrections events	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	7%**	15%**
	Victimisations	0.07	0.04	0.04	0.07	-2%	-3%**
Income and Social Development	Months in which tax paid on wages and salaries	12.7	6.5	6.6	13.1	2%**	3%**
	Income received from wages and salaries	58200.00	30200.00	32000.00	64600.00	6%**	11%**
	Months in which a benefit was received	2.3	1.2	1.1	2.2	-2%**	-5%**
	Income received from benefits	2700.00	1400.00	1300.00	2600.00	-7%**	-4%**

Appendix B: Standard Deviation

		Housing First			NZ pop				
Data domain	Data source	**Standard Deviation from 2 years before being housed**	**Standard Deviation from 1 year before being housed**	**Standard Deviation from 1 year after being housed**	**Standard Deviation from 2 years after being housed**	**Standard Deviation from 2 years before being housed**	**Standard Deviation from 1 year before being housed**	**Standard Deviation from 1 year after being housed**	**Standard Deviation from 2 years after being housed**
Health	Hospitalisations	2.24094	1.341487	1.65433	2.627012	0.515	0.51	0.51	0.518
	Injuries	1.311832	0.851768	0.867383	1.48695	0.508	0.504	0.504	0.508
	Outpatient events	221.0174	116.871	120.8606	242.5728	44.7	27.7	29.5	50
	Pharmaceuticals	28.7	19.9	19.8	36.3	0.515	0.507	0.509	0.516
	Mental Health—Community-based activities	75.50504	40.66792	32.03123	61.02173	7.29	5.23	5.26	7.73
	Mental Health—Inpatient unit bed-nights	58.48	55.4	14.148	19.011	18.8	14.8	14.6	18
	Mental Health—Residential unit bed-nights	97.46	93.81	46.65	46.65	18.6	17.5	25.4	21.8
Justice	Police offences	2.74	1.747	1.994	3.278	0.523	0.53	0.532	0.535
	Criminal charges	2.805624	1.653318	2.282178	3.506707	0.543	0.54	0.525	0.544
	Corrections events	2.39326	1.451	1.48103	2.35184	0.831	0.771	0.784	0.917
	Victimisations	0.8625	0.63544	0.5774	0.917	0.503	0.504	0.502	0.503
Income and Social Development	Months in which tax paid on wages and salaries	6.049648	2.794665	3.217279	6.652	6.38	3.55	3.94	7.93
	Income received from wages and salaries (cumulative over the whole period)	17 061.43	6522.942	7763.375	18 552	33 158	18 760	37 487	68 221
	Months in which a benefit was received	7.597655	3.74938	3.568	7.414151	9.04	5.15	4.42	8.63
	Income received from benefits (cumulative over the whole period)	11 473.31	5912	5821	11 897	11 459	6949	5866	11 173

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Key Elements in Strategies to End Homelessness in the European Union by 2030: A Discussion Paper[1]

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Abstract_ *The aim of this paper is to provide a conceptual framework of the dynamics of homelessness, drawing on key lessons from research, and how these lessons can inform, through mutual learning and collaboration, the configuration of practices and policies in Member States, while reflecting and respecting their diversity, in devising integrated strategies to end homelessness. Drawing on contemporary evidence-based research, the framework understands homelessness as a dynamic process and identifies where homelessness can be prevented in the first instance, and for those who enter homelessness, to minimise the duration of that experience by ensuring rapid exits to secure accommodation. The objective of public policy should be to prevent entries to homelessness in the first instance, and for those who do experience homelessness, to minimise the duration of that experience by rapidly exiting households to secure affordable housing, with support if required, thus reducing the likelihood a further experience of homelessness, and allowing for the reduction of costly emergency accommodation and the alleviation of the individual trauma associated with a spell of homelessness.*

1 This article is based on a discussion paper prepared by the author for the European Commission. The views presented therein reflect the views of its author only, and the European Commission is not liable for any consequences deriving from the reuse of this publication. The original document is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1550&langId=en#navItem-relatedDocuments. An earlier version of this paper was presented a mutual learning seminar held in Brussels on 23rd June 2022 organised by the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness on the topic of the Design of National Strategies to Fight Homelessness and Housing Exclusion which explored the experience of Denmark, Ireland and Portugal in devising strategic responses to ending homelessness. I am grateful to the participants at seminar and colleagues in the European Observatory on Homelessness and FEANTSA for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of the paper, and for the to the staff in DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion for commissioning this paper.

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Understanding the dynamics of homelessness is crucial to intelligent policy design. Developing and implementing a robust methodology that captures the number and characteristics of those experiencing different dimensions of homelessness at a point-in-time, but also over a period-of-time, can provide the data necessary to determine the progress made to end homelessness by 2030, and to inform effective policy decisions. The evidence highlights that the single most important public policy response is the provision of an adequate supply of affordable and secure housing, either provided directly by municipalities and / or not for profit organisations or with rental subsidies.

Keywords_ *dynamics of homelessness, ending homelessness, Lisbon Declaration*

Introduction

The *Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness,* agreed by the Member States in June 2021, aims to work toward the ending of homelessness by 2030, so that: *"no one sleeps rough for lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency accommodation; no one lives in emergency or transitional accommodation longer than is required for successful move-on to a permanent housing solution; no one is discharged from any institution (e.g. prison, hospital, care facility) without an offer of appropriate housing; evictions should be prevented whenever possible and no one is evicted without assistance for an appropriate housing solution, when needed; and no one is discriminated against due to their homeless."*

The Declaration also acknowledges that the drivers of homelessness *"include rising housing costs, insufficient supply of social housing stock or housing assistance, low income and precarious jobs, job loss, ageing and family breakdown, discrimination, long-term health problems and insufficiently prepared release from institutional settings*."

Across the Member States there is considerable variation in the significance of the drivers listed above in contributing to the extent of homelessness and the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness. In broad terms, *the number and characteristics of households experiencing homelessness varies by the strength and inclusivity of social protection, health, and housing systems*. Member States with strong welfare safety nets, and resulting low rates of poverty and income inequality, tend to have equally *low* overall rates of households experiencing homelessness, but these households are also more likely to have *complex needs*. On the other hand, countries with weaker welfare safety nets tend to have *higher* rates of homelessness, but with the majority having few, if any, needs, other than need for income / services to access, secure, and retain housing.

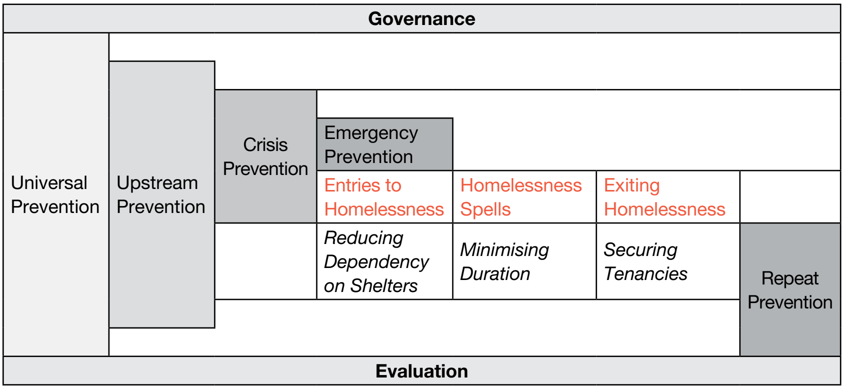
Addressing these drivers is a considerable challenge, but as the Declaration notes, there is "*growing evidence about effective interventions to prevent and solve homelessness.*" In terms of the *'diagnostic of challenge'*, the '*Policy Framework'*, the *'Institutional Set-up',* and the systems of '*Evaluation'*, there will also be significant variation across Member States in how homelessness is conceptualised and measured (if at all). Furthermore, the different welfare regimes evident across the European Union vary in how housing, health, and social services are funded, delivered, the degree to which they are centralised or devolved, and the level of decommodification for service users.

Equally, the administrative make-up of these services will shape the nature of the governance of responses to homelessness, that is *the inter-agency and collaborative approaches required* to ensure that homelessness is ended by 2030. Furthermore, different Member States are in very different places in terms of their current responses to homelessness, with some heavily dependent on emergency and temporary accommodation as a response, and others adopting housing-led policies and practices and have reduced their dependence on emergency and temporary accommodation.

Reflecting this diversity, this discussion paper *does not* provide a toolkit or a manual to inform each Member State on the policies and procedures that can contribute to ending homelessness. Furthermore, given the variety of policies and procedures across the Member States in housing, health, and social services, it *does not* provide a detailed overview of national policies, as this is recently covered in the *European Social Policy Network* Transnational and National Reports on *Fighting Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in* Europe (Baptista and Marlier, 2019).

The aim of this discussion paper is to provide a conceptual framework of the *dynamics of homelessness*, drawing on key lessons from research, and how these lessons can inform, *through mutual learning and collaboration*, the configuration of practices and policies in Member States, while reflecting and respecting their diversity *in devising integrated strategies to end homelessness*. In doing so, it has recently been argued that this will also require changes in culture and thinking around homelessness; changes in how we respond to those experiencing homelessness and those who work with them; changes to funding regimes; and changes to the way people access housing (Demos Helsinki / Housing First Europe Hub, 2022).

The *Conceptual Framework*, drawing on contemporary, evidence-based research, is outlined below. The Framework understands homelessness as a dynamic process and identifies where homelessness can be prevented in the first instance, and for those that enter homelessness, to minimise the duration of that experience by ensuring rapid exits to secure accommodation. The *governance of responses* to homelessness is equally variable across the Member States, as are the means and methods of *evaluating* the different inputs into preventing, responding to, and ending homelessness.



Adapted from Fitzpatrick et al. (2021) and Lee et al. (2021).

The different stages of prevention and various emergency accommodation services for people experiencing homelessness are provided, to a greater or lesser degree, in all Member States, *but the intensity and focus of these inputs vary considerably*. Some have more developed prevention services than others. Dependence on temporary and emergency accommodation is also variable, as is the scale and embeddedness of Housing First programmes and Housing Led policies. The next section of the paper provides a brief overview of the over-arching conceptual framework, and then proceeds to identify the key stages in trajectories through and out of homelessness and the research-evidence based inputs that can prevent and rapidly exit households from homelessness. The final two sections identify a number of issues for consideration in relation to governance of the process for ending homelessness, and mechanisms to evaluate and monitor the impact of the inputs to prevent and end homelessness.

Conceptual Framework

Social science research has clearly demonstrated, using a variety of different robust research methodologies, that the experience of homelessness is a dynamic process and the outcome of the interaction of macro and micro circumstances (Lee et al., 2021). Those who experience homelessness are part of a larger population of disadvantaged households who are at risk of homelessness (Batterham, 2021), and the size of this population is driven by rates of poverty and social exclusion (Byrne et al., 2021) and housing accessibility and affordability.

The larger this population of disadvantaged households, the greater the number of households that will experience homelessness over time. However, not all disadvantaged households will experience homelessness, and this may be determined by the stock of social, financial, and emotional resources available to disadvantaged individuals and families (Hastings, 2021). It is difficult to predict which households will experience homelessness from the larger pool of disadvantaged households, but based on extensive North American research, they "are more likely to be impacted by sudden, unexpected events, have one or more personal vulnerabilities, lack adequate social support, or be an alumni of an institutional setting" (Lee et al., 2021, p.13). The housing tenure of the larger disadvantaged population is also crucial, with those in publicly rented housing less likely to experience homelessness than those privately renting (O'Donnell, 2021), except in countries where there is strong rent regulation and security of tenure in the private rented sector. Those households who do experience homelessness are, in O'Flaherty's (2004) formulation, those who experience a conjunction of adverse structural (macro) and personal circumstances (micro), that is, being the "wrong person in the wrong place."

Despite the heterogeneity of those experiencing homelessness in terms of household type, age, and gender, the broad process identified above will apply, but the duration of the homeless spell and the type of services available will vary (see for example Bretherton and Mayock, 2021 in relation to women experiencing homelessness). A crucial exception is in relation to citizenship, where access to homelessness and housing services in many Member States is either restricted to national citizens or those with a residence permit (Hermans et al., 2020; Giansanti et al., 2022).

For those households that do experience homelessness, that experience is a process where households *enter* various forms of homelessness and residential instability, such as using emergency accommodation, or staying insecurely with family and / or friends. The *duration* of the stay or spell varies considerably, but for the majority the stay is brief. Then there is the *exit* to housing, with the majority not experiencing a further spell, but some will experience a cycle of repeated, often short spells, and others, an experience of prolonged spells.

The paper conceptualises the experience of homelessness as a trajectory through these stages, and the objective of public policy should be to *prevent entries* to homelessness in the first instance. For those that do experience homelessness, the objective is to *minimize the duration* of that experience by *rapidly exiting* households to secure affordable housing, with support if required, thus reducing the likelihood of a further experience of homelessness and allowing for the *reduction* of costly emergency accommodation and the alleviation of the individual trauma associated with a spell of homelessness.

The evidence highlights that the single most important public policy response is the provision of an *adequate supply of affordable and secure housing*, either provided directly by municipalities and / or not for profit organisations or with rental subsidies. In the context of a scarcity of secure and affordable housing, or available housing, but a scarcity or parsimoniousness of rental subsidies, or a scarcity of Landlords willing to take rent subsidised tenants, interventions are more likely to centre on *managing and mitigating* the impact of homelessness, rather than *ending it* and risks polarising debates about prioritisation and deservedness in the allocation of a scarce resource.

The provision of a sufficient level of affordable and secure housing can substantially reduce the number of households who will experience homelessness, and for those that do, will ensure a rapid exit. Given the robust research evidence on the success of housing programmes for specific groups, particularly those with complex needs, experiencing homelessness such as *Housing First*, initially pioneered in North America (Padgett et al., 2016), and later developed to varying degrees in Member States with similar positive results (Loubière et al., 2022), or *national level Housing-led programmes,* such as in Finland (Y-Foundation, 2017, 2022), the contention "that most homeless people were too sick to be housed", which as O'Flaherty (2019, p.23) notes was taken seriously until recently, is no longer credible.

Prevention

In a recent review of the international evidence on the effectives of interventions to prevent homelessness, Pleace (2019, p.8) notes that while the evidence base is not perfect, "there is evidence that services that are flexible and which provide support by working to develop the right mix of support for people threatened by homelessness, which are well integrated with homelessness, health, housing and other services, tend to work best." Thus, prevention is effective when part of an 'integrated homelessness strategy'. Across Europe, a wide range of preventative services are evident (Baptista and Marlier, 2019), from eviction detection mechanisms, conflict mediation support, debt counselling, direct and enhanced financial support to avert the threat of homelessness, legal protections, and tenancy sustainment support. However, there is an absence of rigorous evaluations of these various inputs which impedes the transferability of these prevention inputs across the Member States.

As with the evidence base on rapid re-housing from emergency accommodation, effective prevention requires the same resource: *a sufficient level of affordable and secure housing*. In the absence of this resource, prevention options may be constrained and operate to 'gatekeep' households from accessing the services required to obtain affordable and secure housing, and hence only temporarily alleviating their housing instability.

Given the increasing use of the private rented sector and not-for profit organisations in meeting the needs of vulnerable households, with a drift away from municipal providers in some countries, recent research in Australia using the unique Panel Dataset, *Journeys Home*, found "public housing to be a very strong protective factor reducing risks of homelessness" (Johnson et al., 2019, p.1106). Using the same dataset, O'Donnell (2021, p.1722) concurred, noting that "[p]eople who enter social housing are more likely to maintain their tenancy and less likely to experience homelessness or other forms of disadvantage than people living in privately rented housing."

This was because not only is public housing affordable, but it also provides a level of security of tenure not found in the private rented sector in many countries and is more tolerant of rent arrears than not-for-profit providers, whose primary income source is rent and hence more likely to terminate tenancies if there are rent arrears. However, as noted in the introduction, in countries where there is rent regulation and security of tenure in the private rented sector, the risk of experiencing homelessness from the private rented sector is lessened.

Fitzpatrick et al. (2021) have developed a sophisticated *five-stage typology of homelessness prevention* that provides a temporal dimension to prevention efforts and the public policies that research evidence demonstrates works.

The first stage is *Universal Prevention* in which the provision of affordable housing and reducing poverty are the most crucial interventions to preventing homelessness. This is entirely consistent with the conceptual framework above and signifies that *Homelessness Strategies in Member States must be integrated into housing and anti-poverty strategies.*

The second stage is *Up-Stream Prevention*, which identifies at risk-groups rather than the population as a whole in universal prevention. It can be difficult to identify those who are at risk of homelessness from the general disadvantaged population, *but those leaving state institutions such as prisons, or out-of-home care are* *consistently identified as at risk of homelessness*, and a number of evidence-based interventions have successful reduced the experience of homelessness for these at-risk groups.

Crisis Prevention aims to ensure that households that are imminently at risk of having to enter homelessness, often due to the inability to finance increased rent in the private rented sector, have their tenancy protected through financial assistance and / or advocacy and mediation, formally and informally, with the landlord to prevent them entering emergency accommodation. As above, there are a range of evidence-based interventions that have successfully prevented homelessness at this stage.

The fourth stage is *Emergency Prevention* which ensures that the vast majority of those who lose access to housing do not find themselves unsheltered and exposed to the elements through the provision of emergency and temporary accommodation. The type, scale, and providers of this emergency and temporary accommodation varies enormously across Member States, and congregate shelters of various hues have a long-established role in meeting this emergency need. However, as detailed below, the research evidence supports the reducing dependence on the provision of such emergency accommodation in favour of secure housing where possible.

Repeat Prevention aims to ensure that those households that have exited homelessness do not experience a further spell of homelessness. Crucial here is the nature of the exit – and in particular, the nature of the security of tenure in housing exits. The majority of households who exit homelessness do not have a further spell, and there is now a substantial evidence base for the types of supports required to ensure housing retention for those with complex needs.

In brief, there is evidence that there are a range of interventions at the different stages in the typology that have the potential to significantly reduce the flow into homelessness, but all effective interventions require *a sufficient level of affordable and secure housing.* For example, in the case of Finland, where we have seen substantial decreases in homelessness, a key reason for this decrease is attributed to various prevention measures such as housing advice, but the "most important structural element of prevention has been the increase in affordable social housing supply, especially social housing targeted at young people under the age of 30" (Kaakinen and Turunen, 2021, p.48).

Entry to Homelessness Services

Understanding entries to homelessness is often posed as understanding the reasons for homelessness. As set out in the conceptual framework, entries to homelessness are best understood as the interaction of macro and micro factors, or of individual characteristics and socio- economic structures. For most people, particularly in Europe, those who experience homelessness, either do so by *spending a period of time in temporary and emergency accommodation,* often in shelters and hostels, often congregate in nature, or *living temporarily with family or friends*. In recent years, there has been an increasing use of *'overflow' accommodation*, that is the use of hotel rooms, sometimes at scale, when existing emergency accommodation has been unable to cope with the flows into homelessness (Pleace et al., 2021a). Not all Member States consider those living temporarily with family or friends as experiencing homelessness, but all consider those in temporary and emergency accommodation as homeless (Baptista and Marlier, 2019; Pleace and Hermans, 2020). Thus, the focus of the following section is on the current and future role of temporary and emergency accommodation.

Rough sleeping

However, in many countries, when people think about homelessness, they think about rough sleepers even though people living / sleeping on the street comprise only a very small minority of those experiencing homelessness at a *point-in-time*, and particularly over a *period-of-time*. Although the numbers experiencing street-based sleeping are relatively small in each Member State in comparison with those staying in emergency shelters, temporary accommodation, and those staying temporarily with family and friends; this is the most visible form of homelessness and those who experience this form of homelessness *attract multiple interventions* from a variety of organisations. The *vast majority of these interventions are not evidenced-based*, and by and large do not either resolve or ameliorate the difficulties facing those experiencing street-based sleeping.

There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates what does work in ending street-based sleeping, and hence a rationale for not supporting or funding interventions in the cities and regions of Europe that are not evidence-based. While individual and collective acts of kindness and compassion in assisting those sleeping on the street are well intentioned, they are largely *ineffective*, with research increasingly suggesting that they can be, in fact, *counterproductive. Purposeful assertive street outreach*, with the *provision of suitable accommodation*, is an *effective* means of meeting the needs of entrenched street-based sleepers, particularly those with complex needs (Mackie et al., 2019; Parsell, 2018).

Emergency and temporary accommodation

In a recent review of homelessness services in Europe, Pleace et al. (2018, p.12) concluded that: "Low intensity services, offering basic non-housing support and emergency / temporary accommodation, probably form the bulk of homelessness service provision in Europe". Housing-led and Housing First services centred on immediately providing permanent homes for people experiencing homelessness and the support they need to sustain those homes are probably the least common form of service, although they are present to some degree in most countries (See Appendix 1 for a typology of homelessness services in Europe). These emergency and temporary accommodation services are provided by a range of agencies, including municipal authorities, private for-profit providers, and non-profit providers, which often have a strong presence of religiously inspired organisations but "vary substantially in terms of size, client group, type of building, levels and nature of support, behavioural expectations, nature and enforcement of rules, level of 'professionalization' and seasonal availability" (Mackie et al., 2017, p.x).

