

Seminar 19: Definitions of Home & Homelessness (Room: TBD) - Chair: Nicholas Pleace, UK

Martin Wagener, Nicolas De Moor, Noémie Emmanuel, BE: Between Alternative Living-Models and Housing Precariousness in Rural Wallonia – Questioning Frameworks of Homelessness

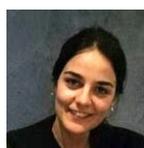
The last book in Homage to Henk Meert is titled « In my caravan, I feel like Superman ». Meert questioned representations of homelessness which are grounded in societal perceptions and normative (dis-)beliefs. Based on data from recent counts in the rural south of Belgium, we'll analyse more in detail the living situations of people in camping sites, tents, caravans or tiny houses. In Wallonia, there is a long-standing discussion about how to recognize these living arrangements between precariousness and the need of social intervention. On the one hand societal actors argue about the recognition of alternative modes of living, and on the other hand, multiple situations of poverty and deep-rooted housing-related precariousness question the "alternative model". Based on the contacts and discussions with different alternative living projects and also residents who are permanently housed on camping sites, we first analyze statistical profiles to give a better understanding of these situations. Further, we'll discuss discourses from a perspective inspired by Blumer (1970) about the normative framing of homelessness and alternative living models by a set of different actors.



Martin Wagener is Assistant Professor in sociology at CIRTES (Centre for interdisciplinary research on Work, State and Society) at the UCLouvain.



Nicolas De Moor is research assistant working on the counts of homelessness in French speaking Belgium.



Noémie Emmanuel is PhD students at UCLouvain working mainly on trajectories of homeless women. They all have worked together in multiple projects regarding Homelessness.

Julia Wygnańska and Małgorzata Kostrzyńska, PL: Definition of a home by people experiencing homelessness in Poland

We will present the qualitative study on the needs of people experiencing homelessness which was conducted by the Housing First Poland Foundation in Łódź Voivodship in 2022. 56 people with various length of homelessness experience currently being in 6 distinct housing situations from street through shelters to municipal mainstream housing (ETHOS) were asked about: their definition of a home; the extent to which their current housing situation met this definition; and meaning of being housed to ontological security (Giddens, 1991). The results were analysed in the theoretical framework of Feantsa three domain conceptual definition of home(lessness) (Edgar et al., 2004) and four markers of a home as used by Padgett (2007).

The analysis resulted in the common definition of a home: Home is a place where you can stay with your loved ones, talk to them privately, have intimate relationships, there is nice atmosphere and you are independent of the help of others. It is important to be able to decide for yourself when and what you do and how you deal with health crises. In the physical sense, the house is modest: one small room (20 m²), warm, with the possibility of preparing meals, washing the body and clothing, taking care of physiological needs, resting, storing things. The place should be equipped with

basic installations and cheap/affordable to maintain. The study clearly showed that for people living in the streets their housing situation means total lack of ontological security and is an unwanted lifestyle disabling them from feeling of being human. This contradicts the common stereotype of homelessness being a chosen lifestyle.

Not all results were coherent with Feantsa and Padget definition of a home: legal title was not playing a big role; living in a traditional homelessness shelter was meeting the need of a home as defined by the interviewees themselves regardless of that housing situation not meeting all the theoretical criteria of a home (three domains and four markers). People living in shelters can experience constancy of their material and social setting and therefore feel human and at home. Multiple occupied homeless shelter with the abstinence rule sanctioned by the removal from the shelter can be a real home.

The study was commissioned by the Regional Centre for Social Policy in Łódź (Regionalne Centrum Polityki Społecznej w Łodzi) and was financed through European Social Fund Regional Program for Łódź Voivodship 2014-2020 Technical Support (ESF Regionalny Program Operacyjny Województwa Łódzkiego na lata 2014 – 2020, Oś priorytetowa Pomoc Techniczna).



Julia Wygnańska, researcher and advocate for ending homelessness, social integration therapist and motivational interviewing practitioner, President of Housing First Poland Foundation. Her engagement in homelessness began with research for the Municipality of Warsaw during her Sociology studies at the University of Warsaw. She became an independent researcher for the European Observatory on Homelessness. In her later projects she concentrated on evaluating housing led programs through in-depth interviews with people experiencing homelessness. Since 2019 she's a leader of Housing First Poland Foundation. She provides fidelity consultation for the teams that want to develop their programs towards HF principles. In cooperation with other researchers the Foundation conducts research concentrated on the perspective given directly by people with experience of homelessness.

Małgorzata Kostrzyńska, PhD, University of Łódź is a university teacher, social pedagogue and art therapist. She has vast experience in qualitative research: long-term participant observation, narrative interviewing, qualitative analysis (Grounded Theory), action and participatory research. Her interests focus on perception of homelessness street work stigmatization social inclusion and exclusion social welfare and ending homelessness. As a Vice-Chairman of the Council for Solving the Problem of Homelessness at the Municipality of Łódź she is active in networking governmental and non-governmental stakeholders including experts by experience as well as representatives of science and business sectors to implement systemic and individual solutions to end homelessness. She has also worked as a street worker and assistant to people with experience of homelessness. Both in her research and social activities she concentrates on changing social awareness, breaking stereotypes and most of all presenting the perspective of people with lived experience of homelessness.