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Bakalářská práce

**Voices of Protest in the Digital Space: Britain's Social
Issue Bloggers**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci *Voices of Protest in the Digital Space: Britain's Social Issue Bloggers* zpracovala samostatně pod vedením vedoucí bakalářské práce a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Plzeň, květen 2020

Poděkování

Ráda bych touto cestou poděkovala vedoucí mé bakalářské práce PhDr. Alici Tihelkové, Ph.D., za její odborné vedení, trpělivost a laskavé jednání.

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1 Introduction

This bachelor's thesis deals with Britain's current issues as depicted by social bloggers. The topic of the thesis was selected with respect to the seriousness of the situation in the United Kingdom and connected social problems that affect many British citizens including some bloggers. Blogs are nowadays widespread across the society particularly among younger people, since blogs are relatively young media. Therefore, the topic of the thesis has not yet been sufficiently explored.

The purpose of the thesis is to observe social problems that Britain is facing from a less usual perspective than newspapers or television, to offer candid opinions of British society and to delineate the real consequences of the actions made by Britain's politicians. Britain is facing a series of various social issues, and for the purpose of this bachelor's thesis two social problems were selected, namely housing and the resulting homelessness, and poverty.

The thesis is divided into several parts: an introduction, a theoretical part, a practical part, a summary and a conclusion. The theoretical part provides general knowledge of the selected individual social issues, focusing both on their development and the current state. The main sources for this part are socially-themed printed publications (e.g. Cathy Davis' *Finance for Housing*, Stuart Isaacs' *Social Problems in the UK*, or Kayleigh Garthwaite's *Hunger Pains*) and a number of Internet sources, primarily academic journals and articles, are also used.

The subsequent practical part deals with the impact of the social issues on British bloggers and society. For the purposes of this bachelor's thesis, three blogs were selected, therefore the practical part is divided into three individual parts, each dedicated to one blog. The first part is devoted to a blog by a freelance journalist Penny Anderson called *Renter Girl* that addresses problems connected with renting in the UK. The second part deals with Jack Monroe's *Cooking on a Bootstrap* and her austerity cooking. The third part is about Sue Marsh's *Diary of a Benefit Scrounger* which focuses on the stigmatising view of disabled people. The choice of the blogs reflects the need to have wider spectrum of opinions represented. The research method is based on qualitative content analysis, as well as compilation and comparative methods. For the purposes of analysis, articles from the

above-mentioned sources, as well as national newspapers as *The Guardian* or *The Daily Mail* were obtained.

As social issues are mainly about people, this bachelor's thesis focuses largely on the human factor. People tend to lean towards the opinions of those that are closer to them; therefore, the relationship between a blogger and his or hers readers is fundamental. Bloggers likewise are ordinary people with their own views, beliefs and issues. Blogs are records of their thoughts, opinions, observations or experiences that they put on the Internet for other people to read. As a young form of journalism blogs support citizens' participation in public life and their engagement with politicians. [1] Bloggers might be viewed as the voices of ordinary citizens, who seek for someone to speak for them when politicians regularly fail.

2 Social Issues in the UK

This bachelor's thesis deals with social issues; therefore, the subsequent chapter focuses on their defining and understanding.

A usual "textbook" definition of a social problem is "any condition or behaviour that has negative consequences for large numbers of people and that is generally recognized as a condition or behaviour that needs to be addressed." [2] Thus, a social problem is recognized as a problem by individuals who feel strongly enough to take steps forward to change. Put in other words, if people are suffering but no one sees it, there is no social problem. Having said that, it does not mean that people are not suffering when no one sees it. But it does mean that their suffering has not filtered into social awareness, hence no one is willing to stop it. [3] However, as Kerbo and Coleman point out, the public is often uninformed or misguided and therefore not able to clearly understand the problems. In a society not only the seriousness of the problem wins public attention, but also the way the media present it. [4]

A social problem does not become one based on its scale. If this were true, rough sleepers, for example, would not attract so much attention as they are a relatively small group. In 2019 around 4,677 people were sleeping rough of total 280,000 homeless people in England [5]. Yet a huge amount of government resources, paid and voluntary workers and charity associations are involved in trying to ease the problem of rough sleeping. What is more, rough sleepers are often the focal point for media reporting. [6]

Most social problems have existed for some time and have a distinct history. A range of government policies have tried solving them, giving rise to a complex array of bureaucratic and legislative structures. However, there are no transparent or fixed boundaries to what may or may not be a social problem. For an issue to be addressed as a social problem, it has to move from the private sphere to the public sphere. [7] Social problems arise due to society's development or a general ignorance of a particular situation. Some social problems emerge because people pursue their personal interests to the detriment of others. [8]

The following chapters discuss two significant social issues in the UK, specifically the current housing crisis and poverty.

2.1 The British Housing Crisis

The housing crisis and the resulting homelessness appear to be one of the biggest issues in Britain affecting millions of people every day. The following chapters focus on the development of the housing crisis and its current state.

Britain is facing a severe undersupply of housing with disastrous effects on individuals, families along with the social and economic well-being of the nation. [9] The problem, however, does not stem solely from the dwelling shortage. The current crisis has deep-seated roots embedded in long-established cleavages in UK society. [10] Individuals and households experience the housing crisis in different ways depending on where they live, whether they have inherited property or gained a council tenancy, what their work position and income are, and what age group they fall in. [11]

2.1.1 Why is there a housing crisis?

The housing crisis is not a new phenomenon and Britain has faced a few of them in the last hundred years. The current housing crisis has been decades in the making. To grasp it better, it is necessary to look further into the past.

Many people believe that the roots of the current crisis are in the late 1970s. During the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher (1979–90) and later John Major (1990–97) the state's role in housing was seen as minimal. This was essentially a neoliberal economic approach which was based on the idea that if state involvement in economic affairs was held to a minimum, the market would eventually establish a competitive economy. [12]

The two most important changes introduced to housing were the privatization of local authority housing by a combination of the Right to Buy (RTB) and the implementation of constraints on council housebuilding, and the liberalization of the mortgage market. The RTB allowed tenants of local authority housing to buy their house at a substantial discount.¹ [13] This gave families, some with low incomes, the opportunity to own their own home for the very first time, or at least buy it and then sell it quickly for a profit. On the other hand,

¹ The 1980 Housing Act introduced discounts ranging between 33% and 50%, depending on length of tenancy. Both discount levels and entitlement were subsequently increased during the 1980s. Under the 1997–2010 New Labour Government they were reduced. However, since 2010 they have been increased again to a contemporary maximum discount level of 70%. The Right to Buy scheme was abolished in Scotland and Wales in 2017.

after its introduction in October 1980 as a part of the Housing Act 1980, RTB took permanently over a million council homes away from the public sector by the end of the decade. This housing was never replaced. [14] Government investments in new council housing fell significantly during that time. Approximately three-quarters of public expenditure 'savings' were inflicted on the government's housing investment programme. The number of council houses built also decreased in absolute terms, as can be seen in Figure 1. The Conservatives preferred to fund housing associations as they were smaller, more easily influenced than the local authorities, and were seen as part of the 'voluntary' sector. [15] Social housing, which has been left under the control of local authority, predominantly included less attractive homes on large estates. These policy decisions have led to the near death of council housing in the UK. Their legacy is a housing shortage that seems almost impossible to ever see being manageable. Around the same time as state-subsidised housing has diminished and been residualised², rents not only in the private rented sector have increased. [16] And not only rents.

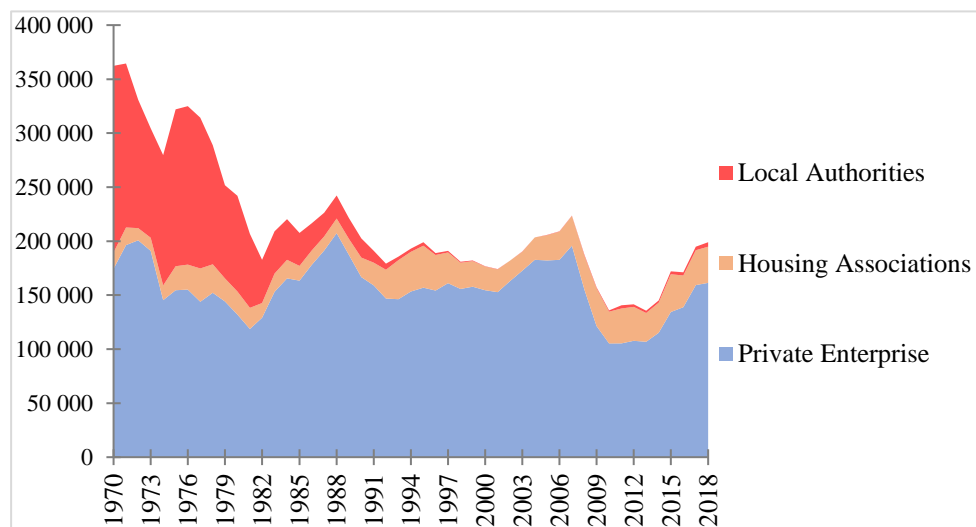


Figure 1. Completion of new dwellings 1970–2018.
Data available from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

² Residualisation can be defined as a process whereby public housing (and other social housing) moves from a 'public housing' model, providing housing for a broad range of households, to a 'social housing' model, housing only those unable to house themselves in the private market. Typically, residualisation entails changing characteristics of social housing tenants: increasing levels of unemployment or economic inactivity and declining incomes. Housing is related to social status, reputation and stigma, access to services and to jobs, social cohesion at the neighbourhood level, and hence to life opportunities for the citizen. Residualizing sector, therefore, may increase social exclusion. Equally, it is often in physical decline, both in terms of size and the quality of housing available (either due to poor initial build quality, or failure to modernise housing as it ages).

