

Homelessness: Governance & Risk

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This batch of papers has been presented at the Fourth Conference “Diversity in cities: New models of governance”.

Homelessness: Governance & Risk

Summary

This paper follows as source an ongoing cross-national comparative (FR, PT, UK) PhD research on homelessness that takes the concept of risk as fundamental analytical string. Risk is a cultural and social construct that to be analysed leads necessarily to compare the perceptions of different social actors. Thereafter, the empirical research is based on interviews to both social workers and homeless in Lisbon, Paris and London (2005-2006). Following the empirical work, it explores the perceptions of both the interlocutors regarding social provision services. Next, it focuses on the impacts of applying the risk concept to the social practices level. Brief considerations are made in what concerns the homelessness path and the processes for legitimising support entitlement. Finally, the paper includes the suggestions of the interviewee for services provision improvement, enhancing that addressing diversity is fundamental for sustainability.

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Introduction

It was not intended to find a hierarchical evaluation of each country social policies but instead basic similarities based on the symbolic images of the two levels of social actors – social workers and homeless. Consequently, the empirical findings express the opinions of those involved, as providers or as users.

Risk discourses constitute a mechanism and process of governance in the sense that they shape values, morals and, especially when referring to social excluded populations, notions of blame and responsibility. At a last extent, these images on responsibility, while associated to the identification of the causes of homelessness, impact on notions as deserving and non-deserving groups.

The research topic – homelessness and risk – should be read on a context of accelerated social, economic and politic changes. Analytical perspectives and methodological techniques need to be able to correspond to concepts such as diversity, multiculturalism, mobility, harmonization, comparability and sustainability. New dilemmas are immerging from the need to construct social policies for the homeless at the European level. The different national definitions on homelessness demand a definitional and methodological harmonization, which represents a challenge and has significant impacts at the social policy level. Above all, methodologies impact on which groups of an extremely diverse population in housing exclusion are made visible, and consequently for whom social provision is directed.

Moreover, among the several State-members there is a growing concern with reaching hidden homelessness, which calls for preventive measures and specific methodologies. The perceptions of the homeless explore the importance of empowerment for the design of social measures. It is essential to develop a sustainable support system by incorporating diversity in many different ways: socio-demographic characteristics, social problems, main needs, etc.

Definitions and Methodology

The research was based on approximately seventy-six semi-directive interviews conducted in Lisbon, Paris and London (2005-2006) with social workers and the homeless.

In the particular case of the homeless, the interview was also an instrument for mapping and analysing life-trajectories and these sociological considerations are briefly mentioned here. This upon a context where individual identities become more fluid and no longer exclusively based on “fixed character” social categories, such as gender, social class, etc.

The homeless were understood as those, at the given moment of the interview, sleeping rough (in the three cities), at emergency night shelters (Centre d’Hébergement d’Urgence (CHU), Cité André Jacomet, in Paris and the Connection at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, in London) and one long-term centre (AMI, Centro da Graça, in Lisbon). One of the first constraints was finding comparable kinds of accommodation provision. Regardless of each city’s temporary shelter classification, the criteria were the use of referral and a short time renewal.

The definition for “social workers” ranged several positions from managerial and coordination, technical and specialised front-line, key-workers and volunteers.

Reaching the Hidden Homeless

Achieving methodologies capable to measure hidden homelessness and the implementation of preventative measures is still to be done. The identification of risk factors is fundamental and implicates triggering potential situations of homelessness for which key-indicators should be defined. For the development of this task, the cooperation among social researchers and social workers is essential.

It is in this context that typologies on housing classifications including “insecure housing” (ETHOS) are of extreme relevance. The development of several data collection techniques is also relevant, namely “collections of data by institutions in contact with the homeless, direct surveys of homeless people and ‘household’ surveys including retrospective questions on homelessness” (Brousse, 2004). Another, essential line of homelessness risk research is to develop comparisons with the general population instead of following a simplistic ad hoc analysis taken from the homeless socio-demographic profiles. Moreover, the recommendations for the Census 2010 (EUROSTAT, 2005) and the European Commission (2007) report follow the same concerns.

It is possible to establish a synthesis on the main vulnerability factors that are transversal to the homeless in Europe (Edgar et al., 2005). Nevertheless, each combined set of vulnerability factors is subject of distinct policy priorities due to governmental allocation of responsibilities, like if homelessness is a housing or social affairs intervention domain. Also, the “distinction between emergency cases and cases for reintegration or between priority and non-priority sectors of the population demonstrates the exact limit of the efforts to which public authorities are prepared to go in terms of social housing” (Brousse, 2004).

