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Journal Philosophy

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

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Editorial

The challenges in ending homelessness across all member states of the European Union remain considerable, and in many cases, existing challenges were exacerbated by the economic crisis. Nonetheless, an increasing number of member states have devised and implemented strategies that formally aim to end or substantially reduce homelessness, with many of the strategies adopting a housing led, or at least elements of a housing led approach. In this edition of the *European Journal of Homelessness (EJH)*, Lux provides a detailed analysis of the evolution of the Czech homelessness strategy, its strengths and weaknesses. As is the case in many other member states, a key structural constraint in the Czech context is the limited supply of social housing. This allied to high rents in the private sector limit the options available for those attempting to exit homelessness, and push many into homelessness.

In this context of limited affordable housing options across the European Union, Hegedüs and colleagues provide a detailed overview of efforts to address these structural housing market constraints, by exploring the role of Social Rental Agencies (SRAs) in 'socialising' the private rented sector in a number of member states, with a particular focus on Hungary. They conclude that the private rented sector, via SRAs, has the potential to enhance the supply of affordable rental housing. A detailed case study of the operation of a SRA in a city in Ireland is outlined by Lalor, who argues that SRA's could potentially add to the stock of private rented accommodation for homeless households, and provide value for money.

Securing affordable housing for homeless households is a key component of any homelessness strategy, but equally important is ensuring that those households that secure affordable housing, retain that accommodation. Gerull's exploration of evictions in 14 member states notes that member states with advanced homeless strategies do not necessarily have strategies to prevent homelessness from evictions. Research on the prevention of homelessness has become increasingly sophisticated in recent years and Maher and Allen provide a state of the art overview of these debates by exploring a homelessness prevention strategy in Ireland. They and others, while welcoming very specific targeted measures that can prevent homelessness, ultimately conclude that homelessness prevention strategies must start with the adequate provision of affordable housing. In addition, the development of effective preventative policies is dependent on robust and reliable research, and the increasing deployment of longitudinal, rather than cross-sectional, research

in homelessness research has facilitated a greater understanding of the dynamics of homelessness. Williamson and colleagues in their paper highlight the ethical, practical and methodological challenges involved in tracking a group of homeless women over a two-year period.

The importance of housing in ending homelessness, while seemingly self-evident, was not and is not always the primary response to homelessness, despite the increasingly robust evidence base for housing led approaches that have been reported in previous editions of the *EJH*. In a further contribution to this discussion, Gaetz argues that a housing led approach is applicable, not only to homeless adults, but to young people as well. Acknowledging that such an approach for young people need to adapt the model and incorporate what we know about the developmental needs of adolescents and young adults, Gaetz nonetheless argues that Housing First models for young people should be seen as an important component in ending their homelessness.

A mantra in many member states is that policies at national and local level should shift from an emphasis on managing homelessness, to ending homelessness. Nonetheless, despite the development of national strategies, at a local level managing homelessness, or more specifically, managing the siting of homeless services is problematic. Karsten provides an assessment of the siting policies in the Netherlands, where a number of new facilities were deemed to be required for homeless people and how the siting policies were determined by what are termed 'fair share policies.'

The varying levels and types of services for homeless people across the European Union are reflected in our special section on the Baltic States, where service provision remains relatively rudimentary. The Editorial Team hope that these contributions will spark a debate on the responses to homelessness in these member states. Defining homelessness, and particularly the utility of the ETHOS definition of homelessness, is one area where a vibrant and productive debate is on going, and García and Brändle in their contribution argue for an extension of the indicators of homelessness and housing exclusion utilised in ETHOS.

This edition of the *EJH* also contains a number of 'response pieces' to contributions on *EJH 7(2),* in addition to a range of book reviews on aspects of homelessness in Europe, with a particular focus on reviewing books and reports, not published in English. As ever, the Editorial Team hope that the diverse readership of the *EJH* find the contributions informative, provocative and stimulating, and we welcome feedback on any aspect of the Journal.

Articles
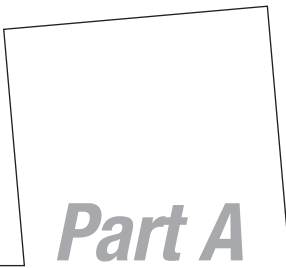
Part A

Are 'Fair Share' Policies Fair to the Homeless? A Critical Assessment of Distributive Siting Policies in the Netherlands

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› **Abstract_** *Policymakers' fears of an increased concentration of marginalised and disadvantaged groups in already vulnerable urban neighbourhoods have prompted recent measures to combat the spatial concentration of human service facilities. In many cities, distributive siting policies have aimed to achieve a more equal distribution of homelessness facilities across areas. This article provides a critical assessment of the 'fair share' criteria that are in use in Dutch siting policies. It brings to the surface the normative and political nature of these criteria that often remains implicit in such policies. The research shows that policy is dominated by discourse focusing on the potentially negative effects these facilities may have on surrounding neighbourhoods in terms of safety and security. As a consequence, the perspective of homeless people is in danger of being overlooked by policymakers, risking a reduced accessibility to service facilities. This article develops an analytical framework that can be used to study fair share siting policies, and provides policymakers with guidelines for assessing where services should be located.*

› **Keywords_** *Fair share, urban planning, service facility siting, social mix, NIMBY, homeless shelters*

Introduction: Spatial Concentration of Homelessness Facilities[1]

Studies show that service facilities for homeless and other marginalised and disadvantaged people are often established in deprived urban neighbourhoods (Gaber, 1996; Wolch, 1996; Takahashi and Dear, 1997; Lobao and Murray, 2005). The reasons are threefold. First, the clients of such facilities tend to be already over-represented in such areas. Second, there are a greater number of cheaper properties available in deprived areas, which makes them financially viable for care agencies. Third, opposition to these types of facilities tends to be weaker in deprived areas, and policymakers tend to follow plans that will result in weak resistance (Wolch, 1996; Takahashi and Gaber, 1998; DeVerteuil, 2006; Culhane, 2010). As a consequence, human service facilities become spatially concentrated.

There is a fear among both scholars and policymakers that such concentrations have negative implications for the quality of life in already socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and this has inspired policymakers to "address the problematic concentration of homelessness facilities" (Culhane, 2010, p.853). It is argued that the spatial concentration of marginalised and disadvantaged people fosters processes of social exclusion and reduces social cohesion (Holt-Jensen, 2000). Consequently, the disadvantages for those who are already economically marginalised are believed to become compounded (see Busch-Geertsema, 2007). Also, it is believed that high concentrations may negatively affect the balance of social mix in neighbourhoods, which may result in further deterioration in the quality of life (see Lee and Price-Spratlen, 2004; Busch-Geertsema, 2007). There is a view that social diversity fosters individuals' capacities to be self-sustaining and also maintains the vitality of a local community in the longer term (Arthurson, 2012). The fear, therefore, is that spatial concentration of homelessness facilities might lead to a situation in which vulnerable neighbourhoods reach their limits in terms of the number of disadvantaged groups they can accommodate, leading to the unsustainability of these areas.

Several local governments in the Netherlands have expressed such fears in recent years. Their cities have witnessed the emergence of 'unbalanced' and 'unequal' distributions of human service facilities that are seen to negatively affect, both socially and economically, more vulnerable neighbourhoods (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2003; dS+V Rotterdam, 2006; Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Municipality of Enschede, 2009). For example, the municipality of Rotterdam, the Netherlands' second largest city with 610 000 inhabitants, has stated that some of

its urban neighbourhoods have reached or even crossed the limits of their 'absorption capacity' for socially and economically underprivileged people and cannot be expected to house additional service facilities (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2003; 2009). Similarly, a number of other Dutch municipalities have expressed the need to ensure that human service facilities will not harm the urban carrying capacity (e.g., Drechtsteden, 2007a; Municipality of Enschede, 2009; see also Evans and Foord, 2007).

In response to this challenge, local governments have developed distributive siting policies for homelessness facilities. These include residential as well as support services for people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. Crucially, the definition of what constitutes a human service facility is subject to controversy, and this lies at the heart of this paper. The relevance of distributive siting policies increased in 2003 when it was established that the Netherlands was suffering from a shortage of housing for homeless people. An interdepartmental working group, published a report, 'Social Relief is Clogging Up', which concluded that there was a shortage of appropriate accommodation, and that this affected access to care and support (House of Representatives, 2007-2008, 29 325, no.25). Similar findings emerged from a series of annual reports monitoring social relief published between 2000 and 2005 by the influential Trimbos Institute, the National Institute of Mental Health and Addiction.

In light of these reports, the Dutch Cabinet aimed to expand housing provision for homeless people (House of Representatives, 2003-2004, 29 325, no.1; see also House of Representatives, 2007-2008, 31 200 Ch. XVIII, no.2). On 7 February 2006, this plan eventually materialised when the four largest municipalities of the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht: the G4), together with the relevant ministry, agreed to provide "an extra impetus for tackling the problem of homelessness" (Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport, and G4, 2006, p.5). Their aligned vision was "to improve the living conditions of people who are homeless (or in danger of becoming homeless) and, in doing so, to substantially reduce the disruption and criminality that is often associated with their behaviour" (2006, p.5). The plan was soon ambitiously expanded to include 39 smaller cities (see Hermans, 2012).

Although the exact implications in terms of the number of required facilities had not yet been determined in 2006, it was already clear that the policy's ambitions would mean that a substantial number of new facilities would have to be created by 2010. The city of Rotterdam alone required 19 new facilities for its estimated 1 740 homeless people. The number of facilities required raised concerns about the spatial concentration of these services and the effects this would have on the quality of life for all. This triggered local policymakers to develop a distribution plan

with regards to setting up facilities among the city's 13 decentralised district governments (dS+V Rotterdam, 2006). This was based on the concern that the large number of facilities, the combination of different types of facilities and the spatial concentration of those facilities would negatively affect the quality of life in some urban neighbourhoods (dS+V Rotterdam, 2006; 2007). In response to similar worries and following the Rotterdam example, many Dutch cities started to develop similar policies for the distribution of homelessness facilities that aimed to spread newly-established facilities across urban areas (Van Bergen and Van Deth, 2008).

Towards Fair Share Policies

There are a number of euphemistic labels that are used to indicate the relative overrepresentation of homelessness facilities in certain areas. Some policy documents discuss the 'unbalanced' distribution or 'unequal distribution' of facilities (Drechtsteden, 2007c). Similar terms include 'unfair', 'uneven' and 'unjust'. Others speak of a 'disproportionate' or 'undesirable' concentration of facilities (House of Representatives, 1997-1998, 25 682; Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006; Municipality of Rotterdam, 2008; Municipality of Enschede, 2009). These are similar to the labels used to describe the principal aims of the siting policies. Many policy documents discuss aims of fostering a 'dispersal of facilities' (Municipality of Zwolle, 2014; see also DeVerteuil, 2006) or of a 'dilution' thereof (Florijn, 2011), where others champion a 'de-concentration of facilities' (see also Biesma *et al.*, 2012; Vanderstraeten, 2004). Others aim for a 'good' distribution (House of Representatives, 2005–2006, 29 325, nr.8; Municipality of Enschede, 2009; Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport, and G4, 2011) or a 'better' distribution of services (Court of Audit Municipality of Leeuwarden, 2013; Van den Handel, 2013). Yet throughout other policy documents, more normative substantive terms are used, such as 'balanced' (Drechtsteden, 2007b), 'proportional' (Van Bergen and Van Deth, 2008), 'equal' or 'fair' (Karsten, 2012). Despite differences in language, these siting policies share a central aim of dispersing homelessness facilities combined with an appeal to a normative principle of distribution. In social geography, such siting policies are commonly known as 'fair share approaches' (Rose, 1993; Valletta, 1993; Weisberg, 1993; Gaber, 1996; Lejano and Davos, 2002). The basic rationale behind such strategies is that 'everyone gets their share' (see also Drechtsteden, 2007c).

The reasoning behind fair share siting policies is made up of four strands, which are often interwoven by policymakers. First, fair share policies are driven by the desire to sustain a viable social mix in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, as discussed above (e.g., Municipality of Maastricht, 2008). Second, some policymakers intrinsically value the fair distribution of facilities across their municipalities, believing that it

is unjust to distribute facilities unequally (see Karsten, 2013). Third, it is believed that an uneven distribution of human service facilities may present critical problems in terms of access to services (Wolch, 1996). Fourth, policymakers expect fair share policies to reduce the amount of social and political opposition to the planned allocation of service facilities sites (e.g., dS+V Rotterdam, 2006). It is believed that fair share policies increase local acceptance of controversial facilities among neighbourhood residents by calling on citizens' willingness to tolerate a facility when others are also doing their part (see Municipality of Groningen, 2003; Municipality of Utrecht, 2005; Van Bergen and Van Deth, 2008). Indeed, it has been demonstrated that citizens do find the fair share argument appealing (Karsten, 2013).

The Fairness of Sharing

One characteristic of fair share siting policies is the recognition that location decisions are essentially political and non-rational in the sense that such decisions necessarily imply normative considerations (Holton *et al.,* 1973; Dear, 1974). As Rose (1993, p.99) put it: "[Location] decisions necessarily rest on subjective and political evaluations of competing values that cannot be satisfactorily resolved by rules, no matter how subtly drafted". In practice, 'fair distribution' functions as a normative principle that guides location decisions.

However, a problem with fair share policies is that, often, they do not recognise that the concept of fairness itself is essentially subjective. Policymakers sometimes speak of an "objective distribution" (House of Representatives, 1997-1998, 25 682), or of "truly and wholly objectified" or even "objectively fair" distributions of facilities (Karsten, 2010, p.39). Similarly, Wolch (1996, pp.651, 665) speaks of "basic fairshare planning principles" without providing any further discussion. Such claims fail to recognise that there is no objective standard of fairness. Stone (2002) shows that many contrasting distributions are possible, all of which could be regarded as 'fair' in the sense that they satisfy the basic principle of giving everyone their share. For individual members of a group, the implications of different fair share criteria are substantial. Depending on what criteria are used, group members risk getting everything, nothing or any conceivable share in between. This is why Rose (1993, p.99) notes with regard to the fair distribution of human service facilities: "Although everyone might agree that fairness is a goal worth striving for, views of how to define the term differ widely."

Current Dutch fair share policies mirror the diversity of conceptualisations of a 'fair distribution' of human service facilities, even though they all adhere to the same basic principle that 'everyone should get their share'. In practice, fairness means something very different in the Rotterdam policy than it does in the Enschede and

Hilversum policies. These differences, however, remain largely implicit. The current article provides a qualitative content analysis (Robson, 2002) of selected policy documents that shows the diversity in measures of fairness. The remainder of this article focuses on policies developed between 2003 and 2009 in the run-up to, or under, the action plan. Here, there is a particular emphasis on cities with over 100 000 inhabitants, since these have developed more formal municipal-level distributive siting policies. The aim of this article is not to provide a complete overview of all the siting policies that have been developed, but to consider the range of variations within policies. This selection technique is known as the diverse case technique (Gerring, 2007). The analysis is limited to policy documents that outline the criteria underpinning siting policies and government evaluations thereof.

Since fair share policies are common throughout Europe and indeed elsewhere (e.g., Vanderstraeten, 2004), the results have wider implications for policymaking. Although policy documents from outside the Netherlands were not analysed, the analytical framework employed is applicable elsewhere. The analysis also draws on experiences with fair share policies in other countries.

A Critical Analysis of Current Dutch Fair Share Policies

A point of departure for all fair share policies is that each of the participating actors is entitled to its 'due share' of 'something'. Fair share policies are essentially a matter of distributive justice. The fact that homelessness facilities are more often perceived as a cost than as a benefit does not change the underlying question of what constitutes a socially just allocation of goods and facilities for homeless people. In the following sections, a basic analytical framework is used to explore fair share policies by bringing to light the distributive norms that underlie each of the policies. As such, the remainder of this article analyses six characteristics of Dutch siting policies, clustered around three fundamental questions: 'Who shares?', 'What is being shared?' and 'What makes a 'fair' share?' The analysis elaborates on the variety of answers to these questions that can be found in siting policies. For each siting policy that is analysed, the sections below identify the entities among which the facilities are shared, the entities that are exempted, the shared objects, the unit of analysis, the basic measure for fairness that is employed and possible additional criteria that are in use. Table 1 depicts the analytical framework.

Table 1. An analytical framework for siting policies

Who shares?		What is being shared?		What makes a fair share?	
Participating entities	Exempted entities	Shared object	Unit of analysis	Basic measure	Additional criteria

Who shares? Participating entities and exempted entities

The first question the fair share policies have to deal with is among which entities are the facilities to be shared. Since fair share policies address issues of spatial planning, this initial question is mainly a geographical one: which areas are eligible for a facility?[2] As such, the choice of geographical level is crucial (see also Busch-Geertsema, 2007). Siting policies can be applied on the national, regional, municipal or even sub-municipal level. The current article focuses on the municipal level, as this is the level where siting policies were to be developed under the 2006-2009 action plan. The policies identified display considerable variability.

A common approach for Dutch cities is to distribute facilities among existing political-administrative entities. The two largest cities in the Netherlands – Amsterdam and Rotterdam – have used their now disbanded decentralised district government areas [*stadsdelen* and *deelgemeenten*, respectively] as a basis for sharing out newly-established facilities (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Municipality of Rotterdam, 2006). In both cities, it was agreed that each of these entities would have to accommodate its fair share of homelessness facilities.

Other Dutch cities lacked such formalised sub-municipal authorities but often used somewhat similar semi-institutionalised administrative areas that are seen as 'natural' social-geographical entities; this has been the usual approach of the Dutch government for some time. The municipality of Utrecht, for example, distributed facilities amongst its districts [*wijken*], each of which was expected to house a facility (Municipality of Utrecht, 2005). Likewise, the municipality of Enschede used its neighbourhoods [*buurten*], which are one level below districts, to distribute facilities. The municipality of Rotterdam has also recently switched to neighbourhoods (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012b). The municipality of Amsterdam, in its more recent policies, has used existing distinctions between postcode areas in its siting strategy (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2013; see also DeVerteuil, 2006). The approach of the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch differed markedly in the sense that it did not use existing entities for sharing out facilities, but instead defined five new 'search areas' in its siting policy that did not match any existing divisions (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009; 2010).

The demarcation of the boundaries of geographical entities is relevant since it can significantly affect location decisions. Facilities that are geographically close may fall into different administrative entities, resulting in existing pressure appearing less problematic than it actually is. This, in turn, may influence what counts as an area's fair share of new facilities. This situation occurred in the area around the 's-Graven-

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2   It is noteworthy that, in some cases, facilities are not distributed among entities and entities are not defined. In such cases, the proximity to other existing or proposed facilities may guide location decisions, see for example (see, e.g., Lobao et al., 2005).

dijkwal in Rotterdam, a road that divides two districts. Both districts initially considered siting their facilities on the 's-Gravendijkwal, which would have resulted in an undesirable concentration of facilities (see also dS+V Rotterdam, 2007). A similar problem occurred around the borders of a number of neighbourhoods in Enschede, where the sharing out of facilities between neighbourhoods did not necessarily prevent the concentration of facilities (Municipality of Enschede, 2009).

In addition to the demarcation of borders, scale is also important, both in terms of absolute geographical scale and in terms of the number of inhabitants. The Rotterdam districts, for example, have on average more than 45 000 inhabitants, whereas the Enschede neighbourhoods have no more than a couple of thousand inhabitants. This significantly affects the number of available locations within a designated area. More importantly, when larger territories are used, they often contain very different areas that are diverse in terms of their social mix or population density, and so there is still a risk of concentration, which can negatively affect the absorption capacity of particular areas (Rose, 1993; Wolch, 1996). Such a scenario became apparent in the Rotterdam district of Kralingen-Crooswijk where, in the opinion of local political executives, the western part of the district was in danger of becoming disproportionately burdened, even though policymakers accepted that the district as a whole would have to accommodate its share of the facilities (Karsten, 2013).

In spatial distribution formulas, scale is thus a crucial factor, even though it is difficult to determine the optimum scale for siting policies (Busch-Geertsema, 2007). In effect, every societal problem has its own scale, and this is dependent to an extent on context (Dahl and Tufte, 1973). What is clear is that existing political-administrative entities often fail to coincide with the areas in which concentrations of human service facilities occur, making them less than ideal as a basis for distributing facilities when de-concentration is the principal aim.

A second question that is important to consider in relation to the 'who shares' question is whether or not certain areas should be exempted from having to house new facilities. In the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, for example, it was decided that the city centre was not eligible for new facilities because it already had a high concentration of human services (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009). Similarly, the municipality of Enschede (2009) excluded four neighbourhoods where "the traffic light had turned red". In the experience of local political executives, it would not have been fair to oblige these areas to house additional facilities. In contrast, executives in Maastricht announced that none of its neighbourhoods would be excluded from their distribution policy in advance. Policymakers in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht took this approach one step further by explicitly announcing that every designated area would have to house a minimum of one

new facility (e.g., Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006). There were both ideological and politically-strategic aspects to such decisions. For some policy-makers, it was a normative implication of the adage 'everyone gets their due share', where others saw that it would be easier for politicians to 'sell' a facility when everywhere else was also participating (Karsten, 2013).

The question as to whether certain areas are to be exempted from having to house new facilities is important in the sense that if the spatial concentration of facilities is the guiding principle, some areas could be eligible for an exemption. Without exemptions, 'fair' siting policies may lead to an increased concentration, and hence a reduced de-concentration, of facilities, while at the same time making it more likely that facilities will be established because the policy has a better approval rating. Such implications of fair share policies provide a clear illustration of the need for political evaluations of competing needs and values in relation to the decision-making process on locations.

What is being shared? The shared object and the unit of analysis

A second point of departure for all fair share policies is the principle of 'sharing'. The question of what is to be shared becomes, therefore, particularly acute. The answer is not as straightforward as it would seem. The first issue is the facilities that should be included in the fair share policy and the facilities to be left out. The question of what constitutes a human service facility often gives rise to a lively debate (see, for example, Kuppens *et al.*, 2013); for example, does the term cover assisted living centres for former addicts as well as facilities that provide actual care to addicts? In the Netherlands, there is a general consensus in relation to the understanding of what human services are included in distributive siting policies because most cities use the same policy framework (at least in relation to the action plan). Although there is still some room for interpretation, the siting policies that have been developed generally apply to social relief for well-defined 'target groups' and cover both residential as well as support facilities for people who are homeless, or in danger of becoming homeless. These groups also include addicts as well as people with psychiatric illnesses (see Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport, and G4, 2006). However, even when there is a common understanding of which types of facilities qualify for the fair share policy, the question of what is being shared remains open to interpretation. Two questions are involved, namely: what objects are being shared and what is the unit of analysis? Since these two questions are closely interrelated, specific siting policies, rather than the more abstract questions, are discussed below for purposes of clarity.

The municipality of Rotterdam decided to distribute facilities in absolute numbers. Since it needed 19 new facilities, the proverbial pie was divided into 19 equal slices, each of which referred to a location. The numerical aspect was thus put first. The

search for locations commenced before it was determined what type of facility and what type of clients the district had to accommodate. The goal was to maximise flexibility in the siting policy (dS+V Rotterdam, 2006; see also Weisberg, 1993). The municipality of Tilburg adopted a different approach when it developed a dot density map of human service facilities in its territory, which was used to justify concrete location decisions. The map contained not only the locations of existing facilities, as a Rotterdam map would have, but also indicated their size in terms of their relative capacity. However, this map was not used to calculate the relative load that each neighbourhood carried.

Figure 1. Dot density map of human service facilities: Tilburg
Source: Municipality of Tilburg, 2008, p.5

The municipality of Enschede (2009) incorporated similar measurements in its fair share policy by not using the number of facilities in its calculations, but rather the size of the facilities in terms of beds or clients. Other than Tilburg, though, Enschede assigned facilities to particular neighbourhoods and used the relative load carried by each of the neighbourhoods as a criterion in its siting policy.

**Figure 2. Capacity of human service facilities
in the Stadsdeel Noord district of Enschede**

○	1
△	2-5
◇	6-10
★	11-25
▽	26-50
◆	51-70
●	> 70

Source: Municipality of Enschede, 2009, p.40; numbers refer to different neighbourhoods

The choice for any of these models can have a significant impact on location decisions because, depending on what measurement is used, the relative distribution of facilities among areas can differ significantly. An arbitrary but not atypical example is the Enschede neighbourhood of Lasonder 't Zeggelt which, in 2009, accommodated only 20 percent of the district's facilities but accounted for almost 60 percent of the district's capacity for social relief. Such differences are largely due to the fact that a single facility can house between one and a couple of hundred clients and the fact that facilities for individuals, other than in Enschede, are often excluded from calculations. Thus, the calculation method used can determine eligibility for new facilities.

In addition to the absolute number of facilities or their capacities, there are also questions surrounding what is being shared. The municipality of Hilversum (2010) has explicitly stated its intention to achieve a more equal dispersal of facilities that have 'detrimental effects on their surroundings' [*overlastgevende functies*] across the city, effectively meaning that this government body was distributing what could be considered inconveniences to the mainstream population. The Delfshaven district government (2007) in Rotterdam developed a similar but more fine-grained approach, which focused on the risks and opportunities of different types of facilities, through which emerged an inventory. The district government argued that self-supporting units for drug addicts involved more risk than supervised day centres for similar clients. By juxtaposing the risks associated with different types of facilities and the government's abilities to control them, it developed a 'colour image' reflecting its risk assessment of each type of facility, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Colour image of the risks of different types of human service facilities

	VDB	ZAB	ZB+	IBW	BKW	SPN
Drug addicts				N/A		
Other addicts				N/A		
Victims of domestic violence						
Psychiatric patients						
Teen mothers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Youth						
Persons with an intellectual disability						
Children		N/A	N/A	N/A		
Asylum seekers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Ex-convicts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		

Source: Delfshaven district government, 2007, p.10; top row contains different types of facilities, abbreviated in Dutch

The district government subsequently used the risk assessments to analyse the concentration of human service facilities in different parts of its locality, on the basis of which it assessed the eligibility of various areas for new facilities (Delfshaven District Government, 2007). In contrast to some of the other siting policies discussed, this strategy incorporates the type of facility in its initial assessment of the eligibility of areas and the suitability of particular locations. It maintains that different types of facilities have varying effects on the quality of life in a neighbour-hood, and that a numerical measure of fairness – in terms of the number of facilities or in terms of the number of beds – is therefore inadequate. Such considerations are largely absent from the other policy documents included in this review, which overlook the types of facilities in determining what a fair share is.

A missing perspective?

Whereas the Tilburg and Enschede siting policies respectively distribute facilities and people, the Hilversum and Delfshaven policies distribute inconveniences and risks (see also Lejano and Davos, 2002). All of these are legitimate answers to the question of what is being shared in fair share policies, but they have important implications for what is seen as fair distribution and for where new facilities are to be located. What becomes apparent when we analyse the background to these answers is that the perspective of neighbourhood residents dominates. Although access to services for clients is often mentioned as one of the reasons for adopting a distributive siting policy (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006; Prins Alexander District Government, 2007; Municipality of Maastricht, 2008), this is not translated into criteria that determine how facilities are to be distributed. What is not distributed in these fair share policies is access to care. In the discourse on fair share siting policies, each facility or bed represents a unit of inconvenience, or a share of burden, rather than a unit of access to care for homeless people. Thus, the implications of fair share policies for client access

remain unclear, largely because this issue is rarely discussed openly in policy documents. In individual location decision processes, this issue is sometimes brought to the fore (as in the Schijnpoortweg and Zichtenburglaan cases reported in Karsten, 2013), but it is not integrated into siting policies in the Netherlands.

This situation prompts concerns, because distributive siting policies regularly have negative consequences for the clientele of such facilities (Busch-Geertsema, 2007). Studies have shown that while the geographical positioning of service facilities can improve client access, it can also decrease access and consequently worsen the problem of homelessness (Lobao and Murray, 2005; Bosch Meda, 2009). Although the fair distribution of facilities across cities may be preferable from the perspective of neighbourhood residents, it is not necessarily preferable from the perspective of the facilities' clients (see also De Kam, 2003). Since the effects of Dutch siting policies on client access have not been systematically reviewed, this is a concern. In their attempts to improve the living conditions of people who are homeless, Dutch municipalities have associated sites of homelessness service provision with a potential threat to the quality of life of others. As such, rather than distributing the positive good of access to care, policymakers are distributing the negative good of disorder (see also Farrell, 2005).

A potential explanation for this particular framing of the siting issue is the increasing importance of public security in popular discourse. With this, social issues are increasingly being perceived as matters of security (Wood and Shearing, 2007). As a consequence, the aim of accommodating homeless people becomes one of resolving security issues (Van den Handel, 2010), which pushes the care aspect of these policies into the background (Geldof, 2006). Even though human service facilities rarely cause persistent security problems, the common framing is aligned with citizens' perceptions of homelessness (Farrell, 2005; Schively, 2007; Van den Maagdenberg *et al.*, 2008; see also Van den Handel, 2010). Reframing the issue to being more a question of what is the best overall solution, both for the homeless and for neighbourhood residents, could result in a very different answer to the question of what is to be distributed in fair share policies and, consequently, could considerably affect what everyone's fair share of facilities is thought to be.

What makes a 'fair' share? Measures of fairness

The third question that fair share policies have to tackle is: what is everyone's 'fair' share? Rose (1993, p.98) duly notes that "the desire to achieve a greater degree of 'fairness' in locating various city facilities is more easily articulated as a political aspiration than codified as a set of regulations governing the placement of facilities as diverse as libraries and sewage treatment plants". What is fair, and which siting criteria contribute to arriving at a fairer distribution of facilities, are political-normative questions *par excellence*. From this perspective, it is somewhat surprising how rare

political debate on fair share criteria is, as Rose (1993) observed in the case of New York City. Current Dutch debates similarly lack discussions about what actually counts as a fair share. Locational conflicts over facilities for homeless people in the Netherlands tend to focus on the reasonableness of the siting of concrete facilities, rather than on the choice between alternative locations. Policymakers tend to frame siting decisions as technical and non-political in an attempt to avoid public debate on the exact location. In other words, the defence of controversial location decisions in the Netherlands often rests on technical and situational grounds rather than on political-ideological arguments (Karsten, 2013). This reduces the possibility of disagreement and the issue is thus effectively depoliticised.

This strategy mirrors Amy's (1984, p.584) observation that "[politicians] often find it safest to justify controversial decisions on technical grounds (…), and thus conveniently avoid the riskier and trickier task of justifying those choices on moral or political grounds." This approach resonates with one of the core aspects of consensus democracy, namely the depoliticisation of issues (Lijphart, 1968). In their explanations and justifications of siting decisions, political executives downplay the political and non-rational nature of location decisions. This neutralises the potential for political dispute to the extent that neighbourhood residents believe that technical and situational justifications provide reasonable explanations for location decisions. This finding contrasts with McGraw *et al.'s* (1993, p.290) finding that "principled justifications – appeals to normative principles to support the claim that a controversial policy decision was the right thing to do – have consistently emerged among the most effective accounts, resulting in higher levels of satisfaction and more positive evaluations of the official than other types of explanations."

Nevertheless, to the extent that it is debated, the level of apparent agreement between policymakers and citizens as to what constitutes a fair share is substantial. While distributive siting policies differ considerably in what is used as the numerator in mathematical calculations of a fair share (facilities, beds or risks), almost all calculations use the absolute number of inhabitants of an area as the denominator. An area's fair share is commonly calculated by dividing the number of units that are needed by the number of inhabitants of that area. Fairness is thus defined in terms of an equal share per person (e.g., Municipality of Enschede, 2009; Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012b). The reasons for this method are twofold. First, population density is commonly used as a standard in determining the pressure that is put on the quality of life in a particular area (Holt-Jensen, 2000; see also Arthurson, 2012). Second, and perhaps more importantly, this particular measure of fairness enjoys the firm support of citizens (Karsten, 2013), as it is generally perceived, at least in the Netherlands, as a reasonable standard for calculating fair shares. This measure is of course not 'objectively fair'; it, too, rests on a decision that is essentially political. Some policymakers, for example, will raise the question of whether the

distributive standard they use to determine fairness in siting policies should incorporate the fact that cheaper real estate properties are available in some areas. A concentration of facilities in such areas would therefore free up additional means (e.g., Municipality of Hilversum, 2010).

Even if this is not seen as a question of fairness in terms of carrying capacity, it certainly raises the question of how the normative value of fairness should be understood, i.e. how considerations of fairness should incorporate or be balanced against considerations of efficiency, as there is fairness, too, in ensuring that the way in which goods are divided maximises the benefits to those who need them most. Even if one sticks to fairness in terms of carrying capacity, policymakers will still have to balance this against competing values, such as the value of access to care mentioned earlier. In determining the carrying capacity, a major criterion in fair share policies, some policymakers have argued that it would be better to use the quality of life in an area or its absorption capacity as the main measure of fairness rather than the number of people who are faced with the burden (see Busch-Geertsema, 2007). This understanding of a fair share could increase the effectiveness of siting policies in terms of maintaining the sustainability of disadvantaged areas.

Rotterdam's Updated Approach

The siting policy that the municipality of Rotterdam has developed over recent years, in conjunction with care agencies, housing associations and others, is one of the more finely-tuned attempts to deal with the various possible standards of fairness. Already in 2006, the local government was using five different measures in its calculation of fairness (Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006). First, a minimum of one facility was to be situated in each district. The remaining facilities were to be distributed on the basis of a measure of fairness that used the number of inhabitants as its main criterion. Shares, however, were adjusted on the basis of the number of facilities a district already housed. Further, two corrections were made based on the quality of life in the district in terms of safety and security and on an area's previous obligations to house facilities.

In the current siting policy, three criteria remain, but the calculation has dramatically changed. The minimum of one facility per district has been abandoned and facilities are now distributed among neighbourhoods. Further, in the calculations, the number of facilities has been replaced by the capacity of facilities. The correction for previous siting obligations has also been abandoned. In the current policy, shares are still calculated on the basis of the number of inhabitants but the basic figure this produces is then corrected for quality of life, using both the Rotterdam Safety Index[3] and the

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[3]   http://www.rotterdam.nl/veiligheidsindex2014

Rotterdam Social Index[4] (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012b). This produces a colour scheme (Figure 3) that indicates the eligibility of neighbourhoods for additional facilities, which is then supplemented with additional (contra-)indicators.

**Figure 3. Eligibility of Rotterdam neighbourhoods
for additional human service facilities**

Zoning map service facility
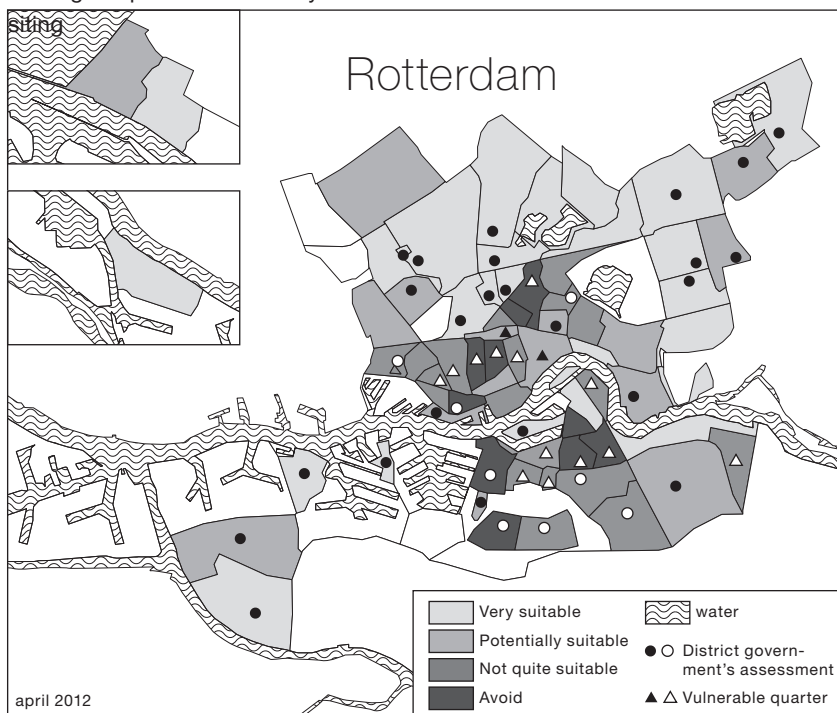
Source: Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012a; colours reflect the eligibility of neighbourhoods for additional human service facilities, ranging from 'very suitable' (light grey) to 'avoid' (dark grey). The circles indicate district governments' additional assessments of the eligibility of particular areas. The triangles indicate vulnerable areas that have been the focus of local policies.

Between 2006 and 2012, the meaning of what constitutes a fair share of homelessness facilities thus changed substantially in Rotterdam. This has also substantially influenced the eligibility of different parts of the city for new facilities (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2012a). Unfortunately, the effects of this change on the quality of life in different areas have not been systematically evaluated to determine whether the desired outcomes have been achieved (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2014).

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4   http://www.cos.nl/sigt/

Discussion

Table 3 summarises the main characteristics of Dutch distributive siting policies for homelessness facilities that have been discussed in this article. Although all of these policies adhere to the same normative principle that everyone should get their fair share, they show considerable diversity in the meaning ascribed to the concept of fairness.

Table 3. Characteristics of Dutch siting policies for facilities for the homeless

Siting policy	Who shares?		What is being shared?		What makes a fair share?	
	Participating entities	*Exempted entities*	*Shared object*	*Unit of analysis*	*Basic measure*	*Additional criteria*
's-Hertogen-bosch - 2009	Designated search areas	City centre and vulnerable areas	Detrimental effects	Facilities	One per area	-
Amsterdam – 2006	District governments	None	Detrimental effects	Facilities	One per area	-
Delfshaven district – 2007	Districts	A number of neighbour-hoods	Detrimental effects	Risks	Facilities per inhabitant	Existing burden
Enschede - 2009	Neighbour-hoods	A number of neighbour-hoods	Detrimental effects	Capacity	Capacity per inhabitant	Existing burden
Rotterdam – 2006	District governments	None	Detrimental effects	Facilities	Minimum of one per area, then facilities per inhabitant	Existing burden, safety and security, previous obligations
Rotterdam – 2012	Neighbour-hoods	None	Detrimental effects	Capacity	Capacity per inhabitant	Quality of life
Utrecht – 2005	Districts	None	Detrimental effects	Facilities	One per area	-

Dutch social relief policies have produced mixed results in terms of their main goal of improving the living conditions of people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless and, in doing so, to substantially reduce any perceived public disruption and criminality that is often associated with their behaviour (Van Bergen and Van Deth, 2008; Federation of Shelters, 2009; Hermans, 2012; Van Leerdam, 2013). Unfortunately, the outcomes of these fair share policies in terms of the quality of life in Dutch cities have not yet been systematically analysed. One of the problems is that although 'distribution' or 'dispersal' are often mentioned in policy documents, their impact on actual location decisions often remain unclear, since the final decisions often come down to individual decision-makers 'weighing up' the suitability of locations (Karsten, 2013). Consequently, it is not always possible to determine whether the ambition to distribute facilities across a city has played a role in actual

location decisions (see, e.g., The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008). What is beyond doubt is that the policies that have been implemented have decreased the concentration of facilities, or at least have helped to avoid further concentration. It is, however, much less clear whether these policies have resulted in fairer distributions, as intended, since the measures of fairness used often remain implicit.

The analysis presented above demonstrates that the question 'What is a fair share?' has at least three distinct sub-questions: 'Who shares?', 'What is being shared?' and 'What makes a share 'fair'?' A content analysis has shown that the answers emerging from various policies and municipalities differ substantially and that this has important implications for what is believed to be fair distribution and for where new facilities are to be located.

If we accept that location decisions are essentially political, the Dutch situation, as well as those elsewhere, seems to lack a debate on these issues. While fair share criteria "can be disputed endlessly without yielding a generally accepted standard" and "may provoke more conflict than [they solve]" (Rose, 1993, p.99), the political-normative character of siting policies remains largely implicit. It seems that the lack of debate can be explained by decision-makers' strategies to depoliticise location decisions and by the fact that the measure of fairness that they have implicitly adopted, namely the number of facilities or beds per inhabitant of an area, enjoys the general support of the population. The approach adopted by policymakers fits well with the discourse among neighbourhood residents, since it is congruent with their wishes and demands and/or value patterns (see Lees, 2004). While the concept of distribution among inhabitants is in itself embraced by citizens, location choices are not readily accepted without supported justifications (cf. Culhane, 2010, p.853).

One of the dangers of this discourse is its focus on safety risks and the potential for disorder commonly associated with homelessness, which has come to dominate distributive siting policy decisions. In fair share policies, the perspectives of neighbourhood residents tend to overshadow the perspectives of homeless people, which goes against the idea that "any effort to address homelessness effectively must consider the perspectives of people who are homeless in the design of various solutions" (Culhane, 2010, p.855). Current siting policies distribute the detrimental effects for the surrounding neighbourhood of homelessness facilities as opposed to distributing access to care for the facilities' clientele (see also Geldof, 2006). Indeed this could be to the detriment of access to care, and fair share policies may increase "the obstacles a mobility challenged clientele must surmount" (Lee and Price-Spratlen, 2004, p.5). In contrast, some fair share policies in other countries have been designed to maximise client access by looking at which areas have the strongest need for facilities (see Wolch, 1996). Although the effects of the Dutch fair share policies in this respect have not have been analysed, other studies warn that

there is a risk that such policies reduce the accessibility of homelessness facilities for their clients when they do not take the perspectives of homeless people into account. "Organised attempts to address homelessness will succeed only to the extent that ameliorative resources are allocated in a manner roughly consistent with the spatial configuration of the phenomenon" (Lee and Price-Spratlen, 2004, p.5). In their attempts to improve the living conditions of people who are homeless, policymakers have produced fair share policies that run the risk of overlooking the perspective of homeless people themselves. This makes the question 'Fair to whom?' particularly pertinent.

›　**References**

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The Potential of Social Rental Agencies within Social Housing Provision in Post-Socialist Countries: The Case of Hungary

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> **Abstract_** *The aim of this paper is to propose a new social housing model as a possible response to the housing crisis in post-socialist transition countries. We will review social housing programmes in developed societies that aim to use the private rental sector for public purposes, giving particular attention to Social Rental Agencies. We then present the case of Hungary, where, after decades of privatisation, the social housing stock is low by European standards, while the need for affordable housing is considerable – a common situation in post-socialist countries. In Hungary, triggered by an urgent housing need on the one hand and a lack of resources and adequate political support on the other, local public and non-profit organisations have been experimenting with innovative solutions to provide secure accommodation in a context of limited financial means. Although these small-scale initiatives have yielded compelling results, their examples are limited and they have not been expanded to a larger national policy in a way that adequately addresses the wider lack of affordable housing. Our proposal is for Social Rental Agencies (SRAs), which integrate elements of existing innovative housing programmes and international best practice; if the scale of existing programmes could be expanded, these could offer a relatively low-cost solution to address this housing need.[1]*

> **Keywords_** *Post-soviet housing policy, private rented sector, social housing, social rental agencies, politics and housing policy*

Introduction: New Welfare Regimes and Housing in the Transition Countries

For most observers, Hungary has moved to a liberal welfare regime, which is characterised both by elements inherited from the pre-transition period (path-dependence) and a new, 'immature' democratic political system (Kornai, 2000; Ferge and Juhász, 2004; Mykhnenko, 2004; Aidukaite, 2009; Tausz, 2010). While agreeing with accounts on the main structural changes, our research on the Hungarian housing system has always followed a particular approach. We propose not to take the institutional system's mid-level changes for granted, as the role of individual actors, conflicts and compromises among the organisations have always played an important role at the local level and in specific areas, and have even affected the macro-social setup. One can refer to this as a soft-structural approach,[2] which accepts that social development in a country faces structural constraints (globalisation and other macro-economic and social factors) but with some flexibility, and that the development and responses of welfare regimes can vary (Kasza, 2002).

Based on the findings of our two current research projects, as well as drawing upon housing policy literature from the past two decades, we observe how post-socialist societies in Central and Eastern Europe have opened up their housing systems to the (largely unregulated) housing market. We argue that there is a lack of commitment to investing in public housing or creating a new housing regime as a way of decreasing social inequalities. This is the result of complex interactions between the market and the state, which brought about a kind of 'trial and error' or 'scrambling through' policy approach rather than a pre-arranged master plan. It is this that characterises policy-making in the region (Tsenkova, 2009).

Two important questions, therefore, are: how did Hungary (and other post-socialist societies) avoid political backlash after neglecting the issue of social housing? And how did decision-makers avoid addressing issues of housing poverty and tenure insecurity in the face of the growing inequalities and social tensions inflicted by these phenomena? If we go beyond a very generalising approach (which is broadly the approach in the existing literature), we will see several distinct narratives in the history of housing policy formation, demonstrating that policy-makers were putting forward progressive policy in pursuit of equitable and sustainable housing. However, due to political compromises, as well as financial and ideological constraints, these attempts have had limited effect. Through examining the failure of past housing policy in Hungary and drawing on observations of the current economic climate, we present in this article a proposal for change to create a more secure and equitable housing system.

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2   This approach combines a 'rational choice' (policy choice or agency choice) type of explanation with structural elements connected to globalisation trends (Hegedüs and Teller, 2006).

However, before we go into the evaluation of the options available for Social Rental Agencies in Hungary, we will appraise existing programmes in a selected number of developed countries. We will also show how social inequalities have translated into housing inequality (tenure insecurity and housing poverty) over the past few decades in Hungary. The analysis loosely applies to other post-socialist countries also. In the next section, we present an overview of the current Social Rental Agency style initiatives that aim at using the private rental stock for social housing provision. After this, we present the housing situation in Hungary, where the wave of housing privatisation of the 1990s left a pressing need for affordable rental housing units. In our view, such housing policy developments are not only applicable to post-Soviet countries but can also apply to Western economies in terms of the developmental path of a housing regime and the legal or financial limits involved in expanding availability of affordable rental housing. We will provide a critical overview of these initiatives, evaluating both their positive and their counterproductive elements. In the final section, we will put forward a proposal that builds on past initiatives but also considers current macroeconomic constraints such as demographic trends, fiscal constraints and economic growth rate in the EU, and specifically the CEE region. In this proposal we aim to use the possibilities of the privately owned, under-utilised housing stock for social purposes, and outline a model that could become the basis of a future social housing sector in Hungary and in other transition countries in the region.

Social Rental Agencies: An International Overview

The history of regulating the private rental sector in Europe goes back to the period during and after World War I, when rent control was first introduced throughout Europe (Balchin and Rhoden, 1984; Lind, 2001). Following from this, potential developers faced much higher political risk than previously, with many choosing to withdraw from the private rental sector. This led to a huge housing shortage at a time of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. After World War I, and even more so after World War II, European governments became actively involved in housing policy and implemented varying institutional structures to address the plummeting supply of private sector rental housing. They did this by creating new forms of public rental tenure such as cooperatives, municipal companies and public-private partnerships; they delegated the rental sector to be monitored by local municipalities; and they provided extensive support for owner-occupation (Hills *et al.*, 1990; Boelhouwer *et al.*, 1997; Priemus, 1997).

However, the housing policy landscape started to change in the 1970s. After decades of dynamic economic growth accompanied by the expansion of welfare capitalism, developed countries had addressed their housing shortage. Partly for

political reasons (neo-liberalism) and partly due to the emergence of a strong middle class, the demand for owner occupation increased significantly. Parallel with these processes, and partly as a consequence of the economic crises of 1970s and 1980s, a paradigm shift took place in the housing subsidy system from supply to demand subsidies (Scanlon and Whitehead, 2008). Policy shifts at the European Union level further shaped national housing policies, particularly the effect of state aid regulations on housing associations in the case of France, the Netherlands and Sweden, among others. Beyond these main trends, a diversity of housing systems emerged in developed countries, which provoked an interesting and productive debate among scholars (on the clash between the convergence and divergence theories see Kemeny and Lowe, 1998; Malpass, 2008).

In terms of tenure structure (especially regarding the size, operation and meaning of tenure types) a trend for convergence is noticeable, but important differences among EU countries remain due to the varying rules and embedded practices that shape housing tenures and systems (Ruonavaara, 2005). Several researchers have concluded that tenure types with similar denominations may have very different content in terms of financial and legal regulation in different countries (Siksiö, 1990; Ruonavaara, 1993, 2005; Haffner, 2011). Tenure structure in each of the countries has been under continuous change under differing housing policies but the focus of this paper will be the shifting relationship between the private rental and public housing sector (Haffner *et al.*, 2009, pp.30-31). Between these two tenures, we can witness a two-way process: on the one hand, the private sector involvement in the traditional public social housing sector is playing a more significant role, while on the other hand, the private rental sector, through various forms, has been functioning as a provider of affordable housing.

From the perspective of transitional countries with high homeownership and low public sector ratios, an important policy question arises: how might housing policy use the private rental sector for public purposes? Due to income inequalities, rents even in an efficient private market are often excessive for low and lower-middle income households. International experience shows that there have been widespread interventions across developed countries since the 1970s, which can be categorised into two basic types:

1. Demand-side interventions: the rent allowance system, which can be used to supplement rents within the private rental sector.

2. Supply-side interventions: subsidy schemes (capital grants, reduced interest rates, loosening of building regulations, etc.), which increase the supply of private rentals and – should in theory – drive down rental rates.

Both solutions are based on the notion that the private rental market works efficiently. However, several authors have questioned the efficiency of the private rental sector. Gilderbloom (1989), for example, argued that it is an imperfect market due to shifting socioeconomic and political factors, which impact on the demand and supply side of housing. Moreover, legal analysis of the private rental sector emphasises the imbalance of power between landlords and tenants. Consequently, it is not enough to subsidise disadvantaged tenants in the private rental sector; there is a need for institutional solutions to balance the tenant-landlord relationship (Schmid and Dinse, 2013). One of the consequences of the legal imbalance is the lack of incentives to invest in the private rental sector and the existence of some 'slack' in the sector because owners of the housing surplus prefer keeping their property vacant to renting it out (Hegedüs *et al.*, 2014). Thus, one of the important functions of Social Rental Agencies, beyond transferring the subsidies to low-income tenants, is that they rebalance market failures and imperfections.

The institutional structure of the subsidy programmes – or the governance of social housing projects – is important. Some examples demonstrate that even a supply-side subsidy may require an institutional structure in order to guarantee the efficiency of the programmes (e.g., the Irish RAS scheme – see below). The following two examples show how the governance of a subsidy system tries to eliminate programme risks through the incentive structure of the organisations and/or actors involved.

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) programme in the US, introduced as part of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, has been the major federal programme for producing affordable rental housing since the introduction of the Act. It is an alternative method of funding housing for low and moderate income households. Tax Credits must be used for new construction, renovation, or acquisition and renovation. Projects must also meet a number of requirements. At least 20 percent of the project units are both rent-restricted and occupied by individuals whose income is 50 percent or less of area median gross income. At least 40 percent of the residential units in the project are both rent-restricted and occupied by individuals whose income is 60 percent or less of the area median gross income. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is responsible for monitoring compliance and state performance (Cummings and DiPasquale, 1999; Green and Malpezzi, 2003). The programme is administered by states (or, in a few cases, locally), but several other institutional players have a vested interest in the success of the programme (investors, lenders, housing agencies, developers), which provides a special governance structure to guarantee the cooperation of stakeholders and interested households.

The other example of a supply-side solution is the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) introduced in Australia in 2009 (Gilmour and Milligan, 2012). Public housing in Australia is an underdeveloped tenure compared to many Western

European countries, thus limited access to affordable housing cannot be solved through this route. The NRAS offers landlords a tax incentive of AUD$6 000 per dwelling per year and a cash payment of AUD$2 000 per dwelling per year in the form of direct or in–kind financial support for a period of ten years. Participants in the scheme include private land developers, real estate agents, non-profit organisations and local governments, who receive these payments in return for supplying rental dwellings at least 20 percent below the market rate to eligible low and moderate income households. The programme has encouraged large-scale investors, but through approved intermediary institutions, small landlords have been able to join the programme, in which private investors select the property and the property managers, and can participate in the programme for a maximum duration of 10 years (AMC, 2011). The function of the governance structure is such as to enforce cooperation and compliance across programme stakeholders.

Case studies

Belgium was one of the first countries to introduce Social Rental Agencies (SRAs) (De Decker, 2002). However, several other countries have also developed SRA-type agencies. Although we will present the Belgian, Irish and Italian cases in greater detail, various other countries also have noteworthy models, such as Solibail in France, the Social Letting Agency in the UK, the Housing Help Agencies in Canada and the Social Housing Agency in Luxemburg (Santos Silva, 2013).

In Belgium, SRAs were originally grassroots organisations founded in the 1980s by welfare institutions that were trying to involve the private rental market in social housing provision. They were institutionalised in the mid-1990s (De Decker, 2002). The SRAs were a response to the lack of adequate social housing; in 2005 this accounted for only 5.6 percent of the national housing stock while private rental accounted for 18.5 percent. The private rental market is regulated by the central government while regional governments are responsible for housing policy. The regulator of the private rental market typically stipulates a nine-year contract period with exemptions, but defines a free market rent mechanism.

In the SRA model, the participating housing organisations (non-profit and local authority organisations) rent dwellings on the market and sublet them to low income and vulnerable tenants. As already mentioned, the length of a contract is for nine years between private landlords and SRAs, and rent is below market level (but higher than social rents) and can be renegotiated every 3 years. Dwellings are only accepted by the SRAs if they meet certain housing standards. SRAs offer guaranteed monthly payments to the landlords, even during vacancies/voids or non-payment of rent. They provide maintenance services, ensure appropriate occupation, and offer mediation in case of conflicts. They also ensure that after termination of the contract, the dwelling is returned to the owner in its original state.