The second significant change, the opening up of the mortgage market to financial institutions other than building societies, coincided with the liberalization of international capital flows and an era of fiscal and monetary conservatism. This resulted in an influx of capital into the mortgage sector and a massive proliferation of mortgage products and agents. Therefore, this increased lending has driven up the house prices, as shown in Figure 2. [17] In 1974, the average price of a UK house was £10,078 and by 2007 it was £181,364. Much of that inflation took place in the 1980s and then from the mid-nineties to 2008. During that same period, average earnings grew by only 28%. As a result, fewer and fewer people could afford decent quality housing, even those whose wages have increased. The increase of house prices was not due to a better quality or size, but simply to an inflated value. [18]

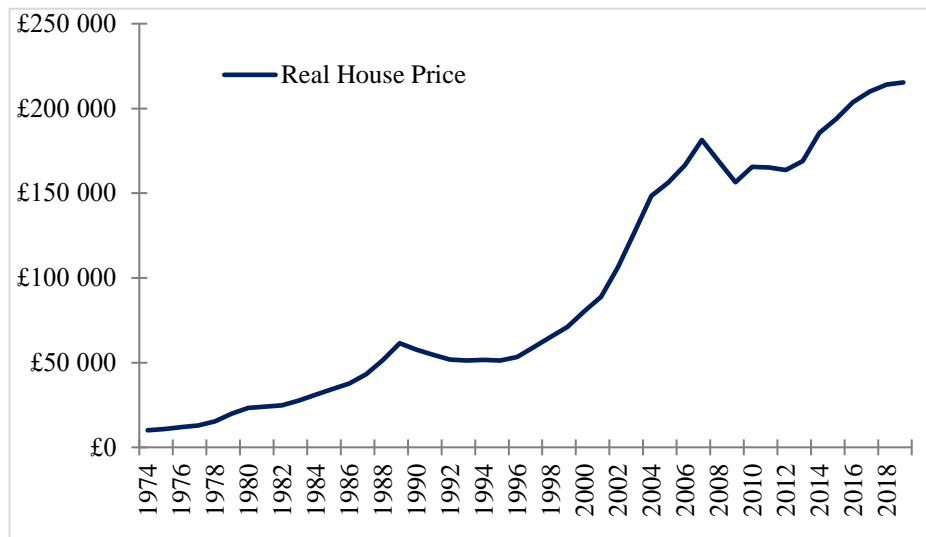


Figure 2. Real house prices in the UK 1973–2019.
Data available from Nationwide

Despite the expectations that many Conservative policies would be reversed, New Labour, with Tony Blair (1997–2007) and Gordon Brown (2007–10) as Prime Ministers, did the opposite. Many of the housing policy directions that the Conservatives had first drawn up were preserved or strengthened. New Labour supported the privatization of local authorities through stock transfer to housing associations. It was probably because associations could use private finance to restore and improve the housing. There was little government funding to build new housing association rented housing until 2007. Nearly no new council housing was built either, but the 'right to buy' council housing continued. [19]

The combined result of increased mortgage availability and the privatization, residualisation and decimation of local authority housing resulted in a significant tenure³ change. The percentage of households in social housing dropped from its peak at 31% in 1981 to 19% in 2001. By comparison, owner-occupation peaked in the early 2000s at 70%. [20]

2.1.1.1 The 2008 Financial Crisis

The second turning point for the UK housing system was the financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent recession. The 2008 financial crisis was the worst economic disaster since the Great Depression in the 1930s⁴. The first signals that the economy was in trouble occurred when house prices started to fall in 2006. At first, realtors cheered as they thought the overheated housing market would return to a more sustainable level. They did not realize, however, there were so many homeowners with dubious credit, and that banks had allowed people to borrow 100% or more of the value of their homes. [21] As house prices dropped and mortgage borrowers were no longer able to afford interest payments, institutions that had borrowed and invested heavily were left with major losses. This resulted in a series of banking failures leading to the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in September 2008. The UK Government had to step in to rescue; for instance, Northern Rock, Bradford & Bingley, Lloyds TSB, HBOS and the Royal Bank of Scotland. [22]

Moreover, it was a catastrophe for the UK housing supply. Within a year, new housing started to fall to their lowest level since the 1929 crash. Construction sites across the country became silent and were mothballed as fundings to developers were retracted. The banking crisis undoubtedly stalled housing supply, but it has also uncovered the degree to which the

³ Tenure refers to the legal rights and obligations associated with the occupation of a dwelling. In the UK it is common to distinguish four tenure types: owner-occupation, renting from a private landlord, renting from a local authority and renting from a housing association (or a not-for-profit landlord).

⁴ The stock market crash of 1929 was a collapse of stock prices which began in the United States in October 1929. It eroded confidence in Wall Street markets and led to the Great Depression. The Great Depression was a severe global economic crisis, happening mostly during the 1930s. It was the longest, deepest, and most pervasive depression of the 20th century.

housing production model of the last decade was fundamentally unsustainable, dependent on the availability of cheap credit and a speculative build-to-sell and buy-to-let bubble⁵. [23]

While the causes of the crash were financial, the immediate costs were social: mortgage repossessions leaving families homeless, growing waiting list for social housing, extensive unemployment in the building industry and increasing number of households in temporary accommodation as the housing supply shortage increased. [24] Since 2007 homeownership began to fall, partly because lower-income households had worse access to mortgage finance following the recession. After 2008, lending institutions generally required higher deposits, typically a minimum of 10%, but sometimes as high as 25%, and they as well imposed stricter affordability checks. The UK private rented sector, with the help of the buy-to-let boom, grew since 2001. Meanwhile, the social housing sector has continued to shrink. [25]

There is no doubt, that the overall impact of these processes has made UK's housing system, as Michael Edwards describes, "an engine of growing inequality, concentrating wealth in the hands of landlords and established owner-occupiers, at the expense of tenants, new buyers and the growing numbers rendered homeless." [26]

2.1.2 **The response to the crisis since 2010 and its current state**

The 2010 Coalition Government had a noticeably different approach from New Labour to handling the long-term effects of the global financial crisis. [27] In 2013, the coalition launched 'Help to Buy' scheme, intended to bolster house purchase, especially by first-time buyers, and resolve affordability problems by subsidizing mortgages⁶. Help to Buy was a "blessing" for the housebuilding industry because it helped inflate prices. [28] The Coalition Government, however, also capped housing benefits and introduced the bedroom tax. In other words, they removed the spare room subsidy for people living in housing association accommodation, or social housing. Under the changes, tenants have their benefit reduced by 14% if they have a spare bedroom, or 25% if they have two or more. Adult couple, 2 children

⁵ The buy-to-let phenomenon turned many ordinary people into property investors. The phenomenon was facilitated by the increase in landlord power in the 1980s including the abolition of rent controls and their introduction of assured shorthold tenure in 1988, which gave landlords much greater powers of eviction. Mortgage lenders coined the term 'buy-to-let' in 1995 and began to promote mortgages for buy-to let properties.

⁶ The help to buy scheme consists of an equity loan scheme offering loans of up to 20% of the price of a house, interest-free for five years, and at below-market rates afterward, and mortgage guarantee scheme offering to cut insurance price to lenders, sharing some of the risk if mortgages go into arrears.

under 16 of the same sex, and 2 children under 10 regardless of sex are expected to share a bedroom. [29] These reforms reduced the number of properties available to people on housing benefit, especially in areas such as London and the south-east where housing markets are tighter and rents higher. This does not, however, mean that in the cheaper areas there is no problem. The same government also declared to boost housing stock, however, practical efforts to do so remained focused on the planning system. [30]

Theresa May's Tory Government was focused on the need to build more houses, as is the present government of Boris Johnson. Undoubtedly the UK builds fewer dwellings than many other countries and has done so since social housing production in the Thatcher years was practically halted. In addition, most of the new dwellings built have been for sale in the open market. [31] Labour, on the other hand, sometimes stressed the need for new housing to be affordable, or to include some social housing. To assess housing affordability Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey uses the 'Median Multiple' (median house price divided by gross annual median household income)⁷. [32] Since the first Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey in 2005, with median multiple ranging from 4.5 to 5.9, the UK has been ranked 'seriously unaffordable' to 'severely unaffordable'. [33] And not only house prices are seriously unaffordable, but also rents. The Coalition Government created a new term 'affordable rent' defined as up to 80% of locally prevailing market rents. [34] However, for many this threshold is still hard to reach and as far from affordable as it could be.

With prices rising and most real incomes stagnant or declining, many households have been unable to meet their expectations of becoming house owners. [35] Rising house prices have a dual effect: people want to buy before prices rise even higher, and property is likely to be a good long-term investment, as homeownership as an investment has been more stable than the stock market and has yielded slightly higher profit. Property, nowadays, represents over a third of a personal wealth of the UK. [36]

Those who cannot afford to buy and those who are unable to access the social housing which had been relatively available to earlier generations in the post-war decades, found themselves diverted into an expanding private-rented sector. [37] This transformation has

⁷ The Median Multiple is a house price to income ratio that is widely used for evaluating housing markets. It has been recommended by the World Bank¹² and the United Nations and is used by the Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University.

given rise to the 'Generation Rent', a phenomenon, that signifies recent changes in people's (usually aged 18 to 40) housing pathways. Once a transitional tenure in the UK, the private rented sector is now housing more and more young people, and for longer periods of their lives despite the fact, that PRS offers some highly precarious living situation. [38] In the UK tenancy contracts tend to be short term with an average of 2.5 years. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government noted in their publication *Overcoming the Barriers to Longer Tenancies in the Private Rented Sector*:

Currently, landlords can evict tenants with as little as two months' notice once their fixed-term contract has come to an end, without needing to give a reason. This means that many tenants live with the worry that they may be evicted at short notice. This instability can have damaging impacts on children's education, and the cost of frequent moves undermines people's ability to save up for a deposit. [...] Some tenants continue to endure poor standards for fear they will be asked to leave if they complain about problems with their home. We want to create an environment where tenants can feel more empowered to challenge their landlord about poor property standards where this occurs without the fear of eviction for no specified reason. [39]

These insecurities may explain why homeownership is more popular in the UK.

In addition, the UK found itself constructing "a form of deprivation: unhealthy, socially isolating, inflexible, energy-hungry buildings". [40] Moreover, the house prices encourage builders to construct smaller and smaller dwellings to create 'affordable homes'. In the UK the average floor area for a property is currently 85 sq meters, making it the second smallest in Europe and 25% smaller than the European average. [41] Furthermore, the dwellings built tend to be one- or two- bedroom flats, aimed at a certain, young demographic. This has resulted in a growing shortage of homes for families in many inner-city areas. [42]

2.1.3 Homelessness

One of the social problems associated with the housing crisis and poverty is homelessness. The general perception of a homeless person is probably a person in dirty clothes lying on the pavement begging for money. However, rooflessness, or rough sleeping, is only a very small percentage of homelessness. [43] According to Shelter, a homeless person is anyone who has nowhere to stay, is living on the streets, however, it can be also a

person who is staying with his friends or family, staying in a hostel, night shelter or bed and breakfast, squatting, at risk of violence or abuse in his home, lives in poor conditions that affect health, or lives apart from his family because he does not have a place to live together. [44]

Homelessness peaked in 2004 at 291,000 households and since the financial crisis of 2008, the number has rapidly reduced to current 140,000 households, which is about 320,000 people. However, the official statistics do not include for example sofa-surfers or some people sleeping rough, as they can be hard to track, because they are staying in vehicles or abandoned buildings. This means that the overall number of homeless people is even higher. [45]

The causes of homelessness, besides those mentioned in the previous chapters, such as the shortage of social housing, high rents, or low income, might be numbers of individual circumstances. These include no longer being able to stay with family or friends, due to emotional tensions, or a friend moving away. Another reason is leaving prison or other institution with no home to go. Domestic violence or breakups are another common cause. So too are mortgage arrears and loss of tenancy, due to rent arrears, lease violation, property damage or other structural factors. [46] In all these cases, the inability to pay, mental health and drug or alcohol addiction can be contributory factors.

