

Home
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in
2030

Essays on possible futures

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The Y-Foundation is one of the key national developers of the Housing First principle in Finland. The Y-Foundation offers affordable rental housing and encourages public discussion on themes related to homelessness. The Y-Foundation is the fourth largest landlord in the country. It tries to support their residents' social and financial well-being. The Foundation also provides new solutions and knowledge on housing, like employment activities. The Y-Foundation was founded in 1985.

Homelessness in 2030

Essays on possible futures



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I HAD A DREAM. In the dream I saw a clear perception of a new book called *Homelessness in 2030* including essays from leading researchers around the globe. When I woke up, I started to feel insecure whether it was a good idea after all. But once again my trustworthy colleagues, critics and curators Taina Hytönen and Saija Turunen from the Y-Foundation convinced me it was worth trying. We started by making a list of researchers who we could invite to write about the future of homelessness – for once without footnotes. We sent the invitation out to 20 researchers and almost everyone said yes. The only guidance for the essays was the title *Homelessness in 2030*, a word count and an always necessary deadline. The essays arrived, but still a lot of practical work was to be done to turn the bundle of texts into this book. No wonder Taina and Saija commented, with a tongue in cheek, that maybe I could dream a little less in the future.

What has come together is an inspiring and illuminating collection of visions for the future. The idea of this book is to distill the wisdom needed to end homelessness from all the knowledge the leading researchers have gained from their extensive work. The personal traits in the essays are recognisable, but also a lot of surprising playfulness can be found. This has not been an easy exercise and I want to thank all the writers. It has been amazing to see the open-mindedness with which the researchers have dropped their formal academic straight-jackets and thrown themselves into this writing adventure. I also want to thank warmly UN Special Rapporteur (and a very special person) Leilani Farha for taking the time to write valuable closing words to these texts.

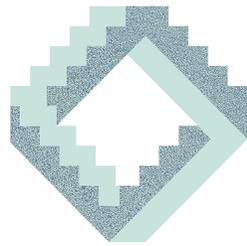
In recent years we at the Y-Foundation have built strong international links to our colleagues in many countries. Housing First Europe Hub, established by us and FEANTSA, is a good example of a permanent structure for our change of experiences and ideas. We all have our own battles in our countries, but we also share the global battle to end homelessness. In this, we have much in common and much to learn from each other. If the challenges sometimes feel unsurmountable, it is good to remember you have a lot of colleagues who share your vision and encourage you. This book is our modest contribution to keep the flickering light of hope burning. Every now and then I hear some cynical and skeptical comments claiming the idea of ending homelessness is a utopian ideology. But in a world where we see dystopia emerging around us each day, this is exactly what is needed: passion, solidarity and a lot of idealism.

I have a dream.

In Helsinki, 13 December 2018
Juha Kaakinen
CEO, Y-Foundation

Hopeful Visions

No one is Homeless. What is Missing?



The year is 2030. The setting is one of the European so-called “smart cities”. Homelessness has been eradicated here. The metropolitan homelessness initiative, launched in 2019, has been completely successful.

Julien Damon

Fuelled with a mix of Housing First programmes, comprehensive health-related services and anti-social behaviour orders, the initiative has succeeded in meeting its public goals. As some countries in the developing world have declared themselves slum-free countries, the municipality is proud to be labelled by the European Commission a “homeless-free” city.

For the most part, local homeless have been provided with stable housing and support. Some have been evicted from the city and sent back to their country of origin, usually far from the external border of the European Union.

Whatever we think about the policies and their ideological backgrounds, they achieved this: neither inhabitants nor tourists may witness any homeless people on the streets. But, regarding atmosphere in the different neighbourhoods, it sounds bizarre sometimes. What is being missed? What is really lacking?

Indeed, some people do miss rough sleepers and beggars, whether they acknowledge it or not. Having ended homelessness does not upset anyone. But it has had unexpected side effects. Let's investigate.

In 1972, the American sociologist Herbert Gans published, in the highly praised *American Journal of Sociology*, an article entitled “The Positive Functions of Poverty”. Still considered an influential classic, it is still worth reading in 2030. Gans details the benefits the more affluent classes derived from the existence of poverty and the poor. He states that the conventional view of poverty, in affluent societies, “is so dedicated to identifying the dysfunctions of poverty, both for the poor and the nation, that at first glance it seems inconceivable to suggest that poverty could be functional for anyone.” Gans goes on to explain fifteen positive functions of poverty.

Let's turn to the contemporary context of eradicated homelessness. Let's say, more precisely, that

in 2030 rough-sleeping has been eliminated from our European smart-city. This quick foresight exercise will help us point how homelessness can actually be beneficial to society. As strange and repulsive as it may sound.

We won't treat fifteen subjects in-depth. Assuming we are in 2030, we will only distinct three areas of functions homeless, rough-sleepers and beggars used to have: economic, social, political.

Disappeared economic functions

A first economic function of homelessness and the homeless was to ensure part of society's “dirty work” was done. For the majority of the connected and clean streets of the 2030 metropolis, most of the physically dirty and dangerous human jobs have been replaced by robots, digital devices and sensors. Waste scavenging has been integrated into the city waste management policy. Now, there seems no need to have destitute people to complete jobs which the general public still perceive to be beneath them, such as cleaning the streets of thrown-away empty cans.

A second economic function of homelessness and poverty was to subsidise a variety of economic activities, with low wages. It was also to support innovation in medical practice with homeless people acting as guinea pigs in experiments. More

Having ended
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While homeless people were moved into transitional and permanent housing, the entire shelter industry had to be radically transformed.

generally, they sell their blood in order to make a little money. By 2030, we no longer see homeless waiting in line to have a needle put in their arms for up to two hours. It is said that, in the city, we'll never run out plasma because we are now able to produce it from synthetic biology. Homeless blood is not needed anymore. Homeless persons are no longer being paid for that.

The existence of homeless – it is a third economic function – used to provide work for institutions and people, in charities and public bodies. For decades, homelessness has created jobs for a number of occupations and professions that serve the homeless or protect society from them. Since the ending of rough sleeping, a huge management effort has been required. While homeless people were moved into transitional and permanent housing, the entire shelter industry had to be radically transformed. And lots of people had to be trained in order to change jobs. Current unemployment is partly due to these still ongoing difficult conversions. Today, there is not one former social worker who laments the disappearance of the plight of homeless people. But some of them regret the good old days of their professional careers. Across Europe, the fight against homelessness has been a driver for social innovation. Now that the battle is won, innovation has left the social arena.

A last economic function originated from homeless consumption. They consumed goods other did not want. In that way, they prolonged usefulness of day old bread or second-hand clothes. They often offered a new lease of life for coats, tents, sleeping bags. Nowadays, none of this stuff appears to be as convenient as it used to be.

Lost social functionalities

In the social field – in 2030 we are asked not to use the word *societal*-, it has been highlighted that a surprising benefit for society was the contribution to homelessness, in itself, to the social order.

Homeless, vagrants, tramps, hobos, travellers, could be identified and punished as alleged or real dangerous deviants. As a potential threat to the foundations of a society and to the well-being in a city, the existence of homeless had an important purpose: to uphold the legitimacy of conventional norms. Without them any longer in the city, many misbehaviours and counter-examples may be now lacking. As a social function, homelessness was very practical when you needed to criticise some behaviours or life choices such as doing drugs, cutting off with relatives, binge-drinking. Even if these matters and deviant activities remain, they are not as easily denounced and stigmatised as when they were associated with suspicious persons and marginalised people.

More broadly, homelessness had some power in terms of social stratification and status quo. It helped to guarantee the status of those who were not as poor as the homeless. Having homeless on the streets could authorise a permanent comparison between the different classes of people. In 2030, without this moral compass it is harder to know precisely where you stand and easier to believe that you belong to a vast middle-class society.

In terms of culture, homeless people, and parts of the city they used to live in (slums, shantytowns, skid rows), have operated, since a very long time, as sources of inspiration. The 2030 clean and smart metropolis might not be as inspiring as the poet,

the movie maker or the song writer would need it to be. A sterilised and sanitised city proves not very attractive for all kind of artists. To a certain extent, cultural originality relies on social marginality. Without any visible homeless and without freak and exotic neighbourhoods, urban life fades over time. Mainstream way of living needs some marginality components to compare with.

In a more spiritual sense, the disappearance of homeless and beggars appears to be a big issue. Years ago, the city's inhabitants had the opportunity to give some spare change when they felt sorry for destitute children or elderly. In 2030, it is no longer possible to take pity on them, because they all vanished from public space. Without homeless and without the opportunity to give money and assistance to the homeless it may become harder to do a good turn once a day or once a week. Functionally, homelessness was very advantageous for charity affairs. It allowed people to buy redemption and to try to achieve their salvation.

Extinct political controversies

Homeless were both economically and socially useful. They were politically helpful as well. On the one hand, they did participate less than other groups. Hence, they weren't themselves a target for electoral campaigning. On the other hand, they were targeted as a main social problem. Homelessness had thus been, for decades, a very challenging issue, at the heart of important political controversies. Without them, no more discussion about deep poverty and inequality. Those important debates, though, remain critical, whether some people sleep rough or not.

In fact, the end of homelessness raises new disputes about the underclass. *Underclass* is considered, in 2030, to be the prevailing synonym of *lumpenproletariat* (in Marx's words), the lowest stratum of the proletariat. Among other groups criminals, vagabonds and vagrants, prostitutes

were usually included in this category. The term has been extensively used from say 1848 to 2030 with very negative connotations. Marxist theorists described the underclass devoid of class consciousness, exploited by reactionary and counter-revolutionary forces. They contrasted it with the praised proletariat.

In their view, the lumpenproletariat is not even part of the "reserve army of labour" but it could be enlisted to combat the true proletariat in its efforts to bring about the end of bourgeois society. In a 2030 smart city there is no more lumpenproletariat, nor is there anything like proletariat.

To put it in a nutshell, having terminated homelessness does not mean reaching the end of history (as Marx predicted it). But it is certainly having removed the concerns about inequality from the public agenda.

At last, the question "what is missing?", raised in the title of this paper, opens up new prospects trying to answer another question: "was Marx so wrong?". The 19th century philosopher continues to be functional to tackle some concerns of the 21st century, such as the persistence of homelessness.

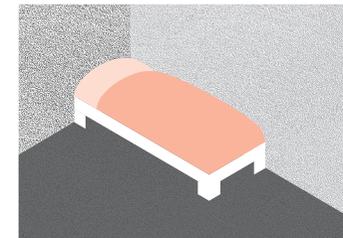
Conclusion

This functional and fictional analysis might sound overly cynical; however, there is truth in it. Although this significant part of reality is hard to swallow. Envisioning a city without homeless is a way to stress how thought-provoking the issue is.

The ultimate truth is that homelessness, in 2030, is certainly not being missed by former homeless themselves. Obviously, the benefits of not having homeless on the streets outweigh any drawback of losing homelessness.

JULIEN DAMON is a sociologist, Associate Professor at Sciences Po. Former Head of the “social affairs” department at the French Prime minister think-tank, he is also a scientific advisor of the French national school of social security (En3s).

2030 Twenty Thirty



Bed of cardboard
stiffening body
a breath of frost

Marcus Knutagård

It was the first of September when Dexter slowly woke up to the alarm. He looked at his phone and saw that the time was only four minutes past eight in the morning. He pushed the snooze button, rolled over and let himself disappear into that great space of being half awake, half asleep, knowing that it was Sunday.

A memory of the smell of the shelter brought him back to that place where he lived more than twelve years ago. The shelter was, unlike utopia, a real place, a world within the world, but a place for the others – a heterotopia. It is fascinating how a scent can bring you back to forgotten places. Most of the time the smell was less favourable, but the smell that brought Dexter back to the shelter was the one of yellow pea soup with pork. To make it a really great dish, mustard is the key. Most of his fellow shelter residents loved the soup and it was one of those dishes that you longed for. Thursdays were the pea soup days. He recalled one Thursday when the pea soup was delivered by another kitchen. The expectation was high before the lunch, but when the soup was served the disappointment abruptly changed the atmosphere around the table. The soup had been blended into a puree that made the small pieces of pork disappear into the yellow sea. Small things can often make a huge difference, not only when it comes to soup, but also how you feel as a human being.

Pressing the snooze button was an activity that Dexter enjoyed, some don't. A minimum of three times per morning was just right for him to get started. He didn't really keep count and often he moved on into the dream world as soon as his fingertip connected with the screen.

His mother phoned and almost yelled at him in an angry voice saying:

– You told me that you had quit that sort of business.

Dexter was confused and asked his mother what she was on about. She said that she thought that

he had stopped with forgery and that she was very disappointed and sad that he had fallen back into this behaviour.

– You mean my student ID-card?

Dexter had had the possibility of taking a course at the University working together with social work students and experts by experience. The course was on how social work practice could be developed to mend the gap that exists between social work professionals and clients. For Dexter, taking a university course and getting a student ID card was an amazing thing. He was extremely proud of his achievements, so he took a photo of the card and posted it on social media; shortly after, his mother called.

The funny thing about dreams is that they tend to take a route of their own liking. Sometimes Dexter remembered what he had dreamt, but often the actual content of the dream disappeared as soon as he opened his eyes. Many times, however, the dreams during the snoozes left a presence, sticky as Nattō, that reminded him throughout the day of a specific feeling.

The digits on his phone were stiff and he often pressed the wrong one because the size of his thumb. The digitalization of social services was the new black. A new app for applying for income support had been developed, making it easier to apply for money and with less paperwork. Unfortunately, the application didn't work with his old phone since it didn't have a touchscreen. Smartphones were something that was more or less a basic need but they were not something you could apply to get money for from the social services.

The alarm went off again, this time Dexter turned it off, looked at the time and decided to make some coffee. It was now eight thirty in the morning and by the looks of it, it was going to be a great day. The sun shone through the curtains, bringing in both light and the very pleasant feeling of warmth on the wooden floor. He remembered

The support given was voluntary and non-conditional.

that it took him almost ten months to get the curtains up from the day he moved into his flat. It didn't have anything to do with laziness, rather the feeling of not being sure if he could call his flat his home. He got his flat from the Housing First programme. He didn't really know what it was all about at the time, but the social workers told him that the basic idea was that housing was a precondition for taking care of other issues in life. The support given was voluntary and non-conditional. Even though the social workers told him this on several occasions he found it hard to believe. All the other housing alternatives that he had stayed at kicked you out if you didn't comply with the rules; it tended to be more rules and stricter than in regular housing.

The memories of the past kept popping up in the present in the weirdest locations and situations. During really happy moments, the feeling of a stiffening body on a cardboard bed would come back like a reflection in a mirror of a placeless place that doesn't exist, but still reflects back into the reality here and now. During those days on the street, having no place to call home was probably one of the most present concerns. The constant threat of having to leave one place for another created a mental and physical fatigue that almost made you immobile. He got the impression that the strategies for dealing with homelessness was to make him invisible to other citizens, but to make homeless people visible internally to the authorities' control apparatus.

Being here, at this moment, in this existence sometimes overwhelmed him when he thought back to how it used to be. The practise of constantly

thinking of people in homeless situations as others and trying to fix their problems with solutions for them rather than for society as a whole. The innovations at that time were building low-cost housing for the poor, back-door entrance for the less advantaged, using punitive design that makes it impossible to take the public commons into use, park benches with a slope or metal spikes in the concrete of a street corner to prevent people from sleeping there. The previous mytopian society almost assumed that there were people that were more suitable for being homeless than others.

It was as if the society was built predominantly on the things that were good for single individuals – what was mine and how it could benefit me. The consequences these actions had on the society were ignored and the physical walls of the world and the lives between them constituted a mix of what could become a dystopian future based on myopia, a short-sightedness of the actions made. The Austrian artist, Friedensreich Hundertwasser, had an idea that humans have three skin layers: the skin, the clothes and the living environment. The physical walls and the facades thus have an important impact on us as humans. The problem with the structures is that they tend to let us think that they constitute the actual frame, or the canvas, that set the limits of what is possible to change within. We often try to change, fix and improve within the frameworks that are already set up rather than trying to create what we think is good and adjust the frame after that.

It is difficult to say when the turn became a turn. But probably, the very obvious signs of climate change had an impact. The more than obvious fact that society once more had turned back into a divided world where the eight richest billionaires in the world controlled the same amount of wealth as the poorest half. Of the total wealth generated in a year, eighty-two per cent went to the richest one per cent, while the poorest half ended up with

nothing. The concentration of wealth had become as normal as the level of inequality during the 19th century. The turn became real to Dexter when he realized that his flat was really his home and when he got a basic income that was unconditional without any obligations. The idea had been tried in different settings before, but when the universal basic income was introduced to every citizen, that made all the difference. It really changed not only Dexter's perception of himself but also how people started to perceive each other, not as jobless or houseless but as citizens. The introduction of basic income changed the frame of what was possible to imagine. Almost utopian, an imagined place, but at the same time it created the very real place that we now call ourtopia.

He pulled the milk carton out from the fridge, finding himself with a great smile on his face. This action of getting milk for the coffee seems so taken for granted that it often passes by without any further reflection. Putting the key into your own door, finding your own toothbrush still being there where you left it, being able to have and keep food in the fridge. All these basic things that are so important. Basic human needs are universal, they do not differ from city to city, or country to country, having, doing, loving and being are universal needs but they can be satisfied in more or less sustainable ways. The short-sightedness from the past was left behind when it became more

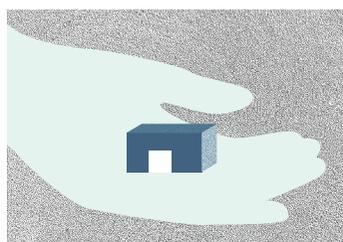
than evident that the globe needed a space, a safe and just zone for humanity – in between a social foundation and an ecological ceiling.

Just before his mother passed away, he sat next to her bed, holding her hand. Over the years their conversations had been drenched in upset feelings and angry words. The silence after his mother's death was drenched in tears, but at that moment when he sat next to her, they came to a point where no more words needed to be spoken, they had said what they wanted to say to each other. Having the opportunity of saying what you need to say face-to-face to his mother that he loved, was something he truly treasured. His mother died of old age, something that many of his friends didn't get the chance to. Dexter often thought about the fact that we exist as long as those who live still remember us. He visited the cemetery now and then and brought flowers to the grave. They talked again about old stories from the past. He mentioned again his experience from the poetry workshop years ago down at the wellness centre. He told his mum about how a bunch of people that met up at the workshop almost sat there like frozen blocks of fish. As the words flowed in the seminar room, the immobilization caused by the lack of previous recognition, melted away – drop by drop. After a breath of frost, the crowd shifted the focus from I to We, and then illness became wellness.

The introduction
of basic income
changed the frame
of what was possible
to imagine.

MARCUS KNUTAGÅRD is a researcher and Senior Lecturer at the School of Social Work, Lund University, Sweden. His research interests include housing policy, homelessness and the importance of place for how social work is organized – its moral geography. Knutagård's research interests also concern social innovation from a welfare perspective, with a particular focus on service user influence in practice research.

A Professional Service for Housing Stabilization



As countries with advanced economies have come to reconcile with an indefinite future of housing affordability shortages, the need for a formally-organised sector of social work practice in housing stabilization has been recognised as necessary for addressing an expected and periodic rate of housing emergencies and homelessness.

Dennis P. Culhane

This new sector has absorbed and rationalised the fragmented systems that previously included more loosely-coordinated emergency shelters, temporary accommodations, housing advice, emergency assistance, and landlord-tenant mediation services. This newly-established sector (although a few countries have had such a sector for some years now) sits alongside other housing, health, human services and workforce agencies, and has a defined set of responsibilities and expected outcomes. The Housing Stabilization Services department operates like other social insurance programmes, but with greater deft, speed and fewer eligibility controls, in order to be responsive to crisis situations, akin to roles of urgent care and emergency departments within health care systems.

The Housing Stabilization Service (HSS) was established to create a stronger, centralised coordinating function in an otherwise diverse and scattered set of emergency assistance programmes. Establishment of a central authority has also enabled this service to forefront an overarching goal of “housing stabilization.” While various services may have more specific objectives, such as providing safe overnight shelter, the housing stabilization focus is no longer lost in the shuffle. Every client is acknowledged by the larger HSS, which assures that each person receives access to a proper assessment in a timely fashion, and is referred and served at the appropriate level of intervention befitting their circumstances, beyond the usual emergency food and shelter assistance.

Core Services

The core services provided by the HSS include homelessness prevention and rehousing assistance. A variety of other services are also provided, both directly and through referral, in support of those core efforts. Clients faced with housing emergencies may enter the service system through a variety of doors, depending on their circumstance (after

hours admission to emergency shelter, for example, versus walk-in office hour services for people presenting with eviction complaints). At initial entry, basic screening information is provided and immediate needs for food, shelter and safety are determined. Immediate needs are addressed either on site or by transport to appropriate programmes within three hours of presentation, and an appointment scheduled for a further assessment by a professional HSS social worker within 24 hours.