Furthermore, landlords can receive tax relief when they maintain an energy-efficient property. In case of disputes, parties have to accept the decision of conciliation court (FEANTSA, 2012). Landlords may not cherry-pick tenants and the allocation of units is the responsibility of the SRA. Selection criteria (income, housing conditions and the number of children) are set by the regional government and can be adjusted to local needs by the local authorities, although evidence suggests that local regulation tends to favour less risky groups. The SRA also helps tenants to obtain welfare and social services, and tenants may also be entitled to rent allowance. To obtain the support of the Flemish government, SRAs have to meet certain standards: they have to manage more than 30 dwellings, of which at least 30 have to be allocated to poor and vulnerable groups; they have to have been in operation for at least two years and must work in several urban districts; they have to adhere to certain organisational requirements, and so on. According to available data, there were 51 SRAs in Flanders in 2009, of which 44 were subsidised by the regional government. They operated around 4 900 units in 2009, which had increased to around 5 800 by 2011. The size of SRAs varies substantially: in 2009 they managed an average of 96 units, while the largest one operated more than 500 units (De Decker, 2013). These numbers show that the significance of the sector is still marginal in terms of size. Nonetheless, their significance lies in the fact that SRAs house vulnerable people and high-risk groups, who would otherwise face discrimination in the mainstream housing market.

In Ireland, the private sector has been involved in social housing provision since the late 1970s when rent allowance for unemployed private sector tenants was introduced (Rent Supplement Scheme – RS). RS was meant as a temporary scheme, but it has gradually gained significant importance and by 2009 there were 95 000 beneficiaries of the scheme, making it a sizeable substitute to the traditional social housing sector, of which there are 120 000 units nationally (Norris and Coates, 2010). In the mid-2000s, the government decided to reform the social housing system, including the RS, in order to increase the efficiency of the system and ensure a wider choice and better service for tenants (Coates and Silke, 2011). As part of the reform, the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) was introduced, with the aim of providing greater security of tenure and better quality housing for those with long-term housing needs. In order to be eligible for the RAS, a beneficiary had to have been in receipt of RS for more than 18 months and be on the local authority waiting list for social housing. The government's intention with RAS was to decrease the numbers of those receiving rent supplement so as to make the private rental sector more transparent (in terms of reducing tax avoidance, among other issues).

The RAS is regulated and financed by the central government, but is implemented by local governments. Alternatively, local governments can outsource it to social housing associations or other NGOs, which means a more decentralised model than

that of RS. Local governments (or other contracted housing organisations) negotiate longer term contracts with landlords, which requires local governments to pay the rent in advance, thus eliminating the risks to a landlord of rent non-payment and vacancies/voids; in return, they ask for an 8 percent rent discount on market rents. The concept is that local governments should become substantial players in the market in order to influence the level of market rents. The rents can be renegotiated only after 3-4 years. Additionally, landlords can only enter the programme if their property meets the required housing standards. Pilot projects of RAS started in 2006 and were extended in the following years, although the number of contracts has been growing more slowly than expected. The government introduced incentives for local governments, paying them a certain amount after each contract, but the administrative costs of the programme are still significant for local governments. On the part of landlords, transaction and renewal costs can also be substantial, which means that there is limited interest in entering the scheme (especially among those who own dwellings of lower quality). Furthermore, in periods when rents are increasing, landlords have strong counter incentives to joining the RAS (Hegedüs and Somogyi, 2013a/b). By 2012 around 12000 private rental units were involved in RAS, mainly owned by accidental landlords (Norris and Coates, 2010).

Italy's housing stock is dominated by home-ownership (80 percent), while the private rental sector accounts for 16 percent and social housing stands at only 4 percent. The country's private rental sector shrank as a result of the rigid rent control introduced in the 1970s, which was alleviated at the end of the 1990s in order to boost the private rental housing stock. In the wake of the new regulations, there are several types of contracts in private rented housing, including 'agreed contracts', which are based on agreements made by local representations of tenants and landlords. One of the main aims of the new regulations (and the subsequent amendments) has been to enhance the affordability of the private rental sector. Consequently, in the case of agreed contracts, tax relief is available for landlords if they offer their dwelling below market rent. Tax relief was also introduced for tenants, at first for those with negotiated contracts but later for other forms of private rentals. Rent allowance was also introduced but has remained marginal (Baldini and Poggio, 2010).

Despite substantial efforts to draw the private rental sector into the affordable housing supply, the related institutional framework was weak at the national level. Housing policy is the responsibility of the regional governments, although some local governments in urban areas have established social rental agencies in order to increase the number of affordable rentals. One such scheme was launched in Turin in 2000, initially financed by the local government, although the regional government has been contributing 70 percent of the costs since 2007. The subsidy scheme is closed-ended, which means that the local governments have to estimate

its annual scale in advance. In Turin, a local government department operates the scheme. The scheme is called Lo.C.A.Re and, besides tax relief, it offers several incentives for landlords to join the programme: once-off cash subsidies (€1 600-€3 000, depending on the length of the contract), rental guarantees, and mediation between landlords and tenants in the case of conflicts. In return, landlords lower their rents to 30 percent of market level. The rental contract is established between the tenant and the owner, but there is an agreement between the local government and the landlords as well, defining the responsibilities of all parties. The target tenant groups are not necessarily the most vulnerable of society; rather, they are low income families who have regular employment, but precarious housing conditions ('weakened middle class' (Magnano, 2013)).

Besides the income criteria, those enrolled in other social services, such as substance abuse programmes and groups for those with special needs, are favoured. Lo.C.A.Re assesses potential tenants through a standardised assess-ment, and those who meet the conditions become what is termed 'guaranteed tenants'. Those who have previously been evicted or have had court proceedings brought against them do not qualify as guaranteed tenants. So far – in the first 12 years of the programme – around 3 800 contracts have been concluded, with an average of 300-500 new contracts annually. In terms of the profile of the tenants, 60 percent of new tenants before 2010 were foreign-born and this has since increased to 85 percent. About 250 contracts resulted in arrears, a number that can be considered quite low when one takes into account that these tenants are economically marginalised and the fact that Turin has among the highest rates of arrears and evictions in Italy. However, the economic crisis also negatively affected the programme and led to a decrease in the number of new contracts secured; on one hand, fewer people can meet the income criteria (due to the rise in unemploy-ment), and on the other hand, the number of defaulted tenants has increased, which is depleting the guarantee fund at a quicker rate. The major limitation of this model is the issue of affordability. In cities where the rent level is high, even a 30 percent rent reduction is insufficient. Similar programmes have been introduced in cities with more moderate rent levels, but usually on a smaller scale than in Turin (Magnano, 2013).

To summarise, through the examination of the international experience, one can argue that the SRA model is not one that can solve the housing problems of low-income people on its own. Rather, it can help to reform the private rental sector whilst also demonstrating that the risks of providing for disadvantaged people (supported by rent allowance) are manageable; in this way, the weaknesses in the private rental sector can be addressed through investments and incentives.

Innovative Housing Programmes in Hungary: Progressive but Isolated and Small-Scale Solutions[3]

Hungary's transition has led to increased debate within the housing system, involving political leaders (both in government and opposition), stakeholders and experts in the field. Debates centre on the lack of a private rental sector and social housing stock, affordability issues, increasing arrears rates, and related consequences for tenure security. Homelessness is, of course, the most visible problem. However, these debates have not gone beyond the threshold of political sensitivity, something that could have forced political decision makers to introduce widespread income benefit and/or social housing programmes to counterbalance market processes. There is, however, an intention to tackle the housing issue, exemplified through innovative programmes started by the central government, municipalities and NGOs. We do not have room here to elaborate on Hungary's current political status; instead we focus on the innovative housing programmes that have emerged. These initiatives started to emerge after 2000 but most have been set up in the past five years. We will focus on their pioneering characteristics as well as the challenges these programmes face.

Central Government Programmes

Social Rental Programme (2000-2004)

In 2000, a five-year grant programme was introduced for local authorities, supporting five areas related to housing: the rental sector, energy-saving renovations, rehabilitation, land development, and renovation of housing owned by churches. The most important element was support for the public rental sector. Local authorities were eligible for grants of up to 75 percent of their costs where they invested in specific forms of housing: social rental, cost-based rental (see below), housing for young families and retirement homes. Between 2000 and 2004, several hundred local governments took part in the programme and almost 12 800 new units were built. Cost-based rental was introduced to ensure long-term cost recovery in the sector, with rent levels higher than social rents but lower than market level. The regulations set the minimum annual rent at 2 percent of the construction cost. Although this approach did not guarantee long-term cost recovery, in the first years the actual operational and maintenance costs of the units were considered to be lower than the rent. Rental costs were 40-60 percent of market rent.

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3   This section draws on Hegedüs and Somogyi, 2013a/b; and MRI 2013.

The high level of interest in the programme is an indication of the commitment of municipalities to solving the housing problem. Before its launch, the Hungarian Government's Housing Policy Committee was concerned that local authorities would not be able to participate because most of them would not be able to afford their own 25 percent contribution. The demand for the fund, however, exceeded budget resources and, in fact, only 45 percent of the amount requested by local authorities could be covered. Nevertheless, the programme had several weaknesses. Average costs were considered to be very high, despite the fact that one of the most important selection criteria was the average cost per square metre. Allocation criteria for new tenancies were not regulated and local politics played a role in discretionary allocation. The cost of rent was considered too high for poor people but insufficient for long-term recovery. Moreover, during the period of the scheme's operation, the privatisation process continued; local authorities privatised 25 000 units but built, bought or renovated only 8 900 rental units (Hegedüs, 2013).

2004 rent subsidy programme and 2005 rent allowance scheme

In 2004, the government stopped the social rental programme because of fiscal pressure, citing the high cost per unit, and proposed a rent allowance programme as a substitute. According to the proposal, local governments would enter into long-term contracts with private investors to use newly-built rental units for social purposes. The central and local government would jointly provide rent subsidies to bridge the gap between affordable and market rent – cost plus profit. The proposal failed because the guaranteed rent level required by investors was unacceptably high – twice the actual market rent due to high construction costs. However, the importance of the social rental sector was never questioned in government documents.

In 2005 a new rent allowance programme was introduced, which aimed to use the private rental sector for social purposes. Local governments could apply for rent allowance for low-income families with children who had private rental contracts. The central government would pay a maximum of 30 percent of the rent per month (approximately €28 in 2005 using the average exchange rate), and the local government would at least match that amount. The programme was considered a failure as very few local authorities submitted a proposal. One reason for this was that the programme required private landlords to be registered with the Tax Authority; the majority of landlords in Hungary, however, evade tax payments and chose not to change their approach for the sake of participating in this programme. A second problem was that the income limit, set to below about €180 per capita per month, was so low that eligible households were not able to pay the rent. In 2006, another new loan programme was launched, giving municipalities access to subsidised loans from the Hungarian Development Bank for investment in the public rental sector. However, local government interest was limited.

Mortgage rescue programme 1: Social Housing Construction Programme

In 2011, the Prime Minister announced a plan to construct government-owned low rent houses in order to save foreign-currency mortgage debtors. The Social Housing Construction Programme soon became a priority government investment. The programme had been debated within parliament since its announcement, with prominent government party members as well as external sceptics questioning its feasibility and even the necessity of the project for many reasons – most notably the remote location of the proposed project. The site is situated near Ócsa, a small town 30km south of Budapest. Residents already in financial difficulties had trouble finding work there and commuting links were underdeveloped. The original plan included large gardens in the development to allow subsistence farming for residents, but many argued that residents were in greater need of job opportunities. New infrastructure had to be established on the site, which drove up construction costs significantly. Opponents of the programme questioned the necessity of building new dwellings. Although no official (government) studies were prepared, experts and some policymakers suggested that buying or renting smaller existing apartments would be a more reasonable investment. After long delays, construction finally began in October 2012 (MRI, 2013). Eventually, 80 units were built instead of the planned 500. To date, tenants have moved into half of them, and it has been announced that the remaining units are to be used as emergency shelters in the near future.

Mortgage rescue programme 2: the National Asset Management Company

The National Asset Management Company (NAMC) was introduced in 2010, although it only became active within the market in 2012. The goal of this new institution was to purchase the property rights of defaulted borrowers from the banks. The transaction takes place at a centrally determined price, it clears all of the mortgagor's remaining debts to the financial institution, it is automatically available to all households that apply and meet all the necessary legal criteria (as a consequence, a fairly large number of defaulted borrowers can rid themselves of their debt burden in cases where their home is designated for repossession). Former owners become tenants in their homes, which become state property, and they have the option of buying back their property within 5 years.

NAMC purchased the first round of housing units in 2012 (around 2 000), and went on to buy defaulted homes *en masse* in 2013. Its budget was gradually raised by the government; for 2013 it was allocated funding to buy 20 000 housing units. If it ever reaches this scale, NAMC will be the largest social housing possessor ever launched since the regime change (MRI, 2013). Some critics have remarked that the stock bought by NAMC tends to be low quality and is predominantly situated

in underdeveloped or remote regions, as households usually apply if their home is worth less than the market value. However, the continuation of its prominent role is uncertain at the moment as its budget was cut significantly in January 2014.

Subnational and Municipal Initiatives

Private rent subsidies by municipalities

Some municipalities provide rent subsidies to support poor households that are only able to find accommodation in the private rental market because of the shortage in municipal social housing. Two such municipalities are the cities of Szombathely and Kecskemét. Szombathely (a city with a population of 80 000 people) introduced the rent subsidy system in 2008 and provides support for around 100 households with a budget of €65-80 000 annually. The maximum support is about €70 per household. The municipality considers the rent subsidy for private rentals to be a more effective way of meeting social housing needs than refurbishing the town's empty rundown units, which amount to 300 units of the total municipal stock of 2 200.

Another city providing rent subsidy is Kecskemét, which has a population of 110 000 inhabitants. The average number of supported households is 80-100 per annum, while the municipal housing stock is about 1 600 units. Households receive a subsidy for one year, after which it must be applied for again. The municipality checks whether the applicant household actually lives in the apartment. Both cities require a rental contract as a condition, but they do not check whether the landlords are registered with the tax authority, which seems to be a key factor in the scheme's success. Similar programmes can also be found in other cities such as Győr.

However, there is a difference in how the subsidies are delivered in the examples above. In Szombathely the subsidy is transferred directly to the landlord, while in Kecskemét, it is the tenant who receives the rent subsidy and in most cases the landlord does not know about it. The reason for this is the fear that landlords would increase rents if they were aware of the subsidies.

Social accommodation in the municipality of Szombathely

'Social accommodation' is an innovative solution launched by the municipality of Szombathely. In order to prevent homelessness among municipal tenants who have accumulated substantial rent arrears, the town gives 'low comfort' units to tenants who are unable to pay even basic rent and utility costs for their apartment. Most of the tenants provided with social accommodation previously lived in higher comfort flats with district heating but with substantially higher maintenance costs. The municipality sets a very low rent level for those who stay in social accommodation and

provides substantial financial help to pay off debts; in return tenants are required to cooperate closely with social workers. Although the original idea was to help out households until they were able to manage or overcome their (supposedly temporary) problems, due to the lack of alternative options, some of the households prefer staying in the lower quality but more affordable unit in the long term.

Subnational programme supporting cross regional labour mobility

A programme supporting labour mobility was introduced in 2012 for those who had lost their jobs in collective closures and redundancies and who had managed to find a job, but that job was more than 100 km away from their home. In these cases, the programme provides a rent subsidy. Furthermore, a special pilot project was developed in the framework of that programme in which the labour offices of two counties badly hit by high unemployment cooperate closely with the labour office of a third county where there is a much more thriving labour market. The labour offices survey those who are unemployed and try to assist them in securing jobs and accommodation, providing training if necessary. Experience shows that finding accommodation in workers' hostel-like accommodation – the type of accommodation that dominates the market – has not been a problem. However, the programme is very costly, as it provides high subsidies to assist with rent and utility payments for 18 months (after which people have to cover their own expenses).

Civil Society Initiatives

In Hungary, most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that facilitate access to social housing provision concentrate on the problem of homelessness. Many homeless shelters are state-sponsored or function within the institutional framework of a municipality, but their role and functioning is very similar to that of civil society organisations. Programmes targeting homelessness are quite well developed in Hungary (Győri and Maróthy, 2008). In this section, instead of giving an overview of all homeless provision efforts, we will focus on programmes aimed at providing a pathway out of homelessness.

The Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy and its Institutions (BMCSPI) is the largest homeless provision facility in the capital. It is not, in fact, an NGO, but functions similarly: it was built on civil initiatives and enjoys a significant level of autonomy. BMCSPI not only operates shelters but also co-ordinates externally supported housing and integration projects, as well as various other forms of homeless accommodation and provision. The Centre manages a 'home of room renters' – an affordable rental facility for 200–300 households. The internal regulations of the Centre are much stricter than those of the Housing Law, which has led

to criticism. However, considering their target groups of very low income people, a more liberal approach could financially ruin the Centre. The programme demonstrates the need for affordable accommodation similar to workers' hostels.

The Halfway House (formerly 'Trampoline' House) of Hungarian Baptist Aid (HBA) has a similar arrangement. HBA deals with people in need, including through homeless provision programmes. The organisation established an affordable accommodation service block based on the model of old worker hostels. They provide rental accommodation (matching market conditions) and have renovated a former workers' hostel in an outer district of Budapest, offering one, two and three bedrooms, with shared bathrooms, to rough sleepers. The hostel has become well-known among people who do not have access to affordable housing: its 158 bed capacity was at capacity within just one month. The rent (for a month), which includes the costs of facilities, is €107 for single accommodation (one person/ room), €61 for a two-bed and €47 for a three-bed accommodation per person. The hostel is operated on a market basis; HBA pays a monthly rent to the owners from rents collected from the dwellers, and they do not receive any public finance. The staff consists of four persons working at the gate service and two cleaners. No social workers are employed.

The next two examples were implemented in the framework of the Roma Settlement Integration Programme, run between 2005 and 2010. In one, municipalities purchased or constructed social housing for Roma who moved out from segregated areas, and in the other, some NGOs became landlords of social housing that accommodated very poor Roma families. The condition was that the units were not to be sold or privatised for five years, after which the tenants had the option to buy the units. Some of the participating NGOs – for example, the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service – rented these units to the beneficiaries at very low rent or rent free, and also assumed responsibility for the payment of utility bills. After the expiration of the five-year period, tenants obtained ownership rights to these dwellings. Transfers of ownership were more widespread in areas with extremely limited social housing, where the municipalities or NGOs do not have the capacity to manage and maintain the dwellings.

After 2008, mortgage-related foreclosures and evictions became a pressing social issue. A number of NGOs tried to develop schemes to help households who had lost their homes due to FX mortgages. They helped them to rent apartments from the private sector, partly through mediating between the landlord and the tenant, and partly by financially supporting the tenants. The Reformed Church launched a programme called 'Life Buoy' in 2011 to help people who had lost their home due to defaulted mortgages. They provided the targeted families with substantial financial assistance for rental costs over a relatively short period of 6-8 months,

during which the family was expected to 'get back on its feet'. A very important element of the programme was that the beneficiaries typically moved later to a larger settlement where they could find jobs, and if they did not succeed alone, the Church would try help them find employment.

The Lifeline Foundation for the Homeless (*Szalmaszál Alapítvány*) acts as a real estate agent specialising in connecting low-income households and inexpensive rentals. The foundation connects landlords with inexpensive (typically low quality) rental units from real estate agent partners. It then distributes these among its clients – typically very poor people in need of affordable accommodation who cannot obtain low cost housing elsewhere. Clients are usually informed of this opportunity through municipal support centres. The Foundation runs on a very modest budget, but when it manages to obtain further funding, it also helps clients to cover their two-month deposit.

Summary of the Hungarian Experiences: Constraints Limiting Social Housing Innovations

Two main points emerge from our summary: first, stakeholders are aware of housing-related social problems and, secondly, they have the technical and innovative capacity to solve those problems. However, the programmes outlined are small-scale and fragmented. The question is: why? Notwithstanding the fact that these initiatives have important innovative elements that could be rolled out at a nation-wide policy level, there are significant challenges, in particular the fact that they are not financially efficient. Another question is whether or not the stakeholders (NGOs, municipalities, etc.) are really invested in expanding the programmes. A separate research project would be needed to answer this question. Organisations who can carry out small-scale pilot programmes are not necessarily prepared for major expansion and where this is the case, their role and influence in the project will probably diminish. Therefore, however innovative and progressive, local initiatives remain small-scale and fragmented. They focus on small local communities or only on specific subgroups, usually selected on the basis of the organisation's existing networks and funding directives. The financial monitoring process applied to these missions is completely inadequate for centrally-financed projects, where minimising financial loss and functioning in an efficient manner would be a strict condition for receiving continued funding. Furthermore, NGOs often work on complex individual cases. While their consideration of local settings is, in fact, a key factor in the success of their mission, their specificity and complexity makes such interventions hard to standardise and apply on a larger scale.

However, the most important factor is that there is no political will to implement systematic changes, to provide financial resources and to alter housing policy extensively. Due to the prevailing homeownership philosophy, which has been supported by housing privatisation and substantial government subsidies, housing is perceived by the general public as an individual responsibility, and commitment to social housing both at central and municipal level is therefore very weak. The negative effects of the lack of social housing policy – such as housing marginalisation, segregation and low labour mobility – are, therefore, not popular subjects in political discourse.

Social Rental Agency:
A Potential Institutional Form for the Public Housing Sector

As a consequence of the housing regime being made up of a negligible public sector and a large, competitive housing market, the majority of poor people reside in accommodation belonging to the lower segment of the owner-occupied sector and the private rental sector, while an increasing number of households are at risk of homelessness. There are two basic types of housing poverty: low-end homeowners, typically in rural homes on settlements on the outskirts of, or far away from urban centres; and low-end tenants on the private rental market, typically in urban areas.

While market rent is high due to legal uncertainties and the tax/subsidy environment, the number of vacant housing units has been increasing in recent decades. The 2011 National Census found that there were nearly half a million vacant residential housing units. According to census data, 11 percent of the total stock was vacant in 2011 and vacancy rates were high in urban as well as rural areas (CSO, 2011). This indicates both a market failure and a state (regulation) failure; a strong demand is unable to meet a large supply, resulting in the under-utilisation of national assets (Hegedüs *et al.*, 2014). While some units may be uninhabitable, far away from job markets and services, or simply unreported private rentals, a significant portion of units – up to around 150 000 – are located in accessible areas that are near job markets and are of standard quality; with the right conditions, they could be very well utilised for rental purposes.

The Contradictory Private Rental Sector: State/Market Failure

After the transition, we could have reasonably expected that, with the growing prominence of free-market and state-backed incentives for entrepreneurial activities, a new middle class of potential landlords would emerge, together with a growing private rental sector. However, official statistics suggest that such a class did not appear, something that can be explained by two main factors: economic (user cost), and legal uncertainties (tenancy law relations).

Biased tenure policy: financial disadvantages of the private rental sector

The tenure choice of a household depends on several factors – in particular, the long-term financial advantages and disadvantages of tenure. We can compare the cost of homeownership to the cost of rent, and if ownership costs more than renting the same home, the rational household will choose the rental sector. The outcome will, of course, differ in a tenure neutral environment and where one tenure choice is encouraged over others through the tools of public policy.

In Hungary, a rational consumer would move into owner occupation rather than into the rental sector, because they would gain greater individual 'profit' in owner occupation. The three key reasons for this are the lack of imputed rent in Hungary's taxation system; the lack of tax incentives for potential landlords; and centrally-funded subventions for owner occupation. Property taxes and subsidies favour home ownership, and policies encourage this through developing the market economy and encouraging a culture of private property ownership. This, however, results in a heavy financial burden for lower income groups who cannot afford home ownership and who have no access to an affordable rental sector. A further issue is a lack of labour mobility in the absence of a flexible rental market. Eventually, many households will simply end up in private rental accommodation because they cannot afford ownership.

Legal under-regulation: a risk factor in private renting

The private sector is under-regulated and the legal conflict resolution system is slow, expensive and inefficient. As a result, many landlords will be discouraged from letting out their property. When private landlords rent out their apartment, they face risks: 1) tenants may leave without paying the rent; 2) tenants may accumulate utility payment arrears; 3) the unit may become run-down or damaged. Economic constraints, stemming from these legal insecurities, will drive up rent levels in the whole sector; landlords will try to ensure a reasonable profit margin or, alternatively, keep their second home empty if they do not find a tenant who is willing to pay the required rent. Based on interviews with landlords and real estate agents, we estimated the costs of such risks and concluded that to cover expected costs, landlords have to raise the rent level by 23 percent on average. Consequently, the

market rent has to cover the expected return on equity (53 percent of the market rent may be sufficient for this purpose only), management costs (accounting for roughly 8 percent of the full market rent), Personal Income Tax (PIT) (16 percent of rental income), and the cost of risks (23 percent). We came to the conclusion that, because of the risk and the tax/subsidy disincentives, market rents are not affordable for the average or lower income household.

The Financial and Institutional Structure of SRAs

SRAs act as intermediaries between potential landlords and social renters (for a more detailed analysis, see Hegedüs *et al.*, 2013) and – functioning under the central coordination of a National Housing Agency (NHA) – offer a guaranteed, low-risk arrangement to landlords. SRAs find and contact landlords who are willing to commit to long-term contracts (of perhaps 3, 5 or 7 years) for a rent level that is equal to approximately 70 percent of the net rent (market rent minus personal income tax). The SRA guarantees regular rental income to the landlord, manages potential risks and repayment in such a way as to ensure that the landlord's rate of return over the contractual period is still about 10 percent higher than it would be under individual market renting, and guarantees that the property will remain in good condition. It is necessary, though, that landlords contracted by the NHA are granted PIT exemption (which figures as tax expenditure in the national budget); furthermore, an amount equal to 20 percent of the rent level must be provided from the national budget as a contribution to the NHA's Risk Fund (which is accounted for as an outlay from the budget). The rent level to be paid by the tenant is 80 percent of the net market rent level. This includes the rent to be paid to the landlord and part of the cost relating to risk. On top of the 20 percent rent discount, the tenant will receive a housing (rent) allowance from the NHA (again, outlay from the budget) to make this rental option affordable. The tenant and the SRA must contribute to the Risk Fund in the amount of two months' rent (this corresponds to the deposit amount). Moreover, SRAs are eligible for a special grant to provide social support for the sub-groups of tenants that require this kind of assistance. This is a special risk-sharing financial model, where the cost and risk of social housing is shared between the landlord, the local SRA, the NHA (Risk Fund) and the tenants (See Figure 1).

This financial risk-sharing model is based on a private market risk analysis. The costs to be covered by the central budget are: 1) 20 percent of the net rent per SRA rental unit per month; 2) social work compensation; 3) housing allowance (direct outlay from the budget); and PIT allowance (tax expenditure). Due to tax avoidance, the latter has largely been missing from state tax revenues such that PIT exemption means no real loss for the central budget while providing landlords with a convenient opportunity

to make their leasing activity legal without a profit loss. The amount of housing allowance depends on household income and total housing cost (rent plus utilities). The main goal is to provide housing at a maximum of 40 percent of household income, where at least a modest disposable income remains after covering all housing costs. Based on a model considering three income groups and three submarkets, we came to the conclusion that the average housing allowance would be 25-30 percent of the total housing cost (around €65 per month per household).

Local SRAs will be approved by the NHA and the maximum eligible rent will also be centrally set. The operational costs of SRAs are covered by 10 percent of the rental income (the difference between the rent paid by the tenant and the rent paid to the landlord) and the grant for those requiring social work must be covered by the central budget through the NHA. The two months' contribution to the Risk Fund has to be paid by the SRA's own sources, which gives an incentive for efficient management. The Risk Fund is managed by the NHA and approves payments only when an SRA has proven that it has done everything that can be expected to manage the properties correctly, in terms of rent collection, property control and so on.

Figure 1. Financial model of the Social Rental Agencies, coordinated by a National Housing Agency (NHA)
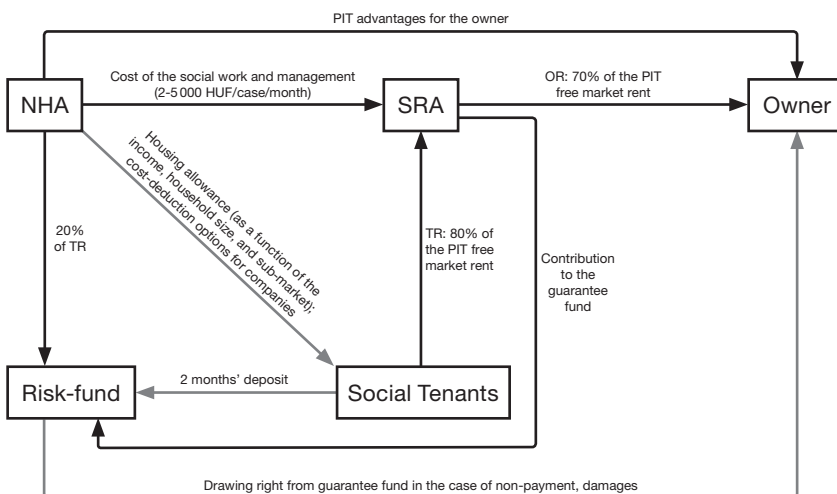
Financial sustainability is guaranteed by the realistic cost estimates and the incentive structure in the model. While providing affordable housing is the primary goal of SRAs, they can only undertake their activities in a sustainable way if they ensure tenant cooperation and regular payments. Unless the tenant is facing *force majeure,* uncooperative behaviour will have to be sanctioned with responses in the form of social work and/or the intervention of a mediating agency on behalf of the

SRA. If satisfactory agreement is not reached, the SRA will have to provide a way out for the tenant, either through the homeless provision system or with lower quality social housing (if available).

Different institutions have expressed their interest in the programme, including NGOs and local governments. One municipality, the city of Szombathely, has already made a decision at municipal level to introduce a pilot project following a similar model, but without the state subsidy and on a smaller scale (local level). Interviews with private landlords showed that they are open to the idea of an organisation that could take over some of their risks for a slightly reduced rental income. Many local governments and a number of non-governmental actors are showing serious interest as well. Furthermore, even some actors from the economic domain – financial institutions and state agencies – have expressed their support, and the introduction of Social Rental Agencies could unite these fragmented interests under a single framework. Policymakers occupying key positions have not committed yet, but they have recognised the need for new solutions in order to create an affordable housing sector with a reliable, stable tenure form. The next key question of the model is whether institutional political interest can be mobilised for its introduction and for leveraging the activities of Social Rental Agencies.

Conclusion

Although we have very limited information on the private rented sector due to the fact that it largely operates informally, it is becoming a crucial area for housing provision in transitional countries. The future role of the private rental sector is a key issue, as it has the potential to contribute to the efficiency of the housing system by making higher mobility possible, providing a more flexible housing supply and helping to eliminate distortions in the system, among other things. Moreover, the private sector can be used for social purposes – as is the case of social rental agencies in countries like Belgium, Italy and others; this can be especially important at a time when there is no demographic pressure for new construction. In transitional countries there have been several attempts to involve the private sector in public rental programmes, but most of the programmes have failed. In Poland, the introduction of 'occasional tenancy', a special tenure form, shows the need for supporting the development of the private sector.

The need for social housing and the limited financial resources for investing in this tenure has forced public agencies to use the private rental sector in certain types of social housing provision. We have seen that in Hungary, several programmes initiated by the municipalities and NGOs have been connected to the private rental sector, typically in the form of rent subsidy, but some programmes have provided

social services for tenants or helped them find rental apartments. Though the programmes have remained limited in terms of the number of tenants, they demonstrate the possibilities for using private rental for social purposes. There are similar examples in other transitional countries.

In the Czech Republic, the idea of using private renting for social purposes has been discussed in the past few years, and was considered as part of the 'complex solution of social housing' set out by the 'Housing Policy Strategy till 2020', passed by the Government in 2011 (Lux, 2013). The pilot 'guaranteed housing' programme used private rental housing for vulnerable households, with special guarantees provided to private landlords. The model became part of the Strategy for Social Inclusion, passed by the Government in 2011. The 'guaranteed housing' programme in the Czech Republic is basically the same as the Social Rental Agency model. It uses existing private rental housing stock for social purposes – i.e., as permanent rental housing for vulnerable, excluded, homeless, Roma, young and low-income households. Following a comprehensive rental risk assessment, private landlords receive a guarantee of having their costs covered (i.e., payment of rent, remuneration and judicial costs in the case of tenancy complications) if they offer long-term rental contracts with lower-than-market rent to persons or households from the target populations, and tenants receive a rent allowance.

In Poland, the TBS (housing cooperative) programme was a progressive step towards a new social housing model, but the budgetary constraints and the 'privatisation drive' called the sustainability of the programme into question (Muzioł-Węcławowicz, 2013). Some of the TBSs are renting apartments to municipalities, who then allocate them to households on the waiting list, which is actually a form of social rental agency. Moreover, municipalities may rent housing premises from investors and sub-lease them to tenants that are on their lists of people who qualify for housing support. Such contracts are set out either for an unspecified time (in the case of communal rental apartments and TBS premises) or a specified time (social premises). However, the availability of apartments for the needs of social rental agencies is a significant issue. Current market prices are too high in comparison with social rent (which is affordable for low-income people), which is a problem that will be difficult to bridge with state subsidies. In Poland, the shortage of housing is another factor that limits the possibility of the social rental agency model.

In Slovakia, traditional supply-side social housing programmes run by the State Housing Development Fund still constitute the main approach. According to Marek Hojsik (2013), the limited supply in the private rental sector makes the social rental agency model unrealistic.

In conclusion, the SRA model has the potential to contribute to the 'socialisation of the private rented sector' due to two factors. The first is related to the institutional interest of stakeholders; financial institutions as well as municipalities, real-estate agents and socially committed NGOs, have expressed interest in the SRA model as long as it is financially well-structured, the risks are shared among parties, and the costs and advantages are allocated evenly. Policymakers may also come to realise the advantages of a model that could increase tenure security but also contribute to the efficiency of the economic system through stimulating mobility and the mortgage market. The second factor is that leaving large numbers of under-housed and excluded people without support is unacceptable. The growing process of integration, which is an important aim in the European Union, can contribute to the harmonization of social/housing policies. The majority of new member states are in a situation very similar to Hungary and there is potential for regional cooperation in the area of social housing policy making.

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Tracking Homeless Women in Qualitative Longitudinal Research

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❯ **Abstract_** *This paper looks at the use of 'tracking' within a longitudinal study concerned with the service use and needs of homeless women. By reflecting on the process in relation to both ethical and practical considerations, this paper suggests that the successful retention of participants in this study (58 percent), as well as the ability to know more about those who did not continue in the research, was the result of four key elements. These were: the relationship between the research team and participants; the relationship between the research team and services; the role of service user advisors; and the importance of recognising respectful values across the research and within the research team itself. This paper also considers how the issue of tracking within research, as well as participants' views on this process, can offer insights into the ways in which service providers might better explain and utilise information-sharing across different statutory and voluntary sector services.*

❯ **Key words_** *Homelessness, gender, tracking, qualitative longitudinal research*

Introduction

Research into homelessness in the UK and elsewhere has, in general, focused on a particular aspect of the experience of homelessness, such as sex work, substance abuse or involvement with the criminal justice system, and has provided a 'snapshot' of the situation at one moment in time (Steele *et al.,* 2003; Christensen *et al.,* 2005). More recently, the value of longitudinal research, i.e., following a cohort of service user participants over a prolonged period of time, has been recognised (Pickering *et al.,* 2003; Abrahams, 2010). This research method enables a greater understanding of the situations that can lead to an increased risk of homelessness and of the way in which some homeless individuals move into and out of homelessness (Bootsmiller *et al.,* 1998). Because research is being conducted over a long period of time, there can be an increased understanding of the chaotic nature of life on the streets and in hostels and a grasp of the factors that affect the extent to which participants are able to engage with services designed to assist them.

This paper outlines the approach to following a group of homeless women over a two-year period, and discusses the ethical, practical and methodological challenges involved. Results and recommendations from the findings of the research itself are available elsewhere (Abrahams *et al.,* 2013; Williamson *et al.,* 2013).

Longitudinal Research with Homeless Populations

This paper contributes to a body of research that has explored the methodological challenges of recruiting, following and maintaining long term contact with various different homeless communities. The literature on homelessness and longitudinal research includes a focus on women with a history of interpersonal domestic violence (Clough *et al.,* 2010); sexual assault survivors (Campbell *et al.,* 2011); homeless men and women with substance misuse (Scott *et al.,* 2005) or dual diagnosis issues (Bootsmiller *et al.,* 1998); and younger people at risk of homelessness with alcohol issues (Boys *et al.,* 2003). Much of the literature recognises that maintaining contact with homeless individuals over a period of time is both labour intensive and time consuming, requiring flexibility and perseverance (McNaughton, 2005). A creative and innovative approach (Nind *et al.,* 2013), as well as an understanding of the pressures that homeless people are subject to, are further factors in maintaining a high level of continued response and engagement with the researchers.

A number of consistent themes emerge in this literature relating to the different types of methodological approaches of the studies. Most refer to the importance of using a range of methods including: the use of participant incentives at varying levels; a mixture of phone calls and letters; interim contacts with participants to maintain contact; and collecting a range of possible third party individual contacts,

both family and professional, through whom tracking activities can take place. In terms of the tracking process, the literature appears to fall within two camps: those articles which concentrate on the ways to improve attrition rates and those which focus on the ethical issues inherent in this process.

Additional factors that emerge within the research in terms of increasing the possibility of keeping track of homeless people over time include: focusing on the competence, skills and training of the researcher in order to ensure relationships of trust with participants (Conover *et al.,* 1997; Bootsmiller *et al.,* 1998); the use of 'searchers' – other homeless people paid to track those whom researchers are finding it difficult to find (Sosin *et al.,* 1990; Boys *et al.,* 2000); service user advisors involved in the tracking process to advise researchers on where they might access missing participants (Clough *et al.,* 2010); and the use of special cards, birthday and Christmas for example, to further enhance the relationship between the research team and participants (Bootsmiller *et al.,* 1998). One study (Conover *et al.,* 1997) also advocated the use of a research office, where participants could come, contact could be maintained and incentives could be given for the participants to return.

Not all of the studies address the ethical issues inherent in 'tracking' and instead are more focused on attrition rates (Ullman, 2011; North *et al.,* 2012). Research on this topic also refers to the concept of 'assertive tracking' (Caton *et al.,* 2005), which recognises that due to life circumstances this population may be less stable and more difficult to find using conventional research methods than the wider population.

In an article focused exclusively on the ethical issues of conducting longitudinal research in this area, Scott and White (2005) identify the key ethical concerns that arise in the course of tracking this group of service users. These were: informed consent; confidentiality; relationship boundaries between participant and researcher; duty to warn and break confidentiality; autonomy and privacy; the ethics of incentives; and finally, data integrity.

Whilst the majority of longitudinal studies inevitably address these issues when contemplating the methods that will be chosen to track participants over time, these dilemmas and discussions are often not reported within the study papers. Indeed, Campbell *et al*. (2011) noted the lack of reporting of methodological concerns in longitudinal research in the field of violence against women. Their review of existing longitudinal research in the field of sexual violence reported, primarily, a lack of data being reported in relation to attrition, and less on the methods used to achieve these rates (Campbell *et al.,* 2011). This paper also raised some important questions about the use of compensation and incentives in longitudinal research. Many of the studies mentioned above used financial incentives, as did the study which is the focus of this paper. Campbell and colleagues found that financial incentives ranged mostly from $10 – $60. They did find however that

"the two studies with the highest retention rates were also at the high end of the compensation range", with these two studies giving $60-$80 and $50, respectively (Campbell *et al.,* 2011, pp.452).

Whilst compensation is recommended ethically, in order to avoid coercion, it is important that the amounts offered do not interfere with the ability of the participant to make a free and informed decision about participation. Campbell also reports that some studies provided free therapy and/or course credits as incentives, but this is not discussed further, either in relation to the impact on the ability to give free consent or in relation to the impact this might have on the generalizability of methods across different welfare and support systems.

Finally, in relation to existing research on longitudinal research, much of the literature (Scott and White, 2005; Clough *et al.,* 2010; Ullman, 2011) recognises the need to have highly trained, skilled researchers who have the ability to develop a good rapport with participants, sometimes referred to in relation to 'respect' (Clough *et al.,* 2010). Whilst it is encouraging that respect and trust were discussed, the literature sometimes failed to acknowledge the inherent contradictions for researchers whose task of recruitment and avoiding attrition might in some situations compromise the ability to respect a participant's desire to withdraw from the research. For example, Bootsmiller *et al.* (1998), whilst reporting an older study, unquestioningly report that researchers are paid by piece rate, and that incentives were offered in the form of bonuses for the number of participants successfully tracked. The study authors fail to discuss how this might undermine the researcher's focus on the relationship between themselves and the participant if their own payment is incentivised in this particular way.

The current study describes the process of tracking homeless women during the research on which this paper is based. It focuses on the different methods of recruitment and retention, and provides a discussion of the ways in which methodological decisions were made. We also highlight some of the ethical issues which arose within the study and which are outlined here in relation to the wider literature on longitudinal research, and discuss how collaboration with others in the project helped us to carry out the research, whilst remaining mindful of the impact on participants and potential participants.

The TARA Project

Tara[1] is a longitudinal study which has followed a group of homeless women over two years in order to identify how their experiences and needs changed over time as they moved on, and to gain a fuller understanding of their complex needs, including their social care and health needs. It has also sought to identify the barriers that service providers face in engaging with homeless women over a sustained period of time, in order to understand how best to support women themselves to access, and maintain engagement with, support services. Additionally, we hoped to be able to devise appropriate targets that could be used to monitor the effectiveness of services for homeless women and provide an evidence base for social care practice.

The project built on previous research commissioned by local service providers (Henry *et al.,* 2010; Williamson *et al.,* 2010), which took a snapshot view of the provision of services to homeless women and evaluated a specific emergency women-only service. During the dissemination phase of the previous research, the value of providing longer-term perspectives that better capture the ongoing process of homeless women through the system became apparent. As a result, funding was obtained for a longer study.

Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical approval from the host institution's relevant university departmental Research Ethics Committee. This involved the committee reviewing all of the recruitment materials, research tools and tracking processes. In addition to the general ethical concerns of conducting research with human subjects, longitudinal research raises some specific concerns about privacy and consent.

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[1] The name 'Tara' was adopted as a result of a suggestion made by a member of the research team. The full title of the project 'A Two Year Study of the Social Care and Health Needs of Homeless Women and Women at Risk of Homelessness in Bristol' was considered cumbersome and also likely to be seen as stigmatising to participants. 'Tara' is regarded as a member of the Buddhist pantheon, but is also prominent in Hinduism. She is traditionally regarded as being the mother of liberation, founder of the Buddhist feminist movement and a committed feminist who symbolises compassion, healing, serenity, mercy and success in achievement. The name seemed to resonate from the outset with all our interviewees, whether or not they had any religious views. As the research continued, we began to find that spirituality was of considerable importance to many of the women we spoke to and the choice of name, which we discussed with participants as necessary, was very much appreciated by them.

'Tracking' as the name of the process

The centre where the research took place has worked for many years with a wide range of individuals who have experienced abuse and complex trauma in their lives. In this context, 'tracking' often has negative connotations, representing a process whereby abusers have stalked and harassed their victims over long periods of time, using a variety of methods and adapting to new technological resources (Humphreys and Thiara, 2002; Perry, 2012). Using this term in reference to a process intended to be beneficial to all concerned felt extremely problematic and somewhat at odds with the feminist and participatory values which the centre espouses.[2] The team looked at a range of other terms but has always come back to the position that the idea of 'tracking' individuals inevitably involves a power imbalance between those being followed and those doing the following (Oakley, 2000; Williamson, 2000).

A meta-analysis carried out by Pickering *et al.* (2003) of studies relating to home-lessness in the UK and USA showed that this is the term most widely used by researchers and we decided to retain this term, albeit reluctantly, to link our study to the wider cohort of research in this area.

Confidentiality

Linked to our work in the area of gendered violence was an awareness of risks to service users of any breach of confidentiality. In our previous research and in other projects, it was evident that women were fearful of repercussions following the interviews should any information be compromised. Their fears related to current and previous partners, pushers, pimps, other residents in hostels and staff members. They were assured that no information would be forthcoming from the researchers without their full consent, albeit within the normal limits of confidentiality described below, that every interview would be cleaned of any names or indicators of identity and that no personal names would be used in any quotes.

In relation to the limits of confidentiality (Williamson *et al.,* 2005), participants were informed at the outset that, whilst we would maintain their confidentiality, if they were to tell us about a risk of significant harm to themselves or others, we would have a duty to discuss this disclosure with a third party, most likely a key worker from within the service where the participant was recruited. We were clear that no action would be taken before discussion with the individual concerned. It was our experience that participants understood these limits to confidentiality, as they formed part of their agreements with a range of service providers. There was one

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2   Feminist values can be seen as concerned with issues around power and control and a commitment to collaborative working with participants, who are seen as experts in their own lives and able to share their experience and give informed opinion, rather than being seen merely as providing information. Research should be carried out with care for participants' rights, mutual respect and attention to transparency and reciprocity (Edwards, 1993; Glucksman 1994).

incident during the project which resulted in an informal discussion with a service manager about general safety concerns, but the normal safeguarding policies were not enacted as no specific details of potential harm to any specific service user had been forthcoming. In this case, the service manager was able to alert staff to ensuring that their normal safeguarding policies were being used within the unit.

Consent

As part of our project, we wanted to be able to ask service providers about the service being provided to the participant. Consent was always established in writing and researchers talked through all aspects of every consent form before participants were asked to sign. To do this, women were asked to give specific written consent for us to approach named workers, whether a) to confirm that a service was being provided, b) to confirm that is was provided and subsequently used, or c) to obtain an idea of progress. These three levels of consent were identified through discussion with the project's active service user advisors and advisory group. Providing a choice of full or partial consent (with 2 options) to tracking gave participants control over whether we were allowed full or partial access to information about them by a third party.

It was made clear to participants that we would honour whichever option was selected. This aspect of tracking is discussed in greater detail later in this paper but it is important to note that in many longitudinal studies, consent to track individuals through services and workers was generic and gave participants little choice about who could be contacted and at what point (Caton *et al.,* 2005). All the consent-to-track forms that we used referred to specific services used and had a defined end date. Irrespective of the completed written permissions, consent was enacted in the research as a continuous process. If participants became upset or wished to stop the interview, we adhered to their request. Participants were told repeatedly that they did not have to answer all questions and were reminded that if they did not want to go into detail they could answer yes or no, or ask us to move on.

External partners

In addition to the external ethical review of the research methods and recruitment materials, the project also sought advice from the project advisory group, which consisted of other researchers, local and national service providers, and ex-service users. The involvement of service user advisors was a crucial asset in the development of the research (Abrahams *et al.,* 2014). We were extremely fortunate that three of the four women who had presented at a dissemination event for the previous research were willing to act as advisors to this project. Their knowledge and expertise gave us insights that proved integral to the project. All three advisors brought their practical experience of accessing a wide range of services to the project and offered

us invaluable advice throughout about how to recruit and maintain contact with homeless women and about how to ask particularly sensitive questions about their experiences. These women acted not just as advisors to, but also as ambassadors for the project. In developing this relationship, we provided training for the advisors – both in terms of the initial dissemination event by supporting the women to build their own confidence to speak publicly, and latterly by providing seminars on research methods. Where possible, meetings took place at the university as an active attempt to break down the barriers between the advisors and the academic institution (Williamson, 2000). We like to think that by the end of the project, the university was a place in which the advisors felt comfortable. All three advisors have gone on to paid and voluntary work where they have used some of the skills from being advisors to this and other projects (Abrahams *et al.,* 2014).

Methodology

The following outlines the key aspects of the methodological approach of the research. This includes issues related to recruitment, the research process and tracking. It is important to clarify that the research team consisted of four experienced qualitative researchers, three of whom were involved directly in the field interviews, the majority of which were conducted by two of the team.

Recruitment

Over the four months between September and December 2011, the research team recruited and interviewed a total of 38 women. Women were recruited from a range of places: a women's emergency night shelter; a different women's hostel with varying levels of support for alcohol and drug issues; and hostels for sex workers and those in contact with probation. In total, women were recruited directly from 11 services. We also tried to recruit women not currently using residential services through flyers placed in other spaces including soup kitchens, libraries and young people's services. At the second-stage interviews six months later we re-interviewed 28 women, and at the final stage, 22 women were still engaged with the project.

In terms of the initial recruitment process we were able to visit the major service providers working in the field and talk directly to workers about the project. We then visited the services to talk to potential participants in communal spaces as a way of explaining what we doing. Some women were informed of the research by their key workers, others responded to posters placed in the hostels. If individuals were interested in taking part, further information in the form of a small leaflet was supplied to women by the research team, and arrangements were made for an interview. In some cases, especially within the women-only night shelter, the interviews were carried out immediately. In other cases, they were scheduled for the

following day, bearing in mind the problems we knew women had in keeping/ remembering appointments and the number of different services they might be accessing. The research used a purposive sample with the aim of trying to recruit 40 women into the initial cohort. In order to try and increase the diversity of the sample, a number of specific service providers were approached. For example, services aimed at black and minority ethnic women (BME), as well as services specifically for young people.

Process

At the first interview, women were reminded of the purpose of the project and asked to sign a consent form. At the end of the interview, they were asked to give consent (discussed fully later) for researchers to talk to their support workers. All of the initial cohort indicated that they were prepared to take part in further interviews, and a contact form was then completed with their current address and mobile number or email address. We also asked for as many contact points as possible, including family, friends and one or more named agency workers. Detailed notes were taken to ensure that any contact via family or friends would be safe and not endanger, either emotionally or physically, the participant. This enabled us, in seeking further interviews, to use both primary contact points (i.e., directly with the woman) and secondary access, which was achieved primarily via third party service providers. Women were also given a project business card with our names and contact numbers and asked to tell us if they moved on or changed their mobile number and if they were happy for us to keep in touch between interviews and, if so, what the preferred method was.

As compensation for taking part, women were given £20, details of which were not included within the information sheet to avoid possible inducement/coercion, and were also sent a personalised card signed by their interviewer. Some women were surprised to receive any remuneration; others rapidly informed their friends and fellow residents. We later learned that although the cash incentive was welcomed at first, by the time of the subsequent interviews taking part had become more important, and many at first refused the money. From an ethical perspective, we discussed at length the issue of providing financial incentives for participation in the research (Fry *et al.*, 2006; Singer and Couper, 2008). The cards, however, proved to be of far greater importance and some had kept all of their cards and contact notes over the duration of the project, displaying them to the researcher on subsequent visits. This was an important part of the ongoing recruitment and retention process and highlights the importance of the researcher/participant relationship.

Tracking

In deciding on the approach to following women during the project, it was considered to be important that, wherever possible, interviews and contact should be made by the same researcher. This strategy enabled rapport and trust to build and undoubtedly contributed to the level of contact we were able to maintain. This is an approach recognised by other researchers (Bootsmiller *et al.,* 1998), who have suggested that the relationship between the researcher and participant is perhaps even more important that any financial incentives to participation. Initial follow-up contact was made about two months after the first interview. The contact via mobile phone was kept deliberately short and simple, and women were asked to text back 'OK' to confirm they had gotten the message. In actual fact, quite a few of them responded with detailed and encouraging messages, indicating that they had found the interviews helpful. On the other hand, a number of the women had 'forgotten' the interviews and needed prompting by a call to the mobile number before they could relate to the research project. Others had indicated they only wanted letter contact; in this case, a stamped addressed envelope was included in the letter. The research team shared tips and knowledge, and much practical learning took place during this early follow-up. This included: not ringing in the morning, as those on any form of medication took time to surface, as do sex workers; that women may not respond because they have no credit on the phone and to try again a few days later; and that some women were very wary of calls from withheld or unknown numbers. In this final case, a short text, indicating whom it was from and that a call would be made from the same number in five minutes, proved surprisingly effective.

Findings

The following sections address the findings of the study in relation to the perspectives of the participants, data from the tracking processes and reflections from the research team. This includes: how we made tracking work; comparing women who were successfully tracked to those who were not; tracking through third party agencies; the relationship between the research team and participants; potential harm to participants; and the relationship between the research team and service providers.

Making 'tracking' work

In terms of the women's responses to our attempts to stay in contact with them, of the thirty-eight women who participated initially, nine sent a basic response to the follow-up text message and a further nine responded very positively, giving details of where they were and what they were doing. Two women who did not respond had been assessed at interview as having minor learning difficulties. They were

subsequently visited informally and expressed their wish to remain with the project. Of those who forgot that the interview had taken place, two were in the middle of personal crises and after further text messages, recognised the research and said they were happy to engage with the researcher again. A further four in this category were in poor mental and physical health and responded in a confused manner. Their caseworker confirmed they were still in residence (within specific services) and willing to participate in further interviews. A further one was traced via her caseworker and was keen to continue. The remaining eleven women did not respond to the initial contact made by the researchers; in some cases their whereabouts were not known, in others the caseworkers agreed to try to make contact.

