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Homelessness in Ukraine: Structural Causes and Moral Evaluation

Anastasiya Ryabchuk

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Homelessness is seen among the most visible forms of urban marginality in post-soviet countries. As changes in the labour and housing markets led to a growing number of the homeless in Ukrainian cities, social policy moved towards moral evaluation of the homeless individual as "deserving" or "undeserving" which is unlikely to resolve the problem of homelessness at a structural level. On the contrary, affordable housing and access to decent work as universal rights guaranteed to all should be among the priorities of state policy and non-governmental institutions alike.

Keywords: homelessness; affordable housing; reserve army of labour; penal state; Ukraine

Introduction

An old woman approaches me in the street, asking to help her find her home. "It should not be far, but I do not see it. It is a small house, not like these palaces". Her name is Katerina, she does not remember her age, last name or her address. All she has with her is a handkerchief, a pair of glasses and a bag of instant noodles. She says she does not have children and lives alone in the village. I take her to the police station where I write a report (using a standardised form) about "an elderly citizen approaching me with a request for help" and ask the policemen what will happen next.

This paper is based on ethnographic work conducted in 2003–2004 (participant observation as a volunteer in a Christian NGO providing food and clothing to the homeless in the streets of Kyiv, 60 interviews with the homeless) and 2008–2009 (visits to various organisations working with the homeless in Ukraine, interviews with social workers, discourse analysis of press publications and official websites of key ministries dealing with homelessness), in the framework of my PhD thesis at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

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Katerina's prospects are quite bleak. Had she just left one of the apartment blocks ("the palaces"), her relatives or neighbours would have by now noticed her absence and called the police. She is too old to walk long distances, so there can only be two options: either she lives nearby, or she was brought there by someone. Brought there? Yes, a policeman responds calmly to my surprise, this has happened many times before. Somebody finds and elderly lonely person in a village near Kyiv, where land is expensive. They make her sign papers of giving the house as a gift or selling it for a symbolic price. Then they just take her to Kyiv and leave her in the street for police to pick her up and place her in a grim Soviet-style retirement home, where she will die in a year or two.

What surprises me most is not the housing affair scheme itself, but the calm matter-of-fact way of telling about it. The policemen are kind and polite, they offer Katerina some tea with biscuits, and they immediately start looking for phone numbers of social services and retirement homes. The housing affair is just taken as a given, as an independent variable. "This has happened many times before". And yet, the immediate function of the police is not to provide elderly homeless with tea, but to deal with these affairs, to punish the criminals and to prevent such situations from occurring in the future.

Another important issue is at stake here. In this story, the policemen are trying to help, and the homeless woman is perceived as "deserving" our support. But in a perspective that is based on moral evaluation of the homeless individual, he or she is totally dependent on the goodwill of the benefactor—the policeman, the doctor, the social worker, the employment officer, etc. In another recent encounter, a homeless man, who was beaten up by the street children, asked me to call the ambulance, but it refused to take him. The doctors just looked at the dying man (he died a week later on the street), and began shouting at me: "You knew we would not take this *bomzh,* why call us? What if somebody dies while we're wasting our time here?"

When I protested, they began to describe the situation in hospitals with a lack of beds for all patients, lack of medications and low salaries for medical personnel. Again, the under-financing of the health-care system, where doctors with limited resources are forced to choose whom to help and whom to leave dying, is simply taken as a given.

Moral evaluation of the homeless will always include these alternatives of pity or condemnation, charity or repression, or mere indifference. In this framework, it is indeed for the concrete policeman or doctor to decide based on his or her moral criteria whether to be kind, indifferent or aggressive at the encounter of a homeless person on the street. But the function of policemen or health care workers is not to evaluate the homeless as "good" or "bad", "deserving" or "undeserving"; it is to guarantee basic rights of housing, medical assistance, protection from crime. Why is it that moral judgment of the individual is the starting point in the construction of homelessness as a social problem?

The few sociologists who write about homelessness in post-soviet societies also tend to focus on the homeless individuals. They do list at least some of the major structural causes of homelessness, such as lack of affordable housing, lack of decent employment opportunities, flawed social policies towards the most vulnerable. But they spend most of their time defining homelessness, estimating the number of people on the street in a given city, classifying them, or producing ethnographic accounts of a typical day of the street homeless. These accounts contribute in many important ways to our understanding of the problem, but they take as a given the structural causes of homelessness during transition from a planned to a market economy, which I intend to problematize in this paper.

Instead of focusing on homeless individuals and on the moral evaluation of whether they are "deserving" or not (whether they should be given tea or beaten up, placed in social care on in gaol), In this paper, I focus on the social construction of homelessness in Ukrainian society. I look both at the material structures (the political economy of homelessness) and at the bureaucratic field where homelessness is being produced and reproduced as a social problem, reaffirming the current social order. My research is based on participant observation in the role of a volunteer of a Christian NGO serving food to the homeless in the streets of Kyiv between fall 2002 and spring 2004, 60 interviews with the homeless, conducted at the same time, 30 interviews with social workers and volunteers assisting the homeless, conducted in 2008–2009, and discourse analysis of press publications and official websites of ministries that deal with homelessness.