The HSS social work assessment is tiered according to the level of presenting need and based on a “progressive engagement” model. Absent obvious exacerbating circumstances, clients are presumed to be universally eligible for “light touch” services. The initial assessment process focuses on these near-term service objectives that can include transportation assistance, phone calls to relatives and friends of the clients, referral and transit to emergency health services, and emergency food and shelter. Flexible emergency cash assistance is also provided up to a basic amount. A benefits eligibility review is offered to ensure that clients

The Housing Stabilization Services department operates like other social insurance programmes, but with greater deft, speed and fewer eligibility controls.

are receiving the various income and entitlement services to which they are eligible.

If formal conflict mediation services are indicated, either with landlords or family members, trained HSS mediators are scheduled for intervention within 48 hours. Conflict mediation in the case of an impending housing emergency is intended to be intensive, but brief. Mediators can negotiate agreements between the parties with clear terms, and the HSS can provide structured payments, including payments paid directly by the HSS or clients, to avert or reverse housing loss. Clients in mediation agreements are assigned a case manager who does a follow up with the parties at scheduled intervals, beginning with 48 hours and with decreasing frequency, but up to six months following the agreement.

If negotiated returns to housing are not feasible or indicated, as in the case of domestic violence or victims of fire, a rehousing plan is developed in consultation with the HSS social worker. HSS retains a list of emergency apartments that it master leases for placements up to 30 days and has lists of participating landlords for units in the private or subsidised rental market for periods of longer duration. A “rehousing benefit” is available with defined terms that are clear to both the HSS staff and the client. They include a relocation grant, of first and last month’s rent and security deposit, provided to everyone with a rehousing plan, move-in expenses and assistance with the housing search. Incremental periods of rental assistance are also provided in approval segments of three to six months, up to one year, with varying client contributions depending on income. Assistance beyond one year is based on continuing presenting need, and accessibility of mainstream rental or housing assistance programmes. The HSS responsibility can be up to two years in duration, during which time mainstream income, employment and housing assistance programmes are intended to provide

Conflict mediation in the case of an impending housing emergency is intended to be intensive, but brief.

for sustained assistance as indicated. But rental assistance beyond two years has to be assumed by mainstream services, if the HSS is to be able to use its resources on a rolling basis for new cases, and to avoid accumulation of long term funding liabilities (mainstream agencies providing a “stop loss” or reinsurance function).

For clients who have significant health or behavioural health needs, or who are exiting institutions, a more intensive intervention service, based on the Critical Time Intervention model, is provided. CTI is a team-based service with an intended duration of nine months. Clients are screened into the service at multiple intervention points, including emergency/urgent care departments of hospitals, jails and prison, detoxification programmes, psychiatric crisis services, and other HSS entry points. The teams include professional social workers with behavioural health training, and peer specialists. The goal of CTI is to initiate work with a client as soon as possible to avoid a crisis in the transition back to the community or housing, in a relatively intensive manner (daily contact at first). After the intensive first three months of transition supports, services become less intensive and focus on sustainment. Finally, the last three months are focused on transitioning the client to on-going service supports in the community and on social inclusion.

The HSS holds as its primary goal that housing stabilization in conventional housing be achieved in 30 days, and that no one remains homeless or

in emergency accommodation beyond that period. Contracts, payment incentives and provider performance reviews are based on success in meeting these goals. Funder and provider conferences are held quarterly to review the barriers to success at both a client and systems level, to troubleshoot and problem-solve. Recognising that affordable housing supply deficit ultimately may make successful housing stabilization difficult, the HSS should provide ongoing public reports regarding their work and needed supply goals to do their job effectively.

Conclusion

The HSS has provided a single focus of responsibility and accountability for addressing housing emergencies, has led to a professionalisation of local approaches to housing crises, and has created a clear set of outcomes that are expected community-wide and from all of the participating programmes. A broad range of supportive services are needed to achieve success, and so an important role of the HSS is to negotiate priority access to mainstream health, employment and social services, as well as to traditional emergency food and shelter services. So, while the HSS has defined responsibilities, it cannot achieve its goals without close collaboration and support from its partner agencies. The community now collectively recognises that a housing emergency and outright homelessness present uniquely significant barriers to health and safety and require priority consideration by all social welfare systems. The HSS has been established to create a clear and central source of responsibility, for establishing protocol for practice, and for keeping the community informed of its success.

DENNIS P. CULHANE is Professor of social policy at the University of Pennsylvania, and formerly Director of research at the National Center on Homelessness among Veterans at the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

Homes for Homeless Women!



By 2030, the Housing First model will have established its position, and its principles will be assimilated as the basis for work to prevent homelessness throughout Finland. As a result of this, housing policy, especially the production of rental housing, will also always take into account vulnerable groups.

Riitta Granfelt

Through the establishment of the Housing First principles and the experiences gained from its implementation, the themes of home and homelessness will have become an important part of housing and social policies and social work by 2030. An increasing amount of resources will be allocated every year to developing support services, and respect for housing social work will have grown substantially. Various supported-housing models based on permanent rental agreements will be available, both in scattered housing and communal alternatives. The specific features of women's homelessness will be understood, and these will guide housing social work among women.

Housing advice services for preventing homelessness

In 2030, one of the most successful areas of Finnish homelessness work, housing advice services, will have expanded nationally to be part of housing policy-focused social service work. It will be a flexibly available service for people living in different forms of housing, including rented housing in the private sector and owner-occupied housing. Along with the expansion of housing advice services, evictions will have become extremely rare, and evictions of families with children will have ceased completely. This will have been achieved by the development of co-operation models between housing advice services and child protection services.

In 2030, Finland will actively participate in the reception of people fleeing their own countries due to catastrophes caused by climate change and war-ridden and conflict areas. As a result of this, housing advice service work will fundamentally be multicultural work, and its significance and responsibility as part of work with immigrants will be well established. Housing advice teams will be multicultural, and the professionals will have close connections to multicultural peer

support work. A housing advisor's professional competence will include basic skills in trauma work and a gender-sensitive work orientation. It will be possible to conduct preventive housing social work almost completely through housing advice services. Because of this, professionals and peer support persons working in other housing social work tasks will be able to focus on ensuring and reorganising housing for people in extremely difficult situations, through the use of their multi-disciplinary, specialised skills.

Housing social work among women burdened by psychosocial problems

In 2030, women-specific housing social work, as part of work with marginalised women, will be a target of continuous development. The feminist approach to research on women's homelessness will anchor housing social work into structural social work and housing policy, as well as into all areas of homelessness work. Housing social work will have strong connections to both psychological and social scientific research, especially social work research.

Next, using examples from three generations, I will describe women's homelessness in difficult psychosocial situations, and the focal points of the related housing social work. My points of interest are the actions taken at various times and how these actions would be taken in the ideal situation in 2030, when long-term homelessness has been eradicated and its re-emergence can be effectively

Evictions of families with children will have ceased completely.

prevented. The case descriptions are fictitious, but I have constructed them on the basis of stories I have heard during my research on homeless women and those who have been released from prison.

Soila, the mid-1980s

Twenty-year-old Soila entered prison in the mid-1980s; homeless, unemployed, abused, depressed, and anxious, with severe withdrawal symptoms. A stabbing had left her with a permanent disability. Soila had learnt already before school age that society had no place for people like her. Her substance abuse had begun when she was 11 years old, and she had lived alone without adult protection from the age of 15, when she left reform school. She had become mother to a baby girl when she was 18, and her daughter had been placed in a children's home almost as a newborn, after this into foster care, and then somewhere else, of which the mother, Soila, had no knowledge.

After serving her prison sentence, Soila was released onto the streets of Helsinki and stayed in homeless shelters, with male acquaintances, or in the stairwells of buildings. She made several attempts to give up alcohol, went to AA meetings and entered rehab. With no housing, homeless, penniless, and defenceless, time and again, becoming free of drugs and alcohol proved impossible. Her life ended at the age of thirty, when she froze to death in the cold.

In 2030, housing would have been waiting for Soila as soon as she was released from prison. Individually tailored, intensive, long-term substance abuse treatment would have been available to her during her time in prison and immediately after. Violence and trauma work professionals would have helped her deal with the violence, abuse and rejection she had suffered at various points in her life. She would also have been helped through peer support to break away from violent relationships. She would have been helped to settle

into her own home, and support services would have been planned, in co-operation with a service centre that has a low threshold for women. She would have been welcome at the service centre regardless of her condition, at any time of day or night, and allowed to stay overnight if she so needed. Her support person would have been a woman well-experienced in peer support activities and with a background of crime and substance abuse. A housing social work professional would have helped her with all her everyday problems, especially in rebuilding her maternal identity.

Mira, early 2000s

At the beginning of the 2000s, Mira entered the same prison as her mother Soila 20 years earlier, with her small daughter. They settled in the mother-child department, their home being a cramped cell and the play area a small yard bordered by a wall. Six months later they were allowed to transfer to the mother-child department of a minimum-security prison. Mira's greatest concern was finding a place to live after being released from prison, and another serious concern was drugs and alcohol and her substance-abusing friends, including her daughter's father. He was also in prison at the time. Just before her release, Mira and her daughter were promised municipal rented housing in a suburban area on the outskirts of the city. They only lived there for a while, as Mira succumbed to taking and selling drugs together with her daughter's father as soon as he was released. The little girl was taken into care, and Mira returned to prison, in poor physical condition and emotionally broken. She lamented her failure as a mother and blamed herself for everything possible. She was too depressed and anxious to participate in a group rehab programme and no options for individual care were available. Eight months later she walked out of the prison gates and was able to keep away from drugs for only a couple of days.

If Mira had
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traumatised woman.

If Mira had been released from prison 25 years later in 2030, she would have been treated as a young, traumatised woman, burdened by her life experiences, who had lost custody of her child and deserved the best possible professional support to rebuild her maternal identity. Support of her mother's role would have been an integral part of rehabilitation work during her prison sentence and would have firmly included plans for housing after her release. Special attention would have been paid to ending the generational cycle of deprivation and homelessness, and the significance of the mother's homelessness and housing difficulties for the child's life would have been understood.

Rosa, 2030

Rosa is being released from minimum-security prison in 2030, aged about 30. She spent her early childhood in this same place with her mother, Mira. They had been transferred there from the prison in which her grandmother Soila had also served her sentence. Rosa's prison sentence has been spent looking after her small daughter, in psychosocial rehabilitation, and planning and arranging her release in cooperation with the housing social work people.

Rosa participated in her own rehabilitation plan even before arriving in prison. She hopes for rented accommodation in a peaceful suburban area. She knows that for decades, Finnish housing policy

has been based on the principle that everyone has the right to their own home. She feels both afraid and hopeful about living alone with her child. She longs for her own space and freedom, but fears violence and loneliness. She begins to think about different housing options together with the other female inmates and her own social worker. Home and its different meanings are a central theme in the rehabilitation group and are handled both separately and together with other topics.

Rosa has heard about a small housing community in which each person has their own home, separate from the rest of the community, but in which the community's activities and services are freely available. She becomes interested in the small community, which follows an ecological lifestyle in all possible ways. The community is for women only and offers different forms of psychotherapeutic support especially designed to meet the needs of traumatised women. The community is multicultural, and its members are mothers of different ages and women with no children. Mothers who have lost custody of their children or live apart from their children for other reasons can meet their children in the privacy of the community and receive support for rebuilding their roles as mothers. Psychotherapeutic and substance abuse rehabilitation are procured from outside the community in such a way that they can be used by either the whole community or individual dwellers. The psychotherapy and substance abuse professionals have a strong understanding of women's homelessness and marginalisation.

Rosa and her daughter visit the community several times during her prison sentence and move there immediately after being released. They live in the community for almost a year, then move to their own home in a peaceful suburban area. For several years, they visit the community now and then, and Rosa participates in its development together with professionals and present and former

community dwellers, as much as her studies permit. Rosa's little girl eagerly attends a nature kindergarten and wants to be a vet who cares for homeless animals when she grows up.

Housing social work in 2030

Supporting the professional growth and coping abilities of housing social work professionals is part of everyday work, and the emotional burden of outreach work, and the resulting risk of burnout and vicarious traumatisation are well-recognised. Diverse training and self-reflective development is available to workers, and their professional experience plays a key role in developing housing services and in homelessness prevention work in general. The development of housing social work combines professional experience and research.

Trauma work is an obvious part of housing social work among women, in which workers understand the relationship between violence and homelessness and traumatisation experienced at various stages of life. One client group that requires continuous training of workers is women and their children seeking asylum in Finland, and the nature of housing social work is indeed both gender and culture sensitive. The ethical principle of housing social work is respect for incompleteness and

vulnerability, and acceptance of the slow pace of the recovery process.

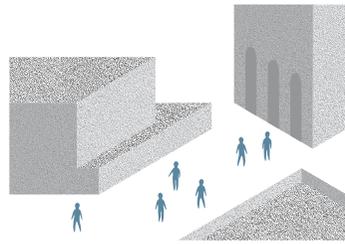
Housing social work is the story of the small steps on the broken path to resettling, and its related recovery. Although housing can be flexibly and adequately arranged, making a house a home is a completely separate project. Housing social work pays particular attention to the sustainability of the client relationship, the building of trust, and being present in the different situations of the client's life.

Homelessness is seen as a theme that brings together work to reduce marginalisation, which also makes it one of the core areas of social work with adults. Individual services are designed together with the client, which leads to sufficiently long-term, intensive service packages, comprising competence at both the basic and specialised level. Ecology is an important principle in housing and building a home and is also implemented in services guaranteeing housing. Housing services always strive for stability and avoid moves and temporary housing solutions. The anchoring of women-specific and gender-sensitive work as part of work preventing marginalisation continues to undergo development. Competence in psychotherapeutic work with women living in socially burdening situations receives special emphasis.

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Fair Enough



If only you could get your act together, they said. Easy! Life is what you make of it, they added. But when the ingredients of 'making a life' were not equally distributed, it was easy to see myself as worthless, different, and the only one in such a desperate situation. I was the problem – at least in the eyes of the others – and eventually I started to believe it myself: Sociologist Erving Goffman has called the phenomenon spoiled identity.

Maria Ohisalo and Saija Turunen

The worst part was trying to make a life without a home. The truth is, if the houses I have lived in had names, they would all be called "The Bouncy Castle". I bounced into housing and I bounced back again on to the street. Now I know that for years many people – professionals, organisations and institutions – were talking about me and people like me. I know that individually they all tried to help me.

I was asked to tell my story in front of different audiences so many times I lost count, and when the weather turned cold I saw my story in the newspapers and I felt the public's pity. Although I felt somewhat empowered because I was listened to, at the end of the day that pity did not keep me warm. And yet my story filled more pages and sold more papers.

At some point they started to talk about basic income; it was assumed that when everyone was given a certain amount of money, their problems would be solved! Yes, I had problems with my finances, but they were always combined with other problems like social and health matters. These problems had been building up for ages, and all the time without a permanent place to stay, a place to call home, a place to feel safe. Every aspect of my life was filled with the uncertainty of tomorrow. The constantly increasing costs of housing meant hard times even for people who were working; how was I supposed to get off the street? The basic income would not have helped, although it could have meant less hassle for me when applying for subsidies, giving me more time for something else. Realistically, in my case, it would not have given me more time to apply for work as originally intended, since I didn't even know where I would sleep the next night, and the nights after that.

Of course, I am lucky to live in Finland which, like many other Nordic countries, already has relatively well-functioning and robust social and health care services. The welfare states' reputation

is definitely there for a reason. But even so, you have to ask yourself where does wellbeing start? Where and when do you need subsidies if you cannot access them, or if they cannot reach you? What I would have really needed in the first place was somewhere to start each new day, well-rested and with one certainty – a place to call home. As with most ideas, the simple ones are the best – provide housing first.

It sounds simple and they called it the Housing First principle. But for me it was Me First, My Needs First. The 'big wheel' had started to turn when actors at all levels had taken co-ownership of the big issue – homelessness. And I was one of them, with them. Money was invested, targets were set and plans were made. And it worked! I have a home now, my own private space where I feel safe. A new door was opened for me – and now I am the one who decides when and for whom I open that door – the one that has my name on it. Because of circumstances, the first door that was offered to me did not turn out to be the right one. Luckily, I was given options to find the kind of housing that best served my needs. Most importantly, I was listened to, and I could decide. I now receive help and support, less so when I am not 'bouncing' and more when I need it.

In my view, Housing First was just the first phase in seeing housing as a human right. The next phase is to take matters further and talk about Universal Basic Assets. Giving money in the form of basic income, of course, safeguards economic wellbeing

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and encourages people to educate themselves, for example, but does it go far enough? In addition to basic income, Universal Basic Services provide good quality social and health services to anyone in need, everywhere. Universal Basic Assets not only encompass income and services but sees even housing as an important part of a good life, as an element of basic Human Rights.

Universal Basic Assets highlight the role that different assets play in our wellbeing and paves the way to a fairer society. It moves on from a traditional welfare state based on taxes. At the core of the idea of Universal Basic Assets are eight categories of 'assets' that everyone should be entitled to: communities, power, capital, data, spaces, natural resources, infrastructure and know-how. Ownership of these 'assets' could be public, private or open. Public assets being infrastructure and services, such as healthcare and education; private being land, money and housing. Open assets on the other hand could consist of the growing set of co-created, digital assets such as open source data. Cooperatives or social enterprises could, for example, own land and build housing that could be publicly supported, with the profits being invested in improving the wellbeing of previously homeless people and increasing their opportunity to influence the wider society. Indeed, in addition to income, services and, for example, housing, people need power. They need a voice to make

their rights recognised in all areas and processes in society.

In terms of homelessness, shifting from problem solving to recognising housing as a basic asset could be a step towards a world without homelessness.

I AM NOT a real person. My story is a compilation of only some aspects of the life histories and experiences of homeless women and men living in Finland. This story is a mixture of the past, the present and the future of homelessness. I have, on purpose, chosen an optimistic approach since for people like me, it is the hope of a better future that keeps me going.

In 2030, the work on combating homelessness has achieved some magnificent results. This is due to an understanding that welfare does not only consist of economic income but of a wider realisation of basic needs of life. The lady of this story is fictional, but her vision is real. We as researchers believe in her vision and want to promote social and housing policy that considers welfare as a wider concept or entity. We want to see a discussion and visions of new universals. Homelessness cannot be combatted without bold visions or without visions that come from people with lived experience. We as researchers can interpret these visions and connect them with research results and bring them to a wider public discussion.

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Dystopian Scenarios

No Homeless in 2030 – Best Practice from Donegary



The country and the characters in this story are all fictional, any similarities to them are purely coincidental.

Boróka Fehér and Nóra Teller

Hungary Our post-democratic country Donegary* is proud to announce that it is the first country in the world to successfully combat the problem of long term homelessness in the modern era! Actually, it is not the first time in history to achieve such success: we already enjoyed a prosperous period as far as housing is concerned during the socialist era between 1948 and 1989. Naturally, it had taken some time for the ~~Hungarian~~ Socialist Workers' Party (from here on: Party) first to nationalise and then to construct in addition enough housing units for everyone after the devastation of World War 2, but they managed. The housing stock increased by more than one million between 1949 and 1980, with periods of housing construction of prefab panels produced in highest standard housing factories, with elevators, balconies, wonderful aesthetics and for the benefit of the most dedicated workers and the political elite. Self-help housing made people become closer friends in rural areas, and the big socialist factories supported this process generously by not sanctioning the use of superfluous materials and devices for housing construction purposes. Although some people criticised the housing units of "reduced value" – small houses with no indoor bathroom, in some years 50 % of the Party's housing output had low standards, but was hence affordable for all, of course – in fact they offered much better conditions to people living in poverty, mostly Roma citizens, who built their homes concentrated on cheap construction sites in villages and remote areas. You know, they like to be among themselves anyway.

We learned a lot from this glorious Socialist Era. First, there were no homeless people. Second, normal people (the ones who wanted to take part in building our Socialist Dreamland) had a job, housing, food, and even possibilities for entertainment. People worked for 8 hours, rested for 8 hours and had 8 full hours for recreation. Mondays were the best, because the wise leaders

kept this day TV-broadcast free so that people go out and for example, do physical exercise or visit friends. Third, nobody had to be homeless! Of course, nobody *could be* homeless, as sleeping rough was forbidden. Not having a job was forbidden. Drinking was not forbidden, though, but people who had issues of alcohol or some kind of psychiatric problems, were taken care of in nice establishments built for that purpose, either temporarily or permanently.

The changes in our government after 1989 resulted in some turmoil. God knows why, unfortunately the beautiful big psychiatric hospitals and rehabilitation facilities were closed down, and due to the economic crisis many factories went bankrupt, closing down most workers hostels as well. So, the problem of unemployment and homelessness that had been plaguing the decadent western countries for decades popped up in our country as well. People were sleeping at train stations, in parks and they simply would not go home! Emergency homeless shelters were opened, then were transformed into temporary hostels, but people still kept sleeping rough, and more and more people came to the hostels.