Breaking these figures down into the various services within which recruitment took place shows considerable differences between the various agencies. It might have been thought that the temporary nature of the night service (and the fact that it was closed down six months later, creating the need for women to move on) would mean that the women there would be less likely to respond than those in the more settled hostels, but this was not the case.

By the time we approached women to carry out the second interview, four months after the initial follow-up and six months after the initial interview, the situation had changed again. Some of those who had responded very positively to the interim contact now came back to us to say that they were in education or employment and, although happy to tell us how they were, felt too busy to give an interview. Others let us know, either directly or via caseworkers, that they had returned 'home', and some failed to respond to the approach. In this latter situation, two approaches were made to contact the women, after which no further attempts were made, since it was an essential part of our ethical procedures to respect their privacy and ensure that our contact measures could at no time be considered harassment. We confirmed that we would be happy to meet up again if they so wished. On the other hand, contacts with former and current caseworkers, and following the leads women had given us, enabled contact to be made with six of those previously missing, and a total of twenty-eight interviews were able to be carried out.

A similar process of making contact was carried out between the second and third interviews. Inevitably, given the problems they were dealing with (Williamson *et al.,* 2013) and the temporary nature of much of their accommodation, some had moved on (often more than once) and we were not able to contact them or no response was received from our approaches. Others contacted us to report their whereabouts or give new phone numbers. One woman, missing from the second interview cohort, made contact again and was interviewed as part of the third wave. A total of 22 women were interviewed at the final interviews, giving a 58 percent response

rate from the initial cohort of 38 women. In terms of findings, it is important to recognise that tracking women for the purposes of conducting follow-up interviews is not the only outcome of this approach.

Comparing women who were tracked with those who were not

As a result of the methods we used to track progress, we have been able to see how women move through the housing system and what has happened to all but one of our original interviewees. Of the 16 women we were not able to track at the final stage: two had returned to the family home (one abroad); three had moved since the first interview and were in supported housing; two had returned to their partners (at least one to an abusive relationship); two had not moved and were still in supported housing; one was recalled to prison; and one woman was residing in an assessment unit with her baby. We were unable to glean any details on one woman from the original sample. All the information pertaining to the other women was obtained through service providers thanks to the previously obtained written consent of the participants

In terms of housing and location, there appeared to be little difference across the participant group and those women who chose not to continue participation in the study. However, our analysis of the issues faced by these two groups – which included experience of mental health issues, domestic and sexual violence, child abuse, drug or alcohol misuse, involvement within the criminal justice system and sex work – showed that the non-participating group disclosed fewer of these issues. This may represent a bias in the sample so it is important to consider why these differences might have occurred. In this regard, we believe there are three possible explanations: 1) this group of women were not experiencing as many complex issues as the participant group and therefore moved on with their lives and out of the research, 2) they did not disclose the issues because they had less opportunity within the latter interviews to do so; we were aware that some of the issues were only discussed in later interviews where trust and relationships had been established, and finally, 3) these women may have been in denial about the issues they faced and therefore were not in a position to address them, disclose them to us or engage with the relevant services.

There are a number of reasons why the research team was able both to get permission from participants to follow their progress through different services, and to maintain contact themselves with participants over the course of the research resulting in such a high level of continuing engagement with the project. These included: the careful management of secondary tracking through third parties; the relationship between the research team and participants; the relationship between the research team and service providers; and the involvement of service user advisors in designing the approach.

'Tracking' through third party agencies

As outlined in the consent section above, in order to facilitate the tracking of women through third party agencies and in order to be able to obtain information about participants' current situations if they moved away, each participant was asked if we could speak to a named worker from specific services about their progress and/or use of service. In terms of securing consent to contact specific services, many women were in contact with more than one service; therefore, the number of consents given by participating women ranged from zero to four. A total of 48 full consents and 16 partial consents were given during the initial interview phase. Some additional consents were obtained during subsequent interviews where women engaged with additional service providers. It was interesting that when giving multiple consents, participants gave either full or partial consent to all of the services they gave us permission to access. Also noted was that participants were more likely to give partial consents if they were accessing services related to the criminal justice system – for example, the police or probation services. This suggests that in terms of personal information collected for the purpose of research, participants were less comfortable sharing information about potentially criminal behaviours than information about drug/alcohol use and/or mental health support. This finding raises questions about the level of consent collected from other potential participants of longitudinal research. Much of the research outlined at the outset of this paper talks about consent to track participants but does not highlight the specificities of this consent, how it is explained to participants or the limitations of the consent given. Whilst our findings suggest that, on the whole, participants were happy to give us full consent to access information from a range of services, this was not always the case.

Relationship between research team and participants

By ensuring that the same researcher was responsible for interviewing and main-taining contact with participants, a relationship of confidence and trust could be developed, both within interviews and in the periods between each phase. By doing what we said we would and not breaking our promises to the participants – for example, by contacting them when we promised and turning up on time – we were able to build a relationship of trust. Connected to this issue was recognising the reasons why women might be participating in the research. In our third and final interviews, we explored why women had taken part, and their reasons ranged from a strong desire to help other women to needing the payment which we offered for each interview (£20 – €25.51), although, as discussed earlier, this appeared to matter less as time went on.

> I have to be honest with you, as I've said to you before, all I heard was is you get £20 for speaking to someone, and I was skint and I needed a drink. So that's why I hung about. But when you contacted me again and you come out the next time and you basically explained what it was like before, it was nice to hear that someone reminded me what I was like, where I've come to in my journey, know what I mean? From where I started to where I am now, it's just like I just can't believe it's been nearly a year.… And I've made so many changes in so many things within a year, it's been really nice you know… […]..It's like it's nice now, I don't do it for the money now as I said to you. The last time you come I didn't even realise I was getting the money.

Whilst we did not advertise the payment at any of the interviews, in one of the services it became apparent that 'word got around'. However, as this quote illustrates, whilst some women may have participated initially because of the payment, this enabled the team to build a meaningful relationship with participants that enabled ongoing contact with the research. This participant continued:

> you're such a lovely lady, <name>, you know even last week I felt really upset I had to let you down… you accepted that, you know, you said 'Come on (name), I'll still take you for a coffee and that' and 'I will still come round to see you', you know, and I thought why, she's still coming to see me, that's nice, you know. So yeah somebody else would say 'oh she's just taking the piss now', you know what I mean, but you've not thought that, you know.

'Sticking with' participants, meeting them for a coffee or a chat, and taking an interest in their lives, irrespective of whether they continued to take part or not, enabled us to maintain relationships we might otherwise have lost. This required the recognition that due to the chaos and complexity of some of the women's lives they would inevitably have to cancel appointments, may be unwell, or might have to prioritise other things in their lives above the objectives of our research. Recognising first and foremost that the women who took part were people, not just participants, enabled us to develop relationships that resulted in greater levels of participation.

> Well I wanted to carry on, that's why I phoned you back on the new phone number and everything, cos I wanted the project to see that from where I was to where I've got to, yeah, to see there is organisations out there that help women. And that's why I gave you a new phone number to say, please get in touch, you know, cos I wanted to tell you, you know, what's happened.

[Interviewer: so how did you feel about being asked to take part on the project?] Um… I felt quite privileged that people were going to listen to what I had to say… so yeah I'm quite privileged really. [And do you know why you agreed to take part, can you remember why?] Cos like… I agreed to take part I think because… to give a little back to what people have given me.

A number of participants actively contacted us to let us know that their circumstances had changed and/or that they had new contact details. As illustrated in the first extract above, this was often motivated by a desire to help other women, to thank the services that had helped them, and by an emotional investment in the relationship with the research team. As the second extract demonstrates, this relationship was based partly on giving homeless women a voice through the research process.

Potential harm to participants

One of the main concerns of the research team was the potential harm to participants in answering questions about very personal and difficult issues in their lives (DVRG, 2004). In this respect the team took advice from the service user advisors about what and how to ask about different issues. The involvement of service user advisors and their importance in the tracking and recruitment process is discussed later. We were aware from some of the discrepancies in information provided during different interviews that there were times when women chose not to discuss certain issues, but as they developed trust in the motives and behaviour of the researchers, they would often reveal more information in a later interview. In particular, issues related to the women's own children and their past experiences of childhood abuse were among the most difficult for them to explore. In this respect we felt confident that women were comfortable not answering questions we asked.

[Interviewer: And what about the questions – was it intrusive? Was it…] Well I didn't find it intrusive. Like you said, if I didn't want to answer I never had to answer anyway. But no there was no intrusive questions, none at all. [Okay, right anything we could have done better.. to get more done, anything else we could have asked?] I don't think so to be honest with you, I think you're absolutely brilliant, I've got to be honest.

As the extract illustrates, this participant was clear in her understanding that she did not need to answer questions if she did not want to and, despite being asked some difficult questions, did not feel that the process was intrusive. Again, this is partly due to the excellent advice we received from the service user advisors and the wider advisory group about how to ask these questions. It was also due to the highly skilled researchers, both of whom had many years of experience interviewing women with complex trauma.

[Interviewer: And what about the questions we asked, did you feel uncomfortable with anything?] No, not at all. Not at all. How has it worked out for you doing the project? [It's been really interesting…] Has it? [really really interesting, yes.] What have you found out? Any major things that you've found out? [Well what we're going to do is…I'll talk to you about it now actually…we are having an event..]

Finally, in terms of the relationship between researchers and participants, we worked hard within the research team to recognise the contribution of participants. The event referred to by the researcher in the extract above was a final participant event, which we ran to feedback the research findings prior to the academic conference and which was organised around the needs of the different participants. For the research team, this was an important stage of the research and recognised that the relationship between the team and participants did not end after the data collection but was part of the motivation to effectively disseminate the findings to commissioners and service providers. As with the recruitment of the service user advisors for this project, some of the women who took part in this research may well decide to act as advisors to future research. The secondary purpose of the participant event was to provide a clear ending to this part of the research. Some women talked about the difficulty of ending relationships with key workers, and whilst we were not providing a service as such, we wanted to make the end of the project as clear as possible. Again this was discussed at length with the advisory group. Given the close relationship that had developed between some participants and the researchers, which is evident in some of the quotes above, we wanted to make clear that the research was at an end, thank participants for their involvement, give them feedback from the anonymised results and celebrate their lives. There are a number of issues that are raised here in relation to the involvement of participants within the research process beyond the participant role. A separate paper is currently being written which addresses these issues in more detail (Abrahams *et al.,* 2014). However, it is important to note here that irrespective of what this type of involvement is called – service user involvement, participants' perspectives or public patient involvement – much more consideration needs to be given to the practical support that service users with complex issues might need in order to facilitate their participation in such activities.

Relationship between research team and service providers

As discussed earlier, the Centre where this research took place has a long history of activist research within the local community and has worked hard to maintain and enhance good relationships. The research team had developed these relationships during the previous research (Henry *et al.,* 2010; Williamson *et al.,* 2010) and this continued in the planning phase for the current project. Involvement from services and commissioners included having representatives from key agencies on

the project advisory group, so that they were aware of the objectives of the research, the methods being used and, again, were able to trust that the team was conducting themselves within the parameters they had set. In this respect, being able to pay smaller organisations for staff time on the advisory group meant that this type of engagement was possible. As two service providers noted at the final advisory group meeting, they were much more likely to respond to emails requesting help from our team because they trusted us as a result of their involvement on the advisory group and had confidence in what we were doing. Very few of the published papers on other longitudinal work discuss the relationship between service provider staff and the research team in detail.

Our engagement with service providers also included the development of relationships with front line staff. Staff had been given feedback from the previous research during a dissemination event in 2010 which was free for them to attend and which resulted in a wider knowledge of the research and the team. At the start of the current research, we liaised with services at the initial recruitment phase as well as through contact during the tracking phases. By conducting interviews on service premises, staff were aware of who we were and what we were doing. This helped when we were trying to locate participants, as services were willing to forward letters or messages to clients on our behalf.

Due to our previous research in this area and the impact of that research, managers and front line workers had confidence that the research team would not exploit the participants, their service clients, and that we would ensure the appropriate dissemination of findings to themselves and commissioners in the area. Many services were aware that we had engaged service users in the dissemination phase of our previous research from feedback they had received from those service users.

It was important in our dealings with services to recognise the different pressures that staff and managers face. We were always careful to make explicit that we knew that assisting the research was an additional task on top of sometimes difficult workloads and other stresses. This meant making time when visiting premises to listen to staff, find out about new changes in service contracts and, where we were able, to offer support.

Reflecting on the process

As indicated earlier in this paper, the research team was aware from the outset that the term 'tracking' is, itself, problematic and somewhat at odds with the values which have enabled us to nurture the relationships which have, in turn, enabled us to follow women over the course of the project. As Pickering *et al*. (2003) highlight, the process of following the lives of homeless individuals must be undertaken with

extreme sensitivity: "It would certainly be highly unethical to undertake a study that would make participants feel stigmatised or that would have a detrimental psychological impact" (2003, p.33).

Our aim was to treat the women with the same respect as any other members of society, but at the same time we were in possession of knowledge obtained from service providers about how they were engaging with services. Given this contradiction and the content of the material we were dealing with, there was considerable emotional stress on all the team and a need to be aware of how this was impacting on us (Scott and White, 2005). This required constant reflexivity on the part of the researchers and examination of how we were working at each stage of the project to an extent that might not normally be considered appropriate. Whilst the longitudinal homelessness research recognises the need to provide training for field researchers (Ullman, 2011), it also often fails to recognise the skills of those staff, particularly where recruitment is financially incentivised (Bootsmiller *et al.,* 1998) rather than based on the recognition of the expertise of those staff. The team on the current project met regularly to discuss the ethical and personal dimensions of their work and followed detailed protocol as regards their personal safety and emotional well-being. A 'buddy' system enabled debriefing and a chance to reflect with another researcher after each interview and after each detailed feedback session with the team leader. One researcher commented:

> It was a privilege to listen to these women and feel that they trusted us to enable their voices to be heard in a wider context. But it was highly stressful to listen to their experiences and balance this with the knowledge from service providers while maintaining feminist values. Without the constant support of everyone on the team it would have impossible to do so.

This quote highlights the importance of emotional support for the research team to enable them to engage appropriately with research participants whilst maintaining values of respect. It recognises the importance of making the safety of researchers central to the other ethical concerns of tracking participants over time.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the tracking process utilised within the TARA project and discussed throughout the methods and processes used, as well as the different responses and feedback to those from research participants, service providers, service user advisors, and from the research team themselves. The methods used in the current study – multiple personal and service contacts; consent to track through third party agencies; compensation and/or incentives; and the building of respectful relationships between researchers and participants/service providers

– are those broadly identified by Pickering (2003) and commended by McNaughton (2005). In this research, the potential participants represented an exceptionally vulnerable and hidden population. The research team collaborated closely with service user advisors, advisory group members and agency staff to ensure that the tracking and recruitment methods being utilised did not unduly impact on the well-being of the participants. There are key lessons to be learned from this process, which may assist researchers in other fields in ensuring that they engage with participants in an ethical and appropriate way.

Underpinning all of the relationships within the research project are the underlying values brought by the key stakeholders. What worked within this project was the way in which these were facilitated by regular meetings and discussion and by upholding an overall ethos of compassion and respect. For example, by sending a text message to a participant, taking cakes on a visit to services to thank staff, or asking for and incorporating people's opinions in feedback to those responsible for the commissioning of services. Four key elements have been identified through this process: the relationship between the research team and participants; the relationship between the research team and services; the role of service user advisors; and the importance of recognising values across the research and within the research team itself.

In terms of the implications of this for future research, we found that if participants were actively engaged in the process, they were, on the whole, happy for the research team to 'track' their use of services and location over time. The exception was in relation to the use of statutory services connected to the criminal justice system – for example, the police and probation. In terms of social care practice, this research found that participants wanted a much better and clearer dialogue about how their personal information might be shared in a way that recognised their complex and multiple needs. For example, during the dissemination phase of this research, participants discussed the idea of a 'passport', which would highlight the issues they faced and remove the necessity for them to recount in detail, over and over again, traumatic and difficult life events and problems. In this respect, participants are aware that services might share information about them but wanted to be involved in deciding how this would work in practice to their benefit. This demonstrates that whilst tracking needs to be done sensitively and within the boundaries discussed with potential participants, participants saw our request to track them within a wider context of information-sharing across services that are there to help them. The findings of this study, therefore, have implications not just in terms of the methodology of tracking research participants, but for service providers concerned with ensuring that information-sharing protocols and procedures are appropriate to the needs of service users more generally.

Acknowledgement

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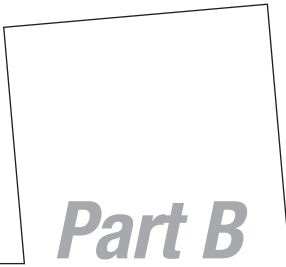
Part B

Milestones in the Development and Implementation of a Governmental Strategy on Homelessness in the Czech Republic

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> **Abstract_** *The goal of this paper is to assess the first ever government strategy on homelessness in the Czech Republic. The paper also aims to describe the main milestones in the implementation of the strategy and in securing its legitimacy in the context of a welfare state regime that is not yet clearly defined. The results show that the strategy was prepared at an opportune time, when it was already possible to draw on relevant data from other studies produced by Czech researchers. This meant that the strategy was distinct from policies elsewhere as it was tailored to the Czech socioeconomic context. However, the vague formulation of measures relating to the priority area of social housing means there is a risk that many of the planned activities may not ultimately be implemented. In addition, the chaos that ensued during its preparation – as has been typical in transition countries – may mean that important steps in tackling homelessness will not be realized in the foreseeable future.*

> **Keywords_** *Forming homelessness policy, post-socialist economies, media discourse, policy evaluation*

Introduction

This paper seeks to assess the 2013 government strategy on homelessness adopted in the Czech Republic. The review outlined in this paper is distinct to other policy reviews; for example, it is not possible to assess the Czech strategy in the same way as strategies adopted in Ireland (O'Sullivan, 2008) or Scotland (Anderson, 2007) have been assessed. The reason is that only one year has lapsed since the Czech Republic adopted its first ever strategy on homelessness and most of the measures proposed have not yet been implemented. Consequently, no measurable effects – such as a decrease in the number of homeless people or improved success in reintegration or prevention – have yet been determined. It was possible, however, to look at the level of public support and the level of consensus secured across various stakeholders using in-depth interviews and an analysis of media discussions on the topic. The degree of public support and consensus for government policies usually predetermines how successful they are. For this purpose, media articles and discussions on the strategy that were available on the Internet were reviewed. In addition, five interviews were conducted with eminent stakeholders involved in policy implementation: a researcher (one interview), NGO staff members (two interviews), a municipality representative (one interview) and a state administrator (one interview). Two of these respondents were actively involved in the preparation of the strategy. The second source for assessing the national strategy are the results of a local strategy on homelessness that was adopted a year earlier in the capital city of Prague. Given the longer time lapse since this strategy was implemented, it is possible to carry out a better assessment of the degree to which the initial objectives were met. It serves to inform our understanding of the potential success of the national strategy.

However, the goal of this paper is more than just a policy review. It also aims to describe the milestones leading up to the first government strategy on homelessness in a specific context of social transformation, which is characterised by the transition from: 1) a planned to a market economy, 2) a centralised system to decentralised administration, and 3) a situation marked by the imposition of a single ideology to freedom of expression, as well as the clash and competition of ideas and interpretations. The description of these milestones, although pertaining specifically to the Czech context, may parallel other countries undergoing major transformation. It also has important implications for comparing the success of homelessness strategies between countries with different welfare and housing systems. In other words, in countries with traditional welfare state regimes, the strategies for creating and implementing policies may differ from the strategies used in transition countries, where reforms have resulted in the abolition of many previously powerful institutions and where there has been unprecedented freedom in critical public discourse targeting the basic pillars of society. Unlike Western

societies, existing institutional structures (weakened by regime change) and prevailing attitudes (disqualified by the former regime) in the Czech Republic have had little ability to limit the scope and openness of the process of re-conceptualising fundamental aspects of society.

It is therefore no surprise that 'reforms in the public sector (…) are unfinished, that institutions in different welfare sectors follow different principles even within one country, and that there is a big gap between rhetoric and the actual implementation of programmes' (Hegedüs, 2011, p.15). And it is no surprise that the application of theories of welfare regimes to European post-socialist states is made problematic by the lack of congruence in power structures and the uncertainty of collective ideologies, which follow a sudden breakdown of political systems (Stephens *et al.,* forthcoming). It is still not clear whether post-socialist states represent a unique type of welfare state regime or whether they are still in the process of evolving into an existing type of welfare state according to Esping-Andersen's (1990) influential typology. The role of path dependence also remains crucial for our understanding of post-transition events; uncertainty as to the effects of reforms often led politicians to opt for 'tried and tested' solutions from the past, or for a mixture of old and new approaches. Such measures often proved unsustainable, ineffective and poorly targeted in the context of new socioeconomic conditions (Pichler-Milanovic, 2001; Lux *et al.,* 2009; Hegedüs *et al.*, 2013).

The goal of this paper is thus also to demonstrate how the issue of homelessness ultimately reached the national agenda and was 'institutionalised' in a country that had witnessed, and is still witnessing, the transformation of discourses, and where this transformation often involves short-term, quick-fix policies that combine old recipes with new ideas.

The first section of the paper situates the homelessness strategy in the socioeconomic context of the Czech Republic, with a specific focus on housing policy. Understanding the housing context provides an explanation as to why the Czech Republic adopted its first government strategy on homelessness 23 years after the change of political regime. The second section of the paper describes the current legislative framework. The goal of the third section is to define the milestones leading up to the government's strategy on homelessness. The final section then describes and evaluates this strategy before setting out the paper's conclusions.

A Changing Housing Context

Visible homelessness is an entirely new phenomenon in post-socialist countries. It first emerged after 1990 as a consequence of the transformation of the economic and housing systems. Under socialism, unemployment and homelessness were officially non-existent as the right (and obligation) to work came with the right to adequate housing – and the state was obliged to provide both. Before 1990, most of the economy in the Czech Republic was in state ownership and was controlled centrally. In the field of housing, this meant that state intervention was directed toward the decommodification of housing through extensive housing subsidies, property expropriations and rent/price regulations. These state interventions resulted in a large public (and semi-public) rental sector where rents were kept at extremely low levels. Due to the decommodification of housing, state support for housing construction, and the extensive interference of the totalitarian regime in the private life of households (through police and other forms of control), there was very little visible homelessness under state socialism.

After 1990, the Czech Republic abandoned central planning and substantially cut (or eliminated) housing construction subsidies. However, successive governments maintained a conservative form of rent control and tenure security for all existing tenancies and subsidised the increased interest rates on housing loans taken out by housing cooperatives or homeowners before 1990. Consequently, despite the state's immediate withdrawal from housing provision, sitting tenants and home-owners remained relatively well protected due to the remnants of rent regulation and 'old debt' subsidisation. In a situation of high uncertainty, the first Czech post-socialist governments used housing as a 'shock absorber' to make the transition process politically feasible (Struyk, 1996; Hegedüs and Tosics, 1998).

The conservative rent control regime applied to all existing tenancies (i.e. all open-term contracts concluded before 1993). The maximum rent levels per square metre of dwelling floor area for these contracts were determined in a decree issued by the Ministry of Finance (Decree No. 176/1993 Coll.) and were amended in July each year between 1990 and 2002. Between 1999 and 2006 the rents for running tenancies were frozen (first in real values and since 2002 also in nominal values). Throughout the 1990s, sitting tenants also retained extensive tenant security, a legacy inherited from the socialist period. They enjoyed the following rights:

- Rents could not be increased unilaterally by a landlord (and without state intervention, rents would remain frozen at low levels);

- An open-term contract (called a 'deed')[1] could not be terminated by the landlord in any circumstances other than those specified in the Civil Code;[2]

- Tenancy rights to the flat following from an open-term contract (deed) could be transferred by a tenant to his or her descendants, other family relatives or exchanged with other 'deed-holders';

- A landlord could only give a tenant notice via the judicial system and if the tenant did not agree with the grounds for notice a long legal procedure ensued. According to the estimates of private landlords, justified termination of tenancies took on average between two and three years during the 1990s;[3]

- Even in the case of valid notice, the landlord had to secure substitute housing acceptable to the tenant. A landlord had to offer at least three alternative dwellings and the tenant had the right to refuse all of them. Moreover, the tenant had the right to similar security and contract conditions in the substitute housing as they had in the original dwelling, including a low regulated rent. If the tenant refused to cooperate, the court could make the decision on the substitute housing. However, the arrangements described above (i.e. the obligation of a landlord to find another empty flat with regulated rent) made eviction practically impossible.

Strong tenure security gave rise to a black market and relatively extensive rent arrears. This kind of strong tenure security and conservative rent control could only function in a static society where there is no migration, household changes or divorce.

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[1] In fact, tenants often did not have a real rental contract; they only held a 'deed to the flat' that in most cases allowed them to use the dwelling for an open term. After 1948, when housing allocation began to be centrally controlled by the state, tenants who were allocated flats obtained unlimited personal occupancy rights in the form of a 'deed' to the flat. 'Personal use' (or user rights) became an institution somewhat distinct from that of traditional tenancy – it could be inherited or transferred to relatives, or exchanged with some other holders of user rights. The tenants arrogated the right to renovate and repair the flat according to their wishes and without the owner's permission, or even to illegally sublease the flat without the owner's permission. When flats of different implicit values were exchanged, people claimed the right to request financial compensation for the unequal exchange for themselves – all this was later called quasi-ownership of housing (Lux, 2009).

[2] Justifiable reasons for terminating a contract included: the tenant was in rent arrears for three months (more precisely, cumulated arrears amounted to three months' rent); the tenant owned or resided as a tenant in another dwelling; or the tenant very seriously violated the rules of good conduct or tenant duties.

[3] The first court decision concerned the justifiability of notice, the second concerned the justifiability of eviction and the third concerned the implementation of eviction. If the tenant was in arrears, he could stay in the dwelling until the courts made all three decisions.

As the government could not guarantee the same security to all, in 1993 free market rents in newly signed rental contracts were introduced. These new tenancies operated under very liberal conditions: the legislation did not set any caps on initial rent levels, subsequent rent review or the terms of tenancy. Consequently, the effort to use housing as a 'shock absorber' led to the split of the housing market into two segments: 'privileged' and 'non-privileged' (Lux, 2009). Strict first-generation rent control with open-term contracts for all existing tenancies operated simultaneously alongside an extremely liberal, unregulated rent and leasing system for new tenancies. This was an untenable situation, particularly given that rent regulation was benefiting many high-income households, while vulnerable and low-income (young) households were often outside of this protection (Lux *et al.*, 2009).

The market split also served as a barrier to any re-integration of the increasing numbers of homeless people. Once housing privileges were lost (due to the termination of a tenancy for rent arrears, or the fact that a person could not inherit any housing privileges), it became almost impossible to regain them. Consequently, the numbers of people sleeping rough or in shelters has increased since then. The situation was aggravated by the absence of any state social housing strategy. The Czech Republic had, and still has, an extremely fragmented array of municipal social housing policies with, in effect, no central coordination or regulation. The municipalities are the only owners of long-term rental housing provided at below-market rents. Although there was no governmental right-to-buy policy that would oblige the municipalities to sell their housing (as is the case in most other post-socialist states), they voluntarily began to sell them, in most cases to sitting tenants, and at a low price. The share of public housing thus substantially declined from 39 percent of the housing stock in 1991 to 8-9 percent in 2011.[4]

In 2000 the Constitutional Court ruled that the decree regulating the level of rent should be rendered null and void by the end of the following year. However, Parliament did not adopt a new act until 2006. In 2006 the situation suddenly changed when Polish landlord Hutten-Czapska won her case against the Polish state in a dispute heard before the European Court of Human Rights. The Czech government quickly prepared a plan to deregulate all rents by 2010 (later extended to 2012 in large towns) to avoid the possibility of having to pay financial compensation to landlords of rent-controlled dwellings (Act on Unilateral Rent Increase 107/2006). This led to an increase in regulated rents and a reduction in the gap between free market rents and regulated rents.

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[4]   Conversely, the share of private rental housing increased from almost zero in 1990 to 13-14 percent of housing stock in 2011.

During this time, the government introduced a generous housing allowance system. Housing allowances had been paid since 1996 but the system was substantially amended in 2006 by the Act on State Social Support 117/1995 and the Act on Assistance in Material Need 111/2006. Since 2006, all tenants and homeowners registered as permanent residents in a given property are entitled to a housing allowance if 30 percent (in Prague 35 percent) of the family income is insufficient to cover housing costs and if this 30 percent (in Prague 35 percent) of family income is also lower than the relevant prescriptive housing costs as set out by law. The amount to be paid by a household is calculated in relation to its income and remaining housing costs are covered by a housing allowance. Prescriptive housing costs gradually increased during rent deregulation and they have recently been set at levels that reflect rents in the free market.

Moreover, an additional benefit – the housing supplement – is provided where the income of the person or family, even with the housing allowance, is insufficient to cover housing costs. The benefit is provided to owners or tenants who are entitled to an allowance for living costs (living minimum). If approved by the Labour Office, the benefit can also be allocated to beneficiaries who have neither an ownership title nor a rental contract (such as subtenants, or people living in dormitories, lodging houses and other less secure housing forms). The amount of the supplement is determined on a case-by-case basis and is calculated on the basis that households should be left with a basic or minimum disposable income. In other words, for families with no income, the housing supplement may actually cover total housing costs. These provisions, like those in the early 1990s, again reflected a strong political will to ensure housing affordability – this time not only for those households that retained 'privileges' from the past, but for all Czech households.[5]

The conservative form of tenant security inherited from socialism has also been gradually weakened since 2000 through several amendments to the Civil Code. For example, it was originally the landlord that had to approach the civil court to pursue a notice of termination. Following a subsequent amendment, tenants could be given a notice of termination and it was then up to the tenant to approach the civil court if he/she disputed the termination of the lease – otherwise the notice was deemed valid. Tenant security was further weakened by the new Civil Code passed in 2014 where the right of the tenant to receive substitute housing was abolished. In the extreme case of a very serious breach of good conduct rules by a tenant or a tenant's family members, the landlord has the right to give a tenant notice of

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[5] In 2012, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs paid out CZK 5.7m (€228 000) in housing allowances to about 4 percent of Czech households, and about CZK 1.7m (€68 000) in housing supplements to about 1 percent of Czech households. Tenants are the main recipients of both benefits.

termination without any notice period (which is otherwise three months). Rent arrears are explicitly mentioned as an example of such a serious breach of good conduct rules.

As mentioned above, despite the abolishment of some elements of tenure security and regulated rent increases after 2007, the state implemented tenancy protection in the form of a generous housing allowance/supplement and left the basic elements of tenure security untouched. Unlike the situation in other post-socialist countries, the overwhelming majority of private rental contracts in the Czech Republic are written and legally binding, and the new Civil Code ensures that a landlord can give sitting tenants notice of termination only for the four specific reasons outlined in the law.[6] As such, a fragmented social housing policy and a declining level of public housing was largely compensated for by generous demand-side subsidies that were of equal help for households in the municipal and private rental housing sectors.

However, the changing housing conditions and policies produced considerable barriers to the re-integration of homeless people into long-term housing (Lux and Mikeszová, 2013). The reason for this is very simple. Homeless people, ethnic minorities, immigrants, unemployed persons, and single mothers are at a disadvantage in the free market because they are regarded as 'risky' households. If they are able to secure rental housing in the market, these properties are often in spatially-segregated areas with low-quality housing and short-term leases. Demand-side subsidies address the problem of housing affordability, but not the problems of disadvantage, social exclusion and discrimination. In the Czech context, where most rental properties are owned by small private landlords, risk-aversion among landlords is logically high. Small landlords favour tenants who pose minimum risk; their caution is bound up in anxieties about tenants failing to pay rent, which could pose a threat to the landlord's own financial stability. The same analogy applies to the position taken by small municipalities. The Czech Republic operates as a decentralised system of local administrations with more than 6 000 municipalities serving 10 million inhabitants. Such small municipalities will be much more circumspect about how they assist 'risky' households than larger municipalities. This situation could be considered a paradoxical consequence of decentralisation. If decision-making is decentralised to a large number of agents that are financially and politically weak, these decision-makers will be strongly risk-averse and tend to avoid decisions that are deemed costly or politically unpopular. This was confirmed by Hradecký (2006b) for Prague: the capital city of Prague is divided into 22 independent municipalities, each with its own administration; without the agreement of these independent municipalities, the City of Prague cannot locate a

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6   Taking into account the whole legal process of eviction, valid termination of tenancy still takes
     more than one year.

homeless shelter in any of the municipalities though it ranks more highly in the administration. This paradox is reflected in the decision to locate a shelter on the Vltava River.

The number of homeless people has therefore grown gradually over recent years. According to estimates based on various sources, the number of homeless people in 2012 had reached approximately 25 000–30 000 people (0.25–0.30 percent of the population). Programmes for the reintegration of homeless people that are run by municipalities, charities or NGOs use a 'Housing Ready' approach. Due to the lack of available housing at higher levels, however, programmes tend to be more developed at the first level of the stair-case model (e.g. short-term, emergency shelters), but the provision of long-term housing for homeless people is minimal.

Legislation Relating to Homelessness

The right to housing is not an explicit part of Czech legislation, but it is implicitly present throughout the legislative system. The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms state that 'everyone who suffers from material need has the right to such assistance as is necessary to ensure her a basic living standard' (Art. 30). On an international level, the Czech Republic signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes the right of every person to an adequate standard of living (Art. 11). The right to housing has been recognised in the Housing Strategy of the Czech Republic to the Year 2020 (*Koncepce bydlení ČR do roku 2020*). The legislation does not, however, contain a clear definition of the terms 'homeless person' or 'homelessness'. According to various acts, a homeless person may be someone without state citizenship (Act No. 40/1993) or a person with a permanent residence at the address of a municipal authority (Act No. 133/2000). The Act on Social Services (No. 108/2006) identifies only 'people without shelter' as homeless, with no clearer definition.

No housing act or social housing act has been approved to date. All attempts to draw up a central social housing strategy have been unsuccessful (including the last attempt made by the Ministry for Regional Development between 2012 and 2013). Recently, the new government led by the Social Democrats has made it a priority to prepare a strategy to address the provision of social housing; the deadline for the new act is set at 2016 such that the legislation should be effective from 2017. However, preparations started only few months ago. Related to this, there is no specific legislation on not-for-profit housing or housing associations. Not-for-profit organisations and charities usually own or manage only temporary housing facilities (night shelters, hostels, half-way houses etc.) for homeless people, victims of domestic violence, refugees or ethnic minorities. These temporary facilities are operated by both NGOs

and municipalities as a social service under the Act on Social Services (Act No. 108/2006).[7] The obligations of the municipalities in the field of housing provision are only vaguely defined and include no explicit requirement to ensure the provision of housing to poor or vulnerable citizens.[8] As mentioned above, the paradox of decentralisation and the continuing demand to privatise the remaining public housing create barriers to effective local social housing policy. Additionally, municipalities are only responsible for helping residents, but many homeless people in big cities are registered as permanent residents of other municipalities.

Milestones on the Path to a Government Strategy on Homelessness

The first studies of homelessness did not appear until the mid-1990s and even by 2007 (i.e. 17 years after the change of regime) only a very small number of researchers had worked on this issue (Hradecký, 2005). The studies and reports written or edited by Ilja Hradecký, the director of an NGO "The Hope",[9] were of particular importance to our understanding of homelessness. Besides these, there were only few papers (Horáková, 1997; Obadalová, 2001; Janata and Kotýnková, 2002) and student theses (Šafaříková, 1994; Le Rouzic, 1999) on the topic. Although many Czech economists and sociologists have addressed the problem of increasing social and income inequalities (for example, Večerník and Matějů, 1999), until 2007 homelessness remained on the margins of social research. This is related to the legacy and social conditions of the pre-transitional period described above, as well as the fact that until the turn of the millennium there was little visible homelessness; and because of strong tenure security, rent regulation and low rates of poverty and unemployment,[10] homelessness was often viewed as a consequence of personal

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[7] This Act signified a positive turning point in defining and providing social services, but it employs a categorisation of social services that is hard to apply to some target groups and lacks some specific services; for example, support for independent housing, homelessness prevention and the operation of homes with special programmes for homeless persons.

[8] The Act on Municipalities (No. 128/2000) states only that the municipality is responsible for ensuring the conditions for the provision of social assistance and for satisfying the needs of its citizens, such as their need for housing, health protection, transport, information, education, overall cultural development and protection of public order.

[9] Ilja Hradecký, together with his wife Vlastimila, founded the NGO "Hope" in 1990. He has worked as Chairman and Director of the NGO for 24 years and he has also been chairman of the Czech Federation of Food Banks since 1994. He has participated in numerous projects for the Czech government, the City of Prague, the European Commission, the University of Dundee, the University of Wayne, FEANTSA, the European Observatory on Homelessness, Ostrava University and others. In 2013, he received the Award of the Senate of the Czech Republic for his outstanding work on homelessness issues.

[10] Until 1998 the unemployment rate was below 5 percent.

failure (addiction and crime) or a personal choice. This perception of homelessness as a consequence of a person's character or choice has persisted in public opinion and expert studies right up to the present day (Vašát, 2012).

A 1996 study by Hradecká and Hradecký entitled 'Homelessness: Extreme Exclusion' can be regarded as an important milestone on the path to the preparation of a government strategy on homelessness, because it highlighted the issue of homelessness and brought it into public debate. It introduced the first working definition and typology of homelessness and is the first analytical study that has withstood the test of time. Similarly, the founding of the Association of Shelters in 1993 represented an important institutional milestone; this is a civic association that acts as an umbrella agency for all those working with homeless people or people at risk of losing their housing, and represents them at governmental negotiations and in international organisations (FEANTSA).[11]

In 2004, The Hope, under the direction of Hradecký, organised the first census of homeless persons in Prague; it was later followed by censuses conducted in other Czech towns (Petřík *et al.*, 2006; *Magistrát města Ostravy,* 2007; Baláš *et al.*, 2010; Toušek and Strohsová, 2010; Váně and Kalvas, 2014).[12] In cooperation with FEANTSA, Hradecký also published the first National Report on Homelessness in the Czech Republic (Hradecký, 2005, 2006b) and provided a profile of homeless people (Hradecký, 2006a).

The next important milestone on the path to developing a government strategy was the project 'Strategies for the Social Inclusion of Homeless Persons in the CR'. The project ran from 2005 to 2007; it was co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Czech state budget and coordinated by the Association of Shelters, and it led to a number of activities in the fields of health and employment for homeless people (*Sdružení azylových domů…* 2007). Most importantly, however, it included the adaptation of the ETHOS homelessness typology to the Czech context (Hradecký *et al.*, 2007). These activities were fundamental in the later development of government strategy.

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[11] The Association of Shelters is an umbrella organisation for organisations that run halfway houses and shelters for men, women and single mothers. These include NGOs, charity organisations, municipalities and state organisations. In 2014, it had 84 member organisations.

[12] Baláš *et al.* (2010) include all the censuses (a total of six) conducted up to the year 2010 in the four largest Czech cities. Although the censuses were carried out in different years, it was clear that visible and latent homeless grew over time. In just the four main cities it had reached more than 5 000 people by the year 2010 (the estimate for the Czech Republic as a whole in this study was 25 000 people). The censuses of homeless people, regardless of methodological shortcomings, yielded other important information: the structure of the homeless contingent of the population according to gender, age and education.

Adapting the ETHOS typology to Czech conditions[13] was not just the work of experts in the field. A working group, consisting of six representatives from public administration and not-for-profit organisations, drafted proposals that were discussed at two seminars organised by the City of Prague (Bill Edgar, coordinator of the European Observatory for Homelessness at that time, was present at the first seminar) and at three workshops organised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in 2006 and 2007. It took more than a year to finalise the ETHOS typology. Hradecký and the NGO Hope, who were principal coordinators of work in the area during this time, played a major role in this process.

An advantage of the ETHOS typology is that it does not describe the causes of homelessness, which are highly complex and specific to each person. Instead, the typology is based on current living circumstances and housing conditions. While the adoption of this typology meant abandoning earlier attempts of categorisation (Hradecký *et al.*, 2007), it has proven to be easily applicable to the Czech context. Three main categories of homelessness were identified: visible, latent and potential. The inclusion of potential homelessness as a category along with an estimate of the number of persons in this category revealed the true scope of the problem and demonstrated that homelessness is not a marginal phenomenon and that it can potentially affect anyone.

The year 2007 also became an important milestone for a different reason – the number of studies on homelessness from various perspectives in the Czech Republic increased significantly. The studies emerged through various disciplines, including criminology (Štěchová *et al*, 2008; Štěchová, 2009), psychology (Krylová, 2008), social psychology (Vágnerová, 2013) and health (Barták, 2004; Šupková *et al.*, 2007). The new literature included studies of biographies (Holpuch, 2011; Růžička, 2011), everyday practices (Vašát, 2012, Hejnal, 2011, 2012, 2013), and the social networks of homeless people (Toušek, 2009) as well as analyses of youth homelessness (Dizdarevič and Smith, 2011), the causes of homelessness (Hladíková and Hradecký, 2007; Prudký and Šmídová, 2010) and factors relating to successful exits from homelessness (Mikeszová and Lux, 2013). Many of these studies attempted to identify the personal and structural causes of homelessness. Lux and Mikeszová (2013) tried to overcome the structure-agency dichotomy by focusing on common routes into homelessness. Through this emerging debate, homelessness became a more prominent issue as various and competing concepts, ideas and perspectives were deliberated.

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[13] This amendment included, for instance, creating a special category for youth leaving institutional care.

These events and emerging discourses, together with the adaptation of the ETHOS typology and homelessness counts in Czech urban areas, provided the government with a more informed understanding from which to formulate a government strategy. This resulted in the development of a strategy informed by Czech-centred research and thus tailored for the Czech context rather than being based on housing policies developed and implemented in other countries.

Government Strategy and its Evaluation

The creation of a national strategy to address homelessness was preceded by the adoption of a similar strategy by the capital City of Prague in 2012. Based on interviews conducted by the author, it appears that the motivation for adopting the Prague strategy was related to previous attempts of Prague politicians to tackle the issue of homelessness with a so-called Action Plan in 2007. However, the Action Plan was never approved by the city council. The primary objectives of the Action Plan were to increase the repression of homeless people and prevent people from 'abusing' social services, rather than actually dealing with the problem. The first version was prepared by a security agency with no prior experience in this field. It was weakened by professional shortcomings and was based on a substandard public opinion survey. The last version (in 2010) contained the objective of creating a Centre for Antisocial Citizens, which meant earmarking a locality in which homeless persons who do not participate in reintegration programmes should be concentrated. This version of the strategy was widely criticised, including in the mass media, which sparked a wave of public outrage. In the interviews I carried out, the media's response to the Action Plan could be considered another milestone on the road to achieving a government strategy, as the issue provoked a strong public response. Indeed, a paradoxical consequence of these efforts was that almost every political party included the rejection of the Action Plan and the creation of a new, progressive strategy to deal with homelessness in its agenda.

After the next local elections, the new Prague political elite commissioned a new strategy from a working group of five people representing academics, municipalities and not-for-profit organisations, in which Ilja Hradecký participated. The strategy was drafted over several months but owing to the unstable political situation, it was not finalised for over a year and a half. The strategy was ultimately implemented in 2012 with 'acute measures' stipulated for 2013 and 2014.

The Prague strategy was based on the following understandings of homelessness: 1) it employed the ETHOS typology to draw attention to potential homelessness, and 2) it conceptualised homelessness as a process, the solution to which must encompass a prevention component, acute assistance and the provision of

long-term housing. For the period of 2013-2014, it proposed implementing numerous preventative measures (such as a system of social and training flats and social intervention among people at risk of eviction) and the reinforcement of acute assistance (such as greater subsidisation of field programmes, the establishment of new day centres and shelters, and setting up special surgeries for homeless people). By the end of 2014, there was to be a 're-socialisation fund' to contribute to the costs of activities aimed at the reintegration of homeless households, an information centre was to be created by social service providers and interdisciplinary research on the problem of social inclusion was to be carried out.

It is probable that the preparation of the Prague strategy indicated the willingness of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to prepare a similar strategy at national level. The Ministry subsequently set up a 25-member committee made up of public officials and representatives from not-for-profit organisations and municipalities. Thanks to the active involvement of several ministry officials, funding was obtained from the European Social Fund to put together the background analytical document necessary to develop such a strategy. This document was prepared by a seven-member working group including representatives from not-for-profit organisations (Ilja Hradecký was again an active member of the team) and headed by the same person that had headed the Prague strategy (university professor Libor Prudký). The study included a basic review of relevant legislation, a summary of available services and data on the target group,[14] and it also incorporated conclusions from previous Czech expert studies. The materials again stressed: 1) the complexity of the problem (and the consequent need for inter-ministerial cooperation); 2) the need to apply the ETHOS typology to understand the homelessness problem adequately; 3) the need to understand homelessness as a process; and, for the first time, 4) the need to carry out a pilot test of the 'Housing First' model as an alternative to the more widespread 'Housing Ready' model.

The background study was prepared and the strategy drawn up without any significant obstruction by relevant stakeholders. According to the interviews, this is likely to have been the case because no substantial amount of public funding was involved. After thorough discussions of both the background document and the strategy proposal within the committee, the Strategy for the Prevention and Solution of Homelessness in the Czech Republic to the Year 2020 was submitted for an extensive feedback process, in which trade unions and academic institutions also took part. Common objections related to the ambitiousness of the strategy, its

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[14] The number of visible and hidden homeless people in the Czech Republic was estimated in the study at 27 000 or approximately 0.27 percent of the population. The estimate of potential homelessness was given as 55 000 people but methodological issues meant the number was probably closer to 100 000 people, or 0.55–1 percent of the population.

unmistakeably left-wing orientation and, that which proved to be the biggest issue, its coinciding with the implementation of another government strategy that was approved sooner (i.e. the Housing Strategy of the Czech Republic to the Year 2020). Finally, a year and two months after the background document had been prepared, the strategy was approved by the Czech government in August 2013.

The national strategy explicitly adheres to the ETHOS typology of homelessness (adapted to Czech conditions) and conceptualises homelessness as 'a complex, dynamic and differentiated process' that requires support for prevention, the provision of social services, and the return of homeless people to standard forms of housing. A multifaceted approach to the issue is reflected in the structure of the strategy and in the number of planned measures associated with each area of provision: housing (17 measures); social services (6 measures); healthcare (9 measures); and information, participation and cooperation (11 measures).

In total, the strategy contains 43 measures and for each, it identifies the responsible administrating body (or ministry). In the area of housing, the measures include social housing legislation, subsidies for social housing acquisition and pilot projects on social innovation (including the 'Housing First' model and a mechanism of prevention based on the FAWOS experience). It also seeks to tackle the problem of debt among the poorest citizens, systemise activities at different levels of administration and increase the coordinating role of municipalities. In the area of social services, the measures concern new definitions of social services that will meet the specific needs of homeless people and ensure their implementation (for example, the introduction of shelters for families). The area of health care focuses on the coordination of activities between the Ministry of Health, health insurance companies, and the regions and municipalities to secure complex health care for homeless people and the education of doctors and nurses as well as to reduce the stigmatisation of homeless people. Finally, measures in the areas of information, participation and cooperation include the establishment of a central information system on homelessness and the organisation of a conference to promote best practice and different educational activities both for field workers and the general public. Unlike the Prague strategy, however, the national strategy contains no estimates of costs or indication of funding sources. The source/method of funding was detailed to some detailed in the middle of 2014 but no cost estimates were given. The strategy does not contain a cost-benefit analysis for any one of the measures presented.

As mentioned in the introduction, the national strategy cannot be assessed using the standard methods of welfare economics, which involve the use of microeconomic techniques to determine allocative efficiency and income distribution simultaneously (Barr, 1998). As there are no outcomes as yet, we cannot measure the

efficiency and effectiveness/equity of these measures. Instead I have assessed the strategy using: 1) the degree to which the objectives set out in the Prague strategy, adopted a year before the national strategy, are met; 2) an estimate of the degree of consensus across different stakeholders based on reactions in the media and the interviews I carried out with selected stakeholders; and 3) an overview of its strong and weak points.

Although it is still too soon to make an assessment, it seems that despite adequate funding having been earmarked, the vast majority of activities planned by the Prague strategy on homelessness for 2013 and 2014 in the areas of prevention and reintegration will not be carried out. The issue of social and training housing has been left entirely aside and none of the set objectives are likely to be met. Objectives in the area of the prevention of homelessness have been limited to the announce-ment of a grant competition, in which the City of Prague is offering co-funding for activities proposed by individual Prague districts. Consequently, the City of Prague has partially resigned its governing role, something which lessens the probability of finding systemic, city-wide solutions for the reintegration of homeless people and the prevention of homelessness. In addition, the re-socialisation fund will not be created, objectives in the area of healthcare will not be met, and the interdisci-plinary research will not be carried out. On the other hand, the planned increase in subsidies for field work with homeless persons (especially in the winter months) did take place, and it is very likely that new day centres and shelters will be opened. In conclusion, in the area of acute assistance, approximately 70 percent of the strategy measures planned for 2013 and 2014 will be implemented. In other areas, however, no more than 50 percent of the strategy will be implemented and almost none of the goals in the area of reintegrating homeless people into long-term housing will materialise. The drift away from systemic solutions towards grant support for various one-year prevention projects run by individual districts goes against the spirit of the strategy, even if some more general objectives may be partially met.

Based on interviews I conducted with principal stakeholders, the biggest problem with the national strategy is that its priority area – the measures for housing[15] – specifically alludes to conceptual and legislative work connected with social housing that was conducted at the same time by another Ministry (the Ministry for Regional Development). Interview data revealed that, with respect to housing-related measures, the authors of the strategy were forced to refer only to the Housing Strategy of the Czech Republic to the Year 2020 adopted earlier by the

[15] It was clear from the number of measures in each area and the defined cornerstones of the strategy that measures in the area of housing were a priority in the strategy.

government; one of the tasks in this strategy was to develop a 'complex solution for social housing' and at the time work was already under way on the preparation of documents on this matter to be submitted to the government.

In the preparation of public strategies, government practice usually prohibits the creation of parallel strategies on the same issue. Unfortunately, such a situation nonetheless occurs and seems to be an effect of continuing ideological battles around establishing a long-term welfare regime in a transforming society. According to one interview, work on both tasks (homelessness and social housing) resembled a race to see who would submit first to the government, and this unnecessary competition was deemed harmful to both sides of the issue. The complex solution to social housing prepared by the Ministry for Regional Development was not adopted by the government while the strategy on homelessness prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was; however, because of the policy overlap, the section on housing measures was largely rendered void simply because it referenced a document that had not yet been approved.[16]

The absence of any estimate of costs or cost-benefit analyses for at least some of the proposed measures, and above all the annulment of the priority section of the strategy (housing measures), put the potential of the homelessness strategy at risk. Another shortcoming is that the expected results of the strategy are not clearly quantified; for example, there are no target numbers for reducing homelessness or for reintegration or prevention activities. This makes it far more difficult to make any transparent assessment of whether or not objectives were met.

It would not be fair to evaluate the formulation of strategy measures themselves, as there could be very different relevant views on what should or should not be included in the strategy. However, two respondents were sceptical of the assumption that the only possible housing for homeless people is independent housing. According to them, a substantial share of the target population requires special accommodation and care facilities in a long-term context. Another criticism surrounded the fact that a conference was planned to take place *after* the government strategy was adopted instead of before, which would be more productive. On the other hand, the strategy on homelessness is of a much higher quality than many of the previous government strategies due to the vigorous consultation phase. While it leaves out (or was forced to leave out) measures related to housing, which undermines its usefulness, the absence of these measures from the strategy meant less controversy during discussions. In other words, this strategy can be viewed as the first step towards solving a much more complicated problem and this gradual conceptual process may ultimately

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[16] Two respondents also mentioned that the strategy on homelessness overlaps with another government strategy – the Strategy against Social Exclusion for the Period 2011 to 2015, approved by the government in 2011.

prove prescient. The work on definition of social housing recommenced in 2014 under the direction of the same ministry that was responsible for the homelessness strategy. There is, therefore, a higher chance that in the future the priority section of the strategy – housing – will also take concrete shape.

The strengths of the national strategy thus include:

1. Application of the internationally recognised ETHOS typology; this aided in the formulation of a clear and ideologically-neutral definition of the target population, created a tighter link between the issue of homelessness and housing policy, and highlighted the problem of potential homelessness. Expanding the target group to include potential homelessness is altering the perception of homelessness in Czech society and adding legitimacy to the grounds for funding solutions.

2. The dynamic nature of the problem is taken into consideration; this means looking at homelessness as a process, the solution to which must necessarily include preventative measures whilst also ensuring that measures are in place to facilitate the transition to permanent housing. Instruments of prevention and reintegration have thus far been overlooked but several parts of the strategy emphasise their importance.

3. Early drafts of the strategy had a high level of expert input, and the strategy was informed by Czech-based studies conducted on this subject. The strategy was therefore drafted at an opportune time as it was already possible to draw on findings produced by Czech researchers and to use more reliable estimates and data, thus creating a more tailored solution to homelessness.

4. The composition of the working group (headed by the academic Libor Prudký and with the participation of Ilja Hradecký) ensured a high standard of expertise and the incorporation of experience from the field. On the other hand, the failure to include any practitioners or academics working on the issue of the housing market and social housing is one of its weak points, especially as the strategy targets this area.