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Homelessness and Lack of Affordable Housing

The first most obvious structural explanation of homelessness has to do with the situation on the housing market. United Nations declared the year 1987 as "Year of shelter for the homeless" in an attempt to draw the public attention to the millions of people in the world who have no home ("absolute homeless") as well as to a billion of insecurely housed and slum-dwellers ("relative homeless"). The second category included people whose housing does not meet the basic criteria of protection from elements, access to drinking water and sanitation, work and health facilities in vicinity to the dwelling, personal safety and stability, sufficient space to avoid overcrowding (Layton 2000, 25).

The line between the absolute and the relative homeless is rather artificial as they are often just different periods of insecure housing arrangements for most homeless people. Rather than staying on the street or in homeless shelters all the time, many of them spend several nights at their friends' and relatives' homes, rent out rooms in cheap hostels and sometimes even rent out flats for a few months. For instance, Oksana, one of my respondents, came to Kyiv pregnant with her husband, who found a job in construction industry. Just after she gave birth to a baby boy, her husband fell ill and died. Since she

cannot work with such a young child, she turned to panhandling in order to pay for the little room in one of the suburbs of Kyiv. The landlady insisted that she pays for each night before 6 pm, otherwise she would go to the train station to find other guests for that room.

Oksana entered a vicious circle with work only possible if the child is in day care, municipal day care being available only for those registered in Kyiv, while registration is only possible in the case of a long-term work contract and enough money to pay rent by month and not by night. Her problem could be easily resolved with a combination of affordable childcare, job opportunities for single mothers and subsidised social housing. However, municipal construction of social housing has decreased by 21 times between 1990 and 2008, even as the total number of dwellings and their total surface has been on the increase. With so little social housing on offer, it would take more than a hundred years to provide housing for all those on the waiting list.

Another category in risk of homelessness consists of people living in dilapidated housing or in buildings that are unfit for permanent residence.[1] For instance, in the historic centre of Kyiv—on 32, Gogol Street—there is a rundown house where elderly people and families with children are forced to live in dilapidated communal flats for more than two decades. The house is too worn out to be reconstructed and must be torn down. In such a situation, according to the Ukrainian housing code, residents should be given flats of equivalent size in other buildings within the city limits. The city authorities were supposed to evacuate people from this house back in 1989, but this evacuation never happened. In Kyiv alone, currently there are 107 houses that were officially declared as unfit for living by the municipality, but where people continue to live for lack of other alternatives. They regularly write letters to city authorities, initiate court trials and protest events, but their demands for decent housing remain unanswered.

In Ukraine, over 40% of the population has to survive the cold without any centralised heating and one in ten was living with room temperature below appropriate level, 23% with frequent absence of electricity, 16% without running water (almost half without hot water), with cracks in the walls and leaking ceilings (over 16%), one in ten shares a room with two or more other people.[2] In Kyiv alone, as of 2006, there were more than one hundred apartment buildings that were officially declared "unfit for living", but were still inhabited. In addition to that, the homeless, migrant workers and other vulnerable categories find shelter in many of the evacuated buildings, and city housing authorities or private structures collect unofficial payments from them.

On some occasions, overcrowded living conditions lead to grown-up children kicking out their parents or other elderly relatives from their homes. Maria sold her house in the village and moved to live with her daughter when the daughter asked for her help in taking care of her young child. But when the child reached school age and Maria's help was no longer needed, Maria's daughter began to regularly kick her out of the overcrowded apartment of just

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20 square metres for a family of four and force her to bring home money earned through panhandling:

> I had my own house and a garden in Cherkassy region, but my little granddaughter was often ill and I came to Kyiv to help take care of her. My daughter sold my house and let me sleep on a fold-out bed in the kitchen. I didn't mind, I've lived through the famine and the war, I can sleep anywhere and do any work. But my daughter became like a savage when a worker came to repair our gas stove and fined her for letting me sleep near the stove. He said it was a violation of some safety rules. But the flat was so small that there was no room to put me a bed anywhere. So my daughter threw out all my things from a balcony and kicked me out. Sometimes if I earn a lot of money from begging, I come and she lets me in, but if I don't bring enough, she won't let me in. She says I'm dirty and have too many things with me, overcrowding the flat. But I go to a public bath house to wash, and all my things are here in this bag! And she doesn't allow me to eat from their dishes or to go to their toilet.

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One of the common explanations to overcrowding is that there is not enough housing in post-soviet societies, but average living space in Ukraine is 23 square metres per person (which would mean a small studio for a bachelor, a two-room flat of 46 square metres for a couple and a three-room flat of 70 square metres for a family with one child). The problem is not lack of living space for all, but uneven distribution of housing: in Kyiv, more than half of all recently built flats are of "elite" or "business" class, while flats of "economy" class constitue only 40% (even these "economy" flats cost at least one thousand euro per square metre and are unaffordable to most people, since average salary in the capital is just 400 euro a month.[3])

One specificity of the post-soviet housing market compared to Western societies is high risk of loss of housing due to housing affairs. "Homelessness and rising crime rates related to real estate are among the most dramatic consequences of the war over private property"—notes Michael Harloe (Andrusz, Harloe, and Szelenyi 1996, 12). He considers housing segregation a key factor of class differentiation in post-soviet societies. Gregor Andrusz adds: "as soon as housing became subject of legal commercial transactions, its market price skyrocketed and as a result it became object of criminal interest" (Andrusz, Harloe, and Szelenyi 1996, 61). He provides examples of affairs where sellers received nothing for their flats and ended up on the street or as "non-identified corpses" in the forests or next to autoroutes.[4] Semen Gluzman, the head of the Association of Psychiatrists of Ukraine, speaks of a typical housing affair scheme:

> Criminals often have good ties with the police and municipal housing services. There they get a list of potential victims who are not needed by anybody and can disappear without anyone noticing: the elderly without any relatives taking care of them, the alcoholics and drug addicts, mentally ill … These are people who are unable to rationally think through all the legal details of selling their flats. They are easy to fool into selling their flat for a few coins, or even to offer it as a gift by signing some papers they can't even read. Among our patients there were a few such cases. There are even cases when relatives

> send their relatives to a psychiatric hospital and sell their flats in the meantime. Just to get a hold of their relatives' flats, they pay psychiatrists to sign papers that the patient has to be kept in a mental home, even if this is not the case and home care is a better option.

Furthermore, although nine in ten families privatised their flats in the 1990s, many of them are now unable to cover the costs of communal services like water, gas or electricity[5] and have to sell their flats and move to ever smaller dwellings with a high chance of being fooled along the way. And because of the privatisation of the majority of flats, now municipalities do not have enough housing stock on offer for the poor in risk of homelessness or those already on the street. As John Evans rightly notes, no matter how efficient are rehabilitation programmes for the homeless, they will not change much if at the end of the line the homeless are not offered any housing options (Evans 2003, 5).

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Homeless as the Reserve Army of Labour

Unemployment is another obvious structural factor of homelessness, even though "unemployment" seems to be a very vague concept when trying to understand homelessness in post-soviet societies. Many people who are not officially employed are nevertheless working in the informal economy (which in Ukraine, according to different estimates constitutes between 30 and 50% of all economic practices). Some of those who are officially employed have wage arrears of six months or more, or earn a very low income, insufficient to pay for housing and other basic needs. Among those who are considered "productive" citizens (excluding the elderly, the handicapped as well as young children), the ILO defines many categories for the non-working population: not only the unemployed, but also students, caregivers and housewives, as well as the "desperate", who have stopped looking for work or think that no work is available for them (there was over quarter of a million people in this last category in Ukraine in 2010). And on the other extreme, there are those who do not need to work, because they can live from interest on their property or from financial assistance of third parties, and who will most likely never be at risk of homelessness under the present economic conjuncture.

As Mike Denning notes in his thought-provoking article "Wageless life",

> Capitalism begins not with the offer of work, but with the imperative to earn a living. Dispossession and expropriation, followed by the enforcement of money taxes and rent: such is the idyll of "free labour". […] Unemployment precedes employment, and the informal economy precedes the formal, both historically and conceptually. We must insist that "proletarian" is not a synonym for "wage labourer" but for dispossession, expropriation and radical dependence on the market. You don't need a job to be a proletarian: wageless life, not wage labour, is the starting point in understanding the free market.

In the Ukrainian context, where up until 2004, three quarters of the population lived below the official poverty line (by 2010, this figure fell to 22%, but still constituted almost a quarter of the population) and where a third of almost 1.8 million officially registered as unemployed have been without work for more than a year (the average duration of unemployment in 2010 was 12 months, and those without work for more than a year do not receive unemployment benefits). It would be difficult to imagine these people as "not working". It is also not surprising that many of the homeless are doing some work to earn a living, even though this fact is often neglected by social workers, as witnessed by this quote by the director of Kyiv's only municipal homeless shelter:

> Social workers at the shelter now have more experience and accept only those who are in a really difficult situation. Earlier, construction workers used to live here, whole brigades of them. In one day they could make 100 hryvni [about ten euro]. They wanted to save on housing and that's why they would come to sleep here.[6]

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While Karl Marx wrote about the market not recognising the unemployed worker ("The rascal, swindler, beggar, the unemployed, the starving, wretched and criminal workingman—these are figures who do not exist for political economy but only for other eyes, those of the doctor, the judge, the gravedigger, and bum-bailiff, etc.; such figures are spectres outside its domain."[7]), in the quote from the director of the homeless shelter we see a somewhat different trend of "doctors, judges, gravediggers and bum-bailiffs" not recognising workers in their homeless clients.

The few studies on the participation of the homeless in the labour market in post-soviet societies show that the majority of homeless work in order to satisfy at least part of their material needs. In a study conducted among the homeless of Yaroslavl (Zavialov and Spiridonova 2000), majority of homeless respondents worked from time to time and 19% had a stable job that nevertheless did not allow them to secure housing. Furthermore, only 4% of job refusals were due to a serious cause like alcoholism or drug abuse, there were almost no refusals due to lack of qualification (half of respondents had secondary education and a quarter—technical or higher education), while the majority of refusals were due to lack of housing (a vicious circle for the homeless). Similarly, in a study, conducted by "Doctors without borders" among their homeless clients in Russia, 46% declared that they worked part-time, almost two per cent worked full-time, and another 2,5% were receiving old-age pension (Gutov 2001).

