Life on the Streets:

An Ethnographic Study of Two Homeless Substance Users' Lives in Helsinki

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Abstract

Abstract: Homelessness has been described as a wicked problem due to its complexity and persistence. In the past few decades, Finland has implemented strategies and measures to tackle homelessness and to prevent it. The results have been effective, and homelessness has decreased significantly. However, despite the success of these implementations, there are still thousands of homeless people in Finland who lack a place to call home. As it remains, homelessness is one of the most challenging problems facing Finnish society.

In Finland the explanations for the homeless phenomenon have usually wavered between individual characteristics and structural factors. Substance abuse and mental health problems, divorce or a break-up, rent arrears and over-indebtedness are usually highlighted as individual factors for homelessness. In Finland, the most significant structural factor for homelessness is the inadequacy and shortage of affordable rental housing. There is a shortage of affordable housing especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area, where homelessness nationally is concentrated.

This ethnographic study approaches the homeless phenomenon in Finland by exploring the daily lives of two homeless men who also suffer from substance use problems. The study is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the men's pathways to homelessness and factors that have contributed to these. This is followed by the men's

conceptualisations of home, what it means to them, and how they make home as homeless people. The second part of the results shed light on the men's survival strategies, daily activities and their encounters with fellow street people. The data, which consists of fieldwork observations and unstructured interviews, were collected between autumn 2015 and winter 2016. Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data.

The results show that the men's pathways to homelessness are complex, stemming from both individual and structural factors. Troubled childhoods, lack of education and employment, low levels of income, bad credit, lack of supporting social networks and addiction problems contribute to the men's situations as homeless people. However, this study shows that many of these factors that are usually considered as individual, are actually more connected to structural factors such as insufficient level of social security and inadequate access to social and health care. The study illustrates that people who are in vulnerable positions to begin with, are more likely to be exposed to these structural factors, the main factor being the lack affordable housing. The participants' conceptualisations of home show that not all housing is considered home. In adverse circumstances home can be for example a staircase or prison.

Furthermore, the research findings show that the everyday life of a homeless person is occupied with attempts to meet basic needs such as eating, washing and finding a place to stay. Much of the men's daily lives are also devoted to making money, which is usually acquired by stealing. The results indicate that the men's social contacts consist mainly of people who use substances or are otherwise in similar situations, though encounters with fellow people are not always positive and the threat of violence is often present.

Tiivistelmä

Tiivistelmä: Asunnottomuus on yksi suomalaisen yhteiskunnan haastavimmista ongelmista. Asunnottomuutta on luonnehdittu myös viheliäiseksi ongelmaksi sen monimuotoisuuden ja ilmiön pysyvyyden vuoksi. Pitkäjänteisen asunnottomuustyön ja asunnottomuuden vähentämiseen tähtäävien toimenpideohjelmien ansiosta asunnottomuus on laskenut Suomessa merkittävästi viime vuosikymmeninä. Toimenpiteistä huolimatta asunnottomuusongelmaa ei ole kyetty kuitenkaan täysin ratkaisemaan ja Suomessa elää edelleen tuhansia asunnottomia henkilöitä.

Suomessa asunnottomuusilmiötä on pyritty selittämään sekä ihmisten henkilökohtaisilla ominaisuuksilla että rakenteellisilla tekijöillä. Ihmisen henkilökohtaisina, yksilöllisinä tekijöinä esiin nostetaan yleensä päihde- ja mielenterveysongelmat, muutokset perhe- ja parisuhteissa, vuokravelat ja ylivelkaantuneisuus. Suomessa merkittävin rakenteellinen tekijä asunnottomuudelle on kohtuuhintaisten vuokra-asuntojen riittämättömyys ja puute. Kohtuuhintaisista asunnoista on pula varsinkin pääkaupunkiseudulla, jonne asunnottomuus keskittyy.

Tässä etnografisessa tutkimuksessa asunnottomuutta lähestytään tarkastelemalla kahden asunnottoman päihdeongelmaisen miehen elämää ja heidän kokemuksiaan asunnottomuudesta Helsingissä. Tutkimus jakautuu kahteen osaan. Ensimmäisessä

osiossa tarkastelun kohteena olivat miesten asunnottomuuspolut ja niihin vaikuttaneet tekijät. Lisäksi tarkastelun kohteena oli koti ja sen merkitys tutkimukseen osallistuneille henkilöille. Tutkimuksen toisessa osiossa tarkastelun kohteena olivat asunnottomien miesten arkielämät ja heidän selviytymisstrategiansa. Tutkimuksen aineisto on kerätty lokakuun 2015 ja maaliskuun 2016 välisenä aikana ja se koostui kentällä tapahtuvasta havainnoinnista ja strukturoimattomista haastatteluista. Aineisto analysoitiin temaattisen analyysin keinoin.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että miesten asunnottomuuspolut ovat monimutkaisia ja asunnottomuuden taustalla on monia, sekä yksilöön että yhteiskuntaan liittyviä tekijöitä. Traumaattisen lapsuus, koulutuksen ja työkokemuksen puute, pienituloisuus, luottotiedottomuus, päihdeongelmat ja sosiaalisten turvaverkkojen puute osaltaan selittävät miesten tämänhetkisiä tilanteita. Tutkimus havainnollistaa, että monet näistä yksilöllisistä tekijöistä liittyvät kuitenkin rakenteellisiin tekijöihin, kuten riittämättömään sosiaaliturvan tasoon ja ongelmiin sosiaali- ja terveyspalveluiden saatavuudessa. Nämä rakenteelliset tekijät, joista merkittävin on kohtuuhintaisten asuntojen puute, myös altistavat jo valmiiksi heikoissa asemissa olevia asunnottomuudelle.

Tutkimukseen osallistuneiden miesten käsitykset kodista osoittavat, että asunto itsessään ei ole koti. Joissakin tilanteissa miehet asuivat mieluummin kaduilla, kuin heille osoitetuissa asunnoissa. Varsinaisen kodin puutteessa väliaikaisena kotina voi toimia esimerkiksi rappukäytävä tai vankila. Tutkimuksessa todetaan että, asunnottoman henkilön päivät koostuvat pitkälti yrityksistä tyydyttää perustarpeet. Tämän lisäksi tutkimukseen osallistuneiden miesten päivät koostuvat lisäansioiden hankkimisesta. Tutkimustulokset havainnollistavat, että miesten sosiaaliset kontaktit rajoittuvat ihmisiin, jotka myös käyttävät päihteitä, tai ovat muutoin samassa tilanteessa. Nämä sosiaaliset kontaktit ovat kuitenkin myös väkivallan uhalla sävytettyjä.

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Preface

One night in the beginning of June 2015, I was passing by a bar in Hermanni when I was stopped by a man who asked for a lighter. I passed him my lighter and we started to chat. He told me he had gotten thirsty while walking around but apparently, he was not allowed inside the bar. He did not seem bothered since he had his own bottle of drink. I noticed the bottle in his hand was Pol Rémy. He asked if I wanted a sip of his drink and added that the content of the bottle is not sparkling wine as it was supposed to be. He said the drinks at the store do not "do the trick" anymore, so he makes his own mix. The mix he was having that night, according to him, consisted of red wine and "pirtu." I kindly said no to his drink offer. He laughed and said that young people like me do not appreciate "proper drinks."

I noticed a big black garbage bag next to him. It looked empty. Also, the clothes he was wearing seemed quite dirty and worn out. His smile revealed the few teeth he had left. "Looks like a homeless person" I thought and immediately regretted my narrow way of thinking and labelling of people based on their appearance. I asked him where he was heading next, to which he replied that he does not have a specific plan as he "likes to walk around the city during the summer." He also added that "life is more exciting when you keep your options open and see where you end up." To a certain point, I had to agree with him.

He took a long sip of his drink mix, and said he used to like the neighbourhood but nowadays people in the area are "uptight." I think he was mainly referring to the woman behind the bar, who did not let him in. I asked if he lived in the neighbourhood to which he replied that he lives in "various neighbourhoods—as you know, I do not have a permanent address." At that point I thought I could perhaps tell him about this study and ask him if he was willing to help. His reaction to my announcement was better than I expected. Perhaps it was the alcohol speaking but he shared his thoughts and experiences of being homeless quite openly. He told me he had been homeless for many years, and it had become "a lifestyle" which he found hard to give up on. I asked him what he usually does during the day and where he hangs out. He told me that although he likes "an open schedule" he is quite a busy guy as he has a lot of friends to meet and many errands to run.

He did not elaborate much more on his daily life, but he was quite eager to offer me some practical tips and advice on how to "manage on the street." For example, he demonstrated that a black garbage bag is better than a normal plastic bag because the plastic in the garbage bag is thicker, and in case of rain, the stuff inside does not get wet that easily. He added that, although he often only carries around his "daily necessities", it is convenient to have a big bag in case you find something "worth taking."

He also provided information on "good places" to sleep at night. His two favourites, during the summer, included Suomenlinna and Hietaniemi cemetery. He said that Suomenlinna is nice in the evening "after the noisy and misbehaving" young people and the over-excited tourists are gone." Hietaniemi, the cemetery, according to him is nice because "it's so quiet." I found this hard to believe and I was not sure if he was "messing" with me, but I did not want to question him. After all, I did not have any idea where homeless people actually sleep at night.

Although I felt bad for him, I could not help but smile at his advice and tips on where to sleep and what kind of a plastic bag is the most convenient for a homeless person. The straightforward approach to life and the occasional irony was refreshing. He did not look for sympathy. In that situation me expressing that I feel sorry for him, or rather sorry his situation, would probably have meant an end to our conversation. I also think that for a l homeless person like him, whose homelessness in his own words is "a lifestyle", irony and tough appearance are ways of coping with the situation.

After about 20 minutes of talking and sharing his experiences he said he should "better make a move now." I asked if he had a phone number I could call to, but he said his phone was in Pasila (police station) at the moment, and he could not remember his phone number. He said he was quite optimistic of getting his phone back because he visits Pasila police station "quite often." I offered to give him my number, but he said that he is not that good at "keeping in touch" so he did not take it. When I asked him if I could present our conversation in my study he was pleased, and told me that if we met again, he would provide more tips and stories of his life but now he had to go because he was running out of drinks and he had to find his friend, who would provide him more. He stood up, took his garbage bag and the Pol Rémy bottle, shook my hand and said it was nice to talk. I thanked him and wished him all the best. He started to walk up the street towards Sörnäinen. Although he was not worried about the upcoming night, I could not help but

think where he was going to spend the night. From this fleeting moment, many questions began to rise. Where does this person sleep at night? Where does he eat or wash his clothes? Why was this man even homeless? Although I have not met this person again, he inspired and pushed me forward in my attempts to explore how homeless people like him, and so many others faced with the same situation, actually cope in their everyday lives.

1 Introduction

"Notions of home represent values and aspirations that societies hold and home also illustrates practical and psychological elements of the way people live, or at least the ways people are expected to live." (Parsell, 2012: 160.)

Homelessness is a complex social and political issue which affects the lives of many people. In Finland, it is one of the most significant failures of the welfare state, as there are still thousands of people who lack a place to call home. A home and housing in general constitutes as a basic rights and need for all people (Lehtonen and Salonen, 2008: 10). Without a permanent home it is hard to build or maintain other aspects of life. Granfelt (2008: 8), argues that a home is a basic precondition for people to integrate into society and to be part of it. Therefore, as Saari (2015: 16) writes, homelessness is the key to understand and analyse what he calls the utmost disadvantage because homelessness has weakening and limiting implications to people's living standards, lifestyles and quality of life. Homelessness, especially if prolonged, breaks down all the elements of a good life. Homelessness pushes the person outside and excludes, hence it can be understood as the ultimate form of exclusion from mainstream society. (ibid.)

Sokeli and Reijonen (1988: 141) paint a vivid picture of the life of a homeless person by writing that a homeless person does not have a place to perform daily activities such as cooking, bathing and doing laundry. Nor does a homeless person have walls to hang pictures and memories, nor a place to invite and entertain friends and family. The homeless person does not a have a door to close in the evening and a bed to fall into at night. There is no privacy or personal security. The everyday life of the homeless follows the same circle—a circle that is hard to break out of. Days lose their meaning. (ibid.) Lack of a home or housing causes distress and insecurity and it often complicates other parts of human life and life control. Korhonen (2002: 17) associates homelessness with other

problems such as poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, substance abuse and mental health problems (ibid.).

Yet, there are many structural factors beyond individual control such as lack of affordable housing and poor economic circumstances that contribute to the homelessness. One significant factor contributing to the homeless phenomenon especially in Helsinki is the shortage of affordable rented housing. Kostiainen (2015: 82) argues that "obvious structural factors behind homelessness in Helsinki are the small size and the slow growth of the housing stock compared to demand which has led to a quick rise in rents and prices." The city cannot offer affordable housing to all those in need and the high rent prices in the private sector exclude people in the low-income spectrum.

Despite the web of problems and individual and structural factors that are linked to homelessness, notable is the recent increased heterogeneity of people considered homeless. Nowadays homelessness does not only affect marginalized single men but also women, young people, families and immigrants (Korhonen, 2002: 18). In 2020, there were 4341 homeless people living alone in Finland (ARA, 2021: 2). Kärkkäinen (1999a: 161) writes that homelessness is often described as an urban problem as most homeless people are located in cities. This urban nature of homelessness is also relevant to Finland. In 2020, the number of homeless people in the Helsinki Metropolitan area (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa) was 2190, of which 1534 were located in Helsinki (ARA, 2021: 4).

Indeed, as Paulus (1993: 11) notes, homelessness has been one of the most difficult and prolonged social problems in Finnish society. Recently, the Finnish government has set policies and strategies to tackle the issue of homelessness and especially long-term homelessness. The implementation of the Housing First model and the homelessness reduction programmes called PAAVO I (2008-2011) and PAAVO II (2012-2015) and homeless prevention programme AUNE (2016-2019) have produced positive results, proving that "with sufficient and correctly allocated support, permanent housing can be guaranteed even for the long-term homeless in the most difficult position" (Pleace et al., 2015: 12).

To tackle the phenomenon of homelessness, research is needed to provide information on the lives and needs of homeless people. Previous studies (Granfelt, 1998; Pyyvaara and Timonen, 2012, 2017) include detailed individual stories of homelessness, and people's paths in and out of it. However, little is known about how people actually live and manage

their daily lives on the streets, and what practices and routines they employ to survive in adverse circumstances. To fill this research gap, this study explores the lives of two men who do not have a permanent place to stay, or rather, a place to call home. In addition to their homeless status, these two men also have severe substance abuse problems. This study aims to investigate the men's subjective experiences of homelessness, how it affects the everyday lives of those who are exposed to it, and how they survive and make "home" in such adverse circumstances. In addition, this study also adds to the existing research literature on pathways by investigating the men's routes to homelessness, and what factors have contributed these. Through ethnographic research, this study attempts to build a picture of a homeless person's everyday life in Helsinki. The strengths of ethnography, for example, to study the everyday lives of homeless substance users, lie in its ability "to describe the social setting in which behaviour occurs and the opportunities afforded by fieldwork to actually watch people doing things rather than relying on people's self-reports" (Stimson, 1995: 758). The research questions in this study were as follows: **1)** What are the participants' pathways to homelessness and what factors have contributed to these? **2)** How do the participants conceptualise "home" and what does it mean to them? **3)** How do the participants manage their daily lives on the streets and what kinds of survival strategies do they employ?

This thesis is divided into the following chapters: chapter two summarises previous research on homelessness, marginalisation, substance misuse and homeless people. Chapter three describes the Finnish welfare system and the services available for homeless substance misusers. Chapter four is devoted to research methodology. Chapter five examines research findings. Chapter six concludes this research and provides some suggestions and ideas for further research concerning the homeless phenomenon.

2 Theoretical Perspective

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of previous research concerning the homeless phenomenon, and to introduce the key concepts employed in this research. I will represent national and international definitions of homelessness showing how the concept is defined and conceptualized in different contexts. Focus is also diverted to the pathways and structural and individual causes of homelessness. This is followed by a description of how homelessness and marginalization is intertwined and how

homelessness and substance misuse problems have been linked together in previous studies.

2.1 Homelessness as a concept

Homelessness is not a simple concept to define. It varies over time and between countries. Previous national and international research (see for example Daly, 1996; Granfelt, 1998; Johnsen et al., 2005) have pointed to the difficulties in defining homelessness. Salonen (2008: 86) writes that homelessness must be seen as a situational and contextual interaction between individual and societal factors. FEANTSA (European Federation of organisations working with the people who are homeless) has developed a typology of homelessness and housing exclusion called ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion) to provide a broad understanding of the concept of homelessness. Busch-Geetsema (2010: 27) writes that four broad categories are included in ETHOS 1) rooflessness; 2) houselessness; 3) living in insecure; 4) living in inadequate accommodation. Busch-Geetsema (ibid., p. 25) continues that the ETHOS typology "underlines that rooflessness, the category that is least controversial and receiving the greatest attention from the media and the general public, is only 'the tip of the iceberg' making visible much wider phenomenon". Avramov (1996, cited in Kärkkäinen, 1999b: 369) offers the following definition for homelessness:

> "Homelessness is the absence of a personal, adequate dwelling. Homeless people are those who are unable to access a personal, permanent, adequate dwelling or maintain such a dwelling due to financial constraints or other social barriers, and those people who are unable to access and maintain such a dwelling because they are unable to lead a fully independent life and need care support but not institutionalization."

Gerald Daly (1996: 1) argues for a broad definition of homelessness which also considers those who are at risk of becoming homeless and proposes the following definition:

> "People are considered homeless if they lack adequate shelter in which they are entitled to live safely. At the extreme, they are sleeping rough. Others live under a roof, but their accommodation is lacking in safety, security or basic amenities (e.g., heat, water, and bathroom). Homelessness is a fluid and elusive concept."

In Finland two different concepts are used to describe the phenomenon. These are houselessness (*asunnottomuus*) and homelessness (*kodittomuus*). In Sweden, the concepts of bostadslöshet and hemlöshet are applied. In English speaking countries the

equivalent term for the phenomenon is homelessness. Järvinen (1992: 12) writes that sometimes the two concepts of asunnottomuus/kodittomuus or bostadslöshet/hemlöshet are used simultaneously, although they do carry slightly different meanings. Houselessness usually refers to a concrete lack of housing and it is a widely used concept in different policy documents and programmes (Kärkkäinen, 1998: 5). Finnish studies on homelessness, which have often focused on the structural side of the phenomenon, have mainly used the term houselessness (ibid., p. 6.) Lehtonen and Salonen (2008: 20) write that "houselessness refers to material resources and the lack of them, whereas homelessness reflects on the subjective attributes that are associated with specific spaces. Therefore, the concepts operate on two different levels: One is physical and juridical, and the other is subjective and existential" (ibid.).

According to Taipale (1982: 48) the term homeless refers to a person who is not only houseless but also rootless and lacks certain supporting networks. Kärkkäinen (1998: 7) notes that the most commonly used definition of homelessness also refers to poverty and social exclusion. Homeless people often live on the margins of society lacking both social and economic support. The concept of homelessness is often used in qualitative studies which explore the individual experiences of homelessness and what kind of meanings people attach to it (Granfelt, 1998: 47).

Homelessness can be divided into absolute and relative homelessness. Absolute homelessness refers to people who live on streets, staircases and shelters; it is a visible social problem (Granfelt, 1998: 54). People who belong to this group represent the most socially excluded and the poorest of society. Relative homelessness is more hidden, as it refers to people who stay in different institutions or with friends and relatives. In addition to absolute and relative homelessness, a third dichotomy of homelessness has occurred, the so-called new homelessness, referring to women, young people, drug addicts and homeless families. New homelessness mainly refers to differences in the urban environment, exposing more heterogeneous groups to urban poverty and homelessness than before. (ibid., p. 55-56) Immigrants can also be found in the new homeless category. In another way, according to Tainio (2009: 28) those experiencing homelessness belong to one of the three groups: 1) homeless people 2) people at risk of becoming homeless in the next two or three months 3) people who do not have an opportunity to acquire housing. This definition, Tainio (ibid.) argues, describes better the situation of a homeless person, and the risk of becoming homeless, rather than just providing information where the

homeless person at the time resides.

According to Lehtonen and Salonen (2008: 23) homeless people in Finland are usually defined as those who live in the outdoors, shelters, staircases, hostels, various institutions and temporarily with friends and relatives. Also released prisoners without housing are defined as homeless. According to ARA[1] (2020: 6) homeless people are those who do not have a home (rented or owner-occupied) and who live: 1) outside, in stairways or temporary shelters; 2) in dormitories or hostels; 3) in welfare home-type housing units, rehabilitation units, hospitals or other institutions; 4) temporarily with friends or relatives due to lack of housing. ARA (ibid.) has defined long-term homelessness as follows:

> "Long- term homelessness refers to a homeless person who has significant social or a health problem, such as debt, substance abuse or mental health problems, and whose homelessness has been prolonged or is in danger of being prolonged due to a lack of conventional housing solutions and appropriate support services. Homelessness is considered long-term if it has lasted for at least one year or the individual has repeatedly experienced homelessness over the last three years. In cases of long-term homelessness, the emphasis is on the need for assistance and treatment- the length of the time is of secondary importance."

Long-term or prolonged homelessness exposes people to different kinds of vulnerabilities. The damaging effects of long-term homelessness affect individuals on both mentally and physically. Tainio (2009: 37) writes that homelessness, especially if prolonged, can lead to criminal activity, prostitution and substance abuse. In the earlier homeless reduction programmes in Finland, the focus has been given especially to long-term homelessness, the hard-core (*kova ydin)* of homeless people, whose homelessness could not have been solved by housing policy measures (ibid., p.12).

2.2 Subjective understandings and experiences of homelessness

The interpretations of people experiencing homelessness need to be made visible in order to develop and understanding of the diverse experiences of the phenomenon. Zufferey and Kerr (2004: 349-350) write that "the needs of homeless people are often defined by policy makers, funding bodies and service providers, which position individuals who access homeless services as unable to represent themselves, and as the socially deficient

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[1] The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland

other in need of expert intervention." Zufferey and Kerr (ibid.) continue that the experiences of homelessness are influenced by context, culture, gender, class, age and sexuality. In their study Hodgetts' et al. (2006: 510) illustrate how their "participants repeatedly presented self-images of people who were not just homeless but community members who make choices, engage in leisure activities, shop and also make mistakes." Goffman (1963) has used the concept of 'spoiled identity' which refers "to the identities of persons who are unable to conform to standards that society regard as normal" (Casey et al. 2008: 909). To fight against this spoiled identity some participants in Johnsen et al. (2005: 285) study highlighted the notion that in spite of their homeless status, participants' identities were built upon other characteristics as well, and that they not only aspired to be like other (domiciled) people, but they should also be treated in this way.

In relation to the concept of spoiled identity is that of stigma. Goffman (1963: 4) has defined stigma as follows: "the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance." Due to their situation homeless people "must constantly strive to adjust to their precarious social identities" (Casey et al. 2008: 909). In their efforts to fight against spoiled identity, homeless people also do attempt to dis-identify themselves from more stigmatized homeless people. For example, Hodgetts' et al. (2006: 507) participants made clear distinctions between those who were "dirty rough sleepers" with alcohol and drug habits, and those who were in some control of their lives and had self-respect. Distinctions of "good homeless/bad homeless" and "deserving/undeserving homeless" were also evident in Zufferey and Kerr's (2004) research. Likewise, Parsell (2012: 165) and Rosenthal's (1994: 40) research participants had similar notions, as they mentioned their frustration of having to interact with other homeless people who they did not like or trust. The exposure to live in public places undermined homeless people's agency over who to have social relationships with (ibid., p. 165). However, occasionally homeless identity was also embraced, as Zufferey and Kerr (2004: 347) have illustrated how their "participants both embraced and distanced themselves from a homeless identity, depending on the context and length of their homeless experiences."

