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HOMELESS PERSONS' INTERPERSONAL EXCLUSION
A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

Homeless persons have been identified as a group particularly vulnerable to social exclusion. At the most general level, social exclusion refers to a lack of participation in political, economic, cultural, or social life. In this thesis, I focus on the interpersonal dimensions of social exclusion, characterized by the breakdown of social ties, disempowerment, social rejection, and stigmatization that persist unsanctioned among members of the mainstream society towards socially excluded persons. Principally, safeguards such as human rights, particularly Article 30 of the European Social Charter (revised), aim at protecting against social exclusion. However, being a pioneering right, Article 30 has some shortcomings in effectively protecting against interpersonal exclusion due to the challenges inherent in the implementation of socio-economic rights, the framework within which Article 30 operates, and the scope and operationalization of Article 30. These limitations reflect the conceptual and practical shortcomings of top-down approaches more generally to combating interpersonal exclusion. Therefore, I argue for the potential of a bottom-up approach to social inclusion to fill this gap left open by top-down approaches. I do so by drawing on a case study that connects homeless persons living in Vienna with students and the general public in an effort to combat the former's sense of interpersonal exclusion. The analysis shows that a bottom-up approach has considerable potential and can be an impactful means to contribute to filling the gap in the top-down legalistic human rights framework.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a homeless person, "[y]ou represent everything that society wants to exclude, every stigma, every prejudice. Enduring this is so difficult and worse than anything else," a homeless woman shared with Amnesty International.[1] In 2023, more than 20.000 persons experienced homelessness in Austria.[2] The case study undertaken in this thesis brings into dialogue persons experiencing homelessness in Vienna, students, and the Austrian public in an effort to combat homeless persons' interpersonal exclusion through a bottom-up approach. The research aims at answering the question, "what is the potential of a bottom-up approach to combat interpersonal social exclusion?" I argue that a bottom-up approach has considerable potential to contribute to interpersonal inclusion. Thereby, it can be an impactful means to contribute to filling a gap that largely persists in the top-down legalistic human rights framework when it comes to effectively addressing interpersonal exclusion.

At the most general level, scholars and policy bodies agree that social exclusion refers to a multi-dimensional, conscious or unconscious process leading up to and sustaining a general lack of participation in political, economic, cultural, or social life.[3] Building on Silver's

[1] rep., *„WENN WOHNEN EIN MENSCHENRECHT WÄRE, DANN WÜRDE ICH SO NICHT WOHNEN": HÜRDEN BEIM ZUGANG ZUR WOHNUNGSLOSENHILFE IN ÖSTERREICH* (Amnesty International, 2022), p. 5, https://www.amnesty.at/media/9679/amnesty-report-wohnungs-und-obdachlosigkeit_april-2022_summary-de.pdf.

[2] Monika Mühlböck et al., rep., *So Geht's Uns Heute: Die Sozialen Krisenfolgen Im Vierten Quartal 2022 – Schwerpunkt: Erfahrungen Mit Wohnungslosigkeit - Ergebnisse Einer Statistik-Austria-Befragung* (Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz, May 2023), https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Bericht_Soziale_Krisenfolgen_20230510.pdf.

[3] Ruth Levitas et al., rep., *The Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion* (Bristol, United Kingdom: University of Bristol, 2007); Jane Mathieson et al., rep., *Social Exclusion: Meaning, Measurement and Experience and Links to Health Inequalities*, 91 (WHO Social Exclusion Knowledge Network, 2008); Emmaculate Asige Liaga and Cori Wielenga, "Social Cohesion from the Top-down or Bottom-up? The Cases of South Sudan and Burundi," *Peace & Change* 45, no. 3 (June 25, 2020): 389–425, https://doi.org/10.1111/pech.12424; Ann Leahy and Delia Ferri, "Rethinking and Advancing a 'Bottom-up' Approach to Cultural Participation of Persons with Disabilities as Key to Realising Inclusive Equality," *International Journal of Law in Context*, March 18, 2024, 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1017/s1744552324000041; Naila Kabeer, "Intersecting Inequalities, the MDGs and What Comes Next?," *Overseas Development Institute*, 2013; Pierpaolo Donati, ed., *Towards a Participatory Society: New Roads to Social and Cultural Integration*, vol. 21 (Vatican city, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018); Graham Room, "Poverty and Social Exclusion: The New European Agenda for Policy and Research," essay, in *Beyond the Threshold*, ed. Graham Room (Policy Press, 1995), 1–9; rep., *Leaving No One behind: The Imperative of Inclusive Development. Report on the World Social Situation "Chapter I Identifying Social Inclusion and*

Solidarity paradigm (1994) which understands exclusion as the breakdown of social bonds between individuals and society that is moral and cultural rather than economic,[4] in this thesis, I focus on the interpersonal, horizontal dimensions of social exclusion. Interpersonal exclusion is characterized by a breakdown of social ties, disempowerment, social rejection, and stigmatization[5] persisting unsanctioned among members of the mainstream society towards the socially excluded persons.[6] An excluding society not only affects the life quality of excluded individuals, but the cohesion and equity of the whole society.[7] Inclusive societies are thus valuable to everyone,[8] as inclusion is "a need and a right inherent to human dignity."[9] It requires holistically promoting terms of participation in society through strengthening excluded persons' voices, dignity, and respect for fundamental rights, enabling their involvement in decisions that affect them, as well as proactively battling prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors often embedded in the very fabric of society.[10]

I will first briefly address the topic of social exclusion under Article 30 of the European Social Charter, the only existing provision that explicitly lays down social inclusion as a human right. Second, I draw on a broad range of literature and empirical evidence detailing the limits of top-down approaches to inclusion, thereby illustrating the need for a bottom-up approach in

Exclusion" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Social Inclusion, January 1, 2016), https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2023-03/World%20Social%20Report%202016.pdf; Jonathan Day, "Social Exclusion: What Does It Mean?," Civil Liberties Union for Europe, 2021, https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/social-exclusion/43579.

[4] Hilary Silver, "Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms," *International Labour Review* 133 (1994): 531–78.

[5] Paolo Carozza, "The Possibilities and Limits of International Human Rights Law to Foster Social Inclusion and Participation," essay, in *Towards a Participatory Society: New Roads to Social and Cultural Integration*, ed. Pierpaolo Donati, vol. 21 (Vatican City, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 228–45.

[6] "Identifying Social Inclusion and Exclusion" 2016.

[7] Paul Bernard, "La Cohésion Sociale: Critique Dialectique d'un Quasi-Concept," *Lien Social et Politiques*, no. 41 (October 2, 2002): 47–59, https://doi.org/10.7202/005057ar; Leahy and Ferri, 2024.

[8] Bernard 2002; Margaret S. Archer, "Increasing Social Participation; From the Top-Down or the Bottom-Up?," essay, in *Towards a Participatory Society: New Roads to Social and Cultural Integration*, ed. Pierpaolo Donati, vol. 21 (Vatican City, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 565–691.

[9] Roland Minnerath, "The Human Right to Full Participation in Society," essay, in *Towards a Participatory Society: New Roads to Social and Cultural Integration*, ed. Pierpaolo Donati, vol. 21 (Vatican City, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 49–59, p. 49.

[10] "Identifying Social Inclusion and Exclusion" 2016.

the first place. The second part of this chapter sets the ramifications for the case study when I outline what a bottom-up approach should consist of. The final chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the analysis of the practical implementation of the case study itself.

2. SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNDER ARTICLE 30 OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

The right to protection against poverty and social exclusion has been incorporated into the revised European Social Charter under Article 30, acting on a 1978 recommendation by the Parliamentary Assembly.[11] To date, Article 30 remains the only provision that recognizes social inclusion as a human right and social exclusion as its violation,[12] with protection against social exclusion remaining largely neglected by regional or international human rights instruments.[13] As such, Article 30 has the potential to shape human rights standards while simultaneously addressing its own shortcomings inherent in any pioneering approach. Relevant to the interpersonal dimension of social exclusion, these flaws revolve around 1) the implementation of socio-economic rights in general, 2) Article 30 within this framework, and 3) the scope and operationalization of Article 30.

