Chapter 4.4

Rights to the City: Thinking Social Justice for Chronically Homeless Women

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Is New York's homeless strategy the answer for Toronto?

> …Mr. Abdella is one of nearly 800 homeless people Toronto says it has helped over the past year and a half by borrowing a new, more aggressive… approach to street outreach pioneered in New York City… which sees outreach workers target homeless people on the street and move them directly into housing instead of shelters. (Gray, 2006, M1)

The "new aggressive approach" described here is a strategy that has come to be known as "Housing First." Initiatives similar to this have recently captured the attention of businesspeople and bureaucrats, politicians and academics, front-line workers and homeless people themselves, in cities across Canada including Victoria, Calgary, Edmonton, and Ottawa (Cyderman, 2006; Hume, 2006; Lavoie, 2006; O'Leary, 2006; Yedlin, 2007). The basic premise of Housing First is that chronically homeless people[1] need and have the right to regular housing first and

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[1] The definition of this term used by the Homelessness Community Capacity Building Steering Committee in Ottawa is "A chronically homeless

foremost, even if they might also require individualized support from social services to stay housed. In these discussions, Housing First is presented as a superior alternative to Continuum of Care. Closely aligned concepts are *supported* versus *supportive* housing (see Table 1).

Table 1: Concepts and Definitions: Supported (Housing First) and Supportive (Continuum of Care) Housing

Supported housing:
- Non-segregated housing managed by a not-for-profit agency.
- Residents have control over where they live and who their living companions are.
- Participating in psychiatric treatment is not a requirement and any support services are provided by an outside agency
- An example is individual or independent apartments.

Supportive Housing:
- Offers a continuum of residential facilities managed by not-for-profit agencies.
- Facilities offer varying levels of supervision and social support and
- Residents are often required to be in outpatient treatment.
- Individuals stay in each setting for a limited time and are expected to move up the continuum to independent housing (Parkinson et al. 1999).
- Examples are group homes, halfway house, community integrated living apartments, and supervised apartments.

Source: Adapted from Kyle and Dunn, 2008, 8.

The standard approach to addressing chronic homelessness, against which Housing First is juxtaposed, begins with the premise that individuals with severe mental health and addiction problems are incapable of living in regular housing until these problems are addressed. As a result, a continuum of specialized housing facilities and support is required, in

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person is one who has spent 60 or more cumulative nights in the past year in an emergency shelter and has reached the point where he or she lacks the physical or mental health, skills and/or income to access and/or maintain housing" (2008, 3).

lockstep with helping individuals to gain mastery over their mental health and substance use challenges. Access to housing beyond the emergency stage is structured as a reward for movement along a path to sobriety (Tserberis et al., 2004).

Housing First, as originally conceived, is a reaction to these Continuum of Care ideas, particularly when they are interpreted in a manner that is rigid and patronizing. There is much to commend Housing First in its contestation of outdated interpretations of Continuum of Care. According to some homeless individuals and their advocates, however, the rush to jump on a Housing First bandwagon has been accompanied by a worrying disregard of the considerable benefits that some individuals reap from living in supportive, congregate, or group settings, especially in environments shaped by a flexible harm reduction approach.[2]

Current Canadian discussions about the relative merits of Housing First and Continuum of Care are not innocent differences of opinion about what works best in helping chronically homeless people to improve their lives. Rather, these debates raise both theoretical and substantive questions about neoliberalization as a governmental orientation that promotes certain types of social rule, such as what should be legitimate social policy goals for initiatives directed at marginalized populations. In this chapter, I raise the possibility that a wholesale shift to Housing First might well become a vehicle for further excluding marginalized peoples, not only in terms of their rights to public space, but also in terms of their visible presence in spaces in the city, including the specialized congregate spaces of emergency, transitional, and supportive housing associated with Continuum of Care. Writing to date suggests that neoliberalization tends to promote individualization while it subsumes other kinds of goals, such as collective "rights to the city" (Purcell,

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[2] Harm reduction rejects the approach that sobriety is required in order for drug- or alcohol-addicted individuals to leave the streets and become stably housed. Rather it posits that there are effective strategies to reduce the potential harm of substance use problems and that these strategies are compatible with a variety of housing arrangements (Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, 2003).

2008). Moreover, these examinations have not been sensitive to gender- and race-sensitive differences (Kyle and Dunn, 2008).

The shortcomings of roll-back neoliberalism have been acknowledged in numerous places, but the question of what comes next in relation to neoliberalization remains to be answered. This chapter is one response to Peck's observation that:

> It is no longer really enough to say that... neoliberal states are "differently interventionist" and that the attendant processes of institutional change are qualitatively rather than quantitatively distinctive; there is a growing need to add content to these assertions, to track actual patterns and practices of neoliberal restructuring, and to make meaningful part-whole connections between localized and institutionally specific instances of reform and the wider discourses and ideologies of neoliberalism (Peck 2004, 396).