Public debates about homelessness emerged in the 1960s, after all governments had been rather reluctant towards the idea of state-led housebuilding programmes (apart from exceptional periods after the First and Second World Wars). [47] The 1960s were a time of rising prosperity and social change. There was full employment, good wages and a growing economy. Slums were cleared, social housing was built, and overcrowding fell. *Cathy Come Home* (broadcasted in 1966) – a TV drama-documentary of a young woman's gradual from a secure, happy marriage into former workhouse accommodation and ending with her children being taken away from her – had a powerful impact. [48] The show triggered debates in parliament and huge support for Crisis and Shelter, the newly formed homeless charities.

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 gave local authorities the legal duty to house people who came under a new category of 'priority need'. People deemed to be 'deserving' were homeless pregnant women, families with children, people who were

vulnerable due to age, mental illness, or disability, as well as those that had lost their homes due to natural disasters. [49] On the contrary, homelessness among unmarried people without children was considered less deserving of help. This meant that the group that comes to mind most easily when discussing homelessness – rough sleepers – was largely excluded from statutory entitlement to housing. It was not until 1996 that an amendment was made to the 1977 Act to include victims of domestic violence under 'priority need'. New Labour's Homeless Act 2002 also extended this category to care-leavers under 20, 16- and 17-year-olds, and those vulnerable due to leaving care, service in the armed forces, time spent in prison, or fleeing violence or threats of violence. [50] However, local authorities did not get any additional resources to cope with these newly discovered 'deserving' groups. The lack of resources provided by the government to local authorities means that even for those that are accepted, local authorities do not have enough social housing. The lack of sufficient funding means that local authorities must implement 'strict eligibility' rules, by trying to ascertain whether or not the person become intentionally homeless. [51]

2.2 Poverty in the UK

The second social issue chosen for the purposes of this bachelor's thesis is poverty. British society is very unequal. Currently, there are millions of Britons trapped in poverty not able to heat their homes, pay rent, or buy essential things. They wake up every day facing insecurity and uncertainty, marginalization and even discrimination. [52] The following chapters focus on defining poverty, describing methods used to measure it, the development of poverty, and its current state including food poverty and the rise of foodbanks.

A social historian Michael B. Katz argues: "For most of recorded history, poverty reflected God's will. The poor were always with us. They were not inherently immoral, dangerous, or different. They were not to be shunned, feared, or avoided." [53] In a market economy, there will always be income differences between people. In the late nineteenth century, when sociologists were trying to map poverty in Britain, they used household income to measure it. It is probably the most obvious approach. Nevertheless, it is not the only way of measuring and defining poverty. [54] Households may have different costs to deal with, such as childcare, housing costs, disability-related costs, as well as varying rates of savings or assets to draw upon. [55]

2.2.1 Measuring poverty

The UK's government defines and measures poverty based on household income. In particular, there are two commonly used measures. One measure is people in relative low income, or also referred to as relative poverty. This involves people living with income below 60% of median household income. Another measure is absolute low income, or absolute poverty, which includes people living in households with income below 60% of the 2010/11 median, adjusted for inflation. The median is the point at which half of households have a lower income, and half have a higher income. The relative income measure, in simple terms, looks at inequality between low- and middle-income households. On the contrary, the absolute low income measure indicates to what extent living standards of low-income households are improving over time, although it does not take into account changes in what is generally regarded as an acceptable standard of living. [56]

Individuals and households can earn income from a variety of sources. These include earnings from employment, cash benefits such as the State Pension, housing benefit, or tax credits, investments, private pensions and other forms of income. Income can be measured before or after the cost of housing (BHC or AHC) has been deducted. A BHC measure acknowledges that certain households prefer to spend more on housing to enjoy a better quality accommodation. On the other hand, variations in housing costs may not necessarily reflect differences in accommodation quality. For a comparable standard of housing, people living in London pay more than people living, for instance, in a smaller city in the north. Poverty levels are generally higher based on income measured AHC, because poorer households tend to spend a higher proportion of their income on housing. [57]

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) releases official figures for the number of people in relative and absolute low income in the annual Households below average income (HBAI) publications. HBAI figures are primarily drawn from the Family Resources Survey, which surveys over 19,000 households in the UK a year. [58] Looking at these figures can give a general idea of who is poor in the UK today. For example, the 2018/19 HBAI figures show that there are overall 20 per cent of people, 12.9 million – over one in five of the population, in absolute poverty AHC including 26% children (3.7 million), 13% pensioners (1.6 million), and 19% working-age adults (7.6 million). [59] Figure 3 shows how poverty trends have changed since the 1960s between groups. During the 1980s there was a large increase in the proportion of people in relative poverty, followed by a more

gradual decline. The proportion of pensioners in poverty is much lower than during the 1960s, but poverty rates for children and working-age adults are higher than they were 50 years ago. Poverty rates for all groups converged after the economic downturn in 2008 and are currently much closer than they have ever been in history. Overall, levels of relative low income have been fairly steady over the past few years. [60]

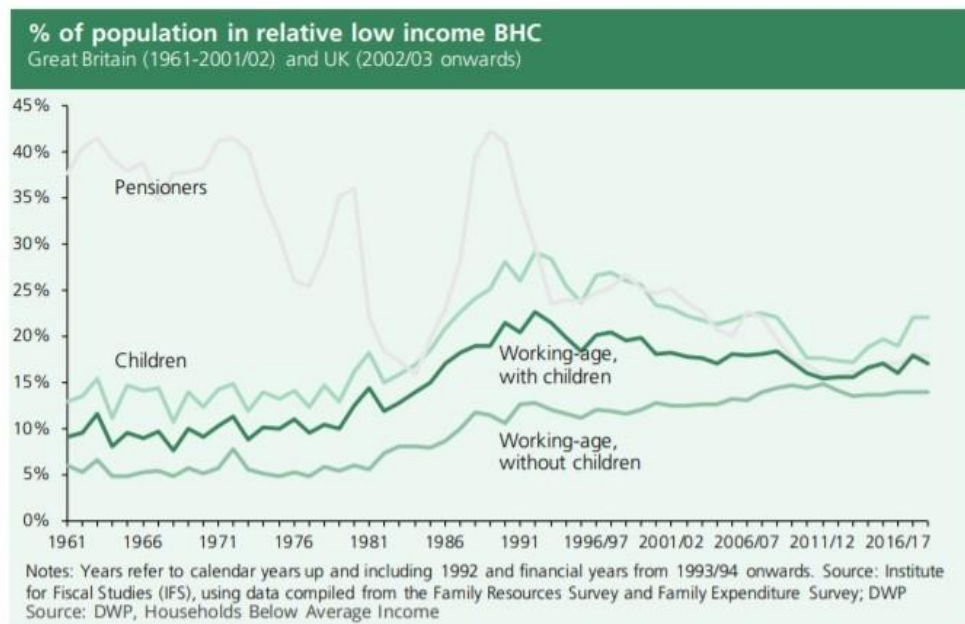


Figure 3. Percentage of population in relative low income BHC
Source: Brigid Francis-Devine. *Poverty in the UK: statistics*. The House of Commons Library, 2020.

Many of the reports offer also other demographic indicators such as the employment status, housing tenure, whether or not the poor are disabled, or whether they are from particular minority ethnic groups. This aids to understand the social groups that are most likely to fall into income poverty. While being a useful tool for social scientists, and even more so for government, who like simple, systematic measures, this does not offer the whole picture. It is not enough to simply rely on quantitative data to analyse poverty. [61]

2.2.2 The development of poverty and its current state

Debates about poverty have always been permeated by biases, stereotypes and moral judgements about the poor. Public discussions on issues affecting the poor, particularly those relating to social security benefits, are connected to moral critiques such as "they are lazy, work-shy welfare dependents, happy to sponge off the taxes of 'decent hard-working families'". [62] Those reliant upon the state for additional income face being seen as welfare

spongers. While having to cope with poverty, they also take the blame for it. The idea that there should be some form of social security to protect vulnerable people from market economy risks and the insecurity of the labour market seems to have faded away. [63]

In the Victorian era, the message of those in power was clear – poverty was the responsibility of the individual and perceived as a moral failing and treated as such with the introduction of the self-help institution, the workhouse. With the growing social research and labour activism, poverty was finally being recognized as a structural rather than an individual problem, and "the judgmentalism of the previous era gave way to a more sympathetic approach, manifesting in the creation of Britain's welfare state". [64] For the decades of almost full employment in the post-war decades, those perceptions about the poor were laid to rest. However, the onset of Thatcherism, with the rise of mass unemployment as a result of de-industrialization, the concept resurfaced. [65] The relation between poverty, welfare and employment is a debate reinforced in government policy. [66] As Margaret Thatcher said in an interview for *Woman's Own* magazine in 1987:

I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand "I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!", "I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!" "I am homeless, the Government must house me!" and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first.

(Margaret Thatcher, *Woman's Own* interview, 1987)⁸

This type of approach as taking 'something for nothing' or 'undeserving poor' ignores the inequalities that are the causes of poverty. There are several factors that can limit opportunities and life chances for individuals. [67] These count not only either intentional or unintentional unemployment, but also ill health and impairment (physical and mental), educational attainment undermined by family structure, inadequate housing, and poor neighbourhoods, discrimination based on ethnicity, gender or sexuality, drug and alcohol dependency, as well as government policy. People battling with poverty find themselves

⁸ Available at: <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>

socially excluded from a 'normal' course of life expectations, particularly in education and work. [68]

From the New Right Conservatives, New Labour, to the Coalition, there has been a political trend to ensure that the vast majority of people receiving social security benefits actually work. In 1998 New Labour introduced its welfare-to-work initiative known as the New Deal scheme⁹. The sole aim of it was to get people into work. [69]

The new welfare state must encourage work, not dependency. We are giving young people and the long-term unemployed the opportunity. A £3.5 billion investment. But they have to take one of the options on offer.

