

Signs posted at the entrance to the Mea Shearim Neighborhood



"Modesty" signs in Mea Shearim



Tolerating Homelessness in Canada's Capital: Gender, Place and Human Rights

FRAN KLODAWSKY
Carleton University, Canada

ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this paper is to explore relational (inclusive) and reductionist (exclusionary) interpretations of 'tolerance' with regard to homelessness, a prominent example of social and economic inequality. The paper examines these notions through three scalar lenses -- a national, statist perspective; a locally situated but neo-liberal perspective based on newspaper reporting; and a locally situated activist orientation -- and considers their gendered and human rights implications. Conceptual and theoretical connections are made between neo-liberal globalism, urbanism and tolerance. The paper concludes that tensions exist between relational and reductionist interpretations of tolerance and that there is an onus on citizens to make these choices explicit.*

"Social Issues Now Dominate Polls about the Concerns of Canadians: 'House the Homeless' say 85% in Annual Maclean's Poll" (Housing Again, 2000).

Results from a recent Canadian public opinion poll suggest that a remarkable shift may be underway. Throughout the 1980s and well into the mid-1990s, "so few Canadians cited social issues as 'the most important problem facing the country' that those issues did not even register" (Gregg, 2000). Nineteen ninety-six marked the beginning of a significant countertrend when 11% of respondents mentioned social issues as their dominant, top-of-mind concern. By 2000, that shift involved almost half of the population and dominated other issues by a ratio of 4:1 (Ibid.). Fully 85% of those polled indicated their agreement or strong agreement that more spending should be geared to eliminating homelessness. When Toronto residents were asked, in October 2000, which issues should receive the greatest attention from local government, they too highlighted homelessness (24%) but gave much lower ratings to such issues as poverty (3%), jobs/unemployment (3%), social services (2%), welfare (0%)

and squeegee kids¹ (0%) (Ibid.). Moreover, neither poll identified women's equality or racialization as matters of public concern (Ibid.).

One plausible inference is that housed Canadian citizens are less willing than previously to tolerate homelessness in their midst; but, what exactly does this turnaround signify? Does it mean that Canadians are less willing to accept homelessness as a necessary evil and want to raise taxes to ensure that no one is without adequate shelter? Or, does it mean that people are less willing to put up with the visible presence of young, apparently able-bodied men on the street (Hermer & Mosher, 2002). While the former suggests a relational understanding - that all homelessness, whether visible or invisible, adversely affects not only those without homes but also those who are housed - the latter perspective is more reductionist - that visibility is the problem and not homelessness *per se*.

In this paper, I want to explore these variable interpretations of what tolerance might imply about Canadians' concerns with homelessness, and particularly whether there is contestation about relational as opposed to reductionist orientations and their governmental implications. Coupled with this question are several gender and scale-related queries: does the growing unwillingness to put up with visible homelessness - that is, to tolerate its presence -- have the same meaning in large cities as it does in other territorial contexts? In large cities, the presence of male panhandlers on the street is sometimes assumed to signify the whole of the problem, but women and children's less visible homelessness is also growing. In such contexts, are there variable meanings of tolerance at play? Are there specific insights to be gained by examining the gendered nature of tolerance for homelessness in the national capital? In exploring these questions, I want to call upon the insights of theorists who explore the domain of economic and social rights discourses in a manner sensitive both to difference and to the changing ("rescaled") roles of cities in a globalizing world (Mayer, 1994; Holston & Appadurai, 1996).

To these ends, this paper is organized as follows. I begin by discussing the conceptual relation between 'tolerance,' and 'human rights,' and indicate its applicability to issues of economic and social rights and homelessness. Then, I ground this discussion in the context of debates about globalization and cities. Having thus established a conceptual lens for my approach, I next present three frames of analysis for exploring the two questions addressed at the outset: are Canadians becoming less tolerant of homelessness and what, exactly, does this mean? What are its gendered implications in particular? The first of these frames

¹ Term given to street youth who offer to wash the windows of cars stopped at traffic lights for money.

is national and policy oriented, centered on the 1998 *Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative* (Canada, 2001). Frames two and three are set in the City of Ottawa, with the first involving a close reading of newspaper reports on homelessness between 1994 and 1997, and the second a consideration of the role of key political actors in the City of Ottawa, and the relationship between local government and a coalition of community organizations concerned about homelessness. The significant correspondence between frames one and two is contrasted with their divergence with the third frame, and links are made to globalization, gender and human rights issues. The concluding section considers the questions raised at the outset about the nature of Canadians' tolerance of homelessness.