Many governments failed to offer real solutions. They all insisted on looking to the west, instead of looking forward. During this era, several European projects focused on exchanging good practices between social service providers, decision makers, even service users – homeless people themselves. These projects generally transmitted lessons learnt in other European countries (mostly in Western and Northern Europe), and, in some cases, even in other parts of the world. Fancy buzzwords kept invading the thinking of the Donegarian professionals in those dark years. These included among others Housing First, housing-led services, focusing on needs instead of merits, focusing on strengths instead of needs and problems – and the list could go on. One suggestion received

from several partners was not to build more shelters, or focus on the improvement of shelters too much, but to place homeless people right into housing and offer them support in their homes and communities. Quite a radical idea indeed. And they claimed it worked, whereas we in Donegary all know now that it didn't. We had seen the truth on TV, on all fifteen public news channels, and we felt sorry for our foreign colleagues who were being fed lies through liberal propaganda about their own countries!

We must say at this point, that Donegarians are a unique people, unlike other nations in Europe – according to our *official beliefs*, our language and genes have their roots in Siberia, Mongolia, who knows, but far from here in any case. (Yes, some people might remember the times when we were to think that the Hungarian Donegarian and Finnish languages were related, but it is clearly not true. We ask our Finnish colleagues: do you understand Hungarian us? Obviously not. Do you ride horses? Obviously not. Does the sun go down after 4 PM in the winter in your country? Obviously not.) Thus, solutions that might have worked in other European countries, (including Finland), are doomed to fail in our country with such a different history, tradition, belief system, weather and fish-eating customs. We are happy to learn from scholars and service providers elsewhere, but all solutions need to be rooted in our fundamentally different culture.

After much heroic struggle, for example to rearrange the election system and the constitution to make sure that the so-called parliament will always support what we want, our government (from now on: Party) has succeeded in finding a unique, but efficient long-lasting solution to homelessness. After analysing solutions and strategies in other European countries, we have decided to look back to our own tradition and the success we had after the Second World War and opted for the criminali-

sation of homelessness. (Mind you: criminalisation of *homelessness* and not *homeless people*!)

One of the first problems solved by the Party was to define homelessness and what is to be outlawed. Obviously, the Party is merciful and has a good heart, and does not wish to punish people for being poor and unable to pay for housing. (Of course, in a country with such potential as Hungary us, only people who are lazy and silly do not get a good education and proceed to find a good job, but still, one has to take care of lazy and silly citizens too, doesn't one?) So, we did not close down shelters and hostels (as suggested by other European countries!), although we did listen to their advice and did not construct new ones, either, or spent money on their refurbishment. Homeless people, according to *our* definition, are those people who are poor, cannot afford accommodation on their own and are delighted to be offered the grid of a bunk bed in a moderately heated or healthy cold establishment, where they can share their experiences – and bedrooms – with many other people with similar backgrounds. People sleeping rough who are unwilling to be helped out of their misery and be escorted into a shelter, on the other hand, are not homeless but criminal elements, as it is a criminal offense to be sleeping rough. Pretty straightforward, isn't it? And which society would want to pamper criminal elements and thus encourage them to continue their criminal activities in the long term??? Thus, it is up to the police and public guards to take care of criminals.

The second job was a bit more tricky: outlawing rough sleeping in accordance with local, national and international legislation. First the Party tried by including it in the Penal Act, but soon it turned out to be anti-Constitutional. So, the Constitution had to be changed (as who would want criminal activities right in their city???). Unfortunately, before the Purge, this received much criticism from both within (the Constitutional Court) and

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from the outside (from people with *other traditions* who do not understand us – see above), claiming it breached several international conventions which were also signed by us. The Party was still playing nice, though, and made some compromises: rough sleeping was not outlawed per se, only around UNESCO heritage sites (you would not want nice tourists to see ugly criminal elements, would you, and make them unjustly think that they do not receive more than enough support to sort out their various issues???) and local authorities were given the right to ban rough sleeping in their area IF they had a good reason (health, safety, etc.). While at first some local authorities tried to refrain from compromises and outlaw rough sleeping altogether, the Constitutional Court made them restrain themselves and allow people without a home to sleep rough at least on one tiny little street.

Since the Purge, however, no such restraint is needed. Everything is solved and arranged for the best. We're done with the international concerns and are now called Donegary (very much inspired by Brexit). As for homelessness, (real) homeless people are escorted to shelters and encouraged to find a good job so they can move out. Shelters are made not too comfortable on purpose, because we do not want people to think this is their home, they should work to leave and find a place on their own. (And no, we do not want to turn our shelters into small housing units, as it would defy the above purpose! People would want to keep staying there, and then where would newcomers go??? Because,

and this is the hitch in the otherwise almost perfect solution, people still tend not to want to pay their bills, on the excuse of being poor or in trouble, which is of course a nonsense in a country with such great leaders, isn't it? Then they lose their home and turn to the shelters for housing. But as this essay is a short description of the unique success of terminating long-term homelessness, something Hungary we can boast to show the world, we should not let short-term homelessness derail our attention.) Criminal elements (that some would think are homeless, but who are clearly not as they do not readily march into shelters like honest homeless people do, thus who disqualify themselves from our human sympathy), however, are punished. They are no longer expected to pay fines (criminal elements never do anyway), instead, they are offered forced labour where they could work to build our country and serve our Party – and, of course, stay at shelters while doing so. If someone refuses this option, our merciful government has no other alternative than to close them up for safe keeping and thus guarantee the safety of the whole country.

At first, these pretend homeless people were sent to normal prison, but then it turned out that we faced two problems: first, there were not enough prisons to keep such a huge number of criminal elements (we had already locked up thousands of refugees, people behind with their mortgage and those openly – or covertly – criticising the Party, and their spouses and children, their friends, colleagues, unofficial advisors, funders, etc.) and second, that their keep cost a burden to society. The first problem was easy to fix: back then we were still a part of the European Union who was generous enough to give funding for building units of housing. While other organisations and governments wasted these resources on building real housing units and transforming shelters, we grabbed the opportunity to build new prisons for

the various target groups. Vacant housing should be kept anyway because it can be used by many other groups, like progressive thinkers of new state arrangements and our supporters, can't it. The second problem was a bit more tricky: you could think that we could have backed down and return to our previous practice (offer rough sleepers some food and hot tea, sporadic visits from outreach teams, and hope that they do not mingle with other people), but that would have been plain cowardice (and rough sleepers would not agree to stay in the woods all day long, in any case, because there are still public buses and trams they could potentially take. We are progressing to cut public funding for mass transportation fully, because individual cars get us more tax revenues and they are so much more comfortable, but it takes more time than anticipated).

Thus, we chose the brave path and started researching into successful long-term historical solutions and came upon the concept of the Work House. It was not easy to learn about these as, since the Purge, social work and social policy education (together with other uneconomical and ideologically burdened courses like Gender Studies, then Sociology and later on Law) have been banned and the books used there destroyed, but we did find an old book in the attic of a library formerly run by a foreign university we could hardly get rid of. For those of you as unfamiliar with the term as we were, here is a short summary. These wonderful places are self-contained establishments where similar people can live in a peaceful community and cater for their own needs. They grow their food, carry out meaningless activities all day (but they do something at least) and get three meals a day. They do not have to leave the establishment (indeed, they cannot!) but at least they do not mingle (and endanger) peaceful citizens. They get simple services, and whenever possible, are used to offer free labour for construction sites, agricultural

activities, etc. Social workers, psychologists are no longer employed: border guards have been retrained to take care of these people, as no more border patrol is needed since Hungary our country has become finally sealed off the rest of the world by our Great Wall.

So, if you are a visitor to Hungary here (which is unlikely as the country has been closed down), we can proudly show you around and you will not see any long-term homeless people anywhere! What you will see, though, is cheerful and carefree citizens happily minding their own business. The women in the red dress and white headpieces are the Handmaids, you should not talk to them, they are not to socialise with strangers. The ladies in light blue outfits are the Wives of the Leaders. The Leaders are behind the tinted windows of the SUV-s surrounded by bodyguards, so you won't see much of them, either.

Wait, there is an announcement on the public loudspeakers, informing us all that writing and reading in foreign languages are also forbidden from now on. So, what should we do with this essay? Delete it or push the Send button? Delete or Send? Delete or Send? Oh, what the heck! *Send*.

Written by:
some lucky, content and
satisfied citizens of Donegary
(*We miss you guys!!!*)

* <https://brilliantmaps.com/eu-exit/>. Before its exit from the EU the official name was Hungary.

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Insights by Country

Great Britain in 2030



Future homelessness trends in Great Britain are not something that we are reduced to making wild, speculative ‘guesses’ about. Or to throw our hands up in despair, crying that it is all too complex and mysterious to make sense of! On the contrary, we have the data, analysis, experience and statistical models to make robust evidence-based projections that allow us to forecast what will likely happen on homelessness under a range of plausible scenarios.

Suzanne Fitzpatrick

Armed with this intellectual ammunition, we can and should throw our lobbying energies into bringing about policy choices that will deliver the desired downward trajectories in all core aspects of homelessness. Whether or not we will succeed in this endeavour is largely down to political priorities and ideological orientation, which we cannot foresee, hence what follows is very much a discussion about projections rather than predictions.

The reality of homelessness in Great Britain

Let’s begin by putting to bed some well-worn myths about the nature of homelessness in Great Britain*, primary among them the oft-repeated notion that homelessness ‘can happen to any of us’ or ‘we are all two (or one or three) pay cheques away from homelessness.’ Such mantras, endlessly rehearsed by certain homelessness charities, academics and journalists, are very often combined with trite homilies about the ‘hugely complex’ nature of homelessness and/or its ‘many different causes.’ We are solemnly assured that there is no ‘typical homeless person,’ and instead all that can be identified is ‘diversity above all else.’

This sort of rhetoric is deployed by many in the Great Britain homelessness sector in the hope that ‘enlightened self-interest’ will prove an effective galvanising moral force – “you should care about homelessness because it could happen to you!” But this type of discourse also serves to de-politicise homelessness, uncoupling it from broader structural forces and patterns, which is presumably why it seems to appeal so much to Conservative politicians as well. Such politicians, knowing the instinctively hostile audience they have on their hands at many a homelessness conference, appear to sense that they are on safe territory with opening gambits along the lines of: “Well even if we can’t agree on much else, I am sure we can all agree that homelessness is terribly complex, and there but

for the grace of God go all of us...” Cue sage nods round the room, with the consciences of all those present, whether from the political Right or Left, seemingly salved by having avoided the dreaded ‘othering’ of people who have had this experience.

As has often happened in my career, irritation at piously repeated, but as far as I could see un-evidenced, empirical assertions spurred me into action. I joined forces with my colleague Glen Bramley to systematically test the claims, or at least implications, that homelessness risks are widely spread across the UK population, and to consider the inferences that can be reasonably drawn about the causes of homelessness from data on the characteristics and circumstances of people who have had this experience.

This work was enabled by the existence of three large-scale, UK-based datasets that contain questions about past experience of homelessness, two of which are cross-sectional (the ‘Scottish Household Survey’ and the UK-wide ‘Poverty and Social Exclusion’), and one of which is longitudinal (the ‘British Cohort Study 1970’). While all three of these statistical sources have their specific strengths and weaknesses, in combination they allowed us to explore the contribution of a wide array of potential causal factors identified in the UK and international homelessness literature.

Our statistical analysis demonstrated that poverty, particularly childhood poverty, is by far the most powerful predictor of homelessness in early adulthood in the UK. Health and support needs, and adverse teenage experiences, also contribute to homelessness risks, but their explanatory power is less than that of childhood poverty. Social support networks are a key protective ‘buffer,’ but again the link with homelessness is weaker than that with material poverty. Where you live also matters, with the odds of becoming homeless greatest in areas subject to higher housing pressure, but these additional ‘area effects’ are considerably less important

than individual and household-level variables.

Thus, in Great Britain at least, homelessness is not randomly distributed across the population, but rather the odds of experiencing it are systematically and predictably structured around a set of identifiable individual, social and structural factors, most of which, it should be emphasised, are outside the control of those directly affected. For some severely disadvantaged groups, the probability of homelessness is in fact so very high that it comes close to constituting a 'norm'. Conversely, for other sections of the population, the probability of falling into homelessness is slight in the extreme because they are cushioned by many protective factors. Two vignettes, drawn from either end of this risk spectrum, serve to illustrate the point.

White male	Mixed ethnicity female
Relatively affluent childhood in rural south of England	Experienced poverty as a child
Unproblematic school career	Brought up by a lone parent in London
Graduated from university at 21	Left school or college at 16
Living with parents at age 26	Living as a renter at 26
	Spells of unemployment
No partner	No partner
No children	Own children
Predicted probability of homelessness by age 30: 0.6%	Predicted probability of homelessness by age 30: 71.2%

Source: British Cohort Study 1970

Thus, we are most certainly not 'all in it together', despite what many Great Britain Conservative politicians, and some homelessness charities, would have us believe.

What do recent homelessness trends in Great Britain tell us?

Moving on from considering risks at the individual level, to aggregate trends at societal level, it is worth looking at each of the three Great Britain jurisdictions separately, and placing more recent trends in a slightly longer historical context.

In England, the numbers of households (mainly families with children) accepted by local authorities as 'statutorily homeless', and therefore entitled to rehousing, rose sharply in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as a result of growing housing market pressures. Peaking in 2003, these numbers then tumbled by a remarkable 70% over the next seven years after the then Labour Government steered local authorities towards the 'Housing Options' model of homelessness prevention. This involved local authorities offering households in housing crisis a range of services – such as rent deposit guarantees, mediation or debt advice – designed to prevent the need to make a statutory homelessness application. While there were fears that Housing Options was being used as a device by some English local authorities to engage in unlawful 'gatekeeping' – i.e. diverting potential homeless applicants away from claiming their statutory entitlements – evaluative evidence indicated that at least some of this steep decline in statutory homelessness was attributable to genuine prevention. Wales then introduced its own version of Housing Options and so too, sometime later, did Scotland, with similarly dramatic results on the numbers of formal homelessness acceptances by local authorities.

Since the Coalition Government took office in 2010, statutory homelessness has again been on the rise in England, with the overall numbers accepted by local authorities up by almost half (48%) over the past seven years. Rough sleeping has expanded even more rapidly, with official estimates some 169% higher than in 2010, and more robust data

Poverty, particularly childhood poverty, is by far the most powerful predictor of homelessness in early adulthood in the UK.

for London indicating a doubling in street homelessness over the period. In conspicuous contrast to England, both Scotland and Wales have avoided post-2010 increases in statutory homelessness, with rough sleeping also declining in Scotland, though it appears to have risen just recently in Wales.

This diversity in Great Britain homelessness trends reflects in part different policy choices, but also easier housing market conditions in Scotland in particular, which retains a larger social housing sector than either England or Wales. The Scottish Government has also taken measures to mitigate some of the effects of austerity-driven welfare cuts imposed by the post-2010 Westminster Governments, and both devolved administrations have (in distinctive ways) strengthened the specific statutory protections available to single homeless people (with England following suit on this latter point only very recently).

What has been particularly damaging in England over the past seven years has been the combined effect of cuts in the housing allowances available to low-income households, especially those living in the private rented sector, and sharply rising market rents in London and the South. The failure of benefit rates to keep pace with private rents, combined with the insecure nature of the 'assured shorthold tenancies' typically used in the private sector, means that benefit-reliant occupants are at risk of losing their homes if landlords decide to end their tenancy and let the property at a higher rent to another household. These high costs are

themselves partly a consequence of diminishing affordable housing stock in England, with the number of social housing lets available to new tenants falling sharply in recent years.

For our present purposes, the key point here is that the upward trend in homelessness in England since 2010 was the predictable (and indeed predicted) outcome of deliberate policy choices, and different policy choices would beget a different outcome. There were successful policies to reduce rough sleeping as well as statutory homelessness under previous Labour administrations, and the more benign recent trends in Wales and Scotland have already been noted. Certainly, with regard to post-2010 England, the relevant Westminster administrations should not have been surprised that when you savagely cut welfare benefits for low-income working age households, fail to invest in social and affordable housing amidst a widely acknowledged housing crisis, and eviscerate the budgets of local authorities in the poorest parts of the country, then homelessness starts to rise.

What might the future hold?

Building on some of the research discussed above, and an array of other sources, my colleague Glen Bramley, took on the mantle of forecasting future Great Britain homelessness trends up to 2041 for the charity Crisis. Adapting an existing sub-regional housing market model as the platform for these homelessness projections, the key research questions he addressed were: What is likely to happen to homelessness levels under existing policies and trends? And what policy measures would have the greatest impact in reducing homelessness?

This modelling work indicated that, if current policies continue unchanged, the most acute forms of homelessness in Great Britain are likely to keep increasing over the medium- to longer-term, with overall numbers estimated to rise by more than a quarter in the coming decade and two and a

half times by 2041. This analysis also revealed a remarkable degree of difference between the future scale of ‘core’ forms of homelessness (defined to include rough sleeping, squatting, staying in hostels or shelters, ‘unsuitable’ forms of temporary accommodation, and sofa surfing in insecure and overcrowded conditions) in the three Great Britain countries. In England, the total number of households affected by core homelessness at any one point in time was projected to rise from 143,000 in 2016, to 215,000 by 2031, and then on to 365,000 by 2041. Upward homelessness trajectories were also forecast for Scotland and Wales, but on different pathways, and on a less extreme gradient overall than that in England.

Glen then modelled a series of ‘what if’ scenarios to test how much difference specific policy changes would make to baseline homelessness forecasts across Great Britain. The cessation of further welfare cuts was found to result in a 22% reduction against baseline forecasts by 2031, while a major increase in new housing supply, skewed towards the south of England, was found to bring about a reduction of 15% over the same time frame. Another scenario tested was ‘maximal prevention’, wherein all Great Britain local authorities were assumed to match the practices currently implemented by those with the most extensive homelessness prevention activity, along the lines of the general effects hoped for from the recent implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (in England) and the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. This scenario was found to reduce core homelessness by 25% across Great Britain by 2031. The final scenario considered was regional convergence in economic growth, which may help to reduce homelessness both by bringing down poverty in the northern regions as well as by easing housing pressure in London and the South. This was found to bring about a 14% reduction in homelessness against the baseline by 2031.

Of course, major economic ‘shocks’ or other unanticipated events may impact on homelessness in ways we cannot foresee, and for the purposes of this analysis a relatively neutral/benign scenario for the economy and labour market has been assumed. Clearly, the potential economic impacts of Brexit remain a significant source of both uncertainty and concern at the time of writing. But the main message is that, as a society, we have a large margin of control over the levels and types of homelessness we tolerate, and we can drive homelessness levels down substantially, using a range of the policy tools at our disposal, if we choose to do so.

Conclusions: what is to be done?

The evidence reviewed in this short essay reinforces the moral imperative for policy action to prevent homelessness, given its predictable but far from inevitable nature. The profoundly uneven distribution of risks can be marshalled to develop policies that target vulnerable groups, while such policies cannot of course be expected to predict with perfect ‘deterministic’ accuracy all those who would otherwise become homeless. Countervailing protective factors, like social support, can always intervene and prevent actual homelessness occurring even in cases where a number of (often mutually reinforcing) risk factors are present. But the identification of these risk patterns draws attention to areas where the greatest need, and potential, for intervention lies.

It is clear that action on addressing child poverty ought to be an overriding policy priority in this field, albeit that strong associations between homelessness and adverse teenage experiences signal another critical intervention opportunity. Glen Bramley’s forecasting work highlights that the key policy levers that must be ‘pulled’ to bring about more favourable homelessness trajectories include the cessation of welfare cuts, far higher levels of investment in new housing supply, maximising

targeted prevention efforts, and a rebalancing of regional economic growth.

What we should also do is abandon any vestiges of the falsehood that ‘any of us can become homeless’. While such ‘inclusive’ narratives may appear progressive on the surface, they do serious damage by distracting attention from the structural inequalities that in reality drive homelessness risks. They also play to self-serving ideological agendas on the part of politicians far more comfortable with the notion of complexity and heterogeneity in homelessness, than the reality of identifiable and preventable risks, amenable to public policy interventions.

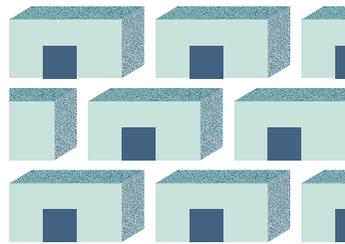
Indeed, the whole notion of ‘complexity’ in this and other social policy fields has to be put under the spotlight. It is far too often used as a smokescreen to excuse inaction, as Tim Richter of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness has also recently commented. A similar point has been noted by colleagues working on the growing use of foodbanks in the UK, where the allegedly ‘complex reasons’ for people using foodbanks have been pivotal to official denials about the links with welfare cuts.