Moreover, “The size and composition of groups at risk of homelessness will depend on the efficacy of the system or family and social protection. In all societies, only a small proportion of individuals belonging to groups at risk of homelessness fall through all the existing social safety nets. A proportion of those who encounter the world of homelessness are able to develop personal coping strategies and build their own paths out of homelessness. Some are effectively assisted by the public authorities. Others just drift and rely on daily survival. A universal rule for every exposure to hardship and vulnerability, which affects those belonging

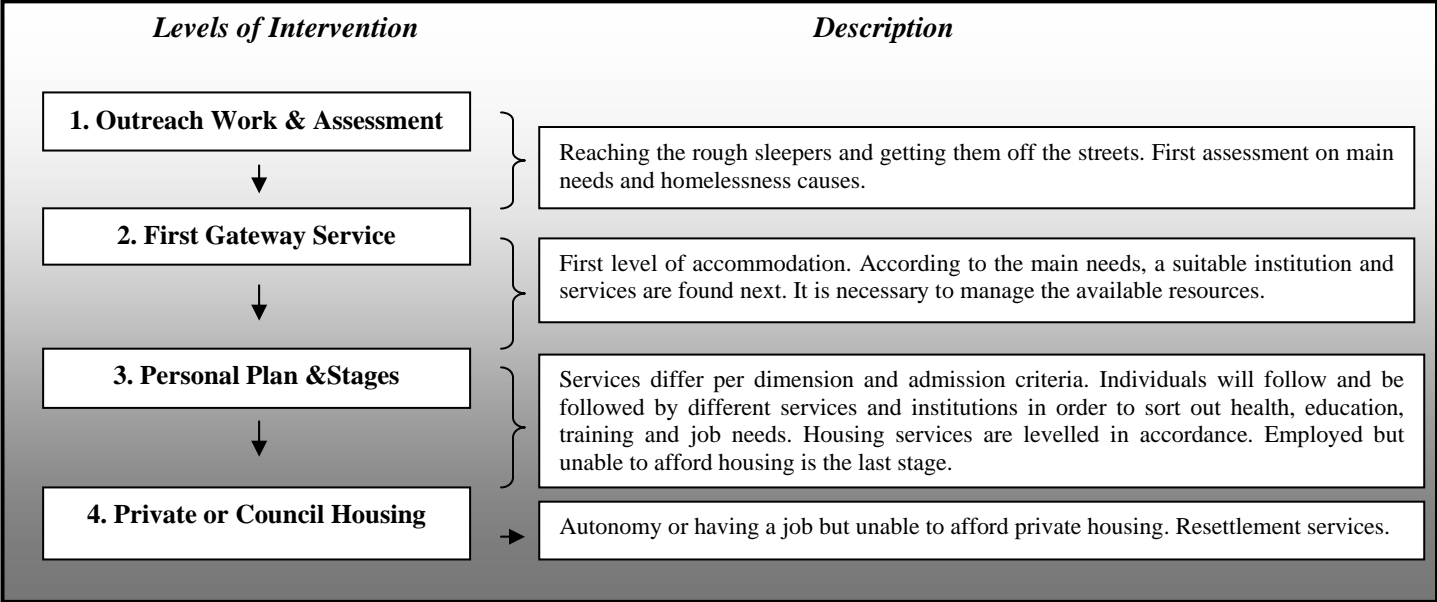
to the risk groups and those who become actually homeless, is the longer the struggle, the higher the casualties.” (Avramov, 1998).

In the case of Portugal, France and England, only the latter has a legal definition of situations at risk of homelessness that contemplates cases as “a person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely he will become homeless within 28 days”. Nevertheless, in situations such as domestic violence, certain cases are also taken as “at risk”, regardless of an existing legal definition in the two first referred countries.

Context of Social Intervention and Support Services Assessment

In spite of the existing differences between the three countries under analysis, it is possible to establish a shared model of intervention regarding the rough sleepers. It is proposed a draft model that results of the reduction of the specificities of each support system to shared framework of basic guidelines for the answers mobilised for the rough sleepers up to the level of social housing. The following image summarizes the existing staged approach to rough sleeping that may be applicable to several European countries:

Fig. 1. Draft Model of Social Services Design for the Homeless



Among the several elements of distinction is the existence of a legal definition of homelessness in the UK, which establishes different categories of homeless corresponding to distinct methods of support, namely the statutory and the non-statutory. Although in France and Portugal there is no legislation that formalizes the existence of priority need groups, those that access more easily the care services end up being the same. In other words, under a system of provision with scarce resources, the vulnerable groups are the ones that get priority and those are primarily children, women and the elderly. Consequently, the rough sleepers, single men with no particular mental or physical vulnerability, are subject to a provisional care system characterised by instability and a longer wait for social housing.

As the image illustrates, the institutional procedure begins with the identification of the rough sleepers by the outreach teams, followed by an assessment of needs and the subsequent guiding to longer term structures. The clients must overcome the diverse challenges, like rehabilitations of addictions, training, employment, in order to find autonomy. Thereafter, the social reinsertion process proposed for the rough sleepers follows a staged path often synonymous, along the way, of a more personalised and integrated type of support. At each

stage, the clients have different levels of autonomy, being, generally, at the last employed but unable to afford housing at the private market.

In this sense, two main poles of action shape the general conception of measures and programmes: reaching the rough sleepers, which is the aim of outreach work and short-stay night shelters; and providing a more personalised follow-up via long-term provision and reinsertion plans.

