Presentation 3

New forms of homelessness and new responsibilities? - 

Homelessness in Switzerland

Joerg Dittmann/Matthias Drilling

Institute for Social Planning, Organisational Change and Urban Development
New forms of homelessness and new responsibilities?
Homelessness in Switzerland
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Structure

1. General trends
2. Dealing with homelessness in Switzerland
   2.1 Legal Foundations
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3. Is stable accommodation key?
4. Conceptual summary and Outlook
Homelessness in Switzerland

1. General trends

- The societal framework aggravate the risk of being homeless
  - Scarcity, inflation and displacement in the Swiss housing market
  - More difficult conditions to legally migrate to CH
  - Change in practice dealing with vulnerable groups (e.g. mentally ill patients)
- No uniform conceptual understanding about homelessness in research and practice
- No national monitoring
  - Little empirical knowledge about extent, structure, causes, courses and best practice
Homelessness in Switzerland

1. General trends

Tightening the housing market

➢ Increasing financial burden in rent (Bochsler et al. 2015: for 82% of the poor households housing costs > 30% of gross income, not poor: 8%)

➢ Vacancy Rate for apartments in cities is still low (Basel 2015: 0.5%)

Homelessness on the rise

➢ Some indications for a rise in the number of rough sleepers (e.g. Geneva)

➢ Increasing number of people without a residential address (e.g. Basel, Geneva, Lausanne)

➢ Rising use of low-threshold offers (Soup kitchen, Emergency shelters)
Increasing number of people who declare their residence at a Streetwork Association Basel, 2010-2016
1. General trends

Emergency Shelters, locations and prices, 2016

French speaking part: free - 78 Franken per night
German speaking part: 6 - 110 Franken per night
Italien speaking part: 62 Franken per night
Dealing with homelessness in Switzerland
2.1 Legal Foundations

Federal Law

- Right to shelter is formulated as a social goal (Article 41, Federal Law), not binding and justiciable

- Right to assistance when in need (Art. 12)

- The Suisse Confederation encourage the activities of developers and organisations involved in the construction of public utility housing (Art. 108)

- Foreign nationals shall lose their right of residence and all other legal rights to remain in Switzerland
  - if they are convicted for a serious crime
  - have improperly claimed social insurance or social assistance

- Controlling the immigration of foreign nationals (by annual quantitative limits and quotas) is relatively restrictive
2.1 Legal Foundations

Cantonal Law, Basel-City

• Provision of convenient living space for deprived people
• Support for clients housing competencies
• Takeover of rent as part of economic aid
• Allocation of 150 temporary apartments for residents in need
• Reimbursement of costs when homeless people in social assistance spend the night in the local emergency shelter
2.2 Social policy and practice

- Different forms of homelessness (e.g. ETHOS Typology) not present in social policy
  - No national strategy dealing with homelessness
  - Tendency for pathologizing and individualization of homelessness (homeless people as «risk taker»)
  - Segmentation within the group of homelessness (e.g. legally/illegally residence, taker/non-taker of social assistance)
  - “Conditional approach” of social welfare, also in the field of livelihood safety
- Hardly applications of promising strategies like “Housing First”
- Promotion of decentralized support of basic needs (food, clothing or stay) in cities
- Developing the resources of a city together with (and for) homeless people is not in scope
3. Is stable accommodation key?

- Living as a fundamental right is taken seriously
- Self-determination is seen as the starting point of recovery
- Risks of vulnerability will be reduced
  - Risks of the road (e.g. hunger, illness, crime) are diminished
  - Many stressors fall away (e.g. search for overnight accommodation, dealing with property, no retreat)
  - Forms of exclusion, control and displacement does no longer exist

-> Housing First Approach
Housing First Approach

- Homeless people are quickly given a permanent home
- Alternative to the “conditional approach”
- The Housing First approach provides intensive assistance to “the homeless”, but at their home.
- Outreaching work including:
  - Individual Case Management,
  - Assertive Community Treatment,
  - Critical Time Intervention
- Positive experiences and evaluation (Belgium, Sweden, Finland)
4. Conceptual summary and Outlook

External side of vulnerability

Exposition „Being Homeless“

Suffering from and coping with „homelessness“

Double structure of vulnerability

Internal side of vulnerability

Risks for having no secure shelter (e.g. illness, crime)

Losing Entitlement and rights (Sen 1999)

Societal exclusion, repression, blame attribution

Personality, Coping Strategies

Biography (critical events, life history)

(Chambers 1989; Bohle 1999)
4. Conceptual summary and Outlook

What do «we» plan?

Learning from others

• COST Action (Measuring Homelessness in Europe, 2016-2020)

• Strengthening (Inter)national network

• Intensify research in the field (study on homelessness in Basel Region)

• Enlightenment of «Blind Flights»
  ➢ Phenomenon description (scope, structure, forms and trends)
  ➢ Explanations (contexts, causes, effects)
  ➢ Use of knowledge for practice and social policy and teaching
Thank You Four Attention

joerg.dittmann@fhnw.ch
Matthias.drilliing@fhnw.ch

Institute for Social Planning, Organisational Change and Urban Development, ISOS