To dispel such smokescreens, homelessness researchers, media commentators, advocacy organisations and others have to unremittingly point to the evidence that shows that we can make sense of these patterns of risk, they are not mysterious or unfathomable, and we must intervene to alter the trajectories currently driving homelessness upwards to 2030 and beyond.

* This essay focuses mainly on Great Britain rather than the UK because some of the data sources drawn upon do not, unfortunately, cover Northern Ireland.

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Australia – Getting out of the Policy Quagmire



In 2009 Australia's Prime Minister launched a National Homelessness Strategy. The headline goal was to halve the rate of homelessness by 2020. At the time, around 45 people per 10,000 of the population were homeless. Two years shy of 2020 the rate has risen to 50.

Guy Johnson

Not only has the rate of homeless people increased, so too has the amount we spend. In the last financial year, we spent just over \$800m on homelessness services. This is more than double the amount we spent in 2007/2008. As spending has increased so has the number of people using homelessness services – nationally homelessness agencies assisted over 288,000 'at risk' and homeless households in 2016/17, more than double the number of households assisted a decade earlier. Yet, nearly 7 out of 10 homeless people who went to a homelessness service last year remained homeless after their 'episode of assistance' ended.

Somehow, we didn't capitalise on the golden opportunity provided by the Prime Minister's interest and the Federal government's funding commitments. Homelessness is now more visible and widespread than ever. We have simply failed to put in place a policy framework capable of reducing homelessness. We are stuck in a policy quagmire that has had no impact on the rate of homelessness but costs a great deal.

I find this both frustrating and worrying. It is frustrating because other countries such as Finland have demonstrated that reducing homelessness is possible. It is worrying because we know what we are doing isn't working, but we keep on doing it anyway. While we have tentatively embraced some new models of service intervention, our primary response to homelessness remains a linear model with temporary accommodation and case management at its heart. This approach has a place but because it is underpinned by a flawed view that homelessness is largely caused by personal failings, it dismisses the role of housing and labour markets and ignores the fact that our welfare system does not pay enough.

After more than two decades working in this field both as a practitioner and a researcher this is the first time I have been asked to ponder the future. I have no idea what will happen in other

places, so I limit my comments to Australia. Australia has a population of 25 million. Australians enjoy a relatively high standard of living and life expectancy is high. Australia has a universal system of health care and education, although both are slowly being eroded by an ideological obsession with the privatisation of government services. The economy is strong with low unemployment and inflation rates. Indeed, Australia has recorded 26 years of continuous economic growth. Yet we have completely failed to address homelessness.

For 2030, I offer two scenarios. The first, and probably most likely, assumes a continuation of existing approaches. The second assumes major changes to key policy frameworks and would require courage and vision, two qualities we seem to lack.

Let's start with a business as usual scenario. If we continue what we are currently doing the number of homeless people will be at record levels, as will the rate. We will be funding more support programmes. We will be spending more on transitional accommodation and more on crisis accommodation. We will have more 'coordinated entry points', more 'scientific' assessments, more 'co-designed' services, and more assertive outreach. We will have larger organisations with a well-paid managerial class increasingly disconnected from their client base and reliant on a fully casualised labour force. We will be housing people in converted shipping containers, in 'tiny' houses and 'pop-up' rooming houses because we haven't built enough affordable housing. None of this will help us end homelessness because none of it tackles the root causes.

My second scenario requires a radically different approach. If there is a significant decline in the rate of homelessness by 2030 it will be because politicians, policy makers and the community have stopped pathologising the homeless and accepted the evidence that homelessness and social disadvantage are a result of how we distribute wealth

and opportunities in our community. The decline in homelessness will have happened because we did four things. I want to start with the most important – we will have fixed the housing market.

Australia's housing system is dominated by home ownership. Homeownership peaked at 72 per cent in the early 1990s and is now around 67 per cent with steeper falls among younger age groups. Social housing accounts for just under five per cent of Australia's housing stock. In real and absolute terms funding for social housing has stagnated and stock levels have declined. Public housing stock is often old, run down and located away from emerging labour market opportunities. Public housing is increasingly targeted to households in 'greatest need' which creates a whole other set of challenges.

Australian housing is expensive. Indeed, housing affordability has been a major issue in Australia for well over a decade now. It is often said that one of the biggest drivers of homelessness in Australia is declining housing affordability. And one reason for declining affordability is a lack of supply. Well, it is not just a supply problem. We build lots of houses in Australia. Over the last decade the growth in our housing stock has outstripped population growth. The problem is that housing stock is not trickling down to lower income households as orthodox economic theory would have it. Much of this has to do with current tax settings and financial deregulation which have made property an attractive investment vehicle, particularly for high income earners. If the rate of homelessness has declined markedly by 2030 we will have removed various tax incentives such as negative gearing, reduced the capital gains discount, swapped stamp duties for general property taxes and improved housing affordability. In addition, Governments will have stimulated the lower end of the housing market by setting social housing construction targets and established

secure long-term financing arrangements including public subsidies, to meet these targets.

Along with reforms to the housing market, the second thing that will have happened is that the progressive dismantling of Australia's welfare system will have been stopped. Over the last two decades the real value of welfare payments declined, and our universal system of health care and education have been weakened. For disadvantaged households one of the best ways to prevent homelessness happening in the first instance is to provide a broad and deep safety net; one of the best ways to reduce disadvantage is through the provision of a high-quality public education system.

Along with housing and welfare reform, the third thing we will have done is start using data better. We collect a lot of data in Australia. But we don't use it very cleverly. I live in the state of Victoria. The Victorian Government has linked administrative data from housing, homelessness, justice, out of home care, health and mental health systems. This data could provide critically important 'real time' insights into the flows in and out of key institutional systems. But the Victorian Government has largely kept this dataset a 'secret'. If we have reduced homelessness by 2030 we will have followed other countries around the world and have systems in place across the country that enable researchers to link administrative data sets through specially designed portals that maintain individual privacy.

In addition, we will have used administrative data and research findings to continually improve our understanding about what works. We do lots of research in Australia. Some of it is quite good. While we know quite a bit about homelessness, paradoxically, we often don't know that much about the things that really matter. We know that poverty and the condition of housing markets play a crucial role, but so do random events. We

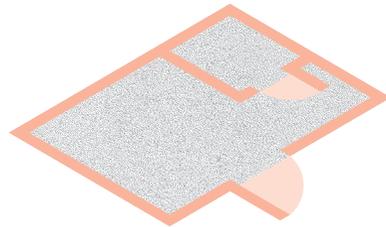
know that housing subsidies seem to be the best sort of intervention, but they are scarce. We know that support helps, but we don't really know how much support any given individual might need to permanently exit homelessness. By 2030 we will have answers to these and other fundamental questions because we spent our research money strategically – we focused on larger, more rigorous mixed method studies that have controls and national coverage.

The fourth thing that will have changed and contributed to a reduction in homelessness is that, as a sector, we became more open to change and more honest in our evaluations of what works and what doesn't. Years of funding uncertainty combined with a lack of political interest in structural reform has dulled our critical edge – researchers and practitioners alike. We have become an entrenched, competitive industry that often shies away from change. We also stopped describing homelessness as a wicked social problem, which to my mind implies a problem that is largely inevitable and unfixable. Viewing homelessness as a wicked social problem was really an excuse to do nothing; an alibi for indifference. Australia will have found the courage to recognise that good-evidence-based social policy works and that we could be (and needed to be) dragged out of the policy quagmire we were in.

The big question though is what is going to be the catalyst that will drive the change we need? What event will disrupt our existing fetish with pathological policies and our refusal to reform our housing system? Will it be technology or perhaps a savvy advocacy campaign? Will it be because housing related disadvantage has spread into the middle class or will it simply be a shift back to the idea of doing things for the social good? I don't know what the catalyst will be or when and if it will occur. I doubt anyone does. I just hope change happens. Soon.

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Homelessness in Finland in 2030 – the Past or Present?



The decision to get rid of homelessness in Finland has been made on several occasions. It was done in the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1987. Back then, there were nearly 20,000 people without a home.

Ilkka Taipale

In the next ten years, homelessness was nearly halved, but the number of the homeless then stuck at approximately 10,000, even slightly increasing for a time. The great Finnish social invention, the Y-Foundation, was founded around the same time, in 1985.

At the Y-Foundation's initiative, the PAAVO project was launched in 2008 under the watch of the Minister of Housing, Jan Vapaavuori, with the aim of removing long-term homelessness in Finland and reducing homelessness in general. In the ten years that have passed, the above objective has been realised to all intents and purposes. The number of homeless has also been cut to approximately 7,000. And it has stayed at that level.

Now, the Y-Foundation has launched a bold avantgarde campaign. Finland must eradicate homelessness during the next two terms of government – i.e. by the year 2027.

Will this be fantasy or reality, even in 2030? Reality, if consensus can be reached on the matter; a mutual parliamentary decision, which could be called 'Finnish solidarity'. Fantasy, if we simply follow the current linear housing policy.

Major changes in population

The roots of homelessness in Finland after the war lie in the great changes in population. In the 1930 census, there were approximately 200,000 day labourers with their families working in agriculture in rural areas without their own homes. After the war, 100,000 men were living at lumberjacks' camps, and in 1950, four per cent of the rural population, or approximately 100,000 persons, were without owner-occupied or rented housing.

As a result of the wars, Finland lost Karelia, which constituted 10 % of Finland's land territory. 400,000 evacuees from Karelia were left without a home. At the time, 11 % of the whole population of Finland were homeless. The majority of the evacuees from Karelia were scattered over different municipali-

ties, where smallholdings suitable for small-scale farming were created for them. To a large degree, they built their own homes. At the same time, the veterans were returning home from the front.

As a result of the war and the period of shortage that followed, the building of homes stopped for almost ten years. A great number of people were moving from the countryside to the cities. In post-war Helsinki, around one thousand men were living in air raid shelters until 1954.

Surveys on the need for housing were carried out in the capital. According to them, each family was in need of a home but only 20 % of those without a family. As for the latter, it was felt that subtenancy, bedsits, night shelters, barracks and asylums would suffice. It marked the beginning of the true heyday of family policy, which has trampled on those without a family.

The time of big decisions

When the lack of housing hits the middle classes, perhaps even the upper middle classes, the problem is rapidly tackled. ARAVA, or the delegation of housing construction, was established in 1949. So far, approximately 800,000 homes have been built on the back of inexpensive loans granted by ARAVA, primarily to families but, later on, also to students. Thanks to this policy, homelessness among families was eliminated in Finland more than 30 years ago in all but name.

Subtenancy remained a common phenomenon in Finland all the way to the early 1970s, for twenty years longer than in Sweden. The late 1960s saw the birth of another major solution at the initiative of student organisations: the construction of student housing. In 50 years, approximately 45,000 flats have been built to accommodate roughly 75,000 students. In the beginning, some of the flats were shared flats, then studio flats and family residences. Subtenancy as a form of residency practically disappeared in Finland.

In 1960, the number of people over the age of 65 – who, back then, were considered the aged population – in Finland was 200,000 (by the way, on average they only had one own tooth left!). The living conditions of the poorer “elderly” were quite miserable. So a third major operation begun. Halfway through the 1960s, the construction of dedicated housing for the elderly started; in the beginning, two blocks of flats per year in Helsinki, as well as terraced houses in rural areas. In the beginning, the housing construction accelerated linearly, then almost exponentially. In practice, the miserable living conditions of the elderly have been eradicated. Nowadays, a person considered elderly is at least 85 years of age. In 2030, there will be an estimated 1.5 million people over the age of 65 (who still have on average 23 of their own teeth left!).

The majority of people without a home are those without a family, and poor solitary men. Even though this was the case already before the aforementioned three processes, it was even more true in their wake, all the way to the current day. Only about 5% of night shelter residents were women. Many of the women who had moved to cities lived and worked in families as domestic help. Women also found it easier than men to find subtenancies. On the other hand, city-owned flats have been granted to single parents because of a child or children.

Population changes continued

The chainsaw emptied logging sites of excess population. By 1973, there were only approximately 8,000 Finns living in work-site huts. The tractor began to empty the countryside of horses and humans alike. In the 1960s, 8,000 young people moved to live in Helsinki each year. There weren't enough homes, especially for those without a family. In the 1960s, the night shelters of the city hosted about 4,000 men, and hundreds of men

lived in self-made bunks in forests and marshes. The situation escalated in the autumn of 1967, when the weather turned extremely cold and dozens of men died as a result. On the eve of the 50th anniversary of independent Finland, sleeping accommodation for a thousand men was opened in Helsinki, in an old, empty paint warehouse. This legendary hall was nicknamed the Bat Cave.

The 1970s were a time of massive migration from rural areas. Housing construction accelerated. In 1974, a record amount of 74,000 homes were built in Finland. But even that wasn't enough. A catastrophe was avoided only by 300,000 Finns relocating to Sweden for work – just like a hundred years ago when the excess rural population emigrated to America.

Homeless = a solitary unmarried man

As early as 1957, the question was posed in the Helsinki city council as to when the problem of housing for solitary people would be solved. The answer was symptomatic: once housing for people with families was sorted out.

Professor Veronica Stolte-Heiskanen – a woman – was the first to publicly highlight the issue in her 1968 article “Men Without a Family – the Forgotten Minority” for a pamphlet edited by Katarina Eskola titled “The Adverse Laws of the World of Men”. The other grievances, applicable to women, discussed in the book have been primarily remedied, or at least attempts have been made to remedy them.

In the early 1980s, the City of Helsinki owned 25,000 rental flats. A thousand of them were distributed each year, but out of each thousand there were only four for those whose marital status was single, i.e. unmarried, divorced or widowed.

As experience had already been gained in solving the housing problems of families, students and the elderly by means of a major project, it was

The roots of homelessness in Finland after the war lie in the great changes in population.

decided in this situation to found the Y-Foundation with the mandate to solve the problem of single homeless people in a similar fashion. The letter Y came from the Finnish word for solitary, “yksinäinen”. In 25 years, the Y-Foundation had acquired almost 7,000 residences in 50 different places. But this is still not enough.

The new faces of population change

If until the 1970s a homeless person was usually an unmarried man, the increased number of divorces introduced divorced men to the group, even among lower middle-class workers. Often, children were left in the mother's care, securing accommodation for them. There's an edgy joke about it. A man tells that the family home was split 50/50 in the divorce: “I got the outside, the wife got the inside.” A divorce leads to the need for two homes.

Nearly all types of institutions in our country that were initially intended for the adult population have acted as accommodation for people without a family: old people's homes, prisons, mental hospitals, workhouses and institutions. With the exception of old people's homes, the majority of the occupants of the above were men. Per Erik Lund, a patient of the Kellokoski hospital, summarises it in his poem:

“Once again, Christmas is nearly upon us. This is my 25th Christmas. Not that I care. What's a man made for if not barracks and institutions?”

Institutional criticism was started by the

November movement in the late 1960s. In the latter half of the 1980s, the real dismantling of institutions began, accelerating during the 1990s depression. It is still going on at a slower pace. Where mental hospitals once provided 20,000 beds, now there are fewer than 4,000 left, and the target is to bring the number down to 2,000. The number of prisoners has been reduced to less than half, workhouses and care homes for alcoholics no longer exist and most of the old people's homes have been torn down. This has created a massive need for small flats with support services.

In the wake of the October revolution in Russia, approximately 40,000 refugees arrived in Finland. Between the world wars, there were more foreigners in Finland than in Sweden. After the Second World War, refugees weren't introduced again until the 1970s. First, there were a couple of hundred Chileans, then, in the 1980s, the Vietnamese came, and in early 1990s, a few thousand Somalis arrived in one go. Since then, the number of the source countries has increased no end. In addition to this, there has been a sharp rise in other immigration.

In 1980, there were 13,000 foreign citizens living in Finland; in 2000, the number was 90,000; and by 2017, the number had already risen to 250,000 (4% of the population). There were approximately 370,000 (6.8%) people who spoke a foreign language or were born abroad.

Roughly half of Finland's population growth is down to immigration. As immigration is mainly concentrated on the bigger cities, it creates added pressure on new construction.

The number of people living on their own is increasing

There are one million people living on their own in Finland. They comprise 40% of our country's households. In Helsinki, there is a lone occupant behind every other door. 70% of over 65-year-olds live alone.

In addition to trendy single women and young students, the number includes two other major groups: old women, and men outside working life. According to EU statistics, the people living alone in Finland are the second poorest group within the EU, after the Bulgarians. A third of them live below the EU's poverty line.

Living alone is a global population trend. It is increasing most rapidly in the Nordic countries and Singapore. It has not attracted global attention in the same way as the aging population as a social phenomenon.

Homelessness in 2030

The starting point of plans should be to know realistically how people are living at the moment. Until 1900, all statistics pertaining to housing covered all forms of housing, including those living at home, in institutions, sheds and work places. Since then, the statistics have only applied to the part of the population with a home. This is the equivalent of sick persons missing from health statistics.

We don't know enough about hidden homelessness, for instance, how many people reside in work places, business premises and other premises not intended for living. In what kind of conditions do immigrant restaurant workers, Estonians and other commuting construction workers, the paperless or urban beggars live? Realistically, to what degree have urban homes been illicitly sublet?

Do people live in summer cottages insulated for winter conditions or in city flats? How many homes are empty in the winter, with 50,000 Finns spending their winters on the beach? And what kind of lodgings do 25,000 soldiers come from each year, and where do they go? There isn't even up-to-date information on the population in the institutions of our country.

No studies have been done on the adult population living with their elderly parents. According to an earlier study, there were approximately 70,000

of them, most of them men. Once the parents pass away, smaller homes are needed once more, often sheltered homes.

There are a lot of questions. Research on the realistic living conditions of Finns, the grey zone of housing, should begin instantly.

Future population trends

- Migration from country to town continues at an increasing pace
- Living alone will become more common
- Free pre-school education for children may increase the birth rate
- The number of refugees and immigrants can only be roughly estimated. However, most of them have families.
- The number of foreign students in Finland will probably rise, but the construction of student housing will continue to take them into consideration.
- The number of students moving from student housing to studio flats in cities will increase
- The number of the aged population will increase linearly for some time
- The life expectancy of men will rise, the number of women living alone may drop
- Dependent care allowance systems will develop, care by a visiting nurse will become more common, the number of facilities will decrease
- The number of second homes of the wealthy will in all likelihood increase
- It is a mystery whether communal living and shared housing will increase
- Divorce rate will probably remain the same. Nonetheless, every fourth or third divorce is unnecessary. Will long marriages become a trend? Not easily. Could the society provide married couples with a bonus for each five-year period they spend together?

The number of beds in mental hospitals will continue to drop, perhaps by one thousand

When the EU's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will begin to be applied to mental patients, there will be increased pressure to raise the standards at private care homes. The convention applies to persons with a mental or physical disability. However, the convention has not yet been applied to mental disabilities. According to regulations, a person with a disability has the right to choose where to live and with whom. The living standard of a person in permanent institutional care must also be ensured at approximately the same level as that of a person of the same age living outside an institution.

Approximately 8,000 mental health rehabilitees are living in different level housing units; a quarter of them do not have their private room and only a quarter have a kitchen, toilet or shower in their room. The need for small housing of this strange 'C hospital' network alone comprises thousands of homes.

Erroneous estimates and mistaken theories

When it comes to the situation of single homeless people, even most relatively smart people usually instinctively declare that the group is so large and heterogeneous that there is no way to fix the issue as a whole. Indeed, there are one million people living on their own. But then, aren't people with a family also a large group? How about families with children, single parents or childless families? It's been possible to handle their issues ever since the war.

Regardless of the partial heterogeneousness of the group, people living alone share several common problems in a number of everyday walks of life, starting from housing and paying your rent.

The situation of single homeless people cannot be remedied by relying on the filtering process theory of housing policy, which was used as a

The majority of people without a home are those without a family, and poor solitary men.

reference point as early as the early days of ARAVA, and still continues as such. Claims are made on the basis of the theory that as the wealthy gain more and bigger homes, the left-over smaller homes will filter down to the poorer section of the population, whose situation will thereby improve. What happens to studio flats that become available nowadays? People with money buy them, either for their children or as second homes or investments. People from other places buy them as their Helsinki homes – such as some of the MPs. Markku Lankinen and Erkki Korhonen already proved the theory wrong back in the 1970s when they were conducting research on the City of Helsinki's distribution of flats process.

The reality is more aptly described by the separator theory. The housing markets for the affluent and the poor, the working age population and pensioners, people with or without a family, the healthy and the sick as well as persons with disabilities have separated sharply.

