

SELECTED THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND THE BASIS FOR HOMELESSNESS CURRENTLY

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Abstract: When examining homelessness issues, it is important to pay due attention to the theoretical and methodological analysis, characterized by definition, causes of origin, course, consequences, as well as linking and linking homelessness with other sociopathological phenomena. In the framework of this paper, we analyze selected theoretical reflections and approaches leading to the definition of homelessness while also looking at the benefits of the historically first census of people living without a home in the Slovak Republic, which was implemented in 2011 through Population and Housing Censuses.

Keywords: Homelessness, Theoretical background, ETHOS, Census of the homeless, The Slovak Republic

1 Introduction

Losing one's home and homelessness¹ can be described as a significant global problem, affecting not only the most advanced countries in the world but also developing countries (Obuobi, 2015).

At the same time, homelessness represents in its sophisticated form a multidimensional, socially undesirable phenomenon whose causes, course and consequences are also closely associated with a range of other social phenomena, especially with poverty and social exclusion (Žilová, 2014).

According to Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen (2012), we can say about homelessness as an extreme form of social exclusion that has profound implications for a person affected by homelessness but also for the whole of society. Under homelessness, this is not only a social-pathological phenomenon but also a process associated with a dynamic course, not only the causes of its origin but also the course and consequences of its duration. In this context, it can be characterized not only as a social but also as a life crisis, affecting all dimensions of the individual's life (Foscarinis, 2012).

Schavel and Oláh (2010), by the essence of homelessness and its expressions, include a target group of homeless people in a group of marginalized groups.

2 The formulation of the issue

Although homelessness and its associated persons living within the public space do not represent a modern phenomenon in society, different definitions have been applied in the attempt to define homelessness for a long time (Brändle, Garcia, 2015). We are therefore focusing on the international organization FEANTSA, which focuses on homelessness in the long run, and has attempted to present a theoretical concept of defining homelessness, taking into account the many features and expressions associated with the problem.

In this context, FEANTSA joined the ETHOS concept in 2002, framing and defining homelessness initially within the four basic conceptual categories (no shelter / flat, no housing, inadequate housing and precarious housing), and the areas creating a home, and where homeless people are excluded to varying degrees. These areas included the physical, social and legal spheres. The original concept of ETHOS was thus modified in 2004 to include seven general categories of homelessness and housing exclusion, which were also the result of linking the original four conceptual

categories, in conjunction with the three areas that characterize the home (Lorenc, Ondrušová, 2015).

Lorenc and Ondrušová (2015) further point out that there was an annual review of the ETHOS typology between 2004 and 2006 through the European Homelessness Observatory, by national surveys of national homelessness statistics from the individual Member States. It was also characteristic for the period that the four basic concepts of the ETHOS typology were developed into thirteen operational categories (including the specification of 24 life situations, their use for different public policy purposes). Later on, most of the EU Member States started to use the Harmonized Definition of ETHOS light (the condition of its compatibility with the UNECE and Eurostat recommendations, given the population census in the EU, which was implemented in the Member States in 2011). It was a shortened equivalent of the ETHOS typology (focusing on conceptual categories of people without shelter and homeless people), which was also used in the 2007 European Commission Study on Homelessness Measurement.

From homeless typology, it is also important to pay attention to the applied standard of living that is not the same within the homeless subculture. In the context of the standard of living standards Kadlečík (2013) recognizes three groups of homeless people:

- a) the first group of persons can be characterized as visible homeless because the persons concerned publicly declare the status of homeless people. A preferred standard of living is usually meager, accompanied by poor hygiene and care for appearance, poor health, apathy, as well as no or only minimal motivation to improve their unfavorable life situation. The given group of people acquire the means for their survival, mainly by selling secondary raw materials and beauties, with the feature being the use of social services of the low-threshold offer;
- b) the second group consists of middle-aged people. Persons belonging to this group did not lose their hope for re-socialization and motivation to change their situation, despite their long-term residence on the street, while hygiene, health or welfare is higher than those included in the first group. From the use of social services, it is essential to mention the preference of higher-threshold social services (shelters, hostels) as well as the priority interest in securing the client's living needs;
- c) the third group consists of persons with a preferred higher standard of living, living without a home in a shorter time horizon, or in connection with a repeated loss of home in shorter time horizons. A characteristic feature of this group is the high degree of motivation to change the existing situation, the high interest in obtaining affordable housing and maintaining employment, which also emphasizes the keeping hygiene and the external appearance of these people in front of the public, declaring their interest in reintegration into society.

