

Seminar 12: Migration and Homelessness I

Chair: **Mike Allen, IE**



Ivana Pericin, IE: Migrant Homelessness in Dublin: A Qualitative Study

Ivana Pericin is a PhD Candidate in the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin (TCD). Previously, she was involved in research that focused on the health needs of, and improvement of health services for, vulnerable groups, including migrants. Her current research seeks to explore the range of factors and processes that lead migrants into homelessness, influence their patterns of movement through service systems and impact their ability to access and maintain housing over time. Her research interests and desire are to be involved in projects committed to marginalised groups in society.

Both internationally and in Ireland, the profile of the homeless population has changed over the past decades, with burgeoning evidence of non-nationals accessing homeless shelters and related support services. Despite clear evidence of an increase in the number of migrants experiencing homelessness in Ireland, there is a paucity of research on this specific dimension of homelessness, and the dynamics and drivers of migrant homelessness are, consequently, poorly understood. In order to address a gap in knowledge it seems essential to gain an in-depth understanding of the lives and identities of migrants experiencing homelessness. Using an ethnographic approach, the paper seeks to explore the experiences that impact migrants' journeys 'into' and 'through' homelessness, as well as to examine migrant homeless identities, including the perception of self and the individual's worldview. The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted over an eight-month period and took place in strategically chosen sites in Dublin, including a day drop-in/advocacy service, a primary health care homeless service and several street locations. The observed encounters revealed that a vast majority of homeless migrants were male, 30-45 years old, predominantly from CEE countries with no experience of homelessness prior to their arrival in Ireland. The preliminary analysis highlights that loss of employment, substance abuse and insecure tenancy agreements significantly contribute to migrants' housing instability and propel them into homelessness. Migrants' pathways through homelessness are found to be closely linked with a significant increase in substance abuse, which combined with a struggle to navigate the social service system (due to language barriers and a lack of previous knowledge) further entrenches migrants in emergency services, and leads to an inevitable progression towards chronic homelessness. This paper offers insight into the construction of identity among participants and how this is used as a coping mechanism for navigating homelessness.

Cordula Bieri and Paula Mayock, IE: At the Edge of Homelessness: Refugees Navigating the Irish Private Rental Market



Cordula Bieri is a PhD researcher at the School of Social Work and Social Policy of Trinity College Dublin and is a recipient of the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship. Her PhD research focuses on the housing experiences of refugees who have recently been granted international protection. Cordula has a MA degree in Sociology from the University of Zurich and has previously worked for Non-profit organisations in Switzerland, where her research and advocacy work had a strong focus on the intersection of poverty, housing and migration.

Dr. Paula Mayock is an Associate Professor at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. Paula's research focuses primarily on the lives and experiences of marginalised youth and adult populations, covering areas such as homelessness, drug use and drug problems. She is the founder and co-director of the Women's Homelessness in Europe Network (WHEN) (<http://womenshomelessness.org/>), which aims to promote and develop academic scholarship on gender dimensions of homelessness. Paula is the author of numerous articles, book chapters and research reports and is an Associate Editor to the international journal *Addiction*.





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The Irish housing market is in the grip of a major affordability crisis and while eviction bans introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic have seen homelessness numbers drop from 10,148 in February 2020 to 8,082 in April 2021, the recent lifting of the eviction ban in combination with the persistent shortage of housing supply as well as limited tenancy rights are continuing to put private tenants at risk of homelessness.

While there is a growing body of literature on people experiencing homelessness, less is known about the people who are at risk of becoming homeless and how they deal with the insecurities associated with the housing crisis. This case study aims to give insight into the experiences of a particular group: refugees renting on the private rental market in Ireland.

The research combines in-depth interviewing with the ethnographic Go-Along approach to gain a deeper understanding of refugees' housing journeys in Ireland and how these journeys shape their sense of belonging. Twenty of the 21 participants interviewed to date were living in private rented accommodation; 18 of them with the support of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme following their transition from Direct Provision (DP) accommodation.

Emerging findings show that the period of transition from DP following the attainment of refugee status was a particular point of vulnerability, which also increased the risk of homelessness. While only a small number of the participants accessed emergency homelessness accommodation, the threat of becoming homeless featured strongly in the accounts of a large number. Participants' employed various strategies to avoid homelessness, including accepting inadequate accommodation, prioritising rent over other expenses, convincing landlords of their deservingness and delaying employment to not lose access to housing supports. The implications of the findings are discussed, with a particular focus on the need to strengthen protections that aim to circumvent the risk of homelessness for refugees who gain status and embark on the journey of securing housing.