Tolerance and Human Rights

In modern parlance, 'tolerance' has been tied primarily to the acceptance of differences in identity and culture (Fenster, 2004) and in a few cases, 'tolerance' also has been linked to human rights. Thus, there seems to have been an emerging acceptance that human beings should be allowed to maintain cultural and personal differences and still qualify as the bearers of (equal) human rights. For example, Waterlot (1996) has explored the interrelations, with regard to religious freedom, between modern notions of tolerance and the various Declarations of Human Rights, beginning with their 18th century origins. However, while discussions relating human rights to issues of personal identity and political freedom have been quite widespread, talk of economic and social rights has been oddly neglected. As Michael Ignatieff recently noted, "I am astonished that social and economic inequality... has simply disappeared from the political agenda in Canada and most other capitalist societies" (Ignatieff, 2000: 19). In other words, while ideas about tolerating identity and cultural differences seem to have been linked to human rights discourses, ideas about tolerating extreme economic and social differences have not been much associated with human rights talk.

Anne Phillips has attributed this gap to "the failures of socialism" and the lack of fit with "celebrations of diversity and choice" (Phillips, 1999: 1), asserting that the seeming "wall of indifference" to economic inequalities has not been due to citizens' lack of appreciation of the necessity of some level of material well-being for political participation, but rather because "...we can see no plausible alternative" (Ibid.: 133). Both Phillips and Ignatieff acknowledge that without basic economic and social rights, constitutional guarantees of political, civic and religious rights will remain unfulfilled. Such arguments suggest that some

versions of tolerating homelessness might also mean a willingness to tolerate certain citizens' inability to access basic constitutional political and civic rights.

The argument that housing is a basic human right seems to have lost ground in Canada since the 1960s. Public debates about the nature of "basic" housing and absolute versus relative poverty have undermined heretofore dominant housing discourses that made Canada a world leader in developing "best practice" models of mixed income social housing (Dreier and Hulchanski, 1993). What is the relationship between Canadians' tolerance of homelessness and their current attitudes about housing as a basic human right? Are there links between this relationship and changes in the international sphere, often discussed under the umbrella term, "globalization?"

Human Rights and Cities in a Globalizing World

According to such theorists as Holston and Appadurai (1996), Mayer (1999) and Sassen (1996), the significance of cities, especially global cities, is changing profoundly as a result of political, cultural and economic globalization. These authors agree that the ability of nations to impose conditions within their borders is being challenged both "from above" and "from below." From above, the pressures are seen to be primarily economic, and driven, at least in part, by neoliberal perspectives (Massey 1996). Throughout the 1990s, cities and regions across Canada have been severely impacted by senior governmental economic and social policy restructuring that might well be characterized as "neoliberal globalism." As described by Peck, (2001: 445) neoliberal globalism's efforts focus on

... purg[ing] the system of obstacles to the functioning of 'free markets'; restrain[ing] public expenditure and any form of collective initiative; celebrat[ing] the virtues of individualism, competitiveness, and economic self-sufficiency; abolish[ing] or weaken[ing] social transfer programs while actively fostering the 'inclusion' of the poor and marginalized into the labor market, on the market's terms.

These measures have been linked to a feminization of poverty as well as the immiseration of large numbers of women and men.

In contrast, globalization "from below" describes myriad efforts on the part of civil society actors and social movements, including many feminist organizations, to challenge the inevitability of certain corporate definitions of globalization and at the same time, to enunciate qualitatively different

perspectives and values (Miles, 2001). Although oversimplified, within the context of this paper, it is useful to examine the work of Holston and Appadurai (1996) and Mayer (1999) as contributing insights into how the “globalization from below” efforts of civil society actors and social movements in the arena of urban politics might influence the nature of Canadians’ attitudes towards homelessness.