First, the right to protection against social exclusion is a socio-economic right, a group of rights which have weaker monitoring mechanisms compared to civil and political rights.[14] While the European Court of Human Rights issues binding judgements to monitor compliance

[11] Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Revision of the European Social Charter, Recommendation 839, 28 September 1978.
[12] Karin Lukas, *The Revised European Social Charter: An Article by Article Commentary* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2021), p. 322.
[13] A. J. Veal, "Cultural Participation as a Human Right: Holding Nation States to Account," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 29, no. 6 (September 29, 2022): 686–700, https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2022.2114468.
[14] Dennis M. Davis, "Socio-Economic Rights: Has the Promise of Eradicating the Divide between First and Second Generation Rights Been Fulfilled?," essay, in *Comparative Constitutional Law*, ed. Tom Ginsburg and Rosalind Dixon (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011), 519–31.

with the European Convention on Human Rights, adherence to the Charter is monitored by the quasi-judicial European Committee of Social Rights. On the basis of the reporting and collective complaints procedure, it adopts conclusions and decisions which must be respected by, but are not directly enforceable in, the domestic legal order of the member state.[15] Additionally, whereas parties to the Convention accept *all* provisions of the Convention, the Charter is built on an "à la carte" ratification system.[16] Article A of the Charter provides that six out of nine "hardcore" provisions must be accepted, Article 30 not being one of them.[17] Indeed, as of March 2021, after Article 31, the right to housing, Article 30 has only been accepted by 19 out of 35 Council of Europe member states which have ratified the revised Charter.[18] The compliance of the states that have not ratified the collective complaints mechanism is assessed every four years via the reporting procedure.[19] The states that have accepted the collective complaints procedure are assessed only every other review cycle and on the basis of the complaints submitted, only 15 invoking Article 30 to date.[20]

Second, not only *as* a socio-economic right, but also *within* the category of socio-economic rights Article 30 is watered down. First, the language of Article 30 is weaker as that of many other rights in the Charter. Article 30 asks states to 'promote' and 'ensure' as opposed to using the much more forceful 'shall' as it is used in Articles 2(5), 3(1), 5, 7(1-4; 6-9), 8(3), and 24.[21] Moreover, the Committee, when assessing the personal scope of Article 30 in DCI v.

[15] "The Charter in Four Steps," Council of Europe Portal, accessed May 10, 2024, https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/about-the-charter#:~:text=Insofar%20as%20they%20refer%20to,directly%20enforceable%20in%20the%20domestic.
[16] Council of Europe (1996), European Social Charter (Revised), Strasbourg, 3 May 1996, Art. A, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/coe/1996/en/40138>, (accessed 20 January 2024).
[17] Ibid.
[18] "Accepted Provisions of the European Social Charter (1996)," Council of Europe, 2021, https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/provisions-of-the-charter.
[19] "Signatures and Ratifications of the 1961 Charter, Its Protocols and the European Social Charter (Revised) as of 17th March 2021," Council of Europe, March 17, 2021, https://rm.coe.int/table-of-signatures-and-ratifications-of-the-european-social-charter/16806f399d.
[20] Council of Europe (2023), *Digest of the Decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights*, HUDOC-ESC (coe.int), (accessed 03 June 2024).
[21] European Social Charter (Revised) 1996.

Belgium, acknowledges that Article 30 is not one of the Charter provisions related to securing "the most fundamental human rights", aimed at safeguarding persons "from serious threats" to their enjoyment of other rights.[22] Whereas the personal scope (outlined in Paragraph I of the Charter's Appendix) of such provisions, for example Article 17, was interpreted by the Committee in light of the situation at hand, the object and purpose of the Charter, and in consideration of international (peremptory) norms[23] in order to cover persons otherwise falling outside the Charter's personal scope, Article 30 was rendered inapplicable ratione personae in that particular case.[24] Finally, although the objective of Article 30 is not to "repeat the juridical aspects of the protection covered by other Articles of the revised Charter",[25] a conclusion or decision on another right – such as employment, housing, training, education, culture, or social and medical assistance – may be relevant in assessing conformity with Article 30.[26] For example, in its 2021 conclusions, the Committee often linked non-compliance with Article 30 to the non-compliance of other rights under the Charter, for example Articles 1(1),[27] 7(5),[28] 12(1),[29] 13(1),[30] 10(4),[31] 14(1),[32] 15(2),[33] 16,[34] 23,[35] 31(1)[36] and (2).[37] As Article 30 becomes

[22] *Defence for Children International (DCI) v. Belgium*, Complaint No. 69/2011, 23 October 2012, §145, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-69-2011-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024).
[23] Ibid, §§29-39.
[24] Ibid, §147.
[25] Council of Europe (1996), Explanatory Report to the European Social Charter (Revised), 12, Strasbourg, 3 May 1996, §113, <https://rm.coe.int/16800ccde4>, (accessed 20 March 2024).
[26] Conclusions 2013, Statement of Interpretation on Article 30, <http://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2013_163_06/Ob/EN>, (accessed 15 March 2024).
[27] Conclusions 2021, Ukraine, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2021/def/UKR/30/EN>, (accessed 31 March 2024).
[28] Conclusions 2021, Serbia, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2021/def/SRB/30/EN>, (accessed 31 March 2024); Conclusions 2021, Turkey, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2021/def/TUR/30/EN>, (accessed 31 March 2024).
[29] Conclusions 2021, Estonia, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2021/def/EST/30/EN>, (accessed 31 March 2024); Conclusions 2021, Latvia, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2021/def/LVA/30/EN>, (accessed 31 March 2024); Conclusions 2021, Serbia.
[30] Conclusions 2021, Estonia; Conclusions 2021, Latvia; Conclusions 2021, Serbia; Conclusions 2021, Turkey, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2021/def/TUR/30/EN>, (accessed 31 March 2024).
[31] Conclusions 2021, Turkey; Conclusions 2021, Ukraine.
[32] Conclusions 2021, Latvia; Conclusions 2021, Serbia; Conclusions 2021, Turkey.
[33] Conclusions 2021, Ukraine.
[34] Conclusions 2021, Latvia; Conclusions 2021, Turkey; Conclusions 2021, Ukraine.
[35] Conclusions 2021, Serbia; Conclusions 2021, Turkey; Conclusions 2021, Ukraine.
[36] Conclusions 2021, Latvia; Conclusions 2021, Turkey; Conclusions 2021, Ukraine.
[37] Conclusions 2021, Latvia; Conclusions 2021, Turkey; Conclusions 2021, Ukraine.

interconnected with other rights, it loses some of its uniqueness as a provision protecting against social exclusion by virtue of its own value and entirely independent from other rights.

Third, the scope of Article 30 can be analyzed based on the provision within the Charter,[38] the Explanatory Report accompanying the Charter,[39] the Statement of Interpretation on Article 30,[40] as well as the Committee's 64 conclusions on Article 30,[41] and 15 decisions on collective complaints that invoked Article 30.[42] While all conclusions have been analyzed, I draw primarily on the decisions as they more precisely and in more depth address and articulate the scope of Article 30 in terms of the extent to which it does and does not cover interpersonal exclusion.[43]

The provision within the Charter reads as follows:

> "With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to protection against […] social exclusion, the Parties undertake: [t]o take measures within the framework of an overall and co-ordinated approach to promote the effective access of persons who live or risk living in a situation of social exclusion […], to, in particular, employment, housing, training, education, culture and social and medical assistance".[44]

[38] European Social Charter (Revised) 1996, Art. 30.
[39] Explanatory Report to the European Social Charter (Revised) 1996, §113.
[40] Conclusions 2013, Statement of Interpretation on Article 30.
[41] Council of Europe (2023), *Digest of the Conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights*, HUDOC-ESC (coe.int), (accessed 03 June 2024).
[42] *Digest of the Decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights* 2023.
[43] For example, see *International Movement ATD Fourth World v. France*, Complaint No. 33/2006, decision on the merits 5 December 2007, §§93-94, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-33-2006-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *Médecins du Monde – International v. France*, Complaint No. 67/2011, decision on the merits 11 September 2012, §105, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-67-2011-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium*, Complaint No. 75/2011, decision on the merits 18 March 2013, §§193-194, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-75-2011-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *European Committee for Home-Based Priority Action for the Child and the Family (EUROCEF) v. France*, Complaint No. 82/2012, decision on the merits 19 March 2013, §§56-58, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-82-2012-dadmissandmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) v. the Netherlands*, Complaint No. 86/2012, decision on the merits 2 July 2014, §§219-225, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-86-2012-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. Ireland*, Complaint No. 100/2013, decision on the merits of 1 December 2015, §§185-189, 191, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-100-2013-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Ireland*, Complaint No. 110/2014, decision on the merits of 12 May 2017, §§162-165, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-110-2014-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *European Committee for Home-Based Priority Action for the Child and the Family (EUROCEF) v. France*, Complaint No. 114/2015, decision on the merits of 24 January 2018, §§181-184, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-114-2015-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024).
[44] European Social Charter (Revised) 1996 Art. 30.