Emerging debates about Housing First as an alternative to Continuum of Care provide fertile ground for such a response, particularly given the rapidity with which Housing First arguments have gained traction among politically powerful actors in the United States and Canada, in a manner reminiscent of fast policy transfers in other realms (Peck, 2002, 2005).

This chapter has four sections. It begins with an overview of the theoretical scope of this primarily conceptual discussion, highlighting the contributions of Nancy Fraser (1997, 2003), Peter Graefe (2006) and Mark Purcell (2008). Also described are the research and experiential context within which the arguments presented here were developed. The second section explores the context within which governmental interest in Housing First appears to be growing, including a brief overview of Canada's history of supportive housing. This discussion is followed in the third section with a closer look at the implications of these debates when gender and race-sensitive analysis is foregrounded, and when the particular situations of and challenges faced by chronically homeless women are considered. Conclusions are presented in the final section.

Finding Home

Policy Options for Addressing Homelessness in Canada

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Scope and Context

Theoretical Frameworks

This article is primarily a theoretical and conceptual effort to foster an understanding of how neoliberalization is unfolding in a particular sociospatial arena, with insights drawn from feminist and progressive scholars who are preoccupied with what it means to develop, evaluate, and/or implement inclusive and socially just public policies (Fraser, 1997; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Fraser, 2003; Larner, 2003; Bondi and Laurie, 2005; Graefe 2006; Purcell 2008). These scholars have an interest in closely examining and raising questions about inequalities in "actually existing" places, while focusing on the multi-scalar, socio-economic and political interactions though which such inequalities are exacerbated or reduced (Purcell 2008). In this paper, I draw upon three complementary frameworks: the first assesses the impacts of a social policy vis-à-vis neoliberalization (Graefe 2006); the second considers group experiences of the impacts of social policy, particularly in relation to questions of social justice (Fraser 2003); and the third focuses on the meaning of "rights to the city," also from a social justice perspective (Purcell 2008).

Graefe (2006) distinguishes between neoliberalism as an ideal type of social rule and actually existing processes of "neoliberalization," that produce "neoliberal state forms...in an uneven fashion" (200). His substantive interest is in investigating the extra-regional influences on Quebec's understanding of the social economy and the extent to which three distinct knowledge networks in that province have taken up ideas associated with the "American model" of neoliberalism. Focusing on the women's movement, "left-centre" intellectuals associated with community economic development initiatives, and civil servants within the Finance Department, Graefe identifies how each interpreted the social economy differently vis-à-vis furthering neoliberalism as a "new form of social rule": "three different versions of the social economy figure in policy debates, ranging from a feminist one that seeks to break with neoliberalization, to one that seeks to flank it, to a third that seeks to roll out market relations" (2006, 198).

He labelled the feminist version as "countervailing" and observed that certain elements of the women's movement were interested in promoting governmental economic priorities in a manner quite distinct from neoliberalism: "centred on the idea of meeting needs rather than on profit-making" and recognizing "that social production reaches beyond the formal market economy to include economies of care that require greater recognition and support" (205). The second (which he calls "flanking"), he links to community-based organizations that helped develop rationales for institutional "exceptions" and by so doing, contribute to maintaining the integrity of the neoliberal project more generally:

> …recognize[ing] that the character of activities being undertaken (e.g., serving markets with low effective demand; employing people with "low productivity") require that state financial and technical support be made available over the medium-to-long term (208).

"Rollout" is a term he uses to describe a third perspective that Graefe associates with Quebec's "mainline state ministries" (209). This option refers to Peck and Tickell's (2002) characterization of the manner in which an initial period of "rollback" neoliberalism in the United States and Britain was revised over time to respond to new challenges, without significantly modifying its market-driven orientation. In Quebec's social economy, it "had a surface resemblance to the flanking approach...but with an eye more firmly on the goal of creating social enterprises capable of meeting new social needs in a productive and cost-effective manner" (Graefe 2006, 209). As will be illustrated below, Graefe's threefold framework is useful in helping unpack the diverse impulses shaping Canada's housing and homelessness policies.

