NICHOLAS PLEACE

HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE: RISING LEVELS, FALLING LEVELS AND THE PURSUIT OF A FUNCTIONAL ZERO

OVERVIEW

▸ Homelessness in Europe

▸ Welfare systems and homelessness

▸ Gender dynamics of Homelessness

▸ Gender identity and sexuality

▸ Ethnicity and culture

▸ Long-term and repeated homelessness

▸ What is "functional zero"

▸ European lessons in stopping homelessness

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THE OTHER EUROPE

COLD REALITY
FIGURES ON HOMELESSNESS
*NON-COMPARABLE

FINLAND

IRELAND
GREAT BRITAIN
THE NETHERLANDS
DENMARK
LITHUANIA
BELGIUM
GERMANY
POLAND
LUXEMBOURG
FRANCE
AUSTRIA
SPAIN
ITALY
GREECE

See sources and more detailed information in appendices, page 100

+150%
From 2014 to 2016

GERMANY
860,000
Homeless in 2016

+169%
From 2010 to 2017

ENGLAND
4,751
Homeless sleeping rough on one night in 2017

+32%
From 2008 to 2016

AUSTRIA
15,090
Statutory homeless people 2016

+96%
From 2008 to 2016

BELGIUM BRUSSELS
3,386
Homeless on one night in November 2016

+8%
From 2015 to 2017

DENMARK
6,635
Homeless (one week in 2017)

+20.5%
From 2014 to 2016

SPAIN
16,437
People per day on average in emergency shelters in 2016

-18%
From 2009 to 2016

FINLAND
6,644
Homeless people (one night in November 2016)

+17%
From 2016 to 2017

FRANCE
20,845
People called the 115 homeless helpline requesting accommodation (one month June 2017)

HUNGARY
10,206
Homeless (1 night in February 2016)

+145%
From 2014 to 2017

IRELAND
8,857
People in emergency accommodation (November 2017)

+16.2%
From 2015 to 2016

LITHUANIA
4,569
In temporary accommodation (one night in 2016)

+11%
From 2011 to 2016

THE NETHERLANDS
60,120
People in homeless accommodation servi in 2016

CZECH REPUBLIC
68,500
Homeless in 2016

SWEDEN
33,000
Homeless (1 week in 2017)

Source: THIRD OVERVIEW OF HOUSING EXCLUSION IN EUROPE (2018) The Foundation Abbé Pierre - FEANTSA

NUMBERS

▸ It is really difficult to get an overall number of homeless people in Europe

▸ Countries define homelessness in different ways

▸ And count homelessness in different ways

▸ And count homelessness at different intervals

NUMBERS - DEFINITIONS

▸ Homelessness tends to include people who are living on the street (sleeping or living rough)

▸ And people in emergency or temporary accommodation designed for homeless people

▸ It may include people who are living in unfit housing, not suitable for habitation

▸ It may include people who are badly overcrowded

▸ And hidden homeless people who are doubling up/sofa surfing

NUMBERS - DEFINITIONS

▸ Countries that are best at counting homelessness

▸ Also probably have the least homelessness

▸ Because countries that count homelessness have policies, practices and strategies designed to prevent and stop homelessness

▸ At the extremes, conditions that in some rich European countries would be defined as "homelessness"

▸ May be defined as "housed" in the poorest European countries

NUMBERS - ACCURACY

▸ Point-in-Time (PIT) counts that take place over one night

▸ Or several nights

▸ Have a number of limitations

▸ Anyone not in services, nor visible on the street, is not counted

▸ Only limited areas are covered

▸ People hide from sight, being out is dangerous

▸ Hidden homelessness is not observed, it is very hard to count people who are doubled up/sofa surfing

NUMBERS – ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

▸ Depends how it is collected

▸ Can have datasets which allow tracking of homeless people across their use of homelessness services