Liebow (1993: 42) argues that homelessness, particularly street homelessness, is a time of great stress, instability and insecurity. Daly (1996: 11) notes that life on the streets and the survival strategies of homeless people may seem irrational and chaotic to an outsider. However, life on the streets requires adherence to a different set of organizing principles, 'an alternate reality', as individuals on the street lack the power to control events which

affect their lives" (ibid.). Rosenthal (1994: 45) writes that a person who lacks shelter is constantly occupied with meeting daily needs such as eating and washing. Daly (1996: 139) notes that night shelters often require people to leave in the morning and they are not allowed back until late evening. Therefore, the days of the homeless people are often marked with endless walking around, attempting to satisfy their basic needs (Meert et al., 2006; Gerrard and Farrugia, 2015). Granfelt (2003: 40) writes that life on streets was often characterized by wandering around, using substances, committing crimes, and waiting for a prison sentence or housing. Participants in Törmä and Huotari's (2005: 40) research had similar experiences as they reported that most of their days consisted of the same routine—that is waking up, getting intoxicated, acquiring more money to get substances and secure a place to sleep for a night or end up in jail to get some rest. Murto (1978: 164) writes that getting arrested for drunkenness, especially during the cold winter months, was common among his research participants. Granfelt (1998) and Murto (1978) have both noted that homeless people's lives are often built upon a principle of day-by-day and here and now, as the lack of housing and minimal financial resources prevent them from making any long-term plans. For those experiencing homelessness, the perspective of time is short.

Day centres and other homeless services are crucial in obtaining food, support and taking care of personal hygiene. Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade (2009:112) write that as homeless people do not have amenities or equipment to cook their own food, they depend on the meals provided by day centres. Alternatively, some people found their food in dumpsters, stole it or simply did not eat every day (Törmä and Huotari, 2005: 30). Studies from abroad (Radley et al., 2005; Meert et al., 2006) also illustrated that begging money for food and substances was a common feature of the homeless life. To avoid further stigmatization, many homeless people put a lot of effort into looking like presentable, legitimate citizens (Casey et al. 2008: 911). Rosenthal (1994) writes that despite people's homeless status, many of his participants tried to maintain a decent appearance by taking care of their personal hygiene and wearing clean clothes. In addition, decent appearance was also adapted as a common strategy among the homeless people to blend in and to secure access to certain public spaces to carry out daily functions (Casey et al., 2008: 905). However, as Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade (2009: 112) point out, it is difficult to take care of one's hygiene, as chances of taking a shower or wash clothes are dependent on the services shelters and other low threshold day centres provide within their opening

hours. Furthermore, as homeless people lack space where to store personal belongings, they own very little, if anything, and may not have additional set of clothing to change into (ibid.).

Due to their vulnerable position, homeless people are exposed to different types of crime. Casey et al. (2008: 911) note that often homeless people must project an image of toughness to feel more secure and safe. Many participants in Meert et al. (2006: 31) study had been victims of physical violence, robbery or sexual assault. Murto (1978:117) also writes how participants in his study had been involved in fights, especially when staying in shelters. The problems with shelters have been highlighted in many previous studies. For example, Meert et al. (2006) and Rosenthal (1994) have shown, that although homeless people rely on night shelters, they do not prefer to stay in such places. The reasons for this are many—Meert et al. (2006: 16) write that occasionally shelters are full, some homeless may be banned from certain shelters or they do not get along with other shelter users, or the shelter environment is experienced as hostile—and many homeless people want to hold on to some level of independence and dignity by finding a place to sleep on their own. Alternative places to spend the night included public toilets, basements, staircases and railway stations (ibid., p. 14-15).

2.3 Pathways to homelessness

In the pathways framework homelessness is understood as a dynamic interaction process between individual characteristics and structural factors. According to Kostiainen and Laakso (2015:12) structural factors create conditions under which people with personal problems are more vulnerable to undesired socio-economic changes in society. The previous research literature on pathways to homelessness has identified four broad groups of risk factors that can increase the probability of becoming homeless. According to Kostiainen (2015: 65) these factors are: 1) *structural*, referring to economic processes such as poverty, unemployment, housing market processes, social protection/welfare, and immigration; 2) *institutional*, such as shortage of adequate services and lack of coordination, allocation mechanisms, institutional living/prisons, and institutional procedures; 3) *relationships*, including family status, relationship situations and relationship breakdown; 4) *personal*, referring to health, education, and addiction problems.

Drawing on her research Kostiainen (2015: 74) has identified three categories among the

homeless resident in Helsinki: "1) transitionally homeless people whose pathways lead to stable housing in either rental or owner-occupied housing after an episode of homelessness spent at friends' or relatives'; 2) homeless people with insecure housing careers, for whom dependent living with a partner, friends or relatives without a lease of their own, or subletting, is common feature of their housing pathway; 3) disadvantaged homeless people, often long-term homeless, who have to rely on homeless services to exit homelessness."

Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade (2009: 28) in their study of homeless people sleeping in shelters in Helsinki have identified six causal factors to homelessness and these are: 1) divorce or break-up; 2) the end of temporary tenancy or termination of tenancy agreement; 3) disturbing lifestyle; 4) rent arrears; 5) termination of rental lease by the occupant; 6) other reasons. The most common reasons for homelessness in Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade's (ibid., p. 29) sample were disturbing lifestyle and/or unpaid rents. Eviction or threat of eviction due to unpaid rents or disturbance were also key causes for homelessness in other studies (for example Kostiainen, 2015; Lehtonen and Salonen, 2008; Desmond, 2016).

Kostiainen and Laakso (2015: 12) note that the majority of homeless people are low income earners, unemployed, or have insecure, short-term employment periods. It is indeed those in vulnerable, especially in financially precarious positions that are at risk of becoming more likely homeless (Rosenthal 1994: 19). In addition, single households have the greatest risk of experiencing the most adverse forms of homelessness meaning sleeping rough and long-term homelessness. This, Kostiainen (2015: 67) argues, is due to the fact that single, childless people hold disadvantaged positions both in the housing market and in the social housing system.

The individual stories presented in Granfelt's (2003) and Pyyvaara and Timonen's (2012; 2016) research also point to the complex and complicated pathways into (and out of) homelessness. Many homeless people expressed in their stories how break-up, divorce or becoming unemployed had caused their initial homelessness. Also, previous difficult life experiences and social problems such as broken family backgrounds, lack of social networks and addiction problems were evident in the accounts of homeless people. Furthermore, economic hardship and lack of sufficient income was a problem for many interviewees. Rent arrears and bad credit records were also common features in the lives

of the homeless people (Pyyvaara and Timonen, 2012). Especially rent arrears and a bad credit record can have long-lasting implications to a person's future chances of getting a rental flat. Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade (2009: 32) write that most of the landlords both in the public and private sector require clean credit or at least evidence of a payment plan to pay previous rent arrears and debts. Granfelt (2003: 53) adds that rent arrears and evictions are the most significant "push factors" to homelessness and often point to the individual's poor economic situation and deficiencies in life management skills.

The most common way out of homelessness, at its simplest, is to find a rental apartment. Kostiainen (2015: 72) notes that many homeless people in her sample managed to end their homeless period by acquiring housing, for example, from the private market or from the social and municipal sector. However, as Kostiainen (ibid., p. 81) notes, "pathways out of homelessness reflect the ability of individuals to negotiate access to appropriate accommodation. Those in the most vulnerable positions lacking both social and economic support and with additional individual problems do need more support and guidance to exit homelessness." Lifestyle, along with mental and substance use problems hamper some people's search for a new apartment. Yet, the most significant factor in exiting homelessness is adequate affordable housing, which proves to be difficult to find especially in Helsinki (ibid. p. 82.).

2.4 The meaning of home

Home is a concept that triggers thoughts and emotions in all of us. Taipale (1982: 47) writes that a house or dwelling (*asunto*) refers to a place where one lives. Housing or living (*asuminen*) is a broader concept than a house, as everybody lives somewhere, even a homeless person. Homeless person can live for example in a staircase or an emergency shelter. Daly (1996: 150) conceptualizes home as follows:

> "Homes are a mirror, a reflection of our state of being and an extension of our human presence. The home constitutes physical, social, cultural and psychological space, which on the one hand, shapes our behaviour and, on the other, helps to form our perspective on the world...Homes allow us to introduce a sense of order in our lives. For most of us our home offers convenience and a comfortable environment...The home connotes status, helping to define our social position. It represents a source of pride, self-respect and a tangible measure of our economic worth."

In contrast, a house is a physical object that can be owned, rented and furnished. A house

or a flat has a price, a home has a spirit (Taipale, 1982: 47-48.) This reflects on Saari's (2015: 15) thoughts, who writes that a home is more than a commodity that can be bought or rented. A roof on top of one's head does not make a place home. Home is something that people have to create. Saunders (1990: 270) agrees, writing that home "has always presented more than just a means of shelter—it is also associated with qualities of social relationships and organization. Home represents a fixed place in our lives, as we usually start our days there, and end the day by returning." (ibid., p. 263.) Taipale (1982: 48) puts it beautifully by writing that "there may be a shortage of housing, but it is homes that are being longed for."

The concept of ontological security has been linked to the notion of home and home ownership. Giddens (1984: 375) who has widely written about ontological security defines it as "confidence or trust that the natural or social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity." Hiscock et al. (2001: 50) write that in order to feel ontological security, people need a secure base to lead fulfilled lives, and home could function as such. Saunders (1990: 293) writes that during times of insecurity and uncertainty, homes, and especially home ownership can provide ontological security and comfort, as he argues:

> "Home ownership is one expression of the search for ontological security, for a home of one's own offers both a physical (hence spatially rooted) and permanent (hence temporally rooted) location in the world. Our own home is unambiguously a place where we belong, and the things that we do there have an immediacy of presence and purpose."

Saunders (ibid.) continues that although the concept of ontological security in relation to home and especially home ownership has been contested, his research findings do support notions that homeowners have greater attachment and investment in their homes than tenants. However, Hiscock et al. (2010: 62) write that based on their research, ontological security was not purely derived from tenure, but it was also gained from having wealth in general and living in a good quality of dwelling. Drawing on the concept of ontological security and people living in caravans, Newton (2008) has also showed how people in his study developed strong emotional attachments of home and feelings of belonging to their caravans. Parsell (2012: 161) also points out how some of his research participants defined as homeless did not actually feel homeless, but rather experienced their current situation or accommodation as home. These examples demonstrate how the concept of

home is indeed elusive and subjectively experienced, and how ontological security can be found in various places and spaces, which in a traditional sense are not conceptualized as homes. Ultimately, home has meaning on social, emotional, spiritual and material levels (Parsell, 2012: 159).

However, it should also be emphasized here that a home can have a negative connotation to it as well. Although often described as a safe haven for most, sometimes a home can be a place of disturbance, abuse, and insecurity. Participants in Parsell's (2012: 169) study described how they had rarely, if ever "experienced positive homes or positive life experiences prior to homelessness." Childhood homes were often described as abusive and oppressive (ibid.). For example, some homeless women in Casey et al.'s (2008: 904) research had fled their homes due to abuse. Parsell (2012: 161) continues that especially feminist scholars have pointed out how homes can be places of violence towards women and children. This evidently diminishes the effects of home as a source of safety and security. Women and also men who are victims, for example of domestic abuse, have been referred to as "homeless at home". The notion of homeless at home can also be extended to people who live in inadequate and unsatisfactory housing, as these types of dwellings are insufficient to provide people with socio-psychological experience of home. (ibid.)

Parsell (2012: 159) argues that if we are to understand the realities of life on the streets, researchers need to understand how those living in this manner construct notions of home. Home refers to something that people experience subjectively and as something which is held in high regard. According to Granfelt (2003: 42) by building or making one's own home, people reveal how they want to be seen by others. Prisoners in Granfelt's (ibid.) study shared their thoughts and ideals of home by describing a home as a place their own, a place they can feel safe and comfortable and a place they can love and feel loved. Notions of independence and autonomy were also evident in the prisoner's accounts. For Parsell's (2012: 160) participants home meant a physical structure and represented a "normal way of living" and was a signifier for "normality." People "constructed home as a means to take control over daily lives; for example, use their own bathroom and kitchen, interact and socialize with whom they chose to, and to protect themselves" (ibid.).

Home indeed enhances people's autonomy. Salonen (2008: 113) writes that autonomy in relation to home means that people have a control over who can come over, what is allowed in their home and how their home is decorated. Parsell (2012: 160) notes that

"people feel at home when they have control, or can at least exercise a degree of control, over a space." This, in turn translates into greater feelings of autonomy and control over one's life. Home can also be seen as a symbol for identity: at home, people know who they are, where are they coming from and where they belong to (Salonen, 2008: 112). Furthermore, the interviewees in Salonen's (ibid., p. 100) research described how having their "own keys in the pocket" enhanced their self-esteem and a feeling of belonging to a mainstream society and being able to take care of personal things.

2.5 Measures on homelessness

ARA has conducted an annual housing market survey on homelessness since the mid-1980s. The survey is sent to municipalities, and they report back the number of homeless people in their own municipality. In 2020, a total of 223 municipalities in mainland Finland responded to the survey, with a response rate of 76% (ARA, 2021: 3). The purpose of the report is to examine developments in homelessness by comparing the figures for the chosen cross-section date of 15 November to those of previous year.

In 2020, there were 4341 single homeless people living in Finland (ARA, 2020: 3). This is 259 less than in 2019. 1534 homeless people were located in Helsinki. Also, in proportion to the population, the highest proportion of homeless people was in Helsinki: there are 2.8 homeless per 1000 residents. The number of homeless families and couples was 201. Although the overall number of homeless people has fallen since 2019, the situation for long-term homeless was different. There were 1054 long-term homeless people in 2020. In comparison, the number decreased in 2019 for the first time, under 1000, since data collection began, standing for 961. In Finland the biggest group of homeless people are those who temporarily live with friends and relatives. In 2020 the number for these people was 2773, accounting for almost two-thirds of the Finnish homeless population. The amount of people living outside, stairwells and temporary shelters was 721. The number of homeless women and men were 1065 and 3276, respectively. The same year, the number of homeless immigrants was 163, which is 133 less than the previous year. The number of homeless people under 25 years was 850, which is 20 % of all the homeless people accounted for. There was no chance in this category compared to previous year. (ibid., p. 3-6.)

Kettunen (2007) writes that the numbers represented in the report should be treated with

great caution because they can only give an estimation of the homeless problem in Finland. Furthermore, not all municipalities report their number of homeless people. Korhonen (2002: 30) for example has argued that due to the data collection methods, the data is likely to actually underestimate the amount of homeless people, especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Also, how homelessness is defined and who is classified as homeless affect the numbers represented in these reports (Paulus, 1993). The cross-sectional approach possess a problem as the numbers only indicate how many homeless people are counted on the 15th of November each year. Salonen (2008: 86) adds that homelessness is reduced to a linear or binary status when measured statistically, meaning that people either are homeless or not. Statistical measures fail take into account repeated homeless and the back and forth movement between housing and homelessness. Furthermore, there are risks at particular points in people's lives for example transition periods, which can lead to homelessness. These are often left out of statistical representations of homelessness. (ibid. 86). However, as Saari (2015, 154) points out, politics is based on numbers and therefore part of the elimination of the homeless phenomenon is that of accounting for the number of homeless people, even if they are estimates.

2.6 Homelessness, exclusion and marginalisation

Homelessness, especially long-term homelessness is a socio-political question, and therefore issues of marginalization and exclusion need to be considered as they play significant roles in the homeless processes (Tainio, 2009: 14). Lehtonen et al. (1986: 18-37) see exclusion as three dimensional: 1) externality from production; 2) externality from social cohesion; and 3) lack of power. Juhila (2006: 54) writes that exclusion is often conceptualized as process which deprives resources from individuals, families and communities that are crucial to social, economic and political participation. The process is first and foremost a result of poverty and low income, but other factors such as discrimination, low educational attainment and weak living circumstances contribute to the outcome. Exclusion can also be understood as an accumulation of disadvantage. People defined as excluded lack significant resources to lead fulfilled lives. The risk factors of ending up excluded are more evident, for example, among (long-term) unemployed, disabled, homeless, addicts, immigrant and children living in unstable conditions. (ibid., p. 54-55.) The process of exclusion is associated with removal,

rejection and retreat (Granfelt 1998: 79). Exclusion from the individual's viewpoint means that a person has often drifted or pushed to exclusion and has perhaps lost the control over his or her life. The word "loss" is closely related to exclusion; life leading to homelessness is often a series of losses, wherein eventually people find themselves outside, often with little, if anything left. Exclusion is an outcome of exclusionary processes. (ibid., p. 79).

The concept of marginalization differs from exclusion in the sense that marginalization captures the diverse movement which can divert the individual further away from "normal" or bring them back to the centre (Knuuti, 2007: 17). Granfelt (1998: 80) takes a similar standpoint by arguing that a wider thematic is embedded in the concept of marginalization, which includes the questions of differentness and otherness but also considers social and economic factors. Juhila (2006: 104) adds that marginalization as a concept has a more positive connotation to it than exclusion. Marginalization does not necessarily capture the whole essence of a person. A person can be marginalized for example based on his or her ethnic background but belong to a mainstream society based on other characteristics, for example employment (ibid., p. 104). The borderline is not as clear in marginalization as it is in exclusion (Helne, 2002: 174). Marginality characterises the edges of society, or the margins, where people have alternative and different lifestyles, values and norms compared to mainstream society (Knuuti 2007: 17). The objects of marginalization have perhaps drifted to the edge or have been pushed there, but they are still inside, somewhere around the centre. Helne (2002: 24) continues that to be on the edge is not the same as being on the outside. Those who are outside or pushed there are excluded. Paradoxically, it can be argued, marginalized people are "others inside" (ibid. 24.)

Juhila (2006: 104) points out that marginalization does not represent incompleteness or inferiority but rather differentness to mainstream and what is seen as "normal." Both Juhila (2002) and Helne (2002) have raised the important question of where to draw the line between marginalized and non-marginalized, us and them, "the others"? Helne (2002: 29) writes that this has also been the debate in public policy research, of what criteria to use, and who can be classified as marginalized. Furthermore, to what extent is otherness and differentness or deviance acceptable and when do they become dangerous? People who live differently from mainstream society can sometimes face what Granfelt (1998: 94) calls "forced integration" (*pakkointegraatio*). This forced integration is

characterized by reintegration of marginalized minorities and unquestionable acceptance of dominant norms. Forced integration may also include labelling or categorization of an individual based on his or her status. For example, the label of being homeless or an addict may result in a person's identity and whole existence being built upon this divergent characteristic (ibid).

Although the concept of marginalization is associated with the risk of exclusion, it can also provide positive opportunities to survive and attach, perhaps again, to mainstream society (Knuuti, 2007: 17). Granfelt (1998: 82) notes that sometimes "to live on the margins" can also provide a viewpoint to the society, people can reflect to their lives from different angles. In addition, a margin can create new opportunities or pathways to people even if they have ended up in the margin due to a loss (ibid.). According to Helne (2006: 9) the important question here is that what kind of relationship mainstream society and its institutions have with marginalized or excluded people, how they represent and face marginalization, and ultimately, what is done about it. The welfare state has a central role in building the bridge between the centre and the edge, to give people tools to enhance their lives (Juhila, 2002: 13).

2.7 Homelessness and substances

Tainio (2009: 39) writes that "lifestyle alcoholics" (*elämäntapa-alkoholistit)* and "chronic alcoholics" (*kroonikkoalkoholistit*) still form the hard core (*kova ydin)* of the long-term homeless. In Törmä and Huotari's (2005: 24) research, almost half of the homeless people used at least one drug, and many were mixed-users, who abused alcohol, illegal drugs and prescription drugs. In their research of homeless people in shelters Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade (2009: 54) write that 89% of their participants suffered from mental health- and substance problems and 82% had pure substance abuse problems. The most common substance with 59% of the participants was alcohol, while 15 % had drug use addiction (ibid., p. 91). Kostiainen (2015: 67-68) writes that research evidence across the industrialized world shows that those people who sleep rough and use low threshold services are mostly single men with complex needs associated with substance abuse and mental health problems. Hakkarainen et al. (2019: 90) point out that the mixed-use of alcohol, illegal drugs and prescription drugs is a significant feature of disadvantage and exclusion.

Murto (1978: 23) points to the importance of social and economic problems such as unemployment, recession and lack of housing that can make substance misuse problems worse. Murto (ibid.) continues that none of his research participants have ended up homeless purely by their own choice but how their objective opportunities to navigate in more demanding (service) system have been insufficient. Behind this "deviance" (*poikkeavuus*), as Murto (ibid. 19) calls it, are individual's life histories, individual characteristics and lack of sources. Korhonen (2002: 58) writes that homelessness in his study was on many occasions an outcome of long-lasting substance abuse that had often started at a young age. However, homelessness can also increase substance abuse. Life on street can be fuelled with alcohol and drugs, as many people cannot bare their situation sober. Alcohol and other substances can be used to kill time, relieve pain and produce euphoria (Pyyvaara and Timonen, 2012; Granfelt, 1998).

When the substance use changes into abuse, and a person's life starts to revolve around substances it eventually breaks down all the elements of a good life. Tainio (2009) in her research describes the dominant role alcohol and other substances play in the interviewees' lives. Substances also prevent goal-oriented action, hence even short-term plans are difficult to follow through. Previous studies (see for example Salonen, 2008; Perälä, 2002; Törmä and Huotari, 2005) have illustrated well how substances and especially drug use dominate the lives of the users; days are filled with getting drugs, financing and using them. Money for the drugs is often obtained through stealing, dealing of drugs, prostitution or from "legal" work (Perälä, 2002: 88-89). Kekki (2009: 10) notes that crimes and criminal activity in general is often associated with substance abuse, especially drug use. The close link between crime and substance abuse is also well demonstrated, for example in Salonen's (2008) and Granfelt's (2003) research which show that most, if not all the prisoners they interviewed for their studies, suffered from substance addiction. People who use drugs are often marginalized with poor social and economic backgrounds.

It is often thought that homelessness is caused by these individual problems. However, Lehtonen and Salonen (2008: 20) quite rightfully point out that a lack of housing or home often complicates rehabilitation from substance use and mental health problems. For example, in the rehabilitation attempts of substances users, a home can be seen as a goal that can be reached when other problems are solved, but at the same time a home forms the base for an independent, worthy, decent life (ibid.). Granfelt (1998: 68) has argued

that "when poverty and homelessness are combined with severe substance and mental health problems, the situation becomes exceedingly difficult. These people are left to wander in the services without attachment to anywhere, and as a result the state of exclusion deepens, and problems become chronical." Liebow (1993: 221) draws these themes together by arguing that "people are not homeless because they are abusers of alcohol and other drugs, or unemployed. However destructive and relevant these conditions may be, they do not explain homelessness. Homeless people are homeless because they do not have a place to live."

3 Social policy, welfare and homelessness in Finland

The purpose of this chapter is to shed light to the structural and institutional aspects of homelessness by providing the reader with a short overview of the Finnish welfare state and its attempts to combat homelessness. Murto (1978: 18) has argued that when researching homelessness, it is also important to understand how the society and its institutions around us functions, as homelessness does not occur in a vacuum. I will present a short description of the Nordic and the Finnish welfare state and then link together homelessness, the role of the welfare state and housing. This is followed by a presentation of the approaches and programmes implemented during the past few decades to illustrate how the Finnish government has tackled the homeless phenomenon, and what kind of support and services are available for homeless and substance misusers in Helsinki.

3.1 A look at the Nordic and the Finnish welfare state

Esping-Andersen (1990) in his classic book of *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* identifies three types of welfare regimes: liberal, conservative and social democratic. Daly (1999: 312), drawing on the work of Esping-Andersen, writes that welfare states are differentiated from each other based on three criteria: 1) the logic of organization (especially their capacity to de-commodify individuals by loosening dependence on the market); 2) their social stratification effects; 3) their configuration of state-market-family relations. Finland, like the other Nordic countries, belong to the social democratic welfare regime. The concept of Nordic welfare state is also commonly used to describe the regime(s) adopted in the Nordic countries. Although there is not a unified definition of welfare, "the Nordic strand of welfare research has drawn much on Richard Titmuss's

concept of welfare as command over resources" (Kvist et al., 2012, 2). In addition, the Nordic strand of welfare research has drawn on Amartya Sen's capability approach which emphasises the abilities of individuals to fulfil their own potential (ibid.).

