ImPRovE
Poverty, Social Policy and Innovation

Experimenting with Housing First in Ghent: the occupation of the Emmaüs monastery

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Case Study N°18
October 2015

October 2015

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Bibliographic Information

Cools, P., and S. Oosterlynck (2015), *Experimenting with Housing First in Ghent: the occupation of the Emmaüs monastery*, ImPRovE Case Study N°18. Antwerp: Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy – University of Antwerp.

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1 The initiative and its organizers[1]

The 'Emmaüs Monastery housing first project' was a self-proclaimed housing first experiment with a group of eleven Roma families from Slovakian decent living in a monastery building in the neighbourhood Muide in the medium-sized Belgian city of Ghent. Fifty-four people lived in this building. Thirty of them are children. The experiment started as an occupation of the monastery by squatters, which was only the culmination point of a long series of actions by anarchist squatters, activists and social and social-artistic organisations to defend the right to housing for marginalized groups. These actions were coordinated and communicated by the 'Movement Right to Housing' (M.R.t.H. - *Beweging Recht op Wonen* in Dutch). This 'unincorporated association' is made up of an atypical and ideologically diverse coalition of third sector organisations and volunteers. It consists of four supporting non-profit organisations, volunteers and independent partners that joined forces around the housing problems of homeless families, later Slovakian Roma migrant families specifically.

The monastery was first squatted and after several months and a lot of (mediatized) conflict and tension the M.R.t.H. succeeded, with mediation of the City of Ghent, to get a 'Granted Occupation' (Bezetting ter Bede[2]). The agreement was signed by the four NPOs that were actively involved in the movement and the monastery project. None of these organisations are (typical) providers of services for the homeless. Two of them are social-artistic organisations (Victoria Deluxe and ROCSA), one is a group of volunteers concerned with refugees and immigrants in difficult situation (*Werkgroep Vluchtelingen Gent* – Regufee Work Ghent) and the last one is Samenlevingsopbouw Gent, a community work organisation that works with vulnerable groups[3]. In the period before the agreement the management of the CAW (*Centrum Algemeen Welzijnswerk* – Centre for General Welfare Work), which owns the monastery, was criticised and put under political pressure because it initially planned

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[1] This report is based on document analysis, in-depth interviews and a focus group. More information about methods used can be found in (Kazepov, Saruis, Wukovitsch, Cools, & Novy, 2014), accessible via http://improve-research.eu/. All interviews and the focus group (Appendix II) were conducted between March 2014 and January 2015. When information is drawn directly from one of the interviews, or when one of the interviewees is quoted it will be referred to as (I: Alias of the respondent). The respondents allowed the researchers to use an alias that discloses their affiliation to the organisation. Information or quotes drawn from the focus group discussion are referred to as (focus group). Appendix II provides an overview of all interviewees and focus group participants. The authors want to express their gratitude to the interviewees and focus group participants for their participation and valuable input.

[2] The 'bezetting ter bede' is an arrangement in which people are granted the use of real-estate until the owner determines the future destination of the building or the agreement is stopped for other reasons. This agreement, which is different from a rent agreement, can be for free or for a symbolical fee. It can be fixed in time or not. This kind of arrangement is a grey zone in the housing legislation, which enables actors to bypass strict rules of the rent legislation (which for the court cannot be the only reason of its existence), and was never formally regulated by law, but grew out of a history of legal cases (Snick, Snick, & Meulemans, 2011). It is used for instance by squatter associations (housing need) to regulate their stay, but also by anti-squatting companies (protection of real estate) to make empty premises without a clear destination available for a low price.

[3] Samenlevingsopbouw has been involved in the services and support for people in bad living conditions and in trajectories for the integration of people living independently after being admitted in care institutions. Nonetheless, they are first and foremost 'community builders', not 'care givers' and they are not regarded as a provider of services for the homeless. The activities in the cloister were new for them (I: Management Samenlevingsopbouw).

to expel the families (although as a publicly subsidized non-profit organisation it is also involved in homeless services).

The Granted Occupation was agreed for a period of 10 months in August 2013. In this period the monastery was recognized as the official domicile of the families. This is crucial because it enabled them to exercise some of their rights related to child support and, in general, to establish a relationship with public administration. The 'monastery project' lasted one year, from July 2013 to the end of June 2014. About half of the group left after this period. The group that stayed was forced to leave in September 2014 after a judicial decision. Today it is unclear what the sequel of this experience will be. The opinions on whether it was a success or a failure differ and depend on how the experience is perceived.

2   Basic information on the (local) context and the emerging problems

2.1   The right to housing in Belgium and Flanders.

Compared to all neighbouring countries the share of social housing in the total housing stock is low in Belgium (Braga & Palvarini, 2013), 9% in 2012[4]. Compared to its involvement in other social policy areas, the Belgian governments have historically taken on a rather residual role for social protection in the field of housing. This has resulted in a very liberal housing market. Strategies of stimulating property acquisition through direct and indirect measures have for more than a century played an important role (Deleeck, 2008). This implies that housing is less seen as a social right (although access to housing is one of the '*sociale grondrechten*[5]' defined in art. 23 of the constitution), but as an individual responsibility that is financially supported by the government. Both scholars and social organisations have argued repeatedly that the 'right to housing', and related documents like the 'Flemish Housing Code' (Vlaamse Wooncode) have largely remained hollow phrases and failed to lead to the realisation of the right to housing in practice (Goossens, 2008; Samenlevingsopbouw, 2014).

In Belgium, housing is a regional competence. The rent legislation and the responsibility for tax abatements for housing acquisition were however only devolved to the regional level in May 2014. In 2013 in Flanders, 73,5% of the population is an owner, 17,7% rents on the private market and 6,2% rents a social dwelling. At the end of 2012, 107,351 individual candidate tenants were signed up on waiting lists of Flemish social housing companies. This is a rise of 12% compared to 2010 (Vrind, 2013).

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[4] http://www.housingeurope.eu/publication/social-housing-country-profiles/social-housing-in/be (last accessed 5-07-2015).

[5] The Dutch term '*sociale grondrechten'* refers to fundamental social rights and were included in article 23 of the Belgian constitution in 1994. These fundamental social rights include the right to decent housing, education, social security, health, labour, a healthy environment and cultural and social development. It is important to note that the social rights are not enforceable as a clearly delineated right. Instead, the parliament (and government and society) has the duty to guarantee these rights in a way compliant to its capacities and cultural preferences. Hence in order to relate social rights with the fight against poverty a public debate on social rights and the appropriate practical instruments will always be necessary (Stroobant, 2008).

This clearly indicates that there is a structural lack of social housing in Flanders[6]. Confronted with this reality many priority rules are implemented to serve target groups with housing needs, in fact creating waiting lists within the waiting list. Between 2011 and 2013 the average waiting time in Flanders is almost three years or 1,065 days (Vergauwen, 6/02/2015), hence waiting four years or more is not exceptional. Both the demand and supply of social houses are unevenly spread across the Flemish region. These problems manifest themselves especially in larger cities, although in general cities have a higher percentage of social houses compared to rural areas. In the city of Ghent about 8,000 people are on a waiting list for social housing (I: Management SLO).

The research by Sterkens, Coppens and Van Acker (2013) shows that, despite the long waiting lists, there is a considerable vacancy rate in the social rental market. At the end of 2012, 6,15% of all social housing units is vacant. The problem of long term vacancy most often emerges due to delays of plans for renovation of the out-dated patrimony. One of the main reasons given by respondents of the research is that the budgets for renovations became inadequate as the isolation and energy standards became stricter. Another reason is that the procedures to remove people (temporary) from their houses for renovation are often very time consuming and complex. Furthermore, accidental circumstances (illness of the architect or technical difficulties) can have a big impact on the renovation plans. As actors related to the Emmaus Monastery HF experiment point out, sometimes only small renovations are needed to make the houses ready for (temporary) inhabitation, albeit without being compliant to all quality standards (I: representative M.R.t.H., Coordinator street social work). Amongst others, under pressure of public opinion, city councils are increasingly realising this as a problem for which a solution has to be found, a solution which is often found in temporary inhabitation by vulnerable groups (Sterkens et al., 2013). However, due to the high standards of the Flemish Housing Code and issues related to insurance these pragmatic solutions can turn out to be costly and risky. Still, such temporarily inhabitation projects remain rather attractive for service providers and other non-profit actors because they allow them to respond relatively quickly to urgent needs without huge resources (I: Management Samenlevingsopbouw, Management CAW, Coordinator street social work, Representative M.R.t.H.).

As in many countries, there is a lack of reliable data on the amount of homeless people in Belgium. Estimates vary largely depending on different definitions and methods used. Recently, Meys and Hermans (2014) published a comprehensive study on the number of people using winter emergency beds, services for homeless care by the non-profit welfare organisation CAW, transition homes provided by the public welfare centres OCMW and people at risk of losing their homes in Flanders. Based on this research the number of homeless people and people threatened by eviction between January 15th 2014 and February 15th 2015 is 4,329 clients (adults) and 1,728 children. The authors of the report suggest that this number is likely to be an underestimation of the total population. Appendix

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[6] Against a background of growing home ownership and a structural lack of social housing, Hubeau and Vermeir (2013) observe tendencies towards more precariousness in the private rental market. The private rental market is functioning as a kind of residual market for more vulnerable families who cannot afford their own home and have not found access to social housing. The fact that Roma families of the Emmaüs Monastery HF project have even not found access to this residual housing market is indicative for the condition of strong social exclusion in which they find themselves.

I provides a table from that report that lists, following the ETHOS typology[7], all the Flemish organisations that work with roof-less and house-less people they surveyed. This table (based on earlier work by Demaerschalk & Hermans, 2010) provides a general overview of the existing services in Flanders and will be helpful to better understand the governance relations surrounding the Monastery experiment in Ghent (see part six of this report)

2.2 Homeless people and Housing First in Ghent

There are no reliable data on the number of homeless people in Ghent[8]. A coordinator of street social work in Ghent (interview) said that they *"do not know, but we estimate at least 800".* The report 'Ghent in numbers' (Verhasselt, Van Steenberge, Bauwens, & Dirikx, 2013) uses the number of people visiting the night shelters as an indicator[9]. In 2012 1,350 different people used one of the two night shelters for acute support. More than one out of ten of these clients are under 18 and about one out of four are women. A remarkable finding from the Meys and Hermans (2014) report is that winter shelters in Ghent had to refuse more people than anywhere else in Flanders because there were not enough places available.

Housing First is a new approach in Ghent. Besides the Emmaüs Monastery HF experiment, two other housing first pilot projects exist in Ghent. One is part of the Housing First Belgium[10] project that coordinates and evaluates six pilot projects in the five biggest cities in Belgium. This project is subsidized by the federal administration POD Social Integration and focuses predominantly on chronical single homeless (I: Coordinator HF Belgium)[11]. This project is not working with Roma families. The second pilot project, called 'Instapwonen' ('Getting in housing'), is a housing first project variant for families. It is subsidized and supported by the public welfare centre (OCMW) of Ghent. It is coordinated by the organisation of street social workers VOS, who receives subsidies for this service. The Neighbourhood Stewards[12] and social workers from the drop-in centre for families called De SLOEP vzw provide the support for the families. They do not receive extra resources for this project, because supporting these families falls within the remit of their core activities. During the pilot two migrant families share one house, one of which is a Roma family. The house is also located in the Muide

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[7] This typology was developed by FEANTSA (http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article120&lang=en). In 2010 the jury of the European Consensus Conference (2010) advised all European countries to use this typology as a shared framework. The research by Meys and Hermans (2014) was oriented to specific categories of the ETHOS typology (1,2,3,4, 7 and 9).

[8] The rapport by Meys and Hermans (2014) does not give aggregate numbers for the surveyed services per city.