In the process of re-social inclusion, it is important to note the length of stay in the street, which, according to Kuhlman (1994), has a decisive impact on a triumphant return to society. In this context, the phases of formation, respectively, duration of homelessness may vary.

Habánik (2016) states a breakdown, consisting of the following stages:

- 1) *the first stage* - at this initial stage, the person who has lost their home is trying to act so as not to exaggerate the impression of the homeless before the public eye. The result is the non-acceptance or non-admission of their new social status, the active search for help, the maintenance of cleanliness and a decent appearance;

¹ The essence of the home is not only a living space, but also a non-material, deeper aspect, necessary for the life of man as a social creature.

- 2) *the second stage* - we can call it a regression - a situation where the individual does not succeed during the first stage of finding suitable ways to solve his social situation. The absence of an address, residence, and security imply that any administrative action is a complex and almost insurmountable problem for individuals. At this stage, a homeless person gets into a state where he/she loses self-esteem, stops looking after his / her appearance and mood, and stops gradually having an interest in improving his / her situation;
- 3) *the third stage* - regression is gradually replaced by resignation to a lifetime, including family, friends, and acquaintances. At this stage, existing social bonds are extinguished, apathy is coming to the forefront, and the total lack of concern for the future. The person at this stage is not interested in the solutions offered, but he wholeheartedly agrees with his destiny and openly accepts the status of the homeless.

Given the ETHOS typology, we further state that due to the multidimensional nature of a universal and general scheme of homelessness, it is possible to encounter a variety of factors and causes that lead to homelessness.

Ondrejko (2009) confirms this view, adding that the phenomenon of homelessness has its roots in poverty and other accompanying factors, but under the very emergence of homelessness can also sign biological determinants presenting the reasons for real homelessness:

- a) *volunteerism* - Homelessness is often presented as a lifestyle expression of members of the homeless subculture, whose members not only practice but also voluntarily choose it. From choice, there is, therefore, the view that even homeless people themselves are responsible for the emergence of their homelessness (the opinion of uninterested persons);
- b) *defects and pathologies* - homeless can be characterized as persons who are affected by one or more defects on a functional basis. Whereas in the past a person who is not home is considered a person unable to integrate into society, it is currently possible to assume that in a person suffering from at least one defect in the pathology set there is a presumption that the person will not be able to take proper care of himself and the risk of homelessness is so greater;
- c) *the inadequate family support* that has a significant impact on why people are losing their homes or why they are unable to reintegrate with their family (family absence, family dysfunction, perceiving the individual as a family victim, and others);
- d) *unfortunateness* as an initial or ending impulse that affects the emergence of homelessness.

According to Fitzpatrick, Kemp, and Klinker (2000), in the second half of the 20th century, in the territory of Western Europe, the public could meet two theoretical concepts arguing about the emergence of homelessness in society. The causes were structural and individual. An important fact, however, was that both the theoretical concepts and the homeless debate in society were presented not only by state representatives but also by social workers working in the field with homeless people as well as by non-governmental organizations working in the third sector. This expert exchange of views was able to draw the attention of the public who subsequently started to address this issue, influencing how social work was done towards this target population.

Due to the circumstances, Marek, Strnad, and Hotovcová (2012) also offer the following causes of homelessness within the public space:

- a) *primary* - the individual is aware of the causes of his or her loss of home, social deprivation and acceptance of the status of a person living on the street;
- b) *secondary*- under the influence of social bankruptcy, the process of psychic decline of the personality follows; an

individual knows why he is on the street, but he does not think about how to handle this situation;

- c) *tertiary* - if an individual realizes that existing barriers in the process of his re-social inclusion can overcome and undertake this process, but unsuccessful, there may be a situation that he can not integrate into society and is unable to find a place in it. The result is a permanent return to the street and the resultant final resignation of his life.

3 The theoretical background of homelessness in the Slovak Republic

The conditions of the Slovak Republic mean that the problem of homelessness is long drawn out of the focus of the state and the majority public attention. In this context, we are dealing with significant deficits regarding examining the issue, as well as the lack of a framework of measures implemented, to resolve, alleviate and possibly prevent homelessness. In Slovakia, we meet not only the lack of legislation on homelessness but also the ineffective distribution and distribution of social services² that can not be reflected in the real numbers of homeless people, including the street work method, as the critical method of capturing a given spectrum of clients (Habánik, 2016).

