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Solidarity in the housing sector: civic responses to homelessness and housing poverty in Hungary



ABOUT THE PROJECT

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SOLIDARITY IN THE HOUSING SECTOR:
CIVIC RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS AND
HOUSING POVERTY IN HUNGARY

SARA SVENSSON, PÉTER BALOGH AND ANDREW CARTWRIGHT

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern urban environment few experiences constitute as immediate examples of vulnerability as spending days and nights in the open or in temporary shelters. Investigating how solidarity is shown towards people having had, or having, this experience can illuminate the conditions under which solidarity emerges and offer insights into how it can be sustained, as well as some of its limitations. At the same time, recent events in relation to the financial crisis and following mortgage crisis also show how the housing sector can bring to the fore other types of tensions and expressions of solidarity in the nexus between citizenry, the private sector and the state.

Hungary is a good case to investigate this nexus as the trajectory of its economic and political transition may offer explanations of behavior and lessons for citizen actors and policy makers elsewhere. Hungary has had a complex transition from collective ownership, planned production and relatively limited citizen participation in decision-making to a new environment based on majority private ownership, relatively liberal markets and at least in theory, greater citizen participation in decision-making.

For some years, homelessness in Budapest has been increasingly visible in terms of numbers and in public spaces. Under the previous regime this would be unheard of and single men, for example, would be housed in workers or state factory hostels. Common associated problems such as alcoholism, drug addiction, family breakdown, and poor mental health were not unknown of course under socialism, but they were certainly less visible. In the context of post-socialism, the rise of homelessness is linked to the decline in overall employment, specifically, large factory based employment. It is also tied to the corresponding reduction in the volume of social housing provided by the state, employers and local authorities. In response, there have been various civic and policy initiatives, not least the recent efforts of local authorities to reduce the phenomena of rough sleeping altogether in favor of housing based solutions.

In parallel and for differing, though related, reasons there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of those living within so-called precarious housing. Among the best-known crisis related examples were the many thousands of households who took out low interest loans in foreign currency, using their properties as security. As the exchange rates fluctuated especially after 2008, more and more borrowers found it hard to make repayments, leading to steep rises in the number of bank led repossessions and evictions. In Hungary, as well as in Spain, for example, the problem of potential foreclosures gave rise to a cross-party nation-wide civic opposition movement that, in the end, successfully lobbied government for intervention on their behalf. Although both groups are amongst the losers in the housing market, there have been clear differences in their approach and their political impact. There are also some marked tensions between the two.

In this working paper, we investigate these larger themes through two initiatives that emerged to respond to the problem of visible homelessness. Solidarity is understood as deriving from 'our appreciation of the vulnerability to suffering we share with others, rooted in imagined or real

experiences of ‘the damaged life’ (Oman 2010: 282), and it is defined as “identifying with and showing concern for the suffering of others through practical actions; it is a generous disposition, a propensity to sacrifice something one values on behalf of others whose welfare is deemed important (Arnsperger and Varoufakis, 2003). The first case study is Menhely Alapítvány (Shelter Foundation), which is an NGO founded in the early 1990s providing practical aid to homeless. The second is a much younger group called A Város Mindenkié (*The City is for All*), which stresses the need for policy advocacy and self-help.

The analyzed data consists of institutional documents available on the organizations’ websites combined with eleven interviews, site observations and reviewing secondary literature (see source section). As stated, the central research question is the conditions under which solidarity emerges, how it can be sustained, and what are its limitations. We focus on the relations between citizens and different spatial and political manifestations of the state. The empirical questions pursued through fieldwork were the following.

1. In what context did these initiatives emerge?
2. What is the nature of organizational decision-making in the initiatives?
3. How do they relate to other actors in the same and other sectors?
4. What impacts, if any, have their actions had on public opinion and housing policy?
5. What types of solidarity acts and bonds have arisen out of the organizations?

Following an introduction to the policy context in section 2, the structure of the working paper largely follows these questions. Section 3 deals with question 1-3 in relation to the *Shelter Foundation*, while section 4 does the same for *The City is for All*. The last research question on types of solidarity acts and bonds constitutes the core of the paper, and is discussed comparatively in section 5, before the concluding section sums up our key findings and arguments.

2. HOUSING IN HUNGARY: SELECT TRENDS AND POLICY RESPONSES

2.1. Housing conditions and housing policy since the 1980s

The housing sector in Hungary is typical for Central and Eastern Europe. During the late socialist period the share of publicly owned housing stood at 22% (Misetics 2016), and was concentrated in urban areas. Housing policy was primarily focused on increasing the urban population, developing commuter towns, and reorganizing and in some cases downgrading the older housing stock through division into smaller units. In its place were installed quickly built, mass occupancy panel homes. There were privately owned residences during socialist times, and in the countryside much of housing was in private hands. However, in the capital and the new towns, most of the housing stock was owned by the state and the municipalities.

In the post-socialist period, the great majority of this housing was transferred to their occupants for nominal, non-market fees. Some residential property was returned to its former owners through special

restitution legislation. Those owning agricultural land held in collective farms were given vouchers for either buying property or redeeming their former agricultural land (Solidus National Background Report on Hungary 2016).

These policies and the changes in the labor market, not least the plummeting participation rate and the collapse of many large state enterprises, had a profound impact on the housing sector. Social housing is now very much a residual category. In 2005, 88% of Hungarians owned their homes, and this has barely changed since (Eurostat 2016). In contrast, the EU-27 average of owner occupation – measured since 2007 – has been around 70–71% (ibid). In 2014, just four EU members (Romania, Slovakia, Lithuania, and Croatia) had a higher share of home-owners than Hungary, while in neighboring Austria for instance only 55.7% of the population owned its homes in 2015 (ibid). A second important factor is that many former housing condominiums were transformed into owner-occupier associations, with shared responsibility over service provision and property maintenance. However, as income differences grew sharply within buildings, problems emerged for covering the costs of basic maintenance and renovation. In many cases, private firms assumed management functions, although the law still provides the broader regulatory framework, for example that each owner has voting rights in proportion to the size of his or her property.

As a result of these changes, there has been a rapid, if uneven deterioration, in the quality of the housing stock, especially in the panel houses which were often poorly constructed using sub-standard materials. Owners and occupants of these properties face big problems raising sufficient funds for renewal and renovation. Although local authority grants and loans can be used, owners are required to cost-share, which, as stated, is often difficult to achieve given the huge variation of incomes within large housing complexes. In this environment, responses have been fragmented, with individuals or small groups of neighbours taking care of their part of the building, including painting the balcony, their stair landing etc.

One illustration of the prevalence of poor housing conditions is the proportion of dwellings without an indoor flushing toilet facility. Whereas the EU average was “only” 2.7%, 5.6% of Hungarian dwellings did not have an indoor flushing toilet (Eurostat 2015: 84). This places Hungary above the other three Visegrad states, although still far beyond Romania, Bulgaria, as well as the Baltic states (11.4–38.1%). It is important to note that there is also great variety when broken down to the regional level. Hence, 2.5% of dwellings lacked an indoor flushing toilet in Central Hungary whereas in Northern Hungary, the corresponding number was 9.2% (ibid). A second example of poor housing conditions is that, according to the housing charity, Habitat for Humanity, “half a million people in Hungary live under a leaking roof or between damp or moldy walls, which endangers families with children, and frequently lead to the development of respiratory-system diseases or allergies” (Habitat for Humanity 2015: 7). Finally, within EU countries, the proportion of the population saying they have a low or very low level of satisfaction with their dwelling was the third highest in Hungary (~15–24%, depending on the household type), only below Bulgaria and Denmark (Eurostat 2015: 86).

A recent study of twelve EU countries showed that only 3% of the current Hungarian dwelling stock is social rented housing, decreasing from 4% a decade earlier (Scanlon & al 2015: 3). Single-parent families with low income are over-represented in this category, and the share of Roma among social tenants is around 25–30% (ibid: 5). Another recent study explored an EU-funded project incorporating principles of giving priority to housing when trying to solve complex social problems. The project gave rough sleepers the opportunity to receive both housing and support for a fix period of twelve months

(Balogi & Fehér 2014). It concluded that such a program can be meaningful only when participants are able to secure an adequate income to maintain their housing (whether from employment or some sort of pension). Couples generally have a higher success rate than single people; however, for those with more complex needs, fixed-term housing-led projects might not be adequate.

