Confronting homelessness in Greece during at time of crisis

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Οι πολιτικές για την αντιμετώπιση της έλλειψης στέγης στην Ελλάδα την περίοδο της οικονομικής κρίσης

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to examine the policies for confronting homelessness in Greece during the crisis. The thesis proposed is that, regardless of the signs of a significant deterioration in the problem of homelessness, a range of policies has been developed that focus on the management of its most extreme and publicly visible manifestations. Social interventions are inadequate, fragmented, repressive in their nature, and with a strong emphasis on charity. This can be seen in the emphasis given to developing emergency services centered on in-kind provisions. The main burden of implementing these services is mainly borne by civil society, with extensive non-state fund-raising to supports its activities. This fact entails wider connotations for the "new" form of social policy that is emerging.

KEY WORDS: Social Policy, Homelessness, Greece, Crisis

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο επιχειρεί να εξετάσει τις πολιτικές για την αντιμετώπιση της έλλειψης στέγης στην Ελλάδα στα χρόνια της κρίσης. Η υπόθεση εργασίας επάνω στην οποία βασίζεται είναι ότι, παρά τις ενδείξεις για σημαντική επιδείνωση του προβλήματος, μέχρι στιγμής αναπτύσσεται ένα φάσμα πολιτικών που επικεντρώνεται στη διαχείριση των πιο ακραίων και δημόσια ορατών εκφάνσεων του. Οι κοινωνικές παρεμβάσεις είναι κατακερματισμένες, με κατασταλτικό πνεύμα και έντονα στοιχεία φιλανθρωπίας. Κάτι που γίνεται αντιληπτό με την έμφαση που παρέχεται στην ανάπτυξη υπηρεσιών έκτακτης ανάγκης με επίκεντρο τις παροχές σε είδος. Το κύριο βάρος στην υλοποίηση αυτών των υπηρεσιών επωμίζεται η Κοινωνία των Πολιτών με εκτεταμένη την άντληση μη κρατικών πόρων για τις δράσεις της. Γεγονός που εμπεριέχει ευρύτερες συνδηλώσεις για τη 'νέα' μορφή της κοινωνικής πολιτικής που κυοφορείται.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ: Κοινωνική Πολιτική, Έλλειψη Στέγης, Άστεγοι, Ελλάδα, Κρίση

1. Introduction

Homelessness[1] constitutes perhaps the most extreme and painful form of social exclusion. It is a social phenomenon which is characterized by a significant heterogeneity as regards attempts to understand it. For this reason, it has garnered the attention of several scientific disciplines, such as housing studies (indicatively Torgensen 1987, Kemeny 1995, Malpass and Murie 1999) and cultural studies (Archard 1979, Somerville 2013). Paradoxically, however, homelessness has been studied very little in the context of social policy.

Through a reading of the international bibliography, four types of services can be detected for dealing with homelessness. The first type is the stage of prevention policies. The second is the stage of implementing emergency services. The third type is policies for transitional shelter. Finally, the fourth type concerns housing and social inclusion. The goal of this article is to examine to which of these types best match the policies implemented in Greece. A more detailed presentation of these services will then be attempted.

Policies for preventing homelessness include interventions that aim to keep those threatened by housing exclusion in decent housing conditions (Burt and Pearson 2005:3). Planning and organizing an effective framework of prevention policies is, in all respects, the ideal choice. This is because homelessness exacerbates the social problems that have led to such a situation (Buckner 2004) and increases the costs of social inclusion policies. The threat of housing exclusion may stem from a varied array of social risks, and for this reason the adoption of a multi-dimensional range of prevention measures is deemed necessary.

Such measures could be housing benefits (Shinn et al 2001) or programmes to combat fuel poverty (electricity and heating subsidies). Social support and empowerment services are also included in this category for those at risk of housing exclusion but still remaining in their residences (Tsemberis and Eisenberg 2000). Furthermore, mediation services to prevent eviction are included at this stage, as well as the existence of a framework of institutional protection of primary residences from estate auctions[2] (Burt and Pearson 2005).

Emergency services are addressed to people who have lost their homes. The tendency in Europe over the past decades has favoured the development of similar services (Fitzpatrick 2014:611). These are services that focus on covering the immediate subsistence and health needs of the homeless in emergency situations. For this reason, these services require an immediate administrative response, as well as a network of effective coordination and complementarity.

These kinds of structures and services could be part of traditional forms of protection, such as dormitories, the operation of which has recently usually been performed by civil society[3] (Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin 2007:75). Moreover, in recent times we can observe the growth of day centres for the homeless. These centres constitute an important point of access to in-kind provisions such as food, clothing, medicines, items of personal hygiene, blankets, etc. (Johnsen et. al. 2005). Finally, these services include the traditional practices of religious and charitable institutions for the destitute,[4] such as social food rations (Glasser 1988).