Looking at the homeless as the reserve army of labour has several implications for our analysis. It allows to address situations when the homeless do have temporary and precarious jobs, when they participate in informal economic practices like garbage-collection and recycling, or when the permanently employed suffer from low wages that are insufficient to pay for housing and also end up on the street. Homelessness is thus not so much as a dysfunctional side effect of unemployment, but as a functional element of the capitalist labour market.

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In 1990, ILO held an international conference in Moscow, entitled "In search of flexibility: the new Soviet labour market", where it promised to provide all necessary consultations on the creation of new employment opportunities, new sectors of the economy and new forms of property. The ILO stressed that wage regulation should be more flexible, that the harsh system of guaranteed employment should be abandoned and that unemployment should be recognised by the state "as a sad reality" (Standing 1991, 4–5). That same year, USSR indeed recognised the existence of unemployment. The Soviet state also admitted that in 1990 about 16% of work was performed outside the state sector and that in some regions of the country one in five workers will be forced to change jobs in early 1990s (Standing 1991, 2).

As a result of the transition of post-soviet societies to the free market economy, a reserve army of sub-proletarians appeared, who were struggling to survive and ready to take up any work offered. Survival strategies among the post-soviet unemployed and underemployed included growing own agricultural produce on their garden plots, barter exchange, petty trade on the street or in public transport or temporary informal employment. But as Ukrainian sociologist Natalia Tolstykh (2003, 83) notes, "Perhaps the only way to earn a living in the situation of unemployment is work in the informal sector, which only aggravates the level of social exclusion, for informal workers do not enter the sphere of judicial and social guarantees related to labour".

For the Ukrainian homeless, the most common survival strategies according to the NGO "Narodna dopomoha" consist in "agricultural work in summer months, work in construction (such jobs do not require long-term commitments and are paid right away), while for most homeless, the main source of income is in the collection of recyclable waste (mainly paper and glass)".[8] The homeless are often seen among the vendors of the unofficial flea market, selling items found in garbage bins. This market was created directly on the pavement of one of the working-class districts of Kyiv after the official one was torn down by the municipality in 2004 to construct a shopping mall. Being "unofficial" and lacking a permanent site to sell their goods, the vendors are being constantly harassed by the police and have to bribe the policemen by giving them between 2 and 5 hryvni [0.2–0.5 euro], which on less profitable days may amount to half of the daily earnings of a homeless vendor.

Many of the homeless have to work even after reaching retirement age, because without registration, they cannot receive their pension. For instance, 60-year-old Valentyna is constantly looking for temporary jobs in the Podil district of Kyiv:

> I went to a church, to sweep the ground and earn some money. I slowly swept and cleaned everything. But I earned just some coins. I am too old and almost blind now and cannot run everywhere like when I was young and worked in a café. I need something quiet and slowly-paced, so that I would not have to run, to break the glass …

There are also those who lose their jobs and housing just a few years before reaching retirement age. Raisa lost her job in the wood industry in north-western Ukraine at the age of 51. She engaged in cross-border petty trade (her town was at the border with Belarus), then moved to Kyiv to sell vegetables in the street. After three years of work as a street vendor, she received a hernia from constantly carrying heavy boxes and then an inflammation of her legs and spent two months in a hospital. Upon leaving the hospital, she had neither work, nor housing and she was willing to take any job for a year before she would become eligible for a state pension at the age of fifty-five.

Some homeless show incredible creativity in adjusting their daily life and material needs to the meagre income-generating opportunities that are present. Two cases from my interviews reveal "contracts" that the homeless made with other poor workers to do their work in exchange for a place to sleep. Borys, a retired pensioner from a village in Central Ukraine, came to Kyiv after his old rural house became unfit for living. During the day, he collects bottles and buys food and vodka with the money he earns. In the evening, he takes the last suburban train to a small station in Kyiv region that is open 24 h a day. He asked the night guard whether he could sleep at the station under condition that he will not make a mess, with share some food and alcohol, and will help in case of emergency when night guard's assistance will be needed (so far, there were no emergency situations at the station and both the guard and Borys were able to sleep peacefully and seemed satisfied with the arrangement).

Similarly, Valia and Serhiy, who both lost their homes because of long-term unemployment, alcoholism and family conflicts, met on the street and made an arrangement with the street cleaner, who provided them a roof over their head and some stability with a predictable daily routine:

> I've lived for more than ten years with Seriozha. When we met, we began to think where to find a place to live. I knew a street cleaner who sometimes let me stay in the basement of one of the houses if I helped her clean the territory around that house. So we asked her, what if we will always clean up here instead of you, and you just let us live in that basement? We will guarantee cleanliness and order! There's not so much work: one or two hours in the morning and then we're free. It's good for her too: she doesn't need to do her work and she still receives her salary! And she's had no problems with us. So this is the contract that we made!

Following a parallel from Zygmunt Bauman's (2003) work, *Wasted lives*, one may say that Ukrainian homeless are degraded to the state of waste and often have no other option but to collect waste. In the Easter season of 2010, the NGO "Social partnership" (closely cooperating with Kyiv city council) initiated a "charitable event" entitled "Clean Thursday"[9], where the homeless cleaned up the waterfront of the Dnipro river, receiving 2 hryvni [0.2 euro] for a 50 litre bag of garbage. Not only was it profitable for the city administration to employ homeless cleaners at a much lower cost than they would pay otherwise

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for this work, but the homeless seemed grateful to have an opportunity to earn at least something and did not object to the event being presented as "charitable".