Despite extensive critiques of the limitations of this form of congregate accommodation as a response to residential instability, and the largely negative experience of those who reside in such facilities, this form of congregate accommodation remains the single most significant intervention in the lives of people experiencing homelessness in a majority of Member States, described in a recent report as "oversubscribed, insecure and unsuitable" (Serme-Morin and Coupechoux, 2019).

However, such facilities provide shelter that can prevent or reduce the experience of street-based sleeping. Research has noted that paternalistic procedures (Parsell and Clarke, 2019), surveillant techniques (Parsell, 2016), and strict rules (Cloke et al., 2010) within shelters can offer support and a sense of safety and security for some shelter residents (Neale, 1997), and as sites where they can achieve sobriety and abstain from narcotics and other psychopharmacological substances. However, *these positive features can also be provided in secure tenancies with floating support* (Watts and Blenkinsopp, 2021) which also provides a degree of ontological security (Padgett, 2007) and have been successfully delivered in North America and Europe (Padgett et al., 2016).

The limited role of temporary and emergency accommodation in ending homelessness

In brief, there is no convincing evidence that the provision of emergency accommodation, particularly large congregate shelters, for people experiencing homelessness achieves anything other than a temporary, generally unpleasant, sometimes unsafe, respite from the elements and the provision of basic sustenance for people experiencing homelessness. This is particularly the case for basic shelter services that simply provide a bed and food (Keenan et al., 2020). For a small minority, emergency accommodation is an extraordinarily expensive and unsuitable long-term response to their inability to access secure, affordable housing. Many are also fearful of using such services resulting in some of the most vulnerable people rejecting entreaties to enter such accommodation (Fahnøe, 2018; McMordie, 2021). Covid-19 added a further layer of critique to the role of shelter-type accommodation in responding to homelessness (Pleace et al., 2021b).

Managing homelessness through the provision of emergency accommodation is also extraordinarily expensive (Culhane, 2008; Culhane and An, 2021; O'Sullivan and Mustafiri, 2020), and a minority of shelter users also make extensive use of other expensive emergency health and criminal justice services as they traverse through an 'institutional circuit' (Hopper et al., 1997) of short stays in various services without ever resolving their residential instability.

Reducing dependency on emergency accommodation

Recent research has indicated that expenditure on homelessness services is increasing across the EU as a whole as a consequence of rising numbers of households experiencing homelessness and that the response is still *skewed towards emergency provision with housing-ready assumptions* (Pleace et al., 2021). In part, this research identified this increase in expenditure on shelter-based services as a *legacy issue*, in that services were largely designed as *reactive responses* to homelessness, centred around the provision of emergency accommodation.

In a number of countries, a not insignificant portion of expenditure is on *over-flow expenditure*, that is expenditure on hotel rooms and other temporary accommodation not designed to meet the needs of households experiencing homelessness, when existing purpose-built emergency accommodation services have reached their accommodation limits. Thus, a degree of path-dependency is evident, whereby initial investment in emergency accommodation services, can result in generating the provision of further shelter beds when the numbers experiencing homelessness periodically increase, *as this becomes the default response*, and in some cases the use of hotel rooms, when shelters are fully utilised.

This path-dependence is a key reason why robust research-evidence is required. For Culhane et al. (2020, p.117): "[g]ood evidence can assist in a constructive change management process that empowers people and institutions to move in a different, more effective direction without engaging in a blame culture. It is critical to enable, as well as challenge, both statutory and third-sector organisations to move away from their 'institutional stake' in existing in effective approaches."

However, for some Member States, it is likely that emergency accommodation will remain a feature of responses to homelessness in the short-to-medium term, largely to due to difficulties in accessing secure, affordable housing, due to general housing shortages or the absence of targeting social housing for those at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. In these cases, it is imperative that those in emergency accommodation are linked in with various employment, social, and health services to mitigate the experience of emergency accommodation use and to facilitate rapid exits to secure housing. As noted in the discussion of prevention, shelters can also be understood as *Emergency Prevention* which ensures that the vast majority of those who lose access to housing do not find themselves unsheltered. For example, in the case of Ireland, while the number of adults accommodated in emergency accommodation increased by nearly 200% between 2014 and early 2022, the numbers unsheltered remained low and static over the same period due to the substantial increase in the provision of emergency accommodation.

Much of the current expenditure on homelessness services in Europe is on *passive services* – e.g., emergency accommodation / day services / street-based subsistence services, etc., that manage and mitigate the experience of homelessness. To end homelessness by 2030, a key target should be to shift expenditure to *active services* – e.g., prevention services / provision of social housing / Housing First, etc., that effectively prevent homelessness in the first instance, ensuring that the use of emergency accommodation is rare and brief, with the provision of secure affordable tenancies the default response to the residential insecurity experienced by the majority of people using emergency accommodation, with more intensive support and accommodation services for the minority who experience entrenched homelessness.

From passive to active services

Making this *shift from passive to active services* is a significant component of achieving the 2030 target, and the reorientation of assumptions underpinning funding models is potentially an important policy lever to bring about the required changes in policy and practice to deliver active practices at scale. De-implementation, that is ending homelessness interventions that are "detrimental, non-cost effective, or ineffective methods, that lack sufficient scientific basis, some of which are tradition based" currently lacks a rigorous evidence base, but Denvall et al. (2022, p.2) highlight examples from other policy domains that have useful lessons for scaling down emergency accommodation. They conclude that the "available evidence indicates that the scientific evidence, together with organized demands from users and favourable financial effects, can constitute driving mechanisms for phasing out programs" (Denvall et al., 2022, p.8).

By providing households with long-term housing, the Finns were able to close their emergency shelter bed system (Pleace et al., 2015). Currently there is only one shelter with 52 beds operating in comparison with over 2000 shelter beds in 1985 (Y-Foundation, 2017). Some were provided with new purpose-built accommodation and others provided with long-term accommodation in individual units with support in converted hostels and shelters (Kaakinen and Turunen, 2021). The evidence from other domains, such as institutional provision for those with mental health issues or intellectual disabilities, demonstrates that it is possible to successfully close large scale congregate facilities by providing more effective housing and support led solutions. In the case of Scotland, following widespread consultation, the two key tasks identified in ending homelessness were "to *scale down* hotel rooms and night shelter provision and to *scale up* rapid rehousing and Housing First." However, in doing so, they stressed the need to communicate this objective clearly to ensure that when scaling down shelters, they "actively discourage any new group from establishing a night shelter in any part of Scotland" (Everyone Home Collective, 2020, p.9).

Of particular interest is the new Danish policy of changing the funding regime for temporary and emergency accommodation. Central government in Denmark has, until now, reimbursed municipalities 50% of the cost of maintaining people in temporary and emergency accommodation without a time limit. However, with the new reforms, this reimbursement will be given for up to 90 days only, after which the full costs for shelter stays will be carried by municipalities. Instead, the central government reimbursement will be transferred to be available for various forms of *support in housing* following a stay in temporary and emergency accommodation. Further, the political agreement dictated that rent levels in just over 4 000 units of existing and new public housing will be reduced to facilitate moving those in temporary and emergency accommodation into housing.

Financial incentives and disincentives to maintaining people in emergency accommodation is under-explored in the European context. The Danish data suggest that for the majority (70%) of emergency shelter users, the most dominant barrier to exiting the shelter is the provision of an appropriate housing solution with the necessary support. Hence, the proposed shift to increasing the affordability of public housing *and* targeting units for those in emergency accommodation, allied to dedicated funding to provide support in housing and increasing the costs to municipalities of maintaining people in shelters after 90 days, is worth watching closely and, if successful in reducing shelter use, may be an important policy tool for other Member States to consider deploying.

Duration

A homelessness spell is typically either *long-term*, *episodic,* or *transitory*. First developed by Kuhn and Culhane (1998) utilising longitudinal shelter data, cluster analyses of time series data on shelter admissions in New York and Philadelphia showed a pattern whereby approximately 80% of shelter users were transitional users, in that they used shelters for very short periods of time or a single episode and did not return to shelters. A further 10% were episodic users of shelters, and the remaining 10% were termed chronic or long- term users of shelter services. Although a relatively small percentage of *single homeless people*, these chronic or long- term users occupied half of all bed nights.

Broadly similar findings have been replicated in studies of shelter usage, for example in Dublin (Waldron et al., 2019; Parker, 2021; Bairéad and Norris, 2022) and Copenhagen (Benjaminsen and Andrade, 2015), albeit with some significant differences in the extent of homelessness and the characteristics of those in each cluster in different welfare regimes.

In relation to *families*, Culhane et al. (2007) found broadly similar patterns were evident, with the majority of families, as with singles, experiencing transitional forms of emergency accommodation usage, but a significantly higher number of families experiencing extensive stays in emergency accommodation. However, unlike the single adults experiencing chronic forms of homelessness, the families did not require high levels of support to exit, nor did they exhibit significant disabilities (see also Parker, 2021 in relation to Dublin). Although some have suggested expanding the 3-group typology (McAllister et al., 2011; Bairéad and Norris, 2022), the more parsimonious typology developed by Culhane and colleagues is more adept for policy purposes.

As outlined in the conceptual framework, *homelessness is a dynamic process.* As described above, a small number of households get 'stuck' in emergency accommodation and a small number experience repeated episodes of homelessness, but most households who experience homelessness *will successfully exit* and *will not* experience further episodes. In the case of Dublin, it was observed that "a quarter of EA residents are effectively 'stuck' in EA which they were forced to use as their long term, stable home" (Bairéad and Norris, 2022, p.8). Although it was not possible to determine from existing data the degree to which those spending increasing periods of time in emergency accommodation was because they had complex needs, but on balance the authors concluded that it was a lack of affordable housing that was contributing to the increasing duration of stay, rather than any personal disabilities.

For those households experiencing *long-term* and *episodic* forms of homelessness, *immediate access to housing without preconditions,* except tenancy rules that apply to everyone, like paying rent etc., *with* high levels of psycho-social support in-housing are *effective* in ensuring housing stability. For those households experiencing *transitional* forms of homelessness, *rapid-rehousing* through the provision of rent subsidies, or preferably, affordable secure housing tenancies are *highly effective* in ensuring housing stability. A crucial observation from this research, is that "[a]lmost everyone who will be homeless two years from today is housed now, and almost everybody who is homeless today will be housed two years from now" (O'Flaherty, 2010, p.143).

Exits and Re-Entries from Homelessness

Early quantitative work on understanding the likelihood of *re-entering emergency accommodation* after *successfully exiting* noted the importance of whether the exit was a dependent (to transitional accommodation or staying with family and friends) or independent (to private accommodation with supports) one, and how these types of exits interacted with personal characteristics (such as age or employment) to increase the risk of a return (Dworsky and Piliavin, 2000). Qualitive work on exits among young people in Ireland highlighted that the availability of family and / or professional support impacted their exit routes (Mayock et al., 2011).

Cobb-Clark et al. (2016, p.67) argue individual risk factors commonly associated with entering homelessness "are completely unrelated to the length of time people are likely to remain without adequate housing", with both O'Flaherty (2012) and Johnson et al. (2019) concurring that whatever interaction of personal and structural factors that led to their entry into homelessness, by and large does not predict their likelihood of exiting homelessness. More recently, O'Donnell (2021, p.1722) has argued for the "relative importance of tenure and support over personal characteristics" in exiting homelessness.

We can conceptualise exits in the following ways:

1. *secure exits*, that is exiting to *social housing tenancies* provided by municipal authorities and to a lesser degree, not-for-profit housing bodies. Those exiting emergency accommodation to this form of housing are *unlikely* to return to emergency accommodation due to high levels of secure occupancy – that is where "households who occupy rented dwellings can make a home and stay there, to the extent that they wish to do so, subject to meeting their obligations as a tenant" (Hulse and Milligan, 2014, p.643). As noted above, exits to the private rented sector can equally be secure where similar levels of secure occupancy occur, but this is only the case in a small number of countries.

2. *quasi-secure exits* to tenancies provided in the private rented sector, *where security of tenure is weak to moderate* depending on the Member State and when the tenancy commenced. The likelihood of returning to emergency accommodation moderate to high depending on the strength of security of tenure. The market rents are subsidised in part *via* various mechanisms by the State by either subsidising the Landlord or the Tenant.

3. *insecure exits*, that is returning to family, staying with friends or families, or moving to other institutions such as prison or a hospital. These exits are inherently unstable with a *high likelihood* that those who exit *via* this route will *return to emergency accommodation* when their time in prison or the hospital ends, or when a sharing arrangement with family or friends breaks down.

Some households will require supports to maintain their tenancy, but for the majority, no additional supports other than financial are necessarily required. For those with complex needs, Housing First has demonstrated a high level of housing retention compared with treatment as usual as evidenced by Randomised Controlled Trials in, for example, Canada and France (Aubry et al., 2021).

The relative mixture of the availability of social housing tenancies and levels of rent support and security of tenure in the private rented sector varies considerably by *housing regime* in Europe. Dewilde (2022), for example, identifies six housing regimes in Europe – North-West European Dual, North-West European-unitary, Southern Europe, Baltic, Central, and East European, and South-East European. Noting that between 2005 and 2017 “social housing provision tended to decline in many countries while some countries relaxed (private) rental market regulation” (Dewilde, 2022, p.395), despite the benefits of providing more social housing and regulation of the private rented sector by increasing access to “decent and affordable housing” (2022, p.395). The regulation of the private rented sector is complex, and the degree to which rents are regulated and the type of regulation vary considerably (Kettunen and Ruonavaara, 2021), as does tenancy protection (Kholodilin and Kohl, 2021) across Member States, but a recent international review argues that the starting point should be “a clear sense of policy vision for a good private rented sector” (Gibb et al., 2022, p.53).

To ensure successful prevention and minimising the duration of homelessness in emergency accommodation or staying with family and friends, the research evidence points to the provision of social housing at scale, with targeted access for people experiencing homelessness and a clear vision of what the private rental market is expected to deliver are core to policies that can ensure the homelessness is ended in 2030.

Governance

Baptista and Marlier (2019) identified 16 out of the 28 EU (then) Member States as having adopted national (10), including Denmark, Ireland, and Portugal, or regional / local level policies (6) aiming at the delivery of integrated strategic responses to homelessness. Denmark, Ireland, and Portugal were also comparatively early adopters of Homelessness Strategies, commencing in Ireland in 2000 and in Denmark and Portugal in 2009. Adopting integrated strategic responses can contribute to more effective evidence-based responses to those experiencing homelessness.

In an international review of the Irish homelessness strategy, Baptista et al. (2022) identified a number of governance issues that were critical to successful strategies to end homelessness. These included: that governance structures must be *stable and consistent*, that strategy needs to be *sustained*, as well as *comprehensive and integrated*, and that Housing-led and Housing First services are less effective outside an integrated strategy. Similar issues were identified in a comparative analysis of policy making in relation to homelessness in Europe, Canada, and the United States, (O'Sullivan et al., 2021; Nelson et al., 2021), which identified the importance of *leadership, stability, and continuity* within relevant homelessness governance structures for evidence-based policymaking.

In the case of Europe – Finland, France, and Ireland being the examples analysed – the continuity or lack of continuity of key personnel enabled, or restricted, a persistent policy drive within relevant governance structures. *Responsibility for housing and homelessness* is identified as one of the key components for the success of the Finnish policy approach to homelessness. In a further comparative analysis of Denmark, Finland, and Ireland (Allen et al., 2020, p.171) it was argued that in devising homelessness strategies that "there is a need to establish a deep and robust consensus at the start of the process so that it can survive the personnel changes and external economic/political shocks that will inevitably come along over the years needed to deliver transformative change."

This was certainly the view in the revised Danish strategy published in late 2021. In preparing the most recent *Danish Homelessness Strategy*, which aims to provide more affordable housing for those experiencing homelessness and at risk, and supporting the full implementation of Housing First, *collaboration* was identified as key, by providing 'co-ownership among the stakeholders.' It was also noted that by "establishing a national partnership of central stakeholders will ensure a systemic monitoring of the progress of the transition, and a continued co-ownership of the common goal" (Egholm and Sabaj-Kjaer, 2022). In the case of Finland, the Member State with the most successful record of reducing homelessness, and aiming to end homelessness by 2027, their national strategies were described as “a showcase of wide partnership and collaboration between several state authorities, ministries, cities, and NGOs both on local and national levels” (Kaakinen and Turunen, 2021, p.46).

The Portuguese *National Strategy for the Integration of Homeless People 2009-2015* (ENIPSA 2009-2015) according to Baptista and Coelho (2021, p.65) was a significant shift in how homelessness was conceptualised and responded to at a number of different levels: “(i) it represented an important shift in the traditional (minimal) role of the Portuguese state in policy orientation in this field; (ii) it illustrated the impact of EU policy orientations on national policy-making processes, namely by explicitly acknowledging the role of several tools developed through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in the field of social inclusion; and (iii) it steered a change in the provision of homelessness services at the local level, namely with regard to enhanced and more effective governance structures and to more innovative approaches to tackling homelessness.” Although a number of internal and external shocks, particularly the impact of the Global Financial Crisis and austerity measures blunted the impact of the Strategy, importantly, various measures were increasingly embedded in the policy and governance process, such as the importance of Housing-led approaches, the necessity of integrated strategies, and the creation of Local Homelessness Units. Thus, when a more favourable political and financial climate emerged, a revised strategy (ENIPSSA 2017-2023) could build on the older strategy, and strengthen housing-based policy responses.

In terms of the governance of responses to homelessness, there appears to be a consensus that integrated strategic approaches are effective at successfully preventing homelessness and responding rapidly to exit households when it does occur. In contexts where the number of households entering homelessness are rising, having an integrated strategic governance approach can ensure that responses are at a minimum, *managed in a co-ordinated manner,* rather than in an ad-hoc manner, and the *negative impacts mitigated*. The formulation of national or local strategies should involve all stakeholders and ensure all stakeholders ‘buy in’. A negotiated process of consensus building amongst all stakeholders, in particular those with lived experience (Green, 2021), is crucial to developing and sustaining what can often be difficult and complex journeys of system transformations.

Measuring Homelessness and Evaluating Inputs in Europe

The Lisbon Declaration stresses "the importance of reliable data collection on homelessness, including youth homelessness, with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, allowing common understanding, systematic comparison and monitoring at EU level." The number of households experiencing homelessness across Europe varies considerably depending on the *definition* and the *timeframe* used (see Appendix 2 for an overview). The definitional issues are largely resolved at the conceptual level, with the development of the *European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion* (ETHOS) (see Appendix 3), and for research purposes (ETHOS Light), although the application of the typology in national, regional, or city level estimates of the extent of homelessness varies considerably (Baptista and Marlier, 2019; Benjaminsen et al., 2020; Drilling et al., 2020).

Point-prevalence or point-in-time surveys are widely used to estimate the extent and characteristics of those experiencing homelessness in a number of countries, either as part of the national census, or specific surveys of those experiencing varieties of homelessness experiences in the Nordic countries (Benjaminsen et al., 2020) and the US (Henry et al., 2022) to name but a few. Point-in-time surveys are helpful for monitoring *trends* and *identifying service needs*, but *minimise the scale of homelessness*, and *period-prevalence* surveys are required to more accurately estimate the number of people who experience homelessness over a time-period (Shinn and Khadduri, 2020).

Many more households experience homelessness over a year than are measured at a *point-in-time*, and their profile is *significantly different* from those at a point-in-time. Therefore, it is critical that programmes to prevent, minimise duration, and rapidly rehouse are based not only on the profile of those experiencing homelessness at a point-in-time, as such information provides a distorted understanding of the experience of homelessness. Understanding the dynamics of homelessness is crucial to designing policies that can end homelessness.

The ESPN Report on *Fighting Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Europe* noted "the wide discrepancy of the evidence available on implementation and monitoring outcomes", with Denmark, Finland, France, and Ireland having the "strongest evidence-based mechanisms enabling assessment of the implementation of existing strategies" (Baptista and Marlier, 2019, pp.63-64).

In the case of *Denmark,* there are two primary sources of data to monitor trends in homelessness: *a biennial national point in-time survey* over a week which commenced in 2007 and conducted by VIVE – The Danish Centre for Social Science Research, and *national statistics on shelter use* which commenced in 1999 and published by Statistics Denmark (Benjaminsen, 2022). The biennial survey provides data on those staying with friends and family, in addition to various forms of shelter use and street-based sleeping. It does so by collecting data *via* a two-page questionnaire from not only homelessness services, but also a wide-range of other welfare services. Data from this survey shows the numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness steadily increased between 2009 and 2017, from just over 5000 to just over 6600, before dropping slightly in 2019 and then declining more sharply to just under 5800 in the February 2022 survey. In contrast, the continuous shelter data shows that the number of shelter users remained relatively static of the same time ranging between 6000 and 7000. Drawing on both the point-in-time survey and the flow shelter data, it is highlighted that in Denmark 2.5 to 3 times as many people use shelters over a year than at a point-in-time, and that *monitoring shelter use only, provides only an important, but incomplete mechanism to monitor trends in homelessness*.