Saari (2015: 18) has argued that society's social and ethical development is often analysed according to how well the groups holding economic and social power treat those in the most vulnerable positions. Anttonen and Sipilä (2000: 271) write that in the Nordic discussion welfare state is understood as a "collective based on citizens' will and political power, which emphasizes wide solidarity and willingness to look after those who are disadvantaged." Wide solidarity and success of the universalistic welfare programmes requires support from the middle classes—the legitimacy and the success of the welfare state relies on the notion that also affluent classes benefit from the system; everyone contributes to it and shoulders part of the burden (Dyb, 2013: 375; Kvist et al., 2012: 6).). Daly (1999: 328) writes that "three features distinguish the Nordic approach to social policy: 1) generous cash benefits; 2) a widespread network of social services; 3) citizenship or residence as a fairly widespread criterion governing access to services and cash benefits." The Nordic welfare states are characterized by a generous redistribution of resources, high employment rates and relatively low levels of inequality—the model is praised for the care it takes of its citizens (Dyb, 2013: 371).

Finland's welfare regime is "a system based on progressive taxation, universal social benefits, high-quality public services, and a drastic redistribution of market incomes by the state" (Vaattovaara and Kortteinen, 2003: 2129). Social security and welfare services are extended to all citizens, not just certain groups, and social rights cover the whole population, as all citizens are insured against social risks (Niemi, 2006: 63). All citizens are eligible for the basic benefits independent of their working career (Kärkkäinen 1999b: 376). The Finnish Constitution Section 19 declares the following:

> "Those who cannot obtain the means necessary for a life of dignity have the right to receive indispensable subsistence and care. Everyone shall be guaranteed by an Act the right to basic subsistence in the event of unemployment, illness, and disability and during old age as well as at the birth of a child or the loss of a provider. The public authorities shall guarantee for everyone, as provided in more detail by an Act, adequate social, health and medical services and promote the health of the population. Moreover, the public authorities shall support families and others responsible for providing for children so that they have the ability to ensure the

wellbeing and personal development of the children."

The aim of the Finnish social policy, as declared in the Constitution, is to prevent poverty and disadvantage by enhancing people's functional capability by providing everyone with the sufficient income in forms of work, income redistribution and social services (Forssen et al., 2012: 15). Benefits and services are mainly funded by taxes or other contributions from employers and employees (Kärkkäinen, 1999b: 376). In Finland, municipalities have a great authority—the responsibility for the planning and implementation of social welfare policies, service production and housing lie with the local authorities (ibid.). Niemi (2006: 62) adds that universal benefits and services are necessary, but in addition, it is important to consider people's individual circumstances and "special" needs.

The Finnish welfare state has also faced extensive criticism. Helne and Laatu (2006: 13) write that there has been a shift in political discourse and public opinions of the welfare system—the emphasis has shifted from common social concern towards more individual concern. Many social problems, such as unemployment and poverty have been de-socialized, wherein their causes are separated from the structures of society or its economy. Also, many social risks are now seen more as an individual rather than societal matter, highlighting individual responsibility. Benefit payments are seen as an obligation rather than entitlement which produce equality. Previously, the system was characterized by redistribution and social justice, now the words used in everyday politics are associated with individual responsibility, empowerment, encouragement and productivity. (ibid., p. 13.)

Furthermore, although Finland has always ranked remarkably high in equality and the welfare policies have been effective in preventing exclusion, there has been a shift as socio-economic inequalities have risen (Saari, 2011: 19). This is partly due to low level of social assistance (*toimeentulotuki*) and low levels of salaries which do not cover living expenses, especially in bigger cities (Kainulainen, 2006: 78). Hence, the concept of "working poor" has lifted its head also in Finland, referring to a phenomenon where temporary contracts and low salaries cause economic difficulties and poverty (Saari, 2011). Greater inequalities and differences push people further apart, which translates into less solidarity and empathy gaps between different socio-economic groups (ibid.). Furthermore, the social service system is criticized to be too stiff, and services are divided into various units and service providers, which can weaken the position of people with

multiple needs and problems (Kainulainen, 2006: 84). Lastly, as municipalities in Finland have the responsibility to organise and provide services, there are regional differences in availability and quality of the services.

3.2 Welfare and homelessness

Saari (2015: 136) writes that a phenomenon such as homelessness is often called a wicked problem[2] (*viheliäinen ongelma*). A social problem can be called wicked when its definition impacts the solution attempts, as different interest groups have different views about it, and there is no permanent solution to the problem (ibid.). Swärd (2008: 55) argues that micro and macro-level approaches to homelessness differ; during economically successful times, responsibility is often on the society, whereas during downturns, responsibility is placed on the shoulders of individuals. How homelessness is defined in society has obvious impacts on political action. Furthermore, these definitions also have impact on what sectors, institutions or organizations are responsible for tackling the problem. (Tainio, 2009: 26). Berghäll (1988: 14) writes that in developed industrialized countries the number of people who lack housing or live in inadequate housing is relatively low, and it is the marginality of this group that in part explains the continuity of the problem. When the majority of the people have adequate housing, it is the poor and politically weak groups that are often overlooked and left unheard—political pressure to deal with homelessness does not come from the homeless group itself (ibid.; Saari, 2015). Kärkkäinen (1998: 77) argues that after all, "homelessness and the resources allocated for its elimination are a question of priority in society."

There is variation how homelessness is experienced and dealt with within different welfare regimes. Kostiainen (2015: 66) argues that "the degree to which the vulnerabilities of an individual lead to homelessness depends on the welfare policies in each country." O'Sullivan (2010: 71) writes that more inclusive welfare regimes usually have a greater range of tools and protections for those who are at risk of becoming homeless or are homeless. Fitzpartick and Stephens (2007: 209-10) have similar notions as they argue the following:

"The nature, as well as the scale, of homelessness is also likely to be related to

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[2] According to Saari (2015) the term "wicked problem" covers a variety of disadvantage- related, complex social and socio-political phenomena.

welfare regimes, and their (contingent) interaction with housing systems. Welfare regimes that produce high levels of poverty and inequality not only produce high levels of homelessness, but the resulting homeless population is made up predominantly of households facing access and affordability problems, rather than particular personal needs arising, for example, from alcohol or drug dependency, or mental illness. Conversely, those countries whose welfare regimes produce low levels of poverty and inequality, tend to have lower levels of homelessness, while a greater proportion of their homeless populations tend to have individual support needs, such as those related to addiction or mental health illness."

Benjaminsen and Knutagård (2016: 47) add that the evidence, especially from the Nordic countries, does support the arguments above. Homelessness in more extensive welfare systems is concentrated among people with psychosocial vulnerabilities whilst homelessness in less extensive welfare systems affect wider groups of poor people due to housing affordability problems. Although there are differences between the different housing regimes in Nordic countries, these countries have often been quick to adopt new approaches in homeless policy and services, for example, Finland's Housing First principle serving as a foundation for specific and extensive national homeless strategies (ibid.). Daly (1999: 328) adds that "Nordic countries are exceptional also in policy terms in that their generally generous model of provision has a preventative effect when it comes to homelessness and other social problems."

3.3 Housing and homelessness

Housing policy plays a significant role in the reduction of homelessness. Kärkkäinen (1999b: 378) argues that Finnish housing policy has been contested and criticised to be one of the weakest links in Finland's social and welfare policies; it has relied on owner-occupied stock at the expense of (social) rental dwellings. The rental housing stock in Finland consists of privately rented housing and state-subsidised social and council housing (ibid., p. 377). The purpose of the state-subsidised dwellings has been to secure housing for those who are the most vulnerable in the housing market (Dhalmann and Karppinen, 2018: 163). Hence, as Benjaminsen and Knutagård (2016: 49) note, the social housing sector in Finland operates on a traditional social democratic basis, where access is widely regulated by waiting lists and an allocation system. According to Daly (1999: 323) social housing and the nature of state policies governing access to it are crucial in the battle of homelessness. For example, Helsinki's ARA funded apartments operate on

need, wealth and income-based selection criteria where "priority is given to the homeless and other applicants of limited means and low income who have the most urgent situation" (Helsinki, 2021a). In February 2021, there were almost 22 000 applications for state-subsidised housing in Helsinki, which reflects the high demand (Helsinki, 2021b). Those low-income households who need to obtain housing from the private market are eligible for housing allowances to meet their housing costs, though housing allowances also cover low-income households in subsidised and owner-occupied dwellings[3]. In 2019, nearly 380 000 household in Finland received a general housing allowance from Kela[4], with 96% of these households living in rental homes (KELA, 2020). The overall amount paid in housing allowances in 2019 was 2,1 billion (ibid).

Daly (1999: 323) has argued that in the homelessness field, housing policy and income assistance with housing costs are the two most relevant policy domains. Kärkkäinen (1999b: 378) writes that housing policy measures have similar basic structures in all Scandinavian countries—they rely on state loans and rent subsidies for housing production and renovation, and they provide housing allowances for low-income households. However, when compared to other Nordic countries, the amount of social housing, for example in Denmark, is higher than in Finland. Hence, there is a shortage of affordable rented housing, which is one of the most significant reasons for homelessness. (ibid.). Like many other countries, Finland has experienced increased urbanization in recent decades, adding more pressure to the already tight housing market, especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area, where demand and supply of affordable housing does not meet. (Kärkkäinen, 1996; 1999b; Dhalmann and Karppinen, 2018; Saari, 2015). Pleace (2017: 2) similarly argues that "Finland faces some housing policy problems; the lowest income households and younger people face housing market disadvantage at disproportionately high rates. Helsinki has a highly pressured housing market, and in common with many European capitals, has an insufficient supply of affordable housing." The evaluation report of PAAVO I and PAAVO II (Pleace et al., 2015) also states that the lack of affordable housing, particularly in the Helsinki metropolitan area, poses a key challenge to the eradication of homelessness. Also, "housing has become more and more

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[3] Besides the housing costs, the amount of the housing allowance depends on the following: the number of adults and children in the household, the municipality in which their home is located, income per month before taxes.
[4] Kela is the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, which provides social security coverage for Finnish residents and many Finns living abroad through the different stages of their lives.

connected to individual consumption and to creating an individual identity and this is of course problematic for the people that are left behind because of poverty" (ibid., p. 40). Furthermore, although housing is seen as a basic human right, its nature as a commodity makes it dependent on the housing market (ibid., p. 35). This obviously possess challenges to housing policy. As Hyötyläinen (2019: 60) argues "a key housing policy objective has been to prevent urban inequality by alleviating the struggle over housing costs, yet Finland's housing policy has not been able to intervene enough to curb increases in the cost of housing."

Fredriksson (2008) sees that the structural weakness of the Finnish homeless policy is that it is too dependent on the changes occurring on the housing market, especially on the rental housing market, and that action is not often taken until the "damage" is done. Fredriksson (ibid., p. 3) continues that the Finnish homelessness policy in the past few decades has been built upon four principles: 1) All the citizens should be able to enjoy the benefits offered by the welfare state, meaning that they should receive support to affordable housing and have access to necessary social and health services; 2) To acknowledge that not all the citizens are capable of organizing their own housing without additional resources and support, and pay for their living costs; 3) To build pathways out of homelessness, and that at the end of the pathway people can manage independent living and housing without additional support; 4) In organizing housing solutions for the homeless people, the focus has been given to location and area structures to prevent segregation.

The Finnish homelessness reduction programmes have focused especially on long-term homelessness, the hard-core (*kova ydin)* of homeless people, whose homelessness could not have been solved by housing policy measures (Tainio, 2009: 2). In recent years, the shift has also been diverted into individual characteristics of the homeless people, referring to a lack of integration and inability to (secure) housing (*asumiskyvyttömyys)*. Tainio (ibid., p. 37) quite rightfully points out that different kinds of social problems produce a picture of homeless persons' incapability, often referring to life management skills or the lack of them. The danger here is that disadvantaged homeless people become treated as a special group, which requires their own tailored services. Juhila (1992) in cooperation with Jokinen, has come up with the concept of bottom-of the-barrel housing markets (*pohjimmaiset asuntomarkkinat*) which refers to poor-condition rented accommodation, various institutions, hostels, overnight shelters, shakedowns with friends

and sleeping rough or in doorways. The bottom market is "characterised by the element of vicious circle, which means that the same person circulates year after year within the market with very little hope of choice." What is common for the people in this bottom market is that they all have poor financial means and that they have perhaps been classified by officials as "hopeless" or "incapable" to live in any other way (ibid., p. 185-192.) By focusing on people's characteristics and classifying them in terms such as incapable or hopeless, the focus is shifted away from structural issues and lacks in the welfare system. People in the bottom barrel are not disconnected only because of social problems but because they lack protective social marginal such as income, employment, family and friends (Dhalmann and Karppinen, 2018: 156).

3.4 Approaches and programmes to tackle homelessness

The roots of Finnish homeless reduction policies can be traced back to the 1960s when many homeless men froze to death during the cold winter months (Saari, 2015: 135). These tragic events prompted action, and since then homelessness policy has been built as a part of the national housing policy and housing programmes (ibid.). Tainio and Fredriksson (2009) write that the foundation for the current system was largely built in the late 1980s. The first time the elimination of homelessness was made a government programme objective was in 1987. Alongside existing housing and welfare policies, more specific measures were developed to meet the needs of homeless people (ibid., p. 184). Services for homeless people became a core part of local authorities' services in cooperation with housing, social welfare and health authorities. In 1995, a new paragraph to section 19 was added to the Constitution of Finland stating that "it is the right task of public authorities to promote the right of everyone to housing and to the opportunity to arrange their own housing" (ibid., p. 185). However, as Timonen (1996: 33) points out, this does not mean that all residents have subjective right to a dwelling; instead, the section emphasises that the state and the local authorities have an obligation to take active measures to ensure that the civil right to a home is implemented.

Despite these improvements described above, Tainio and Fredriksson (2009: 185) argue that the approach Finland has traditionally adopted to cater for homeless people is known as the "staircase model", providing housing in a series of stages. In the staircase model people must "earn" their homes. In practice this has meant that homeless service users must demonstrate their ability and willingness to move from one level to another. Moving

from one level to another, homeless people are required to agree on certain rules and conditions (such as abstinence). This in turn has meant that many homeless people who have substance misuse problems have fallen out of the system when they have failed to meet the requirements. Although the staircase model serves well those who are committed to life changes and an intoxicant-free life, it excludes those who are not capable or willing to adopt an alternative lifestyle. (ibid.)

 For the first time towards the end of the 1990s accommodation was organized on the Housing First approach, without, for example, insisting that service users must be substance-free. According to Tainio and Fredriksson (ibid., p. 189) this principle refers to the following idea:

> "Solutions to social and health problems cannot be a condition for organizing accommodation: on the contrary, accommodation is a requirement which also allows other problems of people who have been homeless to be solved. Having somewhere to live makes it possible to strengthen life management skills and is conductive to purposeful activity"

In this approach a person does not have to 'earn' his or her home. According to Tainio and Fredriksson (ibid.) "a person is allocated independent accommodation, a 'home', and services that differ in their intensity are established around this. The clients or residents are often the most excluded/marginalized, in poor physical and mental health with severe substance abuse problems. The main aspects of the Housing First in the Finnish context are secure accommodation with tenancy agreement, reducing the use of conventional shelters, preventing evictions, drafting plans for individual rehabilitation, offering guidance on the use of normal social welfare and health services and encourage civil action. (ibid., p. 187-189) Pleace et al. (2015: 13) add that "the most important issue in the Finnish homelessness policy has been loyalty to the most important principles of the Housing First philosophy which are permanence of housing, the principle of harm reduction and the right of the customers to make choices with regard to support services."

3.4.1 PAAVO I (*Pitkäaikaisasunnottomuuden vähentämisohjelma 2008-2011*)
Kaakinen (2012: 15) writes that the foundation for the PAAVO programme was laid out in the Name on the Door (*nimi ovessa*) report by the Four Wise Group (*neljän viisaan ryhmä*) in 2007. The group stated that the homelessness phenomenon had become more complex and prolonged, meaning that the "easy part" of the phenomenon had been dealt

with (Fredriksson and Kaakinen, 2018: 116). What was left was short-term, temporary "friction homelessness" (*kitka-asunnottomuus*) and the hard core of the homeless, referring to homeless people with social and health problems who require considerable amounts of services and support. The report indicated that to remove long-term homelessness required distinctive housing, social and health policy measures and an innovative combination of these policies. The Name on the Door report highlighted that removal of long-term homeless is an ethical, juridical and socio-economic question. The ethical side stressed the importance of a human's right to housing and that an adequate dwelling is a signal of equal belonging to society. The juridical aspect referred to various international commitments, for example United Nation's human rights declaration, to which Finland is committed. Lastly, the socio-economic aspect stated that elimination of long-term homelessness is an appropriate and good economic investment. (ibid.)

The Housing First principle was also applied in Paavo I, a programme to reduce long-term Homelessness (2008-2011) which was approved by the Finnish government in 2008. Programme implementation involved the Ministry of Social Affairs, Criminal Sanctions Agency, The Housing Finance and Development Corporation of Finland and Finland's Slot Machine Association (Pleace et al., 2015: 17). The programme was based on letters of intent between the state and ten municipalities[5] with the largest percentages of homeless people (Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009: 188).

The aim of PAAVO I was to halve long-term homelessness by 2011 and to improve prevention of homelessness (Tainio and Fredriksson, 2009: 97). The core idea was to allocate services and safe and independent housing solutions to long-term homeless people with appropriate and tailored support (Fredriksson and Kaakinen, 2018: 118). In doing so the programme was designed to provide 1250 new dwellings and supported housing places for homeless people in the ten cities (Pleace et al., 2015: 17). One key target (if not the most important one) of the programme was to convert temporary shelters to Housing First units, providing residents with permanent tenancies. During PAAVO I significant investments were also made to provide more housing advisory services. These services included, for example, broad-based efforts to prevent different housing-related problems and eviction processes. The estimated cost of the programme was 170€ million

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[5] These ten municipalities were Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Turku, Lahti, Jyväskylä, Kuopio, Joensuu and Oulu.

(Kaakinen 2012: 3).

PAAVO I achieved positive results. For example, long-term homelessness was reduced by 28% between 2008 and 2011, and by the end of 2011, a total of 1519 dwellings and supportive housing units had been completed in the ten participating cities, exceeding the original 1250 dwelling target (Karppinen and Fredriksson, 2016: 4). Cost-wise, providing housing for one long-term homeless person can save annually approximately 15 000€ of public funds (Ympäristöministeriö, 2016: 4). Benjaminsen and Knutagård (2016: 52) write that the success of the programme lays in the comprehensive national strategy "with intensive focus on reducing long-term homelessness backed by substantial resources devoted to establishing new housing units and converting shelters into permanent housing."

3.4.2 PAAVO II (*2012-2015*)

The second phase of the programme, PAAVO II, took place between 2012 and 2015. The same ten cities signed the letter of intent with Pori joining the programme in 2013. The aims of PAAVO II were to eliminate long-term homelessness by 2015, to reduce the risk of long-term homelessness by making the use of social housing rental stock more efficient, to create more effective measures to prevent homelessness and to develop more scattered housing alternatives with appropriate floating support (Pleace et al., 2015: 20). Also, hidden homelessness was addressed. The aim was to provide 1000 new dwellings for the homeless by 2015 (Karppinen and Fredriksson, 2016: 4). The programme was led by the Ministry of Environment and the overall funding of the programme was nearly 100€ million, of which approximately 69€ million was allocated to housing and approximately 31€ million to service production and development (ibid., p. 3).

To effectively prevent homelessness, housing advice services and housing social work (*asumissosiaalityö*) were expanded (ARA, 2019). According to Karppinen and Fredriksson (2016: 27), housing advice work, which is a part of social housing work, is the most effective form of prevention in Finland. Housing advice is offered by both social services and social housing companies (Pleace et al., 2015: 20). Housing advice work is a one form of low intensity work which is not only successful in preventing evictions and securing the continuity of housing but is also cost-effective. Dhalmann and Karppinen (2018: 164) add that prevention of homelessness is a social investment—when the system adopts a more preventative approach, that is, acting before the damage has occurred, the

outcome is often more positive, and it also reduces the cost. In 2012-2013, in Helsinki there were over 16 000 housing advice clients, and thanks to the advice work, 280 evictions were cancelled. In addition to professional workers, the role of "experts by experience" (*kokemusasiantuntija*) have been acknowledged, and the aim has also been to strengthen their role in guiding and supporting clients. (Pleace et al., 2015: 20.).

During PAAVO II multiple scattered housing projects were launched with appropriate support provided to previously homeless people. Pleace et al. (2015: 21) write that mobile support services were developed, referring to the synonymous concept of floating support, which is given to someone in their own homes. Low intensity services, such as floating support are usually provided by social services and by many third sector organizations. The programme highlighted the notion that "homelessness services are increasingly understood as being a necessary and permanent part of the housing policy of the state and municipalities." (ibid., p. 21-22)

Although the programme did not meet the target of eliminating long-term homelessness, it succeeded to permanently reduce long-term homelessness on a national level, thanks to carefully planned cooperation strategy (Pleace et al., 2105). The number of long-term homeless people reduced by 1345 (35%) during the PAAVO programmes (ibid.). 3523 new dwellings were provided for the homeless people during the programme, exceeding the original target (Karppinen and Fredriksson, 2016: 23). Also, significant improvements and new approaches were established. For example, the programme was successful in terms of developing scattered housing alternatives with floating support and preventative services (ibid., p. 20). As both programmes included various stakeholders and service providers, ranging from the state to municipalities, to NGO partnerships, the coordinated, cooperation strategy was of great importance in the success that followed. In this regard, other countries have much to learn from the PAAVO programmes (ibid., p. 24). Furthermore, the results of both PAAVO programmes have also been permanent, as long-term housing solutions have been provided to the "hard core" (long-term homeless people) of homeless population. The evaluators (Pleace at el., 2015: 12) of the programme conclude that:

> "Despite the success of the programme's activities, it should not be forgotten that
> any increase or decrease in homelessness is tied not only to homelessness policy but
> also to other changes and developments in social policy. In addition to this,
> homelessness is a constantly changing phenomenon; one topical challenge that could

be mentioned is the significant increase in homelessness among people with an immigrant background. Work on homelessness is a field of social policy that requires constant development, concerning both the supply of housing as well as the support focused on preventing homelessness."

3.4.3 AUNE (*Asunnottomuuden ennaltaehkäisyn toimenpideohjelma 2016-2019*)

The third stage of the implementation of an integrated homelessness strategy called "Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness" or AUNE began during spring 2016. Alongside the state, ten cities[6], NGOs, foundations and national church took part in the programme (Karppinen 2020, 2). The programme was led by the Ministry of the Environment[7] and the estimated budget for the programme was 78€ million, of which 24€ million was allocated to service development and the rest for housing supply (ibid. 2). The aim was to deliver 2500[8] new dwellings for homeless people and those who are at risk of becoming homeless. Gender, youth and migrant homelessness were also highlighted in the Action Plan (Pleace, 2017: 8). Focus was also given to people with previous rent arrears and debts, as these are often barriers that can jeopardize one's access to housing (ibid.). The programme objective was to continue the homeless reduction work by strengthening the prevention of homelessness and preventing the recurrence of homelessness (Ympäristöministeriö, 2016: 3). Research evidence has shown that around 400 people who used homeless services ended up homeless again between 2012 and 2015, pointing to the fact that the fragmented housing, social, health and employment services do not recognise the early risks of homelessness and prevention but instead, at its worst, can even cause homelessness to occur (Karppinen and Fredriksson, 2016: 35). The paper issued by the Ministry of the Environment (2016: 3) stated that the goal of the action plan was to link homelessness work more extensively to the wider work on preventing social exclusion, with Housing First still operating as a backbone. Pleace (2017: 9) adds that there was a broader narrative in the Action Plan, which reflects not only on homelessness

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[6] These cities were Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Oulu, Lahti, Jyväskylä, Kuopio, Pori and Hyvinkää. Helsinki did not sign the letter of intent but participated in the programme. Additionally, KUUMA-municipalities Hyvinkää, Järvenpää, Kerava, Kirkkonummi, Mäntsälä, Nurmijärvi, Pornainen, Sipoo, Tuusula and Vihti joined the programme in 2018.
[7] In addition to Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and Criminal Sanctions Agency were also involved in the programme.
[8] Based on the letters of intent between the state and the participating municipalities, it was agreed that 1910 dwellings will be delivered for homelessness work.

but also wider socio-economic issues. The Ministry of the Environment (2016: 3) described target groups and objectives as follows:

> "Ensuring that housing is secured whenever the client is met in the service system. The target group of the programme includes people who have recently become homeless and those who have been homeless for longer periods, as well as people at risk of becoming homeless, such as young people or families overburdened by debt or at risk of eviction, some of the young people leaving their childhood home for independent life, people undergoing mental health rehabilitation and substance abuse rehabilitation, clients transitioning from institutions to independent living, child welfare after-care service clients and some of the young people whose child welfare after-care ends when they become 21, asylum seekers who have received a residence permit but have failed to integrate, as well as homeless released prisoners or prisoners going on parole."