In observing that “cities are challenging, diverging from, and even replacing nations as an important space of citizenship”, Holston and Appadurai (1996: 189) recognize that citizenship as it is lived in the tumult of large cities, is likely to generate different sorts of social policy responses than would be the case in other territorial contexts. They examine how very differently situated individuals might achieve substantive citizenship by suggesting that one alternative is “rights to different treatment with equal opportunity,” and they draw, especially, on feminist arguments about the significant differences between formal and substantive equality (Ibid.: 195). By raising questions about the very concept of citizenship rights and by shifting the emphasis from “possession” to a relational claim, Holston and Appadurai’s arguments might be interpreted as asserting that in cities, homelessness is a problem not only for the homeless but also for the housed and, similarly, that universal housing provision might enhance the worth of citizenship for all residents. Their ideas suggest that in certain contexts, Canadians’ intolerance of homelessness might also signal a qualitative shift in perception about the responsibilities of residents towards one another.

Their arguments also have some resonance with those of Mayer (1999). She too emphasizes that significant economic restructuring at a global scale is affecting the shape and nature of city governance, both in terms of policy fields and relevant actors. As local governance becomes more layered and in greater need of the involvement of variously placed actors, urban social movements face new dangers of co-optation and in-fighting, but also the possibility of shifting the lens of local decision-makers towards a more “democratic, sustainable and social city” (Ibid.: 231). In fact, she illustrates how, from the perspective of social movements, shifts to a more relational set of rights might actually be beneficial in helping social movements to achieve their goals. Her arguments focus on the need for strategic coalition efforts by social movements, with a clear sense of objectives, to realistically evaluate the situations in which they find themselves and to respond accordingly (Mayer, 1994: 330). Thus, urban social movements that identify homelessness as a priority concern when city governments come calling for collaboration, may be in a strengthened position to push forward their relational claims about the incompatibility of homelessness (hidden or otherwise) and effective city planning and economic development.

While Ottawa is by no means a global city, I want to discuss these ideas in the spirit of Smith's contention that the important changes occurring in the interrelations of cities and nations are not confined to "global" cities (Smith, 1999). Does evidence exist in Ottawa of enhanced substantive citizenship and relational claims at the level of city governance, and the growing potential significance of social movements? If so, what is the relationship between this city-level perspective, and other perspectives – both local and global – on accepting (that is, tolerating) the presence of diverse homeless individuals – women and men, young and old, newcomer and Canadian born -- in their midst?

Frame One: Homelessness in Canada – The Federal Policy Context

Canada's social housing programs were an early target for policy changes informed by neoliberal globalism. In the mid to late 1980s, federal financial support for the construction of new social housing was significantly compromised and by 1992 that support had all but vanished. Although the predictions of negative consequences were brushed off at the time, by the late 1990s, not only was homelessness clearly on the rise, but also affecting a more diverse group of residents – not only single white men but also newcomer and Canadian born women alone and with children (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 1999). The federal government's first formal response was to establish a "Federal Coordinator on Homelessness," albeit without a budget, to "see to it that federal initiatives that directly address the needs of homeless Canadians complement those of other governments and local communities" (Prime Minister's Office, 1999). Several months later, a three-year Homelessness Initiative Fund of \$753 million dollars was announced, including the "cornerstone" \$305 million Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), "to provide a flexible means for communities to plan and implement comprehensive local strategies to reduce and prevent homelessness" (Canada, 1999).

