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Political Participation of the Homeless in Brazil

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Abstract

Most researchers regard the mobilization of the most deprived as a rare case that needs further explanation. In this contribution the Brazilian National Movement of the Homeless (Movimento Nacional População Rua – MNPR) will be analysed to show mechanisms of mobilization of the most deprived. Unlike other rare cases of homeless mobilization, the movement is active beyond the local level; it has existed for almost a decade, gaining access to and impacting on politics at all levels. How does the MNPR attract homeless people and keep them as active participants and leaders? The case study of the MNPR is based on interviews with leaders of the movement and participant observation in São Paulo, Salvador de Bahia and Brasília in 2013.

Keywords: political participation, homeless, social movement, Brazil.

Introduction

Most researchers regard mobilizations of the most deprived as exceptional cases that need further explanation (Gamson and Schmeidler 1984). The homeless are an extreme case of the deprived, especially in Brazil, where they receive almost no state subsidies and often have no documents. Mobilization of the homeless is thus against all odds (Williams 2005). In this contribution the Brazilian National Movement of the Homeless (Movimento Nacional População Rua – MNPR) will be analysed as an exceptional case of political participation of homeless people. Data for this paper come from participant observation and interviews with activists of the MNPR movement collected in São Paulo, Brasília and Salvador de Bahia in summer 2013. My aim is to show mechanisms of mobilization of the most deprived. Unlike other rare cases of homeless mobilization, the movement is active beyond the local level; it has existed for almost a decade, gaining access to and impacting on politics at all levels. A large majority of the activists are deprived themselves. Focussing on the organizational structures and practices, in this paper I try to answer the question: How does the MNPR attract deprived people and keep them as active participants and leaders?

After a short introduction to the specific problems homeless people face that can be regarded as obstacles to mobilization, I provide a short overview of studies on the mobilization of poor people, especially the homeless. Then I present my case study, based on interviews and participant observations in Brazil in 2013,¹ as an example of successful mobilization.

The homeless in the literature

Being homeless, in the sense of living on the streets and (occasionally) sleeping in shelters, correlates with extreme poverty, including food insecurity (Lee, Tyler, and Wright 2010, 502; Snow and Anderson 1993). Most homeless people are not employed, although some do have a proper qualification. The mainstream literature on the homeless relates homelessness to a variety of problems such as mental illness, alcohol addiction, poor health, and criminality (Snow, Anderson, and Koegel 1994, 462). Homeless people often suffer from biographic vulnerability, such as “backgrounds of poverty, disrupted family arrangements, foster care, [and] fragile social support networks” (Snow, Anderson, and Koegel 1994, 468–69) and they frequently contend with criminal victimization (Meanwell 2012, 73) as well as with the criminalization of street life itself (Snow, Anderson, and Koegel 1994, 467).

¹ The data has been collected as part of the project "Framing the Rights of the Poor" (SFRH/BPD/74743/2010) financed by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT).

Furthermore homeless people have to deal with the stigma of being homeless (Belcher and DeForge 2012; Irvine, Kahl, and Smith 2012; Sánchez 2011, 148; Snow and Anderson 1993) and many of them also suffer from further stigmas related to homelessness, like drug addiction, mental illness or criminal records (Meanwell 2012, 75).

Many of these characteristics from the mainly US American literature also apply to the Brazilian homeless. From a survey of 31,922 homeless in 71 Brazilian cities (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome 2008) we know that two thirds of the homeless sleep mainly on the streets, while the rest makes use of shelters; most of them live without company. The majority of any money earned from small jobs, like collecting recyclable material, helping out at construction sites, selling sweets as well as begging, is mostly spent on food on the same day. In Brazil, a majority of 70.9 per cent of the homeless in the four larger cities São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre and Recife between 2005 and 2009 worked in the informal economy – most of them collected recyclable material. Only 15.7 per cent begged for money to survive (MNPR 2010, 9). Collecting recyclable material is regarded as one of the most precarious and dirty forms of work – a last resort for those who cannot find other jobs. The collectors work (and often live) either at waste disposal sites or on the streets (Gomes Pereira and Carvalho Teixeira). Many of the homeless do not have any identification documents; a great majority are not covered by any social assistance programmes. Around two thirds of those interviewed who live on the streets suffered from violence, including police violence in nearly a third of cases. Furthermore, they experience discrimination when for example trying to enter shopping centres, public transport and even health centres. They are discriminated against by society and the media (Melo Resende 2008; Sato dos Reis 2011).