Homelessness can be eliminated

1. What is needed is strong, large-scale construction of small housing for the homeless and the vulnerable during a period of 8 to 12 years.
2. Sheltered homes and service homes must also be built specifically for those of under the age of 65.
3. Municipal and state housing production must be reinforced. The housing production agency of the City of Helsinki could develop into a housing production agency for the entire

metropolitan area. Whereas the collaboration of the public, private and third sectors is usually emphasised, in housing production, market-based housing construction companies shun the concept beyond all measure.

4. City planning regulations should favour the construction of flats attached to terraced houses and detached houses. For starters, their owners could rent them in order to pay their debtors. At some stage, their children or parents could live in them – the children probably preferably in a flat attached to somebody else's home! The solution would help single occupants and maintain a certain social control, too.
5. The Y-Foundation could organise the architectural competition it was planning in the early 1990s to come up with new ideas for forms of living and living environments for single persons. The earlier project ended with the Vasawings air crash in which the competition architect died.
6. The above competition would lead to the creation of an alternative housing fair and make traditional house fairs actually take note of people living on their own.
7. The Government should establish the parliamentary committee to investigate the social situation of people living alone in Finland, which was proposed by the Y-Foundation and the Finnish Union for Senior Services (Valli) already back in 2014. This should be done before Sweden has the chance to do it! Finland could become a pioneer in highlighting this global problem.
8. The support of the society in the form of donated sites and financing will be directed to non-profit foundations in order to reduce homelessness, for example, to the Y-Foundation or the Finnish Youth Housing Association.

The financial and housing markets will be rocked at least once before 2030 as a result of global or Finnish issues. The incurring of debts by the state, municipalities and households is the greatest threat, the high prices of new housing in the metropolitan area are unsustainable. When the bubble bursts, it could be nasty.

Back in the 60s and 70s, the aim was still for families and single persons to spend a maximum of 25 % of their income on housing. Not a bad goal for 2030, either. Massive housing production would make prices drop to a reasonable level more quickly.

Of those living alone, pensioners and students are active voters. Parties try to woo these groups with promises and also try to meet their demands. What remains are the poor, working age people and those absent from work who cannot get organised and will not vote.

Since the Winter War, there has been a functional tripartite in Finland, where the state, employers and labour unions have developed the society via mutual agreements. This residual group, including the homeless, have been left behind.

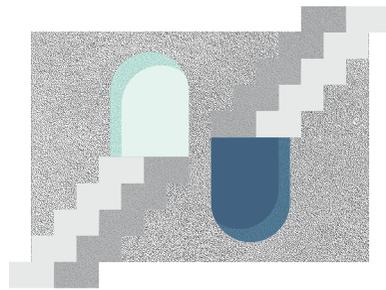
Progressive parties should form the “fourth partite” which looks after those left stuck between the millstones. The elimination of homelessness would increase social peace and reduce social and health inequality more than the government's social and health reform. It would alleviate an infinite number of social problems. Furthermore, according to several studies, reducing homelessness is cheaper than managing it.

The Y-Foundation is already gaining fame abroad. The Housing First principle is spreading in different countries. If we set a common goal to get rid of homelessness by 2030, it will be done.

The goal of the Y-Foundation will be reached.

ILKKA TAIPALE is a Finnish psychiatrist, pacifist and politician. He has been active in many non-governmental organizations and is particularly well known for promoting the rights of single homeless men, and people with mental health problems. He has also authored several books.

Germany in 2030 – Utopia and Dystopia



Nils Bor, a Danish physicist, is credited with the following statement: “Prognoses are extremely difficult, especially when they relate to the future”. And from Winston Churchill the following is quoted: “It is always wise to look ahead, but difficult to look further than you can see.”

Volker Busch-Geertsema

For Germany I have, therefore, dreamt of a nice utopia, not completely free from wishful thinking, but based on existing evidence about important elements of policies to reduce homelessness substantially or even eradicate it. And in contrast to that, I present a rather unpleasant dystopia, which hopefully will never materialise. The future will show which version will be nearer to reality in 2030.

The positive vision – Utopia

My optimistic vision for homelessness in Germany in the year 2030 would be that we have, in fact, reached the stage which had been called “functional zero” in the second decade of this century. Homelessness has become rare, brief and non-recurrent. It has been finally acknowledged by the turn of the decade (2019–20) that homelessness is a solvable problem, that numbers are not so extraordinarily high that nothing could be done about it and that it is much more humane, and doesn’t require much more money to solve homelessness instead of managing it. By 2030 it is seen in politics, and also by the general public, as an absolute shame for a rich country like Germany to leave any person longer than a few days without a home of their own, in temporary accommodation, in the few remaining shelter places or even on the street.

Prevention of homelessness has become much more effective, it is almost impossible to be evicted because of rent arrears, which in the past was the most frequent reason for loss of a home. Those getting into arrears on the rent are contacted at a very early stage, home visits are organised if needed, and financial help as well as social support is provided in order to make a notice to quit void, as foreseen in tenancy legislation, stabilising the tenancy in a sustainable manner. For both the financial support, as well as personalised social support, legally enforceable rights exist in social legislation. Mediation teams intervene if neighbourhood conflicts and domestic crises are about

to escalate, and solutions are found by including all parties involved.

If poor people have to stay for a transitional period of up to 1 year in prison (very rare in 2030; penalising non-payment of small fines with prison stays has been abolished) or in a therapeutic setting, the rental costs of their homes remain covered by social subsistence payments and they can return to their former home after discharge. There are clear rules for institutions like prisons, clinics or youth welfare institutions, which do not allow discharging any person who does not have a permanent home to go to.

Allocation rights in the social housing sector, which have started to grow in recent years (after shrinking so badly in the decades before), secure quick access to permanent housing for those most in need. People discharged from institutions, as well as those threatened with eviction, and for whom their former home cannot be secured (because it is too expensive or too big) are among the top priority groups to be allocated social housing. They can even choose between different options and the new non-profit housing providers in the field are happy to allocate flats to them because financial risks are covered by municipal guarantee funds and there is a very well organised and flexible team of experts of different disciplines who provide floating support for those in need. Specialised help is available at short notice if needed. That, and additional incentives for private landlords, are reasons for private landlords to increasingly

The future will
show which version
will be nearer to
reality in 2030.

There are clear rules for institutions that do not allow discharging any person who does not have a permanent home to go to.

accept as new tenants households who have been imminently threatened with homelessness or those who have already been homeless for a short period (the latter being the second top priority group for social housing allocation as well).

Recent years saw quite a substantial investment in the construction of affordable flats for single people and the traditional, almost exclusive orientation of social housing toward creating family homes has been given up, because the trend toward an ever-increasing share of single households has finally been acknowledged.

For people who are newcomers to the city or town and who have no home of their own, a special agency is responsible for assisting them with finding a home very quickly. Municipalities have a whole range of instruments for influencing the allocation of housing and have started to build up their own housing stock again. A legal obligation was introduced requiring municipalities to always have a certain number of vacant flats available for cases in urgent need. A system of compensation has been introduced at the national and European levels in order to achieve a fair balance regarding the migration of poor people and refugees.

People with complex problems are supported by so called “Housing-First-teams” and provided with scattered housing if they don’t have an explicit preference for more communal settings. These teams are not only responsible for rehousing homeless people but also for keeping people with complex problems in their existing homes if there is a threat of eviction.

The idea of core and cluster housing has been used and promoted by the national government (extra funding made available) as a basis for small initiatives in most cities which combine the offer of communal premises and nearby support with autonomous self-contained housing for those who need or want such a setting. A small sector of unusual housing types is available for those with

persistent problems in standard housing, but this is a small group and there is a consensus that the rule for housing homeless people and people with mental health or addiction problems should be mainstream, ordinary housing, with specialised pro-active support if needed.

Legal regulations for inclusion have made it an enforceable right not to be forced into institutions or communal housing if those concerned do not want to live there. The process of deinstitutionalisation has advanced substantially, large institutional buildings have been redeveloped or demolished and regular housing with accompanying services has become the rule not only for the elderly and for people with handicaps, but for the overwhelming majority of people with special needs.

Examples of good practice like the Finnish initiative to eliminate long-term homelessness have been spread out and promoted heavily by the European Commission. The Commission has finally agreed to implement a European Strategy to End Homelessness, which helps enormously to reach the goal at the national level. New initiatives have stated to promote further social inclusion of formerly homeless people, to prevent social isolation and to provide something meaningful to do and decent pay for everybody who wishes to participate.

After a large research project about the unequal distribution of the risk of becoming homeless in

the German population, a parliamentary committee is now preparing proposals to tackle child poverty, to reform youth welfare approaches and to provide better support for people with mental health and addiction problems in order to reduce the risk of becoming homeless at an early stage.

The negative vision – Dystopia

After the new financial crisis, caused by the American-Chinese conflict in 2019–20 and armed conflicts in the middle East and Korea, the German economy has gotten into massive trouble, unemployment and poverty have seen an unprecedented increase and everybody who is not actively seeking an activity (be it paid or unpaid) is facing strict sanctions which can also lead to cuts of any housing allowance. One of the consequences has been dramatically rising eviction numbers.

The Bertelsburg foundation and the well-known Consultancy Martin Berger International have been very influential in promoting radical reforms in the housing market. New legislation has been implemented in order to liberate market forces in the housing sector and to get rid of any type of regulation or subsidy. It is hoped that new construction for those who can afford rising housing prices will very soon also help the poor to profit from vacancies in the least desirable regions and housing stock.

Following the example of a few cities in earlier years, and forced by national legislation, most cities have sold their remaining municipal stock and have facilitated return payments of subsidies of social housing and a so-called “right to buy” for residents so that the remaining stock has shrunk to a negligible number of flats in the least desirable locations, where homeless people are temporarily accommodated under deplorable conditions. Mayors feel very sad about the rising tide of homeless persons, but they claim that there is no way of influencing the allocation of housing

in the free market and as much as they want to help, they simply can’t.

Able-bodied homeless men and women are offered a place in the armed forces where they can also find decent housing in military blocks. Since national borders have to be monitored all year round, and Germany is participating in a number of armed conflicts, the need for more army personnel has increased substantially and why not ask a much-needed service from those who want to be accommodated and fed? Those who reject such an offer might try to get some food and a bunk-bed from philanthropic initiatives, but it has been made clear that they really cannot expect any state services from tax payers’ money. After an increasing number of destitute people have slept rough and loitered around in public places, sleeping rough and loitering have been made a criminal offence again and German prisons are overcrowded in 2030.

Housing companies have been quite successful with their campaign “Those who Don’t Pay Should Feel the Consequences” and they have attacked municipal eviction services as destroying payment discipline and dreaming of old fashioned “socialist” illusions. The sharp increase of homeless people has led to the increased use of tents, barracks and containers for providing a provisional roof. Of course, destitute migrants from other countries are only allowed to use such facilities for a few days and are sent home by the new “reconnection services” of the national police.

The number of food banks in Germany has grown, but because of capacity problems the majority of them are now exclusively focusing on white families with German nationality and small kids under 6 years of age. A number of new philanthropic initiatives are trying to alleviate the misery. There are new initiatives to provide tea and soup, who have received donations by the new E-car producers. The media praise an innovative

service offering washing machine services to homeless people, sponsored by Mielay. A Christian charity has copied a small initiative in the US from the first decade of the century and has been vastly successful with collecting enough money to distribute more than 20,000 waterproof bibles for the homeless.

A fundamental change to the philosophy of “quid pro quo” has been promoted also for charities by the Initiative for a Social Market in Germany. On specific local spots blankets are distributed to those homeless people willing to cooperate and take up some voluntary work in the charities who are helping them. At the Faculty of Architecture of the Free University of Munchhausen a new contest was started: “Foldable sleeping huts for rough sleepers, excellent design for very little money”. The tiny shiny houses movement has developed a newly-designed wooden hut on wheels, that can accommodate three homeless people at the same time, even six if they sleep in shifts, but the inventors are still searching for a sponsor to cover the building costs and are struggling with street regulations for mobile homes. German politicians have started an initiative in parliament to ease building restrictions and provide extra spaces near city borders, dump grounds and railway tracks where such small wooden houses may be placed. Basic common amenities are financed by the rental income from the beds in such houses (there is a bed rent per hour, no room rent).

Sleeping rough and loitering have been made a criminal offence again.

The increased financial pressure of providing a temporary roof for all homeless people has finally led to a drastic change of the regional laws guaranteeing the duty to provide at least some shelter. It was seen as no longer feasible to do so, and it is now completely up to municipalities to what extent they provide some support for priority groups such as homeless people with physical handicaps or women with small children. After the latest decision of the constitutional court that the German constitution does not allow the exclusion of homeless people from the most basic protection of their lives, health and safety, an absolute majority of the black-brown (i.e. christian democrat and nationalistic) government changed the constitution.

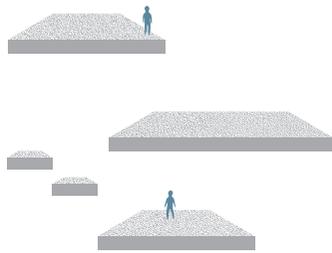
Conclusion

Which of these two “visions” will become reality is partly dependent on political developments that are difficult to foresee and to influence. But there are interesting examples in a number of countries showing that even under adverse political and economic circumstances progress may be made to reduce homelessness and to improve the prevention of homelessness. Whether that will happen will depend on political will, public pressure and hopefully also on the growing evidence that homelessness can be solved.

Prof. Dr. **VOLKER BUSCH-GEERTSEMA** is a sociologist and one of two CEOs of the Association for Social Planning and Social Research (Gesellschaft fuer Innovative Sozialforschung und Sozialplanung – GISS) in Bremen, Germany. In 1995 he joined the European Observatory on Homelessness and since 2009 he has been the coordinator of this group, organising annual European Research Conferences, publishing comparative research and editing the European Journal of Homelessness. Volker has participated in numerous research networks on homelessness at national and at EU-level, has been involved in work about homelessness at global level and has published widely about different aspects on homelessness and housing exclusion.

Paradigms and Policy

A Tale of Three Futures



Societies know how to end literal homelessness – rough sleeping and stays in programmes designated for people who are currently homeless. Actually succeeding is another matter. One still dares to hope for a future where societies would tackle not just the homelessness that spills onto the streets, but the additional, more hidden forms of homelessness.

Marybeth Shinn

The At Home-Chez Soi study in Canada and other replications of the Pathways to Housing version of Housing First show that even people with serious and persistent patterns of both homelessness and mental illness can be successfully housed in ordinary rental housing of their choosing so long as barriers to entry are removed, housing is made permanently affordable, and tenants receive supportive services under their control. The Family Options study in the United States shows that simply making housing affordable with long-term rental subsidies but without any additional services ends homelessness for most families. Other studies show it is often possible to prevent people from becoming homeless with relatively modest resources, such as those provided by the HomeBase programme in New York or eviction prevention programmes in Chicago. The case of Finland is particularly impressive: with a Housing First approach and sufficient affordable housing it has reduced the point-prevalence of literal homelessness in the entire nation to nearly zero for everyone. Other societies have had some success with specific groups. The United States, which I know best, has nearly halved literal homelessness among military veterans, and the 100,000 homes campaign exceeded its target for housing people experiencing literal homelessness, often of long duration, around the nation. What all these efforts have in common is concerted effort, absence or removal of barriers, and devotion of resources. But in most places, both the commitment and the resources remain insufficient. What we lack – and the reason that literal homelessness remains rampant in most wealthy countries including my own – is political will. We have the knowledge, and wealthy societies in the West have the resources, if we choose to deploy them.

Thus, I can readily imagine two futures in 2030. One future is the status quo – where shelter systems in most countries remain overflowing and

most people resign themselves to picking their way around their fellow human beings on the street with averted eyes and occasional handouts. Worse, people with means wall themselves off from everyone else in separate neighbourhoods, schools, and other institutions so they do not even have to come into contact with the misery that their social policies create.

In the second future, OECD countries, which all have sufficient wealth to do so, will follow Finland's lead in expanding the availability of affordable housing, providing adequate incomes, and quickly housing people who take refuge in the streets. Some countries will succeed in turning off some of the spigots, such as prisons and foster care systems, from which people flow into homelessness. In this second future, literal homelessness will be rare, and ended quickly when it occurs.

There is a third future I hope for but find harder to imagine, although perhaps Finland will again show the way. In it, societies would tackle not just the homelessness that spills onto the streets, but the additional, more hidden forms of homelessness and housing insecurity identified in the broad ETHOS typology. Often these hidden forms of homelessness are precursors to more visible forms. Ending hidden homelessness requires reducing the poverty and social exclusion that breed them and building more robust safety nets. In the process,

In this second future,
literal homelessness
will be rare,
and ended quickly
when it occurs.

literal homelessness would be prevented, not just quickly ended for people who succumb.

This scenario is hard to imagine because it would require reversing current trends towards greater income inequality and concentration of wealth in the hands of elites. It would require restoring and expanding rather than shredding social safety nets. It would require curbing the pernicious effects of racism and social exclusion. Housing would need to become affordable for societies' poorest members through some combination of raising incomes at the bottom of the distribution, increasing the availability of low-cost housing, reducing barriers, and providing a robust safety net. There are a variety of policy levers that could be deployed to fashion such a future. The ones most likely to succeed probably vary both by local circumstance and by acceptability in local and national contexts.

Unfortunately, the trends everywhere are in the wrong direction. Political scientists suggest that the generosity of welfare states is inversely related to the heterogeneity of their populations – we are willing to give to those who look and sound like us but feel less generous to those who are not part of our tribe. As societies become more diverse through immigration, and as the middle class loses ground to the upper crust, robust safety nets may

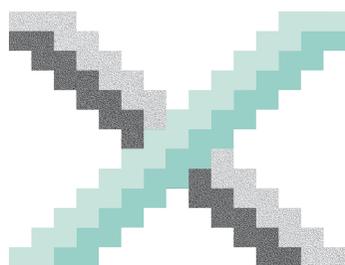
be harder to enhance or even defend. We must expand our ideas about who is one of “us” and hence worthy of assistance, and who is “the other.” Reversing the trends that produce homelessness is likely to require some fundamental social changes in neoliberal societies. It is instructive that Finland, with one of the most equal distributions of income in the OECD, one of the most robust safety nets, and remarkable success in ending literal homelessness, has low rates of people who live temporarily with friends and relatives, which it also defines as homeless. But it is daunting that Finland has had only modest success, thus far, in reducing those rates further.

I am optimistic that we can attain the second future and end literal homelessness by 2030 if we choose to do so, although it will not be easy. One common excuse for inaction – that nothing can be done so it is not worth trying – is no longer viable. The evidence is in, much of it quite recently, and it is indeed possible to prevent homelessness for many and to put an end to literal homelessness for people who experience it everywhere. We know most of what we need to do if we are willing to devote the resources to do it. With the sort of self-reflective approach, openness to evaluation, and willingness to adapt that Finland has demonstrated, we will figure out the rest.

We must expand our ideas about who is one of “us” and hence worthy of assistance, and who is “the other.”

MARYBETH SHINN is a Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor at Vanderbilt University in the United States. She has been studying how to prevent and end homelessness for three decades and her book on this topic with Jill Khadduri, *In the Midst of Plenty*, will be out in 2019.

Ending Homelessness by 2030



At the 70th UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, a new global sustainable development framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted. It represents a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development worldwide by 2030, ensuring that no one is left behind. The Agenda has 17 Sustainable Development Goals; the first goal is to eradicate poverty in all its forms and goal 11.1 aims to 'ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing.'

Eoin O'Sullivan

Providing housing for all is clearly the most crucial element in ending homelessness, in that homelessness is, above all else, a form of residential instability brought about by the inability to secure access to, and maintain affordable, adequate accommodation. The inability to secure and maintain accommodation varies over time and space. This is because it reflects structural factors such as housing markets, social protection systems, health policies etc., which are variable across member states and in constant flux, and how these systems and policies interact with individual level vulnerabilities. Individuals are vulnerable to homelessness when, for example, housing markets do not deliver affordable housing, when social protection systems do not provide sufficient income support to counteract market rents, or where health systems do not provide adequate care for individuals with disabilities.

Therefore, individuals experience of residential instability must be viewed in a comparative-historical context. For example, the experience of homelessness across member states in 2018 is very different from experience of homelessness in the 1970. While there are some constants, such as the recurrent reactive use of congregate shelters to manage residential instability, the drivers and dynamics differ across time and space.

Thus, ending homelessness by 2030 will absolutely require the provision of housing; however, the provision of housing alone will not end all forms of homelessness, particularly entrenched homelessness, without providing the necessary support to maintain that housing. How then to reduce homelessness to functional zero, in that the experience of homelessness is rare, brief and non – recurrent in all European Union member states by 2030?

Utopian and Naïve?

Or is this ambition impossibly utopian and hopelessly naïve? On the one hand, we have

increasing research evidence on what works, both in preventing homelessness in the first instance, and the support mechanisms that can ensure sustainable and stable accommodation for people who had experienced homelessness. On the other hand, the evidence on the ground is that in the majority of member states, the numbers experiencing homelessness are rising, so clearly there is a disconnect between what we know works in reducing homelessness and the current policies being implemented in the member states where the numbers experiencing homelessness are rising.