Compared to estimates of what would be required to address the housing crisis, the federal allocation has been described as "a large drop in the bucket" (*Ottawa Citizen*, Feb, 13, 2001). In examining the rationale that accompanied the current federal funding initiative for homelessness, the emphasis was not on "adequate and affordable housing for all," but rather on containment of the problem. Eighty percent of SCPI funding was allocated to "10 Canadian cities with a documented significant absolute homeless problem;" its primary objective was to remove individuals from the street. Only secondarily was the goal to move individuals from emergency shelters into more permanent accommodations. Finally, the SCPI emphasized, above all, the identification of community capacity

building as the key factor in addressing “the needs of *their* homeless population” [emphasis added] (Canada, 1999). Although there was no explicit mention of gender in statements about the SCPI, the emphasis on street homelessness did appear to infer an emphasis on addressing the problematic visibility of white, male panhandlers.

Each of these characteristics suggests that the federal government’s role in addressing homelessness was not seen as one of leadership, in the sense of directing significant dollars to ensure that all Canadians are adequately housed. Rather, the primary objective was to contain the most visible aspects of distress and also, to signal that primary responsibility lay elsewhere – with the individual communities that were experiencing homelessness most significantly. In other words, it was an approach quite compatible with the characterization of neoliberal globalism described above and strongly incompatible with notions of relational citizenship.

If correct, this analysis suggests that at the federal level at least, the question of whether tolerance of homelessness is or is not growing has been interpreted as having to do mainly with its visibility. Given the question posed above about the growing divergence of cities and their national governments, it remains to be seen whether this perspective on tolerance of homelessness is also dominant at the local level and specifically in the City of Ottawa.

Introducing Ottawa

Canada’s national capital and fourth largest city had a population of about 774,000 within its jurisdictional boundaries in 2001, and about one million people in the region (Ottawa, 2003). Ottawa’s long sojourn as a stable government town abruptly ended in 1994 when the federal government initiated a major downsizing effort, involving the sudden loss of 10,000 public sector jobs (Wallace, 1999). The impact of this move was negatively reinforced in 1995, when provincial Ontario electors brought to power a political party intent on ‘reinventing government’ especially with regard to social security matters. Between 1991 and 1996, the regional and central city poverty rates increased from 14.6 to 18.9% and 21.1% to 28.3% respectively (Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton, 1999). Overall, modest income households saw their “community affordability” standards decrease significantly between 1992 and 1998 (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2001).

A particularly problematic effect has been the significant growth of housing needs in the Ottawa area. In 2000, over 800 men, women and children used shelters or the streets on a daily basis because of a lack of affordable

housing (Ottawa, 2001a). In 2002, the waiting list for subsidized non-profit housing included 15,000 households and estimates suggest that they would have had a five to seven year waiting list unless they were homeless, in which case the wait was still one year.² While no population statistics were available about the extent of women's homelessness as compared to men's overall, there was substantial evidence of single mothers' much greater poverty and vulnerability to homelessness. When the 1998 welfare rates for single parents were compared to those of 'non-family' persons or to 'husband-wife' families, the respective rates were: 40.6%, 15.9% and 8.1%.³ Female heads of households constituted about 75% of the 1000 families, including 2400 children, who used the emergency family shelters between 1997 and 2000. Moreover, disturbing evidence indicated that racism may also have exacerbated the vulnerability to homelessness of some Ottawa residents. Over 62% of the mostly female adult users of the family shelters indicated a country/continent of origin other than Canada, and of these places, the majority was African, proportions very much at odds with the overall distribution of residents by country of origin in the city (Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton, 2000).

In this paper, two sets of evidence inform the effort to understand the meaning of Ottawa residents' tolerance of homelessness. The first is a discourse analysis of 1994 to 1997 news reports on local homelessness in Ottawa's leading English-language newspaper, *The Ottawa Citizen*. The second is an overview of initiatives by the City of Ottawa in the fields of housing and homelessness, including its interactions with a coalition of primarily civil society organizations and actors called the Alliance to End Homelessness.

Frame Two: Discourses on Homelessness – Homelessness Reporting in 'The Ottawa-Citizen'

The research reported here is part of a broader examination of newspaper reporting on local poverty in four medium-sized Canadian cities between 1994 and 1997. Generally, there was very little to distinguish *The Ottawa Citizen's* reporting from those of the other newspapers. As Table 1 (p. 113) illustrates, discussions of homelessness and child poverty dominated domestic examinations of poverty throughout the period, accounting for about 36% of the total. In

² In contrast, in 1991, the waiting list for social housing was about two years for most households.