In the case of Ireland, the PASS (Pathway Accommodation & Support System) provides 'real-time' information in terms of homeless presentation and bed occupancy. Established in Dublin in 2011, PASS was rolled out nationally in 2013 and provides a source of data on the number of adult individuals with accompanying child dependents in emergency accommodation funded by Local Authority's. The publication of these *point-in-time reports* commenced in April 2014 on a trial basis, and from June 2014, with some modifications, has been produced on a continuous monthly basis since then. In addition, from 2014 onward, at the end of each quarter, Local Authorities produce *Performance Reports* providing data on a range of indicators, including the number of new and repeat adult presentations to homelessness services per quarter; the number of adults in emergency accommodation for more than six months, the number of adult individuals exiting homeless services, and the number of street-based sleepers. *Quarterly Financial Reports* are also published outlining expenditure on prevention services, tenancy support services, emergency accommodation, long-term emergency accommodation, and day services.

The production of the Monthly Reports and Quarterly Performance and Financial Reports followed on from the publication in 2013 of a national *Homelessness Policy Statement*. A number of indicators were identified to measure progress in ending homelessness in Ireland, which was the overarching ambition of the Policy Statement, and the purpose of these indicators was to "give a clearer picture of homelessness in Ireland: the rate of entry, duration and exits, together with the type and nature of accommodation" (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013, p.4).

The monthly point-in-time measurement of homelessness, which is comparatively relatively narrowly defined as those in temporary and emergency accommodation, showed between 6-7000 adults (or between 1.6 and 1.7 per 1000 population over

18) were in emergency accommodation at a point-in-time between 2018 and 2021, but just over 22 000 adults (or 5.8 per 1 000 population over 18) entered emergency accommodation for the first time over the same period.

Understanding the dynamics of homelessness is crucial to intelligent policy design, and devising a robust methodology that allows for a broadly harmonised measurement of homelessness in each Member State using ETHOS Light that can capture the number and characteristics of those experiencing *different dimensions of homelessness* at a *point-in-time*, but also over a *period-of-time,* can provide the data necessary to determine the progress made to end homelessness by 2030, and to inform the policy making process. Where it exists, administrative data on those experiencing homelessness has considerable potential to understand the dynamics of homelessness (Culhane, 2016), and are particularly promising when linked with other administrative data sets to inform policy and practice, albeit such developments have some limitations as well (Thomas and Tweed, 2021).

In terms of evaluating specific inputs to prevent homelessness or to reduce emergency accommodation duration, "quantitative evaluations that would meet the usual 'gold standard' evidence thresholds for systematic reviews are rare in the homelessness field outside of the US" (Culhane et al., 2020, p.118). The only exceptions are some health-related research and Housing First. In the case of Housing First, programme fidelity has been comprehensively researched in a number of Member States (Aubry et al., 2018), with a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) of the Un Chez-soi d'abord' Housing First programme in France (Loubière et al., 2022). In a recent review of research on the effectiveness of interventions for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness, the authors noted that although there is now a growing evidence base, nearly 90% of research studies were conducted in the United States (Singh and White, 2022).

There is a need to develop further a robust evidence base for the various interventions to prevent and respond to homelessness across the Member States, and as Pleace (2016, p.28) has argued, although '[g]ood quality American, Australian and Canadian research adds to our understanding….There is a need for caution in relying on externally generated evidence and ideas to guide European research…."

Conclusion

Drawing on contemporary evidence-based research, this paper argues that we need to understand homelessness as a dynamic process. The objective of public policy should be to *prevent entries* to homelessness in the first instance, and for those who do experience homelessness, to *minimise the duration* of that experience by *rapidly exiting* households to secure affordable housing, with support if required, thus reducing the likelihood a further experience of homelessness, and allowing for the *reduction* of costly emergency accommodation and the alleviation of the individual trauma associated with a spell of homelessness. Understanding the *dynamics of homelessness* is crucial to intelligent policy design and integrated strategic approaches are effective at successfully preventing homelessness and responding rapidly to exit households when it does occur. Developing and implementing a robust methodology that captures the number and characteristics of those experiencing different dimensions of homelessness at a *point-in-time*, but also over a *period-of-time*, can provide the data necessary to determine the progress made to end homelessness by 2030 as set out in the Lisbon Declaration, and to inform effective policy decisions. The evidence highlights that the single most important public policy response is the provision of an *adequate supply of affordable and secure housing*, either provided directly by municipalities and / or not for profit organisations or with rental subsidies.

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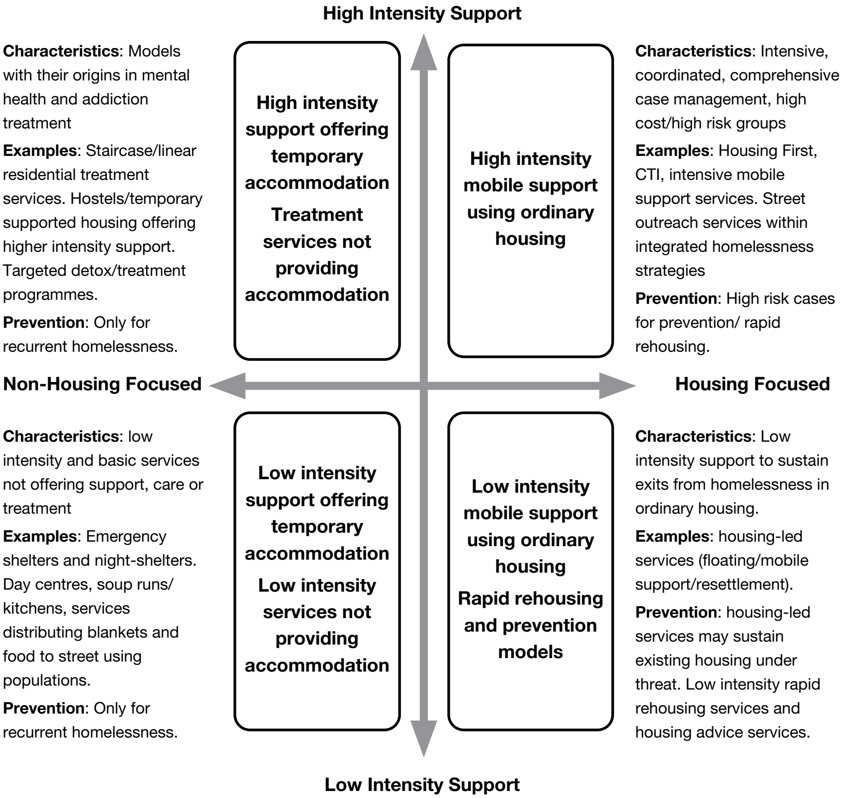
Appendix 1: Figure 1.3 Typology of European homelessness services



Source: Pleace, N., Baptista, I., Benjaminsen, L. and V. Busch-Geertsema (2018) *Homelessness Services in Europe Comparative Studies on Homelessness No. 8* (Brussels: European Observatory on Homelessness).

Appendix 2: ETHOS Light

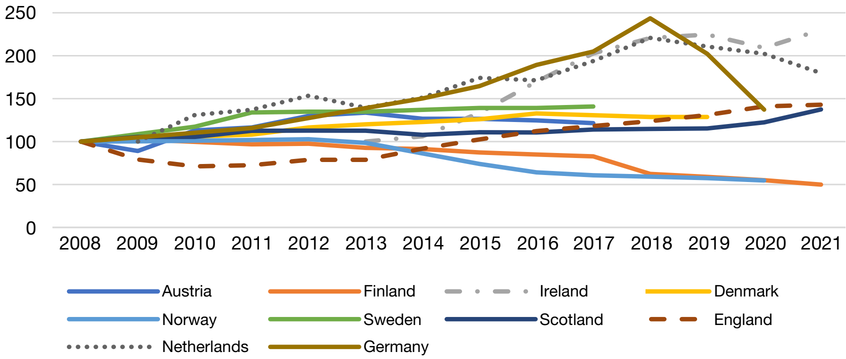
Operational category		Living situation		Definition
1	People living rough	1	Public space/external space	Living in the streets or public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
2	People in emergency accommodation	2	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	3 4 5 6	Homeless hostels Temporary accommodation Transitional supported accommodation Women's shelter/refuge	Where the period of stay is less than one year.
4	People living in institutions	7 8	Health care institutions Penal institutions	Stay longer than is needed because of lack of housing/ no housing available on release
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	9 10 11	Mobile homes Non-conventional buildings Temporary structures	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence
6	Homeless people living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends (due to lack of housing)	12	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place of residence	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual place of residence

Based on Edgar et al. (2007).

Appendix 3: Index of Homelessness in Selected European Countries

Figure 1 shows *trends* in the number of households experiencing homelessness based on *point-in-time data* for several countries. Given the diverse definitions used in measuring homelessness across these countries, and diverse data sources (see Baptista and Marlier, 2019; Develtere, 2022; OECD, 2020), the data is presented as an index designed to identify trends rather than absolute numbers. It shows three clusters: countries that have seen substantial increases in the last decade (Ireland, England, Germany – until 2018, and the Netherlands); countries that have seen more modest increases or relative stability (Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and Scotland) and countries that have achieved significant reductions (Norway and Finland).

Index of Homelessness at a Point-in-time in Selected Countries, 2008-2021



Timeframes are critically important when measuring homelessness as the numbers who experience homelessness, and their characteristics, will differ significantly depending on the timeframe used. Homelessness, as discussed above, is a dynamic process and capturing the experience of homelessness at a point-in-time does not reveal the fluidity of the experience of homelessness, and that most households who experience a spell in an emergency shelter, for example, will exit to housing and stay housed (Lee et al., 2021).

In the all the countries in the figure above, the numbers experiencing homelessness at a *point-in-time* ranges from 0.07 and 0.33 percent of the total population (OECD, 2021). However, two recent surveys of respectively twelve and eight European Countries found a lifetime prevalence of respectively 4% (Eurostat, 2018, p.29) and nearly 5%, albeit with significant variations by country, with a 5-year prevalence of just under 2% (Taylor et al., 2019). In the Eurostat research, 75 percent who had an experience of homelessness, it was in the form of staying with friends and relatives temporarily, with only one in 20 who had an experience of homelessness sleeping rough.

Think Piece

Part B

The Energy Crisis and the Homelessness Crisis: Emergent Agendas and Concerns

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Abstract_ *This paper looks at a rapidly developing situation linked to the ongoing Ukrainian war and associated pressures on global fossil fuel markets and what it might mean for homelessness and housing exclusion at a European level. Some emergent issues are explored through the lens of the UK, but there is an attempt to cover wider European developments as the situation develops. The information used here was current during the Summer of 2022. The following areas are examined: homelessness causation, prevention, and reduction. The paper concludes by considering what the strategic implications of the fuel poverty crisis might mean for individual Member States and in relation to the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness.*

Keywords_ *Homelessness; fuel poverty; housing exclusion; after housing cost poverty.*

The Energy Crisis and Fuel Poverty

At the time of writing, restrictions in natural gas supply from the Russian Federation have had unprecedented impacts on global markets and a significant effect on domestic energy. Taking the example of the UK, in 2021 an average bill was £1 339 (€1 561) (Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy 2021). However, households began to feel the effects on increased price rises in October 2021 when the Government's 'price cap' (a maximum amount chargeable for a unit of energy) was increased by 12%. Increases in both prices and the cap have continued across the year, with a 54% increase in April 2022, and a proposed increase of 80% on October 1st, 2022 (leading to a projected average combined bill of around

£3 549/€4 143) (Stuart and Bolton, 2022). However, on the 8 September the Prime Minister Liz Truss announced a 'price guarantee' limiting average bills to around £2 500[1] (€2 919) for two years from October 2022.

Non-domestic premises such as residential care homes (Albert, 2022), public sector buildings, including schools and the NHS, have not been protected by the existing cap, and have faced even higher prices than the domestic sector (Tomlinson and Bailey, 2022). At the time of writing, no specific protections for emergency shelters, supported housing, and day services run by NGOs funded by local authority (municipality) contracts, the welfare system, through charitable donation, or provided directly by local authorities have been announced, although the Government has stated that some form of support will be provided for business and public sector organisations over the course of Winter 2022/2023 (HM Government 2022).

The extent of these extreme price rises varies considerably across Europe, conditional on national policies, so that in France for example a now effectively nationalised energy grid will prevent significant price rises at least in the short term. At the time of writing, EU wide interventions are being announced that will potentially restructure the energy landscape, for example, by decoupling the cost of electricity from gas (although natural gas generation of electricity occurs, renewable sources and nuclear sources of electricity are not affected by the global spike in natural gas costs).

These rapidly increasing energy costs have led to concerns about an unprecedented fuel poverty crisis across Europe. The combination of much higher energy costs, in the context of sustained shortfalls in affordable housing supply and increasing food inflation, is threatening to widen and deepen the experience of European poverty at an unprecedented rate. *Prior* to the energy crisis, in 2020, Eurostat reported survey-based estimates that 8% of the European population could not afford to adequately heat their homes, i.e., some 36 million people were in fuel poverty (European Commission, 2020).[2] Calculations by the *Financial Times* (2022), using OECD data, reported the following levels of annual energy inflation in 21 EU Member states as of July 2022:

[1] The Price Guarantee acts in the same way that the Price Cap did, limiting maximum price per unit.

[2] See also: https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/markets-and-consumers/energy-consumer-rights/energy-poverty-eu_en

- Austria, 47.24%
- Belgium, 49.11%
- Czech Republic, 40.32%
- Denmark, 43.36%
- Estonia, 87.06%
- Finland, 35.55%
- France, 28.65%
- Germany, 36.22%
- Greece, 50.7%
- Hungary, 4.42%
- Ireland, 47.97%
- Italy, 42.96%
- Latvia, 70.56%
- Lithuania, 63.42%
- Luxembourg, 43.28%
- Poland, 36.8%
- Portugal, 31.18%
- Slovenia, 39.73%
- Slovakia, 20.57%
- Spain, 41.38%
- Sweden, 28.46%

Variations due to national policy, particularly the French nationalisation and the continued deals for Russian gas in Hungary, had already led to some variation and this was prior to EU led interventions that look set to influence prices across the EU-27. Outside the EU, alongside the energy inflation seen in the UK, Switzerland saw increases of 27.8% and Norway 32.19% as of July 2022 (*Financial Times*, 2022).

An unprecedented fuel poverty crisis

Concerns about the issue of fuel poverty arose in the 1970s as a result of the 1973 energy crisis. Since then, substantial knowledge, scholarship, and policy action has developed to address it, with the UK regarded as a leader in this regard (Liddell, 2012). Since this period, significant work has been undertaken on the definition and measurement of fuel poverty (Thomson and Snell, 2013); the physical and mental health impacts of living in fuel poverty (Marmot Review Team, 2011; Liddell and Guiney, 2015; Liddell and Morris, 2010; NICE, 2015; O'Neil et al., 2006); and coping strategies associated with living in fuel poverty, such as longer periods of time spent in bed, dangerous heating and lighting practices, self-disconnection from energy supply, debt, reliance on friends and families to provide financial or physical support, and financial strategies to reduce costs in other areas in order to pay for energy (Anderson et al., 2012; Beatty et al., 2011; Gibbons and Singler, 2008; Snell et al., 2018; Middlemiss et al., 2019).

Numerous measures can be used to provide comparative insights into the issue across Europe, including the consensual measures used within the EU SILC dataset that reflect household experiences (Thomson and Snell, 2013). Using this, the most recent FAP/FEANTSA (2022) review of housing exclusion in Europe drew on EU SILC data to look at two aspects of fuel poverty in 2020.[3] These data showed ranges between 49% (Bulgaria) and 3% (Finland) of 'poor' households reporting that they had difficulty in maintaining an adequate household temperature (18% across the EU-27 as a whole). Between 28% (Greece) and 1.5% (Netherlands) of *all* households were in arrears on one or more utility bills (water, energy) in 2020 (7% across the EU-27 as a whole) (Fondation Abbé Pierre/FEANTSA, 2022, pp.104-105).

Returning to England and considering its definition of fuel poverty that focuses on the combination of low energy efficiency, low incomes, and high prices, the 'Low Income Low Energy Efficiency' (LILEE) measure[4], 13.2% of households (3.16 million households) were in fuel poverty in 2020. Whilst to date there are no projections about the coming year using this official measure, several organisations have used projections based on variations of the 'Boardman' definition where a household would need to spend more than 10% of its income on energy to maintain an acceptable heating regime.[5] Estimates suggest that the number of fuel poor households will increase from four million in October 2021 to 6.7 million households in October

3 One caveat here is that people were spending far more time at home because of the COVID-19 Pandemic lockdowns and hence using more power, but the costs of that power were much lower than at the time of writing and very much lower if the expected price levels at the beginning of 2023 are not mitigated by national and EU wide interventions.

4 In housing with low thermal efficiency with disposable income below the poverty line.

5 Both the utility and application of this measure has been subject to significant debate and review, whilst we recognise this, we present these figures given the lack of alternative projections.

2022 (NEA, 2022; see also Bradshaw and Kueng, 2022). Before the 'Price Guarantee' intervention there were predictions that this would rise in October 2022 to 8.2 million. Whilst the 'Price Guarantee' will have an effect, the rapid increase in the number of fuel poor households is substantial.

The issue of fuel poverty has been compounded in recent years by rapid upward trends in relative housing costs, including increases in rents and house prices that outstripped inflation (FAP/FEANTSA, 2022) and increases in food insecurity, as more European households struggle to afford healthy diets (Penne and Goedemé, 2021; Snell et al., 2018). Moreover, the politics of austerity in countries such as the UK, alongside increasingly negative political and mass media narratives about those out of work or unable to work, has led to welfare reforms that have essentially reduced disposable incomes amongst those least well off (see for example, Kaye et al., 2012). There are longstanding concerns that fuel poverty receives insufficient attention in the design and operation of welfare systems and the suitability of housing for people living with limiting illness and disability (Snell et al., 2015a). For example, Snell et al. (2015) found that austerity measures that reduced access to disability related benefits and simultaneous fuel poverty policy reforms had the potential to cause widespread harm to people with disabilities.

Is fuel poverty an inevitable part of the energy crisis?

One point that is important here is that this paper must speculate about *possible* effects of the crisis, without it being clear how much mitigation, or more aggressive management, might yet emerge in individual Member States and the EU. Indeed, the management of fuel poverty is not a simple matter in many countries. There is not necessarily one, single policy instrument, like an easily adjusted fuel cost component in welfare systems, that can just be scaled up to manage the potential risks.

Taking the UK as an example, there are welfare system payments, including a Winter Fuel allowance (a payment to 11.2 million people in receipt of state pension or other age-related benefit regardless of income), and a means tested additional cold weather allowance that becomes payable after seven days of zero-degree Celsius temperatures for those in receipt of certain social security benefits. There is also a system of bill reduction by larger energy companies, called the Warm Home Discount, aimed at vulnerable households, which was the equivalent of €175 in the Winter of 2022. One of the initial interventions in the UK was a £400 (€461) 'Energy Bills Support Scheme' applied to all households from October 2022 over a period of six months (Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy 2022) an 'energy rebate' intended to reduce energy bills. Government in England also provided a council tax rebate (the property tax on homes) by the equivalent of €175 for those in Bands A-D, a tax unrelated to energy consumption, but a quick mechanism by which to increase household disposal income. In addition to this, in late July 2022, the Government announced additional one-off cost of living payments to eight million pensioner households (£300), to six million people in receipt of certain disability benefits (£150), and to eight million households on means tested benefits (Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, 2022).

This article has been written at a time of considerable change. Many of these interventions predated the massive increases in natural gas prices that have occurred in recent months at the time of writing, equally, the apparent policy paralysis caused by the election of a new Prime Minister may now be over, with the incoming Prime Minister Liz Truss announcing the 'price guarantee' for households that is expected to last for the next two years, alongside short-term support for private and public sector organisations. Given the increase in fuel poor households since October 2021, even with the existing policy interventions, early analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicates that low-income families will still be €900 a year worse off after all the interventions to contain energy costs, also allowing for other increases in food costs and general inflation. [6]

Another dimension of the management of fuel poverty is retrofitting and thermal insulation, and indeed this has been a long-standing policy approach to addressing fuel poverty. There are subsidies to add thermal insulation and improve energy efficiency in social rented, private rented, and owner-occupied housing. Almost all schemes are funded by energy companies via the 'Energy Company Obligation' (ECO). These programmes can be used to improve heating systems and thermal efficiency. There is substantial controversy regarding this funding mechanism (Snell et al., 2018a), although there is general consensus that in a 'normal' set of circumstances (i.e., not an energy crisis) improved energy efficiency and retrofit is a positive way of addressing both social and environmental concerns reflected in domestic energy use, and this approach has become increasingly prevalent in policy (Cahill, 2001; Snell and Thomson, 2013). It should also be noted however, that attempts to increase thermal efficiency can lead to further issues, perhaps most prominently the pursuit of net-zero or low emission new-build or retrofitted housing, where reduction of airflow to preserve heat inadvertently leads to reductions in indoor air quality, including spikes in harmful pollutants (Carslaw and Shaw, 2019).

