The role of social experimentation in driving change in the homeless sector: Observations from Belgium.

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3 questions

1. What paradigms?
2. Is it necessary to change it?
3. If so, how?

→ Learnings from the HFB experiment
1. What paradigms?
1. What paradigms?

To what?
2. Is it necessary to change it?

First quick (simplistic) answers

- **No**: HF is only for a small and specific target group. A large diversity of needs → a large diversity of offers (HF is only a new one more).

- **Yes**: the classical system is not enough efficient (HF is the best deal). Let’s do HF everywhere.
Some learnings from HFB

CONTINUOUS EVALUATION OF 378 PERSONS

0 1 YEAR 2 YEARS

HOUSING FIRST BELGIUM
141 TENANTS

TRADITIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM
237 PERSONS
137 HOMELESS 100 TENANTS
Some learnings from HFB

Housing First

- Roofless (Street/night shelter)
- Houseless (short-term accommodation*)
  * Example: reception centre
- Houseless (prison)
- Houseless (hospital/treatment centre)
- Insecure/inadequate house
- Adequate house

Homeless Traditional Support System

- Roofless (Street/night shelter)
- Houseless (short-term accommodation*)
  * Example: reception centre
- Houseless (prison)
- Houseless (hospital/treatment centre)
- Insecure/inadequate house
- Adequate house

In Housing - After Traditional Support System

- Roofless (Street/night shelter)
- Houseless (short-term accommodation*)
  * Example: reception centre
- Houseless (prison)
- Houseless (hospital/treatment centre)
- Insecure/inadequate house
- Adequate house

100%

0%
1. **HF = fastest access to long-term solution**

- **HF works in Belgium too.** Housing retention after 2 years = 90%.

- **Outside HF, homeless people with lower needs are also capable of living in housing (86%).** But: Many of them have first been to a reception centre and have thus been prepared to access housing (47%).

- **The traditional support system to address homelessness doesn’t facilitate rapid access to housing.** 2 years are needed for 48% to achieve housing.
Some learnings from HFB

2. HF = recovery

3. Housing (not only HF) = social integration
   - Better/faster access to social rights.
   - Street control group: 50% are still not in order with their identity card and 23% don’t have any income.

4. Housing (not only HF) = empowerment, self-esteem

5. HF support = efficient (17.80 euros/day/person).
First quick (simplistic) answers

Evidence based answers

• Yes: HF is more effective, efficient, sustainable, just. HF invites to social innovation; to fast track the exit from homelessness. Let’s do HF everywhere. It is about housing led policies/practices.
2. Is it necessary to change it?

Evidence based answers

• Yes and *The housing support needs to be as long and intensive as necessary.*

• Yes and *The housing support teams should have specific resources with regards to health/addiction.*

• Yes and *The lack of housing should not make us accept any kind of rental option. Someone responsible for housing should be appointed and ensure mediation if necessary.*
WE DON'T NEED COINS WE NEED CHANGE...

Help us end homelessness and drug addiction in Vancouver and in your community. Local businesses are collecting donations which go directly to agencies that help overcome homelessness and help people conquer drug addiction.
3. How to change it

Social innovation – Change management

• “If you want truly to understand something, try to change it » (Kurt Lewin)

• « People support what they create » (Kurt Lewin)
3. How to change it

Some learnings from HFB

• Testing HF in order to adapt the copy-paste to our Belgian specificites
• From a bottom-up process
• Public/Private stakeholders
• Coordination/steering from stakeholders
• Stakeholders freely developed the HF teams needed
• Pluri-institutional HF teams
3. How to change it

Some learnings from HFB

• 3 independent regional knowledge centers
• Inclusive/participative evaluation methodology
• Mirror of existing common challenges in the traditional support system
• Social laboratory → Transferable solutions, HFB is opening doors
• Inclusive communication (not dichotomous)
3. How to change it

With common recommendations

1. Describe and record the number of homeless people.
2. Match the needs and the offer of services through an efficient orientation scheme.
3. Support social innovation and the development of programmes like Housing First.
4. Aim for short circuit solutions for durable exit from homelessness and avoid the use of emergency reception facilities.
5. Dare to use housing-led programmes.
6. Increase access of low income households to quality housing and support innovation in this area.
3. How to change it

With common recommendations

7. Invest in supportive housing services adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries. They should be intensive, multidisciplinary and long-term if necessary.

8. Establish a concerted plan to fight homelessness involving all levels of governance in the areas of anti-poverty policy, social integration, urban policy, health, social action, well-being, housing and employment.

9. Prevent homelessness by anticipating evictions and exits from youth institutions, hospitals and prisons.

10. Longitudinally evaluate the efficiency and the effectiveness of the practices and policies documenting the trajectories of the targeted population.
... still a challenge...
They didn’t know that it was impossible, so they did it.

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