[9] This is likely to be an underestimation of the total population of homeless people. It is relevant that both respondents from the M.R.t.H. and service providers point out that night shelters in Ghent fail to provide adequate support for homeless families and single mothers with children (amongst other reasons because people can only come in after 9p.m.). They argue that these groups often do not use this service. It is therefore likely that they are not included in the numbers (I: Coordinator De SLOEP; Representative M.R.t.H.).

[10] http://www.housingfirstbelgium.be/ (last accessed 8-07-2015)

[11] Interestingly the Ghent pilot, in contrast to the others, has no problem finding housing units because the city has a tradition in using Flemish measures for 'accelerated allocation for homeless'. The city has also developed cooperative protocols for supported independent living. These seem to be good conditions to develop a housing first scheme (I: Coordinator HF Belgium).

[12] The Neighbourhood Stewards or 'Buurtstewards' is Flemish program that appoints outreach workers in the cities of Brussels, Ghent, Antwerpen and Sint-Niklaas in neighbourhoods with 'many' Roma residents (online: http://thuisindestad.be/buurtstewards last accessed 1-09-2015).

neighbourhood, which has raised concerns about the willingness of neighbourhood residents to accept their presence in their neighbourhood (I: Social worker Instapwonen, Coordinator De SLOEP). After one year the funding for this project has been extended and in the summer of 2015 the capacity is increased with one house and from a total of two to three families with children.

2.3   The City of Ghent and debates about migration and inclusion

Gent is the second largest city in Flanders with around 250,000 inhabitants (Verhasselt et al., 2013). Ghent has had a socialist mayor since 1989, with the current mayor Daniël Termont holding his position since 2007. He leads a coalition of the socialist (Sp.a), the green (GROEN) and the liberal (Open-Vld) party. The city council of Ghent presents the city as a progressive bulwark in a conservative region that is dominated by the Flemish nationalist and conservative party NV-A, which favours a strict (less inclusive and redistributive) approach to integration and welfare policy.

The city has a vibrant civil society, amongst others organising around the themes of immigration, integration and diversity. One example is the organisation of the anti-racism day 'Gentse Lente' ('Ghent Spring', alluding to the Arabic Spring), which was actively supported by the city council. Eastern-European migration, however, remains a sensitive issue for the electorate of the coalition parties, but in differing ways (I: Management SLO, management CAW, representative M.R.t.H.). In reaction to the growing number of Eastern European migrants, in 2010 the city of Ghent established the 'Permanent Consultation Committee on Intra-European Migration' ('Permanent Overleg Comité Intra Europese Migratie – POC). Its purpose is to exchange information and coordinate strategies between relevant city departments, like the police, the local welfare centres and integration services. This committee focuses also, but not exclusively, on the situation of Roma in Ghent and it is still active in 2015.

The visible presence of (mainly but not exclusively) Slovakian Roma has been controversial in Ghent for several years. From the one side (leftist) civil society actors, some of whom later got involved in the Emmaüs Monastery HF project, have watched the city council's policies towards Roma very closely[13]. They often criticized official political statements, which they perceived as stigmatizing or criminalising Roma families and Roma culture. From the other side, the right wing opposition is keen to attack the mayor for being too lax towards Roma, integration of ethnic-cultural minorities and squatting. As a result, the city council has become more careful in its communication on Roma, while at the same time trying to show themselves strict when it comes to nuisance and claiming that the city cannot absorb new inflows of Roma migrants[14]. Local Roma expert Elias Hemelsoet (2011: 50 *authors translation*) observes:

> *Ghent chooses resolute for a dual policy. Next to a supportive track one can distinguish a second, rather repressive one, which focuses on tempering new streams of migration[15].*

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[13] See for instance the critical article in the city magazine TienTiens (http://www.tienstiens.org/node/4914 - published 5.12.2010) (last accessed 20-07-2015)

[14] (http://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20130924_061 - published 24.09.2013) (last accessed 20-07-2015)

[15] A desk study of media articles, the interviews and the focus group support this observation. The mayor has stated on several occasions that the city cannot host new waves of Roma migrants (http://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20140214_062 - published 14.2.2014) and in the past he has made strong statement about the "Roma problem" and discouraged citizens to help homeless Roma

Hemelsoet points out, as do activists from the M.R.t.H., that the procedures used for closing down squats and other targeted actions against 'public disorder' are part of this repressive strand. They argue that it threatens to undermine the more supportive approaches from the city, volunteers and other service providers (focus group) (see also Debruyne, Vandeputte, & Beunen, 2014).

2.4   Roma in Ghent

The exact number of Roma in Belgium is unknown. Ethnicity is not included as a category in migration registers. Many Roma have Belgian nationality, some of them have no legal place to stay and a small minority is not sedentary. The Council of Europe estimates that around 30,000 Roma's reside in Belgium, which is 0,29% of the estimated total Roma population in the world[16]. However, the reliability of this estimation is questionable. The city of Ghent estimates the number of Roma in the city on the basis of the perception of the functionaries of the city's civil affairs department of the share of migrants of each country that to them appeared to be Roma. At the end of 2011, they thus estimated the total number of Roma at 4,820. About 2,815 of them would be Bulgarian, 1,737 Slovakian and 268 Czech (Hemelsoet, 2013)[17].

The first Slovakian Roma families reached Ghent in the late 1990s to apply for asylum. They were not always distinguishable from other Slovakian migrants and amongst the Roma there were differences in region of origin and socio-economic profile. After a range of conflicts related to nuisance, the then mayor of Ghent demanded from the federal government to apply he rules more strictly towards Slovakian asylum seekers. As a result the policy started to search actively for Slovakian asylum seekers, asking them to complete their application dossier, which led to the collective expulsion of 74 Slovakian Roma whose asylum was refused in in the Autumn of 1999[18]. A few families of this first wave stayed in Ghent, despite this expulsion policy. They would become a point of reference for Slovakian Roma families that would migrate to Western Europe later and use their family network to find a new place of residence (Hemelsoet, 2013).

(http://www.gva.be/cnt/aid996318/daniel-termont-wil-niet-dat-gentenaars-dakloze-roma-helpen - published 2.10.2010). On the other hand he is recognized in the focus group as a reasonable consensus figure and at the end of 2012 he proudly announced that Ghent was amongst the first cities to employ its first Roma employee, "giving a forceful signal that it is not a group of illiterate noisemakers" (last accessed 20-07-2015)

(https://m.facebook.com/notes/dani%C3%ABl-termont/eerste-roma-werknemer-van-stad-gent-geeft-krachtig-signaal/10151210830407993/ - published 18.12.2012). Currently he is also actively involved in discussions on the European level regarding the responsibilities of the countries of origin and transnational support schemes (http://ec.europa.eu/belgium/belgoview/essentiel/140926_roma_nl.htm - published 24.09.2014) (last accessed 20-07-2015).

[16] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/belgium/national-strategy/national_nl.htm (last accessed 20-07-2015).

[17] Hemelsoet (2013: 6) stresses that these numbers are not very reliable. Firstly, because of the method of calculation and secondly because a substantial number of Roma is not officially registered.

[18] In 2002 Belgium was condemned by the European Court of Human Rights for the organisation of this collective expulsion in the case Conka/Belgian State. See for instance online: http://www.dewereldmorgen.be/artikel/2014/06/27/what-about-us-europa-herleidt-roma-tot-illegaal-en-inhumaan-bestaan (last accessed 03-09-2015).

The eastward expansion of the European Union with Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004 and Bulgaria and Romania 2007 encouraged the migration from Eastern to Western Europe, including of Roma families who often flee discrimination (Hemelsoet, 2011). European expansion changed the policy context fundamentally because the Roma families were now European citizens and no longer asylum seekers as was the case in the late 1990s. The new inflow of Roma migrants in Belgium only really started after 2005. Different groups (with different nationalities) settled more or less in different cities across Belgium. After the expansion of the European Union Ghent experienced a big inflow from especially Slovakians and later from Bulgarians[19] (Roma and non-Roma).

The Slovakian Roma families are often very large, with families of over ten children not being an exception. Overall, the educational levels and the socio-economic status of this group are very low. Most Slovakian Roma in Ghent come from the same region in East-Slovakia in the surroundings of Košice, the second largest city of Slovakia. Many of them lived in Lunik XI (the largest Roma ghetto in Europe) or neighbouring villages. They lived as an underclass in Slovakia, where they were faced with extreme forms racism, discrimination and exclusion. In Ghent, a substantial part of this group lives in squats in appalling conditions (lack of proper heating, water and electricity). Roma themselves, however, seem to prefer these conditions over the situation in Eastern Europe. According to Hemelsoet, this background of long term discrimination and deprivation is important to understand the distrust of this group towards mainstream society and its institutions, which often results in what is perceived as a "fatalistic attitude" (Hemelsoet, 2013, p. 9). This complicates trajectories of social integration and activation (to work).

Although Slovakian Roma are European citizens, they often end up in an administrative twilight zone after failing to meet the criteria of their migration statute (Debruyne et al., 2014). As Slovakia is part of the EU since 2004, Roma families who came after 2004 could apply for an 'E'-card, which gives them temporary right to stay and have limited access to social support (like medical care). If they stay continuously in Belgium for three to five years and work more or less continuously for three years (depending on their situation) they can get and 'E+'–card, which grants them the full right to reside in Belgium and access to social rights[20]. Most families in the monastery failed to meet these labour related expectations so they did not get the E+ and their E-card expired but being EU citizens they are not illegal in the country. Depending on this statute (and when they entered Belgium) the families are often no longer, or were never, entitled to social housing and/or medical care. Many Slovakian Roma in Ghent are not formally employed or work only occasionally in the precarious informal economy. They often survive on limited incomes from child benefits and sometimes on minimum income benefits and charitable care. Given their living conditions (no official address) and problematic migration statute some families do not receive benefits at all. Some of the families have large debts, which makes

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[19] Bulgarians are the largest group of Eastern European migrants in Ghent. This is partly explained by the large Turkish population in Ghent, who can communicate with the ethnically Turkish Bulgarians who speak Turkish. Because of the shared language this group has easier access to the informal jobs provided by Turkish entrepreneurs.

[20] It must be stressed that the procedures and exceptions are much more complicated than discussed in this report. Here the point is that most of the families in the monastery lost their rights because they fail to meet work related expectations and that they got trapped in an administrative grey zone. More information about the E and E+ card (in Dutch) is accessible online: http://www.kruispuntmi.be/thema/verblijfsrecht-uitwijzing-reizen/unieburger/eu-werknemer/duurzaam-verblijfsrecht-voor-een-eu-werknemer (last accessed 08-07-2015).

them reluctant to take on a recognized domicile, because in that way the creditors (or debt collectors) would be able to find them (focus group).

Overall, the situation of the recently migrated Roma families is different from the relatively small group of Slovakian Roma who arrived in Ghent since the late 1990s and was able to stay here. Over time this group found access to the labour market and managed to improve its living conditions and knowledge of the Dutch language. One extended family that has been going from squat to squat since the late 1990s is an important exception. They have been in and out social housing and have often been helped by volunteers. This rather notorious family, which developed its own survival strategies over this long period of time, was also part of the occupation of the Muide Monastery (focus group). Seven of the eleven Slovakian Roma families that ended up living in the Muide Monastery had already established relationships with (staff members of) the local service provider De SLOEP vzw, before they entered the Monastery. Family members attended various drop-in sessions and participated in support trajectories organized by De SLOEP vzw (I: Coordinator De SLOEP).

3 Genesis of the initiative

The Emmaüs Monastery housing first experience is an important and controversial episode in the struggle for housing for vulnerable groups in Ghent. The squatting and 'granted occupation' of the monastery, coordinated by the Movement Right to Housing, was only the last episode in a history of actions by squatters and activists in Ghent. We situate the start of this story and the M.R.t.H. in the autumn of 2012, but during the focus group it was pointed out that some of the families and organisations have been involved in squatting actions for over a decade.

