

Summary of the workshop n°4 of the CUHP network
Qualitative Research Methods/Voice of the Homeless
London Metropolitan University, 166, Holloway Road, London N7

Thursday, October 7th 2004		
Morning	9:00 – 9:10	Welcome
	9:10 – 9:30	CUPH current status – Martine Quaglia, France
	9:30 – 9:50	Observing the Doing of Social Work with Homeless People - Denmark
	9:50 – 10:30	Comments from other participants*
	10:50 – 11:10	Approaches to qualitative research in the UK; two case studies of homelessness research using qualitative methods.
	11:10 – 11:50	Comments from other participants*
	11:50 – 12:10	Qualitative interviews: narrative interviews and the biographical approach in Italian research
	12:10 – 12:50	Comments from other participants*
Afternoon	13:50 – 14:20	Perspectives of the homeless of time and space in the Netherlands
	14:20 – 15:00	Comments from other participants
	15:30 – 16:10	Further discussion on the range of qualitative methods <i>As in Copenhagen the three comment sessions should include reference to the short papers on qualitative studies that are tabled by the three teams who do not present long papers at W4.</i>
	16:10 – 17:30	Discussion on the relationship between qualitative and quantitative methods.

Morning session:

Welcome from **Professor John Gabriel** (Head of the Department of Applied Social Studies) and **Professor Graeme Evans** (Director of the Cities Institute) to London Metropolitan University, the 3rd or 4th largest University in the UK with a multi-ethnic student body. Professor Gabriel reported the long involvement with qualitative research and policy studies in the Department and the increasing interest of policy makers in using qualitative methods. The response from INED, France, was made by **Martine Quaglia**, who reported the progress of the works.

The first paper was that of Tobias Stax from SFI, DK.

Tobias Stax, ‘Observing the Doing of Social Work with Homeless People’

The paper was in three parts: first a discussion of qualitative methods in relation to observation and case studies, secondly the theoretical model that was applied to a recently completed study, and third the policy issue that is being researched in Denmark of how social

work with homeless people is conducted. The data was gathered through accompanying clients of a local shelter to their meetings with social workers of local welfare offices.

Methodological issues

1. Some shelter tenants avoided any contact and therefore there was a bias. This raises the question of what effects such avoidance has on the data.
2. Qualitative methods have a different approach to generalising than when we talk about correspondence theory, theory of representation for sample population, the sort of more statistically based study that generalises. Selecting cases in qualitative research is a strategic choice, it's not a random choice and that's a very significant distinction between qualitative and the quantitative methods. We have to have a formulation or a theoretical understanding when choosing cases e.g. to understand people hanging on to the labour market we need to interview the very marginalized in order to understand. In that matter it's sort of a falsification or a verification of hypothesis.
3. There is also the possibility of obtaining theoretical insight through model building. For example Bourdieu is an illustration of this approach. From his study of a village in Algeria he generates concepts of *social capital* and *habitus*, all these different concepts that can afterwards be applied elsewhere.

Theoretical issues

There are three different theoretical positions that I have adopted:

- i) Ethnomethodology for the study of interaction between social workers and clients,
- ii) Goffman for the relationship between the construction of identity and the institution, and those writers concerned with the understanding of social problems. (Goffman is interesting to understand how homelessness is understood in the institutions where they interact. Being homeless is being in a particular position constructed by the action in organisations – an institutional identity.)
- iii) Perspectives on social work with the marginalized - homeless people, sex workers, drug abusers, mental patients, all those with a 'troubled identity' to use a phrase. The Danish approach is focusing on the relations between clients and workers and how this works in particular institutions, and how power and identities are constructed.

Qualitative methods were important for this study as it is not possible to show this dynamics of interaction by any other methods: how the categorisations are created, how social order is actually constructed in this everyday life of homeless people, wherever they are and whatever organisations they're dealing with.

This argument leads to the position that it is important to do observation work. Ethnomethodological approaches demonstrate the importance of observing the practice that is unfolding in the everyday life of people, rather than afterwards doing some kind of reconstruction of what happens or how people felt - which is done both by surveys and by qualitative interview. It's also an argument for looking at things as they unfold.

Isabelle Frechon and **Svetlana Stephenson** were welcomed to the group. Isabelle Frechon had completed her Ph.D. on women living in foyers and Svetlana Stephenson reported on her work interviewing homeless people on the streets of Russia (life history interviews) and street children (focus groups). She had found large differences between them in that the street children were engaged in constructing their 'social capital' in ways the homeless adults were not.

Discussion: Martine Quaglia opened the discussion of paper from the Danish team.

- a) She argued that she was surprised that only one social work attitude was reported as in France, in a study she conducted, attitudes could differ between being involved and identifying with the client and being a 'social engineer'.

b) Interviews might have been important to establish the context e.g. the education of the social worker. You need to know the history.

Tobias Stax: These welfare offices fund all other programmes and therefore there was an emphasis on funding. Surprisingly there wasn't the emphasis on personal change in the long-term plans as there should have been. This is one optic – there are lots of ways of looking at social work.

Antonio Tosi: There are heavy risks in choosing cases theoretically. There is a span of outcomes in which another selection based on the theoretical would find another outcome. Theoretical assumptions are different from theoretical reasoning. I am inclined personally to give more importance to the theoretical construction of the problem but there is much to be concerned about.

Joan Smith and Megan Ravenhill, Approaches to qualitative research in the UK; two studies of homelessness research using qualitative methods

Joan Smith began the joint presentation of this paper in three parts. There were three comments about the first part of the paper. First, qualitative research methods have a long history in the UK because of the previous traditions of social anthropology and ethnographic study, and because of the importance of the tradition of Weberian sociology. Therefore there was immediate interest in ethnomethodology, Goffman, and grounded theory. Second, the in-depth interview became the most developed method in the UK, like in Germany, whilst observation methods were most important in the US. The range of in-depth interviewing is from focussed groups to intense biographical analysis, as in Germany. Finally, qualitative research methods are now of importance in policy making in the UK, and used in evaluation studies unlike the US.

Second part of the paper presented by **Joan Smith** reported on a series of studies over 10 years researching the family background of young homeless people and the risks of homelessness for young people.