At the same time, many middle and working class owners have struggled to keep themselves in their homes. According to Habitat for Humanity's Annual Report,

[d]espite utility cost reductions, housing costs have not decreased significantly and as a consequence, indebtedness of families is reaching high levels. In 2014 nearly one quarter (24.9%) of the population had some type of arrears (loan payments, rent and utility-arrears), which is 2.5% higher than the European average. (Habitat for Humanity 2015: 8)

Taken together, these developments highlight the problem of precarious housing in the country and the fact that that significant segments of the population do not enjoy stable housing conditions. According to Habitat's Annual Report (2015: 9), the situation of people living in housing poverty in Hungary did not improve in 2014.

2.2. Homelessness and national level policy responses

The focus of this report is homelessness in Hungary. It should be emphasized that this term lacks a single definition. In Budapest, the authorities follow the European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion (Lidmo & Törnsten 2016) developed by the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA). This divides homelessness into 4 categories (roofless, houseless, insecure, and inadequate), with 13 further sub-categories. In this case study, we mainly deal with those classified as 'roofless' and 'houseless' (FEANTSA 2005).

In recent years, homelessness has become controversial public issue. As a means of reducing the number of people living on the street, the government introduced legislation that places significant responsibility on local authority to reduce the incidence of rough sleeping in its district. In some respects, the legislation simply codified existing approaches whereby district-level authorities took the initiative to cut down on the numbers of rough sleepers, mainly by moving them into hostels and, in some cases, moving them on from popular sites such as metro underpasses. In the different parts of the city, there were important differences in the scale of the problem and the local policy response. Indeed, some critics went as far as to say that the local authority actions made it essentially illegal to sleep rough at the same time as not providing any accompanying alternatives (Udvarhelyi 2013, Misetics 2013).

The key point of contestation became Article XXII §3 of The Fundamental Law of Hungary (National Assembly 2013), which provides for the following:

[i]n order to protect public order, public security, public health and cultural values, an Act or a local government decree may, with respect to a specific part of public space, provide that staying in public space as a habitual dwelling shall be illegal.

This has been interpreted by some as a criminalization of homelessness (Udvarhelyi 2013, Misetics 2013). While the Article encourages local governments to 'strive' to provide housing, it leaves a great deal of space as to how to achieve this: for example, according to a regulation from March 2015, each

municipality can decide whether to offer housing allowances for their residents and, if so, under what conditions (Habitat for Humanity 2015: 8). Other social benefits are also in the hands of municipalities, with the consequence of further socio-spatial polarization.

Two groups in particular are disproportionately affected by homelessness. Men constitute approximately three quarters of the visibly homeless (Janecsko 2010), and close to one in three respondents in an annual (voluntary) survey with people living in streets or shelters “is Roma or seen by the surrounding to be Roma’ (Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy and its Institutions (BMSZKI) (accessed November 29, 2016). While the numbers are uncertain, the long-term trend is believed to be upwards:

There are much more Gypsy homeless today than earlier. Probably because those Roma communities that existed at the fall of communism, these have fallen apart and they do not stick together as much as before. (Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7)

Beside this community-oriented explanation, another explanation that has been suggested is out-migration from rural areas to the city (Shelter Foundation Employee 11). However, none of these explanations are empirically proven, and should be treated cautiously.

2.3. Local level policy-setting and service delivery: the case of Budapest

As the following table shows, there are clear differences in the number of homeless within the country. According to one of the leading homeless NGOs, the main difference is that most homeless people outside the capital live in the streets rather than in shelters.

Respondents living in the streets on February 3									
Settlement	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Budapest	1,189	1,360	1,252	1,150	876	1,057	836	1,201	1,130
Other towns	1,376	1,502	1,816	1,720	1,463	2,030	2,395	2,488	2,292
Total	2,565	2,862	3,068	2,870	2,339	3,087	3,231	3,689	3,422

Source: Shelter Foundation www.menhely.hu (accessed November 6, 2015), Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy and Its Institutions (BMSZKI) (accessed November 29, 2016)

At the same time, the total number of homeless people is contested, partially due to different use of definitions. The same NGO argued that 10,000 may be living ‘on the street’, including those sleeping at shelters, at any given moment, around 40,000–50,000 are probably at the verge of homelessness. As a result of the public institutions’ limited capacities for dealing with the situation, district authorities regularly outsourced the management of homeless related services to non-governmental organizations. Up until 2013, in Budapest alone there were 13 organizations, which led to difficulties of co-ordination (Lidmo & Törnsten 2016). The city authorities signed a contract with two major organizations which, apart from taking care of homeless people themselves, also coordinate the work with a couple of smaller organizations. The two organizations are the Shelter Foundation, which will be the focus of this chapter, mainly in charge of the Pest side, and the Hungarian Maltese, who are headquartered in and focusing

their work on the Buda side¹. In addition, there are several civil initiatives working with homeless that do not benefit from support from the public sector or other large organizations. The largest one in Hungary is a movement called ‘*The City is for All*’ (AVM), which constituted the case study for the Hungarian team’s SOLIDUS Work package 2 contribution.

3. THE SHELTER FOUNDATION (MENHELY ALAPÍTVÁNY)

The Shelter Foundation is one of the largest and oldest organizations in Hungary dealing with homelessness. Its stated core belief is that “every human being has the fundamental right to feel safe legally, physically, and socially in an apartment, in a town, or in a country. The main goal of the foundation is to ensure that no one is deprived of this fundamental right.” (Shelter Foundation 2016)

The Shelter Foundation was established in 1990 as one of many organizations founded to address the disruption of the transition from socialism to democratic capitalism. Those societal groups who today are referred as ‘vulnerable’ or ‘disadvantaged’ are in this condition, at least in part, because they were the hardest hit by employment lay-offs and shifting governmental responsibilities.

Activities of the Shelter Foundation include: (1) coordinating work with homeless shelters across Budapest; (2) maintaining its own shelters for hundreds of people, mostly men, and for both temporary (night) shelter and long-term with respect to elderly homeless; (3) accepting and distributing donations and food to the benefits of shelter residents and others affected by homelessness; (4) managing the publication of the street magazine “Fedél Nélkül” (“Without a Roof”); and (5) conducting advocacy work and sociological research.

The organization is keen to emphasize that several activities related to service provision were not available before the Foundation initiated them. The organization’s website highlights that it provided the first venue ...

“<...> where professional Care Centers were established to manage and help homeless people. It was the first institution to establish a Day Centre where professional social workers provided assistance as well as organized cultural programs. The Shelter Foundation was the first to create a magazine in conjunction with homeless people, Fedél Nélkül (“Without a Roof”); and was the first organization to provide a 24 hour dispatcher service, Crisis Car, recovery center and centrally located luggage storage area. The foundation was also first to provide long term accommodation for elderly homeless people and strives to help those threatened by homelessness.” (Shelter Foundation 2016)

The organization is based in and focused on Budapest, particularly the Pest side of the city which holds three quarters of the capital’s residents. It is particularly active in Districts 7, 8 and 9, where it has “social workers who help the homeless with the organization of their official affairs” (Shelter Foundation 2016). Though District 9 is by now largely gentrified, and districts 7 and 8 are rapidly gentrifying as well, these districts are still ‘home’ to many of the ‘homeless’ in the capital. Beyond

1 However, in terms of beds the largest direct service provider is a public entity, the Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy and Its Institutions.

Budapest, some of the Foundation's services, such as the Dispatcher's Service, are available also in the surrounding Pest County, which has the most inhabitants after Budapest (MA 2015: 10), whilst its sociological and advocacy work spans the nation.

The Shelter Foundation is usually classified and referred to as a non-governmental organization, but it should be noted that it was initially co-founded by five organizations, three NGOs and two public authorities (the Municipality of Budapest and the Social Department of District 4 in Budapest). Thus it can be said to have been an early example of a civil-public partnership. These founders do not have any controlling influence on strategies or management of the organization; a supervisory board consisting of three persons is ultimately responsible for this. However, under Hungarian law, significant amendment of the organization's statutes would require the founders' approval, which would be challenging due to the transformed and sometimes adverse relation between the various founding organizations today (HOU 11).

The majority of funding comes from the Budapest Municipality, since the Shelter Foundation is one of the main contracted partners for the delivery of shelter services in the capital. Resources are made more complex by the fact that several buildings used by the Shelter Foundation have unclear property relations or are leased under uncertain conditions and may be subject to discontinuation by the City or local district (such as the Vajdahunyad shelter in the 8th district).