It is important to bear in mind that this project developed 'along the way' and did not follow from a well prepared plan of action. The gradual development of the housing first initiative has to be understood in relation to the on going public debates, squatting opportunities, cooperation between social organisations and perceived social needs that presented themselves (focus group).

During the first and second phase the political contestation was built up. The social artistic organisation Victoria Deluxe, led by a very vocal and politically aware director, started to make a lot of noise about the situation of homeless families living on the camping site Blaarmeersen because they did not see alternative housing solutions[21]. The action started from indignation:

> *How is it possible that in the 21st century, when our society is so rich and we spend so much money on social services, that people are forced to live on a camping site to the point that they see no future for themselves!?* (I: Coordinator street social work)

The voicing of anger and call for action of the director of Victoria Deluxe and other supporters gave hope and energy to the people of the camping site. Because attempts to demand a solution from the city council did not have the desired results, activists and camping inhabitants organised a symbolical occupation of city hall on the 28th of September 2012. The non-violent 'occupation' was in fact a sit-in

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[21] Some of the people living on the camping testified that the public welfare centre advised them to go to the camping because of a lack of alternatives (I: representative M.R.t.H.).

and public meeting, for which the media were invited. This action was called 'right to housing' and is the starting point of the Movement Right to Housing. Different organisations found each other around these intersecting issues of social integration, migration and housing and decided to join forces. The occupation of the city hall is crucial because here the movement articulated its oppositional discourse (Fraser, 1989) to the city council. It is relevant to note that the different actors involved in M.R.t.H. never deliberately aimed to develop a project targeting Roma. From the start there were Roma living on the camping site and over time more Roma families joined the movement and lived together with Belgian families in the de Pélichy Castle (see further). Afterwards the Belgian families left.

An interesting point of discussion during the 'occupation' was whether people should discuss their situation and needs publicly (demand of the movement) or behind closed doors per family with a case manager and mediator (demand of the city council). The latter was backed up with arguments about protecting people's privacy. The city council insisted on the latter option. Some of the activists and people from social organisations that were present were appointed as a 'trust person' to support families during these discussions.

The story entered a second phase after the families were expelled from the camping site. The vacant castle de Pélichy was squatted to house the homeless families. The activists and social organisations decided to support the group in their housing situation as the they felt that the city council did not provide adequate solutions despite their protest. Some of the people involved in setting up this support were aware of an approach to homelessness called 'Housing First'. They felt that this professional term described well their approach to the homeless families and started using the term Housing First to describe both their political aims and the practical alternatives they were engaging in to realise the right to housing in the absence of adequate response from the city council. The movement used the existing expert discourse on housing first (see for instance Tsemberis, 2010) to plea for a solution for the Ghent families. As their representative describes:

> We discovered that if you are making political demands, you need a constructive proposal to fill up these holes in the welfare state. You need this socially innovative claim, an alternative project, because otherwise they do not have to take you seriously, and they will not take you seriously. (I: Representative M.R.t.H.)

After having been expelled from the Pélichy Castle by the city council that owned the premises, the homeless families briefly lived in squatted private housing. They were expelled by the owners very quickly, after which they moved into squatted empty social housing. This action attracted a lot of public interest and controversy, because some people felt that the homeless people jumped the (long) queue for access to social housing but also because the action made visible how a substantial number of social dwellings are not used (often because they stand empty in anticipation of renovation), despite the long waiting lists for social housing. This action led some actors within the city council to criminalize the families for their squatting strategies (Debruyne et al., 2014). One of the members of the city council and member of parliament for the socialist party SP.a filed a bill in federal parliament to extend the conditions under which squatting can be treated as a criminal offence[22]. The M.R.t.H. critiqued the cities' anti-squatting policies and the refusal to grant a domicile to squatters.

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[22] http://www.dekamer.be/FLWB/PDF/53/3151/53K3151001.pdf (last accessed 06-07-2015).

After squatting the social housing unit, the autochthonous Belgian families left mainly because housing solutions were found for them. The homeless families left without access to housing are now all Slovakian Roma. When the Movement for the Right to Housing and the allied social organisations squat the Emmaüs monastery, which stands empty awaiting its demolishment, to house the remaining homeless families, the project turns into a Roma only project.

M.R.t.H. and the four NPO's lead the way in organising their own housing first initiative. They support the families in forcing and signing the 'agreement of a granted occupation' with the owner and the CAW. When the management openly opposes the occupation, pressure on the management comes from different angles. For instance, from the new local government coalition (predominantly socialist and green party politicians) who steps in to mediate between the CAW and the four NPO's. Pressure also came from the syndicalist delegation of the CAW Ghent, which does not support their management and the local media who was very critical of the CAW their coverage of the situation. At that time, the relations between different service providers and volunteers in Ghent were very tense (see also chapter six of this report).

The Movement succeeds in signing a 'granted occupation' for ten months and then the Housing First project really starts. The focus is on the provision of stable living conditions for the families, although the occupation is again temporary. The activists feel that setting up the Housing First project themselves is necessary, given the fact that the city council and its professional social services are not coming up with a solution to the problem of the homelessness of these families.

In the first months of the housing first project most effort was put in developing shared rules and procedures amongst the inhabitants and in addressing charitable needs and a variety of needs for support, mostly related to arranging legal documents, regularisation, debts and looking for work. It was only later, as the end of the 'granted occupation' approaches, that the focus shifts from the providing daily social support to addressing more formal political and organisational questions. From the perspective of the supporting actors the two main questions are:
- *How to convince the policy to recognize Housing First as a more adequate response to the needs of these persons?*
- *Which future is there for these families in Ghent?*

These questions gave rise to renewed tensions between practitioners and management of service providers (De Potter, Claeys, Debruyne, Hintjes, & Deduytsche, 2014). When the granted occupation ended, without a new building to house the families, many volunteers and support workers felt tired and disappointed that they could not complete the project with a positive breakthrough and perspective for the families (focus group). At the moment of finishing the data collection (January 2015) it is uncertain what will happen in the aftermath of the monastery experience. Service providers in the Ghent area are involved in the development of new housing first inspired projects that would benefit families, but it is unclear whether the Roma families from the monastery project will benefit from it. (I: Management SLO, Management CAW, Coordinator street social work)

4 The activities and organization

On the one hand, the Emmaüs Monastery housing first project aims to provide services and support to homeless families whose needs are not adequately met by the existing services in Ghent. On the other hand this project, initiated by the Movement Right to Housing, engages in a political struggle for the realization of the social rights of these families. The two rationales are often intertwined. Activities for strengthening the position of the families are for example related to the strategies for enabling access to basic rights and vice versa. In what follows we first briefly discuss the project management. Then we go on to discuss the different activities, distinguishing between poverty relief, case management for capacitating trajectories and political activism.

4.1 Project management

The organisation of the Emmaüs housing first project required different levels of negotiation with different actors and types of expertise to cover the different dimensions or stakes of the project i.e.: the living situation of the families, political actions, the juridical side of the complex dossiers etc. It emerged from the focus group that the project lacked clear and firm leadership. There were key actors (like the four NPOs who signed the 'granted occupation'), but there was not one clear team of leaders or managers who had the legitimacy to take all key decisions. Instead, it was attempted to have more basic democratic procedures in which all actors involved could participate in decision making. Table 1 gives an overview of the three types of meetings organized within the monastery project.

Table 1: Three types of meetings in the Emmaüs monastery

Topic of the meetings	Who is attending
Daily life in the monastery: rules for living together, problems and a diverse range of possible activities**.**	All residents attend as well as some volunteers and professionals.
Squatting and political actions	Movement Right to Housing and external partners. Representatives of the families attend.
Thematic working groups that would discuss the more in depth on different relevant themes (housing, documents, education…)	Volunteers, professionals involved in the M.R.t.H. and concerned professionals from external partners meeting in smaller groups depending on their expertise and interest. Families do not attend, they are informed by translators afterwards.

Source: Interview with representative M.R.t.H.

A first type of meeting was concerned with the daily life in the monastery and it involved all residents and some of the volunteers and professionals taking part in the project. Attempts to agree on shared rules for living together for all inhabitants in a democratic way, was an on going and time consuming concern. It turned out to be difficult and was not always successful. The people who wanted to support the families felt they had no possibilities of enforcing living rules or sanctions for undesirable behaviour in the monastery (focus group). First of all, there was a language barrier as many inhabitants were not proficient in Dutch and they spoke Slovakian and/or a Romani dialect. Furthermore, in order to reach the families the volunteers and social professionals also had to take into account the family structure and hierarchy within extended families according to the customs of the Slovakian Roma.

As the Emmaus HF project was not a 'project' in the strict sense (De Potter et al., 2014), the temporary residents in the squat were not clients or project participants in any strict sense. They were not selected or screened by the social organisations. The occupancy grew from previous experiences and through informal networks. It was common for members of the extended family or acquaintances to join whenever the need arose.

> *Some families surely did not feel part of a project, they felt like squatters. So from that perspective we were visiting them. They appreciated our help but did not feel that they owed us any obedience.* (member Workgroup Refugees Ghent during focus group)

A second type of meetings was set up to discuss issues related to squatting and strategies for political actions. It is focused on the struggle for the right to housing and not so much on the daily life of the inhabitants or the support schemes for the families. The meeting consist mainly of members of the M.R.t.H. and some of the external partners and people interested in the dossier. Some members of the Roma families attended those meetings and communicated it with the rest of the family.

Different respondents that participated in the meetings of the Movement Right to Housing voiced the same two critiques on these kinds of meetings. The first, most heard critique is that the meetings were too disorderly. Everybody had a say, but as there was no clear structure it was often difficult to come to an orderly dialogue. Hence the meetings lasted quite long and often no clear consensus, shared vision or plan was reached in the end. Secondly, service providers were often heavily criticised during the meetings, which gave some professionals the feeling that they had to choose sides and that they were not very welcome (I: Coordinator street corner social work, Neighbourhood Steward, Coordinator De SLOEP).

A third type of meetings was set up to make different actors that were involved with the 'monastery dossier' work together around different themes: housing, living together/hygiene, work, education, documents… The mayor of Ghent proposed this working group structure[23]. The Roma families did not participate in these meeting that were often more technical. Efforts were made to communicate the discussions and decisions with them using translators.

The above makes clear that a lot of time was invested to coordinate the various partner organisations and to communicate all (policy) developments with the residents. Amongst them, the four NPO's had regular meetings, sometimes together with representatives of different city departments. The project also had to be explained on different platforms for consultation in the city of Ghent like the 'the consultation for precarious families' (overleg precaire gezinnen), 'client consultation' (cliëntoverleg), 'Permanent Consultation Forum fieldwork' (Poc veldwerk), the 'consultation for neutral chairmen' (overleg neutrale voorzitters). Also local residents and organisations outside of Ghent like the Local Welfare Centre of Brussels and Kortrijk and the Brussels based organisation for multi-ethnic work Foyer visited the project.

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[23] Before this, the M.R.t.H. was already working in thematic groups, gathering information about various aspects of the housing and integration dossiers of homeless families. The mayor proposed to reproduce this to a certain extend within the structure of the Permanent Consultation Commission Intra-European Migration and focus it more on the case of the Emmaüs Cloister (I: Representative M.R.t.H., focus group).

I often had several meetings a day, several days in a row. To explain what we were doing and so on. And I was appointed only part time! (Social worker Samenlevingsopbouw during focus group)

4.2 Social support and political activism

On the level of concrete activities to support the families and pursue the right to housing we distinguish between activities that can be understood as poverty relief, case management for capacitating trajectories and political activism.

