



A systemic perspective on how to end homelessness

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Demos Helsinki

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Outline

1. **Introduction:** The broader societal context
2. **Hypothesis:** How can Housing First be a tool for systemic change?
3. **Case studies:** What does Housing First as governance mean in practice?
4. **Conclusions:** What are the implications of a governance approach to Housing First?



We operate in an increasingly complex,
non-linear and interconnected world.



As the Ukrainian war is demonstrating, COVID-19 has been only the harbinger of many foreseeable disruptions for homelessness policy: a practice round to a century of transformations.



Now more than ever, we must equip purpose-driven change makers with apt tools that can achieve systemic change.



Homelessness is also a systemic problem.

How can Housing First be
a tool for systemic change?

It's about
governance.



Governance is not only about governments.
It's about shared goals & collective action.

Housing First: policy..or governance?

At its core, HF is a new model for the governance of homelessness characterised by a radical goal:

. Eliminating, rather than just managing homelessness.

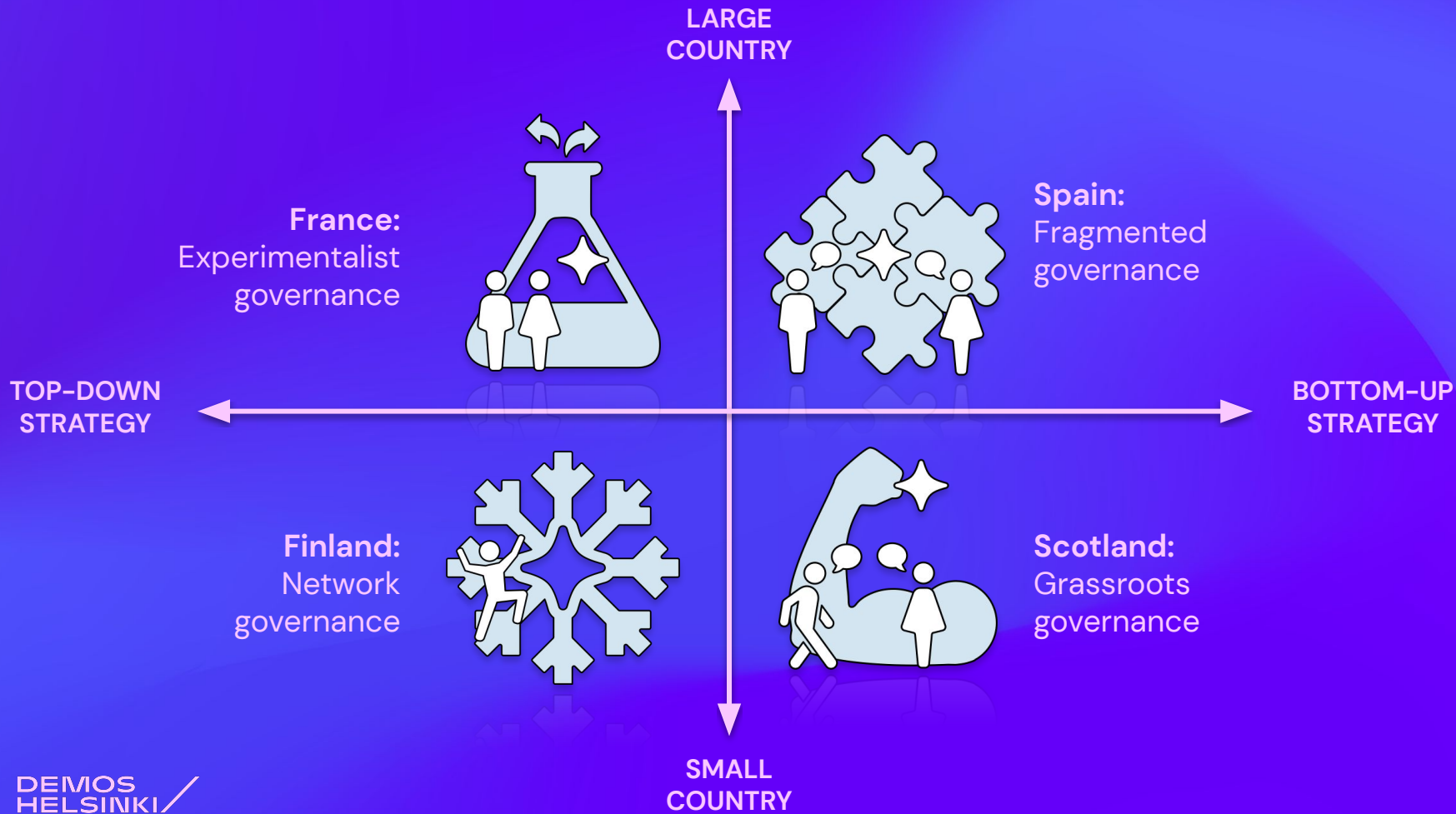
To seize its potential, advocates should not focus on designing a perfect roadmap or blueprint for its implementation – as if HF is not a goal in itself, or a one-size-fits-all policy.