In terms of participation, survey data reveal that about 2.9 per cent of the homeless participate in social movements (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome 2008). Similar results are shown by a survey about homeless in the centre of São Paulo (Schor and Viera 2010). In the following chapter I will take a closer look at the literature on the mobilization of such poor people.

Does organizational structure contribute to mobilizing poor people?

One core question in the mobilization of poor people is how – if at all – a viable organizational structure can be built up. In their classic work *Poor People's Movements*, Piven and Cloward claim that poor people are more dependent on disruptive tactics, while organizational structure implies external financial resources and leads to them choosing less radical forms of action and hence a lack of threatening potential (Piven and Cloward 1979).

Many of the more recent studies on mobilization of the poor, however, point out the opposite: A formal organizational structure is essential for the survival of poor people's movements (Walker and McCarthy 2007). Formal organization is said to play an even greater role in poor people's than in middle-class movements (König 1999, 15). Gamson and Schmeidler disagreed with Piven and Cloward: "'Poor People's Movements' is wrong in arguing that organization inevitably or usually dampens insurgency. On the contrary, it is a critical component in sustaining and spreading it. Certainly, some established organizations will act to tame and contain it but, in successful movements, others or new ones will be built to perform the necessary organizational functions. They will frequently act to inflame and spread defiance, particularly in the early stages of a movement. Typically, these mobilizing organizations will make use of an existing infrastructure of older organizations and informal networks" (Gamson and Schmeidler 1984, 573). They also criticize the lack of a satisfactory substitute for organizations in explaining insurgencies in Piven and Cloward's classic work (Gamson and Schmeidler 1984, 574) and claim that: "Some movement organizations stimulate anger and defiance, and escalate the momentum of the people's protests. Some use their communication networks to spread disruptive forms of collective action and their organizational planning to chart strategy and timing, and to increase the effectiveness of collective action. Some institutionalize their dependence on their own constituency rather than come to rely on elite resources for survival" (Gamson and Schmeidler 1984, 583). Cress comes to the conclusion that "the issue is not about organization versus no organization; it is about the political effectiveness of different kinds of organizations" (Cress and Snow 1996, 1106).

So what could a politically effective social movement organization of the poor look like? Factors that favour the survival of poor people's organizations are a large set of weak ties, financial patronage at the time the group comes into being, diversity of funding and belonging to a national network (Walker and McCarthy 2007). One of the main obstacles, especially for organizations of homeless people, is a lack of resources (Allen 2009, 291); this includes informational resources as well as relatively strong leaders, who are less easy for homeless people to create because of their marginalized position in society (Cress and Snow 1996, 1098). "Given their overwhelming poverty, homeless individuals are able to provide little more than their voices and physical presence to SMOs. Consequently, differences in the durability and accomplishments of homeless SMOs across the country must be partly the result of differential success in mobilizing resources, presumably from external organizations" (Cress and Snow 1996, 1091). A place to meet is especially important for

homeless groups, as their only alternative is to meet in public spaces. Furthermore, it is of symbolic importance since it “signifies the acquisition and control of a rare commodity for the homeless: physically bounded, private space” (Cress and Snow 1996, 1098). A study by Cress and Snow shows that success of a homeless movement organization is dependent on sympathetic allies, city support and the kind of framing used by the movement organizations (Cress and Snow 2000). Cress also shows the positive effects of providing services to the local homeless community on establishing credibility. The most successful SMO in his study of fifteen local homeless social movement organizations “included such things as evaluating and providing referrals to local homeless services, advocating for benefits for homeless individuals, providing a space to store belongings, and supplying certain necessities such as clothing and hygiene kits” (Cress 1997, 350) into their activities. For other SMOs in his sample, the symbolic benefit was the overriding factor: “Nonprofit incorporation was viewed as providing the organization with greater legitimacy to the homeless constituency, potentially supportive organizations in their environment, and the general public” (Cress 1997, 352). Resources like information and relatively strong leaders can be achieved by having alliances, but also by internal qualification programmes (Cress and Snow 1996, 1098).

How to attract the homeless to participate in social movement organizations?