An important part of the support activities for the families residing in the monastery consisted of organising poverty relief i.e.: gathering food, clothes and providing a large boiler for heating (I: Representative M.R.t.H.). This kind of social assistance was needed because the families were in a crisis situation where they were often not able to get access to necessities of life. The project organizers did not have a budget and as they (the four NPOs) had signed the granted occupation they had to pay for the energy bills. The project was mainly supported by the Diocese Ghent (who provided money for heating) and a support group called '100 strong shoulders', over one hundred citizens who donated ten euro monthly. Raising funds and resources is regarded as an important activity for this project (focus group).

Besides the material support, the project supported the families with more encompassing case management with tailored support trajectories for each family "*using a kind of assertive outreach approach*" (I: Representative M.R.t.H). These support activities aimed to address some of the thresholds for participation and to capacitate the families in the process.

Throughout the contacts with the group in the process leading up to the housing first project in the monastery, a variety of important thresholds and barriers that hindered the successful inclusion of the families in mainstream society were identified: barriers related to access to work, the need to learn Dutch, problems related to procedures to arrange official documents, medical conditions and access to medical services (e.g. difficulties to acquire a medical card), getting a domicile recognized[24], difficult access to housing opportunities and the accumulation of debts. The families were often not able to address the problems adequately because of lack of information or skills to navigate administrations and their procedures, confusing and complex procedures, bad experiences with and distrust of formal institutions and the pursuing of survival strategies that are in conflict with formal procedures. To explain to the families the different steps that are important to take for their inclusion in society, to convince them of the importance of this and to assist them with this proved to be very time intensive and often beyond the carrying capacity and expertise of the voluntary and professional actors involved (focus group).

This kind of support was provided both by volunteers and professionals. As for the latter, some of the involved social organisations, namely Samenlevingsopbouw, Victoria Deluxe, ROSCA and the

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[24] The city refused a domicile of the families at several occasions before because they did not want to support ("trouble making") squatters. The monastery, however, was recognized as the domicile of the families during the period of the granted occupation.

Integration service of Ghent (the service that coordinates the neighbourhood stewards who flanked the project), allocated some of the social support and assistance tasks to their community workers. Street social workers from VOS also visited the monastery to assist families, but took a less central role (I: Coordinator street social work). For each of the families a so-called 'grandparent' was appointed to oversee their case, centralise needs and questions and thus avoid double work (De Potter et al., 2014). Some group-based forms of social support, for instance Dutch language classes, were also organized in the monastery.

In the Emmaüs Monastery housing first project support trajectories for the families are heavily intertwined with political struggles to realize their right to housing. The idea of housing first is invoked to make the connection between support for marginalized groups and political activism for the right to housing. The supporting organizations/activists assert that the housing need deserves priority because a 'stabilisation of the living conditions' is a precondition for working with these people on other needs for support like the regularization of their documents, sending children to school, looking for work etc. In order to legitimize this connection between the right to housing and a holistic understanding of social integration the activists draw selectively on the expert discourse of Housing First (see for instance Tsemberis, 2010), which rapidly gained legitimacy in European policy circles over the last five years. In communication with the local press a representative of the Working Group Refugees explains how she applies Housing First principles on these families at the margins of the welfare state.

> *You are nobody without a home. Even if you want to do better, it is not possible without and residence and domicile in our bureaucratic society. In order to get a job, get a passport, receive child allowances, indeed even to apply for a social dwelling you need an address.*

The basic idea adopted from HF as understood by the representatives of the monastery 'experiment' is that all forms of assertive outreach and case management for these people should be structured around low threshold housing in order to create a stable basis for social advancement and (re-) gaining access to the welfare state and its care and support institutions (De Potter et al., 2014; Demaerschalk, 2014). This is the core of the projects' organisational ambition and its political (oppositional) discourse on what should be done by other providers and policy makers.

Hence, the choice to profile the Emmaüs monastery activities as a Housing First experiment is a strategic one. The 'project' does not aim to implement the original Pathways to Housing First model and all its methods. Experts on housing first have been arguing that housing first is not a readymade model or philosophy that can be applied the same everywhere "*rather local contexts will require some tailoring to meet local needs*" (Atherton & McNaughton-Nicholls, 2008, p. 289). However, while context and needs will indeed always differ between HF projects, one cannot disregard that the monastery situation is very atypical when it comes to both the organisation (planning, resources, infrastructure etc.) and the target population and their needs: the project does not target single homeless but families with children. These Roma families have a very complex migration status of being European citizens without full rights (I: focus group; I: Neighbourhood Steward).

From a social work method perspective several issues were raised, discussed and disputed about the monastery situation. For instance: the infrastructure was not ideal, the group was too big and

homogeneous, there were no selection procedures and clear rules in advance and the period of ten months is too short for this group (focus group and several interviews). Representatives of the M.R.t.H. state that these questions are very important indeed, but they also argue that these expert discussions on the best methods to alleviate needs should not distract too much from the core message and political arguments about the right to housing, social inclusion and the problem of vacant housing.

> *Listen, we can always discuss methodology and evidence based practices, but it also about the struggle for a more social use of the housing stock. And this is a battle we can win. People, right wing or leftist, they are against two things: (a) children on the street, everybody agrees this is wrong and (b) vacancy. Vacancy is also unjustifiable, especially with the current housing problems and rising prizes*. (I: representative M.R.t.H.)

Hence, besides support activities political actions have been set up. Political actions took the form of public manifestations, like the occupation of city hall or a neighbourhood activity in front of the castle De Pélichy[25] or other interventions in the public debate. The activists/support workers often tried to give opportunities to members of the families to tell their side of the story, like during the occupation of city hall (chapter three of this report). Also, video reportages[26] were made of the monastery and public manifestations in which some of the Slovakian Roma gave an interview. Some of the inhabitants also tried to negotiate with policy makers themselves and at one occasion some of them went to the mayor, accompanied by Neighbourhood Stewards[27].

Some of the activists also participated in meetings and debates, also in newspapers, blogs and via public letters, which was at some moments a very intensive activity (I: representative M.R.t.H.). To do this in a well prepared manner actors had to gather expertise in juridical matters such as the 'granted occupation' and the particularities of migration statuses like the 'E'- and 'E+'-cards, but there was significant juridical expertise and debating and writing skills available with the M.R.t.H.

5 The innovative dimension of the initiative

In this part, the socially innovative dimensions of the housing first project in the Emmaüs monastery in Ghent are analysed in depth through three basic components of social innovation (Gerometta, Haussermann, & Longo, 2005; Moulaert, Martinelli, Swyngedouw, & Gonzalez, 2005):

    (a) the satisfaction of basic social needs (content dimension);

    (b) the transformation of social relations (process dimension);

    (c) and the empowerment and socio-political mobilization (the political dimension linking the process and content dimension).

Applying these three dimensions, the Emmaüs Monastery HF experience is indeed a socially innovative experience for three reasons. The first is that it aims to address complex situations of unmet needs in

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[25] Most of these activities were filmed by people from the media and/or of people from the Movement Right to Housing who put mini the mini reportage online on their youtube channel.

[26] Online: https://krakengent.squat.net/?page_id=569 (last accessed 06-07-2015).

[27] This action was not supported by all volunteers and professionals in the project. The mayor received them for a talk but he was very critical for them. It turned out to be a "sobering" experience for the families. (focus group)

a creative way, namely by connecting problems of precarious living conditions and homelessness and the presence of vacant buildings. The second is the emergence of new partnerships between activists, volunteers, social professionals, functionaries and policy-makers around the intersecting issues of housing, immigration and the well-being of children. Interesting about this project is that it developed in a rather spontaneous, unplanned way. It is a form of social and political action by a variety of concerned social actors that attempted to develop socially innovative alliances in order to alleviate unmet social needs and to denounce the structural thresholds for the excluded population. The third is the strategy to empower homeless families that are excluded in multiple ways by arguing for an unconditional right to decent and stable housing while providing social support.

5.1 Content dimension: Basic social needs

Chapter three of this report explained how the M.R.t.H. and the Emmaüs Monastery housing first project emerged from discussions about what homeless families need to overcome their precarious situation. Crucial differences in the interpretation of what these families need were articulated during the occupation of the city hall. In particular the discussion between representatives of the local authorities on the one hand, who maintained that the families should use the available (shelter) services and follow the procedures to attain social housing; and the activists and families on the other hand, who argued that these services and procedures fail to provide adequate support and do not provide the families with necessary life chances and opportunities in order to participate as peers to society. The partners involved in the 'monastery experiment' make the principal argument that housing provides the necessary stability to pursue other goals in life and is a *condition sine qua non* for social integration. They demand that the city of Ghent and local service providers take the necessary steps to make services more open for vulnerable migrant families and to provide housing for them. Amongst other measures they propose to use of vacant properties. So clearly, they regard access to stable and quality housing as one of the main social needs of these families, deserving priority.

Like in other housing first projects, it is not about housing alone. Through their practice and previous experiences the coalition of volunteers and professionals came across a wide range of basic social needs for these (Roma) families who are in many regards in the margins of the welfare state. These basic needs are not the same for every (extended) family and their members, but overall they include: the need for stable, qualitative and affordable housing, the need for affordable medical care, the need for basic goods like clothing and furniture, the need to buy and prepare healthy nutrition and the need to have access to paid labour and education for the children. In the process of trying to understand why families fail to meet these needs themselves and trying to help them with meeting these needs, the social organisations and volunteers identified a range of thresholds and barriers.

One of these thresholds relates to being aware about cultural expectations and administrative procedures that are important in the contact with a variety of institutions like schools, local welfare centres and possible employers (focus group, I: Neighbourhood Steward). This is often related to learning Dutch. Many Roma that reside in the Monastery are not proficient in Dutch and in Flanders and Ghent it is very difficult to get assistance in Slovakian or Romani (Hemelsoet, 2013). Cultural barriers, combined with a low level of education, create a need for support in administrative and communicative matters.

Another set of thresholds experienced by the Roma families has to do with their legal status. This became very clear when autochthonous Belgian families gained access to housing in the period before the occupation of the monastery and Roma families did not. It shows how social rights can be regarded both as a point of departure and a goal (desired outcome) for socially innovative initiatives. In short, Slovakian citizens can reside legally in Belgium, but it is a conditional right to reside and they first get an E card. With an E card immigrants do not have full access to the social welfare state. In order to get this, they need an E+ card, which means they move from the foreigner register to the population register. In order to get this they have to meet pre-determined conditions over the first three to five years, related to being an employee (or student) or because they have sufficient resources to sustain themselves through continuous labour. After a period of three to five years after receiving the 'E'-card people can apply for an 'E+'-card. If they do not meet the criteria (of either the 'E' or 'E+'-card), they risk losing this political status and the corresponding rights. This means they end up in a juridical grey zone of being EU citizens without any access to social welfare. Over the last years control on immigrants meeting the criteria of E cards has become much stricter (Debruyne et al., 2014). The families in the monastery all failed at one point to abide by these formal expectations. Some of them used to have access to social housing but over time they fell out of the system.

Hence in order to reconnect the families to services of the social welfare state they needed to apply again for the right to reside. During these procedures and waiting periods it was often problematic or impossible to get access to basic support like healthcare, which complicated the choice between strategies[28]. Activists of the Movement Right to Housing have denounced these national and European procedures for being unrealistic for vulnerable migrant groups, including these Slovakian Roma, and therefore discriminatory and fundamentally unjust.

> *It is irrational that these people are sent from left to right without any stability and then they are displayed as being no good for nothing. Such a lack of stability is bad, also for the children who grow up in these circumstances. A Europe was created in which freedom of movement for individuals, freedom of transport and freedom of trade is so important, but they are not doing anything to make this possible for people who are not wealthy. Europe is made for rich people.* (Member of Refugee Work Ghent during an interview[29])

Other well documented thresholds are related to a history of discrimination in their country of origin and discrimination on the labour market and housing market in Belgium (De Potter et al., 2014; Debruyne et al., 2014; Hemelsoet, 2013).