Fraser's (1997, 2003) orientation is quite distinct from Graefe's, but equally relevant to this discussion. Her concerns are about the impacts of public policies on the lived experiences of particular groups. She asserts that justice is unlikely to be served without simultaneous consideration of three dimensions: redistribution, or targeting material inequalities; recognition, or targeting injustices that stem from cultural differences, and representation, which involves addressing political power imbalances (2003). In identifying what she regards as the core values of modern liberal societies ("the equal autonomy and moral worth of human

beings"), she interprets their social justice implications in a manner that Purcell (2008) characterizes as a radically pluralist form of democracy:

> …to respect the equal autonomy and moral worth of others one must accord them the status of full partners in social interaction. That…means assuring that all have access to the institutional prerequisites of participatory parity – above all, to the economic resources and social standing needed to participate on a par with others… In the end, as such matters are highly contentious, the parity standard can only be properly applied dialogically, through democratic processes of public debate (Fraser, 2003, 228).

In this manner, Fraser provides a series of strategies to encourage debate about what would constitute more socially just policies for particular groups. Drawing from these insights, this paper's argument is that these strategies are as relevant to chronically homeless women as they are to other groups, such as children, despite the commonplace assumption that children are more deserving of governmental resources, given the potential human capital benefits to be gained by directing resources to them over the medium and long term.[3]

Purcell (2008) articulates the socio-spatial implications of the radically pluralist democratic "attitudes" that he favours,[4] which he describes as:

> ...reject[ing] the notion that all democratic politics must aim at the common good. Rather they embrace an antagonistic model in which adversaries with unavoidably divergent interests struggle with each other to win a temporary hegemony that favours their agenda. It is a social-movement vision of democracy, one that imagines distinct movements that act together in networks of equivalence (2008, 104).

Purcell sees these attitudes as the best hope for challenging the regressive aspects of neoliberalism, and he examines the notion of "rights to the city" with this motivation and perspective in mind. He distin-

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[3] See McKeen (2006) for a critical examination of this assumption.
[4] Purcell's (2008) version of radical pluralism is distinct from, though not incompatible with, that of Fraser (2003).

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guishes between a vision of the "neoliberal city-as-property" and an alternative "city-as-inhabited" (105) and uses the metaphor of "linchpin" to describe how social movements might work in "networks of equivalence" towards diverse rights to the city. Through this framework, Purcell identifies both commonalities and differences in how distinct social movements would begin to work towards "rights to the city": commonalities insofar as the preeminence of city-as-property is rejected, but differences in the choices made to emphasize particular claims for inhabitance. He sees these sorts of differences as productive in the sense of helping to translate abstract ideas about social justice into context-specific social, cultural, economic, and architectural claims for what cities should accommodate.

Research Grounding

These three scholars frame my theoretical approach, which has also been inspired by "concrete cases in particular contexts" (Flyvbjerg 2001, 143). More precisely, the arguments here build upon more than six years of participant and non-participant observation of deliberations on how best to address and end homelessness in Ottawa and in Canada. As one of two primary investigators for the Panel Study on Homelessness in Ottawa, I am known and trusted within the "homeless sector." The Panel Study, which began in 2001, was the first large-scale longitudinal study of its kind in Canada, conducted through a collaborative university-community-local government approach (Klodawsky 2007; Klodawsky et al., 2007). The success of this study was in part dependent on the researchers being able to garner a high level of confidence from community actors as well as from local government staff and politicians. This confidence was gained from our research focus and orientation5 but also as a result of our involvement in numerous roundtables and committees that address the problem of homelessness in Ottawa and Canada.6 A

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5 The Panel Study examined the long- and short-term factors that influence why diverse persons might become homeless and also the ease with which such individuals are able to exit homelessness (Aubry et al., 2003; Klodawsky et al. 2007).

6 They included the Steering Committee of the City of Ottawa's Community Ca-

particular moment of significance (for this research) occurred during my participant observation of the deliberations of the Women's Roundtable, an initiative of the City of Ottawa to encourage new, more coordinated responses to "problematic" gaps in the City's service and support infrastructure. The Roundtable was focused on chronically homeless women with multiple mental and physical health challenges. In this context, questions were raised about the tangible and intangible benefits of some types of "supportive" housing in comparison with "supported" housing. The knowledge gained through the Panel Study, about women and girls' greater propensity to report mental and physical ailments, as well as childhood sexual abuse, sexual assault and wife battering, highlighted the importance of making theoretical links with concepts of gendered and race-sensitive rights to the city (Novac, 1999; Shaw and Andrew, 2005; Klodawsky, 2006; Whitzman, 2006; Klodawsky et al., 2007).