Theoretical approach

The approach was based on an interest in the issue of family obligation. Under what circumstances did families feel able to ask their young people to leave the home in the UK? The studies led to risk theory (Beck), social exclusion theories, and concept of social capital.

The studies

1. The first study on the family background of young people can be described as more structured qualitative research. Although the interviews were narrative there was a focussed topic schedule and all topics were covered in interviews with young homeless people and similar topics with their parents. A matched group of families living on local estates whose children were still domiciled with them was interviewed in order to discover the moral order of families in these situations.

2. In the second study of the risk factors of homelessness for young people the information from the first study was used to create a structured questionnaire used in interviews with young people living in hostels and a matched sample of young people living at home in London. The comparison provided a risk profile, which was used to guide a large youth homeless prevention programme in London.

3. The third study is one now being undertaken by Joan Smith and Megan Ravenhill through focus groups with young people out of school and in school aged 14-15 years to determine their understandings of risks. It will include focus groups with parents and also biographic interviews with young runaways and parents of young runaways.

Methodological issues

These studies demonstrate one way of integrating qualitative and quantitative research in a series of studies – from qualitative to quantitative and back to qualitative. But this is possible because of the orientation of the researchers. For an ethnomethodologist there would be little purpose in undertaking the quantitative element of the study.

The third part of the paper, presented by **Megan Ravenhill**, demonstrates the use of in-depth biographic interviews and observation methods.

The study – the theoretical approach

This study developed out of lack of an ethnographic study of street culture among the homeless in the UK and was designed to describe some of the dominant features of that culture, the existence of sub-cultures and their impact to ‘rooflessness’ i.e. the street homeless. It was designed to see the street homeless as they saw themselves and therefore their accounts were treated as more important than the agency view of what was happening. The study based on grounded theory and had a broad agenda to understand how people entered homelessness and how they left.

Methodological issues

A range of methods were used: 48 life story interviews; observation methods mostly on London streets; participant observation in homeless settings whilst working as a volunteer for projects; case documents from the agencies.

The sample was purposive including females and different stages of the homeless life-cycle. The different methods offered different insights into what was happening on the ground (the reason for the grounded theory approach). Documentary analysis showed the stereotypes the agencies were working with. Observation on the street informed on the interactions with convention society and within the homeless culture: formation of groups, interactions between people, gender roles and gender segregation, and the general public’s reaction to people on the street. Observation in agencies generated understanding of their funding and policy issues. Life story interviews gave a lot of information about the children. Out of the in-depth interviews time lines were constructed based on some sort of date, their age, or when something else happened.

Discussion on time-lines, or homeless route maps in two cases. Series of life events make it possible to see where intervention might have worked.

In this research triggers of homelessness began to accelerate for the street homeless between 7 and 9 years of age. It is a picture in which homelessness risk could accelerate and decelerate and where intervention can take place.

Analysis of the in-depth interviews was through intense thematic analysis using Atlas-Ti, a computer package which allows researchers to code around the text of an interview. Information is then exported into SPSS and generates statistics on the sample.

Discussion: Jean-Marie Firdion: 1. From this paper it can be argued that the choice of the good methods depends on the kind of questions we are asking. Quantitative methods are best used to answer questions such as how many, what, who. Qualitative methods are best used to answer questions such as how, where, and why.

2. It is possible to combine quantitative and qualitative research as long as we keep the distinction. Perhaps the two methods – quantitative and qualitative – should be kept separate until all theoretical positions have been explored. It can be wrong to jump too quickly to a triangulation of methods.

3. The concept of risk is difficult. It has both individual and structural dimensions and these must be clear.

4. Is it possible to combine all the roles of researcher, observer, volunteer during the one project?

Tobias Stax: The route map is interesting but so perhaps there should be a more hierarchical design and more precisions about the context. Is it possible to draw any conclusions from the route map depending on the perspective of the researcher?

Antonio Tosi, Qualitative interviews: narrative interviews and the biographical approach in Italian research

The presentation is taking both the long and the short Italian papers.

Methodological issues

There is a natural homology between the method of life history interviews and the thing that will be explained, biographical methods appear a natural choice when dealing with poverty and, in this case, homeless life trajectories. This interview method of life stories places the emphasis on poverty and marginalisation as processes, and on chains of events and paths.

Conditions required to achieve qualitative methods are very stringent. The critical content is to dismantle the constructions of homelessness (and poverty) that have been adopted.

There has been no resolution of how to link the macro with the micro in the accounts of homeless people with the structures, the framework in which to place the micro research.

The narrative of a biographical interview is itself a reconstruction, and the only way it to treat it is as a text and to recognise the different viewpoints in reading it as a text. At this point biographic methods come close to art, to the art of the novelist, and there is a danger for sociology unless you change the definition of science.

One other important issue is that when people are at the extremes of marginalisation they lose citizenship, they lose the ability to say why they are there so there is a black hole at exactly the point where information may be most useful.

Theoretical issues

One of the important understandings from the three pieces of Italian research is that of the process of marginalisation. The first piece of research employs a life course approach and the notion of career from Goffman's theory: arrival on the street, adaptation to street life and the chronic condition.

The second piece of research investigated the way of life and that of adaptation and urban itineraries of those who have 'no fixed abode' living in Rome. Ten life stories were collected in 3 sessions, using videos. But the author allows everyone to read the book as they wish.

The third piece of research collected life histories within a night shelter and questionnaires, and 'street careers' through life histories and observation. Again the notion of career was employed.

Therefore together the construct of the 'career' is important and this could imply a sociological rhetoric that marginalisation is a cumulative process that has something inexorable about it. This has a policy implication. It implies that homeless careers are a progressive loss of abilities and that there needs to be more and more resources devoted to getting people off the streets.

One other point is that there is an issue in that reconstruction backwards – the extreme outcomes of the homeless situation are taken as the starting point of understanding everything happened before.

Discussion: Discussion of this paper was taken with discussion of the following paper from the Netherlands.