▸ And other services

▸ Denmark is able to do this and Ireland, to an extent

▸ Some other administrative data is fragmented, partial or difficult to combine

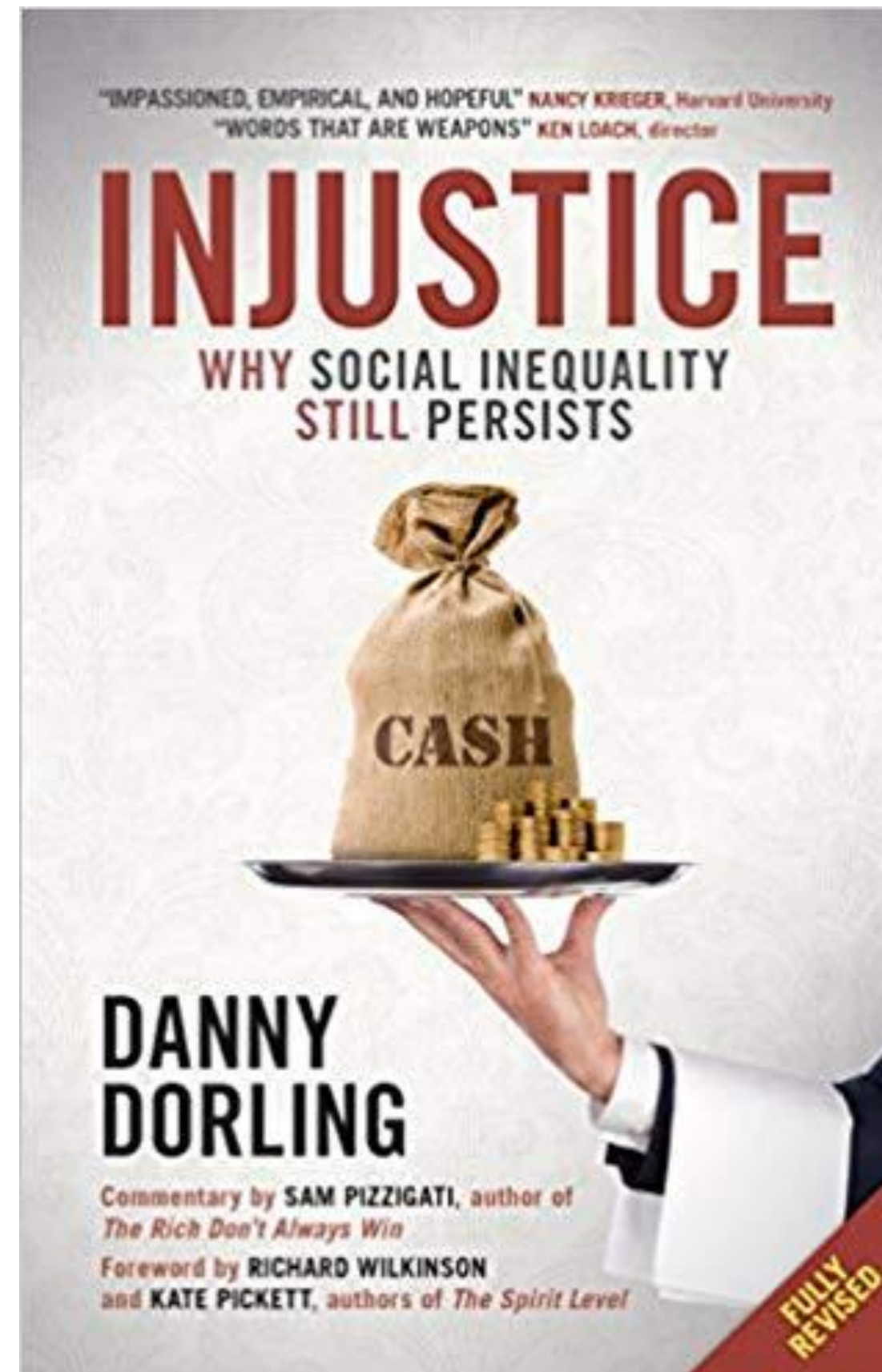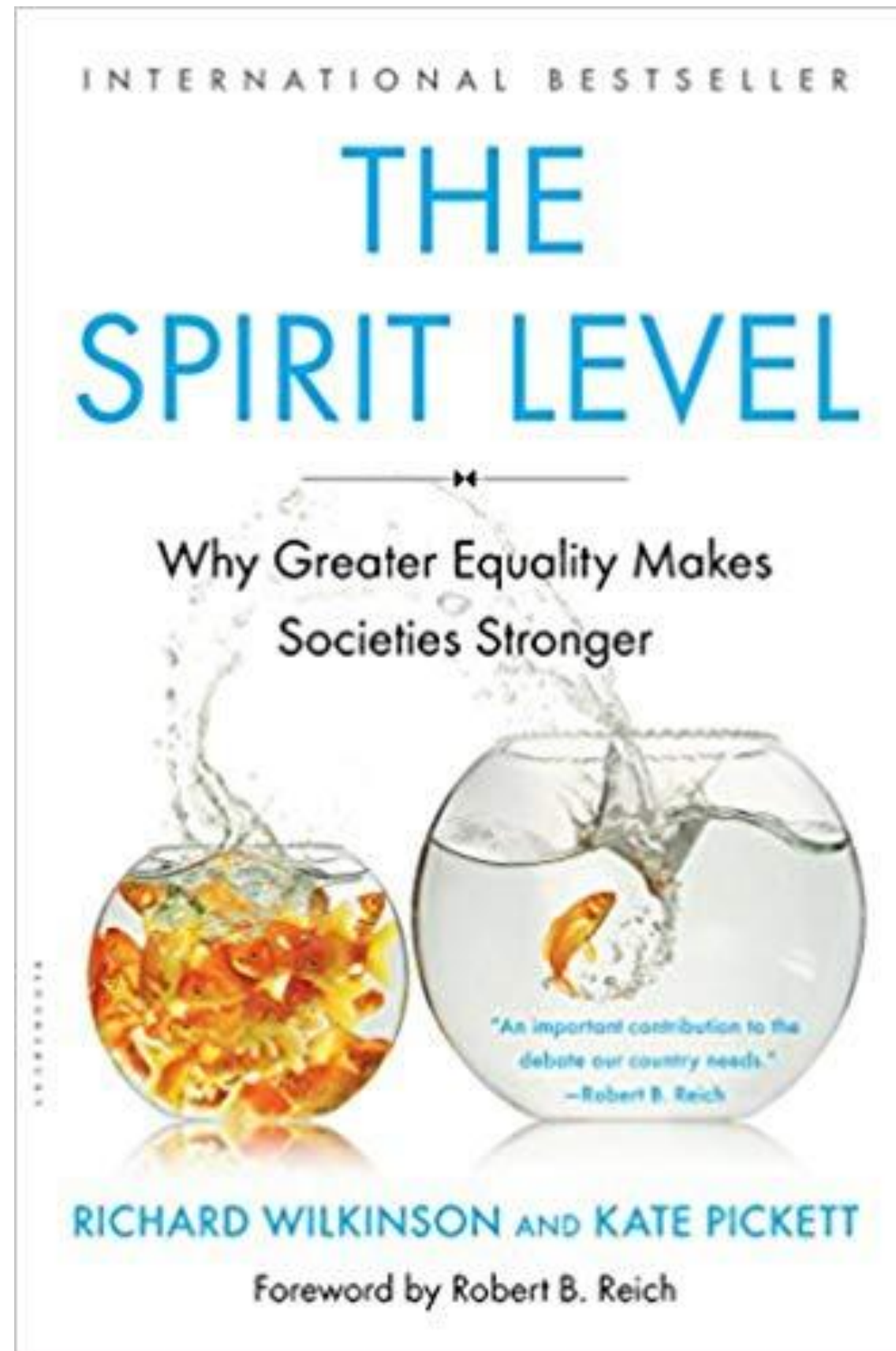▸ Limitation is that it misses people who are "off grid"