The claims about Housing First and Continuum of Care are complex and contradictory when considered from a social justice perspective. This is not surprising, since these debates derive from multiple political locations – international, national, regional, and local – and that even within specific jurisdictions, the framing of each approach varies as a result of diverse philosophical and practical considerations. In keeping with Bondi & Laurie's (2005) argument that "approaching neoliberalism as a constructed social terrain or field turns notions of inevitability into

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pacity Building Initiative, the Women's Roundtable on Homelessness, the Research and Evaluation Working Group of the Alliance to End Homelessness, the Multifaith Houisng Initiative, the National Network on Housing and Homelessness, and the Research Alliance on Canadians" Housing, Homelessness and Health. In each case, the persona I have presented is that of researcher, able to offer resources (such as student and library support), relevant knowledge, and the possibility of engagement in related research activities. In a separate research study, knowledge of Canadian state responses to problems of homelessness was gained through the analysis of documents as well as in-depth interviews with 24 senior and mid-level federal and provincial government bureaucrats and politicians involved in helping to establish, shape and revise the National Homelessness Initiative. This research was conducted with other scholars who have been examining the links between public policy development and change in Canadian municipalities (Hulchanski, 2006; Young and Leuprecht, 2006).

potential resources in the long-term project of 'deliberalizing' space"
(399), such analysis provides additional insights on where intervention
might be productive in promoting alternatives to neoliberal thinking.

Contextualizing the Growing Interest in Housing First

Welfare Reform

Since about 1980, North American engagement with welfare reform has
had a profound influence on the role of housing as a tool of social policy.
Cutbacks in state-sponsored public housing have been linked with the
rise of homelessness in both Canada and the United States (Hulchanski,
2002, Shapcott, 2006; Falvo, 2007; National Low Income Housing Coali-
tion, 2007), and with the growing focus on explanations that emphasize
the shortcomings of individuals, rather than structural matters or value-
based assessments linked to citizenship rights to housing (Hutson and
Clapham, 1998; Callahan et al., 2002; Shinn, 2007). Mounting evidence
has challenged such explanation, suggesting instead that the majority of
people who experience homelessness do so briefly and/or episodically,
primarily for economic reasons (Shinn, 1998; Aubry et al., 2003; Joint
Center for Housing Studies, 2007; Klodawsky et al., 2007). Arguments
emphasizing the need for additional safe and secure affordable housing
have not, however, been particularly effective in convincing policy mak-
ers or politicians that this should be the approach of choice, deserving of
far greater public resources than is currently the case (Hulchanski, 2002;
Hulchanski, 2006; Shapcott, 2006; Shapcott, 2007).

As in other social policy fields, the significance of proactive state in-
tervention has been downplayed in favour of institutional arrangements
that encourage market responses or public-private partnerships. Given
the enormous gap between the material costs of building and maintain-
ing housing in a country of climatic extremes such as Canada, and what
poor people can afford, the housing affordability gap remains a major
reason that people become homeless as well as an area of growing con-
cern among municipal politicians (Layton, 2000; Moore and Skaburskis,
2004). In Canada, these problems likely have been exacerbated by inter-
jurisdictional disputes between the federal and provincial levels of gov-
ernment, together with structurally weak local governments with an ex-

tremely limited capacity to raise or autonomously manage the funds to which they have access (Carter and Polevychok, 2004).

Chronic Homelessness: American and Canadian Responses

Along with growing evidence about the significance of economic factors, it has also been found that about 15 percent of those who are homeless make inordinate demands on provincial and municipal health and social services, due to the multidimensional nature of the issues they are dealing with, including physical and mental health matters, substance use problems, and concurrent disorders (Tserberis et al., 2004). These individuals have garnered the attention of city planners and local politicians, since the majority of "street homeless" are drawn from these groups (Tserberis et al., 2004). As cities attempt to present themselves as "entrepreneurial," concerns have intensified about the visible presence of bodies and activities that are increasingly seen as being "out of place" (Mitchell, 2003). Numerous plans have been put into effect, often in the name of urban revitalization, to discipline such bodies and remove them from view (Mitchell and Staeheli, 2006). Typically, these reports do not discuss the individual rights of people who are homeless, or societal obligations to such individuals, despite mounting evidence that circumstances beyond individual control, such as childhood sexual and physical abuse, are often implicated in their circumstances (Novac 1999; Klodawsky et al, 2006; Mitchell and Staeheli, 2006; Pavao et al., 2007).

Affordable housing, as an element of social policy, is characterized as a problem in need of innovative and multi-faceted responses (Carter and Polevychok 2004; Bradford 2005). Increasingly, Housing First has been promoted as innovative in just these terms. As has been the case in other instances of fast policy transfer, claims of innovativeness can be contested: key elements of the Housing First approach have been in play in both Canada and the United States for over 20 years (Kraus et al., 2006). Recent interest in this approach appears to have been sparked by a series of well-publicized research results suggesting that Housing First is both more economical and more effective than Continuum of Care (Fagan, 2004; Gladwell, 2006; Gray, 2006; Wente, 2006). These research results have been drawn from scholarly evaluations of Pathways to Housing, a New York City–based initiative that incorporated Housing First

with a harm reduction approach and aggressive efforts by workers to connect individuals with the services they need to stay housed, regardless of intensity or time frame (Gulcur et al., 2003; Tserberis et al., 2004). Evaluations of that program suggest that the cost of certain elements of this approach may be lower than for a similar population of individuals using a Continuum of Care model.