Retrofitting and improvements in thermal efficiency are a huge issue in the UK, where housing stock is old, much of it built without any regard at all for thermal efficiency. One in six homes in England (15%) and a fifth of homes in Wales (23%) were built before 1900, and while housing built since 2012 has high thermal effi-

6 https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/joseph-rowntree-foundation-highlights-gap-support-remains-people-low-incomes-after-liz-truss.

ciency, that represents a tiny fraction of national stock (ONS, 2022). Some data suggest heat loss from UK housing may occur at up to three times the level seen in other Northern European countries such as Norway and Sweden (TADO, 2022)

The challenge in different EU Member States varies by what sorts of systems they have for reducing fuel poverty, how easily orchestrated those systems are and a wide range of variables including their degree of energy independence. This includes factors like their levels of nuclear and renewables and degree of reliance on imported natural gas (Norway for example is an exporter of natural gas and the UK retains some reserves). Beyond that, there are factors like access and support for alternative heating technologies, like air source and ground source heat pumps, and the infrastructure and support needed to undertake the necessary retrofits (thermal efficiency must be drastically improved in older housing for these technologies to work). Some economies, the obvious example being Germany at the time of writing, were also much more reliant on Russian gas imports than was the case for others, but equally, the scale and strength of the German economy meant it could direct enormous resources to managing the fuel poverty crisis, compared to some smaller EU Member States.

Colliding Issues: Homelessness and the Energy Crisis

The energy crisis has the potential to cause a cascade failure in homelessness systems, while at the same time causing exponential increases in European homelessness. Securing and sustaining adequate housing for people at risk of homelessness could be dependent on whether or not both the *energy costs* and the rent are affordable. The costs of finding suitable homes for housing-led and Housing First services, of stopping evictions due to arrears, and facilitating rapid rehousing within preventative systems and running emergency shelters, day centres, and supported housing could all increase hugely. Whether accommodating and supporting people experiencing homelessness temporarily or trying to find them sustainable homes to stop or prevent their homelessness, energy costs will be central to which sorts of strategies, systems, and services will be viable in a way that has never been the case before.

Homelessness is already generated by the intersections of fuel poverty, after-housing cost poverty, and food insecurity, the balancing act that precariously housed, lower income people perform across Europe, which is already difficult enough, will increasingly become impossible. It has never been the case that 'anyone' is at risk of homelessness in Europe, the risk has always fallen disproportionately on people in poverty and the energy crisis looks set to increase the extent and depth of poverty across much of Europe (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2020).

Hidden homelessness, the energy crisis, and fuel poverty

Both the 2021 Lisbon Declaration of *European Platform to Combat Homelessness* [7] and the recent COST Action [8] on pan EU homelessness enumeration (Hermans, 2020) build on ETHOS (Busch-Geertsema, 2010) in acknowledging the true scope of European homelessness. Homelessness includes 'hidden' forms, i.e., people living temporarily and often precariously with family, friends, or acquaintances, without any security of tenure, physical security, or control over their own private space (Pleace and Hermans, 2020). Homelessness also includes women and women with dependent children, young people, and others who cannot safely remain in their own homes because of domestic abuse (Bretherton, 2017; Bretherton and Mayock, 2021). While these definitions are not universal, several European countries recognise these forms of homelessness within their national strategies (Allen et al., 2020). Increases in experience of hidden homelessness linked to the energy crisis might include:

- Extreme downsizing to reduce fuel, rent, and other costs, i.e., an individual, household, or family that was in adequate housing moves into housing that is overcrowded.
- Effective overcrowding as people reduce their living space without moving, the most obvious example being only heating and living in one room.
- Moving into situations of hidden homelessness, i.e., families and couples moving in with parents or grandparents because energy costs are unmanageable (FAP/FEANTSA, 2022).
- Increased risks that women, young people, and others at risk from domestic abuse, who are often victims of financial abuse that restricts their capacity to secure other housing (Bretherton and Mayock, 2021), could now face an additional barrier of having to find money to meet very high energy costs.
- People switching off the power and the basic functions of a home, in terms of heating, light, refrigeration, hot water, and what are now basic communications links, in terms of phone service and Internet access, becoming unavailable or highly limited. The UN Habitat *Right to Adequate Housing* notes:

7 https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1550&langId=en

8 CA15218 *Measuring homelessness in Europe* (MEHO)

> *… housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage or refuse disposal.* [9]

Evictions and spiralling energy costs

A core risk is that the energy crisis will increase rates of eviction because every aspect of life using energy will become harder to afford, leaving less money for housing costs (Bradshaw and Keung, 2022; NEA, 2022). However, the rate at which homelessness occurs does depend on who is being evicted under what circumstances (Kenna et al., 2018). Precariously housed people with very limited incomes might well be at heightened risk of not securing another private rented sector tenancy at an affordable rent in overheated housing markets (Pleace and Hunter, 2018). Up until now, people with higher incomes who get evicted can usually find somewhere else, or, as can often be the case with owner occupiers who can no longer afford the mortgage, still have sufficient funds to at least find somewhere to live. The energy crisis might mean that more people who get evicted will be unable to avoid or self-exit from homelessness because they cannot afford (already) high housing costs and significantly higher energy costs.

Research also shows that women, on losing housing or having to abandon it because of domestic abuse, are more likely to fall back on informal solutions, i.e., enter hidden homelessness by staying with family, friends, and acquaintances (Bretherton and Mayock, 2021). Differing pathways through homelessness exist, and some of them mean that the evictions may not lead to 'visible' homelessness for some time, not least because services have tended to be designed on the false assumption that most people experiencing homelessness were lone men. It is difficult to estimate how many Europeans are experiencing hidden homelessness, but the numbers appear to be high. The often very limited options that women face when entering hidden homelessness may be further restricted because of the energy crisis, both because budgets for services will come under pressure, which might restrict development of innovations like Housing First for women, and because both rent and energy costs will need to be manageable if a new home is to be found (Pleace and Hermans, 2020; Bretherton and Mayock, 2021).

Once energy costs, house prices, and rents reach sufficient extremes, the idea that only certain populations will be at risk of homelessness following eviction starts to break down. Ireland, the UK, and USA have experienced superheated housing markets in their major cities, linked to spikes in economic causation of homelessness (O'Sullivan, 2020; Wilde, 2022; Colburn and Aldern, 2022). UK data on home-

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9 https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf (p.3).

lessness show clear associations between eviction from the lower end of the private rented sector and homelessness (the link was temporarily broken by COVID-19 eviction bans), while owner occupiers whose homes are repossessed by banks remain unlikely to enter homelessness (MHCLG, 2020), but that pattern could now start to change.

Not everyone experiencing homelessness has been evicted (O'Sullivan, 2020; O'Sullivan et al., 2020). People experiencing long term and recurrent homelessness associated with multiple and complex needs have often never had a settled home, but have instead lived in institutions, homelessness services, and (to a lesser extent) on the street their whole lives. The breakthrough successes of Housing First, showcased by the *Housing First Europe Hub* [10], have often enabled people experiencing homelessness with multiple and complex needs to enter their first ever settled home (Pleace, 2018). The danger here, discussed below, is not eviction, but that finding suitable, affordable housing with *manageable energy costs* for Housing First will become still more difficult.

Preventing Homelessness in the Context of the Energy Crisis

The essential component of effective prevention lies in being able to secure enough adequate, secure, and affordable homes. If there is not enough housing at an affordable price, the risk of homelessness increases and the pressure on homelessness prevention systems increases. Rapid rehousing, i.e., preventing homelessness when an eviction cannot be stopped, or a risk like domestic abuse cannot be resolved, becomes much more difficult. Alongside this, housing with manageable rents and energy costs may not be nearby, so that prevention becomes disruptive, severing familial and social networks, i.e. ending homelessness might increasingly mean leaving one's community, already a longstanding issue in rural areas (Milbourne and Cloke, 2013). Preventative systems cannot address inadequate housing supply by being more efficient or better targeted, if there are not enough affordable, adequate homes, all the evidence is that prevention, however well organised, will have inherently limited effects (Browne Gott et al., 2021; Fitzpatrick et al., 2021; Mackie et al., 2017). When prevention and wider homelessness systems are reliant on private rented sector housing, for temporary accommodation and as a source of settled housing, European evidence suggests that many private rented sector landlords will often increase rents as much as they can (Rugg and Rhodes, 2018; Pleace et al., 2022).

10 https://housingfirsteurope.eu/

Reducing Homelessness and the Energy Crisis

Energy costs may force fixed-site homelessness services, ranging from emergency shelters through to short and medium length stay supported housing, aka 'staircase'/'housing ready' services to close their doors. If each room or bed in an emergency shelter or supported housing service suddenly costs three, four, or five times as much because of energy costs, there are questions about the future of such services, especially when their costs and outcomes are already being challenged by evidence around better results from housing-led and Housing First services (Pleace, 2018). Another risk is that the energy crisis will compound the challenges that these services already often face in finding suitable, affordable, adequate homes to allow people to move on into their own homes, again because both energy costs and the rent will need to be manageable (Pleace et al., 2018).

Another issue is the cost of 'overflow' emergency and temporary accommodation which is used in some European countries when formal homelessness services become overwhelmed (Pleace et al., 2021a). The hotels and short-term private sector lets that are used for this overflow accommodation may go bankrupt or start to charge higher rates as a result of the energy crisis.

In much of North Western Europe, there is a formal, publicly funded homelessness sector and the question there is how much those budgets may or may not be allowed to expand (Pleace et al., 2021). In some Eastern EU Member States, certain homelessness services for people with multiple and complex needs are within the responsibility of social services (social work/social care) and again are state funded. Management of the energy crisis could have major effects on the public funding of these services, i.e., how far, given that homelessness is often not a central public policy concern and other concerns like keeping Europe's pensioners warm, might lead to cuts in these budgets.

The stability of funding for homelessness services can be variable. Legacy systems still exist that are out of sync with prevention, Housing First, and integrated strategies. While these systems *might* remain relatively stable for emergency shelters and housing-ready services, funding can be much more variable and precarious for services like Housing First (Pleace et al., 2021). The risks that effective cuts will occur throughout much of the European homelessness sector may be compounded by some of most innovative and effective services, like Housing First, being especially vulnerable because of their 'pilot' status, or because they are still in the process of being integrated into homelessness strategy.

In England, the equivalent of over one billion euro has been taken out of local authority funding that was used to commission homelessness services (fixed site supported housing, outreach, housing-led, Housing First) since 2010. Budgets are ever shrinking, unpredictable, and precarious, making planning extremely challenging for both commissioners and service providers (Blood et al., 2020). It is not difficult to imagine what sudden, huge increases to the energy costs of homelessness services and to the energy costs involved in rehousing someone with support needs will do to this picture.

Significant parts of the homelessness sector across Europe are provided by the voluntary and charitable sectors and faith-based organisations (Pleace et al., 2018). In some areas, such as Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe, charitable and faith-based services form the backbone of whatever homelessness services are available. These services can often have low and precarious incomes, existing on a hand to mouth basis, i.e., they consume whatever financial support they can get as soon as they get it just to keep working, they often cannot build up reserves, and thus lack any contingency funding. The potential impact of the energy crisis is obvious, in that the more energy costs escalate the more likely it may be that these services cease operation without government intervention.

A wider point here is that there is not a single budget, or even a coherently organised group of nationally orientated budgets, that is used to prevent and reduce homelessness in most EU Member States (Pleace et al., 2021). Even relatively orchestrated commissioning and strategic systems are often highly devolved and there is also marked variation at local level around the nature and extent of funding for homelessness services. The governance and administration of funding for the EU and other European homelessness sectors is often *highly* fragmented (Pleace et al., 2021). Dealing with whatever spikes in energy costs emerge, for however long the problems persist, will represent a significant logistical challenge for homelessness services across Europe. This is because dealing with the energy crisis will often mean adapting fragmented policies, practices, and systems working at multiple levels. Administering an effective response to the crisis in what are often inconsistently managed, designed, funded, and only partially coordinated European homelessness sectors, will be a challenge in itself.

The Platform and Integrated Strategy in the Context of the Energy Crisis

The 2021 Lisbon Declaration of *European Platform to Combat Homelessness*[11] is designed as the beginning of a process that will create more consistent, stable, and effective responses to homelessness across the EU-27.

11 https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1550&langId=en

Members of the Platform are committed to work together towards the ending of homelessness by 2030, by promoting policies based on a person-centred, housing-led, and integrated approach, so that:

- *No one sleeps on the street for lack of accessible, safe, and appropriate emergency accommodation;*
- *No one lives in emergency or transitional accommodation longer than is required for successful move-on to a permanent housing solution;*
- *No one is discharged from any institution (e.g., prison, hospital, care facility) without an offer of appropriate housing;*
- *Evictions should be prevented whenever possible and no one is evicted without assistance for an appropriate housing solution, when needed; and*
- *No one is discriminated against due to their homelessness status.* [12]

The energy crisis could present multiple, unanticipated challenges to achieving these goals. The viability of some homelessness services may be undermined by spiralling energy costs. Moving on from emergency and transitional 'housing ready' services, already a challenge because of the shortfalls in affordable and social housing supply across most Member States, could now be even more difficult because of having to also find housing with manageable energy costs. In some Member States and other European countries, the relatively greater thermal efficiency of the housing stock will mitigate these risks, in countries with poor thermal efficiency, like the UK, the risk that homelessness will occur or reoccur because of unmanageable energy costs may be greater. Equally, the risks that housing-led/Housing First services will be undermined by further insufficiencies in affordable housing supply will also be linked to wider energy cost management and how thermally efficient the housing stock is, as well as levels of rent.

The goal to avoid discrimination also links to how people with experience of homelessness will be allowed to pay for energy. The issue of the kinds of credit checks run by more expensive private rented sector housing and banks offering mortgages, operating as potential barriers to housing for people experiencing homelessness, have not often arisen. People experiencing homelessness are not barred from entering the more expensive parts of the private rented sector by failing credit checks, because the rent is unaffordable anyway, so the attempt to access that housing is never made.

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[12] European Commission *Governance, Work Programme and Way Forward for the European Platform on Combating Homelessness 2022-2024* https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_3044

However, everyone needs an energy provider and the basis on which that provider sells you energy may be determined by credit checks and other data. Some people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness may be barred from having certain types of energy accounts, or switching supplier, because they have no credit history, a history of debt (indeed they may increasingly owe an energy provider money as part of that debt), or, sometimes, any history of being responsible for the energy bills in their own home for any length of time. Card and coin-fed options may offer energy only at a premium, with fixed price deals and offers for lower rates being confined to owner occupiers who are deemed to be a good credit risk. If the typical annual bill is going to be €4 000-€6 000+ in some European countries, there is a serious incentive for energy companies to check whether or not someone can pay and minimising the risks around non-payment, more so than if the bill is €1 000 or less.

The Depth and Extent of Permanent Change

COVID-19 has illustrated the dangers of prediction. The use of hotels to end most street sleeping, along with eviction bans, was sometimes interpreted as reflecting a new COVID-driven civic energy, a renewed social contract, that would end homelessness as part of the change the pandemic would bring to European society.

In practice, such interventions were mainly short term and focused on containing a population with relatively poor underlying health [13], who could not self-isolate, and who were likely to be hospitalised if they got infected, placing still higher pressures on public health systems that were already cracking under the strain of the pandemic (Parsell et al., 2020; Pleace et al., 2021b).

The reality is that several of the possibilities discussed here may not come to pass and that energy costs will, eventually, fall back significantly. However, even if that is the case, fuel poverty as a driver of homelessness and as an impediment to the effective operation of homelessness prevention, reduction, and to the creation of integrated strategies was already here and was already a serious problem. Even if the energy crisis that has thrown these issues into sharp relief comes to rapid end, or fades over time, there will still be an energy crisis within Europe's homelessness crisis.

13 Very poor underlying health in the case of the small populations of long-term and recurrent people experiencing homelessness with multiple and complex needs, who were present among the populations living on the street and in 'shared air' shelters.

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Research Notes

Part C

What Happens to Households that are Evicted from their Homes in France? Long Term Implications

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Introduction

Evictions in France are regulated by a legal procedure that aims to grant additional time to the household to find other housing. In spite of the legal evolutions in the field of eviction prevention, and the multiplication of preventive measures, the number of households in eviction procedures and actually evicted is increasing year after year.

The precariousness of household resources, with a structural rise in unemployment, involuntary part-time work, and precarious contracts such as fixed-term or interim contracts, makes millions of people vulnerable to the rising cost of housing. Nearly nine million people now live below the poverty line in France. Unpaid rent (95% of them) is the main cause of eviction procedures.

The record of 16700 evictions with the assistance of police officers was reached in 2019. However, there are probably two to three times more households that are affected when considering the tenants who leave the housing of their own accord under the threat of eviction proceedings. Despite the health and social crises and the extension of the winter truce, the number of evictions in the last two years has exceeded 20000 households.

France has been condemned on several occasions by the European Committee of Social Rights because evictions are not accompanied by rehousing solutions, which violates article 31-2 of the European Social Charter. The lack of housing, especially social housing, of adapted shelters, the increasing share of rent, and expenses in household budgets contribute to this evolution.

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Many studies have analysed the circumstances and causes of rental evictions[1], but no study in France has looked at what happens to people who have been evicted from their homes a few years later**.** The Fondation Abbé Pierre, in partnership with the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, conducted this retrospective study on the consequences of rental evictions to find out whether eviction leads to poor housing and if so, to what extent**.** In other words, does rental eviction have lasting consequences on people's lives?

Thanks to the network of partners[2] and its platform "Allo Prévention des expulsions"[3], 66 households that were evicted in the last three years were contacted and participated in interviews (for 68% of them, the eviction was due to unpaid rent linked to a drop in income). The difficulty of tracking down these households is important to note, because for these households, their access to support ended with their evictions. This in turn could have caused a legitimate sense of bitterness toward the organisations and institutions that failed to prevent the eviction. While the French Ministry of the Interior expected 12 000 rental evictions in 2021, this sample represents a very small proportion of evicted households, but gives an insight into situations that were previously invisible.

The questionnaire for these interviews was drafted by students in sociology under the supervision of their professor and a lawyer from the Fondation Abbé Pierre and a professional involved in the social and legal support of these households. The content of the questionnaire addresses several themes. First of all, it is a question of reconstructing the residential history of these households since the eviction, and then asking about the consequences of the eviction on their social and professional relationships, on their health, on their children's schooling, on their relationships with the institutions, and on the social and legal support they received.

The interviews were conducted in pairs with households living in 46 cities in metropolitan France. Of the interviews, 36% were conducted face-to-face (in Marseille, Romilly-sur-Seine, Toulouse, Perpignan, Montpellier, Nice, Cagnes-sur-Mer, Grenoble, Lyon, Lille, Vias, and Tourcoing), the rest were conducted by telephone.

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1 Fondation Abbé Pierre, *Les conséquences psychologiques et sociales de la procédure d'expulsion,* June 2004; ANIL, *Comment en arrive-t-on à l'expulsion? 100 ménages expulsés de leur logement rencontrés par les ADIL,* February 2012; Tassin, F. (2014) «Mieux connaître le processus d'expulsion locative», *Lettre de l'ONPES n°2*; François, C. (2017) «Déloger le peuple. L'État et l'administration des expulsions locatives", sociology thesis at the University of Paris 8, under the supervision of Sylvie Tissot.

2 Gathered within the framework of a network led by the Fondation Abbé Pierre, these associations support the most precarious households, particularly in terms of preventing evictions, fighting substandard housing, and access to the DALO.

3 This eviction prevention hotline informs households about their rights, about the procedure underway, advises them, and guides them through the procedures.

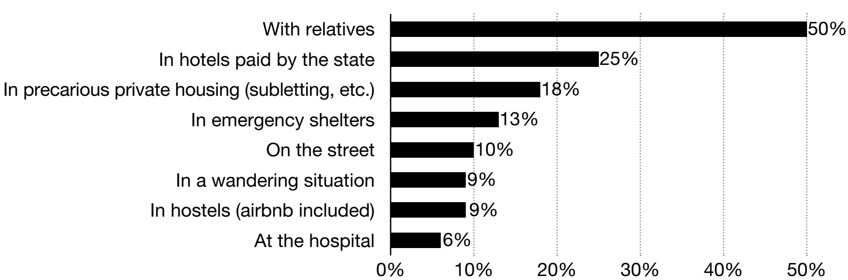
The high proportion of associations located in Ile-de-France region in the sample led to an over-representation of households from this region: 45% of the people surveyed currently live in this region and 50% were living there at the time of the eviction. Seven additional interviews were conducted with associations in the areas concerned in order to get a better understanding of the local context.

The selection method of this sample introduces certain biases. Indeed, setting up the sample through associations led to an over-representation of people who have received support or at least socio-legal advice. It is therefore not representative of the people who are the furthest from associations. Finally, our language skills and those of the associations have limited our interviews to French-speaking people. This selection bias invites us to analyse with caution the effect of the language barrier as an obstacle to rehousing.

Results of the study

First of all, this study shows that eviction is not a trivial event in people's lives. It has dramatic consequences for some households: we can see that 10% of people who have been evicted have spent time sleeping on the street. Also, 50% of households were taken in by relatives, which means that the mobilisation of the family, friend, or community network is decisive when evicted. One third of the households had used social hotels paid by the State, with all the very negative consequences that we know: hotels are very far from urban centres, they are unsuitable for family life, there is no social support, the conditions are often poor and unhealthy with cock-roaches and bedbugs, they are often overcrowded, and there are no proper cooking facilities; in short these are not places to live but simply places to sleep.

Share of people having lived at least once....



We also note that eviction severely disrupts the lives of households in terms of health, employment, self-esteem, and trust in the institutions that failed to prevent the eviction and failed to rehouse them quickly. These are households that were already vulnerable – both in terms of income and social issues – leading up to the eviction; the eviction makes them even more fragile for longer. Eviction produces a social rupture and a strong feeling of incomprehension and humiliation for the people affected.

