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Meeting the housing needs of prisoners and ex-offenders in the UK: Opportunities and limitations

Henryk Adamczuk // henryk.adamczuk@uce.ac.uk

University of Central England, Birmingham, UNITED KINGDOM

Punishing criminals as a social policy aim sits uncomfortably with the re-integration of previous offenders into the community. How are these aims to be resolved in a humane society? The Social Exclusion Unit (2002) identified loss of liberty as one cause of homelessness and the need to find new accommodation at discharge has been a focus of recent UK government attention.

The UK has one of the highest rates of imprisonment in Europe (EU ICS 2005) and the prison population at a point in time is around 80,000 in England. A higher number are imprisoned every year, many serving short sentences or on remand pending legal proceedings. The process has considerable implications for housing policy. The UK Home Office (Home Office 2004) and Assembly Governments have emphasised that the national priority is to protect the public and there is strong emphasis on the national policy of reducing repeat offending. Within the Home Office, the National Offender Management Service assesses the social needs of prisoners, including the need for accommodation, but there is a co-ordination issue between resettlement services and housing policy.

The Department for Communities and Local Government and counterparts in Scotland and Wales, oversee the working of the homelessness legislation. In England, the 2002 Housing Act inserted for the first time a new priority group for inclusion in the housing obligations of local authorities:

‘vulnerable as a result of having been remanded or having served time in custody’

Has access to housing improved for ex-offenders? This paper explores the changed legislative context of prisoner resettlement; how departments and agencies mediate the intentions of government and the ways that ex-offenders’ housing needs are met in practice in the face of considerable barriers.

Sustainable solutions to homelessness: Policy progress and policy transfer in the case of Scotland

Isobel Anderson // isobel.anderson@stir.ac.uk

University of Stirling, Stirling, UNITED KINGDOM

In the post-1997 period of devolved government to Scotland, both housing and homelessness have been high on the policy agenda. A Homelessness Task Force was given a ‘blank sheet’ opportunity to review homelessness policy and to make recommendations for sustainable solutions. The Scottish Executive accepted the recommendations of the Task Force and an implementation programme to 2012 is underway. The resultant strategy for tackling and preventing homelessness has been held up as an exemplar for the rest of Europe. Five years on, this paper will examine progress on implementation and consider the potential for policy transfer with reference to other European countries. In doing so the paper will draw upon both published data sources and ongoing research within the Scottish and EU contexts.

The paper will initially consider the policy process within Scotland. It will outline the process of policy review and the key recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force which reported in 2002. It will then summarise the legislative and other policy instruments adopted to ensure implementation of the recommendations, including the mechanism of a Homelessness Monitoring Group, which works with the Scottish Executive to oversee implementation. Importantly, the paper will present a critique of mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate progress in tackling and preventing homelessness in Scotland.

The paper will then examine Scottish policy progress in the international context, specifically focusing on key policy networks within the European Union. The Scottish policy framework has been characterised as the most comprehensive in Europe, and one from which other countries

could learn. This paper will question whether implementation is matching those expectations through comparisons of available evidence from other European countries. Conclusions will reflect on the sustainability and transferability of the Scottish approach to homelessness and whether Scotland might also learn from its European neighbours.

Removing legal barriers to sustainable reductions in homelessness from Sydney, Australia

Elisabeth Baraka // elisabethbaraka@yahoo.com.au
Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Sydney nsw, AUSTRALIA

As part of creating a sustainable solution to homelessness, the legal needs of those who are homeless and at risk of homelessness must be addressed. Legal problems can lead to homelessness and create barriers to moving out of homelessness. Further, there are systemic ways in which the legal system operates to alienate homeless people and jeopardise their access to justice. The enforcement of particular laws result in a disproportionate impact on homeless people (e.g. fines for offences in a public place).

The paper will seek to engage with the ways in which the legal system, and the laws and policies of different levels of government, operate in relation to homeless people and how the law reflects broader societal approaches to homeless people and, historically, to those in need more generally. It will also discuss the possibility of how advocating for reform in these areas can bring about, not only changes in the law, but also changes in the way the community views and treats homeless people.

The paper will make particular reference to the model chosen to address these problems by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, an independent, non-profit legal and policy centre based in Sydney, Australia. Known as the Homeless Persons' Legal Service ('HPLS'), free legal help is provided to people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness. As well as the direct provision of legal services, HPLS seeks to understand the systemic issues, engage with key stakeholders and bring about change through education, law reform and policy initiatives. The paper will look at some of the ways in which HPLS has achieved its aims, as well as the struggles it faces in its work.