(Tony Blair, Leader's speech, Brighton 1997)¹⁰

New Labour also introduced the minimum wage and the tax credit system that gave people real cash benefits to make them better off in work. For lone parents and low-income families, there was also support with childcare through tax credits, vouchers, and increased number of state nurseries. For most of the targeted groups, higher employment rates were achieved through the New Deal. The success was, however, more constrained in the medium term and the economic downturn from 2009 had its role in undermining the New Deal. A 2012 report from the Institute of Fiscal Studies concluded that improvements in education and employment under New Labour did little to prevent poverty in the long term. However, New Labour did target the reduction of child poverty by 50 per cent between 1998 and 2010. [70]

The Coalition, however, scrapped the New Deal and announced a large-scale welfare reform. It extensively cut welfare benefits through the implementation of austerity measures such as Universal Credit¹¹. [71] To reconcile the public with the potentially explosive policy, the Coalition government shifted the poverty debate away from the focus on the real need to emphasis on moral eligibility of breaking a dependency culture and assured the 'hard-working families' that the Government is on their side. On the contrary, those behaving

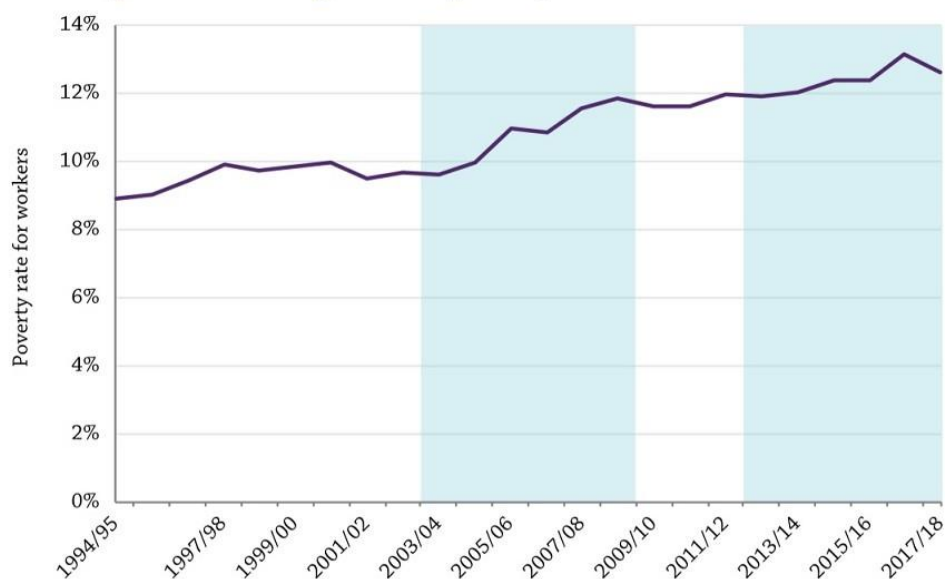
⁹ New Deal were targeted at social groups that consisted of a disproportionate number of people likely to face the difficulties associated with social exclusion. Thus, there was a New Deal for Young People, a New Deal for Lone Parents, the over-50s, or the disabled.

¹⁰ Available at: <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=203>

¹¹ Universal Credit was introduced as part of the Coalition government's welfare reforms in Welfare Reform Act 2012, replacing the following benefits: Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Income-related Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit.

in a way deemed socially and economically irresponsible were identified as the main targets of the cuts. Rather than exploring the root causes of extensive welfare reliance, talk of "benefits lifestyle" is employed. However, the current situation of the rising poverty among workers undermines the 'undeserving poor' argument. [72] In-work poverty has risen from 10% of workers 20 years ago to 13%, as can be seen in Figure 4, despite the rise of the minimum wage in 2015¹². The first reason is that low-income families do not keep as much of any extra income they receive from work, because they have their social security payments decreased sharply as they earn more. An even more significant reason is that poverty is about whether a family's income is enough to cover their necessary costs. Having said that, hourly pay is just one element; how many hours members of the family are working, their family structure and their costs all matter too. Rising housing costs and reduced benefit incomes and tax credits have made it harder for low-income working families to escape poverty. [73]

The two periods of rising in-work poverty



Source: Households Below Average Income and Family Resources Survey

Figure 4. Percentage of in-work poverty

Source: JRF. 2020. *UK Poverty 2019/20: The leading independent report*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

¹² In July 2015, George Osborne announced the introduction of the National Living Wage, bringing about fast rises in the minimum wage for those aged 25 and over. The National Living Wage has successfully pushed up the hourly wage of the lowest-paid, eligible employees.

After the 2018 UN report on poverty in the UK, Theresa May insisted that she did not accept the report's findings saying that absolute poverty is at record lows, more people are in work than ever before, and wages are growing. She also noted that the Conservatives had been forced to make difficult decisions from 2010 because of the financial profligacy of the previous Labour government. Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the Labour Party and the Opposition (until 4 April 2020), replied: "When I hear the prime minister talking about 'difficult decisions', what always happens afterwards in these contexts is the poorest lose out in our society." [74]

2.2.3 Food poverty and the rise of foodbanks

Foodbanks are a global phenomenon. First introduced in the USA in the 1960s they now exist in many wealthy countries. Likewise, Britain is experiencing a foodbank explosion. The Trussell Trust, an anti-poverty charity, operating a network of volunteer-run foodbanks across the UK while campaigning for the end of their necessity, ran only two foodbanks in 2004. [75] By 2014, the number increased to 400 and nowadays the Trussell Trust's network operates over 1,200 food banks centres. Moreover, there are at least 822 independent foodbanks which makes over 2,000 foodbanks in total. A foodbank is a charitable resource which distributes food to those in need of it. The Trussell Trust provides 'three-day emergency food parcels', and it is also a standard unit of measurement in their statistics. In its mid-year statistics for the period April – September 2019, the Trussell Trust has reported an increase of 23% in food bank usage and the overall number of 823,145 emergency food parcels given to people in crisis. This is the highest usage they have yet experienced, and the highest percentage increase in usage since 2013. [76] This level of foodbank use is unprecedented in the UK and is a "shocking condemnation of current government policies, as rising demand for the basic need of food has coincided with an increase of those seeking help following benefit sanctions¹³ or benefit delays". [77]

Although foodbank use has been on the rise since 2010, hunger in Britain is not simply a product of the policies of the Coalition government. Historically, there have always been soup kitchens for homeless people, but the extent to which various forms of emergency food

¹³ Sanctions can last between four weeks and three years, and are applied to people claiming benefits who leave job voluntarily, lose a job due to misconduct; fail to apply for or accept a job that is offered to them; fail to show that they are available for and actively seeking work; fail to attend a compulsory training or employment scheme; or fail to carry out direction from a Jobcentre Plus adviser.

provisions have grown and expanded in recent years is tremendous. Breakfast clubs, pay-as-you-can cafes, soup kitchens and food redistribution are all firmly rooted in Britons' everyday lives. However, there are also people living in cities where there is no foodbank, people who are too ashamed to seek help, and a significant number of people who are coping by eating less and buying cheaper food. [78] Government ministers have been reluctant to admit to a link between cuts in social security and foodbank use, and instead choosing to dismiss foodbank use as a lifestyle choice of those who are unable to budget properly. When asked about the suggestion that more and more nurses were resorting to foodbanks, Theresa May replied: "There are many complex reasons why people go to food banks." [79] However, frontline experiences of foodbank use and academic research have both contradicted this idea. Professor Liz Dowler from Warwick University has argued:

Research shows that the key causes of hunger and food poverty are structural – how much money people can spend on food, what it costs them, and whether or not they have equipment and fuel to store and cook it – rather than individual characteristics such as whether people know what to buy and eat, can budget and cook well. [80]

As can be seen in Figure 5, the Trussell Trust listed the primary reasons for people using its network foodbanks.

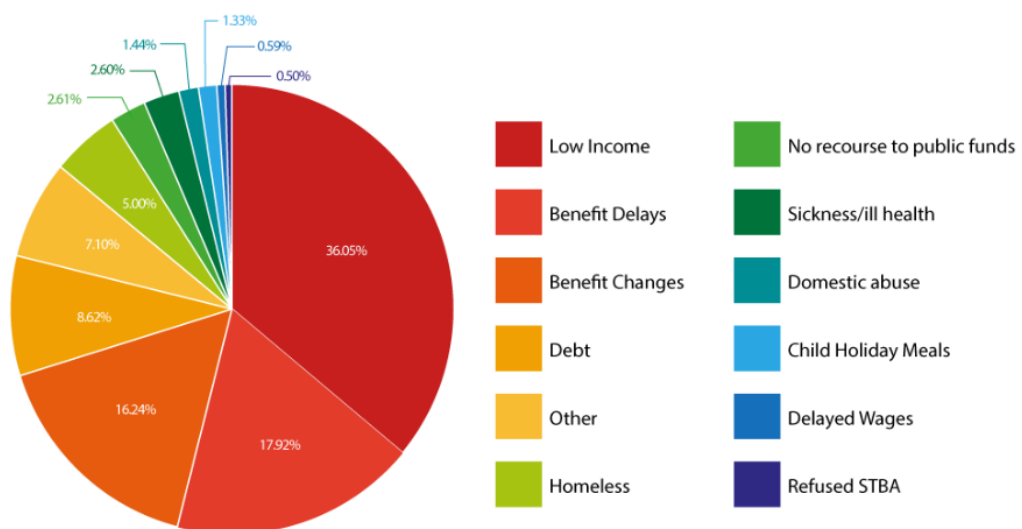


Figure 5. Primary reasons for referral to foodbanks in the Trussell Trust network in April to September 2019

Source: The Trussell Trust. MID-YEAR STATS. <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/mid-year-stats/>.

The rise of emergency food aid is an extreme manifestation of poverty and inequality. The rising prices of food, fuel and living costs (much higher in the UK than in other parts of Europe) has meant that people have to cut back on fresh fruit and vegetables and instead are buying cheap, sugary, fatty, salty and processed foods. What's more, many low-income families do not have the money to buy up front, for instance, a new fridge if their old one stops working. As they can struggle to find affordable credit, they therefore have to turn up to doorsteps loans or other quick fixes such as cheque-cashing shops and pawnbrokers. [81] In December 2019 Boris Johnson, asked if his pledges would decrease the use of food banks, said: "I do (hope it will decrease). That's why we're lifting the living wage by the biggest ever amount. It is imperative in my view that the next government, if I'm lucky enough to be leading it, tackles the cost of living for everybody in this country, that's what we're going to do." [82]

3 Britain's Social Issue Bloggers

The following chapter explains the terms blog and blogger and deals with social issue bloggers in Britain. Blogs are read by diverse social and cultural groups. They are a different form of online engagement and their expansion has been assigned to user-friendly template designs in free access blogging platforms. [83]

Dave Winer, a writer and a software developer, created the first "weblog" in 1994 when his website *Scripting News* (then called *Davenet*) was started. In *The Alternative Media Handbook* Chris Atton defines a blog as "a personal web page used for a number of purposes: to post commentaries on mainstream news; to enable discussion with and among visitors to their sites and, significantly, to originate their own news." [84] Since the late 1990s blogs have begun to play a greater part within the breaking and forming of news. They have become a focal point perhaps due to their personal roots, enabling mainstream journalism to develop human-interest stories around their makers. Weblogs posted after 9/11 which re-told the stories of ground-zero from personal perspective showcased how individual narratives mediated global events. [85] Likewise, in 2003 during the Gulf War, 'Smash', an American military officer serving in Iraq, posted records and insights of his experiences on his website. Blogs posts were also published by professional journalists and the BBC and the Guardian established 'warblog' sites during the conflict. [86]

The development of blogs offers individuals the opportunity to create their own news sites, though mostly they incline to personal commentary and opinion. However, in times of crisis, bloggers are able to offer their readers an eyewitness account. Bloggers are critics, opinion leaders, and reporters writing their own stories using various radical journalism methods, critiques of government policies, and government actions. However, according to the book *Bloggers Boot Camp*, it does not stop there. Immediately after posting a blog post, the discussion continues when the readers respond. A blog is therefore a place not only for posting one's personal opinions, but also a space for debate as mentioned in the Chris Atton's definition above. [87]

Social issue blogs as people's expressions of their everyday experiences provide a source of rich counter-narratives and resistance to the official portrayals of social problems. Personal commentaries contained in blogs disrupt the linearity of political ideologies and official voices that claim to speak on behalf of the nation and its citizens. There has been a

proliferation of social issue bloggers that document the daily struggles of living in Welfare Britain. Blogs such as *Collected Walk*, *Hardship and Hope*, *A Writer in a Wheelchair*, *The Skint Foodie*, *Benefit Scrounging Scum*, *Mum V Austerity*, *Renter Girl*, *Cooking on a Bootstrap*, *Diary of a Benefit Scrounger*, chronicle the experiences of housing crisis and poverty through a multitude of narratives where issues are discussed through the political, economic and social context of the nation and its policies. [88]

For the purposes of this bachelor's thesis, three social issue bloggers were selected, namely Penny Anderson, Jack Monroe, and Sue Marsh. The following chapters focus on their stories and experienced shared via their blogs.