This readiness of the homeless reserve army of labour to gratefully take up any work that is offered is exploited by various so-called responsible or ethical businesses and social enterprises. For instance, in Chernivci, in the framework of a rehabilitation programme the homeless participate in the work of a social enterprise that specialises in cooking and preparing half-processed foods to cafes and restaurants in the city. Restaurants can order from this enterprise the services of vegetable-cutting, dough mixing, etc. while the use of the nearly free labour power of the homeless allows to cut on the price of the food.

The question of the use of homeless people's labour power is often raised in government programmes. During the meeting of the Lutsk city council dedicated to the prevention of deaths of homeless people in cold weather, participants agreed that

> The most important task is to create a special shelter for those citizens who live on the street. As the experience of neighboring cities (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Rivne) shows, the most reasonable solution is to create such a shelter in a rural area, in order not to "attract" the homeless to Lutsk. Furthermore, in such a case, those homeless citizens that will express their wish to remain in the center for a longer period, will have an opportunity to engage in agricultural labor, in such a way paying for their stay.

State officials sometimes also abuse their position to engage homeless and other vulnerable categories into slave labour. A journalist investigation by Lavryk et al.[10] revealed cases where policemen arrested homeless people in the street under pretexts of various administrative offences and sold them into slavery to isolated rural farms. Such abuse was revealed only after one of the slaves escaped and was picked up by the peasants. One of the judges in the city of Zhytomyr used the free labour power of those whom he condemned to several days or weeks of administrative arrest, by forcing them to participate in the construction of a house for his father. In Vinnytsia, workers of a detention centre for migrants used the labour power of a group of Somali asylum-seekers on various construction sites in the city.

Work is perceived by many NGOs as part of the "rehabilitation" of the homeless. For instance, in the community "Oselya" of the international movement "Emmaus", the homeless are expected to participate in the repair and sale of old clothes, toys and furniture, and thus to "regain a sense of self-worth" (the slogan of this community is "there are no things or people that are not needed"). "Just as an old broken item can regain life and continue to serve people if it is cleaned and repaired, so too the homeless can start anew and once again feel that they are needed in society and their work is valued"—explained one of the social workers.

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Social Policy: From Universalism to Targeting, from Assistance to Repression

Analysis in previous sections of this paper showed the main structural causes of homelessness. These causes were readily acknowledged by social workers, bureaucrats and volunteers working with the homeless, and we can also see at least some level of awareness on behalf of the general public. But as changes in the labour and housing markets led to a growing number of the homeless in Ukrainian cities, social policy moved in the opposite direction. Universal programmes that take equality and socioeconomic rights as a starting point were replaced by targeting programmes for specific vulnerable social groups. The poor now have to prove that they are indeed poor and deserving of assistance.

Policies to guarantee right to housing and to employment are universal in the sense that they do not depend on personal qualities of recipients. Everybody, not just the homeless or some specific "deserving" groups of homeless, have the same basic human rights. But in Ukraine, the construction of social housing has decreased by more than ten times in the last twenty years and it would take more than a hundred years to satisfy the need of all who are now in the waiting list (if same quantities of social housing are constructed annually, and if nobody is added to the list). Furthermore, social housing that is constructed is immediately privatised by the recipients, and in some cases—resold at a market value. This practice turns social housing into precious gifts on behalf of the state to a small number of people, and a question of why these specific people (and not others) receive such gifts, becomes a question of social justice. Currently, 90% of housing is privately owned, while a universalist housing policy would presuppose an increase in the municipal housing stock in order to be able to provide affordable housing for rent to all who require it. And as far as the labour market is concerned, unemployment was recognised as a reality of late Soviet society back in 1990. Moreover, it was recognised a necessity for the capitalist market economy. Currently, the Ukrainian state has made an attempt to introduce the new Labour code that further reduces the rights of workers. Violation of labour rights has also become more common, and the informal economy grew to up to half of the total GDP. And small numbers of the unemployed, who are evaluated as "deserving", may be offered free classes to change or improve their qualification, or micro-credits to allow them to start their own businesses. In labour policies, as well as in housing policies, a focus on responding to concrete individuals' requests has turned the state into a charitable institution.

Additionally, targeting policies were developed to help specific groups that were defined as "vulnerable", among whom the homeless and those leaving prisons were lumped together and dealt with by a specific department of the Ministry of work and social policy. In case of homelessness, the person seeking help must first of all register at a special registration centre of this Ministry, pass a rehabilitation or a resocialization period of approximately three months

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(in the case of Kyiv, such a resocialization centre was created 40 km outside of the city in a former pioneer camp that was evacuated because of radiation from Chornobyl disaster). Otherwise, the homeless may only count on emergency shelter and free meals and clothing. In Kyiv, the only municipal homeless shelter can host 160 people, and only after they prove not to have any form of registration (so labour migrants would be immediately excluded), or contagious disease (considering that up to 80% of street homeless have tuberculosis, this homeless shelter is not an option for them), or to be under the influence of alcohol (another difficult requirement for many of the street homeless). In religious NGOs serving the homeless, the latter may be required to pray or repent and receive baptism in order to get food, clothing and basic medical service.