The weaknesses and risks of the national strategy include:

1. An overly-complex approach: the large number of measures proposed significantly increases the likelihood that some of them will not be implemented. It is, however, possible that the large number of measures will lead to more measures being implemented than if the strategy had focused on a smaller number of measures in the first place. It is not certain if the assumption of 'the more the better' will work or whether the concept of the entire strategy will be considered unfeasible in a few years.

2. The annulment of measures in the area of social housing due to the coinciding of two strategies and the ensuing competitive clash between two ministries.

3. The conference ought to have preceded the adoption of the government strategy, and not to have taken place afterwards. Although the level of consensus was relatively high, the conference would nonetheless have assisted in further refining the formulation of objectives and measures.

4. The absence of cost estimates for individual measures and of cost-benefit analyses.

5. The absence of clear quantification of expected measurable outputs, which would allow for a transparent assessment of the strategy in the future.

The strategy was adopted by the caretaker government. After the elections in 2013 the Social Democratic Party, who had previously formed the opposition, became the ruling government party and adopted the issue of homelessness as an electoral priority. Due to the fact that the strategy did not represent a significant source of income for various interest groups, the strategy was accepted with a high level of political, expert and public consensus. Its discussion in the media, while limited, was positive and supportive in tone. The strategy was heralded as the first effective intervention by the state to tackle this issue. The main criticism of the strategy, which emerged from the interviews and not from comments in the media, was in reference to the overlap in policy submissions with regard to social housing.

The success of the Prague and national strategies to address homelessness thus largely depends on the efforts in the area of social housing – an area that both strategies deem a priority. Both strategies are therefore a useful step towards the main objective of reducing the scale of homelessness in the Czech Republic, but neither is fully sufficient. Overlooking the complicated area of housing and the housing market will place the potential of this strategy at risk.

Conclusion

This paper sought to offer a preliminary assessment of the strategy for addressing homelessness in the Czech Republic. However, its goal was also to describe the milestones in the passing of the government strategy and the factors behind its achieving legitimacy and support, specifically in the context of a society that is still in the process of significant transformation. By contextualising these milestones in the area of homelessness, it is possible to better understand the circumstances surrounding the adoption of such strategies in countries where the housing system is still going through a transformation and where the nature of the welfare state regime is not yet clearly defined. International alliances were evident here with the incorporation of the ETHOS typology, and cooperation between the Association of

Shelters and FEANTSA were very important during this process. Furthermore, the fact that the homelessness typology was adopted back in 2007 meant that enough time had elapsed for it to have gradually become more dominant in public discourse.

The strategy was prepared at an opportune time, as it was already possible to draw on the findings of Czech research studies, which provided more reliable data. The time was also right with respect to the slowly changing outlook of the mass media on the problem of homelessness; paradoxically, this change was a response to several proposals by conservative politicians in Prague for more oppressive solutions to homelessness. The level of public consensus was attained through the participation of Ilja Hradecký, a well-known scholar and practitioner in the field. It can be argued that a respected commentator such as Hradecký can have a majorly positive impact on reinforcing a wider consensus.

The strategy itself has a number of strengths and weaknesses. The composition of the working group appointed to draft the strategy is certainly one of its stronger points: not just the involvement of Hradecký but also the academic leadership involved. For the first time, homelessness was considered as a process and the recognised ETHOS typology was adopted to better understand the target population. On the other hand, the broad scope of the strategy and in particular the vague way in which its measures in the priority area of social housing are formulated means there is a risk that many of the planned activities may not ultimately be implemented. The disappointing performance of the Prague strategy on homelessness (as well as of a previous government strategy on social inclusion approved in 2011) adds to this risk. Overall, success thus largely requires the success of the social housing concept, which is under preparation.

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What is Preventing us from Preventing Homelessness? A Review of the Irish National Preventative Strategy

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Introduction

It is now widely recognised that preventing households from becoming homeless must be a key component in any strategy to tackle homelessness effectively. Due to the high public and personal costs of providing emergency shelter, governments increasingly view preventative strategies as cost-effective and socially progressive (Mackie, 2014). This increased emphasis on prevention can be seen, alongside the attention to 'Housing First' and 'Housing Led' approaches, as a paradigm shift away from the large-scale provision of emergency shelter. Ireland's homelessness strategies have been positively regarded internationally due to a series of government policy publications from 2000 on, which emphasised the importance of prevention. This recognition led to the publication of a Homeless Preventative Strategy (Departments of Environment & Local Government, Health & Children and Education & Science, 2002), which FEANTSA described as 'one of the more advanced examples of prevention being integrated into the policy package/strategic approach to tackling homelessness' (FEANTSA, 2004). However, Culhane *et al.* (2011) have argued that investment in prevention, in contrast to Housing First, is being pursued without an adequate empirical and conceptual basis. This article looks at what impact the Irish Preventative Strategy has had on preventative practices in Ireland and what the lessons might be for other EU jurisdictions.

How we Understand the Prevention of Homelessness

While it is universally agreed that 'prevention is better than cure', the practical deployment of effective approaches to prevent homelessness is plagued with conceptual and methodological problems (Shinn *et al.*, 2001). Most authors use a three-stranded framework to conceptualise prevention strategies, but although this constitutes the general approach to prevention, deeper exploration shows this apparent consensus to be quite superficial. While Culhane *et al.* (2011, p.3) warn that 'these classifications should more be seen as ranges in a continuum', the approaches differ more fundamentally than simply where they set boundaries between the three strands, and different authors include very different forms of intervention in each. This has implications for both practice and research.

Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick (2008, p.73) set out a three-tier model of prevention, drawing on the disciplines of both medicine and criminology:

1. Primary prevention measures: activities that reduce the risk of homelessness among the general population or large parts of the population. It is at this level of prevention that general housing policy (supply, access and affordability) and overall welfare settlement (such as the availability of income benefits, housing benefits and employment protection) are most relevant.

2. Secondary prevention: interventions focused on people at potentially high risk of homelessness because of their characteristics (for example, those with an institutional care background) or because they are in crisis situations that are likely to lead to homelessness in the near future (such as eviction or relationship breakdown).

3. Tertiary prevention: measures targeted at people who have already been affected by homelessness. From the analogy with medicine and criminology, it would make sense to subsume 'harm reduction' measures such as rapid re-housing here, so that homelessness is ended as quickly as possible.

While other authors tend to agree with the sort of issues that Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick (2008) include in the first tier, considerable variation emerges when we look at the second. For example, Shinn *et al.* (2001), Culhane *et al.* (2011) and Montgomery (2013) are explicit in their view that secondary measures only apply to people who are already homeless. Culhane *et al.* (2011, p.3) comment that secondary measures 'do not reduce the number of new cases, but rather treat the conditions closer to their onset of homelessness'. For Shinn *et al.* (2001), 'secondary prevention efforts may reduce the prevalence of homelessness, but they do not reduce the number of new cases.'

In the German and English approaches described by Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick (2008), however, the term 'prevention' only applies where people have not yet become homeless; 'secondary prevention' relates to people who are not yet homeless but are at 'high risk' or 'in crisis… likely to lead to homelessness in the near future' (2008, p.73). Quite aside from the simple confusion that can be caused by the deceptive similarity in frameworks, the different approaches reflect a divergent idea of what is in fact being 'prevented'. In the European approach, the intention is to prevent *any* experience of homelessness at all, while the US approach reflects a concern that any experience of homelessness should be short lived. In fact, in the US it appears to be *long-term* homelessness that is being prevented. To some extent this difference reflects a greater US emphasis on considerations of efficiency and effectiveness, as will be discussed.

Similar differences exist in the understanding of tertiary prevention, with interventions such as rapid re-housing of newly homeless people being classified as 'preventing' long-term homelessness in some countries, while being seen as 'resettlement' (i.e. not prevention at all) in others. Mackie (2014, pp.3-4), in his review of the Welsh experience of homelessness preventative strategies, puts these differences down to the varying definitions of homelessness on either side of the Atlantic*:*

> This means that policy-makers operating under a narrow definition of homelessness (e.g. the USA) are seeking to prevent people from sleeping on the streets, whilst policy-makers operating under a more liberal definition of homelessness (e.g. the UK) will be seeking to prevent households from occupying unfit or over-occupied housing.

The framework outlined by Gaetz (2013) comprises three tiers but is also distinct; all three strands refer to actions prior to the experience of homelessness. The second tier is named 'Systems Prevention' and focuses on transition from care institutions. Finally, the third strand is called 'Early Intervention', which he defines as 'identifying and addressing the physical, emotional, material, interpersonal, social and educational needs of people who are at imminent risk of, or who have just become homeless' (2013, p.482) – activities which fall into the second strand for Busch-Geertsema and Fitzpatrick (2008) and might fall into any of the three strands for Culhane *et al.* (2011).

Beyond these conceptual difficulties, Culhane *et al*. (2011) identify two fundamental practical problems: 1) effectiveness: assessing whether any particular intervention is successful; 2) efficiency: selecting those who would most benefit from intervention.

The problem of effectiveness

Assessing whether a preventative strategy is effective requires us to know both 1) what the impact of the intervention has been, and 2) what the outcome would have been in the absence of the intervention. Shinn *et al.* (2001) point out that to achieve any certainty on this issue would require substantial randomised, controlled studies. For ethical and methodological reasons, there were very few of these at the time and Shinn *et al.* reject the claims of a number of studies of cost-effective interventions, which attribute all positive outcomes to the intervention and contrast these with pessimistic assumptions about the outcome.

The problem is deeper than methodological weaknesses in the research, however, as the context in which homelessness is occurring is constantly in flux. Factors that might increase or decrease the risk of homelessness for particular groups or individuals are constantly changing, both as a result of outside factors and the impact of the adopted preventative strategies themselves. Pawson (2007) analysed the decline in homelessness in England after the introduction of preventative measures in 2002. He expresses concern that the decline resulted not from real changes in the circumstances of people, but rather due to the fact that local authorities changed the definition of homelessness to avoid having to supply the services set down in legislation. Mackie (2014) expresses similar concerns in the Welsh case. Stuart (2014) finds an even darker picture in Los Angeles, with a disciplinary model of policing using homelessness prevention as a pretext for coercing homeless people into rehabilitative programmes rather than tackling the underlying causes of homelessness.

The problem of efficiency

The most cost-effective method of delivering preventative measures would be to identify those individuals who are going to become homeless and target interventions only at those individuals. However, problems arise with this method – first, in reliably identifying those at risk of becoming homeless. A number of studies have been carried out to establish indices of risk factors for homelessness, but Shinn *et al.* (2001) demonstrate that even the best of these would, if used for recruitment to a programme, involve substantial expenditure on people who would not have become homeless in any case. They argue that such approaches would be further undermined as people would adapt their behaviour in order to qualify for the interventions. Based on this, Shinn *et al.* (2001) emphasise the risk of queue-jumping in any preventative strategy, where people who adopt behaviours that put their homes at risk receive greater rewards than those who make reasonable efforts to sustain their homes.

Shinn *et al.* (2001) and Culhane *et al.* (2011) differ on the extent to which at-risk individuals can be targeted for efficient interventions. Culhane *et al.* (2011) propose a practical response to this difficulty in a sliding scale of preventative responses.

Through this 'progressive engagement' approach, large numbers of households can benefit from inexpensive measures but resource-intensive measures are only deployed in the case of people who have already demonstrated they are at risk by actually becoming homeless. Montgomery develops this further in relation to services for people with mental health issues. On one side of the scale are relatively cheap interventions, which are widely available in the population, and at the other end of the scale are more expensive interventions, which are only available to a much smaller number of people in particular need.

Shinn *et al.* (2001) make a helpful distinction between 'Universal Strategies', 'Selected Strategies' (aimed at people because they are a member of an at-risk group) and 'Indicated Strategies' (targeted at people because of their individual characteristics). Indicated and Selected Strategies can operate at both the secondary and tertiary level. They also critique efforts to target measures, leading to the conclusion that the most effective preventative measure would be to ensure that affordable housing is readily available – which is essentially a first tier intervention.

Gaetz's (2013) approach is less based on statistical screening for risk factors and more concerned with service practices, which, he argues, are effective at directing resources to those who are genuinely at risk of homelessness. He identifies two such practices in particular: case management and common access. He also places a strong emphasis on building resilience and, particularly in the case of youth homelessness, the important role of family relationships.

The detailed analysis of over 11 000 families who were in contact with homeless services in New York City by Shinn *et al.* (2013) challenges Gaetz's (2013) position on the role of case-workers in some respects. Shinn's evidence shows that screening for risk factors (female-headed households, previous experience of homelessness, etc.) are better predictors of homelessness than the judgement of case-workers. In this way, the emphasis is on what she had termed 'Indicated Strategies'.

The concern about achieving efficiency in targeting preventative measures is closely related to two of the key critiques of preventative strategies: that they are selective in who they assist and that they emphasise individual rather than structural causes of homelessness (Parsell and Marston, 2012). As has been noted, the shift towards preventative intervention is strongly driven by concerns about cutting the cost of homelessness, so it is not surprising that such interventions can end up being 'restricted to those where a cost-saving can be made' (Mackie, 2014, p.5).

The two groups that are likely to be excluded as a result of cost-benefit analysis are those who are deemed likely to find their own solution to their problem, and those whose high support needs make the intervention expensive or likely to fail. Mackie shows that the Welsh Preventative Strategy tended to exclude certain groups, and

he argues in favour of the new approach adopted in Wales, which will create a universalist obligation on local authorities to make all reasonable efforts to assist anyone who is at risk of homelessness. However Mackie's (2014) critique appears to conflate a number of different issues. It seems to be quite a different matter to refuse someone a service because it would be too expensive and to refuse the service because the available evidence indicates that they do not need it. While we might argue, for example, that everyone who has cancer has a right to treatment irrespective of their prognosis, it is hard to sustain the case that everyone has a right to cancer treatment whether they have cancer or not. In the Welsh case, as presented by Mackie (2014), certain groups appear to have been excluded either through administrative inefficiency (prisoners) or prejudice (single men) – the prevalence of such arbitrary selection is an argument for all selections being made based on reliable evidence rather than an argument against targeting as such.

Significantly, Shinn *et al.* (2013) test the hypothesis that there are cases where the risk of homelessness is so severe that no intervention would be cost-effective, but they conclude that this argument is unsubstantiated. Shinn *et al.'s* (2001) earlier critique of the absence of empirical evidence in relation to prevention is particularly relevant in the context of the current emphasis across the EU on cost-benefit evaluations of social interventions, because the evidence of success in specific cases is hard to establish reliably. There is therefore a risk that – quite counter-intuitively – cost-benefit approaches will shift resources away from preventative measures.

However, it is striking that even where the literature is sceptical about the effectiveness of targeted interventions to prevent homelessness, there is an underlying recognition that many of these interventions are, in and of themselves, socially beneficial. This perspective can also be seen to inform the insistence of Culhane *et al.* (2011) that services targeted at people who are homeless (or at risk of becoming homeless) should be mainstream services so as not to create separate loops of provision that maintain people in a condition of homelessness. In other words, rather than designing a range of specific homelessness prevention measures and researching their cost-effectiveness, it might be better if mainstream (first tier) economic and social policy were designed to ensure they did not have any unintended consequences of increasing the risk of homelessness. This is the core of Parsell and Marston's critique (2012) of the Australian Homelessness Prevention Strategy. They argue that the focus on individual risk factors and service interventions to respond to these risks shifts attention away from the underlying functional causes of homelessness and suggest that if we can identify and 'fix' each individual considered at risk, we would be able to end homelessness. Genuinely effective preventative measures would be in the first tier and would seek to reduce the overall incidence of homelessness in society rather than simply transfer the experience of it from one group to another.

Prevention in the Irish Strategy

The national Homeless Preventative Strategy (Departments of Environment & Local Government, Health & Children and Education & Science 2002) was drawn up in response to recommendations in the general Integrated Homelessness Strategy (Department of Environment & Local Government, 2000). This Integrated Strategy represented 'the beginnings of a coherent national policy approach to the needs of homeless households' in Ireland (O'Sullivan, 2008a, p.211) and identified the fact that is was 'essential that action be taken to identify and assist those at risk of becoming homeless' (p.7). It situated this risk primarily with people moving out of or between state institutions such as prisons, hospitals or care institutions and recommended a further, specialised plan to set out 'preventative strategies across identified relevant agencies' (p.7).

After a brief report of this recommendation and the history of its implementation, we will discuss how the recommendations relate to the concerns outlined in the literature.[1] The 2002 national Homeless Preventative Strategy included fourteen recommendations, categorised under three institutional settings: 1) adult and youth offenders leaving detention; 2) people leaving psychiatric institutions and acute hospitals; and 3) young people leaving care.

1) Adult and youth offenders leaving detention

The first two recommendations place the responsibility for ensuring that prisoners do not become homeless upon release with the prison authorities, recommending the establishment of a 'specialist unit in the probation and social welfare service to deal with offenders who are homeless' (2002, p.34) and that the Prison Service should build and operate 'transitional housing units'.

The implementation of these recommendations establishes a pattern that soon becomes familiar. The recommended specialised unit was set up in 2002 but was dissolved in 2006 and later replaced by a different approach – a cross-agency team. While the Prison Service initially indicated it would build transitional housing units, this objective was dropped in an internal review and does not appear in the most recent Prison Service Strategic Plan (Irish Prison Service, 2012), as it is not considered part of their core function. There has been patchy progress on the third recommendation: to enable prisoners to continue educational courses after their release.

In relation to youth offenders, the report recommended that step-down units at two youth detention centres should be staffed and made operational as a priority. This happened in 2006. However, when responsibility for youth detention moved to the

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[1] A more detailed description of the implementation of the Irish Prevention Strategy was presented by Catherine Maher at a conference in September 2012 and can be accessed at bit.ly/prevhomeless

Department of Justice, the units were closed as the Department considered that this fell outside their remit. Recent reports by the Inspection Authority (HIQA) indicate that the risk of homelessness on discharge of juvenile offenders remains an unresolved problem (Health & Information Quality Authority, 2010; 2011).

2) People leaving psychiatric institutions and acute hospitals

Recommendations 5 to 10 essentially stated that psychiatric and general hospitals should have written policies for discharging people who are homeless, that there should be a dedicated staff member responsible for these policies and that records should be kept of the outcome of psychiatric discharges. Seven years after this recommendation, The Mental Health Commission (2009) published a *Code of Practice on Admission, Transfer and Discharge to and from an Approved Centre*. This required that approved centres work with homeless organisations and other relevant service providers when an in-patient is identified as being homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Mental Health Commission (2011) reported that 58 approved centres were fully or substantially compliant with the Code of Practice; seven had initiated compliance; and two were not compliant. However, this code also deals with other matters of admission and transfer, and there is no published breakdown of compliance with the homelessness section of the code. In any case, this measure only relates to patients who are involuntarily admitted to mental health institutions; patients who are voluntarily admitted may discharge themselves at any time and such patients continue to feature strongly in reports from homeless services. The recommendation that the form of accommodation to which patients are being discharged be recorded has not been implemented and there is no plan to do so (Parliamentary Question, 2012).

In relation to General Hospitals, a *Code of Practice for Integrated Discharge Planning* (HSE, 2008) was published in 2008 and revised in 2010. This noted that homeless people should be identified on admission and that primary care services should be notified on their discharge. However, the experience of homeless services is still that the discharge of patients from acute hospitals is uncoordinated and unplanned.

3) Young people leaving care

Recommendations 11 and 12 called for the development of aftercare protocols and their implementation within 6 months. Ten years after this recommendation, National Guidelines for Aftercare were drafted after consultation with voluntary and statutory bodies, are expected to be published in 2014. The Irish Government has now agreed to give these guidelines a legislative basis.

Recommendation 13 proposed that education services for homeless adults be extended across the country. Since 2002 the number of adult courses has tripled and the percentage of those allocated to homeless adults has increased from 0.35 percent to 0.46 percent, so that 146 homeless adults benefited from such courses in 2011.

4) Monitoring the implementation of the Strategy

The final recommendation relates to having 'monitoring systems in place to ensure that the measures in this strategy that are relevant to them are implemented and that they contribute to the overall aim of preventing homelessness' and to having monitors 'report regularly to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion' through the Cross Department Team on Homelessness (2002, p.31).

This Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness has been meeting for a number of years and frequently engages in joint sessions with the National Consultative Committee on Homelessness. It met only once between the end of 2010 and the end of 2012 but is now meeting on a quarterly basis once again. However, given the poor track record of implementation of the report recommendations outlined above, the effectiveness of the meetings that were held can certainly be questioned.

Analysing the Irish Measures

Because of the failure to consistently implement most of the recommendations and the absence of consistent, regular and robust data on homelessness in Ireland, analysis of the recommendations may seem an empty exercise. However, we believe that there are a number of useful lessons that can be taken from the Irish experience.

All the proposals are of one type, falling into Busch-Geertsema's and Fitzpatrick's (2008) second and Culhane's *et al.* (2011) tertiary tier: a focus on groups of people where there is a known high incidence of homelessness, such as ex-prisoners, care leavers, etc. All the measures in the Strategy respond to the situation of people who are homeless under Category 6 of the ETHOS definition: people due to be released from institutions. In the terms of Shinn *et al.* (2001), they are generally not 'selective' measures (targeting all people released from institutions) but rather 'indicative' measures, utilising a basic risk factor: whether the individual within the cohort leaving an institution has accommodation to return to upon discharge. While the proposed mechanism for targeting is not sophisticated, there can be little doubt as to the efficiency of this approach. It is hard to think of a more precise targeting than individuals living in our state institutions who we know to have nowhere to live when they are released. The proposals would be more likely to miss people at risk of homelessness than provide an unnecessary service for people who would be able to resolve their own problems.

Effective Systems Prevention

Most of the measures can be characterised fairly comfortably within Gaetz's (2013) 'Systems Prevention' approach, and the Strategy's identification of the institutional pathways into homelessness is one of its stronger aspects. The systems approach recommended is not case management, nor is it ensuring a supported pathway for the individual as advocated by Gaetz (2013); the major recommendations essentially propose that the discharging institutions continue to take responsibility for people beyond the legally required period. This can be done by the prison or youth detention centre providing transitional homes or by agreeing protocols with other state institutions, so smoothing out the manner in which responsibility for the individual is transferred from one state agency to the next.

One of the lessons here is that while the Strategy sought to intervene in the institutional interactions at a functional level, it did not attempt to alter the underlying legal responsibilities. For instance, although in the Strategy the justice institutions agreed to *act* differently, the underlying legal position for all juvenile justice institutions is (and remains) that when the young people in their care have completed their sentence or reached adulthood, the institutions have a legal obligation to release them – but to do nothing further. Instead of proposing to change this legislative fact, the Strategy proposed to bypass it by agreeing protocols concerning discharge. However, when the officials and Ministers who were party to that agreement moved on, their successors simply returned to what the legislation requires and does not require. An approach more concerned with creating social rights for those facing homelessness might have created a more sustainable framework than a protocol.

Further, Gaetz (2013) places information sharing and a case management approach as practices essential to Systems Prevention. While these are now central to the delivery of the Irish system (Downey, 2012) they were not in place in 2002. The community and voluntary sector were recognised as full 'social partners' during the period in which the Strategy was drafted. Nevertheless, the homeless strategy documents are only concerned with the question of how different arms of the state, at local and national level, should interact with each other. This misses the reality that every pathway into (or out of) homelessness involves complex transitions back and forth between various state agencies and voluntary organisations. The omission of voluntary organisations from the framework means that some of the preventative approaches that have since demonstrated the greatest successes were also overlooked.[2] These come about when

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2   To a large extent these practices have come about since the implicit adoption of a Housing-Led approach following the major evaluations of Dublin services in 2008 (Brooke, 2008), which heralded a shift from managing homelessness towards ending it. They also coincided with a stronger integration of voluntary sector actors, such as the NHCC and the Implementation Advisory Group in Dublin, into governance structures.

voluntary sector case-workers are able to work with the at-risk citizen to integrate the necessary complex range of state services around the specific needs of that individual. In this way the integration of services does not come about by written protocols from above, but through front-line collaboration of public service and voluntary sector staff.

One current example of this involves the delivery of preventative services in Dublin by voluntary organisations, working with and on behalf of the local authorities. In this model, certain emerging problems with social housing tenancies trigger local authority staff to request an intervention by voluntary sector staff. For institutional reasons, the voluntary sector staff, working to some extent outside the system but authorised by it, are able to engage a wider range of appropriate support services than the local authority staff working alone. Written protocols are, of course, an essential part of this as they permit and prioritise action. But they are not the starting point. The failure to recognise that Systems Prevention can be built upon an effective, professional, person-centred voluntary sector seems to be one of the weaknesses of the programme set out ten years ago.

How to Integrate the Work of Different Agencies?

The second lesson lies not in the realm of homelessness, as such, but rather in the broader question of the challenges faced by governments in implementing social programmes that require the engagement of a number of state actors over a prolonged period of time. Because homelessness is a classic example of such a social problem, the implementation problems faced by the Irish Strategy are likely to be of some relevance to other jurisdictions and are worth some consideration.

One of the causes of the failure to implement relates to the extent to which state agencies that previously had core responsibilities ceased to exist, or were amalgamated, split-up or renamed over the intervening decade. O'Sullivan (2008, p.228) draws attention to this phenomenon when he identifies the formation of the Health Services Executive (HSE) as one of the factors slowing the progress of the Irish Strategy.

Burt *et al.* (2007) identify the fact that a system for feedback and continuous improvement is one of the key elements of successful strategies at community level, and this appears to be important at national level too. Many of the dead ends in the implementation of the Preventative Strategy might have had a different outcome if they had been referred back to the Consultative Committee or the Cabinet Sub-Committee, as had been envisaged. Indeed, the cross-departmental monitoring system, with reference to the highest political authority in the state (the cabinet), would appear to be the ideal institutional arrangement to avoid any loss of momentum when institutional changes take place. Of course, the scale of Ireland's economic crisis accounts for the effective absence of monitoring in recent

years, but there is no evidence that earlier changes in the plan (e.g., the Prison Service's decision not to build step-down units in 2005, or the Juvenile Justice system's decision to close step-down units that it had opened) were brought back to the monitoring committee so that an alternative approach could be agreed upon.

One explanation of why the monitoring process failed to operate effectively was the growing number of recommendations that were outlined in subsequent reports. To understand how policy and practice in Ireland developed over the period from 2002, it is important to recognise the extraordinary numbers of specialised and generalised, national and regional, strategies, action plans and implementation plans that were published. All of these documents included further recommendations on the prevention of homelessness (Table 1).

Table 1: Prevention recommendations per report (2002 – 2010)

Strategy Document	Number of recommendations on prevention
Homelessness Preventative Strategy (Departments of Environment & Local Government, Health & Children and Education & Science, 2002)	14 Recommendations
Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent Homelessness in Dublin (Pillinger, 2005)	104 Actions
National Adult Homeless Strategy 'The Way Home' (Department of Environment & Local Government, 2008)	10 National recommendations 6 Local recommendations 15 Actions
National Implementation Plan (Department of Environment & Local Government, 2010)	8 Approaches 6 Priority Actions 36 Specific Actions 6 Further Key Actions
A Key to the Door (Homeless Agency, 2007) Dublin	15 Recommendations
8 x Regional Homeless Strategies (2010)	Up to 50 Actions in each of 8 regions.

This was happening at a time when detailed strategies were being published to tackle a whole range of intractable social problems in addition to homelessness. This era also saw a Youth Homelessness Strategy (Department of Health & Children, 2001), an Anti-Poverty Strategy, The National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008, The National Health Strategy 2002, the National Children's Strategy 2000 and many others.

It could be argued that the various social inclusion strategies were more concerned with referencing each other than relating to the emerging reality. Perhaps the most extreme example of this is the decision to commission a 'poverty proofing' evaluation of the 2008 homeless strategy 'The Way Home'. Poverty proofing was a process agreed in social partnership to assess the impact that government decisions *not directly related to poverty* might have on the incidence of poverty.

After poverty proofing the homeless strategy, it was concluded – unsurprisingly – that, if implemented, the reduction in homelessness would have a positive impact on the incidence of poverty.

Processes for monitoring and review are essential for the delivery of any successful strategy. Such structures appear to be well considered in the Preventative Strategy, but they did not function effectively. We can draw two tentative explanations for this, which may be relevant for other jurisdictions; first, that the subsequent deluge of detailed recommendations clogged up the system and resulted in the underlying issues being lost; and second, that linking monitoring to the highest level of government (the cabinet) may give an impression that an issue is being taken seriously, while the reality is that such high levels of government are the most likely to be distracted by other immediate and urgent problems.

It is worth noting that the absence of overall resources is not a plausible explanation for the failure to implement so many of the recommendations in the Preventative Strategy, as funding for homeless services increased substantially over the eight years after its publication (O'Sullivan, 2012).

A Broader Understanding of Prevention

A more fundamental critique of the Preventative Strategy is that, as in Parsell and Marston's (2012) critique of the Australian strategy, it is far too restricted and fails to address any of the causes of homelessness. While the Irish strategy mentions structural causes of homelessness, the recommendations are confined to second tier measures. There is no exploration of the structural causes of a high risk of homelessness even among the high-risk groups identified. In this sense it is open to the criticism of framing homelessness as an individual problem.

If we look at the wider context at that time, the case made by both Shinn *et al.* (2001) and Parsell and Marston (2012) becomes very relevant – that the most effective way to prevent homelessness is to increase the availability of affordable housing. In the period immediately after the publication of the Preventative Strategy, Ireland experienced a house price bubble. This resulted in a massive increase in house prices, a collapse in the proportion of social housing being built and the growth of waiting lists for social housing (Drudy and Punch, 2005). All of this led to a property crash which, coinciding with the international financial crisis, left tens of thousands of people in negative equity, mortgage arrears or facing rising rents. All these factors significantly increased the numbers at risk of losing their homes. These factors were slowly building from 2002 onwards, yet were overlooked throughout all policy documents on homelessness prevention. While the homeless strategy was being 'poverty proofed', no poverty proofing was considered for the lending policies of

banks or general housing policy. In this sense, Shinn *et al*.'s (2001) conclusion is illuminating: a genuine homelessness prevention strategy must (among other things) be a realistic sub-strategy together with the provision of affordable housing.

Conclusion

To test the effectiveness of a prevention strategy, one must primarily consider how its measures have impacted on those at risk of homelessness. However, the lack of data on this means that we have had to focus on whether proposals for specific policy instruments have been implemented. This review has demonstrated not only that the progress on the 2002 proposals has been slow, but even more strikingly, that the progress made during the first four years was not sustained, and was in many cases lost. Recent work on homelessness prevention suggests that, if situated in the context of affordable housing policies, the limited focus of the Irish Preventative Strategy may not have been misplaced. The targeting was precise and the proposed interventions involved elements of what Culhane *et al*. (2011) would recognise as 'shelter diversion' and Gaetz (2013) would see as 'systems prevention'. The fundamental problem was a failure to implement or sustain the implementation of these recommendations.

We have argued that this loss of impetus arose in part because the Strategy was excessively focused on state institutions and their formal interactions. The inevitable shifting geography of state institutions and departments means that arrangements between departments have a limited lifespan. This highlights the need for regular review, best carried out through collaborative arrangements. It is striking that reviews and evaluations became less frequent as the strategies and implementation plans got more numerous and included ever more proposed actions. This suggests that an effective review is best achieved where there are a limited number of objectives; these objectives need to be re-allocated to different institutions as governance arrangements change, so that responsibility for achieving the objectives can remain clear.

A final conclusion is that while inter-agency protocols are useful, effective systems prevention requires early intervention through person-centred case management. More recent experience in Ireland suggests that voluntary agencies can play a key role in assisting state institutions integrate their services through a case management approach. Notwithstanding Pawson's (2007) concerns about diversionary responses to legislative changes, conferring positive legal rights on citizens and legal obligations on institutions also has a key role to play.

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Evictions Due to Rent Arrears: A Comparative Analysis of Evictions in Fourteen Countries

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❯ **Abstract_** *In an earlier paper, a comparative analysis on evictions in three countries was undertaken (Stenberg et al., 2011). In 2013, I expanded the research to a total of fourteen European countries, taking into account different geographic, economic and political considerations. I examined the differences across nation states in terms of legal dimensions, but also in terms of preventative measures. A key question is: are there national strategies that prevent evictions? As there is an apparent relationship between evictions and the housing market, this data has also been collected. The results show that the problem is very complex and that jumping to conclusions is ill-advised; for example, a high rate of rented dwellings does not necessarily lead to a high rate of evictions; identified best practice does not mean there is a robust national prevention strategy in place; and strong legal protection of tenants and people in need does not necessarily lead to the prevention of evictions. Nevertheless, this overview of fourteen European countries provides some conclusions in terms of measures and strategies that can help in avoiding evictions due to rent arrears.*

❯ **Keywords_** *Evictions, rent arrears, prevention of homelessness, comparative study*

Introduction

"Typical yet damaging, for the consequences of eviction are many and severe: eviction often increases material hardship, decreases residential security, and brings about prolonged periods of homelessness… ; it can result in job loss, split up families, and drive people to depression and, in extreme cases, even to suicide… ; and it decreases one's chances of securing decent and affordable housing, of escaping disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and of benefiting from affordable housing programs." (Desmond, 2012, p.91)

If this statement holds true for countries other than the USA, we need more research examining evictions as a cause of homelessness in Europe. But as Desmond also reminds us, "[e]viction is perhaps the most understudied process affecting the lives of the urban poor" (2012, p.90; cf. Stenberg *et al.*, 2011, p.40 for Europe). Relatively few European countries have data on evictions, and of those with data, most do not know how many of those evicted become homeless (Thorpe, 2008). But we can argue that evictions, alongside family and relationship breakdowns, constitute key pathways into homelessness in Europe (Busch-Geertsema *et al.*, 2010).

In our comparative analysis about evictions in 2011 (Stenberg *et al.*, 2011), we first tried to develop a theoretical framework placing evictions in the intersection between civil and social citizenship. Secondly, we presented and compared legal frameworks, the procedures of evictions and the possibilities of avoiding homelessness due to rent arrears in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Preliminary data on the numbers of evictions were also given. Some striking differences in the processes of dealing with evictions between the three countries were observed, although there was a lack of reliable data on the number of tenants with rent arrears in these countries – apart from Sweden, which had national level statistics on evictions. The processes from rent arrears to eviction also differed significantly between the countries; Germany was identified as the country with strongest tenancy protection.

Evicted households can be considered "the weakest players in the urban housing markets" (Edgar *et al.*, 2002, cited by Teller, 2010, p.91) and it is likely that the most recent economic crisis is a major contributing factor to the increase in evictions in some countries (cf. Boerebach, 2013, p.12 for the Netherlands). As well as this, stigmatisation and discrimination have been associated with eviction processes. In his empirical study in Milwaukee in the US, Desmond (2012) found that racial discrimination affects eviction rates, with a higher proportion of black people and Hispanics experiencing eviction than white people, regardless of personal debts or other 'objective' aspects affecting tenancies. His conclusion was that: "the relationship between non-payment of rent and eviction was anything but straightforward" (2012, p.110).

Reliable data on the scale of evictions, the reasons behind evictions, and information on the households threatened by evictions are required urgently across Europe (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). If rent arrears and evictions are identified as triggers of homelessness, successful preventative measures must focus on this problem "and be underpinned by appropriate resources and governance" (FEANTSA, 2013a, p.2). However, most prevention policies are "ad hoc prevention programs and less far-reaching initiatives" (2013a, p.11). The following analysis will show that prevention starts with legal protection for tenants in general and vulnerable people in particular, and ends with individual support for people already threatened by evictions. As rent arrears are the most common cause of evictions (Stenberg *et al.*, 2011), this policy review focuses on evictions due to rent arrears within conventional rented housing. Consequentially, eviction in the context of this article means the process of dispossessing a person from their rented accommodation.[1]

Research Questions and Research Design

As stated in the introduction, rent arrears are the most common reasons that tenants are evicted. Comparing fourteen European countries, the review poses the following questions: are there differences in the dimensions of the problem? How many people or households lose their flats due to rent arrears? Do we have socio-demographic information about them? In addition, I looked at the legal basis for evictions (tenancy law) and preventative measures in different countries, also posing the question: are there national strategies to prevent evictions and, if yes, are they embedded in a wider strategy to tackle homelessness? The chosen fourteen countries, taking account of different geographic, economic and political contexts, are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Countries examined and country codes

AT	Austria	IE	Ireland
BE	Belgium	NL	The Netherlands
CZ	Czech Republic	PL	Poland
DK	Denmark	PT	Portugal
FI	Finland	ES	Spain
FR	France	SE	Sweden
DE	Germany	UK	United Kingdom

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[1] An ongoing research project on evictions in EU-member states (Pilot Project Promoting the Right to Housing: Homelessness Prevention in the Context of Evictions) defines evictions more broadly and includes those from institutional housing and squatting, and evictions due to domestic violence, etc.; it also examines foreclosures. The final report will be presented at the end of 2015.

To answer the above questions, I first conducted a literature search. Apart from articles featured in the European Journal of Homelessness, publications on rent arrears are scarce and my language competencies limited me to literature written in German, English and French. I referred to all country reports and comparative articles provided by FEANTSA and examined hundreds of further articles and reports using key search terms such as 'rent arrears', 'evict…', etc. The results are based on analysis of more than a hundred publications and websites. The findings were then used to compile a standardised questionnaire on various aspects of eviction for each of the fourteen countries.

Secondly, I contacted national experts[2] and requested them to complete this questionnaire. The first page of the questionnaire contained a table for quantitative data about demography, housing market and evictions/rent arrears, where the experts could add missing numbers, including references. The following pages contained questions about, for example, the legal conditions for evictions and national or local strategies to prevent homelessness due to evictions. This is a rather unusual approach but it was necessary due to the lack of third-party funds that would have been needed for traditional face-to-face or telephone interviews. If we consider research methods not as dichotomous (quantitative vs. qualitative), but rather as ranging in a spectrum without clear boundaries, the approach presented can be classified as problem-centred, guideline-based expert interviews in a written form or as questionnaires with open questions (cf. Bortz and Döring, 2003). Besides the statistical analysis of the quantitative data identified, the results have been processed in the form of a qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 1993).

The advantage of this approach is its cost- and time-effectiveness. Using this method, it was possible to gain and check an extensive quantity of information about evictions for the fourteen countries examined in a relatively short period of time. On the other hand, face-to-face or telephone interviews provide more openness and directness. Misunderstandings are less frequent and/or can be clarified immediately, avoiding the delays associated with email correspondence. In addition it may have been easier to find experts who would have agreed to short telephone interviews rather than written questionnaires. But all in all, the systematic collection and analysis of the requested data generated valid results.

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[2]   The list of experts (and other supporters) is located at the end of the article in the section 'Many thanks to'. Comments of the participating experts that are included in this article are cited as follows: Name/Exp.; e.g. Mostowska/Exp. is the Polish expert.

Housing and Evictions

Evictions are strongly connected to housing policies and housing in general (Stenberg *et al.*, 2011). In order to gain comparative data I mainly used the data collected by Eurostat (2012) and the European Observatory on Homelessness (e.g., Edgar, 2009). Unfortunately the housing data gained by the Census 2011 have not yet been analysed for every country. The numbers on evictions that are presented do not identify reasons for evictions, so we are not able to capture cases where rent arrears are *not* relevant. The percentage of rented dwellings and social rented dwellings in the fourteen countries are presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Percentages of Rented and Social Rented Housing Stock (Eurostat, 2012)[3]
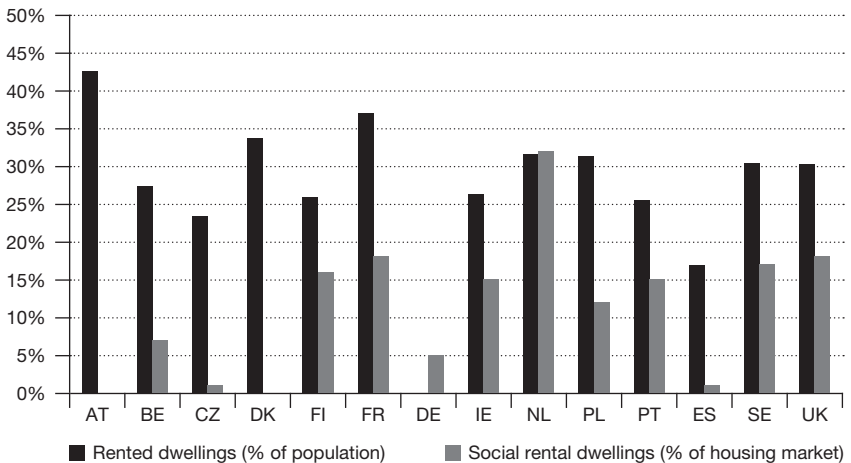
As the data shows, the percentage of rented dwellings (by percent of population) differs to a great extent. In Spain only 16.8 percent of the population live in rented dwellings, compared to 42.5 percent in Austria. Also, social rental dwellings are unequally distributed; Spain and the Czech Republic, where social housing accounts for only 1.0 percent of the total housing stock, contrast with the Netherlands, where 32.0 percent of the housing market is social rental housing.

Figure 2 shows eviction rates among households and rented dwellings. Data were only available for eight of the fourteen countries examined for the years 2008-2009.

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3   Data from 2009; figures from own data collection

Figure 2. Eviction Rates of Households and Rented Dwellings by Percent[4]
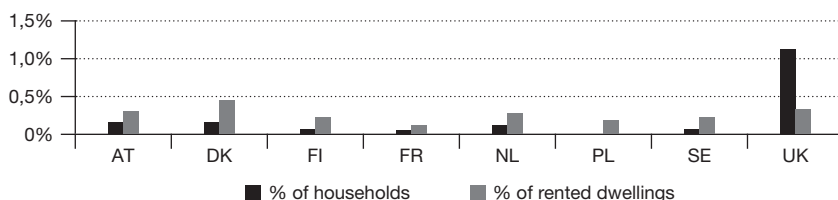
In 2011, the numbers of evictions decreased in Austria, Poland and Sweden, but increased in Finland and France.[5] Disregarding the UK, eviction rates seem to be moderate at first glance: 1 in 2 500 households has been evicted in France (an eviction rate of 0.04 percent) in comparison to 1 in 89 in the UK (1.12 percent). Quantified in relation to all rented dwellings, it equates to one eviction in 909 rented dwellings in France (0.11 percent) in comparison to one eviction in 227 rented dwellings in Denmark (0.44 percent).

Underpinning this research has been the assumption that there is a statistical connection between the percentage of rented dwellings and eviction rates. However, statistical computation showed that a high rate of rented dwellings does not lead to a high rate of evictions per households (r=0.175 – very weak correlation). Also, a high percentage of social rental dwellings does not increase the risk of evictions (r=0.36 – weak correlation). From this data, it can be argued that, as clients, the tenants of social rental dwellings are not as risky as they are assumed to be by politicians and housing companies (cf. Stenberg *et al.*, 2011). Of course, the findings must be interpreted with caution because of the few countries providing data about evictions.

Legal Conditions

Data on evictions do not distinguish between evictions due to rent arrears and evictions due to other violations of tenancy obligations, such as so-called serious 'anti-social behaviour'. In the following section on legal conditions, however, the focus is exclusively on evictions due to rent arrears. The legal conditions for an application to court and court decisions are very different in the countries under review. In most of the countries, two or three months of rent arrears can lead to an

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[4]   Edgar (2009) for Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland and the UK; Bundesrechenzentrum and BMJ (2013) for Austria; NAOE (2012) for Finland; Fondation Abbé Pierre (2013) for France: Stenberg *et al.* (2011) for Sweden. Eviction rates are the author's own calculations.

[5]   Bundesrechenzentrum and BMJ (2013) for Austria; Mostowska/Exp. for Poland; Kronofogden, (2013) for Sweden; NAOE (2012) for Finland; and Fondation Abbé Pierre (2013) for France.

instant dismissal of the tenancy. In Poland, the landlord may terminate the contract when the tenant has more than three months of arrears in rent or other payments and has not paid despite being informed of the arrears (Mostowska/Exp.). The extreme cases on either end of the spectrum are Sweden, where six days of arrears are enough to give a landlord the right of instant dismissal, and the Netherlands, where landlords have to wait for 150 days of arrears before they can dismiss a tenant (Stenberg *et al.,* 2011). In some countries the legal procedure depends on the type or length of tenancy. In England, tenants living in social housing provided by municipalities (i.e., local authorities) are currently more secure than those in social housing provided by housing associations (NGOs) or private sector landlords (Pleace/Exp.). As Shelter ('The housing and homelessness charity') warns in an online guidebook, "a landlord doesn't need to give a reason to evict a private tenant [in many cases]" (Shelter, 2013).

The period of time from notice to quit until the actual eviction is also quite different in the fourteen countries. According to Djankow *et al.,* (2003) the duration ranges from 52 days in the Netherlands to 1 080 days in Poland. For most of the countries the period of time is given as between 120 and 330 days (l.c.).[6] One reason for the short period of time in the Netherlands seems to be the fact that housing associations become "more business-minded in their debt collecting policies. This means bringing the cases to court earlier and referring defaulters to the bailiff at an earlier stage." (Stenberg *et al.,* 2011, p.51) In Ireland, the period of time is determined by the length of the tenancy; if the tenancy was for less than six months, a minimum notice period of 28 days must be given, but if the tenancy has lasted for more than four years, 112 days' notice must be given (O'Sullivan/Exp.).

Only a few countries guarantee a so-called 'protection period', where the regulation of rent arrears makes the notice to quit legally void. Such protection was identified in Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden. In Portugal this is only possible once per tenancy contract and the arrears have to be paid 30 days after receiving the eviction notice (Baptista/Exp.), whereas in Germany the legal protection does not take effect if, during the previous two years, rent arrears have been paid after a notice to quit (Stenberg *et al.,* 2011). The protection period is two weeks in the Netherlands, three weeks in Sweden and two months in Germany (l.c.). There is no legally determined protection period in Belgium, but tenants can delay or avoid evictions by claiming exceptional circumstances and "judges are allowed a lot of discretion in evaluating the situation" (Thorpe, 2008, p.33).

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6   Some experts commented that the total administrative duration given by the source was possibly not up-to-date for their country, but there were no up-to-date references on this issue at time of writing.

In most countries the procedure for evictions is regulated by law. Usually present at the eviction are the bailiff, the landlord (or a representative), a locksmith, a removal firm and sometimes the police. Furniture will be stored in most countries, and former tenants can regain it later by covering the storage costs if it is not considered refuse (e.g., Schoibl/Exp. for Austria; Benjaminsen/Exp. for Denmark; Stenberg *et al.,* 2011 for Germany and the Netherlands). In some countries there are special regulations under which evictions are not possible. This is the case in France, for example, where a so-called 'moratoire hivernal' prevents evictions in wintertime, depending also on the winter temperatures (Lévy-Vroelant/Exp.). In Poland, also, evictions cannot be carried out during wintertime except in cases of domestic violence, and "the regulations are strict on not allowing eviction to a homeless or night shelter" (Poland – National Report, 2008, p.35). Furthermore in Poland, evictions due to rent arrears are only allowed if substitute accommodation in a 'gmina' (community) social housing apartment is provided (l.c.; Mostowska/ Exp.). In Sweden, no children should be evicted but the law has not yet been adjusted to reflect this; in the opinion of the Swedish expert it is "more talk than business" (Stenberg/Exp.).

Preventative Measures

Prevention in general can be defined as primary, secondary and tertiary (or intervening) prevention. Primary prevention is a course of action not targeted at specific people or groups. In the context of homelessness, primary prevention involves the right to housing and measures "reducing the risk of homelessness for the general population, such as effective housing and welfare policy" (FEANTSA, 2013a, p.2). Secondary prevention is tailored to people or groups considered vulnerable where, "interventions focused on people at risk of homelessness" (FEANTSA, 2013a, p.2), while tertiary prevention (or intervening) is addressed to people already known to have housing problems, or people "who have already been affected by homelessness" (FEANTSA, 2013a, p.2). Using these definitions, most of the measures preventing eviction that have been identified are secondary and tertiary preventative measures.

Prevention connected to court procedures

Secondary and tertiary prevention in cases where eviction is threatened are strongly associated with court procedures. In many countries, it is through the courts that counselling and support for tenants can be arranged. In most of the countries surveyed, this is regulated by law. In Austria, municipalities have to be informed when a case is brought to court and when a date of eviction is announced. However, in rural areas the lines of communication between municipalities and specific

advice agencies do not always work well (Kitzmann/Exp.). In Denmark it is the duty of housing organisations to inform the municipality – at the latest when the case is sent to the bailiff's court – and in some cases additional support must be provided, especially when there are children under 18 living in the household (Benjaminsen/ Exp.; Høst *et al.,* 2012). However, an investigation by the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs suggests that "contributions from the municipalities are not in all cases optimal" (Denmark – National Report, 2008, p.3).

In Belgium, following the updated 1998 law, which made eviction procedures more humane, the local social service (LSS) is informed when an eviction proceeding has begun in the courts (de Decker/Exp.), and specific regulations in Flanders dictate a mediation process if a social rental agency wants to end a rental contract with a tenant on a low income (Blow, 2004). In Finland, the Enforcement Code (510) obliges the bailiff to inform local housing and social welfare authorities when people are threatened by evictions and appear in need, but most social housing landlords try to communicate with the tenant as early as possible to avoid an eviction (Hytönen/ Exp.). Similarly, in Germany and Sweden the municipalities must be informed when the landlord serves a notice to quit (Sweden) or when court procedures start (Germany), and a second time when the bailiff sets a date for an eviction (Stenberg *et al.,* 2011). In Scotland, all landlords must inform local authorities of planned evictions; the local authorities then try to prevent the eviction or rehouse the individual or household (United Kingdom – National Report, 2008).

Pro-active support was identified in some countries, mostly provided by NGOs. For example, in Austria specialised prevention centres make contact with households threatened by evictions. They offer legal advice, but also support in developing a financial plan and claiming social benefits (Thorpe, 2008; Busch-Geertsema *et al.,* 2010). However, in some Austrian regions there is still no systematic prevention of evictions (Kitzmann/Exp.). In France, there are the 'commissions de coordination des actions de prévention des expulsions locatives' (CCAPEX) – coordination commissions for the prevention of evictions. Depending on local actors, however, they often lack sufficient means to carry out their job adequately (Lévy-Vroelant/Exp.; Rapport National France, 2008). In Germany, prevention centres are run by the municipalities. They usually send a letter offering support to households in need; home visits are rare since welfare reform in 2005 and are mainly done when children are involved (Busch-Geertsema *et al.,* 2010; Stenberg *et al.,* 2011). In Belgium, the GWW (Centres for General Welfare Work) is responsible for assistance and support when someone is threatened by eviction (Blow, 2004). In Flanders, tenants in social housing are given preventative guidance in regard to avoiding evictions, but this is not available for tenants in the private renting market (Callens/Exp.). In the Czech Republic there are

no preventative tools for tenants in the private sector and the authorities responsible for the social and legal protection of children will only try to prevent evictions involving households with children in council flats. (Růžička/Exp.)

A specific preventative measure is the regulation of rent arrears to avoid evictions, and this exists in some of the countries examined. In Austria, centres for secure tenancy can advocate on behalf of clients applying for social benefits to address the problem of arrears, but this service is not regulated by law (Schoibl and Kitzmann/Exp.). In France, authorities can cover rent-accrued debts, or part thereof, using specific housing solidarity funds available in every region when other preventative measures such as financial agreements between the tenant and landlord have failed (Rapport National France, 2008; Thorpe, 2008). In Denmark, municipal regulation of rent arrears is possible, but only under specific circumstances under the Law of Active Social Policy (Benjaminsen/Exp.). In Portugal, rent arrears may be regulated by the state when the tenants can prove a lack of material resources (equal or lower to minimum wage or are beneficiaries of Social Insertion Income) or have a disability status of 60 percent or over (Baptista/Exp.).

In Sweden, households can apply for financial assistance to settle their rent arrears. If through social worker investigation it is deemed that the tenant is unable to pay the arrears, economic help may be granted (Stenberg *et al.,* 2011). In Germany there are robust legal regulations for local authorities or job centres to assist with rent arrears. A tenant's entitlement to help should be assumed where this is both justified and necessary, and where there is a risk of homelessness (Books of the Code of Social Law SGB II and SGB XII). However, if the rent is too high, this intervention is not mandated (Benjaminsen and Busch-Geertsema, 2009; Stenberg *et al.,* 2011). Again due to the 2005 social welfare reforms, this is not as effective in practice as it is in theory. In most cases, it was the job centres – with overworked and undertrained staff – who were responsible for decisions on these applications, thus increasing the risk of tenants becoming homeless, particularly among households with long-term unemployed members (Stenberg *et al.,* 2011). In some countries, assistance with rent arrears is only possible in some regions. In the Belgian region of Flanders, the government created a 'guaranteed lease fund', which is still in its initial development phase. It is based on the idea that tenants in need are granted some rent-free months "so that owners (and judges) are more willing to give tenants a second chance" (Callens/Exp.). In some Spanish autonomous communities (the Basque Country and Catalonia), people with rent arrears can get financial assistance to avoid losing their housing. These preventative interventions target families in particular (Garcia, 2008).