Thus, while the Shelter Foundation is an organization that is perceived by the general population as a non-governmental organization, it is intimately bound up with State activities in the following respects:

- **Initiation:** two out of five founders were public bodies.
- **Finance:** a majority of funding comes as payments for services by the state. The director is clear that it would not be possible for civil society to take up the shortfall of state withdrawal. "This country cannot sustain as many civil organizations as we have now. In our case, we get 75%² of funding from the state and have to collect the remaining 25%; but small organizations – e.g. below 50 persons – are often struggling. The state is so involved in civil society here [through funding] that if it withdrew, the system would collapse." (Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7)
- **Property:** most of the properties used by the Foundation are owned by Budapest districts or the city of Budapest.

In 2015, the Shelter Foundation's total revenues were HUF 613,359,000 (approx. 2 million Euro). 34.3% came from the central budget, 32.6% from the municipal level, and 28.9% from so-called normative support. This means that 95% of the funding was provided through the state through different channels. The Foundation spent HUF 173,353,000 (approx. half a million Euro) on material costs and HUF 317,717,000 (approx. one million Euro) on person-related costs.

In addition to public financing, the Shelter Foundation receives donations from private companies and individuals. Annually they receive donations from 200-300 individuals and 20-30 company donations (HOU 11). The staff member responsible says "this mood and solidarity is not decreasing" (HOU 11), and even if the number is not significantly increasing, she argues that since people are not getting richer, it is good to have this stable/slowly growing income from donations. However, she also

2 This percentage refers only to the direct state-level support for service provision excluding for instance state covered project money. The full state support is even higher. See the text for overview of finances.

said that “of course you would need to put more energy into this”. (HOU 11) Somewhat more women than men tend to donate, with female donors amounting to around 60% of the total. (HOU 11)

In Hungary, individuals can donate 1% of their income tax for charitable or religious purposes. In 2016, the Shelter Foundation received 6,145,147 HUF (about 20,000 EUR) from 962 taxpayers (Hungarian Tax Office 2016 data). According to the organization, this number has remained stable³. Many organizations have campaigns to encourage donations in the time preceding the annual tax declarations, but the Shelter Foundation has not done this, since they believe that it is not worth their time and effort. Their name is well known from their hotline advertisements and from their appearances in the media, both planned strategic appearances and spontaneous ones resulting from queries.

“Often it has to do with the cold season, that between December and February, so they search us for different topics, so we did not have to pay money, to invest, so that our name is known, because a one percent campaign that would be the purpose. So if someone thinks about homelessness and the name ‘Menhely Alapítvány (Shelter Foundation)’ comes to their mind, that’s good”. (Shelter Foundation employee, HOU 11)

This employee once looked at similar organizations that do similar things, drawing the conclusion that it is not very possible to increase donations via campaigns, something which she refers to “as a bit strange”, but therefore “we did not see it justified to spend much money on this, if you had big posters it would largely take away the income.” (HOU 11) As judged by 2016 data, this conclusion seems plausible. In terms of donors, the Shelter Foundation was placed 206 out of 25,000 organizations, with mainly the religious organizations or health related organizations receiving substantially more donations.

Another factor is that Hungarian tax law changed a few years ago and income tax was drastically reduced (to 16%), later followed by a further reduction to 15%. This meant that the amount resulting from the 1% donations also decreased. In the case of the Shelter Foundation, this meant a decrease from 10-11 million HUF to 6-7 million HUF. About 1,000 persons annually donate their one percent, and that number has slowly grown over the past years.

3.1. Decision-making: pluralism, transparency and accountability

The Shelter Foundation is a professionally run organization, where most of the activities are planned and executed by hired employees with the help of some volunteers. Unlike the AVM group, it is not built upon the explicit premise of participation by ‘affected’ or ‘end users’. This professional character has developed over time. When asked about whether there have ever been homeless representatives on the Board, the Director recounts the early days of the 1990s.

The Shelter Foundation started out with a squatting action, whereby homeless moved into a workers’ hostel at Kürt Street. They broke the window there, there was no heating; they destroyed everything. At the same time, 8–10 social workers moved in with them who occupied their own room and began to organize institutionalization. This was in 1989–1990. Since then, from this room a system of institutions emerged around Vajdahunyad

3 The research team could not identify official data going back further than 2012, when 1146 persons donated, giving a total sum of 7.9 million HUF. 2015 saw donations from 1048 persons yielding a total of 6.6 million HUF. The trend in these four years therefore seems slightly downward.

Street <where one of the shelters is located today>. So this was the point when intellectuals took charge, instead of the guards who still worked there at that time. It was very difficult to take control over those homeless who felt themselves to be in charge. The current system of management – on unit level – is based on shifts of 6–12 hours. There are some homeless who help with maintenance etc. and the ones that are present at a given moment feel to be in charge. Information is not always transmitted. This caused difficulties in the beginning. Sometimes even the continued operation of shelters was threatened by such persons coming from below (who wanted to control things). (HOU 7, Shelter Foundation Director)

This quote highlights the early participation of three groups of stakeholders: intellectuals, social workers (presumably state/local government employees but driven by belief in change) and homeless people, and shows how tensions around this led slowly to professionalization. Together with the mission statement it is also clear that the homeless are seen as a group that needs to be ‘managed’ and, to some extent, ‘controlled’.

Homeless people are still involved in a number of ways. The bi-weekly magazine *Fedél Nélkül* (lit. ‘Without a Roof’), issued since 1994, was founded by a homeless man; its editing, organization of printing, and distribution to homeless for selling is managed by the Shelter Foundation. Homeless persons are continuously represented among the magazine’s contributors. The Shelter Foundation organizes a number of activities involving homeless users, such as art galleries that can be visited at the shelters. The opinion of shelter users are also taken into account to the extent that resources allow, i.e. if wishes from residents can be met within existing financial frameworks they try to fulfill those.

A male resident at the permanent shelter for elderly is full of praise for how the home works, and the following excerpt indicates that any changes would be the result of dialogue centered around complaints, but also that there is very often no united front among end-users.

<SOLIDUS team>: You said everything is very good here; but if anything wasn’t, would you be able to influence the situation, here at the shelter?

Well, I can’t name anything bad here, anything that had influenced me in any bad way.

<SOLIDUS team>: But if there had been, do you think you would be able to speak to the employees about it?

Of course, of course. There were a few tiny affairs here, but really they were so small that they aren’t even worth mentioning; we told them immediately.

<SOLIDUS team>: And was that thanks to the employees, or because some among you drew their attention to them?

We told them about it. For instance the system of showering, as there are 1–2 persons who don’t like to take a shower every day. I myself couldn’t live without taking a shower at least once a day. It used to be obligatory to shower twice a week; I didn’t like that only two times were obligatory. I am taking a shower every day; when the waves of heat hit in, I sometimes took one even twice a day. I shave every day; but oftentimes some hang around with a large beard...

<SOLIDUS team>: So you tried to achieve that a daily shower would become mandatory?

That was not possible; but there is a list hanging on the wall right behind you, indicating the names of those who are not taking a shower.

<SOLIDUS team>: I see; so pressure is being put on them this way. And does it have an effect?

Yes, it does. They [other homeless residents] are getting to grips with it – not with showering, but with the list... I even have a friend here, who helps the institution a lot, but he hates taking a shower. (HOU 9 – male resident at the home for elderly)

For a female volunteer interviewed by SOLIDUS, what is important is not so much the involvement of beneficiaries, but that they should be treated with respect. She previously volunteered at a different shelter, where she saw that the social workers did not treat the homeless properly (such as ‘referring to them as ‘those’ in a bad tone’). According to this volunteer, the Shelter Foundation is characterized by opposite practices where the social workers are ‘nice’ and professional.

The Shelter Foundation appreciates volunteers and receives up to 20% of its income in donations from the general public. However, drawing volunteers closer to the organization has not been in focus, or not been successful. The volunteer interviewed stated that she did not attend any events organized by the Shelter Foundation.

“They just sent me information, up to date information about their activities, in printed version. When I organized the charity lunch <at my workplace, for the benefit of the Shelter Foundation>, <a named Shelter Foundation employee> was here and brought promotion material to the CEU community. Several people came to her.” (Shelter Foundation volunteer, HOU 8)

To sum up, the Shelter Foundation adheres to the principles of transparency and accountability, and is open to demonstrating its activities to any outsiders (they were remarkably willing to spend time with the SOLIDUS team and openly discuss their achievements as well as challenges). However, it does not place special emphasis on bottom-up participation or empowerment. Rather, its aim is to provide support in an as efficient manner as possible, although several informants conceded that organizational development is hampered by adverse relations between the original funders.

