

Summary of the 1nd CUPH network workshop in Paris

Theme: Methods and national contexts

The first workshop of the CUHP thematic network was held in Paris at INED on the 6th and 7th of March. It was attended on the first day by an expanded INED team and a researcher from INSEE (the French National Institute of Statistics) and all the partners. It was attended on the second day by INED researchers (including field researchers), partner teams and teams from French NGOs working in the field of homelessness who presented their work.

The output of the meeting is seven parts to inform the work of defining homelessness and presenting robust methodologies:

Thursday, March 6th, 2003

Morning

10:00 AM – 1:00PM

10:30 – 11:45
programmes

Presentation of the network teams and their research

12:00 – 12:20

Provisional assessment of the definition and the methods used in different countries in the field of research on the homeless by Maryse Marpsat, INED.

12:20 – 1:00 PM Discussion by all partners.

The main focus of the discussion was on how homelessness should be defined, and who should be included in surveys of homeless populations. There was a distinct difference between the perspective of the Italian and Spanish partners who emphasized the necessity to include psycho-social aspects of the person within the homeless definition, compared with the French emphasis on housing situation. By and large the Northern European and Eastern European teams emphasized housing definitions of homelessness. (Although Denmark also had a more social welfare/social exclusion definition of homelessness). The Spanish and Italian partners raised the following important issues:

1. Can homelessness be defined through the housing situation of people as the French do in their four dimensions of housing situation? Should not psycho-social factors be included in the definition?
2. Can homeless situations be described on a continuum of housing situations i.e. the homeless situation being the worst of the 'badly housed' or the worst of the 'insecure housing'? Is there not a qualitative leap between the worst of insecure housing and being homeless?
3. Is it true that homeless people are not a social group but that homelessness happens to 'normal' people who find themselves at the bottom of one or more of the four dimensions? Are there not populations at risk?
4. Can definitions of homelessness vary according to the political or welfare purposes of the research?

5. Does the definition of homelessness differ if we look at the causes, the risk factors, than if we look at the consequences? Is the INED definition looking at the consequences, the outcomes of all these risk factors, that are visible in the housing situation?

Maryse Marpsat responded that

1. It is very difficult to operationalise psychological definitions in a statistical survey. A housing definition is easier to operationalise. (The partners from Netherlands also made this point in the discussion).
2. If you want to see the causes or consequences of family background, mental health, you cannot include them in the definition. If you want to see how they interfere with the loss of housing you have to separate these issues from the definition of homelessness.

2:15 – 4:15 Presentation, by each country, of the national context in which homelessness occurs, the definition of homelessness that is used and the main research methods. Discussion.

Some countries have a restrictive definition of homelessness and others a more expansive definition. Very few have precise definitions. France has a precise scientific definition of housing situations based on the work of CNIS (the National Council for Statistical Information), INED and INSEE, but no official definition of homelessness. The UK has a broad legal definition based on twenty-five year old homelessness legislation and an administrative definition of 'rough sleeping' based on initiatives in the field of street homelessness. Denmark, Netherlands, Italy and Spain have no official definitions of homelessness but different common words to describe the situation – some including socio-psychological factors (e.g. including elements of disengagement), and others simply meaning roofless for that night. Different researchers have used different definitions. The Spanish team prefer the definition from the United States – sleeping on the streets or in a shelter i.e. literal homelessness rather than FEANTSA's that they can not operationalise. In Hungary there has been a change as there was no homelessness under socialist governments (but 60,000 worker hostel beds for example), now there is visible homelessness and 'hidden' homelessness i.e. overcrowded apartments.

4:30 – 6:30 Presentation, by each country, of the latest developments in terms of legislation, policy, and systems affecting the homeless. Discussion.

Friday, March 7th, 2003

Introduction: Maryse Marpsat introduced the work of the previous day on definitions of homeless and researching homeless populations for the benefit of the representatives of the French NGOs that attended the workshop on the second day.

10:00 – 12:30 Presentation by French NGOs of their work in the field of homelessness and the research questions they were most interested in.

Presentations were made in French, with INED researchers translating into English, and overheads were in French and English.

Presentations were made by Francois Brégou from *FNARS – Fédération Nationale des Associations d'accueil et de réinsertion Sociale*, by Jean Caël from the *Secours Catholique (CARITAS)*, by Jean-Louis Dauteuil from the *Association des Cités du Secours Catholique* and by Mrs Teyssède from the *Centre d'Action Sociale de la Ville de Paris (CASVP, a local public agency helping the most destitute)* .