There seems to be a cycled oscillation in the outreach working approach according to the frequently discussed principle: should provision reach the individuals on the streets, or should the ones needing support demonstrate their will for reinsertion and seek the services? Generally, the outreach policy will be stronger and the main entrance contact if the rough sleepers are characterised as accumulating social and health handicaps that may constrain their capacity to seek support.

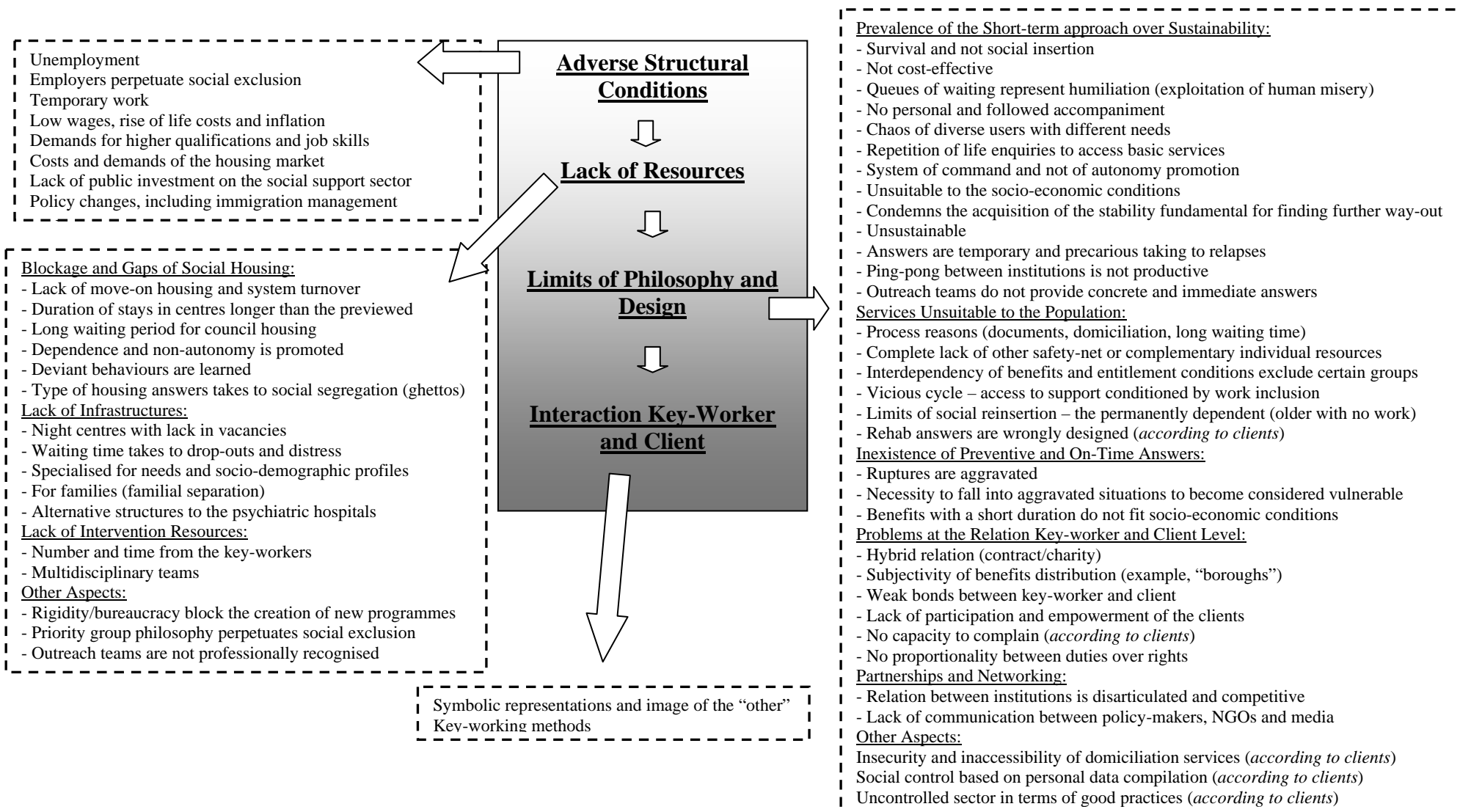
Next, the first gateway service is usually temporary accommodation requiring the clients to leave in the morning. This initial moment is also an assessment of needs and the moving on to specialised infrastructures for more personalised reinsertion plans according to target groups, depending on availability.

The specialisation of accommodation services according to the client's socio-demographic characteristics and satisfaction of specific needs on a long-term basis is not equally developed in the three cities. It is caused by factors such as public investment and the visibility of the multiple target groups, like families, youngsters, asylum seekers, and so on. The particular situation of the youth is also of concern since they can be left in a hiatus of entitlement to support (no longer a child, not yet an adult).

The presented draft model is directed to the visible situations but the life-trajectories of the ones in a housing deprived situation comprises a path of homelessness prior to the streets, namely staying at friends, family members after losing home, etc. As mentioned above, the situation of the hidden homeless is a concern for most European countries.