3.2. Relations and recognition

Public services in Hungary are often delivered in a politicized environment, and homelessness is one of the most contentious areas within public discourse. The Shelter Foundation describes its relations with the state, primarily encountered as local authorities, as being good and productive. However, it is vulnerable due to its funding position, and organizational development is complicated by the fact that the founding entities do not cooperate well.

Beyond its relations to state and local government, the organization values good working relations with other non-governmental actors in the area. On its website, it states:

“The success of the foundation relies on the cooperation of businesses, individuals and organizations that also strive to help the homeless. The foundation continues to assume a significant role in coordinating activities with other homeless organizations and other partner organizations. (These include the regional dispatcher service, Budapest street services, crisis cars, night shelters, etc.)” (SF’s webpage).

These relations can be mobilized in discussions with the city. As the key partner on the Pest side of the capital Shelter sometimes subcontracts other service providers, and cooperates with the main organization on the Buda side, the Maltese order, for instance, in relation to the Dispatcher Service.

Our cooperation with the Maltese is related to the consortium agreement that the two of us have with the capital. During the anti-homeless campaign, the capital has cancelled its agreements with a number of smaller organizations. It planned to withdraw the normative support <...>. A serious lobby-activity was launched against this, and as a result the Maltese and us now receive the money to coordinate work on homelessness and with shelters. (Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7)

Compared to the Maltese, the Shelter Foundation emphasizes religious independence, which limits its funding (religious organizations usually get top-off funding from churches) but ensures a pluralism of perspectives which the organization values.

They also cooperate with *The City is For All*, to which the Shelter Foundation provided help with some initial legal and organizational issues. Perhaps more importantly, the Shelter Foundation provides meeting space, previously for free and currently against a small fee.

In some ways, we are standing on the same side; in others, we have different interests. They want to improve regulation and conditions for homeless, and think that our provision isn’t good enough; in this sense, our interests diverge. But this is totally normal and we are dealing with this in a totally normal way, it does not influence our cooperation. We know that this their goal. (Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7)

The quote indicates appreciation of their work, while there is also a tension between providing services and conducting advocacy.

The Shelter Foundation also has international links through its membership in the European Federation of National Organizations working with the Homeless (FEANSTA) and it has also taken part in some projects. For instance, in 2016 it was a member of a project led by a Spanish partner on employment. However, such project grants do not normally make up for more than 10 or 12 million out of their HUF 500 million operational budget. (Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7)

3.3. Social and political impact

The Shelter Foundation has several regular and long-standing research and outreach activities, which inform the general public, professionals and policy-makers about homelessness. Most importantly, every year on February 3rd, the Shelter Foundation is the lead organization behind a survey which, in its aggregated form, gives an impression of characteristics of the homeless and the conditions they

live with. While the survey always receives attention, the Shelter Foundation management has been increasingly aware that the focus is not where it would want it to be.

People and media are always interested in numbers, this is the way to catch their attention, and to make friends and enemies. Yet whatever numbers are presented, some groups are always unhappy. <Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7>

There are always the same questions: 'How many are they? How many shelter places are there?' In the last 5-6 years, it was always these questions, and even from abroad when there were foreign journalists wanting to know about the legislation issue around homeless <they asked the same questions>. < Employee, the Shelter Foundation, HOU 11>

The survey is a form of hard evidence that can be used for policy argumentation, and therefore numbers are inevitably contested. For instance, if 10,000 people take part in the survey, the government might look at the available number of shelter places and, if those match, use it as a justification for not extending provision any further. Alternatively, it might look at the overall amount of public money spent, divide it with these 10,000 homeless people, and find that the money spent per capita is higher than they would seem justified. Government opposition, on the other hand, might want to have 'proof' that the number of homeless is rising, and doubt the methodology if it does not.

The two most important public outreach activities are the 'school visiting' and the 'city tour' programs, which have taken place since 2009, when it was initiated with support from the Norwegian fund. The One or several people who are currently, or who have recently been, homeless visit a school class accompanied by a Shelter Foundation employee or social worker, and discuss with the students. In 2015, 900 students were reached in this way through 72 lectures. The program has been relatively stable over the last years (Shelter Foundation Annual Reports 2015, 2012, 2010 and 2009). The city tour program is done in a similar way, but it is always led by one homeless and one social worker, and is conducted upon demand. The scale is somewhat smaller.

Activities with professional groups include taking part in an annual event organized by the Department of Psychology at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. The management is aware that more could be done in this area, but at the same time emphasizes shortage of resources and capacity.

Actors at Shelter Foundation see public opinion as rather constant, but highlight the fact that people often hold ambiguous or opposing perspectives towards homeless.

People become thoughtful when they see someone sleeping outside in winter; yet when walking with their small children and seeing homeless people shouting at each other in public places, they might think that something needs to be done and if nothing else, these people would need to be carried away. So these feelings come interchangeably. I think there is a strong bias in favor of solving the issue with violence by the authorities; at the same time, there is the feeling of the need to provide help. <Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7>

People can feel both sympathy and revulsion, and be both in favor of restrictive measures and in favor of aid. In the eyes of the long-term staff, this has not significantly changed over the past decades and there is definitely no clear change either for or against that can be linked to the financial crisis of 2008. What has changed over the last 10-15 years is an increased interest from companies to be socially

aware and demonstrate ‘corporate social responsibility’. Shelter Foundation has a significant share of donors, both companies and individuals, who prefer to donate anonymously and do not require, or explicitly want to avoid publicity.

Those who give donations, it is not sure that they want to be part of our organization. That is, they know our organization, and trust that we spend money well, but don't want more. We had a trial, a couple of years ago, or more, we had a party for donors, it was here, in the middle of the city, not too early, and not too late, well planned, but they did not come. ... In Hungary those who donate, that is a private matter ... Of course we tried to rationalize, blame the weather, but the lesson we learned was also that the person who gives money or things, it is not sure that he or she wants to see this close-up. So if we invite someone, there is the ‘danger’ that they will see one close-up. <Shelter Foundation employee, HOU 11>

The Shelter Foundation is generally satisfied with the media coverage of homelessness, and the coverage of their work. The Foundation thinks its recognition is largely due to its presence in media, and find the general coverage fair and accurate, regardless of the political color of the media outlet.

When there is much interest, the issue of capacity again comes in, and there are times when the employees feel that they cannot respond, much less harness potential benefits. One employee used the expression ‘being attacked’ by media, but not in the sense of negative coverage, but of being overwhelmed. (HOU 7)

For the Shelter Foundation, transforming the way the public and policy-makers think about homelessness is not a goal. It is true that its website lists some common ‘misperceptions’ about homelessness, and tries to counter these with facts about levels of education and involvement in work. At the same time, a drive to change perceptions does not permeate their work, and in interviews, employees said that the statistics behind those numbers are old and might not actually reflect the truth anymore.

We don't communicate like this, but there is on the website this ‘common misperceptions’ article. For instance, that they don't work, but that is based on somewhat old research by now, so it can have changed. <HOU 7, Shelter Foundation Director> After the financial crisis even fewer can reintegrate than before. <HOU 11, Shelter Foundation Employee>

Awareness-raising is one dimension for assessing the Shelter Foundation, although there are at least three that matter:

- 1. Providing direct support** to people who would otherwise have nowhere to go. During 2015, in Budapest altogether 5,071 homeless persons were registered in the database of the organisation. A total of 1,487 homeless people spent altogether 143,271 nights in their shelters. (MA 2015: 8) This is a marked increase compared with five years earlier, when 256 persons spent 17,876 nights at the shelters. (MA 2010:10). The increase can partly be explained by the city's reorganization of service outsourcing.
- 2. Influencing policy:** While the Foundation could not stop the enactment of the so-called ‘criminalization law’ in 2013, it claims some success in the lax implementation of parts of this law. A Shelter Foundation employee described it as “it seemed very frightening at first, but it was not so bad”. <Shelter Foundation employee, HOU 11> Despite the dependence on the state, the Shelter Foundation retains its capacity to be critical of government or municipal activities.

“Well, theoretically this does not influence our independence. As I said we don’t look for conflict; but if our interests, or those of the homeless are being damaged, I think we are able to stand against that. When the rule-breaking ordinance [i.e. the anti-homeless regulation] appeared, we did our best to oppose it, trying to achieve that fines would be as small as possible. We have been sitting down and discussing with authorities. As a result, no homeless persons are penalized or carried away without first consulting with us.”
(Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7)

- **Influencing attitudes:** The Shelter Foundation has tried to counteract negative attitudes is some of the debates in Hungary concerning homelessness. For example, their project targeting schools the program where homeless people guide tourists around the city.