We consider the absence of a National Strategy that includes effective procedures and solutions in the process of eliminating homelessness, in conjunction with the lack of homelessness models at the level of individual regions (as well as not paying enough attention to marginalized populations, including not only homeless, but also drug addicts, segregated Roma communities, etc.). In this regard, we note that it is very complicated to thoroughly map and accurately determine the number of people living without a home. In particular, the group of potential homeless people is vast because, according to economic indicators, the still significant share of the population is at the border, respectively. Below the poverty line (based on indicators of the minimum subsistence minimum as a socially recognized minimum income limit for a natural person)³.

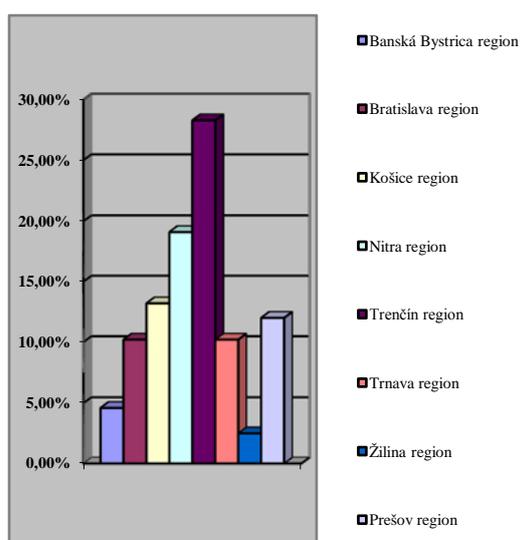
Gerbery (2015) notes further that at the OECD level it is estimated by calculation that regarding productive population, one in a thousand people are 1-8 people living without a home. In this context, we also point out an inevitable shift in SR conditions, as in 2011 Population, Housing and Homeland Census took place, and for the first time, it was also attempted to map the size of the group of people living without a home. In this case, the secondary category of homelessness was applied by which the survey commissioners looked at the size of the population consisting of people living outside the dwelling of the housing stock as well as using collective accommodation of a temporary nature (as defined by Act No. 448/2008 Coll. social services) or residing in a fictitious house without a shelter.

Given that the census methodology provided that each person is formally counted within a particular flat or house, the legendary house item was applied in case the investigated person did not live in the house or the apartment. This methodology has created a space for backgrounds serving as a group of homeless people. Results Population and housing censuses finally showed that up to 23 483 people could be characterized as living without a permanent home, with a dominant male representation (up to 61.4%) (Ivančíková, Škápik, 2015).

² Kamanová (2016) explains that the nature of social services is focused on solving, mitigating, or preventing the emergence of an unfavorable social situation, disrupting the social independence of an individual, family or community.

³ By failing to reach the minimum of life, one finds himself in a state of material need. A more detailed status as well as the possibility of assistance is defined by Act no. 417/2013 Coll. on Assistance in Material Need and on Amendments to Certain Acts.

Figure 1: Proportion of homeless regarding the occurrence in individual regions of the SR



Source: Gerbery, 2015, author's own processing

Table 1: Number of homeless people on the basis of sex and region

Region	Men	Women	Total
Banská Bystrica region	621	451	1 072
Bratislava region	1 289	1 107	2 396
Košice region	1 740	1 356	3 096
Nitra region	2 701	1 172	4 473
Prešov region	1 720	1 107	2 827
Trenčín region	4 380	2 258	6 638
Trnava region	1 570	831	2 401
Žilina region	385	195	580
Total	14 106	9 077	23 483

Source: Gerbery, 2015

4 Conclusion

The problem of homelessness has been developed in modern society as the current challenge, the consequences of which are perceptible at the level of the whole society. With its multidimensionality, homelessness represents a specific social phenomenon, touching and affecting other social phenomena. Multivariate itself is specific to a wide range of existing approaches to exploring the phenomenon from different angles. An attempt to present the definition of ETHOS, in synergy with the support of the census of homeless people, can be a significant step in the process of looking not only for long-term but especially effective ways of solving homelessness even in the conditions of the Slovak Republic.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AO