The structures and services of transitional accommodation are differentiated from those with emergency needs, as they are oriented towards the housing reintegration of the homeless individual. Recent research has shown that long-term stays in transitional accommodation play an important part in achieving a smooth housing reintegration process (Sahlin 2013:305).

Types of transitional housing could be social hostels or social apartments with rent subsidies, and water, heating and electricity subsidies. At the same time, an individualized approach to social services is deemed necessary to solve the particular social problems that each homeless person faces (Crane et.al. 2011). At this stage, and to this purpose, a series of interventions are attempted in order to ensure successful autonomous living. Such services are those that support the treatment of mental health and addiction problems, the development of skills in household and budget management, and possible debt alleviation for debts that the homeless person has accumulated. These interventions may also include efforts to connect these services with training and employment policies (Crane et.al. 2012:26-7).

The final stage, that of housing inclusion, should not simply be comprised of a one-dimensional set of policies aiming solely at a return to housing. On the contrary, this stage requires an attempt to solve most of the causes that led to the loss of one's home. The dominant discourse of European networks and organizations focuses on the necessity to assist people who are outside the labour market, by improving their employment strategies, etc. (indicatively, FEANTSA 2009:3).

However, efforts at real inclusion presuppose interventions with broader implications to ensure the access of the homeless individual to in-kind and monetary provisions. Similar kinds of policies could be offering supported employment, psychosocial support services, the mediation of social services to deal with the specific social problems of a homeless individual, and education and training policies aiming at enhancing his or her professional skills.

The linear way in which the above typology is presented, however, does not correspond fully to the real world. The policies are formed under special conditions and pressures that derive from external and endogenous factors, a fact that highlights the dynamic character of such issues. Academic studies have highlighted the specifics shaping the political process, in particular for the range of public policy interventions (indicative Easton 1965, Edelman 1977, Lindblom 1980), as well as the different institutional levels and dimensions where the people who take action influence the policy-making process.

Martin Bulmer's study (1986) attempts to examine the role of the social sciences in the formation of social policy. Citing Lindblom's rational model (1980) as well as group theory, it highlights the central role of active and pressure teams in forming policy. While reclaiming Pinker's study (1971), it also marks the importance of the role of values in the choice to become involved with particular issues (Bulmer 1986:8-14).

Other parameters that affect the formation of the policy process in social policy have also been formulated. Banting (1979, 1986) recognizes the importance of individual policy-makers as well as the institutional factors and the administrative system in forming social policies. In the first case, the changes come from modifications in attitudes and perceptions of the central decision makers. In the second case, the political parties, bureaucratic structures and interest groups construct an institutional area that filters ideas and attempts to transform them into policies (Banting 1986:42, 48).

It can therefore be seen that the planning and implementation of social policies is a multidimensional and complex issue that depends on specific factors. These include the values that favour involvement with a particular social problem, institutional factors, the power of lobbies, internal actors, as well as the weight of their influence in the formulation and implementation of social policy. These can either promote or prevent a social intervention.

Returning to the typology presented earlier, it is interesting to examine which types of services best match the policies that have been developed in Greece during the economic crisis. The impact of the crisis on the urban environment, and more specifically on issues relating to homelessness, has been a subject of interest in the international bibliography. The analysis of the consequences of the crisis of the post-war welfare state is characteristic, as is the predominance of neoliberalism in reinforcing the restructuring of social policy. Examples include Great Britain during Margret Thatcher's premiership and the USA during the administration of Ronald Reagan. In these instances, cuts in social expenditure led to the emergence of new marginalized groups and the appearance of new groups of homeless (Savage 2005).

Over the past five years in Greece, the consequences of the economic crisis have led to reasonable suspicions of a broader change in the social situation and, by extension, a significant worsening of the problem of homelessness. The limited literature (Sapounakis 1998, Arapoglou 2002, Arapoglou and Gounis 2015) shows that the policies for homelessness in Greece focus on emergency services. The thesis examined here, therefore, is that in the case of Greece, during a period of deterioration as regards a major social problem, a policy spectrum has developed that aims to deal with this problem's most extreme and visible manifestations. The examination of the validity of the above claim is attempted below in two different ways.