NUMBERS

▸ Combining multiple methods is probably the best way of getting together information

▸ Denmark has done this

▸ But in other countries, like the UK, progress has been slower

▸ In other areas, attempts to combine data are not being made

▸ And surveys may only be intermittent, only cover certain areas, or just not happen at all

NUMBERS

▸ We have some idea about numbers in much of Western Europe

▸ The data are not perfect

▸ Nor complete

▸ But in Spain, Italy, France, most of Scandinavia, Ireland the UK we have at least some idea

RICH COUNTRIES THAT SPEND LOTS ON PUBLIC HOUSING, PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE HAVE A LOT LESS HOMELESSNESS, PROBABLY...

European homelessness researchers

WELFARE SYSTEMS STOP HOMELESSNESS

▸ These ideas stem from the European academic mainstream

▸ Equal societies

▸ Societies that actively prevent poverty, inequality and which pursue social justice

▸ Tend to have less poverty, less marginalisation

▸ Better protection and treatment for vulnerable groups

▸ And thus less homelessnesss

WELFARE SYSTEMS

▸ But we can only say richer countries with extensive welfare systems *probably* have a lot less homelessness

   ▸ If there is significant spending on public health

   ▸ And public housing

   ▸ And on welfare policies and systems that prevent extreme poverty

▸ The data we have on homelessness though are **too variable in quality** to be absolutely certain

WELFARE SYSTEMS

▸ There are "canary" indicators

▸ Romania has street children

▸ Denmark does not

▸ Families become homeless in countries with less extensive welfare systems

▸ But are less common elsewhere

WELFARE SYSTEMS – UK

▸ The UK cuts public housing

▸ Cuts health spending

▸ Around mental health

▸ Around addiction

▸ Cuts basic welfare for families, for lone adults

▸ Cuts welfare for people with limiting illness and disabilities

Cornwall council housed boy, 17, in a tent

Ombudsman cites 'long list of failures' over teenager who became emaciated and mentally ill

Why are so many people sleeping rough on Britain's streets?