Social assistance programmes medicalize homelessness as a personal defect, and the homeless person has to be willing to engage in reintegration and adaptation programmes, where the social system is taken as a given. The homeless person also has to accept gratefully the goodwill of benefactors who are providing him or her with basic needs, instead of perceiving this provision as an obligation of the state and as his or her entitlement prior to any moral evaluation of individual deservingness. Both in state and charitable organisations, the homeless may be required to prove their desire to work. These targeting policies take as a starting point moral evaluation of the homeless individual rather than provision of universal guarantees to all, irrespective of whether somebody may be judged as "deserving".

A second component of social policy that begins with the moral evaluation of the homeless individual as "deserving" or "undeserving" is the growth of the penal state and the response to homelessness with assistance of police. In fact, Ministry of Internal Affairs is identified as one of the key ministries in social assistance programmes towards the homeless. Homeless people and beggars are often seen as threatening the "security" of upper- and middle-class citizens. As a result, the state that serves primarily the interests of dominant classes is more preoccupied with physical security in better-off areas than in improving living conditions in the poor neighbourhoods and in preventing homelessness.

As a consequence, police and private security are omnipresent in business and tourist areas such as the Independence square in Kyiv. Police has the right to arrest a person for up to 24 h to verify identity and for up to three months if a person has no documents or is seen drunk in a public space—a right that is often used against homeless or beggars to "clean up" the streets. People in shabby clothes are not allowed into large shopping centres and are chased away from elite residential areas. Tall fences, private security and surveillance cameras become all the more common. The homeless and the visible poor are stigmatised as criminals, and their behaviour is seen as illegal or antisocial.

By visible poor, I mean people who can be identified as "poor" based on their appearance and/or behaviour. They include the homeless and street people, unemployed youth from sleeping districts and people who come from

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villages and other poor areas of the country (identifiable by their accent, clothing style and behaviour). According to Lee, Farrell, and Link (2004, 42), the visible poor are stigmatised—"labelled or marked based on one or more attributes judged undesirable by in-group members". They are also "routinely avoided or treated as non-persons by domiciled passersby" (ibid.). Of course, the boundaries for such identification are never fixed but are socially constructed, and "excluded" groups may be different in different contexts. Lee et al. found that extreme exposure reduces sympathy towards the marginal groups and promotes avoidance of them: about ten per cent of city-dwellers they interviewed are even "altering where they go to shopping or entertainment or how they use public transportation because of the presence of homeless people" (ibid., 56). According to Wacquant (1998, 22), this is a type of poverty that causes discomfort "because it is visible, causes incidents and disagreements in public space and nourishes the diffused feeling of insecurity".

It is a known social fact that inequalities are a source of social tension, aggressive behaviour and crime. A logical conclusion from this fact would be that in order to decrease crime rates and feelings of insecurity, we should decrease the level of inequalities. On the contrary, the responses of the well-off population in the city centres are aimed at securing their privileged positions by keeping the poor out and making them invisible. Furthermore, in many countries, these are not only private responses (of the "Not in my backyard!" kind) but also public policies of the state. In particular, "zero tolerance" policies, first introduced in the United States, are now being copied as "best examples" throughout the globe: in Western Europe, in post-socialist countries and in the Third World alike.

"Zero tolerance" policies do not simply "spread" around the world: Wacquant (1998, 46) rightly notes that "they are flourishing because they meet the interests and feelings of authorities in the countries of destination". In well-off areas, where the presence of the poor is seen as a threat in itself, private security and "face control" are introduced to forbid the poor from entering. In Kyiv, the case of underground passages that were recently turned into shopping centres is especially interesting, because there was a change in major function (from a public passage to a semi-public shopping passage). It is an example of privatisation of public space in the Ukrainian capital—of course, people who do not intend to shop can still pass to the other side of the street as they used to, but several groups are excluded from passing. The homeless, the Roma, people under the influence of alcohol or drugs may be turned away by the guard. It is clear that the shoppers would not appreciate their presence, but how are these excluded groups expected to get to the other side of the street remains a question.[11]

Even when demands for security of the well-off residents of the city centres may be seen as legitimate, they definitely do not resolve the problems. Residents of apartment blocks in Kyiv often pay night guards to watch the entrances to their homes to prevent the homeless from entering and spending the night in the common hallways, on the stairwells or on the attics/basements.[12] This does

not resolve the problem of homelessness, but instead leads to deaths of many homeless people in the streets during the cold winter (several hundred people died in the cold winter of 2006 in Kyiv alone, after which the state opened the first and only night shelter for the homeless).

Desire to clear the city centres from the poor is present not only among well-off individuals and private companies but also in public policies of the state. This tendency is more disturbing than private "initiatives", because the state by definition has to protect all of its citizens and not only those on the top of the social ladder. An example of such an attitude is "Operation 'Bum'" of the Transport Police at the train stations of Kyiv—places of high concentration of homeless people. People who look like they could be homeless are approached by policemen and asked to show documents and tickets to justify their presence at the station. Those without such documents are taken to the police station for further inspection and to check whether they have committed any crimes. In an interview to a TV news programme[13], a policeman said that this "operation" is good both for the passengers (who "are afraid of the homeless because they may steal their belongings and spread contagious diseases") and for the homeless themselves (who "get at least a temporary opportunity to spend a night in a warm place"— police station). Another example is the initiative of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine to create a centre that would register the homeless. It is supposed to "identify the homeless and to provide them with access to social protection" but in reality contributes more to controlling the homeless through "identification" and "registration" than to preventing the problem.