Living in emergency: A research on the quality of temporary housing in emergency conditions

Alessandra de Cesaris // alessandra.decesaris@uniroma1.it
HousingLab University of Rome, Roma, ITALY

Temporary social housing's need has become in contemporary world a priority of Local and National Authority. Migrations; natural or technological catastrophes, political events or seasonal works, lead periodically large areas to considerable modification of their own layout. In this critical background, temporary social housing can offer opportunity to study and to test new concepts to settle in the landscape: new reversible methods defined by a hard network system in the ground and viceversa by a flexible, undefinitive and temporary settlement above the ground.

In Italy, Guidelines of the Civil Protection Department suggest that each Municipality adopts an Emergency Plan that, among other functions, will identify sites to be destined to temporary living to be inserted in planning regulations.

These areas for setting up prefabricated shelter, must be strategical placed in the roads network and must be provide, preferably, of infrastructural networks: electric energy, telephone, drainage, and water systems.

Planning and designing sites to be destined to temporary living point out a range of design issues as:

1. the relationship between emergency area and urban sprawl;
2. the multifunctional use of land. The same sites must be available for settling different

functions/activities in times of peace and in times of emergency

3. the constraints determined by the double function of civil protection;
4. the imprint on the ground and the network system and modular design;
5. the definition of a minimal living module and the research of a personalized 'existenz minimum'.

Preventing and tackling homelessness in a context of homeownership: The Norwegian case

Evelyn Dyb // evelyn.dyb@nibr.no

Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Oslo, NORWAY

Preventing and tackling homelessness has been high on the political agenda in Norway since 2000. A strategy to prevent and combat homelessness, setting up rather ambitious objectives, is running to the end of 2007. A revised strategy is expected to follow. The strategy is developed by state government and passed through the Parliament. The responsibility to perform housing and services to households in need is directed to the local authorities. Thus, the achievements are dependent on the local authorities' priorities and ability to implement the homelessness strategy. An important part of the governmental strategy is funding of a variety of local homelessness projects to support local implementation of state policy. The paper is based upon review of existing research, the greater part being evaluation of state funded projects and research undertaken to support the strategy, and policy documents. However, the context for implementation of the homelessness policy is a high proportion of homeownership touching 80 percent and a very small sector of social housing of approximately 1.5 percent of the total housing stock. The paper explores whether a sub sector of housing for homeless households is emerging, and if that is the case, what is the impact on the local homelessness policy and practice?

Forms of prevention of homelessness

Heidrun Feigelfeld // hf@srz-gmbh.com

SRZ Urban + Regional Research, Vienna, AUSTRIA

Prevention is key to avoid housing loss and to enter an 'often quite long' homelessness 'career'. But, there are many interpretations of 'prevention', many different stages where prevention could and should start. Very different measures are set and services provided, on various levels. And, there is still a lack of definitions.

I will present some examples of cooperative interventions of prevention in some big European cities, which a team of practitioners and researchers identified as promising and innovative, and discussed regarding their key qualities and their transferability to other national and local framework conditions. They also cover a range of people affected, from people in a neighborhood, those threatened by eviction by a landlord, to ethnic minorities who are supported to avoid the loss of their flats by contributing to refurbishment.

Lessons learnt from this exchange project, COOP, and policy recommendations will be mentioned, but, also some first reflections on a more systematic access to the issue 'prevention' and on structural framework conditions of housing systems, which 'produce' a certain number of housing loss.

Rental Accommodation Scheme: A solution for sustainable urban centres in Ireland?

Robert Jordan // bob@threshold.ie

Threshold, Dublin, IRELAND

Sustainable urban centres typically have a substantial residential population and a diverse social mix living there. In Dublin City, where 13% of the Irish population live, there has been a

revival in city centre living. Many in the professional classes no longer want to escape to the (ever more distant) suburbs. Apartment development is escalating, as is the overall size of the private rented sector. Many social housing estates are being refurbished and, through Public Private Partnerships, re-engineered to mix social groups.

But a continued place in the city centre for people with limited education and skills or for migrants is not assured. The social housing stock in the Dublin City is restricted, despite high levels of housing need. And private rental accommodation at the lower priced end of the market is failing to provide affordable accommodation of decent quality. This raises questions about the future supply of key workers and service employees ' waste collectors, hospital staff, childcare workers, and retail workers - who underpin a dynamic, well-run city.

The Irish government has announced housing policy initiatives in response, most notably the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). This is a scheme whereby local authorities contract private landlords to provide longer-term housing for people in housing need ' a hybrid of social housing/private rented accommodation.