Lia Van Doorn, Perspectives of the homeless of time and space in the Netherlands

Qualitative studies are not frequent in the Netherlands – this paper is reporting one and there is currently a large one in Amsterdam with rough sleepers. This study is one reported in Copenhagen of 64 street homeless people followed over 7 years.

The study is based on biographic analysis of in-depth interviews as well as observation. It was designed around three questions: how did people end up on the street (triggers); did they live on the street the whole time or came off and went back on; and how did they manage to get off the streets during that seven years. Methodological issues were discussed in Copenhagen and this paper deals with theoretical insights that arose on the perspectives of time and space.

Theoretical insights

Once people became homeless their perceptions of space and time changed. In modern society perceptions of time are defined by a clock and a calendar, and the rhythm of working. This is linear time. For the homeless you could say that time is cyclical and is less demarcated and less goal orientated.

The cyclical perception of time had six ramifications. (1) A shrinking time horizon where they can't make plans but most focus on the here and now. This is functional for two reasons – it protects the homeless from disappointment and it allows them to be flexible; but it also hampers their regular contact with agencies. (2) Their lack of long-term goals makes them appear in our culture to be aimless but also less obligations can become a lifestyle. (3) The absence of the order of linear time can lead to an absence of order which is disorientating and some homeless people use contact with agencies to give some order to their lives. (4) Homeless people focus on immediate rewards not deferred rewards therefore the economy of the street trade is important as it is immediate. Spending money immediately is also important as they are less likely to be a victim of extortion or robbery. (5) Homeless people lose sight of chronology, the order in which events occurred before they lived on the streets. (6) Time also stands still for homeless people. Days might be crowded but they also do not include significant events and that may be a definition of time.

Space is also demarcated differently for the homeless person. (1) For other citizens it can be the four walls of their home but for the homeless it is the open public space and this can become associated with a sense of freedom for the long-term homeless. They live 'outside'. (2) Homeless people do not have a safe haven in which they can deny access to uninvited guests and this may cause light sleep and fatigue. (3) Homeless people may create private space within public space through sleeping in the same bed in night shelters or locking the toilet door. (4) Homeless people must constantly filter impressions because they are in crowded city centres or crowded night shelters. (5) Homeless people lose autonomy because in the spaces they stay in they have only the status of guests. They only own their own bodies. (6) Homeless people complain about dirt, waste and junk on the streets, they are concerned they will be infected by needles.

Policy issues

What can we do with these findings on time and space? (1) If people are formerly homeless they need to be able to tell their life stories and reconstruct a chronology for themselves. (2) The goals of rehabilitation must be reduced to small steps so that progress can be seen. (3) It is important to understand that some homeless people flee a new home because they see the 'walls closing in on them' so they need housing dealing with this problem.

Discussion on Antonio Tosi's and Lia Van Doorn's papers:

1. Some of the ideas of time and space could be related to all people, even with home. We can experience time as circular and the creation of private space. So should we examine our assumption of a distinction between "them" and "us"? Another thing you argue that

homelessness causes this perception of time but might this perception of time lead to homelessness?

2. The discussion on perceptions of time and space leads us to the discussion that Antonio Tosi's presentation raised of how we are going to treat these texts. In the UK and in Germany, biographic interviews are read by teams of people, three people doing thematic analysis of the text alongside each other. However, there is also a robustness in the repetition of homeless routes described in the texts. There are robustness issues in quantitative research as well as in qualitative research.

3. Are events labelled precipitous (or triggers) but in fact this is a construction and the causes go further back? Moreover in previous times some people had the triggers of homelessness but did not end up homeless so what prevented them – a social network?

4. Is the reason that the conditions of the long-term street homeless become identical that those who could exit are no longer there?

5. In relation to marginalisation and poverty how is it possible to reconcile the idea of progress with the idea that some have always been poor?

6. In relation to the concept of the homeless career we can say that it is not always downwards, it might be upwards. But is that an outsider's point of view? Cannot upwards also create stress for a homeless person?

Discussion then moved to two general issues:

1) Range of qualitative methods and their robustness

2) Relationship between qualitative and quantitative methods.

Various points of view were then expressed without resulting in a collective proposal.

This discussion on **the range of qualitative methods** began from previous comments that some European countries have a lot of qualitative studies – France, Italy, UK, Germany – and others – like Spain and Hungary – do not. What makes the difference?

1. France (as in UK) had a lot of qualitative studies before it had the major quantitative studies in the field of homelessness. Many qualitative studies were undertaken as Ph.Ds and explored the field. However the past twenty years there has been more attention and funding for quantitative. Additionally France has large scale statistical modelling for the general population but usually to spend that level of funds for a small part of the population is not considered in the general public interest.

2. In the Netherlands it started in the opposite way, i.e. with counting heads and then it moved to qualitative. It may be because the study in the Netherlands only started in 80s and by then countries like America were doing statistical analysis. In Netherlands switch to qualitative is also about prevention in that we have discovered that more housing doesn't always work and also social services are cutting back funding as there are cut backs in the welfare state.

3. Hungary is like the Netherlands. The resort to the statistics is because homelessness is a post 1991 phenomenon and the public authorities needed hard data to change services. No-one wanted to know the figures on homelessness or unemployment before, there was no funding, but now in the market economy they have looked at America and recognised empirical research and they want to know how many homeless. This study was easy to do but the basic question of how were they homeless was forgotten. Now we rather seek a connection between the qualitative and quantitative approaches.

4. In the UK, the government first funded quantitative studies into single homelessness alongside. Much of the qualitative research was funded by charitable trusts. So part of the explanation may lie in the relationship between government agency, voluntary sector, independent trust funding, and policy making. The core research council for the social sciences has moved from being quantitative orientated to in-depth qualitative.

5. In Spain the main funding is for physical sciences and not psycho-social sciences. Also homelessness is not a big issue for the general population. The majority of money comes from the state or city councils and they want figures – they are not interested in interviews. We have some doctoral students doing qualitative but they don't publish this. Evaluation studies are expected to be quantitative.

6. There is a general issue in that it is easier to report quantitative research to the government and to the general public i.e. this is the percentage of homeless. Qualitative is harder to communicate.

7. Some qualitative data comes from Russia but it is extremely prejudiced – researchers interview in the presence of police and present a pathological view of homeless people that fits with the government stereotype.