Cooperation of state services with private institutions to control and contain the homeless is also highly problematic. A sector of economy is created that makes profit on social inequalities, insecurity and the fear of the "dangerous" poor and because the state supports their profitable initiatives instead of defending the rights of the poor citizens against such privatised forms of harassment and exclusion. Moreover, such a turn to crime control is "a mode of state action to compensate for political failures and retrenchments in other fields of social policy", notes Feldman (2002, 419). He also quotes Scheingold to support his oppinion: "while effective governance is increasingly out of reach, states in advanced capitalist societies develop diffuse, insistent, mutable, and, by some accounts, insidious iterations of disciplinary and punitive power. These capabilities are increasingly deployed as repressive surrogates for governance, that is, governing through crime control" (ibid.).

Increased crime control in cities usually means higher rates of imprisonment and over-representation of marginal groups in gaols (Wacquant 1998). This also means higher state expenses for maintaining prisons, which is done at the expense of decreasing state expenses for social programmes. Furthermore, when the poor leave the prisons after having served their sentence, they are confronted with a problem of having nowhere to go and no chances to find any work and to start a normal life. They either become homeless (among Ukrainian homeless at least a third are former convicts) or turn back to crime.

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"Whenever the police comes to be considered as an alien force by the community it is supposed to protect, it becomes unable to fulfil any role other than a purely repressive one and, under such circumstances, it can only add to discord and disorder, often fuelling the very violence it is entrusted to curb" (Wacquant 2007).

Despite the fact that human rights are meant to be equal and guaranteed to every human being, in reality, they are differentiated based on one's position in society. Rights are not entitlements guaranteed equally to all, but become dependent on a series of other social factors—on class position, race or ethnicity, age, place of residence, levels of cultural and social capital. In post-soviet societies, "reduction of government services increased the misery of the poor while advancing the economy for the benefit of the upper middle-class professionals and wealthy investors" (Wright 2000, 34). Worldwide, "polarisation of the class structure … combined with ethnoracial segregation and welfare state retrenchment, has produced a dualization of the metropolis that has consigned large sections of the unskilled labour force to economic redundancy and social marginality" (Wacquant 2007).

Such differentiation of citizenship often leads to serious violations of basic human rights of the poor. They are excluded from the semi-public places where they have to pay a fee to enter— many parks and sports facilities. They are excluded from cafes and supermarkets based on their appearance. For the homeless, this situation is especially acute, since they "might be so constrained that they are literally unable to do anything without infringing the rights of others" (King 2003, 667). They may end up having no place at all to eat, drink, buy food and clothes, sleep or simply sit down to rest.

Having analysed ways in which homeless people's rights are violated because they have no home, King (2003, 667—668) argues that housing should be seen as a freedom right and not a social claim: "all actions, be they urinating, love-making, reading a book or discussing philosophy are situated … we must have a place to be". For Ukrainian homeless, such "places to be" often are public toilets, abandoned buildings or subways. Homeless people are seen as second-class citizens to be satisfied with minimum standards of life, which leads to creation of bad quality facilities that the homeless prefer not to use—unsafe, dirty and overcrowded night shelters. In Ukraine, social housing for poor families is given only in the distant sleeping districts, despite the fact that 7—12% of all housing being built in Kyiv goes to the city housing fund (according to the law). Such policies segregate the poor population of the city from the wealthy. In Kyiv, this segregation is reinforced by natural barriers—the historical city centre with the highest housing costs is situated on the hills of the right bank of the Dnipro river, while the working-class sleeping districts are on the left bank. Wealthy districts are safer, cleaner, better-kept and have better schools and general infrastructure. This is a proof of differentiated citizenship depending on the place of residence

And finally, the visible poor are excluded in the public discourses where they are seen as a problem for the state, for charities and for society in

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general. "Homelessness can be criminalised through discourse, by inaccurately describing the causes of homelessness and publicising those descriptions in newspapers, radio broadcasts and television shows. Institutional mechanisms can also play a role in this; for instance, laws have been created which specifically target the survival strategies of the homeless people. Through these means, the primary causes of homelessness—poverty, lack of affordable housing and lack of jobs with living wages—become obscured. If they were instead highlighted, they could challenge (though not necessarily successfully) the legitimacy of the existing social order" (Schiff 2003, 494). Schiff's conclusion is important: instead of criminalising poverty, developing countries that seek democratic transformations should highlight the root causes of existing social problems and be committed to change the existing social order and to fulfil its obligations towards its most vulnerable citizens.