The first uses quantitative data to understand the dimensions of the problem today and to giving an overview of the main institutional initiatives for combating homelessness over the last five years. The second way is to present the results of field research carried out at relevant organizations working with homelessness in the Attica Prefecture. Specifically, the views of organizations representing all political levels were collected using qualitative research methods (indicatively, Mason 2002). For this reason, the construction of a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions was chosen (Kyriazi 2006:127, MacDonald and Headlam 2009:41). The research population was divided into three distinct sub-categories: central organizations, local organizations, and civil society organizations. Based on these remarks, 21 interviews were conducted (see Annex): eight interviews with representatives of state organizations, five with representatives of municipal social services, and eight interviews with civil society representatives.

This article is structured as follows: in the following section, the context of policies for tackling homelessness in Greece is presented. More specifically, the evidence indicating a significant worsening of the problem is highlighted, as are the characteristics of the social interventions during the past five years. In the third section, the findings of the field research, conducted among the bodies responsible for each intervention stage mentioned in the introduction, are analysed. In the final section, conclusions are drawn regarding the types of services for addressing homelessness implemented in Greece.

2. Evidence for the worsening of the problem of homelessness and characteristics of the policies used to tackle it over the past five years

2.1 Homelessness in Greece and evidence for its worsening during the economic crisis

Combating homelessness has never been a social policy priority in Greece for a number of reasons that go beyond the aim of the present article. Despite Constitutional guarantees for the protection of housing (Article 21, paragraph 4 of the Constitution), social protection of the homeless has remained over time in the realm of charities and religious organisations, with weak and fragmented interventions (Arapoglou 2004b). This situation was facilitated by the absence of an official definition concerning who is considered to be homeless, as well as valid data that can reflect the real dimensions of the problem (Arapoglou 2004a:103). The emergence of the homeless as a distinct social group took place no earlier than the 1990s, a phenomenon that in public discourse was interpreted as the result of the massive migration flows (MPHASIS 2009:5).

The main target groups during the 1990s were refuges, the "repatriates" from the Pontus region, and the Roma. There were a few deinstitutionalization programs as well, for mentally

ill people, which also included housing care, as well as some hosting facilities for minors and the elderly (Sapounakis 1998:10-14). Therefore, the visible features of homelessness during this period could be said to be significantly great for European levels (Arapoglou 2002:261), despite the prevailing perceptions that the opposite was the case. Moreover, misleading impressions also prevailed for the housing conditions of poor households as well (Emmanuel 1996:287). The visibility of the homeless in public was conspicuous. However, interventions remained weak both in terms of welfare policies, as well as at the level of the development of a social housing policy. Therefore, the lack of both governmental social policy and specific targeting for the homeless population led to a fragmented and piecemeal network of protection focusing on the activity of the church, the local authorities and NGOs (Sapounakis 1997:16, Arapoglou 2002:195).

During the economic crisis a series of developments has taken place that give rise to strong suspicions that, based on the relevant data, the problem has today significantly worsened. This has resulted in the need for increased initiatives at a central level. Unfortunately, we can only refer to well-founded indications, as there have been no research attempts to measure the actual dimensions of the problem.[5] For this reason, this issue will be approached through indirect but indicative quantitative data.

Important data can be drawn from social indicators that appear "favourable" for an increase in the phenomenon of homelessness. Issues such as poverty and social exclusion, and unemployment, specifically long-term unemployment, are fundamental structural factors that contribute to the occurrence or aggravation of homelessness.

Based on Eurostat data (Eurostat 2015a), in 2013 Greece was third from last in terms of levels of poverty and social exclusion in the EU-28. Behind Greece are Romania and Bulgaria, two countries that traditionally display exacerbated social inequalities. It can be seen that Greece displays, comparatively to other countries, lower levels of severe material deprivation. However, it can also be ascertained that it has the highest poverty rates, a more economics-based concept, in the EU-28. These rates are higher even than those for Romania and Bulgaria, which appear in the last positions concerning total percentages. This phenomenon can also be observed in the three other countries that form the grid of Southern European welfare regime types, and could be attributed to the extended informal/family network of social reproduction and social protection.

The evidence for the worsening of the phenomenon of homelessness is also enhanced by examining the variance in the levels of poverty and social exclusion risk in Greece during the last decade. Here, an obvious expansion of these problems can be ascertained from the beginning of the crisis onward. Over the horizon of a decade, more specifically, it has been shown that the risk of poverty and social exclusion has increased by almost 7% (Eurostat 2015b).

Another central dimension is levels of unemployment. The parameter of unemployment, let alone long-term unemployment, constitutes an important factor in homelessness. Relevant measurements indicate that in 2013 Greece was the country with the largest problem by far on both of these issues. More specifically, percentages of general unemployment rates obviously exceed 25%. Together with Spain, Greece is ten percentage points ahead of the third country, Croatia. However, the most substantial aspect concerns the percentages of long-term unemployment. The long-term unemployment rate in Greece is almost 20%. These percentages are four times higher than the EU-28 average, which stands at 5% (Eurostat 2015c).

