

## Occupational and residential trajectories of the homeless and how these interact

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EPC 2014 Conference, Budapest.

Since the 1990s, the homeless have been a recurring topic in the media. Here we use a new French statistical survey, “*Sans-Domicile 2012*”, conducted by INSEE and INED. Its initial findings show an increase of nearly 50% in the number of homeless in metropolitan France since the previous survey in 2001 (Yaouancq *et al.*, 2013). It is important, therefore, to improve our knowledge of the processes by which people are excluded from the housing market and see if any new mechanisms are operating. Earlier research has revealed a number of factors and events often associated with losing normal accommodation: immigration, separation, leaving home at an early age, health problems, adverse events during childhood, such as domestic violence, fostering or early death of a parent. Loss of employment obviously also plays a major part and is probably the most crucial element. We look closer at this point and analyse critical transitions in occupational and residential trajectories and how these interact.

First, we describe the interactions, mainly on the basis of data on residential and occupational transitions during the 12 months preceding the survey. Is the loss of housing the consequence or cause of the loss of a job? Is this single critical event (job loss) sufficient to derail a person’s life, or is the loss of housing related to an accumulation of varied events (health problems, changes in the family group, loss of social relations, etc.)? In other words, is becoming homeless the extreme case of a more general situation of occupational and economic insecurity, or the result of a series of critical events? Although we look mainly at employment, we also pay attention to other life events. We also examine interactions with the standard socio-demographic variables (age, gender, origin). This is because losing normal accommodation and being taken care of by an institution are quite different things for women and men, according to their family structure, migration status and age (Brousse *et al.*, 2008).

With respect to the relationship between occupational and residential trajectories, we focus on a particular situation that has recently become more common: people with a job but without normal housing. As insecurity grows on the labour market and house prices rise in cities, having a job no longer necessarily means having access to stable accommodation of quality. This specific population group raises the question of the relationship between occupational and residential trajectories. What obstacles prevent them having normal housing? Is it mainly due to the type of job held (low income, part-time, short contract) or other life events? If their “organic solidarity” (Paugam, 2008) has not broken down (although it may be weakened), what are the strengths and weaknesses of their other social ties<sup>1</sup> that have led to them losing

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<sup>1</sup> Serge Paugam identifies various types of tie: filiation (based on intergenerational solidarity), organic participation (with the learning and exercise of a function within the organisation of labour), elective participation (from socialisation outside one’s family of origin, including forming a couple) and citizenship (based on the principle of belonging to a nation and supposed to guarantee legal protection under the principle of equality) (Paugam, 2008).

their home? Next, how does this group differ from the other homeless, particularly in their conditions of accommodation? The initial survey findings show that only 5% of the homeless accommodated in a centre that must be left in the morning have a job, compared with 45% of those living in a lodging. Is it because they have a job that they can afford this type of accommodation, or rather because they have the accommodation that they are able to hold down a job? The answer to this question will throw light on the “Housing First” policy<sup>2</sup> currently underlying the treatment of the homeless in France.

In general, we examine the relations between developments in the labour market and exclusion from an increasingly selective housing market. A parallel may be drawn between the increasing forms of selectivity in both markets. In the 19th century, Engels considered that a housing shortage was inherent in capitalist society and closely associated with the relations of exploitation in the productive system (Engels, 1957). How can this question be re-examined now and what are the relations between the social organisation of labour and the integration of individuals for whom housing is a basic precondition?

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<sup>2</sup> The “housing first” approach is based on US experience. It sees accommodation as a necessary precondition for labour market reintegration.