The programme laid great emphasis on preventative measures. Like with any other social problem, prevention is also key in the battle of homelessness. Dhalmann and Karppinen (2018: 157) have identified three stages that preventative measures can be applied to different points of homelessness: 1) PRE: secure housing, for example assisting in rent payment and providing financial and social guidance; 2) IN: to prevent the circumstances of a homeless person to get any worse by taking care of basic needs such as shelter and health; 3) POST: to prevent homelessness from occurring again and helping the individual to integrate into wider society. Prevention is a broad field as pathways to homelessness are complex—prevention work requires understanding of both the structural and individual causes of homelessness (Karppinen, 2020: 8). Hence, prevention must be placed in a wider context which include questions of employment, unstable employee relations and intergenerational transmission of disadvantages. Therefore, homelessness policy must move from a "special group" approach to the wider field of exclusion prevention work, as there are more vulnerable people in the housing market (ibid.).

The programme was successful in many levels. Statistics by ARA (2020) show that individual homelessness reduced by 2050 people between 2016 and 2019, and in 2019, for the first time, long-term homelessness fell under 1000 people. Further, 2142 new dwellings were delivered, which exceeded the amount agreed on the letters of intent by a couple of hundred (Karppinen, 2020: 26). The role of housing advice/guidance work was greatly improved—by the end of 2019, 92 housing advisors were working in the

participating cities. Their output was significant; in 2019, 5438 interventions to stop eviction were made on behalf of the housing advisors (ibid., p. 24). Also, 3 out of 4 people who used homeless services during the programme succeeded in their housing, indicating that homelessness work has developed and provided positive results (ibid., p. 38). During the programme 45 separately funded (sub)projects[9] were launched, which produced innovative and new models to tackle homelessness. For example, the "*pienlaina*" project of the Guarantee Foundation was developed to prevent low-income households from becoming overburdened by debt, offering a solution of risk insurance equivalent to home insurance for those with no clean credit (Pitkänen et al. 2019, 51). In addition, subprojects to provide information on housing for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers were organized especially in the beginning of the programme, when an exceptionally large number of foreign people arrived in Finland (Karppinen, 2020: 30). The role of experts by experience was enhanced, and in addition 34 housing sponsors (*asumiskummi*) who are mainly Somali-background stay-at-home moms, were introduced in Helsinki to support immigrants in their housing (ibid., p. 24).

However, as a form of utmost exclusion, the elimination of homelessness requires systematic work in even broader national and international context (Pleace, 2017: 4). Preventative work should be at the heart of these elimination attempts. The aim of the current Finnish government is to halve homelessness by 2022 and eliminate it by 2027 (Karppinen, 2020: 44). Municipalities with the highest number of homeless people are invited to join the programme led by the Ministry of the Environment (Ympäristöministeriö, 2020). The new programme also highlights issues related to rising housing costs and a lack of affordable housing. The risk of becoming homeless affects an ever more heterogenous group of people and has become more connected to financial difficulties and indebtedness. The objectives of the programme are to increase affordable and state-subsidized housing for homeless people in Finland's metropolitan area and centres of growth; enhance homeless work and skills related to it in basic services that municipalities offer; improve housing advice work; and to consolidate co-operation especially on the municipal and regional level. (ibid., p. 2-3)

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[9] For more information on these projects, see for example Karppinen, 2020: 15-19.

3.5 Services and support for homeless and substance misusers in Helsinki

The City of Helsinki provides various services and support for homeless people. The homeless support unit organises housing service for homeless adult residents, childless couple, mental health clients and for residents under the age of 65 (Helsinki, 2021c). The unit offers housing advisory services, placement, evaluation and social work for supported living and the Hietaniemenkatu service centre. The Hietaniemenkatu Service Centre[10] offers round-the-clock services for the homeless including daily activities, emergency housing service, social and health care services and temporary accommodation. The city also offers supported housing for homeless people over 18 years, who have problems with substances and life management (ibid). Residents for these supported housing units are selected by homeless unit's SAS-team (*selvitä-arvioi-sijoita-tiimi)*. The city also offers low-threshold daily activity services[11] in three different locations for people who have mental health and substance abuse problems (Helsinki, 2021d). The aim is to strengthen clients' life management skills and to reduce the harm the abuse causes.

Puttonen (1996, 51) writes that "Finland is said to be a promised land for associations and societies—it has several hundred voluntary organisations operating at both the local and national level for people faced with problems of homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, drugs, young people, the disabled and elderly." Kettunen (2007: 384) adds that hardly any municipality in Finland produces services for the homeless without the third sector. Organisations and association such as Y-Foundation, No Fixed Abode (*VVA*), Blue Ribbon and Deaconess Foundation are few examples of service providers that operate in Helsinki and elsewhere in Finland. For example, No Fixed Abode (*VVA*) is an NGO which aims to reduce homelessness and strengthen the circumstances of homeless people. VVA advocates "that every person can live independently if she or he is provided with adequate conditions and support. Housing is a fundamental right, and its absence cannot be accepted under any circumstances" (VVA, 2021). VVA runs two housing units and offers low-threshold services such as Vepa peer support and voluntary centre, night centre

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[10] "The Hietaniemenkatu Service Centre is a round-the-clock service centre for the homeless. Its purpose is to improve the living conditions of the worst-off homeless people in Helsinki. The centre aims to act as a strongly rehabilitation-oriented unit which refers people requiring further aid to the services they need." Hietaniemenkatu service centre | City of Helsinki. Accessed on 13.4.2021.

[11] These activity centres are called *Symppis*. Located in Kontula, Itäkeskus and Sörnäinen, they provide guidance and support for people from Monday to Friday. Customers can have a low-cost breakfast, read newspapers, watch TV and play billiard.

Kalkkers, housing advisory work, immigrant services, floating support and outreach team Yökiitäjä which moves around the metropolitan area during the night time.

Blue Ribbon and Deaconess Foundations have various housing support units in the metropolitan area which provide housing for homeless people with substance abuse issues and mental health problems. Clients need an affirmative decision from their local social services before they can be housed in the housing units. In addition, both providers offer rehabilitation and replacement therapy for people with substance abuse problems. The city also has four regional psychiatric and substance abuse outpatient care facilities which offer psychiatric examinations, treatment, rehabilitation and treating of harmful addictions, such as alcohol detoxification treatment (Helsinki, 2021e). The city also offers opioid substitution therapy at the Substitution Treatment Assessment Clinic. The clinic coordinates and participates in the development of opioid substitution therapy and supervises substitution therapy provided as a purchased service (ibid.).

4 Research methodology

"Where the hell did the researcher go? Guys, can you actually believe that someone is doing research on me because I am homeless?" (Fieldnotes, November 2015)

4.1 Background of the research and research questions

Some years ago, one housing support unit in Helsinki attracted a significant amount of negative attention in the press. Reporters, politicians, local residents, and many other people expressed their concerns and fears towards the housing support unit and its residents. The residents of the unit were homeless people who suffered from substance misuse and/or mental health problems. The unit operated on a housing first principle, which means that abstinence is not required from the residents. This detail and the location of the unit were the central themes of the discussion and critique.

The more I read about the homelessness phenomenon the more I became interested in the daily practices and routines of homeless people. Prior to this study, I did not personally know any homeless people, and I had no idea where homeless people can spend time, where they can eat, where they can take a shower and wash their clothes. I started to think

of all these little daily things that most of us can do in the comfort of our home. At the beginning, the broad research topic was the everyday lives of homeless people. During the research process, more specific research questions were formulated to explore the everyday lives of the homeless with addiction problems:

1) What are the participants' pathways to homelessness and what factors have contributed to these?

2) How do the participants conceptualise "home" and what does it mean to them?

3) How do the participants manage their daily lives on the streets and what kinds of survival strategies do they employ?

4.2 Researching the marginal

Homelessness is a difficult phenomenon to research. One reason for this is what Lehtonen and Salonen (2008: 18) call the "service user paradox" referring to the fact that the available statistics are often based on the users of services, leaving others beyond the scope of data. In addition, the methods often applied in social sciences are insufficient in homeless research; for example, it is difficult to post questionnaires to people who do not have an address. Furthermore, as Ohisalo and Saari (2014: 14) note, questionnaires and surveys rarely provide a detailed picture of the circumstances and wellbeing of those who are the most vulnerable. In the Finnish welfare state, disadvantage accumulates and condenses to the glens of disadvantage (*huono-osaisuuden notkelmat*) and people living in these glens are difficult to reach (ibid.). Often interviewees can only be reached through the services they use, if they use any at all. Also, as homelessness is understood as a crisis in people's lives, they may not have the tools and strength to analyse the causes and consequences that have led them to homelessness. (Lehtonen and Salonen, 2008: 18.)

The situation is similar for people who abuse illicit substances. According to Bourgois (1995: 12) Most drug users and dealers distrust representatives of mainstream society and will not reveal their intimate experiences of substance abuse or criminal enterprise to a stranger on a survey instrument." Therefore, Bourgois (ibid.) continues, traditional social science research techniques which rely on census statistics or other sample surveys "cannot access with any degree of accuracy the people who survive in the underground economy and much less those who sell or take illegal drugs." Hence, people who are faced with what I call the "double burden", that is being homeless and a substance abuser,

need to be studied with appropriate research methods that take these issues into consideration.

In relation to this, Granfelt (1998: 50) notes how macro-level studies that have traditionally dominated poverty and marginalization studies fail to consider people's personal experiences and survival strategies. Granfelt (ibid., p. 76) continues that different research approaches are needed in homelessness studies to capture the diverse experiences of homeless people with individual life histories and stories. Murto (1978: 28) in his research on homeless alcoholics, argues that information about their living situations and lifestyles cannot be investigated solely by analysing structural mechanisms, but information is also needed from people living on the edges of society, about their aspirations, lives and hopes. In addition, Spradley (1977: 14), writing on heroin addicts, illustrates how these people live in different sociocultural worlds, and if we are to study those worlds, the researcher must begin his or her journey by describing the perspectives and contexts where people's lives take place. Glasser (1988: 48) adds that for example anthropologists, who often use ethnographic methods "can use their skill in observing, describing, and understanding groups of people in order to enable the unseen, economically and politically marginal groups in contemporary society to have a voice in social policies that shape their destinies."

4.3 Ethnographic research

Ethnography is a broad and contested methodology. Its roots in anthropology of non-Western cultures and distant destinations, and the Chicago School of sociology focusing on urban cities and their dwellers, ethnographic research indeed draws from various perspectives. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 2) write that due to this complex history of ethnography, there is no well-defined or one standard meaning of what ethnography is. Hence, ethnography has been redefined, reinterpreted and recontextualized in various ways in different disciplinary contexts (ibid.; Atkinson et al., 2001; Taylor, 2002). Vanhala (2005: 7), for example, writes that "ethnography is a form of social research which brings out those frequently routine habits by which people survive and function in everyday life." Spradley (1977: 3) has defined ethnography as the science of cultural description. In ethnographic research cultural phenomenon is studied from the participants' perspectives. As Soloway and Walters (1977: 161) argue "every culture has a world view, an orientation, which defines and orders reality, and the ethnographer seeks to present a

description of human behaviour, which reflects the universe of the native." The distinctive feature of ethnography, which sets it apart from other research approaches, is that it "remains firmly rooted in the first-hand exploration of research settings; it is this sense of social exploration and protracted investigation that gives ethnography its abiding and continuing character" (Atkinson et al., 2001: 5).

The task of an ethnographer is to describe ways of life among groups, how they define their world, and how they behave in their everyday lives (ibid.,13; Hammersley, 1990: 1). Ethnography is learning by experience. Taylor (2002: 3) adds that "ethnographers set out to study people and aspects of their lives and social worlds to produce a research text." By doing so, "the ethnographic researcher is said to obtain an insider's view of a society and so to understand other people's own worldview, instead of taking the outsider's perspective of the conventional scientists; ethnographic research is said to produce situated knowledge rather than universals, and to capture the detail of social life" (ibid.). Clifford Geertz (1973) has used the term "thick description" to illustrate focus on detail, context, culture and going beyond the surface in observation and interpretation in ethnographic research. The focus of ethnographic research is usually a single setting or a group of relatively small scale (Hammersley, 1990: 2).

One field of ethnography that has been adopted specially to study illicit drug users, prostitutes and hustlers, who are often found on the street, is "street ethnography" (Weppner, 1977: 29). Weppner (ibid.) continues that "street ethnography is a loose term which has been applied conventionally among its practitioners to denote their activities." Spradley (1977: 13) argues that "street ethnography implies that people who spend much of their lives on the streets have acquired a culture of their own." This research approach is well-suited also for the study of homeless people. Without housing, one must rely exhaustively on public spaces and amenities to satisfy basic needs—life and everyday practices often take place in the public domain. As I wanted to acquire information on how homeless people with addiction problems navigate their lives in poor circumstances without housing, and what kind of practices they utilize to survive and satisfy their basic needs, the ethnographic approach seemed an appropriate methodological choice. Going to my "participants' level" and meeting them in their preferred locations and surroundings, prompted insightful and deep conversations that could have not taken place with any other type of research.

Gobo (2008: 5) writes that in ethnographic studies the data are gathered from a range of sources, but central data collection methods are observation in the field, informal conversations, interviews and documentary materials (such as diaries, letters, newspaper articles and photographs). Gobo continues that what "most distinguishes ethnography from other methodologies is the role of 'protagonist' assigned to observation as its primary source of information." The main observation strategies are participant observation and non-participant observation. Gobo notes that in the former case the researcher establishes a direct relationship with the social actors, interacts with them and participates in their everyday lives. (ibid.) Participant observation requires a significant relationship between the researcher and the researched; the researcher is more than a researcher in the setting that he or she is studying (Perälä, 2002: 71). The concept of immersion is associated with participant observation, as the researcher should be able to navigate in the "foreign culture" effortlessly, by being familiar with at least some of the practices that the researched apply (ibid.). In non-participant observation the researcher observes the subjects "from a distance" without interacting with them in order to minimize any influence on their behaviour (Gobo, 2008: 5). However, there is a fine line between these two observation strategies and as Murto (1978: 27) points out, in real research settings these strategies often overlap and are used somewhat simultaneously. In addition, covert participant observation refers to an observation strategy, where an ethnographer carries out research without participants being aware that research is taking place (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 10).

Data collection, in most cases, is unstructured, meaning that it does not involve following a detailed plan, yet this does not mean that ethnographic research is unsystematic but rather refers to the notion that data are collected "in as raw a form, and on as wide a front, as feasible" (Hammersley, 1990: 2). Bourgois (1995: 123) adds that by doing so "ethnographers violate the canons of positivist research; we become intimately involved with the people we study." Brewer (2000: 105) argues that ethnographic data are always autobiographical as "ethnographers have to select from an infinite series of events on the basis on their personal interests; and the socio-biographical characteristics of the ethnographer compared to people in the field can affect what is seen and recorded and how it is interpreted." Hence, the data provide a portrait from one person's vantage point. (ibid.)

4.4 Getting access and research participants

The biggest concern and problem regarding this study was to find people who were willing to take part. I had never thought that finding research participants could be so time-consuming and difficult. My only criteria for a participant was that he or she was obviously homeless, and that the study locality was Helsinki. Helsinki as a locality was chosen because of convenience, and because most of the homeless people are located in Helsinki. The problem was not that I did not find homeless people. Quite the opposite. For example, In Helsinki, there are low threshold day centres where homeless people can spend time, get advice and have something to eat and drink. These centres are open to everyone. During summer 2015, I visited one of these day centres. I spoke to a staff member and told her that I was doing research on homelessness, and I was there to look for participants. She welcomed me and said that I could freely approach people there and talk to them. During this visit, I met some homeless people who did speak to me and expressed interest towards my research, but the problem was that most of them were not too keen to let me "hang out" with them and to observe their daily lives, which is very understandable. Few people on the other hand did show interest and even gave me their phone numbers but when I later tried to contact them the numbers were not in use, or they did not reply. At the time, I was already keeping a research diary, so I documented the "recruitment process" to record the difficulties I faced with finding participants. The level of frustration and fear of not knowing if I could find a suitable person was strongly evident in my notes. Also, I was becoming more uncertain about the approach I had chosen. Perhaps people would have agreed on an interview but the fact that I was more interested in getting to know about their daily lives through observation was too much for many:

> *"It has been several months, and I still have not managed to find a person who would like to take part in my research. I understand that having some random person following and hanging out with you must sound strange. Perhaps it is too much to ask... I am sure that most of the people I have met so far, have enough on their plate without me asking them to take part in my study. If I cannot find someone soon, I think I have to consider changing my approach."* (Research diary notes, August 2015).

After few months of writing the quote above I finally found a person who was willing to take part in my research. This person was Tatu. I randomly met him outside a bar in October. There was something about him that had caught my attention as a potential

participant for this research. I approached him and we started to chat. First, I thought that he was just drunk, but I soon realised that perhaps he was on drugs as well. His pupils seemed small, and he constantly stepped back and forth. He told me that he had gotten out of prison a while ago and was back on the streets again. The language he used was quite colourful and he cursed a lot.

Despite the strong language, he seemed like a nice person, so I thought that I could take my chances and tell him about my research. At that point I was not overly optimistic, as my previous attempts to find participants had been quite unsuccessful, to say the least. Surprisingly, he did seem interested, but he was a bit sceptical about what I could achieve by "following him" and "hanging out with him." However, I got his number, and I was incredibly pleased later when I phoned him, the number was in fact working, and he actually answered my call. Perhaps most importantly, he was still willing to help.

Later, when my fieldwork period with Tatu had already ended, I came across a person who I had met at the low threshold day centre. He had then given me his number but despite numerous of attempts, I had not been able to reach him. Months later though, while I was passing by a subway station, I saw him "hanging out" in front of the main entrance with couple of other people. At that point I was not sure if I had enough material for my research, but I was hesitant to approach him as I did not know if he even remembered me. Below is a quote from my fieldnotes:

> *I saw Jarkko today when I was passing by a subway station. It was months ago when I first met him. I had tried to call him several times, but I had given up after a while because he had not returned my calls and later the number was not in use anymore. I hesitated whether I should approach him. There was a big chance he would not remember me and also, I did not want to come across as a weird stalker who haunts people. I decided that I would walk by and casually say hi. As I did so, he turned to me and ask if he knew me. Slightly embarrassed I explained that I had met him months ago at a day centre and I had then briefly talked with him. At this point the one of the guys who was standing there took part in the conversation by laughing and asking if I had met him too. I mumbled something about my research and my attempts of getting in touch with Jarkko.* (Fieldnotes, January 2016).

Despite my obviously clumsy attempt to remind Jarkko of my study and his previous "maybe I can help you out" promise at the day centre, this random meeting with him was successful, and he became my second participant in this research. At this point, it is

perhaps useful to give some background information about my research participants. I have given pseudonyms to my participants to protect their identities. I have also given pseudonyms to my participants' friends and acquaintances who appear in this research.

4.4.1 Tatu

Tatu is a single man in his late thirties. He is originally from the Southern Savonia region, but he has lived in Helsinki for almost 15 years. He comes from a working-class family, and he has one younger brother and one half-sister, who has never lived with them. His half-sister is a doctor, and his brother works in the construction field. His mother, who was close to him, died of cancer when Tatu was in his mid-twenties. His relationship with his father has always been difficult, due to the father's aggressive and abusive nature. Based on Tatu's stories, he was molested and beaten by his father on several different occasions between ages 3 and 5. The molestation had stopped when Tatu's mum had caught the father. The physical and verbal violence between the two continued until the day Tatu moved out from the house. He was 19 at the time. Since then, Tatu has spoken to his father a few times on the phone, but they have not met in person. His siblings nowadays live in different cities, and he speaks to them occasionally.

These traumatic childhood events have played a significant role in Tatu's life, and his problems started at a young age. He spent some time in a residential school setting (*koulukoti*) but managed to get through comprehensive schooling. In Tatu's own words he was also "easily bored and always in need of excitement." The excitement came from stealing and causing a "general hassle." After compulsory schooling Tatu started a vocational school in the metal-working field. After the first semester, the head teacher had suggested that perhaps partial distance learning could work better for Tatu. According to Tatu, this was due to the fact "that so many tools and light machinery went missing." Despite all the difficulties Tatu managed to get his diploma but has not work in the field.

Tatu's passion is floorball and ball games in general. He played in a floorball team when he was younger. According to Tatu "sports have always been an important part of his life, a channel he can relieve his anger and resentment." However, a move to Helsinki and increasing use of substances meant that there was less time for sports. According to Tatu "general hassle, drugs, alcohol, crimes and searching for a place to stay" occupied his days. However, later while he has been incarcerated or in rehabilitation, sports such as jogging, and the gym, have played an important part of keeping him sober and occupied.

On top of being homeless Tatu also has a substance misuse problem. He abuses alcohol, uses cannabis, amphetamine and benzodiazepines. He has regularly used alcohol and cannabis since he was a teenager. Other drugs have also been a part of Tatu's life for few decades now. In his own words "he has pretty much tried all other drugs but heroin." He has a long criminal record, and he has been in prison 6 times, and has received multiple conditional sentences over the past 20 years. His sentences have varied from serving a few months for unpaid fines to over three years for attempted manslaughter. Other sentences include thefts, and assaults.

4.4.2 Jarkko

Jarkko is in his early thirties. During this research Jarkko was also single. Originally from Northern Finland, Jarkko has lived in Helsinki for almost ten years. What brought him to the capital was "bigger circles, more opportunities and old friends." Jarkko comes from a broken family background. His father had a violent nature and domestic violence was a regular feature in Jarkko's childhood. His mom divorced Jarkko's father when Jarkko was around 12 years old. Both of his parents were alcoholics and occasionally drugs were also involved in their family life. Due to his parents' substance abuse, Jarkko and his younger sister spent periods in foster care when they were younger. According to Jarkko "he has never had any real hobbies" apart from hanging around with his friends. His parents "were not bothered with any hobbies and they were not in a condition to take him or his sister to any activities, neither had they the financial means to do so."

Substances have always been a part of Jarkko's life. Given his family background Jarkko learned from an early age what alcohol and drugs were. Jarkko himself has used drugs for almost half of his life. The story is similar for his younger sister. Jarkko started with alcohol and cannabis, and by the time he was fifteen he was injecting amphetamine. Due to his long history of drug use Jarkko's educational attainment is compulsory schooling. Later, he started construction studies in vocational school but dropped out after few months. He has never work "legally." His main drug nowadays is amphetamine. He does not drink excessively but consumes alcohol on a weekly basis. He uses benzodiazepines to "calm himself down" and to sleep. Jarkko also has a criminal record, and he has served four sentences ranging from thefts to aggravated assault. His longest sentence has been just over two years. In addition, Jarkko also received conditional sentences. During his

prison time he has managed to withdraw from amphetamine, but he has "always got back on the gear" sooner or later after his release.

