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A Common Understanding of Homelessness on a Global Scale

Typology and Measurement

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A Common Understanding of Homelessness

- Is essential for meaningful dialogue: not just amongst researchers, but also between policy makers and practitioners
- Without a common 'language' and reference point to frame exchanges across different countries and world regions, we risk 'talking past each' about different sorts of phenomena
- A definition of homelessness is needed that has resonance in the Global South and North, and can provide a robust basis for the development of global estimates and comparisons
- In attempting to develop such a definition we have drawn on literature and other sources from both the developed and developing worlds

The Conceptual Model

- Our core concept focuses on ‘severe housing deprivation’:
“Lacking access to minimally adequate housing”
- Three ‘domains of home’ within which to evaluate housing adequacy:
 1. ***The security domain***: security of tenure, exclusive occupation and affordability
 2. ***The physical domain***: sufficient quality of accommodation (durability, amenities, protection from weather, etc.) and quantity of accommodation (not severely overcrowded)
 3. ***The social domain***: ability to enjoy social relations, privacy, and safety

The Proposed Typology of Global Homelessness

- Covers three broad categories of people who may be considered homeless:
 1. People without accommodation
 2. People living in temporary or crisis accommodation
 3. People living in severely inadequate and/or insecure accommodation

Proposed Typology of Global Homelessness

(IGH focus marked in green)

	Category	Subcategory
1	People without accommodation	<p>1 (a) People sleeping in the streets or in other open spaces (such as parks, railway embankments, under bridges, on river banks, in forests, etc).</p> <p>1 (b) People sleeping in public roofed spaces or buildings not intended for human habitation (such as bus and railway stations, taxi ranks, derelict buildings, public buildings, etc.)</p> <p>1 (c) People sleeping in their cars, rickshaws, open fishing boats and other forms of transport</p> <p>1 (d) 'Pavement dwellers' - individuals or households who live on the street in a regular spot, usually with some form of makeshift cover.</p>

Proposed Typology of Global Homelessness

(IGH focus marked in green)

	Category		Subcategory
2	People living in temporary or crisis accommodation	2 (a)	People staying in night shelters (where occupants have to renegotiate their accommodation nightly)
		2 (b)	People living in homeless hostels and other types of temporary accommodation for homeless people (where occupants have a designated bed or room)
		2 (c)	Women and children living in refuges for those fleeing domestic violence
		2 (d)	People living in camps provided for 'internally displaced people' i.e. those who have fled their homes as a result of armed conflict, natural or human-made disasters, human rights violations, development projects, etc. but have not crossed international borders
		2 (e)	People living in reception centres / temporary accommodation for asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants

Proposed Typology of Global Homelessness

(IGH focus marked in green)

	Category		Subcategory
3	People living in severely inadequate and insecure accommodation	3 (a)	People sharing with friends and relatives on a temporary basis
		3 (b)	People living under threat of violence
		3 (c)	People living in cheap hotels, bed and breakfasts and similar
		3 (d)	People squatting in conventional housing
		3 (e)	People living in conventional housing that is unfit for human habitation
		3 (f)	People living in trailers, caravans and tents
		3 (g)	People living in extremely overcrowded conditions
		3 (h)	People living in non-conventional buildings and temporary structures, including those living in slums/informal settlements

Summary of Approach

- The distinction between poor housing v homelessness rests on the severity of deprivation in the three key 'domains of home'
- But is also embedded in varying economic, cultural and institutional contexts
- We therefore do not think it helpful (or possible) to try to impose a single definition of homelessness, applied uniformly across the globe
- What is more important (and feasible) is to develop a Typology of Global Homelessness as a 'reference frame' – an aid to transparency - that national and local definitions can be set in relation to
- *But* a clear and consistent definition, that has global resonance and application, is needed to guide IGH's work....