Social exclusion is understood as "involving obstacles to inclusion and citizen participation".[45] It may refer to "persons who find themselves in a position of extreme poverty", as well as persons who are "denied access to certain rights" resulting from long periods of illness, breakdown of their families, violence, release from prison, marginal behavior,[46] "insolvency, […], unemployment, homelessness, insufficient education or other social difficulties."[47]

An "overall and co-ordinated approach" requires States to adopt a comprehensive analytical framework,[48] including the adoption of legislations and policies as well as the appropriate allocation and prioritization of financial and non-financial resources aimed at removing and preventing obstacles to access fundamental social rights,[49] including psychological and socio-cultural obstacles to accessing rights.[50] The measures should address persons who face or risk facing exclusion;[51] and move "beyond a sectoral or target group approach"[52] but "specifically target the most vulnerable groups and regions," where necessary.[53] The Committee assesses compliance with Article 30 by taking into account a set

[45] Conclusions 2013, Statement of Interpretation on Article 30.
[46] Explanatory Report to the European Social Charter (Revised) 1996, §114.
[47] Conclusions 2007, Finland, <http://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2007/def/FIN/30//EN>, (accessed 10 May 2019) quoted Lukas 2021, p. 325.
[48] Conclusions 2003, France, <http://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2003/def/FRA/30//EN>, (accessed 22 March 2024); European Committee of Social Rights (2018), Conclusions 2017, Press Briefing Elements, https://rm.coe.int/press-briefing-elementsconclusions-2017n/168077fedf (accessed 30 March 2024).
[49] Conclusions 2005, Slovenia, <http://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2005/def/SVN/30//EN>, (accessed 18 March 2024); *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium*, Complaint No. 75/2011, §197; *International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium* Complaint No. 62/2010, decision on the merits 21 March 2012, §§113, 201, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-62-2010-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France,* Complaint No. 51/2008, decision on the merits 29 October 2009, §§47, 93, 99, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-51-2008-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *European Roma Rights Centre v. Bulgaria*, Complaint No. 31/2005, decision on the merits of 18 October 2006, §35, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng/?i=cc-31-2005-dmerits-en>, (accessed 29 May 2024); *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy*, Complaint No. 58/2009, decision on the merits 25 June 2010, §107, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-58-2009-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024).
[50] Conclusions 2003, France; Conclusions 2005, Slovenia; Conclusions 2015, Ukraine, <http://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2015/def/UKR/31/2/EN>, (accessed 18 March 2024).
[51] Explanatory Report to the European Social Charter (Revised) 1996, §116.
[52] Lukas 2021, p. 326.
[53] Conclusions 2003, France.

of indicators, including the level of resources employed by the State[54] and the measures or practices which fall within the scope of other substantive provisions of the Charter.[55]

A central feature of Article 30 is the requirement for states to assess the effectiveness of the measures taken in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including social partners, organizations representing socially excluded persons,[56] as well as persons affected by exclusion themselves[57] – as "indirect consultation arrangements may not always be in the best interest of those concerned"[58] – thereby contributing to their empowerment.[59] Repeatedly stressed by the Committee,[60] the involvement of those concerned is the main link of Article 30 to addressing the interpersonal dimension of social exclusion which has so far not been a major focal point in the Committee's conclusions[61] and decisions.

Indeed, in the 13 collective complaints where Article 30 was applicable, the applicants' complaints primarily centered around de jure barriers to housing,[62] care facilities for persons with disabilities,[63] shelter for homeless persons,[64] and accommodation for travelers;[65] legal

[54] Conclusions 2013, Statement of Interpretation on Article 30.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Explanatory Report to the European Social Charter (Revised) 1996, §117.
[57] *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France,* Complaint No. 51/2008, §93; *International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium* Complaint No. 62/2010, §204; Conclusions 2003, France.
[58] *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy*, Complaint No. 58/2009, §108.
[59] Conclusions 2021, Norway, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=2021/def/NOR/30/EN>, (accessed 31 March 2024).
[60] Explanatory Report to the European Social Charter (Revised) 1996, §117; Conclusions 2021, Turkey; Conclusions 2021, Serbia; Conclusions 2021, Estonia; Conclusions 2021, Latvia; Conclusions 2021, Ukraine; *European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) v. the Netherlands*, Complaint No. 86/2012, §227; *European Committee for Home-Based Priority Action for the Child and the Family (EUROCEF) v. France,* Complaint No. 114/2015, §185.
[61] *Digest of the Conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights* 2023; European Committee of Social Rights (2018), Conclusions 2017, Press Briefing Elements; European Committee of Social Rights (2022), Conclusions 2021, Press Briefing Elements, https://rm.coe.int/conclusions-2021-press-briefing-final-en/1680a5eed6 (accessed 30 March 2024).
[62] *International Movement ATD Fourth World v. France*, Complaint No. 33/2006, §160; *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France,* Complaint No. 51/2008, §91; *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy*, Complaint No. 58/2009, §93; *European Roma Rights Centre v. Portugal*, Complaint No. 61/2010, decision on the merits 30 June 2011, §61, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-61-2010-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024); *Médecins du Monde – International v. France,* Complaint No. 67/2011, §102; *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Ireland,* Complaint No. 110/2014, §154.
[63] *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium*, Complaint No. 75/2011, §189.
[64] *European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) v. the Netherlands*, Complaint No. 86/2012, §§212.
[65] *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. Ireland,* Complaint No. 100/2013, §182.

status and social benefits;[66] civic and political participation;[67] lack of a coordinated approach;[68] failure to collect data to assess the situation;[69] inadequate allocation of resources;[70] and risks of social exclusion triggered by the suspension of family allowances of vulnerable people,[71] the failure to provide adequate social and economic protection,[72] and the threat to schooling and regularization of unaccompanied foreign minors.[73] Occasionally, however, aspects relating to the interpersonal dimension of exclusion have been brought up by the applicants. For example, ERRC (v. France) argued that the lack of an overall national policy on housing for travelers "contributes to [their] *feeling* of social exclusion" [emphasis added].[74] Similarly, ERRC (v. Portugal) considered that the creation of segregated Roma neighborhoods "has led to a *stigmatisation* of such neighbourhoods among the general public" [emphasis added], resulting in the increased social exclusion of Roma.[75] Finally, ATD Fourth World alleged that inadequate housing also has adverse consequences on "the family's *relations* with the world outside," and on the education of children who "*share their parents' pain and distress*" [emphases added].[76]

Interpersonal exclusion has also occasionally been addressed by the Committee in both its conclusions and decisions. For example, it acknowledges that "[l]iving in a situation of

[66] *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy*, Complaint No. 58/2009, §92.
[67] Ibid, §94; *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Ireland*, Complaint No. 110/2014, §156; *European Roma and Travellers Forum v. France*, Complaint No. 64/2011, decision on the merits 24 January 2012, §68, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng?i=cc-64-2011-dmerits-en>, (accessed 22 February 2024).
[68] *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France*, Complaint No. 51/2008, §91; *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy*, Complaint No. 58/2009, §92; *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium*, Complaint No. 75/2011, §189; *European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) v. the Netherlands*, Complaint No. 86/2012, §§213-215.
[69] *International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium* Complaint No. 62/2010, §190.
[70] *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Ireland*, Complaint No. 110/2014, §155.
[71] *European Committee for Home-Based Priority Action for the Child and the Family (EUROCEF) v. France*, Complaint No. 82/2012, §54.
[72] *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Ireland*, Complaint No. 110/2014, §154.
[73] *European Committee for Home-Based Priority Action for the Child and the Family (EUROCEF) v. France*, Complaint No. 114/2015, §179.
[74] *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France*, Complaint No. 51/2008, §91.
[75] *European Roma Rights Centre v. Portugal*, Complaint No. 61/2010, §62.
[76] *International Movement ATD Fourth World v. France*, Complaint No. 33/2006, decision on the merits 5 December 2007, §§160-161.

social exclusion violates the *dignity* of human beings" [emphasis added].[77] It further noted the importance of community empowerment[78] and to combat "psychological and socio-cultural" obstacles to accessing rights.[79] Finally, it took note of the adverse effects of stigmatization on social exclusion.[80]

Building on these cautious links to interpersonal exclusion, hints of the Article's potential to encapsulate interpersonal inclusion can be drawn when the Committee stresses that the scope of Article 30 should not be interpreted "too narrowly", [81] reflecting the "multidimensional phenomenon" of social exclusion. [82] Furthermore, the Committee has repeatedly emphasized that "the aim and purpose of the Charter […] is to protect rights not merely theoretically, but also in fact",[83] and it is this human rights approach that has been consistently applied by the Committee.[84] That is, the Charter is a living instrument "dedicated to certain values which inspired it: dignity, autonomy, equality, solidarity", [85] and "a teleological approach should be adopted when interpreting the Charter,"[86] so to "give life and meaning to fundamental social rights."[87]