Although both of my participants share similar experiences, which are being homeless and suffering from addiction problems, they are still two different individuals with their personal difficulties and challenges. Every person has a his or her own personality and ways of interacting with others. Personality-wise, I would describe Tatu as straightforward, outspoken, loud and easily approachable. Jarkko, on the other hand, was slightly more distant, quieter and more considerate. However, under the influence of drugs and alcohol, the personalities of my participants occasionally altered and changed. There were occasions when they expressed pure anger and signs of violent behaviour. Also, occasionally I got to witness bursts of frustration and sadness stemming from their current situations. However, both had also certain level of toughness in their character, reflecting on their experiences on the streets and "drug circles." To my knowledge, the men did not know each other personally. Yet, I do not know this for sure, as the fieldwork periods were different for both of my participants.

4.5 Fieldwork and data

I carried out my fieldwork between October 2015 and March 2016. The beginning of the fieldwork was rather chaotic. Perälä, (2011: 42) in his ethnographic study of the drug market in Helsinki, writes how his habitus and lack of understanding the slang caused difficulties at the beginning of his fieldwork. My experiences are similar to Perälä's. I really struggled with the language and slang my participants used. Also, prior to this research, I did not have experience "hanging out" with people who use drugs. All of a sudden, I was in situations where people inject drugs, are heavily intoxicated and occasionally behave in an unpredictable manner. The first few weeks I basically spent wondering what I got myself into, how I could ever build relationships and rapport with people whose lifestyles were quite different to mine, and if my participants would ever trust me enough to share their experiences. It should be noted here that it took time to build trust and rapport, especially with Jarkko. Tatu, on the other hand, shared his experiences quite openly from the beginning and was eager to show me around.

The first few weeks of observing my first participant's (Tatu) life, I found everything interesting and worth of taking notes. This is perhaps explained by my novice position related to my research topic; everything was new and strange to me. Eventually, I started

to grasp little things here and there, and to notice certain patterns and routines that my participant had. When I started to observe my second participant's everyday activities, similar patterns and routines emerged and they were easier to grasp and make sense of. However, this is not to argue that they both had the exact same patterns and routines. During my fieldwork I utilized a "hanging around" approach applied, for example, by Rosenthal (1990) in his work on homeless people. According to Rosenthal (ibid., p. 118-9) "hanging out allows the researcher to come to know individuals in their multi-faceted wholeness, while simultaneously building a trusting relationship that allows and encourages an informant to discuss aspects of the life he or she might otherwise refrain from explaining." This hanging out approach allowed me to observe and learn without too much disturbing the everyday lives of these two men, and it also was an excellent approach to build rapport and get to know my participants better. The first observations with both men happened in public spaces and did not last awfully long. I thought that at the beginning it is better to meet my participants in "small doses" so that I do not bother them too much. After all, I was an unfamiliar person, with interest to research someone's personal life and experiences. As I got to know my research participants better, the observations extended from public and semi-public spaces such as malls, bars and day centres to private flats.

Most of the time Jarkko did introduce me to his friends and acquaintances. He usually used my first name. Occasionally, when Tatu remembered to introduce me, he often referred to me as "a researcher who does research on him because he is homeless." Few times I was also called "a reporter" or "social worker." In general, most of the men's friends and acquaintances came to know who I was, and what my "role" was, but on some occasions, for example, when I visited low-threshold centres with my participants, I did not feel the need to disclose specifically to everyone who I was and what I was doing. There were also a couple of occasions during the fieldwork period when I wanted the whole world around me to know that I was only carrying out my research:

> *We headed down to the subway station. Tatu's behaviour was becoming more aggressive while Jesse was actually calming down. At the platform Tatu staggered around and complained what kind of a "wuss" Jesse was because he did not want to help. At this point people moved further away from us and I could not help but notice the looks they gave towards our direction. Soon Tatu spotted a friend and shouted "Riku where the hell are you going, get your ass here, I need your help."*

Riku came to us and Tatu started to explain his plan for work. The subway came and we got in. Tatu and Riku went to sit down, and Jesse and I went to stand next to them. The talk about "today's work" continued as we travelled towards the city centre. Based on his nodding Riku obviously knew what kind of "work" or "job" Tatu was referring to. Somewhere near Herttoniemi station Tatu turned to Jesse and asked for more pills as in his opinion "he still needed more encouragement to go to work." Jesse started to go through his pockets asking what exactly Tatu wanted. There was no attempt to lower their voices or hide their doings from fellow-passengers. People around the guys were fully aware of what was going on and few of them got up and switched seats." (Fieldnotes, December 2015).

The data in this research consist of both participant and non-participant observation, informal, and unstructured interviews and conversations. I also had the chance to ride along with No Fixed Adobe's Yökiitäjä one time in January 2016, to observe and get to know this outreach service, and how it helps the homeless on the streets. During the research process, I also took part in a few panels and one neighbourhood event, to gain wider understanding of the homeless phenomenon and substance abuse issues. The fieldwork, depending on the condition of my participants, lasted from only a couple of minutes to several hours (cf. Perälä, 2011). Occasionally, my participants were so intoxicated, or their behaviour was too unpredictable, that I decided it was best if I would carry out fieldwork another day. Also, despite observing a few occasions when they were in the middle of "working", I usually withdrew myself from those situations, not only to protect myself but also my participants.

I took notes on my notebook, pieces of paper and I also used my phone to save important notes and observations. On many occasions, the fieldwork was rather fast-paced, and situations changed quickly, so I only had time to write down single words or bullet points of events and conversations. When this happened, I usually wrote more comprehensive fieldnotes as soon as I got home. Also, occasionally it felt inappropriate to pull out my notebook and take notes when I, for example, visited my participants friends' flats. Those visits that I took notes of, I asked all the people involved if it was ok to write down some observations. Most of the data are collected in Finnish, except some fieldnotes and self-reflections which I had directly written down in English.

When I proposed to my participants that I would also like to conduct a more formal interview that would be tape-recorded, I got a firm no as an answer from both men. The

reasons for this are many, Jarkko, for example expressed that "it feels awkward, and pointless to speak to a tape-recorder" and Tatu said that "he does not want his voice to be recorded, and that he has been interrogated enough by the police." I found this slightly contradictory, as they allowed me to follow their days, and they quite openly spoke about their experiences and troubles as being a homeless person with addiction problems. However, the mention of tape-recorder caused them both to become guarded. Other researchers (Perälä, 2002: 72; Vanhala, 2005: 45-6; Okely, 1994: 24) have also encountered difficulties when trying to tape-record interviews or conversations, so I found comfort in the fact that perhaps declining a "formal interview" was not to discredit me as a researcher, but rather my participants simply felt more comfortable talking and interacting with me "like normal people."

Having outlined above some difficulties I encountered with tape-recording, I decided that I would rely on notes that I wrote down during unstructured interviews and conversations. The interviews took place in several different occasions, for example, during a subway ride or in front of a drink or a meal in a bar or a fast-food restaurant. Topics covered during these interviews and conversations ranged from their childhood memories and experiences to recent and current events in their lives. Homelessness, substance abuse, poverty, experiences with the social and health service sector, and encounters with fellow users and acquaintances were among the many topics my participants brought up and discussed. I mainly asked follow-up questions or asked the men to elaborate more when I felt wider context was needed.

Glasser (1988) in her study of the soup kitchen, found out that the best way to acquire information from her participants came out over a long period of time and it also enhanced trust. This was also the case in my study and in addition I felt that my participants were more focused when I did not "burden" them with too many questions at once. It became clear that especially bars, restaurants and subway were places were my participants felt comfortable and open to answer my questions. Although I did not pay the men to take part in this study, I did occasionally buy them meals or a few drinks. Weckroth (2006: 44) argues that "an element of trade" is always evident in ethnographic research; people reveal intimate information about their lives and expect something in return. Perälä (2011: 45) for example in his research drove his participants around, gave few of them old furniture and bought food, drinks and cigarettes. In addition, I noted that the process of collecting data in the form of interviews, is not a one-way street, meaning that I ask

questions and my participants answer them but, they also asked me questions and wanted to know about my life. I would argue that you cannot form any kind of relationship with someone unless you are willing to reveal something about yourself and your own personal experiences and life. Rosenthal (1990: 118) has also noted that "research participants or interviewees are most forthcoming and truthful when they feel themselves to be in a position of teacher, with the researcher in the position of a student." Weppner (1977: 32) reflecting on his study of narcotic addicts, adds that once "they come to trust you, they then are flattered by your interest and readily assume a teaching role." This indeed was the case also in my research. For example, when I was doing fieldwork, especially Tatu told me on several different occasions "to write this down" or "put this in your report." I was also "educated" of not leaving any belongings unattended or going to particular places alone. In addition, both men occasionally had to act as "translators" as I did not understand all the slang words and phrases.

4.6 Thematic analysis

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 158) argue that "in ethnography the analysis of data is not a distinct stage of the research as in many ways it begins in the pre-fieldwork phase, in the formulation and clarification of research problems, and continues through the process of writing reports." Brewer (2000: 105) writes that analysis "can be defined as the process of bringing order to data, organizing what is there into patterns, categories and descriptive units, and looking for relationship between them." The task of ethnographers and other social scientists is to translate their data into to a text of social science argument in a sustained manner, demonstrating relationships between data and concepts or theory (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 193). Many scholars (Whyte, 1943; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Nowell et al., 2017) have pointed to the researcher's responsibility of making their epistemological and other assumptions explicit, by providing detailed description of the analysis process; what was done, how it was done and why it was done. Braun and Clarke (2006: 80) continue that without disclosing this information, "it is difficult to evaluate one's research and to compare and/or synthesise it with other studies on that topic, and it can impede other researchers carrying out related projects in the future." To be transparent of one's own methods of analysis also allows the reader to determine whether the process is credible (Nowell et al., 2017: 2).

The data in ethnographic research are often voluminous and gathered from a variety of

sources, which can pose a challenge to the researcher. Although some critics have pointed out that ethnographic data are small in sample size, "they compensate in the sheer scale and complexity of the data" (Brewer, 2000: 105). As the purpose has been to shed light on my participants' everyday practices and survival strategies on the streets, an analytical approach was required, which allows the phenomenon to be analysed from various angles, from the bottom up, from the perspective of the lived experiences of those studied. I have utilized thematic analysis as my analytical framework for this study. According to Nowell et al. (2017: 2) "thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be widely used across a range of epistemologies and research questions; it is a method of identifying, analysing, organising, describing and reporting themes within a data set." Thematic analysis not only provides a high level of flexibility but also theoretical freedom, which can be modified to many studies that seek to provide a rich, detailed, yet complex account of data (ibid.). To be more specific, I have applied thematic analysis as a realist method which is used "to report experiences, meanings and reality of participants" (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 81).

The process of analysis was data-driven (*aineistolähtöinen*). This means that the analysis was inductive; coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame and allowing the themes to emerge from the data without researcher's theoretical interests (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 83). The first step of the analysis was to reduce the data into more manageable size by loosely coding it. This was done manually in the fieldnotes and transcripts of interviews and conversations by writing notes and using coloured pens to indicate patterns. During my fieldwork period, I had already started to write down specific ideas, tentative interpretations and themes that constantly came up in my fieldwork notes (Okely, 1994: 23). The emerging themes that started to rise from the data revolved around issues of substances, poor social and economic circumstances, and their close links to the main theme of homelessness. In addition, various sub-themes were also identified within the data. Attride-Stirling (2001: 403) argues that by dividing the text into clearly defined groups of themes, allows the researcher "to unravel the mass of textual data and make sense of others sense-making, using more than intuition."

As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 193) point out, it is not easy to construct a coherent account that does justice and also illustrates the complexities of everyday life. Also, as "social life does not present itself as a series of analytical themes, the choice of themes and the relative priority assigned to them is always going to be one of the most significant

decisions that the ethnographer needs to make" (ibid., p. 193-4). Also, it takes enormous effort and time to pool these themes into a cohesive story that illustrate the lived experiences of those studied. However, as Nowell et al. (2017: 2) point out, when we as researchers conduct data analysis, we become the instrument of it, "making judgements about coding, theming, decontextualising and recontextualising the data." Therefore, analysis and interpretation of the data are always to some extent subjective. Dey (1993: 39) defines interpretation as making action meaningful to others, which "requires the development of conceptual tools through which to apprehend the significance of social action and how actions interrelate." Okely (1994: 31) argues that a researcher's interpretations are attained both from the topic/subject-related knowledge and textual scrutiny as well as through the memory of field experience. "The ethnographer, as former participant observer, judges the authenticity of his or her conclusions and interpretations in terms of that total experience" (ibid.). Hence, the analysis presented in the pages to follow includes various segments from the original data to illustrate the reader where my analysis and interpretation stems from.

4.7 The problem with concepts and representation

Granfelt (1998) raises the important question of concepts and how the researcher applies and operationalizes them. The concepts applied to describe a phenomenon have a crucial meaning, especially in research that focuses on people who live on the edges of society and may be stigmatized by their very status. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 205) highlight that "how we write about the social world is of fundamental importance to our own and others' interpretation of it." Daly (1996: 9) takes a similar standpoint by arguing that language and words researchers use and the values we hold, shape our behaviour and views of others. For example, "by exercising our power to name, we construct a social phenomenon, homelessness, the criteria used to define it, and a stereotype of the people to whom it refers" (ibid.).

Granfelt (1998: 19) writes that sometimes the concepts applied may reflect more on the researcher and her or his values than the people and their lives that are being researched. For example, people are often categorized based on their disability, substance abuse, mental health problems or their homeless status. Although sometimes these categorizations are necessary, for example, in relation to provision and allocation of services, the danger is that people belonging to any given category may be treated as a

homogenous group, without any further investigation of their other needs. Labelling or categorizing people to certain (special) groups can lead to descriptions of people and their identity which is built upon their label, undermining all other individual factors such as family relations, gender and educational background (bid., p. 96).

The concepts that the researcher applies not only guide the research, but they also form the textual reality of the research group that it is presented to the reader (Granfelt, 2003: 16). At the beginning of my own research, I considered my participants as homeless men. Once I got to know them better and observed their daily routines and habits, I added concepts such as drug user, mixed-user[12], and alcoholic. To justify the use of such labelling words, both of my participants used terms such as a drunk (*puliukko*, *juoppo*), junkie, speed junkie (*pirinisti, piripää*), habitual offender (*taparikollinen*) to describe their lived experiences. Although these concepts described my participants' habits and addictions, I felt that these concepts can also be very labelling and stigmatizing—are these people only bodies of addicts and slaves of their addictions, ore are there also other words that can be used to describe them? For example, my participants were also very resourceful, active and displayed a high level of "street smart."

However, I would argue similarly as Bourgois (1995: 2) has in his research of crack users and sellers that "substance abuse in the inner city is a merely a symptom—and a vivid symbol—of deeper dynamics of social marginalization and alienation. Hence, we as researchers cannot ignore the suffering, destruction, and social misery that people face when they live in substance-fuelled worlds or without a roof over their heads. This requires the use of terms and concepts that best capture the lived experiences of those in question. The terms are not necessarily politically correct, but they do represent the realities of people who we study. Bourgois and Schonberg (2009: 5) offer an illuminating example of this in their book titled "Righteous" Dopefiends", a term used by the homeless participants who "embrace the popular terminology of addiction with ambivalent pride." However, we should not forget that there are also other aspects, aspirations and hopes in the lives of people who use illegal substances and are homeless which should not be ignored. Behind every describing word such as homeless, drug addict or alcoholic, is a

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[12] Mixed-user refers to a person who abuses various different substances either simultaneously or separately. Alcohol can be the most used substance while other substances are used whenever available. According to Perälä (2011: 73) mix-users can also strive for "controlled mixed-use" (*hallittu sekakäyttö*). Prescription drugs such as different benzodiazepines are also used. Mixed-users often have a long history of substance abuse and they devote much of their time to obtaining substances (ibid.).

person whose personality and identity are built upon other characteristics as well; these people are someone's children, parents, siblings, friends, relatives. (Granfelt, 1998) For example, being homeless is not a personality trait, but rather a circumstance that some individuals are exposed to.

4.8 Reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity has become a central feature in social scientific research. Some scholars (for example Taylor, 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) have suggested that there has been a reflexive turn in the social sciences, pointing to the researcher's role and influence in the research process. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 197) write that "reflexivity implies a recognition of the extent to which researchers shape the phenomenon their study." Taylor (2002: 3) argues that reflexivity "draws attention to the researcher as a part of the world being studied and to the ways in which the research process constitutes what it investigates" by considering "the identity of the researcher and the relationship between researcher and researched, which is seldom one of equals." This is particularly relevant to ethnographic research as the researcher has a central role in collecting, producing and interpreting knowledge (Perälä, 2012: 55). Hence, nowadays the starting point for any ethnographic research should be that of reflexivity, where the researcher acknowledges his or her role in the construction of social reality and actively reflects on this during the research process (ibid., p. 59).

Power relations are always present when conducting any type of research, but they are "particularly relevant to ethnographic research as it has often been about people who are positioned as 'other' within large-scale relationships of domination and subordination" (Taylor, 2002: 3). This is indeed the case for research that deals, for example, with marginal issues and people who live in the shadows of society. In relation to this study, my background as a female with good family relations and safety nets, and having a high level of education, made me wonder how I could even carry out this type of research. With no experience of homelessness or illicit substances, could I conduct research on these issues? Would I be able to construct valid accounts of the experiences of the people I aim to research? What gives me the right to do this? At first, I felt, as perhaps did my participants as well, that our lives were worlds apart, but as rapport was built and the relationships with my participants evolved, I came to understand that despite their vulnerable, marginalized positions, my participants were well-informed of current

societal and political events, and they were also very articulate about how these events could affect their situations. By the time I started following my second research participant I reflected on these notions in my research diary as follows:

> *"Having to get to know my participants, I have realized and learned that they are quite well-informed and knowledgeably two individuals with information on current political climate and issues that I am not even aware of. The amount of information they have on, for example on the services and rehabilitation system, exceeds my knowledge. It seems that I am indeed the student here and they are the teachers. How did I ever assume I would "know better" and have wider understanding of certain things just because I am educated. Book smart can serve one to a certain extent but then there is this street smart and real life experience that I obviously lack.* (Research diary notes, January 2016)

Although I thought that I did not hold any major pre-assumptions or prejudices, this reflection above proves my thoughts wrong. For some reason, maybe my participants' frequent level of intoxication, I assumed that they are perhaps not up to date with all political events and decisions, or that they were not interested in such issues. These false assumptions and prejudices clearly have an impact on the research itself and also on the representation of the research participants. Obviously, the early interpretation was based on my beliefs, which are partly based on my personal background. Reflecting on this and acknowledging the fact that research and the interpretations we construct are always shaped by our own background, personal experiences and values, can reduce the effects of biased or even false representations of the phenomenon being studied. As I proceeded with my research, I attempted to identify my own prejudices and consider them in the work that followed. By recognising our backgrounds and shortcomings not only as researchers but also simply as humans, we can appreciate the fact that "any account of a research project is also an interpretation rather than an objective description; people's perceptions and interpretations are inevitably selective and are shaped by the understandings they bring to any situation" (Taylor, 2002: 4).

4.9 Ethical considerations

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 209) argue that although the goal of research is the production of knowledge this should not be pursued at all costs. One of the most fundamental ethical issue that shapes social research is the elimination of harm. In other

words, research that can cause harm or danger to participants, researcher or other people should not be conducted (Perälä, 2011: 41). Murphy and Dingwall (2001: 337) argue that "like all researchers, ethnographers have a responsibility not only to protect research participants from harm, but also to have regard to their rights." Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 213-4) write that occasionally being researched can cause stress and anxiety, especially when the focus of research is on "one's work, one's life or oneself." Harm can also arise from the field relations that are evident in ethnographic research, but by building rapport and trust with research participants can lessen and even diminish these effects. In relation to this study, I was particularly worried if I would cause any additional stress and discomfort to my participants, who were already in vulnerable positions. As noted earlier, homelessness itself already occurs as a crisis situation in people's lives. Would my presence and "hanging around" be an additional burden to the participants, as they "already had enough on their plate."

Informed consent is often required from the people being studied. Informed consent can be acquired, for example, with a piece of paper that states the purpose of the research, indicating that participation is voluntary and that withdrawal, at any point of the research, is possible (Gobo, 2008: 140). With regards to this research, I got an oral consent from my participants, as neither of them were interested in signing papers[13]. From the beginning of the research, I tried to be as explicit as possible about my intentions and purposes. Without any "scientific jargon" I told my participants that I wanted to get to know their daily practices and routines by observing and talking to them. I tried to stress the fact that if at any point my presence was not wanted, they could tell me, and I would go. I also tried to emphasise that they can reveal as much or little as they wish, and if they felt uncomfortable, they could withdraw at any time. As rapport and trust between myself and my participants developed, I believe that they felt comfortable enough to tell me when I can be around and when my presence was not wanted.

Other important ethical aspects that every researcher must consider are related to anonymity, security and confidentiality. I gave pseudonyms to my participants and other people who appear in this research. I also decided not to give any specific information, such as names of bars or information about where private flats were located, to protect

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[13] I believe the reluctancy of not wanting to sign any formal documents was that my participants feared that they could be identified from those papers, although I did stress the fact that no one else would see the consent form.

the identities of the people who appear in the following pages. I have provided some information, such as the location, where some events occurred, but I have omitted the specific dates and times in the analysis so that my participants cannot be identified by me providing too detailed information. Perälä (2011: 41) notes that confidentiality and anonymity are especially important when the research deals with sensitive issues, crime and substances. An example is provided below:

> *One evening in December 2015 I had made plans to meet Tatu in town to do some more fieldwork. It was about 7pm on a normal Tuesday night when I met him at city centre. I had to call him twice or three times in order to find him. We were supposed to meet at one particular location but when I got there, surprisingly he was nowhere to be found. Eventually I caught him outside one building. He was in the process of stealing a bike. I hesitated to go to him because I was afraid of what might happen if I was caught with him. He noticed me and said he is going to unlock his bike and then we can go to the next location. I told him I did not believe it was his bike as he had wire cutters in his hand and the bike was a woman's bike. Tatu laughed and said that it is his bike now and asked me to walk to with him.*

> *I noticed that he was quite intoxicated. We walked to the location. Tatu was annoyed with the bike he had most likely stolen. The back wheel of the bike was almost flat. It was an old white bike with three gears. Tatu told me he had to go to get a playstation from the nearby shop, but he wanted to have a bike outside ready to get away fast. I told him I was not comfortable being involved in this kind of activity. Tatu said I would not have to do anything, rather I could take the subway to nearby station and wait for him there, he would meet me there shortly. While we were discussing about the details Tatu had noticed another bike, which he thought would be better. He tried to unlock it with his wire cutters. I noticed two teenage boys looking at us and I told Tatu that they clearly realised what he was doing. Tatu shouted at the boys to mind their own business. I told him I would leave and call him later. He gave up and decided to use the bike he already had. But it was too late. As we started to walk away from this location, I saw two police cars coming towards us. I remember panicking and telling Tatu that this was the kind of stuff I do not want to be associated with. Tatu told me to act cool and say nothing, he would do the talking.*

> *We were surrounded by the two police cars and one of the cops shouted "Ok, Bonnie and Clyde, stop right there." I was quite scared and annoyed at that moment. One cop came to me and took by purse. He asked if I had anything sharp in the purse and*

also wanted to see my ID. He took my ID, checked my pockets and put me in the back of a police car. I could hear Tatu and the other cops outside. After a minute or so the door opened, and the police put Tatu in the back of the car as well. He was hand cuffed. He asked for Tatu's ID, which he did not have so Tatu told his social security number, and the cop closed the door. Tatu told me not to say anything. He said he would talk me out of it, and I should just be quiet. After a while (perhaps 5 mins) the door opened, and the cop asked me to come outside. He asked me if I had any idea who I was hanging out with. I told the cops that I was doing my research on homeless people and was observing Tatu's evening. Not sure the cop believed me, but he told me that I should not be hanging out with Tatu as "he is not a good company." I was a bit annoyed about this comment, but I decided it is best not to say anything. The police told me I was free to go but given Tatu's history, he would spend the night at Kisahalli (jail). (Fieldnotes, November 2015)

This passage above introduces various ethical issues. Firstly, it represents an involvement in criminal activity that I was associated with, although involuntarily. Even if I did not take part in the actual stealing process, I was still present to witness this event occurring. Secondly, it possesses a question of my presence in the field, if it prompted my participant to act in a certain way to "show off how things are done." Most likely this event would have occurred in some form regardless of if I was present or not, but would he have been caught in a similar manner? Did my presence catch more attention to his activities? Did I cause him harm? Should I have been firmer telling him not to do what he was doing? Did I even have the right to interfere and tell him what to do? These are some of the questions that went through my mind after this event took place and I returned home knowing that he would spend the night in jail.