National or local strategies to prevent homelessness due to evictions

If one excludes socio-political strategies and actions relating to housing in general (such as limiting rent levels), primary and secondary prevention measures in the context of evictions and rent arrears are scarce. National and local strategies to prevent homelessness due to evictions can be identified as secondary prevention in a certain kind of way, but the lines are blurred. For seven of the fourteen countries surveyed, such strategies were identified. In Denmark, the government developed a national programme to prevent evictions in 2012 and a state budget to the amount of €5.1 million (38.8 million DKK) over four years was allocated to the programme. This money will be provided to local initiatives to support tenants threatened by eviction (Benjaminsen/Exp.). In France, strategies targeting vulnerable groups in the housing market, including measures to prevent evictions, have existed for a long time (FEANTSA, 2006). Since 2008, people under threat of eviction with no possibility of rehousing can appeal under Right to Housing Act (DALO) (Loison-Leruste and Quilgars, 2009). In Portugal, the national strategy on homelessness defines three specific areas to tackle homelessness, the first of which concentrates on preventative measures "to avoid homelessness situations arising, namely from eviction or from discharge from an institution" (Edgar, 2009, p.36; cf. Baptista, 2009). Across the UK there are national homelessness prevention strategies. Eviction is a key issue, embedded in the wider preventative strategies required of urban municipalities. Although they share similar approaches, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have four separate 'national' prevention strategies (Pleace/Exp.).

Finland has a long tradition of homelessness prevention. As early as 2003, a specific joint action contract was signed between the state and local authorities to reduce homelessness, which included preventative measures (Weckström, 2004). Extensive government programmes to tackle homelessness followed during 2008-2011 and 2012-2015; these included increasing the provision of housing advice services by the Housing Finance and Development Centre (ARA) (Hytönen/Exp.; Housing First FI, 2013a) For the current period to 2015, the housing advisory services have the capacity to expand through the allocation of central government funding. Another focus in Finland is the cooperation between social services and housing providers in preventing evictions (Hytönen/Exp.; Housing First FI, 2013b). In Spain, prevention strategies exist only at the local level. The Governor of Catalonia signed a National Housing Pact in 2007 that includes preventative measures like personalised assistance, but also involves aid with rent for 20 000 homes and aid for avoiding 15 000 evictions (Garcia, 2008). Similarly, Andalusía developed measures to prevent against the evictions of tenants and homeowners; a current decree should protect 200 families by reducing their rents to 25 percent of household income (FEANTSA Flash, 4/13).

Preventative strategies are mostly part of wider strategies against homelessness and aim to decrease the overall number of evictions. This is the case in the Netherlands where the *G4 Homelessness Action Plan 2006-2013* contains the objective of reducing the number of evictions by 30 percent (Hermans, 2012). Sweden has also placed a particular focus on reducing the numbers of evictions (Anderson, 2010). In most of the relevant literature, however, the description of strategies is rather vague and a more valid evaluation would require the comparison of theory and practice, which would require more time and resources than were possible here.

Personal support for people threatened by evictions

Besides structural and legal regulations, personal support (mostly given by social workers) is listed as a key measure to prevent homelessness in many reports and by national experts. In Austria, the NGO Volkshilfe established FAWOS (Fachstelle für Wohnungssicherung or the Centre for Secure Tenancy) in 1996 and it was given an award for Best Practices by UN Habitat as one out of the 40 best projects in 1998 and 2002. FAWOS emphasises the principle of 'help for self-help': "The goal is to restore as quickly as possible a person's ability to take decisions concerning their personal life and to provide financial help very fast" (Perl, 2008, p.40). In Belgium, the General Welfare Work (GWW) also offers personal help when someone is threatened by eviction. At the end of the process, "the GWW worker evaluates with the tenant if he now has enough tools to get on with his life. If necessary, external services are involved, and sometimes the client is transferred to the regular programme for accompanied housing" (Blow, 2004). In the Czech Republic, the NGO Naděje works with people in danger of being evicted. Its social workers try to find out why rent is not being paid: "It happens quite often than not paying rent is a secondary effect of a problem rooted elsewhere" (Armáda Spásy, 2004, p.2).

In Denmark, municipalities give advice to people in need about repaying debt. In special cases they can place 'weak payers' under financial administration and make sure that rent is being paid (Denmark: National Report on Prevention, 2004). In Finland, the above-mentioned housing advisory services offer counselling and try to "respond[] rapidly to any tenancy problems that arise" (Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009, p.190). Social workers also arrange contact between clients and the housing company as well as other social services and even relatives, in an effort to create a network of co-operation (Weckström, 2004). In Ireland, interventions differ across local authorities; the local authority area office may use its own welfare section or refer people at risk to other services, such as those for addiction problems (Ireland – National Report, 2008). In the Netherlands, prevention takes place at the local level (Hermans, 2012). The NGO *Eropaf! (Let's do it!)* in Amsterdam counsels people at risk and includes an outreach approach (Stenberg *et al.,* 2011). The organisation has developed a guidebook, primarily for social rental agency tenants, which

provides examples of what can be done in the different phases of the eviction process (FEANTSA Flash, 5/13). Some projects like Eropaf! are also funded by social housing organisations because their "aim… is to *house* people, not to *evict* them" (Boerebach, 2013, p.12, emphasis in original). In the UK, some housing providers give debt advice themselves before an eviction case starts (FEANTSA, 2003). In the other countries surveyed, except Poland, social services are also available to advise people who are threatened by eviction.

Findings and Conclusions

First of all, court procedures and the process from rent arrears to evictions is usually complicated and often incomprehensible for tenants in the countries surveyed (e.g., Callens/Exp. for Belgium). To make matters worse, this is also true for the responsible local actors in some countries. It is reported in Ireland, for example, that "the differences of practice across local authorities may reflect the lack of clarity around procedures" (Ireland – National Report, 2008, p.34). Similarly in Germany, due to the staff in job centres being overworked, the strong legal protections available for tenants and vulnerable people are not sufficiently used by the administrations responsible for avoiding evictions due to rent arrears (Stenberg *et al.,* 2011).

The legal framework relating to rent arrears and evictions is very different in the fourteen countries examined. Strong legal regulations that protect tenants from immediately losing their housing was identified in only some countries (e.g., Germany and Belgium), and only four countries provide a so-called protection period in which tenants or social welfare services are given the opportunity to clear debts in order to save the tenancy. In some of the countries surveyed a court application can be administered very quickly upon the accruing of arrears (e.g., after six days of rent arrears in Sweden) and the length of the total process from rent arrears to eviction ranges widely from 52 to 1 080 days in the fourteen countries. Furthermore, tenants in the private sector are less well protected than those in social or communal housing in some countries (e.g., in the UK).

Despite these apparent differences, one of the more surprising results of this analysis is that strong legal regulations do not necessarily lead to lower rates of evictions, as exemplified in Germany. Germany provides strong tenancy protection rights to ordinary tenants and also those in particular need, but there is no national strategy tackling homelessness nor are the numbers of evictions fully known. Similarly, Belgium has as yet only developed local strategies and no national strategies (de Decker/Exp.), and the numbers of evictions are also unknown. 'Good practice' does not necessarily mean providing legal guarantees to avoid evictions. In Austria, prevention centres for eviction, funded by local or regional authorities,

aim to avoid homelessness, but, as the Austrian expert points out, there is no legal framework for the prevention of evictions (Schoibl/Exp.). Equally, national programmes do not necessarily translate into the prevention of evictions. Although the Danish government is funding preventative support with an allocation of more than €5 million, it is argued that there are limited possibilities for municipalities to assist financially with rent, and therefore very limited possibilities of actually avoiding eviction (Benjaminsen/Exp.). Likewise in Finland and France, national programmes have not necessarily led to reduced numbers of evictions. Thus, an interim conclusion is that differences among the countries surveyed are significant and deriving causal connections is ill-advised. Based on the literature review and expert questionnaires, this paper argues the following central issues:

1. There is a need for valid data on evictions

2. Preventative strategies should include:

    a. a legal framework protecting tenants and people in need

    b. a sufficient budget

    c. housing advisory and counselling services

    d. available affordable housing

3. Strategies must be coordinated between departments for housing and social affairs

4. Local strategies must be coordinated within a national strategy

Although FEANTSA stated in the current European Research Agenda on Homelessness (FEANTSA, 2013b, p.3) that countries having invested in "primary research and data collection on homelessness, are also to the forefront of advancing coherent and integrated policies that aim to end homelessness", more research is necessary to understand the connections between general legal regulations, preventative measures and the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of evictions due to rent arrears. Therefore, further research is needed in the following areas:

• the influence of the housing market on evictions;

• informal and illegal evictions;

• conditions and legal frameworks leading to a reduced number of evictions;

• cost-effectiveness of prevention strategies;

• national prevention strategies assuring tenants' protection independently from the status of the landlord (i.e., whether private or social housing);

• best practices that are also sensitive to national contexts.

In addition we need more evidence and research on the effects of preventative measures, including the question: "what would have happened in the absence of intervention?" (Shinn and Greer, 2011, p.186). Hopefully, the study on evictions in all EU-member states set out in this paper provides some more valid data and information in these important areas.

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Think Pieces

Part C

Can Housing First Work for Youth?

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❭ **Abstract_** *Housing First has emerged as an effective and humane approach to addressing homelessness. In spite of the strength of the evidence, questions remain regarding the applicability of Housing First to sub-populations, including youth. The proposed framework for Housing First for Youth outlined here is intended to provide a starting point for communities, policy-makers and practitioners interested in applying the model to adolescents and young adults, recognising that different national and local contexts present both unique challenges but also opportunities. Housing First does not promise or pretend to be the only approach to addressing youth homelessness. However, it can and should become an important intervention that supports, and in turn is supported by, other preventive and early intervention strategies, short term emergency supports, and so on.*

❭ **Keywords_** *Housing First, youth, key principles*

Introduction

Housing First has emerged as an effective and humane approach to addressing homelessness. Internationally, there has been debate over its potential for adaptation and application in different national contexts based on the recognition that social and housing policy varies widely between countries and on concerns about how the concept has been interpreted and implemented. The case for Housing First has been bolstered, however, by a large volume of research that attests to its efficacy, including the highly successful At Home/Chez Soi project from Canada. The breadth and rigour of this research makes Housing First one of the few homelessness interventions that can be truly deemed a 'best practice'.

In spite of the strength of the evidence, questions remain regarding the applicability of Housing First to sub-populations, including youth. In the application of Housing First in Canada and elsewhere, chronically homeless (and mostly adult) people with acute mental health and addictions issues are typically prioritised, and many if not most youth do not fit this criteria. As Housing First has become a priority for many funders across Canada, many are asking about its relevance for a youthful population for whom the causes and conditions of homelessness are unique from the adult population.

The question to be addressed in this paper is: can Housing First work for youth? It will be argued that Housing First can work for young people, but that the model must be adapted based upon our understanding of the developmental, social and legal needs of young persons.

What IS Housing First?

The increasing popularity of Housing First raises important questions about the exact meaning of the concept, as well as about how and in what ways it can be adapted. At its most basic, Housing First is considered to be:

> a recovery-oriented approach to homelessness that involves moving people who experience homelessness into independent and permanent housing as quickly as possible, with no preconditions and then providing them with additional services and supports as needed. The underlying principle of Housing First is that people are more successful in moving forward with their lives if they are first housed. This is as true for homeless people and those with mental health and addiction issues as it is for anyone. Housing is not contingent upon readiness, or on 'compliance' (for instance, sobriety). Rather, it is a rights-based intervention rooted in the philosophy that all people deserve housing and that adequate housing is a precondition for recovery (Gaetz, 2013, p.12).

The evidence for the effectiveness of Housing First with adult populations (and, in particular, chronically homeless people) is both extensive and compelling (Shern *et al.*, 1997; Tsemberis and Eisenberg, 2000; Culhane *et al.*, 2002; Metraux *et al.*, 2003; Rosenheck *et al.*, 2003; Tsemberis *et al.*, 2004; Pearson *et al.*, 2007; Falvo, 2009; 2010; Mares and Rosenheck, 2010; Tsemberis, 2010; Goering *et al.*, 2012; 2014; Waegemakers Schiff and Rook, 2012; Gaetz, 2013; Gaetz *et al.*, 2013). In fact, it is one of the few homelessness interventions that can truly be considered to be a 'best practice'. The At Home/Chez Soi project in Canada represents perhaps the most extensive examination of Housing First anywhere (Goering *et al.*, 2012; 2014).

This multi-side randomised controlled trial of Housing First as an intervention for homeless individuals with mental illness has provided the best and most compelling evidence to date for this intervention.[1]

Key findings from the *At Home/Chez Soi* study suggest that individuals who participate in Housing First, when compared to those who receive 'treatment as usual', are more likely, for instance, to obtain and maintain stable housing, experience a reduction in unnecessary emergency visits and hospitalisations, and have improved health and mental health outcomes.

In the wake of compelling evidence, the growing popularity of Housing First creates its own challenges as communities attempt to adapt the model. As Housing First has come to be taken up in contexts outside of the United States, the importance of taking into account cultural, policy and structural differences in social, health, welfare and housing supports has raised questions regarding the practicality or desirability of strict adherence to the Pathways model (Atherton and McNaughton Nichols, 2008; Johnsen and Texiera, 2010; Pleace, 2011; Johnson *et al.*, 2012; Pleace and Bretherton, 2012). Of course, it can also be argued that some of the controversy surrounding Housing First emanates from a profound misunderstanding of what the concept means, from the fact that it threatens established ways of doing things, and from poor and inappropriate applications of the intervention. In a review of Housing First practices in North America and Europe, Pleace and Bretherton argue that:

> As 'Housing First' has permeated the thinking of policymakers and service providers across the US and the wider world, the core ideas of (Pathways to Housing) have been simplified, diluted and in many instances, subjected to change. The (Pathways to Housing) paradigm often only has a partial relationship with the wide range of new and remodelled homelessness services that have been given the 'Housing First' label (Pleace and Bretherton, 2012, p.5).

In the end, in spite of controversy, the evidence base for Housing First suggests that not only is it an effective intervention with a strong evidence base (a best practice), but it is also likely more cost effective than 'treatment as usual' (Larimer, 2009; Gaetz and Scott, 2012; Goering *et al.*, 2012; 2014). Advocates of Housing First acknowledge that it is not the only possible response to homelessness, but it most certainly is a key one.

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[1] An extensive list of research reports from the *At Home/Chez Soi* project can be found on the Mental Health Commission of Canada's website: http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/ English/issues/housing?routetoken=a0e29a03d828cfe8c99d30b93dae9fdc&terminitial=23

Can Housing First Work for Youth?

While the question 'Does Housing First work for adults?' has effectively been answered, whether and how it works for youth[2] still remains a valid question. Consultations with a range of Canadian service providers and young people who have experienced homelessness have revealed a number of questions and concerns relating to the age and maturity of young clients, the nature of youth appropriate supports and the length of time young people would have access to them, legal issues that may affect access to housing and benefits, and the challenges of trust-building necessary to support the model. Young people voiced concern about the potential isolation that might come from being put into the community in scattered site housing before they felt ready. Finally, concerns were expressed over the focus of rushing young people to independence and thereby undermining a broader goal of supporting a healthier transition to adulthood and wellbeing. These concerns do not suggest that Housing First cannot work for youth, but point to the need to better understand how to adapt the model for a more youthful population.

So what do we really know about how Housing First works for youth? While a small number of communities in Canada have implemented Housing First programmes for youth, few have been researched or rigorously evaluated. In spite of the wealth of research on the effectiveness of Housing First for adults, there is surprisingly little research evidence anywhere on the efficacy of the approach for young people.[3]

The best evidence we have to date in support of Housing First for youth comes from the *Infinity Project*, operated by the Boys and Girls Club of Calgary (Davies, 2013; Scott and Harrison, 2013). Serving young people 16-24 years of age, the goal of Infinity is to help youth become permanently housed and to increase and maintain self-sufficiency and a successful transition to adulthood. In addition to accessing housing (and obtaining rent supplements), young people are provided with a range of supports that facilitate reconnection with family and natural supports, accessing education and employment, life skills, etc. In terms of youth engagement, young people are supported in volunteering, exploring community resources and opportunities in their community, attending community events, identifying interests and

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[2] Homeless youth are defined as persons "between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers and importantly, lack many of the social supports deemed necessary for the transition from childhood to adulthood. In such circumstances, they do not have a stable or consistent residence or source of income, nor do they necessarily have adequate access to the support networks necessary to foster a safe and nurturing transition into the responsibilities of adulthood" (Gaetz, 2014, p.13).

[3] It should be noted that the *At Home/Chez Soi* project did include a number of participants between the ages of 18 and 25 and there is an intent to report research findings relating to Housing First with this sub-population. However, these findings had not been released at the time of writing.

exploring opportunities to become involved in programming. A central tenet of the Infinity Project is 'zero discharge into homelessness', meaning that if housing breaks down due to a crisis, behavioural challenges or other issues, young people will not find themselves on the streets, but rather, alternative accommodations will be secured. An evaluation of the project shows quite successful outcomes after the first year, including a housing retention rate of 95% and increases in income stability and access to services (Scott and Harrison, 2013).

Another perspective is provided by research on the *Youth Matters in London* (Ontario) project, which argues that while many young people thrive in a Housing First context, it does not seem to work for everyone. In some cases, those with mental health and addiction issues (or a combination of both) find that the choice and independence offered by the model were too much to handle and could be experienced as a 'set up for failure' (Forchuk *et al.*, 2013). That is, some young people felt that independent living was isolating and could become an enabling environment for drug use, and therefore would prefer to address other develop-mental/health issues prior to independent living. Forchuk and her team conclude that the 'one size fits all' approach proposed by some advocates is actually quite limiting and ignores the incredible variability in needs and circumstances of young people who are homeless.

> The social, cultural, financial and existential (i.e. the perceived meaning of one's existence and place in the world, as well as how this meaning may influence the decisions one makes) situations of the study's participants are very different (Forchuk *et al.*, 2013, p.113).

The research evidence on Housing First for youth suggests several outcomes. First, as it is currently constituted, Housing First is clearly a viable, effective and preferred option for some youth, but perhaps not all. Second, the two research perspectives are not contradictory and do not undermine the efficacy of Housing First for youth, when we remember that client choice is a key underlying principle of the approach. Finally, and following from this, young people may need a range of housing options within the Housing First umbrella that go beyond the scattered site, independent living model that is fundamental to many Housing First approaches. As part of a spectrum of options for accommodation and support, it is worth being reminded that 'Housing First' should also mean 'Preference First' (Forchuk, *et al.*, 2013).

What Might Housing First for Youth Look Like?

Those who work with young people who are homeless have been quick to stress that a Housing First approach for youth must not merely replicate an established approach that works for adults and simply create Housing First 'Junior' by changing the age mandate. If Housing First is to work for youth, it must be built upon our understanding of the developmental, social and legal needs of young persons.

This perspective is based on an understanding that because youth homelessness is distinct from adult homelessness both in terms of its causes and consequences, so must the remedies differ (Gaetz, 2014). Young people, depending on their age (and the needs of a 13 year old will most certainly be different from an 18 or 23 year old) may experience significant developmental changes (physical, cognitive, emotional and social) that impact on decision-making, social relationships, inclusion and opportunities (Christie and Viner, 2005; Steinberg, 2007). Some will have very little or no experience of living independently, dealing with landlords or managing a household budget. Becoming homeless may mean young people not only lose their families but other natural supports (friends, adults, extended family), and be forced to drop out of school. The youth population is also diverse, and some young people will be doubly or triply marginalised because of racism, sexism and/or homophobia (Abramovich, 2012; 2013; Springer *et al.*, 2013). Finally, youth may experience various forms of exclusion that mean they cannot easily access rental accommodation or a living wage (especially if they are early school leavers), both of which are necessary for independent living.

Many young people become homeless initially due to having experienced the trauma of physical, sexual and emotional abuse (Whitbeck and Hoyt, 1999; Tyler *et al*., 2000; Thrane *et al.*, 2006; Tyler and Bersani, 2008). For these young people, leaving home may in some ways be experienced as 'freedom', but the longer a young person is absolutely homeless or comes to rely on emergency services, problems can mount, and the experience of trauma can be intensified (Karabanow, 2004). The greater their entrenchment in the street youth lifestyle, the more estranged young people may become from mainstream services; the worse their health (mental health and addictions) may become (Kidd, 2004; 2013; McKay and Aiello, 2013); and the greater likelihood there is of their experiencing crime and violence as well as sexual and economic exploitation (Gaetz and O'Grady, 2002). We also know that without adequate supports, many youth who are homeless today will become the chronically homeless adults of tomorrow (Baker Collins, 2013).

All of this suggests the need to provide young people at risk of, or who have experienced homelessness, with appropriate housing and supports as rapidly as possible. This is the case for adapting Housing First in a way that meets the needs of young people, and providing an alternative to entrenchment in emergency services and the street youth lifestyle.

The Core Principles of Housing First for Youth

The goal of articulating core principles is to establish a common set of ideas that should underlie any application of Housing First. While there is no 'one size fits all' approach to Housing First, the core principles articulated by Pathways to Housing (Tsemberis, 2010) and the At-Home/Chez Soi project (Goering *et al.*, 2014) become important in ensuring that programme adaptation demonstrates fidelity to the model – in particular the notion of consumer choice and self-determination – as well as immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness require- ments. Consistent with the perspective that interventions for youth should not merely replicate adult models but rather must appropriately meet the develop- mental needs and capacities of adolescents and young adults, the following are core principles that Housing First for youth should include:

1. **Immediate access to permanent housing with no preconditions**: Young people should be provided with rapid access to safe, secure and permanent housing that meets their needs as quickly as possible, without the condition that they are 'ready' for housing.

2. **Youth choice and self-determination:** Housing First is a rights-based, client-centred approach that emphasises client choice in terms of the kind of housing they need, and the extent and nature of supports and services they access. Housing First programmes should embrace a harm reduction philosophy, and there should be no requirement of sobriety or abstinence.

3. **Positive youth development orientation:** Accommodation and supports must first be designed and implemented in recognition of the developmental needs and challenges of youth, and second, foster and enable a transition to adulthood and wellness based on a positive strengths-based approach.

4. **Individualised and client-driven supports:** A client-driven approach recog- nises that all young people are unique individuals and so are their needs. Once housed, some people will need few, if any, supports, while other people will need supports for the rest of their lives.

5. **Social and community integration:** Helping people integrate into communities requires socially supportive engagement and the opportunity to participate in meaningful activities.

The Application of Housing First for Youth

It is important to distinguish Housing First as a philosophy from its application as a programme. As a *philosophy*, Housing First can be a guiding principle for an organisation or community that prioritises getting young people into housing with supports to follow. It is the belief that all young people deserve housing and that people who are homeless will do better and recover more effectively if they are first provided with housing. Housing First can be considered more specifically as a *programme* when it is operationalised as a service delivery model or set of activities provided by an agency or government body. It is important to note that there is no one single programme model for Housing First and that it can take many forms, but key essentials of any programme include access to housing and a range of youth appropriate supports.

A major consideration in the application of Housing First for youth is the kind of housing that is deemed appropriate. While in North America, Housing First programmes routinely emphasise private sector scattered-site housing (because this is, in fact, what most participants desire), one must consider a broader range of options for young people, as outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Models of accommodation within a housing first framework for youth
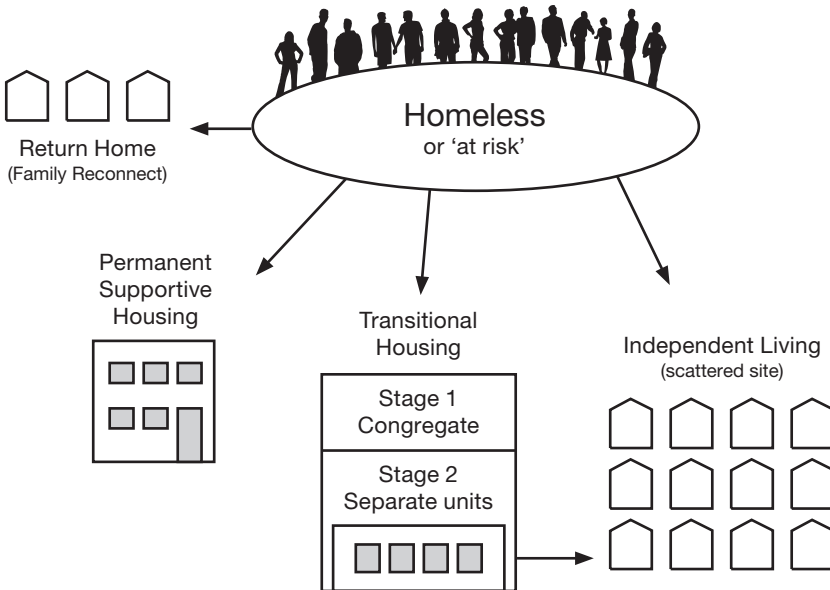
That many young people will, in fact, want access to their own (or shared) permanent housing in either the private market or the social housing sector must be acknowledged, and this has been demonstrated through the success of the Infinity Project. However, consistent with the key principle of 'Consumer Choice and Self-Determination', one must consider a broader range of housing options. For some, this means the opportunity to return to the home of their parents and/or to the home of another significant adult including relatives, godparents or family friends. Returning home is best supported through programmes and services that adopt a 'family reconnect' orientation, and may involve ongoing family counselling, mediation and support (Winland *et al.*, 2011; Winland, 2013). Other young people, particularly those with acute and chronic mental health and addictions issues, may require Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), involving a more integrated model of housing and clinical services.

A key innovation of Housing First for youth is the inclusion of transitional housing as an option, in spite of the fact that many proponents of Housing First see it as an outmoded approach. In fact, transitional housing in the form of more extensive supports and congregate living may not only be very appropriate for many youth but, again, consistent with the core principle of client choice, as it may be what many youth prefer and desire. There is research evidence that highlights the effectiveness of some transitional housing models for youth – in particular the Foyer (Quilgars *et al.*, 1995; 2008; Smith *et al.*, 2006; Gaetz and Scott, 2012). A case can be made that, particularly for younger teens, transitional housing may be ideal for those who have not have attained the necessary life skills, independence, confidence and maturity to maintain their own apartment. In our consultation with young people, some suggested that they preferred a more congregate environment as they learned independence, because moving into one's own place often means leaving their street friends behind along with the possibility of loneliness and isolation – a transition that can be difficult to navigate:

> I wasn't all about wanting to be independent so much…Like I've been very family deprived and that's why I loved Brennan [Transitional housing] so much… I was able to get that family and link up with friends. I always used to stay in then and never went out and partied. I was always there and it was enjoyable to come home and eat dinner with everybody and what not.

> (Alex, age 19, Hamilton, ON.)

A key caveat of incorporating transitional housing within a Housing First framework is that all young people who access such accommodation must eventually be supported to move into independent living (with supports).

Of course, Housing First is about much more than housing – it also necessarily means ensuring that young people are provided with appropriate supports to facilitate their transition to adulthood. Such supports are best delivered through an integrated 'system of care' approach, supported by client-centred case management, in order to organise and coordinate the delivery of services. A service integration model should ensure that the young person is able to access the range of supports they need to ensure housing stability and well-being.

Two key factors distinguish the kinds of support that young people need from those typically associated with Housing First for adults. First, the goal of case management and supports should not merely be to facilitate a successful transition to independent living, but rather to support a healthy transition to adulthood. Supports should be age-appropriate, designed to meet the needs of the developing adolescent and young adult, and emphasise 'positive youth development'. Second, in order to support the transition to adulthood, the supports should be provided as long as the young person needs them. Time limited supports (one or two years) are not practical, nor are they consistent with a broader understanding of the needs of young people, and they may in the long run undermine the ability of young people to reengage in education or maintain housing stability, for instance. The following are supports are considered necessary for the transition to adulthood:

1. **Housing Supports:** Given that many homeless youth will have little or no experience in finding and maintaining accommodation, housing supports are essential. Such supports include helping to search for and obtain safe, affordable and appropriate housing in the first place. It also means providing young people with the necessary life skills to enable them to maintain and keep their housing, and this includes learning to pay rent on time and learning how to develop good relations with landlords and neighbours, or deal with friends. In communities with a lack of affordable housing young people will likely require some form of rent supplement until their income is stable. Finally, young people will need supports when things go wrong, and a 'zero discharge into homelessness' philosophy should be adopted so that housing stability and crisis management become key.

2. **Supports for health and well-being:** A recovery-oriented approach to clinical supports that includes trauma-informed care should be implemented in order to enhance well-being, mitigate the effects of mental health and addiction challenges, improve quality of life and foster self-sufficiency. As part of a 'system of care', and because many homeless youth experience mental health challenges, young people should be supported in accessing assessments for mental health problems or learning disabilities, as well as in finding suitable interventions, if required. Some young people will need ongoing support to deal with addictions,

and harm reduction approaches should be emphasised. Finally, sexual health is a central feature of physical, emotional and social health and well-being, which influences individuals of all ages; as such, young people should be supported in the development of healthy sexuality.

3. **Supporting access to income and education:** Inadequate income and employment are well documented as causes of, and contributing factors to young people cycling in and out of homelessness. Supporting young people to earn an income is an important task of Housing First, and is key to addressing housing stability in the long term. Many young people who are homeless have dropped out of school at a young age. Given the centrality of education in our understanding of what helps young people to grow into healthy independent adults, and our understanding that many homeless youth have dropped out of school at an early age, support in (re)engagement with school should be a central feature of Housing First supports for youth.

4. **Complementary supports:** Life skills, access to adult support and mentoring, and family reconnection should be provided in order to facilitate housing stabilisation and help young people to improve their quality of life, integrate into the community and achieve self-sufficiency. Individual advocacy should be provided to support young people as they navigate their way through systems and get access to the services and supports that they need and are entitled to. All of this should be provided in an environment that emphasises anti-discrimination, for although homelessness is stigmatising for all young people who experience it, many are doubly and triply marginalised due to racism, sexism, transphobia and homophobia.

5. **Opportunities for meaningful engagement:** Key to any young person's transition to adulthood and well-being is the ability to nurture positive relationships with others, connect to communities and become involved in activities that are meaningful and fulfilling. Young people should be supported in developing positive relationships with peers, adults, employers and colleagues, landlords etc., as well as given opportunities to engage with communities of their choice – whether people and institutions in the local neighbourhood, or making cultural connections. Opportunities to participate in meaningful activities such as arts, sports or volunteering in order to learn skills, develop relationships and social skills should also be provided.

Conclusion

While there does not yet exist an extensive body of research on Housing First for youth, there is nevertheless reason to claim it can be an important response to youth homelessness, based on the belief that all people deserve housing and that young people who are homeless will do better and recover more effectively if they are first provided with housing. However, addressing youth homelessness through Housing First means adapting the model and incorporating what we know about developing adolescents and young adults – particularly those who have experienced trauma – into the programme model. This requires consideration of different models of accommodation, and an expansion of services and supports to assist young people to successfully transition to adulthood and wellness, and not merely to independence.

The proposed framework for Housing First for Youth outlined here is intended to provide a starting point for communities, policy-makers and practitioners interested in applying the model to adolescents and young adults, recognising that different national and local contexts present both unique challenges but also opportunities. Housing First does not promise or pretend to be the only approach to addressing youth homelessness. However, it can and should become an important intervention that supports, and in turn is supported by, other preventive and early intervention strategies, short term emergency supports, and so on. Under the broader umbrella of strategies to end youth homelessness, Housing First has an important place.

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Enabling Access to the Private Rented Sector? The Role of Social Rental Agencies in Ireland

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❯ **Abstract_** *Social Rental Agencies (SRAs) rent properties from the private rented sector (PRS) and sublet them to marginalised households. SRAs overcome barriers experienced by homeless households in accessing their own leases within the PRS. In Ireland, a shortage of PRS accommodation and a decline in social housing outputs has had a major impact on homelessness, and in 2012 Focus Ireland and three housing and homeless NGOs piloted an SRA in Cork city. Arising from this experience, Focus Ireland commissioned a feasibility study in 2013 to examine the potential for establishing an SRA in Dublin. This paper summarises the findings of the study, it outlines the Cork pilot and considers how an SRA could operate in Dublin. The paper concludes that – notwithstanding some risks – an SRA could potentially add to the stock of private rented accommodation for homeless households, and could provide value for money.*

❯ **Keywords_** *homelessness, housing, Ireland, Social Rental Agencies*

Introduction

Ireland's 2011 national population census reported 3 808 people sleeping rough or in homeless accommodation on census night, with the Dublin homeless population of 2 375 accounting for 62 percent of the total (CSO, 2012a).[1] Ireland's homeless policy has adopted a 'Housing First' model, which focuses on the immediate provision of long-term/permanent accommodation for homeless people, with supports and services subsequently built around the needs of each individual. This commitment is reiterated in Ireland's *Programme for Government* (Fine Gael/ Labour Party, 2011 – Christian Democratic and Social Democratic respectively) and the *Homelessness Policy Statement* (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013). This policy is predicated on the availability of accommodation; in this regard the role of the private sector is important, as has been evidenced in successive policies. For example, the Government's policy on homelessness, *The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland 2008–2013,* included as a strategic aim the 'greater use of the private and voluntary and co-operative housing sectors' (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008, p.21).

Overview of the Rental System in Ireland

Since the foundation of the state in 1922, Ireland's housing policy has traditionally promoted owner-occupation. This policy has been characterised as a dualist rental system (Norris, 2014), which means that one housing sector (home ownership) is offered preferential treatment through subsidies, incentives, and so on. A dualist system is also characterised by limited subsidies to the private rented sector, though this is protected from competition with the social rental sector; the social rental sector is small – its size is controlled by government limits on public subsidies for new building – and access is restricted to disadvantaged groups. As a result, households are provided with incentives for home ownership. In contrast, Norris (2014) describes a unitary model as one which is tenure neutral, and where social housing is accessible to a wider range of social groups and therefore competes with the private rented sector; this raises standards and encourages a higher rate of renting than is the norm in dualist systems.

Norris (2014) describes how in the period up to the 1970s in Ireland, there were numerous initiatives to support home ownership, including the sale of social housing on tenant purchase schemes, and other incentives, including tax relief on mortgages, grants for home purchase and local authority mortgage provision for home ownership.

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[1] This is a point-in-time count and does not include everyone who comes under the ETHOS typology developed by FEANTSA.

This resulted in a steady increase in home ownership. At the same time, access to social housing programmes was limited to those most disadvantaged, such that the social rented sector remained small. However, ongoing state subsidies for social rented units remained high owing to the low-income status of tenants. As a result, financial constraints led to a drop in social housing outputs, and the sector was further undermined by the aforementioned tenant purchase schemes. During this period, there were no subsidies for private sector tenants or landlords, and rents and tenures were, with certain limited exceptions, uncontrolled.

As a result of the economic crisis and cutbacks in expenditure during the 1980s, the capacity of local authorities to generate revenue to support capital programmes for social housing was curtailed as domestic rates were abolished and the decline in social housing outputs continued. Norris describes this period as the retrenchment of the dualist rental system. A number of measures were introduced, including private rented subsidies, tax incentives for private landlords and the regulation of the private rented sector (which, amongst other things, provided greater security of tenure to tenants). At the same time, grants and subsidies to new home-owners declined. The same period witnessed a decline in social housing construction, increased house prices and an increasing proportion of mortgages accounted for by the 'buy to let' sector. It also witnessed the emergence of housing associations competing with local government in the construction of social housing. However, while social housing output increased during the 1990s, its overall contribution to housing output remained low and the private rented sector increased in size for the first time in the state.

The post 2008 economic crash was accompanied by the emergence of a unitary rental model, according to Norris (2014); mortgage interest relief for homeowners was curtailed, a property tax was introduced and the emphasis of housing policy on home ownership diminished. Occupancy rights were equalised among tenants of all private renting and housing associations, and schemes were initiated for the leasing of private rental units by local government and housing associations for the purpose of providing social housing, as capital budgets had been significantly reduced. The role of local government in the provision of social housing has been superseded by housing associations, which the state now considers as the main future provider of social housing. Norris describes how these changes resulted from practical and financial challenges and were not ideologically driven, but have led to the emergence of a unitary rental system with greater competition between types of tenure and marked by an 'equalisation of minimum standards regulation', secure occupancy rights and the disbursement of public subsidies across both sectors.

Current status of the private rented sector

Total housing outputs in Ireland have declined in recent years; in 2013, only 8 301 housing units were completed while, by comparison, 93 419 units of housing were completed in 2006. The large supply of private housing in the 1990s and 2000s was partially driven by capital allowances and other tax incentives, as well as capital gains investments during this period (Crook and Rowley, 2004). Outputs have rapidly declined across all sectors since 2010, and 2013 saw figures at their lowest point since at least 1970. As noted above, the proportion of annual housing outputs accounted for by social housing (local authority outputs) has been in sharp decline since the mid 1980s. In 2013, local authority housing outputs numbered 293 units, representing only 3.5 percent of housing completions. Voluntary and co-operative housing units comprised 2.5 percent of completions, reflecting the drop in capital funding for social and voluntary housing since the onset of the economic crisis.

In the last few years, demand for private rented accommodation has further increased, fuelled by the decline in social housing outputs, population and demographic changes, low rates of mortgage lending since the financial crisis and, most recently, an increase in housing prices. According to census data (CSO 2012b), 29 percent of households were living in rented accommodation in 2011, up from 22 percent in 2006, and 69 percent of these were living in private rented or the voluntary housing sector. At the same time, the composition of the private rented sector in Ireland has been characterised by some as 'a fragmented, under-capitalised "cottage" industry, lacking the professionalism and modern synergy with a strong regulatory framework that prevails in other EU countries' (Taft, 2009).

Increased demand and limited supply have led to an increase in rental rates since late 2010 in urban areas, particularly Dublin. According to the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB), there has been an upward trend in actual rents in Dublin since 2011, and average rents in the fourth quarter of 2013 were 7.6 percent higher than during the same period in 2012.[2] These increases are outlined in Table 1.

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[2]   The Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) was established by the Government in 2004 to operate a national tenancy registration system and to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. It also provides policy advice to the Government on the private rented sector, and its dispute resolution service replaces the courts in relation to the majority of landlord and tenant disputes. See: prtb.ie

Table 1. PRTB rent index 2013 (Q4). Annual percentage change in actual rental rates

	Dublin	Dublin Houses	Dublin Apartments
2008 Q4	-8.6	-6.8	-9.1
2009 Q4	-16.5	-14.3	-18.1
2010 Q4	-1.7	-2.2	-1.2
2011 Q4	1.1	0.7	1.5
2012 Q4	3.4	2.5	4.4
2013 Q4	7.6	6.4	8.0

Source: PRTB rent index

It is likely that supply will continue to be an issue in Dublin; the Housing Agency projects a housing need for 37 581 units between 2014 and 2018, and estimates a current need for 5 663 units (Housing Agency, 2014).

The Private Rented Sector as an Exit Route from Homelessness

The State supports low income and homeless households in accessing the private rented sector through a 'rent supplement' payment. Its purpose is to provide short-term income support for people living in private rented accommodation whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. The Department of Social Protection reports that rent supplement recipients numbered 87 684 in 2012 (a decrease of 9 percent on 2011 figures). In spite of the policy aim that rent supplement should provide short-term assistance, 62 percent of the 2012 recipients had been in receipt of the payment for over 12 months, and over one third (36.2 percent) had been in receipt of the payment for over two years (Department of Social Protection, 2013). Rent supplement recipients account for approximately 35 percent of the total private rental market.

In terms of accessing a competitive private rented sector, homeless households are likely to be particularly vulnerable. Research commissioned by Focus Ireland (TSA Consultancy, 2012) reported the following experiences of homeless households attempting to access private rented accommodation:

• Discrimination from landlords, many of whom are reluctant to rent property to those on rent supplement, particularly when overall demand for private rented accommodation is high. It can also have the effect of driving rent supplement recipients into poor quality properties.

• Access is also impacted by the conditions of the rent supplement scheme. In order for a rental property to be considered eligible for rent supplement, it must not exceed a set maximum rent level as established for the local authority area

in which the property is located. These rent limits (commonly referred to as 'rent caps') vary according to the type of accommodation, the nature of the household and the location of the property.

• Where the rent cap is lower than actual rental rates, the practice of rent supplement recipients and landlords colluding to declare a lower rent for the purposes of securing a rent supplement is common. In such instances, the gap between the declared rent and actual rent is paid by the tenant in the form of a 'top-up'. This excess, in combination with the tenant's original contribution towards the rent, can drive households into debt, and ultimately compromises the sustainability of tenancies. This practice also has the potential to distort rent rates as published.

An example of the discrepancy between rent caps and actual rents can be seen in data produced by the PRTB. In the fourth quarter of 2013 the cheapest one-bedroom accommodation in Dublin city was €640.21 per month, which was over €120 more expensive than the monthly 'rent cap' for a single person (with no dependents) of €520. This discrepancy is consistent across property types and sizes. At the end of May 2014, using current rent caps, *The Irish Times* newspaper searched property websites to see what rental options were available to families on rent supplement in Dublin city. The research found that for a couple or a single person with two children whose rental cap stands at €975, there was a total of just three rental properties available in the city at that price, while for a couple with one child and a rental cap of €950 the number of property options fell to just two (Duncan, 2014).

Social Rental Agencies as a Response to Supply Issues

Social Rental Agencies (SRA) emerged in the late 1990s in mainland Europe in response to housing policies and circumstances, many of which mirror those of Ireland. In Belgium, for example, the factors which gave rise to the setting up of SRAs included housing policies that favoured home ownership, low social housing outputs, government budgetary constraints and demographic changes in the population (De Decker, 2002). SRAs now operate in Belgium, France, Finland and Germany (FEANTSA, 2012). SRAs rent properties from the private rented sector and sublet them to marginalised households, providing rent at reasonable rates, long leases and the possibility of housing support.

Hegedüs *et al.,* (2014) discuss the potential for SRAs in Hungary, where privatisation of social housing, home ownership policies and increasing housing costs have created a pressing need for affordable rental housing units for low and medium income households. They discuss a number of innovative measures developed by municipalities and NGOs that have been aimed at increasing access to the private rental sector. However, although successful, programmes have been relatively

small-scale and fragmented. Moreover, there remains an under-utilisation of privately-owned property and a lack of political will to finance extensive social housing measures. In their paper, Hegedüs *et al*., consider the need for an institutional structure to provide for scale and expansion in private sector reform, and propose that SRAs can meet this need. Their model includes a special risk-sharing financial model and it has received interest from a range of stakeholders, including local government, NGOs, landlords and financial institutions. They conclude that the introduction of Social Rental Agencies could unite these fragmented interests under a single framework.

The Cork Social Rentals and Housing Support Partnership

In response to problems of access to private rented accommodation and an increasing number of people sleeping rough in Cork (a city in the south of Ireland with a population of 120 000), Focus Ireland[3] and three other housing and homeless NGOs (Cork Simon[4], Society of St. Vincent de Paul[5] with the support of Threshold) formed The Cork Rentals and Housing Support Partnership ('Cork Rentals') as a pilot social rentals initiative in late 2012.

The partner NGOs agreed to take out lease agreements with landlords and to sublet units to homeless households. The rationale is that the perceived or actual risk to a landlord in renting to a homeless household is absorbed by the partnership, which guarantees rent payments, covers any voids and guarantees to return the property to the landlord at the end of the lease in its original condition.

The target group included homeless people in emergency accommodation, sleeping rough and those at risk of homelessness who are eligible for rent supplement. An initial target of 21 units was established, and these units would be sublet to people within the rent supplement thresholds. Any differences between the actual rent and the rent supplement 'rent cap' would be paid by the NGOs from their own resources.

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[3] Focus Ireland is a national housing and homelessness organisation working to prevent people becoming, remaining or returning to homelessness through the provision of quality services, supported housing, and research and advocacy throughout Ireland.

[4] Cork Simon is a homeless NGO, which works with men and women who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, offering housing and support, and campaigning for a society without homelessness.

[5] The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the largest voluntary charitable organisation in Ireland, and it supports those experiencing poverty and social exclusion by providing a wide range of services to people in need.

Functions and activities

Accommodation search and screening

Cork Rentals sources private rented accommodation and examines each unit against established quality standards. Approximately half of the units viewed are rejected due to poor quality.

Leasing accommodation

Each of the three homeless NGOs takes out a lease agreement (Cork Rentals does not have a separate legal status) and negotiates rents if these exceed the rent cap. Most leases are for an initial period of one year.

Provision of housing support

Tenants have medium to high support needs and all tenants access housing supports. Housing support and tenancy management functions are kept separate.

Maintenance management

Most light maintenance is undertaken by Cork Rentals, including aspects that fall under the superior landlord's responsibility – an added incentive for landlord participation in the initiative.

Oversight and governance

A steering group (comprising the four partner NGOs) meets on a quarterly basis. A monthly meeting takes place between all housing support workers. Cork Rentals does not have a separate legal status; the decision against a separate status was made to expedite the establishment of the pilot and to demonstrate its capabilities – Cork Rentals was operational within two months of conception.

Costs and resources

If the cost of accommodation is higher than the rent cap, the relevant partner organisation pays the additional cost from its own resources. This cost was estimated at €13 000 per annum per organisation, based on 7 tenancies. All but one of the tenancies were secured at rates above the rent cap. Other costs associated with the initiative (management, housing support and maintenance) have also been absorbed by the partner organisations but are not included in the above cost.

Outcomes

In its first year, Cork Rentals housed fourteen households. Three tenancies ended – two returned to emergency accommodation and another ended for reasons unrelated to the tenancy. Eleven of the original fourteen tenancies have been sustained, the majority being single households who had been long-term homeless, with medium to high support needs (an estimated 80 percent have substance misuse issues). Cork Rentals has enabled those experiencing the greatest barriers to accessing private rented accommodation to move out of homelessness; this has included ex-prisoners and people with no history of managing tenancies.

A Model for a Social Rental Agency

Arising from the success of Cork Rentals, Focus Ireland commissioned a feasibility study into a Social Rental Agency (SRA) in Dublin (TSA Consultancy, 2013). Some key findings of the study are outlined below.

Roles and functions

The SRA would undertake dual roles: that of a tenant of a superior landlord, and that of landlord to the household subletting the property. These two roles imply a range of functions, outlined below.

Table 2: The functions of a Social Rental Agency and their implications

FUNCTION		ISSUES
SRA negotiates access to accommodation with property owners.	→	As Ireland's domestic rental market is characterised by many property owners/ landlords owning few accommodation units, this is a time-consuming task.
SRA acquires properties on a rental/ lease basis from private sector landlords and property owners.	→	By leasing the property, the SRA takes on liability for all tenant responsibilities and effectively gives guarantees to landlords who are reluctant to rent units to households exiting homeless and on rent supplement.
SRA negotiates a lease arrangement on a long-term basis.	→	The guarantees provided by the SRA should (in time) encourage a long-term lease agreement, given the risk-free element of the transaction for the landlord.
SRA seeks a lower-than-market rental rate in return for guarantees and long-term lease.	→	The guarantee system of the SRA means that the landlord operates on a risk-free basis for which a lower-than-market rental rate is sought. This has proven not to be viable in the current market circumstances in Ireland.
SRA undertakes some of the maintenance functions of the landlord in the ongoing management of the property.	→	This acts as an incentive to landlords by minimising their ongoing involvement in the units. As homeless organisations have maintenance teams in situ, this has limited resource or financial implications.
SRA sublets the property to homeless households.	→	SRA manages the relationship with the tenant without the involvement of the superior landlord.
SRA liaises with support services.	→	Tenants receive housing support under existing support initiatives.

Risks and scale

The main risks involved in underwriting tenant liabilities are the payment of rent, absorbing the costs of voids, arrears and defaults, and undertaking maintenance. In order to mitigate these, the SRA would need to adopt robust tenancy management policies (potentially more robust than current policies with NGOs' own housing stock). There could be a risk of reputational damage for the NGO, particularly if tenants are evicted. In the event that eviction procedures were pursued, court costs could potentially be incurred and the procedure this could delay possession of a unit, during which period the SRA would have to cover the rent due – resolution of

disputes can last for 18 months. It would be critical that 'cherry-picking' of tenants not occur, as the SRA model is particularly beneficial to those with high support needs and who find it difficult to source private rented accommodation. SRAs should be a net contributor to private housing available to homeless households. Where a superior landlord terminates the tenancy, households will require re-housing to avoid a return to homelessness. This could be a challenge and the feasibility study proposed that the target number of units should equate to approximately ten percent of the long-term housing units available: for example, as Focus Ireland has approximately 330 units in Dublin, 30-35 units could be acquired with some contingency for re-housing.

Resources required

Managing 35 tenancies would require housing management, housing support staff and maintenance provision – this was identified as an important incentive from the perspective of property owners.

Governance structure and systems of management

Options include 1) the establishment of a legal entity separate to the partner organisations; 2) the establishment of a partnership/coordinated structure between partner organisations; or 3) a single organisation – a homeless NGO – driving the process. The feasability study recommended establishing a separate legal structure in the long-term.

Table 3: Pros and cons of different governance structures

Form	Pros	Cons
Separate legal entity	Clarity around the structure and functions – less potential for confusion Limited risk to the partner organisations (financial, legal, regulatory, reputational) Clear delineation of roles (of NGO and SRA) and function (tenancy management, housing support functions) Potential for collaboration/ learning maximised, and for others to participate in the structure (e.g., NGOs, local authorities)	Legal incorporation required – additional reporting/ administrative obligations May not be able to benefit from good reputation of homeless NGOs amongst landlords, given its separate identity May be perceived as avoiding liabilities by establishing an 'arms length' relationship – guarantees may be required from the partner organisations.
Coordination of existing NGOs	Could be established quickly A collaborative approach could support transfer of learning across the sector Could ensure consistent delivery by using existing homeless organisations for management Could facilitate a separation between housing support and tenancy management functions Risk would be shared among organisations	Potentially slow decision-making Could potentially lead to duplication of effort across organisations Could lead to inconsistencies in delivery Would need to be effectively managed
Single NGO leads the process	Speedy delivery of an initiative Utilises capacity already in existence in NGO Decision-making potentially quicker Lead NGO would be committed to protecting its own reputation with landlords.	Could limit scaling and development Could limit learning transfer If other NGOs subsequently engage in activity, could create duplication.

Financial analysis

The study considered costs (staffing, maintenance, provision for voids, technical expertise, overheads and rent top-ups) and estimated an additional annual cost per tenancy at €6 000. When the costs of rent supplement and housing support are included, the total annual estimated cost is just over €14 000 per unit for a single household. This cost still compares very favourably to indicative annual costs of housing an individual in emergency accommodation, which is estimated to be in the region of €38 000. This indicates a potential saving of €24 000 per annum, without even taking into account the high costs of housing families in hotels – in May 2014 there were approximately 142 families accommodated in private hotels in Dublin.

Conclusions

Subsequent to the publication of the feasibility study, the Government's *Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness – May 2014 to December 2016* committed to establishing a Social Housing Rental Service in Dublin on a pilot basis by the end of 2014, and to review outcomes with a view to establishing similar initiatives in other major urban centres (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2014). The Implementation Plan states that (p.45):

> A Social Housing Rental Service (SHRS) would be a single point of contact for landlords, homeless clients and local authorities. The SHRS would have close links with the Department of Social Protection to facilitate timely payment of rent supplement for its clients and also with local authorities… [it] would be tasked with identifying and managing accommodation sourced in the private rented sector. The SHRS would deal directly with landlords and would hold the contractual relationship with them. The SHRS would ensure the payment of deposits, guarantee rent payments, cover voids and undertake all landlord and tenant interactions/relations. The SHRS would then place homeless clients in the accommodation which they have sourced and would ensure they had the appropriate tenancy supports to sustain a tenancy.

An SRA model will not address the more fundamental problems of housing and the limited supply of social housing units in Ireland. Given the over-reliance on the private rented sector for the provision of social housing, it could be argued that greater regulation of the sector, rather than increased funding, might be a more appropriate response. However, given the current crisis in access to accommodation, the model is a potentially innovative response to the barriers experienced by homeless households. It complements the existing housing management and support functions of homeless NGOs and, as an alternative to supported temporary and emergency accommodation, it will provide cost savings to the State.

Acknowledgements

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Relevance of the use of ETHOS in the Assessment of Housing Exclusion: Proposals for Discussion from the Spanish Case

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❯ **Abstract_** _This paper aims to contribute to the debate on the suitability of the ETHOS typology as a means of measuring housing exclusion and homelessness in Europe. To this end, a review of the conceptual model that theoretically supports the typology is proposed. Additionally, a number of new indicators extending and enhancing the original classification are presented in order to address the wide range of forms of housing exclusion in a more comprehensive way. Finally, an analysis of ETHOS is conducted according to the available data and statistical sources in Spain, including objective and subjective indicators of housing exclusion._

❯ **Keywords_** _Housing exclusion, ETHOS typology, homelessness, measurement_

Introduction

A home is a basic space where the structures of the individual, the family and social life are shaped. As such, homelessness can be regarded as a consequence of social exclusion processes. In 2009, some 30 million people in the European Union (6 percent of the EU population) suffered from severe housing deprivation. This group is regarded as living in substandard dwellings that are usually overcrowded and are characterised by at least one of the following: leaking roof, lack of bath/ shower and flushing toilet, and darkness (Eurostat, 2011). The estimated figure for 2012 is somewhat lower: 5.1 percent of the EU population (Eurostat, 2014). Several

studies approach the measurement of housing exclusion as another symptom of wider social exclusion, while others focus on the assessment of exclusion in the housing context only. Most of the studies that specifically examine housing exclusion focus on housing and environmental conditions. In a recent study carried out by the European Union (Eurostat, 2011), four major housing-related issues were analysed: overcrowding, housing conditions, environmental conditions and over-burden of housing costs.