3.1 Penny Anderson also known as *Renter Girl*

Penny Anderson is a blogger, writer and an artist. She started her blog called *Renter Girl* in 2007. As the name says, the blog is dedicated to everything related to renting and the buildings tenants live in. Not long after Anderson launched her blog, she started writing for Guardian's Society pages. In 2014, however, she decided to end *Renter Girl*, primarily because she "plan to write a book about it, but also because renting is now firmly on the political agenda". [89] Despite that, *Renter Girl* still provides insights of life as a tenant in Britain of housing crisis.

As *Renter Girl* states in her 'About me' box:

We don't all have a dream home. We move from rented flat to rented flat, dealing with lazy landlords, and neighbours, good and bad. We endure the tribulations of newbuild housing complexes, and the insecurity of never knowing how long you can stay in one place, or indeed, if you want to. [90]

This describes the everyday reality of millions of Britons. For some, renting might be just a short period of life: sharing a flat as a student, living as a couple when saving to buy, while on holiday, or as elderly in sheltered housing. Some, including Anderson, are tenants for their whole life. Anderson started *Renter Girl* as a lodger after a landlady drinking three bottles of wine per evening gave her one hour's notice to "get out of her house". She, therefore, moved to Dovecot Towers (so-called, because people like pigeons were stacked up there), a newly built apartment block. She has moved a few more times over the years, experienced the different joys and hardships offered by the broken private rented sector in

the UK: catastrophic shared homes, revenge eviction, being a lodger, and social housing. She witnessed burglaries, thefts, drug dealers, prostitutes, assaults, and neighbourliness replaced by frostiness and distance. She suffered in the buy-to-let boom and subsequent collapse, when her rented home was repossessed because her landlord had gone bankrupt, and, like other tenants, was occasionally homeless. [91]

3.1.1 The Fear

Renter Girl describes the constant and paralysing fear the Generation Rent live in. The fear of being evicted, getting a notice, and therefore become homeless, landlords visiting unannounced, not able to pay the rent, not having the lease renewed, asking for repairs, moving, not getting a deposit back, bad references, benefit cuts, losing a job, being burgled, or menacing neighbours or flatmates. The sentence 'I'm afraid of' can be followed by varying and increasing list of terrifying eventualities and dreadful possibilities. Anderson asks:

When did renting start resembling a horror film? There is mounting insecurity, a feeling that nobody is on their (our) side, and that we have nowhere to go if things go wrong, and had better move as demanded without a murmur. [92]

For tenants, the most common way of finding themselves homeless, desperate pleading for help, and sofa-surfing is receiving a notice. The length depends on the type of tenancy agreement and its terms. In case of assured shorthold tenancies, it is a minimum of 2 months given no sooner than 6 months after the original tenancy began. In case of the fixed term, landlords can ask tenants to leave only if they have a reason or 'grounds' for wanting possession. The notice period varies from 2 weeks to 2 months. Same goes for assured tenancies. When living with a landlord, a lodger often has an excluded tenancy or licence. The landlord only needs to give a 'reasonable' notice to quit. Usually this means the length of the rental payment period – so if lodger pays rent weekly, he gets one week's notice. When it comes to non-excluded tenancy or licence, the landlord can end the lease at any time. The notice period again depends on the agreement, but it usually is at least 4 weeks. [93] With this degree of insecurity, there is no wonder the tenants are scared. The simple fact of lawful, legal, rightful notice is an everyday problem, and causes widespread harm. *Renter Girl* observes:

When an assured short-term tenancy usually lasts for just six months (twelve if you're lucky) and is then rolled over if not fully renewed or ended, tenants generally have a maximum of four months in which to breathe before they could face being kicked out with two-month notice. This precarious, fractured security is more than simply unsettling. It's also costly, with the regular hiring of vans, storage to find, upfront deposits, the infamous fees to letting agents and rent in advance to find. Other costs are emotional, but they also hit hard over time, especially the cost of replacing lost belongings after yet another move. [94]

Anderson adds that when the notice is given without warning, or when tenancies are not renewed, it is generally about money – especially when letting agents whisper into a rentier's ear, guaranteeing them inflated profits, regardless of the expense of finding new tenants, "since agents coin it in from sundry fees". Sometimes it is only a matter of disorganisation, with owners thinking about selling up, issuing a notice to leave, but then changing their minds, disregarding the effect this has on tenants' lives. And sometimes the reason is tenants asking for repairs. *Renter Girl* states that:

Tenants slip between homes, desperate to cope with news that is always delivered at the wrong time, such as when hours have been cut, money is tight or when renters are ill, rendering new owners/agents unlikely to house them. [95]

In a post called *Repairing Relationship*, *Renter Girl* describes repairs as nightmares. She claims that there are some good landlords, but many are rather reluctant to their own property and that the best solution is to offer to sort it out yourself. Another, dark result of justified requests for repairs might be "the landlord – entirely by coincidence – urgently 'require the house for relatives', which is simply the easiest legal ploy to evict 'troublemakers', i.e. the landlord name for tenants wilful enough to need repairs, however urgent, necessary, and reasonable." [96] This reluctant approach of some landlords also applies to burglaries, which makes the tenants "safeguards of the owner's property", which is according to Anderson "stupid and ill-informed". Considering that the landlord's property could be damaged by robbers breaking in, one would think security would be right at the top of any priority list. But no. Therefore, tenants are helpless and there is very little they can do. *Renter Girl* adds: "They can't really justify the cost, or effort of installing burglar alarms

when they might be given two months notice at any time. There is no guarantee they will reap the benefits. So they're stuck with rickety back doors and precarious windows which do not shut – let alone lock." [97]

Another situation too many tenants find themselves in is not being able to pay the rent. The combination of low incomes, high rents, increasing utilities, job insecurity and the resulting looming threat of redundancy, make them take dispiriting and degrading measures to cover the rent:

Bellies half-full, minds in turmoil, life lived on a day-by-day basis. So tenants can pay the rent. Fine dining on value brands and gratefully accepted food-bank bounty. So they can pay the rent. Selling everything (I mean everything – that is, absolutely everything) other than basic essentials. So you can pay the rent. Actually begging in the street to see if you can raise something, to buy food, so you can pay the rent. No headache pills or plasters, eking out toothpaste, rationing toilet paper, painful lumps in over-darned socks. Cuts from blunt razors, clothes un-ironed, length of shower rationed on the electrical appliances and scant telly time. Because you paid the rent. [98]

The anxiety over rent payment is closely related to anxiety over losing one's job and needing to claim benefits. The explanation is that some landlords are averse to renting to unemployed individuals on welfare and may evict tenants if they find themselves workless. That said though, the presence of a job does not necessarily mean problem-free rental. Since in certain sectors of the labour market wages are too low to cover the costs of rent, many tenants claim the housing benefit to offset the disparity. However, some landlords tend to be prejudiced against any type of benefit claimants, as evidenced by the occasional signs "No DSS¹⁴" on their properties or advertisements. [99]

3.1.2 **Dysfunctional Housing System**

In her posts, Anderson often criticizes politicians, of the Right as well as the Left leaning parties, and their approach to the UK's housing crisis. As mentioned in chapter 2.1.2, the main response to crisis is to build more houses, and furthermore, affordable ones.

¹⁴ DSS stands for the Department of Social Security, which is an older, but persisting name for the Department of Work and Pensions.

However, Anderson opposes the affordability of dwellings saying: "They will not be affordable. What's worse, they'll be substandard. They will be smaller, and shoddier, and not even that cheap." [100] She also questions the affordable rents, saying: "Affordable rent certainly isn't 80% of market rents. It's just that when market rents in London are rising so fast and so high, I need oxygen to look them up, the whole phrase is meaningless and pointless." [101]

The new-built dwellings in the UK are among the smallest in Europe. Furthermore, the homes have not only a small floor area, but they are often one- or two-bedroom units. Bedrooms often become combined dining rooms, lounges and even workrooms. The spare rooms (in families homes intended for children) are often too small to fit in bed, there is little or no space for storage, the ceilings are low, and the walls are thin. These sub-standard properties are seen as unsuitable for family life. Renters are increasingly reporting purposefully putting off childbearing due to the lack of a secure home for children to be brought up in. [102] Property adverts for traditional houses sometimes include, besides "No pets allowed", also a command: "Children not allowed". Generous three- or four-bedroom houses with basements, gardens and lofts make more money for landlords if rented out as individual rooms - houses in multiple occupation. Living rooms can be turned into bedrooms, maximising income for buy-to-let investors. And modern developments are usually unsuitable for children. Therefore, the new-built, especially buy-to-rent, neighbourhoods are silent during the day, as there are no families around. [103]

In addition, the neighbourhoods miss the sense of community and neighbourly relationships among tenants, as the unstable tenancies and the constant drifting in search of a roof over one's head stand in the way. [104] Anderson comments:

Tenants are often alienated from their local community, because they are seen, and indeed see themselves, as transient occupants whose stay is temporary, or else as that coupled with nuisance. People who are allowed longer tenancies contribute more to the community – they take part in neighbourhood watch, chat in a friendly manner etc. [105]

Not only it leads to loneliness and isolation, but it also denies the informal network of mutual aid that is crucial to those living on low incomes. Without the helping hand of the

community, the effects of poverty are more difficult to battle, as evident from the high rate of anxiety and depression amongst renters. [106]

Anderson describes the reality of renting as horrible and not so bad at the same time. Tenants might find a suitable, reasonably priced flat with a nice landlord, or end up in a nightmare. The same goes for landlords who can let their property to tenants paying rent on time, or drug dealers turning their property into a dump. Anderson sums up:

Rentiers frequently forget that letting property is a business, with human beings at the heart – flawed organic beings, who grow old, get ill or have accidents. Tenants fondly imagine that they pay for a total service, not just the honour of insuring the rentier's pension, so they can just sit still to watch the property bubble inflate and float away again. [107]

3.2 Jack Monroe

Jack Monroe is a 32-year-old award-winning food writer, blogger, journalist and an anti-poverty campaigner from Southend-on-Sea. Almost eight years ago she had £10 a week on food for herself and her son. Nowadays, she writes recipes for people who are living on extremely tight budgets, including people relying on food banks. Monroe's recipes are designed with the simplest, cheapest ingredients in mind. They are also fuel-efficient as they can be cooked on one hotplate in less than 15 minutes, yet they are also nutritious and delicious.