Instead, they can work to ensure that **ungoverned** homelessness phenomena become **governed**.

Housing First: policy...or governance?

HF as policy	HF as governance
From focusing on developing a "one-size-fits-all" blueprint...	...to ensuring that practitioners can learn by doing how to solve implementation problems
From focusing on the assessment of resources needed for implementing HF...	...to actively bringing key stakeholders (local and national) on board
From supplying valuable but resource-intensive policy ideas...	...to fostering the long-term commitment of politics towards <i>eliminating</i> homelessness

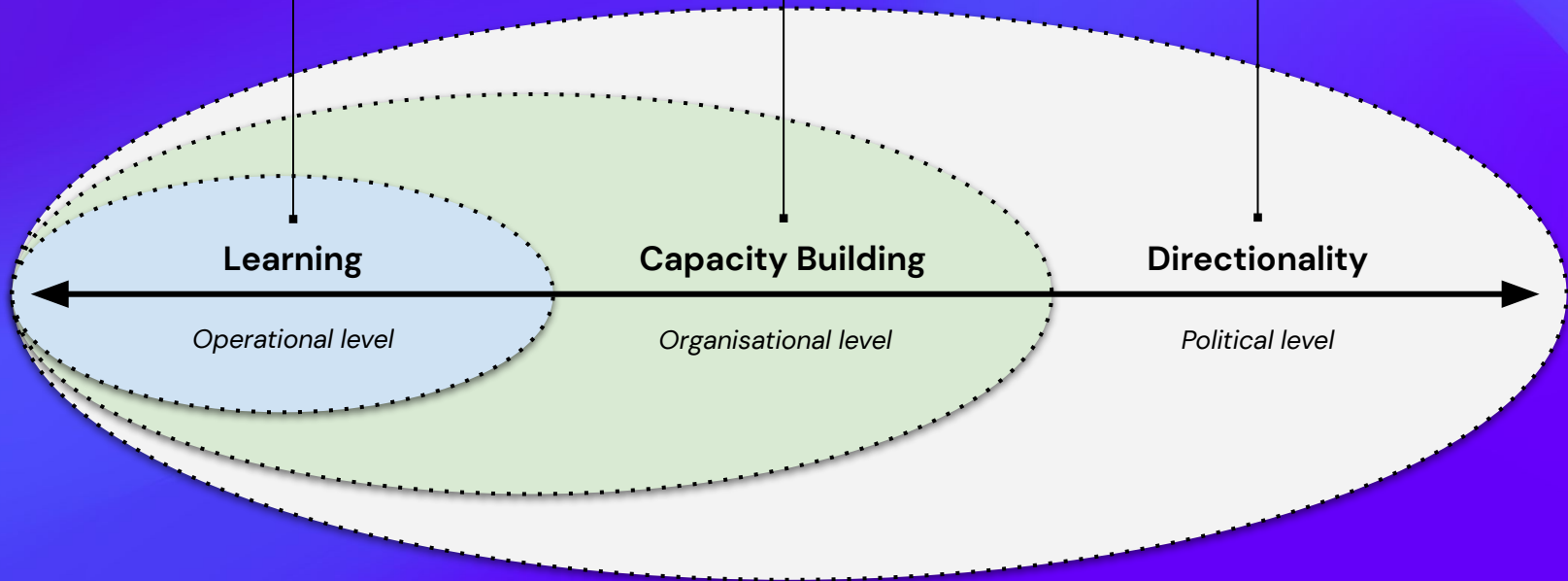
What does Housing First as
governance mean in practice?



Identifying bottlenecks preventing **continuous improvement** of HF implementation