But in a minority of countries – Finland and Norway (albeit not a member state), the numbers of people experiencing homelessness have declined, thus giving rise to some optimism. This optimism is justified because it is now possible to identify the key triggers for the increase in homelessness in some member states, and the reasons for the decline in others. On balance, building on this knowledge we can be optimistic that with the appropriate policy tools, we reduce homelessness to functional zero across the European Union by 2030.

This optimism is also increasingly reflected in the fact, somewhat paradoxically, that despite the recent increases in the numbers experiencing homelessness, an increasing number of States, regions and municipalities across the EU are devising plans or strategies to end homelessness. Ending homelessness, which may sound utopian, as articulated in these various homeless strategies and plans, consist of essentially pragmatic and realisable targets.

Housing, Housing, Housing... and more

As noted above, the core overarching requirement for achieving functional zero by 2030 is the increased provision of affordable, accessible accommodation. It also will require the restoration of social housing to a 'wider affordability role', rather

Managing homelessness through the provision of emergency congregate is extraordinarily expensive.

than 'a safety net' or 'ambulance role' as is occurring in many member states; and the provision of secure occupancy in the private rented sector, ensuring access and ongoing affordability, security of tenure and adequate mechanisms of redress in member states where these key provisions do not exist, or have been eroded in recent times.

In addition, there are four key challenges to the road to the realisation of the goal of achieving a functional zero by 2030, and collectively these challenges will require substantial shifts and transformations in policy (from managing homelessness to ending homelessness), practice (to evidenced based interventions) and perception (those experiencing homelessness are not the diseased, disabled detritus of society unable or unwilling to be helped) by all actors (the European Commission, National Governments, Local government, NGO services providers) if the goal is to be realised.

The first challenge is to shift policy from the provision of congregate shelters as the default position to addressing homelessness, to the default position being prevention and the provision of rapid rehousing.

There is no evidence that the provision of large congregate shelters for people experiencing homelessness achieve anything other than a temporary, generally unpleasant, respite from the elements and the provision of basic sustenance for people experiencing homelessness, and for a small mi-

nority, a very expensive and unsuitable long-term response to their inability to access and maintain their own housing.

There is however, very substantial evidence that shelters impose rules and regulations that restrict individual autonomy, often infantilising in tone, allowing shelter users to survive shelter life, but limit their ability to achieve sustained exits to independent accommodation. Despite these rules and regulations, the violence and intimidation often evident in such congregate settings can result in some of the most vulnerable people rejecting entreaties to enter shelters.

Managing homelessness through the provision of emergency congregate is extraordinarily expensive, and a minority of shelter users also make extensive use of expensive emergency health and other services, as they traverse through an institutional circuit of short stays in various services without ever resolving their residential instability.

The policy of providing large scale congregate facilities for people experiencing various disabilities, for example, was abandoned in the 1960s and the default position to day is provide housing with individualised support in scattered sites for those who are not in a position to live independently. Rapid Rehousing must become the default position for responding to crisis homelessness, with shelters playing a minimal emergency role only. The evidence from other domains, such as institutional provision for those with mental health issues or intellectual disabilities, demonstrates that it is possible to close large scale congregate facilities. Furthermore, there is clear evidence from Finland that closing shelters is possible.

The second challenge is to reverse the tendency in some countries to criminalise the experience of homelessness itself, particularly street homelessness or some of the survival tactics utilised by those experiencing homelessness and reorient policy to positive engagement with those experi-

encing entrenched homelessness through assertive outreach and provision of permanent supported housing.

The repeal of often long-redundant 19th century legislation which criminalised beggars and vagabonds in the 1960s and 1970s was a positive development in the majority of member states. There is evidence across the EU of the re-introduction of legislation regulating behaviour in urban public spaces, begging in particular. Involvement in street culture activities, such as begging, is problematic because of the strong evidence that it is highly damaging to those involved. However, rather than excluding those experiencing entrenched homelessness in the cities of Europe through costly criminalisation and penalisation, the default position must be the alternative evidenced-based policies of inclusion.

For the minority of entrenched long term, often dual-diagnosed homeless, engaged in problematic street culture, research is clearly demonstrating that if engaged with through assertive outreach, and provided with permanent supported housing, they are capable of retaining their accommodation, and making significantly less use of costly criminal justice services.

The third challenge is to respond to the increasing feminisation of homelessness. Although, there are methodological challenges in exploring the extent and nature of family homelessness, because there is evidence suggesting that families may experience high rates of hidden homelessness. Family homelessness is generally quite different from homelessness among single adults. First is the extent to which family homelessness is experienced by women. Second, family homelessness is not characterised by high rates of complex support needs, such as addiction and severe mental illness, as is can be the case for single adults experiencing recurrent and sustained homelessness.

For families at risk of homelessness, the default

policy and practice must be targeted preventative interventions, and for those families who experience emergency homelessness, speedy access to affordable accommodation with security. The research evidence is clear that both long and short-term housing subsidies are considerably less costly than emergency accommodation or transitional congregate facilities for families, while also offering substantial additional benefits across a range of psycho-social domains, particularly for the children.

The fourth challenge is responding to migration. There is limited data on the extent to which migrants experience homelessness in member states, but they are heterogeneous in terms of their needs and supports. While migrants who experience homelessness may have little in common with one another, other than experiencing homelessness, (very similar to general population experiencing homelessness), what is common across member states are restrictions on access to homeless services for migrants experiencing homelessness.

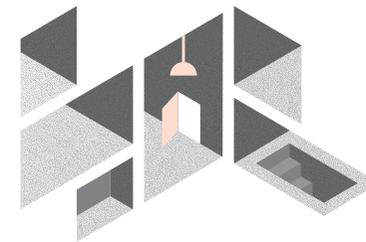
It is in this context, that an EU homelessness strategic plan, is required to ensure co-ordination, coherent planning and consistent access to services in all member states. While, as noted above, an increasing number of individual member states and municipalities have developed strategic plans to end homelessness, there is also a need for the European Commission to develop a strategic plan, on issues which transcend individual member states, such as migration, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity. In addition, Eurostat in conjunction with the Statistics Office in each member states should devise a methodology to measure homelessness on a biennial basis based on existing typologies to ensure a consistent measure of the extent to which people experience homelessness in the European Union. Without such data, we will never fully know if we have realised our ambition across the member states.

Conclusion

What will homelessness look like in Europe in 2030? If evidence-based policies and practices are implemented it could look very different than it does in 2018; however, if individual member states continue implementing their current policies and practices, a bifurcated picture will be evident in 2030, with countries such as Finland achieving the target, but in the majority of other member states, the number of people experiencing homelessness will continue to increase, and the target hopelessly missed. To date, the European Commission has played a relatively limited role, albeit with important learning initiatives such as the peer reviews of policies and practices in relation to homelessness, but a more assertive response is now required. Through the development of an EU strategic plan, the Commission can stimulate the implementation of evidence based policies and practice where they are absent; provide leadership in supporting member states to developed strategies to end homelessness where such strategies are absent; via Eurostat, monitor the numbers experiencing homelessness by putting in place a robust, consistent and agreed measure of homelessness.

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Getting Rid of Home



I cannot think of homelessness in 2030; of strategies and interventions; of more policymaking and expertise, without addressing the pressing issue of what and where *home* is. The issue is as follows: if, under current conceptions and conditions of home, we have space for something like *home-lessness*, then we will never be able to get rid of that thing without tackling the original problem – which is home itself.

Michele Lancione

Home is an exclusionary act. It is made of walls and doors, which create control and allow the policing of a border. It is made of social relationships based on emotional bonding, which are carved out through exclusion (there is no bonding if there is no exclusion of others). It is constructed, in its material form, thanks to accumulations of capital that, in some form or other, are related to – and contribute to reproduce – systems of oppression. As many have shown, it also has internal exclusions, being filled with unbalanced, gendered power relationships and paternalistic modes of breeding. In its most common physical representation – housing – home can quite easily be turned into an exploitative machine, used as a means of capital accumulation that has effects not only on tenants, but also on land values, urban development, and financial markets. It seems as if home is that construct that cuts across multiple dimensions of human life, as a machine that is capable of abstracting from those domains an autonomous function that is then able to reproduce itself in the longer term (it is what Deleuze and Guattari called an ‘abstract machine’). That machine is about extracting one form of existence from the magma of all possibilities, of all possible forms of existence. What I argue is that the possibility of that extraction, the bare primordial functioning of that machine, is carved around the possibility of its negation: home is home because it contains the possibility of not-being-at-home within itself. Home is a full bodied and multi-dimensional exclusionary act.

So, answering the question of what homelessness might be in 2030, in 3452, in 1861, means investigating the unformed matter that diagrams or sketches out the functioning of the universally accepted, mainstream, homing machine. How can one think of ending homelessness without ending this kind of home?

Further, what home does is more than enabling its negation from within, the creation of

home-lessness as a space of existence upon which the whole exclusionary act can be sustained. Home and that negated space of -lessness are productive, because they are not only the site for the (re)production of material and cultural conditions, but also the nexus where subjects are (re)produced. In other words, home-lessness is matter of becoming. It is a non-linear process of subject-formation: one is not born homeless, one does not choose to be homeless, one does not end up being homeless. Everyone, within current systemics of home, endures a process of subject-formation that can be defined of ‘home-less’. The particularity of the socio-technical machines involved mean that even those with a house are not at ‘home’; not fully in-place; not really belonging in the fullest possible way.

The ‘theory’ of homelessness is, for the most part, concerned with making sure that this categorisation is used as a bordering tool to create a minority who are then defined as *l’autre*, the deviant other. This kind of mainstream normative theory knows nothing of the enduring process of subject-formation that makes home-lessness not an exception, but a true common: our shared experience of not being fully in-place. When mainstream theory speaks of ‘the transition’ from being a ‘normal’ dweller to being an ‘abnormal’ homeless person, it explains it as a matter of stages, of pre-explanatory traumas; it justifies it in terms of linear paths where, at a certain point, something ‘went wrong’ causing ‘homelessness’ to emerge. Cause and effect. But in reality, home-lessness is not a matter of cause and effect. Far from that! Home-lessness is about a process of subject-formation that cuts across sociological categorisations, social groups, classes. Rough sleeping is a traumatic intensification of that process: a dense cusp that is not set apart, but well within a whole pluriverse of intensities of ‘lessness’ that endure above, beyond, before, and after it.

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homeless.

The subject is suddenly kicked out of his or her house. Because s/he wasn’t paying. Because s/he couldn’t cope. Because s/he is ill, sick, addicted. The subject is kicked out of her/his house and seems to fall in-between. This is a space made of all sorts of relations and objects that the subject was not aware of before, when s/he was living in the fiction of ‘home’: soup kitchens, shelters, begging and the charity of strangers, sidewalks, tents, wet sleeping bags in abandoned buildings, nights, shadows and new fear of violence too. These things are not foreign, totally hidden away, but instead lie in-between a normalised form of everyday life under contemporary capitalism and its expelled version. But once we zoom out and plug into the micropolitics of our shared existences, is there a real distinction between the subject who falls and the one who does not? Is there a real distinction from the subject within and the one without home? I am not denying that there is a traumatic experiential difference, which is a matter of intensities, but there is not more than this. Both subjects never really left home.

Lessness for both starts before getting kicked out. It is beyond, above, before, and after the event of displacement, because it has to do with the substratum of our social lives. It has to do with the answer to the broader question of how we go about life; about how we decide to deal with the power and energy of life in its multiple forms. The power to love, to make connections, to create and

destroy, to make ends meet, and more. The way these things are managed and the way they are reproduced is always matter of collective choices, conscious and unconscious in their makings. The mode of reproduction that we have chosen is just one of the ways to go about these things. Under this (capitalist) frame there is an individualistic mould that dominates and regiments all others. From the figure of the successful entrepreneur of the 19th century to contemporary consumer-based arguments about choice and free will, capitalism has (re)produced individualisation as our mainstream mode of assemblage and circulation, meticulously constructing the desire for victory, success, and affirmation into the backbone of each subject. Lessness is one of the substrates that emerges from this, and upon it home is assembled. This is a key assemblage of contemporary life, which is made out of private property; individualised responsibilities and private accountability for ‘failures’; identity construction by exclusion; patriarchy; racialised bordering; and so on.

Home does not sit outside of these relations but is their most evident product, which in turns produces us as home-less: it (re)produces us as subjects in a way that ensures that, being at-home, being-‘OK’ also creates the possibility of our expulsion from that home. This being-OK cuts across the unconscious levels of the skin, the body, the face: it becomes a way of being alive, an entanglement with the codes/axioms brought forward by the capitalistic machine, becoming therefore machinic itself, channelling and reproducing that particular form of exclusion as a normal way of life. The subject at home is far from being free – far from being able to choose and to actuate, far from being allowed the free circulation of will and joy. On the contrary: by accepting the individualisation and commodification of everything (which is the abstract mantra of the capitalistic machine) the subject becomes commodified as

well. S/he becomes defined, privatised, wrapped up in opposition to that which is portrayed as less defined, less private: the deviant, the poor, the black body, the 'homeless'. But again, this is a fictional opposition. When the event of expulsion happens, home-lessness is not generated. It simply re-asserted, intensifying the exclusionary status upon which the norm, is built. That is the shared substratum of -lessness, where life is codified on the basis of home's possible absence. This is the substratum upon which we have assembled that thing we call home.

Like theories, policies know nothing of the way in which home-lessness is at the core of the homing game. They are built around a false compartmentalisation. They aim to tackle the 'homeless' subject as if that subject exists in a domain distinct from that of normality, from that of mainstream, shared functions of home. This is perfectly coherent under current conditions because it maintains a false distinction that is required for policies – and experts – to maintain their role (as Foucault so clearly argued). Expertise and interventions are designed to isolate and manage, and through that act of isolation and management – through detachment – they are able to reproduce themselves and their function. Policies can, of course, vary greatly in their immediate effects, which can range from outright annihilation to compassion and care. But ultimately, they all fail in recognising the impossibility of tackling 'homelessness' and the 'homeless' subject as a defined, distinct element in

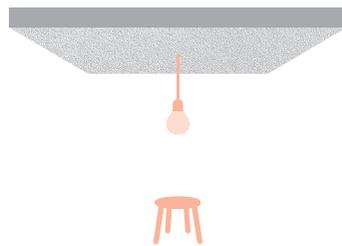
a wider social plane. That's because – once again – there is no distinction to start with. Homeless people do not exist. Once we realise that everyone is part of and a producer of a shared way of life, we can recognise that homelessness lies right at the core of the current home we choose to embrace and inhabit.

PAAVO should be celebrated for its capacity to reduce the intensities of lessness. Few programmes have achieved so much in terms of restoring forms of ontological security to so many people. Those interested in the short-term alleviation of the symptoms of home-lessness should take inspiration. But PAAVO, and other initiatives (such as Housing First in many other contexts worldwide), will not end home-lessness. Not now, nor by 2030. To tackle home-lessness requires a radical critique of the function of lessness, and then the imaginative labour of reinventing home. We need a new home, based around solidarity, affective care, horizontally-shared responsibilities, redistributed means – and more. Only then will we reach a point where home does not include, within its own definition, the possibility of its annihilation. We must move beyond mere shelter, deep into the socio-economic and cultural making of being in the world together, as a true collective being. As anarchist and feminist literature shows, these alternatives makings are possible. An entirely new home needs to be assembled, starting from the radical undoing of the current one.

Lessness for both
starts before getting
kicked out.

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The Best of Times or the Worst of Times?



Capitalism creates inequality, concentrating wealth and opportunity among elite groups, while minimising the potential for the bulk of the population to increase their access to resources. Welfare states arose because the potential to become a billionaire exists alongside the, generally much greater, potential to starve.

Nicholas Pleace

Capitalism in Brazil, China, India or Russia, rampant and successful on one level, has a consistent pattern, little clusters of millionaires, billionaires and a middle class exist alongside a mass of extreme poverty, one clear characteristic of which is being without an adequate home. However, where governments, NGOs and civil society intervene, the presence of extremes of wealth need not – in itself – act as an engine that generates homelessness, providing there is enough redistribution in a society to ensure every citizen has a decent home.

In part, this is about resources. Countries do have to have a certain level of prosperity before they can start spending significant amounts on social programmes. In Finland, a progressive, well-resourced, fully integrated government-led strategy that seeks to prevent and end homelessness has been created and has driven homelessness down. This strategy has been enabled by the political will to pursue it and because the resources were there to make it realistic, both in the sense of dedicated funding for the strategy, but also because Finland has extensive social housing and social protection systems that redistribute wealth and provide social housing at scale. A government may not have the resources to tackle homelessness and can find no better approach than to provide what little support it can and to rely on the charity, altruism and self-reliance of its citizens to do as much as can be done to end homelessness. Bulgaria or Greece cannot emulate Finland or Denmark, however much they might wish to, because the money is just not there.

Responses to homelessness are also about politics. Japan could afford to spend far more on homelessness, as could the USA, but the idea of doing so is too far outside the political mainstream in either country, albeit that these are two countries which are probably as culturally distinct as any two societies on Earth. Hungary may not have all the resources ideally needed to tackle homelessness

but declaring rough sleeping illegal and trying to enforce it out of existence involves political and economic commitments that use resources, which we know could be better directed, just in terms of cost effectiveness, let alone the humanitarian argument.

Redistribute, using a mix of welfare benefits, social housing and rental cost assistance for the poor and regulation of wages, so that people earn enough to actually live on, and you can ensure that most people can keep a roof over their head, even if it is not always an adequate home. The UK, a free market society which is profoundly unequal, limits experience of homelessness because it still has welfare benefits, social housing and state funded intervention on homelessness at relatively higher levels.

In 2017, England had some 120,000 statutorily homeless children living in temporary accommodation, at any given point in time. Alongside these children were their parents and other adults without children who had been determined to be ‘homeless’ under the homelessness laws which meant they were entitled to temporary accommodation and, in most cases offered help with rehousing, by a local authority. In addition, there were at least 5,000 people sleeping rough, at any one point in time. However, England is also a society where government intervenes to prevent and stop homelessness and is spending at scale. While those children were living in what can often be inadequate temporary accommodation, they are not on the street and they would (eventually) be rehoused. Assume 300,000 people are homeless in England at any one point – a terrible and wholly unacceptable statistic in any society purporting to call itself a civilisation – but also only around 0.54% of a population of 55 million. Total experience of homelessness, in terms of the number of people who experience it in a lifetime, may be higher, but it is still a very unusual experience.

Countries do have to have a certain level of prosperity before they can start spending significant amounts on social programmes.

Take away the welfare systems, the statutory homelessness system, the social housing and homelessness would be higher, we already have a clear idea of what England without a welfare state looks like, just read Dickens or Orwell.

In a less regulated economy like the USA, with relatively lower welfare spending, there is a population of working homeless people, i.e. people holding down one or more jobs and living in a shelter, a tent, or a car. There is more homelessness and it is more widespread. What might the level in say, India, Brazil or China be in comparison with the UK? We cannot be sure, the data to assess this do not exist, but the author is willing to take a reasonably educated guess and say more, a lot more. In the UK, as in the USA, the links between poverty, particularly the extremes of poverty, and homelessness are very clear, homelessness is very unlikely to happen to just anyone, it mainly happens to poor people. If there are no social protections for the poor, they will end up living on the street, living in tent 'cities' or building shanty towns, because there is nothing else they can do.

In Finland, of course, sustained investment, collaboration and the delivery of a truly integrated homelessness strategy involving all levels of the State and the NGO sector, with significant spending and a social housing building programme has reduced homelessness to almost nothing. Finland is a capitalist country, but redistribution within a humanitarian social policy and integrated homelessness strategy has tackled homelessness. The Finns would argue that there is still more work to do – and there is – to effectively eradicate homelessness, but homelessness has already been reduced to a residual social problem, it is almost gone. In Denmark too, levels of homelessness, while they have risen, are still negligible compared to levels in much of the economically developed world, and the people experiencing homelessness have dropped through the extensive safety nets of a

social protection, public health and social housing system that makes it unlikely someone will become homeless.

So, Capitalism does not inevitably cause homelessness, providing it is managed to some degree by using redistributive social protection and specific interventions to prevent and stop homelessness. Indeed, the resources of a rich, successful capitalist economy can be effectively directed to mean the risk of homelessness for any one citizen is tiny. While you are not less likely to become homeless than to be struck by lightning in Finland, the comparison is not a ludicrous one.