Perälä (2011: 40) notes that when research focuses on illegal activities, the researcher may experience that the chosen method(s) applied present a form of "extreme work" (*äärityöskentely*) to the researcher. Also, researchers who study people engaging in illegal activities have been criticised for non-interference, instigating participants to commit crimes, over-participating and over-reporting. The researchers are obliged to professional confidentiality and privilege. The researchers cannot inform authorities of the crimes that participants have committed. The situation is different if the crime is in "the planning state" and is considered a felony. An example of felony is an aggravated drug offence. (ibid.)

As illustrated above, ethical issues are indeed complex and evident in any type of research. The balance between what is ethically and morally correct is not always straightforward and these aspects may need re-evaluation and re-negotiation during the research process. Vanhala (2005: 57) has quite rightfully pointed out that often ethics in research are concerned with what should be done or what is the possible outcome, but little is talked or written about what has been done and with what consequences. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 228) conclude by arguing that "it is the responsibility of the ethnographer to try to act in ways that are ethically appropriate, taking due account of his or her goals and values, the situation in which the research is being carried out, and the values and interests of the people involved… and we should be prepared to support our judgements with arguments if and when we are challenged." In this way, despite the complicated ethical questions that arose from my experience with Tatu, I continuously evaluated my role and influence in the research process. Each day of fieldwork brought new ethical challenges as well as opportunities to navigate them.

5 Research findings

The results presented here are an ethnographic description of Tatu's and Jarkko's lives as homeless men with addiction problems. This research has adopted a very narrow approach by focusing on the lives of two men, but by doing so it has yielded intimate, detailed information on the men's past experiences and current lives on the streets. One must be aware of the previous circumstances and events to fully comprehend the present, hence the first part of the results shed light to the men's pathways to homelessness. The focus is then diverted to the men's conceptualisations of home and what home actually means to them.

5.1 "And then I was out on the streets with my belongings"- Pathways to homelessness

As previous research (Granfelt, 1998; Korhonen, 2002; Kostiainen, 2015) has well documented, pathways to homelessness are often complex, characterized by a series of losses and shortcomings. These shortcomings are rarely personal but rather a consequence of marginalization and exclusion which are closely related to issues of poverty and lack of affordable housing (Kärkkäinen, 1996). Although this study did not aim to compile

complete life histories of my participants, I find it imperative to provide the reader with some biographical sketches, to illustrate what events and circumstances have led to the men's current situations. I also find it necessary to go back in time, as childhood, family background and other significant periods in people's lives can help to understand the complex and diverse pathways to homelessness.

5.1.1 Tatu's pathway

Tatu's "housing history" is quite colourful and complex. In 1996, at the age of 19, he moved away from his childhood home. He rented a one bedroom flat from a private landlord in his hometown. Back then, Tatu still had good credit (*luottotiedot*) so finding a flat was not difficult. He did not have a permanent job, but he did "odd jobs here and there" and otherwise relied on welfare. To support himself, he also committed minor crimes. If caught, he was usually issued with a fine, which he did not pay. As a result, he had to serve a couple of short conversion sentences for these unpaid fines in the late 1990s. Eventually, with a lack of steady income and his substance use issues, Tatu started to fall behind on his rent. The social services paid his rent arrears once; however, since Tatu still could not pay his rent, he was evicted in 2000. After his eviction, Tatu stayed with his brother, who still lived at the time in their hometown.

Since Tatu's brother did not consume any other substances than alcohol, and even that on a very moderate basis, Tatu's substance use and lack of finances eventually became an issue. His brother hinted that Tatu should find his own place and "sort himself out." This gradually prompted some action, as Tatu was able to reduce his use of alcohol and other substances. For a while, Tatu had wanted to move to the metropolitan area, and he looked for flats to rent and "easy jobs" to apply for. He moved to Helsinki in 2001 to work in a warehouse and his employer provided him housing (*työsuhdeasunto*). Tatu's first few months on the job went well, but his substance use, which then mainly consisted of alcohol and cannabis, started slowly interfering with his work. He showed up late or missed entire days of work, which got him warnings that eventually led to dismissal. Due to this, Tatu also lost his job-related housing. At the end of 2001, less than a year after moving to Helsinki, he had lost his job and his housing, and was out on the street with his belongings which consisted of a few bags. These events led to an increase in substance use. Alcohol and cannabis were still Tatu's "main substances" although depending on his finances and availability of drugs, he also used other "stuff", especially amphetamine, as

well. This mix-use of different substances created problems and also contributed to an assault, for which Tatu received a conditional sentence (*ehdollinen vankeus*).

Tatu spent a couple of months living with his friends and acquaintances, and occasionally looked for flats. Without a job, with bad credit (*luottotiedoton*) and in a poor financial situation, Tatu was struggling to find a flat to rent. In spring 2002, he managed to get a flat in East Helsinki from a housing company that provides affordable social housing for people in the lower income spectrum. His housing benefit did not cover all his rent, and he had issues with his unemployment benefit. He managed to pay partial rent every month, but due to his difficult financial circumstances and increased use of substances, rent arrears started to accumulate. However, rent arrears were not the only reason leading to the inevitable event of eviction from the flat. Tatu's friends, who also used substances, some more heavily than others, had a part to the play:

> *See, the problem with drunks and junkie "friends" is that they show up at your door unannounced, at random hours, they ring the buzzer downstairs or if someone lets them in, they bang your door, so that the neighbours get annoyed, perhaps even call the police if I'm not home to open the door. Then the neighbours make complaints to the deputy landlord. So, I end up with a warning for disturbing my neighbours because of my so called friends. Never tell people where you live or invite people over if you want to keep your flat.* (Fieldnotes, October 2015).

Complaints from his neighbours led to warnings, which however, did not stop the disturbance. This together with rent arrears led to eviction from the flat in 2004. Once again Tatu was out on the street with some of his belongings. The donated furniture, which consisted of a bed and a dining table with two chairs, Tatu left behind, along with some less important personal belongings that he could not carry around. Tatu stayed yet again with friends and acquaintances and served a short sentence for thefts. He also started to date a woman, and soon moved to her flat. The relationship ended after a year or so and Tatu had to move out.

In 2006, Tatu's life was on a downward spiral. Being homeless, tired, frustrated and heavily dependent on substances pushed Tatu further on the edge. Things escalated when Tatu got into an argument with "some random junkie" and stabbed him. He was charged with attempted manslaughter (*tapon yritys*) and was sentenced to over three years in prison, of which he served two thirds. After his release, he got a flat in halfway house

type unit, which required him to stay sober. The arrangement worked well for a while, but after Tatu's parole ended, he decided that he would rather be homeless, than stay in the unit "where people snitch (*vasikoida*) each other to the staff." Thus, the streets called again. He stayed with his friends, who happened to have a roof over their heads and looked for something of his own to rent. Again, with no job, no money and substances back in his daily life, the search for a rental flat was difficult. He had applied for a city council flat (*Heka*) but did not receive an offer. At the beginning of 2011, Tatu managed to get to rehabilitation, where he spent around 4 months. During this time the social services had organised him a flat in a housing support unit, where he moved after his rehab. The housing support unit provided housing for people with mental health and substance abuse problems, and no abstinence was required. From the beginning, Tatu did not feel at home in the flat and despised the whole unit and its residents:

> *Very nice of the social workers to arrange me housing in a unit that is full of junkies and other fuckers. And right after my rehab. How do you stay sober in that kind of a place, where everybody around you uses, and drugs are easily available? It is not possible. Good thing I found a new girlfriend and stayed with her. I only went to the unit to check my mail and to do drugs. I had the flat for a year or so, and barely stayed there. It was a place from hell.* (Fieldnotes, October 2015)

Eventually Tatu was also evicted from the housing support unit. According to Tatu this was because he "never stayed there" and had "some issues with other residents." Between the eviction in 2012 until 2015, Tatu did not have a place of his own. He stayed with various girlfriends, friends and acquaintances, or in staircases. During this time, Tatu went to prison three times for crimes he had committed to survive without housing and to finance his substance use. In 2015, right after his latest release from prison, and when I met him, he had access to a basement floor/laundry room where he stayed. This opportunity also came to an end when the police arrived and removed him from the basement.

5.1.2 Jarkko's pathway

Jarkko also has a colourful and complex housing history. When he turned 18, he moved out from his family home, where he had lived with his mother and sister. Prior to this, Jarkko had already spent periods in foster care, and also stayed with friends, when "things got heated at home", so he was eager to live on his own. Local social services arranged

him a small flat, and he was provided with both social and economic support from the services. Jarkko lived in his first rental flat for a couple of years, but substance abuse and disturbance he caused his neighbours led to an eviction in 2004. Jarkko's mother allowed him to move back to the family home but since they both had substance abuse issues, "things got often heated and they clashed at each other." Soon after his eviction, Jarkko was convicted of an assault and went to prison. After his release, Jarkko stayed with friends and applied for housing from the council. Since he was not offered a flat, Jarkko started to think about moving to Helsinki, where some of his friends already lived:

> *I was kinda getting sick of my hometown. I had lived there all my life, and I pretty much knew everyone, well at least everyone who used drugs and other shit. I had some friends who had already moved to Helsinki, and I thought what keeps me here, I could move as well. I figured I need a chance of scenery and also the circles are bigger in Helsinki.* (Fieldnotes, January 2016)

The move took place at the beginning of 2007. With a couple of bags and no money, he arrived in Helsinki by train. Despite his status as homeless, Jarkko had no urgent need to move to the capital other than a change of scenery and "bigger circles." Jarkko's friend, who also had problems with substances, provided him a place to stay. Given the fact that he had a place to sleep, in this case a mattress on the floor, Jarkko was not in a rush to find his own place. His position as unemployed, with bad credit and substance problem, placed him in a weak position in the housing market. Jarkko applied for city council housing and housing from Y-säätiö and Nuorisosäätiö.

Jarkko's substance use also increased after he moved to Helsinki. "Circles indeed were bigger" which made getting and consuming drugs easier. Jarkko's first year in Helsinki went without housing and he lived a substance-fuelled life. Jarkko had meetings with the employment office and social workers, but due to his substance abuse problems, he was not able to obtain further education or find employment, nor was he "interested to work at all." His income comprised unemployment benefit; however, he often failed to meet the requirements attached to it. In these occasions, he had to rely on basic income (*toimeentulotuki*). In 2008, still homeless, Jarkko served a short sentence for thefts. After his release, Jarkko was granted a flat in a halfway house unit, which required abstinence. Jarkko managed to stay clean and sober for a while, but he gradually slipped back into his "old habits." He received warnings, but could not commit to stay off drugs, so he was evicted in 2009. Once again, friends, acquaintances, staircases and shelters provided him

places to sleep. At the end of 2009, Jarkko went to rehab, but after a few weeks he left and was out on the streets. In 2010, Jarkko went to prison again for unpaid fines and aggravated assault. He was released in 2012, having served just over two years for his crimes. Upon his release, and with the help of a social worker, he was offered a rental apartment from the city (*Heka*). This offer marked a new beginning for him, as he also started vocational training in the field of construction. Things went quite well for a while:

> *I was happy about having my own place, was worth the wait I guess. I enjoyed having my own flat, it helped me to stay clean (olla putsina). Well, given my history, what do you expect is gonna happen. Eventually, I fucked up by getting back on the gear, and you know, the rest is quite obvious. First, I quit school, it just didn't work, but hey, I managed to stay on for a while. Then, I started to fall behind on my rent and I guess I also caused some disturbance. I don't know. Social services (sossut) paid my rent arrears twice, but eventually they kicked me out.* (Fieldnotes, January 2016)

Jarkko was unable to provide the exact year when the eviction took place, but "it was probably in 2014." Yet again, he was homeless, relying on his housed friends and short-term girlfriends to provide a place to sleep. Frustrated, with a few personal belongings, without money, and nothing to look forward to, Jarkko committed minor crimes to support himself and his habit. In winter 2015, he served a short sentence for his illegal activities, but he was released by summer, without a roof over his head. At the beginning of 2016, when I randomly met Jarkko again, and he became my research participant, he had been homeless approximately two years.

5.1.3 "You deal with the hand you're given "- Burdened by the past

As these biographical sketches about my participants' pathways to homelessness illustrate, both participants have a so-called broken housing career or a broken housing history. Reflecting on Kostiainen's (2015: 74) categorisation of homeless people in Helsinki, ranging from transitionally to disadvantaged, my participants would fall to the category of disadvantaged homeless people, who are often long-term homeless and require homeless services and support to exit homelessness. Currently, given their prolonged homelessness and complex, partly personal problems associated with it, the two men could be described as long-term homeless—a state and situation that exposes individuals to multiple other problems as well. Homelessness can invite difficult psychosocial problems, such as depression, illness and substance abuse (Desmond, 2016).

The damaging effects of homelessness, especially if prolonged, also expose individuals to crime, violence and even prostitution (Tainio, 2009).

Both Tatu and Jarkko have been homeless on and off on several different occasions throughout their adult lives. Starting from an early age, both participants have had their share of problems and challenges. Both men have been affected by turbulent family relations and broken family backgrounds. The intergenerational transmission of social disadvantage (*huono-osaisuuden ylisukupolvisuus*) is strongly evident, especially in Jarkko's case; both of his parents had substance abuse problems, they lacked education and employment, and had little means to support their children, either economically or emotionally. As Saari et al. (2020: 90) have documented, children who grow up in families, for example, with substance and mental health problems, are more exposed to similar problems later in their lives and have higher rates of emotional and behavioural disorders and diagnoses. These findings mirror Jarkko's experiences and offer one possible causal explanation for his challenges and problems. However, Jarkko, reflecting on his early life and his current situation, offers an account that also lays emphasis on individual responsibility and highlights that there is no point of "crying over spilt milk." In addition, despite how chaotic and harmful a person's childhood has been, children often have deep affection and loyalty to their parents, which seems to be the case with Jarkko and his mother:

> *I guess I can say that my childhood was, and my family is kinda (niinku) fucked up. But what can I do about it, you don't get to choose your parents. I think you deal with the hand you're given. Yea sure, I wish my cards were better, but it is what it is, and you just have to deal with it. I do blame my mom for some shit, especially ruining my sister's life, you know, she uses as well and life for a girl in these circles is way harder than it is for guys. My old man (ukko/isä) is a piece of shit and go to hell. Haven't seen him in years, but I would beat the shit out of him if I did, you know because of the domestic violence and stuff. But yeah, I've done things that I'm responsible for and can only blame myself. It is not my mom's fault that I am an addict and homeless, she didn't offer me drugs, I decided to try. Yeah, maybe my life would have turned out to be different if my childhood was different, but you never know. Like I said, it is what it is, and I just have to deal with it.* (Fieldnotes, February 2016).

In Tatu's case, traumatic childhood events with an abusive father and molestation, have understandably left lifelong scars, which may never heal. The time in residential school setting is also something Tatu does not remember with warmth, but he says that "it was a necessary period in my life, since I was getting out of control, and I needed to be in a remote place with strict rules and control." Despite his father's atrocities, Tatu had a good and loving relationship with his mother, and he was provided with opportunities to have hobbies, such as floorball. Tatu also had his brother to rely on. Hence, Tatu has some good memories and experiences from earlier years, which have provided him with support and social capital. However, traumatic events, and unsafe childhood environments have left their marks on both of my participants, and these in turn have translated into deeper personal problems and gaps in social skills and capital. With little or no support, both men have had to navigate on their own, and find ways to support themselves.

Insecurities and problems that arise from my participants' troubled pasts, from problematic substance use and lack of steady income, have heavily burdened my participants. Especially Jarkko, with no education or work experience, is in an extremely vulnerable position. Tatu's position is also precarious, but his educational attainment and work experience provides him with some social capital that he can possibly benefit from. However, even these little achievements have currently no positive effects in his life:

> *When you are homeless and live on the street, you don't really think that what a great thing I got my diploma back in the day, or that I have some work experience and when was the last time I updated my CV. Fuck, I have never had a CV. Who nowadays would like to hire a guy like me, a drunk (puliukko) who is homeless? I don't even have time to think about that kinda stuff. All I think every fucking day, is where I'm gonna sleep and how do I make money. Hah, funny right, you make money when you go to work, but I don't know many street men (kadun ukot) who do legal work. You are occupied with other stuff, like substances.* (Fieldnotes, October 2015.)

Indeed, when one endlessly wanders the city streets to find shelter and some comfort, there is no time or energy to think about anything else, the mind is occupied with daily survival. Being homeless is a full-time job in itself (Rosenthal 1994: 45). Certainly, substances have also played a great part in the men's pathways to homelessness and where they are at the moment. This has also been noted by other researchers (Murto, 1978; Granfelt, 1998; Tainio, 2009) who have illustrated how long-lasting substance use

complicates and diminishes other parts of life. In the lives of those who problematically abuse substances, there is little space for anything else; substances take over and everyday life revolves around them. Substances prevent goal-oriented action and commitment to responsibilities. Although the causal relationship between substances and homelessness is complex, and not as clear cut as one may assume, many previous studies on homeless people (Korhonen, 2002; Törmä and Huotari, 2005; Kostiainen, 2015) have reported problematic substance use in addition to other problems. In relation to my participants, disturbances, warnings, rent arrears, evictions and general inability to retain housing have mainly been the outcome of heavy substance abuse, a pattern also identified by Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade (2009: 2) in their study of homeless shelter users.

5.1.4 "I guess my destiny is to be homeless"- Burdened by constraints

So far, the narratives of the men's partial life histories and their personal obstacles have focused on individual aspects, to provide some background to why the two men have experienced homelessness and why they are currently homeless. However, one should not overlook or underestimate the effects of macro-level processes and structures that operate beyond the individual level. Researching homelessness from the marginalization perspective points to the social structures and mechanism that exclude some people and provide them with less opportunities in society (Granfelt, 1998). These exclusionary processes and mechanisms are connected, for example, to education, employment and income. As Murto (1978: 79) has noted, people's living circumstances (*elinolosuhteet*) such as housing, health, income, and other financial resources are an outcome of their attempts to create good lives for themselves, yet there are structural constraints which guide and limit these attempts. As Whyte (1943: 273) argued long ago, societies place high value upon social mobility; people are expected to evolve and climb up the ladder to improve their positions. However, there are some people who find it difficult "to get onto the ladder, even on the bottom rung", as there are factors prejudicing their advancement (ibid.). Also, people without a home and with substance issues and other problems lack resources, both social and economic, that provide opportunities to enhance one's living standards. Reflecting on Kostiainen's (2015: 65) classification of structural factors which include economic processes, such as poverty, unemployment, social protection and housing market processes, one can see that both Tatu and Jarkko are exposed to these. With no income other than welfare benefits, unemployed and excluded

especially from the private housing market due to their finances and lack of clean credit, the men are in very disadvantaged, marginalized positions. Earlier research (Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade, 2009; Granfelt, 2008; Kostiainen and Laakso, 2015) has also documented how bad credit, debts, previous rent arrears, overall poor economic situations and deficiencies in life management, create conditions that further burden people who are already on the bottom rung of the ladder.

The most crucial, structural factor contributing to homelessness is lack of affordable housing. This is a well-known factor across different countries, and Finland is not alone battling this (Kärkkäinen, 1996; Pleace, 2017; Dhalmann and Karppinen, 2018). The demand and supply of housing does not meet, especially in the metropolitan area, and people in the lower income spectrum face high rates of disadvantage in the rental housing market. In addition to the affordability issue is the Finnish housing stock and its structure, which greatly consists of owner-occupied housing and larger units that cater especially for families and couples, leaving single and childless households with less options. This is also noted by Paulus (1993: 21), who argues that national and international research evidence on housing policy has pointed out that homelessness is often an outcome of the distorted structures of the housing market and the exclusive nature of housing policy, which favours families and owner-occupation over single households, rented dwellings and low-income households. Hence, there is a shortage of small, affordable units, that suit for single households, a category that majority of the homeless people belong to. The polarization of the housing market translates into inequality in housing (Valtioneuvosto 2018: 36). The unequal distribution of wealth and resources divides people into "haves and have-nots".

Furthermore, as homelessness is an urban problem, focusing on bigger cities, it adds additional pressure to the already tight housing market. City council flats (for example Heka) are difficult to get and usually there is a long queue to such housing, leaving many applicants without an offer. Perhaps many people who move to Helsinki, especially without a job, are surprised how expensive, competitive and distorted the (rental) housing market is in the capital city. Jarkko was in for a surprise when he arrived in town:

> *Well, maybe it was a bit risky and stupid to move here without finding housing first, but to be honest, I really didn't even think about it, as I had my friend here, who promised that I can stay at his. I kinda thought that it would be easier to get a flat in Helsinki, since there are more flats available, but obviously I was wrong about it. I*

didn't quite realise how expensive the flats are here, and I had no other income than my benefits. Oh, and add this to your report, private landlords are dicks, because they won't rent for people with bad credit. Like if my rent is paid by Kela and social services they still say no. Eventually I was like fuck this, let's live the life of a homeless person then. (Fieldnotes, January 2016)

Indeed, the high rent prices, combined with little or no income, would place anyone in a difficult situation when acquiring housing, especially in the capital region. Although people in the low income spectrum are eligible for housing allowances to meet their housing costs, the situation becomes very complex if a person has marks in his/her credit, and especially if these marks are rent arrears, as many landlords require clean credit. Even those landlords who operate on public and social housing sector, often require at least evidence of a payment plan, to cover previous rent arrears and debts (Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade, 2009). This, combined with personal obstacles, places my participants in extremely vulnerable positions in the housing market and gives no hope of finding a rental flat, especially in the private market, as Tatu sees it:

Well, if I was a landlord, I don't think I would rent a flat to a person like me, even if the rent was paid by social services. I mean c'mon, I don't have a job, then I have this substance issue, as they [social and health care professional] call it. Yeah, and given my history, it seems like some problems always appear, sooner or later. I don't know what the urgent criteria for city council is. Apparently being homeless is not an urgent situation enough to get a flat, I've tried but nothing...I don't even bother updating my application anymore, what's the fucking point. I guess my destiny is to be homeless and survive one way or another. (Fieldnotes, November 2015).

These structural issues described above, especially the lack of affordable housing, point to the failures of housing policy, which according to Kärkkäinen (1996) is indeed one of the weakest social policies in the Finnish welfare state. Hence, homelessness is first and foremost a housing policy problem, and only then a social problem (ibid.). The increase in affordable rental housing has a direct impact on low income people since it enhances their capabilities and reduces economic inequality (Valtioneuvosto, 2018: 36). Although housing policy plays a key role in the reduction of homelessness, it alone cannot solve the issue. Other policies such as education, health and employment, also have a part to play. For example, the changes that have taken place in the labour market, referring to the replacement of industrial sector with information and service jobs, demand highly skilled,

educated people. Thus, the shakedown in employment has had the most severe effect on people at the bottom of the educational ladder. People with little or no educational attainment like Tatu and especially Jarkko, struggle to even enter the labour market, not to mention to have a secure job that provides both financial stability and social capital. Here, the concept of "working poor" (Saari, 2011) becomes particularly useful to describe these changes—insecure, short-term contracts create instability and uncertainty. This combined with low salaries, which do not even cover living expenses, especially in the metropolitan area, puts some people in very difficult situations.

Furthermore, rising inequalities, cuts in welfare and social security also contribute to the homelessness phenomenon. As Saari (2011) has pointed out, socio-economic inequalities in Finland have risen in the past few decades. Indeed, the unequal distribution of wealth and welfare has created an even wider gap between those on the top of the ladder and those at the bottom; the social distance and the empathy gap (*empatiakuilu*) between people from different socio-economic classes has increased. This could be one possible explanatory factor to why attitudes towards the welfare state have changed, as the current discourse calls for individual responsibility, empowerment and efficiency. These shifts in attitudes and discourses, which point to individuals and their successes or shortcomings, clearly take the focus away from the structures and the root or underlying causes of homelessness, as for example, Juhila (1992) notes in her conceptualisation of bottom-of-the-barrel housing markets. What connects these people in the bottom market is poor financial means to improve their living circumstances (ibid.).