Despite the existing cautious links between Article 30 and interpersonal exclusion, which showcase its potential to address this type of exclusion, the preceding analysis points at considerable shortcomings of Article 30 to combat interpersonal exclusion. These

[77] *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France*, Complaint No. 51/2008, §93.
[78] *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy*, Complaint No. 58/2009, §106.
[79] *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium*, Complaint No. 75/2011, §197; *International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium* Complaint No. 62/2010, §§113, 201; *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France*, Complaint No. 51/2008, §§47, 93, 99; *European Roma Rights Centre v. Bulgaria*, Complaint No. 31/2005, §35.
[80] *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy*, Complaint No. 58/2009, §109.
[81] *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France*, Complaint No. 51/2008, §99.
[82] *International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium* Complaint No. 62/2010, §203.
[83] *International Commission of Jurists v. Portugal*, Complaint No. 1/1998, decision on the merits of 09 September 1999, §32, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng/?i=cc-01-1998-dmerits-en>, (accessed 10 May 2024).
[84] *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) v. Italy*, Complaint No. 58/2009, §107.
[85] *International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) v. France***,** Complaint No. 14/2003, decision on the merits of 08 September 2004, §27, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng/?i=cc-14-2003-dmerits-en>, (accessed 10 May 2024).
[86] *World Organisation against Torture ("OMCT") v. Ireland*, Complaint No. 18/2003, decision on the merits of 07 December 2004, §60, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng/?i=cc-18-2003-dmerits-en>, (accessed 28 May 2024).
[87] *International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) v. France***,** Complaint No. 14/2003, §29.

shortcomings reflect a gap in top-down legalistic human rights approaches more generally when it comes to their ability to combat interpersonal exclusion, the topic of the proceeding chapter.

3. THE "WHY" AND "HOW" OF A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

3.1. The Limits of Top-Down Approaches to Social Inclusion

I focus on two challenges top-down imposed law faces when it comes to combatting interpersonal exclusion, the first is conceptual, the second practical. Conceptually, it is difficult to identify and articulate what exactly is required under a law protecting against exclusion and of whom it would be required, that is, who, exactly, is "doing" the "excluding".[88] Current human rights practice tends to center around the vertical relationship between the individual and the State and finds relational goods and horizontal subsidiarity hard to account for.[89] However, contrary to that individualistic paradigm, at the heart of the challenge of inclusion and participation is in fact the structural human need for relationship and belonging.[90] Social exclusion is not easily reducible to the (relatively) rigid language of rights as it reflects complex interrelationships, namely "psychosocial elements such as shame and humiliation and loss of a sense of self-worth; the breakdown of relationships at all levels, from families to neighborhoods to broader associations of civic life; barriers of communication and language; and so on."[91] This interpersonal dimension of social exclusion, which is horizontal in nature as

[88] John Finnis, "Chapter VIII," essay, in *National Law and Natural Rights*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2011).
[89] Carozza 2018.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid, p. 232.

it is not necessarily the State that excludes but citizens towards each other, is therefore difficult to be captured via the traditional, predominantly vertical human rights framework alone.[92]

In addition to conceptual challenges, practically, top-down imposed law is also very limited in bringing about substantial social change. "At the margins, law sometimes leads and often follows societal attitudes […], but rarely is it dramatically different from them. So, to expect from law the eradication of social exclusion, and the generation of inclusiveness and participation, is already necessarily a semi-utopian project at best."[93] This assertion is confirmed by previous social movements, from civil rights to marriage equality, where "deeply held emotional commitments to the status quo",[94] coined by private prejudice and stereotyping were slower to change than legal rights and public rhetoric,[95] and indeed survive court victories.[96] The swiftness of the constitutional triumph in *Goodridge* was only possible because public opinion underwent a sea change in that period,[97] similar with *Brown*, *Roe*, and *Obergefell*.[98] Thus, it is challenging for law on its own to stamp out interpersonal exclusion.[99]

Bearing these limitations in mind; Carozza (2015) eloquently described the contribution law can have to contribute to inclusion: "[t]he mechanisms of human rights can't make the seedlings of participation and inclusion germinate, but they can nourish the soil in which they sprout and protect them from being trampled so that they have the opportunity to grow strong

[92] Jennie Popay, *Understanding and Tackling Social Exclusion: Final Report to the Who Commission on Social Determinants of Health from the Social Exclusion Knowledge Network* (Geneva: WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, 2008).
[93] Carozza 2018.
[94] William N. Eskridge, "Marriage Equality's Lessons for Social Movements and Constitutional Change," *William & Mary Law Review* 62, no. 5 (January 2021): 1449–1476, p. 1466, https://doi.org/https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmlr.
[95] Richard Oppel and Lazaro Gamio, "Minneapolis Police Use Force Against Black People at 7 Times the Rate of Whites," *New York Times*, June 3, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/03/us/minneapolis-police-use-of-force.html.
[96] Eskridge 2021.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Helena Silverstein, "The Will of the People: How Public Opinion Has Influenced the Supreme Court and Shaped the Meaning of the Constitution," *American Journal of Legal History* 52, no. 2 (April 2012): 237–240, https://doi.org/10.1093/ajlh/52.2.237.
[99] Lincoln Quillian, "Does Unconscious Racism Exist?," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 71, no. 1 (March 2008): 6–11, https://doi.org/10.1177/019027250807100103.

and flourish."[100] In other words – although law also aims at de facto protection against exclusion[101] – a particular strengths of law lies in providing especially de jure protection against social exclusion by identifying and removing specific, legal barriers to participation.[102] That is, law can protect "conditions of openness" and "dimensions of freedoms", the conditions for persons to exercise their moral agency and develop initiatives capable of generating greater social inclusion.[103] Law, therefore, can help create space for bottom-up approaches to inclusion to emerge and develop. They have potential to succeed where law-reliant,[104] state-centric,[105] top-down interventions which are often ineffective in meeting the needs of the most affected communities fail.[106] As Raga (2018) put it:

> "[t]he real problems of the world cannot be contemplated from top, where the opulent world resides, to bottom, because the distance is so great that its magnitude and intensity would be difficult to appreciate. It is necessary to invert the order. One must put oneself alongside those who suffer in order to comprehend the extent of their suffering […]. The route, therefore, is not from the macro to the micro. On the contrary, it is from the micro to the macro."[107]

Therefore, many scholars argue for reforms or interventions from the bottom up,[108] which give community groups authority and control over decisions and resources with special

[100] Carozza 2018, p. 245.
[101] For example, see European Committee of Social Rights (2019), Factsheet on the University Women of Europe Decisions, Complaint No. 124-138/2016, 310th Session, 2-4 December 2019, https://rm.coe.int/uwe-decisions-factsheet-en/16809ede22 (accessed 04 June 2024).
[102] Haris Gazdar, Syeda Quratulain Masood, and Haider Naqvi, "Bottom Up or Top Down? Exclusion and Citizenship in Pakistan," *International Household Survey Network*, August 2013, 1–20, http://www.researchcollective.org/Documents/Bottom_Up_or_Top_Down_Final Report.pdf; Mathieson et al. 2008.
[103] Carozza 2018, p. 245.
[104] Stanley Hoffmann, "The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism," *Foreign Policy*, no. 98 (1995): 159–177, https://doi.org/10.2307/1148964.
[105] Manase Kudzai Chiweshe, "Efficacy of Top-Down Approaches to Post-Conflict Social Coexistence and Community Building: Experiences from Zimbabwe," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 16, no. 2 (2016): 11–34.
[106] Liaga and Wielenga 2020.
[107] José T. Raga, "Is Inequality of Any Kind an Obstacle for Social Integration and Participation? Towards an Integral Ecology," essay, in *Towards a Participatory Society: New Roads to Social and Cultural Integration* , ed. Pierpaolo Donati, vol. 21 (Vatican City, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 60–114, p. 70.
[108] Gazdar, Masood, and Naqvi 2013; William Easterly, "Design and Reform of Institutions in LDCs and Transition Economies - Institutions: Top-down or Bottom-Up?," *American Economic Review* 98, no. 2 (2008): 95–99, https://doi.org/http://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/aer.98.2.95; Leahy and Ferri 2024; Pierpaolo Donati and Margaret S. Archer, *The Relational Subject* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Gazdar, Masood, and Naqvi 2013.

efforts to involve marginal groups.[109] Bottom-up approaches contribute to "inclusive equality"[110] and generally "lead to more hopeful results than a delusory top down intervention" when it comes to promoting inclusion of groups that face stigma, prejudices, and discrimination.[111] At the heart of bottom-up action lies the rebuilding of relationships between people[112] through a comprehensive approach that brings together[113] and amplifies various voices from the grassroots level and civil sector.[114]

That being said, a bottom-up approach should not substitute for the failure of the State to promote inclusion,[115] nor is it the magic bullet that solves social inclusion by itself. Still, scholars agree that by complementing top-down approaches and creating synergies, bottom-up approaches have the potential to create sustainable social inclusion.[116] Community-driven action is a powerful tool to "push governments to become more responsive to public demand in general – and to the socially excluded by implication,"[117] and to hold the State accountable.[118] The characteristics a bottom-up approach should have in order to become such a 'powerful tool' is the focus of the proceeding chapter.