Monroe has written six cookbooks: *A Girl Called Jack*, *A Year in 120 Recipes*, *Cooking on a Bootstrap*, *Tin Can Cook*, *Vegan (ish)* and *Good Food for Bad Days* (coming out on May 28, 2020). Moreover, Monroe writes for national publications such as The Guardian, for which she formerly wrote food and recipe column, or BBC. She appears on television, for example, in BBC's show *Question Time*, ITV's *This Morning*, from April 2020 she is co-hosting *Daily Kitchen Live* on BBC One¹⁵ (see Appendix 1), and she as well speaks at events.

¹⁵ A new show *Daily Kitchen Live*, based on *Saturday Kitchen*, airs on BBC One since April 13, 2020. The show is launched in response to the coronavirus pandemic, offering tips to people struggling with limited resources and making it easier for them to cook at home during lockdown.

Monroe works with and supports The Trussell Trust, Child Poverty Action Group, The Food Chain, Plan Zheroes, and numerous food banks, schools and children's centres to teach people how to cook and eat well on a low incomes, and campaigns against the causes of poverty and austerity in Britain. [108] She is a former supporter of the Labour Party, and even appeared in their 2013 campaign video. However, as she said for *The Guardian* in June 2019:

Party politics are quite upsetting. I've been a member of the Labour party, the Green party, the Women's Equality Party, the National Health Action Party and now I'm not a member of any. I like Ed Miliband, but there was one time at Labour Party Conference when I asked the question: "What are you going to do about the rise of food banks?" This was 2013, so foodbank use was probably half what it is now. He responded: "Well when we get in power..." and I just exploded because I thought: "People are hungry now. There are things you can do now." [109]

3.2.1 *Cooking on a Bootstrap*

Monroe started then named *A Girl Called Jack* blog in 2012, "originally as a local politics blog with a few recipes in it." However, after posting 'Hunger Hurts' – an article "describing the anguish of being a single mother, with delayed and unpaid benefits, looking for work" – her life changed as her success started. She was interviewed by the *Sunday People* who offered her £200 for telling her story and at that time being threatened with gas cut off, almost everything she owned sold, desperate for money, she said yes. Not long after the interview was published, Penguin offered her an austerity cookbook deal. [110] *The Guardian* gave her 'the face of modern poverty' title and *The New York Times* wrote a huge profile about her, saying she has become Britain's austerity celebrity. In contrast, Richard Littlejohn, the journalist for the right-leaning tabloid *Daily Mail*, dismissed Monroe, mocked her kale pesto pasta recipe and described her like another benefit claimant who just wants money for doing nothing, commenting: "She may have had more money for food and heating if she hadn't spent so much on tattoos." [111] However, Monroe wrote a widely shared response disproving Littlejohn's accusations.

As a person with first-hand experience of poverty, Jack Monroe has become widely popular (not only) among ordinary people who are stopping her on the streets asking for

autographs, or writing supporting and thankful comments on her blog. The now named *Cooking on a Bootstrap* blog offers budget-friendly recipes, as well as sustainable tips, and updates on Monroe's life. Despite her fame and six books published, Monroe continues campaigning against poverty, moreover, still posts several times a month on her blog. A few months ago, she also started her own YouTube channel, where she uploads cooking and talking videos tackling themes such as poverty, but also self-confidence. *Cooking on a Bootstrap* remains a platform for those who need it the most, and as Monroe stated in her riposte to Richard Littlejohn, she does not do sponsored posts, or product endorsement to earn money out of it. Although there are some adverts and a 'tip jar' under every post, as "the site does incur costs to run and research and test recipes." (see Appendix 2). [112]

3.2.2 **Hunger Hurts**

Hunger Hurts is not only a title of Monroe's probably most famous article, but also a simple truth experienced every day by millions of people around the world including Britain. In this post, Monroe brilliantly summed up thoughts flashing through many of the poor single parents' minds. And not only single parents. Questions whether a phone, a TV or a microwave is a necessity are likely to arise to anyone who does not have enough money to pay electricity and rent bills, and cannot afford to buy food (in many parents' cases for their children let alone for themselves). Situations scarcely conceivable in 21st century Britain, many would claim. Monroe's *Hunger Hurts* proves, though, they are not as difficult to get into.

Once earning £27,000 a year, working in the Fire Service, Monroe found herself out of work, dependent on benefits with a two-year-old to feed and take care of. In Foreword of Kayleigh Garthwaite's *Hunger Pains: Life inside foodbank Britain*, she wrote:

It happened so quickly, the debt, exacerbated by the steep financial penalties for having no money, over and over and over again. Within two months I had gone from full-time, salaried job in Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to sobbing on the phone to the energy company, begging them not to turn off the heating in a flat with cold laminate flooring and large windows. [113]

Because it was impossible for Monroe to cover night shifts thirty miles from home with any form of childcare, and the Fire Service did not comply her applications for flexible hours, day work roles, or even other job in the Fire Service closer to her home, she had no choice

but quit her job to find another. However, the search meant hundreds of applications, 18 months, and a dreadful experience of life in poverty. The initial six-week delay of Housing Benefit, prolonged to eleven weeks, and a rolling contract, almost made her homeless. Eventually, after trying all possible options, she contacted her MP, who stepped in, and she, therefore, escaped eviction. However, as soon as the Housing Benefit landed on to her account, it was "swallowed by the negative balance gouged out in late payment charges". [114]

First you turn your heating off. That was in December, it went off at the mains and I parked furniture in front of all the heaters to forget that they were ever there in the first place and alleviate the temptation to turn them on. Then you turn everything off at the wall sockets; nothing on standby, nothing leaking even pennies of electricity to keep the LCD display on the oven. [...] Then you start to take lightbulbs out. If they aren't there, you can't turn them on. Hallway, bedroom, small boys bedroom, you deem them unnecessary, and then in a cruel twist of fate, the Eon man rings the doorbell to tell you that you owe £390, and that he's fitting a key meter, which will make your electricity more expensive to run. So you turn the hot water off. [115]

As Yasmin Ibrahim contended in her article [116], these poignant insights and the rawness of deprivation provide first-hand accounts of first-world poverty. *Hunger Hurts* also tackled child and food poverty, as the article's title suggests. With only £10 weekly budget on food, Monroe recounts the daily struggles with satisfying the basic need of food.

Now I'm not only in arrears, but last night when I opened my fridge to find some leftover tomato pasta, an onion, and a knob of stem ginger, I gave the pasta to my boy and went to bed hungry with a pot of homemade ginger tea to ease the stomach pains. This morning, small boy had one of the last Weetabix, mashed with water, with a glass of tap water to wash it down with. "Where's Mummy's breakfast?" he asks, big blue eyes and two-year-old concern. I tell him I'm not hungry, but the rumblings of my stomach call me a liar. But these are the things that we do. [117]

Such narratives make the hunger of the poor present and real. At the same time, they corroborate statistics about increasing poverty in the UK. [118] According to the 2013

Trussell Trust report, almost 350,000 people received a minimum three-day emergency food parcels between April 2012 and April 2013, noting that "this dramatic rise in foodbank usage predates April's welfare reforms, which could see numbers increase further in 2013-14". [119] And as stated in chapter 2.2.3, the number did in fact increase, and resulted in 2000 foodbanks operating in the UK nowadays. As Monroe wrote herself, she also once was a number in these statistics. "One in a million – and more – who have been referred to a foodbank in recent years, reliant on a small parcel of emergency food." [120] Although foodbanks helped her surmount a rough period of life, when attending, she had this stealthy feeling of being a pauper.

A lot of people don't go, because of the shame and the stigma attached to queuing up outside a community centre to beg for food. Because I'll tell you now, even after months of attending, it feels like begging. [121]

Monroe describes that poverty is not just about having to unplug a fridge, turning off hot water, or not having enough money on food. She notes that MPs, with a salary of £65,000 a year¹⁶, can never fully understand the impact of their decisions on poverty, let alone Prime Minister – at that time David Cameron. With statements such as "we can make British poverty history, and we will make British poverty history" back in 2007 [122], while planning to cut benefits, making it even harder for the most vulnerable people to survive in the Breadline Britain, poverty can never become history. And it never did. On the contrary, it is very real, and millions suffer every day, as once did Monroe, who sums it in the last paragraph of *Hunger Hurts*:

Poverty is the sinking feeling when your small boy finishes his one weetabix and says 'more mummy, bread and jam please mummy' as you're wondering whether to take the TV or the guitar to the pawn shop first, and how to tell him that there is no bread or jam. [123]

3.2.3 Life Savers

Cooking on a Bootstrap, however, is more than a narrative of the lived realities of poverty and a criticism of austerity. It captures and preserves a particular knowledge derived

¹⁶ From 1 April 2020 the basic annual salary for an MP is £81,932. MPs also receive expenses to cover the costs of running an office, employing staff, having somewhere to live in London or their constituency, and travelling between Parliament and their constituency.

from Monroe's everyday struggles to live on a £10-a-week budget. The knowledge is widely spread on the Internet and through recipes handed out at foodbanks. Since the 1970s, the need for such knowledge has emerged as many British households have become dependent on ready-made meals, leaving some adults without basic cooking or budgeting skills. Blogs such as *Cooking on a Bootstrap* began to address such gaps. [124]

Unlike the budget cooking shows on television, Monroe's recipes are easy, quick and primarily cheap. Each one consists of a short list of affordable ingredients, including prices for each ingredient. Because of the low-cost ingredients, one of the readers' favourite is *Carrot, Cumin & Kidney Bean Burgers, 9p* and as Monroe states: "This burger is where the media storm began." [125] (for the full recipe, see Appendix 3). Moreover, *Cooking on a Bootstrap* is also full of posts offering many useful tips (not only for the poor), such as how to shop on budget, what to do with leftovers and tired vegetables, how to eat healthy on budget etc. These suggestions and austerity recipes not only help Monroe's readers, fans and the poor people survive in the Breadline Britain, but what is more, they helped Monroe get back on her feet. If it were not for her writing skills and courage to 'get out there', she probably would not get the book deal and her life might be just as dreadful as back then. The capturing of her knowledge has also led to acclaiming awards for 'revolutionising budget cooking'. Although she is in a safe place nowadays, Monroe admitted in an article for *The Guardian*:

I'm still haunted by the fear of being hungry. Once you've lived it, it never leaves you. I hoard food – I never throw anything away, I insist on taking leftovers home from restaurants, and that's because it wasn't a choice, it was a set of terrible circumstances. [126]