A dwelling is an essential component of social integration; hence, housing depriva-tion may become "the factor that triggers exclusion processes" (Antón *et al.*, 2008, p.349). This is the concern expressed in the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'The problem of homelessness', approved in October 2011 (European Economic and Social Committee, 2012). This document explores the use of the ETHOS typology – which was created by the European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) – in order to align homeless-ness statistics at European Union level and encourage the use of common defini-tions and indicators in the analysis of housing exclusion.

ETHOS, the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion, was launched by FEANTSA in 2005. Following a two-year review process, it became the main reference for the study of homelessness in the European Union (Pleace *et al.*, 2011). ETHOS is a conceptual and analytical tool that also provides a framework for debate and reflection on how to address housing exclusion. FEANTSA (2010, p.5) states that "ETHOS is an open exercise which makes abstraction of existing legal definitions in the EU Members States", providing a common conceptual framework that is to be adapted to the uniqueness of each European country. According to ETHOS, three domains are defined as constituting a home: legal, social and physical. The legal domain implies having a legal title to occupation (owning or renting), which results in security of tenure and exclusive possession. The social domain involves being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations within the home. And the physical domain involves having a decent dwelling that is adequate to meet the needs of the household (Busch-Geertsema, 2010).

Deficiencies in one or more of these domains lead to the four main concepts of homelessness, which are categorised as follows (FEANTSA, 2010): *rooflessness* (people living rough), *houselessness* (people living in temporary accommodation, such as hostels and institutions), *insecure housing* (people living with no legal tenancy, or under threat of eviction or domestic violence) and *inadequate housing* (people living in huts occupying land with no legal rights, in dwellings unfit for habitation or in extreme overcrowding). These four categories are subsequently

divided into thirteen operational categories that can be used to analyse the conse-quences of homelessness and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies (European Economic and Social Committee, 2012).

This paper aims to revise the ETHOS typology, highlighting its strengths and weak-nesses when applied to the assessment of housing exclusion, and underlining the need for suitable indicators for measuring housing exclusion. We intend, therefore, to contribute to the debate on the conceptualisation underlying the ETHOS typology and suggest new proposals to extend it. To this end, the paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss the suitability of the ETHOS typology as a tool for studying housing exclusion, drawing on several authors who have participated in this debate. Then, ETHOS is examined in a new light, combining ETHOS with another model developed by a Spanish author. The inclusion of new subcategories is proposed, and the availability of data and statistical sources in Spain is examined using objective and subjective indicators. Finally, the main conclusions of the study are drawn.

ETHOS Typology: A Discussion

There is an established consensus on the need for a typology such as the ETHOS (FEANTSA, 2007) when conceptualising housing exclusion and homelessness. It is now widely used throughout Europe as a means of defining and classifying the population that is in a difficult living situation. However, given the complexity of homelessness and housing insecurity, several proposals have been forwarded as a means of improving the typology over recent years. This debate was particularly lively following the proposed critiques of Amore *et al*. (2011), which were refuted by the works of Edgar (2012), Sahlin (2012), Roman (2012) and Amore (2013). Emerging from this debate were arguments relating to the advantages of the instrument (especially in Edgar, 2012; Roman, 2012), as well as the weaknesses of the concep-tual model proposed by Edgar (2009), through which the different living situations are defined. The debate has focused on the relevance of the thresholds distin-guishing the most severe forms of homelessness from other forms of housing exclusion that are less acute. The conceptual model proposed by Edgar (2009) states that homelessness takes place when living situations are deficient in the three domains that constitute a home: legal, physical and social (or at least, in the legal and social domains), whereas Amore *et al.* (2011) extend the definition of homelessness to include living situations that are lacking in two of the three domains, regardless of which ones. In other words, Amore *et al.* propose a looser definition, which includes the population that are living in unstable living conditions even if these residents are not excluded from one of these three domains.

We agree on the desirability of avoiding arbitrariness in fixing unequivocal thresholds that demarcate which living situations can be defined as homelessness. Otherwise other situations that actually present equivalent levels of deprivation would be ruled out. If that were the case, the subsequent problem is that there would be a mismatch between the conceptual model and the typology, which could also fail to place each situation in the appropriate categories. An accurate assessment of the worst situations is undoubtedly important for institutions to take effective action. Nevertheless, every form of housing exclusion, regardless of the causes and the degree of seriousness, entails different hardships that directly affect the daily lives of the people involved. Therefore, the tool cannot merely measure the most severe situations lacking in at least two of the three domains, as suggested by Amore *et al.* (2011) in their proposal. It should rather embrace all scenarios of residential exclusion in a continuum ranging from those at risk of homelessness to severely excluded populations (Edgar, 2012). In this sense, when speaking of homelessness in the narrower sense (roofless and houseless) or in a wider sense (insecure and inadequate housing), Cabrera (2009, p.4) emphasises the term 'homelessness' instead of the broader term 'residential exclusion': "All this has meant the organisation of the concept of homelessness ('sans-abrisme') as a continuation of situations in relation to accommodation and housing."

In our opinion, Sahlin usefully proposes (2012) to keep the original typology categories, which are deemed adequate, but does not seek to establish a line between the conceptual categories of homelessness and housing exclusion, since all of them are unified under an umbrella of housing deprivation corresponding to the broader notion of housing exclusion. In an attempt to find a greater convergence between the conceptual model and the operational categories, we propose an integration of the conceptual model with a proposal of housing exclusion analysis for the Spanish case in the following section.

With regard to the discussion on the exhaustiveness of the categories proposed in the typology, as Edgar (2012) and Roman (2012) point out, ETHOS does not aim to be definitive and immovable, but rather a general flexible model to be adjusted to regional specificities. However, like Amore (2013), we understand that the typology should not just offer a variety of categories for each country to use the most suitable ones to their own context, because this would make the comparison across countries impossible, and the aim of working on a homogeneous model at European level would be lost. As Sahlin (2012) points out, it is a complex task to find operational categories that are always valid for all phenomena in all countries, but this should not impede researchers from including additional types of housing exclusion according to different contexts, as a way of potentially improving the model. As such, an extended typology is proposed in this paper for the sake of completeness.

Finally, it is pointless to have a theoretically robust model such as ETHOS if we do not have enough statistical data to measure the magnitude of the problem. Edgar (2012) reminds us that gathering comprehensive data is a difficult task. Data are mostly the result of surveys that collect indicators at a quantitative level, and as they are very often lacking in scale and quality, they are unable to fully capture the wider phenomenon of housing exclusion. In order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, objective indicators (which are often unavailable) must be complemented by subjective indicators (which include the perspective of the people involved). This would allow for a more dynamic and comprehensive analysis of varying unstable living conditions, because housing instability can occur repeatedly and recurrently, and this may not be effectively captured in cross-sectional surveys.

The ETHOS Typology: Conceptualising Housing Exclusion

Our objective is to complement the ETHOS conceptual model with proposals for housing exclusion analysis in Spain as suggested by Cortés (1995; 2004). This author defines housing exclusion as the presence of four types of basic accommodation restrictions (Cortés, 2004, p. 42):

• Accessibility: the possibility of having a home aligned with the household's disposable income.

• Stability: in the temporary use of the dwelling that allows for social benefits.

• Adequacy: between the housing conditions and the individual's needs, which vary across the life course.

• Habitability: minimum quality requirements in construction, facilities and surrounding locality.

Figure 1 shows an integrated overview of the four main ETHOS categories and the types of housing restrictions proposed by Cortés (2004). In the most severe situations, homeless people would suffer from all types of deprivation (accessibility, stability, adequacy and habitability) and in all three domains (legal, social and physical). And at the other end of the scale – inadequate housing – restrictions would be related to housing adequacy and habitability in the physical and social domains (Brändle and García, 2013).

Figure 1. Housing exclusion and housing restrictions

ETHOS category	Restrictions on housing use			
	Accessibility	Stability	Adequacy	Habitability
Roofless				
Houseless				
Insecure				
Inadequate				
Fields of use	■ Legal	■ Social	▨ Physical	

Source: Adapted from FEANTSA (2010) and Cortés (2004)

The social and legal domains may be the ETHOS categories most affected by the impact of different housing restrictions. In the legal domain, the problems of accessibility and stability are present in three of the four categories, from the lowest to the highest degree of seriousness of housing exclusion. However, the restrictions in adequacy and habitability would be predominantly in the social domain. Despite the fact that restrictions in habitability and adequacy, which belong to the physical domain, may be the most evident problems in identifying a housing exclusion situation, they do not seem to be the only aspects to bear in mind, nor the most relevant ones.

Rooflessness is not only the most severe situation of housing exclusion but also of social exclusion, as numerous social disadvantages are brought about by the lack of accommodation. Sleeping rough can only serve to exacerbate other problems. In fact, "many special or strange behaviours exhibited by roofless persons are just an adaptive response to the extreme conditions they must face" (Cabrera, 2008, p.188). Rooflessness implies that there are deficiencies in all housing domains (legal, social and physical), and all restrictions are evident (accessibility, stability, adequacy and habitability, see Figure 1). Houselessness means that there is guaranteed shelter in terms of habitability and adequacy from the physical viewpoint in the medium to long term. However, when it comes to the legal and social domains, the persons involved have no access to a home of their own and their housing conditions are not stable or adequate for their needs, as the accommodation in this case is usually a collective household. All of the living situations included in the third ETHOS category are insecure regarding tenure (legal domain), which leads to restrictions on housing access and reduces stability in the use of assets (Figure 1). Finally, in the category of inadequate housing, the domains lacking in adequacy and habitability are physical and social (Figure 1). The accommodation is accessible and stable but it is not adequate and does not meet habitability conditions. Under this conceptual framework, the inclusion of new subcategories is proposed by integrating risk situations and housing vulnerability caused by either economic constraints that prevent the household from access to, or from gaining stability in, social and legal domains, or by a degraded housing environment that may end up damaging adequacy and habitability in the physical and social domains.

Proposal for the inclusion of new subcategories

We understand that economic constraints in the household may cause housing insecurity. For instance, economic hardships could push the household into a financially compromised situation, forcing it to take exceptional measures to ease the burden of housing costs and perhaps causing it to fall behind on the mortgage, rent or utilities (electricity, water, etc.). It is clear that if such a situation were to continue, the risk of housing exclusion would be heightened. The current economic crisis, characterised by large-scale unemployment and high household debt, is a clear call for the inclusion of a new ETHOS subcategory of insecure housing. This new subcategory, which could be named 'people living in insecure accommodation for economic reasons', would encompass situations of housing insecurity due to financial constraints.

In Europe, nearly two out of three people (65 percent) think that living in a decent home in their area of residence costs too much. This opinion is particularly common in Cyprus (91 percent), the Czech Republic (88 percent), Luxembourg (86 percent) and Spain (73 percent) (European Commission, 2010). The housing cost overburden rate was used by Eurostat (2011) and was defined as the share of the population living in households where the total housing cost accounts for more than 40 percent of household disposable income (net of housing allowances). The term 'housing cost' refers to the monthly costs related to the accommodation itself as well as utility costs (water, electricity, gas and heating). According to Eurostat (2014), 11.2 percent of the EU-28 population faced this situation in 2012. This figure is considerably higher in poorer sections of society whose income is 60 percent lower than the national average (39 percent). From a subjective point of view, 36.9 percent of the EU-28 population believe that housing costs are a heavy burden; this percentage rises to 55.5 percent among poor people.

**Figure 2. Delay in the payment of utility bills in the EU, 2007-2012 (percentage of total population)**

Legend:
— European Union (27 countries)
····· European Union (15 countries)
- - - New Member States (12 countries)
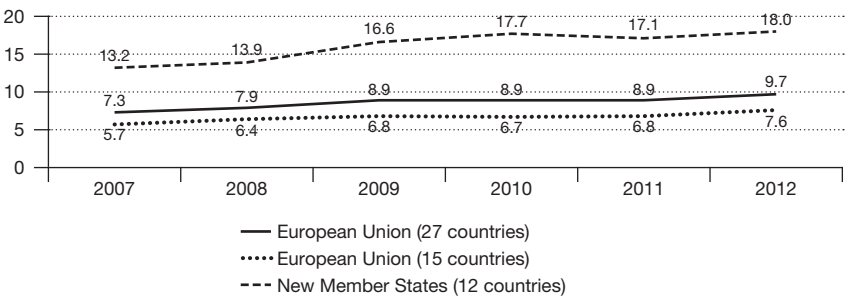
Source: Eurostat (2014), EU-SILC

There is no doubt that insecure housing gets worse when the household fails to pay housing-related costs. One of the first symptoms is delay in the payment of expected housing expenses, such as mortgage, rent or utilities. If the late payment situation lasts too long, it could lead to eviction and/or deprivation of basic services (electricity, water or gas). Eurostat's data (2014) corroborate this fact. The share of people who admit to having fallen behind on utility bills in the last year increased in EU-27 between 2007 and 2012, especially in the new member states, where percentages are much higher than the EU-27 average (Figure 2).

There is some consensus that the following living situations must be taken into account when considering the basic dimensions of housing exclusion: lack of basic facilities (running water, wastewater removal and indoor flushing toilet), existence of structural problems (leaking roof, damp walls, rot in floors, window frames or doors), problems related to the environment and access to certain services from the dwelling, and overcrowding. Notwithstanding the conceptual comprehensiveness of ETHOS, which includes the poor conditions outlined above, we argue that the housing environment also needs to also be considered.

Figure 3. Problems related to the environment of the dwelling in the EU-27, 2007-2012 (percentage of total population)
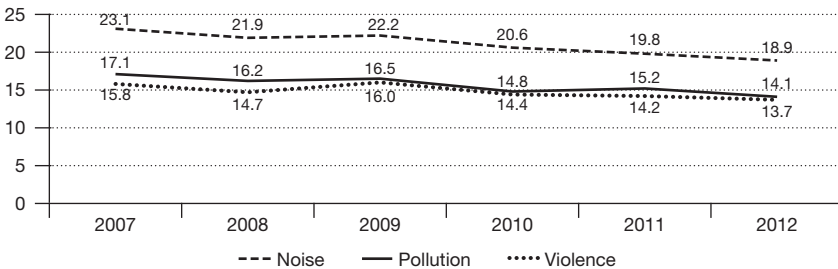
Source: Eurostat (2014), EU-SILC

Problems related to the environment of the dwelling (noise from neighbours or the street, pollution, grime, vandalism or violence) are important and affect a significant proportion of the European population (Figure 3). That is why a new subcategory within *inadequate housing* is proposed. It would be referred to as 'people living in an inadequate environment', which would encompass problems related to the environment and accessibility to certain services. The characteristics of the housing environment, which in some cases are deplorable, can hamper the normal progress of daily life for people living in such environments. In short, our proposal does not

change the names of the main ETHOS categories, which are understood as a continuum of situations of housing exclusion; rather, the new subcategories would be included within each of the last two main categories (Table 1).

Table 1. ETHOS: Typologies of housing exclusion

Category		Operational Category
Roofless	1	People living rough
	2	People in emergency accommodation
Houseless	3	People in accommodation for the homeless
	4	People in women's shelter
	5	People in accommodation for immigrants
	6	People due to be released from institutions
	7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)
Insecure	8	People living in insecure accommodation
	9	People living under threat of eviction
	10	People living under threat of violence
	11	*People living in insecure accommodation for economic reasons*
Inadequate	12	People living in temporary/non-conventional structures
	13	People living in unfit housing
	14	People living in extreme overcrowding
	15	*People living in an inadequate environment*

Source: FEANTSA (2010) and own elaboration.

As shown in Table 1, our proposal would extend the scope of the original typology to include situations that, despite not being among the most extreme and intolerable examples of housing exclusion, could negatively impact on daily life and wellbeing. It is true that by including more subcategories to ETHOS, there is risk of overestimating the problem of homelessness, whereby housing situations may be included that have not yet resulted in a significant problem of residential exclusion, thus perhaps deflecting attention from more severe situations. But despite these potential inconveniences, we argue that the typology should not be limited to the most severe forms of homelessness but extended to a broader range of residential deprivation, which, over time, could involve real risks of housing exclusion. Moreover, these situations are adequately reflected in various statistical sources, such as EU-SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions), and this could help to determine the magnitude of the phenomenon before the situation worsens. In this sense, there is no doubt that the sooner the problem is known, the faster actions can be taken to mitigate the situation.

Measuring Housing Exclusion in Spain

This section discusses the statistical sources in Spain through which the main ETHOS categories are examined, distinguishing between objective and subjective indicators.

Objective indicators

In Spain, statistical data on roofless and houseless people are scarce and uneven over time, as well as insufficient at a regional level. Additionally, ETHOS provides a breakdown in the classification of these situations that is impossible to apply in Spain due to the lack of statistical data, e.g., data on people due to be released from institutions. At a European level, adequate statistical information is key for understanding and forming homelessness policies. This information can be gathered through surveys with stakeholders, street counts of homeless people, data from public or private institutions, or censuses (Edgar *et al*., 2007).

The Survey on Homeless Persons (SHP), conducted by the National Statistics Institute of Spain (INE) in 2005 and 2012, is the main information source available to explain the most relevant socio-demographic characteristics of houseless and roofless people in Spain – how long they have been without accommodation and their living conditions.[1] The INE also carries out a biannual survey of institutions for homeless people called Survey on Support Centres for Homeless Persons. However, it only provides information on the number of users, and no distinction between houselessness and rooflessness is made. The SHP underestimates the impact of homelessness, since it only collects information on people using supported accommodation or food centres provided by institutions in cities with a population of over 20 000, leaving out individuals who do not access such services and those who live in smaller villages or rural areas. In any case, the INE data do not correspond directly to every category in the ETHOS typology. First, there is no distinction between long-term and short-term shelter; therefore, one of the categories included in rooflessness (night shelter) cannot be estimated. Similarly, most accommodation centres for illegal immigrants are not included, and a large number of shelters for women suffering from domestic violence declined to answer the questionnaire because they considered that these women were not homeless. This means that the situational and operational definition of 'homelessness' proposed by FEANTSA and assumed by the INE in its fieldwork is not completely accepted by those on the ground (Cabrera and Rubio, 2008).

1　A socio-demographic overview of the ETHOS categories of rooflessness and houselessness can be found in Cabrera (2008) using the 2005 SHP data, and Cabrera and Rubio (2008) with the additional information of the street counts carried out in Madrid and Barcelona.

Street counts are a technique to ascertain the number of roofless people who do not make use of emergency accommodation, and who spend the night on the street. In Spain, this type of estimation has been carried out on a regular basis in Madrid and Barcelona. The results provide useful information on the socio-demographic profile of roofless people, their living conditions, how long they have lived in these condi-tions, and the use they make of available social resources (Cabrera and Rubio, 2008). Even though these are partial data, this type of census can facilitate information on the characteristics and needs of the individuals that remain outside of the social support network, and it may be crucial for defining the intervention policy aimed at reducing the population of those sleeping rough (Cabrera *et al.*, 2008).

In terms of obtaining data from registers, the Common Information System of Users of Social Services (SIUSS), maintained by the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality since 1994, could be a relevant information source on home-lessness and housing exclusion in Spain. However, due to its limitations in the coverage of territory and the poor quality of its databases it cannot be used for these purposes at present.

In terms of private institutions, the Spanish Red Cross has developed annual reports using their records of users since 2006. The meaning of homeless in this context tends to refer to roofless and houseless people living in hostels and institu-tions (Malgesini, 2011). Nevertheless, it collects considerable data over time and space and therefore possesses a series of indicators for analysing the needs of houseless and roofless people and developing social intervention strategies. These indicators should reveal who the homeless people are and how long they have been living in these conditions, which are determining factors in the process of both exclusion and integration.

Information on the ETHOS category of insecure housing is also lacking in Spain. This is due to the instability of housing situations and legal confusion over this category. Even though there is no clear distinction between subcategories (tempo-rarily living with family/friends, no legal (sub)tenancy and illegal occupation of land), there are some sources that shed some light on these situations. The first is the Living Conditions Survey (LCS), which emerged as part of cross-national statistical operations for EU countries and is the national survey used for the EU-SILC database. It is the main source of information for the assessment of inequality, poverty and material deprivation in Spanish households, and also includes a series of variables related to living characteristics and conditions. Likewise, the LCS collects data on socio-demographic variables, employment, and the educational and health status characteristics of adults and households in every Spanish region, but the sample is insufficient for the purposes of conducting a combined analysis of variables in most cases.

The Living Conditions Survey for Spain, like EU-SILC for Europe, demonstrates how some households enjoy rent-free accommodation and identifies other tenants and subtenants whose rents are subsidised. However, as a recent Australian comparative report notes, only where households are able to access rental housing as a first option is secure occupancy possible (Hulse *et al.*, 2011). When the rental housing reflects a combination of lower socio-economic status, lower quality houses and less desirable neighbourhoods, then insecurity, instability and a lack of control over accommodation become increasingly prevalent (Hulse *et al.*, 2011).

With regard to people living under the threat of eviction, data on the number of evictions are provided by the Spanish General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ, 2011a). There is no information on people living under threat of violence, though police records on domestic violence incidents exist (CGPJ, 2011b). It is clear that a significant number of these reports are not due to insecure housing situations. However, this group should be deemed significant, despite the fact that by their very nature, these experiences remain mostly hidden from view. The indicators for the new subcategory suggested for inclusion, 'people living in insecure accommodation for economic reasons', could result from both the LCS and the Household Budget Survey (HBS), or more specifically from the point of view of well-being that was only elaborated in 2010. Both statistical sources provide diverse information on cost and delay in payments related to the main dwelling.

On the other hand, the Census and most household surveys in Spain, like LCS or HBS, are helping to collect information about habitability conditions related to the lack of basic facilities, structural problems and overcrowding.[2] With regard to the proposal for including the new subcategory 'people living in an inadequate environment', the LCS includes a set of indicators that provide relevant information for defining the main problems related to the housing environment, such as noise, pollution, bad odours caused by traffic or factories, and crime and vandalism in the area.

Subjective indicators

Subjective information on how houseless and roofless people perceive and assess their own housing situation is scarce. The SHP provides little subjective data on how homeless people assess their own health status or the help provided by social services. In 2012, 44 percent of roofless and houseless people stated that the help provided by social services was little or non-existent (INE, 2012). This lack of information is partly made up for by some qualitative research studies (Comunidad de

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[2]   Measuring overcrowding is a complex issue. There is a wide range of criteria in the literature establishing numerous techniques for measuring overcrowding, in particular the minimum criteria to determine overcrowded conditions. Among others, see Colectivo IOE (2004), Leal and Cortés (2005)and Eurostat (2011).

Madrid, 2006; Cruz, 2006; Bachiller, 2010), which deal with the processes, opinions and behaviours of people living in housing exclusion, and assess the limitations of the social services system.

Finding information on households' perception of housing insecurity is not an easy task. In any case, a subjective indicator allowing identification of housing deprivation is the one that can tell whether the relevant housing-related costs are a burden that households are struggling to afford. In this sense, the LCS collects data on the share of households affirming that the total housing costs (including mortgage, rent, insurance, electricity, etc.) are an excessive burden, an affordable burden or no burden at all. Unlike the rest of the ETHOS categories, there is some subjective information available on 'inadequate housing' – information that is collected by most household surveys.

As such, it may be interesting to complement the assessment of overcrowding, which varies greatly between studies, with the subjective perception of the people living in overcrowded conditions. It seems that the subjective perception of the existence of overcrowding is somewhat greater than objective information would suggest. In fact, as Navarro points out (2006), when mining the data from the ECHP (European Community Household Panel) survey, just 25 percent of households who declare a lack of living space suffer from overcrowding.

In any case, we think it is also interesting to look at individuals' subjective assessment of their own housing situation in greater detail. Individuals will have different perceptions of the same housing conditions depending on their own personal experiences, wishes and expectations. In keeping with this, in addition to information on the existence of certain problems, the 2007 and 2012 LCS provide subjective information on problems of access to common and necessary services for daily life (shops and food outlets, banks, post offices, public transport, primary healthcare facilities and schools). Finally, a subjective assessment of housing conditions can also capture degrees of satisfaction. This indicator is interesting for the analysis, since it ascertains the degree of connection between the objective material conditions of the dwelling and perceptions of the housing situation. As Navarro points out, "the higher the degree of dissatisfaction (very unsatisfactory or totally unsatisfactory) with the own living conditions, the greater the impact of housing deprivation on the household" (2005, p.186).

Conclusion

Housing is a basic human need, as there is a strong parallel between adequate housing and the development of a life project. A home is not only the place where private life takes place, but it is also a gathering point where cohabitation and social integration occur. The features of housing exclusion are closely related to the ones defining the general terms of social exclusion. In other words, it is a structural, dynamic, heterogeneous and multidimensional phenomenon; it involves many factors; it includes a subjective or individual element; and it can be addressed from the perspective of public policies (Hernández, 2008; García and Hernández, 2011).

Given the magnitude of the phenomenon, it is very important to have a robust tool to measure and address the problem of homelessness. Furthermore, the diversity and depth of the problem in each region has triggered debate on the need to find a model for covering all possible situations of residential deprivation in a more comprehensive way. Several authors have considered the suitability of the ETHOS typology for this purpose.

When assessing housing exclusion, there is no doubt that the subjective experiences of housing and how this relates to more objective material deprivation is vital. Personal experiences are related to social and cultural grouping and belongings as well as personal aspirations, and the everyday reality of being part of a social group can differ greatly from personal expectations (Brändle, 2007). This is why an interesting housing deprivation indicator could be one that provides information on the differences between what is perceived as a need and what is really affordable.

This corroborates the difficulties that exist in defining and measuring housing exclusion. As has been previously discussed, information on this in Spain is scarce, uneven and insufficient at a regional level. However, this paper argues that ETHOS should be extended to include other situations of exclusion and risk. These new dimensions were outlined in this paper and include those in insecure housing due to economic reasons, those experiencing environmental degradation in their surroundings, and a better incorporation of subjective assessments of people affected by these processes. As we have already highlighted, this proposed extension of the ETHOS typology may have certain limitations in terms of widening the net of those who are included under these definitions, but it would offer an important understanding of real situations of risk in a way that attempts to understand problems before they get worse.

Finally, there is no doubt that an adequate system of indicators for characterising and measuring housing exclusion is key for public policy intervention but, at the same time, the availability of information must be enhanced through bolstering the scope and explanatory power of surveys on housing exclusion in Spain. As regards

surveys addressing homeless people, it is necessary to collect information on a regular basis. And in household surveys (LCS, HBS, SHF), it would be desirable to expand the sample at both territorial level (for a better analysis of different regions) and at vulnerability level (social groups such as youngsters, immigrants, poor people) in order to advance our understanding on these matters further.

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Profiling Homelessness: The Baltic States

Part D

Homelessness in Lithuania: Policy and Research

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❯ **Abstract_** *This paper reviews developments in social policy and services related to homelessness in Lithuania over the last 20 years. Using the form of a descriptive case study, it provides an overview of how homelessness is conceptualised, the organisation of homelessness services, the development of social policy related to homelessness, and the support services available within the provision and maintenance of housing, as well as a review of relevant research on homelessness in Lithuania. The paper draws on secondary analyses of legislation, both published and unpublished research results and other sources. It discusses two parallel policies administrated by different departments of the Lithuanian government: tackling homelessness and increasing housing quality, and using social housing to alleviate housing poverty. Finally, findings on the problem of homelessness and its relationship to housing policy in the Lithuanian context are discussed.*

❯ **Keywords_** *homelessness, Lithuania, social housing, social services, government responses*

Introduction: The Emergence of Homelessness in Lithuania

The issue of homelessness was first officially acknowledged in Lithuania after the restoration of independence in 1990. Prior to this, throughout the period of Soviet occupation, the existence of homelessness as an issue was denied by state officials and there was little public discussion on the issue (Sadauskas, 2008). Moreover, during the socialist regime, there was intensive mass construction of state housing

in the form of standardised public apartment buildings and hostels for students and workers, and housing was guaranteed for young people who left care homes. Before the creation of this public investment policy (Vaisieta, 2012), citizens without a home were negatively labelled in dominant discourses, and terms such as 'parasite', 'vagrant' or simply 'person with no fixed abode' were used to describe them. The criminalisation of homelessness was common and often related to such activities as begging, public disorder and prostitution.

After the restoration of independence, the socio-economic context changed dramatically with the dismantling of state guarantees of work, a minimum wage and housing. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija, 1992) does not stipulate the right to housing, although Article 24 states that "The home of a human being shall be inviolable" and Article 52 stipulates that the State must provide assistance to those in situations of homelessness. In addition, after independence Lithuanian citizens were given the right to have their property restored in the form of real estate and to privatise residential property. After the ensuing mass privatisation of housing, which often involved high levels of corruption, many of those who had been excluded by the process were forced to sleep rough, or to seek shelter in emergency homeless hostels, abandoned houses or squats; many were also forced underground to sleep near heating pipe systems or to remain in public institutions and other unstable locations. The radical change in the State's social policy meant that responsibility for providing accommodation shifted away from the State to individuals, who had to take full personal responsibility. This had a dramatic impact on many socially vulnerable groups.

First, the introduction of social welfare provisions for individuals and families, which was implemented with the support of international funds, involved very strict limitations. This resulted in many families that were living on unemployment or other social benefits losing their housing as property prices rose. An array of social problems emerged after independence including widespread poverty, unemployment, low wages, poor state support in securing housing, gaps in social housing provision and an underdeveloped social services sector, which was unable to deal with these issues adequately. Combined, they led to a surge of homelessness in the country. Despite this, the development of policy to address homelessness was slow, as evidenced by the omission of the issue from the first Lithuanian Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2000 (Skurdo Mažinimo Lietuvoje Strategija, 2000).

The Concept of Homelessness in Research and Policy

In Lithuania, the first official homelessness counts were published after the first Population and Housing Census in 2001. According to the data, 1 250 people were homeless. A decade later a second Population and Housing Census took place, the results of which have not yet been published (Statistikos Departamentas, 2001 and 2013). Given the direction of public policy and growing inequality, however, it is likely that the numbers have increased. It is important to note that the number of homeless people in the country counted during the Population and Housing Census is likely to be an underestimation of actual homelessness levels, given that the only people defined as homeless by the Census were those who were rough sleeping or had no temporary shelter (Kanopienė and Mikulionienė, 2004). Using the ETHOS definition of homelessness (Edgar, 2009), the Census therefore included only one out of the seven categories of homelessness – rooflessness.

According to Kocai (2006, p.53), "homelessness is one of the forms of social exclusion in which people often find themselves outside the boundaries of civil society". In 2001, Statistics Lithuania – the Lithuanian Government Department of Statistics – provided a very narrow definition of homelessness: those with no permanent place of residence and without the funds to purchase or rent even basic housing (Lietuvos Statistikos Metraštis, 2013). Kanopienė and Mikulionienė (2004, p.53) provide a broader concept of homelessness to include anyone without a permanent residence, regardless of "whether one is actually roofless or has even a temporary roof above one's head". On homelessness in Lithuania, Kocai (2006, p.53) adopts the broader definition, writing that people are homeless "if they have no permanent place of residence or are temporarily unable to use their place of residence and, as a result, are sleeping in random locations or at institutions providing temporary accommodation, and if, in addition to this, they do not possess the funds to purchase or rent housing". Nevertheless, it can be argued that even this broader definition is not broad enough, since it does not include people living in public institutions or those who live in extremely poor conditions. Homelessness can also be a form of social exclusion; in other words homelessness may include those who are socially and economically marginalised from society.

In the capital of Lithuania, the Vilnius Municipal Council 2013–2018 has established integration programmes for individuals that are vulnerable, that beg and that have no permanent place of residence (Vilniaus Miesto Savivaldybės Taryba, 2013). This programme uses a definition of homeless people and homelessness similar to that used by Kocai (2006), and similar definitions can also be found in current Lithuanian legislation. When considering the concept of homelessness and homeless people in Lithuania, it is worth mentioning that it is very different from those included in the

European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (FEANTSA, 2012). This permits an understanding of the multidimensional nature of homelessness across time and space (Kanopienė and Mikulionienė, 2004).

For the purpose of this article, homelessness shall be defined as follows: individuals or households without a permanent place of residence and without the funds to rent or purchase housing. Our definition will also include those in temporary or unsafe housing, and those who live in Lithuanian institutions. Homelessness will also be treated as a form of social exclusion.

Poverty is a significant driver in generating social exclusion. Vosyliūtė (2002, p.26) claims that "belonging to the class of destitute people creates a feeling and images of hardship, trouble and sometimes pity in the social sphere. Poor people are more likely to commit crimes, they tend to lose their pride within community (they are less valued and respected, there is an unwillingness to communicate with them)". As such, a chain reaction takes shape, which perpetuates social exclusion over time. In Lithuania, the dynamics of poverty and social inclusion are hard to evaluate objectively due to rapidly changing assessment indicators in measuring levels of absolute poverty as well as relative poverty. A more robust understanding of the change in poverty levels can only be gleaned after 2004, when European poverty measures were standardised. The latest data on the social situation in the European Union show that Lithuania is one of the countries "with the largest increase in the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion"; where severe material deprivation has increased substantially by 6.7 percent; and where "labour market exclusion (unemployment, inactivity) and increase in (quasi-) jobless households have increased substantially" (European Union, 2013, pp.21-2). As poverty rates have increased, the risk of homelessness has increased due to the lack of housing provision and declining living conditions.

Homelessness and Social Policy: The Search for Solutions

The broad theoretical discussion about housing poverty in Eastern Europe is outlined by Hegedus (2011). In the Republic of Lithuania, two public institutions are responsible for the introduction of social policies in relation to housing exclusion and homelessness: the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The first law on the right to housing was adopted in 1992 (Lietuvos Respublikos Gyventojų Aprūpinimo Gyvenamosiomis Patalpomis Įstatymas / Law No. I-2455 of the Republic of Lithuania on Providing Residents with Dwellings). This law gives citizens the right to acquire or rent a place of residence and articulates the nature of associated state support for individuals and house-holds in need. Priority was given to the support of young people leaving the care

system, people with disabilities, single pensioners, large families (four or more children) and single parents with two or more children. However, the law did not include responses to homeless individuals or families. Furthermore, Article 11 of this law states that where the condition of a place of residence has worsened since the adoption of the law, support in acquiring new housing shall be granted but only after 5 years. Taking general economic restructuring and increasingly limited access to affordable housing into consideration, it is reasonable to assume that the number of homeless people increased after the adoption of this law.

Homeless people do, however, feature in the Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinių Paslaugų Įstatymas, 1996), which provides that homelessness is a situation for which social services can be provided (Art.4). This law made municipalities responsible for the organisation and provision of services, including temporary accommodation, in response to which shelters for homeless people and families were set up across the municipalities.

The 2000 Lithuanian Poverty Reduction Strategy categorises homeless people as "marginalised", along with street children, former prisoners, prostitutes, drug addicts, alcoholics and families in conflict, and describes them as clients of municipalities and social care institutions "who are difficult to handle" (Skurdo Mažinimo Lietuvoje Strategija, 2000, p.16). Notably, the document reflects a view of homeless people that is very similar to that of previous USSR legislation. It recommends that shelter be provided to prisoners leaving prison, to young people leaving care homes, and to pensioners no longer in a position to maintain independent housing. However, there are no provisions on housing policy issues in this document and while summer houses were set up in garden communities for pensioners, the housing provision for young people leaving care homes has not been actually been implemented. These authors suggest that municipalities must cooperate closely with NGOs in order to provide effective services to these groups.

Homelessness or homeless people do not feature at all in the current Law on Social Services (Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinių Paslaugų Įstatymas, 2006); they are not even included under "adults at risk" (defined as beggars, vagrants, alcohol abusers, gamblers and criminals) (Art.2). This omission creates the impression that all homeless people are now perceived as people suffering from addictions who are a danger to themselves and to society. For this group of people, short-term institutional care is provided, for which an individual may be charged up to 80 percent of their income.

Nevertheless, in analysing the development of municipal social services, it is important to note that services for homeless people were established prior to the implementation of these laws. For example, in the city of Kaunas the first accom-

modation shelter was established in 1992, catering for 72 men (Nakvynės namai, 2014). By 2012, there were numerous institutions catering for homeless people, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Numbers living in temporary residence institutions in Lithuania (2013)

		Number of vacancies in temporary residence institutions	units	Number of temporary residence institutions	units
Hostels for homeless people	2012	1257	22
Crisis centres, temporary accommodation, and institutions for mothers and children	2012	595	34

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania (Lietuvos Statistikos Metraštis, 2013)

By the end of 2012, there were 22 hostels for homeless people in Lithuania, accommodating 2 400 residents. One third of service users had been residing in the hostels for more than six months. On average, another 100 people were being provided with temporary accommodation on a night-by-night basis (Lietuvos Statistikos Metraštis, 2013). Crisis centres and institutions for the temporary accommodation of mothers and children held a further 2 500 people – 500 more than in 2011. More than 3 400 persons received other forms of social services such as consultations and psychological help through these institutions, including people not resident there (Lietuvos Statistikos Metraštis, 2013).

These data show that of the 60 municipalities in Lithuania, around one third have opened shelters or provided other services to homeless people. According to data from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, of all cities with homeless shelters, the city of Kaunas sees the highest demand for its homeless support services. In 2009, one Kaunas shelter received 211 requests for temporary accommodation, of which only 171 requests were granted. A further 245 people requested emergency beds on a night-by-night basis, all of whom were granted accommodation (Lietuvos statistikos metraštis, 2013)

The number of institutions does not reflect the variety of services and accommodation available in each facility. The Kaunas homeless shelter, for example, provides accommodation for roofless men (both on a night-by-night and a more medium-term basis) as well as low threshold services for the local homeless population and a day care centre and shelter for women with children (Nakvynės namai, 2014). However, not all homeless people fit the criteria to access such facilities. First, they have to be over 18 years of age and provide confirmation of their identity, a declaration of their previous place of residence and a certificate from a medical institution confirming that they do not have tuberculosis. Those who have tuberculosis or

mental illnesses and those who are intoxicated are not accepted in the hostels. Such stringent criteria regularly lead to reports on people freezing to death during the winter months or being burned to death in abandoned buildings. However, without robust research it is difficult to say exactly what kind of social services are currently being provided and how homeless people in Lithuania view these services.

NGOs and religious organisations play a significant role in working with homeless people in Lithuania. Caritas Lithuania, for example, currently owns and manages homeless shelters and provides people with food, clothing and other services. Homelessness is intimately intertwined with the ability to access affordable housing and the following section provides an overview of social housing in Lithuania.

Social Housing as a Solution to the Homelessness Problem in Lithuania

The results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census published by Statistics Lithuania (Lietuvos Statistikos Metraštis, 2013) show that in Lithuania, 96.6 percent of residential housing is owner-occupied. The data also shows that 11 percent of residential housing is not suitable for habitation. State- or municipally owned housing makes up only 1.4 percent of the entire housing stock of the country.

It is difficult to provide an exact definition of social housing as up until 1 January, 2003, the concept of social housing, as such, did not exist. Municipally owned residential housing belonged to the four foundations: the Main Fund, the Manoeuvring (Temporary Housing) Fund, the Official Fund and the Special Residential Housing Fund. According to the subsequent Law on Providing Residents with Dwellings (Lietuvos Respublikos Gyventojų Aprūpinimo Gyvenamosiomis Patalpomis Įstatymas, 1992), which was applicable until 1 January, 2003, residential housing that belonged to the main housing funds would be rented to citizens with no other housing according to financial need and for an indefinite period of time. Manoeuvring (Temporary Housing) Fund's residential housing premises were temporarily provided to citizens being relocated for reasons including residential overhaul, reconstruction, modernisation, and liquidation due to natural disasters or other issues. Residential housing that belonged to the Official Housing Fund were given to the employees of particular institutions. Premises that belonged to the Special Residential Housing Fund included dormitories, single-family housings, homeless shelters and care homes.

On 1 January 2003, these four housing funds were abolished and the concept of social housing was clarified. Social housing – or municipal residential premises rented on a non-commercial basis in accordance with government tax procedures – is provided to accommodate individuals and families on low incomes in accord-

ance with the law. The official social housing category does not include professional residential housing premises, dormitories, shelter homes, nurseries or residential care premises, though definitions of social housing that include these are still used in Lithuania. The new concept of social housing united two municipally-governed residential housing funds: the Main Fund and the Manoeuvring (Temporary Housing) Fund. However, the law did not unite the two remaining funds: the Official Fund and the Special Residential Housing Fund, which included dormitories. Municipal residential premises in the form of dormitories are residential housing premises (rooms) suitable for a person or a family, located at formerly purpose-built dormitories owned by municipalities (Lietuvos Respublikos Gyventojų Aprūpinimo Gyvenamosiomis Patalpomis Pakeitimo Įstatymas, 2003).

Residential rent in dormitories is regulated by the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos Civilinis Kodeksas, 2000) under articles 6.623, 6.624, 6.625. These articles state that such dormitories may accommodate workers, employees, and students and schoolchildren during school term, and that such dormitories are designed for this purpose. Nevertheless, dormitories that are part of the residential housing premises owned by the Kaunas municipality are rented to individuals or families on low income who meet the criteria for social housing. Following the Kaunas municipality council decision of 9 April 2009 No. T-237, residential housing premises could be temporarily rented to a family of four people until such time as the family were given social housing. Based on this decision, it could be argued that a dormitory is not considered to be social housing, but rather a temporary substitute for social housing. Although municipally owned residential premises comprising dormitories are not categorised as social housing, because the dormitories are rented to individuals and families, they comply with the concept and functions of social housing procedures. Due to the overlap between the two in this particular context, dormitories are included as equivalent to social housing in this article.

Social housing and related policy in Lithuania can provide a real opportunity for homeless people to acquire a home. The principal law currently regulating housing policy and conditions is The Law on State Support for the Acquisition or Rent of Housing and for the Modernisation of Multi-Family Buildings of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybės Paramos Būstui Įsigyti ar Išsinuomoti ir Daugiabučiams Namams Atnaujinti (Modernizuoti) Įstatymas, 2013), that was accepted in a place of the law, accepted in 2003 and with many amendments in 2008. This law defines four methods of state support: assistance in acquiring housing (S.2, Arts.3-6); municipal social housing rent (S.3, Arts.7-11); privatisation of municipal (public) premises under preferential terms (S.4, Art.12); and state support for the modernisation of multi-family buildings (S.5, Arts.13-16). In terms of finding a solution to the problem of homelessness through the provision of social

housing in Lithuania, the first two methods – support in acquiring housing and municipal rents – will be considered; these create a real opportunity to reduce homelessness numbers.

In 2008 an amendment to the Laws on the State Support for the Acquisition or Rent of Housing and for the Modernisation of Multi-Family Buildings of the Republic of Lithuania was drafted (Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybės Paramos Būstui Įsigyti ar Išsinuomoti Bei Daugiabučiams Namams Atnaujinti (Modernizuoti) Įstatymas, 2008). The aim was to reduce the number of people waiting for social housing and this was done by adding two new ways: first is of acquiring social housing or rent to the existing ones and second is to compensate for up to 50 percent rent price of others houses which are in market. This draft was later amended by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (Socialinės Apsaugos ir Darbo Ministerija, 2013), which deemed that, given the general economic situation in Lithuania, existing legislation does not respond to the reality of supply and demand in social housing. This perspective was reinforced by municipality data showing high numbers of people waiting for social housing. In 2012, the number of people waiting for social housing exceeded 31 500, while in the same year the State rented just over 1 000 new social housing units (Socialinės Apsaugos ir Darbo Ministerija, 2013). Therefore, it seems apparent that state support for housing acquisition or the provision of social housing does not meet demand, leaving tens of thousands without support. Some people have had to wait for six to seven years, and sometimes more than ten years to receive state support for housing acquisition or rent. It is expected that after the amendments and proce-dures for the implementation of legislation are adopted by the Seimas (The Lithuanian Parliament), they will be formalised after 1 January, 2015.

Only those individuals and households that meet the criteria as defined by the aforementioned Law (Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybės Paramos Būstui Įsigyti ar išsinuomoti ir Daugiabučiams Namams atnaujinti (modernizuoti) Įstatymas, 2008) are eligible to apply for social housing. According to this law, those with the right to receive state support for housing rent are defined as follows: 1) families and persons over the age of 18 years; 2) families and individuals who do not own housing located in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania, or whose housing space per family member is less than 10 square metres (in cases when a member of family is disabled 14 square metres); 3) families and persons whose assets and income value do not exceed the levels defined in the Description of Procedures for Estimation of Annual Personal (Family) Income and Assets (Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybės 2008) Bylaw documentation provides precise income, property and family composition criteria, which are quite restrictive (see Table 2).

Table 2. Levels of income and assets for persons (families) entitled to social housing rent as defined by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania

Place of residence	No. of family members	All available assets in thousands of LTL	Net annual income in thousands of LTL
Cities or district municipalities of Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Palanga, Neringa.	1	32,5	13,2
	2-3	58,5	26,4
	4 and more	26,0 (per capita)	7,7 (per capita)
Other areas	1	19,5	11,0
	2-3	39,0	22,0
	4 and more	19,5 (per capita)	6,6 (per capita)

These figures were compiled based on (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, 2008) Analysis of these regulations suggests that in order to receive social housing, family size must be proportional to household income. In this way, rising real estate prices may create a situation when any housing – even that in extremely poor condition – may become an obstacle to accessing social housing, particularly if the minimum wage also increases. Without an increase in wages more individuals and families will qualify for social housing income support, thus the numbers awaiting social housing will continue to grow. Differentiation between household income and the number of family members would increase social justice among those who would quality for social housing rent based on determined income levels.

When comparing the criteria for social housing rent, it is worth mentioning that around 20 percent of Lithuanian citizens live below the poverty line; they receive state aid in paying utility charges, which is part of a housing loss prevention strategy, and are eligible for social housing (Lietuvos Respublikos Piniginės Socialinės Paramos Nepasiturintiems Gyventojams Įstatymas (Law on Cash Social Assistance to the Poor Residents of the Republic of Lithuania, 2003). Another state support implemented by the Lithuanian Government relating to housing provision (laid down in the same law) is state-sponsored housing credits. Only a small segment of the population (mostly families) is entitled to receive such credits.

Therefore, the criteria in determining the right to housing are related to the absence of housing as well as annual income and assets, which may not exceed the levels defined in the Decree No. 1162 „For subsidized housing credits description of the procedure of approval & quota (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, 2011) the yearly net income of a single person may not exceed LTL 27 500 and assets may not exceed LTL 40 300; 2) the yearly net income of a two-or three-person family may not exceed LTL 38 500 and assets LTL 81 900; 3) the yearly net income of a four- or five-person family may not exceed LTL 46 200 and assets LTL 109 200; and 4) the yearly net income of a family of six or more may not exceed LTL 7 920 per capita and assets per capita may not exceed LTL 26 000. The threshold numbers for social housing rent and those for state-sponsored housing credits are significantly

different. As such, differences between the value of assets and annual income, the right to receive social housing rent and the right to receive state-sponsored housing credit are rather high. This reveals a paradox: those who have income and assets exceeding the values allowed for social housing rent may also not meet the criteria for state-sponsored housing credits and may be unable to receive state support.

It should be mentioned that a prior amendment to that currently in force, issued on 10 October 2008, contained an article stipulating the procedure and conditions of rental in the private sector and making state compensation available for the 80 percent difference between the rental prices of private and social housing (Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybės Paramos Būstui Įsigyti ar Išsinuomoti Bei Daugiabučiams Namams Modernizuoti Įstatymo, 2008) This measure was benevolent and was intended to reduce the number of people waiting for social housing. However, it was expected that bureaucracy and the participation of the private sector in the market would prevent the measure from becoming well-established and, indeed, the amended article expired within two and a half months.

Another piece of legislation relevant to the implementation of social housing policy is the Decree On The Level of Annual Income and Assets Based on the Right to Receive Social Housing (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, 2011-02-17), which was ratified by the government of the Lithuanian Republic in 2003 (active amendment from 25 February, 2011). The decree defines the value of personal (family) assets and net annual income that should not be exceeded in order to qualify for a social housing. In other words, it clearly identifies groups of the population who are entitled to rent housing and those who are not. It should be emphasised that this legislation is directly related to the Law on Declaration of the Property of Residents of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos Gyventojų Turto Deklaravimo Įstatymas, 2013), which provides that each person must declare their assets to the State Enterprise Centre of Registers, and that a declaration of assets must be provided when applying for social housing.

State housing policy is based on the Lithuanian Housing Strategy (Lietuvos Būsto Strategija, 2004), the aim of which is to set out long-term housing policy objectives and priorities. The strategy set out measures for housing development, the renewal and modernisation of properties, and the implementation of financial and social support programmes. One of the main tasks outlined in the strategy is the produc-tion of social housing through building new social housing facilities. By 2020, the relative share of social housing is anticipated to increase to 4-5 percent of all housing; i.e. during the period of 2004-2020 the social housing fund should be supplemented by 20-30 000 housing units.

The final relevant aspect of the implementation of social housing policy in Lithuania is the social housing development programme, intended to ensure the implementation of the Lithuanian housing strategy (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė (2004). The programme supported people in accessing affordable housing and rents in the period 2008 to 2012, and LTL 126 million was designated for this purpose. The biggest amount allocated was LTL 69.2 million in 2008 while the least amount allocated was LTL 13.3 million in 2012, but the social housing fund has not increased since the launch of the strategy in 2004. It is claimed that this is due to increased prices in the housing market and the fact that over the last four years 17 860 new apartments came onto the market – almost 8 times as many apartments as were created by the social housing fund in the same period. It could be inferred that no progress has been made on the goal of increasing the relative social housing fund share to 4-5 percent as laid down in the strategy; that figure is currently 2.4 percent, despite the fact that the State allocates sufficient funds for the implementation of the strategy.

Other legislative acts regulating social housing are formed at municipal level. In accordance with housing policy, municipalities set social housing rental procedures and rules, and manage social housing waiting lists, rental agreements and other decrees. In general, it could be argued that the legal framework regulating social housing rental procedures and fund development is adequate. However, in spite of sufficient funding, targets are not being met and access to social housing in Lithuania has become more restricted than ever over the last two years.

Review of Research on Homelessness and Social Housing Issues in Lithuania

In Lithuania, research on homelessness and social housing issues is limited. In her work entitled "*The Issue of Homelessness in the Context of the Lithuanian and the European Union Policy*", Andruškevičiūtė (2013) examined how homelessness is addressed in Lithuania through a comparative analysis with other European countries. The focus of Indriliūnaitė's (2013) PhD thesis centred on survival strategies among a sample of homeless shelter residents. In her earlier article "*Criminal Subculture Outside the Prison: Former Convicts as Homeless People*", Indriliūnaitė (2009) analysed this specific subgroup of homeless people – former convicts – and tried to understand their criminal subculture and how it manifested itself outside the prison. In the work "*Home Significance and Homelessness Experiences: Biographical Narrative Perspective for Internally Displaced Women*", Žilinskaitė (2013) researched the perspectives of women who had lost their home through biographical narratives. Norkūnaitė (2013), in her work "*Children Living in Shelters Adaptation Peculiarities at Vilnius City Schools (Evaluation of Children, their Parents and Social Workers)*", links the issue of homelessness with low levels of engage-

ment with the schooling system. Blažaitienė (2011) and Verbauskienė (2010) in their respective studies researched the theoretical and practical provision of social services to homeless people and attempted to identify the needs of homeless men living in temporary homeless shelters. In Sadauskas' (2008) work "*Homeless People as a Group of Social Exclusion*", he viewed homelessness in the context of social exclusion, and later in 2010, he focused on service provision and working with homeless people (Sadauskas, 2010).

Research on social housing and housing has been even more limited. The issue of housing for young families was analysed along with employment patterns by Jurevičienė (2007) in her work "*Social Housing Policy in Lithuania: The Case of Šiauliai City Municipality*". Tverijonaitė (2012) investigated social housing policy in the city of Šiauliai. Mockienė (2009) investigated problematic aspects of state support for housing acquisition or rent. Similar research was described in Sičiūnienė's (2009) work "*Social Housing and its Residents as an Object of Policy: Socio-Political Insights: The Vilnius Case*".

Since it is impossible to perform a meta-analysis on the research to date, only some shall be discussed in greater detail. Sadauskas (2008) analyses the results that emerged from a quantitative study of people in Lithuania without housing, which was conducted in 2003. This research was undertaken by both teachers and students of the former Faculty of Social Work at the Lithuanian University of Law, together with the public institution Social Policy Group. The sample consisted of 606 homeless people: 467 men (77.1 percent) and 139 women (22.9 percent). The research attempted to capture the living conditions of the respondents to determine the extent of their social exclusion. The majority of the sample consisted of homeless men aged between 30 and 49. In most cases, before becoming homeless, they experienced a long period of unemployment, had weak social support systems and developed addictions. Homeless women reported greater health adversity due to violence and abuse that they were exposed to. Routes into homelessness were impacted by varying risk factors according to age and education and it was found that the duration of homelessness impacted on the extent of social exclusion. The author's main argument that emerged from the analysis was that the longer the duration of homelessness, the deeper the level of social exclusion, as with time individuals become increasingly entrenched into a life of homelessness, making it more difficult return to mainstream society.