³ These data are based on unpublished analysis provided by the Advocate Institute (n.d.) to the City of Ottawa.

contrast, only about 5% of the articles linked poverty with unemployment or low wages, even though housed poor Canadians far outnumber their unsheltered peers (National Council on Welfare, 2002). Little attention also was given to the diversity of those who face poverty – in less than 12% of the articles overall, was gender or ‘race’ given any focus, and when gender was mentioned it was predominantly in relation to child poverty.

Table 1: Proportion of Items (%) by Poverty Group, All Newspapers⁴ and *The Ottawa Citizen*, 1994-97

	All Newspapers	<i>Ottawa Citizen</i>
Homelessness	19.5	19.3
Child Poverty	15.3	16.8
Unspecified	13.9	14.6
Multiple Groups	6.3	8.2
Families/Parents	6.2	7.6
Poor Individuals	5.5	N/A
Adults	5.1	2.2
Other	4.7	6.0
Welfare Recipients	4.5	7.3
Working Poor	3.6	1.6
Seniors	3.2	3.2
Inner City Residents	2.9	0.0
Low Income Cut-Off	2.7	5.1
Youth	2.1	1.6
The Unemployed	1.5	1.3
N/A	1.2	3.0
Panhandlers	.6	1.3
University/College Students	.6	.9
Mentally Ill	.5	0.0
Gender Specific	11.3%	8.2%
‘Race’ Specific	.4%	.3%

Discursively, 33 news reports were examined and four dominant themes identified: passivity, white male identity, evidence of substance abuse, and central city location. The notion that homeless individuals are passive males who are the recipients of the help of active ‘housed’ citizens seems to reinforce neoliberal arguments that the welfare state has created dependencies, and that the role of government now must be to encourage or force those who have become

⁴ Based on the electronic data files of the *Calgary Herald*, the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Ottawa Citizen* and the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

dependent to take some responsibility for their own situations. This blanket of passivity also serves to homogenize homeless people, whose histories are, in fact, very diverse and who became homeless through a myriad of reasons (Klodawsky et al., 2002; Farrell et al., 2000). The image of passivity as it is presented entirely dismisses any contextual information about why a person might be on the street. Instead, homeless individuals are portrayed as being overwhelmingly single, white males with substance abuse problems. While this focus does reflect a certain reality -- that of street homelessness -- it hides at least as much as it reveals. For numerous reasons, women's homelessness is much less likely to be reported than is men's. First, women are less likely to be 'on the streets.' For those with children, panhandling is an improbable occupation, and more generally, women's personal safety concerns also act to discourage panhandling. Second, women who are homeless often are survivors of wife assault (Passaro, 1996). However, when women escaping violence are mentioned by the media, they are categorized as 'battered,' even when they are also 'homeless.' Third, men's emergency shelters are clearly identified and long-standing markers in the Ottawa landscape and coupled with the men who gather around these buildings, the image of 'the homeless' as single white males is further reinforced. Women's shelters are much smaller and more likely to be hidden. Finally, homelessness statistics provided by a variety of community and local government agencies also contribute to making women's homelessness invisible. While the men's shelters reported nightly bed usage, family shelters only reported on numbers of adults and children. Moreover, residents of battered women's shelters have not typically been included in homelessness estimates. All of these factors also reinforce the message that homelessness is a distinct, inner city male-dominated phenomenon.

The portrayals of homelessness in *The Ottawa Citizen* bear intriguing parallels with the implicit assumptions behind the federal government's SCPI program. While the latter focuses on absolute, visible and therefore male homelessness, the dominance in the news reports' images of this type of homelessness reinforces the collapse of any distinction that might be made between street homelessness and the much broader issue. The SCPI's emphasis on containment is also compatible with the newspaper's focus on individual failings. If the homeless -- mostly able bodied, single men -- are passive, they are likely the subjects of 'learned dependency' and the most effective solutions are neoliberal ones -- a minimalist welfare state where the marginalized learn that they must fend for themselves in the labor market (Peck, 2001). For those unwilling to comply, the most appropriate solution is shelter in a minimal sense -- off the streets, where they might be a threat to housed citizens -- while receiving the clear message that the state will not take responsibility for their failings. The

much less straightforward linkages between such neoliberal perspectives and abused women's and children's homelessness are conveniently ignored in most reporting on homelessness in these reports.