Moreover, the model should be read under the structural and socio-economic conditions that represent constraints for the development of this sector of services. According to the testimonies obtain via the interviews conducted to both social workers and homeless, at Paris, Lisbon and London, it is possible to draw the following shared concerns that affect the overall efficiency of the support system available:

Fig. 2. Constraints to the Social Provision Services System according to the Social Workers and Homeless (Paris, Lisbon, London)



Taking the several levels of constraints to a more detail:

The **Structural Constraints** are attributed to both the causes of the homeless situation, relapses and long duration of the episode, and the limits of the social provision services, namely due to the existing lack of resources and the viability of the so-called reinsertion plans. In a certain way, it is hoped that this sector finds the solution to problems as poverty and social inequalities that are at the social organisation and dynamics of employment, housing and social exclusion levels.

Overall the perceptions of social workers and homeless are coincident in what regards the existence of social vulnerabilities, which place certain social groups at a particularly socially fragile situation. However, causes and paths are analysed by the first separating individual and social causes. On the other hand, the economic context takes the clients to long periods of permanence under social support dependence, including the night centres. To a certain extent the homeless are considered as having specific characteristics that put them apart of the general population (managing expenses, respecting schedules, living for the short-term, etc.). As according to the homeless there are only a few that can be denominated as the ones that “have given up”. The homeless consider that the society expects them to be work “chameleons”, meaning a disposable reserve of workers for all kinds of work demands.

The successive changes on social policies depending on political powers make it very hard to “follow and understand” the process of applying and qualifying to social provision. To this regard, the dualism conservative and labour governments are often mentioned. As for France and Portugal the critics of the homeless were address to specific ministers.

In sum, this first dimension delimits a starting point of responsibility for the existing constraints at the social provision services: structural difficulties, namely on the sphere of employment and housing; the lack of governmental investment that reflects on the scarcity of resources and answer capacity of the sector; the non-existence of a defined housing policy and the oscillations of repression and tolerance of immigration policies.

The **Lack of Resources** impacts on several domains. A first crucial aspect is the scarcity of social housing that condemns the system of provision to inefficacy for no turnover. By other words, the support, or reinsertion stages, is blocked. Secondly, temporary housing (night centres) does not always offer integrated specialised answers according to socio-demographic characteristics and specific needs. The creation of undifferentiated emergency type structures is negative for both social workers and homeless, particularly for the ones, among the last, that consider themselves far from the status of an institutionalised homeless person (in French the “*clochard*” as in opposition to the “*sans domicile fixe*”). The inefficiency of the system stigmatizes and distresses. The lack of resources reflects on the work conditions and methods of the social workers.

In global terms, at the same time that there is a large variety in services (accommodation, food, clothing, hygiene), quality, accessibility and availability do not allow to provide for the total population in need. There is an overall under articulation of the several institutions, being of primordial importance to overcome individualised and competitive logics so that partnerships may develop a clustered and integrated social provision.

The homeless synthesise their dissatisfaction with the lack of public investment and the incapacity of the social institutions by affirming that the “social spirit is lost”, since that the social parts involved at the decisional and providing levels have no longer the will to fight for social causes (it is a “circus” or “business”).

This takes to the analysis of a third level of constraints that is the **Limits of Philosophy and Design**, which goes beyond the resource limits by several reasons. Overall, both levels of

social actors are in agreement. Nevertheless, some differences may also be pointed out, including about the same common critic. For example, the fact that answers are unsuited to the population is for the social workers more often associated to the so-called specific characteristics of the homeless populations, and for the homeless attributed to their lack of participation and empowerment on the construction of their own life projects. In common, the short-term and winter services provision is rejected. For the two, the disinvestment on long-term and stable structures of housing support is more expensive and consequently the socio-economic difficulties may not be used as argument to justify temporary approaches. There is a generalised lack of in-good time and preventive measures.

There is also a concern for the inexistence of answers of indefinite limit of time, or even permanent, for the individuals without possible employment insertion (old age, mental health, etc.). Being work the key-stone of social reinsertion, these cases, and considering the actual socio-economic dynamics and vulnerabilities, call for an ethic and political essential question, which is recognising that alternative and creative answers are necessary.

The elaboration of an insertion plan and work on multiple angles (employment, health, and so on) takes the individuals to follow different providers simultaneously. According to the social workers, the cooperation among institutions, or networking, is of essential value. However, the articulation between health and social support still leaves a gap. The social workers called for the establishment of an ethical and cooperative relationship among the social provision workers. The competition among the institutions is an added constraint on finding shared lines of action.

It was relevant to achieve several common perceptions among the homeless on daily survival activities and social services in the three cities. As an example, the option for a night centre was impacted by the perception that some are unsafe and those that come are associated with drug addicts. The existence of satisfactory centres is shared and depends of an investment on reforming and refurbishing. For the homeless, the interdependence of benefits depending on employment insertion/seeking perpetuates social exclusion, particularly for those without collocation on the labour market (lack of qualifications, age, health handicaps, and so on). In other words, it was considered perpetuating social exclusion the fact that to have access to housing support a person needs to also have some source of income (employment, social benefit, etc.).