More specific quantitative dimensions of the issue of homelessness are available on a micro-scale, stemming from the research efforts of voluntary organizations and local organizations.[6] From the findings of these studies, it can be argued that the problem of homelessness has

significantly worsened. Structural factors prevail as the causes of loss of home.[7] According to these arguments, people in these situations have ended up homeless due to unemployment and adverse economic circumstances (Katsadoros et al 2013:206).

The academic research by Arapoglou and Gounis also comes to similar conclusions. Their findings indicate an increase in the obvious forms of homelessness and an extendsive increase in hidden forms of poverty, and of inadequate and precarious housing. According to the researchers' calculations, approximately 9,100 people experienced some of the visible forms of homelessness in the greater metropolitan area of Athens during 2013. The number of the roofless homeless over the same year is calculated to have ranged from 1,200-2,360. Likewise 15,435 people are estimated as belonging to the second category of the ETHOS typology, the houseless. Finally, based on the evidence of the national census of 2011, it is estimated that approximately 7,950 live in non-conventional dwellings and another 13,651 people in dwellings unfit for habitation (Arapoglou and Gounis 2014).

2.2 Characteristics of policies for combating homelessness during the past five years

Based on the above indirect data, the evidence suggests that the phenomena of homelessness during the period of the crisis are very likely to have shifted in a more negative direction. As such, an examination of the measures with which social policy has attempted to combat this serious social problem is deemed necessary. However, there has not been thus far a comprehensive strategy to combat homelessness, other than sporadic interventions that directly or indirectly relate to its individual dimensions.

A first horizontal set of measures can be traced in the provisions of the first Economic Adjustment Programme and refers to the development of emergency intervention measures for the social consequences of fiscal consolidation measures. A characteristic measure in this example is the creation of the "National Network of Immediate Social Intervention" which put into operation the "Social Structures of Immediate Poverty Relief", with municipalities and NGOs as implementing bodies (Ministry of Labour, 2012). Also, a significant source of funding comes from the programmes of major charitable institutions (Stamatis 2012:10, Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014:40). The philosophy of these programmes included targeted actions for the homeless population, such as day centres, dormitories, social pharmacies, etc. These actions are implemented by NGOs.

A second round of initiatives can be dated to around 2012. These initiatives were included within the framework of the Social Investment Package, which included a special reference to the issue of homeless individuals. Within this framework, the Ministry of Labour moved towards the institutional recognition of the homeless as a Vulnerable Social Group (Article 29, Law 4052/2012). The legal recognition was accompanied by a definition of homelessness. This fact confirms all the aforementioned indications concerning that the problem of homelessness had been seriously exacerbated. The adoption of the definition of the FEANTSA (2006) ETHOS typology can be credited as one of the positive aspects of the law. Non-attribution of homeless status to migrants that do not possess legal residence permits or to asylum seekers is one of the negative aspects of the law.

Instead, therefore, of adopting a comprehensive strategy, in 2013 the New Democracy government announced the distribution of the dividend of the primary surplus to vulnerable

social groups, by providing benefits and services amounting to 450 million euro. The voting of the relevant omnibus bill (Hellenic Parliament 2014, Subparagraph A.2) targeted aid to the homeless with actions amounting to 20 million euro. The Housing and Reintegration Programme, which is still in progress, was announced. It claims to seek the transition from a framework of policies centred on emergency housing to a wider spectrum of autonomous housing solutions.[8]

The content of the programme appears to be oriented in a more correct direction, compared to the past. And this is because, in theory, it supports the transition from a fragmented framework of emergency need services to social policies that promote the transition to autonomous housing with a social inclusion prospect. However, its quantitative efficacy remains unknown, and will remain so if attempts at measurement of the real dimensions of the problem today are not made. In the meantime, a number of issues have been raised in a critical light. Such objections refer to non-official practices during certain points of the implementation. Indicatively, a large part of the budget is intended for the provision of food that will be distributed by the Church. Moreover, the duration of the programme seems rather short, while a broader philosophy for the programme, its priorities and its particular structure are generally absent (Arapoglou and Gounis 2014:40-1).

Two final measures that also focus on the homeless population aim at mitigating the consequences of the humanitarian crisis. The first aims at facilitating the access of uninsured citizens to health services (Ministry of Health 2014).[9] The second is related to the pilot implementation of a minimum guaranteed income.[10] The adoption of this measure was decided with the ultimate aim of reforming the fragmented and particularly ineffective social expenditures of the social protection system in Greece (Lalioti 2014:39).

