

Seminar 13: Impact of Data on Policy Design I (Room: 00.14)

Chairs: **Matthias Drilling, Zsolt Temesvary, Jörg Dittmann, CH**

Jan de Vries, NL: Impact on policy: advocacy by organisations representing the interests of people experiencing homelessness



Jan de Vries has worked, for almost 20 years, in the field of human rights and advocacy in various positions. He has practical experience and theoretical understanding of advocacy and human rights, having developed and implemented, trained and advised on, advocacy strategies and human rights. For 7 years now he has been working on the right to housing and homelessness in The Netherlands. He is a board member of Bureau Straatjurist (paralegal support for homeless persons in Amsterdam) and a steering group member of the Straatalliantie (cooperation between organisations in Amsterdam). He currently provides advice on advocacy and advocacy strategies to civil society organisations. In the past few years he did research on advocacy on homelessness in The Netherlands.

Structural positive impact on policies and legislation for people experiencing (risk of) homelessness can be achieved through effective advocacy by organisations representing the interests of people experiencing (risk of) homelessness. This was the motivation for undertaking research in 2020-2021 on advocacy by civil society organisations on homelessness in The Netherlands. Applying a case study method, literature review and 29 interviews, 5 main barriers for effective advocacy by civil society organisations working on homelessness were identified: barriers within organisations; limited role of rights holders; structural lack of cooperation on advocacy; finances and financial relationship with municipalities; co-optation by the State through the “Poldermodel”.

During the research a private foundation working on youth homelessness showed interest in the results of the research as they were changing their funding strategy focusing more on advocacy. They proceeded by funding part of the research. Besides writing recommendations for civil society organisations, the research also included recommendations explicitly for funders of advocacy initiatives (State and private foundations). Following the research, I was asked, as an advocate, to support several organisations to increase their capacity to undertake advocacy.

The research proved relevant in the Dutch civil society and political context on homelessness. It contributed to, or accelerated, positive changes in the field of advocacy of organisations representing the interests of people experiencing (risk of) homelessness. The presentation will focus on developments since the research was published highlighting the impact of these positive changes on policies at municipal and national level. While there are positive developments, serious challenges remain. These will also be highlighted during the presentation, as well as their impact on the capacity to undertake effective advocacy on (risk) of homelessness.

Dennis Culhane, USA: Sustaining Commitments to Innovation and Implementation



Dennis Culhane is the Dana and Andrew Stone Professor of Social Policy at the School of Social Policy and Practice at The University of Pennsylvania. Culhane is a nationally recognised social science researcher with primary expertise in the field of homelessness. From July 2009 – June 2018 he served as Director of Research at the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans, an initiative of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He is a leader in the integration of administrative data for research and directs Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP), an initiative that promotes the development of integrated data systems by state and local governments for policy analysis and systems reform.

His homelessness work has positioned him as an early innovator in the use of administrative data for research and policy analysis, particularly for populations and program impacts that are difficult to assess and track.

Culhane's work has resulted in federal legislation requiring all cities and states to develop administrative data systems for tracking homeless services in order to receive HUD funding. His work has also been instrumental in a national shift in how cities address chronic homelessness and family homelessness. Culhane's current research utilises linked administrative data to better understand and respond to the emerging crisis of ageing homelessness, and was featured in the New York Times Magazine article, "Elderly and Homeless: America's Next Housing Crisis."

When engaging in planning and evaluation research projects with public officials it is important to consider the constraints of public officials. Commissioned projects tend to get the most attention and traction, as the projects were generated at the behest of officials. Planning projects that are funded by foundations or initiated outside of the official channels are much more challenging to get implemented. Often, policy reforms or pilot projects require the commitment and redirection of existing public funds which is a major barrier to implementation. Foundations are useful for funding projects initially, but unless they are adopted by public officials they tend not to be sustained. Officials often have to sustain funding commitments for NGOs, whether or not they are effective. New projects therefore must rely upon the incremental increase in public funds for which there is significant competition. In this presentation, I will discuss several projects in a single jurisdiction and some of the challenges associated with implementation.

Response by **Freek Spinnewijn, BE**