It becomes evident then that the root causes lie elsewhere; in the lack of protective marginals, and failures of the welfare state to look after those who are in the most vulnerable situations. As previous research (Kostiainen, 2015; O'Sullivan, 2017) has shown, how individuals are protected against homelessness and other social risks depend on the welfare policies in each country, and extensive welfare systems (such as those in Nordic countries) tend to have more protective measures in place. Within these types of regimes, homelessness has often been associated with individual vulnerabilities such as mental health problems and substance abuse, housing affordability being a less pushing factor. However even in a welfare state like Finland, the question of housing affordability is becoming a pressing issue, especially in the metropolitan area (Kärkkäinen, 1996; Pleace et al., 2015). Therefore, the issue affects and touches an ever greater, heterogenous group of people than those with heavy personal burdens like Tatu and Jarkko, who are

exposed to homelessness. Although the welfare regimes in Nordic countries have been relatively effective to protect individuals against social risks, the safety nets have not proven to be resistant for everyone. Also, the Nordic welfare model, which is praised for its equality, does not seem to provide equal opportunities for all. Those who are disadvantaged from an early age enter society as adults with scars that are hard to mend later in life. The equality of opportunity and outcome vary, as Tatu's and Jarkko's cases illustrate. To sum up, any reductions in affordable housing supply, mental health services, cuts or failures in health and social services and changes in employment due to structural changes in economies along with a wide range of other factors, have an impact on homelessness levels, either indirectly or directly (Pleace at al., 2015: 84).

5.1.4 "From a prison cell to hell" – The meaning of home

As previous studies (Granfelt, 2003; Lehtonen and Salonen, 2008) have illustrated, a home or housing is seen as basic human right allowing individuals to integrate into society and be part of it. Every person deserves a home that provides privacy and security. A home lays the foundation for a better life and without it, it is difficult, if not impossible, to make lifestyle changes or improve one's quality of life. Research evidence has also shown that "homelessness services that are housing-led and operate on the basis that having a home is a basic human right are more effective in ending long-term homelessness" (Pleace et al., 2015: 90). For most of us, our days begin in the convenience of our homes, maybe with a cup of coffee and end at night when we put our heads down on a comfortable pillow. For a homeless person like Jarkko or Tatu, a day could start anywhere and there is often no guarantee where it ends. Parsell (2012) has quite rightfully pointed out that to capture the realities and experiences of homelessness, the researcher should also investigate what constitutes a home for homeless people. When asked what home means to the men, and what makes up a home, both Tatu and Jarkko struggled slightly to put it into words, but both brought up aspects related to safety privacy and autonomy. Jarkko provided the following account:

> *Well, I don't really know. I guess a home is a place that I have control over, you know who gets in and stuff like that. A place, where I can do whatever I want and feel good. Like if I decide to leave my clothes on the floor, I can do so, and no one will complain about it. I guess home also provides safety, you know, I don't have to worry about someone stealing my stuff, unless I let other*

junkies in, then it's different. Yeah, for sure, I don't want my future home to become like a dope house (luukku)where people come and go, do drugs and other shit. I want to respect my next flat, and make it actually a home, you know with furniture, posters and other stuff. (Fieldnotes, February 2016).

What is interesting and important in this quote is that a flat (*asunto*) itself is not a home (*koti*). A flat is a commodity which is bought or rented, a home has to be created and made (Granfelt, 1998; Saari, 2015). According to Granfelt (2003: 42) the experience of home is subjective—the furniture, the paintings and pictures people hang on the walls, the noises and smells—they make a place home. A home often has a strong psychological and emotional meaning to it and is therefore respected and valued differently than a simple flat. A roof over a person's head does not make a place home. A home enhances one's self-esteem and self-determination and provides freedom, privacy and safety. Hence, not all housing is home. This takes us back to Taipale (1982) who has written that home has a spirit, and it is homes that people long for; a place where one belongs to. Tatu and Jarkko do not simply look for housing, but places or spaces where they can feel at home. Both Tatu and Jarkko have lived in places where they have not felt at home, as Tatu's account shows:

The housing unit where I lived, or actually where I had the flat, was definitely not a home. It was a house from hell, a real shithole if you ask me. That's why I never stayed there. Yea, and the other housing support unit as well. That was bad too. I had my own space there as well, but it wasn't really a home, it was like an institution for the retards, people snitching each other to the staff. What cowards and rats. I rather became homeless again than stayed there. (Fieldnotes, November 2015)

Indeed, housing support units and the experiences Tatu had of them triggered strong emotions. Having lived in two different ones, Tatu rather "chose" to be homeless than live in such units. Other residents, although arguably suffering from similar problems as Tatu, annoyed him and he did not want to associate with them. Although he had his own private space, with keys to his door, Tatu still felt that it was "institutional living." Jarkko shares surprisingly similar thoughts about his experiences:

When I stayed in that housing support unit after my release, I didn't really feel like it was my home. It was more like an extra punishment, you know, the other people were fucking annoying, and I didn't want to deal with that kind of people. The staff was ok, well some of them, but I don't think that kinda living arrangement works for

me, with rules [abstinence was required in this unit] and people getting involved in
my business. (Fieldnotes, February 2016).

These findings reflect those of Parsell (2012: 61), who has shown that people can feel "homeless at home" due to unsatisfactory housing, which does not provide socio-psychological experiences of home. Also, it seems that these housing support units, especially if abstinence is required, interferes with one's feelings of self-determination as the quotes above illustrate. Although rules and regulations are often put in place to protect individuals and improve their situations, these good intentions did not translate into positive or empowering experiences in Jarkko's and Tatu's cases. These findings are also important policy-wise. For example, in Finland, during the homelessness reduction programme of PAAVO I, homelessness was tackled by providing mostly housing unit type solutions with Housing First as a guiding principle. As has been already shown, the programme was effective in reducing homelessness. However, there have been debates on how well congregate models of housing cater for those who live in them (Pleace et al., 2015: 62). Critics have pointed out that people who live in such units, occupy distinct, physically separate accommodation than rest of their fellow citizens and could therefore be stigmatized. Also, it has been pointed out that this type of housing does not necessarily improve social integration but rather replicates institutional responses to homelessness, since many people with high support needs live together in a shared space that could be detrimental to their well-being. Hence, the need for scattered housing with floating support have been addressed in the subsequent programmes of PAAVO II and AUNE. (ibid.)

However, what is interesting is that for both of my participants, prison was a substitute for home (cf. Granfelt, 1998: 104). This is slightly contradictory, as prison is also an institution, which in fact, limits one's freedom in a significant way. Yet, prison was regarded as "home" which does not only provide shelter but also structure, routines and discipline, aspects that especially Tatu despises, but still at the same time seems to yearn for:

> *I would say that prison is my home. Every time when I get sentenced to prison, I'm*
> *actually quite happy, feels like I'm going home. Especially if I don't have to share a*
> *cell, it's even better, you know, I get to have my own little space and I don't have to*
> *think about where I sleep the next night or if I'm gonna be kicked out. Prison*
> *provides me a place to rest and take care of myself. When I'm locked up, I don't use*

anything, and I exercise. The food sucks, but at least I get to eat regularly. I like the structure and routines, you know, there are certain rules you need to follow, and some idiots don't get it, but if you do as you told, it is quite chill and relaxed. Depending on the sentence I get, I'm usually in a pretty good shape when I get out. Even short sentences for fines and stuff are good, couple of months gives you time to rest and then you good to go again (laughs). (Fieldnotes, November 2015).

Jarkko shares similar experiences:

Yeah, I don't mind being locked-up. Prison is kinda like a home. After a few times in prison, you already know what to expect and I don't care. I guess in a way it is my home for the time being. There are worse places to spend nights than prison. Prison also provides me with routines and a chance to withdraw from shit. The first few weeks are always difficult when you kinda have to adjust to the rules and routines but then it gets easier. I eat well and sleep. Good time to rest and figure out what to do in the future. Obviously, if you are released without housing then there is not much to figure out, as I know that I will go back to the same old shit. What else can I do. It's straight back to the street life (katuelämä); It's like from a prison cell to hell and I live that life until I go back to prison. (Fieldnotes, January 2016).

As both men have a background living in institutional settings, the adjustment to prison life, especially having served sentences in the past, is smooth and it provides a positive change. Prison time gives them opportunities to withdraw and take a break from daily substance use and street life. Prison provides rest for both the mind and the body, as the men are not constantly occupied with figuring out where to sleep at night and how to make money to fund their habits and other daily needs. Routines and structure provide safety and stability, opposed to street life which is often chaotic and unpredictable. Among laypersons, prison as a home is perhaps not something that first come to mind, nor would one probably even make such an association but for my participants it does associate with "home", familiar and safe place that also provides some level of ontological security. A home for the time being, especially for Tatu, can be located anywhere he happens to find a quiet and relatively safe place to sleep:

T: *There was a time when I had access to a staircase of a normal residential building. I knew the code to the front door so every night I would go there and sleep in one particular landing. Well, it didn't take many nights until one old hag came to tell me that this is not a place to sleep, and I should leave or otherwise she would*

call the cops. I was like well I don't have anywhere else to go, this is my home for now.

M: *What did she reply? Did she call the cops?*

T: *She just mumbled something and left. The cops never came, so I guess she didn't phone then. Oh, and think about this, the next morning the lady brought me a sandwich and a cup of water and said something like, here's little breakfast for you. I guess she realised that I was homeless and felt bad for me.* (Fieldnotes, November 2015)

These findings reflect to those of Parsell (2012: 159) who has suggested that sometimes people feel at home and find ontological security in places and spaces which are not typically conceptualised as homes. Hence, not all homes are classified or acknowledged as appropriate housing (Granfelt, 1998: 103). Places like a staircase, or a laundry room in the basement can serve as a temporary home. These do not present the ideal of a home, but they provide some level of safety and privacy; feelings that are associated with "real home." When I met Tatu in 2015, his home then was a laundry room which located in the basement of a residential building. On the "eviction" day from his home, he phoned sounding furious:

T: Well, first of all I got kicked out from my home, I mean the basement, and now I cannot use that place anymore. So yeah, that fucking sucks big time.

M: Sorry to hear that. What happened?

T: Life, as usual. I took some "lakka"[14] last night and I passed out. I woke up this morning when the person in charge of cleaning came in. See, the problem here is that I shouldn't have taken that shit, but I did, and I didn't wake up on time. So, she [here Tatu also used more colourful words to describe the cleaning lady] came in and called "revolveripamput."

M: She called what?

T: Revolveripamput, siat [pigs]. I mean the cops of course. So yeah, they came and removed me from my home, or the premises as they called it. I told them that I cannot leave yet because I first have to put my wet clothes in the dryer but obviously they couldn't care less. So, I told them that if I get pneumonia they will hear from me again, to which one of the cops replied something like I have a feeling we will hear from you again in any case. This whole thing is unbelievable shit. (Fieldnotes, October 2015)

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[14] Finnish slang for Gamma-Butyrolactone

This segment of our conversation points to the contingency that most homeless people have to face in their daily lives. Life is here and now (*tässä ja nyt*) and it is impossible to predict what happens next or make plans for the future. The segment also shows that although the basement, which was a private space belonging to the residential building, was not Tatu's "real home", it still prompted feelings of anger and frustration when he was moved from the premises. Homeless people, like Tatu, learn to make a home in a variety of places. This demonstrates that what constitutes a home varies, and notions that people have of home are indeed subjectively constructed and experienced. The Finnish terms houseless (*asunnoton*) and homeless (*koditon*) also point to the differences in the conceptualisation of the phenomenon. The term homeless is better suited to describe the two men in in this study, because it captures the subjective and existential aspects of their lived experiences (Lehtonen and Salonen, 1998). Also, as has become evident in the quotes above, providing housing, for example in the housing support unit, does not necessarily take away the feeling or experience of homelessness since the men evidently did not feel at home in these places. The term homeless also captures other aspects associated with it, such as poverty and marginalization and lack of supporting networks (Taipale, 1982; Kärkkäinen, 1998). These diminishing factors indeed determine and shape the lives of those who have to deal with such issues.

5.2 Everyday encounters and daily lives

So far the results have provided insights into the pathways to homelessness by showing how both individual and especially structural factors contribute to homelessness, and how these factors determine and shape one's pathway. How the men conceptualise home, what it means to them and how they "make home" as homeless persons, have also pointed to complex constructions of the concept. The rest of this chapter explores Tatu's and Jarkko's daily activities, coping and income-generating strategies and encounters with "fellow people." By providing information on the daily lives of homeless people, we can begin to capture and comprehend the complexity of the homelessness phenomenon.

5.2.1 "Porridge and butter"- attempts to satisfy basic needs

Life as a homeless person means that one has to constantly worry about how to satisfy basic needs such as eating, washing and finding shelter. For example, homeless people rarely have the opportunity or option to cook their own meals. Hence, they have to rely

on service providers for food or buy their daily meals if they want to eat. Reflecting on the work of Rosenthal (1994), being homeless is a full-time job in a sense that meeting basic needs can be time-consuming and also requires a specific knowledge of where and when to carry out these functions. As previous research (Törmä and Huotari, 2005; Erkkilä and Stenius-Ayoade, 2009) has shown, day centres and other low-threshold services play an important part in the lives of homeless people. Day centres do not only provide breakfast and snacks (some also provide lunch at affordable price) but also support and guidance. Both Tatu and Jarkko are regular visitors to the day centres, especially in the mornings when breakfast is provided.

One morning I met Tatu at the day centre. He had a bowl full of porridge on his tray and he was just about to add some butter on top of his porridge when I walked in. The amount of butter he added was almost equal to the amount of porridge. He took two slices of bread, a glass of juice and a cup of coffee and then headed to a table. He carefully placed his full tray down, mixed the melting butter to his porridge and then started to share his thoughts on nutrition:

> *It is important to get enough good fats every day… Who needs Omega-3 supplements and all that other crap when you can actually use real butter…yeah they say that this type of butter is not good for your veins but look at my veins,* [laughing] *destroyed already." Yeah, but butter gives you energy and obviously I need energy when I have to run the streets and do stuff. They say breakfast is the most important meal of the day, right? Well, this is usually my only meal, so we have carbs and fat here which are good but maybe I would also prefer a bit of protein…Can't have it all I guess, and this is better than nothing. Porridge and butter keep me going* [laughing]. *If I get hungry in the evening, I just usually go to a store and steal whatever I want to eat. I don't really care that much about food, drinks and other stuff are more important.* (Fieldnotes, November 2015).

This quote above mirrors the findings of Tainio (2007), who in her research has noted that during periods of heavy substance use, food is not a primary concern, as energy is devoted to obtain and use substances. Substances are substitute for food (Murto, 1978.) Indeed, food was not Jarkko's most important concern either. Jarkko also pointed out that when he was under the influence of amphetamine, he did not feel hungry and "could go days without eating or sleeping." When hunger did present itself, he would often go to a store and also steal something to eat. However, when there is no money left and the

physical and mental condition does not stretch to stealing, breadlines also are an option to acquire food, as Jarkko tells:

> *I have days when I just don't feel like stealing or I have zero interest to make money if I don't really have to. Those days, if I know that there is a breadline somewhere, I may go there to get something to eat. I usually eat the stuff what is ready to eat and sell or throw the rest away or give it to someone in exchange for a place to stay for night. Most of the time I can't be bothered to queue for stuff like food, but it is good to have these options.* (Fieldnotes, March 2016).

Although breadlines are important to those who have fewer financial means to support themselves, the line does not really cater to homeless people, who do not have refrigerators and freezers to store the given goods. The lack of storage affects other areas of life as well. As Erkkilä and Stenius-Aoyade (2009) have documented, homeless people rarely have a place to store their personal belongings. This was also the case for Tatu and Jarkko. Everything they owned, which was very few things, they had to carry around at all times. When I met Tatu, all his belongings were stuffed in a backpack which he carried around. Jarkko's situation was perhaps even more heart-breaking when I first met him since he did not have anything. His belongings—change of clothes, ID, a phone charger and some toiletries—had been stolen. He was left with the clothes he was wearing and his phone, which happened to be in his pocket at the time. Events, such as this, were not unusual, and both men were used to basically not having any possessions, or that their belongings got lost or stolen. Jarkko expressed the following:

> *I think it's almost a relief that I don't have many belongings, or that I don't own anything important at the moment. Where would I store my things? You can't have anything valuable when you live on street. Things get stolen, trust me, they do in these circles, or you lose your own stuff or forget them somewhere when you are high. So better not to have anything expensive with you. Stuff is stuff. But one things that really annoys me is that my fucking ID got stolen. That really complicates my life.* (Fieldnotes, January 2016).

For both men, a basic need that was perhaps more important than food, was that of personal hygiene and a decent appearance. Yet, this is a need that can be hard to maintain, both because of people's condition and lack of amenities (cf. Tainio, 2007: 75). At some day centres, visitors can take a shower and wash clothes. Both men utilized this service, especially showering, whenever they had the opportunity. Tatu would occasionally wash

his clothes as well but the problem with Jarkko was that, at the time, he did not have anything to change into. A few times he had accepted donated clothes but had then decided that he could steal a change of clothes every week and throw the old ones away. Neither one of them wanted to look like "toothless junkie" or "smelly hietsu alcoholic". Hence, no matter how much substances they used, the men always tried to maintain a decent appearance, occasionally with less successful outcomes. Tatu on several different occasions for example asked, if his clothing and demeanour seemed like a normal person's appearance. When I asked what is normal, he replied that "anything that does not look like homeless person, so people do not see straightaway what the situation is." This statement takes us back to Casey et al. (2008) and Hodgetts et al. (2006) who have noted in their studies how homeless people tried to present self-images and identities that are more than that of a homeless, and how they attempted to dis-identify themselves from more stigmatized, undeserving homeless people. In this study, to retain some dignity through a decent appearance and clothing, was also a way to protect oneself from a stigmatised, spoiled identity (cf. Goffman, 1963).

5.2.2 "Get arrested and you have a place to sleep" – Attempts to acquire shelter

One demanding task a homeless person faces is where to find a place to sleep at night. The City of Helsinki and some third-sector organisations provide shelter type emergency service for rough sleepers. During my ride-along with Yökiitäjä service, I visited No Fixed Abode's night café that can accommodate around 15 people per night. There are no beds, instead chairs are placed around the room where people can sit and try to rest. The space is small, but it provides some shelter for people, who would otherwise spend their nights outside. Interestingly though, Tatu and Jarkko were not keen to use these services, they rather attempted to make their own arrangements for shelter. The problem with shelters have also been noted in previous studies (Murto, 1978; Meert et al., 2006). Rosenthal (1994) has shown that although homeless people have to rely on shelters, they do not prefer these places. Both men in this study despised one particular night shelter and rather slept outside than went there. Jarkko explains his reasons for this:

> *Imagine the worst place where you would have to sleep at night. That shelter is that*
> *place. Pure shithole, full of junkies and old alcoholics who smell like shit and urine.*
> *Yea, I got issues as well but hell no, I would not sink that low. Seriously, there is no*
> *privacy, the smell is disgusting and most likely you wake up in the morning without*

your shoes because someone has stolen them at night. That kind of rats and human waste stay there. I rather sleep outside or in a public toilet than go there. (Fieldnotes, February 2016).

This quote points again to Hodgetts et al.'s (2006) concept of dis-identification from other homeless people and substance users. Although arguably Tatu and Jarkko shared similar destinies with fellow homeless people, there were boundaries regarding who they wanted to be associated with. These findings reflect those of Meert et al. (2006) who have noted that sometimes homeless people do not get along with other shelter users. This particular shelter was perhaps one of the worst places and they did not want to have anything to do with it. Jarkko's words "I would not sink that low" expresses that there are people he perceives below him, whose situations are even worse than his, and staying in that shelter would mean he was as "bad" as the rest of the people who stayed there. This dividing of people into good or bad, deserving or underserving, can indeed act as a coping-mechanism (Casey et al., 2008). When one lives in such adverse conditions, to distance himself from "the worst bunch" can offer comfort and self-respect, much needed sentiments that can help to cope. Furthermore, many homeless people, like Tatu and Jarkko, want to hold on to their dignity and independence by finding their own place to stay and sleep (Meert et al., 2006).

Previously, when the men had been in relationships with their housed ex-girlfriends, they did not have to worry about these issues. However, during my fieldwork periods, both men were single. With the lack of a girlfriend and in constant lookout for shelter, Tatu, for example, would sometimes go to nightclubs to "pick women" as he called it:

Well, I can honestly say that I use women in a sense that I go to nightclubs and try to pick some random chick there, so I will have a place to stay. Yea, I know, sounds a bit harsh, are you a proper feminist? [laughs]. *Women do the same thing; I mean they don't necessarily need a place to stay but they need a man so I would say it's a win-win.*

The nightclub visits required both a presentable condition and decent finances, so this option did not arise on a regular basis, nor was it guaranteed that Tatu would find someone there who would accommodate him for a night. Thus, most nights the men relied on their friends and acquaintances who had flats. However, since majority of the men's friends and associates also had substance abuse problems, there was also a level of uncertainty; if something was agreed in the morning, it did not necessarily hold anymore in the

evening. The men constantly had to negotiate whether or not they were welcome. Furthermore, as Tatu puts it, "there are no free meals, you have to compensate for your stay one way or another." Often times this meant substances in exchange for a place to stay. Also, "overstaying their welcome" was an issue that Tatu and Jarkko tried to avoid. Some of the men's friends were more welcoming than others. For example, Jarkko's friend who lived in a housing support unit was ok with Jarkko spending his nights there on a regular basis. This friend, who I also visited, did not mind too much, since it was only "a housing unit, not a normal house" where he lived, and he also received drugs in exchange. The fact that Jarkko would actually spend his nights in a housing support unit is interesting, because as noted earlier, he expressed strong dislike towards this type of housing solution. When I asked him about this, he replied that he would not want to permanently live in a housing support unit "but it is ok occasionally spend a night there, because it is a friend's place."

When there was no access to friends' flats, alternative options needed to be explored. Both men relied on staircases, attics and public toilets for shelter. During warm months, both men have also slept outside, for example, in parks. During my ride-along with Yökiitäjä, we discussed places to sleep or stay at night. The service workers pointed out that nowadays access to many places and spaces is limited. For example, for security reasons and perhaps also in fear of unwanted guests (for example homeless people), the main doors to most buildings around the city are locked, so access to staircases, without breaking in, is difficult. The case is similar for dumpsters. According to the workers, in the past especially paper dumpster were "popular" among the homeless people. Nowadays, these are often behind locked doors too, so they are difficult, if not impossible, to access. Public toilets, or "green homes" as Jarkko referred to them, are always a "secure option" if nothing else is available:

> *I have slept quite a few nights in public toilets, or green homes* [laughs]. *Definitely not my favourite places to stay but better than staying outside in the cold, especially if it rains or snows. The smell is pretty disgusting, you know urine and shit, but at least you get some privacy. Imagine that some nights it has been a struggle to find a free toilet. I guess they are in high demand. They should have more of those…The handicapped ones are good, they are bigger so there is more space.* (Fieldnotes February 2016).

One place to "stay" at night is jail (*putka*). Jail is a place that most people would not want

to end up. However, for a homeless person jail can have a different meaning. Especially during cold winter months, a jail cell sounds a better option than to be outside in freezing temperatures. The role of jail, as a form of shelter, has been identified in previous research as well. Murto (1978) has noted that getting arrested, for example, due to drunkenness, was common among his research participants, particularly during the winter. In my research especially Tatu often "opted" for the jail option. According to Tatu, one year he had spent 123 nights in jail. However, people do not get to choose whether they spend their night in a cell. Usually, a person has to do something, or be in such intoxicated state that one is taken to jail for a night. Tatu had developed "strategies" that helped him to get to jail for a night, as he explains:

> *Well, usually misbehaving is enough to get myself to jail. You know, be wasted, cause hassle in public spaces, ignore leave the premises orders given by security guards and these kind of things. Nothing major, no long-term consequences, maybe a fine. It's pretty simple, get arrested and you have a place to sleep.* (Fieldnotes, October 2015).