Overall, social services lack on integrated answers for accommodation and other essential services. The rough sleepers are the most affected and criticize the “giving a bed and ceiling” approach, meaning that they feel they cannot find the right conditions to seek solutions. The impossibility of building sustainable life-options refers to factors such as moving permanently from one service to another (ping-pong) for each specific need (food, clothing, documents, etc.), schedules and shelters where it is compulsory to leave in the morning carrying all personal belongings, no access to bank accounts and other basic civic rights, consequently being excluded from labour, etc. In other words, for some respondents, being supported means being trapped in a vicious cycle.

At the level **Interaction Key-Worker and Client**, apart from recognizing structural constraints, the assisted population considers the social workers part of the “system” that perpetuates their social segregation. It is because of this identification that most of the relational conflicts emerge. On the other hand, the characteristics attributed by the social workers to the homeless population increases the hiatus between the provider and the assisted.

Since that the homeless that were interviewed have presented their relation with social support services along their life-trajectories, it is possible to identify for each individual several strategies. This dimension involves the representations of each “group” about the

other, and also about “some others” of the same category. These symbolic images may threaten the viability of the available support answers and they also reveal strategies for identity construction.

Table 1. Symbolic Images (“Inter” and “Intra”) of the Key-Workers and Homeless

<i>Actor</i> <i>Target</i>	Social Workers	Homeless
Social Workers	<p><u>(Some)</u> No professionalism, competence and ethics Incapacity to diagnose on health problems Lack of specific training of the outreach teams</p>	No technical skills, competences and professionalism No objectivity (sympathy approach) No time (“production line”; “looking at the hours”) No education, sympathy and empathy (“humiliate”) No objective working methods Do not provide concrete and effective answers Do not adapt to each specific case and needs Bad conflict managers
Homeless	Mobility prejudices efficiency Lack of complementary resources: - Individual (qualifications) - Family support Addictions Mental health problems No social competences (discipline, organisation, etc.)	<p><u>(Some)</u> No hygiene, responsibility, rude and abusive, all kinds of mental blockages, not motivated, incapable of seeking support, mental problems and addictions</p> <p><u>(Dichotomies)</u> The ones settled on support / The ones that want autonomy Comfortable living of assistance/ Assistance is an humiliation The “fighters”/ The ones that gave up</p>

In what regards the provision perspective, the social workers share some points of view with the assisted population in matters such as professionalism and technical competencies. However, for them excludes many cases, while for the homeless is for the greater part of the cases. The inverse happens regarding the image of the homeless population.

For the ones supported the critics embrace several aspects, like the lack of a personal involvement, empathy, rudeness, insulting behaviour, etc. The homeless stated that it is necessary to develop good practices and evaluation strategies. In all three cities, examples of individuals who have a closer relation with a “certain” key-worker were found. In these cases the social worker “has proved to be more sensitive to their situation”, and with whom personal matters are voluntarily shared. Not understanding the evaluation criteria and considering that “less deserving” (including the immigrants) persons are supported are also the causes of several misunderstandings between social workers and the homeless. Conflict or disagreement may cause a person to indefinitely reject services. In other words, one bad experience may condemn the whole process and the will of finding reintegration solutions.

The strategy to be “accepted as beneficiary” involves being able to gain the sympathy of the key-worker. For that is essential to “be other person”, namely being affirmative only at the right times, listen without making questions, play the victim, being humble, and humour or compliments also help. Otherwise, rejection probabilities increase.

The social workers’ perceptions reveal a conception of the homeless as, in a certain way, apart from the general society. Their specific characteristics may come from the living conditions at the streets, or be at the root of their situation. In general terms, it is an itinerant population, with their own rules, life-styles and socially isolated. Their life-trajectories are marked by past traumatic events, accumulation of needs, different familial dynamics, addictions and mental issues. The unsuccessful results, including dropouts, of certain social support measures are in part explained by these specificities, like: are impossible to follow-up, unable to be autonomous due to a lack of basic social competencies (discipline, ability to follow schedules), preference for assistance and not self-sustainment, criticism of the quality of the

services only as an affirmation strategy, lack of knowledge of their civic rights, difficulties on understanding forms and procedures and keeping documents.

On their hand, the homeless stated that the social workers should identify those that do not correspond to the stereotype and give them the support they deserve. In this regard, the opinions highlighted to be essential reach beyond the affirmations of incapacities without understanding the individual underneath factors. According to the supported population, it is relevant that the service providers really understand the implications of not having housing while looking for employment and other kinds of solutions.

As a concluding note, and taking into account the images of both levels of respondents, the “right social worker” is the one that: *adapts to the population and respects their rhythms and times, listens and cares and sacrifices his own personal time when necessary. He knows the ones with whom he interacts not needing to check any documentation to have in mind each life story. He thinks the assisted in their full being in order to solve each single issue he has, considering structural factors and knowing how to find the suitable service. He is the social worker that searches for alternative solutions and is creative finding new ones. He gives space and builds a cooperative relationship with the client so that together they can make plans for the future. He is there with passion, with his heart, and keeps his motivation.*

Risk: A Top Down or a Bottom Up Approach?