Beside a glamorous retail centre, a new community is forming. The growing homelessness crisis is the legacy of austerity
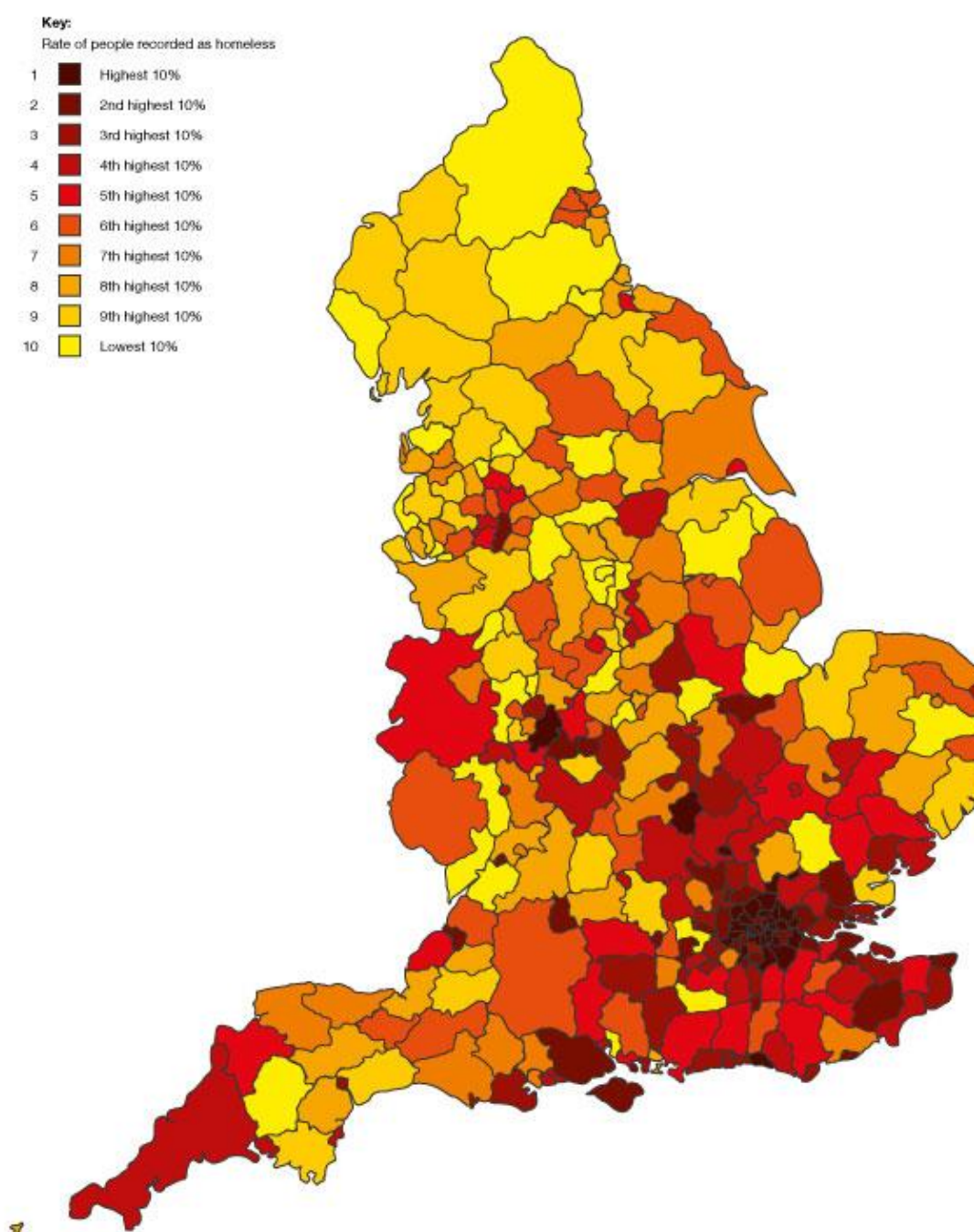
▲ A homeless person's tent on the Regent's Canal in London, left; and, just down the towpath, Coal Drops Yard shopping centre Composite: Getty

WELFARE SYSTEMS – UK 2009/10 TO 2016/17

‣ 169% increase in rough sleeping in England

‣ 48% increase in people accepted as eligible for temporary accommodation under homelessness law (rehousing)

‣ 30% increase in preventative activity by local authorities

‣ Some of the worst levels in most affluent (and expensive) areas - Shelter

Rate of **homelessness** ranked by local authority area

Key:
Rate of people recorded as homeless

1 Highest 10%
2 2nd highest 10%
3 3rd highest 10%
4 4th highest 10%
5 5th highest 10%
6 6th highest 10%
7 7th highest 10%
8 8th highest 10%
9 9th highest 10%
10 Lowest 10%