Connected to the question of how to construct a viable organizational structure, poor people’s movements also need to tackle the issue of how to attract poor people to political participation. At first glance, the homeless lack all preconditions for successful mobilization mentioned in literature: They are weak in terms of interpersonal and organizational social network linkages, have neither an indigenous organizational base nor a facilitative organizational context, they lack resources, access to the political sphere and – as they are often considered a superfluous population in the ongoing functioning of the social system – they also have no social power (Snow and Anderson 1993). Mobilization of the homeless is thus against all odds (Williams 2005). Among the ranks of the poor they are “the least likely candidates to create a self-representing organisation” (Allen 2009, 289) and “almost any mobilization and sustained protest involving the homeless appears to constitute an empirical and theoretical anomaly” (Snow, Soule, and Cress 2005, 1184).

Nevertheless, there have been occasions of organizing the homeless, including social movements and protests by the homeless (Lee, Tyler, and Wright 2010, 512; Snow and Mulcahy 2001, 162–63). In the US American context for example, 250,000 homeless marched to the Capitol demanding housing in 1989 (Cress and Snow 1996, 1091). The groups

researched by Cress and Snow, for example, “depended on sustained protests to maintain mobilization among the local homeless population” (Cress and Snow 1996, 1103). Further, stigma management is an important task for a movement of the homeless (Snow and Anderson 1987). In-group strategies including identity talk among homeless peers could be organized by the movement organizations, while out-group strategies, including passing, covering, defiance, and collective action, rather lead to isolation and a lack of trust amongst the homeless.

At this point it is also interesting to take a look at the tradition of community organizing, because community organizing is often practiced in poor communities. The approach is based on local entities and strong grassroots leaders with the ability to mobilize further supporters. One of the core ideas is to strengthen social ties and networks within the communities. Qualification of new potential leaders is essential: “Community participation provides access points for new emerging community leaders to develop their experience, confidence and skills, thereby building community capacity, which increases voluntary action through ‘people power’” (Staples 2012, 288). By qualification and strengthening of networks, those approaches thus overcome some obstacles to becoming politically active faced by poor people in particular. Through support from others and qualification, the activists gain the confidence necessary to successfully participate in political committees or to contact politicians. Furthermore, immediate results are important: “For people to shift from nonparticipation to engagement, they have to anticipate success in the not-too-distant future. Only the experience of winning will undo the socialization of powerlessness; it isn’t something that you can talk people out of [...]. Success can be used to convince the sceptics on the side lines to participate” (Miller 2010, 45).

The “Movimento Nacional População em Situação de Rua” (MNPR)

Homelessness has always been a problem in Brazil, and in some cities homeless people have been organizing at the local level since the 1960s (Movimento Nacional da População de Rua – MNPR 2010, 29). An influential movement that also works at the national level, however, was founded only in 2004. The main events that led to the foundation of the movement were two occasions of violence against homeless: Seven homeless were killed and nine injured in São Paulo in August 2004. These acts of violence were the reason for several demonstrations against violence and for the dignity of the homeless that took place in São Paulo and Belo Horizonte. The homeless movement was founded at the “Third Garbage and Citizenship Festival” in September 2004 – an event co-organized by the

movement of the collectors of recyclable materials. The movement cooperated closely with the state from the very beginning. The Ministry for Development financed the first national meeting in 2005, and in 2006 the movement participated in the meetings of the newly founded Inter-Ministerial Work Group for Social Inclusion of the Homeless. It gained seats on national committees on homelessness and social assistance. MNPR also runs official partnerships with city councils, research institutions and NGOs including joint research projects and programmes for the homeless, and has participated in the conducting of larger national surveys on homelessness.² There are local groups in various cities. The local groups of the MNPR I interviewed in São Paulo and Salvador have an office, where they hold their meetings, organize the movement's activities and attend to people.³ These places do not belong to the movement, but are owned and currently not used by other NGOs or the Church. The daily work is financed by donations that the MNPR receives, for example for invited speeches and by selling T-shirts with the movement's logo. None of the activists are paid, but some of the movement's projects are financed due to cooperation with the state. Sometimes other social movements or NGOs, especially the MNCR, help with travel or material costs.