[109] Deepa Narayan, Lant Pritchett, and Soumya Kapoor, *Moving out of Poverty: Success from the Bottom Up*, vol. 2, 4 vols. (Washington (DC), Basingstoke: World Bank; Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[110] Leahy and Ferri 2024, p. 3.
[111] Easterly 2008, p. 99.
[112] Harris Englund, "Recognizing Identities, Imagining Alternatives," introduction, in *Rights and the Politics of Recognition in Africa*, ed. Francism B. Nyamnjoh (London: Zed Books, 2004).
[113] Liaga and Wielenga 2020.
[114] Donati and Archer 2015.
[115] Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor 2009.
[116] Ibid; Thania Paffenholz, "Unpacking the Local Turn in Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment towards an Agenda for Future Research," *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 5 (May 4, 2015): 857–874, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1029908; Chetan Kumar and Jos De la Haye, "Hybrid Peacemaking: Building National 'Infrastructures for Peace,'" *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 18, no. 1 (August 12, 2012): 13–20, https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01801003; Archer 2018; Gazdar, Masood, and Naqvi 2013.
[117] Gazdar, Masood, and Naqvi 2013, p. 8.
[118] Narayan, Pritchett, Kapoor 2009.

3.2. Five Pillars of a Bottom-Up Approach to Social Inclusion

Drawing on a broad range of literature stretching across the fields of civil conflict and peace building, community-driven and collective action, cultural integration, social movements, and strategic litigation, I identify five pillars on which a bottom-up approach to social inclusion should be built on.

3.2.1. Allied Social Groups

For a bottom-up action to inclusion to have an impact, the recruitment of unaffiliated allies is essential.[119] "Allies" being the operational word here, as it is pivotal to, in the early stages of a movement, focus limited resources on those people who already support, or are most open to supporting or learning about the cause concerned, rather than getting pre-occupied with persuading the principled skeptics.[120] Moreover, engaging these "human rights champions" will start moving the national dialogue and the skeptics may just move into the intended direction as a result of a changed culture.[121] These allies could also act as meaningful intermediaries to help transmit bottom-up claims beyond personalized confines and up to the macro-level.[122] Even if the initial ally is small, "a social group that is both strongly motivated […] and widely dispersed throughout society" is a good starting point to achieve structural reform.[123]

[119] Mary Ziegler, *Abortion and the Law in America: Roe v. Wade to the Present* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[120] The Opportunity Agenda, *Talking Human Rights in the United States: A Communications Toolkit*, accessed March 22, 2024, https://www.environmentandhumanrights.org/resources/HumanRightsToolkit.pdf.
[121] Ibid, p. 11.
[122] Emmanuel Lazega, "Participation, Top-Down Collegiality and Intermediaries," essay, in *Towards a Participatory Society: New Roads to Social and Cultural Integration* , ed. Pierpaolo Donati, vol. 21 (Vatican City, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 482–98; Paul S.N. Lee, "Communication, Participation and Socio-Cultural Integration," essay, in *Towards a Participatory Society: New Roads to Social and Cultural Integration*, ed. Pierpaolo Donati, vol. 21 (Vatican City, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 530–41.
[123] Eskridge 2021, p. 1467.

The factors that make such allied social groups an effective means of collective action to combat social exclusion have been extensively studied by Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor (2009).[124] Here, families emerged as pivotal units for successful collective actions, thanks to underlying bonds of trust – which both derives from and reinforces interactions and relationships built over time – solidarity, loyalty, and stability.[125] Thus, allied social groups that support community-driven approaches should exhibit these characteristics as well in their interaction with those they support.[126] Most importantly, the "allied social groups" and those they support should not remain a mere aggregate of persons but become a collective of "relational subjects",[127] capable of creating a sense of "togetherness"[128] by generating a sense of relatability and capitalizing on shared values.[129]

3.2.2. Accessibility

A bottom-up approach to social inclusion needs to be accessible, in that it is necessarily "pro exclusis". That is, the approach should be in the best interest and tailored towards the needs and demands of the excluded group it aims to support[130] in order to enable *participation on an equal basis* with others.[131] In practice, accessibility is achieved through listening to the needs of those concerned, which may vary even within that "category" of people. For example, a recent study on cultural participation of persons with disability revealed that while many

[124] Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor 2009.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Donati and Archer 2015.
[128] Adam Curle, "New Challenges for Citizen Peacemaking," *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 10, no. 2 (April 1994): 96–105, https://doi.org/10.1080/07488009408409148.
[129] Archer 2018.
[130] Gazdar, Masood, and Naqvi 2013; Minnerath 2018.
[131] "Article 9 - Accessibility | Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD)," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Social Inclusion, accessed March 15, 2024, https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/article-9-accessibility#:~:text=To%20enable%20persons%20with%20disabilities%20to%20live%20independently,public%2C%20both%20in%20urban%20and%20in%20rural%20areas.

participants stressed the importance of integrated opportunities, so "just an event" which is accessible for everyone but not marketed towards a specific group,[132] separate events were sometimes preferred by some, particularly deaf, participants.[133] Furthermore, an accessible approach to inclusion often requires innovation and creativity, for example, a blind participant in the above-mentioned study has been invited on stage to experience the theater play through her senses.[134] In addition to an accessible transmission of information, the "medium" or "venue" used to convey different perspectives should also be appealing and tailored to the target audience. For example, the Arts have been identified as a medium that is accessible to a variety of people.[135] Not only is accessibility essential as a means to change mainstream cultural representation and create new modes of participation, but even the very process of working towards accessibility makes people conscious of others' approaches to "perceiving, interpreting and meaning-making", creating a more inclusive society.[136]

3.2.3. Empowerment

A bottom-up approach to inclusion needs to be built on meaningful and effective participation by those affected and contribute to their empowerment. In fact, "any polity fostering the common good should appeal to participation of all social forces," as inclusive societies are built "first of all by ensuring the effective conditions of free participation of all.[137] This is reflective of the paradigm that a person "is always and everywhere endowed with the *need and the right* to participate in all affairs that may concern him/her" [emphasis added].[138]

[132] Leahy and Ferri 2024.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Bree Hadley, "Participation, Politics and Provocations: People with Disabilities as Non-Conciliatory Audiences," *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 12, no. 1 (2015): 154–174, p. 168.
[137] Minnerath 2018, p. 50.
[138] Ibid, p. 50.

That is, society does not *grant* participation but needs to recognize that the right of everyone to participate is not negotiable.[139]

In top-down approaches, decisional power is rarely shared with vulnerable citizens,[140] such as those suffering exclusion, and their demands may not truly be considered.[141] Consequently, affected persons stress, that "outsiders" – NGOs or governments – often get it wrong and force inappropriate help upon them,[142] which renders the participation of those affected ever more vital.[143]

An essential characteristic of community-driven as opposed to top-down approaches is that the former more effectively allows affected communities to voice their own assessment of the issues they encounter.[144] In fact, those who are experiencing exclusion and must live with its effects are best positioned to devise appropriate solutions and responses to repair their communities and achieve restorative justice.[145] Bottom-up approaches that combat social exclusion indeed *require* engaged agents who are critical of the social arrangements and the role they themselves adopt within them.[146] Such approaches are necessarily "counter-hegemonic",[147] allowing excluded persons to become visible and a plurality of voices to be heard and move people into action.[148] Not only is this crucial for challenging the cultural mainstream[149] and enabling a collective learning process,[150] but greater participation