The IGH Definition

- Proposal: IGH should focus on Category 1 and 2 (a-c) of the proposed Typology of Global Homelessness, i.e. people without any accommodation and those living in temporary or emergency accommodation specifically provided for homeless people
- Three main reasons
 - ◆ Higher level of commonality concerning “literal homelessness” - street homelessness and shelters of various kinds - across the globe
 - ◆ Street homelessness is particularly neglected; international and local strategies to tackle ‘homelessness’ often focussed on more numerous and better organised groups (shack or slum dwellers)
 - ◆ Many other organisations and networks focus on slum dwellers, refugees and internally displaced persons
- IGH activities should fill an existing gap

Characteristics of Proposed IGH Approach

- ➡ Entirely accommodation-oriented: severe housing deprivation
 - ◆ Connections with family etc. not taken into account in the definition, although relevant for degree of isolation from mainstream society
- ➡ Approach is as concrete, descriptive and objective as possible
 - ◆ Subjective perceptions are less relevant when it comes to enumerating severe housing deprivation. Definition for this purpose has to be operationalisable and measurable
- ➡ Focuses on those who are currently homeless rather than those “at risk” of homelessness
- ➡ Awareness of the “service statistics paradox”

A Global Estimate

- ➡ Global estimate is important for a world wide initiative to address the problem
 - ◆ *"... numbers tend to drive investment and can enable lobbyists or officials to direct funding to address the problem." (Tipple & Speak, 2009, p.103)*
- ➡ Trend data are equally important and easier to achieve
- ➡ The current basis for global estimate is still much too patchy and thin for very large parts of the world
- ➡ Differences in methods and definitions used in existing counts may lead to erroneous comparisons
 - ◆ Australian Census found 0.49 % of the population homeless 2011
 - ◆ Last count in Chile found 0.07 % of the population in the street

A Global Estimate

→ Methodological problems

- ◆ Combining incomparable data, relating to differing time periods (point in time, annual prevalence etc.) and/or different groups of homeless people
- ◆ Taking local data as a representative basis for generating national or even world-region averages
- ◆ Extremely large variations in population rates

→ United Nations estimates vague and basis unclear

- ◆ 100 million “without a place to live”
- ◆ 1 billion “inadequately housed”
- ◆ 20-40 million “homeless people in urban centres worldwide”

A Global Estimate

→ Tipple & Speak (The Hidden Millions, p. 119)

- ◆ Between 3.8 and 216 million homeless according to official figures
- ◆ Between 33.6 and 179 million living on the streets
- ◆ Between 41.6 and 730 million living in inadequate housing
- ◆ *“This is a highly unsatisfactory range as it is much too large to be useful. (...) It seems that we should enumerate homeless people but currently we do not have the tools to do so with any accuracy”*

→ European Census 2011

- ◆ Recommended a definition of “primary” and “secondary” homelessness
- ◆ 10 of 28 EU countries reported no homelessness numbers at all
- ◆ In several countries the reported numbers were unreliable or questionable

EU 2011 Population and Housing Census

Census Data

Period of time Year 2011

Housing arrangements ▶ Homeless

Geographical area ▾

Belgium	0
Bulgaria	287
Czech Republic	11,496
Denmark	0
Germany	0
Estonia	864
Ireland	2,045
Greece	3,381
Spain	0
France	16,339
Croatia	137
Italy	34,653
Cyprus	0
Latvia	0
Lithuania	857
Luxembourg	274
Hungary	5,571
Malta	2
Netherlands	0
Austria	5,811
Poland	8,699
Portugal	696
Romania	1,524
Slovenia	0
Slovakia	23,483
Finland	0
Sweden	0
United Kingdom	240 u
Iceland	761
Liechtenstein	0
Norway	0
Switzerland	0

c - confidential; d - see metadata; n - not significant; u - low reliability; z - not applicable

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Three Common Enumeration Methods

- 1) Registry Based Estimates**
- 2) Point In Time (PIT) Counts**
- 3) Retrospective Reports from Household Surveys**

Registry Based Estimates:

- Advantages:
 - Unduplicated, longitudinal counts
 - Any time period can be measured
 - Captures service use dynamics
 - Useful for typologies

Examples: US HMIS, Denmark, Netherlands, Canada



Registry Based Estimates:

- Disadvantages:
 - Shelter-based do not track unsheltered periods or persons
 - Incomplete bed coverage
 - Requires long-term commitment of resources and training