WELFARE SYSTEMS - DENMARK

▸ Strong evidence from Denmark which has unrivalled data on homelessness

▸ Very small groups of homeless people with high and complex needs form almost all the homeless population

▸ Evidence that only some people with high and complex needs that drop through existing health, welfare and public housing "safety nets" become homeless

▸ The welfare systems appear to stop homelessness associated just with **poverty** from happening

▸ Marked contrast to some other countries in Europe and the USA

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WHEN
WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE NETWORK

Home   About Us   People   Resources »   Blog »   Contact   Join

Women's Homelessness in Europe Network

An international network for research and collaboration in the field of women's homelessness. Research findings and the latest thinking, relevant to homeless support organisations, charities and academics.

What is WHEN?

Find out more about the when network and our aims.
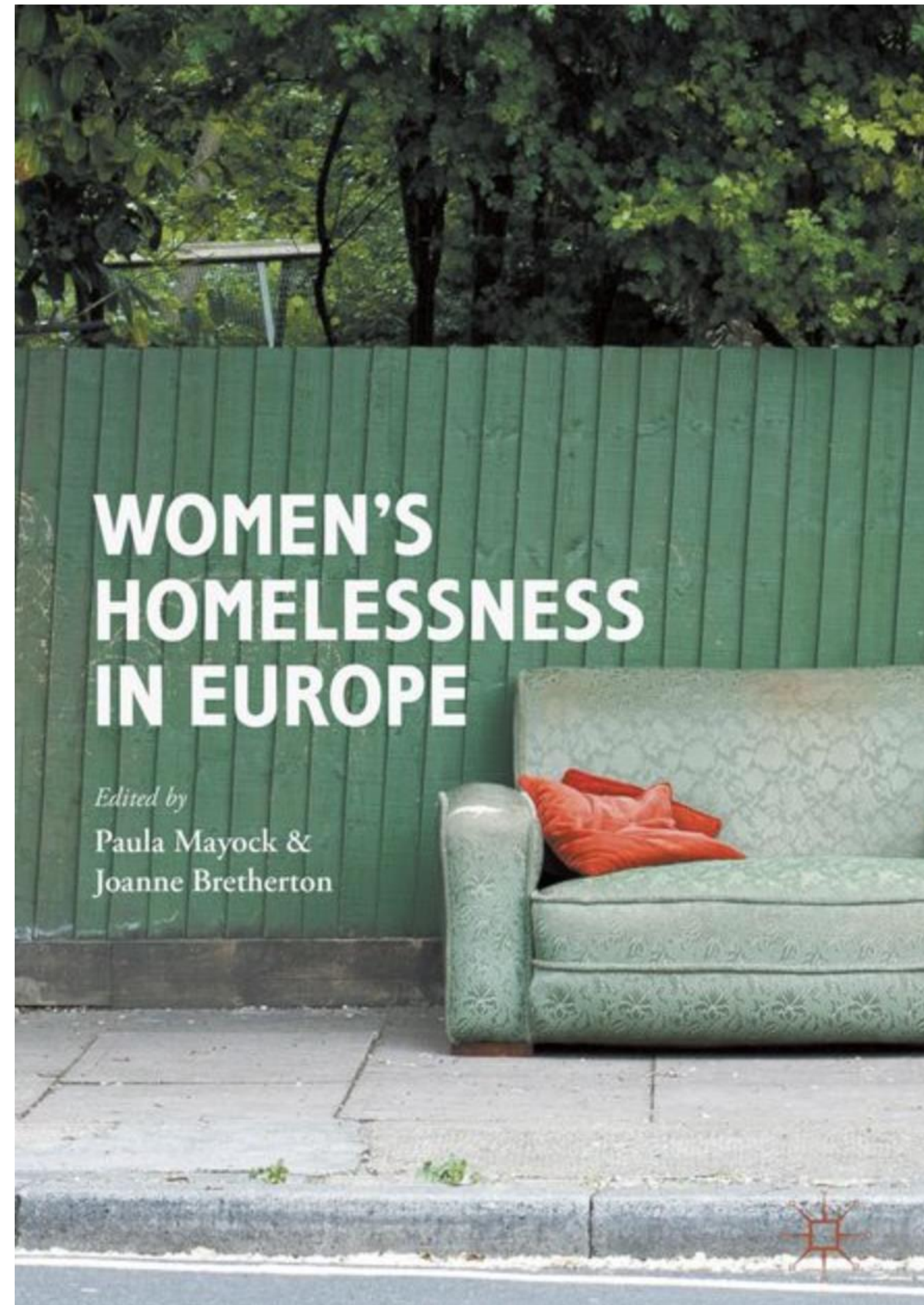
View

Statistics

View Women's homelessness statistics for european countries.