This activity in the field of social policy, which seems to start with the outbreak of the crisis, does not seem thus far to be sufficient for dealing with the increasing problem of homelessness. On the contrary, the social policy measures that have been adopted have a strong managerial character. A model of emergency need for the governance of the social crisis has arisen (Arapoglou and Gounis 2015). This model has been produced by the combination of a distinct shift towards a social policy implemented by civil society, which is dependant on funding from charitable institutions and private businesses, with a preference for the provision of in-kind services (Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014, Arapoglou and Gounis 2015). Therefore, there is reasonable suspicion that, at a time when a serious problem of poverty and social exclusion is worsening, social policy measures are reduced to simply relieving its most extreme and publicly visible aspects. Moreover, this is being done through the implementation of measures by non-state organisations. Below, an attempt will be made to prove this claim empirically.

3. Findings of field research

A few useful findings emerged from the research regarding the range and adequacy of the social policy for homelessness. There is an emphasis on emergency need services, where the dominance of NGOs is verified. On the other hand, prevention services and structures of transitional housing and social inclusion have not been adequately developed. Each of these findings will be independently analysed.

The interviews suggest the absence of a coherent network of prevention measures for the protection of housing. The only exception is the so-called "Katseli Law", which protects over-indebted borrowers from the foreclosure of their primary residence. Today's social policy

framework does not provide prevention policies and, as a result, all those individuals who are at risk of housing exclusion remain without support. Besides the "Katseli Law", there are a few interventions of a limited scope by NGOs, which can be included in the prevention stage. These focus on developing social housing programmes or mediation services to solve economic and social problems. These kinds of programmes seem to have a promising prospect, but have not thus far been promoted at a central political level.

> *Question: So, do you also implement programmes at the prevention level?*
> *Answer: The social housing programme is of preventive character. It gives the opportunity for financial support. That is, we repay certain bills, and we also provide the opportunity for employment counselling. The programme lasts from three to six months. But, it always adapts to the needs and specificities of each family. Through the programme, economic regulation and financial support for rent or housing loans is provided as well as financial support for utility bills and coupons for purchasing food products from super-markets. (Interview 16: Interview with an NGO Social Scientist, Responsible for Actions on Homeless Issues)*

At the same time, pressing conditions that lead to housing loss are exerted by a further two separate aspects. The first aspect concerns the abolition of the Workers' Housing Organization and the gap in protection that it has left behind. The second aspect is related to the repeated attempts to revoke the "Katseli Law". Subsequently, not only is it not being promoted, but developments over the past few years have weakened it even further.

> *Question: You said with absolute clarity that the Workers' Housing Organisation did not include the protection of the homeless in its fields of intervention. However, do you think that its abolition could have had an effect on the increase in the number of homeless individuals?*
> *Answer: Absolutely! It may not have supported homeless people among its beneficiaries, but if many of its beneficiaries did not have access to housing from the Workers' Housing Organization, then they would have been potentially homeless. Look, I think that people that used to work or who were fired or are now unemployed have a huge problem dealing now with their housing needs. If we thus consider that some of these groups were housed thanks to the support of one of the organization's programmes, then certainly the complete abolition of social housing programs in Greece, will therefore lead to potentially homeless individuals. (Interview 7: Interview with a Social Scientist from the Workers' Housing Organization)*

> *I would like to say that the discussion that is taking place around the suspension of primary residence foreclosures is very important. This should concern us and it is definitely connected. That is, if tomorrow primary residences "go under the hammer", then we will have a problem. There is an explosive bomb right now. Some will have the possibility to rent a house, if their house is taken from them. Some will have the possibility to be hosted by their family or friends, which is a hidden form of homelessness. But, others will remain homeless; and they are not a few in number, if the bomb of over-indebted households explodes. I hope that this bad thing will not happen. (Interview 1: Interview with a Staff Member of the Social Welfare and Solidarity Department of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare)*

The above excerpts suggest two main dimensions that relate to serious responsibilities or omissions from a social policy perspective. First of all, the absence of a structured prevention framework is noted, in combination with different in-kind and in-cash services. At this stage, measures that promote prevention are not only not being promoted but, on the contrary, the abolition of organizations like the Workers' Housing Organization is another addition to the unfavourable landscape of the crisis, given that this organization indirectly seemed to favour prevention. At the same time, the efforts to withdraw the protection of primary residences from foreclosure is likely to lead to a greater exacerbation of the problem.

Perhaps the most fundamental issue that is illustrated by the field research is the emphasis that is placed on emergency need services. Throughout the interviews there is an acceptance of the predominance of a form of protection with a "repressive" spirit. The actions that exist are mainly centred on publicly visible manifestations of homelessness. This is, without a doubt, the "recycling" of an extreme social problem, especially at a time when there are signs of its worrying increase.