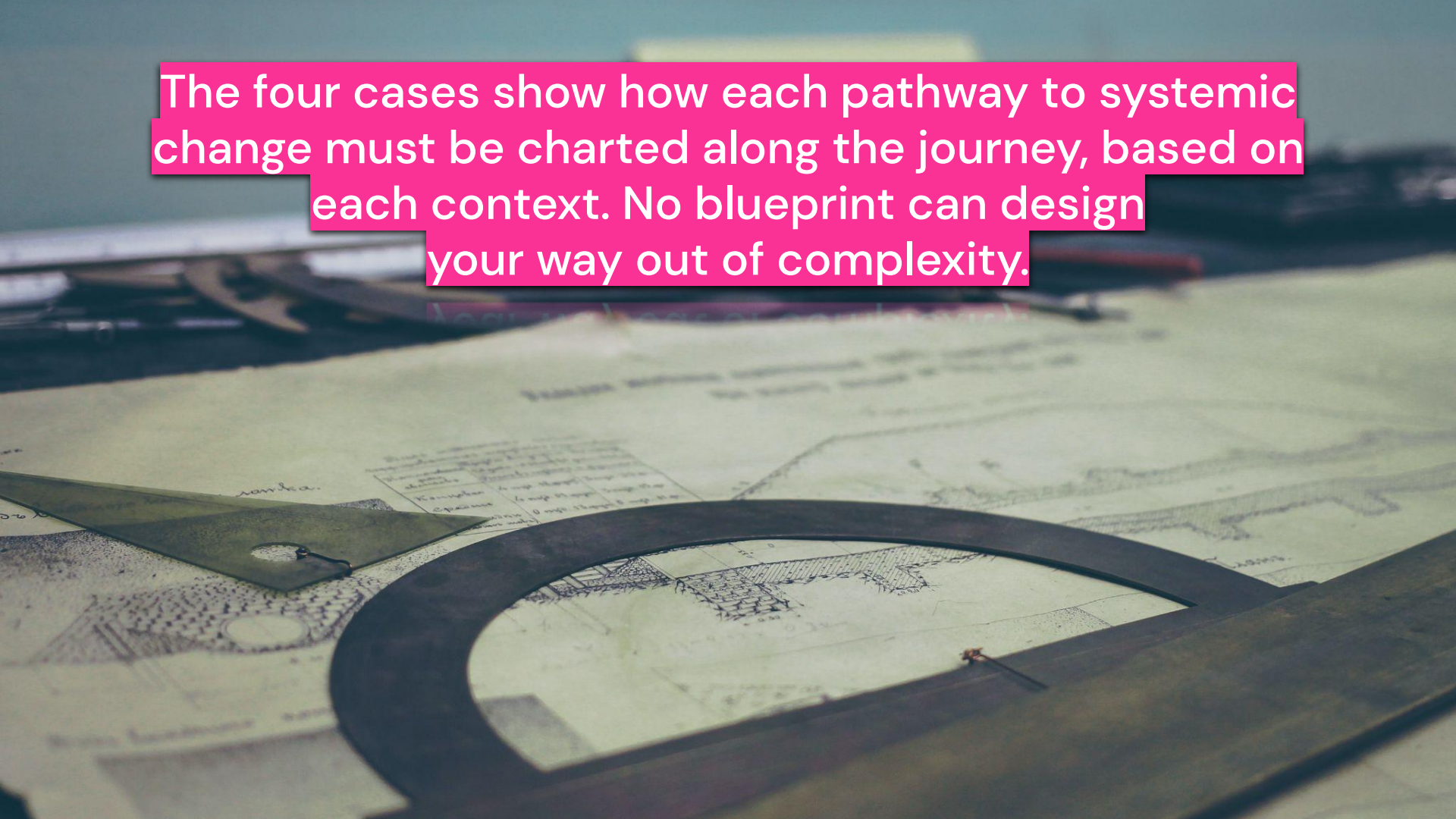
Establishing networks providing the human and financial **resource flow** needed to overcome them throughout HF scale-up

Nurturing the long-term political and societal commitment needed to align stakeholders **incentives** towards systems change



What are the implications of a
governance approach to HF?

The four cases show how each pathway to systemic change must be charted along the journey, based on each context. No blueprint can design your way out of complexity.



Instead of being seen as a blueprint, HF can provide governments and practitioners with a compass allowing them to chart their own journey through homelessness





HF advocates as sherpas of systemic change in homelessness

Call to action: Key recommendations

To ensure **directionality**...

- Believe it when you say it: homelessness can be ended.
- Secure high-level political commitment by building incentives and pressure for decision-makers.
- Advocate to adjust the incentives for the previous legacy of service providers, so as to ensure that: (i) moving from shelter-based to permanent housing pays off for them as well; and (ii) person-centred planning is prioritised.

To ensure **capacity building**...

- Prevent fragmentation of practitioners and groundworkers' initiatives through training and peer learning.
- Engage with all stakeholders that may help securing key human or financial resources for HF deployment.
- Prevent isolation of HF initiatives by governing networks of actors committed to ending homelessness – and not just stakeholders committed to HF.

To ensure **learning**...

- Commit to action rather than detailed ex ante planning.
- Direct research resources into ex post evaluations to strengthen the knowledge base.
- Balance decentralised autonomy of local networks implementing HF with centralised diffusion of lessons learnt.
- Create broader appetite for HF philosophy by promotion of a captivating narrative.

Thank you!

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