In her article based on her PhD research, Kocai (2008) analyses the process and stages of homeless people's social exclusion. The study reveals that the exclusion of homeless people is caused not only by their difficult financial situations and broken social bonds but by their own personal attributes, which are negatively viewed by wider society leading to stigmatisation and ostracism. The methodology

employed in this research consisted of secondary analyses of various scientific, public and statistical sources combined with semi-structured interviews with homeless people. Based on her research results, the author recommends commu-nity-led actions to prevent homelessness and to promote community coordination and integration between stakeholders including the State, the private sector, community-based organisations and homeless people themselves.

The article by Mikelionienė and Stankūnaitė (2013) drew on a qualitative study of semi-structured interviews with 32 people living in a male shelter during winter. The majority of service users were over 60 years old; they had no housing, no family support and no fixed income, and during the cold season they resided in the shelter. Here, they were provided with hot meals, showers, warmth and medical attention. At the time of interview, their main sources of income were retirement pensions, disability pensions, rummaging through waste, begging and shoplifting. The authors recommended the provision of better individual support and social services for homeless people.

The quantitative research conducted by Verbauskienė (2010), in which 109 homeless men aged between 30 and 62 were surveyed using structured inter-views, showed that those interviewed differed in many ways. They became homeless for different reasons and the services they received were very varied, though the demand for services was almost the same. The majority of homeless shelter clients did not receive any social work services or support, nor were they even informed about the possibility of receiving social services elsewhere, something that may exacerbate their situations.

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that research on the issue of homelessness adopts a narrow definition of homelessness and most individuals in the research samples are living in highly unstable situations such as in train or bus stations, on the streets and in homeless shelters. Those residing in substandard, institutional or unstable accommodation are overlooked entirely in the Lithuanian research to date.

Conclusion

Homelessness in Lithuania emerged as a more prominent social problem after the country's separation from the Soviet Union – a separation that prompted rapid economic reformation, the privatisation of real estate and a re-structuring of the labour market to capitalism. This complex period of transition provided the backdrop to the creation of housing legislation to ensure all citizens had a right to housing. In more recent legislation, homelessness has been defined as the absence of housing or any kind of home combined with the proven inability to acquire housing. There is a tendency, however, to expand this definition of homelessness

in line with international definitions. In the absence of measurements documenting extreme poverty in the country, statistics highlighting the rising number of people receiving social services can be used to suggest that poverty rates are increasing.

State policy for tackling homelessness is divided between two governmental departments that do not always coordinate policy actions, resulting in a fragmented policy response to the issue of homelessness. Since the implementation of state policy, there has been a focus on increasing access to affordable housing, but the uncertain economic context has meant that these efforts are insufficient. Given the growing gap between rich and poor, there are significant challenges in improving the living conditions of an impoverished and disadvantaged population. In cases of extreme homelessness, interventions are delayed and most homeless shelters that provide accommodation (which are often only open during winter time) do not provide social work services, and this lack of services can lead to greater difficulties for homeless people in exiting homelessness. Those residing in medium-term accommodation who also receive social services have greater opportunities to improve their situation and exit homelessness. Such services are not provided in all municipalities. Moreover, the perception that homeless people are "persons at risk", i.e. former prisoners or addicted to drugs, is widespread; this leads to the stigmatization of such social services, which in turn results in many people losing their home as they delay seeking help. Those who have tuberculosis or mental illnesses have no chance at all of being provided with shelter – other than hospitalisation.

Homelessness impacts every facet of a person's being: identity, relationships and physical and mental health, and exiting homelessness without support is extremely challenging. Social housing offers only limited solutions because even when social housing is granted, rental and utility charges still have to be paid for. This is particularly challenging for those who experience long-term homelessness, as it is extremely hard to find a job with a criminal record or only basic education or skills.

Scientific research on homelessness reveals the stigmatisation of people experiencing homelessness. There are several unpublished works evaluating service provision but there are no studies on the living conditions of homeless people, and those who are waiting for social housing or have already secured social housing have not been studied at all. Those living in institutions are also entirely overlooked by the research on homelessness, despite the fact that those exiting these institutions are at a substantial risk of homelessness. Such challenges need to be acknowledged when it comes to creating policy adequate for tackling homelessness in Lithuania.

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Homelessness in Estonia: Overview and Analysis

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> **Abstract_** *Whenever there is a discussion on the topic of homelessness in the Baltics, perspectives and angles are varied and appear to present a conundrum. During Soviet times, there was apparently little homelessness; people had jobs and everyone had some means of survival, yet the freedom to choose and make progress was missing during this time of repression, and the standard of living was very low for most Estonians. In contrast, since freedom came to Estonia in 1991, homelessness has become a social problem and organizations have sprung up to mitigate this problem. While the standard of living in Estonia is, at times, held up as a model for Europe, especially during the Euro crisis, economic hardships have been among the causes of home-lessness, along with other social issues such as alcoholism. This article reviews existing data and presents anecdotal evidence about homelessness in Estonia during Soviet times and in the transition period, and looks at its current status. Included are interviews with personnel who work with homeless people, with four sample organizations represented. Some research studies are also referenced.*

> **Keywords_** *Baltics, Estonia, homelessness, Soviet, transition, social services*

Introduction

Estonia, the smallest of the three Baltic nations and approximately the same size as Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands, has existed since approximately 9000 BC, according to evidence found of communities existing in Northern Estonia. Its long history of occupation by many peoples and countries, first by the Teutonic Knights then by Sweden and finally Russia in 1721, accounts for its varied cultural characteristics, evident in societal and cultural characteristics such as literature and food. It was proclaimed an independent republic in 1918 but was annexed by the USSR in 1940 as a constituent republic, the Estonian SSR. Germany invaded in 1941 and the repression of Estonians' rights continued during this time. In the autumn of 1944 the Soviet armies returned, deportations continued and almost all remaining rural households were collectivised. A significant decline in population due to the effects of war, deportations and occupation occurred during World War II, with casualties estimated to be a quarter of the population. With the break-up of the Soviet Union, Estonia regained its independence in 1991. An article published in 2006 in *The European Journal of Housing Policy* provided a primary examination of homelessness at that time in Estonia, and reflected a growing interest in this area of social dysfunction. Because it was an academic, post-occupation effort at quantifying, explaining and suggesting solutions, the 2006 article expounded on the definition of homelessness, using theoretical definitions and research results from a rather wide range of European literature.

According to the website of the *European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless*, FEANTSA, the development of a European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS), launched in 2005, provided a common language for discussion on homelessness. As the website states: "Homelessness is perceived and tackled differently according to the country. ETHOS was developed through a review of existing definitions of homelessness and the realities of homelessness which service providers are faced with on a daily basis. ETHOS categories therefore attempt to cover all living situations which amount to forms of homelessness across Europe:

- rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough)

- houselessness (with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter)

- living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence)

- living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding).

The ETHOS approach confirms that homelessness is a process (rather than a static phenomenon) that affects many vulnerable households at different points in their lives." (FEANTSA [on-line]).

The current article is the result of research carried out in 2014. Interviews conducted for this article reflected the ETHOS approach, and the interventions described by the interviewees covered the four points listed in the above definition. Another valuable aspect of the 2006 article was its attention to the economic and psychological causes of homelessness, and the fact that it offered preliminary solutions. In 2014, many of these solutions have been implemented, reflecting the validity of the 2006 suggestions.

A major difference between the 2006 article and this article – in addition to the eight years between their publication – is that the 2006 research used the city of Tartu as its base, whereas this article investigates the status of and reasons for homelessness in the capital city and one other smaller city, focusing on how homelessness is handled and remedied. Even today Tallinn, as the capital city, has more funds to develop and implement services than Tartu. In addition, many people who are unemployed migrate to Tallinn from all over Estonia in the hopes of finding work in a larger city – a city that is also the seat of the country's government. Homelessness in Tartu can thus be considered quite different from homelessness in Tallinn.

Another difference is that the 2006 article presented minimal information about homelessness or its equivalent during Soviet times, whereas this article includes an excellent research study and report that analyzes the homelessness situation under Communism quite thoroughly and lays the groundwork for our exposition of what occurred in the interim period between the decline and fall of Communism and today's action and activities in alleviating and remedying homelessness.

It is also perhaps significant that the 2006 article states that the list of services for homeless people is short. It is commendable that some of the 2006 suggestions, such as the development of dormitory-like dwellings designed to assist homeless people, have actually been carried out and are reported on in this article.

Although the 2006 article and the article in this volume are written eight years apart, the articles complement each other, the first laying the scientific groundwork on which to build this analysis of homelessness in 2014. The purpose of this article is to focus on Estonian societal conditions, particularly homelessness, during the Soviet occupation and post-occupation years – the years of freedom, which officially began on August 20, 1991. Since Estonia was annexed and not part of the war victory of Soviet Russia, many choose to consider 1918 as the founding date of the Republic of Estonia, although that view did not mitigate or ameliorate the effect of Sovietization from 1940 until 1991, during which time the formerly existing

social structure was destroyed. Prior to the establishment of Estonia as a Republic in 1918, little is recorded about the societal problems that may have existed. The focus was on occupation by other nations, the development of nationalism in the 1900s, and cultural and economic changes.

Parameters and Limitations of the Study

This article depends on various sources that it was possible to accumulate in recent months, including research reports, factual presentations by experts in the field, and personal interviews, both with individuals who presently work with homeless people or homeless causes and with those who lived through Soviet times and are currently engaged in societal issues and/or nongovernmental organizations. These individuals include one of the author's relatives and current leaders in the NGO sector.

The article does not aim to quantify or provide a full examination of the social welfare system of the Soviet era. Rather, a minimal amount of information is included to provide perspective on the transition period and the current status of homelessness, as well as factors that shaped attitudes and actions during the last three-quarters of a century or so.

In addition to analysis of available documents – published or presented in conferences or meetings – interviews were conducted with three sample organizations that work with homeless people, one supporting organization (a food bank) and the Social Ministry of the Estonian government. Because the majority of homeless people are in the capital city, Tallinn, the major focus of the article is on conditions and resources in that area. It would be desirable for future interviews and research studies to expand into rural Estonia and small towns or villages, and to include contact with homeless people themselves as well as with government officials (besides the Social Ministry represented below).

Homelessness in Soviet Times

As the Soviet occupation took hold and became entrenched, social welfare was merely a system of social allowances and subsidies, governed by Soviet rules and regulations. Local social welfare was abolished and the State became responsible for social welfare in all of Estonia. Local authorities were required to implement the guidelines and had no voice in adapting or modifying these according to local needs. According to a document published in 1997 by the Tallinna Pedagoogikaülikool (Tallinn Pedagogical University) which examined Estonian welfare during the Soviet times and during the transition, the Social Insurance Ministry of the ESSR functioned from 1946 until 1979 and focused on training, employment and welfare for

veterans, people with disabilities, retirees and families of fallen soldiers (Tulva, 1997). By 1948 there were 35 social care institutions, which included orphanages and facilities for the elderly and disabled. Although these facilities existed, social welfare was mostly a system for delivering State pensions and allowances. The basic elements of the social security system were wholesale consumer price subsidies, guaranteed jobs, pensions and sick leave, child benefits, the services necessary to raise a child, and free healthcare and education (Tulva, 1997). While these elements seem laudatory and exemplary, they need to be couched in the reality of the times – deportations and war casualties depleted the population considerably; the immigration of Russians, who were imported to work in factories and businesses, swelled the population but also resulted in a stratified society in which Russians received many privileges and benefits denied to Estonians; the collectivisation of rural populations and farms along with some industries such as ship-building forced Estonians to work in situations and places that may not have been of their choosing; and many of society's perceived misfits, such as people with disabilities, were warehoused. As a result, homelessness was not a public situation or problem because of the allowances, subsidies, forced employment and homes for those who didn't fit the idealistic image of the Soviet ideology.

As summarized by Taimi Tulva (1997), the main parameters of the Soviet social welfare system included the following. First, social problems were frequently ignored or concealed from public scrutiny and this had an effect on public opinion and attitudes. According to those individuals who lived through and survived the Soviet era, it was a case of 'out of sight, out of mind', and in the struggle to make a living and a life during these times, social problems were simply ignored or even forgotten until freedom brought them to the forefront, with accompanying action needed to improve these social conditions. Second, local needs were ignored because all services were centralised, both due to control factors endemic in Soviet society and because of the concept of egalitarianism that prevailed within Soviet ideology. Third, the workplace administered redistribution of resources, and at times this protocol included the handing out of privileges to those in favour at the time. Finally, in spite of the theory of egalitarianism, which was part of the Soviet system, redistribution favoured those who played an active part in the idealization of the Soviet life, such as veterans, political leaders, trade union leaders and heroes.

The matter of homelessness during Soviet times was summarized by Evi Jeeser, a social worker who was born in Siberia during the Soviet era: "Social work was not valued during the Soviet times. There wasn't unemployment at that time because image was important and systems existed that made sure there wouldn't be home-lessness—at least not visibly so. Everything was very regulated and everyone had to work or suffer the consequences. Wages were low. There was money, but nothing

much to buy. During Soviet times, if you behaved, you could have a flat – and some still have those dwelling places. If you didn't behave, you were shipped out." (Personal interview, Evi Jeeser, 2014)

According to the prevailing analysis presented by historians, economists, average citizens and others, the Soviet occupation and annexation of Estonia in 1940 destroyed the country politically, economically and socially. As the second occupation progressed, from 1944 onwards, the Soviet system began to develop in such a way that homelessness began to disappear – along with disappearance of choices in lifestyle, work, education, economy, travel and personal expression. At the same time, social welfare was fully controlled by the state during the Soviet period and was guided by the policies of the Communist party. However, as Jeeser stated, the Soviet system did provide a foundation for the transition period when a great deal changed in society and there was a groundswell movement toward civil society.

The Transition Period from Soviet Rule to a Democratic Society

Tulva (1997) pointed out that the massive societal changes in former socialist countries took place at three interacting levels: in public institutions; in civil society, which includes voluntary organizations; and in the private lives of citizens. The national 'wakening', which began in 1988, was significant in establishing an independent welfare state. Tulva (1997) also opined that changes in a transitional society happened faster than people's ability to adjust to new circumstances. This certainly was the case in Estonia as the nation and its citizens moved from an oppressive and paternalistic society in which 'learned helplessness' was the norm to a society where citizens were capable of self-management.

The uncertainty and stress of the transition period caused coping difficulties. Many of the restrictions of the Soviet era resulted in a lack of qualified workers and parents. People with disabilities or those with diseases were able to emerge into society, but without an infrastructure or resources to assist them, they became a burden on an already burdened population. The breakup of collectives – whether rural and agricultural, or urban and industrial – created unemployment, and the benefits that the government were able to provide in the early nineties were insufficient. Not everyone could adapt to the rapid economic and social changes of the transition period, nor could they adjust to the changing opportunities and demands in the workplace.

Among the many social problems that could be enumerated from that era – including the role of women and workforce opportunities, health problems that proliferated, child protection processes, poverty, and other social situations – homelessness was a relative newcomer. During this time the number of homeless people was unknown. Most were assumed to be alcoholics. Shelters began to be opened, supported by the state or religious organizations, and centers for providing social and health care services were established little by little. Social work attained a more respected status and training of social workers began.

During the transition period a system had to be developed that would protect and handle vulnerable groups and individuals. Laws guaranteeing social rights were passed in the Parliament Commission on Social Welfare and problems began to be solved via government action and regulations. One occurrence during the transition period was decentralisation and local governments acquired executive power. Tulva (1997) defined aspects of the developing Estonian social welfare system.

Social protection, which deals with citizens' social security and provides assistance in various forms. Social insurance, which provides security for citizens and pays benefits out of social tax revenues for pensions, sick leave benefits, child care and employment subsidies. Social welfare, which delivers social services, allowances and benefits in cash and in-kind and is directed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and local municipalities.

Social services, which provide opportunities for assistance for people in need, such as family care, counseling, health provisions. Social assistance, which consists of cash or in-kind support. Social protection, therefore, can be summarized as having three components: financial, services, and special intervention.

The transition period in social welfare and services took place quite rapidly, given the highly controlled Soviet era practices and policies and the new freedoms that both the State and its citizens acquired. Leppik (1996) described it as a 'transition from childhood to youth'. During this time, the number of people who needed help in Estonia increased, particularly as Estonian society was undergoing considerable changes. One of the most notable changes was the increasing level of stratification and the distribution of family income. Estonia's Gini coefficient has been steadily higher than the European Union average in recent years (it was 31 in 2009), and social problems are exacerbated with the process of stratification, including homelessness.

Addressing Homelessness Today

In addition to the perspectives provided above regarding homelessness during the Soviet period and the transition period, the article published in 2006 in *The European Journal of Housing Policy* provides a baseline for examining the situation in Estonia in 2014. The 1995 Social Welfare Act did not contain a specific definition of homelessness but subsumed it under this phrase: "The purposes of social welfare are to provide assistance to persons or families in preventing, eliminating and relieving difficulties in coping, and to assist persons with special social needs in social security, development and integration into society." Also addressed in the 2006 article were some of the economic and psychological causes of homelessness, which by 2014 have become part of standard practice in managing and providing services for homeless people. Most importantly, the article offered recommendations for solutions while listing the services available. Fortunately many of the recommendations have been implemented by 2014 and are described in this current article.

One aspect that has not changed in the intervening eight years since the *The European Journal of Housing Policy* published information about Estonia is the legal status of homeless people in Estonia. The Social Welfare Act dating from the year 1995 is unchanged as of now (see Legal aspects of homelessness in Estonia [on-line]). It addresses all aspects of social services, including aid for homeless people, the jurisdiction of local entities, remuneration, the rights of homeless people and services to be provided. These services, as outlined in the Act, are consistently implemented, along with solutions that have emerged since the 2006 research was conducted.

This article focuses on Tallinn, the capital of the Republic of Estonia, as well as another smaller city, Haapsalu. Today, Tallinn has a population of 432 012. Estonia's population is 1 315 819 meaning that 33 percent of the population lives in the capital. Unemployment, a major factor in homelessness, is 5.5 percent throughout Estonia and in Tallinn, 2 percent of residents are unemployed.

During 2011 and 2012 the Tallinn Social Work Centre conducted a survey of homeless people and found approximately 1 225 living in shelters and 146 living on the street. Being homeless was defined as not having personal or rented housing, not having permanent housing opportunities, or sleeping in a temporary place.

The above facts were set out in a report by Meelika Limberg of the Tallinn Social Work Centre and Krista Tammsaar of the Tallinn Social Welfare and Health Care Board (Limberg and Tammsaar, 2014). They included in their report what Tallinn is doing to address homelessness. Three major initiatives are underway. First, preventive measures, which include clubs for the unemployed, debt counseling, free public transport and raising citizen awareness of homelessness. Second, an early

intervention system that includes resocialisation and transitional accommodation. Third, ensuring minimally acceptable living standards for the so-called 'hopeless cases'; this includes those who don't want to change their lifestyle or those who live on a minimum income in the form of subsistence benefits. It also includes those with addiction problems (Limberg and Tammsaar, 2014).

Among the preventive measure that Tallinn utilizes are cooperation between departments, as well as cooperation with governments at all levels and NGOs. The state provides employment services, local governments provide maintenance level work, and NGOs provide additional services such as training for employment. In addition, in Tallinn there are health care services for those not covered by insurance, as well as counseling aimed at helping homeless people achieve independence. Resocialisation services are provided in stages, the first being a shelter, with the next level being transitional accommodation or residence in a social housing unit. A client sets goals while in the resocialisation plan and after six months can apply for lodging in a municipal or social service home. According to Andrus Toompuu of the Tallinna Sotsiaal- ja Tervishoiuamet (the Tallinn Social and Health Office), the following residential options, both short-term or long-term, are available for homeless people in Tallinn (Toompuu, 2014).

Lodging for a night: there is a total of 124 beds among three shelters.

Shelters for homeless people: these are in four locations through Tallinn with a total of 140 beds.

Sites for resocialization: these are in five locations with a total of 427 places. In these, clients may live 2-3 per room and families with children have their own rooms. The client pays a monthly fee of 38.35 Euros, with children costing an additional 3.83 Euros.

Additional services include an active soup kitchen, the Food Bank (more information will be shared later in this article about this resource), healthcare centers and a day center where homeless people can use the Internet, and benefit from assistance in finding work, counseling in finance or in dealing with psychological problems. In addition, NGOs are involved. For example, the Salvation Army provides food and clothing, among other services such as work therapy and drug addiction programmes. The Estonian Red Cross provides traditional services such as crisis preparedness and intervention, and also assists vulnerable populations in various ways.

Selected Sample Programmes
Providing Residential Services for Homeless People

The shelter in the Nõmme District on Männiku Street in Tallinn

This residence has 92 places in total, with 13 families on the third floor. Most families consist of a mother with children; only three families have a father present. Of the residents, 30 percent are Estonians. The rest are Russian or other nationalities. Half of the residents work to pay the cost of residence; €38.35. Two-thirds pay their own fees; if a resident is unable to pay, the city provides the funds. If a resident is registered in one of the eight Tallinn districts and can't pay, the local district then assists.

Residents are involved in a resocialization plan that lasts for six months, after which the plan is reviewed and evaluated. If the resident has no place to go after six months, he or she is allowed to stay another six months. The resident also must do his/her best to acquire work skills and visit the employment office.

The reasons that the shelter's residents are homeless vary greatly and are not uncommon in the general field of homelessness – largely due to work that disappeared after Soviet times (e.g., factories and collective farms), the loss of an apartment (in some cases apartments were reclaimed by those who owned them pre-World War II), a lack of language skills, living at bare subsistence level or below for pensioners, and substance abuse problems.

Residents must get their own food. This may be from a soup kitchen, the food bank or NGOs that provide meals or food supplies. If healthcare is needed, city clinics are available. Two social workers are available for 92 people. A total of twelve workers are employed at the Tuulema residence, which include eight social work assistants and one coordinator. According to Evi Jeeser, formerly a social worker who worked for twenty-three years with the mentally handicapped, there is more respect now and understanding for persons who undertake this profession (Personal interview, Evi Jeeser, 2014). Unlike Soviet times, there is no longer any need to be embarrassed about being a social worker, and training is available. She confirms the prevailing view that Estonia has made much progress in a short time, which included a somewhat chaotic transition period, and most importantly, social services not only provide services for almost all who those need it but work in a preventive manner as well.

The shelter in the North Tallinn District on Tuulemaa Street

Hannes Vetik is the director of this residence (Personal interview, Hannes Vetik, 2014). On the first floor there are 16 rooms with 51 beds. On one side of the second floor are 18 rooms with three men per room, and the other side houses families and women. The third and fourth floors are designated for families, with a total of 47 rooms. This shelter serves a total of 220 persons, with one-third being Estonians and two-thirds Russians. As with other shelters, residents pay the fees – some from their pensions or from the mother's subsidy, common in Estonia. The state provides a homeless person with €95 in social support (an average pension, by comparison, is approximately €200 per month) and from this, those who cannot work for various reasons can pay for their lodging.

Employed in this shelter are six social workers and one coordinator, plus a director and a social caretaker who helps clients in learning to accomplish their living chores.

According to Vetik, shelters began to open around the turn of the last century, the year 2000. Prior to that, mutual help was prevalent. Vetik states that the public perception of homelessness is frequently shaped by the media – what sells is the negative, and the media tend to publicize the bad issues and situations. More attention is paid by the public during the cold times of the year, and feature stories at these times help to build a more positive view. Vetik emphasizes that a comprehensive approach to resocialisation and rehabilitation is a positive factor and is working. Other Estonian cities such as Tartu, a university town, also have units or shelters like Tallinn has; it is not a State system.

Exiting homeless is done progressively, with a homeless person starting the rehabilitation process by staying at a night shelter, progressing to units and services like the ones described above, and finally securing an apartment or room. Other services with which Vetik's shelter cooperates are the food bank, the housing department of the city or region, job assistance, soup kitchens and social welfare departments that provide benefits.

The majority of homeless people have problems with alcohol. A relatively small number are veterans or become homeless as a result of mental illness, and a few are on the street by choice – they want to be free! How is the success of this programme measured? By securing a city apartment, becoming independent, finding a job, and staying clean from substance abuse. Between twenty and twenty-five people were successful in achieving these goals in 2013.

The shelter and social services in Haapsalu, 85 km southwest of Tallinn.

Kaja Rootare, who is the vice-mayor of the city of Haapsalu, stated in her interview that in order to improve conditions for homeless people in that city of 11 000 citizens and region, the root problems need to be addressed – a lack of education and of work opportunities (Personal interview, Kaja Rootare, 2014). She stressed that the problems relating to homelessness are many and often interrelated, and that it is necessary to train people to help themselves. More men than women are homeless in Haapsalu. The causes of homelessness are familiar – alcohol abuse, lack of work, loss of apartment or residence. However, two aspects that make Haapsalu somewhat different are that, first, if people in rural areas are homeless, they come to the city; and second, there are more young people that come through the orphanage system. Foster families are few, so children growing up as orphans often don't acquire the personal or work skills to enable them to cope when they reach adulthood.

The Haapsalu system includes emergency locations, shelters and soup kitchens, and apartments like those found in Tallinn. Rootare believes that smaller shelters are better, such as those which house approximately 40 persons. She also states that those who are housed with others who have similar problems find this to be beneficial. Every month there are approximately fifty persons residing in the social service apartments and 38 in shelters.

One example of resources available for homeless people in Tallinn

According to Eesti Toidupank (the Estonian Food Bank) in Tallinn, from which food is distributed throughout Estonia, poverty is a major problem in Estonia (Personal interview, Piet Boerefijn *et al.*, 2014). More than 230 000 people have difficulty in securing a daily, healthy meal, and of these, 63 000 are children. Food banks across Estonia acquire food from food stores, wholesalers and food manufacturers; they keep these products from spoilage and disposal; and they deliver food to those who live below the subsistence level. The Food Bank was established in 2010 by Piet Boerefijn, manager of the Estonian-Dutch Charity Foundation Päikeselill, and other like-minded individuals, and after one year, nine other food banks were established across Estonia. Today it is the best-known charity in Estonia.

But Boerefijn and his team are not willing to maintain a status quo; they believe that there is still a long way to go and they continue to strengthen existing partnerships and establish cooperation with new ones. Food for the bank is not purchased, except in some rare cases or projects. The food banks are logistic centres that gather the food and receive donations. The process begins with producers, wholesalers and stores providing food, which volunteers pick up and social workers distribute to those in need. Other supporters are those that provide financing or manage campaigns, and partners such as charity organisations.

The assistance the Food Bank provides is for families and people who have financial problems and need assistance meeting basic needs. This includes homeless people. Help is free of charge and designed to be temporary.

Summary of statements by a representative of the Social Ministry

Raimo Saadi, head of the Welfare Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs, reiterated much of the information secured through documents and interviews in our interview with him (Personal interview, Raimo Saadi, 2014). The Social Ministry does not exercise direct control over any aspects of homelessness but works with regions, counties and organizations. He agrees that Soviet times provided a base for today's activities and services, even while exacerbating the situations and problems that lead to homelessness, such as the loss of work or living quarters. The reasons for homelessness are, unfortunately, quite universal, although the Soviet repression of almost fifty years was a hugely negatively influence. Alcoholism is a major cause, along with a lack of language and work skills, psychological or mental problems, breakup of the home, and, at times, movement from rural areas to the city, causing a loss of control over one's life. Saadi agrees that the growth of social services for homeless people in Estonia has been rapid, moving away from the paternalistic practices of the Soviet era, establishing priorities and processes during the transition from Soviet rule to democracy, and experiencing success and ongoing improvement in today's society. Addressing both the root causes of home-lessness as well as the situations in which homeless people find themselves is today's mentality in Estonia, providing both hope and help to those in need.

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Response Section

Part E

Housing First Europe: Next Steps

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Introduction

I have been invited by the Editor to provide commentary on the final report of the Housing First Europe (HFE) project authored by Dr. Volker Busch-Geertsema (2013). For this purpose, I have reviewed the report as well as the article published in the August 2014 edition of the European Journal of Homelessness (Busch-Geertsema, 2014). My commentary will focus on the findings in the report and comparing them to previous research on Housing First including the At Home / Chez HF multi-site demonstration project in Canada (Goering *et al*., 2014) on which I served on the National Research Team and Co-Lead of the Moncton site. The HFE entailed a multi-site evaluation of Housing First (HF) projects in five cities, namely Amsterdam, Budapest, Copenhagen, Glasgow, and Lisbon. Lessons from the evaluations were shared with five other European cities that were planning or implementing Housing First projects.

Although the evaluations conducted in the five cities used different methodologies and were conducted on different timetables, they were intended to answer the same research questions relating to providing a profile of service consumers in each of the projects, their support needs, satisfaction with services, housing and other outcomes, costing, and lessons learned. The methodologies included either qualitative and narrative interviews (Budapest and Copenhagen) or structured quantitative interviews (Amsterdam, Glasgow, and Lisbon) of a portion of HF service users combined with administrative data on the characteristics of the HF service users and length of time housed. HF service users were interviewed twice in two of the cities (Glasgow and Lisbon) and only once in the other three cities and there were no comparison groups at any of the sites. It is noted in the report that the choice of the evaluation design and methods are a function of the modest budget allocated for the research (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). In contrast, the At Home / Chez (AHCS) project in Canada was allocated $110 million CAD (approximately ¢75

million) by the federal government and as a result was able to conduct a large cross-site randomized controlled trial in five Canadian cities following study participants for a period of two years (Goering *et al.*, 2014).

To some extent, the individual evaluations conducted in each of the cities serve as case studies of these pilot projects. Given the rich findings provided in the HFE report, I fully expect that they have been useful for program development and improvement purposes in each locale. At the same time, I also view the cross case study analysis conducted by Busch-Geertsema (2013; 2014) as value-added even though different evaluation designs and methods were used and there were differences in the cohorts of pilot participants at the different sites. In particular, the cross case study analysis produced useful lessons from an examination of the commonalities and differences of the programs, the populations they served, and the social welfare contexts in which they were located.

Interestingly, the HF projects in four of the five sites represented the first attempts at piloting this new approach to addressing homelessness for people with complex needs. In fact, it was only in Copenhagen that the implementation of HF was part of a broader national strategy. In my view, this fact makes the kind of limited evaluation research that was undertaken as fitting since the focus is on new pilot programs that can be expected to evolve further as they mature.

Busch-Geertsema (2013) assessed four of the five projects as following in large part the eight broad principles of the Pathways Housing First model; he noted that this assessment is based on information provided in the individual evaluation reports and by individual site representatives at HFE meetings. So the available data is secondary in nature and relatively limited and does not allow for conducting a more fine-grained fidelity assessment focusing on program structures and service characteristics (Nelson et al., 2014; Stefanic, Messen, Drake, and Goering, 2013). It is very clear that the program in Budapest, although following some of the principles of HF, was different with the support being less intensive and available for a time limited relatively short period.

Interestingly, all of the sites with the exception of Copenhagen assisted individuals to access scattered-site housing in the community rather than single-site congregate housing. In the case of Copenhagen, the HF program placed individuals in congregate housing initially but over time gravitated towards scattered housing because of negative experiences of their program participants with congregate facilities. Also, in both Glasgow and Copenhagen because of its availability, the HF programs housed individuals in social housing rather than private market housing which has been the norm in North American HF programs (Goering *et al.*, 2014; Tsemberis, 2010).

Although only Copenhagen configured its services into an ACT team, the support elements of the projects other than Budapest reflect HF principles in terms of their level of intensity (1: 3 to 1: 11), client-centered nature, services delivered at home and in the community, and the availability of staff for emergencies on a 24/7 basis. The level of intensity of these pilot HFE projects is impressive and exceeds what is often typically offered when intensive case management is delivered as part of the HF service package (Goering *et al*., 2014; Tsemberis, 2010).

Target Group

Similar to recipients of studied HF programs in the U.S. and Canada (Goering *et al*., 2014; Rog, 2014), all of the HFE sites with the exception of Budapest targeted typically single people with longstanding histories of homelessness and substance abuse problems who were unemployed and receiving some form of social assistance. Lisbon had the highest proportion of individuals with a psychiatric diagnosis although it is likely in my view that many individuals in the other projects who presented with addictions also had an undiagnosed psychiatric problem. In Budapest, the study participants were recruited because of where they lived (i.e., in a forest) and included a majority of persons who lived with other family members, partners, or friends. As well, the majority of participants relied on some form of employment or activities for survival and did not receive social benefits.

High proportions of recipients of HF in American and Canadian programs have a concurrent disorder (i.e., diagnosable mental health problem and substance use problem) and also tend to be single and have a long-term history of homelessness (Aubry, Ecker and Jetté, 2014; Goering *et al*., 2014; Rog *et al*., 2014). Although HF has been questioned as an approach for people with addictions (Kertesz, Crouch, Milby, Cusimano, and Schumaker, 2009), there is no empirical evidence of it achieving different or worse outcomes with this population. In fact, in the AHCS project, severity of addictions was not a predictor of HF recipients achieving housing stability in the first year of the program (Goering *et al*., 2014).

Similar to the support needs of participants in North American HF programs described in research (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012; Tsemberis, 2010), community support in the early stages of the HFE programs focused on practical matters related to finding and moving into housing, organizing finances, and addressing immediate mental health and physical health needs. Longer-term needs of HFE participants include assisting individuals with vocational planning, participation in meaningful community activities, and social isolation.

Retention Rates

The housing retention rates reported in the HFE project report are very impressive with three of the HF programs having rates that exceed 90 percent while Lisbon had a 79 percent retention rate among its participants, and Budapest had the lowest retention rate at 33 percent. It is important to note that these retention rates are based on whether or not individuals were housed at the point of the follow-up evaluation and that the follow-up time varied within and across sites. It does appear from the information provided in the HFE report that a large portion of these individuals experienced housing stability over the course of receiving HF. The much lower retention rate in the Budapest project is explained as being the result of the program only being able to offer support of a low intensity and only for a time-limited period. As well the services did not include the provision of a rent supplement.

In determining housing retention, an "intent to treat" calculation was not applied wherein recipients who had moved into more institutional accommodations or whose living situation was unknown were not counted in the denominator for calculating the retention rate. This type of calculation likely contributes at least in part to the retention rates in three of the HFE exceeding those reported in American and Canadian studies on HF (Goering *et al*., 2014; Rog *et al*., 2014). However, the HFE results on housing retention provide important evidence that HF is effective in assisting a large majority of individuals to exit homelessness and achieve housing stability in quite diverse European contexts. As noted in the report, the HFE projects lacked a control group receiving standard care. As a result, it is not possible to determine whether or not the housing retention outcomes are superior to standard care.

In the AHCS project in Canada, 14 percent of participants were identified as failing to achieve housing stability in the first year of receiving HF services (Goering *et al*., 2014). The HFE housing retention rates also show a small percentage of individuals with additional needs who appear to be non-responders to HF at least in terms of exiting homelessness. It is critical for HF programs to determine how best to respond to these additional needs so that these individuals do not fall through the cracks and continue experiencing chronic homelessness. The use of more structured single site housing programs with on-site support may be worth considering for some of these individuals either as a transitional step or on a longer-term basis (Yamin *et al*., In press).

Methodological Constraints

Given the cross-sectional research design in three of the five sites, the small sample size, and the reliance on perceived impact or changes by participants or staff, the interpretation of the results on non-housing outcomes (i.e., mental and physical health, substance use, community functioning, recovery, and quality of life) reported in the HFE report has to be done cautiously. Moreover, again the lack of a control group in the HFE project precludes being able to attribute positive changes to receiving HF services. To date, studies conducted in the U.S. have shown inconsistent results as it applies to non-housing outcomes (Aubry *et al*., 2014; Rog *et al*., 2014). The ACHS study did find HF recipients to experience improvements in community functioning and global quality of life that exceeded those of people receiving standard care over a two-year period (Goering, 2014). However, the effects in these areas were relatively small in nature. Interestingly, qualitative research on a subsample of participants in the ACHS study uncovered broader and even transformative changes in the lives of HF recipients that did not appear to be captured by the quantitative methods that were used (Goering *et al*., 2014).

Poverty and Unemployment

Findings with respect to the low employment rates and financial difficulties of HF recipients in the HFE project are not surprising and consistent with findings in American and Canadian studies (Goering *et al*., 2014; Rog *et al*., 2014). HF programs have typically focused on assisting individuals with housing and community functioning and vocational outcomes are not targeted unless it is part of an individual's recovery plan. As a consequence, it would seem unrealistic to expect significant improvements in the areas of employment and finances. In fact, HF participants who are housed and unemployed continue to live in significant poverty even after the financial assistance received for rent. Their poverty places significant limitations on their ability to engage in meaningful leisure and social activities.

The poor employment outcomes, that are consistent with previous research on HF (Aubry *et al*., 2014; Goering *et al*., 2014; Rog *et al*., 2014) suggest that in evolving HF programs, there is a need to find ways of integrating supported employment (i.e., Individual Permanent and Support; [IPS]) in the delivery of services. The Montreal site in the AHCS demonstration project examined the effectiveness of adding this type of service to their HF program delivered to people with moderate needs (Latimer *et al*., 2014). Individuals receiving IPS did have greater success at becoming employed compared to the comparison group (i.e., 34 percent vs. 22 percent). However, this difference was not significant.

The reported positive results in the HFE report concerning relationships with housing providers and resolution of neighbourhood conflict are important evidence of the ability for individuals exiting homelessness to become integrated in scattered-site regular housing. The fact that eviction occurred in only a small number of cases even when HF recipients encountered difficulties with neighbours or housing providers demonstrates the important mediating role played by HF service providers in these contexts (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). Working with 260 landlords and property managers in the five sites, the AHCS project reported similar results with only a small number opting to discontinue renting to HF participants (Goering *et al.*, 2014).

Costs of Housing First

The costing analysis conducted as part of the HFE evaluation was limited by the resources for the project and the information available from each of the sites and focused simply on costing of the programs. Moreover, complete costing of the HF programs was only conducted on three of the five sites (Amsterdam, Budapest, Lisbon; [Busch-Geertsema, 2013). It is noted in the HFE report that the costs of HF services compare favourably to those of existing services. Research on cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit of HF is at a very early stage with only a very small number of studies actually conducting comprehensive or societal costing analyses (Aubry *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, the purported savings associated with reduction of acute care services and implication in the justice systems, may have been oversold. The AHCS project found that across all participants $10 invested in HF produced cost offsets (i.e., costs associated with reduction of use of health, social, and justice services) of $7.61 (i.e., $9.60 for high need participants receiving HF with Assertive Community Treatment and $3.42 for moderate need participants receiving Intensive Case Management).

Conclusion

In summary, I congratulate Dr. Busch-Geertsema and the researchers conducting the individual site evaluation research for the very useful cross site analysis presented in the HFE final report. The work provides detailed case studies of HF programs including their outcomes at an early stage of program development in very different contexts. It shows the value of conducting multi-site research even when there are differences in the populations, interventions, and methods used in the different sites. I agree with the directions set out in the report for future research on HF that involve cost-effectiveness research, research on the use of the HF approach with subgroups in the population like youth, and more in-depth and comparative evaluation studies of the different types of community support that can be provided in the HF approach including Assertive Community Treatment, Intensive Case Management, and Critical Time Intervention. Other areas worthy of investigation at this stage include an investigation of the relationship between fidelity and program outcomes, examination of the characteristics of nonresponders to HF, evaluation of longer-term outcomes of HF, and research on how the HF approach can be supplemented to more effectively address addictions, unemployment and social isolation. The current multi-site randomized controlled trial in France can be expected to provide further advancements on the use of HF in a European context.

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Scaling Up Housing First in Europe

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Introduction

Housing First (HF) represents a new approach in helping homeless people, which was developed in the USA and has in recent years been increasingly adopted in European countries. The adoption of this approach has been questioned on the basis of its transferability to different cultural, economic and welfare contexts and the need for fidelity to the originally developed concept. However, it has already been argued that HF represents a range of services that all follow the same operational principles (e.g., Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). It has also been argued that the typology of HF is constructed for adaptability, and consequently transferability into different contexts.

The 2014 article by Busch-Geertsema, 'Results of a European Social Experimentation Project', further strengthens these arguments. It clearly presents the argument that it is not only possible to transfer the HF model to a variety of different cultural, economic and welfare contexts within the EU, but that such transfers are also highly successful. The author of the article states that "data confirmed a number of studies in the US and elsewhere that the Housing First approach facilitates high rates of housing retention, and that it is possible to house homeless persons even with the most complex support needs in independent, scattered housing" (2014, p.20). It also indicates that for the success of HF, high fidelity to the model is not needed but, rather, following the core principles seems to be sufficient to ensure a high rate of success with the model. As Pleace and Bretherton (2013, p.34) suggest, lower- and higher-cost variants of HF can be developed to reflect available resources, allowing for a wide-ranging use of the approach in the EU. High fidelity to the original approach might, perhaps, not even be desirable in the EU context, as adaption to specific circumstances is most likely vital for the success of projects in different locations and contexts. As Busch-Geertsema emphasized in his article, the ability to ensure housing for homeless people depends on the specific housing contexts of individual countries (e.g., whether the social rental sector or the private

rental sector is used), and the level of housing support needed depends on how health and other services are organised within individual welfare systems.

According to the results of the HFE project described in Busch-Geertsema's article, there is strong evidence of the transferability and success of the model in Europe. However, in this response I would like to elaborate on an issue that the author of the article raised in the concluding section, and that is the question of scaling up the HF model. As the author emphasizes: "It remains to be seen to what extent these plans [of implementing the approach on a wider scale] go beyond single projects for a very strictly defined target group" (2014, p.24).

Scaling up HF

Scaling up can be approached in two ways. The first is scaling up by widening the HF target group. The second is scaling up in terms of a wider policy adoption of the model, moving from a mere 'experimental' or specific local project to a wider national policy level. Regarding the applicability of the HF approach to a variety of vulnerable groups, current use of HF in Europe and elsewhere already seems to indicate a positive answer on the possibilities of scaling up the model. The HF cases included in the HFE project indicate its applicability to a variety of groups with different needs of a more or less complex nature, such as alcohol abuse, drug abuse, mental health issues or combinations of these. As Busch-Geertsema (2013, p.325) described it: "There is no reason… why other homeless people with less severe support needs should have to endure 'preparatory periods' of several years before they are re-housed, if the necessary support can just as easily and much more effectively be provided in regular permanent housing."

Scaling up can also mean widening this approach from a local and in some cases experimental project to a wider national policy. At the moment, HF initiatives are mainly part of very small-scale local or experimental projects. Busch-Geertsema mentions in his article that in some countries there are plans to implement the approach on a wider scale, and the Copenhagen test site (part of the HFE project) was part of a nation-wide strategy. However, the number of countries where there is even the potential of HF application on a larger scale and within a national policy still seems to be rather limited.

Similar difficulties seem to apply both to scaling up in terms of widening the group and to scaling-up in terms of inclusion in regular (welfare) policy approaches; both are linked to questions of how successful the approach is and its financial sustainability. In times of financial and economic crises and retrenchment of the welfare state, the expansion of welfare programmes is not favoured by governments. Perhaps even more importantly, it is questionable if it would even be favoured by

the people, as it would invoke issues of welfare state dependency and the issue of 'deserving/undeserving' that relates to all welfare spending. In light of this, perhaps the best way to promote such initiatives is by stressing how they relate to wider issues, such as the role of housing in welfare provision, housing rights and the role of users in service provision.

First, HF opens up debates on the role of housing in welfare states. HF initiatives can potentially illustrate how housing is a vital part of securing welfare and that housing should be the cornerstone of the welfare state and not the wobbly pillar (see Torgersen, 1987; Malpass, 2008). This might be especially relevant in the CEE countries, where privatisation of large shares of the housing stock, the dominance of home-ownership, and poor regulation of private rental markets and small social rental markets not only make access to housing highly problematic for the most vulnerable groups in society (such as homeless people with high support needs as are targeted by HF), but they also relate to a wider segment of the population that is suffering from housing exclusion.

Secondly, HF puts forward more strongly the idea of housing as a basic human right and as part of citizenship rights (as defined by Marshall). The right to housing is embedded in several international documents, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966 International covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the European Social Charter, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the 1996 Habitat Agenda; these documents emphasise the importance of security of tenure, as well as the affordability, habitability, accessibility, location and cultural adequacy of housing. HF ensures the most direct protection of these rights when compared to more indirect protection through prevention, enabling policies and approaches, legal frameworks, and so on.

Thirdly, HF, in its main principles, emphasises giving voice and choice to (welfare) service users, and therefore supports the approaches in literature that emphasize empowerment of service users and their inclusion in decision-making as central concepts. Service users have, to a large degree, become co-producers of services, though to what extent also depends on the welfare state regime (Pestoff, 2009), and the most vulnerable have been, perhaps to a lesser degree, part of this development. Consequently, HF emphasises that these approaches need to be implemented for all.

Conclusion

HF is a model that addresses the social problem of homelessness in an alternative way. It therefore requires policy change, which is, of course, difficult even in the best of circumstances due to issues of path dependency, existing institutional frameworks and existing ideology. In times of economic crisis, the question of cost might be an additional strong argument against policy change. However showing cost effectiveness of HF approaches could address these arguments. As HF models can differ significantly, comparing models and their success, as well as cost effectiveness in different contexts, poses a challenge. Further research would be needed, taking into account all relevant contextual factors along with differences among the models. Despite the difficulty such an endeavour poses, this might be important way of broadening support for such initiatives.

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Re-inventing Soft Governance Mechanisms in the Field of Social Inclusion: Learning from the Europeanisation of Homelessness Policy?

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Introduction

In a thorough analysis of the impact of the Social OMC (Open Method of Coordination) on homelessness policies in the European Union, Liz Gosme's paper 'The Europeanisation of Homelessness Policy: Myth or Reality?' provides a timely opportunity – the EU is now almost halfway into the Europe 2020 Strategy – to reflect critically on the path and future of the social dimension of the EU2020. This article reviews the role of the Social OMC as a key driver of change in homelessness policies and approaches across the EU, highlighting the limitations of that process but also the emergence of innovative dynamics in homelessness policy-making at different levels during the last decade.

The author moves away from more restricted definitions of Europeanisation that identify it as change or adaptation at member state level to meet the requirements and/or consequences of European integration (O'Connor, 2009) or as 'reverbera- tions' of EU policies in national arenas (Radaelli, 2003). Rather, the conceptual approach adopted in Gosme's article understands Europeanisation as "a three-tier process including top-down influencing of (sub-) national processes, bottom-up dynamics influencing EU policy, and horizontal cross-national developments" (Gosme, 2013, p.45). The evidence provided throughout the article on evolving dynamics in the homelessness policy arena at different levels of governance confirms the pertinence of that broader conceptual approach.

The author argues that the progress achieved by the increased interweaving of EU and national policy-making in the field of homelessness over the last decade is faced with a major challenge: the re-invention of governance mechanisms aimed at strengthening the vital role to be played by the Social OMC in ensuring effective delivery of policies and in strengthening the social dimension of Europe 2020.

Finally, the reader may find – as this reader did – that Gosme's engagement in FEANTSA's activities – on the crossroads between EU policy-making, and national and sub-national processes involving policy-makers, practitioners and researchers – gives her a privileged perspective on many of the dynamics described throughout the article, which contributes towards her thoughtful analysis of EU influence on homelessness policy development.

From Lisbon to Lisbon: Delivering on the EU Social Dimension?

In March 2000, the European Council held a special meeting in Lisbon to agree a new strategic goal for the Union in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy. The implementation of a new, open method of coordination, designed to help Member States to develop their own policies progressively, was among the Presidency's conclusions in that special meeting: "Policies for combating social exclusion should be based on an open method of coordination combining national action plans and a Commission initiative for cooperation in this field to be presented by June 2000." (European Council, 2000)

Since then, the Social OMC has undergone deep changes and encountered multiple challenges. Overall, it has been widely recognized that the Lisbon Strategy's virtuous triangle, conceptualizing social cohesion, employment and economic growth as mutually interdependent sides of a knowledge-based economy, has been gradually 'losing balance'.

The continued relative weakness of the social dimensions of EU policy has cross-cut the different stages of development of the Lisbon Strategy from the Lisbon Summit in 2000 to the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 and the subsequent launching of the Europe 2020 Strategy in 2010. In a recent paper, Frazer *et al.* (2014, p.5) review some of the main factors that explain why "the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy has been disappointing" and identify "key policies and programmes that will need to be pursued by the EU and Member States" in order to restore balance to economic and social objectives and to achieve the Europe 2020 target of reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 20 million by 2020.

FEANTSA and other European NGOs have also highlighted the rise in the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion between 2008[1] and 2013. According to available statistical data,[2] the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU27 increased from 116 million in 2008 to 121 million in 2013. In March 2014, the European Commission's Communication 'Taking Stock of the Europe 2020 Strategy' recognises that the EU has "drifted further away from its target – equivalent to a number of 96.4 million people by 2020 – and there is no sign of rapid progress to remedy this situation – the number of people at risk of poverty might remain close to 100 million by 2020. The situation is particularly aggravated in certain Member States and has been driven by increases in severe material deprivation and in the share of jobless households. The crisis has demonstrated the need for effective social protection systems" (European Commission, 2014, p.14).

Gosme's article argues that Europe, namely through the Social OMC, has played an important role as a driver of homelessness policy changes in the last decade. Given the particularly challenging context in which such changes have occurred – as illustrated briefly in the previous paragraphs – we will draw on the analysis provided by the author and critically reflect on some of the conditions that contributed to such positive evolution in the field of homelessness.

Learning from Progress in the Homelessness Arena

The setting of EU common objectives – and the explicit reference to housing and homelessness therein – is seen by the author as an opportunity for action, and has been seen by some interest groups as a sign of potential support from Europe. However, the extent to which such an opportunity has actually been taken on board by different stakeholders at national and subnational levels has certainly varied across countries.

The example of Portugal may help to illustrate this. Following the adoption of the EU common objectives, there was increased public and political attention on the development of more comprehensive and integrated policies in the social arena – namely as regards the fight against poverty and social exclusion. However, and in spite of the adoption in 2009 of the First National Homelessness Strategy, homelessness has never truly reached the status of a recognised public or political issue. The role of social partners, for instance, is of crucial importance in this respect. Baptista (2009) argues that Portuguese civil society has been characterised by a high level of fragmentation and a low level of organisation. In the homelessness

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[1] The reference year for the EU target, given the lag of EU-SILC data

[2] See http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/income_social_inclusion_living_conditions/data/database

arena, the participation of NGOs and other relevant service providers in decision-making processes is extremely limited. Their ability to organise themselves in a coherent way in order to profit from external 'legitimising' opportunities for action in this specific field is even more limited (Baptista, 2013).

Gosme rightly argues that the signs from Europe – the setting up of common EU social objectives and of the Social OMC mechanisms – have been vehicles for agenda-setting in the homelessness arena. However, it would be interesting to identify among the different countries 'touched' by that early EU impetus, the existence of 'lower level' key drivers (e.g., at national and sub-national levels) that have the potential to transform agenda-setting processes into processes that lead to actual policy change (Dery, 2000). Drawing specifically on the Portuguese situation, we would argue that the configuration of the homelessness sector and its capacity to dialogue with and influence national level policy-making processes would be one of those lower level key factors.

The presence and appropriateness of such lower level key drivers may be of particular relevance to keeping up momentum when, at EU level, some of the initial impetus given by the Lisbon Strategy to the social inclusion process is waning. The development of bottom-up dynamics at the national level, fostered by an increasing stakeholder dialogue in the Social OMC, was particularly relevant at that stage (Gosme, 2013). Once again, there may have been some geographical imbalance as regards the likelihood of participation in that dialogue. Whether the latter issues have shaped the integration of (some) national priorities in the EU agenda would, in our opinion, be an interesting question to add to the discussion raised in Gosme's article.

Nonetheless, the argument put forward by Gosme that the new EU2020 'architecture' is reducing the potential for countries to influence the EU social policy agenda is particularly relevant. In fact, the new national reporting mechanism, focused on the production of National Reform Programmes (NRPs) and on 'occasional' National Social Reports (NSRs), has clearly restricted the scope for pushing forward social policy priorities, including in the homelessness field. In those countries where such priorities were already well established at the national level, EU level constraints may have had limited impact on the strategic development of homelessness policies. In others, however, where such national level processes are more recent and are embedded in challenging contexts (Baptista and Perista, 2013), those EU level changes have contributed to relevant setbacks in the implementation of strategic approaches to homelessness.

Moreover, the new EU2020 reporting on social inclusion includes "national priority setting through annual country-specific recommendations" (Gosme, 2013, p.50), which has focused particularly on macroeconomic stability, thus restricting the scope for enhancing social policy priorities. This new model for enhancing national priority

setting has become particularly restrictive as regards social inclusion priorities in the so-called 'programme' or 'Troika' countries. In fact, taking the example of Portugal again, the country-specific recommendations issued over the last three years have been limited to the compliance and implementation of measures established in the Memorandum of Understanding, the focus of which was primarily on the stabilisation of the budget deficit. The severe social consequences of the economic crisis and of consolidation packages were not considered relevant within the new 'guidelines', paving the way for national governments to address them with piecemeal solutions, rather than pursuing or consolidating strategic approaches to socially relevant challenges (Baptista, 2011; Baptista, 2012; Baptista and Perista, 2013).

As regards bottom-up dynamics influencing EU policy, one particularly powerful example described in Gosme's article is the increased use of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS). ETHOS has made a very important contribution to both European and international discussion on the definition of homelessness and housing exclusion (Amore *et al.*, 2011; Edgar, 2012; Roman, 2012) Evidence on the extensive use of ETHOS as a reference benchmark for the definition of homelessness in Europe is abundant (Homeless Agency, 2009; MPHASIS, 2009; Busch-Geertsema, 2010; European Consensus Conference, 2010; Pleace *et al.*, 2011; Pleace and Bretherton, 2013).