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[28] During the Emmaüs housing first project, it was impossible to apply for a medical card when the application for residence (Appendix 19 or 20) was ongoing. For one family with a severely ill family member this created a difficult situation of choosing between getting the migration statutes in order and being able to access basic medical support. Only very recently the possibility to get a medical card during this procedure was installed by the OCMW of Ghent.

[29] The interview was conducted during a solidarity action in front of the Castle Pélichy after it was announced that the families would have to leave the premises. The full video report is published on the Youtube channel of the Movement Right to Housing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7i3V4MO29Og (last accessed 9-02-2015).

5.2 Process dimension: transformation of social relations

The Movement Right to Housing and supporters aim to transform the relationship between these families and broader society by focussing in the first place on the right of decent and stable housing. Focusing on the need for housing would transform the social relations between Roma and the broader society in at least two ways. The first is that people need stability and a place to rest. As long as people do not have a secure and decent place to stay they are forced into 'survival mode' all the time. This is not a good condition to make long term plans and decisions (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013) in line with expectations of mainstream society. Secondly, having an officially recognizes address (domicile) is a precondition to claim other rights. Without domicile, it is hard to engage in a relationship with public and private institutions.

Apart from changing the relationship between Roma families and the society and its institutions, Emmaüs housing first project was also embedded in a network between a range of different public and private actors. The constitution of this network took some time and implied a transformation of governance relations because the rather horizontal cooperation between actors was new and unconventional in different ways. Firstly, it developed as cooperation between different organisations that had little expertise in this field and identified and distributed tasks along the way. Secondly, the configuration of actors consisted of both social support NPO's and social movement type organisations focused on struggle and political action and there was a growing cooperation with public departments of the city who were also involved. Thirdly, professionals and volunteers cooperated without a clear hierarchy or pre-determined distribution of responsibilities.

Respondents described this network of actors as a 'learning network' (I: Representative M.R.t.H., focus group). The goal of this process was to find, forge and fine-tune new cooperative relationships between partners who previously were not involved in addressing homelessness and support for excluded families to better meet the unmet needs of these families. At the end of the monastery experience, when the network was decomposed, actors involved tried to assess this learning experience and spread the lessons learned on different levels by writing an evaluation document of the monastery experience (De Potter et al., 2014).

An impact assessment of this project falls outside the scope of this report. Based on the various interviews and the focus group it emerged that several actors have a double feeling about the 'success' of the project, depending on what is regarded as its main goal. Most respondents agree that the project did not succeed in developing a sustainable programme for homeless Roma families. They often add that ten months is rather short to gain big results with this target population. However, if it the main goal was to put the situation of these families and the incapacity and/or reluctance of service providers to help them on the public agenda and to offer these families some stability in order to make steps for social mobility, several respondents argue that there was some success (focus group; I: Coordinator street corner social work; I: Representative M.R.t.H.).

> *One of the most important things for us as an organization is that an opening emerged to at least think about a chain in a housing policy that starts from homelessness and ends with a stable living situation. A chain in which the city actively looks from its role and capacity and not so much, or not only to service providers like the CAW for instance*. (I: Management SLO)

5.3 Political dimension: Empowerment

Throughout the Emmaüs Monastery housing first project, the idea of empowerment appears in different, often contested guises. Supporters of the M.R.t.H. often speak of empowerment in terms of acquiring social rights. Social rights are empowering to the extent they enable people to have access to life options. Here this is mainly understood as (re) connecting these families to the social welfare state. The M.R.t.H. did not act directly to make the constitutional social right to housing juridical enforceable or to change European or Belgian migration legislation. They acted locally by instigating a learning process about a housing first inspired project and they aimed to influence discourse about these families and consequently, future policy strategies. In other words, they tried to offer housing, even when still in suboptimal conditions, using the discourse of social rights.

The respondents who were involved in the project are very much aware that they have to work on different political levels to create social change (focus group). However, they experienced that this is often beyond the scope of their direct activities and their capacity, because of the intensity of the social support activities as well as difficulties to impact supra-local policy from the vantage point of a local coalition of professionals and volunteers This explains why they wrote evaluation documents (De Potter et al., 2014), newspaper articles[30] and academic articles (Debruyne et al., 2013). As such they put this case in a broader perspective of dynamics of migration and diversity and pointed out some of the institutional thresholds to empowerment that are difficult to address at the local level with a project like theirs.

> *You know, you can put forward as many socially innovative projects as you want, but what if you are faced with juridical limits and structural thresholds for integration? These people are not fully recognized as citizens. That is a difficult, almost impossible context.* (Representative M.R.t.H.)

In this case of Roma migrants, empowerment appears as a process that works very much through the public debate and it has an important 'recognition dimension', which is relevant in the struggle for access to social rights. The M.R.t.H. regards the public recognition of the mayor that these families are in Ghent to stay as a crucial symbolic moment (focus group). Recognizing these Roma families as citizens of Ghent makes expulsion from the territory unlikely. It implies that local institutions should look for ways to open up their procedures for these families.

The volunteers and professionals combined political action around social rights for the homeless Roma families with social support. Talking about empowerment volunteers and professionals mention, amongst other things, that they assisted families with forms and documents, stressing the importance of learning them to do it themselves in the future. They refer (implicitly) to strength oriented approach which is current in so called empowering social work (Vansevenant, Driessens, & Van Regenmortel, 2008) (focus group).

Representatives of the local authorities and social service/social work providers have questioned and critiqued the rights oriented vision of empowerment that the M.R.t.H. pursued through its actions, for

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[30] Some of the activists were very active on the news site www.dewereldmorgen.be (last accessed 07-07-2015).

different reasons. Firstly, representatives of the city council have maintained that the activists' and squatters' claims for the right to housing works to bypass the rights based access to social housing and services in illegitimate ways (by 'jumping the queue'). They invoke the idea of universal and equal access to social housing as a counter argument against the pragmatic solutions to respond to particular needs of certain 'problem' families. In this reasoning the Emmaüs Monastery housing first project is not empowering because it creates an illegitimate and temporary, exceptional situation which conflicts with equal access to housing. It should not surprise that representatives of M.R.t.H. refute this argument, pointing towards vacancy, long waiting lists, ill adapted services and little opportunities and/or discrimination on the housing market. Nonetheless, they do recognize a tension between principles of universal access and their support towards the particular situation of this group and agree that they "*demand highways in this landscape of long administrative roads*" (I: Representative M.R.t.H.).

Representatives of other social organisations in Ghent (I: Coordinator De SLOEP, coordinator street corner social work, management CAW) have questioned the empowerment dimension of the Emmaüs Monastery housing first project for two reasons: the creation of unrealistic expectations and risks related to participation in the struggle for social rights. Social professionals (I: Coordinator De SLOEP, management CAW) expressed concerns that the political activism and rights talk might foster certain attitudes towards social services that will not benefit engagement with services in the future. The activists support the families in being critical and standing up for their rights, but according to social professionals that had built up relationships with this groups this led to the undesirable effect that some families became convinced that the best strategy was to demand a house rather than actively engaging in support trajectories. As mentioned in chapter two of this report, seven of the eleven families were involved in support trajectories organized by De SLOEP vzw (which included the distribution of food and looking for work and a stable place to stay). These families stopped their engagement with De SLOEP vzw when they lived in the Emmaüs Monastery. When the coordinator of De SLOEP visited the Monastery and asked family representatives why they stopped frequenting De SLOEP, they asked whether the services could be provided in the Monastery, which she refused. The coordinator feels that this disengagement with her organisation meant a setback for the families, not empowerment

In contrast, one could imagine that if the existing services are regarded as part of the problem, which M.R.t.H. put forward, disengaging with these organisations could be regarded as part of the emancipation process. However, while this has been alluded upon in the interviews and informal exchange, it cannot be regarded as an official statement. Different respondents had quite different, often rather emotional opinions, which were complicated by their personal engagement and inter-personal tensions between individuals involved. People involved in the Emmaüs Monastery project confirmed during the focus group that some families indeed developed an attitude of expecting support that might not benefit them in the interactions with service providers later on. However they would argue that this 'danger' does not justify disregarding their right to housing or the social rights dimension of empowerment in general and that those dangers could be overcome by going into dialogue with families.

> *It is important to explain very well what we as volunteers do and that it is not obvious, because after a while they just expect to get support. One way of doing this was showing them my*

payslip and explain to them my schedule. That was really an eye opener to my family. (volunteer that supported a family during focus group)

I believe that we can very modestly say that for some of the families we did have a positive impact. You can see that they now better understand the situation they are in and which strategies might benefit their chances in life. (member of Refugee Work during focus group).

Relatedly, it has been argued that getting involved in this struggle for the right to housing might not be in the best interest of the families, because it will not benefit them (directly) in practice and/or place them in situations that they are vulnerable. For instance, at the occupation of the city hall some of the inhabitants of the camping said that they had no problem with a public discussion of their personal situation. A street social worker (interview) understands why these person want to do this in this situation as they are encouraged by people who want to help them stand up for themselves, but he questions whether they are really able to assess the possible repercussions of it. Attempts of marginalized groups to enter the public debate do not always turn out in their favour. Another argument from a social work perspective is that it might be irresponsible to give people so much hope with an unsustainable project because the backlash of the failure might do more wrong than good. These different criticisms draw attention to potential adverse effects and limitations of an activist approach to social rights.

Some issues on the level of engaging with the monastery residents further complicated the empowerment through both demanding social rights and mediating access to the institutions of the social welfare state. Firstly, there were difficulties due to the Roma families' operation in extended families and the heterogeneity of their problems and personal skills and capacities. The hierarchical 'clan' structure of the Slovakian Roma families and solidarity among them complicated the provision of support for the social organisations, which tried to work mainly with nuclear families because of administrative and practical reasons. Secondly, some families that survived in Ghent for many years in squats and with help of volunteers internalized coping strategies that conflict with strategies that focus on realizing rights through the engagement with public institution. Some of these issues resonate with the criticisms of undesirable attitudes and unrealistic expectations described above. Others are more complicated as engaging with public institutions might be disadvantageous for the families in the short term. For instance, some of the families have debts and gaining a domicile means that creditors will be able to find them.

6 Institutional mapping and governance relations

This part of the report elaborates on the relationships between the different actors involved in the Emmaus Monastery housing first project. Figure 1 aims to visualise this rather complex configuration of actors[31].

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[31] This figure focuses on the actors. Hence, some of the consultation platforms where some of these actors meet on various topics are not put in the scheme, because it would make it harder to read this already complex figure. Furthermore, while these platforms are important to understand how relations between different actors are negotiated and how the project and its learning experiences are communicated amongst Ghent actors, these platforms do not have a direct impact on the governance of the project.