Following the four presentations on the work of the NGOs (and public agencies) with different homeless populations, the NGOs presented their agendas for research that was required in relation to different homeless populations. Below is a summary of the different questions that French NGOs working in homelessness are interested in;

1. Some different categories of homeless persons, or sub-populations of the homeless population: a) young people (including who is at risk), b) immigrants, c) ex-prisoners.
2. The impact of social policies
3. Evaluation of the work of social workers and of voluntary workers
4. Supply and demand for housing, other types of residency, and services.
5. Homelessness and mental health
6. Right to Housing
7. Giving a voice to people who are homeless
8. Longitudinal research

2:00 – 4:15 Presents the response of the different partners to the presentations of the French NGOs.

Each partner presented their research findings in their own country that had relevance for a question raised by one of the NGOs.

Petra Van Leeuwen presented research from the Netherlands that support professionals working with homeless people by making apparent the '8' steps of such work.

Tobias Børner Stax reported that in Denmark it has been possible to undertake longitudinal research using shelter records on users of shelters in 1988 and 1989 and eight years checking their progress in national records using each citizen's unique identifier. The results were that there were very different outcomes for different groups. Women either died or left homelessness, immigrants were reintegrated, those with drug or alcohol problems were the 'revolving door' clients who moved in and out of homelessness.

Iván Tosics and Sándor Erdosi reported there are three groups of researchers in Hungary thinking about different ways of working with 'street homeless' people either to provide new homeless people services or to restore the previous system where no-one was allowed to be homeless.

Antonio Tosi reported that in Italy it is important to reconsider the role of those services who work with immigrants, and to influence public opinion and to deal with the structural problem. There is a core problem of defining what is 'useable knowledge' for an NGO.

Manuel Muñoz reported the research interests of Spanish NGOs who, like the Italian and Danish NGOs, do not fund research or research themselves. However, in Spain NGOs participate in research through EC programmes. What are their research interests?

- 1) How to do outreach effectively
- 2) How to measure the effectivity of programmes
- 3) Mental Health and homelessness
- 4) Alcohol and homelessness

Dr Joan Smith reported on the research interests of the many UK NGOs. She summarized a research project undertaken by her centre to identify 'risk factors' in relation to youth homelessness for a prevention programme in eight London boroughs. This study compared life histories of 200 young people in hostels with 150 not living in hostels and produced two risk indices: a) risk by individual b) risk by area. The comparison was used to identify young people in schools at risk of homelessness so that additional preventative services could be provided by the 'Safe in the City' programme. This programme is now to go nation wide.

The main common questions that came out of the following discussion was the issue of immigration and homeless, and the issue of the relationship between social research and the social practice of NGOs in the field of homelessness.

List of the researchers and NGOs and public agencies for the second day of the Paris meeting

Network

MARPSAT Maryse, INED
ARBONVILLE Denise, INED
FIRDION Jean-Marie, INED
MARKOU Efi, INED
QUAGLIA Martine, INED
SMITH Joan, Staffordshire University
MUNOZ Manuel, Universidad Complutense de Madrid
PANADERO Sonia, Universidad Complutense de Madrid
VAZQUEZ Carmelo, Universidad Complutense de Madrid
STAX Tobias Børner, The Danish National Institute of Social Research
VAN DOORN Lia, Nederlands Instituut voor Zorg en Welzijn
VAN LEEUWEN Petra, Nederlands Instituut voor Zorg en Welzijn
TOSI Antonio, Politecnico di Milano
ERDOSI Sándor, Metropolitan Research Institute Ltd.
TOSICS Iván, Metropolitan Research Institute Ltd.

People from organizations who presented their work

BREGOU François, FNARS
CAËL Jean, Secours catholique (CARITAS)
DAUTEUIL Jean-Louis, Cité Saint-Martin
TEYSSÉDRE Mme, Permanence sociale d'accueil Mazas

Public agencies, politicians

BALLET Danielle*, Ministère de l'équipement, du logement et des transports
CASTELLAN Mchel, Mission d'information sur la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale en Ile-de-France
DAMON Julien, CNAF
GEGOUT Catherine, Counsellor 20th district of Paris
NOBLET Pascal*, Ministère de l'emploi et de la solidarité

Others organizations / resources who were in the meeting:

COTTIN Jean-Yves, CDSL
CARPENTIER Sandrine, Observatoire du Samu Social de Paris
LAPORTE Anne, Observatoire du Samu Social de Paris
LARDOUX Carole, Observatoire du Samu Social de Paris
MECA Pedro, Compagnons de la nuit
POUPENEY Yves, Centre d'action sociale protestant
ROBERT Patrice, Médecins du Monde (Mission SDF)
ROBERTS Graziella, Médecins du Monde (Mission SDF)

* Mrs Ballet and Mr Noblet had a last-minute difficulty and couldn't come