4. THE CITY IS FOR ALL (A VÁROS MINDENKIÉ)

The City is for All was selected as a case study because of the distinct approach it takes towards the subjects of its work. Although there are many that promote self-help, empowerment and solidarity, *The City is for All* is probably the most systematic. This position is derived from the involvement of so-called affected people in its work.

It was created in 2009, inspired by the American organization Picture the Homeless, and views itself as a ‘homeless rights advocacy group’. The initiators were mostly Hungarian graduates from universities in the US and other western countries. (HOU 4)

As mentioned earlier, the civic response to the rise in homelessness often had close connections to the social work departments in local governments (Metropolitan Research Institute 2012).

The original idea was for an advocacy organization characterized by genuine and real participation of homeless people. This translated into a stringent set of rules for the organization, but also the decision not to register as a formal organization on the grounds that this would impose too many unwanted restrictions on their activities. The initiative continues to maintain contacts with similar actors operating abroad⁴.

4.1. Decision-making: pluralism, transparency and accountability

A somewhat paradoxical feature is its combination of informality and formality. It is not registered, but nonetheless admits members only after a lengthy and rather formalized process. It has a core of about 30 members, divided into ‘affected’ (i.e. homeless or persons in severe housing poverty) and ‘allies’ (activists not directly affected by housing poverty). Each week, members meet to discuss current issues and take decisions concerning activities, applications for membership, requests for interviews, and other issues. Members are expected to devote around 20 hours a week to the organization. In addition to the regular members, the organization claims several hundred sympathizers and supporters.

⁴ During the research for example, one of the team members encountered three AVM representatives at a conference taking place in another country.

The movement claims to be apolitical, defined as being independent from political parties. It benefits from few external resources but, following the high profile occupation of the office of a local politician well-known for his hard line against rough sleeping, people started to volunteer and donate food and clothes. Members with financial difficulties can ask for money for food, public transport tickets, travel, and other costs. The group's coordinators receive some money, too; each one has got a mobile phone and receives 3,000 HUF to top up and 2,000 to use internet.

At the meetings, the moderator is self-nominating. *The City is for All* has let its meetings be evaluated by an external person, receiving overall a very positive feedback. Each working group has a coordinator. The main, operational working group requires at least five 'affected' persons on its board: if this is not met, then new board members are elected. That board is additionally composed of two 'allies'. New members can choose which working group they want to join. Recruiting new members is important because "every person's way of thinking is different" (HOU 3) and can bring new insights.

An academic and sympathizer said that being a member makes "a huge difference in the case of *The City is for All*" (HOU 4), because it has quite strict rules regarding membership despite not being a formal institution. Nevertheless, the distinction is not based on displaying authority.

It should be noted that in the fieldwork for this case study we deliberately chose not to ask *The City is for All*'s main initiator and founder, Éva Tessza Udvarhelyi, for an interview. She has published extensively on the organization, and therefore we have drawn on this material for this report (Udvarhelyi 2013, 2014, 2015). For the interviews we interviewed the persons the organization set out as their spokespersons. We learnt that Éva Tessza Udvarhelyi remains the most prominent figure of the movement; although she remains humble about this, strictly following *The City is for All*'s truly democratic mechanisms. Only one external interviewee (HOU 4) mentioned that "there are of course power asymmetries in all organizations", but even he confirmed the image of a strictly egalitarian structure.

In terms of pluralism, the most striking feature is the members' diverse social and, in particular, educational background. Young, middle-income graduates work alongside those experiencing severe housing poverty. On the one hand, 'the affected' benefit from formalized support such as training courses and seminars. On the other hand, the activists learn first-hand from affected persons of their everyday lives and the kind of situations faced.

As a unregistered organization, *The City is for All* cannot receive financial donations but it does accept clothes, blankets, coffee and tea. There is a formally recognized and associated organization called 'Utcáról Lakásba! Egyesület' (ULE, From Street to Apartment! Together). As a registered organization, ULE can receive public donations. Meetings are restricted to members only; even 'sympathizers' cannot attend unless they are specifically invited. The movement's webpages (homepage: avarosmindenkie.blog.hu) as well as its Facebook-group, inform relatively extensively, on goals and ambitions, but also on its topical activities and programs.

4.2. Relations and recognition

The City is for All cannot compete for grants or demonstrate its recognition through projects. However, it does have a strong name in the local and national media, amongst local authorities, and related professional groups. This is shown in frequently appearing in media reports as well being mentioned in various research and policy reports on Hungarian social and housing work. In line with its belief in

the importance of representing those affected, *The City is for All* promotes affected persons as speakers, whether in media, meetings with officials, or presentations at conferences. One of the spokespersons and our interview partner (HOU 3), a man in his sixties who had been without stable housing for large parts of his life, spoke of how he was interviewed on Hungary's main public service radio station, Kossuth Rádió.

The City is for All's website showcases media appearances of, or other news on, the movement: between March and May 2016, 7–21 links were added per month. According to one academic interviewed for the project (HOU 4), “media coverage and public awareness is growing almost ‘exponentially’. The negative thing associated with this is that the horizontal nature of the organization is partly challenged. With growth, more coordination is necessary”.

4.3. Social and political impact

While there are few independent sources of verification, all the interviewed stakeholders and external experts agreed that interest in housing issues has increased in the capital. One academic, who identifies himself as a ‘sympathizer’, estimates:

Since the crisis, homelessness is much more visible and discussed. But this is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, many know people who lose their homes, which in certain instances can generate some solidarity and understanding, rather than blaming the victim. On the other hand, people who just lost their home distance themselves from others in a similar situation. They want to blame the banks, and not themselves, since homeless are traditionally blamed for being so due to alcohol problems etc. (HOU 4)

Overall, it is difficult to say that municipal policy has adopted the goals and agenda of *The City is for All*. Local governments still issue local ordinances that forbid sleeping rough. One spokesperson conceded that “[w]e push law-makers all the time, but...” (HOU 3). The hesitation indicated that developments have not been successful. At the same time, they can point to numerous victories. For instance, Budapest police can no longer check the identity cards of unsuspected persons at food distribution events, a practice which was previously common. Some homeless people said that they could be checked two or three times within a single occasion. In conjunction with the local Helsinki Committee, *The City is for All* are carrying out training of policemen. In some cases, they have also managed to halt evictions.

The problem is that in Hungary, homeless people are being persecuted, even by law. Our main dream is therefore that Hungary should codify the right to housing. As long as it isn't, things will only get worse in this respect. (HOU 5)

On the social side, *The City is for All* has a strong impact on the lives of its members. One interviewee testified how he used to stay at a day shelter before he got to know the movement at a food distribution event.

My intellectual capacity was underutilized. But now I am writing a book on my life, and even though I'm 61 years old I feel youngish. And I do many things, like now I am organizing a trip to Vienna for the group. (HOU 3)

Another spokesperson affected by unstable housing explains how *The City is for All* helped her secure a job as a cleaner.

We gave a presentation at Gólya [a meeting place for the City is for All and other urban activists located in district 8], where an employer announced the job, which I took with pleasure. I like it and have worked there for two months now. I earn the minimum wage plus benefits, cafeteria and compensation for public transport. (HOU 5)

Beyond the members, the movement is directly affecting the lives of others through its Street Lawyers program. This is a group of volunteer lawyers that provides legal advice in well-known public squares in the city, sometimes receiving up to 18 persons at a time. At the same time, there are expectations that those receiving support will return the support in other ways. A female spokesperson for the group said:

Our motto is that we cannot help if the affected person does not participate. People can be ungrateful; many just leave us after having received help. (HOU 5)



Street lawyers in action (Photo: Péter Balogh, March 2016)

An important part of the advocacy work is to change popular attitudes and perceptions of homeless to be in a certain way (e.g. alcoholic):

I am active in a program First Hand About Homelessness; consisting of Gyula, me, and occasionally a social worker visiting school classes – 8th grade and up – and telling our life-stories. Moreover, we play an in-situ game with the pupils who take on the role of homeless people who want to get into a shelter to sleep. This is to counter widely common attitudes that all homeless people are stinky, alcoholic, and lazy. In reality, homeless people’s alcohol consumption is not higher than in society at large – but non-homeless people are much less visible. Moreover, ~85% of homeless have some sort of an income; from returning aluminum cans, working illegally, or disability benefits. Homeless lodging costs about 10,–15,000 HUF/night. At some places, a deposit needs to be paid. (HOU 5)

To sum up, *The City is for All's* various methods have been successful at raising the issue, changing the discourse towards housing poverty rather than homelessness, and introducing terms such as 'affected by housing instability' rather than homeless, etc. They can point to concrete successes against local policies, but they admit that they have not shifted policy in their desired direction.