In 29% of the cases, the eviction leads to an interruption of employment. The loss of employment is linked to a change of neighbourhood or town, or sometimes to the loss of housing, which leads to professional destabilisation. Continuing or finding a job when you do not have stable and secure housing is very complicated.

In addition, 71% of households report that eviction has had an impact on their health, particularly on mental health. The procedure itself causes a lot of stress: it often lasts a year to a year and a half, during which households live in anxious expectation because they do not know when it will happen. The post-eviction period is also a very anxious time because people have to organise and search for new housing and deal with uncertainties; this stress can lead to the break-up of some families.

Also, 43% of households with children report that the eviction impacts their children's schooling: problems with attendance, concentration, dropping out of school, etc. Not knowing where they will sleep or living with three to five people in a hotel room are not good conditions to continue education.

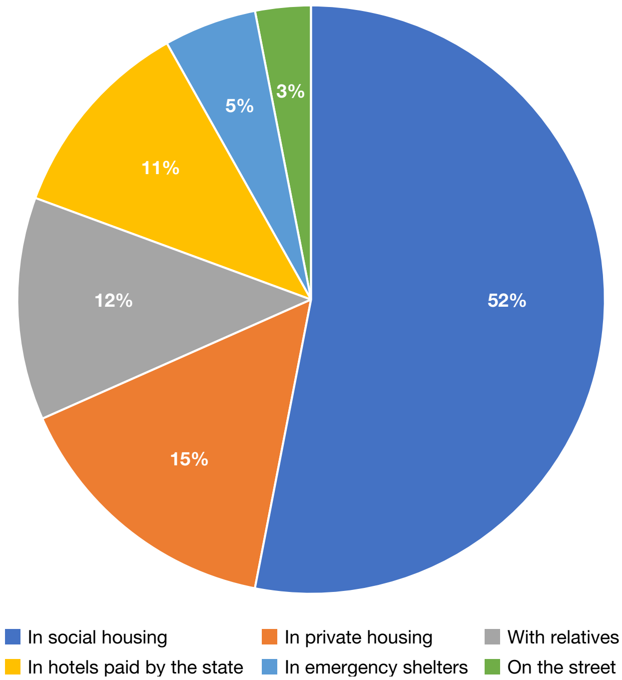
Of this sample, two-thirds of the households ended up being rehoused three years later by their own means or through social housing. On average, for those who were lucky enough to be rehoused, it took 11 months to secure a new home. During these 11 months of wandering, households alternated between several accommodation solutions depending on their resources (with friends, in hotels, in hostels, in sublets, in mobile homes, with sleepers, etc.). Although some people find housing more quickly, wandering can be a source of psychological, family, professional, and social setbacks and it becomes difficult to get back on track. Three years later, one third of households have still not found housing.

The study also shows that eviction is a tragedy that follows households for quite a long time because after an eviction, households are still in debt and must repay their rental arrears. This debt must be paid off if the household wants to have a chance to find a social or private landlord. Debt reduction is all the more difficult as eviction often leads to breakdowns in managing personal/family affairs: loss of address, housing benefit, administrative documents, etc. Households describe how the burden of eviction can be very heavy. Households describe how complicated the maze of procedures is when you no longer have a stable home. Social support is often split between several social workers and several administrations. The feeling of being 'blacklisted' because of a payment (or debt) incident is very strong for some households who declare that they "cannot get back on track".

Eviction therefore leads to a social rupture that generates a very strong feeling of incomprehension and humiliation for some people.

When rehousing does occur, it is mainly in social housing (52% are currently housed in social housing). It is in this type of housing that households manage to restore their stability and to find better housing conditions for the most part.

Current housing type of surveyed households



Conclusion

There is no standard pathway for evicted households, but it is clear that eviction makes residential pathways more fragile over time. It has serious consequences for social relations, financial resources, health, and education. Conversely, access to social housing stabilises the residential pathway and is the most common rehousing solution, however this solution is often far too late.

These results clearly demonstrate the importance of preventing eviction because eviction is a moment when people become disengaged and excluded from society, and results in humiliation for people who have simply encountered an obstacle in their lives (68% of the households surveyed were evicted following unpaid rent linked to a drop in income caused by a loss of employment, a health problem, a separation, etc.). When eviction cannot be avoided, it is essential to support people at all levels so that they can be rehoused as quickly as possible, and the period of homelessness can be kept to a minimum.

Data Collection Systems and Homelessness in the EU – An Overview[1]

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Introduction

The European Platform on Combating Homelessness (hereafter the Platform) wants to strengthen the monitoring and data collection on homelessness in the EU in order to promote evidence-based policies and initiatives addressing homelessness. It is looking for clarity, regularity, and comparability in the data available in the EU. ETHOS 'Light', is a widely used and pragmatic tool for homelessness data collection. It distinguishes six different operational categories: living in public spaces, emergency accommodation, shelter for the homeless, prolonged stay in institutions, non-conventional dwellings, with families or friends. Several efforts have been made to measure or estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness in Europe: the European Census of Eurostat as well as its EU-SILC module, the OECD, the European Social Policy Network, FEANTSA, the Fondation Abbé Pierre, and the Joint Research Center. It is estimated that at least 700 000 people experiencing homelessness are currently sleeping on the street or living in emergency or temporary accommodation across the European Union. There is evidence that this number – which does not include the more hidden forms of homelessness – is on the rise. However, at present it is not possible to provide the total number of people experiencing homelessness in Europe because data are lacking, or definitions and data are inconsistent.

Therefore, attempts have been made to make overviews of the different methodologies used and to make them more aligned. Some authorities or research institutes use administrative data, others rely on recurrent national surveys collecting individual or aggregate data. Some run one-off surveys at a national level. But there

[1] This article is based on a discussion paper prepared by the author for the European Commission. The views presented therein reflect the views of its author only, and the European Commission is not liable for any consequences deriving from the reuse of this publication. The original document is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1550&langId=en#navItem-relatedDocuments.

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are also many regional and local one-off surveys undertaken. In recent years we see experiments with the mobilisation of volunteers to count street-based sleepers or the collaboration between local service providers and other actors to collect and monitor data on different forms of homelessness and housing exclusion in a particular location.

The recurrent methodological challenges encountered are varied. There are definitional differences, there is the phenomenon of hidden and invisible homelessness, the differences in duration of homelessness experiences, the over-reliance on services to estimate the homeless population, the urban bias in homeless counting efforts, the frequency and consistency of data collection, the impact of the policies, and homelessness in a broader context.

The European Platform therefore seeks to develop a monitoring framework using different sources of information on the number and the profiles of people experiencing homelessness as well as the different policies and their effectiveness. It can rely on various and complementary initiatives. Reference can be made to the Pilot Project on European Homeless Count, initiated by the European Parliament, that will promote local counts with the active involvement of local actors. But also, on the forthcoming EU-SILC module, the forthcoming Census, as well as national and local surveys. The objective is to generate more regular data collections and bring them together to identify profiles, trends, or problem areas and as such make them policy relevant. Therefore, more uniformity and consistency in definitions used and methodologies applied is needed. Key in this will be a multi-stakeholder approach involving national, regional, and local policy makers, service providers, researchers, and volunteers.

Homelessness is an extreme form of social exclusion that needs to be addressed through integrated approaches that successfully deliver on Principle 19 of the *European Pillar of Social Rights*. However, while progress in this regard is being achieved by a few European countries, available data shows that there has been an overall upward trend in homelessness across Europe over the last decade (Baptista et.al., 2011; Busch-Geertsema et.al., 2014; Fondation Abbé Pierre and FEANTSA, 2017). But who are we talking about? What is the *prevalence* of homelessness? In other words, how many people are homeless today? How does this evolve over time? What is the *incidence* of homelessness? In other words, how many people become homeless during a particular time period? How long are people homeless? What do we know about people *moving in* and *out* of homelessness? What is *the socio-economic profile* of persons who experience homelessness (gender, age, migration status, etc.)?

The members of the European Platform on Combating Homelessness (the Platform) have committed themselves to address these salient questions and to strengthen the monitoring on homelessness and the data collection in order to promote evidence-based policies and initiatives addressing homelessness and work toward ending it by 2030. They are looking for clarity, regularity, and comparability in the data available in the EU. Developing better data collection systems and monitoring mechanisms is one of the four main work strands of the Work Programme of the Platform. Amongst others, it is foreseen to promote a common monitoring framework on homelessness, to prepare a coordinated European-wide counting initiative, and to collect data on past experience of homelessness with a view to better understand the drivers of falling into and escaping from homelessness.

What is the Ambition?

In some countries or regions, the objective of ending homelessness has already been stated as an ambition. But what does it mean to 'end homelessness'? So far, there is no internationally recognised definition to 'ending homelessness'. The following options would apply:

1. An 'absolute end' to homelessness whereby nobody is homeless anymore as from a certain point-in-time, and the risk of becoming homeless, in any form it can take (sleeping on the street, relying on temporary shelter with a friend…), is completely excluded.

2. 'Functional zero' homelessness, where it becomes a manageable problem and the policy measures, the available resources, and services are appropriate and sufficient to deal with homelessness associated problems. Reaching functional zero implies that we have and apply the tools necessary to make homelessness rare and exceptional. Also, that it is brief and permanently resolved when it occurs. This approach is more realistic and pragmatic than the first option, although it does not exclude to adhere to an absolute end option as an aspirational goal. A critical note is that reaching 'functional zero' does not imply that some people remain homeless because they are defined or considered 'voluntary homeless' or not accepting housing offers which are not adequate for them.

Both options require a policy kit that matches the needs and demands of the homeless population and the people at risk of homelessness.

Who are We Talking About?

Homelessness is defined, perceived, and tackled differently in the EU Member States. Within a given Member State different definitions may be used for different purposes or at different levels. In some countries, the definition is restricted to people living on the streets or in public spaces ('sleeping rough'), and/or living in shelters or other emergency accommodation. Other countries (or regions) apply a broader definition, which also includes people who are, for example, living in caravans and are doubled up with family and friends. Not all countries have an 'official' definition for statistical or policy-purposes. The ESPN study (Baptista and Marlier, 2019) revealed that this was the case in eight EU Member States.

In the framework of the work programme of the Platform, it is crucial to adhere to a common definition of homelessness and its different manifestations. It is a first and essential step in developing a common counting system and a joint approach to monitoring homelessness. Benefits from such an exercise will be drawn not only at the European level but equally at national and even local level, since experience suggests that countries that have counting systems on a nationally agreed-upon definition have more reliable data, better and more effective policies, and thus also better outcomes.

To develop a common language, in 2005 FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, developed the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) through a review of existing definitions of homelessness and the realities of homelessness which service providers are faced with on a daily basis. The European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, an initiative of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council, co-organised with the European Commission in 2010, has recommended ETHOS as a common framework definition of homelessness. While remaining a voluntary approach, ETHOS is now commonly used by academia, policy makers, and service providers. ETHOS recognises that homelessness is not a fixed state but a dynamic process whereby people move in and out of different precarious living situations. ETHOS categories therefore attempt to cover all living situations which amount to forms of homelessness or housing exclusion: rooflessness, houselessness, and living in insecure or inadequate housing.

ETHOS Light is a definition of homelessness *for statistical purposes*. It harmonises a variety of existing definitions and has become a widely used pragmatic tool for homelessness data collection, rather than a conceptual definition. ETHOS Light distinguishes six different operational categories:

1. People *living rough* in public spaces.

2. People *in emergency accommodation* such as overnight shelters.

3. People living in *accommodation for the homeless* where the period of stay is time limited. Examples are homeless hostels, women's shelters, or refuge accommodation.
4. People *living in institutions* such as health care institutions or penal institutions for a longer period of time because there is no housing available prior to being discharged.
5. People living in *nonconventional dwellings* due to lack of housing. Examples are mobile homes or caravans on illegal campsites, non-conventional buildings, and temporary structures.
6. People living temporarily *with family or friends* due to lack of housing.

The main added value of ETHOS is two-fold: it provides a conceptual definition to underpin policymaking and it proposes a common language for understanding which living situations precisely are captured by data in different contexts. ETHOS is already widely used in these two senses. However, ETHOS is not a common European standard for national data collection strategies. National data collection strategies, including definitions used, still vary significantly within the European Union, which makes comparability of data limited.

What Do We Know? How Many People Experiencing Homelessness are there in the Member States and in the EU?

There have been different efforts at European level and beyond to get an idea of the number of people living in homeless conditions. Every 10 years, a European census counts the entire population and housing stock of the Member States and collects information on its main characteristics. For the census in 2011 (https://ec.europa.eu/CensusHub2), Eurostat asked Member States to count the people experiencing homelessness in their territory, but not necessarily as a separate group. However, only 16 countries did so. Together, these countries reported just under 120 000 people experiencing homelessness (118 946). These results could not help to compare homelessness across the European Member States. Nor could they reliably estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness at a European level. Extrapolation of the data available from the 16 countries was not possible because they were not a representative sample of all the Member States and the counting systems used in the countries covered were often of a very different nature (e.g., administrative data, point-in-time surveys,…). For the 2021 census round, European statistical legislation stipulates that Member States must do a separate counting of the homeless.

In 2018, a study was carried out by Eurostat (Eurostat, 2018), in the frame of EU-SILC, to give an overview of the magnitude of homelessness, through looking at how 'housing difficulties' are experienced by the entire European population. As this module was optional for Member States, only 12 countries participated: Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, as well as the United Kingdom, Albania, and Switzerland. According to this study, four out of every 100 people in Europe – in the sample of 12 countries – report that they have been homeless at least once in their lives (ranging from one in every 100 persons in Hungary to 10 in every 100 in Denmark). For every 100 people, three have had to live with relatives temporarily and one person in every 100 reports having slept on the street or lived in emergency or temporary accommodation or in a place not intended as a home. For the majority of people surveyed (76.2%), the duration of their most recent experience of homelessness was less than 12 months. Almost a quarter of people surveyed reported that this period had lasted more than 12 months: for 11.5%, it lasted between 12 and 24 months, and for 12.2%, it lasted more than 24 months. The next time Eurostat will use the housing module of EU-SILC will be in 2023.

In addition, EU-SILC survey allows monitoring housing deprivation and housing conditions. These data are also used for the Social Scoreboard, which tracks the implementation of the Pillar of Social Rights. The Scoreboard has among its headline indicators the housing cost overburden rate, which monitors housing conditions and affordability, in line with principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights. It also has a secondary indicator on the severe housing deprivation rate.

In 2020 the OECD estimated a total of just over 900 000 people experiencing homelessness in 21 EU Member States (2020 data or latest year available data; 911 177). These data were drawn from the OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing and other available sources (https://www.oecd.org/els/family/HC3-1-Homeless-population.pdf). Although there is a lot of variation in the percentage of people experiencing homelessness in the Member States, in all of them less than 1% is reported homeless. Definitional differences and differences in methodologies used drive some of the variation in the reported prevalence of homelessness across countries. These differences, of course, hamper international comparison and an understanding of the differences in homelessness rates and risks across countries. The OECD could not collect data for the same years for all countries as the timing of homelessness counts is not harmonised across countries. In a number of countries, there have not been any data collection efforts at a national level and led by their national statistical institutions in the last five years.

At the request of the European Commission, in 2019, the European Social Policy Network (ESPN) published a report on national strategies to tackle homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE). The synthesis report of this mapping exercise outlines several key findings (Baptista and Marlier, 2019). First of all, the available data, although inconsistent, point to an increase of HHE over the last decade in the majority of the 35 countries covered by the ESPN. Finland is the only EU country where homelessness has decreased significantly over the last two decades. There are similarities in the profiles of people experiencing homelessness across Europe (mostly men within working age), as well as emerging profiles within specific national contexts (e.g., young people and an older cohort of people experiencing homelessness). Women and children remain a more invisible category (often resorting to more informal 'hidden' accommodation solutions). In most EU countries, long-standing or more recent negative housing market developments (e.g., steep increases in rental prices, insecurity of tenure, rising evictions) are the main determinants behind HHE increases.

Until 2010, FEANTSA's European Observatory on Homelessness published estimates on homelessness on a yearly basis. Since 2016, FEANTSA and the Abbé Pierre Foundation publish their annual Overview of Housing Exclusion. In its 2017 edition, the Overview provided a 'map of alarming trends' bringing to light facts and figures from most European Union Member States. This information shows how shocking the situation is in most countries. The map offers a closer look at certain cities or categories of people particularly affected by homelessness. Every year, the report publishes an updated table of national figures and summarises the most telling trends. Insofar as possible, the data comprise the most recent official figures from the country concerned and, if these figures were not available, other sources, such as those collected by services for the homeless or research, are provided.

In the 2020 edition, FEANTSA and the Foundation Abbé Pierre estimate that at least 700 000 people experiencing homelessness are currently sleeping on the street or living in emergency or temporary accommodation across the European Union. This is a 70% increase in the space of 10 years. This is based on an earlier estimate from 2009. The methodology consisted of combining point-in-time survey data from the countries where it was available and extrapolating for the EU as a whole. Looking at it from different angles, this is considered to be a conservative and not particularly robust estimate.

As background material for its reports, FEANTSA also produces country profiles that can be retrieved from its website and that are regularly updated.

In 2021, the Joint Research Center (JRC) of the European Commission carried out a survey on homelessness among cities and smaller towns. The main aim of this study is to get a better understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness (trends and numbers), policies (prevention and rehousing), the developments during the pandemic, and the potential implications for future policies. The study includes a wide range of urban classifications, from smaller towns and villages to large metropolitan areas.

The survey was completed in Spring 2021. In total, 131 responses were collected from 16 Member States, the majority of which came from two countries, Italy and Portugal. The survey included 29 questions, divided into five main sections:

1. General information about the respondents and the municipality that he/she represented;
2. Data to quantify and qualify homelessness;
3. Existing strategies and policies for homelessness;
4. Specific trends or initiatives related to homelessness that have been observed or put in place during the COVID crisis; and
5. The availability of public/social housing in the municipality and the criteria for inclusion/exclusions from it (van Heerden et al., 2022).

EU Methodological Initiatives on Better Measuring Homelessness

The European Social Policy Network study of 2019 we referred to in the previous section puts the finger on the soft spot of most research on homelessness in the EU: at present it is not possible to provide the total number of people experiencing homelessness in Europe because data are lacking, or definitions and data are inconsistent.

Still, there have been several attempts to harmonise the measuring of homelessness in Europe, especially over the last 15 years. These methodological exercises have led to important insights in how best to measure – or estimate – homelessness.

A first initiative worth mentioning is the MPHASIS (Measuring Progress on Homelessness through Advancing and Strengthening Information Systems) Project which ran from December 2007 to December 2009. MPHASIS (https://www.dundee.ac.uk/geddesinstitute/projects/mphasis/) made a significant contribution to building capacity in measuring homelessness. Networks of key stakeholders were created, involving not only people with a responsibility for data collection but also policy makers and service providers. At a national level, MPHASIS provided a mechanism for bringing national and local government departments and agencies together with NGOs. In some cases, this was done for the very first time. The inclusion of stakeholders from national statistical agencies was particularly significant.

Then, in 2009, the Social Protection Committee (SPC) organised a peer review on data collection and homelessness. During the peer review meeting, organised in Vienna, improved and comparable counting was considered the basis for the planning of assistance.

FEANTSA and its European Observatory on Homelessness (EOH) have undertaken a lot of work on data collection on homelessness in the EU. In 2014, the EOH published a comparative study on the 'Extent and Profile of Homelessness in European Member States'. It asked experts in 15 EU Member States to complete a questionnaire exploring the extent of statistical data on homelessness in their countries. The experts were also asked to summarise any relevant statistical research on homelessness published in their countries since 2009. In addition, the national experts were asked to describe the methods used to count and survey people experiencing homelessness in their country and to provide an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of these methods.

In a way the recent COST Action (2016 – 2021), in which 20 EU Member States participated along with some neighbouring countries, was a follow-up to the previously mentioned EOH exercise. The results were published in a special issue of the European Journal of Homelessness (Volume 14, Issue 3, 2020). In a coordinated European approach, researchers tried to make progress on the development of a European wide scientifically based methodology to measure it. More specifically, the purpose of this network was (1) to bring together the expertise with regard to measuring homelessness, (2) to tackle specific measurement challenges (such as measuring hidden homelessness or homelessness careers), and (3) to create a common European framework on measuring homelessness.

To that effect, in 2017 a questionnaire survey was conducted among the COST action members. The results of this work were published in 2020 in a special issue of the European Journal of Homelessness.

The researchers first focused on the legal definitions and observed 5 substantive elements in the legal acts.

1. Lack of tenancy rights/status.

2. Income situation is insufficient to sustain housing (affordability).

3. Actual living situation: topological (street); institutional (within service provision); in physically inadequate structures or unsafe; involuntarily living with family or friends.

4. There is a threat of becoming a person without housing or no home to return to (e.g., after release from prison).

5. Administratively defined (lack of registered address).

In some countries there is no legal definition and thus only a research-driven definition. In some countries the above elements are combined in one, single legal definition. Sometimes in the same country definitions change over time or different definitions are used simultaneously by authorities, regions, or researchers. Except for street-based sleeping and the presence in emergency accommodation, many legal definitions do not cover the ETHOS Light categories mentioned before. Few refer to people who must extend their stay in health care or penal institutions because they have no housing available. Only a few take into account people living with family or friends by lack of housing. Practices in different countries also differ because they include specific groups (e.g., young people, migrants) or exclude groups because of lack of enumeration techniques (e.g., women, migrants).