Figure 1: Actors and relationships
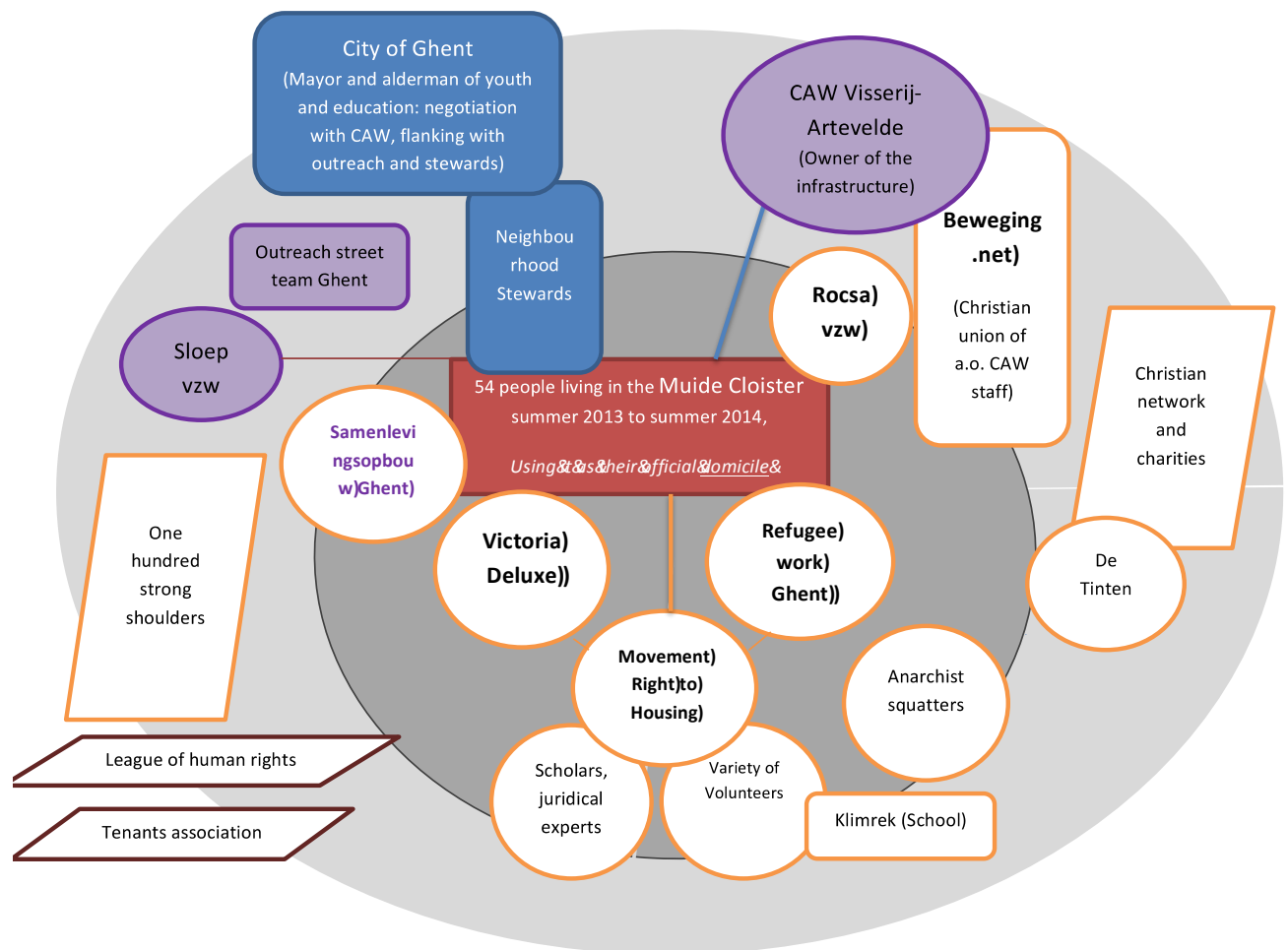
Source: our elaboration from desk analysis, interviews and focus group.

The two grey circles indicate the degree of direct involvement. Actors in the inner dark grey circle are *directly involved* in the operation of the monastery 'project'. This group includes the families living in the monastery and the Movement Right to Housing that consist of four officially supporting non-profit organisations and volunteers such as juridical experts, scholars and several others. The anarchist squatter movement and the local section of the Christian-democrat labour movement Beweging.net (formerly ACW), which includes union representatives of the CAW (i.e. the organisation that is owner of the squatted Emmaus monastery building), are also directly, but more selectively involved in the Movement Right to Housing. The squatters were mostly involved in squatting actions. The involvement of the Beweging.net was particularly relevant for symbolic and strategic reasons.

The city's public service unit Neighbourhood Stewards was not a member of the Movement Right to Housing, but it was directly involved in meetings of the project and got already involved during the occupation of the de Pélichy Castle. Neighbourhood Stewards supported homeless Roma families and forged a bridge between these families and the city council and neighbourhood residents. The primary school Klimrek, which hosts several Roma pupils, was also not a member of the M.R.t.H., but they are

involved because they have several Roma pupils and the schools' 'bridging figure'[32] volunteered actively in thematic working groups and more.

Table 2: Four NPOs of the Emmaüs monastery project that signed the Granted Occupation

Name	Description
ROSCA	A social artistic workplace that is active in the neighbourhoods Muide, Rabot, Meulestede and Afrikalaan in Ghent. Inhabitants and artist engage in projects that focus on the relations between people with their surroundings and with each other. This organisation is supported by the Flemish Community government, the city of Ghent and the province Oost-Vlaanderen (www.rosca.be).
Samenlevingsopbouw Gent	This organisation is active in the 19th century industrial belt of Ghent, especially in areas with a high concentration of social dwellings. It supports vulnerable groups works form the understanding that everybody should have fundamental social rights and that these rights should be enforceable. The organisation receives structural financial support from the Flemish ministry of Well-being, Health, Equal opportunities and Development, the King Baudouin Foundation, the City of Ghent and the Province Oost-Vlaanderen (www.samenlevingsopbouwgent.be).
Victoria Deluxe	A social artistic organisation that organizes and supports projects that aim to develop new forms of shared meanings. They also want to strengthen and give voice to the participants through emancipatory processes. The organisation receives subsidies from the Flemish government, the province Oost Vlaanderen, the City of Ghent and is supported by a broad group of volunteers (www.victoriadeluxe.be).
Werkgroep Vluchtelingen Gent	A pluralistic group of volunteers committed to refugees, undocumented people and Roma. (http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.be/vrijwilligersgroep/wvg)

Source: Interviews, evaluation of the project (De Potter et al., 2014) and the webpages of the organisations.

The four NPOs (table 2) took on an important responsibility by signing the 'granted occupation' with the owner of the Emmaus monastery, the welfare organisation CAW. Working with these families, especially in this manner, was relatively new for them and they got involved because they were indignant by the situation and saw it as a way to push forward their agenda in housing or migration issues. Samenlevingsopbouw reckoned they could play a role in structuring this spontaneous movement by contributing their professional expertise (I: Management SLO). The CAW wanted the NPOs to sign the 'granted occupation' because they – unlike the homeless families - are legally liable as an organisation for damage to the infrastructure and accidents with people (I: Management CAW). All actors describe this arrangement as a balancing act in the grey zones of what is legally possible and practically desirable. It was a pragmatic consensus to create some calm and temporary stability for the families.

> *The granted occupation was juridical patchwork, a judge would probably have difficulties to understand what we did.* (Juridical expert during focus group)

> *If something bad happened with the people or infrastructure, it is likely that the responsible NPOs would have been in big trouble.* (I: Management CAW)

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[32] Staff member that is responsible for good communication and cooperation with parents.

Earlier and less contentious proposals for organizing social support for people living in squats and 'granted occupations' did not get realized exactly because of these matters of insurance and risk (I: Coordinator street social work).

Actors in the outer, light grey circle can be regarded as *relevant actors.* They are not directly involved in the operational governance of the Emmaus HF project. Still they are involved in or concerned with the development of the Emmaus HF project for a variety of reasons: because they own the infrastructure (CAW), because it concerns people residing on their territory (the City of Ghent), because the project works with their target population (the welfare organisations CAW, De SLOEP and Outreach street team and the school Klimrek). Others want to be involved because of their mission of responding to humanitarian need (De Tinten, diocese Ghent). Some people responded to the call to donate and support (like the support group one hundred strong shoulders) and their expertise on human rights and the right to housing (League of Human Rights, Tenants Associations).

The orange colour corresponds to organisations that decided to actively support the project, in contrast to other actors who got involved because the project affected their operation (CAW), because the residents of the monastery belong to their client group (De SLOEP vzw, Outreach street team), because the city council decided to get involved (Neighbourhood Stewards) or because they were called in for support and expertise later on (League of Human rights, tenants association). Some of the actors in orange were able to commit professional resources to the project (described in part four of this report). To understand the diversity of actors and relations that make up this coalition it is important to understand that many of the involved individuals "wear different hats" (I: Representative M.R.t.H.). This means that they use their professional expertise and their personal and professional networks to strengthen the voluntary involvement in the project and vice versa. Like volunteers, several professionals were also personally committed to the project and often invested more time than they were paid for (focus group).

The city and its services are put in blue. The city mediated with the CAW in order to pacify the relation between them and the M.R.t.H. that resulted in the temporary 'granted occupation'. The council has to operate in a politically sensitive situation between a rather left wing civil society and right wing opposition that indeed used the monastery project to attack the city council. The city council has also been criticised by M.R.t.H. and their partners, especially concerning their anti-squatting policy (see chapter three of this report). Although relations were often very tense, e.g. after the occupation of city hall, there have been constructive encounters as well. The mayor's role in the granted occupation was crucial to give the experiment a chance. Also, the fact that the mayor recognized publicly that returning to Slovakia is not a good option for the Roma families, is regarded as a crucial, valuable step in the Movement's struggle because it meant that permanent solutions needed to be found for their homelessness. Despite all this, members of the M.R.t.H. believe that the mayor should have played a stronger symbolical role to support these socially innovative attempts (focus group). They are also convinced that if they did not do the actions and interventions they did, the city council would never have gone so far to at least condone and flank this experiment.

> *They underestimated us. At first they thought they were dealing with a group of disorganized squatters only... They have tried to ignore and dismiss our claims from a kind of power arrogance.* (I: Representative M.R.t.H.)

After playing a mediating role in arranging the granted occupation the city council kept its distance for the time being while flanking the project with the neighbourhood stewards, mandated to prevent nuisance. The involvement of the Neighbourhood Stewards, and how they used their time and expertise in a sensitive and flexible way is valued very highly by other actors of the Emmaus HF project (focus group). Neighbourhood stewards are a relatively new city outreach service, which is regarded by several respondents as crucial for the development of socially innovative responses to unmet needs of marginalized groups and Roma in particular (focus group). According to the Ghent coordinator of the Neighbourhood Stewards (personal communication), they have two main tasks: handling nuisance complaints and being the bridging figures between organisations, services and families (which is in many cases nota bout nuisance). Their two main goals are: support and increase living together in diversity and to ameliorate the communication between intra-European migrants and services and organisations. The Neighbourhood Stewards believe they can play an important role in these kinds of situations. However, the experience was quite difficult at times as they sometimes felt that the families and members of the Movement sometimes approached them with suspicion as they were employed by the city council. As there was no clear leadership or hierarchy amongst the different professionals and volunteers involved, the distribution of tasks and responsibilities was often unclear and contentious. It was not easy for the Neighbourhood Steward professionals to cooperate with volunteers in this context (I: Neighbourhood Steward).

Many of the people of organisations like Outreach Street team Ghent, De SLOEP vzw, Samenlevingsopbouw, Refugee work Ghent and De Tinten already knew each other from various occasions like the deliberation platforms on social work clients and marginalized group in Ghent. Some of them worked together on different matters before and after the Emmaüs HF project.

The thin red line indicates that seven Roma families were involved in activities set up by SLOEP vzw before they inhabited the monastery. It was explained in chapter five (5.3.) that these families stopped coming to De SLOEP vzw from then on. The coordinator (interview) made clear early on that De SLOEP was not going to be involved in political activism, but she wanted to be involved in coordinating service provision, because the organisation noticed the absence of the families. It did not come to a productive cooperation between De SLOEP vzw and the M.R.t.H. during the Emmaüs HF project.

It is relevant in this regard, and for this case in general, that tensions between organisations in the inner and outer grey circle were often complicated by personal relationships and conflicts. Also, within organisations and within the M.R.t.H individuals have different convictions about how to engage with vulnerable groups. Some social workers and volunteers had very good trust relationships with families and families were loyal to these individuals and not so much to the organisation. This could create tension between the support worker and the management of the organisation. It also gave rise to accusations that people were appropriating and treating families as being 'their clients'. The importance of personal tensions makes it more difficult to disentangle the all the reasons behind conflicts and failed attempts to cooperate. In what follows we focus on the general arguments that reoccurred in several interviews.