Undoubtedly, the social impact of user participation is significant. Those affected by homelessness testify to being empowered and also to gain concrete benefits from their involvement in the movement. Other members and allies have been given an alternative perspective, which has inspired them for voluntary work as well as academic work on the issue. Through its provision of legal help, the movement has also directly impacted the lives of hundreds of people.

5. SOLIDARITY BY WHOM AND FOR WHOM? BATTLES OF IDEOLOGIES IN A POLARIZED POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

In this paper, solidarity derives from 'our appreciation of the vulnerability to suffering we share with others, rooted in imagined or real experiences of 'the damaged life'' (Oman 2010: 282). In this sense, solidarity is defined as "identifying with and showing concern for the suffering of others through practical actions; it is a generous disposition, a propensity to sacrifice something one values on behalf of others whose welfare is deemed important (Arnsperger and Varoufakis, 2003). Thus, solidarity emphasizes practical action and the creation of strong ties between different social groups and individuals. The aim of this section is to map what kind of solidarity acts and bonds can be seen in these two cases. The working assumption is that there is a causal relation between group-based bonds and actions in the sphere of solidarity. While not conclusive, the findings from this study can contribute to future research on this causality.

5.1. Levels of solidarity: Institutionalized and individual solidarity

Solidarity between differing social groups has been central for the emergence and the maintenance of housing-centered initiatives in Hungary. This is visible at the level of institutionalized solidarity and individual and/or collective solidarity.

Institutionalized solidarity is manifested primarily through the redistributive functions of the state. This is most visible with the Shelter Foundation, where the study demonstrated how, while generally perceived as an independent non-governmental organization, the organization is actually heavily dependent on the state in terms of financing, regulatory/property framework. It is also strongly connected to the state through the original involvement of state entities at the time of establishing the foundation. However, this solidarity is qualified in two main respects. On the one hand, it does not wholly cover the needs of the target population, meaning that additional expressions of solidarity at individual or collective level are required. Secondly, it is not transformative in the sense of challenging underlying causes and public policies. The close links between the state and the organization means that it does not challenge the phenomena of homelessness itself. To be specific, providing shelters for homeless does not challenge the state of homelessness itself. By contrast, *the City is for All* is a protest against both the manifestation and the non-manifestation of this kind of solidarity.

The *individual and collective solidarity manifestations* that are channeled through these two organisations are a response to the problem of homelessness in Hungary, especially in Budapest. Few deny that it requires policy intervention, although ideas vary from pushing the homeless out of sight of the tourists, providing sheltered accommodation, to codifying the right to housing. In this respect, the two different initiatives draw contrasting conclusions. The Shelter Foundation assumes that public awareness is already there, but it is need of additional information on the differing conditions that lead to homelessness and how life works for someone who is homeless. This is done through school information and guided tour activities and can lead to a more identity-based solidarity, increasing the numbers who identify with homeless persons through – if not their own – at least a proxy experience. *The City is for All*, sees a need to change the way people and policy-makers perceive the housing sector, making the right to housing a constitutional right.

5.2. Group-based identification and solidarity expressions

‘Identification’ is a key concept to explain practices of solidarity. In the case of showing solidarity with and among people without access to secure and stable housing, the question is if there are any group-related features that can enhance or reduce the likelihood that such solidarity will appear. From the document analysis and interviews carried out here, the following identity dimensions appeared as having potential importance.

For intra-group solidarity with homeless (motivations for staff and volunteers)

- Identification with homeless persons through own or proxy experience vs. seeing homeless persons as ‘the others’
- Identification with homeless as ethnically ‘one of us’ (Hungarians) vs. others (refugees, Roma)
- Gender-specific vs. gender-neutral solidarity with homeless

For inter-group solidarity among homeless

- Identification as being in the same situation and having to help each other vs. stratification according to perceived groupings among the homeless (levels of education, Roma/non-Roma, ‘domestic’/‘foreign’, gender)

Inclusive solidarity between those with and without access to secure housing

- Rejection of identity as motivator for action.

In the following three sub-sections these aspects are elaborated on, based on the empirical material.

5.2.1. Solidarity with homeless

A volunteer at the Shelter Foundation (HOU 8) started cooking with her family for homeless people in the winter of 2011. She delivered food to a nearby temporary shelter, erected due to the unusually severe winter. In 2012 she started to deliver food regularly to the Budapest District 8 Vajda shelter, run by the foundation, which means she has now five years of experience as a volunteer/donor. She raised

money among colleagues at her workplace, where she works as an administrator. In the beginning she delivered one hot meal per week. In 2016, she collected nearly one million forints to buy food supplies, and was able to deliver one hot and one cold meal a week. Her target is to deliver three meals per week in the 'season', defined as running from December to April.

In the interview she stressed how her volunteering is motivated by humanism (helping people in need). She denies any other group-based motivations, but acknowledges that having been acquainted with several people who were affected by homelessness, this might have played a small role in her decision. Typical for this humanitarian approach, when asked about what solidarity means to her she answered:

Help people in need, disregarding the type of need. In this case it is food because they have a place to sleep, they are together, the social workers discuss with them their special problems. I don't say that they are friends, because it is not true, but you know ... human to human ... the only thing I can say is 'help people in need'. (Shelter Foundation volunteer, HOU 8)

During the interview, she mentioned several times acquaintances that had experience of homelessness and whom she knew before starting to help. At the same time, she does not think that knowing someone is enough. In her case it was an unusually cold winter coupled with increased public debate about homelessness and a prompter on social media that led to her engagement.

I think that if you know such people that can be a thing that motivates you, absolutely. But you know, just knowing this person was not a starting point. It did not come into my mind that I can do that, but when this temporarily shelter thing came into the picture, and my daughter saw this promotion on Facebook, that became a fact, a natural thing that I can do that, and I will do that. (Shelter Foundation volunteer, HOU 8)

This picture of the importance of personal experience is supported by two interviews conducted with Shelter employees, both of whom had worked with the organization for 20 years or more. People might be more inclined to give if they know something themselves about homelessness, but they very often do not want to engage more, or get to know homeless directly. Instead, they often prefer to keep a distance to the organization.

When it comes to domestic rather than foreign homeless, this was an issue in 2015 when several hundred thousand migrants and asylum seekers passed through Hungary on their way to northwest Europe. Other interviews carried out in the course of this project corroborate the conclusion that volunteers for the homeless were inclined to help migrants and refugees. Later on, some of those who were mobilized sought other ways to re-channel these feelings towards the Hungarian homeless. On the other hand, there is no evidence that the more armchair critics, posting critical messages on social media that those who helping refugees neglected their own homeless, would themselves begun to help homeless as a result of what they saw.

One telling feature of homelessness in Hungary and in other countries, is that men are vastly overrepresented among the visibly homeless. This is easy to see as you walk the streets of Budapest, but it is also supported by the annual survey. Despite this, there is some evidence that the rate of women among homeless has increased over the past decade and that women may face more difficulties in accessing (safe) shelters than before (Janecsko 2010).

The Shelter Foundation has always focused on male homeless, and its shelters are primarily for men, although there is a small number of places for couples. This focus is not something that the Director can easily explain.

This question is important in the provision of homeless; otherwise it shouldn't be. My opinion is that indeed, there were much more homeless men around the change of regime; they lost their jobs en-masse, were living in workers' hostels etc. I think they received more focus as it is easier to provide for them; it is more difficult to maintain co-educated shelters. There are very few such shelters, it is more difficult to cope with conflicts emerging in co-educated units. Even in the latter, men and women are segregated, living on different floors. There are still some shared spaces, e.g. diners; but overall, shelters are segregated. There is no regulation for male and female shelters, there are only homeless shelters, but these have specialized their profiles, thus there are male and female homeless shelters. In the past 4–5 years, we have tried to achieve having as many shelters for couples as possible. <HOU 7, Shelter Foundation Director>

As the quote shows, the Shelter Foundation management is aware that this is not in line with discourse which pushes for gender-sensitive strategies. The SOLIDUS working paper expressed this as “women more often than men, are “invisibly” homeless, e.g. because they seek temporary solutions such as living with family, friends, “convenience partners” or casual acquaintances” (SOLIDUS Concept Paper for Gendering Social Policies, citing Bettio et al., 2012).