10. In Italy there are only small amounts of money for research into homelessness and with small amounts of money qualitative research is much more satisfactory than quantitative.

Discussion on the relationship between quantitative and qualitative methods.

1. The discussion first focused on the question of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods. Two different positions appeared: Qualitative and quantitative must be kept separate compared with the position of undertaking the two types of studies alongside or sequentially. In the UK paper there is a sequence of qualitative and quantitative methods but does this integrate the two types of data in a meaningful way? Is this integration? Do you have to assume that the two types of method are comparable, which is not the case in general, or that the aim of the two studies are converging, which is also not the case in general? Also why undertake SPSS analysis of data from qualitative research – that is not its role, it is mixing the roles. For UK team, to serially do qualitative and quantitative work allows a reflexivity on the questions that is different. But qualitative work should never be a pilot study, it has to be valued for its own sake. However it is hard to do the depth analysis required because theoretic work (not thematic) is very time consuming and there is not the funding for it – a lot of qualitative work is under-analysed compared with quantitative.

We are considering ways that qualitative research can come of age instead of being secondary to quantitative or used to explain quantitative findings. For Tobias Stax, the concepts that stand out are the ones derived from qualitative studies – concepts of career, of marginalisation, of social capital. Quantitative studies aren't able to produce concepts.

2. The question of the meaning of the terms of validity and reliability in relation to qualitative studies was also raised. We have definitions for them in quantitative – what are our definitions in qualitative? The UK team proposed that another word for this could be robustness. Are measures of reliability and validity our measures of robustness in qualitative research? This is a serious question, because we are not literature. How do we define our work as social scientists? According to other researchers, perhaps you can find reliability in comparative studies – the Netherlands and UK studies of rough sleepers found similar things.

3. A third issue was the one of generalisation. According to Manuel Munoz, there is similarity of procedures in that when you start a study you must clarify it – clarify the data, how you will take it, how you hope to analyse. For example you can now do quantitative analysis on texts, with mathematical models. The important issue is how you use the data to generalise. How do you prove your theory? Other researchers argued on the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods: When you read quantitative you look for the proof, when you read qualitative you look for whether the account is convincing. This could be art. The importance to distinguish between text (interviews, observation notes, recordings) and data is also pointed out, because we have to distinguish between text and turning text into data. You can take a text and analyse it qualitatively and we can also take a text and count instances and turn it into data: No qualitative and quantitative methods are separate;

Quantitative data has a clear way of writing up but for qualitative it is less clear it is a different kind of generalisation.

The necessity to put qualitative studies into context was highlighted. The paper on the single life history shows how qualitative data can be put in context. Is there point in a single life story that cannot be generalised? The single life story does show process and the process of institutionalisation. The story is useful, even if not all true, because it enlightens.

Friday, October 8th 2004		
Morning	09:15 – 09:10	Welcome
	09:30 – 09:40	Presentation by INED of the CUHP-network – previous themes, upcoming themes of workshops. The intentions with ‘day two’ interactions.
	09:40 – 11:10	Housing and supporting homeless people – single homeless and rough sleepers strategies. Self-organisation of homeless people.
	11:30 – 13:00	Housing and supporting homeless people: NGOs working with women, families, young people.
	13:00 - 13:30	Question session
Afternoon I	14.30 – 15.00	Papers on theoretical perspectives
	15.00 – 15:30	Discussion on theoretical issues
Afternoon II	15:50 –16:10	Copenhagen conclusion
	16:10 – 16:40	Meeting the website designer – work on the website
	16:40 – 17:10	Financial and administrative issues

The second day was attended by NGOs and picked up two themes that had become apparent in previous meetings with NGOs (work with the single homeless and street homeless, and the crisis of homelessness in capital cities) and also invited NGOs of homeless populations whose situations had been referred to in previous meetings but organisations working on their behalf had not previously attended – homeless families, domestic violence survivors, refugees.

After the presentation of the network by Maryse Marpsat, the first NGO to speak works on behalf of the Single Homeless.

Tariq Hilal, Policy Manager of **CRISIS**. He reported that in the UK, legislation rations social housing to homeless people in priority need and his charity represents those not in priority need because they are without children. Founded in 1967 to raise public awareness of the single homeless and also to provide services. Ran Christmas at Crisis (shelter for all homeless over Christmas) first in 1972. All volunteers until the 1980s. 1990s began to operate more outside of the Christmas period. Reports broke major issues such as mental ill-health among the homeless, tuberculosis, prevention early in the cycle of homelessness and the presence among the homeless of ex-armed forces members. We re-launched ourselves in 2002 emphasising skills and also the need for the homeless to have social networks (Homelessness and Loneliness report).

All this work is important because the Labour Government launched an incredible drive against rough sleeping that has been effective BUT overall homelessness is going up amongst those applying as homeless to local authorities for housing. Now the government has tackled families staying in bed and breakfast.

Therefore our two latest projects are Skylight, based in the East End in order to reskill homeless people, and has an activity centre for those in the City. Open seven days a week all year, core staff of four and the rest are volunteers. The Urban Village, the other project, is a copy of the Common Ground project in New York, and we are seeking funding to build affordable housing in which homeless and non-homeless people can live side by side.

In terms of research that we do it is generally small scale and often qualitative. The production of huge quantitative studies and numbers is not evident. For example on Anti-Social Behaviour Orders being applied to the homeless we have our ideas and the government has theirs but there is no research on either side. The latest emphasis in the UK is on costing homelessness – we need to be able to do this because otherwise we won't speak the language of the Treasury. It is also important for us to talk about the structural aspect of homelessness – the poverty that underlines homelessness which we don't talk about enough.

James Francis, Director of Street and Hostel services for Thames Reach Bondway was the next speaker.