Risk should not be understood as a static category without reading the vulnerability factors upon an identification of triggers related to specific and dynamic contexts. Peretti-Watel (2004) alerts the researchers on the dangers of a multi-factorial risk factors approach that seeks to promote prevention without understanding the individual’s centrality and social environment. The contemporary success of concepts like “risk conducts” largely stand on an epidemiologic model of human behaviors, combining the dominance of prevision over understanding. By this way, multiple factors are identified (none is enough but each increases the probability of a negative effect) while the idea of cause is abandoned (“une toile des causes centrée sur l’individu”). In sum, it promotes risk privatization or individualization.

One of the qualitative measures included in the research that serves as the source of this paper was precisely the uses attributed to the risk concept on the social services field. The interest for this concept and the discourses around it relates to the radical opposite uses it can be object of, namely from basing social control and repression measures to defending the implementation of preventive and in good time measures.

To this extent, the identification of “vulnerable groups” may constitute an instrumental tool for dealing with social contingency and reinforce the belief in control through the delimitation of the counter concept of “safe groups”. The “groups at risk” perspective may accentuate social inequalities via the idea of individual risk management neglecting the phenomenon as a social responsibility. Risk may perpetuate the individual and structural separatist discourse, under the use of terms such as “responsibility”, and affecting social policy design by delimiting perspectives of “treatment” without contemplating an integrative strategy.

A positivist approach on risk of homelessness is not exclusively built on the assumptions that this risk may occur - with more or less probability - according to the different case scenarios. Anticipating the consequences of a future event, is attached to a kind of “first aid survival kit” intended to design prevention strategies and for preparing individuals. Consequently, risk discourse is not exclusively about making the unexpected expected but is also linked to a philosophy on how life should be lived (Douglas, 1992).

On the other hand, risk assessment and reaching groups at risk can be used to promote access to information, support and prevention policies. Moreover, it may also be a first approach to identify social groups that require social promotion.

In sum, in one hand the delimitation of groups at risk may serve as a top down governance versus the bottom up empowerment perspective.

At the social practices level, namely through the opinions expressed by the social workers that were interviewed, it was found that generally there is not a formal stipulation on risk assessment parameters, but instead a sort of informal general evaluation synonymous with “higher probabilities for an adverse outcome to happen to a person”. This means a relative comparison among cases or “competition for vulnerability”. The access to services will vary around, on one hand, the support for the more vulnerable cases and, on the other hand, for the ones that present higher chances of success since their risk situation is lower.

Overall, risk parameters are used for: an assessment of the current situation based on the enumeration of individual resources (skills, employment, family, drug and alcohol use, health); evaluating past events and background, which constitutes a retrospective way to find causes of homelessness without reaching the intersections with specific structural factors; prioritising target groups along with managing scarce resources; follow-up or insertion stages design, meaning that a person will only go on to the next stage if risks are not significant to the point of compromising sustainability for the community and the individual’s future progress.

As a particular example of the application of the concept, considered more formalised by one of the interviewees, risk is used as an instrument for managing the project, clients and the community. It takes a triangular notion: the risk the client represents to the project; the risk the client represents to other clients and the risk the client represents to the community. Financial risk adds to the three. This form of risk assessment is referred to in the British (DUL diagnosis) case. However, the possible coming scenario may be that it is difficult to find persons that pose no risks.

As an instrument used to base preventive strategies, risk is associated with identifying crisis points (e.g. family breakdown) and question points (e.g. paying bills). This approach has not yet reached the necessary development for basing prevention strategies.

Brief Considerations on Homelessness Paths

On what concerns the homeless population, the sleeping place analysis has allowed finding persons that had “just arrived”, meaning using a centre on their first week, or even first night. It is a piece of information useful to start a follow-up of these situations and their paths along the homelessness welfare system. Moreover, the analysis of spells and episodes is constrained by the mixed notions of space and time of the interviewees, especially for the rough sleepers. The homeless situation is shown as existent before being visible, or on the streets, and several gateways to the system are identifiable, namely hospitals, other homeless persons, rehab processes, etc.

There are not evident grounds on the existence of “street solidarity” but more a volatile need to combine efforts to achieve goals and needs. Several aspects like looking for protection, sharing, etc. intertwine with many explanations from social wellbeing, competition, survival.

The homelessness paths are affected by the lack of safety nets, in many cases, existing from early life stages. Along the life trajectory, the contact with the social services may be directly related to social exclusion, or pass by a first level of support like unemployment benefits.

There is a hiatus between the two levels that leaves the individuals without continuity of support, being forced to get to a more precarious situation. The impact of welfare benefits was characterised as being complementary to limbo situations but insufficient either to prevent homeless if additional crisis happens, or to get out of homelessness if the individuals do not have resources of their own.

Lack of family support is evident but cannot be read exclusively as a matter of rejection or conflict. Poor economic conditions may make it impossible to support family members.

To this regard, crisis susceptibility perpetuates upon family generations. According to Esping-Andersen (1999) the product markets and the family are the two other main sources, along with the State, for the management of social risks. Post-industrial society carries new categories of social risks since previous “forms of security” tend to become more and more precarious.