Those interviewed by the project did not see the current situation as problematic. One volunteer, a woman, supported separation, and preferred to work for the homeless men. She described her experience preparing food for a female shelter in negative terms:

The difference between men and women was very big. While male people were able to queue in silence, and everything was alright with them. In case of the female people, the behavior was absolutely unacceptable. Okay, I can understand that if in someone lives in the street that's another world, but you know, they used such a rude and ugly words and expressions, and they shouted loudly in the street, that I told my husband that 'this is a first and last time we are here. So I don't want to come back again.' (Shelter Foundation volunteer, HOU 8)

The homeless interviewed also supported a policy of segregation.

Well, it is better if a shelter is not for both genders, [a mixed shelter] generates tensions, when men and women stay together. (Male visitor to Shelter Foundation day center, HOU10)

To sum up, there is a gender-dimension in homelessness, but solidarity is not ‘gender-specific’ in an identity-linked way. Within the Shelter Foundation, men do not express solidarity with men simply because they are men, and women do not express solidarity because of them being women. However, this does not mean that solidarity is gender-neutral. Rather, it is shaped by gender-based expectations on behavior and needs.

5.2.2. Solidarity among homeless

Several interviews emphasized that homeless people do not see themselves as a homogenous group and that there are important social stratifications among them.

Homeless are a fragmented group. Some pay for staying at the <long-term> shelter, dress well – you wouldn't be able to tell they are homeless. Those using the night shelter tend to be addicts etc. who might have some income but are generally "satisfied" with using provision, living in a room with ten persons, under not very 'European' conditions. The latter group may emerge and be put into rental flats or other type of provision. Tensions might arise already here – some call each other hülye csöves [Engl. dumb homeless]; they are of course in a similar position themselves, but don't feel that way. Then there are those living on the streets who are so run-down, so physically and mentally damaged that they can't be motivated to do anything. (Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7)

According to many informants, stratification was by education or general cognitive capacities.

How I can see it, it counts the educational background. So if someone has like eight classes, or less than eight classes, they fight more than those whose educational background is higher. This is what I heard from an acquaintance who earlier lived in the street. (Shelter Foundation volunteer, HOU 8)

<SOLIDUS interviewer: What is the basis of these cliques?> It is based on [the level of] intelligence [he laughs]. (Male resident at Shelter Foundation shelter for elderly, HOU 9)

Well, whatever we have been doing, there is a stratum with which it is difficult to do anything; these people are so damaged that they have no goals at all, but just struggle to survive day by day. They have zero motivation, and it is very difficult to lift them out of this state. (Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7)

Another dividing line is where and how you use the services provided by the Shelter Foundation. For instance, a resident at the permanent shelter for elderly did not want to interact with people utilizing the night shelter.

Basically, not at all. We are separated: we could go down to them but – I don't want to be, how to call it... – but they are not really on our level, those guys who come here to sleep. Some have had bugs on their heads, etc. (Male resident of the Shelter Foundation day center, HOU10)

On the other hand, he overall found that there was a good community within his shelter.

Well, there is. There are some mini-cliques though, consisting of 2–3 persons. It occurs that someone doesn't fit into the company; these one cannot help... <SOLIDUS interviewer>... at least not here. Yes. But we don't just have cliques, we are friends with all, really. We are helping... <SOLIDUS interviewer: You help people working here, for instance?> Yes, definitely. They also help, e.g. by offering respite/moratorium [most likely on paying the rent]. <SOLIDUS interviewer I can see that you are in a rather good condition. Can

you help with some things here, or are you basically provided everything?> It is basically not necessary, as everything is prepared and complete. Occasionally, they ask me kindly to help a little in the kitchen. But we basically have everything here; nurse, carer, etc. (Male resident at Shelter Foundation shelter for elderly, HOU 9)

The quote demonstrates the importance of service-provision rather than a self-help or empowerment orientation.

All interviewees confirmed that there were tensions and ill-feeling from the side of homeless at the time of the refugee crisis in 2015. No-one mentioned any kind of solidarity between the homeless and the refugees.

The Shelter Foundation supported the humanitarian assistance for the nearly 300,000 persons who passed through Hungary in 2015. Shelter Foundation helped transport donations and also, during a short period, provided accommodation in a spare room for families who arrived on late night trains. For this, the organization cooperated with major refugee organizations and other housing organizations. The Director described it as a chaotic period, where it was hard to know whether things were done through bottom-up or top-down initiatives. This also describes the process within the Shelter Foundation.

It was a bottom-up initiative, but really, it depended on the persons. Though – as mentioned – some social workers were also afraid [of refugees], because – I don't know – they had such a line of thinking. Others appreciated the new challenge and type of work. They helped small children, too [i.e. refugees]. There was no directive from the management, but we did coordinate work, e.g. with directing the emergency car, transports of food, donations, etc. <Director Shelter Foundation, HOU 7)

However, this work with refugees remain unpublicized, for which several explanations were given. The unplanned nature, the novelty of the actions and fear of government retribution may be reasons for this stance.

During these months there were a lot of volunteers and organizations, and we were also there, even if we were not very visible. But as official organization we did took part. They even got a storage place, which was never realized, because it took so long time that the reality had changed. Our experience was that they looked out for us to donate, but we did not make big publicity for this. <Shelter Foundation employee, HOU 11>

Yes, it was. We did not communicate on it extensively, i.e. we did not explicitly oppose the mainstream – for which I was also criticized by the president of the Board [of the Shelter Foundation]. But we did what we could. Yet the refugee issue is not a profile of ours. Also, one needs to possess many languages in order to help them. Even more could have been done, but we did what we could. <Director Shelter Foundation, HOU 7)

Awareness of negative attitudes among the homeless, may also have contributed to their unwillingness to highlight the solidarity actions towards refugees.

“They don’t like the refugees. Those who are street homeless are direct negative towards that so many civil organization citizens helped them “<Shelter Foundation Director, HOU 7) But its stupidity. <HOU 11> <SOLIDUS interviewer. Is it not true that the Hungarian homeless got less?> They did not get anything less. <HOU 7> There is just this psychological feeling that people come who take away the attention from you, like in a family when a second child arrives or a another child is adopted, this is an automatic psychological reaction, nothing new. And the workers worked a lot on that, to try to soothe this atmosphere. It was very significant. <HOU 11>

Well, they [the refugees] were supported more than us. Financially, too. <SOLIDUS interviewer: Do you agree with that they received more support?> No, I don’t. (Male visitor at Shelter Foundation day-time shelter, HOU 10)

I am Hungarian, and I oppose the refugees. I absolutely oppose them. I have experiences ranging back fifty years. Back in the days, there was a refugee camp in Italy, where many Hungarians would arrive. Capua was the city [located near Naples]. It was so bad there they couldn’t wait more to return home. They were just waiting for their visas to be able to return to their own native countries. I had several colleagues; they were all sons of military and policemen, and they came home. (Male resident at the Shelter Foundation residence for elderly, HOU 9)

To conclude, the Shelter Foundation does not promote solidarity among the homeless or push for self-help initiatives. Although we did find homeless to help and stand up for others, this is often limited by care-taking attitudes, other homeless being perceived as being ‘below’ oneself, primarily due to education. Within this organization, we could also not see that solidarity was also not taken up towards a vulnerable group, such as refugees. Further, there is no empirical base for saying whether one’s identification as ‘Hungarian’ and/or ‘Roma’ plays any role at all for the creation of solidarity-based acts towards others in the same situation (homeless).

5.2.3. Inclusive solidarity – the quest for transcending groupthink

In the case of *The City is for All*, there were many manifestations of solidarity ties and actions. The movement deliberately encourages bonding and bridging solidarity, in which members with and without housing can demonstrate solidarity towards each other. At the same time, the strict rules of membership create normative feelings of insiders and outsiders.

Without prompting, one interviewee referred to a flat in bad condition because “previously <it> was rented to gypsies” (HOU 3). There were comments towards foreign beggars along the lines of “[s]ometimes we even see that Romanian beggars are tolerated by police while we are harassed, even though we stick to the rules” (HOU 5); and one comment about worsened conditions in Germany due to the influx of migrants in 2015: “[i]n Germany 90% of people rent their homes, and still people aren’t on the streets. If you have been working for 3 months there – now unfortunately 8 months, because of the migrants – the state takes over your rent” (HOU 5).