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Conclusions

Homelessness is seen among the most visible forms of urban marginality in post-soviet countries. At the same time, sociological analysis of inequalities and of structural causes of social problems such as homelessness or street crime is marginalised. A similar retreat can be seen in politics and public discourses where immense efforts are made to present these problems as the fault of the poor themselves and consequently to decrease social assistance programmes. This paper has analysed the major structural causes of homelessness in Ukraine in access to housing and in the labour market: privatisation of almost all available housing and decrease in the construction of social housing by more than twenty times in the last two decades, housing affairs, inadequate housing conditions and overcrowding, as far as housing market is concerned, and unemployment, underemployment and the phenomenon of the "working poor", and the place of the homeless as a reserve army of labour in the capitalist labour market.

After analysing these causes of homelessness, a logical conclusion can be made that in order to resolve homelessness at a structural level, affordable housing and access to decent work (following Labour code regulations and with salary above poverty level) should be among the priorities of state policy and non-governmental institutions alike. The right to housing belongs to basic human rights (paragraph 1, article 25 of the General declaration of human rights) and is guaranteed in the Ukrainian Constitution (article 47). Violation of this basic socioeconomic right leads to homelessness and inability to satisfy other basic needs, namely protection from unsatisfactory weather conditions, personal hygiene, regular rest and meals, safety and privacy, which are necessary for human existence. Right to housing should therefore be guaranteed by the state and a comprehensive policy should be developed. Similarly, as our prior analysis has shown, right to decent employment should also be guaranteed to all if we wish to prevent homelessness and other social problems. We

see however two quite contrary tendencies in Ukrainian policy: a gradual shift from universalism to targeting and criminalization of social problems.

Wacquant (1998, 26) warns that one of the main causes of the degradation of social conditions and life chances of the urban poor is the "erosion of 'state social capital', that is, organisations presumed to provide civic goods and services—physical safety, legal protection, welfare, education, housing and health care—which have turned into instruments of surveillance, suspicion and exclusion rather than vehicles of social integration and trust-building". He also notes that "the punitive nature of street-level welfare bureaucracies ensures that their effect is more often disruptive than stabilising", arguing for the need to defend a strong social state instead of further criminalising poverty.

A focus on human rights and the need to create a democratic state that would respect them seems one of the possible solutions. Taking housing policy as an example, King (2003, 670) argues that "One of the key problems with housing policy is its relatively low political priority … because housing as a social problem is all too frequently seen as particularist and concerned with a minority of population. […] However, a discourse based on freedom rights concentrates on common features within a population by emphasising those basic elements which most take for granted, but which are impossible without access to housing. Hence, the stress is on what is common and universal to us all and not what separates or excludes certain groups or individuals". Access to work, medical assistance, education, transport, safe and well-kept public spaces, freedom of movement in the city can also be seen as freedom rights that the state has to guarantee to all.

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Notes

1. According to the Social monitoring of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2010, almost a third of all respondents lived without sanitation or central heating (one in ten said their apartment was "very cold in winter"), a quarter had unstable supply of electricity, one in ten lived in overcrowded conditions (three or more persons per room) and the same number of people had leaking walls or ceiling.
2. Statistical data on housing conditions is taken from the Social Monitoring of the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Science of Ukraine and from the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua.
3. High housing expenses also mean a need to save on other costs (food, medicine, clothing, transport, education, cultural and social life), forced co-habitation without a possibility to escape family violence or other conflicts, and a high risk of homelessness in case of illness, job loss or unpredictable expenses. This has lead Russian sociologist Tikhonova (2003) to list inadequate housing as one of the key factors of social exclusion.
4. According to the data of the Moscow Department for criminal investigations, at the end of 1994, 115 owners of sold flats were declared "disappeared". In 1993, there were 17 murders related to housing transactions, and in early 1994, there were already 50 such murders. Between January and June 1994, at least 500 persons ended up on the street because of housing transactions (Andrusz, Harloe, and Szelenyi 1996).
5. For instance, in Hungary, between 1989 and 1994, housing expenses rose by 50% and they continue to rise today (Polakov and Guillean 2001).

6. Published online at: http://gazeta.ua/index.php?id=137512 One should note that these construction workers are for the most part precarious day-labourers working in the shadow economy without work contracts or social guarantees.
7. Economico-political manuscripts of 1844.
8. http://www.homeless.net.ua/ua/researches.php
9. "Clean Thursday" is how Ukrainians call the day, when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples before being condemned to death. On this day, religious tradition encourages people to clean up their houses, wash themselves and all their clothes in order to prepare for Easter.
10. Published in a Ukrainian weekly magazine " Ukrainski Tyzhden" in October 2008, No. 41(50).
11. Other examples of such "privatisation of public space" are parks and green areas. Many small squares in the city centre of Kyiv have been turned into summer terraces of restaurants or cafés and you can only sit there if you order something.
12. A more extreme example of urban segregation and exclusion of the poor is seen in "gated communities". This a wide-spread (and widely criticised) phenomenon in countries like the USA (Low 2003) or South Africa whereas in Ukraine first gated communities are only beginning to appear in the last decade. In Kyiv such communities are presented as positive signs of city growth, prosperity and comfortable life. An advertisement of "Vozdvyzhenka" gated community proudly lists all the benefits of living "in the very heart of the city, but as if in a small peaceful XIXth century district, with private security, video surveillance, own kindergarten and elementary school, health and sports facilities …".
13. A programme with the title "Transport police is conducting a prophylactic operation named 'Bomzh'" on 28 January 2006, online access at: http://5tv.com.ua/newsline/184/0/20300/.

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