The former Soviet Union and its satellites, as with China under Mao, were what Marx would have called State Capitalist societies, i.e. the State behaves like Capital does in a free market economy and the population is still oppressed and exploited. There is not a lot of research on what homelessness was like in these countries, but while, theoretically – from each according to their ability, to each according to their need – no one should have been homeless, actually ending up on the street did not necessarily prompt a compassionate response. These societies were unforgiving totalitarian regimes and being an unproductive citizen, even one without a roof, was likely to prompt a harsh reaction from the authorities. A truly equal, even communistic society, may come to pass at some point in our collective evolution, which would

mean the extremes of poverty and inequality that generate homelessness will disappear, assuming we actually manage to not melt the polar ice caps. However, being sensible about this, Capitalism really is the only game in town, and how we manage and respond to the benefits and disadvantages of Capitalism will be crucial to determining what homelessness looks like, both in 2030 and far beyond that point.

If we follow the best example – and Finland, while not perfect, is the best example – and other countries, with the resources and the political will, move in the same direction, it is not at all ridiculous to think in terms of largely ending homelessness across much of Europe, including non-EU countries, i.e. Norway, Switzerland and the UK. Equally, Australia or Canada could go the same route, because they have the requisite economic power to make it practical and sustainable. Homelessness is often preventable and it can be solved when it does happen, and these points cannot now be argued with, because it has been done. As said, this means redistributive policies in a broad sense, Finnish Strategy works in part because it is nested within an extensive welfare system and relatively high provision of social housing, alongside the dedication of significant resources to an integrated homelessness strategy. Things do become more difficult with respect to countries without the same level of economic power, but greater redistribution and spending whatever money can be found on an integrated strategy will at least mitigate the levels of homelessness.

If Europe and the rest of the economically developed World moves towards where Finland is in 2018, it will be the best of times in terms of tackling and preventing homelessness. Finland is a beacon, it is clear evidence of what government, what the resources of the state, working in collaboration with other agencies, particularly the NGO homelessness sector can achieve. If we follow the

Finnish example, homelessness in 2030 could be much less common across Europe than it is now, we could even think in terms of ending it.

Some readers may find all this talk of the deep inequalities of Capitalism and welfare systems rather perplexing in an essay on homelessness, because it is completely at odds with the picture of homelessness on mass and social media and with fictional and artistic imagery surrounding homelessness. Homelessness is almost always portrayed as a matter of individual tragedy, of lost souls and of misguided and troubled individuals who descend into addiction and crime or whose mental health problems drive them onto the streets. So, what is all this talk of redistributive policies and integrated homelessness strategies, when surely homelessness is all about vulnerability, about illness, or about criminals and people refusing to take on the same responsibilities as everyone else?

It is not difficult to find homeless people who have become addicted, or whose mental illness led them to a life of homelessness. If you look at people with a long history of living rough in London, Paris, Dublin, Helsinki, Berlin or New York they will appear similar to each other. They will be high cost, high risk individuals, with complex mental, physical and personal care needs, with levels of addiction and severe mental illness that are far higher than the general population. Look at long-term homelessness in Denmark and Finland, where levels of homelessness are probably amongst the lowest on Earth, and the same pattern appears.

However, if you take a typical (Capitalist) society without the extensive welfare and social protection systems and integrated homelessness strategies of most of the Nordic countries, homeless people share fewer characteristics, with one key exception, they are all poor. Most homeless Americans are very poor, most homeless Britons are, comparatively, very poor, but as the pioneering research of Dennis Culhane and others in the USA first showed

in the late 1990s, most homeless people are not ill, do not have mental health problems and are not addicted to anything.

Look at a homeless family in a typical 'advanced' Capitalist society, like say the UK, Ireland or the USA, and they look nothing like the stereotypical image of what a "homeless person" is, they often are poor lone women parents or poor couples, they are not addicted, they do not have mental health problems and they are doing everything they can to avoid living permanently on the street. Some of the Nordic countries are somewhat different, because their social protection and welfare systems are so extensive that becoming homeless simply through lack of money is pretty difficult, here the pattern of homelessness is indeed one of people with high and complex needs who fall through these safety nets, but the numbers of people involved are tiny, both in a relative and absolute sense.

If, by 2030, more governments which are still actively involved in stopping and preventing homelessness have pulled back, pushing responsibility for homelessness onto NGOs and the altruism of citizens, the problem will get worse. England is almost the definitive example of this, it has extensive legislation, social housing and even, at one point, had dedicated housing related support funding that supported homelessness services within coordinated local and national strategies, but England has made massive and sustained cuts to spending on homelessness, cut social housing supply and abandoned the idea of a national strategy, producing spikes in all forms of homelessness.

The risks of increasing homelessness by 2030 centre on governments pulling back and reducing spending. This is because there is only one solution to homelessness, it takes the political and economic power of a nation state, nothing else – nothing else – can mobilise the necessary resources. We know what will happen if government steps away from homelessness, because we have seen

it before. Victorian London, full of self-righteous religious belief, good works and philanthropy had thousands and thousands of street children. While it may be reeling from Brexit, riven with inequalities and have a housing market that is overheated to the level of absurdity, London in 2018, does not have children living rough on its streets, because London in 2018 still has a welfare state, social housing and statutory homelessness system. Working with NGOs and society as a whole is an essential part of an effective, integrated, homelessness strategy. Finland brings everyone concerned with homelessness together to achieve the best result, but ultimately it is only the Finnish State that is able to do this, nothing else could. Other partners are important, but in the end, it can only be governments that solve homelessness.

There is a problem with the 'alpha' class, the tiny minority of people who hold most of the wealth in Capitalist societies, because the alphas have an agenda that is antithetical to the Nation State as a force for social justice, redistribution and, at a smaller scale, as the main force by which homelessness can be prevented and stopped. State spending and action against inequalities creates what is perceived as an existential threat by the alpha class, because to lessen inequality, even to lessen homelessness, means the state trying to take resources from the alphas and redistribute them elsewhere, i.e. it means the alphas paying a fair rate of tax and not being allowed to hoard the best opportunities for their own tiny elite, as we mortals say.

The alphas pursue a political agenda. The extremes of which are the alt-right and neo-reactionary (NRx) ideologies, which both pacify and agitate large sections of the population, by blaming migrants, ethnic minorities, and of course women who are outside traditional submissive and politically marginalised roles – rather than a tiny group holding extraordinary amounts of total

global wealth – for the relative poverty, political marginalisation and sense of stigmatisation that many ordinary people experience. This is a pretty standard explanation of Brexit and Trump – both of which directly deliver NRx/alpha goals- but also important to future homelessness policy because of the alpha agenda to minimise what the nation state does, the level of regulation it exercises and the amount of taxation that it collects.

Retrenchment, the state pulling back from spending on public health, social housing and welfare spending is a familiar story in North Western Europe. International competitiveness can be given as the reason, a taxation level that must be brought down to allow competition with China and India. In reality, such cuts are not about 'economic efficiency', Germany spends huge amounts on social protection, as it does on education, infrastructure and research, and outcompetes most of the World. The pressures around minimising the Nation State, forcing down tax and minimising regulation, come from the alphas, that tiny minority who control most of the World's wealth.

Homelessness is politically important to all of this because it is the ultimate representation of what Capitalism can do to people, or rather it has the potential to be interpreted that way, because

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the dominant imagery around homelessness is all about individual pathology. Homelessness is almost always presented as a story about people who, through sickness and through their own actions, come to be on the street or in an emergency shelter. Pseudo-science is used to reinforce this picture, by talking in terms of what can 'predict' homelessness and focusing debate on what works in stopping or preventing homelessness, within an individual pathology framework that is essentially about 'treating' what is 'wrong' with homeless people with high support needs. What is wrong in most cases is being poor, and there is a reason this work always focuses on individuals, who, providing they are long-term or repeatedly homeless have the correct array of complex needs to allow the debate to be framed in these terms. None of this pseudo-science talks about homeless families who are mainly just poor, or very poor, and who just need an adequate home and a sufficient income to live on. Nor is the evidence that addiction or mental health problems might arise after someone becomes homeless given any attention.

What makes Finland different is that the Finnish version of Housing First is a philosophy underpinning an entire strategy that starts from the premise that every citizen should be housed and that the State has a responsibility to ensure this happens. We know what stops homelessness, a strong social protection system, redistributive policies, social housing, an integrated homelessness strategy that focuses on prevention and uses tested, humanitarian responses to homelessness that recognise it is an experience of fellow human beings, not a population who are somehow different from the rest of us.

The alpha class need homelessness to be about the faults or the illnesses of the people who experience it, or need it to be linked to immigration or some other scapegoat. This is because, if people start to question the story that blames homeless

people for their own homelessness, questions might be asked as to whether homelessness might have something to do with a tiny group of alphas hoarding the bulk of society's resources and behaving however they want. Homelessness in 2030 could be all but over, at least in the most economically developed parts of the World, the best of times, but if we allow a narrative that serves the alpha class, that blames individuals, not deep inequality, and which seeks to stop the State from bringing its resources to bear on homelessness, it could be the worst of times. What we must avoid is reinforcing the alpha class narrative, to take the English example, we must not talk just in terms of the 5,000 rough sleepers with complex needs but instead focus attention on the 120,000 poor homeless children. We must recognise that we already know how to stop homelessness and that the solution lies with governments taking the political lead, providing the resources and assuming responsibility. Long live Finland and the national homelessness strategy, it is an example to the World.

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There is Light at the End of the Tunnel – Let's Hope it's Not a Train



There is an old saying by Yogi Berra: "It's difficult to make predictions – especially about the future". And so it is, complicating the task of predicting what homelessness will be like in 2030. Things could get worse, improve dramatically or stay much the same. There are of course many possibilities to think about.

Stephen Gaetz

Let's begin with a consideration of what can go wrong. In many countries we have built our response to homelessness around the homelessness sector, tasked for the most part with providing emergency services and supports such as shelters, food, and day programmes, for instance. The challenge is, of course, that many of the factors that can have an impact on the problem of homelessness are external to the sector, and cannot be controlled, shaped or even really influenced by the sector. In many countries, the lack of safe, affordable and appropriate housing continues to be an issue, and there are few signs that this problem will be easily resolved over the next decade. On a positive note, Canada is getting back in the game of direct investment in expanding the affordable housing supply; however, this will not be an easy road to take as there is 30 years of inaction to make up for, and incredible pent-up demand across the country. It will likely take considerable time to see any impact on the homelessness crisis, and unless there is a clear and well-articulated path (including programming and funding) between the housing investment and the homelessness strategy, it may not have much of an impact at all. Income inequality continues to plague many nations, and while there are, of course, solid examples of progressive governments that through public investments and progressive taxation are addressing the issue, in most countries there is very little political will – amongst the public, and major political parties – to move aggressively in that direction. Complicating things is the reality that developments in Artificial Intelligence may render many more workers (including some whole sectors) permanently displaced, and there are few indications that governments are preparing for this eventuality through a consideration of economic redistribution, or even more boldly rethinking the meaning of 'work' and the relationship between employment and income. It is therefore unlikely

that by 2030 we will see significant improvements for the many individuals and families who are economically vulnerable and precariously housed. The rise of alt-right governments in Europe and the United States, and the growing popularity of such political parties elsewhere doesn't give one confidence in the potential for positive changes any time soon, and raises concerns regarding the stigmatisation, marginalisation and exclusion of vulnerable people – including those who experience homelessness – going forward.

In this political context it is also worth considering how in recent years national responses – including active resistance – to cross-border migration have had an impact on the problem of homelessness and how we respond to it. A humanitarian crisis caused by inadequate settlement supports for immigrants and refugees and backlashes against migrants is compounded when the homelessness sector becomes the support system of last resort for newcomers. The problem is worsened when immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are denied even this kind of minimal support and are instead forced into rough sleeping and worse. This is an issue that is much discussed in Europe but that has rarely been a concern in Canada until recently. This year in Toronto – Canada's largest city – the Mayor recently claimed that 40% of shelter users are refugees, and the City of Montreal made the decision to refuse to accept more refugees into its shelters.

While most political signals across North America and Europe suggest there is little reason to think this situation will improve in the coming years, it is certainly possible to imagine that the situation will get much worse by 2030. Not only will the factors that are producing the humanitarian crisis likely continue – conflict, oppression, economic crises – the political shifts to the right may lead to further backlash and restrictions on entry as well as greater stigmatisation and marginalisation of

The problem is worsened when immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are forced into rough sleeping and worse.

newcomers. One factor that is little discussed in the homelessness sector is the potential impact of climate change on international migration. The World Bank estimates that 140 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America will be forced to move within their own countries to escape lands that are no longer habitable because of drought, flooding and storm surges. That such migration will contribute to a massive homelessness crisis in these countries, potentially leading to conflict resulting in external migration also seems inevitable. In many receptor countries our current systems are not sufficiently resourced to adequately support such people under the current circumstances. The 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which is designed to protect those fleeing persecution, war or violence, currently does not grant those fleeing the consequences of climate change refugee status. So, while this may be a looming crisis by 2030, it seems to be one for which we are unprepared.

While by 2030, the homelessness problem could worsen considerably in many if not most nations, it could also be the case that things might dramatically improve. In recent years, we have seen positive developments such as the widespread and growing adoption of Housing First in many countries in North America, Europe and now South America. In many contexts the implementation of integrated systems responses has led to more coordinated efforts involving both the homelessness sector as well as mainstream

sectors (such as health, justice, child protection and employment). There is growing evidence that some cities and countries, through implementing such innovative approaches, have actually made progress in reducing homelessness.

In imagining that we will continue to make progress, it is worth considering the role that engaged research involving collaboration between researchers, policy-makers, service providers and people with lived experience might play in driving such change. We have come a long way – in Canada anyway – from the days when there was a common disdain voiced by people in the homelessness sector, along the lines of "We don't need research. We know what the problem is, and what the solution is." Wrong, wrong and wrong.

It is hard to imagine any issue area related to social policy where research does not have a significant role to play, and I think there is now a strong consensus that research produces an important kind of knowledge that can help improve our thinking and practices. In Canada, the successful At Home / Chez Soi was perhaps a key turning point. This large-scale and highly-successful research project involved large demonstration projects on Housing First in five Canadian cities and used a randomised control trial to measure the outcomes of the intervention. The positive results that came from this research (at least with adults) had a profound influence in Canada, and arguably globally, in making the case for Housing First as truly a 'best practice'. By 2013 when the Government of Canada renewed its homelessness strategy, it prioritised Housing First and many communities across the country began to implement the model. Since that time, research on youth homelessness has had a growing influence on policy and practice in Canada, including the development of Housing First for Youth, an approach adapted to meet the needs of developing adolescents and young adults.

So, what of the future? There is a lot that needs

There is growing evidence that some cities and countries have actually made progress in reducing homelessness.

to be done, but much can be accomplished in the next 12 years. A key area that researchers, policy makers and practitioners really need to turn their attention to is homelessness prevention. It is a very odd situation that so little energy and investment has gone into prevention. In North America, there has been much resistance from many quarters against shifting our focus to prevention, with the claim made that “first we need to eliminate chronic homelessness – then we turn our attention to prevention”. While one shouldn’t hold their breath waiting for an end to chronic homelessness in countries like the United States at the current pace of progress, it is also highly unlikely that many other countries will be able to make this claim by 2030 as long as we continue to ignore the inflow into homelessness. Moving in the direction of expanding our efforts to prevent homelessness is the right thing to do, but to get there we need to greatly enhance our knowledge and understanding of how to do it effectively and begin to take to scale policy and practice that is showing positive results.

One area of resistance to making the shift to prevention is that there is not enough knowledge about, or evidence for homelessness prevention (ignoring the fact that outside of Housing First, there are very few examples of truly best practices in the homelessness world). Yet there are good examples of prevention interventions and policies out there – see the Welsh homelessness prevention legislation for example, or Australia’s efforts to reduce youth homelessness through school-based early intervention (the Geelong Project) – and there is an emerging body of research and evaluation to support this direction, but we need more. And by the way, let’s not mistake the current paucity of research supporting prevention as “absence of evidence, rather than the evidence of absence” as Sandra Nutley (of ‘research impact’ notoriety) might say. A focus on prevention, on

building the evidence base, and shifts in funding policy and practice could have the most profound influence on how we address homelessness over the next ten years. These are areas that the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and A Way Home Canada have been actively engaged in, through implementing demonstration projects across a number of areas of prevention. Working to stem the flow into homelessness should be a priority – waiting for people’s health and well-being to worsen and to become entrenched in street life before we prioritise them for help, should not be how we orient our response.

Another area where research can have a positive impact is to increase knowledge and capacity at the local and national levels around the utilisation of research and data. Supporting governments, municipalities and service providers to use research and data more effectively through defining best practices for data collection, management, analysis and reporting will have an impact on service delivery and our goal of reducing and eventually ending homelessness. This can also involve the development of meaningful and feasible outcome measures (key performance indicators) to drive service delivery and for communities implementing plans to prevent and end homelessness. Better tools to assess and case manage clients to either prevent their homelessness or help them exit in a sustainable way are needed as well, and there is most surely a growing demand for these kinds of resources. Molly Brown, in her evaluation

of SPDAT, identified that a surge in demand at the local level for tools to assist in assessment and prioritisation has meant that there has been widespread adoption of tools for which there is very limited evidence to support the psychometric properties of instruments available for coordinated assessment. She concludes that: “we do not know whether we are building our houses on shaky foundations”. These are problems we can fix, and over the next 12 years potentially make incredible progress. This should improve our response to homelessness.

Finally, the growth of international engagement between practitioners, policy makers and researchers has the potential to create a positive impact on strategies to address homelessness across the globe. There has been an increase in active engagement across international borders over the past five years that has led to an exchange of knowledge and innovation, as well as collaboration. Some examples include the Housing First Europe Hub helping to share knowledge and support taking Housing First to scale across Europe. In the youth homelessness space there is the A Way Home movement, which began as a national coalition in Canada to help shift the focus to preventing and ending youth homelessness, and which in a few short years led to the founding of A Way Home coalitions in the United States, Europe (Scotland, Belgium, Austria, and growing), and soon in Australia. This international movement has helped spread the model of Housing First for Youth (HF4Y), including the development of an international research and evaluation protocol to assess the effectiveness of the intervention, and contribute to its continuous improvement. FEANTSA’s Youth Study Sessions have helped bring together young practitioners, policy makers and researchers from across Europe (with invitees from Canada) to learn about HF4Y and using a human-rights framing to address youth homelessness. A new international collab-

oration called the Upstream International Living Lab (founding partners from Australia, Canada, the United States and Wales) focusing on social R&D in the area of youth homelessness prevention (and in particular school-based interventions) has been launched this year. By 2030 there is no doubt there will be more of this kind of activity, and it should have a positive impact on how we address homelessness.

While we have discussed things getting worse on the one hand, and better, on the other, it is quite possible that things will remain relatively unchanged in most places by 2030. One thing that we have learned over the years is that in most cases, progress is slow due to a number of factors, some operating within the homelessness sector, some external to it. The experience of progress in the United States is quite instructive. After close to two decades of investment in Housing First (and a rather large investment in ending veteran homelessness), as well as the broad implementation of plans to end homelessness, and expanded use of innovations such as Homelessness Management Information Systems and Coordinated Access, homelessness remains a big problem in the United States. A 2017 report on Point in Time counts revealed that chronic homelessness had declined by 27% over the previous ten years – progress for sure, but nowhere near the rate needed to drive that down to zero, and certainly it is unlikely to happen by 2030. The challenge is that while progress is being made, it is very uneven. While some cities have taken significant steps in reducing homelessness (Columbus, Ohio; Rockford Ill.), others have not (New York, Los Angeles). Progress has been made in reducing veterans’ homelessness, but this came with a massive Federal investment that was not matched for other homeless populations.

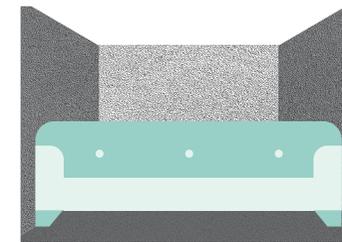
Impeding progress is the fact that taking innovation and best practices (including Housing First) to scale is inherently challenging and fraught with

obstacles. While many in the homelessness sector embrace innovation, many others openly resist it, or adapt innovation in ways that profoundly distort the intent and outcomes of evidence-based policy and practice. For these reasons we need to be cautious in making claims about the inevitability of dramatic reductions in homelessness if only we would apply certain kinds of solutions, no matter how evidence-based.

So, going back to Yogi Berra, while it may be hard to predict the future when we don't know what is going to happen, there are things we can surmise. Our knowledge about how to address homelessness – including how to prevent it – will progress, expand and become more evidence based. International engagement and knowledge sharing will grow in scope, influence and impact. At the same time, we should assume that applying what is learned from social R&D will be anything but straight forward and will face resistance, meaning progress will be uneven and quite possibly slow. Finally, and this is the greatest uncertainty, but it is very possible, perhaps even likely, that homelessness as a 'wicked problem' may in fact grow in complexity, challenging what we know about 'what works' and for whom. We will all need to be actively engaged, and increase our collaborative efforts, in order to face new and uncertain challenges.