A key champion for Housing First who has frequently drawn upon the Pathways to Housing evaluation is Philip Mangano who in 2002 was appointed as the full-time executive director of the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) by President Bush. Since his appointment, the Council has emphasized a coordinated, outcomes-based approach and promoted the development and implementation of community, state, and national "10-year plans" to end homelessness (Burt et al., 2004). While these plans are not synonymous with Housing First, there are important connections between the two: one, that efforts should first and foremost be directed at moving chronically homeless people off the street and into some sort of shelter, and two, that the focus should be on encouraging coordination among agencies and jurisdictions to prevent individuals from falling through the cracks and not being able to access the services they need to stay housed (Burt et al., 2004).

Canadian debates about the relative merits of supported versus supportive housing have been somewhat similar. Historically, Canadian approaches to dealing with chronically homeless individuals involved implicit and explicit assumptions about their readiness for certain arrangements, typically within the context of supportive housing. Simon (2006), summarizing the situation for persons with mental illness in the 1950s and 1960s, described the dominant approach as custodial: "client autonomy was limited, there was an emphasis on rules... and residents had little or no decision-making input" (165). However, he notes that changes began in the 1970s, often associated with self-help and tenant empowerment movements. Currently, "best-practice guidelines stipulate that residential facilities should be small and homelike, offer more privacy, have more of a rehabilitation focus and be run by nonprofit societies" (167). A growing interest in supported, as opposed to supportive, housing reflects "increased emphasis on the principles of recovery and empowerment and in particular the importance of client choice" (167).

Canadian municipal government and local business interest in Housing First as an alternative to managing homelessness through Continuum of Care approaches is however, a recent development. In 2006, the City of Toronto became an early champion (Gray, 2006), as the result of an emergency response to dismantling a "Tent City" for homeless adults in 2004 (City of Toronto, 2007). Other Canadian cities with persistent and growing homeless populations, including Calgary, Edmonton, and Victoria, soon followed (*Calgary Herald*, October 1, 2006, A10; Cyderman, 2006; Hume, 2006; Lavoie, 2006; O'Leary, 2006; Yedlin, 2007).

Simultaneously, local activists began to voice reservations about the motives behind such shifts (Crowe, 2007; McQuaig, 2007). Questions have been raised about the manner in which emergency shelter funds in the city are being redirected: "The planning and funding of homeless services are now focused on removing the visible homeless from the streets while at the same time reducing shelter beds, limiting emergency services for people who are homeless such as during extreme hot or cold weather, and seriously underfunding homeless services such as day shelters and meal programs" (Crowe, 2007, 1).

An irony of these developments is that Canada has had a federal initiative on homelessness since 1999 that, among other elements, has promoted the development of community plans to better coordinate the efforts of local agencies involved in trying to address homelessness. The National Homelessness Initiative was the federal government's response in 1999 to highly publicized efforts by the mayors of major Canadian cities to highlight homelessness as a "national emergency." Program funding established under its Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative required a coordinated plan involving all of the key players (R. Smith 2004; personal interviews with senior federal government bureaucrats). In each case, either the municipal government or a designated community "entity" took responsibility for bringing relevant players together to establish and oversee the implementation of a community plan. As in the United States, justification hinged on assumptions that such plans would aid in promoting the efficient use of community services and help eliminate duplication.

In Canada, though, the motivations for the program were not only about getting the chronically homeless "off the streets," although there

certainly was a strong interest in doing just that. The National Homelessness Initiative coincided with interest in reversing some of the negative impacts of the "rollback" fiscal policies of the early 1990s. A sharp rise in the number of visibly homeless people, particularly in Toronto, coupled with effective lobbying by Canada's big city mayors, dramatically raised the profile of this problem and placed a spotlight on the federal government (R. Smith, 2004; personal interviews with senior federal government bureaucrat and politicians). While this interest did not extend as far as reversing federal withdrawal from building new social housing, there was a concerted effort to provide some extra resources to municipalities to deal with the problem. Minister Claudette Bradshaw, a former social worker and community activist, was charged with the homelessness file. One senior bureaucrat described the deliberations leading up to the establishment of the initiative as follows:

> The government found itself in a horrible quandary. All the affordable housing programs had been cut or deleted. They were trying to come up with new programs, but politically this would be impossible for the next five years... they wanted to open the door a crack...When Minister Claudette Bradshaw showed the video after her cross-country tour, there were tears going down faces. Cabinet Ministers did not want to be known as meanies... She gave government instant credibility... (personal interview).