The paper analyses the potential for RAS to improve the housing situation of people on low incomes and enhance their opportunities to participate in the city economy. It explains the programme and the improvements that it promises. It then considers whether RAS is likely to enhance minimum dwelling standards for private rental housing and the quality of housing management, such that less well-off households can settle and make longer-term homes. The impact of RAS on the affordability problem in the private rented sector will also be addressed.

The 'intermediate' housing market in Britain

Peter Malpass // peter.malpass@uwe.ac.uk

UWE, Bristol, UNITED KINGDOM

For many years British housing policy has been based on owner occupation as the mass tenure, with a safety net social rented sector for those unable to buy, and a small private rented sector mainly for those on their way towards owner occupation. However, strongly rising house prices in the last decade, and an increasingly residualised social rented sector mean that there is a growing body of people who are excluded from both of these main tenures. This group includes, but is larger than, those who are often referred to as 'key workers'. In the last few years the notion of an intermediate housing market has emerged as government has sought a solution to the embarrassment of increasing numbers of people who work but cannot buy. The argument to be developed is that it is important to see the intermediate market in relation to both problems of affordability in owner occupation and perceptions of social housing. Whereas in the past social rented housing was seen as an appropriate offer for key workers, now that is not the case. The emergence of the language of intermediate housing will be interpreted as a sign of acceptance of the immutable residual role of social housing in the present period. Parallels will be drawn with earlier periods, to argue that the importance attached to the intermediate market is a reflection and continuation of the tradition that those with economic power get the attention of housing policy makers. In a sense the intermediate market is a modern version of the homes for heroes experience of the 1920s, when high quality, subsidised council housing was effectively targeted at the better off working class secured, leaving the poor largely out of the policy frame of reference.

The comparison study of housing exclusion between UK and Japan

Yoshihiro Okamoto // yokamoto@mecl.chukyo-u.ac.jp

Chukyo University, Nagoya, JAPAN

This study explores the influence of the change of the policies and economic circumstances for the state of housing.

In the UK the direct provision of housing from the public authorities switched to the various provisions. The residents of social housing have changed from various persons to the supporting people such as the low income, the handicapped and the homeless people. In Japan housing policy has been based on the market. Since the rapid economic growth the movement of population from the rural to the urban area and from the inner city to the suburban area reduced the average size of households. The reduction of the housing supports from the company for the reduction in cost due to the severe competition in the global economy narrows the choice of housing and increases the unstable housing. So in both countries the housing division has been expanded between the rich and the poor. However there is the fundamental notion that the housing market can distribute fairly the resources, the poorest people are excluded from the society in both countries.

Radically divergent? Homelessness law and practice in post-devolution Scotland

Hal Pawson // h.pawson@sbe.hw.ac.uk, **Emma Davidson**
Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, UNITED KINGDOM

Since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Scottish Executive policy has served to widen the remit of homelessness legislation within a broader strategy of 'social justice'. Homelessness policy in Scotland is presented as playing a key role in extending social citizenship. This contrasts with New Labour's more 'consumerist' approach to housing policy in England. This paper reviews the evolution of homelessness law and practice in Scotland, using as reference points divergent developments in England. At the same time, we draw attention to parallels between the two countries relating to a 'strategic approach' to homelessness and the advocacy of a 'prevention-focused approach'. Drawing on empirical research in both Scotland and England, the paper compares and contrasts approaches to homelessness prevention, and explores the limits of 'devolutionary divergence' in this area.

Gatekeepers, invisibility and 'turning a blind eye': Homeless women's use of public spaces in England

Kesia Reeve // k.reeve@shu.ac.uk, **Rionach Casey, Rosalind Goudie**
Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UNITED KINGDOM

Drawing on primary research carried out in 2006 this paper explores homeless women's use of public spaces and buildings: the ways in which women negotiate access to public spaces, the behaviours they (strategically) adopt within these spaces, and the function they serve in the daily lives of homeless women in the UK. Public buildings and spaces, such as libraries and parks, represent places where homeless women try to meet their needs in the absence of appropriate service provision, but also represent a means of distancing themselves from their homelessness status and preserving a non-homeless identity. The paper will explore the ways that women 'read' and interpret the rules of public spaces, and develop alliances with the gatekeepers of these spaces, as a strategy for managing their daily lives.