I began as a volunteer at the Crisis Christmas Shelter, and since then I have run advice rooms, day centres, supported housing, hostels. We know what causes homelessness and we know some of the solutions. 10 years ago we ran focus groups with our services users, then we had a peer education service and our users have been trained to run groups themselves. We found that obviously there was a need for accommodation, but also we need to address people's health needs – mental health, physical health and substance misuse, and we must address the skills deficit in relation to daily living. The emphasis now is on 'meaningful occupation' from volunteering to paid employment and a sense of belonging. Homeless people can over-identify with being an ex-homeless person and with that life so we need to move them away to the wider community. Finally, self-esteem. So these are the issues we have to address to move people away from homelessness. One piece of our research was called 'A dream deferred' which also provided a toolkit for practitioners.

Thames Reach Bondway works in the whole of the M25 area i.e. inside the motorway ring road that skirts the whole of Greater London as well as the City of London, Westminster and the West End. Our turnover is £14 million pounds and 350 staff. We provide resettlement support. When we first started working with street homeless a lot of agencies were doing their own thing and continued to do so under the Conservative Rough Sleepers Initiative. But the Labour Government re-packaged this initiative and the Social Exclusion Unit (attached to the Cabinet Office) set up the Rough Sleepers' Unit which had a common strategy. (If our organisation hadn't followed the common strategy we would have been cut out of funding.)

There were two parts to the funding. First Contact and Assessment Teams (CATS) for those on the streets and second, Tenancy Sustainment Teams not just for six months but unlimited time in order to resettle those on the streets. This system cut across 33 London boroughs and depended on good information because of the government pledge to cut rough sleeping by two thirds.

At the beginning of the rough sleeper strategy in 1998 we found 2-300 sleeping rough in Central Westminster. But now, with a 24-hour telephone helpline we can be told about any rough sleeper in the area. Over the past twelve months we have helped 1700 in Central Westminster, and on any one night the figure is 180 a night. We know that for every 15 we help off the street, another 14 replace and there is a huge flow through problem. So now there is a 'rapid intervention' strategy.

Mostly rough sleepers are rehoused in shelters, and others in hospital beds, and under 40% are ready to be moved in independent accommodation. Therefore hostel beds, hospital beds and psychiatric beds are 'silted up'. Therefore rapid intervention is difficult.

We now have a different issue in relation to ‘value for money’. Government is arguing to stop work through CATS etc and take a street management approach as in the US and use police, traffic wardens, cleaning authority to send people to day centres and hostels. But we don’t think this will work because many are long term homeless. We think the new agenda of enforcement is a political issue and not our policy.

In relation to research we are looking at longitudinal research of which we have had a first study. To look at what works in resettlement.

Tony Dodson from **Groundswell** was the next speaker.

I have a background of being homeless over 30 years – both streets and squats – but not know and I want to talk to you about a different way of doing research – peer research. I ask ‘Who is the expert? The person who has learned the theory or the person who has lived the experience?’ Peer research is about people conducting research that they understand through experience – whether it is face-to-face interviews, or questionnaires or tape-recorded. It is very useful for service evaluation. Moreover homeless populations are not hard to reach for those who have been homeless and the research involves an element of outreach as well.

My latest piece of research involves interviewing homeless people from black and minority ethnic groups (BME), and one with people with drug problems and problems with accessing services.

It is a very cost effective method as researchers can work at their own rate.

The following speakers represented NGOs working with homeless populations whose issues had been discussed at previous workshops but from whose NGOs there had not been a representative speaker.

Andrew Van Doorn from **HACT (Housing Association’s Charitable Trust)** to speak about refugees and homelessness.

The experience of many refugees and asylum seekers does not fit well with the current discourse on homelessness within Europe because we speak about refugee housing needs. Refugees have lost their country and their home and often fled persecution and therefore are vulnerable, but they perhaps don’t display the same sorts of needs profiles as single homeless people – mental health, drug abuse, alcohol use.

In the UK there was a significant increase from about 5,000 a year claiming asylum in the late 1980s to about 100,000 in 2002 but during that time there has been an erosion of rights for asylum seekers, a growth of xenophobia in some quarters including that of the press.

There are different periods of the process: first, arrival as asylum seekers and the possibility of deportation; second, once they have achieved refugee status a period of transition from one system which provide specialist support for asylum seekers to another system which is the general welfare system of the UK. But settlement takes longer than this and transition can lead to difficulties.

HACT itself is nearly 45 years old. It was set up by the housing sector at a time when social housing was expanding and big new housing developments occurred. We have also been a catalyst for change in the housing world; we procure and support networks and deliver training and consultancy and record what works. We also seek to change policy and practice. Currently we have three programmes: supported living; older people including refugee elders; refugee housing integration programme. We have invested £1.5 million into refugee community associations. We now have funding from the European Refugee Fund to deliver training to refugee organisations that provide housing advice.

One of our major problems is around the dispersal system in this country that followed from the 1999 Act that aimed to a) stem the flow of refugees into UK and b) disperse refugees from London and the South-East to the North of England and Scotland where more housing was

available. However, many of these communities are deprived and without work and are unused to receive immigrant communities. A third aim of the government with this Act was to split the dispersal into three types of housing – local authority housing, housing association housing, and private rental market housing.

In 2002 the Nationality and Asylum Act was passed that aimed to provide a holistic system. But it removed state support to those claiming asylum and this led to street homelessness identified in a report by the Refugee Council. The Refugee Council also identified an issue of poor quality housing, and that those with special needs were being made destitute. This has been compounded in the latest legislation this year which created a local connection for refugees with the area they had been dispersed to. Therefore if they returned to London they couldn't ask for housing assistance without being referred back to that other area.

The culture of the homelessness sector is to focus on individual needs and it is weak at working with and supporting the assets of local communities, and dealing with community tensions. There is a need for a new partnership between the housing sector and refugee communities e.g. the government's new Sunrise Project.

Similar problems have affected people from the accession states in Europe who are coming to this country to work particularly in agricultural labour.

What are the research needs for this homeless population? I) We need to plan better and invest better in particular areas and we need statistics that show flows of people. II) Distinguish between refugees and UK citizens among populations; research in the 1990s showed the different needs between the UK BME populations and refugee populations. III) Effectiveness of different kinds of support for refugees. IV) Use peer research as reported above among other homeless populations. V) We need to use research to stress the importance of housing in integration not just employment which is what the government agenda has been. VI) We need to look much more at aspirations and assets.