The organisations in purple are service providers that have homeless Roma families as their target group and while they might know and work with some of the families in the monastery, they are not

active members of the group that operates the project. The relation between the purple and the orange actors have been contentious throughout the history of the project. The actions of the orange actors often included a critique to the service providers that were not able or did not do enough to denounce and solve the crisis situation of the families. To be sure, these purple and orange actors do not disagree on all accounts. They are all concerned with the situation of the families and sometimes support the same proposals. For instance, the outreach street workers have been asking to make vacant houses available for homeless people for a long time (I: Coordinator street social work).

The (purple) service providers agree with some of the points raised by the M.R.t.H. and its partners. For instance: the coordinator of De SLOEP vzw (interview) confirms that some of the situations of the families are terrible and is in favour of signalling these problems and working with housing first approaches (I: Coordinator De SLOEP). The CAW management (interview) recognizes that the social sector, including their own services, is currently not able to provide these families with what they need. A coordinator of street social workers in Ghent (interview) is willing to accept the critique that in some cases they could and should be more vocal about the injustice and work in a more flexible way to support vulnerable groups.

However, these service providers also think that some of the criticisms levelled at them by the M.R.t.H. is exaggerated or even false. They stress that not being able to solve difficult problems in an optimal way is not the same as being unwilling to do so. They claim that they are putting the needs and thresholds of Roma homeless families on the table in meetings and reports as *critical partners of policy-makers*. They also disagree with the style and perceived (lack of) organisation of the M.R.t.H.. They argue that the activist style of the M.R.t.H. and partners might be useful for political action but they doubt whether it is always in the best interest of the target population and that it prevented productive deliberation and cooperation between actors, especially when the debate (in the media) became heated. Overall, they are reluctant to immediately change their agenda, priorities and approach under pressure of the M.R.t.H. These service providers believed that some of the proposals where not desirable or realistic and because they felt that some individuals in the M.R.t.H. were not really interested in constructive talks about service provision, but only in pursuing political aims (I: Management CAW, Coordinator De SLOEP, management SLO, street social worker).

The organisations in the colour purple will be the ones that will continue to engage with the target population and are expected to develop housing first projects in the future. Today, De SLOEP vzw and the Outreach street team (street social work) are working together on the project 'Instapwonen'. Other plans related to making vacant dwelling available for vulnerable families (not necessarily Roma) in Ghent are in the making. They are designed by these organisations including Samenlevingsopbouw whose name is put in purple for that reason.

7 Governance challenges

This closing section of this report identifies the governance challenges to social innovation in the project. They are described as they emerged from the documents and the field research, using the ImPRovE definition (ImPRovE, 2013).

7.1 Mainstreaming social innovation

In the case of the Emmaus HF project, the challenge of mainstreaming is not understood as trying to disseminate, spread or upscale the 'monastery model', because most involved organisations did not 'want' to become new social service providers or permanent volunteer organisations in the first place. The goal of supporting the people on the camping site and later the squats was to address needs that were not adequately addressed by existing services and institutions and put pressure on these services and institutions to take these needs more seriously and change their approach. More precisely, they want to force established organisations and institutions to make their services more inclusive for marginalized (migrant) families and develop practices to address homelessness by making use of vacant buildings in the city.

The evaluation report of the Emmaüs housing first project (De Potter et al., 2014) formulated two strategies for the local government to further pursue HF projects for homeless families. The first strategy concerns the use of (temporal) expropriation procedures on the private market in order to use neglected or vacant properties to house vulnerable groups, while supporting them in various possible ways. The second strategy concerns the social housing market. Local social housing companies are encouraged to investigate further how to make vacant social houses (often awaiting minor renovations) temporary available for people in a precarious situation.

On a more fundamental level, the project aimed to mainstream one of the basic premises of Housing First: a stable living condition, i.e. a realization of the right to housing, is a pre-condition to work towards the (re-)integration in society of individuals and families who face complex needs. There is disagreement on the extent to which the highly politicised strategy pursued by the Emmaus HF project is the most effective one to mainstream this principle in circles of policy-makers and social service organisation (e.g. I: Research Expert Feantsa). However, the involved activists and other service providers argue that the political action has succeeded to set things in motion that have been asked by regular service providers for very long – without result (I: Representative M.R.t.H., coordinator street corner social work).

7.2 Welfare mix: Avoiding fragmentation

The four NPO's who signed the granted occupation and the other organisations and volunteers actively involved in the Emmaüs Monastery housing first project struggled with keeping the plurality of actors – volunteers and professionals with diverse ideological backgrounds, people with an activist background and those more oriented towards social support and social artistic work - and activities manageable. The absence of clear hierarchical relationships between the involved actors made it much more difficult to arrive at a shared vision, turn this into a strategy and implement this consistently. Due to the circumstances in which the project developed – no long term planning but ad hoc responses to pressing and urgent needs - the platforms where social innovation experiences and strategies could be exchanged and a shared vision can be elaborated did not function successfully throughout a substantial period of the Emmaus HF project (see also #3). Despite these difficulties, the ideological variety of the partners enabled them to able to have an impact on the public debate with politicized claims and mobilize a rather broad range of supporters and volunteers. Furthermore, from a social innovation perspective it can be regarded as positive that a wide variety of actors decide to cooperate and invest

time and resources to address complex social problems, which they were not able to tackle on their own (I: Management SLO).

At the level of the local welfare system in the city of Ghent, at least that part of it that is concerned with homelessness and migration, this new, often chaotic coalition formed around the project is very much a reaction to the incapacity of the current welfare mix to tackle the pressing housing needs of some families. From this perspective the difficult process of working together horizontally can be seen as a sustained attempt to forge new relationships between various relevant public and private organisations, between volunteers, social professionals and policy makers and between the issues of housing and migration in order to be better able to tackle these new and emerging social needs.

The political actions forced the actors to articulate their stance more clearly, which initially made it very difficult to develop a shared vision. The high level of conflict resulted in a fragmented welfare mix in sense that there was a lack of shared vision and cooperation between relevant actors. The Emmaüs HF project has received critique for organizing services in the monastery that already existed and appropriating families and/or using them for political purposes. After a while the situation was pacified to some extent, which opened up possibilities to discuss new approaches for working with homeless (migrant) families in the future. At the same time, the issues of homelessness and migration remain controversial in the public debate and decisions in other policy domains, like a more strict anti-squatting policy, might undermine the new forms of cooperation that have been forged through the Emmaus HF project.

7.3   Welfare mix: participatory governance

The Emmaus HF project explored new roles for public institutions, and civil society (both third sector and volunteers) in service provision for homeless families with children, more specifically Roma families at the margins of the welfare state. It also drew a number of actors in the provision of social services and support that had not been active in this field before, e.g. social artistic organisations. One of the motives driving the unusual network of organisations was the conviction that established welfare organisations, public institutions and policy-makers needed to be made more responsive to the social needs of homeless families, in particular of Roma families, and that they should make more use of the local knowledge of grassroots organisations. To the extent that the network of organisations and volunteers around the Emmaus HF project succeeded in doing so, we can speak of a more participatory welfare mix. Among the directly involved organisations in the Emmaus HF project a lot of time and effort was invested to work through horizontal, deliberative approaches, both amongst the partner organisations but also with the temporary residents of the monastery. However, as mentioned above (#2) the attempts at horizontal decision-making created problems in terms of coordination, which led to unclear definitions of roles, accountability and autonomy.

Also in relation to the inhabitants this process was often problematic. Some difficulties had to do with language barriers or customs and strict hierarchies within the Roma families that were often difficult to understand for the M.R.t.H. volunteers and complicated their methods of case management and tailored support. Furthermore, some of the families did not regard themselves as part of a support programme, but as squatters in a squat that was often visited by people who wanted to support them. Hence they did not feel any obligations towards the project and did not feel they needed to abide by

the decisions made during resident meetings. The way in which the project came about (without 'client' selection or pre-set rules) made it very difficult to impose rules or structure.

> *We would try to discuss these things, but we could not really punish them… How would you punish them? They are already on the street, basically.* (Representative M.R.t.H.)

Some of the service providers outside the Movement Right to Housing expressed during the interviews (I: Management CAW, Coordinator DE SLOEP) that from their perspective the weaknesses in coordination has a negative impact on the effectiveness of the housing first intervention and that this complicates a constructive cooperation with other partners in the local welfare mix. Supporters of the M.R.t.H. stress that there was an unwillingness of members of the local council and the CAW to engage in this process of social innovation and real deliberative governance. They point to a lack of support and resources offered for their housing first experiment.

7.4   Equality and diversity

The initiative presents itself as an attempt to develop new instruments and approaches that can help the local welfare system to cope with the reality of 'super diversity' (De Potter et al., 2014; Debruyne et al., 2014). The service providers and policy makers were repeatedly criticised for not being sensitive enough to these new challenges related to increasing cultural diversity and destitution of migrant families.

In the case of Roma, the use of essentializing and stigmatizing images in the debate is often a big concern for social organisations and activists that pursue the emancipation of these groups. In this case, while not irrelevant, this was not a central issue during the Emmaus HF project. All interviewees were careful not to narrate the problems or needs of these Slovakian Roma families as 'Roma problems' or typical 'poverty migration'. Several interviewees did refer to the relevance of the Roma family structure and the context of discrimination in Slovakia when explaining difficulties to set up (formal) engagement. But when it came to their needs it was stressed that they are not fundamentally different from other deprived families with (or without?) a migration background (I: management walk in centre families, management CAW, Street social work coordinator).

For the actors involved in the M.R.t.H. it is necessary that the Slovakian Roma are recognized as citizens or at least recognized as people that are here to stay (focus group). Statements of the mayor supporting this stance were regarded as a very important form of support and recognition (see also #6). The mayoral support is regarded as support for the argument to open up public institutions and social services to these families instead of arguing for their return to their country of origin. However this stance remains politically contentious and the extent to which the acceptance of their presence in the city implies that they would also be granted social rights or access to services was a matter of strong disagreement in local politics (focus group).

The Movement Right to Housing and the different squatting and social support actions that followed, developed as a reaction against the precarious living conditions of homeless families and unequal access to social services and support. The social innovators did this by developing a social rights oriented oppositional discourses. The fact that solutions were found for Belgian families while Roma

families remained on the streets illustrates that it is (juridical) more difficult and politically more contentious to argue for the right to housing for these migrants. In debates and practice they were challenged by a tension between the idea of universal rights and them responding to particular needs of a particular (marginalized) group. Interestingly the idea of universal access to services also provided arguments against the initiatives of the M.R.t.H.. Some voices in the debate critiqued the (squat) actions for access to housing in a context when people are on the waiting list from a perspective of equal rights. While the activists argue that equal rights implies direct access to stable housing, representatives of the local authorities argue that it implies being put on a waiting list for access to social services or social support like everybody else.

7.5   Uneven access

Working with this group under the circumstances described above it was very hard to go from political statements to developing common standards and new methods (methods for housing first schemes with families on the one hand and tailored support trajectories for these families at the other). At the operational level the initiative did not regulate access in a very strict way. This was difficult given the circumstances in which the initiative developed. This was also regarded as in conflict with their goal of supporting the most needy. The way the project evolved into a project for Roma families with multiple support needs, to which some families joined unexpectedly, presented many challenges (see also #4) for the organizations and volunteers in terms of management and providing support. During their stay in the de Pélichy Castle the group benefited from a mix of Roma and Belgian inhabitants. This advantage was absent in the monastery. Moreover, because some families were considerably weaker in terms of skills and capacities than others, it was very difficult to use group support methods or for the volunteers to follow a similar approach for each family (focus group.