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Between Vision and Reality



To end homelessness in five or ten years is a statement often found in ambitious programmes from government agencies or civil society organisations. However, when confronted with social reality, programme evaluations often need to explain why the initial targets of these programmes were not met.

Lars Benjaminsen

We need to consider the perspectives for generating more affordable housing in larger cities.

Practitioners in the field know all too well that there are no shortcuts to solving homelessness, as they witness the many barriers that homeless people encounter when they try to navigate through complex welfare systems and access housing markets that even the middle class can hardly afford. In social policy the predominantly individualist understanding of homelessness largely stands in the way of addressing the structural and systemic barriers that expose the most vulnerable people in society to homelessness and housing exclusion. When gazing into the crystal ball to see what homelessness may look like in ten or fifteen years this essay will examine some of the main structural and systemic factors that may influence different scenarios of homelessness in 2030.

An important driver of the current upward trend in homelessness in many countries is the widespread absence of policies to provide affordable housing for low-income groups. In combination with the strong wave of re-urbanisation that characterises the western world today, the lack of adequate housing policies creates a cocktail where low income groups and vulnerable people, in particular, are effectively excluded from living in their own cities. Cities like Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Helsinki, Oslo and Stockholm are growing fast. These wealthy cities are the urban motors of economic growth in their respective countries. Despite being proclaimed as among the most liveable cities in the world, none of these cities have come close to solving their homelessness problem. Whilst some cities have shown progress in reducing rough sleeping, hidden homelessness has become more widespread as growing numbers of vulnerable young people, ethnic minorities, and other marginalized groups cannot find housing they can afford and often stay on the couches of friends and acquaintances until their fragile social network is worn down. The severe lack of affordable housing also hampers efforts to implement

long-term solutions in homeless services. Most notably, the lack of affordable housing makes it difficult to scale up Housing First programmes, which rely on the access to permanent housing in combination with intensive social support. When discussing future scenarios of homelessness, we therefore need to consider the perspectives for generating more affordable housing in larger cities.

First of all, there is the scenario that the shortage of affordable housing will prevail or even get worse. Nowadays new housing developments almost solely target the purchasing power of the upper middle class who are the winners of new urban growth with strong employment opportunities. At the other end of the income scale the construction of new social housing is often very modest. In many countries with a tradition of public or social housing there has been a long trend of increased marketisation by reducing subsidies for new construction, a tendency that was only reinforced by austerity measures following the financial crisis. There are no signs that subsidies for the construction of new social housing will increase in the near future, and other policy areas such as hospitals and public security are more likely to win the competition for scarce public funds. Even in the Nordic countries with their strong social-democratic welfare state tradition, housing policies seem to have lost their attraction for policy makers.

Whilst the overall supply of low-cost housing may be the single most important factor, well-functioning allocation mechanisms are also crucial in providing access to housing for vulnerable people.

However, in some countries a growing concern for the general composition of residents in troubled housing estates have led to the introduction of mechanisms that effectively divert low cost housing away from the most vulnerable groups, instead giving priority to residents with employment or other indicators of not belonging to any vulnerable group. There are also examples of countries where traditional queuing and allocation mechanisms for public housing have been abolished giving local housing associations the right to pick their residents from the mass of applicants. The result is the same. People with employment and a stable income get a fast track into public housing whereas vulnerable people are left behind. If such current upward drivers of homelessness and housing exclusion of low income and vulnerable groups should be reversed by 2030, there will be need for a more holistic approach to urban planning, housing supply and housing allocation policies. An awareness of the unintended effects of housing policies that reinforce the housing exclusion of vulnerable groups rather than alleviating it and an obligation to provide alternatives for people who are effectively denied access to ordinary housing would be a good starting point for future change.

Another issue often overlooked when it comes to the scarcity of affordable housing is the disincentive to provide new social housing attached to administrative divisions within metropolitan areas. Most large cities consist of a core city with a ring of suburban municipalities around it. In most European countries core cities are very densely populated with very high land prices. Affordable land for new low-cost housing is often only available on the fringes of metropolitan areas, and often only in poorer suburban municipalities rather than in the more affluent suburbs. However, a low income suburban municipality has no incentive to build more public housing in addition to existing stock as it would just attract even more

people with low income from the entire urban area. This situation is all too familiar in cities such as Copenhagen or Stockholm, but hardly given any attention in current housing policies. Since administrative boundaries around larger cities are not likely to be redrawn in the near future, a rebalancing of the incentives for local authorities to increase the supply of low cost housing is needed. This could involve the establishment of regional housing planning authorities or even quotas on social housing construction across municipalities depending on regional housing demand.

Another factor influencing current homelessness trends is the impact of general welfare reforms. The workfare reforms and reduced welfare benefits that have been implemented in many countries to strengthen the financial sustainability of welfare states have further widened the gap between income and rent levels for vulnerable people with modest chances of finding employment. In particular, marginalized young people usually receive much lower benefits than middle-aged or older benefit recipients. Whilst these incentives may have worked well for young people with stronger educational abilities, they are likely to push vulnerable youth even further over the edge. In combination with the growing lack of affordable housing, the lower benefits are a main driver behind the increase in youth homelessness in many countries today.

The financial pressure on welfare systems will prevail in the coming years as welfare states face the challenge of meeting the increasing pension obligations of aging populations. Thus, it is unrealistic to expect more generous social benefits in general over the coming years. A more realistic way to adjust the balance between employment incentives and the protection of vulnerable people would be to increasingly differentiate welfare benefits and offer higher benefits for particular risk groups such as people with mental illness or

other severe social problems. Such a differentiation already exists in some countries, but they are often restricted to quite narrow groups such as people with schizophrenia and other psychotic illnesses, whereas for instance cognitive disorders such as ADHD are usually not included amongst the diagnosis giving access to higher benefits. However, cognitive disorders and personality disorders are also strongly associated with a higher risk of homelessness. Increased differentiation and targeting of benefits could be seen as a fine-tuning of social policies, alleviating the most severe side-effects of the workfare reforms of recent decades.

Finally, for the large group of homeless people with complex support needs, the provision of social support tailored to individual needs is as fundamental as the access to housing. In recent years, better knowledge has emerged about support methods that are holistic enough to meet the complexity of support needs of people with a dual diagnosis or with other severe conditions. These are evidence-based interventions such as Assertive Community Treatment or Intensive Case Management that are both crucial elements of the Housing First approach. Whilst these support methods have been tested rigorously in randomized controlled trials in the USA, Canada and France and have been shown to substantially increase the housing retention rates for people with complex support needs, these methods are used

surprisingly little in most European countries. By contrast, the reality in social services in most of Europe is that the support available when homeless people are rehoused is often much less intensive and flexible than these evidence-based methods prescribe. If progress is to be achieved in reducing homelessness over the next decade, then there is a fundamental need to strengthen the provision of holistic, recovery-oriented support services when homeless people are being rehoused and there is a need to mainstream such services into local welfare systems and make them the default option and not an experimental option for the few.

The improvement of social support services for homeless people and making more use of already existing and well-documented support methods may be the dimension where a positive change over the next decade is most realistic, compared to alleviating the shortage of affordable housing in larger cities. After all, the software is easier to change than the hardware. However, if the current detachment of homelessness policies from more general housing and welfare policies is not overcome, the most vulnerable people in society may very likely still face the extreme marginalization of homelessness and housing exclusion, perhaps even to a greater extent than today, and we may find ourselves discussing the same barriers and challenges in 2030 that we are today.

After all,
the software
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How to Make Progress on Homelessness by 2030?



We are probably witnessing the most rapid growth in homelessness in the European Union of this generation. In such a context it is extremely difficult to be optimistic about the future. But there are some reasons to be hopeful.

Freek Spinnewijn

In a growing number of EU member states, homelessness has become increasingly politicised. There is a developing awareness amongst policy makers of the seriousness and urgency of the problem and the need for dedicated policy action. Knowledge and expertise on homelessness have increased exponentially in recent years and have never been so easily accessible. We know more than ever before about the dynamics underpinning homelessness and what solutions work. The homelessness services sector is witnessing a rapid professionalisation and evidence-based service provision is gradually becoming the norm.

A considerable reduction in homelessness is thus conceivable. Finland is already leading the change as the only EU member state that has managed to steadily, and substantially, reduce homelessness over the past 15 years. Unfortunately, they remain alone in this achievement currently.

Progress on homelessness will find itself dogged by structural problems that are likely to jeopardise, or at the very least complicate, meaningful strides forward over the next decade. The most prevalent of these impediments are issues relating to housing, migration, budget, and time.

The European Union is currently facing a major housing affordability crisis. Almost 40 % of people living in poverty in the European Union are suffering housing-cost overburden, meaning they spend more than 40 % of their income on housing. In Greece the situation is particularly dire, with almost 90 % of poor households in housing-cost overburden. But unaffordable housing is an issue everywhere in the EU, especially in the larger urban areas where homelessness is most acute. The situation has deteriorated in most EU member states and the gap between rich and poor is likely to continue growing. If the affordability of housing for people on low incomes does not change soon, it will be impossible to stem the tide of homelessness. It is clear that State intervention

into the market is a necessity. Social housing stocks need to be rapidly expanded, especially where they have been depleted in recent years. More broadly, a careful examination of the potential of more atypical affordable housing solutions, is required too. Most poor people live in the private rental sector. Making it sufficiently affordable & secure will be a key part of the homelessness puzzle in many contexts.

Secondly, there is the migration 'crisis'. The strain of flawed migration policies on the homeless shelter system has reached unmanageable levels in many member states. An increasingly large number of undocumented migrants find themselves forced to use homeless shelters. The expected boom in housing-led and Housing First solutions to homelessness is very welcome, but it will make undocumented migrants a more visible part of the homeless population living in shelters and hostels. This will subsequently make the cracks in the migration system far more obvious and reinforce the political drive to 'solve' it. The homelessness sector will come under increasing pressure to become a 'partner' of public authorities in future migration policies.

Solving homelessness requires a tremendous, long-term financial investment. Substantial social investment will be required to allow policy

Knowledge and expertise on homelessness have increased exponentially in recent years.

Finland certainly is a source of inspiration, but it should not make us blind to interesting developments in other countries as well.

makers and service-providers to make the transition from ‘managing’ homelessness to ending it. In the long-run, housing-led and Housing First policies might be more cost-effective, but in the short-term, cost-benefit arguments will not be convincing enough. Particularly in countries where the shelter system is still cheap, there will be few financial incentives to solve homelessness and more comprehensive arguments will need to be developed.

The Finnish example proves that progress on homelessness requires time, consistency and perseverance. It is an illusion to think that homelessness policies can be turned around during one political mandate. A strategy to end homelessness can only be successful when it is planned over several government terms. With politics becoming increasingly polarised, this may prove to be a real challenge in quite a few countries. Finland stands out from other member states in the way it has combined a very focused strategy on homelessness with its “bigger picture” social and housing policy.

There are obviously many more problems that will make progress on homelessness difficult. But let’s not be overly pessimistic. From my many visits to Finland and contacts with Finnish colleagues, I have learned that political commitment and a “can-do” approach can do wonders.

Firstly, it may be necessary to put aside some academic hubris and stop arguing that homelessness is tremendously complex. How better to scare away policy makers and complicate long-term commitments? Why not argue that solving homelessness is actually pretty simple? Presenting the homeless cause as a highly convoluted issue helps to boost professional pride within the homelessness sector but it does not really facilitate policy progress.

We must also call for policies that are based on the rule rather than the exception. Too often we get distracted, sometimes even obsessed, by the small number of homeless people that would be unlikely

to benefit from a new policy approach. Most of the resistance to the Housing First approach, for instance, is based on individual cases and ignores experimental programmes that consistently show that, for at least 80 % of the chronically homeless people, it works.

We should not try to anticipate all potential problems and obstacles when designing policies to prevent and tackle homelessness. It risks weakening the foundation of a policy approach and makes implementation and oversight unnecessarily complicated. The Finnish example shows that obstacles will emerge, but that they can be addressed much more directly when a clearly planned policy is in place or in the process of being implemented.

For those who are still sceptical, I wholeheartedly suggest a visit to Finland to see with your own eyes the unpretentious and pragmatic approach to homelessness. Oh, and by the way, Finland has reduced shelter capacity to only 50 beds.

My only reservation about the Finnish approach to homelessness is that they seem to underestimate the importance of health and the power of public health actors in the fight against homelessness. Homelessness is not only an issue of housing, but also an issue of public health. The increasing focus of public health policy on the social determinants of health is an opportunity to mobilise public health actors and budgets in the fight against homelessness. In some countries this may be a

necessity to ensure progress, and bring Housing First, for instance, to scale.

Finland certainly is a source of inspiration, but it should not make us blind to interesting developments in other countries as well. That is where the role of the European Union comes in.

The European Union has played a regrettably minor role in the fight against homelessness so far. This is a real pity as the appetite for transnational expertise among policy makers and service providers is growing rapidly. The huge international interest in the Finnish approach to homelessness is a clear illustration of this.

National and local governments are best placed to address homelessness directly. But I believe that the European Union also has an important role to play. There are three instruments the European Union has at its disposal to support member states in their efforts to tackle and prevent homelessness: education, funding, and legislation.

The European Commission has a long tradition of funding transnational research, monitoring, and exchanges in the social area. As there is growing interest in evidence-based policies, and the knowledge and expertise remains relatively scarce and fragmented, the Commission could generate a far greater impact by further developing good understanding of homelessness. Up until now, the Commission has financed learning programmes related to homelessness in a rather improvisatory way, which impedes any large-scaler impact and kills the momentum of any long-term programmes.

The Commission manages some incredibly large budgets, a portion of which are reserved for social issues. The FEAD is a fund of 3.4 billion euro, allocated over a 7-year period, that finances support for the most deprived parts of the European population, including the homeless. Unfortunately, it is almost entirely used to provide food and basic material aid, which is not an effective way to address extreme poverty or homelessness.

The other EU funds are of such broad scope that homelessness can be seen as a minor issue, even as an undeserving cause, rarely benefitting from financial support.

There are not many areas that are relevant to the fight against homelessness in which the European Union can legislate. But it would be a mistake to conclude the legislative powers of the European Union are useless. The European Union can legislate on free movement, and we know that people exercising their right to free movement sometimes become homeless. So, why is there no EU law that helps prevent homelessness among mobile EU citizens? Other areas where EU legislation could be helpful are migration and consumer protection for instance. Up until now, homeless people have been frequently neglected by the EU legislature as citizens and rights holders.

It is frustrating that the European Commission, which is the body that initiates most of the activity of the European Union, does not understand the added value and potential impact of a strategic focus on homelessness. Euroscepticism is growing and the need to show the social face of the European Union is more urgent than ever. A clever set of European Union activities related to homelessness could rapidly generate a visible impact and help the Commission to claim back some authority as a major player in social policy.

After more than 20 years of professional activity in the “Brussels Bubble,” I, too, must fight regular spates of Euroscepticism. But I believe there are good reasons to think that things will change for the better. In 2017, the European Union solemnly declared the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is likely to be the primary framework for social policy at EU level. The Pillar includes a strong reference to homelessness and the right to housing. Without wanting to sound naïve, I think this reference should be enough to trigger a concerted European policy dynamic on homelessness.

Ideally, this dynamic will lead to an EU strategy on homelessness, managed by the European Commission, which combines knowledge development and policy monitoring with grant-allocation and legislative initiatives. We know from FEANTSA's lobbying work over the past 10 years that sufficient political support can be mobilised from the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers for such a strategy.

The core objective of the EU strategy should be the promotion of Housing First as the most effective approach to solving entrenched homelessness. Finland demonstrated the potential of mainstreaming Housing First and would be the exemplar for other European countries. Policy makers and other stakeholders are already now queuing to meet Y-Foundation and its colleague organisations to see with their own eyes how Finland managed to reduce homelessness to functionally zero. Why not formalise this leading role of Finland in the framework of an EU strategy?

The Finnish Presidency of the EU in the second half of 2019 might be an important opportunity in this regard. It would be a perfect occasion for the Finnish government to showcase its work on Housing First and encourage the other member states to push the fight against homelessness as a priority for future EU social policy. A simple passage in the Conclusions of the EPSCO Council would be sufficient. The timing would be ideal as the EU 2020 Strategy comes to an end and a new, hopefully more social, 10-year strategy will most likely be launched. The new Commission would still be in the early days of its mandate and hence open to suggestions for concrete policy actions.

If an EU strategy is launched in due time, the European Union could help to reverse the growing tide of homelessness. As part of the strategy, a proper monitoring system should be put in place that allows comparison of homelessness data and the performance of member states. A multiannual

learning programme should be developed that focuses on common research questions and on the most urgent knowledge gaps. The EU Structural Funds (i.e. Grants) and the new Invest EU fund (i.e. Loans) should be used to support the scaling of Housing First and the development of innovative housing solutions for homeless people. A realistic legislative package should be part of a strategy as well. The package should include; better protection of homeless EU mobile citizens; an EU-wide unconditional right to shelter, to avoid competition for shelter beds between different vulnerable groups; and better protection against evictions and repossession in the frame of the EU Banking Union, including stronger consumer protection legislation.

FEANTSA has no control over what happens in the EU member states, but we can try to help create a European policy context that supports member states in their efforts to address homelessness. I am confident that by 2030 some form of EU homelessness strategy will be in place which provides, in a more calculated way, access to knowledge, expertise, and funding.

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Closing Words

ELIMINATING HOMELESSNESS by 2030 is a human rights imperative that States throughout the world have committed to through the Sustainable Development Goals. Imagining a future where this goal is not met is distressing. But imagining the fundamental shift that will be needed to meet this goal in such a short period of time is daunting!

The researchers and thinkers who have contributed to this book illustrate this tension. Some focus on the abandonment of people living in homelessness by governments who turn a blind eye, and others suggest that progress is being toward solving this egregious violation of human rights.

For those who fear the worst, dark humour is often used to describe the realities of living in homelessness, for example in a post Brexit United Kingdom, or the increasingly oppressive Hungary. In one paper we are taken into a dystopian housing nightmare wherein, following a financial crisis, municipalities sell-off all remaining public housing stock, and homeless people are drafted into the army as it becomes one of the sole providers of accommodation and food. For those who refuse to take up this opportunity or are unfit, charities set up soup kitchens and blanket runs, while innovators design shiny tents for the new encampments springing up near city dumps. This nightmare is complemented by the Hungarian authors' tongue-in-cheek praise for the re-introduction of 'Work Houses' as the solution for homeless people who have not (yet) been imprisoned.

But the authors also carry a sense of optimism, and a consensus emerges, that homelessness can be solved and the fundamental shift needed to solve it is at hand. It is clear from the papers that the data and the evidence upon which to base effective rights based housing policies is available. A number of authors point to Finland as a beacon – a place of inspiration demonstrating that homelessness will only be solved and the right to housing realised by identifying and addressing the systemic causes of homelessness and by treating people, first and foremost, as rights holders. This ideal is clearly shown in the Finnish philosophy of Housing First as a strategic approach to transition the homeless system away from emergency responses to providing long-term, secure and adequate and supportive housing for those in need. The Finnish way also seeks to prevent homelessness by addressing the systemic barriers that lead to violations of the right to housing.

Whether it's their intention, the authors illustrate the human rights dimensions of homelessness by exposing their lived experiences interacting with policies that do not serve their needs and the consequences on them of government inaction. The lack of urgency accorded to their living conditions despite the obvious and deep suffering seems even more dystopic and callous than any imaginary future that can be conjured.

Several authors put forward potential solutions – building more social housing stock, implementing Housing First programmes, changing the way we understand homelessness, and solving the housing crisis, to name a few.

From my vantage point, while each of these solutions has merit, whether undertaken alone or in concert, homelessness is unlikely to be solved without an overarching vision and framework for solving it. The answer lies in human rights. Homelessness is undeniably a fundamental assault on dignity, and as such it must be understood as an egregious human rights violation that warrants an urgent human rights response. That response is human rights based housing strategies that: set measureable goals and timelines; recognise people who are homeless as rights holders and not beneficiaries of charity; coordinate and provide universal and coherent norms across laws, policies and programmes; that address gaps and inequalities to ensure that no one is left behind; and most importantly hold governments accountable.

Though the authors were asked to imagine homelessness in the future, ultimately this book provides a snapshot of the here and now. What we learn is that homelessness, as it stands, is unacceptable. That's a good starting point for change.

In Ottawa, 13 December 2018
Leilani Farha
UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing

What will the state of homelessness be in 2030? Top experts on homelessness, social policy and poverty from around the world offer up their views on where we are headed. This collection of essays, compiled by the Y-Foundation in Finland, includes a wide range of scenarios: from the optimistic to the dystopian, from the pragmatic to the idealistic, and many more in between. But one shared idea shines through: inaction is not an option when it comes to the future of homelessness.



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