The author points out that one of the strengths of this example of Europeanisation of homelessness policy lies in the fact that the development of ETHOS arose from "a real need from the ground". We would argue that, in addition to this, another asset was the fact that the development of the ETHOS conceptual and operational model was based on – and further developed through – research: a sound starting point for effective policy development. The rapid and consistent dissemination of ETHOS, and the fruitful debate around its conceptualisation and operationalization, has made a major contribution to policy improvements in the measurement of homelessness, both at the national level and in comparative EU terms. The ETHOS example could therefore create a stronger impetus for the development of sound and reliable research in other areas of social policy development, including in the field of homelessness and other EU social dimensions.

Similarly, the development of Housing First and Housing Led initiatives are also paving the way for important changes in policy development and in the provision of services in different EU countries. Here, too, the operation and dissemination of Housing First and Housing Led initiatives have been progressing alongside research based on evaluation and monitoring (Busch-Geertsema, 2013; Benjaminsen, 2013) and on a constructive dialogue between both sides of the Atlantic and within Europe (Pleace, 2011; Busch-Geertsema, 2012; Löfstrand, 2012; Tsemberis, 2012).

In her article, Gosme describes several EU funded research projects, which highlight the potential of such transnational partnerships and research dialogue in reinforcing cross-national dynamics. Although there is clear evidence of the impact of such cooperation mechanisms in local policy and in service delivery, I believe that such impact largely depends on the 'hosting' conditions of the countries or of other local contexts – namely the pivotal role of research in sustained policy developments.

Conclusions

The scope of the challenges facing the EU's commitment to building an inclusive and cohesive society and to strengthening the social investment approach could hardly be covered by an analysis of any single key area of EU social policy. However, the issues that Gosme raises concerning the Europeanisation of homelessness policy are an important contribution to the debate on how to effectively deliver on the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy (Frazer *et al.*, 2014), and lessons learnt in the field of homelessness may prove important in other areas of social inclusion. The emergence of innovative dynamics in policy-making, which involve a wide range of public and private stakeholders and a growing convergence towards adopting strategic approaches to social problems, is vital for both the homelessness arena and other social dimensions.

Gosme's paper provides useful evidence on how specific soft governance mechanisms have been embraced by, and enhanced at different levels of homelessness policy and practice within a challenging European context. Her critical analysis opens the door to a conversation about hidden factors that can either facilitate or hinder sustainable and consistent progress in the implementation of strategic approaches to complex problems within a diverse EU territory. Geographical imbalances arising from institutional configurations and from different levels of investment in evidence-based policy-making still persist within this Europeanisation of homelessness policy. The discussion on the key role of the EU in fostering (sub)national developments in social policy approaches and in embracing national priorities within the social inclusion process may also contribute to reframing a strengthened social OMC, which could "benefit from the emergence of Europeanised policy clusters" (Gosme, 2013, p.56). Such an approach could prove useful in addressing the above-mentioned imbalances within a strong framework of cooperation between local, national and EU governance, underpinned by proper policy evaluation.

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Book Reviews

Part F

Laura Stivers (2011)

Disrupting Homelessness: Alternative Christian Approaches

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, pp.187, £11.99.

David Nixon (2013)

Stories from the Street: A Theology of Homelessness

Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, pp.202, £19.99.

Laura Stivers is Professor of Ethics and Director of the Graduate Humanities Programme at the Dominican University of California. David Nixon is an ordained Anglican priest and Dean of Studies of the South West [of England] Ministerial Training Course and sometime Research Fellow and Teaching Assistant in the School of Education at Exeter University. In these publications, Stivers and Nixon both exhibit a profound anxiety about the way religion engages with homelessness and draw upon liberation theology as the inspiration for a critique of established ecclesiastical dealings with homelessness in their respective countries.

Liberation theology emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America. It sought a reinterpretation of the gospels to re-orientate Christians (particularly the Catholic Church, though other denominations were involved) away from support for established hierarchies to champion the poor – a concern with social justice overshadowing the prevailing doctrine that salvation is the primary purpose of religion. This challenge to traditional beliefs, together with the conjoining of liberation theology with elements of Marxism, incurred the bitter opposition of the papacy (as well as the CIA, see Fox (2012)). Pope John Paul II with Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), then 'Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith', declared

liberation theology a 'singular heresy' and, in a sustained campaign, muzzled and disciplined its most prominent clerical proponents thereby effectively sabotaging and thwarting its impact and influence.

Liberation theology endures today, as a more ecumenical movement, in a muted and truncated form in some Latin American countries and has been adopted by black, queer and feminist groups in North America and to a lesser extent elsewhere. In the UK and Europe it has long been a topic of academic interest and intermittently a guide to action among some campaigning groups and communities (Streetlytes UK; Smith, 1997; Howson, 2011; Altman, 2009). Notwithstanding several (overly) confident predictions of its demise (e.g. Lynch, 1994), liberation theology has survived and, indeed, is presently undergoing something of a revival; in the words of one observer, it has 'come in from the cold' (McDonagh, 2014; see also Rocca, 2013). The basis for this revival has much to do with *inter alia* the continuing secularisation of western society, the rise of militant Islam and the socially selective austerity effects of the 'great depression', all of which challenge the role and relevance of established Christian churches. The recent election of Pope Francis as head of the Catholic Church is perhaps symptomatic of this change in outlook. Pope Francis – formerly Archbishop of Buenos Aires – has not embraced liberation theology and is unlikely to do so (indeed he has a history of fierce opposition), but he has welcomed and endorsed some of its former clerical proponents[1] and seems sympathetic to liberation theology's social (if not political) aims. It is in this context that the significance of the work of Stivers and Nixon is manifest.

Laura Stivers begins by setting out her 'ethical method'. Referencing the work of Traci West, the black, feminist and Christian ethicist, Stivers encapsulates her approach in the concept of 'prophetic disruption', which calls for the dismantling of social policies and practices that exploit and exclude disadvantaged people and confronts ideologies that justify such exploitation and marginalisation. Stivers poses several explicit questions (p. 20): 'What would it mean to make power analysis central to the issue of homelessness and housing? How are power, privilege, and social domination connected to homelessness and where do we see intersecting oppressions (e.g. race, gender, and class) at work?'

In seeking answers, Stivers first provides a brief history of homelessness in the USA, identifying the economic policies that make it difficult for low-income people to access adequate housing. This is followed by a critique of those ideologies that, in seeking solutions to homelessness, focus on transforming the behaviour and the spiritual mind-set of the poor rather than on structural solutions that challenge

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[1]   In September 2011 Pope Francis met with Dominican Father Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the founders and proponents of Liberation Theology in Latin America.

social domination and inequality in American society. With these propositions in mind, Stivers goes on to provide a critical examination of two common Christian responses to homelessness. The first is the 'charity approach', which typically focuses on the provision of temporary shelter, basic food and (often rudimentary) support services. Spurred by a commitment to the concepts of 'agape' and 'caritas', the charity approach accounts for the bulk of Christian churches' involvement with homelessness. The second response Stivers labels a 'more structural' approach. This augments the charity approach by, for example, assisting homeless people to move on to permanent, affordable accommodation. These two approaches are illustrated (in chapters 4, 5 and 6) through a critical exploration of the *modus operandi* of two representative FBOs (faith based organisations): the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (the charity approach) and Habitat for Humanity International (the 'more structural' approach).

While readily acknowledging that these approaches tackle some of the immediate effects of homelessness and provide a valuable service, Stivers maintains that they fail to address the fundamental systemic causes of homelessness in that they reinforce ideological assumptions such as 'individualism' (e.g. instilling discipline and a work ethic), 'blaming the victim' as well as 'idyllic conceptions of home ownership'. According to Stivers' assessment, 'neither of these responses challenges the status quo of privilege and power, and in fact, by adopting dominant ideologies, they actually support the status quo' (p.106).

Stivers' alternative approach of 'prophetic disruption' challenges 'theological interpretations that support domination and oppression' (p.113) and calls for a widening of horizons beyond the local and beyond the immediate needs of individual homeless people. For Stivers, prophetic disruption 'would critique our capitalist system and would be wary of simply offering alternatives without challenging… the social and economic policies that marginalise and exploit people and would support policies that redistribute wealth and power more evenly' (p.117). Furthermore, prophetic disruption asserts that 'the multiple ways people are exploited and marginalised must be addressed simultaneously… simply providing affordable housing without at the same time organising for workers' rights, for equitable and excellent education systems, or against institutional racism will not automatically support people to have flourishing lives' (p.120).

Stivers' proposals are ambitious. She advocates the building of a 'social movement' to end homelessness (pp.17-19; 127-133): 'there must be a social movement that keeps the momentum of prophetic disruption going, that structurally addresses the root causes… and does not settle for short term efforts' (p.17). For Stivers, such an undertaking would move beyond a focus on housing policy to address all social and economic policies that create poverty and inequality. She further insists that a

social movement based on prophetic disruption is 'less about reaching some ultimate finite goal than about participating in the hopeful process of becoming a more just and compassionate society' (p.19).[2]

In the final two chapters, Stivers develops aspects of the scope of her proposed social movement on homelessness. She starts by reiterating the reasons for establishing such a movement: 'All of our ideals of a just and compassionate society will be just that unless we have the political will and power to institute social change' (p.127). The picture she conjures is of church congregations choosing areas of concern 'while working in coalitions… and in solidarity with the people most affected' (p.120). These areas of concern include: challenging the ideology of home-ownership; pressuring developers and bankers to act responsibly; campaigning for change in local, state and federal tax regimes and budget priorities; and agitating for educational reform and the provision of proper health care support. Stivers recognises that such activities may well be beyond the comfort zone of many Christians. However, using scriptural support from Moses and the Hebrew prophets among others, she suggests that while '[c]oercive methods can feel un-Christian to many church people… justice clearly requires both resistance and advocacy'; she goes on, however, to reassure that such 'resistance and advocacy… can be peaceful and non-violent' (p.131).

Stivers thus conceives of her proposed social movement as a form of group action pulling together individuals and organisations in a common focus on specific political and social issues in order to bring about fundamental social change. Such coalitions and groupings require organisation. Stivers identifies two national role models in this context: PICO (People Improving Communities through Organising) and the IAF (Industrial Areas Foundation). For Stivers '[t]heir distinctive emphasis on organising people from the ground up is a useful approach for responding to the issues that most affect the poor and homeless' (p.141). It is not entirely clear whether Stivers is suggesting that church congregations emulate such organisations by forming an independent homelessness social movement or that they should join with these organisations, which already have a focus on affordable housing provision, to enhance their homelessness credentials and interests. Indeed, her conclusion that 'while there are many approaches, the most important thing is to take action' (p.146) rather lacks focus and is a disappointingly vague end to an important and innovative book.

'Stories from the Street' is David Nixon's PhD thesis, a fact that comes through in its specialised and academic tone. Whereas Stivers' book is very much a primer, adopting a didactic tone with each chapter followed by a series of questions 'for

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2   Stivers employs the word 'prophetic' not so much in the sense of foretelling the future but of 'creating a vision' and 'identifying potentialities'.

discussion', Nixon's is less accessible, at least for non-theologians. Sub-titled 'A Theology of Homelessness', the reader has to work hard to discern the message amid the biblical and scriptural references and engagements; indeed, one reviewer (with Christian beliefs) accused Nixon of excessive 'theological musings'.

The basis of Nixon's book is his own experience of 'urban ministry'; especially his interaction with homeless people and their 'stories', and indeed much of the text is given over to the narratives of homeless people themselves. Nixon uses these accounts to explore what he calls a 'theology of story', whereby homeless experiences are set alongside biblical and scriptural texts in what is described as a 'dialogue of mutual illumination and critique' (p.ix). For the less theologically inclined, and indeed I suspect for many with or without religious beliefs, this is all rather impenetrable – in this respect at least Nixon's book is definitively for the theological cognoscenti. A further theme running through the book relates to the methodology of research, with introspective reflections on ethics and procedures, especially that of 'participatory methods' and the relationship between 'the writer and those written about' (p.146). This is a work of postmodern scholarship where the analysis of text and language seems to be as important as the analysis of practice. Such topics may well be important for a PhD thesis but are perhaps less relevant to a general audience concerned with homelessness and the role of religion in that process.

Nevertheless, having dealt with the theological detail, Nixon comes to an interesting conclusion – one that mirrors and reinforces that of Stivers. Michael Langrish (until recently Bishop of Exeter), in a foreword to the book, summarises this well: 'listening to the voices of homeless men and women is to be pointed towards an exploration and understanding of a larger paradigm which provides a frame of reference for listening to the experiences of a wide range of people… who increasingly *have a sense of their lives being shaped by a space, or spaces, which they have to occupy, but to which they do not belong*' (p.ix, emphasis added). In this way, issues of homelessness are set in the wider social context of a theological critique of capitalism and its impact on individual lives, especially those who are vulnerable and marginalised.

Having dealt with some methodological and ethical issues in the first few chapters, Nixon – mirroring Stivers in the context of the USA – embarks on a brief history of UK homeless legislation up to the 2008 financial crisis and the formation of the present coalition government. Nixon concludes his historical evaluation with the observation that homelessness is a 'by-product of… privatisation, free trade and deregulation' and that '[p]olicies on housing and homelessness are choices and therefore ideologically and politically motivated' (p.57). Nixon then works through these sentiments with an examination of what he labels 'Theologies of Place and

Space' (pp.58-60) and 'Theologies of Inequality' (pp.61-65). In these two sections – the latter of which explicitly picks up on the arguments of liberation theology – the problematic obscuring of the social message with the minutiae of theological 'musings' is well illustrated, for the general reader at least. It is clear, however, from the multiple references to liberation theology throughout the book, and especially in the early introduction of the topic (pp.9-13), that this perspective provides the overarching 'ethos' for Nixon's work. But even in this introduction – and certainly later on when he moves to a specific consideration of liberation theology and homelessness (chapter 11) – the obsession with scripture tends to overshadow the social and political message.

Nixon's overriding concern is to demonstrate the relevance of 'story' – the narratives of homeless people's experience. For him – if I am interpreting correctly – such narratives more often than not parallel biblical accounts and they thereby effectively reflect the 'word of God'. The lack of attention to these 'stories' is, in Nixon's view, a 'significant flaw' (p.58) in the agenda around homelessness, especially in the attempts to formulate policy. This 'flaw', it seems, also extends to the Church of England's dealings with homelessness (see pp.154-63). However, it has proved rather difficult – despite several readings – to clearly determine Nixon's views of the church's role in this respect, for he swings hot and cold and at one point changes his mind, admitting to 'some revision of the argument advanced earlier' (p.154). The obfuscating theological shadow that hangs over Nixon's book, together with these frailties of argument construction and presentation (which include some problematic use of commas), detract from what at first glance promises to be an important and enlightening analysis of the connections between homelessness and religion.

Reflecting their shared ethos, Nixon references Stivers appreciatively on several occasions. Both call on and share a predilection for liberation theology and equally embrace its prophetic and disruptive proclivities, yet their emphasis is rather different. Nixon's focus is principally on demonstrating and illuminating the prophetic voices of homeless and excluded people in guiding understanding and policy objectives; indeed, he finishes his book with the exhortation: '[l]istening informs our theology and social policy' (p.184). Stivers is more engaged with liberation theology's organisational message and is persuaded by the potential of social movements to bring about fundamental social change. However, Stivers does recognise the importance of 'story' and its prophetic quality (p.9-11) and, while Nixon has no indexed reference to 'social movements', in writing about Stivers' work he approvingly uses the term and in his brief Epilogue (pp.183-84) references the 2011 'Occupy' movement in London.

Both authors are firmly placed within a reviving radical tradition of Christianity (Duchrow, 2011) and both books are, in their own way, a 'call to action' (though Stivers provides the better signposts). Yet, there are some interesting and curious absences. There is, for instance, no hint of a reference to Marx – curious because of the strong association between Marxist thought and liberation theology in its Latin American origins; this reflects, of course, the rather more timid modern-day form of liberation theology espoused by both Stivers and Nixon. And, curiously for books that propose major changes in outlook and activity, there is no direct reference to the church's conservative opposition to liberation theology or how this is to be overcome, or indeed how to bring on board those who regard 'charity' (reputedly the highest of the three theological virtues) as sufficient (cf. Bowpitt *et al.*, 2013 and Lancione, 2014). Similarly, in advocating the creation of a social movement, the problems of interfaith and interdenominational differences and conflicts receive no consideration. Additionally and perhaps most disappointingly, there is no significant reference to the wider literature and history of social movements. While there are indeed passing comments in Stivers to historic examples, the vitality and experience of present day secular social movements (both PICO and IAF are faith-based), which have similar objectives to those proposed by Stivers, are ignored. For all their challenge to ingrained church attitudes and behaviours, Stivers and Nixon are themselves still seemingly trapped in a faith bubble that inhibits the breadth of their thinking and proposals. Beyond the church gates there is world of social movements which could provide positive role models and fruitful alliances (see Cox and Gunvald Nilsen, 2014).

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Samara Jones (Ed.) and Guillem Fernàndez Evangelista (Coordinator) (2013)

Mean Streets: A Report on the Criminalisation of Homelessness in Europe

Brussels: L'Imprimerie Chauveheid, pp.246, €25.
ISBN: 978-2-8052-0218-6.

In 2011, Jürgen von Mahs and I edited a special issue of *Urban Geography* that examined whether, with the globalization of American-style capitalism, there was likewise a globalization of American-style policies towards homelessness and the homeless. As street homelessness became more prevalent in "advanced" economies, were punitive "anti-homeless" measures being implemented? Studies from South Korea, Germany, France, and Sweden all came to a similar answer: "sort of." In each country, new measures for managing and controlling homeless populations, or for making them more invisible, were identified, but at the same time efforts at homeless management were situated within specific histories, specific "path-dependencies," that sometimes softened the punitiveness of various policies.

The authors of *Mean Streets* are less equivocal. About half of *Mean Streets* is given to documenting various new laws and practices that make *being* homeless and thus engaging in activities necessary for daily life either criminal offensives or otherwise punishable. Across Europe, the homeless are the new outcasts and in country after country they are being treated as such. The criminalization of homelessness is perhaps most advanced in Hungary, with the government amending the constitution to make it possible for the legislature to criminalize many aspects of homelessness without review by the Constitutional Courts. (Balint Misetics's two chapters on Hungary – one outlining the history of criminalization, the other examining the impressive struggles to reverse this history by The City for All, an organization of homeless people – are impressive: they are models of analysis and advocacy.) But moves towards criminalization can be found right across the continent even as much more commonly European governments (often at the local level) tend to penalize being homeless rather than out-and-out criminalize it. Or, as the authors put it in an Executive Summary, "Homelessness is not being explicitly criminalized in Europe. The process is subtle and often almost invisible" with homeless people in essence being cast as a new "enemy" and policies being implemented that

presumes homeless people comprise a dangerous class (p. 20). Preemptive penalization is not uncommon (especially as immigrants, Roma and Travellers make up, or are presumed to make up, a growing portion of the homeless population).

The other half of the books is devoted to advocating for a "human rights" approach to homelessness and to contesting the criminalization and penalization of homeless people. The book opens with two forewords (one by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the other by the UN Special Rapporteurs on housing and extreme poverty) and with the Executive Summary. Part I then lays out a "Theoretical Framework" in two chapters: one on developing and deploying a human rights approach to homelessness; the other tracing historically the rise of European punitive policies and the theories behind them (some, like "broken windows" policing and "zero tolerance" philosophies imported directly from the US). These laws are interpreted in part as an instance of "Symbolic Criminal Law" in which the goal is mostly to give "a soothing impression of being an alert, decisive legislature" (p. 61, quoting Silva, 2001) and in part as revisions in "the law of the enemy." Part II explores penalization empirically, with chapters on Belgium, Poland and Hungary plus examinations of penalization in relation to housing and prison policies. Part III is explores "Good Practices" which are divided into "Political Measures" and "Legal Initiatives." There are two of the former: (1) A survey of a range of homeless prevention and housing rights strategies across Europe and (2) an examination of Barcelona's efforts to remove homeless people from its airport. Five of the latter are examined: (1) The development of a legal services bureau for homeless people in Sydney, Australia; (2) The role of University based actors in supporting the rights of homeless people in Barcelona; (3) the value of Ombudsmen and NGOs in defending homeless peoples' rights in a number of states; (4) an inspiring insider's account of the work for The City is For All in Budapest; and (5) a comparative study of homeless-service NGOs in Spain, France, and Britain. The Report ends with a brief and confusing Epilogue.

The book is valuable. The historical-legal chapter in Part I (by Guillem Fernàndez Evangelista) offers a quite convincing narrative about how homeless policy in Europe has shifted to a punitive mode – and offers and good explanation as to why. The other chapter in this part, on developing and applying a human rights approach (by Padraic Kenna and Fernàndez Evangelista), lays out a clear and excellent case for fighting for housing and various services to the poor as rights at a time where there is a fair degree of skepticism towards rights and "rights talk" among many activists and advocates. The table comparing a human rights approach with charity- and needs-based approaches (p. 37) is especially helpful. The reports from the countries on different penalization processes provide an at times harrowing account of how some European countries and locales are now exceeding the punitiveness that has marked American homeless policies. And, as already noted,

Misetics's report on the work of The City is For All in Budapest is inspiring. Homeless people and activists in that city have created a fighting organization that ought to be emulated (some of its techniques were developed, as Misetic notes, in collaboration with the New York City, Right to the City affiliated organization, Picture the Homeless, but those of us on the American side of the Atlantic would do well to reimport strategies as they have been elaborated by The City is for All).

But the book is not as valuable as it could be. First, the title is misleading. The book is not only, and perhaps not even primarily, "A Report on the Criminalisation of Homelessness in Europe." It is more about penalization than criminalization, and it is as much about elaborating human rights and analyzing various legal "best practices" as it is about either. This matters because the arguments about rights are important and a key part of the book, yet nowhere signaled on the cover. Second, the book is inconsistent in argument. The overall tenor of the book is that criminalization/penalization is a violation of human rights and that homeless people, whether locally born and raised or immigrants, Roma, Travellers, or migrants from the countryside, have as much right to the spaces of the city as anyone. Absent housing or policies that make housing available, they have the right to occupy spaces to carry out their everyday needs, like sleeping, bodily care, easting, socializing, etc. Of particular concern are concerted efforts to "remove" homeless people from public spaces, including places like transportation hubs. Yet one of the two "political" "best practices" – "A Model of Inter-Administration Coordination" (p. 171), no less – concerns the "good results obtained" (p. 177) in an effort to kick homeless people out of the public areas of the Barcelona airport. The idea that homeless people have rights has no place in this chapter. At best officials worked from a "needs-based" approach which was shown to be inadequate in Part I. If this is a model, it is a model of precisely what the book seems to be arguing against: homeless policies developed not with the rights of homeless people in mind, but with the desires of city managers for clean and efficient spaces that do not unsettle the housed, tourists, or the public.

Third, the book is poorly edited. Numerous citations are missing, references are made to concepts that are never explained and will probably only be sensible to workers in the trenches of European homeless policy (e.g. "the ETHOS typology of homelessness" [p. 47]), and translations seem not to have been checked. On this last point Iñaki Rivera Beiras's potentially forceful epilogue (which seeks to "invite criminology to focus its attention not necessarily on actions 'officially' defined as crimes, but on actions that cause real harm to society, like violating human rights" (p. 237) is undermined by a consistent mistranslation of "Ilustración" as "Illustration" or "Illustrated" instead of "Enlightenment." It's hard for a reader to grasp the meaning of sentences like "Humankind not only no longer progresses on the road to freedom, toward the plenitude of the illustration, it retreats and sinks into a new barbaric game" (p. 239)

or "Kant was possibly one of the most lucid philosophers of the Illustration…" (p. 241), and once they do, just a bit of pique tends to set in, distracting from what is, or could be, and important summary argument about how "it is the rule of law itself that has left so many people without the protection of laws" (p. 241).

In the United States, that rule of law has long been quite barbaric as the now more-than-twenty years of reports from the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty have so depressingly detailed. To the degree that an American-style puni-tiveness has come to define the landscape of homelessness in Europe – and this report shows it is way too high a degree – the need for action is urgent. As *Mean Streets* makes clear, this action must be rights-based. Charity (which relies on the good will and largess of the wealthy and tends to reinforce rather than ameliorate inequity) and needs-based approaches (which situate individuals as objects and understand homelessness to be an individual pathology rather than a societal condition) are both radically inadequate. As rights-based approaches are developed and entrenched in Europe, and as organizations like The City is For All, develop and gain the strength to roll-back the punitive tide washing across Europe while enforcing the human rights of the poor such that *poverty* can no longer be a defining feature of their lives, the question of whether homelessness is Europe is somehow being "Americanized" will be moot. The new question will be one of how homeless-ness in America can be – and should be – Europeanized.

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Flóra Pőcze (2013)

A Moszkva tér gyermeke [The Children of Moscow Square].

Budapest: Jószöveg Műhely, pp.143, 2 290 HUF (€7.50).

The publication of Flóra Pőcze's book on a small community of homeless people living at Moscow Square (one of the main transportation hubs of Budapest) received considerable attention in the Hungarian media, which is remarkable for a study on homelessness. Unfortunately, however, the public attention was less concerned with the important findings relating to poverty and homelessness in Hungary, and instead re-ignited long-standing prejudices, fear and aversion towards homeless people framed by people's astonishment that a young female social scientist would dare to live among homeless people.

The author lived together with a group of homeless rough sleepers for two months, and the book is an account of her experiences. Through her descriptions, the reader becomes acquainted with the members of this small group, how they became homeless, how they earn money and how they spend it. Hungarian publications on homelessness prior to this mostly focused on the history and prevalence of homelessness, epidemiology, the composition and characteristics of homeless people, public policies on homelessness (especially shelters), recent measures of criminalisation and exclusion (including a participatory action research project on the police harassment of homeless people), and social work with homeless people. Until this publication, there had been no study on the everyday lives of homeless people through systematic engagement via participant observation.

The author introduces herself and identifies herself as a social scientist in the book, and she justifies her participant observation approach within a tradition of cultural anthropology. However, there is not much social science or cultural anthropology in the book. Furthermore, the author does not engage with any previous studies on homelessness. Indeed her approach to homelessness sometimes appears rather naïve – for example, when she writes about how surprised she was when she first heard of the presence of tuberculosis among the homeless population she was studying.

The author is also somewhat unclear about the exact meaning and requirements of participant observation. For example, she explains the method as involving 'living together, and becoming one with a group,' but in the very same sentence also writes that it entails 'trying to behave as an outsider' (p.104).[1] There also seems to be some inconsistency in her practice. For example, when one of the members of the group violently attacks a street vendor, she does not assist the police investigation when asked about the assailant's whereabouts – thus prioritising group loyalty over ethical concerns, without much explanation. She also writes of how on one occasion she 'grumbled' in response to someone in the group who was using heroin, and says that 'everyone knew very well' that she 'hated' heroin usage (p.111), thus making explicit her moral judgment about a common practice within the group setting.

Furthermore, the author appears insensitive to the process of 'othering'. She refers to the group as a closed community that establishes its own system of norms and whose unwritten rules are 'diametrically opposed' (p.79) to the laws of majority society.[2] In places she also refers to group members as 'brigands' (p.16). At one point in the text, when explaining to the reader why she did not want to influence what was happening in the group, she asks the reader: "think about it, where would it lead if you gave smartphones to an African tribe so that they could reach each other easily in the jungle?" (p.104).

Consequently, it is perhaps more appropriate to view this book as a brief journalistic account of the author's personal experiences of spending some time among one particular group of homeless people, accompanied by sentimental and sometimes romanticised monologues addressed to each individual member of that group. It is something like pulp non-fiction and for this reason is very readable and likely to succeed in reaching a broader audience. But what will the book really tell us about homelessness?

To put it simply, there are two broad (often distinct but not mutually exclusive) approaches to challenging the dominant view of homelessness in terms of moving beyond inherent prejudices and processes of de-humanisation within popular discourse. The first approach consists of providing a more accurate and balanced view on homelessness, through inciting the sociological imagination of the audience to open up to the possibility of thinking about homelessness not as a matter of individual misdeeds or misfortune, but as a consequence of market mechanisms and state policies, unequal distribution of resources and power, wages and housing costs, etc., and to bring to the fore the perspectives of homeless people themselves. It is important to move beyond the traditional image of homelessness that

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[1]   The translations from Hungarian are my own.

[2]   The two norms of the group that are most emphasised in the book – reciprocity and respect for mothers – do not seem to be diametrically opposed to mainstream norms.

relates to visible street homeless people, older bearded males, those suffering from addictions or mental health problems, those who engage in criminal activity, and so on. Many homeless people are, unlike what is commonly assumed, engaged in paid employment but cannot afford – and without significant changes in social policies will never be able to afford – to rent an apartment.

The other approach consists of trying to convey the human side of those who constitute the more visual portion of the homeless population – those who are most discriminated against by society – to show that they, too, are human beings, capable of love and suffering. The first strategy might be more effective in targeting prejudices and politicising the issue of homelessness, but is perhaps less so in challenging the dehumanisation of homeless people. The second strategy, on the other hand, might be more effective in doing just this, but possibly at the cost of strengthening existing prejudices about homelessness and its causes for some.

The Children of Moscow Square obviously belongs to this second approach. Its protagonists mostly confirm the prevailing stereotypes about homeless people; they do not seek job opportunities or work on potential ways to exit homelessness, they beg, sometimes commit crimes and abuse illegal substances. They are also all described as alcoholics, though the book does a good job in explaining that this should be viewed as a consequence, and not a cause, of their homelessness (pp.58-59). With regard to the causes of homelessness, the author emphasises personal tragedies and unique pathways into homelessness (on one occasion, even its 'voluntary' nature). Perhaps it would have helped if the author were more explicit and reflective about causation, however. The book is supposed to be about homelessness more broadly, but it is really about one particular community of rough-sleeping individuals who also share some subcultural characteristics, and this particular group must not become representative of all homeless people. Sometimes the author refers to her protagonists as members of the 'gang', and seems to understand her subjects to be the inner life of 'urban gangs', which diverts the reader away from homelessness and onto a different topic, even if there are some elements of overlap between the two. This lack of clarity regarding its subject and the misleading impression it makes concerning the generalisibility of its author's personal experiences to homelessness in general are major weaknesses of the book.

On the other hand, it is quite clear that the author developed a close relationship with the members of the group and therefore can, for the most part, write about them with empathy, which should positively affect how her readers understand the hard realities of homelessness. At moments it grasps intimate moments of human lives and the most impersonal structural causes behind their hardship – also demonstrated, for example, in the works of Elliot Liebow (1993), David Wagner (1993; 1997), Vincent Lyon-Callo (2008) and Teresa Gowan (2000; 2010). Indeed,

this is exactly what was famously called the 'sociological imagination' by C. Wright Mills [1959] (2000): translating personal troubles into larger social issues, which can challenge popular assumptions about homelessness and its causes. This is a challenging endeavour but one that is necessary in order to provide a robust account of a grave and urgent social problem.

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Bálint Misetics
The City is for All (Budapest)

I read this book written by Flóra Pőcze – a young and ambitious author – with great curiosity but also with a critical eye. I read it critically because it is about a controversial topic that invites many unsympathetic comments by those who have a two-dimensional understanding of homelessness. This is why I wrote this review. Flóra Pőcze ventured out to the streets to explore the everyday lives of homeless people through living together with them. She was taken in by a group of rough sleepers and, as she describes in her book, was protected by them while they resided at Moscow Square, one of the main public transportation hubs of Budapest.

Reading this book was important to me as I myself have been homeless for 22 years, and because of this experience, I wanted to know how a young person with stable housing would experience and write about the everyday lives of those living on the street. Her book recounts this experience with remarkable openness and – I think it is justified to say – love. On the other hand…

As a homeless person, I never spent one single day in a homeless shelter or day centre, nor did I ever stand in line at a soup kitchen. I am a homeless person, who, in the past 22 years, has made countless attempts across time and space to secure stable housing and lead a decent, productive life. Through this journey, I have met, talked with and even worked with many different types of homeless people.

The first thing I would like to refute is that homeless people live in gangs or, to quote the out-of-date Hungarian term used in the book, in *galeri*-s. This term evokes the (youth) gangs of the 1970s and 1980s, and groups of criminals who seek to intimidate others. This is not the case for homeless people, the vast majority of whom are simply trying to navigate their marginal position in society as best they can. Many try to carry out their daily lives without being noticed, though in many cases homeless people can be singled out from the rest of the society due to their visibly different life circumstances. Homeless people usually operate either alone and apart from others or with smaller supportive groups that resemble families. Homeless people sometimes need to fight to access scarce resources because that is the only way they can make ends meet. Territories are contested – for example, territories such as locations where people look through the rubbish to find anything that can be eaten, used, recycled or sold.

Alcohol addiction and mental health problems are prevalent amongst the homeless population, but contrary to the impression the readers of this book might get, drug abuse is by no means widespread among homeless people. Addiction obscures the central issues of homelessness. In mainstream housed society, we find alcoholics and substance abusers (including among those from affluent social backgrounds), but being housed can shelter substance use in a way that cannot be done with homeless living. While a heroin overdose may result in the deaths of homeless people in public places (as it happened with Tüsi in the book), a similar death that

occurs indoors is more likely to be hidden from public knowledge. Furthermore, the majority of those addicted to alcohol are not homeless but, again, we do not see them because they are drunk (and perhaps abusive) in the private sphere as opposed to being publicly drunk and perhaps disorderly.

The author could only write about that particular group of homeless people. While she recounted *their* everyday lives sensitively, it is important to know that this group may not be representative of the wider homeless population. Like with the housed population, there are a variety of different opinions and experiences among homeless people. Around 40 percent of homeless people sustain themselves through their own income and work. There are also homeless people who pay for their temporary shelter with their disability benefit or old-age pension, and some of them earn through begging as well.

Furthermore, there are many homeless people – usually couples – who build temporary shacks for themselves on the outskirts of cities in an attempt to create some semblance of a home space. Some shacks have basic furnishings, which are accumulated over time. These temporary structures not only provide a partial feeling of home but also act as provisional protection from the outside world, away from public hostility and prejudice. Despite the struggles they have experienced throughout their lives, homeless people try to maintain a sense of dignity. These efforts and this determination usually remain hidden from view for most.

The author describes the causes of homelessness, or more accurately the story of how her participants became homeless. But there are several other causes of homelessness that are denied or overlooked by public discourse. It cannot be stressed enough that in most cases, homelessness is a consequence of social circumstances. We should seek to prevent homelessness instead of blaming homeless people for their situation! The book includes stories about entering into homelessness after leaving foster care institutions without any support. But there are also women and children who have been victims of domestic violence for years and are eventually unable to withstand any more abuse, becoming homeless by way of escape. There are also those who, following divorce or a relationship breakdown, are unable to support themselves financially and become homeless. Sometimes there is no job, no income, and not even a sublease, a temporary lodging or a workers' hostel.

Being homeless is more than being without a home; homeless people are routinely judged and humiliated for their homeless status by wider society. They are generalised and, thus, misunderstood.

Flóra Pőcze describes to the reader that one specific community of homeless people, which she got to know herself and, indeed, I feel that she writes with affection and empathy about this group. But she only got to know a more extreme segment of the homeless population and it is important to know that there are countless homeless people who live differently. Thus, making any generalisations on homeless people or their lives is inadvisable.

Jutka Lakatosné
Activist

Gijsbert Johan Vonk and Albertjan Tollenaar (Eds.) (2014)

Homelessness and the Law: Constitution, Criminal Law and Human Rights

Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishers, €24.95

The impact of the law and the legal system on people experiencing homelessness is an important area of study. Of course, housing law is only one area of law that can change the lives of persons living in such extreme poverty. Social security law, laws regulating the use of public spaces, immigration laws, and court practices and procedures all influence the lived experience of homelessness.

This book is a collection of essays written by students studying homelessness-related issues at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. Many are exchange students from countries both within the European Union and outside it, so the authors are able to offer insights into the laws, policies and practices of many different countries.

Perhaps the most important lesson that may be learned from this book is that the legal difficulties faced by people experiencing homelessness are strikingly similar across many nations. By recognising this, we create opportunities to learn from one another, and to draw upon one another's successes and failings, as we 'reform' our laws.

Raised in this book is the fact that laws related to housing and homelessness present certain paradoxes. First, the law has a role both in assisting people experiencing homelessness and in regulating their behaviour. Thus, it has both protective and repressive effects. Secondly, there may be disconnects between overarching rights and duties established under federal or national laws, and the operationalization of those laws by local authorities. Thirdly, laws and practices that are aimed at assisting people experiencing homelessness tend to focus on providing housing, which fails to appreciate cultural differences between different groups of homeless people.

As someone who resides in Australia, where there is no national Bill or Charter of Rights, and where very few rights are constitutionally enshrined, I find the commonality of our complaints about laws related to homelessness intriguing. Human rights advocates in Australia insist that the plight of vulnerable people could be alleviated

through the creation of legal rights. It cannot be denied that rights are certainly better had than not. Yet, from what is said in this book, it seems that constitutional rights to housing do not always solve the practical problems that homelessness creates for governments and communities.

A right to housing does not create a sufficient housing supply. Regardless of any legal rights to housing, social housing waiting lists remain high even in wealthy nations, and individuals and families can still be forced to sleep in improvised dwellings or squats.

A right to housing does not erase stigma. Individuals and businesses continue to support the removal of people from the streets who are visible reminders of 'misery'. Creating a right to housing, it seems, does not always serve to humanise the individuals affected. Laws that criminalise loitering, sleeping out and begging continue to be introduced and reintroduced, even though they tend to exacerbate, rather than address, the problem. A number of chapters of this book discuss 'exclusion orders', which allow local authorities to remove homeless individuals from public spaces. The equivalent in Australia is police 'move-on' powers. Two of the chapters in this book discuss anti-begging legislation in the Netherlands and Switzerland, noting the distinction that is made between active and passive begging. This reminds us of the legislators' desire to balance the interests of people that beg with the discomfort of other members of the community. To this end, in some countries, the application of 'exclusionary' laws against homeless people is coupled with offers of support and assistance. But, regardless, the message of rejection is clear. My research has suggested that this underlying message has a profound effect on an 'excluded' individual's sense of self-worth, and may increase their alienation from the community.

A right to housing does not recognise cultural differences. A number of chapters in this book relate to the Roma, some of whom live in appalling conditions in camps. These chapters describe how, in some countries, laws have been passed to enable these camps to be destroyed, and the result is that many Roma are forced to sleep rough. One of the authors indicates that this response ignores the fact that the Roma may not wish to settle. They may simply require temporary assistance until they move on. Another author notes that in Canada, Aboriginal people are over-represented in the homeless population. This is true in Australia, also. This is the direct result of colonisation and dispossession of Aboriginal lands, but it is also a product of cultural misunderstanding. Some Australian Aboriginal people choose to live transient lifestyles. 'Home' may be a locality or a set of spaces, rather than a structure. Some may not wish to be 'housed' – instead, they may require access

to lands and access to services. Others who are housed may still consider them-
selves to be homeless as a result of forced separation from their lands. In short,
cultural homelessness is more complex than our systems recognise.

A right to housing does not always reflect the goodwill of the community towards
those who are vulnerable. Indeed, it may serve to inflame. Just as some individuals
in Australia express concerns that asylum seekers will 'take our welfare and jobs';
fears related to 'social benefit tourism' are rife in Europe. A number of chapters
in this book discuss the increasing importance of 'local connection' as an eligi-
bility criterion for housing assistance. They raise the corresponding concern that
an increasing proportion of individuals and families who require housing assis-
tance are displaced persons. These people are often stateless and unable to
return to their country of origin, and they are then excluded from services and
support by the laws of their new country. The same is true in Australia, where
asylum seekers are subjected to mandatory detention, resettlement in developing
countries and exclusion from the welfare and work systems. Many chapters of
this book raise the plight of Bulgarian and Romanian nationals – in Australia, most
'boat people' who arrive on our shores come from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Sri
Lanka. In a world where displacement has, evidently, become a chronic problem,
the short-sighted exclusionary approach of governments in our wealthier
countries is rightly condemned by the authors of this book. Whilst the fear may
be that generous social programmes will open the floodgates, the editors note in
their opening chapter that forcing these people to live on the fringes of society
will not reduce their numbers.

A right to housing is not always practically effective because often it cannot be
availed of by those who need it most. Two chapters of this book outline the difficul-
ties that people experiencing homelessness face in obtaining access to justice. It
seems that the reasons for this are common across many countries. Vulnerable
people are likely to be disconnected from services offering legal support, and they
tend to be unaware of their legal rights. Indeed, knowledge of the laws outlining
their entitlements may be difficult to gain – they may be complex and they may be
applied differently in different local areas. When funding for legal aid is cut, oppor-
tunities for outreach are reduced, such that those who would otherwise benefit from
the rights provided for under the law cannot avail of them.

For me, therefore, the value of this book is that it indicates that legal rights to
housing do not in themselves solve all problems. This book sheds light on the
variety of impacts that the law can have on people experiencing homelessness in
countries including the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, England,
Wales, Canada and Australia – in systems with and without a right to housing.
One is struck by the commonalties between countries, despite their different legal

regimes. Whilst the book would have benefitted from a thorough edit before publication, it is a useful collection of student essays that can serve to educate an uninformed reader.

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Jakub Marek, Aleš Strnad and Lucie Hotovcová (2012)

Bezdomovectví v kontextu ambulantních sociálních služeb [Homelessness in the Context of Low Threshold Services].

Praha: Portál

This 2012 volume was written by three authors with different backgrounds. Jakub Marek is a Ph.D. student of pedagogical psychology at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice and works with a research team at a Prague-based psychiatric centre. Aleš Strnad is the team leader of an outreach programme for homeless people and has worked with homeless people for the past ten years. He studies at the Protestant Theological Faculty in Prague. Lucie Hotovcová works as a social worker in a day centre for homeless people.

The goals of the monograph are: "to draw attention to the ways of working with the homeless with regard to the practical aspects of this work and to attempt to stimulate a discussion about the situation of the homeless in the Czech Republic" (p.12). With outreach- and social workers as its primary audience, the volume covers a broad range of issues, from the definition of homelessness to describing everyday challenges in social work with homeless people.

In the first chapter, the authors discuss a possible definition of homelessness based on the Czech etymology of the word and its usage in Czech legislation (i.e., 'a stateless person without the right to domicile'). The authors conclude the first chapter with a list of the causes of homelessness.

The second chapter is devoted to understanding psychosocial barriers to the resettlement of homeless people. According to the authors, in the Czech context these barriers are typically unemployment, addictions, disintegration of the family and social isolation, leaving institutionalised care or ending a prison sentence, having psychiatric disorders or, last but not least, the characteristics of the social and health care systems. With regard to the latter, the authors specifically mention barriers caused by the fact that social welfare assistance is linked to a domicile, barriers due to the indebtedness of households or low pensions, barriers due to the shortage and absence of specific services, and barriers caused by the selectiveness of social services, which mainly works with service users who can demon-

strate a willingness to change their situation. The authors of the monograph report on the use of the 'cycle of change' model in deciding which social intervention should be chosen when working with homeless people. This model reflects the stage of motivation the person is shown as being at. A type of social work intervention is then chosen according to that stage and an adequate social service is matched to the person. This view may, however, be somewhat limiting, especially if it serves as the basis for a narrow view of homelessness from a pathological perspective; the authors state "with a little exaggeration, we may say that for at least a certain percentage of these people, homelessness can be classified as an addictive disease" (p.33).

The third chapter uses another discourse, describing being homeless as belonging to a specific subculture. The authors summarize what is known about the life histories of homeless people, and also describe social policy in relation to homelessness, albeit only from the local perspective – i.e., within the city of Prague. Particularly interesting is the part of the chapter that maps out the methods of survival used by people on the streets of Prague, including 'street culture activities' such as different types of begging, scavenging in garbage bins, collecting waste, using social services, working – including temporary jobs – and pursuing criminal activities. They describe a life of homelessness and the daily regimes of homeless people in different seasons of the year, which gives us a very realistic picture of life and survival strategies on the street.

The fourth chapter deals with homelessness from a psychological viewpoint. The authors classify the homeless population according to their life cycle and attempt to identify the characteristics of each of these stages: young homeless people up to the age of 26, people of 'productive' age and people of 'post-productive' age. The chapter is also devoted to understanding gender stereotypes in the context of homelessness.

The fifth chapter is the central part of the whole monograph, and it discusses the challenges of social work with homeless people in low threshold services. The authors state that in the Czech Republic, "emphasis has traditionally been placed on active change. Support is provided by social services on condition that people show an effort to change" (p.115). The core ideology of the Czech continuum of care system is that clients have to be active. This chapter maps the services on offer in great detail and describes the procedures used in outreach work as well as in day centres for homeless people. With regard to outreach work, the authors focus on mapping the locality, looking for and contacting people, and providing basic social advice. They consider the provision of health care services to be an important part of outreach work in spite of the fact that it is limited. Visits to

hospitals, and accompanying service users on visits to institutions, are also described as being part of Czech outreach work. In Prague, mobile social services are also offered in mobile social vans.

In the section on outreach work, the role of the outreach worker, and relationships between outreach workers and clients are analysed. Possible ethical dilemmas that outreach workers may face while conducting outreach work are listed, such as clients asking to borrow money, clients giving gifts to outreach workers, clients confiding in the outreach worker about their illegal activity, clients badmouthing workers from the same or another organisation, clients expressing erotic feelings, or outreach workers recognising the risk of suicide. The authors offer various solutions to such conflicts but also leave enough room for individual initiatives by pointing out that every situation is unique and the outreach worker's assessment of the situation at any given moment is decisive.

Detailed attention is also paid to the issues of day centres. The authors state that in Czech practice, such centres mainly assist with arranging IDs, organising a minimum amount of regular income, and finding a safe place for homeless people to spend the night. In connection with arranging overnight accommodation, the authors claim that in the Czech Republic, every organisation sets its own specific conditions for admission to the shelter. Many shelters require that homeless people be sober, which some are simply unable to comply with. The authors observe that in Prague, and probably throughout the Czech Republic, there is a lack of wet shelters. While mapping the deficiencies of day centres, the authors express their belief that each day centre should have a general practitioner or at least a nurse present. They also note that cultural programmes such as sports events or excursions, drama therapy, and foreign language or PC courses are rather rare in Czech day centres, although spiritual services are generally available.

The sixth chapter uses descriptions of homeless people's situations to illustrate some of the psychological and social barriers that can work as obstacles to reintegration in certain situations and according to the age of the homeless person. In the last (seventh) chapter, the authors contemplate the various therapeutic approaches that could be utilised when working with homeless people.

The volume provides a thorough description of the situation facing homeless people in the Czech Republic with regard to social services. This is primarily done from the perspective of large service providers, which may be due to the fact that the authors worked for many years in one such organisation. While on the one hand the book benefits greatly from the authors' work experience, on the other hand, it limits their approach in a certain way. In many places, the monograph strengthens entrenched, stereotypical views of homelessness and homeless people. Moreover, the book is clearly based on psychotherapeutic approaches

to homelessness, such that the possibilities of community work or structural social work are completely neglected. In fact, although one of the authors' main goals was to instigate a discussion on homeless, their attitude is, rather, a confirmation of the pathologising discourse of homelessness – the predominant, mainstream view in the Czech Republic.

To conclude, despite the above caveats, the monograph, being one of the very few publications on homelessness in the Czech Republic, brings an interesting insight into the life of Czech homeless people and can be useful reading for practitioners in the sector.

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Katia Choppin and Édouard Gardella (2013)

Les Sciences Sociales et le Sans-Abrisme: Recension Bibliographique de Langue Française 1987-2012 [Social Science and Homelessness: French Language Literature Review 1987-2012].

Saint-Étienne: L'université de Saint-Étienne, €26.00.

This in-depth collective work, edited by Katia Choppin and Édouard Gardella, gathers and brings together more than twenty years of research on homelessness in the social sciences. The main aim of the book is to give visibility to this important mass of research and enquiry. It also provides a very accomplished description of the main theoretical axes and concepts that structure the research field, thus offering a summary of accumulated theoretical knowledge.

The scope of the work is limited to French literature, as similar books are already available in English. It focuses on social science research that explains the place, the experience of, and the social and political approach to the fact of living between public spaces and public assistance. Homelessness is understood not as a fixed condition defining the situation of a person but as a process. It is the result of a series of actions that stem from the fact that a person has to survive, for some time, in public places or public shelter structures.

The book is divided into four parts: the research review, strictly speaking; a vocabulary index that gives an overview of the concepts and notions that 'problematise' homelessness; a chronological classification of bibliographical references; and a bibliographical classification of references by author.

The review is set out around the four directions taken by researchers in tackling homelessness, developed in four chapters. Each of these chapters gives a summary of the themes and concepts that are found in the research, followed by a bibliographical list of relevant articles and books. Some of the most relevant research is developed in a few lines to several paragraphs.

Chapter One, '*From a social issue to a scientific issue: names, objectives and enquiries*', is dedicated to work on identifying, naming and designing approaches to issues relative to homelessness. One section gathers several public empirical enquiries on the theme of: 'Who are those visible persons that live in public spaces and where are they from?'

A second section entitled '*Elaboration of a research field*' gathers the work that '*objectivates*' the '*problem of homelessness*' either by replacing it with more general issues, or by conducted specialised research and looking at new issues, such as life on the streets and public support.

A third section called '*Research approaches: stance, tools and field*' brings together more reflexive work; for example, surveys on homelessness require the elaboration of new methods, as the typical questionnaire formula is not adapted to this type of public. The sensitive subject of homelessness also raises many ethical questions as to whether and how to question homeless people, as it does not provide any solutions to their difficult situations.

Chapter Two deals with '*Homelessness assistance schemes*'. This chapter brings together enquiries on homeless people supported by institutions, including day and night shelters, mobile teams and different forms of outreach. The relation to care is at the centre of all research on this subject, and work has been divided into two groups. The first, a section on institutional support, gathers work that reflects generally on assistance to homeless people: What kind of help? How is it organised? What difficulties and tensions do social helpers have to face? How do users interact with schemes?

The second, called '*Shelter accommodation: from emergency to housing with support*', is dedicated to examining how assistance is organised within different types of structures. Research focuses on conditions of access to shelters (*hébergement*), on the collective lifestyles that these structures engender, and on the relationships that develop between peers and social providers. Most authors are quite critical about how these schemes operate.

Chapter Three, '*Homelessness as a public problem*', collects and analyses the work of researchers that approach homelessness from the perspective that it is not only a social problem but also a public problem, as homeless people are not only present in the public and political debate but are also – and especially – physically visible in the public space. The presence of homeless people on the streets raises serious questions about the ability of occidental democracies to deal with the exclusion of those who are most vulnerable.

The first section in this chapter, '*Public action and public arenas'*, collects the work of researchers that approach homelessness as a public problem as well as a social problem. Homelessness, as something that needs to be controlled and regulated, has been subject to the State's actions for centuries. This action has often been ambivalent, falling between assistance and repression. The collective actions of NGOs relayed by the media, along with changes in methods of social intervention and public action in general, has led to a social support approach.

However, as soon as repression was overcome at national level (the offenses of vagrancy and begging were only abolished in 1992), it reappeared at local level though the 'anti-begging' decrees adopted by local authorities. That is why this chapter contains a second section on '*Social control and juridicisation'*, looking at how the law deals with homelessness and revealing ambivalence as to how this public issue is dealt with.

A final section entitled '*Conflicts, tensions, use and negotiations in public places'* outlines the substantial work that has dealt with the 'materiality' of public spaces and with the 'visibility' of its occupants. Questions of citizenship, meetings, space-sharing, giving and exchanging are at the centre of this section.

Chapter Four, '*Between street life and assistance: experiences and expedients',* synthetises the results of surveys on homelessness. All the studies agree that homeless people are not external to society, and research issues are precisely about how they relate to society. Street life is an experience, in that it transforms those that experience it. However hard it is, every person living on the streets will adapt and develop mechanisms to survive in the most deprived situations and to create some form of social network, with or without social services.

In the section '*Daily life as survival'*, research is outlined that recounts the adaptive and ingenious abilities homeless people must develop to meet their needs. The section '*Precarious housing'* amalgamates research that focuses on people's ability to 'inhabit', even without a roof over their heads. These studies reveal creative abilities with all their limits and constraints.

The last section, '*Life stories and identities',* gathers work on the relationship homeless people have with their own stories – past and future. By tackling issues such as the end of homelessness, death, daily fights to survive, and difficulties like the need for recognition, studies on the identities and trajectories of homeless people contribute to showing the diversity of paths and experiences that homeless-ness can take, and expand available categories and descriptions of homelessness and how it is seen in the public space.

This book is a must-have for anyone who wants a good overview of the concepts of homelessness and the state of homelessness research in social science. It is also a very useful book in helping to choose relevant subjects for study from the mass of existing information. The vocabulary index will be of serious help to anyone who wishes to understand the issues at stake without having to study for several months. The very complete chronological bibliography and traditional bibliography by author will also prove very useful for anyone starting a research study on homelessness.

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European Journal of Homelessness

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

European Journal of Homelessness is published twice a year by FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless. An electronic version can be down-loaded from FEANTSA's website www.feantsaresearch.org.

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