The researchers also identified six methodological clusters and gave an overview of the use of these methods by the European countries.

A first method consists of the use of administrative data. These data mostly refer to numbers or profile of service users. Administrative data can be an effective means to assess the number of individuals using homeless services and may better capture the flows of people who transition in and out of homelessness over a given period. These estimates tend to be much larger than point-in-time estimates.

This method is used in many Member States. More systematic, coordinated, and sophisticated methods using a combination of registers and involving different stakeholders can be found in Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Germany.[2]

A second method that is used in several Member States consists of recurrent national surveys. In most cases a point-in-time or week method (PIT) is used.

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2 The 2019 ESPN study revealed that eight Member States do not have an official definition at all. The study, that covers 35 European countries, concluded that a comparison between the presence or absence of the various living situations encompassed by the six ETHOS-Light operational categories among the 35 countries reveals a clear trend: the more visible the HHE situation (e.g., rough sleeping, living in emergency shelters), the higher the probability of that condition being defined as homelessness. In fact, people living on the street are almost everywhere defined as being homeless. On the other hand, only 14 countries include “people living temporarily with family and friends, due to lack of housing” in their homelessness definition and, out of these, only four are actually able to provide data on the extent of this phenomenon. For an overview of all the definitions used in the EU Member States, see Baptista and Marlier, 2019.

Denmark, for example, has annual shelter statistics based on a client registration system. Ireland records service user data from statutory and NGO services for people experiencing homelessness. The Dutch National Statistical Office uses a combination of data from the national population register (covering data on people with a postal address at a day or night shelter), a data base on homeless benefit claimants, and data from the national alcohol and drug information services for national estimates on street-based sleepers. A core set of data on NGO providers of services for people experiencing homelessness is analysed each year by the national umbrella organisation in Germany to produce statistics on the profile of service users.

In some cases, *individual data* are collected. This is done on a yearly basis in Hungary, bi-annually in Denmark, and every six years in Sweden.[3] Germany also plans to do it yearly for 'sheltered homeless', and bi-annually for street homelessness and people experiencing homelessness sharing with friends and relatives. In other countries, such as Finland and Portugal, *aggregate data* are collected.[4]

In France, certain cities have recently introduced a method to count people experiencing homelessness in the streets and in public spaces: '*les Nuits de la Solidarité'* or '*Solidarity Nights*'. Using the slogan 'Une nuit qui compte' ('A night that counts'), they take place mostly on one, single night. The method has been inspired by similar experiences in the USA and was tried out in Paris in 2018. Since then, this method has been used in several big cities such as Rennes, Metz, Grenoble, Toulouse, and Montpellier, each having its specificities. In 2020, Berlin (Germany) used a similar methodology. Les Nuits de la Solidarité are multi-actor operations mobilising hundreds of volunteers and grass-roots organisations that walk through the streets and squares of the cities during a specific night. Using a questionnaire, the volunteers also have a chat with the street-based sleepers they encounter. To address the many conceptual, organisational, budgetary, methodological, and communication challenges these operations face, the French national statistical office produced a methodological guide in May 2021.

This kind of point-in-time estimates may be more effective in reaching homeless people who do not seek out formal support and provide an estimate of the stock of the ('visible') homeless population on a given night. They focus on the first three categories of the ETHOS Light typology. They represent an underestimate of all the people who have experienced homelessness over a given period. In addition, such estimates fail to capture those who may be transitionally or temporarily homeless in a given jurisdiction.

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3 In Hungary, since 1999, a homelessness survey has been conducted every February 3rd. It is carried out by services for people experiencing homelessness and also covers street-based sleepers. Participation is voluntary for services and clients and a self-completion questionnaire is used. It is not a count but provides profile data. In Denmark and Sweden all potential contact services (such as shelters, addiction treatment centers, psychiatric facilities, municipal social centers, or social drop-in cafés) are asked to document information on homeless clients in individualised questionnaires within a certain week. Double counting is excluded by unique identifiers. Surveys are repeated bi-annually in Denmark and every six years in Sweden.

4 In Finland, for example, all municipalities have been asked to provide data or an elaborated estimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness every year (since 1987) as part of a general Housing Market Survey. For a number of years, in Portugal, online surveys were done. The questionnaires were filled out by social departments and services of municipalities. They provided data about people who are roofless and live in a public space, in an insecure form of shelter, in emergency shelter, or in temporary accommodation.

The great strength of this methodology is the mobilisation of citizens and local organisations as well as the sensitisation of public opinion and policy makers through local media.

Another experiment has been tested out in a number of Member States, notably the Nordic countries and Belgium: *multi-method measurement and monitoring systems*. In this case an inventory is made of the available data. These are then combined with a local multi-stakeholder approach to trace as many people experiencing homelessness as possible, including the 'invisible homeless'. This methodology thus tries to capture all categories of the ETHOS Light typology.

In Belgium, since 2020, this methodology has been rolled-out in different cities. Academics give back-up to these exercises. To get more information on the extent of homelessness in a certain area and at a certain point-in-time, as well as the profile of the people concerned, short questionnaires are used by social workers together with the homeless client. As such they gather information on gender, age, children, nationality, permit of stay, income, accommodation, reason of homelessness, duration, stay in institution, health, and service use. In this way the profile of the homeless also comes into the picture. [5]

The counting is done in a coordinated way by as many local institutions as possible: specialised services for the homeless (night shelters, residential centres, day-care centres…); regular social services (public and non-profit); low-threshold services (social restaurants, neighbourhood centres…); health care services; penal and psychiatric institutions; social housing companies; etc. For example, in the city of Gent, a city of 260 000 inhabitants, 37 different counting organisations were involved. [6]

Together the different local actors determine the point-in-time for the counting and work together for a full year to prepare the exercise, to inform the stakeholders, to fill in the questionnaires, to do the counting, and to make the analysis and draw the conclusions. The strength of this mixed-methods approach lies in the mobilisation of actors and the local coalition building around the topic. Like for other methods, the major challenge is to get a view on the dynamism of homelessness.

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5 This method reveals that the proportion of people with 'complex needs', such as addiction or psychiatric problems, is much smaller than usually assumed (Pleace and Hermans, 2020).

6 In 2020, they counted 1 472 people experiencing homelessness, of which 401 were children. Of those, 124 lived in public spaces, 113 in night shelters for the homeless, and 169 in temporary accommodation. Further, 136 were institution leavers, 246 lived in non-conventional dwellings, and 585 lived temporarily with family or friends. In addition, 76 persons were identified who had the risk of being evicted.

The major disadvantage of both these measurement systems is that it remains unclear how to reach national numbers from these local counts. One-off surveys at national level are another way of gauging the extent of the homelessness problem in a country. We find examples of these in Italy and Germany.[7] Regional and local recurrent surveys are also executed in a number of countries, such as Spain.[8] Regional and local one-off surveys are a final way of base-line counts. These were already implemented in a number of Member States.[9]

Critical Methodological Challenges

There are significant methodological challenges that make it difficult to assess the full extent of homelessness. Homelessness is, by its very nature, a problematic circumstance to assess, as people experiencing homelessness may be more or less 'invisible' to the 'outside' world and as they live a very mobile life.

So far, efforts to count the number of people experiencing homelessness at one point in time or during a certain period often, at best, produce very good and methodologically reliable estimates that when done on a regular basis can give important information on profiles and trends. In this way, these estimates can contain crucial information and lay the basis for insights that are useful for evidence-based policymaking.

Definitional differences drive some of the variation in the reported incidence of homelessness across countries. These differences hamper international comparison and an understanding of the differences in homelessness rates and risks across countries. Different definitions of homelessness can exist within the same

[7] In Italy, a national survey was conducted between 21 November and 20 December 2011 and again in 2014. A sample of users of accommodation and meal services for people experiencing homelessness were interviewed. National numbers were estimated on the basis of service use and beds and meals provided in cities. Recently in Germany, data on people sleeping on the street or with relatives and friends were collected via low-threshold services, food banks, advice centers, places for fictive postal addresses, street outreach services, etc. People in shelters and other types of temporary accommodation provided by municipalities and NGOs are included in a recurrent point-in-time count of the National Office of Statistics every 30 January from 2022 onward.

[8] In Spain, recurrent local surveys have been conducted in Madrid where they do street counts every second year since 2006. In other big Spanish cities, like Barcelona and Sevilla, as well as in the Basque region, similar exercises are done.

[9] There are many examples of these not (yet) repeated methods to gather data. Mention can be made of Bavaria and Badem-Wuerttemberg (Germany), Athens (Greece), Bologna (Italy), Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht (the Netherlands), Bratislava (Slovakia), Lisbon (Portugal), Flanders and Wallonia (Belgium), and Bucharest (Romania).

country, depending on the purpose and the collecting authority, producing vastly different homelessness estimates over the same territory. In some cases, changes to the definition does not allow for reliable comparison over time.

But there are more than definitional problems that hinder the collection of valid and reliable data on homelessness. Chief among these is the increasing incidence of 'hidden homelessness,' which refers to people who do not appear in official statistics on homelessness because they are not sleeping on the street nor using homeless services. Hidden homelessness tends to be more prevalent among women, youth, LGTBI, victims of domestic abuse, and people living in rural and smaller communities. As a consequence, people experiencing long-term homelessness are over-represented in many measuring exercises and especially in point-in-time counts. In addition, it is difficult to count specific groups such as undocumented migrants, EU migrants with no claim to social benefits, people with prolonged stay in institutions, or people sleeping with friends or families, also known as 'sofa surfers'.

People experiencing homelessness are literally a mobile population. It is therefore necessary, but methodologically complicated, to take into account the relevance of time and the duration of experiencing homelessness. Biographical studies on 'homeless careers' or 'paths through homelessness' therefore distinguish between those leading to only a relatively short single episode of homelessness (transitional or short-term homelessness), those involving successive, mostly relatively short periods of homelessness (episodic homelessness), and those where homelessness has been experienced without interruption for a longer period of time and usually one year or more (chronic homelessness).

As most research on homelessness departs from the services for homeless people or the 'supply side', many counting exercises suffer from a 'service paradox': the more services are available, the more people experiencing homelessness are registered and counted. As women and young people disproportionally rely on alternative solutions, such as living with friends or family, and use services less than older men, they are underrepresented in many surveys. This means that research on homelessness should also sufficiently take into account the 'demand side' or the dynamics of homelessness as seen and lived by the homeless themselves.[10]

[10] To some extent this has been done by some European Commission funded projects such as studies that aim to identify strengths and weaknesses of service providers from the perspective of the 'clients' (Goboardi et al., 2020).

Geographic coverage of data collection represents additional methodological challenges. Many counting exercises focus on urban centres and have no data for rural areas. As realities of homelessness in urban and rural areas differ fundamentally in terms of numbers, dynamics, and living experiences, it is not possible to simply make extrapolations from urban data to get a view on nation-wide realities.

Frequency and consistency of data collection is also often problematic. Data are often only collected once or irregularly. They are often partial, not comprehensive. They come from some service providers only, at best specific types of service users, in particular cities or regions, and, in voluntary counts, there are always services and people experiencing homelessness missing because they do not (want to) participate. It has to be noted, as we have done in the table in Appendix 1, that only a few European-wide data collection efforts rely on the original data they generate themselves. Most studies reproduce data or estimates that are collected by third parties.

Double counting is often a problem, and unique identifiers are sometimes rejected to protect the anonymity of the service users, though anonymised identifiers may be used.

A major challenge for the measurement of homelessness in quantitative terms is its correlation with existing policies. Very few studies have ventured into this which leaves an immense gap in our understanding of the effectiveness of strategies and policies. This was also one of the conclusions of the European Social Policy Network study of 2019 already referred to above. [11]

Finally, it has to be noted that most research and data available tell us something about the homelessness problem *an sich*, as an isolated phenomenon, and less in its relation and interaction with the wider community or society. In other words, we most of the time zoom-in on homelessness itself but could also zoom-out and shed light on important questions such as the attitude of the population in general toward people experiencing homelessness, the perceived reasons for homelessness, the

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11 The researchers found that integrated strategic responses to HHE are on the increase across the EU, although evidence of their effectiveness remains scarce. Very few countries have strong evidence-based mechanisms enabling the assessment of their strategies' implementation. There is evidence of a growing presence of housing-led services (e.g., Housing First) across Europe within an overall prevailing 'staircase model' of homelessness service provision, i.e., mostly aimed at making someone 'housing ready' by providing support and treatment. There is insufficient evidence to assess adequately the effectiveness of existing homelessness services in most of the 35 countries covered by the study. This is particularly striking for services representing the bulk of homelessness service provision across Europe such as emergency and temporary accommodation as well as day centers.

perceived risk of becoming homeless as a citizen, the willingness to support people experiencing homelessness, or the approval or disapproval of policy measures in the field of homelessness.[12]

What Can Be Achieved Before 2024?

Over the last decade, the EU has supported a number of projects aiming at better defining, measuring, and understanding homelessness at a European level, but there is a need to build a consensus on *what* should be measured, on *how* to measure it, and to *start actually measuring it*.

Monitoring framework

Progress should be made in developing a common monitoring framework on homelessness to enable common understanding, better comparison, and assessment of the extent of homelessness as well as policy responses and their impact across EU countries. The framework should be based on existing typologies, such as ETHOS Light, and take into account actual national and regional monitoring systems. The objective should be to agree on common definitions, but also on the best way to measure the different categories of homelessness. The framework should cover different collection methods such as point-in-time counts, surveys on past experience, and other sources (for instance, administrative data). The monitoring framework could include indicators on number and prevalence of homeless, incidence and flows as well as on policy levers. The monitoring framework could compile data from different sources (PP, EU-SILC, census, national sources, etc.) at a macro level.

The monitoring framework could be discussed within and agreed upon by the Indicator Sub-Group of the Social Protection Committee and by the Platform. It is important to base the framework on state-of-the-art research, as well as on a thorough mapping of the situation in Member States. Building upon existing initiatives at national, regional, or local level, the EU level framework could put forward a common approach, which could in return inspire national or local initiatives.

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12 Of the few attempts to look at these issues, we could mention the special Eurobarometer on Poverty and Exclusion that was published in 2007 (Edgar et.al., 2007) as well as a study that tries to understand how much inequality EU citizens accept regarding homelessness and how people with a lived experience of homelessness perceive opportunities, choices, and capability gains with the services and the existing social policies (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/726997).

In parallel, efforts can be undertaken to add sources to the framework and to provide data on the different forms of homelessness and on policies combatting homelessness. The following projects have the potential to fill in some of the gaps in the data collection. They are complementary, covering both past experiences of homelessness, as well as point-in-time counting.

Pilot Project on a European Homelessness Count

The European Parliament adopted a proposal for a Pilot Project on a European Homelessness Count in the 2022 Budget. This project will be one of the first concrete initiatives of the Platform.

The project has a budget of almost EUR 1 million. It aims at "stimulating regular collection of data on homelessness at local level" and "building on existing robust and effective methodologies, such as point-in-time counts, point of prevalence, and surveys". "The pilot project would promote a common methodology among interested local authorities and coordinate a common European homelessness count at the same moment/in the same period. The aim would be to repeat such count on a regular basis and expanding the number of cities participating over time. The results would inform local, national, and European authorities and policymakers about the evolution of the nature and scope of homelessness, and the different dimensions and profiles of homelessness." Complementary with Eurostat efforts will be ensured.

Forthcoming EU-SILC Module on Housing Difficulties and Homelessness

The available homelessness estimates do not capture the total number of people who may have experienced homelessness or extreme housing insecurity over the course of their lifetime.

The 2023 EU-SILC module on housing difficulties will collect data on past experience on homelessness and therefore on the incidence and prevalence of homelessness and housing difficulties over the life cycle. It will repeat questions that were tested in the 2018 Eurostat ad hoc module on "material deprivation, wellbeing and housing difficulties". Then, Eurostat found that around 4% of people had, over the course of their lifetime, temporarily stayed with friends or relatives; stayed in emergency or other temporary accommodation; stayed in a place not intended as a permanent home; or slept in a public space (Eurostat, 2020). The next EU-SILC module on housing difficulties will also collect data on the reasons why people entered into and left homelessness. The survey could allow to better understand the drivers of falling into and escaping from homelessness. The module is carried out every six years. The next survey will take place in 2023, allowing a publication of results in Spring 2024.

Agencies such as Eurofound or the Fundamental Rights Agency can also play a role. Their surveys can provide valuable information on dimensions of homelessness. This is the case for Eurofound's quality of life survey) and FRA's surveys on women's experiencing violence, on LGBT, on Roma, or data on asylum seekers and migration.

Conclusion

Better homelessness data should be a priority for Member States to assess and monitor homelessness trends. From the overview we can draw a number of lessons and conclusions. There have been numerous efforts in Europe and Member States to count or estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness. The COST Action has mapped the different methodologies and the methodological challenges. We can build upon the COST Action and many of the previous research and counting exercises mentioned before.

There is certainly a pressing need for more regular data collection. As the table in Appendix 1 shows, many studies bring together existing data and estimates (e.g., from FEANTSA or from national and local authorities) and do not generate own new data. The issues of uniformity in methodology or method-mix and consistency have also to be addressed. In particular, a common understanding of the phenomenon would need to be based on a common definition. ETHOS Light can be a guiding definition and measurement tool in this respect. The different forms of homelessness can be measured using different methodologies. Apart from counting, looking at the profiles of the people experiencing homelessness is also important. It helps to develop more sophisticated and varied policies to tackle the multiple problems the homeless are facing.

The forthcoming EU initiatives mentioned in this research note should provide more clarity, regularity, and comparability in the monitoring of homelessness at an EU level, allowing a common understanding of the issue at stake. They should also stimulate data collection on homelessness at the national level, but also at regional and local levels. City counting is important to mobilise local actors, local public opinion, and to develop focused local policies. When bringing together results and insights from local counting, it is possible to identify trends and recurrent problems and issues. To get a clear view on the national or European landscape of homelessness, it is important to combine different levels and methodologies of data collection, involving different sources and different stakeholders (data from local and/or national public services, data from NGOs, advanced research, etc.).

In addition, efforts to expand the methodological toolbox to collect data and investments in the integration of different data sources are needed. There are already interesting experiments and innovative approaches to link administrative and survey data. These should be pursued and promoted.

Appendix 1: Summary of the initiatives on the table:

Institution	Year	Expected results	Remarks
Census	2021	First time data on current homelessness	***Sources**: MS Administrative and/or existing survey data* Once every 10 years Different methodologies/comparability
JRC	2021	Amongst others: data on cities and smaller towns	***Sources:** existing data at city or town level*
Eurostat (EU-SILC)	2023	Life-time homeless experience Instrument to compare scope and nature of homelessness	***Sources**: Own survey* Once every 6 years Methodological sound/comparability Is not a proxy of current homelessness Useful for awareness raising
ISG	Yearly	Collecting and updating national data	***Sources**: No own data* Different methodologies In framework of semester
OECD		Housing database Comparison with non-EU countries	***Sources**: Data from own questionnaire collecting existing MS data plus FEANTSA-data* Different national methodologies
FEANTSA	Yearly	Profile data	***Sources**: Own research and members data* Thematic Network of national researchers Longitudinal data from service sector Comparability?
Pilot Project	2022-23	New data collection initiative	***Sources**: local data to be generated* Geographical coverage Micro => macro Feasibility
Other		Eurobarometer, Eurofound, F.R.Agency	

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Review Essays

Part D

Frustrated Bus Robbers, Liberal Cat-Lovers, and Keynesian Dentists: A Review of Three Books about US Homelessness

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Homelessness Is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns, by Gregg Colburn and Clayton Page Aldern

Homelessness in America: The History and Tragedy of an Intractable Social Problem, by Stephen Eide

San Fransicko: Why Progressives Ruin Cities, by Michael Shellenberger

In the 1970s, buses in Newark started getting robbed frequently. Robbers got on the buses, pulled a knife or a gun on the driver, and demanded that they hand over the cash they had collected from riders. Usually the drivers complied, and then the robbers hopped off the bus and vanished into the surrounding neighbourhood. This was a big problem.

Fortunately, the transit agency solved this problem after a few months. They stopped the drivers from keeping or even touching money. Lockboxes were welded to all the bus floors, and riders deposited their fares directly into the lockbox. If you wanted money, you had to steal the whole bus, and it's really hard to hide a bus in Newark. The robberies stopped.

I kept thinking about this incident when I was reading these three books. Mainly (because I was riding the buses then), I'm grateful that the bus robbery problem was not subjected to the sort of discussion we often have now, in the age of culture wars, as exemplified by these three books. If it had been, well-educated people would have saturated the discussion, assigning blame everywhere: on lenient judges, weak prosecutors, lazy cops, absent parents, elimination of prayer in schools, Michel Foucault, the end of the draft, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, inequality, capitalism, deregula-

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tion, low tariffs, the movement of factories to the South, and in general, the ideas of those of a different political persuasion. Nobody would have let the engineers weld lockboxes to the bus floors.