The dynamics of the life-paths highlight that the social contingency that characterises modern societies is neglect, namely by following a generalisation of homelessness risk factors without dynamically understand the interaction with structural factors. Furthermore, the types of social ruptures are not always specific to the homeless population. The particular factor is their incapacity to find alternatives and overcoming ways when there isn't a safety-net or individual social capital. In sum, fall into visibility is inevitable if preventive measures are not developed. While in a situation of homelessness, the psychological obstacles to use social provisions tend to increase. The level of stigmatisation, and consequently of less motivation, was higher for the rough sleepers.

The homeless perceptions on responsibility allocation for getting to the current homelessness situation do not necessarily reflect a concern with social background conditions, but their own role and decisions. The construction of homelessness as an individual responsibility was also patent at the interviewee's discourses. However, the general social and welfare conditions are more often criticised when regarding not being able to find a solution to the street situation, for reasons like lack of provision, unemployment, housing market and immigration policies.

Processes for Legitimising Support Entitlement

By what was stated, it is possible to affirm that, to a certain extent, it is the will and not the capacity to find a solution that is rewarded. The support services evaluate the clients persistence on seeking employment, which is the social reinsertion key-stone, under socioeconomic conditions unfavourable for them (undifferentiated skills, old age, health issues, long unemployment and so on). A dropout can be blamed on the individual's incapacity to find their social insertion. In other words, the care logic is of also being morally accepted as deserving.

As Declerck (2001) states, the social workers are allocated with a surveillance responsibility so that the homeless population does not take advantage of the support system, meaning that they protect the richness of the rich. They must believe in the happiness social project that should be followed by the clients so that pathologies can be eliminated not threatening social organisation. The socioeconomic constraints are neglected underneath the reinsertion phantasm that allocates to the individuals the demonstration of their will to be reintegrated.

The subject is controlled by the institutional dominant practices that detain the power to define which social norms are considerable moral. It is for the ones in a social disadvantage situation that the surveillance increases and no negotiating capacity are recognized (Foucault, 1975).

The stigmas (Goffman, 1980) attributed to the homeless population are the object of differentiated and variable types of answers, like: the physical deformities may cause vulnerability; “individual blames” may, or not, be found under the same social circumstances. For instance, unemployment caused by labour exploitation generates sympathy but due to alcoholism is more easily blamed on the person, neglecting other social factors. On the other hand, the two poles of interviewees enhance the effects that risk society places on the more vulnerable social groups.

The entitlement is defined by strict parameters in parallel to subjective factors that reveal several symbolic images of the social workers. Thereafter, the “slackers”, or incompetent due to their individual lacks (irresponsibility, laziness, etc.), are considered only deserving of temporary or emergency support; the “slackers”, as vulnerable, care for protection but their so-called incapability perpetuate their assisted condition (women, children, elderly), and the “unwilling victims” that for structural reasons are temporarily on a housing exclusion situation but without having lost their competencies. Winning sympathy is synonymous with a moral value assessment of the person in need; of their personal responsibility and the result of a comparison with the social worker’s own position (Rosenthal, 2000).

The priority needs approach, namely to women, follows a “handicapologie” logic (Marpsat e Firdion, 1998) that can be denominated of an “advantage with limits”, meaning “It follows that it is unacceptable for women to be left homeless, while the fact of their not having paid employment is judged acceptable, providing they respect the feminine gender roles. Men, by contrast, are identified with ‘outdoors’ and with ‘work’, and consequently their presence in the street is judged more acceptable and may be viewed as a punishment for transgressing the role of the worker who supports his family.” (Marpsat, 2000).

In parallel to a lack of preventive and timely measures, service allocation is based on a dichotomised basis: support for the vulnerable, following a compassionate approach, and, on the other hand, for those that still have some sort of individual social capital (like family network) with higher chances of success, following a maximum efficacy perspective. To this last extent, social reinsertion capacity is being allocated to the individuals.

Thereafter, diversity cares to be addressed by social provision in a specialised and integrated way, empowering the users, in order to reach sustainability. What the perceptions of the interviewee have allowed to highlight is that services criteria and the selection of priority need group’s takes to perpetuate social segregation and marginalisation. On one side specialised services according to certain needs and socio-demographic characteristics exists, but on the other, many situations (mainly single homeless men without any particular vulnerability, including the immigrants and young people) are integrated on shared structures without integrated services to correspond to specific needs (from health to documents). In this sense, the term diversity embraces several dimensions, from cultural to needs and socio-demographic profiles.

It is considered that the users should be included at the service design level, meaning that their participation and empowerment would only improve the potential of social support. Social policy sustainability depends on the capacity to plan in a bidirectional way, meaning also incorporating the suggestions and assessment from the users, or from the bottom up.

Including the clients as active citizens goes beyond the flexibility rules by also respecting their times for finding their own solutions. To this extent, respecting the time of the needy person and not imposing the support, as a social normalisation instrument, is fundamental. There was no consensus of the social workers perspectives regarding if the client must “deserve” the support, or if the right to be assisted should be based on an adaptation of the services to the client’s needs. The logics of deserving and non-deserving still shape the

allocation of benefits (between social workers, boroughs, etc.), existing or not a law to define the entitlement conditions.