This shows how knowledge is created and spread. The movement is not unaware and there is counter-evidence that tries to spread solidarity. For example, the website has 14 postings related to

migrants, all of them showing migrants in positive light or requesting the Hungarian government to repeal its anti-migrant policies. Hence, when it comes to solidarity between different vulnerable groups there is evidence both for and against its presence.

If we look to solidarity with another segment of the population, then it is clear that there can be other divisions that matter. As mentioned, many Hungarians got into financial difficulties after taken loans in foreign currency. As these loans became more expensive after 2008, it became increasingly difficult to keep up with payments. People blamed the banks for misleading on terms and being greedy on interest rates. The resulting anti-bank movement, was partially successful in pressuring the government to intervene, leading to a law in 2014 that mandated banks to convert all loans back to forints on terms unfavorable to the banks. Obviously, there is a common grounds between the different groups. However, *The City is for All's* efforts to cooperate with these groups largely failed, for two reasons:

“[o]ne, due to ideological differences, with some far-right movements blaming the Jews etc. Secondly, The City is for All realizes the housing crisis isn't just caused by the credit crunch alone” (HOU 4) [but by legislation, stigmatization, etc].

Strong disagreements played out on Facebook, as well as in public space, and eventually led to *The City is for All* asking the ‘other side’ not to join their events. What is clear, is that housing questions rally both the right and the left, raising questions about the possibility to use solidarity as an inclusive base for action.

Unlike *The City is For All*, the Shelter Foundation does not emphasize the importance of *solidarity expressions* (*‘self-help’*) *among those citizens that are concerned*. As mentioned, interviewees highlighted a series of tensions that existed between the different groups of homeless, expressed in terms of differing educational levels, in terms of dress, attitudes towards hygiene and cleanliness. As one informant put it, there are those who clearly can be identified as homeless, whilst there are others that from outward appearances you would never know. At the time of the migrant transit, a certain ‘we-identification’ could be observed among homeless interacting with the Shelter Foundation against migrants who were seen as undeserving ‘others’. This discourse was also used by parts of Hungarian society that were against volunteerism with migrants (see Svensson et al. 2017). The homeless were portrayed as ethnically ‘one of us’ and deserving support, unlike the transient and non-Hungarian migrants. However, these sentiments do not appear to have translated into higher levels of support for the Shelter Foundation. This implies that this type of excluding attitudes have less potential for translation into action.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

We began by giving an account of organizational aspects of two differing organizations dealing with housing shortages and homelessness in Budapest, Hungary.

The time and influence of the groups represents two different time periods for civil society engagement, partly typical for the Hungarian and Eastern European context, partly representative of broader global developments. The *Shelter Foundation* was one of many NGOs that emerged to

stimulate the growth of a new vibrant civil society and second, to respond to urgent demands for public goods delivery for the most vulnerable parts of the population. Nearly 20 years later, *the City is For All* can be seen as a critique of the *Shelter Foundation* and similar NGOs. They are on the one hand, too embedded in the old structures and, on the other, not inclusive enough of their beneficiaries. While the *Shelter Foundation* developed into a professionally run organization, largely dependent on state funding, *The City is for All* remained a unregistered organization, albeit one with strict internal rules eligibility and how decision making could include the lived experiences and competences of those affected by homelessness. It paid much more attention to changing public opinion and housing policy. *The City is for All* is a good example of a cross-class movement, bridging or linking solidarity with a growing urban problem. Whilst there are strong internal bonds and solidarity practices, there other elements of exclusion and even hostility. In other words, *The City is for All's* efforts to create a horizontal approach is creating boundaries of their own. In some ways, this mirrors the fragmentation of social life in contemporary Hungary.

Yet *The City is for All* also reveals that despite this, there is a new generation of young intellectuals and activists (many of whom have studied in the West), who are deeply committed to social change. Importantly, this takes place outside the political party system, which has been losing legitimacy not just among civil society activists but among wide segments of Hungary's population. Inspired by organizations abroad *The City is for All* can legitimately claim to be a pioneer in the fight for housing rights in Hungary. Although originally based in one single district Budapest, the movement has spread to other affected districts and outside the capital.

The movement has successfully halted a number of evictions. At the same time, its main policy goal – the codification of the right to housing– remains elusive. Without credible proof, it is hard to say whether *The City is for All* has changed public opinion in any substantial way, although its strong media-presence is undisputable. However, at this stage, the distinctive approach, the commitment of members as well as the enduring nature of housing poverty, might well manifest itself in a significant country-wide movement.

In contrast, the *Shelter Foundation* works through the provision of direct support, trying to influence policy in all its stages and influence public attitudes. It does not aim for 'high targets' such as 'codifying the right to housing'. Expectations are more modest. A volunteer summed it up as: "I think they are unable to prevent homelessness, but they can make the life of these people easier somehow." (Shelter Foundation volunteer, HOU 8)

Thus, while *the City is for All* promotes the expression 'people affected by housing poverty', the *Shelter Foundation* sees it as important to increase knowledge about homeless. It does this for the sake of enabling service provision to those in need, not in order to engage in discourse-changing advocacy.

Finally, three further observations deserve special emphasis and would constitute starting points for further research. First, the solidarity that is expressed towards homeless persons by the *Shelter Foundation* is not characterized by requests for recognition and acknowledgment. In this respect, it is relatively hidden. Both individual and corporate donors remain anonymous and the Shelter Foundation's effort to attract donors, through presentations or events, has not been so successful.

Second, the scale and character of homelessness has an important gender dimension and this is reflected in the way in which solidarity is organized. Most visible homeless persons are men. However, the reason women are less visible is that they are more often covered up by informal arrangements. The *Shelter Foundation* focuses its work on homeless men through single sex shelters, and it has had

few projects that are specifically directed towards women. The management is conscious of this, and acknowledges that women might need more attention. At the same time, research could not establish any evidence of concerted efforts to overcome this. Moreover, the current arrangements with most shelters being segregated (for either men or women) were largely supported.

Third, there are clear spatial issues that affects both organizations. The first concerns the question of whether scalability of activities, i.e. whether the *Shelter Foundation* or *the City is for All* might inspire others in the country. The second concerns the problem of inter-district discrimination within the capital, and the extent to which the organizations have managed to position themselves among the different administrative and political boundaries within Budapest. The research found only anecdotal and sporadic evidence of the first, while the frequent references to expulsions between districts could not be substantiated.

SOURCE MATERIAL

Interviews

- HOU 1: Member (female, young) of *A város mindenkié (AVM)*, interview conducted by Andrew Cartwright, December 2015
- HOU 2: András Szekér, National Director for Habitat for Humanity Hungary, background interview, conducted by Andrew Cartwright, December 2015
- HOU 3: Member (male, upper middle-age) of *A város mindenkié (AVM)*, core interview, conducted by Péter Balogh and Sara Svensson, March 23, 2016
- HOU 4: *A város mindenkié (AVM)* sympathizer (male, young), interview conducted by Sara Svensson and Péter Balogh, March 24, 2016
- HOU 5: Member of *A város mindenkié (AVM)* (female, middle-age), interview conducted by Péter Balogh, March 25, 2016
- HOU 6: József Hegedüs, co-director of Metropolitan Research Institute, background interview, conducted by Sara Svensson and Péter Balogh, May 6, 2016
- HOU 7: Zoltan Aknai, Director, Shelter Foundation (Menhely Alapítvány), interview conducted by Sara Svensson and Péter Balogh, August 15 and September 5, 2016.
- HOU 8: Volunteer (female, middle-age), Shelter Foundation (Menhely Alapítvány), interview conducted by Sara Svensson and Péter Balogh, September 5, 2016.
- HOU 9: Resident (male, senior) at the home for elderly, Shelter Foundation (Menhely Alapítvány), interview conducted by Sara Svensson and Péter Balogh, September 5, 2016.
- HOU 10: Visitor to the day and night shelter (male, upper middle-age), Shelter Foundation (Menhely Alapítvány), interview conducted by Sara Svensson and Péter Balogh, September 5, 2016.
- HOU 11: Employee (female, middle-age), Shelter Foundation (Menhely Alapítvány), interview conducted by Sara Svensson and Péter Balogh, September 5, 2016.

Additional empirical material

- Observations at Budapest Street Law Clinic (UtcaJogász) including conversations with volunteers and end-users, Péter Balogh, March 25, 2016.
- Part of the project team took part in several interviews with policy actors and affected in the housing sector carried out in May 2016 by Master students enrolled at the Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University. Material from these interviews is referenced as Lidmo & Törnsten (2016) in the main text as well as below.

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