Each of these books has strong points. In all of them, for instance, the last chapter is sensible and interesting. They all have excellent bibliographies that have helped me find work that I had not known about. But to varying degrees they have all been infected by the culture wars virus.

Homelessness Is a Housing Problem, by Colburn and Aldern (CA)

For me, this book was the most comfortable of the three. It's got economics, it's got housing, and that's what I spend a lot of my time thinking about. The book uses a cross-section of point-in-time (PIT) count data by continuum of care (COC) from the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) and finds that housing market variables have higher simple correlations with homelessness than practically anything else, especially measures of pathology. This exercise is intended to convince policymakers and the general public of the proposition in the title.

It didn't convince me, because I believed something like that proposition already (more on this later), and I know that simple correlations have very weak implications; they're what you do in kindergarten. But simple is good, and CA are out to convince policymakers and the general public, not me, and so perhaps this approach is the best way to reach the intended audience. Or perhaps not.

The great strength of this book is its emphasis on aggregate data. Generally, when a policymaker asks about homelessness they really want to know about aggregates. Too often homelessness researchers respond with results about individuals. This disconnect, for instance, is the part of the current problem with Housing First in California and the Pacific Northwest. More on that below.

CA's policy recommendations generally agree with the consensus among US homelessness researchers. One small difficulty in this section is their uncritical acceptance of the wildly enthusiastic interpretation of the reduction in veterans' homelessness after several new programmes were launched in 2009. Many commenters like to believe that these programmes were responsible for almost all of that decline. As I showed in O'Flaherty (2019), this interpretation is implausible. During the eight years that followed that programme announcement, the number of veterans under age 65 declined precipitously as the huge Vietnam cohort, the last cohort of draftees, passed that age. Homelessness appears to be quite rare among Americans over 65, as many safety net benefits, and several veterans' benefits, kick in around 65. This demographic change appears to account for a large proportion, perhaps a majority, of the 2009-2017 decline in veteran homelessness.

My major difficulty with the book is the title and with the frequent references to housing as the root cause of the homelessness problem. Whenever I see the clauses "*x* is a *y* problem," or *"y* is the root cause of *x*," I know that the culture wars virus is around and mask up. The other two books are also replete with these clauses. Lockboxes would never have been welded to bus floors if the New Jersey transit agency had started thinking in these terms.

Almost any reasonably complex phenomenon has many (perhaps millions) of but-for causes (the only type of causes I know how to think about). The Newark buses, for instance, were being robbed because they carried US currency, because many firms accept US currency as a means of payment, because the bus drivers were unarmed, because some Newarkers had larceny in their hearts, because some of those Newarkers were not incarcerated, because there were lots of buses running, because deterrence was insufficient, because no earthquakes had shattered Newark and shut down the bus system, because Newark air had oxygen, and so on. Remove any of these but-for causes and robberies fall drastically. Nothing is a root cause; bus robbery is not any *x* problem. Arguing about these terms is fatuous.

There are generally two different reasons why we may want to draw particular attention to a small subset of causes, rather than all of them: the explanatory reason and the policy reason.

In explanatory investigations, we try to see whether variation in particular causes over a particular stretch of time or space matches variation in the *explanandum,* the effect we are studying. So, for instance, if we try to explain variation in bus robbery in Newark in the 20th century, we can dismiss severe earthquakes as an explanatory cause, because there happened to be no variation in severe earthquakes in Newark in that period. This does not mean that earthquakes could never be an explanatory cause (if we looked at San Francisco in the 20th century, we might find something different), only that in this particular time and place, earthquakes were not an explanatory cause.

In contrast, policy investigations are forward-looking rather than backward-looking, and involve costs and value judgments. The idea is to find the subset of but-for causes that can be manipulated to bring about the desired changes in the *explanandum* at lowest cost, all things considered. So, for instance, we might veto the idea of shutting down the entire bus system to reduce robberies because of its enormous cost, and so we would not consider the operation of the bus system as a policy cause.

Notice that good explanatory causes are not necessarily good policy causes, and vice versa. When the New Jersey transit agency was thinking about the rise in bus robberies, unwelded lockboxes was not an explanatory cause, but it was an excellent policy cause. This setting leads to a reasonably precise statement of the relationship as we know it now between housing and homelessness, without any appeal to "root causes."

First, housing market variables, especially measures of rent that people at the margin of homelessness might pay and variables correlated with this, explain a lot of the variation in measured homelessness in the US for the period since around 1975. In this time and place, housing variables are a decent explanatory cause, and we currently know few other variables about which this can be said.

Second, at this point, interventions and policies involving housing subsidies account for almost all the tools for which we have decent evidence of efficacy in reducing homelessness (see Evans et al. (2021) and O'Flaherty (2019) for details). Assertive Community Treatment and Critical Time Intervention have demonstrated some efficacy and don't necessarily involve housing subsidies directly, but they are difficult to scale without housing subsidies. That doesn't mean that no one will ever find an efficacious intervention that doesn't involve housing subsidies. The New Leaf Project in British Columbia, for instance, has some encouraging but preliminary results about unconditional cash transfers (Foundations for Social Change, 2022). But today, for the policy maker who wants something off the shelf to reduce homelessness, the only shelf that has been stocked is labelled "housing subsidies."

San Fransicko, by Shellenberger

While CA seem to have been infected with a mild case of culture wars that leads them to express accurate statements in sloppy ways, Shellenberger has a much more serious case. Somehow Foucault and Marx end up causing tent cities in San Francisco. An undefined group of people he calls progressives collude to make everything terrible—although, somehow, on their watch the Bay Area has become the richest large metropolitan area in the US, possibly the world. Reading this book is like being pummelled by a firehose squirting anecdotes, selective quotations, and misinterpretations[1] at you.

But if you ignore these distractions, the book has some interesting propositions. It denies that "housing is the root cause of homelessness," but as we have seen, this proposition is vacuous to begin with. More seriously, it argues that (1) mental illness and substance misuse are policy causes of homelessness in the sense that certain policies (mainly coercive) directed toward those conditions would reduce both homelessness and those conditions; and (2) these conditions are explanatory causes of homelessness in the US, and in San Francisco in particular. He sometimes seems to imply (3), aside from his recommended policies on mental illness and substance misuse, no other policies or interventions are likely to reduce homelessness substantially. I'm not sure how strongly Shellenberger asserts this last proposition (3), and since it's known to be false (see Evans et al, 2021 and O'Flaherty, 2019), it's not worth going into detail about.

Surely, homelessness is correlated with mental illness and substance misuse in California and elsewhere. The best recent study of severe mental illness in California is Caprara et al. (2022). They link records from Los Angeles outreach teams to medical records and find that 17% of unsheltered people had a diagnosis of severe mental illness in the previous five years. Of those, 7% had a diagnosis of a psychotic spectrum disorder (psychotic or delusional disorder, schizo-affective disorder, schizophrenia, schizotypal disorder, bipolar disorder with psychotic symptoms) and 10% had a diagnosis of another severe mental illness. These proportions are well above those observed in the general population, but below those often found with methods that rely on untrained or hasty observations.

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1 For instance, on pp.41-42, he writes, "And those who put many of the stricter drug laws into place did so because they were under pressure to protect African American communities suffering from violence associated with gang warfare over open-air crack markets. Notes Pfaff, 'when prosecutors weren't too concerned about drug crimes, they simply ignored the Rockefeller Drug laws…'" In the quoted passage, Pfaff (2017) was emphasising the discretion that prosecutors have in enforcing drug laws and did not state that it was concern for African American victims that made them start doing so. In general, Pfaff is somewhat cynical about prosecutors' motives, and two of his major proposals are toward raising the influence of urban voters in prosecutorial elections (pp.214-216). Similarly, Shellenberger (p.38) says, "Some long time Housing First advocates suggest the movement has become dogmatic," and goes on to quote Dennis Culhane. The Culhane quote looks like an attack on the qualifications and mind-set of Housing First advocates. In context, Culhane (2022) said that Housing First is highly successful for the majority of people, but that *we* shouldn't be ideological about it in the sense that for some groups of people some other programmes probably work better.

But for Shellenberger's first argument to work, this correlation has to be causal. The best studies—in fact the only serious work I'm aware of on this question—are several papers by Julie Moschion and Jan Van Ours (two of them are also co-authored with Duncan McVicar). These papers use a unique Australian data set, Journeys Home. Since the 1980s at least, researchers have debated how the individual-level association between homelessness and substance use and mental illness (SUMI) worked: did SUMI cause homelessness, or did homelessness cause SUMI? Since no data were around then to shed light on the issue, researchers just yelled at each other. Shellenberger continues this tradition by yelling loudly that SUMI causes homelessness (Eide yells the same thing, but less loudly).

Moschion and Van Ours don't have to yell because they have the right data. Journeys Home is a longitudinal data set that follows over a thousand extremely disadvantaged Australians for about three years in the early teens of this century. It has extremely rich covariates. With Journeys Home, Moschion and Van Ours and co-authors can observe people entering and leaving homelessness, as well as entering and leaving spells of intense SUMI.

In McVicar et al (2015) and Moschion and Van Ours (2015), they examine the relationship between homelessness (using various definitions), and substance use (illicit drugs, cannabis, and alcohol, together and separately). They ask two main questions: Are people who use particular substances more likely than people who do not to transition from non-homelessness to homelessness, holding everything else constant? And are people who are homeless more likely to transition from not using to using particular substances than people who are not, holding everything else constant? A "yes" answer to the first question is a necessary condition for substance use to lead to homelessness (as Shellenberger contends). A "yes" answer to the second question is a necessary condition for homelessness to lead to substance use (as some other authors have contended).

McVicar and Moschion and Van Ours answer no to both questions almost always – alcohol use may lead to a condition somewhat more general US sheltered homelessness, and a smaller though still significant rise in unsheltered homelessness. In general, neither causes the other, although people who tend to use substances tend to become homeless, and vice versa.[2]

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2 Two other papers find similar results with a longer time horizon. McVicar and Moschion and Van Ours (2019) find that only daily cannabis use by young men increases the risk of homelessness in the next decade or so—other substances have no effect for men, and none affect women. Moschion and Van Ours (2022) find that only depression among young people increases the likelihood of homelessness over a similar time span; anxiety disorders, bipolar, schizophrenia, and PTSD have no impact.

There is nothing strange about the relationship they found; it just never occurred to people who like to shout about homelessness. As an example of a relationship like the one McVicar and Moschion and Van Ours find, consider the positive correlation in the US between liberal political views and preferring cats to dogs as companion animals (e.g., Ivanski et al., 2021). Almost no one explains this correlation by arguing that one attitude causes the other. Instead, the correlation probably arises because some of the same things that predict preferring cat companionship (being female, living in a small apartment, not seeking predictability or hierarchy, for instance) also predict politically liberal attitudes in the US.

Using a US longitudinal data set, Geller and Curtis (2011) similarly find that substance use does not predict future homelessness in a data set of young urban non-residential fathers, once other controls are added (table 4).

Moschion and Van Ours (2021) applies approximately the same approach as their earlier paper to mental illness and finds a similar answer. Their measure of mental illness every six months is the respondent's answer to the question: "Have you been diagnosed with any of the following conditions by a doctor or a health professional, such as a psychologist or a psychiatrist since [date of last interview]?" The conditions were: depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar affective disorder, schizophrenia, and post-traumatic stress disorder. They found that depression increased transitions to precarious housing, but no condition led to homelessness in the US definition, and the US definition of homelessness led to no psychological condition.

These results are consistent with what randomised control trials (RCTs) generally find. If homelessness does not cause SUMI, then RCTs where the treatment is primarily provision of housing should not usually reduce SUMI. This is a good description of the average results in Housing First RCTs (see Kertesz and Johnson, 2017). If SUMI does not cause homelessness, then interventions that reduce only SUMI will not affect homelessness. This is a good description of the most common outcome of such RCTs (see Rosenheck, 2010; Evans et al., 2021).

To be sure, the Moschion and Van Ours results do not rule out the possibility of interventions that reduced homelessness at the same time that they reduced SUMI, even though we know few or none now. An intervention could do this if it ameliorated some condition that was causing both homelessness and SUMI. Such an intervention would be wonderful, but finding it would be hard, since we know very little about what conditions are responsible for the observed correlation between homelessness and SUMI.

By analogy, there probably are some conditions that both make people liberal politically and cat loving (Ivanski et al., 2021 have some tentative leads). Some of them may be easily malleable (others, such as gender, may not be). But we don't know what they are yet and producing an advertising campaign today that would simultaneously increase votes for liberal candidates and cat adoptions would be considered an extremely difficult task. Practical people usually don't try to do it. A person who was either trying to get liberal candidates elected or a person trying to get cats adopted would not turn to such a campaign as a first resort.

Thus, Shellenberger's first proposition about SUMI as a manipulable cause of homelessness is not likely to be true now or in the foreseeable future. It is not a proposition on which action could be based today.

What about the other proposition, that SUMI is an explanatory cause of homelessness? Shellenberger does not claim to have seen any serious study that shows variation in SUMI is significantly correlated with homelessness across COCs, or within COCs over time, and so it is hard to think of SUMI as an explanatory cause of homelessness. CA show a negative simple correlation between a measure of mental illness and homelessness on a state level, and a positive but tiny correlation with measures of drug use. Fargo et al. (2013), with a much larger multi-variable model, show a small and inconsistent relationship between substance use and homelessness, but use only 2009 PIT count data. Even large and significant positive correlations, of course, would not necessarily be causal. However, since SUMI is usually measured poorly, attenuation bias may affect both these studies, resulting in coefficients that are too close to zero.

So, the best that can be said for the explanatory proposition is that most of the evidence against it is pretty weak. On the other hand, no evidence at all supports it—even though it has been prominent in the media for more than 40 years. Such a proposition should not be the foundation of a long book.

Shellenberger, however, has another story: migration. Large numbers of homeless substance users and severely mentally ill people migrate to San Francisco, in Shellenberger's view, and this is what makes San Francisco's homeless population both large and troublesome.

What do we know about migration? First, net migration in the US either of people experiencing homelessness or people experiencing homelessness with SUMI problems has to add to zero, and so in-migration cannot account for homelessness everywhere. That means Shellenberger has to give up the pretence to generality in his subtitle, *Why Progressives Ruin Cities.* Second, even gross migration on average in the US is a small phenomenon among people experiencing homelessness. Meyer et al. (2021) used a nationally representative sample of sheltered people experiencing homelessness in the American Community Survey between 2011 and 2018 to estimate that 9% moved to a different state in the past year—this is gross migration, not net. Finally, local officials and residents often claim that homelessness in their locality is dominated by in-migrants and almost never say that their localities experience outmigration. It is impossible for all the local commentators to be right.

What about San Francisco, then? In the appendix (available in the Columbia University Academic Commons)[3], I look at what is actually known about San Francisco and the surrounding counties. The information is far from definitive, but it suggests quite strongly that net migration is not a major reason for San Francisco's disproportionately large homeless population.

So as a book about homelessness, *San Fransicko* goes nowhere. It does, however, have interesting things to say about mental illness and substance use—mental illness especially. These are serious problems that are associated with a great deal of pain and suffering (whether or not they have an explanatory or policy connection with homelessness), and that's why we should be concerned about them.

Homelessness in America, by Eide

Eide's *Homelessness in America,* on the other hand, is much more carefully argued, much more surprising, and much more willing to follow a line of reasoning to its logical conclusion. For readers of the *European Journal of Homelessness,* this is the book I recommend if you are going to read one of these three. You'll find a higher proportion of propositions you mainly agree with in CA, but these are things you mainly know already. I also recommend reading this book in reverse (by chapter, of course, not by letter). The last few chapters are crisp and clear; the first few are mired in culture wars.

The book's greatest strength is as a warning against hubris in homelessness research. We really don't know a lot of good, cheap strategies for reducing aggregate homelessness, and we do everyone a disservice by claiming that we do or acting as if we do. Keynes (2010 [1932], p.332) said something similar about economists about a century ago: "If economists could manage to get themselves thought of as humble, competent people on a level with dentists, that would be splendid!" Keynes sets the right standard for homelessness researchers, too. Eide shows how homelessness research should be humbler in several areas.

For instance, he does a good job in raising questions about assessment practices that try to maximise some aggregate characteristic (like homelessness reduction) when deciding who out of a group of eligible people will receive a benefit and who will not. These assessment practices are formally similar to the algorithms now common in criminal justice to decide questions like pretrial detention and parole.

3 https://doi.org/10.7916/3043-h542

For those algorithms, concerns have been raised about whether they contain proper safeguards to prevent racial or gender discrimination (see Yang and Dobbie, 2020, for instance). These concerns also apply to algorithms in the homeless assessment systems. Eide emphasises a broader set of safeguards that are needed—those of fairness. Fairness—part of which is non-discrimination—has taken a back seat to optimisation in many cases, and Eide is right to point out that it shouldn't. Durlauf (2006), Harcourt (2007), and several other authors have made similar points about profiling activities.

Eide also provides an important service by pointing out some problems with popular views of Housing First. On pages 57-58, for instance, he shows that claims that Housing First saves taxpayers money are weak, often relying on both the economic mistake of using average costs rather than marginal, and the philosophical mistake of leaving out benefits to participants and implicitly acting as if programmes for poor people are worthwhile only if they make rich people richer. He also points out the difficulties of believing that Housing First actually does reduce PIT counts. However, his allusion to the rise in homelessness in New York City between 2011 and 2016 is somewhat inappropriate, as this change was driven by a large reduction in the rate at which homeless families received subsidised housing (see, O'Flaherty, 2019).

The question of the effect of Housing First on PIT counts is an important one—since mayors and other policymakers are extremely interested in the PIT count—that has often been misunderstood. The evidence usually cited for Housing First is on the individual level; there has never been an RCT where communities were randomly chosen to implement Housing First and compared with communities randomly chosen not to implement Housing First.

At the moment, Corinth (2017) is the best study of the effect of Housing First, or something like it, on PIT homelessness. This is a panel regression study with AHAR data for period 2007-2014. He finds that on average 100 additional Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) beds reduce the PIT count by about 10, but the standard error of the estimate is large—anything between 0 and 20 is possible. The major problem with this estimate is that the independent variable is PSH, not Housing First. Many PSH beds are Housing First, but we don't really know whether the marginal PSH bed during this period adhered to Housing First protocols. But I think Corinth's range is plausible.[4]

4 Evans et al. (2019) use a shift-share instrument involving veteran population across continua-of-care to study the effect of award of HUD-VASH vouchers, but this instrument violates the exclusion criterion. Funding from several other programmes to combat veteran homelessness, especially Social Services for Veteran Families, is likely to be positively correlated with this instrument as well.

The plausibility is based on a close reading of two well-known RCTs: the HUD-VASH study of PSH (Rosenheck et al., 2003) and the At Home-Chez Soi (AHCS) study of Housing First (Goering et al., 2014). In both studies, the primary emphasis was on days housed—the proportion of days stably housed in AHCS, and simply the proportion of days housed in HUD-VASH. The proportion of days homeless, however, is not just the complement of days housed in either study: in both studies there is a third category, days institutionalised, and in AHCS there is a fourth, days temporarily housed. Table 1, from O'Flaherty 2022, shows the basic results of the two RCTs. AHCS, which was conducted in Canada, did not report days homeless directly; I put that number together using the US definition.

Table 1: Proportion of Days in Various Housing Statuses
Average days over length of the experiment

Status	Treatment	Control	Difference
	At Home/Chez Soi		
Emergency shelter	6%	16%	-10%
Street	3	8	-5
Subtotal, homeless (US)	9	24	-15
Temporarily housed	12	33	-21
Institutions	9	11	-2
Stably housed	73	32	+41
	HUD-VASH experiment		
Homeless	14.5%	22.7%	-8.2%
Institutions	19.2	24.0	-4.8
Housed	66.0	52.9	+13.1

Notes: At Home/Chez Soi. Derived from text in Goering et al. (2014) on p.17 (days stably housed) and p.18 (days not stably housed). The sum of the categories for the treatment group is only 97%; the text does not explain why. This includes both treatment arms (Assertive Community Treatment and Intensive Case Management), and all five sites. It covers all days for 24 months of the intervention.

HUD-VASH experiment. Derived from table 2 (p.945) in Rosenheck et al. (2003). "Treatment" is considered "Group 1: HUD-VASH" and "control" is "Group 3: Standard Care." The original table reports average days out of 90; I divided by 0.9 to get percentages. In the original table, both groups in fact sum to 89.69 instead of 90. Participants were interviewed at six months, one year, 18 months, two years, and three years, and asked about housing in the previous 90 days. Numbers in table are averages over all these interviews. "Homeless" category in includes sleeping in "a substandard single-room occupancy hotel" (p.942).

Both RCTs show robust increases in days housed, and AHCS shows an almost spectacular increase in days stably housed. This is very impressive and is a solid reason to believe that Housing First helps its participants. But the decrease in proportion of days homeless—15% for AHCS and 8% for HUD-VASH—is well less than 100%. A decrease of 100%, of course, would be impossible, because the control group was homeless only 24% of the time in AHCS and 22.7% of the time in HUD-VASH. To a first approximation, if actual programmes operated precisely like these RCTs, we would be looking for a decrease on average of eight to 15 for each 100 Housing First or PSH beds.