View

Publications

Publications related to Women's homelessness.

View

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CENTRE FOR HOUSING POLICY

WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE

Edited by
Paula Mayock &
Joanne Bretherton

Women and Rough Sleeping

A Critical Review of Current Research and Methodology

Joanne Bretherton and Nicholas Pleace

University of York, Centre for Housing Policy

2018

GENDER DYNAMICS

▸ Research is starting to uncover different pathways through homelessness associated with gender

▸ We've known for some time that women with children will have differing experiences, as welfare systems tend to protect children

▸ And that domestic violence services are actually dealing with a lot of homelessness

▸ But work is now indicating that women take different trajectories through homelessness
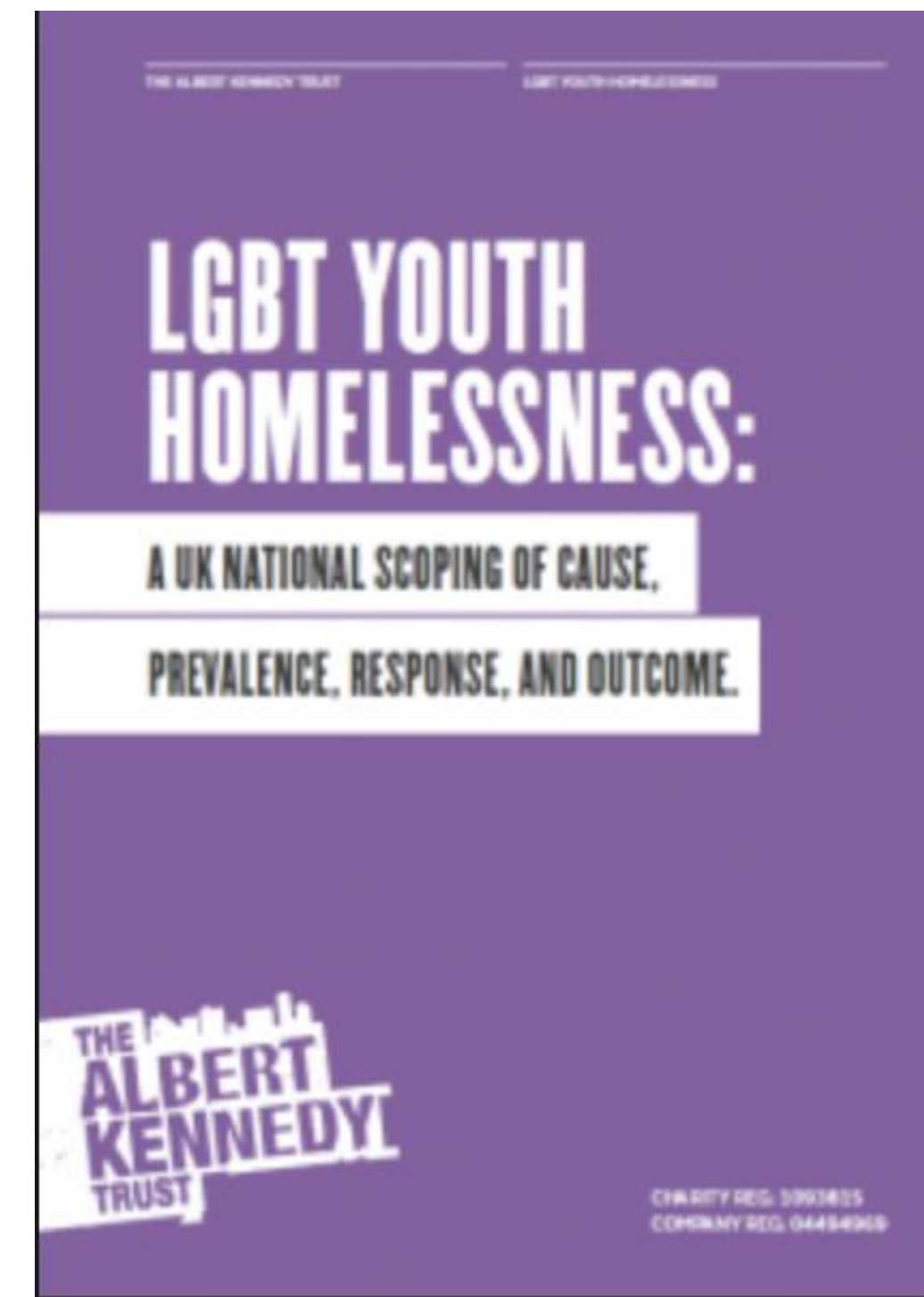
GENDER DYNAMICS