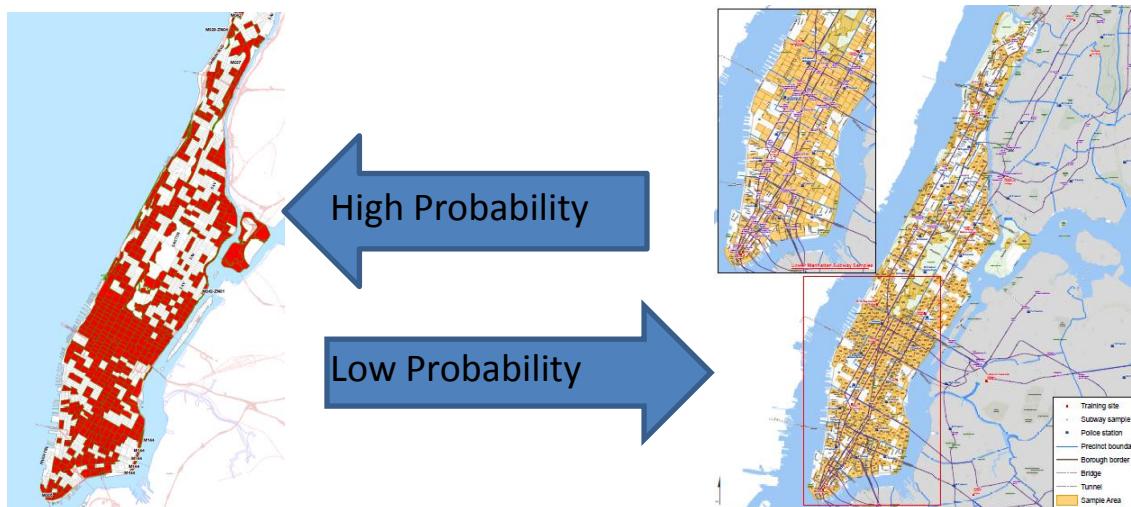
The PIT Counts (Rossi, 1987):

- Enumerate people in shelters
- Estimate unsheltered through visual count
- Example: “HOPE Count” in NYC and S. Korea Street Surveys



PIT Count:

- NYC divides the city into 2 kinds of areas based on the expectation of finding people:
 - High Probability: 1+ People (2+ in Manhattan)
 - Low Probability: 0 People (0-1 in Manhattan)
- Cities usually sample low probability areas, and survey all high probability areas; some designate “medium” probability also



FINAL SAMPLE:

- 1,549 Total Areas
- 1,103 High Probability
- 445 Low Probability

The HOPE Count in NYC:

→ Recruit Volunteers

- Volunteers needed: 3,000
- 4 people per team; 2-4 areas per team
- Recruitment
 - Community partners/partner agencies
 - Free media
 - Past volunteers



The HOPE Count:

→ Count Night

- Checking in volunteers
 - Assigned to teams (and areas)
 - Enough team leaders?
 - Enough vehicles?
- Training volunteers in methodology
- Volunteers sent out to count their areas
- Outreach vans for those who want shelter

The HOPE Count: Correction Factor

→ Decoys

- Plant-capture to ensure methodology compliance
- Conducted by outside agency
- Used to adjust results



Retrospective Reports in Household Surveys

- Toro's work in US and Europe
- Recent UK-based surveys
- FEANTSA and European Observatory efforts with EuroStat
- US American Housing Survey (just recent movers)
- *To be covered in “measurement” breakout session*

Two Less Common Methods:

- 1) Service based methodology (Burt, 1988) – also a corrective for PIT counts**
- 2) “Capture and Recapture” – Chile – also to be reported in “measurement” break out session.**

Some ways forward:

- ➡ Unlikely to have a global count any time soon – need for training and dissemination of best practices, especially PIT and Household Surveys
- ➡ Trends may be discernible in PIT enumerations focused on “high probability areas” (train stations, parks, roadsides)
- ➡ Need to grow enumeration efforts, alongside other knowledge development and policy and practice strategies
- ➡ Please do reflect upon our proposed Global Typology, Definition and Measurement approaches in your deliberations over the next two days, and offer us your feedback and suggestions for improvement