The MNPR's principles of action are direct democracy, direct action, to work independently from political parties or other strong actors, mutual support, solidarity with other social issues, non-violence, transparency, personal commitment, equality, justice and social control (Sato dos Reis 2011, 34). The movement's major aim is to gain visibility for the homeless and their problems. It is fighting for more dignity and against discrimination of this group of people. The aims are summed up by Lúcia, an MNPR leader from Salvador: "First get precisely visibility of the demands of the people that are currently homeless. The second aim was to organize this people to show that they are subjects entitled to certain rights and that they also have duties."⁴ For this task, according to the movement leaders the most important thing is to build up the self-esteem of the homeless, who often do not believe they are subjects entitled to certain rights. Besides improving the lives of those who live on the streets, the movement also helps people to return to a life with a home and a stable job: "To show these brothers, fellows who live on the street that they can have another life"⁵ (interview Ronaldo). In cooperation with state agencies, the movement offers qualification for skilled

² Information taken from <http://mnprsp.blogspot.com.br/p/historico-do-movimento.html> (accessed 03.12.2013).

³ The following information about the movement (if not indicated as based on literature) is based on interviews that I conducted with activists from the movement in São Paulo and Salvador in summer 2013.

⁴ "Primeiro trazer justamente a visibilidade das demandas da população em situação de rua. O segundo motivo foi de organizar a própria população em situação de rua mostrando que são eles eram sujeitos de direitos e também de deveres."

⁵ "Mostrar para aqueles irmãos, companheiros que estão na rua que eles podem ter outra vida."

jobs such as painter or bricklayer.⁶ According to my interview with Lúcia, in Salvador around 200 persons enjoyed this kind of qualification, with 80 of them entering the regular labour market. Furthermore, the movement campaigns for the inclusion of the homeless in statistics and the state's housing programmes. It also campaigns for centres of human rights defence for the homeless (Sato dos Reis 2011, 37).

As a poor people's movement the MNPR faces a lot of difficulties in attracting and keeping activists. A 2010 survey of 526 homeless living on the streets and in shelters in São Paulo shows that 24% of them knew the MNPR, and 48 of them had already participated in the movement's activities (Schor and Viera 2010, 22). Activists get into contact with the homeless via face-to-face-communication. They walk the streets and visit shelters, speaking directly to the homeless. They visit the places where people sleep on the streets at night. In many of the shelters they are welcome, since their work is not primarily directed at criticizing these places. The activists have their own experiences with homelessness, thus it is easier for them to establish trust with the homeless. In Salvador, every other Saturday people on the street are invited to an open meeting. The call for these meetings is also sent via email to the shelters, where it is communicated to those sleeping there. The movement also organizes conferences together with other actors, e.g., on housing or social assistance. One of the movement's activists is responsible for contacting the homeless on the streets and encouraging them to participate. In São Paulo an NGO close to the movement publishes the monthly journal *O Trecheiro*, which is free and distributed on the streets; in addition to other aspects related to homelessness it also provides information about activities. Even though (for financial reasons) there is no food and only sometimes coffee or tea offered at the meetings, according to information from the activists the meetings in Salvador attract up to 320 people. The movement invites specialists on issues of interest for the homeless. The lively participation of the homeless and formerly homeless in São Paulo is also pointed out: "Here we are around 1,000 persons who participate de facto. In the last plenary we were 180 persons. Out on the streets they are called to the plenaries. 180 persons participated, to really debate, to bring things forward" (interview Anderson).⁷ Photos of these events on the website of the movement confirm these data. The movement offices in Salvador and São Paulo are open every day and welcome people who wish to discuss their problems. In São Paulo the political work is organized via working groups, e.g., on housing, work or human rights. All

⁶ Opportunities for qualification are listed on the website of the movement's São Paulo group: <http://mnprsp.blogspot.com.br/p/cursos.html> (accessed 5 December 2013).

⁷ "A gente tem aqui 1.000 pessoas participando de facto. Na última plenária que nos fizemos foram 180 pessoas. Fala rua chama os as plenários. 180 pessoas participar, para discutir mesmo, para pautar."

those who are already in contact with the movement are also organized via a mailing list: “So we send an email and 1,000 to 2,000 people participate in our actions”⁸ (interview Anderson). The homeless in Brazil benefit from cheap and sometimes free internet access at public spaces or at the shelters. They also use social media: “Our people have Facebook, many of them have Facebook. The people use the equipment at the shelters”⁹ (interview Ronaldo).