▸ Women may be tending to react to homelessness differently

▸ Using informal responses

▸ Staying with friends, relatives or acquaintances

▸ In what may be unsafe situations

▸ Some evidence that this can include women with high and complex needs

▸ Who do not use homelessness services that are predominantly used by and designed for men

GENDER DYNAMICS

▸ Numbers of homeless women may be much greater than we think

▸ We have to find ways to count it

▸ And understand it

▸ And then begin to design services and preventative systems to reduce it

▸ Evidence so far suggests services designed, built and run by women for homeless women work best

GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUALITY

▸ Broad sense that prejudiced reactions from parents and communities can trigger youth homelessness

▸ Growing sense of intolerance across UK and much of Europe linked to the rise of far right parties

▸ But little actual data on this

▸ A broad need to understand this aspect of homelessness across the UK and Europe

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

▸ Longstanding evidence of discrimination against Roma/Sinti or "traveller" populations across Europe and in the UK

▸ Including evidence of profound housing inequalities compared to the general population

▸ Evidence indicates that there may be over-representation of people of African descent in some homeless populations

▸ UK an example of this, reflecting structural inequalities linked to racism

▸ Increasing political and popular hostility to Muslim populations may present risks around homelessness, but situation is uncertain

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

▸ Migrants without leave to remain (permission to live in a country) can be at heightened risk of homelessness

▸ Cannot access welfare, housing, health and other public services

▸ In effect removed from the social protection/safety nets that European countries provide for their citizens

▸ Some countries, like France, will provide emergency shelter

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

▸ European Union of 28 countries allows free movement of labour, i.e. right of people from one country to work in another

▸ A major driver in the UK leaving the EU, immigration that is perceived or portrayed as high is not popular

▸ Economic migrants within the European Union who are not in work or very poorly paid can face housing exclusion and homelessness

▸ They may not be able to access welfare and other services, including homelessness services if they need help

▸ Estimated that half the people living rough (street homeless) in London may be Eastern and Southern European people

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE – MIGRATION

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ETHNICITY AND CULTURE – MIGRATION

▸ Very challenging policy area

▸ Have to balance compassionate and humanitarian response

▸ Against border control

▸ A common response in the UK and some other countries is to use homelessness "reconnection" services

▸ But there are ethical questions around a response to homelessness that are essentially a plane or train ticket back to Europe

LONG TERM AND REPEATED HOMELESSNESS

▸ The evidence is not quite at the levels that it is in the USA

▸ But strong data from Denmark

▸ And some data from the UK

▸ Indicate the presence of a long-term and repeatedly homeless population with high and complex needs

▸ Housing First is, increasingly, being used

▸ People whose homelessness is associated with severe mental illness, addiction, traumatic childhoods, poor health, isolation and frequent contact with criminal justice systems

▸ But only a small group of people, outnumbered by low income individuals and households

European Observatory on Homelessness

CLEARLY A FUNCTIONAL ZERO IN HOMELESSNESS CAN BE DEFINED AS A ZERO THAT IN A VERY REAL SENSE IS FUNCTIONAL, AND A ZERO.

Europeans

FUNCTIONAL ZERO

▸ We keep talking about this but there is a lack of clarity as to what exactly it means

▸ For some, it is a situation of dynamic equilibrium, a 'steady state'

▸ Homelessness services can react sufficiently fast to mean that no-one stays homeless

▸ Rather than pooling, increasing in numbers, the homelessness population is effectively being helped away from homelessness by services

FUNCTIONAL ZERO

▸ For me, a functional zero needs to mean something else

▸ The first element must be that **almost no-one** experiences homelessness

▸ Absolute zero, where no-one experiences homelessness ever, is not a realistic goal

▸ But getting to a point where the chances of being homeless are similar to being struck by lightning, that is achievable

▸ When homelessness does occur, it must not be of any duration, it has to be **stopped more or less instantly**

▸ Because we all know what happens if homelessness starts to become long-term.

FUNCTIONAL ZERO

▸ How do we get to this point in Europe?