The effect on policy responses of differing constructions of homelessness attributed to domestic violence

Angela Spinney // angiespinney@hotmail.co.uk
Leeds Metropolitan University, Brandon, UNITED KINGDOM

This paper compares the changing approaches to homelessness attributed to domestic violence in England and Australia since the formation of the feminist refuge movement in each country in the early 1970's until the present day. In both countries domestic violence has been accredited as a major cause of homelessness. This paper examines the ways in which the

disparity of the social construction of such homelessness has contributed to the development of differing policy responses, and to the ways in which these policies have been enacted. A structured analytical framework has been developed in order to demonstrate how the rise to, and fall from, prominence of varying discourses in each country has influenced attitudes to homeless victims of domestic violence. A conclusion is made on the extent to which the ways in which victims of domestic violence are responded to, including whether it is they or their perpetrators who should lose their home, has been influenced by differing social constructions of homelessness in the two countries.

An international review of homelessness and social housing policy

Mark Stephens // ms513@york.ac.uk, **Suzanne Fitzpatrick**
University of York, York, UNITED KINGDOM

In comparative accounts of social housing systems, much emphasis is placed on the extent to which social housing is 'mixed' or 'residualised'. It is generally assumed that the former is a 'good thing' and the latter a 'bad thing'. In this paper we shift the emphasis to a consideration of the role that social rented housing plays in housing the most vulnerable groups including homeless people, the extent to which they are excluded in the social rented sector, and the way in which social rented sectors are often segmented themselves. We place an emphasis on the way in which policy relates to homeless households and examine the links between welfare regime, housing system and the nature and response to homelessness.

The fit between supply and demand in womens refuge services in the Netherlands

Judith Wolf // j.wolf@sg.umcn.nl
UMC St Radboud, Nijmegen, NETHERLANDS

To improve the quality of service delivery the Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre, in cooperation with the Trimbos-institute, has conducted a study commissioned by the Health Ministry on the fit between supply and demand in the women's refuge services. It focused on whether the services currently available are still sufficiently compatible with the profiles and the problems and needs of the client group, which has been changing over time (about 60% are now from non-Western ethnic minorities). The research report is available (Maat en baat van de vrouwenopvang. Onderzoek naar vraag en aanbod. Wolf, J. e.a. 2006). The research continues with a follow-up study of ex-clients, with a primary focus on their current living situation and state of physical and mental health.

Size estimates and profiles of homeless people in the Netherlands

Judith Wolf // j.wolf@sg.umcn.nl, **Connie Mensink**
UMC St Radboud, Nijmegen, NETHERLANDS

Although in the Netherlands no recent nationwide figures are available on the numbers of homeless people living on the streets or in homeless accommodation, estimates about the size of those populations have been made in several Dutch cities. Estimates involving rough sleepers and people depending on night shelters and counts of people living in homeless accommodation in Leiden, Utrecht, The Hague, Alkmaar, Zwolle and Zeeland deliver some information about the homeless population.

The estimates (using capture-recapture methods) and the tallies are based on data collection with purpose-designed recording sheets. This enables the counting of all people who meet the pre-set criteria and it ensures the detection of duplications. The estimates take place in low-threshold facilities and are usually conducted over a two-week period. In addition to the estimates, tallies are made in residential facilities (specialist hostels, 24-hour residential facilities etc); these are based on the client record systems of the facilities themselves.

In addition to making size estimates or counting the numbers of clients being served, these studies have also created profiles of client populations in these cities. Their physical and mental condition is poor, and 40% have both psychiatric and physical problems. More than half use several types of psychoactive substances.

Homeless children in Istanbul by the framework of social segregation, urban poverty and spatial relations

Reyhane Yigiter // yigiter@itu.edu.tr, **Nilgun Ergun**

ITU, Faculty of Architecture, Istanbul, TURKEY

The 1980's is described as a refraction point in the world, when the economic, social and spatial changes have been seen especially in the rapidly urbanized cities. The migrants cause, such as insufficient house stock, unemployment problems in the social and spatial environments. Problematic family and social relationships, alcoholism, drug addiction, increasing in crimes, vandalism are seen as a result of 'urban poor' in this period and the 'homeless people' take place as users of the cities.

'Homeless children' has an important ratio in the 'homeless people' population in Turkey. Lack of social governance considerations, internal migration, rapid urbanization, low socio-economic level, segregated families, violence in families, cause increase on the homeless children population. Large numbers of street-bound or homeless children in Istanbul, petty crime committed by children and child labor. How well families have fared in the 1980s period of privatization and 1990s era of economic instability, high rates of inflation, and decreasing purchasing power, directly affects the overall welfare of children.

In this study, the socio ' economic situations, the places where they live and the reasons of the preference of to live in the streets of the 'homeless children in Istanbul' will be take consideration in the framework of homelessness and the reasons and the results of the problem is evaluated by the point of view of the urban planners.