Question: What do you think of the present protection framework for the homeless?
Answer: There is no framework. There are relief type services. Soup kitchens, etc. These are services of a charitable type. And there are also no prospects for these people. No social policy, nor a European policy has been implemented for the issue of the homeless. There is no funding, no registration, and no policies for the homeless, to put it in a nutshell. At a time when the number of people on the streets is increasing, we have a decrease in the measures to protect them. Also, at a time when mental health problems are increasing, we are facing a reduction of funding for mental health. (Interview 15: Interview with an NGO Social Scientist, Responsible for Actions on Homeless Issues)

In addition to the emphasis that is laid on emergency need services, the way in which they are implemented is also of great importance. The absence of a state social policy leaves ample room for the involvement of NGOs. In recent years, NGOs have borne the responsibility for more and more critical tasks. This can be seen from the interviews, where it is apparent that a series of basic human needs are covered thanks to the actions of NGOs. The main points of intervention are meeting the daily needs of individual survival (food, clothing, hygiene) as well as the provision of services (medical care and provision of medication).

Question: How would you evaluate the spirit of all these measures?
Answer: The model applied is as follows: The state is withdrawing from the implementation of social policy by saying 'let NGOs do all the dirty work'. The state is not facing up to its responsibilities and is not helping NGOs. It gives them a small payment in advance, the programmes begin and then it leaves them unpaid and exposed. This is the dominant state policy now. It wants NGOs doing all the work with no money. But this constitutes a withdrawal. Because NGOs could be an example, a good practice, but NGOs cannot perform overall interventions. Only the state can perform overall interventions. There is also another issue. Services are transferred to the local level. The responsibility for the homeless is transferred to the local administration. While the local administration faces a huge financial problem, it cannot hire personnel and its existing services are shrinking due to excessively increased responsibilities, so how can the municipalities cope, for example, with only one social worker? They do not have the ability to do so because this is how it was planned. You transfer powers while at the same time emasculating! (Interview 14: Interview with a Representative of the Housing Rights Network)

The first dimension concerns the provision of everyday goods that are necessary for the survival of the homeless. The research concludes that the main responsibility for the provision of basic necessities is borne by the municipalities, the Church and NGOs. Actions are being developed to provide food, clothing, hygiene and medical care. Day Centres for the Homeless are also included in this domain, and these have been created by certain NGOs. At these Centres, homeless people can obtain everyday food products such as coffee, tea or a snack, and personal care items, while at the same time psychosocial support services and counselling can be provided to them, as well as healthcare.

In terms of feeding and clothing, the Church, the municipality and NGOs undertake on a daily basis the provision of social food rations. Periodically, they also collect items of clothing and footwear. All the above services derive from voluntary contributions by citizens or the sponsorship of private businesses, and the state is not involved in either their planning or funding. This results in a situation where homeless individuals find themselves in a relationship of everyday dependency on the above organizations, in order to fulfil their basic personal subsistence needs. Homeless individuals are in daily contact and interact with these organisations, and as a result any problem they face is dealt with in terms of charity.

The second main dimension concerns the substitution of health services by NGOs, because of the exclusions resulting from health policies in the years of the crisis. The interviews suggest that almost the entirety of the homeless population is using health services that are provided by NGOs and solidarity initiatives. These services include medical examinations and the administration of medicines. A parallel world is developing in the field of health protection, which is expanding very rapidly as it seeks to cover the multiple gaps that are left by the state healthcare system.

The above points make obvious the signs of an almost complete substitution of state social services by non-state organisations. This is manifested in its most usual form by NGOs, as the main vehicle in cooperation with institutions like the Church and the municipalities. Also, in recent years solidarity initiatives have been particularly developed by activists.

Perhaps the most negative message deriving from the field research comes from services with an inclusionary character. The structures of transitional accommodation are characterized by quantitative and qualitative inadequacy, while the absence of any systematic planning of social inclusion policies is obvious. Transitional housing is mostly reduced to an obsolete grid of social hostels. These services are devoid of any inclusionary logic, as they do not connect the accommodation offered with social inclusion policies. The functioning of the hostels, without the existence of broader inclusion policies, must be considered as an action without a social end.

The overall absence of a set of policies aiming at social inclusion is another important gap that characterizes today's situation. The answers suggest that there is no targeted inclusion framework for the homeless. The only initiatives that could be consistent with some elements of an inclusionary logic are, once again, those undertaken by NGOs. These actions are associated with social economy ventures. Both cases are measures with a limited popularity, which seek to provide minimum income support to the homeless. In no case, in fact, could they be considered as effective measures of inclusion, but more as a form of basic support.