But actual programmes do not operate like RCTs. Participants start at various times, and when a participant leaves a new one usually replaces them. The homelessness-reducing effect of a Housing First bed depends on the length of time its occupant has been in the programme, and so the average reduction depends on the length of time the average participant has been in the programme. I experimented with various scenarios of programme expansions and exit rates and found that most of them resulted in the average participant being in the programme a length of time that was more homelessness-reducing than the average length of time recorded in the RCTs. Most of the values for the average PIT count reduction for 100 beds end up being in the range of 10 to 20 in these scenarios. That is why I find the Corinth results plausible—their overlap with the range that RCTs would lead you to expect to see (O'Flaherty, 2022).

There are two reactions to this conclusion. The first is the one that Eide would emphasise: as humble competent dentists, homelessness researchers should be modest about what we claim. A hundred PSH beds will reduce the PIT count by 10 or maybe 20 if all goes well over the next few years; it will not remove 100 people from the streets. Over-promising is dangerous.

The second reaction is one that Eide misses. There isn't much that is better than this, as far as we know (see, Ellen and O'Flaherty, 2010, p.12, note 3 and Corinth, 2017, p.79). The responsible policy at this time is to rely heavily on Housing First—not because it's spectacular at reducing the PIT count, but because nothing else is better.

To be sure, Eide seems to recognise this (p.63):

> Resistance to Housing First can tempt people into promoting mediocre programs or programs they know very little about… Any temporary intervention risks seeing its gains diminish over time. That goes double for the hardest cases. Even well-run programs will often fail. Programs that do succeed often do so based on certain conditions, which limit the ability to scale them.… We should explore alternatives to Housing First—it does not enjoy the funding or the reputation it now enjoys—while also being humble about what to expect from them.

I agree with most of this (except for the word "funding"). But what is supposed to happen while this long exploration is going on? Competent dentists don't tell patients to go away and come back in a decade in the hope that better treatments will be discovered.

Eide also does a useful service in pointing out that moral hazard permeates many programmes and policies for homelessness, and that moral hazard is costly. Promising housing subsidies to people experiencing homelessness can encourage people to enter homelessness or discourage them from leaving it, Housing Choice vouchers can discourage people from working or sharing households, clean needles can encourage substance misuse, and so on. Advocates sometimes act as if these possibilities are not real, and Eide is correct to say that they are real.

Moral hazard, however, is like COVID: although it's everywhere and cannot be ignored, the sensible reaction to its presence is not to despair, but to measure, mitigate, and turn to science to figure out how to deal with it.

Consider structure fires, for instance. For most American households and businesses, a structure fire will trigger a generous pay-out from their fire insurance company, and a speedy and free response by their local fire department. The latter is in fact an entitlement in most cities. Moral hazard is obviously present: people take fewer precautions than they would if they had to bear the full cost of their careless activities (again I failed this year to check the batteries on my smoke detectors during fire prevention week).

Yet by and large, Americans have not given up on fire insurance and fire departments, and households and businesses continue to use structures that might burn. The chief policy responses to the dangers of structure fires have been fire codes and the chief private response has been more fire resistant (and expensive) building materials and techniques (the two responses have complemented each other as the possibility of code upgrades probably spurred investment in fire resistance research). The result has been a large decrease in per capita structure fires and deaths from structure fires in the last century or so, and general contentment with the current system. There is no great demand that households and businesses bear more of the costs of their carelessness. I'm not sure the current system is optimal, but I doubt that it's terrible.

Sometimes people have just decided to accept moral hazard without doing much about it. Medical care is an example. Medical care has been replete with moral hazard for centuries but seems not to have found it a large enough problem to require much action in most cases. In an article about ringside doctors at Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) contests and their concerns about facilitating bad behaviour, one doctor, an emergency specialist, compared ringside physicians to pulmonologists who take care of smokers even though they disapprove of smoking, and noted, "We're ER docs. We would have nothing to do all day if it wasn't for bad behavior" (Whang, 2022).

In contrast, corporations face a great deal of moral hazard, too, but great efforts have been made to mitigate it. The corporate form of business organisation presents large opportunities for moral hazard, particularly from limited liability and the separation of ownership and control. Adam Smith (2007 [1776], book V, chapter 1, part III, article 1) was convinced that joint-stock companies (what we now call public corporations) were horrible organisations that should almost never be used:

> This total exemption from trouble and from risk, beyond a limited sum, encourages many people to become adventurers in joint stock companies, who would, upon no account, hazard their fortunes in a private co-partnery. Such companies, therefore, commonly draw to themselves much greater stocks than any private co-partnery can boast of…. The directors of such companies,… , being the managers of other people's money than of their own, it cannot well be expected that they should watch over it with the same anxious vigilance with which the partners in a private co-partnery frequently watch over their own. Like the stewards of a rich man, they are apt to consider attention to small matters as not for their master's honor, and very easily give themselves a dispensation from having it. Negligence and profusion, therefore, must always prevail, more or less, in the management of the affairs of such a company.

That negligence and profusion don't always prevail in the management of today's huge joint stock companies in developed countries is probably due to the invention of many ways to combat moral hazard—auditing, chancery courts, and investor protection agencies, for instance. This has taken many years and large investments. Even today, a significant proportion of the research in business schools and law schools is devoted to moral hazard in corporations. People didn't throw up their hands when they realised that joint stock companies come with moral hazard.

Nor should people throw up their hands at the realisation that dealing with homelessness involves moral hazard. The first step is measurement—which occasions of moral hazard are big, and which are small. With Housing Choice Vouchers, for instance, it appears that the work disincentive effects are pretty small, and the household-sharing disincentives are pretty big. In the Welfare-to-Work Voucher Experiment, a large experiment in the early 20th century, a hundred vouchers to welfare (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and welfare-eligible families reduced employment by three or four in the first 18 months, and close to nothing after that (Mills et al., 2006, p.99, exhibit 4.8, TOT), but also reduced the number of families that experienced homelessness in a year by about nine (p.139, exhibit 5.3). That might be worth it. But the same hundred vouchers also reduced the number of multi-generational families by about 20 (p.76, exhibit 3.10). All of these effects are likely to depend on the particular structure and rules of the US Housing Choice Voucher programme, which is quite different from anything in Europe or Oceania. The programme could (and probably should) be redesigned to reduce moral hazard, especially in sharing of houses.

Offsetting these three great strengths, the book has three drawbacks, one of which I think I understand now.

The first drawback is Eide's tendency to write gratuitous anti-woke comments for which he has no evidence, and which do nothing to advance his arguments. As an example (p.116): "Homelessness policymakers minimise the mental health dimension of homelessness so as to avoid qualifying the idea of homelessness as a housing problem and, thereby, undermine support for more subsidised housing." No citation.

I don't see how Eide could have obtained this knowledge. I've spent a lot of time with homelessness policymakers—probably a lot more than Eide has—and I really don't know what makes them tick. The proposition is not necessary for his argument; the motivations of people he disagrees with are irrelevant to whether he is right or not. And it hurts his ability to convince people who believe something different (or are homelessness policymakers). [5]

The good news about this drawback is that you don't have to let it annoy you: just tell yourself that Eide conceives of his audience as conservative and has to throw them some red meat every once in a while to make sure they remember he's on their team. I don't know whether that's true or not (I'm not going to do what I just criticised Eide for doing). But if you keep telling yourself that that might be his motive, you can ignore the snippets and appreciate the book.

The second drawback is Eide's misunderstanding of deinstitutionalisation, especially in the 1970s. His approach is too narrow in some ways, and too broad in others. It is too narrow in paying attention only to mental hospitals, while mentally ill people are also institutionalised in nursing homes, prisons, and jails. It is too broad in that it includes elderly people, who are at little danger of homelessness. If you correct for both shortcomings, you find that the working age (18-64) population of institutionalised mentally ill people in the US rose from about 350000 in 1975 to over 400000 in 1983 and rose a little more to 1990 (see O'Flaherty, 1996, chapter 12). These numbers are standardised to the 1990 population. If you don't correct for population growth, the increase would be bigger. In short, deinstitutionalisation of working age mentally ill people was over by around 1975; homelessness in the US first rose at the same time that the institutionalised mentally ill population was rising faster than population.

Eide's figures hide this by using the 1970-1980 decade instead of cutting at 1975 and including the elderly. The decrease in mental hospital population in the 1970s appears to be disproportionately elderly. For instance, in New York State, the elderly accounted for 55% of the total reduction of the mental health population

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5 Another similar example is the adjective "legacy" attached to Catholic Worker houses on p.51. When Dorothy Day died in 1980 there were about 100 Catholic Worker houses. About 60-70 of them appear to have gone under (McKanan, 2008). But the 2022 directory of communities (https://www.catholicworker.org/communities/directory-picker.html) lists 187. The Catholic Worker seems to be doing better than the Catholic Church.

between 1973 and 1990, even though they accounted for only 46% of the 1973 population (for details and sources, see O'Flaherty, 1996, chapter 12 and appendix). Deinstitutionalisation is as much of a myth about this period as Ronald Reagan.

The final drawback is Eide's insistence that homelessness as currently defined in the US is either a "somewhat artificial" (p.1) or "artificial" (p.150) concept. How can it make sense, he argues (p.4) to attach the same term to "[s]omeone evicted due to a short-term bout with unemployment, [a] thirty-year-old man with schizophrenia who has lived on the streets almost his whole adult life[,] [a] young man, who, on a lark, moved to the streets of San Francisco and has a family in the Midwest who would willingly take him back[,] [a] single mother living in a welfare hotel with two children"?

The objection misses a fundamental principle of modern science: all concepts are artificial (except possibly atomic numbers and some other concepts in physics). The philosopher of science Philip S. Kitcher writes (2007, p.299):

> I find it hard to envisage nature as prescribing the forms our language should take, as coming nicely organized with fence-posts that our concepts must respect… We make conceptual progress by devising concepts that prove useful for us, with our particular capacities and limitations, to deploy in answering the questions that matter to us, and we should recognize that those questions are historically contingent and culturally variable.… {T]here is a nondenumeerable infinity of possible accurate maps we could draw for our planet, and the boundaries they introduce depend on our evolving purposes.

Thus, the four individuals that Eide describes have the same word attached to them if they all lack access to certain capabilities in the ETHOS typology. Similarly, if all of them had a cavity in the lateral incisor of the upper jaw a dentist would find it useful to group them together by that characteristic. Both groupings are "artificial," like every other grouping science uses (with a few exceptions).

Eide also seems offended by the fact that we use the word "homeless" in a way different from the way it was used in 1960. But we use the words "icon," "telephone," and "marriage" in considerably different ways from those of 1960. Back then, only monks and prisoners had cell numbers and Pluto was considered a planet. When the world changes, the taxonomies that are useful change and so do our words.

Eide's essentialism has consequences for his arguments, which are sometimes led astray by it. Thus, when speaking about Housing First he wants us to believe that it's horrible when (p.52):

> A program that shows no promise whatsoever at addressing behavioral and unemployment challenges will keep being funded as long as it's hitting its housing metrics. Excellence in homeless services consists of keeping as many people stably housed for as long as possible.

If those researching homelessness are following Keynes' advice and striving to be like competent dentists, this description of a horrible programme would read:

> A program that shows no promise whatsoever at addressing behavioral and unemployment challenges will keep being funded as long as it's hitting its *dental* metrics. Excellence in *dental* services consists of keeping as many people *with well-functioning teeth and gums* for as long as possible.

Phrased in these terms, what Eide decries makes perfectly good sense. No one would object to it; this is what we in fact expect from dentistry. No one should object to the same statement about homeless services, *mutatis mutandis.*

Conclusion

While Eide is incorrect in asserting that the current concept of homelessness is illegitimate because it is artificial or different from the 1960s usage, proponents of the term still need to defend it by showing that it's useful.

In a scientific sense, that has been obvious for at least a decade or so, as old questions have been tentatively resolved, new questions have been presented, new data sets have been developed, new methods have been employed, and new scholars—both already established and not—have turned their attention to the field. Those who are mired in 20th century culture wars are missing the excitement. The case can also be made—much more tentatively, of course—that the research that has relied on this concept has inspired reforms and innovations that have improved people's lives (although not necessarily as much as has sometimes been claimed). Finland has almost ended homelessness (Allen et al., 2020) and most of the US experienced a long decline in homelessness before the pandemic. Innovations like Housing First and 100 000 Homes appeared to have made an impact (Leopold and Ho, 2015), and US veterans' homelessness has probably declined, even correcting for demographic change.

Modern homelessness research was born amid the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. The wars have always been present. But we shouldn't be obsessed by them.

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Housing and Homelessness in Ireland

Joe Finnerty

Housing Shock, by Rory Hearne (2020). Policy Press: Bristol, pp.302. £23.99.

Gaffs, by Rory Hearne (2020). HarperCollinsIreland: Dublin, pp.352. €18.95.

Housing systems in many countries have become increasingly dysfunctional, with accommodation often precarious or unattainable for newly-forming and middle-to-low income households. In these two books, Rory Hearne sets out to describe and explain the emergence of the current domophobic housing system in the Republic of Ireland, and to point the way towards a domophilic transition (in the terminology of Finnerty and O'Connell, 2021).

Housing Shock and *Gaffs* provide vivid descriptions of the contours of Ireland's current housing crisis: homelessness, unaffordability and unavailability of homes, and poor quality of housing. The explanations of housing dysfunctionality centre on the role of neoliberalism (both marketisation and financialisation). Also common to both volumes is a passionate and engagingly expressed case for the centrality of housing for personal and societal well-being, and for the urgent need for change to the prevailing arrangements for providing this social good.

The principal difference between the books is that *Housing Shock* is more conventionally scholarly (albeit with chapters on the role of the academic in social change and on housing activism), while in *Gaffs* the addressees are young people directly experiencing the housing crisis. *Gaffs* is effectively a popular restatement of *Housing Shock*'s arguments, as is apparent from its snappy, colloquial title, absence of the 'scholarly' apparatus of footnotes, bibliography, and index, and from Hearne directly addressing the reader as 'you'.

Hearne identifies three factors in the Irish housing crisis: the decline in social and affordable housing new build; the aftermath of the residential property crash from 2010 in the form of mortgage arrears and collapse of employment in the construction sector; and the courting of corporate residential investment by successive governments after the crash. This courtship of institutional investors is explained in the context of governments deliberately wishing to inflate house prices and rents, as part of a strategy for banking stability and economic recovery.

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Hearne's proposed solution to the current dysfunctional housing system is a 'Green New Deal for Housing', whose central pillar is the construction of 300,00 cost-rental housing units (public rental housing supplied by public or private not-for-profit landlords), along the lines of 'the Vienna model', and funded by loans from sources such as Ireland's Housing Finance Agency and the European Investment Bank. The closing chapters of both books provide a rousing call to arms for a radical tenure restructuring involving the ambitious development of this cost-rental model. He aims to change the discourse on housing – "to put the heart back into home" (*Gaffs*, p.3) so that its use-value rather than its exchange value becomes paramount.

A potential downside of any politically-committed text is that some nuance may be sacrificed. For example, despite the acknowledgement that housing is a very complex issue (*Housing Shock*, p.11) and that there are differing explanations for the crisis, the only alternative explanation mentioned is 'the free market view', a perspective not systematically engaged with throughout either book.

A point deserving further consideration is the importance of institutional investors, "faceless piles of global cash" in Hearne's striking phrase (*Gaffs*, p.10). One aspect of this is whether their business model is inherently about "sweating their asset – you, Generation Rent" (*Gaffs*, p.9) and of 'maximising return' (*Housing Shock*, chapter 7). The second aspect is the extent of the impact of these corporate investors, relative to smaller private landlords. While corporate landlords are having a major impact in relation to the supply/purchase of new apartments in the main urban centres, small to medium size landlords still dominate the Irish private rented sector. The danger here is of throwing out the small landlord baby with the corporate landlord bathwater, especially given the current exit of many of the former. The important role of the private rented sector in providing exits from homelessness in the last decade likewise deserves greater examination (O'Sullivan, 2020). Furthermore, the significant progress, despite important loopholes, toward much greater security of tenure in the private rented sector, with most recently the introduction of tenancies of indefinite duration, is insufficiently reflected in the discussion.

In relation to homelessness, the extent to which values of care and social justice do in fact animate some politicians and public servants, as well as NGOs in providing services such as Family Hubs, is worth further exploration (Finnerty et al., 2021).

Housing Shock and *Gaffs* are impressive works of synthesis by a public intellectual which deserve to find a wide audience, particularly amongst the latter's Generation Rent addressees. The late EO Wright remarked, apropos Antonio Gramsci's dictum that progressive forces need pessimism of the intellect but optimism of the will, that they also need at least a little optimism of the intellect to sustain the optimism of the will. These books supply grounds for both kinds of optimism.

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Book Review

Part F

European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Van Heerden, S., Proietti, P., Iodice, S. (2022)

Homelessness in EU Cities and Towns Before and During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Main Challenges and Ways Forward

Publications Office of the European Union

Measuring homelessness in and of itself presents a significant challenge. Measuring it in a comparable way adds to this challenge in many ways. First, the challenge begins with using a common definition of who is homeless – what categories are included, are we actually talking about people sleeping on the street, users of shelters, those in position of hidden homelessness, or also those in precarious housing conditions? Of course, the way we define the subject of our research has a significant impact on the results we obtain. As such, several authors have emphasised that what is considered to be homelessness is often based on very narrow or biased definitions that exclude a significant portion of this population, and result in a specific profile and characteristic of the homeless (see for example O'Sullivan, 2020; O'Sullivan et al., 2020; Pleace, 2016; Fitzgerald et al., 2001). The next step is to determine how to measure the selected categories, using either existing administrative data (e.g., from shelters), or different types of counts and surveys. These different methods can in turn affect the result of what can be counted, how reliable these counts are, and also how comparable they are. Despite these challenges, there is an urgent need to count the homeless population so that policymakers can build on a solid base of data and knowledge about this social problem. In this context, the comparative dimension also plays an important role, the ability to measure the phenomenon comparatively is the basis for learning from others and comparing the success of different policies applied in Europe. The report on *Homelessness in EU Cities and Towns Before and During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Main Challenges and Ways Forward* can be seen as one relevant endeavour in this sense, and therefore has a particular value in its promotion of the comparative measurement of homelessness agenda at the European level.

The report presents a study summarising the results of a survey conducted among a sample of European cities and towns, composed of 133 local administrations across 16 EU Member States. The adapted classification ETHOS light was used as the basis for the definition of homelessness, demonstrating the relevance and applicability of this commonly adopted definition. Nevertheless, the survey refers to the homeless mainly in terms of "people with no fixed address", as this was the predominant definition used within the observed municipalities (88%) (p. 16), indicating the prevalent use of a still relatively narrow approach to people experiencing homelessness at the administrative level in several EU countries.

In the Definition and Primary Data Collection chapter, the authors point out some of the challenges in measuring homelessness, and then in the next chapter describe the empirical strategy and data collection used in this report. Data for the study were collected through an online survey of municipalities in the EU. The survey conducted in 2021 covered the topics of data on homelessness; existence of strategies and policies to address homelessness; changes during the Covid-19 pandemic; and the availability and conditions within public/social housing in the municipality.

The results section of the report presents the proportions of the homeless population that range from zero to 0.95%. The results are also analysed by city size, which, as the report's authors describe, "allows for the detection of possible differences in terms of homeless people, profiles, trends and policies between cities" (p.1). This is a laudable effort, but it may not accomplish what it sets out to do. As the sample itself does not allow us to draw firm conclusions because we have to consider the large national differences that go beyond differences in city size, differences in definitions and measurement methods, and sample bias, as most of the small cities in the sample come mainly from two countries – Italy and Portugal. The authors are aware of this shortcoming and point out that number and geographical scope of the response cannot be considered representative of the situation of the homeless in Europe; however, these limitations could be stressed even more, as they hinder a reliable comparison by the city size. The same issues also make it difficult to compare the profile of people experiencing homelessness in different cities and towns and to assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on homelessness trends.

One of important findings of the report is that all large metropolitan areas and medium sized urban areas included in the survey have specific strategies in place to address homelessness, indicating a very positive policy trend. Not surprisingly, the share is much lower in smaller towns, where a quarter of them have adopted specific strategies. Moreover, the report also points to the relevance of housing led strategies, as "about a quarter of the cities that have a policy in place, implemented housing first or housing led approaches" (p 4). On the other hand, the report also highlights the structural problem of low housing supply of affordable housing in the overview of social housing accessibility in the surveyed municipalities, as the average waiting time for social housing was three to four years, and even more than 10 years in six cities.

Despite its drawbacks in providing a comparative picture according to the size of cities, the relevance of the report is that it approaches the measurement of homelessness in a comparative manner, and also points to an important additional dimension within the cross-national comparison, namely the size of cities. Thus, the relevance lies in the comparative perspective that is brought forward, and the overview of differences in definitions and policy approaches in studied cities. But these strengths, on the other hand, are also the weaknesses, as the report illustrates well the difficulty and challenges that arise in comparative research on homelessness, both across countries and in terms of city size, and the enormous difficulties encountered in making such comparisons. Thus, we can only support the authors' call made in the concluding section of the report, in which they emphasise that there is a strong need for better data to provide the basis for better policies and greater awareness of the extent of the phenomenon among local communities.

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European Observatory on Homelessness

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

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