Frame Three: Understandings of Homelessness by Local Political Actors

In contrast to the close correspondence between the newspaper portrayals and the federal homelessness initiative, there appears to be a growing divergence between these perspectives and the City of Ottawa's policy stance towards homelessness. This divergence is evident at four levels: first, explicit linkages are made between human rights, safe, affordable permanent housing and homelessness; second, both interpretation of the problem and its policy responses are developed in close consultation with a variety of civil society actors; third, the diversity of those who experience homelessness and the need to address particular requirements in various, appropriate ways are addressed; and finally, the structural relationship between local homelessness and national and international trends are identified.

At the level of human rights, it is appropriate to note the City Council's 1998 decision to declare its renewed commitment to 'the right to decent housing' in the context of a statement of *Principles for Social Housing* (Region Of Ottawa-Carleton (ROC), 1999a, Annex A). This statement is a strong indication of the City Council's acknowledgement of housing as a basic element of well-being, as well as a reaffirmation of its long-standing local tradition of policy and philosophical support for non-profit and supportive housing (Ibid.). This statement of principles also reflects a key moment of collaboration between the City of Ottawa and The Alliance to End Homelessness (hereafter known as 'Homelessness Alliance'), a broad coalition of over 50 organizations representing front-line workers, academics and social housing providers, concerned about the availability of affordable housing and appropriate support services.⁵

Throughout the late 1990s, the City Council had allocated significant funds to fighting homelessness while also strongly supporting the arguments of advocacy groups across Canada that homelessness problems could not be solved without substantial senior government financial support and leadership. In 1998, it allocated \$1 million from its own Social Housing budget surplus to a Homelessness Initiatives Fund and established a cross-departmental team to implement the Plan (ROC, 1999b). Then and subsequently, funds accessed through both local and senior government sources have been distributed as a

⁵ The Alliance to End Homelessness was established in 1995.

result of a call for proposals to community members, and an adjudication process involving both community and government representatives. In 2001, this process resulted in funds of about \$8 million being allocated to 44 of the 130 local non-profit organizations that applied. Successful proposals were those that most clearly met the aims set out in Ottawa's 1998 Community Plan to End Homelessness. Overall, funds were allocated to established programs, in order to enhance services and supports where gaps were especially problematic and in general, this meant that funds were directed at particular populations whose needs had not been met by the mainstream (men's) emergency shelter services (Ottawa, 2001b). Table 2 (p. 117) is a listing of the largest 2001 funding allocations specifically directed to women and families or to programs that will disproportionately help these groups. These funds account for about 40% of the total or \$3,706,976 of the \$8,236,817. The specific nature of the allocations indicated a clear recognition of the diversity of persons and households facing homelessness, as well as the complexity of their situations and requirements.

Monies also have been provided to aboriginal persons, female and male ex-offenders, persons with HIV/AIDS, women and men who suffer from mental, illness, sexual abuse and addiction problems, and gay, bisexual, transsexual and questioning youth. These funds are directed not only at services, but are also for long-term housing, and not only in the downtown core but throughout the region (Ottawa, 2001b). It is also noteworthy that the process by which the funding was allocated involved a wide range of organizations with very different understandings of justice and tolerance. Some were faith-based charitable organizations with a commitment to a particular kind of paternalistic care model, while other groups emphasized very different models promoting personal empowerment and human rights for all individuals.