As the activists are very poor, they face enormous difficulties in staying active. In terms of mobility they have to spend a lot of time on public transport – time that they need to earn a living – and sometimes the price of taking the bus into the city centre is too high. Furthermore they are threatened by more powerful actors. The following part of one of my interviews illustrates these obstacles:

BB: “I have heard that many fellows leave the movements, because the life of an activist is that difficult.”

Anderson: “Too much, too much. Even the kids stay hungry. There are moments when there is no transport, no food; there is not even this cookie to eat. It’s a mad, crazy life. It is fight, its discussions and moreover it is organizations. So there are times when we feel frustrated [...] and in our struggles there are times when we receive death threats for being part of the movement”¹⁰ (interview Anderson).

The MNPR uses a wide variety of forms of action that all include the participation of homeless people. I was told about occupations with up to 500 persons, marches through the city of São Paulo, national days of action, and national congresses in Salvador and Brasília with 200 to 500 participants. These activities are sometimes organized together with other social movements, like the MNCR or the housing movements. The movement also fights against everyday discrimination of the homeless. Although it is against the constitution, individual homeless people are often denied access to public buildings like the city council or health centres, on the grounds that they are not adequately dressed. Access is no longer denied if they arrive together with people from the movement. The movement pressures politicians, but also uses direct contact to politicians: Homeless people make appointments with mayors

⁸ “Então a gente manda um e-mail, temos uma rede muito grande e a gente manda um e-mail aparece 1.000, 2.000 pessoas participando nos nossos atos.”

⁹ “O nosso povo tem facebook, muitos tem facebook. Eu converso com muitos no face. E a gente está a usar equipamentos nos centros de acolhida.”

¹⁰ BB: “Ouvi falar que muitos companheiros saíram dos movimentos, porque a vida do activista é tão duro.”
Anderson: “Demais, demais. Até os meninos passam fome. Tem momento em que não tem transporte, que não tem comida, que não tem nessa bolachinha para comer. É uma vida de doída, louca. É briga, é discussões e é para além de organizações. Então tem hora em que a gente se sente sem poxa. [...] Também em luta chega a hora em que a gente recebe uma ameaça de morte por estar no movimento.”

to discuss the situation of the homeless. The current Brazilian government is very open to the MNPR and direct meetings with the president do take place.

An important factor for the movement's success in mobilizing the homeless is the activists' attitude towards these people, which is strongly connected to the activists' own experiences of being homeless. The leaders are aware of the necessity of a broad and active base: "Without a basis the movement does not work"¹¹ (interview Anderson) and those activists who no longer live on the streets treat the homeless as equally capable. The following citation demonstrates this attitude:

"They [BB: the homeless] understand a lot of politics. The homeless population is not stupid, because they read newspapers, they watch TV. So they know what is going on. They know this guy is not with, is not with the life of the street. They know who the president of the Republic is, they know who that guy is, they know who to vote for and who not. He is aware. So when his self-esteem starts to grow, dignity and respect, he starts to participate again. The movement's task is to look out for this. It is a dialogue"¹² (interview Anderson).

The activists are very committed to the movement. They explain this through their own experiences of being homeless.

"You can never forget where you came from"¹³ (interview Ronaldo).

"We have left the street behind, but the street has not left us. And even if we have abandoned the street I might return tomorrow. I have to be very careful with this. I cannot forget my history. I cannot return to it, but I cannot forget it. I have to fight so other fellows will have the same dignity I have, the same respect that I have. And thus I can never forget where I came from, who I was, just because I achieved my house, my work, say: 'Ah, these people are not of interest, these are vagabonds'. It is not like that. This cannot happen"¹⁴ (interview Anderson).

¹¹ É muito importante para o movimento você ter base. Se você não tiver base o movimento não funciona.

¹² "Eles entendem muito da política. A população que está na rua não é bobo, porque eles leem journal, eles assistem televisão. Então eles sabem o que está a acontecer. Entendem o cara não está no mundo, não está no mundo da rua. Eles sabem quem é o presidente da república, sabem quem é o Fulando, sabem em quem ele votou ou em quem não quis votar. Ele é consciente. Então quando ele começa alterar o autoestima, a dignidade, o respeito, ele começa participar de novo. O papel de movimento é um pouco buscar isso. É um diálogo."

¹³ "Nunca se pode esquecer de onde tiver."