Since its beginnings in 1999, the program has been renewed three times, with some refinements in the objectives but very little change in the model's fundamental characteristics of coordinated community planning and services and supports to help stabilize the lives of individuals who have been homeless.

Recent Canadian interest in Housing First is likely an outcome of the persistence of homelessness as a visible and seemingly intractable social problem, despite the National Homelessness Initiative and the efforts it stimulated among many governmental and non-governmental actors and institutions. It also may be connected to two recent trends in downtown urban redevelopment. On the one hand, pressure is growing for municipal governments to attract economically productive activities in order to help pay for services previously provided by senior levels of government. On the other, disciplinary practices that attempt to reduce the visibility and the assumed negative impacts of less attractive popula-

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tions and activities, are also on the rise. Also, there is evidence to suggest that residences such as group homes, emergency shelters and transition houses are attracting ever-greater legal oversight through municipal zoning and citizen opposition (Takahashi, 1998; Leamon, 2003; Feldman, 2004; Ranasinghe and Valverde, 2006). Residents' fears of adverse impacts on property values and neighbourhood safety have resulted in "not-in-my-backyard" reactions so that finding a suitable location for group homes has become a key challenge and cost (HomeComing Community Choice Coalition, 2005). When such impacts are coupled with downtown redevelopment pressures that reduce the possibility of group home and shelter placement in traditional locations, the "right to be" for homeless people is stretched to include not only public and quasi-public spaces but also quasi-private ones.

A question worthy of further research is whether Housing First is attractive because of implicit assumptions that the result would be homeless people housed in "normal" accommodations, with visible differences minimized, including the specialized facilities that cause such consternation to property owners. Mitchell and Staeheli's (2006) arguments about a changing property regime with regard to public spaces is potentially relevant to the quasi-private spaces of group homes, transition housing, and emergency shelters. Such institutions sit uneasily in landscapes that are increasingly being shaped by neoliberal logics.

Meanwhile, in Canada and the United States, there is a growing consensus among housing advocates and researchers that a greater investment in long-term affordable housing would address the situations of most individuals who face homelessness (Hulchanski, 2002; Shapcott, 2006; Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2007; Shapcott, 2007). In neither country, though, has the creation of additional affordable housing units been a priority, although it is frequently a recommendation of those who produce homelessness plans (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2007). The lack of attention to building more affordable housing has led some homeless advocates to suggest that Housing First may not be as attractive in practice as it is on paper. They question the utility of concentrating scarce resources on the hard-to-serve population, rather than addressing the adverse impacts of too little affordable housing for a much broader marginalized population.

Housing First and Continuum of Care through a Gender and Race-Sensitive Lens

A Lack of Gender and Race-Sensitive Research

These debates are of particular interest, because Housing First is promoted as being superior to Continuum of Care models, including those for chronically homeless women who are particularly likely to have experienced abuse as children and adults. In Canada, disproportionate numbers of these women self-identify as Aboriginal – such women bear the traces not only of patriarchal structures, but also of intergenerational colonial trauma (Brownridge, 2003; Peters, 2004). Empirical studies of sex and race differences are, however, almost entirely lacking. According to Kyle and Dunn (2008), one "shortcoming of the existing research is its inability to speak to the diversity of individual factors that affect housing needs..."; they recommend that housing research "reflect the diversity of persons with mental health problems including those with different diagnoses and levels of illness severity, seniors, new immigrants, indigenous populations, and rural residents" (12).

One insightful exception to the lack of a gender-inclusive approach is a 2005 study by Rich and Clark (2005). Their longitudinal research highlighted the different reactions of women and men to congregate and independent living and raised further questions about whether, for traumatized women in particular, the former may be an especially meaningful form of care. Rich and Clark (2005) investigated the effectiveness of two types of homelessness service interventions (similar to a Housing First versus Continuum of Care distinction) and compared single women and men with severe mental illness in this regard. The findings showed that men using the Housing First type model had longer periods of stable housing, but that women exhibited more complex and contradictory outcomes (Rich and Clark 2005). Comparable studies among Aboriginal women have not been located, although Richmond (2007) suggested that Aboriginal men and women respond differently with regard to social interventions vis-à-vis health outcomes.

Although critics of the Continuum of Care model can cite evidence that the model is sometimes interpreted in a rigid, inflexible manner, the

reality of supportive housing is sometimes far more nuanced. In Canada, several agencies have combined the best of Housing First and Continuum of Care perspectives, including the combination of "no eviction" and harm reduction within congregate settings (Kraus et al., 2006). In these cases, people have been able to connect to one another as part of a caring community, to reap the benefits that on-site staff support sometimes provide, while still benefiting from enlightened policies shaped by a "harm reduction" philosophy. Rather than focusing solely on the importance of access to good physical shelter and individualized support services with the aim of establishing independent living, the significance of creating home and community spaces as spaces of healing and nurture have been emphasized (Gurstein and Small, 2005).