The Homelessness Alliance has been quite successful in avoiding the infighting that has plagued so many non-profit organizations and that Mayer (1994) identified as one of the barriers to making progressive change. There has been a concerted effort to take advantage of the long-standing collaborations of some members and extend them to encompass all groups who see themselves as advocates against homelessness. While some might argue that the disbursement of funds to so many different groups might act more as a device of exclusion for those not in an appropriate category (Brodie, 1995), in Ottawa, funds to address the particular needs of specific groups have been coupled with support for other types of initiatives more geared to tackling the structural problems: funds have been made available for research, for agency development and for longer term housing for families and individuals. In addition, both City Council and the Homelessness Alliance have and are building alliances with groups in other cities

and with national organizations concerned about homelessness and other economic human rights injustices.

Table 2: Largest Funding Allocations from the Homelessness Initiative Fund, 2001

\$ Amount	Purpose	On-going commitments
560,000	To assist with completing a 74-unit project for families including units for those who are developmentally delayed, homeless or at risk of homelessness and transitional units for victims of abuse.	
514,075	To provide outreach support services and manage transitional housing for up to 20 homeless aboriginal women and their children fleeing abuse.	
364,000	13 townhouses for families, with units for those who are homeless or at risk	4 rent supplement units ⁶
127,853/year	To decrease the number of unstably housed families/ individuals in South East Ottawa by 5% a year.	Until March 2003 ⁷
100,787/year	In collaboration with Family Shelters provide educational, recreational and support activities for approximately 200 children and youth living in these shelters at any given time. Other activities will include support to youth as they move to permanent housing.	Until March 2003

Beyond Tolerance for Homelessness?

What insights might be gained from the three frames of analysis discussed above? Is there evidence to suggest that Ottawa citizens now are less willing than previously to accept the fact that diverse individuals – women and men, young and old, newcomer and Canadian-born – are living without adequate shelter in their midst? If so, what does this growing *intolerance* of material deprivation signify – that governments should be more proactive in addressing the conditions that result in fellow residents becoming homeless, or that government's key obligation is to get rid of the problem's most visible and therefore masculinist aspects in order to promote its economic advantages for footloose capital. It is my contention that both sorts of attitudes are in play. The divergences described above seem to lend some support to Holston and

⁶ This stipulation indicates an on-going commitment on the part of the City of Ottawa to provide funds to cover the gap between rent levels that are "geared-to-income" and the amount required to cover the operating costs of providing a unit of housing.

⁷ This date corresponds with the end-date of the current *Supporting Community Partnership Initiative* funding allocation, the most significant element in the monies distributed in 2001.

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⁷ This date corresponds with the end-date of the current *Supporting Community Partnership Initiative* funding allocation, the most significant element in the monies distributed in 2001.

Appadurai's (1996) arguments about the shift from reductionist to relational citizenship claims at the level of cities. The nature of the City of Ottawa's policy responses to local homelessness reflect a quite different understanding of the problem of homelessness than appears to be true either of the SCPI or *The Ottawa Citizen*, where the pressures of neoliberal globalism appear to have had more significant impacts.

This analysis is not, however, meant to identify any sort of inevitability based on scale, nor to argue that the City of Ottawa's responses to homelessness are either typical or entirely coherent. It is well to remember that the City of Ottawa has had a long tradition of proactive innovation in the fields of social housing and housing advocacy, and it may well be that this history, rather than particular lobbying efforts or policy opportunities, had the greatest influence on current developments with regard to homelessness. In addition, it also is important to appreciate the impacts of SCPI funding in helping to nurture and strengthen the Homelessness Alliance and its ability to put forth arguments sympathetic to notions of relational citizenship. The question also remains whether the extent to which funds have not been allocated to men's emergency shelters reflects more dominant biases about more or less deserving poor that are very much in line with neoliberal orientations (Passaro, 1996). Finally, it is critical to recognize that the allocation of funds to homelessness initiatives is likely to become more contentious as the full effects of provincial downloading are felt in an environment where dominant discourses reject the possibility of local tax increases for equality enhancing social service provision.

Despite all of these provisos though, the City of Ottawa's policy responses to homelessness do illustrate how an understanding of citizenship claims as "relational" rather than reductionist might be introduced at the urban level, and what the implications of such a shift might mean for gender inclusive policy-making.

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