Discussion on single homeless and refugee population homeless:

- i) We must not forget to take care of couples with children, who are also not eligible.
- ii) There are refugee immigrants in many countries but why are they homeless in one and not in another. This is an important issue. Is it connected with the social construction of the problem?
- iii) Working with single homeless in the UK seems to be to get them into accommodation, as well as working with their social needs. Whereas in Southern Europe, homelessness is not a problem of the housing departments, but of the social affairs. It is important to compare the two approaches. However, in the UK there is now some shift from seeing homelessness as a housing issue and more as a social work issue and the Homelessness Directorate has moved to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.
- iv) Although the relationship between benefits and work and housing is a problem in the UK in terms of choice it is preferable to a situation where women fleeing domestic violence are unable to access support in some Southern European and Eastern European countries.

The next group of speakers spoke on the operation of the homelessness legislation.

Simon Cribbens spoke from the **Homelessness and Housing Unit of the Greater London Authority** about the housing problems of the capital city of London.

1986-2000 London governed only by 33 local boroughs because the old London authority (GLC) abolished. 2000 re-establishment of a pan-London government with an elected mayor and 25 members with a budget of £5 billion.

Household size has fallen in the capital – single people, divorced people – and this has led to a growth in the number of households. First time buyer properties cost 200,000 £s, 1.6 national average. Therefore there is a challenge to house key workers and create sustainable

communities. In London the social housing sector is declining and private is rising. An increase in social housing built by housing associations but that has been negated by the sale of local authority housing to their tenants. So the Mayor wants to rise the housing target from 19,000 to 30,000 a year.

Problems of London are common to other areas of the country except that the issues of poverty, health and housing are on a much greater scale. How many homeless would there be in London if all the different groups were included – statutory homeless under the legislation, non-statutory homeless, those fleeing domestic violence, those vulnerable?

2003/4 30,000 households accepted as homeless by London local authorities and the local authorities then have a duty to house them; these households were in priority need (dependent children, older persons, or vulnerable persons or fleeing domestic violence etc.) A further 14,000 households/people were homeless but not accepted by the local authorities as owing a duty because they were not in priority need and most of these would be single homeless and there would be many more single homeless who didn't apply.

Our big problem in London is not just single homelessness but also that homeless households can expect to spend two and a half years in temporary accommodation before they are rehoused by local authorities.

Currently there are about 250 to 300 rough sleepers in London on any one night. It is a success that the numbers have fallen this low but it is still a pressing problem. On top of this there are 14,000 single homeless living in hostels waiting to move on accommodation and that has taken up many of the hostel beds.

We also have 32,000 asylum seeker households being supported by local authorities – some under homelessness legislation and some by social work departments – and further 24,000 supported by NASS (National Asylum Seekers Service).

The GLA has done research on households at high risk of homelessness (hidden homelessness): 140,000 severely overcrowded households, 15,000 in hostels and night shelters and refuges, 9,000 living involuntarily in bed and breakfast, and 8,000 squatting.

Not all local authority housing can go to homeless households. Therefore the numbers of homeless households living in temporary accommodation keeps rising and by 2007 it will reach 80,000. At the moment there are over 60,000 and obviously that is very expensive and would buy a lot of houses.

Much new housing will be out of London, where private sector rental is less expensive. But the homeless population is vulnerable and need their social networks.

We would like the focus to shift to homeless prevention. The Local Authorities realise their own stock isn't enough and they need other solutions. We try to spread joint working across boroughs and we have a web-based information system across boroughs.

David Ginshall from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The problems of Tower Hamlets are the same as the other 32 London boroughs but they are also different because of its situation near the City of London. Historically it has been one of the 3 poorest boroughs in England but now has some of the most expensive developments.

Government pressure has pushed the local authorities to transfer their housing stock to housing associations. Whereas we were the biggest landlord in the borough we will now be very insignificant. We have a poor community, many are very vulnerable, and worsening drug and alcohol misuse problems, and the worst overcrowding in the country. 40% of our borough population is from BME groups.

Those who apply as homeless have to complete a short questionnaire and then meet the Enquiry and Prevention Team which offers specialist housing advice and offers to help with rent deposits to prevent homelessness by moving people into the private sector. We can only deal with landlords who accept housing benefit level rents because our tenants couldn't pay

the short fall if they weren't in work. We also offer family mediation as a way of preventing homelessness particularly between a young person and their family. We have our own team of social workers working with young people (all 16-17 year olds are priority need under the 2002 Act).

Because of all this the number of acceptances has fallen.

What are the steps to being accepted as homeless? First, the household has to be eligible and many are not. Second we look at priority need e.g. with children, pregnant women, 16-17 year olds. Third we look at vulnerability, e.g. through mental illness. Fourth test is whether the household is intentionally homeless e.g. previously abandoned their tenancy. Finally, are they local, do they have a local connection with the borough?

Last year we accepted 1,600 households and currently have 3,000 households in temporary accommodation costing £25 million pounds a year. We used to use bed and breakfast accommodation (a few years ago 500 households were in bed and breakfast) but only 170 families are in bed and breakfast accommodation currently under the six week limit that the government allows for families to be in this type of accommodation. We are allowed to use bed and breakfast for young people. Our households are living in private accommodation that we lease from the landlord. We also use what stock we have.

There is an average wait of 2 to 3 years but if you are a family that needs a large property like 5 bedrooms then it can be up to 10 years.

One final point is that the OPDM believes that 15-20% of homeless acceptances are of people who have been homeless once or twice before. That is not true of our figures – only 1.5% of our applicants have been and that is because we have developed initiatives such as our own independent living team to give our households life skills.

Sarah Credland from SHELTER

Our history is similar to CRISIS, as we were established in 1966. At that time homelessness was dealt with through social services and it was ad hoc. We campaigned for the passing of the Homelessness Legislation in 1977 which placed the same duties on all local authorities. We are now the main independent provider of housing advice – we advise 100,000 homeless or potentially homeless households or single people each year. We run more than 50 housing aid centres and a legal advice centre for London and a telephone helpline service called ShelterLine.