[139] Ibid.
[140] Frank Fischer, "Participatory Governance: From Theory to Practice," essay, in *Oxford Handbook of Governance*, ed. David Levi-Faur (Oxford University Press, 2012).
[141] Ibid.
[142] Lars Schäfer, "Wohnungs- Und Obdachlosigkeit," Diakonie Deutschland, August 2, 2023, https://www.diakonie.de/wissen-kompakt-wohnungs-und-obdachlosigkeit.
[143] Narayan, Pritchett, Kapoor 2009.
[144] Liaga and Wielenga 2020.
[145] Alex Thomson and Niki Jazdowska, "Bringing in the Grassroots: Transitional Justice in Zimbabwe," *Conflict, Security & Development* 12, no. 1 (March 2012): 75–102, https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2012.667662, p. 77.
[146] Margaret S. Archer, "The Reflexive Imperative in Late Modernity," *Cambridge University Press*, May 3, 2012, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139108058.
[147] Alex Ramsbotham, Alhaji M. Bah, and Fanny Calder, "Enhancing African Peace and Security Capacity: A Useful Role for the UK and the G8?," *International Affairs* 81, no. 2 (March 2005): 325–39, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2005.00453.x.
[148] Lee 2018.
[149] Leahy and Ferri 2024.
[150] Lazega 2018.

inevitably contributes to more inclusion in society writ large.[151] Most importantly, participation via bottom-up approaches "provides an opportunity for community empowerment that conventional […] approaches have failed to provide."[152] In short, participation is empowering.[153]

3.2.4. Community-Building

A bottom-up approach to social inclusion needs to bridge the gap between the excluded group and the mainstream public. Excluded people have a propensity to create spontaneous bonding groups among themselves[154] which can be helpful in coping with the situation and meeting immediate needs, and might provide the foundation for scaling up and creating social movements. Yet, these groups do not by themselves contribute to the elimination of exclusion and may even perpetuate inequalities as the group members also have limited resources and information.[155] Therefore, bottom-up approaches to inclusion should opt for inter-group mediation,[156] that is, they should aim at destroying the artificial "I / YOU antagonism" that often exists between the excluded group and the mainstream public.[157] Bridging this gap can create inter-group solidarity[158] by raising more awareness about alternative ways of experiencing the world[159] and in doing so challenge assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes

[151] Leahy and Ferri 2024.
[152] Evan D.G. Fraser et al., "Bottom up and Top down: Analysis of Participatory Processes for Sustainability Indicator Identification as a Pathway to Community Empowerment and Sustainable Environmental Management," *Journal of Environmental Management* 78, no. 2 (January 2006): 114–27, p. 114, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2005.04.009.
[153] Gazdar, Masood, and Naqvi, 2013; Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor 2009; Leahy and Ferri 2024.
[154] Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor 2009.
[155] Ibid.
[156] David Udofia, "Peacebuilding Mechanisms in Akwa Ibom State Oil-Bearing Communities in Nigeria," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 1, no. 2 (2011): 104–119, https://doi.org/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.1.2.104; Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor 2009.
[157] Raga 2018.
[158] Bree Hadley et al., "Cultural Safety as a Foundation for Allyship in Disability Arts," *Disability & Society* 39, no. 1 (May 6, 2022): 213–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2022.2067468, p.5.
[159] Leahy and Ferri 2024.

that may underly the mainstream cultural discourse.[160] In order to bridge this gap, to create more inclusive societies and to thereby open more opportunities for excluded people to participate and shape culture,[161] sincere and open dialogue among members of different groups is key. Indeed, "communication can help to increase understanding [and] is crucial in integrating people into a community."[162]

Effective communication should convey the following aspects:

Relatability. Instead of focusing on our "accidental differences", that "build the walls that will isolate some […] from others",[163] we should concentrate on our core and shared values, such as dignity, equity and solidarity, making audiences more receptive to unfamiliar arguments.[164]

Structural Issues. While it might be compelling to focus on the plight of individuals, research shows that an exclusive focus on such stories suggests to audiences that the respective people should solve their problems themselves, without outside intervention or support.[165] Because "how we talk about our problems is in fact part of our problem",[166] it is important to situate stories into a broader context, highlighting systemic injustices.[167]

No Cons, Only Pros. It is important to explicitly point out to the skeptics that proposed changes would not ensue any disadvantages for themselves, and to frame the issue in a way that its fulfillment is in the interest of the society as a whole.[168] The core message should be that values of inclusion and participation make the system stronger, that is, that it is better for

[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Lee 2018.
[163] Raga 2018, p. 63.
[164] Eskridge 2021.
[165] The Opportunity Agenda *Talking Human Rights in the United States: A Communications Toolkit.*
[166] Douglas V. Porpora and Pierpaolo Donati, "The Successes and Failures: Systems in Combatting Social and Cultural Exclusion," essay, in *Towards a Participatory Society: New Roads to Social and Cultural Integration*, vol. 21 (Vatican City, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 203–227, p. 204.
[167] The Opportunity Agenda, *Talking Human Rights in the United States: A Communications Toolkit*.
[168] Justin Driver, "Rethinking the Interest Convergence Thesis," *Northwestern University Law Review* 105, no. 1 (2011): 149–97, https://doi.org/https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234109505.pdf; Minnerath 2018.

everyone to live in an inclusive society that pays attention to human rights, rather than one that excludes parts of its people.[169]

3.2.5. A Process

It is unlikely that sustainable, structural change can be created immediately or dramatically,[170] as the promotion of values, concerns, and solutions in the public discourse – so that it prompts the public to question their longstanding and potentially hardened presumptions – is a long-term process.[171] Bottom-up approaches are likely to be impactful in the long-term if they produce "positive […] consequences for a visible and widely dispersed group of beneficiaries" and are not disadvantageous for the wider community,[172] and have "unexpected messengers" speak out in support of the causes at hand.[173] Additionally, the bottom-up approaches should establish linkages between the cultural and structural, that is, between the micro- and the macro level to generate institutional change.[174] Nevertheless, community-drive action is worth the effort, as indeed most participatory rights in Europe stem from assertive and coherently organized social movements in the 20th century.[175]

The next chapter will be dedicated to the practical implementation of a bottom-up approach built on the above-mentioned five pillars, using the interpersonal exclusion faced by homeless persons living in Vienna as a case study.

[169] The Opportunity Agenda, *Talking Human Rights in the United States: A Communications Toolkit.*
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Eskridge 2021, p. 1465.
[173] Ibid. p. 1470.
[174] Archer 2018.
[175] Ibid.

4. A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO HOMELESS PERSONS' INTERPERSONAL EXCLUSION

4.1. Homeless Persons' Interpersonal Exclusion

Homeless persons are a group particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, as confirmed by a study conducted by Diakonie Deutschland, and Evangelischer Bundesfachverband Existenzsicherung und Teilhabe e.V. (EBET).[176] "Homelessness" refers to both persons lacking a home and persons who in addition also lack shelter and may live in public spaces such as parks, gardens, train stations, basements or construction sites.[177] The term will be used in this overarching sense throughout the thesis, unless specified otherwise.

According to Statistik Austria, six percent of Austrians experience a phase of homelessness during their lifetime, and more than 20.000 persons experienced homelessness in 2023, with numbers rising in the post-pandemic years.[178] As not everyone registers with homeless shelters or local authorities, the actual number of homeless persons is estimated to be much higher still.[179]

As a home is the center of physical, social, economic, and emotional well-being, lacking a home puts both civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights at risk.[180] Regarding the former, homelessness ensues risks to the right to life (Article 2), freedom from inhuman treatment (Article 3), the right to private and family life, including physical and mental integrity (Article 8), and freedom from discrimination (Article 14) of the European

[176] Schäfer 2023.
[177] "Fakten Zu Obdach- Und Wohnungslosigkeit - Fsw Obdach," Obdach Wien, accessed February 20, 2024, https://www.obdach.wien/p/hintergruende-obdach-u-wohnungslosigkeit.
[178] Mühlböck et al., 2023.
[179] *„WENN WOHNEN EIN MENSCHENRECHT WÄRE, DANN WÜRDE ICH SO NICHT WOHNEN": HÜRDEN BEIM ZUGANG ZUR WOHNUNGSLOSENHILFE IN ÖSTERREICH* 2022.
[180] rep., *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in This Context* (United Nations Human Rights Council, Thirty-seventh Session, January 15, 2018), p.9. https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g18/007/65/pdf/g1800765.pdf?token=dT9tp5vvKCdjw2aOHw&fe=true.

Convention on Human Rights.[181] Homelessness has also adverse implications on many socio-economic rights, including the right to work (Article 1), access to health care (Article 11), social security allowances (Article 12), social and medical assistance (Article 13), the benefit of social welfare services (Article 14), the rights of persons with disabilities (Article 15), the social, legal and economic protection of the family (Article 16) as well as of children and young persons (Article 17), the rights of the elderly (Article 23), the right to housing (Article 31) and the non-discrimination clause (Art. E) of the European Social Charter.[182] While these rights are each linked to potential implications of homelessness, and have been studied as such,[183] the most comprehensive right encapsulating the implications of homelessness is Article 30 of the European Social Charter, the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion.