The competition among NGOs that was identified as a constraint to networking is also a consequence of the scarce governmental funding. To this regard, a liberal approach requires organisations to demonstrate their results, which is difficult to control since multiple contingent factors influence homelessness trends (for example asylum seekers, unemployment growth, etc.), by registering the decrease of rough sleepers. However, in other countries, the NGOs justify their need for existing by showing the seriousness of the phenomenon via significant rates of homelessness. Consequently, achieving a single quantitative figure is polemic and is a consequence of the several definitions given to homelessness, which is well exemplified between the countries under analysis.

Essay for a Bottom Up Approach: Suggestions for the Homeless Services Development

A cross-national analysis cares for specific considerations on the several social support systems. It was not the scope of this paper to perform such an in depth analysis but to point out the main shared constraints according to the interviewees. For instance, the line of social emergency that controls the hostel places in Paris and the statutory homeless and priority need groups in London, although based on different social policies, both share constraints. Thereafter, the suggestions given by the respondents that can be enunciated as common eliminate other more concrete observations, which reflect national specificities.

To a certain extent, the social workers relatively to the social policy makers may be considered the bottom level of decision making processes. The social workers mentioned the necessary conditions to overcome the constraints of the social provision system. The lack of resources is the main blocking factor.

It is applicable to financial resources, which scarcity translates on a human resources shortage taking to the impossibility of developing personalised reinsertion plans and follow-ups, multidisciplinary teams, active networking and partnerships between institutions acting on several domains (employment, health, housing, etc.) and the social workers. It is necessary to provide more human resources for a more effective key working.

Lacking resources was also several times referred in terms of housing solutions, being social owned, low-cost or through schemes of cooperation with the private sector for those that cannot afford their own housing.

Moreover, services, from access to benefits, employment and health, care to be provided in articulation with the shelters. It is by contemplating several combinations of types of needs that diversity can be addressed.

The creation of intermediary support services for “needs in transition” cares also for further development, namely infrastructures such as therapeutic units for those coming out of the hospitals and without the capacity to arrange accommodation. The necessity to have services for those without possible employment insertion is also of importance and causes us to recognize the existing limits of social reinsertion. On the other hand, the temporary character of certain measures of social protected employment is associated with the on/off cycles that can be triggered. The lack of services for families is also a concern.

Sustainable work is fundamental to avoid repetition of homelessness episodes and needs to continue long after housing attribution. It is enhanced that situations of social isolation persist among the council housed cases that should be involved on activities, such as the occupational.

The social workers are privileged sources for understanding the accumulation of social handicaps when preventive and timely answers are lacking. In this sense, getting to the hidden homeless is of main relevance for avoiding those situations where people end up on the streets. The financial costs are obviously lower at the preventative level.

On their hand, the homeless highlight the need to control the social workers' practices and to develop a good practices guide. They agree that more resources are essential to have a personalised accompaniment (time to be listen and access to more concrete answers) and also for creating smaller scale services (example clusters with key-workers). The development of integrated answers (employment, social benefits, documentation, health and so on) at the shelter level would contribute to alleviating feelings of disorientation. Tensions arrive from perceptions of being permanently in a standby situation and social exclusion is perpetuated by the interdependence of benefits, based on work inclusion. Cooperation and empowerment is favoured, including the importance of working with the client's motivation.

In general, the homeless asserted that broader communication needs promotion, including between themselves, social workers, media, social research and policy makers. Many times rough sleeping is the way to obtain information on the existing support services via the homeless network. Information should get to the recently arrived in an easier and more effective way. The outreach teams are the main avenue for reaching those that do not, or cannot, seek support.

One other suggestion was to manage the schedules for basic services provision, like showers and laundry, according to the specific housing situation of the clients. In parallel, specialised shelters are necessary, among others, for the youth and families. The assistance should not be restricted to housing including also furnishing support.

The clients have well valorised several existing forms of support, like: the equipment available at the day centres for time occupation and the development of competencies; activities that promote users participation, namely regular meetings with managers and social workers; group debates on relevant social themes, like drugs and alcohol, specially for the youth; health care by the regular presence of medical staff at the shelters; creation of therapeutic residences for those coming out of the hospitals or with chronic diseases. It was considered that these suitable services should continue to be developed.

Concluding Note

On a first level, the paper presented for the conference "Diversity in Cities: New Models of Governance" explores the perceptions of the social workers and the homeless regarding social provision design following the empirical work. At a second stage, it discusses the implications of risk discourses on the social provision field. Finally, both perspectives are cross-checked seeking to meet the conference main topics, namely the debate on how can diversity be understood in order to contribute for the development of a sustained social provision system, which has to answer to diversified target groups (women, immigrants, rough sleepers, mental illness, drug and alcohol issues, etc.).

In sum, this short paper gives the "freedom of speech" to both social workers and the homeless from three European capital cities. It highlights that, although coming from distinct social policy measures, many constraints are shared. Sharing that embraces social workers, the homeless and countries. Thereafter, under a social policy redefinition, the participation of the several social actors (key-workers, clients, policy makers, mass media, and civic society) should be included by promoting a cooperative approach and empowering practices.

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