▸ Finland, as you will or have heard about in this session is an example of what can be done

▸ And flatly contradicts any suggestion that homelessness is inevitable or too complicated to solve

▸ Clearly it can reduced to a point where it is very unusual and only very short term

▸ Prevention, where there are lessons from the UK, is another key way forward
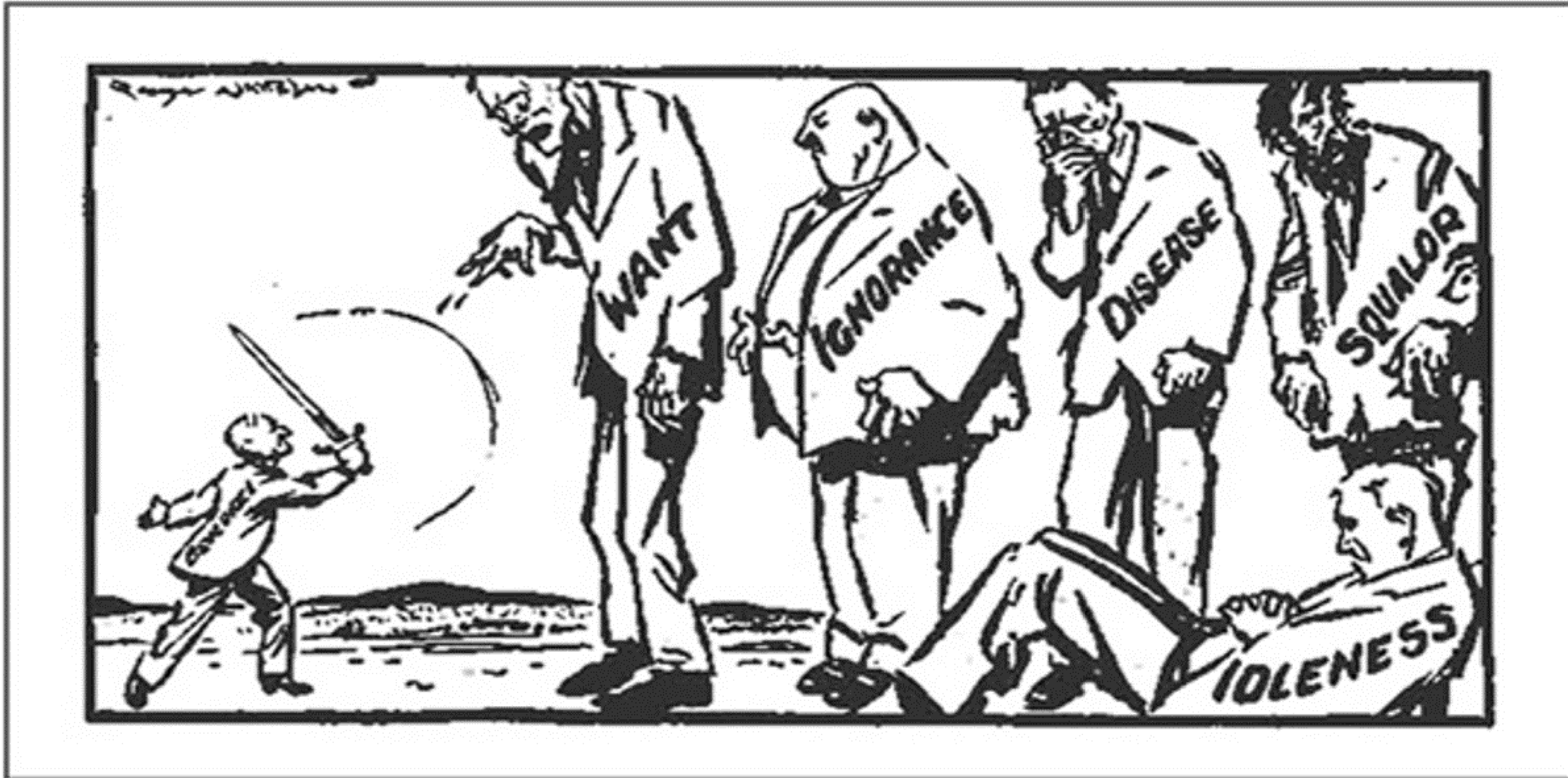
▸ And integrated responses to homelessness

FUNCTIONAL ZERO

▸ Strategies that prevent eviction

▸ That rapidly-rehouse people who become homeless

▸ That can offer Housing First or other effective, intensive support models for people with high and complex needs

▸ And lower intensity support, ranging from housing advice through to money management and help accessing services and housing for people whose homelessness is associated with poverty

FUNCTIONAL ZERO

▸ And just a couple of other things…

THANKS FOR LISTENING

▸ Nicholas Pleace, Director, Centre for Housing Policy

  ▸ http://www.york.ac.uk/chp/

▸ European Observatory on Homelessness

  ▸ http://www.feantsaresearch.org/

▸ Women's Homelessness in Europe Network (WHEN)

  ▸ http://womenshomelessness.org/