We have created this collective also so as to provide certain reintegration measures for the homeless. This is why if you simply left them standing there they will never be able to take part in normal life again. A person's energy should not be lost. With this programme they collect paper that is subsequently sent for recycling. To be precise, I am

referring to people without substance abuse and mental health issues. I am referring to the new homeless individuals because of unemployment. It is very important that they participate professionally and at the level of social participation. And the streets are doing the opposite. The longer they stay on the streets, the more the game is lost. We cannot move on without participation and reintegration. (Interview 15: Interview with a Social Scientist member of an NGO, Responsible for Actions on Homeless Issues)

The landscape of transitional accommodation and social inclusion policies is characterized by serious shortcomings. The few interventions are subject to a managerial spirit. Such efforts are not deemed desirable in any case. However, a basic condition for a realistic inclusionary perspective is their inclusion in a wider grid of policies that will guarantee an income and provision of psychosocial services of empowerment, and secure them a steady residence for a respectable period of time.

4. Conclusions

The lack of will for the implementation of policies to tackle homelessness at the central level remains in social policy terms, creating large gaps, despite significant signs of the exacerbation of the problem. Attempts to cover these gaps are mainly undertaken by civil society, from actions at the social level to funding from sponsorships and corporate social responsibility practises. Addressing the issue in terms of the lack of decisions at a macro-level, results in philanthropy being cemented as a core philosophy in combating the issue.

Alongside this, as mentioned in the Introduction, a crucial role is played by actors at the micro-level. This is of great importance for tackling homelessness, as it is a problem that needs a personalised approach. The interviews have shown that those working with NGOs internalize the discourse of a failure to respond at the central level, due to the crisis. In this sense, they endorse the lack of alternatives to a degree – something that partially contributes to legitimizing the notion of the emergency services as the only option.

Combating homelessness in Greece is, therefore, subject to the provision of services for emergency needs. Measures of a "fire-fighting" character continue to prevail, despite the signs of a worrying aggravation of the problem. Social policy for the homeless is implemented through a repressive approach, as was established through an analytical examination of its services. More specifically, there are no traces of a powerful framework of prevention policies that could deter the manifestation of many negative aspects of the problem. On the contrary, the few prevention measures have been weakened by the crisis.

A limited mobility can be observed in the field of emergency need services. Measures such as dormitories, social food rations, Daily Homeless Reception Centres, and social solidarity clinics and pharmacies have made their appearance in recent years. Municipalities or NGOs are responsible for their operation. Despite the importance of the existence of similar kinds of services, it appears that this is where the activities end. Today, the character of the policies is one-dimensionally limited to the management of the most extreme – and publicly visible – symptoms of the problem and not to a regulatory framework that would serve to prevent or to combat homelessness in its entirety. Some of the few interventions aim to maintain the homeless person in a condition of basic survival, such as the in-kind provisions that serve his or her everyday needs. This, without a doubt, represents a logic of "recycling" an extreme social problem.

Within the structures of transitional housing, the remnants of the old system of social hostels is not sufficient. These structures appear to function more like "human warehouses", as no attempt has been made to integrate them into a framework of social inclusion policies. In this way, all homeless individuals that are accommodated in transitional housing, other than housing protection, are not necessarily ensured access to a structured range of policies that will lead to their permanent transition to a normal residence. The absence of social inclusion policies is the other side of the coin. The findings of the research did not suggest the existence of any targeted measures for the homeless population. This situation significantly limits any prospects for reintegration for individuals who face situations of extreme social exclusion.

The emergence of a model for the emergency management of homelessness can be observed, in particular a series of actions that are mainly implemented by non-governmental bodies. The quantitative expansion of the pre-crisis framework is also observable, as are the charity benefits and the emergence of new services with a similar philosophy. At the same time, the depletion of the scarce preventive measures that existed is also visible (for example abolition of the Workers Housing Organization, and pressure to permit the foreclosure of primary residences). A policy along these lines cannot achieve the prevention or eradication of the root causes of the problem and is instead limited to a charitable type of management of the extreme and publicly visible manifestations of homelessness. It is a policy that sometimes puts human survival itself in danger.

The findings of the research offer the opportunity for further considerations. Do the developments as a whole require a new strategy? A new model for managing social problems in Greece? Will, from now on, the answers to social policy intersect with the paths taken by civil society? Or, more specifically, when a phenomenon of extreme exclusion, such as the lack of shelter, intensifies, are the choices of social policy to rely on solutions supported by NGOs and the private sector? Is this a new form of social policy, which is becoming fully moulded through policies to combat homelessness?