Kyle and Dunn (2008) observe that "based on previous theoretical and empirical research, it is likely that merely having shelter is a necessary but insufficient condition for maintaining stable housing; in order for people with SPMI [severe and persistent mental illness] or anyone else for that matter to be successfully housed, they must also have some experience of home" (1). Walker (2008) also notes that Canadian social policy in the 1990s has decoupled earlier efforts to join social housing and Aboriginal self-determination efforts, with negative results.

Chronically Homeless Women Inhabiting the City

In contrast to the current presentations of Housing First as a new and better way to end homelessness, an appreciation of building "a sense of home" acknowledges that collective, appropriately situated arrangements (and, in the case of Aboriginal communities, autonomous oversight) may provide therapeutic benefits over and above the "bricks and mortar" required to construct housing. It provides an appreciation of what "inhabiting the city" might mean for chronically homeless women. Gurstein and Small (2005), reporting on their interviews with residents of the Portland Homes Society, an innovative supportive housing organization in Vancouver, powerfully articulate this perspective:

> [Tenants] do not perceive the acquisition of a home as part of a rehabilitation process. Individuals who are homeless or who have had difficulty integrating into the housing units of conventional housing agencies view creating a home as part of a wider process of personal self-healing. Heal-

ing is a process that is self-authored. It is not an intervention that is done to tenants or clients by professionals. Many do not feel confident about their sense of membership in, or connectedness to, the wider community nor do they feel confident in their full personhood... Constructing a sense of home is a social, meaningful human action. It is not simply a physical structure (2005, 732).

From this viewpoint, housing is seen as a necessary social and material context within which healing can take place that allows for further engagement with others. Feelings of "connectedness to the wider community" are an outcome of positive social relations, but they also depend on a sensitivity to certain types of interactions between bodies, physical structures, and territorial surroundings. Such interactions allow a sense of being "at home" to become established as a result of positive impacts from a multiplicity of social relations, ranging from co-residents to supportive staff to welcoming surroundings. From this vantage point, housing is much more than a utilitarian setting: it is the starting point for establishing a home base as a foundation for claiming "rights to the city," including efforts centred not necessarily on employability, but on the (sometimes limited) capacities of those who have lived through trauma and abuse (Tomas and Dittmar, 1995; Bridgman 2002).

Feminist Perspectives

Since the late 1960s, some feminist activists and academics have been building the case for a gender- and race-sensitive analysis in urban studies and design. Ideas have spread and networks have emerged to share strategies on how to build women-friendly and inclusive cities. In 2002, the First International Seminar on Women's Safety became a space of sharing and elaborating diverse perspectives; it also was the moment that a formal organization, Women and Cities International/Femmes et Villes, was born. Women and men from five continents, 27 countries, and 55 cities and municipalities contributed to the group's founding document, the Montreal Declaration (Women and Cities International, 2002).

The Declaration's focus was on multi-scalar collaboration, emphasizing particularly the significance of learning from the most vulnerable in building welcoming and inclusive cities. The declaration's creators asserted that "[t]he solutions introduced by women to increase safety

and security [would] make cities and municipalities safer for all." In other words, they asserted that starting from the perspectives of those who are most affected by exclusionary cities would most likely result in broad based benefits and "rights to the city" for urban residents more generally (Michaud, 2004; Shaw and Andrew, 2005; Whitzman 2006).

This approach aligns with Fraser's interpretation of what liberal societal values should encompass. For chronically homeless women, Fraser's arguments would mean acknowledging the legitimacy of their claims and the simultaneous need for secure affordable housing (redistribution), living circumstances that signal understanding and promote healing (recognition), and efforts that invite women to articulate their needs and desires in political terms (representation). Drawing on Purcell (2008), the Women's Roundtable might thus be interpreted as a social movement that began from the needs of chronically homeless women, not in order to achieve results for these women instead of others, but rather to bring into political discourse policies that would facilitate homeless women's ability to inhabit the city.

According to Graefe's (2006) schema, these perspectives illustrate countervailing arguments to neoliberalization as a process promoting new forms of "social rule." Graefe's (2006) framework helps unpack the diverse rationales that have contributed to Canadian housing policy discussions on what to do about chronic homelessness. These complex and contradictory interpretations and prescriptions fully support Larner's (2003) characterization of neoliberalism as not only "operating at multiple scales" but also in need of sensitivity to its "different variants... [including the] hybrid nature of contemporary policies and programmes [and]... the multiple and contradictory aspects of neoliberal spaces, techniques, and subjects" (509).