3.3 Sue Marsh and *Diary of a Benefit Scrounger*

Sue Marsh is a blogger, journalist, mother, and disability campaigner. Since her childhood, she has suffered from a rare form of Crohn's disease. She struggles daily with pain, frequent vomiting, being weak and malnourished. Sometimes, she has to be fed through a tube into the vein, and sometimes, just to get through the day, she has to take very strong medication, including chemo-style immuno-suppressants, opiates and anti-sickness injections. Despite her illness, Marsh went to college, then university, and then started her dream career. However, several operations left her thinner and weaker each time, so

eventually, she could not go on working. She has children, that she often cannot take care of, and a husband that takes care of her. [127]

Her husband has always worked, but as he had to take care of her more and more over time, he had to take jobs with less responsibility and, thus, less money. She claims that: "We were never well off, but we managed, and the few hundred pounds a month we received in Incapacity Benefit (IB) meant that I felt I hadn't failed totally. It was a small recognition of how hard I'd tried, the one financial contribution I could make to my family." [128] In 2008, however, the New Labour Government changed the system, scrapped Incapacity Benefit, and replaced it with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)¹⁷. As Marsh states in an article for *Daily Mirror*, she started to be scared:

Suddenly, the papers were full of stories about scroungers and skivers. I started to feel ashamed and frightened. Under ESA, pain and fatigue and diarrhoea were irrelevant. Could you pick up a pint of milk? Could you turn the pages in a book or pick up an empty cardboard box? Then you were fit for work. The more I heard, the more worried I became. I started reading DWP reports and anything else I could find out about the new benefit and the more I read, the more worried I became. In the end, it was clear that millions of people were going to be hurt by the new benefit – even the DWP's own figures confirmed it. People with conditions that changed from day to day like mine, or people with mental health conditions or learning difficulties couldn't get a fair assessment. [129]

Marsh felt the need of doing something, she was writing letters to politicians, but they were ignored. In October 2010, she, in desperation, started her blog ironically called *Diary of a Benefit Scrounger* to raise awareness of living with a chronic illness, confronting untruths and misrepresentations about people who do not work. Her posts capture day-to-day life as well as commentary on the political situation in the UK. Shortly afterwards, more and more people were reading her posts, leaving comments saying that they feel the same way, and sharing their terrible stories. [130] She guested on other blogs such as *Left Foot*

¹⁷ Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a welfare payment for adults under State Pension age, who have disability or health condition that affects how much they can work. Nowadays, people can claim Universal Credit, or 'new style' ESA. To apply, a person needs to have worked as an employee or been self-employed, and paid enough National Insurance contributions (usually in the last 2 to 3 years).

Forward, The Hardest Hit, or Liberal Conspiracy, was writing for national newspapers such as *Daily Mirror* or *The Guardian*, and she appeared on television debates such as BBC's *Newsnight*.

3.3.1 Trapped in Welfare State

Marsh received the Incapacity Benefit for 9 years, and to obtain it, she had to fill in 40 pages of questions every three years. And according to her, each question required an essay style answer – the unknowing claimant who wrote "yes" or "no" or "maybe" would not get a positive outcome. Moreover, the questions were subtly repeated to dig for anomalies and required the claimant to share information they probably did not share with their partners. For some, the process was more complicated – fill the forms more regularly or attend an assessment, but she was not troubled by that, because her condition was seen serious. However, after New Labour government changed IB to ESA, she was "invited" to an assessment of her condition. After the process, she did not qualify. Her assessor told her, that qualifying for ESA is almost impossible, and added: "If you lose one eye they tell you to use the other one, if you lose one leg or one arm they tell you to use the other. It's not until you can't walk move or see that you qualify". [131] Marsh, therefore, had no other choice than to qualify for Disability Living Allowance (DLA)¹⁸.

Marsh first claimed for DLA in the beginning of 2011. However, after nine months of waiting, her application was rejected, and after another two months, when she asked for "reconsideration", she received a letter with complete declination of her claim. She summed up her anger in a post called *The Very Definition of Irony*:

I have severe Crohn's disease. Probably one of the most severe cases in the country. I have had 7 major life-saving operations to remove over 30 obstructions (blockages) from my bowel. I take chemo-shots every two weeks that suppress my immune system, ensuring that I regularly have to fight infections. Exhaustion, pain and nausea plague every single day of my life. I have osteoporosis and malnutrition. I have had major seizures and a stroke.

¹⁸ Disability Living Allowance (DLA) was replaced by Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for disabled people. People can apply for DLA if they are under 16. PIP helps with extra costs if individual has a long-term ill-health or disability, and the amount he can get is between £23.60 and £151.40 a week. The amount depends on how the condition affects one's life, not the condition itself.

Nonetheless, I have just heard from my own Disability Living Allowance application, that it has been rejected. Completely. I will receive no support at all from DLA. Despite claiming successfully in the past, despite only getting weaker and more frail and less able to live independently, my reconsideration was rejected. The only option now is to appeal. I will have to fill in a horribly complicated appeal form over the Xmas period, wait up to one year to go to tribunal, and probably go bankrupt in the meantime. [132]

As she admitted, she was not surprised. The world, however, seemed to be in shock. Her story, that finally managed to convey the horror of benefit cuts, went viral. To give context, the Coalition Government at that time introduced Welfare Reform Bill, proposing many changes and one them was to replace DLA with a Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The intention was to reduce government expenditure, focusing welfare payments on disabled claimants that are "most in need". [133] It meant, that 3.2 million people would have to reapply, be assessed, and the claims would be cut by 20%. In an article for *The Guardian*, Sue Marsh says:

The irony of my fight to save disability benefits for millions yet failing to qualify myself seemed to add a final dash of outrage. I only wish I could tell everyone who read, retweeted and shared my article that I am just one story. [...] This is happening up and down the country to people much more sick than I am, people with far greater impairments. It is happening to people you will never hear of, people with no voice, no power to fight and nowhere to turn. [134]

After 18 months since her initial claim, Marsh suddenly got a phone call from DWP apologizing that it was all a mistake, and she did qualify for DLA after all. However, during that time, her family became poor. They were forced to sell their home and move to a smaller flat. They could not afford to buy clothes for their children, let alone birthday presents or letting them have a birthday party. It was not enough, though. In a post called *What DLA has meant to me*, Marsh notes:

We still had to pay heating and lighting bills and we had to buy food. Because of my Crohn's disease, we had to buy good food. No £50-for-a-fortnight

Iceland runs for me. Nope, I had to somehow buy lots of fresh fruit and veg, good quality meat and supplements with no money. I always felt guilty. [135]

In August 2012, however, they ran out of options. They borrowed money from family knowing they could not pay it back, and found themselves hopeless. But when Marsh was qualified for DLA, they could start to live again.

I had been so worried all the time, there had seemed no way out. The constant pressure and fear had weighed me down without me even noticing. It was just life. But as soon as we got the help we needed, the help we had always qualified for, the pressure lifted. [136]

3.3.2 **Spartacus**

In the meantime, Marsh was fighting not only for herself, but for those 3.2 million, who had no one to defend them. She was soon joined by Kaliya Franklin and, along with other "from-bed" activists, they found researchers, administrators, welfare rights advisors, managers and people who had been through the system they wanted to change. [137] Their research has shown that over 90% of experts opposed many aspects of the government's proposal. One document revealed that Boris Johnson, then Mayor of London, had criticized the proposal, a fact he had not made public. [138]

On 9 January 2012, disabled activists and their allies published the results in a report entitled *Responsible Reform* (see Appendix 4) – in practice known as the 'Spartacus Report'. In ancient Rome, supporters of the rebel leader Spartacus are said to have all claimed to be him, making it impossible for the authorities to arrest Spartacus. The slogan 'I am Spartacus and I support the Spartacus Report' was used to emphasize that attacks on disabled people could affect anyone. It was published with the support of charities and the Ekklesia thinktank, but it was users of social media who led the way. Within the first hour, #spartacusreport was 'trending' number one on Twitter and servers of three sites hosting the report crashed due to a record number of visitors. In the following days, campaigners sent targeted tweets and emails to every MP and individual members of the House of Lords, whom they thought were persuadable. Most of the mainstream media remained unaware of this until the government defeat three days after the report was published. [139]

On 11 January 2012, the House of Lords was expected to pass the government's Welfare Reform Bill. Most newspapers were not interested enough to send a reporter to hear peers debating the issue. The Lords, however, dismissed three elements of the proposal. They voted to reject frequent re-testing of disabled people, to retain entitlement to certain benefits for young disabled people unable to work, and to exclude cancer patients from benefit time limits. The BBC posted the news on its website in the briefest terms, while journalists struggled to find out what had happened as most newspapers were unprepared for the prospect of a government defeat. The few who were less surprised were those who had been following Twitter closely. [140]

The campaign had been building for some time. The Coalition Government had announced multi-billion-pound cuts to the welfare budget, following the general election of 2010. Disability benefits were a particular target. David Cameron stated that previously they had been given to disabled people with "no questions asked". An investigation, however, revealed a fraud rate of only 1 in 200, which is 0.5%, and therefore one of the lowest of any benefits. Atos, a transnational company carrying the test for disabled people claiming ESA, was accused of conducting simplistic assessments to cut as many benefits as possible. Numerous stories of people forced to miss meals and turn off heating after their benefits removed emerged. The group Disabled People Against Cuts said that hundreds of people had died not long after being considered healthy enough to pursue a job. As many disabled people lost their income, government-supporting newspapers reported the figures as evidence that many claimants had been fraudsters all along and ignored more detailed evidence. Over 40% of appeals against Atos were upheld. In the case of claimants accompanied by a legal adviser, the figure rose to 70%. However, the government was also planning to cut access to legal aid. [141] This all contributed to a climate of fear. Number of disabled people reported experiencing verbal abuse in public. Sue Marsh, unfortunately, had also such experience, as she states in her post *Sick or Scrounger???*:

"Bought a new TV? Didn't know they were giving those out on the state now"

(Husband's best friend, laughs at own hysterical joke)

"She never wanted to work, she just wanted a man to look after her"

(Husband's best friend)

"You have to weigh up a bit of diarrhoea against the money you cost us" (Said by top consultant who obviously doesn't have a CLUE about my kind of bowel disease.)

"Eat a f***ing donut you skinny cow" (Shouted in the street by two fat Mums)

"What's disabled about you then? You look OK?" (Asked by a policeman questioning why I need a disabled parking badge) [142]

However, the Coalition government were determined to ignore both peers and protests, that emerged after the launch of 'Spartacus Report', and invoked the Right of the House of Commons to override the Lords and used their majority in the Commons to push through their original proposals. The Welfare Reform Bill was not blocked. That, however, certainly does not mean that the campaign had been worthless. Since then, disabled activists regularly appear on TV and radio and their street demonstrations hit the headlines. [143]

4 Conclusion

Through their narratives, social issue bloggers portray problems with housing, or poverty as lived experience. Moreover, they challenge the widespread stereotypes of people dependent on benefits. Most benefit claimants – one of whom, for instance, was Jack Monroe – are generally perceived as individuals who are out of work through a fault of their own, who have not made enough effort to find work or who are unwilling to work.