It should be pointed out that on many occasions these "strategies" did not need to be employed separately; Tatu's behaviour and level of intoxication was often already enough to take him to jail, he did not have to act or try harder to make this happen. Occasionally, Tatu was also taken to jail to stop him from committing more thefts during the same day. Hence, to go to jail was not always a good thing, especially if one got detained during the day, when there was "work" and "other errands to run." The problem with daytime arrest was that usually a person is released after the level of intoxication is decreased enough. Tatu tells the following:

> *I don't mind going to jail at night, but I do mind if they arrest me during the day, or worst case, in the morning. They* [police] *do this sometimes so that they don't have to deal with me later during the day. Like they know that they would for sure. Well anyway if you get arrested early if enough, they will kick you out later the same day and that sucks. Let's say you have spent 10 hours in a cell. Then late in the evening or even at night they kick you out, although they know that you don't have any place to go. That's fucked up. Can't they just keep me there overnight.* (Fieldnotes October 2015).

These examples illustrate where homeless people can spend their nights and what kind of strategies are employed to acquire shelter. To find a place to stay requires constant

negotiation and arrangements that sometimes fall through. Also, there are rarely "free places" to stay; the men's friends and acquaintances expected something in exchange, which was often substances.

5.2.3 "The art of stealing"- Income-generating strategies

In addition to the men's attempts to satisfy their basic daily needs, much of Tatu's and Jarkko's days are devoted to "making money." What one does not perhaps realise is that life as a homeless person is expensive, especially street life. Since my participants' financial resources were very limited to begin with, making ends meet possessed a constant struggle. Also, as Murto (1978) has recorded, financial situations are further complicated by people's substance use and of lack of planning. Both Tatu and Jarkko received social security benefits. However, there were months when they did not receive any money. This is due to a fact that they had failed to provide necessary documents and proofs or missed an appointment, in which case the benefits were cut off. In general, providing necessary proof and documents to qualify for benefits can be time-consuming and difficult. To a homeless person like Tatu or Jarkko it is very difficult. They do not have addresses where information is sent regarding what is required from them. They do not necessarily have an internet banking ID or a smart phone to log into the services to fill out applications, nor have they ID so that they can go to Kela to deal with these issues face to face. Even when the men received their benefits, the money did not last for long. Hence, there was a constant need to make more.

Spradley (1970: 69) in his study of urban nomads has shown that many strategies are employed to earn a livelihood: stealing, aid from third sector organizations, social security, and benefits. One way of earning a livelihood is also to sell drugs (Perälä 2002: 2011). Jarkko had considered this option but had not (yet) opted for it. Jarkko feared that he would "get high on his own supply" and as a result, would get in trouble with "tougher guys". Hence, stealing (*ritsata/käydä varkaissa*) was Jarkko's and Tatu's main source of additional income, a routine, they had to perform in order to get money and to support their substance use habits. When Tatu went to shoplift, he referred to this activity as "work". It was his current job. Tatu referred to himself as an "entrepreneur" and "self-employed" and took some pride of his "talent" (cf. Perälä 2002: 94) as the quote below illustrates:

> *There is kinda an art to stealing. Anyone can steal but not everyone is a good thief.*

I think I'm really good at what I'm doing and most of the time I get away with it. When you go to work, you need to have clean clothes and decent appearance in general, so you don't draw any attention. Otherwise, store clerks and security guards (pamput) will immediately spot you and start following you in the stores. That's not good, interferes with work. Behaviour must be normal as well. You can't be too wasted, it will ruin the whole thing. (Fieldnotes, November 2015).

It becomes apparent here that clean clothes and a decent appearance did not only relate to dignity and attempts to dis-identify as a homeless, stigmatised person. They were also important features on a practical, everyday level; to carry out "work-related" tasks successfully, one needed to blend in. This was partly achieved by looking presentable. In addition to aesthetics, other items, such as wire cutters and a bag, were also needed when one went to steal something. Wire cutters were used, for example, to cut non-metal bike locks or alarms on items. Tatu had a reusable bag that he used in any case to carry his few belongings with him. This was practical because "you can't go to a store with a big empty bag and walk out with a fuller looking bag pretending that you didn't take anything" as Tatu explained it. Occasionally, when Tatu went to steal he also used a stolen bike, which he parked outside a mall or a store so he "would get away faster if someone ran after." Ironically, what had happened a few times, was that someone had re-stolen the unlocked bike from outside while Tatu was in carrying out his own activities.

In addition, their physical condition could not be too bad either, or otherwise it would draw unwanted attention. However, since both men usually went to shoplift during rush hours, that is in the afternoon and evening, they had had plenty of time to consume substances. Both men usually stole and shoplifted only under the influence. Jarkko mostly relied on amphetamine, whereas Tatu used alcohol, benzodiazepines and amphetamine. Consequently, sometimes the men over-exceeded their limits and work could not be carried out. Jarkko explained that substances, mainly amphetamine but also occasionally some benzodiazepines such as Xanor, helped him to carry out compulsory tasks, because substances gave him euphoria and feelings of being "untouchable and above all others." The level of arrogance grew the more "speed" he used, and therefore he could operate better because he did not get nervous, nor did he care. These findings are in line with Kekki (2009: 88) whose research participants also reported similar patterns and feelings with regards to stealing and substances.

The items the men stole varied widely. Sometimes Tatu and Jarkko would ask around to see what people they knew needed, but often the men stole items they knew would sell easily. These included more expensive meats such as tenderloin and sirloin, vacuum packed salmon and different types of cheese. Both men had "regular customers" who bought these food items. Kitchenware such as frying pans and good quality knives also sold easily. Both men also stole electronic items including, wireless headphones, Bluetooth speakers, electric toothbrushes, and game consoles. Indeed, PlayStation video game consoles were the most valuable items that Tatu stole on a regular basis. They were also in high demand, and according to Tatu there was "roughly a two week waiting list" from his buyers for these consoles. Tatu explained that the reason for the long waiting list was that the game consoles were the most difficult items to steal because of their size and how they were displayed in the store, and therefore he did not steal these every day. Tatu asked between 170 and 200 euros for these consoles, depending on how desperately he needed money. This was only a fraction from the original price. Perälä (2002: 93) in his research on drug addicts, noted that his participants also relied on a traditional exchange economy (*vaihdantalous*). Tatu and Jarkko also utilised this form of exchange, as stolen goods were exchanged into illicit substances and prescription drugs.

What is imperative to point out here is that stealing and selling stolen goods was a necessary activity for Tatu and Jarkko, a routine they had to perform to get money. Although Tatu took some pride on his skills, it was still work for him. Jarkko also pointed out that stealing was only a way to make money and to acquire basic necessities, such as clothes and hygiene items for oneself:

> *Some people get excited when they go to steal. For me it's like a compulsory thing to do, if not daily at least several times a week. I'm pretty much always high when I go to steal, easier to operate. But yea, it gets tiring when you basically have to steal everything for yourself too* (Fieldnotes, February 2016).

Stealing required the men to travel around the city, since the men had many different stores, where they usually went to shoplift goods. Also, according to Jarkko, even some basic supermarkets differed in their security arrangements, and it was worth taking the subway or a tram to "an easy shop." This meant a shop that he had previously stolen successfully from or heard a tip from his acquaintances. The men also delivered the stolen goods to a buyer's home if the person had one. Otherwise, meetings for exchange took place in various public spaces, often in the vicinity of public transport stations. These

were convenient locations, because both men utilised subways, trams and trains to move around. To carry out these tasks meant that both Tatu and Jarkko were highly mobile in their daily lives. It was not uncommon to travel the subway line from beginning to end. Most of the money the men acquired through stealing was used to buy substances. These substances were not only for their own use, but also to pay for a place to stay.

5.2.4 "Associates and acquaintances"- Encounters with "fellow people"

The men's everyday lives involved multiple encounters with "fellow people", or as Jarkko calls his friends and acquaintances, "other speed heads and junkies." Tatu and Jarkko associated mainly with people who had similar interests and lifestyles; substances and the use of them. Hence, the men's circles heavily revolved around substances and contacts with non-users are very limited. These findings are in line with Murto's (1978) research which showed that homeless alcoholics in his study also associated with like people. Murto explains this by arguing that subcultures provided homeless alcoholics with emotional support, social acceptance and sympathy. Because of their poor and adverse circumstances, the alcoholics had shared interests, and therefore they found it important to have contact with one another. Furthermore, by minimizing other social contacts, a homeless person is not constantly reminded of his or her lack of competence and inadequacy (ibid.).

People like Tatu and Jarkko, who are marginalised in every single aspect of their lives, often have a negative long-term relationship with mainstream society; many marginalised people feel betrayed by the "system", they express distrust towards authorities and feel that they are misunderstood and not heard. Spradley (1970: 5) has pointed out that getting defeated by the system and different institutions, for example, in attempts to secure housing or to get treatment for substance abuse problems, changes people's identities and assimilates the patterns of certain subcultures. Furthermore, setbacks and rejections motivate people to take up, or to maintain the lifestyles of marginalized "others" (ibid.). Hence, as Murto (1978) has noted, there are obvious downsides to this; subcultures often passivate and alienate people even further away from mainstream society.

Both Tatu and Jarkko felt that they were best understood and accepted among people like them. Jarkko notes the following:

Well, I don't know many normal people, you know, people who are not junkies or have some other issues. I guess normal people would not understand nor accept this lifestyle I'm living so maybe that is the reason. Also, where would I find these normal people? They don't hang out in the same places as I do. I'm stuck with these other junkies. (Fieldnotes, February 2016).

This quote is interesting for two reasons. First, it illustrates how, according to Jarkko, "normal" people's and substance users' lives are world apart; lifestyles and values do not match. This reflects Spradley's (1970: 252) findings, who has noted that societies value differently people whose lifestyles do not conform to the mainstream of culture. Secondly, it shows how one is "stuck" with this group. There are no alternatives to this circle of friends, other than being solely alone. This shows that damaging relationships that feed each other's bad habits and feature elements of distrust and disloyalty are still chosen over pure loneliness. Homelessness and street life are already stressful and tragic periods in people's lives. The men in this study did not have supporting family networks either. Everyone needs some comfort and companionship, even if the companionship is purely based on shared substance use. This notion was evident also in Tatu's account:

I don't know if I would call these people my friends. True friends are rare in these circles. I would perhaps call them associates, acquaintances. Yeah they give you a place to stay and so on, but it doesn't come for free. People mainly try to benefit from each other. The more money and drugs you have the more friends you have. That's the way it is. I don't think I would hang out with these people if it wasn't for substances. At the end of the day, you are alone. (Fieldnotes, November 2015).

Tatu's quote points to the fact that "friends" appear when you have something of value, in most cases this is money and drugs. Both men also expressed that in the circles they hang out, one should always be cautious. There are people who try to "rip others off" and take advantage if one is not on high alert. As illustrated in the fieldnotes excerpt below, the element of distrust is strongly present in the men's everyday lives:

One morning I went with Tatu to a day centre. We found a table with free seats, and Tatu placed his plastic bag under it before he went to get breakfast. He soon came back, put his tray down and started to look for a power socket to charge his phone. He found one but it was a few tables away. Tatu took his phone there and loudly said "ok fellow junkies, that is my phone charging over there so do not even think of stealing it." Two men who were sitting at the same table with us laughed and asked

Tatu to calm down. Tatu sat down and started to eat his breakfast. After he finished breakfast, he stood up and went to get his phone. He came back and told me that we should go. On the way out I reminded Tatu of his plastic bag. He seemed a bit confused but when he realised what I was talking about he ran to the table to get it. When he came back he had an important point to make: "Ok Merja, this is something you have to write down. When you come to a place like this you cannot leave your belongings unattended. Look around what kind crowd comes here. Not that trustworthy people, I know. So, never leave your stuff unattended, especially if it is my bag of beers." (Fieldnotes, October 2015.)

On the street emotions run high and people rarely have patience if they feel that they are being mistreated or "fooled." Fights, violent outbursts and other kinds of altercations also happen when people are under the influence. Below is an excerpt from my fieldnotes that illustrates this:

One afternoon when I finally located Tatu, he was in a middle of an argument with his street friend Jesse. After standing there for a while, I understood that the argument was about a jacket that Tatu had given Jesse in exchange for benzos. Jesse insisted that he had already "paid" for the jacket, but Tatu disagreed. In Tatu's opinion he had not received any payment and he was furious about it. Jesse offered to give the jacket back, to which Tatu replied that "what would I do with a used jacket, get my benzos." Jesse tried to explain that he did not have any at the moment, but he could get more in the next few days and then give the pills to Tatu. Tatu did not accept this offer and shouted how he didn't trust a junkie like Jesse, and he needed the "payment" right now. If Jesse was not willing to get him the pills right now Tatu would take further action. Tatu shouted: "You fucking rat, do I need to break your legs or stab you, so you understand that you don't fucking mess with me! I can easily do that so think about it." (Fieldnotes, November 2015).

Events like this occurred on a regular basis and the threat of violence was often present. The men and their acquaintances did not always remember what was agreed and feelings often got heated over payments and other arrangements. Previous studies (Murto, 1978; Meert et al., 2006) have also shown that homeless people are often exposed to physical violence and robbery, both as victims and as perpetrators. In this research, the level of incidents was heightened because of heavy substance use. One illustrating fact was also that both Tatu and Jarkko always carried knives, or some other sharp items that are suitable to harm other people. Jarkko explained this by saying that "when you live on

street and associate with these kind of people, it is necessary to have some protection."
Furthermore, in Tatu's quote above, we can also see a previously acknowledged feature;
Tatu's attempt to dis-identify himself from Jesse by calling him a rat and a junkie,
although Tatu had sold him a stolen jacket and was asking for pills in exchange. Yet, he
felt that he was above Jesse because in Tatu's opinion Jesse tried to rip him of. In general,
pride and reputation were features that needed to be maintained. This is what Tatu and
Jarkko tried to do constantly, even though it entailed a threat of violence or the actual use
of it. Substance-fuelled life on the street is tough and showing weakness and too much
emotion can hurt one's reputation and put them in more vulnerable positions. These
finding reflect to those of Granfelt (1998) and Casey et al. (2008) who have illustrated
that homeless people are often forced to project a tougher image to survive and feel safe
and secure.

These research findings have shed light to Tatu's and Jarkko's everyday activities and
attempts to satisfy their basic needs. Although the men's everyday lives may seem chaotic
to an outsider, there was a certain structure in their days. Visits to day centres, making
money by stealing, acquiring substances and organising places to stay were activities that
the men performed almost on a daily basis. Daly (1996: 11) has used the concept of
"alternate reality" to describe the daily lives of homeless people. Alternate reality refers
to different set of organising principles which are required on the streets (ibid.). The men
in this study also lived in this type of reality, where their actions and choices may have
appeared irrational and immoral to an outsider but when put in context they seemed to
make sense, at least on a street level. One should bear in mind that street life is rarely a
time of rational and long-term thinking. Being homeless is day-by-day living, the
approach is here and now. A homeless person is constantly occupied to even satisfy the
most basic needs that most of us can do in the comfort of our homes.

5.2.6 "I had enough"- Tatu's decision

Towards the end of 2015, Tatu's life was getting more out of control. Although he had
been released from prison only a few months earlier, the street life had already gotten to
him. Surviving in the colder weather was getting difficult and attempts to satisfy even the
modest basic needs, such as finding a place to stay at night, was becoming more difficult
each day. Tatu had fallen out with some of his acquaintances and friends, so he had less
options for places to stay. His increased use of substances caused aggressive outbursts

and emotions in general ran high. Tatu had tried to get to rehabilitation, but according to Tatu, he did not get a "high enough score" to secure an urgent place in rehab facility. He was placed on a waiting list and was offered outpatient rehabilitation. He did not take the news well and was seemingly upset about this:

> *This is unbelievable shit. I can't believe that I don't score high enough, like my substance abuse is not bad enough, and I need to wait. Or outpatient rehab, what a joke! So, I would go and get my meds in the morning and then hang out on the streets sober and watch everyone else being high. I don't think so. What a great welfare state we have! If I voluntarily seek help for my problem and I don't get it, what does it say about this country? Fuck, I haven't asked for much. Well, whatever, not gonna ask again anytime soon. I had enough of this.* (Fieldnotes, December 2015).

Rejection and disappointment towards the system pushed Tatu even further on the edge. Tatu could not understand how the social and health care professionals would offer him outpatient rehabilitation when he was homeless and had no other option than spend his time in the midst of other substance users. Devastated by these news, Tatu told me that he would do something drastic to get off the streets and go back to prison, since no other options seemed to be available. At this point, I offered to make phone calls to see if, for example, social workers could urgently help him. Tatu told me not to, he "would sort out his own situation." After this I did not hear from Tatu for months. I assumed that he had done something illegal to find some relief for his situation. Eventually, in spring 2016, I received a phone call from unknown number. It was Tatu calling from prison. After our last conversation he had robbed a small grocery store. He was caught later the same evening. Since Tatu had held a knife during the incident, he received a sentence for aggravated robbery. He was now home.

6 Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study has been to explore the everyday lives of two homeless people with substance abuse problems. By using ethnographic methods, this study has provided a thick description of the two participants' pathways to homelessness, what home means to them, how they make "home" while being homeless, and their everyday encounters and struggles as homeless people with addiction problems. The study has illustrated how pathways to homelessness are often complex, stemming from individual characteristics

and structural factors. In my participants' cases, troubled childhoods, lack of support, and substance abuse problems have all played their part in the men's pathways to homelessness. Their housing histories have also illustrated that even when the men have had flats or homes, they have not been able to hold on to these. Rent arrears and disturbances have led to warnings and eventually to evictions. These problems have mainly stemmed from heavy substance use, lack of life management skills and lack of supporting social networks.

However, as noted before, the link between homelessness and substances is a complex one. It is far too simple to say that substances cause homelessness. Substances most definitely contribute to homelessness in a sense that they further complicate the lives of those already in vulnerable positions. Yet, homelessness can also cause or increase substance use, as substances can provide an escape and relief in adverse circumstances. Although Tatu and Jarkko had substance abuse problems prior to their homelessness periods, their use of substances always increased when they lived on streets. As illustrated throughout this thesis, homelessness is a time of great distress. A homeless person struggles financially, psychologically and emotionally. Attempts to satisfy even basic needs such as eating, sleeping and washing, require significant efforts and arrangements. Homelessness, especially if pro-longed, indeed breaks down all the elements of a good life, it defeats a person. A person goes into a survival mode, and problems begin to accumulate. The longer this situation persists, the harder it becomes to break out of the vicious circle.

However, researching homelessness from the marginalization perspective, one can see that individual characteristics are only a minor part of the causal explanation framework for homelessness. As I have already pointed out, the root and underlying causes for homelessness can be found by focusing on the structural factors and exclusionary processes and mechanisms. Homelessness, as Liebow (1993: 224) argues, is deeply rooted in the issue of poverty, and ultimately homeless people are homeless because they lack a place to live. In Finland, the most significant structural factor contributing to homelessness is the lack of affordable housing, a widely acknowledged fact which has been highlighted for example in the Finnish homelessness reduction programmes. The situation is difficult, especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area. In addition to the homeless population, the affordability issue also affects people whose work-related earnings are low, and people who would move to the capital region because of work but

cannot afford housing there. The most straightforward housing policy response to homelessness and housing affordability is the sufficient production of affordable (subsidised) housing and the allocation of land for it. However, as noted before, housing policy alone cannot solve homelessness. Other social and welfare policy measures are also needed, which address issues of insufficient level of social security, education, employment and access to health care and social services. The rising socio-economic inequalities point to the shortcomings of the welfare state, as not everyone has the same resources and opportunities in life. Nowadays homelessness does not affect only marginalised single men, like Tatu and Jarkko but also women, families, young people and immigrants. The heterogeneity of the people considered homeless is significant.

What became evident in this research is that without a home, it was nearly impossible to make any life-improving changes such as withdraw from substances. For Tatu and Jarkko, a home meant a private space which they had control over. Home was also associated with safety and security, feelings that a person who lives on the streets rarely experiences. One significant research finding was that not all housing was considered home. An example of this was a flat in a housing support; neither of the men considered this home, it was simply a shelter which did not provide the socio-psychological experiences of home. Tatu had even "chosen" to be homeless rather than live in the unit. Hence, Tatu and Jarkko did not simply look for housing, but places or spaces where they could feel at home. Quite interestingly though, for both men, prison was a substitute for home. It was a familiar and safe place, which provided some level of ontological security. In adverse cases home was also, for example, in a staircase or a laundry room. As the men's conceptualisations of home illustrate, the concept of home is multidimensional, and what constitutes a home varies considerably. For these reasons, research that focuses on homelessness should also take into consideration what home actually means to a homeless person.

The research results also illustrated that much of Tatu's and Jarkko's daily lives were occupied with attempts to satisfy basic needs such as eating, washing and finding places to stay. Day centres provided breakfast and utilities to take care of personal hygiene. Since the men did not prefer to stay at night shelters, alternative places for nights needed to be acquired. Alternatives were staircases, public toilets and jail. Most of the time the men relied on friends and acquaintances. Access to housed friends was usually negotiated by giving substances or something else in exchange. Making money for substances and other

necessities was obtained by stealing. This routine was mainly a compulsory activity for both men. The daily realities for the men were very different from people who are included in the activities of mainstream society. For example, income-generating strategies of a homeless substance user may test the moral compass of an ordinary, housed taxpayer. However, street life requires a different set of skills and coping mechanisms that can be difficult to comprehend if one is not exposed to similar challenges and vulnerabilities.

This study also has some limitations. First, focusing only on two homeless men and their everyday lives, means that these findings are limited to their experiences and survival strategies. Hence, this is by no means a representative sample. However, as Rosenthal (1991, 119) has argued, "no sample of homeless people can claim to be representative of the total homeless population which cannot be known due to invisibility, flux, and so forth". Also, it should be emphasised that not all homeless people struggle with substances. The experiences and activities of a homeless person with no addiction problems would paint a very different picture. However, no methodology is flawless, and the goal is finding the most suitable one(s) for each study. With regards to this research, the ethnographic approach and "hanging out" method have provided a path to observe my participants' everyday lives in their own environments and settings, which yielded information that could not have been discovered only by interviewing homeless people. Second, given the scope of restrictions of this thesis, there are many other areas and aspects in the lives of homeless people that have not been addressed in detail. One important aspect is homeless substance user's attachment and connection to social and health care services. The topic has been slightly touched upon by showing that both Tatu and Jarkko had long-term negative relationships with social and health professionals. Both expressed distrust towards the "system" and they felt misunderstood and unheard. This became strikingly evident in Tatu's "final decision." Any changes or improvements in the services tailored to homeless substance users should be based on research and evaluation on the needs of this group. Another important area for future research is to explore more in detail how homeless people utilize and use public spaces, as much of homeless people's lives take place in the public domain.

While writing the concluding remarks for this thesis, the outbreak of COVID-19 unfolded. This pandemic put everything on hold, societies across the globe were at a standstill, businesses had to close their doors and many services were suspended. During

the peak of the pandemic, many homeless services had either been closed or they have worked at a limited capacity. Due to vaccinations, many societies, including Finland, have slowly returned back to normal, or a "new normal" as some people have called it. The effects of the pandemic are yet to be fully research, but it could be hypothesized that COVID-19 has hit people already in vulnerable positions the hardest. Homeless people in particular have been exposed to the effects of COVID-19 as many crucial services have not been in operation. Furthermore, many public places, where homeless people spend time and hang out, have also been closed, or there have been restrictions regarding "unnecessary hanging out", an activity homeless people have to exercise due to a lack of their own personal and private space. In addition to the already existing homeless population, the pandemic has also affected the housed population, as people have struggled to pay rent or meet their mortgage payments due to layoffs or terminations of employment. Hence, there is a real danger that the amount of homeless people will increase because of the pandemic. These are some topics that future research need to address.

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