We have also begun providing living support through a service called Homeless to Home, helping people sort out their bills once they are re-housed. We have a new project called a Shelter Inclusion Project which is a pilot project working in Rochdale to prevent homelessness.

The government has now recognised that it needed to extend the groups of people who are in priority need and that has been done under the 2002 legislation. Equally local authorities are now focussing more on their strategy – creating homeless strategies was also a part of the legislation. SHELTER set up a Homelessness Act Implementation Strategy after the legislation. During the year we surveyed 28 local authorities to see what was happening and set up a website to work with local authority staff. 107 boroughs signed up to the website. They are completing their homeless strategies by 2005 and finding out their information gaps. Half of the local authorities thought that creating homeless strategies was a very effective method because it allowed them to access different resources.

This campaign couldn't continue because it is very resource intensive but we have set up regional strategy groups that mirror the OPDM housing regions.

A large part of our campaign is about temporary accommodation – there are over 97,000 homeless households living in temporary accommodation. We are also running a campaign to highlight the fact that over a million children in Britain are growing up in unfit or

overcrowded or emergency accommodation. We have done 7 pieces of research looking at this including a survey based on 400 questionnaires from households living in temporary accommodation. We estimate that using temporary accommodation costs £500 million pounds a year and that includes increased medical needs. We also interviewed children living in temporary accommodation.

Our current research is also about the impact of the changes to priority need groups in the legislation. Many of us are members of a research forum run by Homeless Link and there we discuss broader research issues that affect us all.

Linda Delahay, Housing Services' Policy Officer from Women's Aid Federation of England which is the main domestic violence charity working across England.

We have a network of 270 refuges and these plus the local authority run refuges come to 500 refuges for women providing outreach services, local helplines, advice centres and accommodation. It was formed 30 years ago.

Research from National Children's Homes (NCH) has found that 90% of all domestic violence incidents have children in the same room or the next room, 25% of women are assaulted for the first time when they are pregnant, 44% of all incidents reported to the police are domestic violence incidents. 2 murders a week are of women by their partners.

20% of all homeless acceptances have the reason of relationship breakdown. The 2002 Act has broadened the definition of violence and that will be helpful in gaining accommodation for those vulnerable due to violence.

There has recently been research called 'Routes to Safety' on domestic violence which found that local authorities were a key agency for women seeking help to survive domestic violence. A quarter said they had problems but that included having to live in temporary accommodation, but some included advice such as take out court orders or go back home which put them at risk.

In 2002 we had 16,738 women and 22,350 children accommodated in refuges in England (and there are refuges in Scotland and Wales as well). A third of these women will present to local authorities as homeless. We are concerned because a lack of housing seems to be a major factor in preventing women leaving a violent relationship and a very strong factor in forcing women to stay for a very long time. Some women have to stay up to two years in refuges before they are rehoused - that in addition silts up the available accommodation.

Renting is difficult with children but also private assured shorthold tenancies only have to last for six months and then the women is back in a revolving door. In some areas women are being asked to find their own remedies or being referred out of their own area despite wanting to live there near their own social networks.

A further problem is that many women's organisations and refuges don't have the resources to provide for women with additional needs such as disabled women, or women from BME groups or from refugees. Some of these have not access to welfare funds because of their nationality.

Young single women and women without dependent children also have difficulty getting housing although in Wales if you are fleeing domestic violence then you are in priority need with or without children as it should be elsewhere.

A lot of refuges have outreach services but these have closed because outreach is not funded through the new funding arrangements of Supporting People because it is defined as prevention. This is very short-sighted on the part of the government.

How women fleeing domestic violence are treated by local authorities still depends on the availability of accommodation. Local authorities have ever dwindling resources because their stocks have been sold.

The next group of speakers dealt with the issue of youth homelessness.

Lorna Eisen of St Basils, Birmingham

Supply in our city is not such a big issue. We are a city of 1 million, the largest single local authority and there are 120,000 social housing units. But the housing is not popular – it is what we call ‘low demand’ and people move in and out of it. At the moment stock is transferring to housing associations whilst Birmingham city has to create the homeless and housing strategies.

Our organisation has existed for 30 years. We are now the largest voluntary organisation for young people outside London. Every year we work with 4000 young people, and at the moment 300 are living in our accommodation, and supporting another 200 who have been moved into their own tenancies. Our emphasis is now on helping young people keep their home. Supporting People – the new funding stream – has been a blessing in providing money to do this. But we also raise our own money in order to provide innovative new projects. We have found a lot of issues in relation to drug, alcohol misuse and lack of education. We try to provide the young people with skills so that a crisis doesn’t become a catastrophe. We have family mediation projects. We educate young people about the risk of homelessness through peer educators and peer befrienders from young people who have been in our accommodation.

So we have a range of prevention and early intervention projects, and also crisis intervention through the provision of accommodation.

We did a peer based research project.

Emma Strong, Centrepoint

Our organisation is 35 years old. We began in London and our direct housing services provide 500 bedspaces a year to young people in London but we also work outside London now. We believe that you have to intervene in the downward spiral that young people are on and help them address their health, learning, job needs, alcohol and drug and we have a support and development model which is on our website.

We conduct a lot of research based on our experience of working with young people. Our service users have met with Gordon Brown and told him what their support needs are. We are working with Joan Smith and Megan Ravenhill at London Metropolitan University to research the perceptions of homelessness held by young people and by their parents.

We have a national development team that negotiates between local authorities and the voluntary sector and other statutory bodies. We have done this in about 70 local authorities. We do a lot of work around joint protocols i.e. the services young people should receive from housing or from social work under different Acts of Parliament such as homelessness and the Children Act. This is to streamline services for young people.

We are very interested in prevention, we draw together learning from the Safe in the City programme which was an action research programme. The risks of becoming homeless were identified by Joan and Safe in the City set up cluster programmes in local areas aimed to address those risks. The work of the clusters was hugely successful and we are taking that work forward in other areas. Over the next two years we will be working with local authorities to do this.

Centrepoint wants to be at the heart of defining what prevention work is in relation to homelessness. We see it as a continuum of services from prevention in the early stages when they show risks of homelessness, through to hostel accommodation and through to support in their own independent accommodation. Homelessness is not just about accommodation but about the other needs people have for support. We aim to work with education services and social services.