The stigmatizing view of benefit claimants also assumes that the welfare system has created a dependency culture that encourages indolence, rather than serving as an emergency safety net, and expects the taxpayer to fund a lifestyle through benefit payments. Foodbanks are not seen as a manifestation of genuine need, but as an expression of this culture. Politicians have used these stigmas to legitimize welfare reforms not only in the pragmatic sense of forcing people back into work, but also in the moral sense of acting in the individuals' best interest by saving them from dependency and incentivising self-reliance. Right-leaning newspapers have presented benefit claimants as unable to manage their own finances and enjoying a lifestyle of large televisions, tattoos and unhealthy diet paid for by taxpayers, as can be seen from Richard Littlejohn's comment mentioned in chapter 3.2.1. They further emphasize the distinction between the work-shy "skivers" living off benefits and the hard-working "strivers" whose taxes pay for benefits. [144] Such accounts are based on explanations of social issues predicated on individual failure while ignoring structural and systemic ones. [145]

However, social issue bloggers undermine and disprove these arguments by revealing the true consequences of ministers' decisions in their posts. The bloggers are individuals brave enough to open up to the world by sharing their stories, perceptions and political opinions. They shift their private lives into the public sphere, raising the awareness of social problems in Britain. They have become the voices of ordinary people, who are equally trapped in destitution and housing crisis. Blogging activism and campaigning forced those talking about "scroungers" or "skivers" to revise their opinions, which corresponds to Sue Marsh's question in one of her posts: "What else but personal experience could get through to these ideologies?" [146]

Penny Anderson, Jack Monroe, Sue Marsh, and other bloggers successfully lifted themselves through their writing about social issues in the UK. Their blogs and later articles

for national newspapers, as well as other activities, have helped them overcome a harsh episode of their lives. Unfortunately, very few are just as fortunate. Millions of people find themselves helpless and hopeless when fighting with the problems of housing and poverty. Anderson, Monroe, and Marsh, however, unlike those in power, have been through the system, which makes them more trustworthy. Their life stories inspire those struggling, and thus provide them with the courage to fight along and participate in the campaigning for changing the system.

Any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members – the last, the least, the littlest.

(Cardinal Roger Mahony, in a 1998 letter, *Creating a Culture of Life*)¹⁹

Britain is yet again failing its weakest citizens, and with the coronavirus pandemic, which affects not only health, but also the global economy, it will probably be even more difficult for Britain to provide the safety net for those "last, least, and littlest". After the lockdown was announced on 23 March 2020, the Trussell Trusts reported its busiest ever period, with 50,000 food parcels issued in a week, which is almost a double of its usual volume. [147] Most countries, including Britain, were unprepared for this situation – people not able to go to work due to taking care of their children; people losing their jobs, as employers can no longer afford to pay them etc. Many of those people may become numbers in the poverty statistics, or they may struggle with keeping their housing, or finding a new one. The outlooks, nowadays, do not look optimistic either for those already stranded, or those on the edge of precipice.

As stated in the Introduction, the purpose of this bachelor's thesis was to examine the selected social problems faced by today's Britain from a less customary perspective, i.e. by means of blogs, in order to present candid opinions of British society and to delineate the real consequences of the actions taken by politicians. The social issues selected were housing crisis and the resulting homelessness, and poverty.

The theoretical part, specifically chapter 2 and the following subchapters, provided information of the selected individual social issues, described the development and current

¹⁹ Available from: <http://onemonthbeforeheartbreak.blogspot.com/2011/01/fit-for-work.html>

state of each one. The historical and political context provided in theoretical part was found crucial for the subsequent practical part.

The practical part, specifically chapter 3 and the subsequent subchapters, focused on the impact of housing crisis and poverty on Britain's social issue bloggers, namely Penny Anderson, Jack Monroe, and Sue Marsh. The applied research method was content-based, as well as compilation and comparative, analysis of articles written by the bloggers, either on their blogs or for national newspapers such as *The Guardian* or *The Daily Mirror*. The analysis showed that Anderson, Monroe, and Marsh sharply criticize the politics of both New Labour Government and then the Coalition Government. They all have been affected by the governments' decisions, Jack Monroe and Sue Marsh particularly by the extensive benefits cuts introduced in Welfare Reform Bill in 2012 by the Coalition. At some point of their lives, the social issue bloggers selected found themselves either almost homeless, struggling to feed their children, let alone themselves, or seriously in debt. And as the analysis indicated, the reasons, for them to be caught in these situations, were hardly intentional.

Britain's social issue bloggers have evinced resentment towards governments' decisions and public opinions of people trapped in the housing crisis or poverty and chose to cast light on the reality of poverty, hunger, desolating pain or lives of tenants, by writing about their own experiences. Their blogposts revealing the real consequences of UK government's policies managed to raise public awareness of the extent of the housing crisis and poverty in Britain, thus leading to at least partial abandonment of the work-shy "skivers" and hard-working "strivers" rhetoric.

Moreover, Britain's social bloggers (except for Penny Anderson), have engaged in various campaigns calling for the change of the current system. By "change" the activist mean the increase of benefits (at least in line with inflation), improvement of the administration of the benefit system, stabilization of the labour market, as well as the government's investment in social housing. However, in the present situation, amidst the coronavirus pandemic, the chance of improving the system seems less plausible than before.

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7 Abstract

The bachelor's thesis entitled *Voices of Protest in the Digital Space: Britain's Social Issue Bloggers* deals with issues such as the housing crisis, the resulting homelessness, and poverty, from the perspective of British social issue bloggers. The main objective of this bachelor's thesis is to acquaint readers with the real consequences of selected social problems on the lives of British bloggers and society. The thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part defines social problems as such, and also provides information on the development and current state of individual social problems. The emphasis is mainly the decisions of individual governments from Thatcher times to the present. The second part defines terms blog and blogger, and also focuses on selected social issue bloggers, namely Penny Anderson, Jack Monroe, and Sue Marsh, and analysis of their life stories and articles written by them, published either on their blogs or in British newspapers. The used analytical method proved the insufficiency of the British welfare system and obstacles to its possible improvement.

Keywords: housing crisis, poverty, homelessness, blog, social issue bloggers

8 Resumé

Bakalářská práce s názvem *Protestní hlasy v digitálním prostoru: Britští sociální blogeři* se zabývá problémy, jako jsou krize v bydlení, z toho plynoucí bezdomovectví, a chudoba, z pohledu britských sociálních blogerů. Hlavním cílem této práce je seznámit čtenáře s reálnými následky vybraných sociálních problémů na život britských blogerů a také společnosti. Práce je rozdělena na dvě hlavní části. První část definuje sociální problémy jako takové a dále poskytuje informace o vývoji a současném stavu jednotlivých sociálních problémů. Důraz je kladen především na rozhodnutí jednotlivých vlád od dob Margaret Thatcherové až po současnost. Druhá část definuje pojmy blog a bloger, a dále se věnuje vybraným blogerům, konkrétně Penny Andersonové, Jack Monroeové a Sue Marshové, a analýze jejich životních příběhů a jimi napsaných článků, zveřejněných ať už na jejich blozích či v britských novinách. Použitá analytická metoda prokázala nedostatečnost britského sociálního systému a překážky k jeho možnému zlepšení.

Klíčová slova: krize v bydlení, chudoba, bezdomovectví, blog, sociální blogeři

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1



The hosts of BBC One's cooking show *Daily Kitchen Live* Matt Tebbutt and Bootstrap Cook Jack Monroe

Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/articles/dailykitchentips>

9.2 Appendix 2

SHARE:       

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This site is free to those who need it, and always will be, but it does incur costs to run and research and test recipes etc. If you use it and benefit, enjoy it, and would like to keep it going, please consider popping something in the tip jar, and thank you.



"Tipping jar" from *Cooking on a Bootstrap*

Source: <https://cookingonabootstrap.com/2019/11/01/carrot-kidney-bean-burger-recipe/>

9.3 Appendix 3

Carrot, Cumin & Kidney Bean Burgers, 9p

Posted by Jack Monroe | Nov 1, 2019 | Beans & Lentils, Blog, Dairy Free, Gluten Free, Recipes, Vegan, Vegan Recipes, Vegetarian | 227



This burger is where the media storm began, and dubbed 'the 9p burger' because of the low cost of the ingredients used to make it, it's one of my most popular recipes. A can of value range red kidney beans is a cheap but excellent source of protein and I built a lot of my early cooking around it, and they became a firm staple in my household. I triple the recipe to make a batch of them, and freeze them in patties to whip out at a moment's notice and fry on a low heat. I like mine best in a pitta bread (22p for 6) and a dollop of mango chutney or mayo...

(I'm currently trialling a partnership program with the budget supermarkets that I shop in for my recipes. If you click the links in the recipes I may earn a small commission, but don't just click for the sake of it as they're wise to that! As ever, I don't promote anything I don't genuinely use and love myself, but if you do online shopping at either of the Big Two, you might want to check out my recommendations)

Makes 4 generous burgers at 15p each or 6 good sized ones at 9p each*: (*This post is not sponsored; I provide links to the ingredients that I use so you can see how I calculate my recipe costs, and I may earn a small commission if you click the links and make a purchase.*)

1 x 400g tin of kidney beans, 30p

1 smallish onion (150g approx), peeled and finely chopped, 5p

1 large carrot (150g approx), grated, 6p

1 teaspoon (1.5g) ground cumin, 4p

1 tbsp veg or sunflower oil, plus 2 tablespoons to fry the burgers, 6p

1 heaped teaspoon flour, plus another to shape the burgers, 1p (to make these gluten free, simply use your favourite gluten free flour to bind them)

Drain the kidney beans and rinse in cold water to wash away the 'tinned' taste. Put into a saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 10 minutes to really soften.

Put the onion, carrot, and cumin into a medium frying pan. Add the splash of oil and cook on a low heat to soften. When the kidney beans have softened, drain well and add to the carrots and onion. Remove from the heat and mash together until you have a smoothish puree, like a mashed potato consistency. Stir in the flour to stiffen.

Heat the remaining oil in the frying pan on a medium heat. With floured hands, take a quarter of the burger mixture and roll it into a ball. Make three more balls with the remaining mixture. Place one in the oil and flatten gently with a fork to make the burger shape. Depending on the size of your pan, you may be able to cook all the burgers at once or need to do them in batches – unless you're freezing some of the uncooked patties. Cook for a few minutes on one side, before turning. The burgers need to be handled with care as they can be quite fragile before they're done! When cooked and slightly crisp on both sides, remove from the pan and serve.

Tip: Make the burger mixture in advance and pop into the fridge for a few hours – it firms up nicely and is less fragile when cooking. It will keep, covered, for 2 days so can be made well in advance.

Source: <https://cookingonabootstrap.com/2019/11/01/carrot-kidney-bean-burger-recipe/>

9.4 Appendix 4



Sue Marsh and the *Responsible Reform*

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/oct/09/society-daily-email>