Notes

1. This article adopts the approach definition of the ETHOS typology of FEANTSA (2006). According to this, the homeless are not only defined as people who live on the street or who are accommodated in social facilities, but also those who are at threat of housing exclusion, such as people living in precarious housing conditions and in unsuitable accommodation.
2. The house foreclosures issue, although it is a "hot topic" in Greek society after the recent legislative changes, is not discussed in this article.
3. The activity of civil society is neither uniform nor concrete. It is characterized by different political, cultural and religious perceptions, which are reflected, in the present case, by the practices and means of intervention for the protection of the homeless. The result of these differentiations is to distinguish between different 'discourses of philanthropy' for emergency need services (Cloke et. al. 2005). This has also been noted for the Greek case (Arapoglou 2004a). For an in-depth analysis of the particular characteristics of civil society in Greece, see Sotiropoulos (2004). For its transformations during the economic crisis see Sotiropoulos and Bourikos (2014).
4. Of particular interest are ethnographic studies that research the wider implications of social food rations in homeless individuals' everyday lives (indicatively see Laven and Brown 1985 and Glasser 1988).

5. With the exception of an attempt to quantitatively approach the problem, such as in the research of Arapoglou and Gounis (2014).
6. For a more detailed presentation see Kourachanis (2015:184-7), where the results of research by the NGOs Klimaka (2012) and KYADA (2013) are described.
7. More specifically, according to KYADA (2013) 53% of the people questioned declare that they became homeless due to a lack of financial resources, while the corresponding NGO gives 47.1%.
8. Its specific objectives were: "firstly, the immediate transition to autonomous forms of living through the provision of housing and social care services, and secondly, the reintegration into the social fabric by the provision of employment integration services". Pursuing this rationale through this programme, the "access to support leasing schemes, in parallel to the total or partial covering of the cost of public services and utilities bills or other subsistence needs" will be attempted. The programme will have a total budget of 9,400,000 euro and is intended to benefit approximately 800 homeless individuals belonging to the following target groups: families and individuals that are hosted in Social Hostels for the Homeless or Night shelters or make use of the services of the Open Day Centres for the Homeless, families and individuals that have been documented as homeless by the social services of the municipalities, women that are hosted in Hostels for Women Victims of Violence, persons that are hosted in Child Protection Structures, who are 18 years of age and not students (Social Security and Solidarity Department 2014:3-4).
9. The objective of short-stay cover that the proposed card offered cannot be considered as sufficient for addressing the problem.
10. The implementation of the Minimum Guaranteed Income programme has been criticised for its expected lack of efficacy by some of the scholarly literature. This argument claims that the policies that are being implemented by the Minimum Guaranteed Income programme do not guarantee the improvement of the efficacy of social protection systems by mitigating the manifestations of poverty, deprivation and social exclusion. On the contrary, they may lead to a transformation of the social protection system in the context of liberal regimes that appear less effective in dealing with these social problems and in promoting general social welfare (Papatheodorou 2014).

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Annex
Interviews with Organizations

Interview 1:Interview with a Staff Member of the Department Of Social Welfare and Solidarity of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare.

Interview 2:Interview with a Staff Member of the Department Of Social Welfare and Solidarity of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare.

Interview 3:Interview with a Staff Member of the Department Of Social Welfare and Solidarity of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare.

Interview 4:Interview with a Staff Member of the Department of Development of Health Units of the Ministry of Health

Interview 5:Interview with a Staff Member of the Department of Primary Health Care of the Ministry of Health

Interview 6:Interview with an Administrative Staff of the Special Service of Coordination and Monitoring of Actions of the European Social Fund

Interview 7:Interview with a Special Scientist of the Workers' Housing Organization.

Interview 8:Interview with a Social Scientist of the National Center for Social Solidarity

Interview 9:Interview with a Staff Member of a Municipality's Social Service

Interview 10:Interview with a Staff Member of a Municipality's Center for the Homeless

Interview 11:Interview with a Social Worker of a Municipal Social Service

Interview 12:Interview with a Social Worker of a Municipal Social Service

Interview 13:Interview with a Social Worker of a Municipal Social Service

Interview 14:Interview with a Representative of the Housing Rights Network

Interview 15:Interview with an NGO's Social Scientist, Responsible for Actions on Homeless Issues

Interview 16:Interview with an NGO's Social Scientist, Responsible for Actions on Homeless Issues

Interview 17:Interview with an NGO's Social Worker, Responsible for the Functioning of a Day Center for the Homeless

Interview 18:Interview with a Social Worker of an NGO

Interview 19:Interview with a Social Worker of an NGO

Interview 20:Interview with a Representative of the Archbishopric of Athens

Interview 21:Interview with a Representative of an NGO, Responsible for the Circulation of a Street Magazine

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