Institutionalized barriers to the social inclusion of homeless persons are manyfold in Austria: first, there exists systematic discrimination of groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, immigrants with EU citizenship that worked under seasonal or informal contracts, migrants and refugees, the "working-poor", LGBTIQ persons, sex workers, and young adults.[184] Second, fragmented housing and homeless assistance policies exist,[185] limiting the meaningful involvement of affected persons in policy-making processes at the federal level.[186] Third, there is restricted applicability of state housing policies connected, among others, to one's eligibility to welfare benefits which require an Austrian citizenship or

[181] *Warda Osman Jasin v. Denmark*, CCPR/C/114/D/2360/2014, UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), 25 September 2015, https://www.refworld.org/jurisprudence/caselaw/hrc/2015/en/116873; *Jama Warsame v. Canada*, CCPR/C/102/D/1959/2010, UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), 1 September 2011, https://www.refworld.org/jurisprudence/caselaw/hrc/2011/en/84029.
[182] Lukas 2021, p. 325.
[183] Elisabeth Hammer, "Don't Look Away: How a Society without Homelessness Is Possible," *European Journal of Homelessness* 17, no. 2 (2023): 53–64.
[184] *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in This Context*, 2018.
[185] "BGBl. Nr. 1/1930 Zuletzt Geändert Durch BGBl. I Nr. 100/2003, Artikel 15a.," RIS, January 1, 2004, https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/eli/bgbl/1930/1/A15a/NOR40045742.
[186] *„WENN WOHNEN EIN MENSCHENRECHT WÄRE, DANN WÜRDE ICH SO NICHT WOHNEN": HÜRDEN BEIM ZUGANG ZUR WOHNUNGSLOSENHILFE IN ÖSTERREICH* 2022.

equivalent.[187] Finally, practical barriers to accessing support, including shelters, revolve around linguistic, technological, bureaucratic, and financial obstacles.[188] As these aspects of social exclusion are already on the radar of international human rights organizations,[189] the focus of this thesis will be on the interpersonal dimension of social exclusion.

Empirical research by Amnesty International[190] and Diakonie[191] found that Austrians' prevailing view of 'the homeless' is heavily influenced by the conviction that housing is first and foremost a commodity rather than a human right to which everyone is entitled to, and that homelessness traces back to individual failure rather than to structural failures by the State. These perceptions, rooted in principles of individualism and personal responsibility, as well as the non-involvement of homeless persons in decision-making processes, contribute to the ongoing stigmatization of homeless persons within society.[192] They are often degraded to beggars or supplicants that want handouts from the State.[193] Consequently, they pervasively face social aversion, coldness, discrimination, marginalization, prejudices, and stigmatization.[194] If they do overcome their perceived shame of their situation and ask for help,[195] support networks break away, as one Amnesty interviewee recalls: "[i]t quickly turned out that all my old contacts were suddenly gone. They had excuses why I couldn't live with them."[196] Social exclusion "is cruel", as another interviewee recalls: "[y]ou represent

[187] Erläuternde Anmerkungen zum Sozialhilfe -Grundgesetz, 514 der Beilagen XXVI. GP, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVI/I/I_00514/fname_740754.pdf.
[188] Mühlböck et al., 2023.
[189] *„WENN WOHNEN EIN MENSCHENRECHT WÄRE, DANN WÜRDE ICH SO NICHT WOHNEN": HÜRDEN BEIM ZUGANG ZUR WOHNUNGSLOSENHILFE IN ÖSTERREICH* 2022.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Schäfer 2023.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] *„WENN WOHNEN EIN MENSCHENRECHT WÄRE, DANN WÜRDE ICH SO NICHT WOHNEN": HÜRDEN BEIM ZUGANG ZUR WOHNUNGSLOSENHILFE IN ÖSTERREICH* 2022.

everything that society wants to exclude, every stigma, every prejudice. Enduring this is so difficult and worse than anything else."[197]

Therefore, in order to tackle the root causes of interpersonal exclusion of homeless persons in Austria and not merely suppress the symptoms thereof, Amnesty calls for a paradigm shift in Austria,[198] the aim of the proceeding case study.

4.2. Five Pillars of a Bottom-Up Approach to Social Inclusion – Case Study

Scaffolded around the theoretical framework outlined in Chapters 3.2.1-3.2.5, I designed a bottom-up approach that connected students from Central European University with homeless persons in Vienna. Through a series of workshops, the participants overcame mutual reservations and collectively worked through their experiences of exclusion. Two concluding community-building events open to the Austrian public served to advocate the principles of openness, inclusion, and interaction on eye-level beyond the bounds of the project. The project implementation as a whole was a process that spanned across six months.

4.2.1. Allied Social Groups

The first step was to find an organization which works with homeless persons that would host and monitor the implementation of the project. I found this organization in MUT (Mensch|Umwelt|Tier), a Viennese NGO whose mission it is to provide urgent as well as regular support to those who need it in an unbureaucratic, efficient and sustainable manner.[199] I chose MUT because, unlike day center and emergency shelters which often function on a delicate, hierarchical "client-supervisor" relationship, MUT's interaction with homeless

[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] "Der Verein," Verein MUT, accessed April 30, 2024, https://verein-mut.eu/verein-mut/.

persons happens on eye-level, an important condition for the success of the project. Funded 95 percent via private donations,[200] MUT employees have been going above and beyond to help homeless persons since 2005 and therefore are trusted by many homeless persons in Vienna.

Next, I recruited student volunteers. A vital part in the application process, besides ensuring their openness and motivation to participate in the project, was to be unequivocally clear that whenever we would interact with homeless persons, it would happen respectfully and on eye-level. The students' diverse personal backgrounds based on which they had experienced social exclusion themselves enabled them to relate on a certain level to the social exclusion experienced by homeless persons.

To strengthen relatability, we conducted several role-plays and experiments during the workshops, which aimed at sensitizing the students to what interpersonal social exclusion feels like. Moreover, during the workshops, we have also covered a variety of different topics related to homelessness, including, but not limited to, addiction, human rights violations, institutionalized exclusion, mental health, overcoming prejudices, and poverty in Austria. Familiarizing and sensitizing the students in regard to these topics had been the basis for the community-building events.

4.2.2. Accessibility

From the very beginning, the project was designed to be accessible for all participants, which had multi-faceted implications. For example, the event locations were chosen to be at Esterhazy Park and Fritz-Grünbaum Platz in Mariahilf, Vienna, which are locations easily reachable for homeless persons. Designing two separate flyers – one for homeless persons and one for the public – to promote the community-building events in a fashion most appealing to

[200] "Mitmachen & Helfen," Verein MUT, accessed April 30, 2024, https://verein-mut.eu/mitmachen-helfen/.

our respective audience constituted another layer of accessibility. Finally, and importantly, accessibility meant having low-threshold activities where everyone could participate as equals. Cooking is such an activity, which is why we had a community cooking event hosted by Caritas, connecting homeless persons, the Austrian public, and students. Low-threshold activities centered around food, music, games, and arts and craft also played a central role in our final community-building event and enabled participation by everyone on equal footing.

4.2.3. Empowerment

The entire project was designed based on the meaningful and effective involvement of MUT and homeless persons in Vienna. For example, based on both of their inputs, we started a donation drive collecting hygiene products, sleeping bags and sleeping mats, as well as more than 40 kilos of food. It was also their input which had shaped all the activities that we offered at the community-building events. It was thus not anyone from the outside "forcing" unsolicited support on them, but the homeless persons were in charge of deciding and designing the activities most fitting to their lifestyle and needs throughout the whole process. To further promote participation and thus empowerment, we had a self-defense workshop with both the students and homeless persons under the umbrella of building confidence, setting boundaries, and overcoming mutual reservations.

4.2.4. Community-Building

Two community-building events – a Cultural-Cooking and the Open Day – were aimed at bridging the gap between homeless persons and the Austrian public. The *free*, low-threshold activities already mentioned played an important role here, as they created an environment where neither the homeless persons had to ask for anything from the public, nor did the public

feel pressured to give something to the homeless persons. Instead, everyone could enjoy the food and music which enabled interaction between the public and homeless persons as equals. Furthermore, symbolic activities aimed at bringing homeless persons and the public closer together by displaying and capitalizing shared values. Specifically, we had an arts and craft station set up where everyone could share what "interaction on eye-level" meant to them. The pieces of colored paper were then glued together into a chain that grew longer the more people added to it. Interestingly enough, some values were echoed by many, regardless of their social status, namely equity, and respect, and looking beyond what someone represents.