Pat McAllistair, from the Foyer Federation

Foyers were set up in the UK just over 10 years ago. There are now about 133 offering holistic support including accommodation to 16-25 year olds with different levels of needs, some of whom have complex needs. Tackling skills deficits among the young people is one area and that is about motivating young people and developing their communication skills.

Foyers can be on a single site or they can be dispersed – on many sites – particularly in rural areas. In 50 of them there are on-line centres where young people and people from the community can learn on-line through Learn Direct and other programmes.

Foyers see about 10,000 young people a year both for housing and for skills training.

Our new programme is Safe Moves which is very similar to the Safe in the City project. The difference is that we have peer mentors that we have trained from the Foyers in order to talk to young people at risk of homelessness. This is important because foyers are seeing more and more sixteen and seventeen year-olds becoming homeless. We are also seeing more young people with children and more refugees.

Afternoon session – restricted to the thematic network partners

Papers on theoretical perspectives were not formally presented because several of the concepts had been introduced in the papers on qualitative methodologies and the session moved directly to discussion.

The discussion concerned the concepts used by the various teams, the variations of their meanings and the conditions that contributed to have recourse to these concepts.

Four concepts or theories are analysed in the “theoretical papers”: social capital, social exclusion, risk and moral order. However the researchers indicate some others, especially poverty and social class (UK) as well as career (a notion put forward by Goffman’s works and used by several teams of the network).

The Italian team doesn’t use the concept of social capital but that of the life cycle as most of the Italian qualitative studies, which are more biographical and about life cycles.

As for the Spanish researchers, who aren’t social psychologists, they don’t have the theoretical positions described by the papers but mostly they use the concept of social exclusion.

The Hungarian researchers pointed out the importance of the scope of the research to the use of the theoretical references and of the disciplinary orientation of the researchers. For them, most of the questions are practical and not generalising ones. Their main concepts are marginalisation and social exclusion. But they don’t have a unique point of view because they work in multi-disciplinary teams of sociologists, psychologists and social workers in order to construct interventions. Researchers of other countries have a more comprehensive theoretical approach and that is very European.

Several teams pointed out the variety of the concepts used in a country, even by the same researcher, according to the discipline, the scope, or the historical period.

For the French team, the notion of social capital is important, but they also use that of career. In France the research on homelessness interprets in terms of social exclusion or even, for some of this research, of individual explanations of homelessness. The last one seems near to the “moral order” described by the UK paper (for instance, why some societies accept that young people must abandon the family home even if they become homeless and others societies don’t). About this point, Svetlana Stephenson reports that in Russia, the crisis of moral order in community is described by the term of “social disorganisation”. Nevertheless, the Dutch team thought that even if there are a variety of concepts, in some countries there is a dominant perspective. In the 1980s the first studies in the Netherlands were taken from the psychological perspective and then they moved to other perspectives.

To understand the theoretical approaches adopted by the researchers, we also have to consider the history of this approach. So, social exclusion theory started in France, went to European Commission and then to the rest of Europe and therefore several countries use it. In the UK, it was used as an alternative to concepts taken from the United States under the previous Conservative Governments – concepts such as the underclass were challenged by theories of social capital and social exclusion.

Another perspective to add to the previous discussion about the theoretical approach is to compare the use of the concepts. For example, Joan Smith discusses six aspects of the social exclusion – but other researchers in the UK only discuss 4 aspects. So the concept is different. In the same order, the French team uses the concept of social capital in a social perspective but in UK they talk about an individual's social capital or social capital in relation to social processes. This is also true of social exclusion. One term can mean many different theories. Some people have an understanding of the theoretical background and others just use it.

Discussion on next year's conference and theoretical concepts

The theme of the final conference is “Social capital, risk and social exclusion”. For the coordinator, the network has to study this question in relation to the way research is structured in each national context. That way we don't put researchers on a scale – this is more scientific, this is less – but understand the context of each country. We need a session on how research is organised in each country. Who has the freedom to do research that is not directly funded – we have a little money in France that allows this.

Another theme is how research is done in relation to theory. Even for statistical models there are different approaches depending on whether you see homeless people as individuals or the social reasons for homelessness.

To put forward the question of the moral order, and in relation to the scope of the network, the UK proposed to include in the final conference a discussion about whether there are European social values that apply to the problem of homelessness and apply across all the teams. A thematic analysis of the NGOs contribution to the workshops could be useful, as the network hasn't such a funding for a theoretical analysis. Some other possibilities were discussed such as to look at disability, mental health, human rights, civil rights and the relationship between housing and them. The Hungarian researchers noted that the question of access to social rights was an ongoing project of the Council of Europe (not the European Union), in 2002 across 45 European countries. In the Council of Europe constitution it says that people have a right to decent housing but each country interprets this differently.

The question of the existence of European social values could be analysed also by comparison between European countries and USA. Regarding to the theoretical basements, in Europe there was Esping-Anderson's theory of welfare regimes, Bourdieu on social capital and theories of social exclusion at the time that the US was developing underclass theory and communitarianism. But this might be more analysed because in UK they were both competing and the French team feels close to the US researchers on homelessness, and besides the concept of social capital it uses that of career, as in the USA. For the Spanish team, a difference between Europe and America is that in Europe we can have meetings between psychologists, sociologists and social workers and talk the same language.

The teams decided to think about these questions and to interact by email to find the 5 or 10 questions between us and get other people in other countries to answer the same 5 or 10 questions about the national context of research.

The works continued with a discussion on the website with Paul Silver, web-site designer which focused on the possibilities of the use of the website, the linking perspectives and the improvement of the themes presentation. Several teams asked to better communicate the outputs, i.e. the themes discussed in the different workshops: not just a label that says Paris workshop, Madrid workshop but one that says, survey research, longitudinal research etc. A further output should be an analysis of the NGOs statements across all the workshops. UK though that will have to be thematic rather than theoretic.

Finally, the teams broached the question of the publishing of the papers. A further discussion will take place in Milan.

The works finished with the recalling of the topic of the Milan workshop and the discussion of the financial questions.