¹⁴ "A gente saiu da rua mas a rua não sai da gente. É se a gente abandona a rua, amanhã eu posso voltar para ela. Então eu tenho de tomar muito cuidado com isso. Eu não posso esquecer da minha trajetória. Eu não posso voltar para ela, mas eu não posso esquecer dela. Tenho de lutar para que outros companheiros e companheiras tem a mesma dignidade que eu tenho, mesmo respeito que eu tenho. Nunca pode esquecer de onde eu vinha, quem eu fui, só porque a gente conseguiu a minha casa, o meu trabalho, falar aí esse povo não interessa, esse povo é vagabundo. Não é isso. Não pode acontecer."

Conclusion

In terms of resources and networks, the participants of the movement are extremely deprived. The individual activist's costs of participation are thus relatively high and there is usually a lack of all kinds of resources. The enormous workload and the lack of money, e.g. to pay for public transport, mean considerable effort is required to participate in meetings. This is a great obstacle to political participation, as we have seen above.

The movement's emergence is connected to a favourable political opportunity structure and the decisive event of seven homeless people being killed and numerous injured. This situation of extreme, sudden grievances combined with a favourable political environment – including the worker's party PT being in government and willing to support the homeless – favoured its creation and early successes. Furthermore, the infrastructure of the movement of recyclable materials collectors was already in place and many recyclable materials collectors are also homeless. From the beginning onwards there has been a close cooperation between the movement of the recyclable materials collectors, various NGOs on behalf of the homeless and the homeless movement. Events organized by other movements and the expertise of supporters were helpful at the beginning, and the close cooperation between various movements of the poor in Brazil are still important factors behind the success of the homeless movement.

However, this favourable context does not guarantee the political participation of the homeless themselves. The movement has built up a strong organizational structure based on local organizations and regular meetings at the regional and national levels. Activists often have a background as homeless people and all of them are volunteers. The movement is supported by strong allies, e.g., state actors, NGOs and politicians. It is included in state committees at all levels. The homeless movement itself cannot offer material gains to the homeless by organizing them, but it offers help and arranges qualification and housing support via other organization and state programmes. A variety of financial resources allow the movement to continue its daily work without risking co-optation by stronger actors. The movement of the unemployed is a movement that successfully combines radical forms of action, like occupations and large marches, and a strong organizational structure. It enjoys the support of the Brazilian government, but is financially independent from the government and any other actor. The case thus contradicts Piven and Cloward's argument against organization in poor people's movements. The movement became strong by building up a viable organizational structure and maintaining contacts with state actors.

Like all successful movements of the poor, the movement uses a local approach to attract activists, based on small groups and associations that are constantly in direct contact with potential participants. A good deal of time is spent on direct contacts, and the movement organizations are easily contacted due to the availability and centrality of the offices. Regular meetings are open and announced especially by face-to-face communication, computer-based communication and via allies. Furthermore, the movement can offer visible short-term gains. The movement has celebrated successes in qualification and access to politicians at all levels. In the long term it has already challenged some of the prejudices against the homeless and helped people out of their miserable situation, for example providing access to housing and job training programmes.

A very important point seldom accounted for in the literature is the attitude of the activists towards the homeless. For many European NGOs working with the homeless, participation is a fashionable concept but often restricted to a few simple tasks because “the user is not considered adequately prepared to organize even their own basic living conditions” (Sánchez 2011, 153). In this Spanish example the homeless helped to identify other homeless and were consulted about activities offered to them. “The incorporation of users into the staff of an organization rarely goes beyond incidental operational tasks, such as messenger or photocopier, and never involves such positions as high-ranking quasi social services technician, or voluntary consultation-level positions in coordination or on work committees. As such, there are no opportunities for incorporation into the institutions’ decision making positions, and any possibility of a practical reversal in the meaning of intervention” (Sánchez 2011, 154–55). MNPR practices a far more inclusive approach. Most of the homeless activists have often overcome the status of being homeless, but all of them have broad experience with being homeless. They feel connected to the homeless through this experience as well as the threat of becoming homeless again, and they see themselves as examples for others. In contrast to the paternalistic projects for the homeless, the activists of the homeless movement regard the homeless as fully capable of becoming activists. They are included in the daily activist work; for example, they also contact other homeless or help in the survey projects on homelessness. In the case of the MNPR, qualification is the key to keeping the homeless as activists. The mobilization of homeless people is definitely more difficult, especially because of the fewer financial and educational resources. The case above, however, demonstrated different paths to overcoming these specific obstacles and to building up strong and influential movements.

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