4.3. Analysis

4.3.1. Homeless Persons and the General Public

Since the project's objective was to combat interpersonal exclusion by bridging the gap between homeless persons and the public via community-building events, I asked thirty-three homeless persons and thirty-one persons representing the Austrian public at both community-building events: "has this event reduced your sense of social exclusion? Why or why not?" and "has the event prompted you to re-think any presumptions you may have had about homeless persons? Why or why not?", respectively. In the name of accessibility, I did not conduct formally structured interviews but rather narrative interviews that fitted the informal context the interviews were taking place in.

The cumulative answers reveal that the experiences of homeless persons and the public were quite congruent, with the main insight being that face-to-face interactions on eye-level reduced both the feeling of exclusion and contributed to letting go of presumptions. One homeless person said "[w]e were all just people having fun and enjoying the food. It didn't feel like anyone was better than anyone else for the moment." Someone else shared that "since a

long time, I felt like being a member of society again. People looked me in the eyes and did not see me as *that* filthy homeless guy." Another homeless person expressed optimism: "I met a few people who really wanted to get to know me and hear my story. It gave me hope that there are people out there who see me as more than my situation." These sentiments were brought straight to the point by someone else who said that "[i]t wasn't just me against the world for once," suggesting that the events have (temporarily) contributed to their sense of inclusion.

Responses by members of the general public echoed these experiences. One person noted that "many of these people had a normal life, and then something went wrong – something beyond their own control, really. Because of unfortunate circumstances they ended up on the street and were completely left alone by family, friends, and the government." These open and honest conversations made the participants realize "how easily any of us could end up in the same situation." Someone else shared that they realized, through a conversation with a homeless person, that "homelessness is really just a label which carries so many prejudices and stereotypes that it creates this group completely outside of, and separate from, the rest. But in the end, these are people just like anyone else and should be treated like anyone else." Therefore, for the people involved, the events contributed to reshaping public perceptions about homelessness and "humanized" homeless persons. Most importantly, the event created awareness and compassion in members of the public, leading them to assume personal responsibility: "I used to think that homelessness was a 'problem' for the government to solve, but now I see that we all have a role to play," as one participant shared.

Despite all the positive and even formative experiences that both homeless persons and the public shared with us, more remains to be done to combat interpersonal exclusion. A few homeless persons reported that they "could tell that some people were uncomfortable around [them]," one person recalling that "a woman made a big detour just to not walk past me." This

suggests that we need more of these types of events to rob them of their "special" character and transform them into something "normal." A higher frequency and wider breadth of these events would also help to reach those people of the general public who are extremely skeptical about interacting with homeless persons.

4.3.2. Student Volunteers

To assess the potential of a bottom-up approach to interpersonal inclusion, I asked my student volunteers the following questions upon completion of the project:

1. What is your KEY take-away from the project?
2. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the project?
3. Has the project prompted you to re-think any presumptions you may have had about homeless persons? Why or why not?
4. In your opinion, has the project had a real-life impact? Why or why not?
5. Do you think the knowledge and experience gained during the project will shape your personal / professional life in the future? If so, how?
6. Would you recommend this project to your friends? Why or why not?

The main take-aways the students described revolved around understanding the significance of social inclusion for homeless people conceptually and in real-life; giving up internalized prejudices towards homeless persons; how "stigma […] destroys the approach humans take with homeless people"; and that even small-scale efforts can mean a lot to people. Although some students criticized the initial "chaos", primarily rooted in personnel changes within MUT, the strengths clearly prevailed. The biggest strength of the project was working closely together with homeless people: "I believe help is more effective when we are actively and directly communicating with the community we are helping," as one participant noted. "Precisely through direct interaction with the homeless in different environments", participants were able to let go of their own internal biases they may have had towards homeless persons. As one participant recalled, "I thought that you could always easily tell by looking at someone if they are homeless or not. But having had the chance to interact and hang out with them, I

learned that many times it is impossible to tell that someone is homeless because homeless people try to cover it up as society stigmatizes homelessness."

Students found the biggest impact of the project was to create a space where homeless persons and the general public could interact on equal footing: "it is very rare for homeless people and not homeless people to interact and regularly meet with each other as equals. I think it is not common for these groups to interact with each other at all but even when they do, most of the time the power dynamics suggests the superiority of not homeless people." The project also had positive impacts on the students themselves, as it made them more aware about what people go through, opened their eyes to certain issues, and allowed them to leave their own "little bubble".

All students would recommend their friends to participate in such a project, primarily because "people tend to interact with people only from their own social class which really splits society up into cliques. However, this project reduces these social cleavages."

4.3.3. MUT

To assess the potential of a bottom-up approach to social inclusion, it is important to consider the value an organization representing excluded persons sees in it. Hence, I asked employees at MUT the following questions upon completion of the project:

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the project?
2. In your opinion, has the project had a real-life impact? Why or why not?
3. Would you recommend other organizations that cater for the needs of homeless persons to cooperate with students in a similar project? Why or why not?

The biggest strength of the project was seen in bringing together on an equal footing persons who would not necessarily come into dialogue with each other otherwise. This was achieved thanks to the project's flexibility in designing activities most suitable to the "world [homeless persons] are living in." Food, picnic blankets, and music created an environment

where everyone "could feel comfortable to open up and interact without fear." Not so much a weakness as a point to consider in the design of the project is the unpredictability that is inherent when working with homeless persons: "you cannot at all predict the situation in which a person is at the moment. At these events, you cannot predict if people know each other, if there have been tensions between them." Therefore, such a project must always be in cooperation with professionals who know what to do when a situation escalates, MUT said. Unpredictability also means that perhaps people may say they participate at an event, but they never show up. A key to such projects, therefore, "is the ability to actively motivate people to join."

The biggest impact echoed by all respondents from MUT has been that the project provided a forum for "people with different backgrounds and statuses to eat and talk together without fear which created a lasting impression on everyone." It also enabled "homeless persons get to tell their stories [and] get their experiences off their chest."

While MUT stresses that organizations that are built on a hierarchical, delicate "supervisor-client" relationship and where social workers have an "extremely demanding, stressful and occasionally dangerous job" are not suitable for such projects, it does recommend organizations that do have the resources to cooperate with students on similar projects: "as a social worker, you often only have about two minutes to talk to a person before you need to move on to the next one. It is very meaningful for homeless persons to have someone to listen to them, though, and students can do that and thereby help both the homeless persons and the social worker." Another upside of such a cooperation is that it can contribute to the visibility of the work of the organization, important for its ability to continue serving homeless persons.

Overall, the analysis of the project implementation illustrates that this bottom-up approach, a six month process built on allied social groups, accessibility, empowerment, and community-building was able to contribute to:

1. reducing homeless persons' sense of social exclusion;
2. breaking down presumptions the public may have against homeless persons;
3. allowing students to explore interaction with other social groups and thereby raising their awareness about social cleavages and exclusion;
4. creating more visibility of the work of organizations that work with homeless persons.

5. CONCLUSION

In an effort to address the gap largely left open by the top-down legalistic human rights framework in addressing interpersonal exclusion, I designed a bottom-up approach that connected homeless persons to students and the general public. The analysis of the case study points at the potential of this bottom-up approach to combat the interpersonal dimension of social exclusion faced by homeless persons. The case study serves as an example and is thus not the only way to implement the five pillars – allied social groups, accessibility, empowerment, community-building, and a process – on which a bottom-up approach to social inclusion should be built. Arguably, a bottom-up approach built on these five pillars – given the breadth of literature and empirical research on the basis of which they were identified – has potential to combat interpersonal exclusion not limited to persons experiencing homelessness. It could thus be a valuable complementation of top-down approaches to social inclusion.

Despite their great potential and versatility, there is a need for awareness about a limitation of bottom-up as opposed to top-down approaches to social inclusion: the former needs to be connected to the latter to achieve sustainable, structural change.[201] Achieving structural change through bottom-up approaches takes longer than it does with top-down approaches, and it requires a lot of commitment, contributing factors, and consistent follow-up. Therefore, sustainable, institutional change is likely to be achieved when the bottom-up and top-down approaches are linked and function in synergy. One way to do just that is for the

[201] Archer 2018; Eskridge 2021.

European Committee of Social Rights, in the realm of Article 30, to more strongly encourage States to support these bottom-up initiatives. In the meantime, we need a paradigm shift where interaction on equal footing among members of different social groups becomes natural, and where interpersonal inclusion is afforded more gravitas, bringing it to the forefront of building open and inclusive societies.

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