During public meetings representative of the M.R.t.H. critiqued another housing project inspired by the housing first principles, namely the project 'Instapwonen', for selecting families who are easier to work with in order to guarantee success. The coordinator of De SLOEP vzw (interview), who is involved in this project, refutes this criticism (referring to classified data about the multiple and complex support needs of the families involved in Instapwonen). In any case the possibility to regulate access and enforce rules (and the number of people and the size of the infrastructure) are pointed out as crucial differences between these projects (I: Coordinator street social work, Social worker 'Instapwonen'; focus group).

7.6   Avoiding responsibility

The socially innovative project set up by a range of civil society actors in Ghent clearly and explicitly responded to what was perceived as a failure of the local government and established social service providers to take on responsibility for marginalized families that lived on a camping or in squats instead of emergency shelters. The civil society actors also voiced criticisms of policy failures, decisions or contradictions on the supra-local i.e.: European, federal and regional, levels which help to explain the precarious situation of the families (De Potter et al., 2014). It is argued, for instance, that the free movement of persons and workers in Europe is designed to benefit the well-off and not poorer groups. On the federal level they point towards contradictions in how certain residence statutes give access to

social rights (or not). For instance, people with Appendix 19 (being in the procedure of applying for an ID) did not get a medical card from the local welfare centre because this institution did not regard people with this document as residing in the country illegally. At the same time they did not get access to child benefits because with this document the authorized departments regarded them as residing illegally in the country.

The critique on avoiding responsibility was not so much one of loathing governmental responsibilities in order to save money, but of the lack of responsiveness of governments and institutions of the social welfare state for the needs of relatively new vulnerable groups. Despite the staunch critique, it was recognized that, amongst others in response to the efforts in setting up the HF project, the local council and the mayor made considerable efforts to offer some support, most notably in pressuring the owner of the monastery in agreeing on a granted occupation and by letting Neighbourhood Stewards support the project, while being in a politically sensitive situation.

> *It cannot be denied that the mayor stuck out his neck to give them a chance, he could have easily shut it down.* (I: Coordinator De SLOEP)

> *The coalition already made considerable steps in a difficult climate, but we want them to go all the way.* (I: Representative M.R.t.H.)

Some respondents argue that the monastery building and the large number of people make it impossible to develop a housing first project with a well-developed support component (I: Coordinator DE SLOEP, Management CAW). In that regard it was irresponsible of the M.R.t.H. to take on this endeavour. Others say that it as a matter of a method 'which failed in this case because of a lack of a clear design but also because of a lack of resources and support from key actors like the local government and the CAW who did not take enough responsibility' (focus group).

7.7   Intra-organizational tensions

Due to difficulties related to the specific, vulnerable target population and the circumstances in which the experience evolved, there have been various intra-organizations tensions. They have already been identified and described throughout this report and in governance challenges #2 and #3. A first set of tensions played out between the partners with ideological positions and approaches, although it needs to be said that these tensions were also to some extent productive, amongst others in slowly creating some common ground and broadening the support base for social support of homeless Roma families. Pragmatism and a shared commitment to helping the families often helped to overcome ideological differences. For instance, the different partners of the M.R.t.H. would not agree on whether squatting is a goal in itself or a means to another end and hence in which circumstances it is legitimate. However, they all recognized that it was a legitimate means in this situation and that what they were doing was deprivation based squatting (Debruyne et al., 2014) and therefore had some legitimacy.

However, some issue remained a source of continued tensions and the attempts to arrive at a shared vision on the most appropriate social support methods, political activism strategies and distribution of tasks and responsibilities were time- and energy consuming. While the cooperation between volunteers and professionals was often productive, sometimes tensions emerged between developing

a social service and making political claims, which, according to some, delayed the development of coordinated approach and methods and gave rise to suspicions about the use of the fate of homeless families for political purposes (I: Management SLO, I: Street social worker, I: representative of M.R.t.H.).

A second set of tensions are related to the conflict between objectives of the professionals and volunteers offering support, trying the (re-) connect the families to the institutions of the welfare state, and the families who continued to develop and pursue survival and coping strategies. These tensions were tangible between families and volunteers and professionals and also between families in the monastery. For instance, strategies of families to avoid a domicile in order to avoid creditors worked against the efforts to get their domicile recognized in order to (re)connect the families to the welfare state. Also, there have been incidents of petty theft, both outside and within the monastery, which put pressure on the project. Within the community living in the monastery there were a significant imbalances of power between the 'strongest family' and the other families, with the former often dominating or taking advantage of the other (extended) family (I: Neighbourhood Steward). Again, due to the way the 'project' emerged the volunteers and professionals found it difficult to regulate such tensions.

The third set of tensions is related to the difference in perspective of people occupying strategic, management and/or political roles in organisations and the 'street-level' social workers and professionals. This challenge is partially related to a tension which is at the heart of social innovation and hence also of the organizations promoting it, namely the tension between reacting to immediate concerns and the need to develop long terms visions and strategies for the structural transformation of society. Whereas the former tend to highlight the long term strategies, the latter tend to have a more pragmatic perspective, focusing on the daily activities and immediate needs to be addressed.

7.8 Enabling legal framework

The inhabitants of the monastery are people who fell out of the system and for whom the existing legal frameworks are not enabling. The right to housing is not guaranteed in Belgium, not for Belgian families and not for the Slovakian Roma families. The case study illustrates that it is more problematic for the latter group to get access to housing because as they failed to meet the criteria of the migration legislation, they ended up in an administrative grey zone of being legal citizens with limited social rights. In order to develop their socially innovative practice the actors supporting these families had to gain expertise about the legal rules and regulations. In order to create a more enabling legal framework, effort is needed at different policy levels, which are often far beyond the reach of local organisations and volunteers. A difficulty for the creation of an enabling legal framework is that the mechanisms of representative democracy and citizenship rights are less adequate to transfer insights from social innovation initiatives geared at impoverished and marginalized populations into policy making, given the weak socio-political position of this population. This is especially true for the often stigmatized Roma and the controversial practice of squatting.

The aim of promoting innovative ways to connect the problems of homelessness and vacancy are hampered by the strict regulations in the (social) housing sector. Common practices in insurance do

not enable non-profit organisations to take on a central role and responsibility in these projects. In order to get such practices mainstreamed a more favorable framework is needed.

The 'granted occupation' is a practice of law that did enable the social innovation in this case. It is however a very complicated option, that is often very uncertain for the inhabitants.

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Appendix I

The Flemish organisation for roof- and house-less people in the Meys & Hermans (2014) research according to the ETHOS typology (Based on Demearschalk & Hermans, 2010: 29).

		Operational category		Living situation	Service residential	Service Ambulant
Roof-less	1	People without permanent residence	1.1	Public space or open air		Street social work city/CAW/OCMW
	2	People in shelters	2.1	Night Shelters	Night Shelter CAW Shelter OCMW	Outreach service CAW/OCMW Walk-in centre CAW
House-less	3	People in care centres for the homeless	3.1	Care centre mid-long term	Crisis shelter CAW	Walk-in centre CAW
			3.2	Temporary housing	Crisis shelter for young people CAW General care centre CAW Man shelter CAW	
			3.3	Housing as a transition period	Emergency home OCMW/City	
	4	People in women shelters	4.1	Bunk shelter for women	Women care CAW Bunk shelter CAW	
	5	People in centres for asylum seekers and migrants	5.1	Asylum centres	*Services for these groups are not part of this research.*	
			5.2	Pension for seasonal workers		
	6	People wo are soon to leave an institution	6.1	Correctional institution		Aftercare residence assistance CAW
			6.2	Medical institution (including rehab and psychiatric hospitals)		
			6.3	Youth institutions		
	7	Assisted living	7.1	Care housing for elderly homeless	Care housing CAW Pension housing OCMW	Walk-in centre CAW
			7.2	Assisted living for people who were homeless	Assited living CAW Assisted independent living CAW Transit house OCMW	Residence assistance OCMW/CAW
	8	People without a rent contract	8.1	Temporary with family or friends		

			8.2	Without formal rent contract			
			8.3	Illegal occupation of premises			
	9	People who are evicted from their house	9.1	Executed subpoena (tenant)			
			9.2	Reversal command (owner)			
	10	People living under threat of domestic/family violence	10.1	Reported to the police			
Inadequate housing	11	People in temporary/ unconventional houses	11.1	Camper/Caravan			Samenlevings-opbouw
			11.2	Nonconventional housing			
			11.3	Temporary housing			
	12	People in unsuitable housing	12.1	Houses unfit for habitation			
	13	People in extremely overpopulated premises	13.1	Highest national criterium for overpopulation			

Source: Meys & Hermans, 2014: 25

Appendix II

The data collection for this ImPRovE case study consists of:

- Extensive literature and the study of documents on the Emmaüs Monastery HF projects and related events and topics.
- Seven in-depth qualitative interviews involving nine respondents
- A focus group discussion with nine participants (including the two authors of this report)

Al interviews and the focus group were conducted between March 2014 and January 2015. The data gathering was temporarily intermitted because the researchers decided not to intervene during the contentious developments in the summer of 2014. All respondents that were involved in Ghent had the opportunity to provide comments on the pre-final draft of this report in July and August 2015. Several respondents used this opportunity and their comments were taken on in the final revision of this report.

Respondents of interviews (9):

- An academic who has been very active in the Movement Right to Housing and has often intervened in the public debate on behalf of the Movement (I: Representative M.R.t.H.)
- Coordinator of Samenlevingsopbouw Ghent (I: Management SLO)
- Person with management function in CAW Visserij (I: Management CAW)
- A team coordinator for outreach and street social work in Ghent (I: Coordinator street social work)
- Staff of FEANTSA (I: research expert Feantsa)
- Federal coordinator of HF Belgium (I: coordinator HF Belgium)
- Person with coordinating function in DE SLOEP vzw (I: Coordinator De SLOEP)
- A social worker in the 'Instapwonen' project in Ghent (I: Social worker 'Instapwonen')
- A Neighbourhood Steward (I: Neighbourhood Steward)

Focus group participants (7+2)

- Professor Stijn Oosterlynck and researcher Pieter Cools (organisers of the focus group and authors of this report)
- Representative 'refugee support Ghent' (vluchtelingenwerk Gent).
- Social worker for Samenlevingsopbouw who worked part-time supporting families in the monastery.
- Political activists and juridical expert on housing.
- Coordinator of the neighbourhood stewards for the city of Ghent
- Bridge figure for the primary school 'Klimrek' which has the largest number of Roma students in Ghent.
- Coordinator for street social work in the provinces Oost-Vlaanderen and West-Vlaanderen
- Representative of the Movement Right to Housing and scholar at the University of Ghent

ImPRovE: Poverty Reduction in Europe. Social Policy and Innovation

Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation (ImPRovE) is an international research project that brings together ten outstanding research institutes and a broad network of researchers in a concerted effort to study poverty, social policy and social innovation in Europe. The ImPRovE project aims to improve the basis for evidence-based policy making in Europe, both in the short and in the long term. In the short term, this is done by carrying out research that is directly relevant for policymakers. At the same time however, ImPRovE invests in improving the long-term capacity for evidence-based policy making by upgrading the available research infrastructure, by combining both applied and fundamental research, and by optimising the information flow of research results to relevant policy makers and the civil society at large.

The two central questions driving the ImPRovE project are:

How can social cohesion be achieved in Europe?

How can social innovation complement, reinforce and modify macro-level policies and vice versa?

The project runs from March 2012 till February 2016 and receives EU research support to the amount of Euro 2.7 million under the 7th Framework Programme. The output of ImPRovE will include over 55 research papers, about 16 policy briefs and at least 3 scientific books. The ImPRovE Consortium will organise two international conferences (Spring 2014 and Winter 2015). In addition, ImPRovE will develop a new database of local projects of social innovation in Europe, cross-national comparable reference budgets for 6 countries (Belgium, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain) and will strongly expand the available policy scenarios in the European microsimulation model EUROMOD.

More detailed information is available on the website http://improve-research.eu.

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