Countervailing, Flanking, and Rollout Elements of Housing First and Continuum of Care

There are certainly "countervailing" elements in initiatives such as New York City's Pathways to Housing, where the goal is for individuals to live with dignity, with access to the services and supports they need, choices in housing, and a timeframe more geared to healing than to sys-

tem efficiencies. This initiative challenges the assumption that individuals who use substances cannot live independently or that using substances constitutes a reason for state indifference or condemnation (Tserberis et al., 2004). However, when individuation and employability begin to supersede other goals, elements of "rollout" and "flanking" come to the fore, while countervailing tendencies that emphasize healing and the construction of "home" are overshadowed.

Continuum of Care can be assessed in a similar manner. When the emphasis is on dignity and real choices are available, supportive housing can be a context where countervailing values are promoted. More typically though, a notion of rehabilitation that is more directive of how individuals should behave and that establishes a hierarchy of suitable behaviours and rewards, simply "flanks" neoliberalism as a means of "organizing" individuals who likely cannot manage on their own. Declining resources often result in approaches that shift from flanking to "roll-out," where messages shift to those of "cost recovery" and "promoting independence."

The motivations of Canada's federal homelessness strategy contain some of these same tensions. Developed in response to a "national crisis," officials rejected the argument that building additional permanently affordable housing would address the problem more effectively than other approaches. Instead, they shaped policy based on assumptions about the need for increased coordination and efficiencies tied to local circumstances, as well as greater knowledge about the sources of the problem. The coordinated community approach was countervailing insofar as it acknowledged that each community faced somewhat different challenges and that local knowledge was valuable in helping address those challenges. Over time though, the flanking aspect of the Initiative has become its most prominent element. Without senior government resources, communities could not manage the growing problems of extreme poverty, including homelessness, within their jurisdictions. The new interest in Housing First may be the outcome of a disillusionment with the Initiative and its "management of homelessness" approach and a wish to find a "quick fix" in a manner that aligns with other "roll-out" kinds of arguments, such as those that emerged around workfare in the United States and Canada in the late 1990s (Peck and Tickell, 2002).

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4.4 Rights to the City: Thinking Social Justice for Chronically Homeless Women

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Toronto area activists have hinted that the expectation on the part of policy makers seems to be that Housing First would be a cheaper and more direct route to moving homeless people off the streets and into self-sufficient life styles than is currently the case. A recent editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* that government efforts should focus on the "truly homeless" – those who have lived in emergency shelters for more than 60 days – and focus on providing coordinated housing and supports to help them stabilize their lives illustrates the concerns raised by activists. This editorial suggests that a concentration of funds on the "truly homeless" would be a good investment, even if it meant drawing some funds from maintaining "general-purpose social housing" – despite numerous horror stories about the extent to which that housing requires massive upgrades to address extreme mould and insect infestation problems (*Ottawa Citizen*, November 19, 2007, C4). Such recommendations suggest that the motivations for promoting Housing First have more to do with removing visually disturbing images from places ripe for redevelopment than with concerns about the provision of decent housing or the autonomy rights and "rights to the city" of homeless persons.

Conclusions

Growing interest in Housing First, and an increasing skepticism about Continuum of Care and its focus on specialized, congregate facilities, threatens marginalized peoples not only in terms of their rights to public space but also in terms of their visible presence in the city. An outcome of potential concern is that specialized, congregate spaces are re-framed as part of the problem of homelessness rather than as part of the solution. Housing First is an attractive approach in theory and one that in some variants, exhibits countervailing tendencies in relation to neoliberally inspired social policy developments. But just as deinstitutionalization was negatively reshaped with disastrous consequences, there is a well-founded fear that Housing First could result in warehousing marginalized individuals in units that present a façade of normalcy, but that exacerbate the isolation and exclusion of already vulnerable individuals. The lack of concerted efforts to devote substantial resources to providing permanently affordable and secure housing, coupled with urban redeve-

lopment pressures that reduce such opportunities, mean that more low-income people will struggle to maintain independence while confronting the inevitable instability of not having a home.

A focus on home spaces and gendered and race-sensitive rights to the city represent alternatives to neoliberal urbanism. These perspectives would explicitly acknowledge that among the most marginalized groups, women and men may have different reasons for becoming homeless and may also therefore, react differently to the social care on offer. This focus would also highlight inevitable connections between home and neighbourhood spaces and raise questions about what physical structures and community surroundings are required for inclusion efforts to be meaningful. Addressing the question of how these options affect the individuals for whom they are prescribed is one route to further investigation of the complex relations and issues raised above.

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Acknowledgements

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