

People, Policy and Place: Examining Homelessness Beyond the Capital in Ireland

Dr Kathy Reilly,
Discipline of Geography,
College of Arts, Social Sciences, &
Celtic Studies,
National University of Ireland, Galway



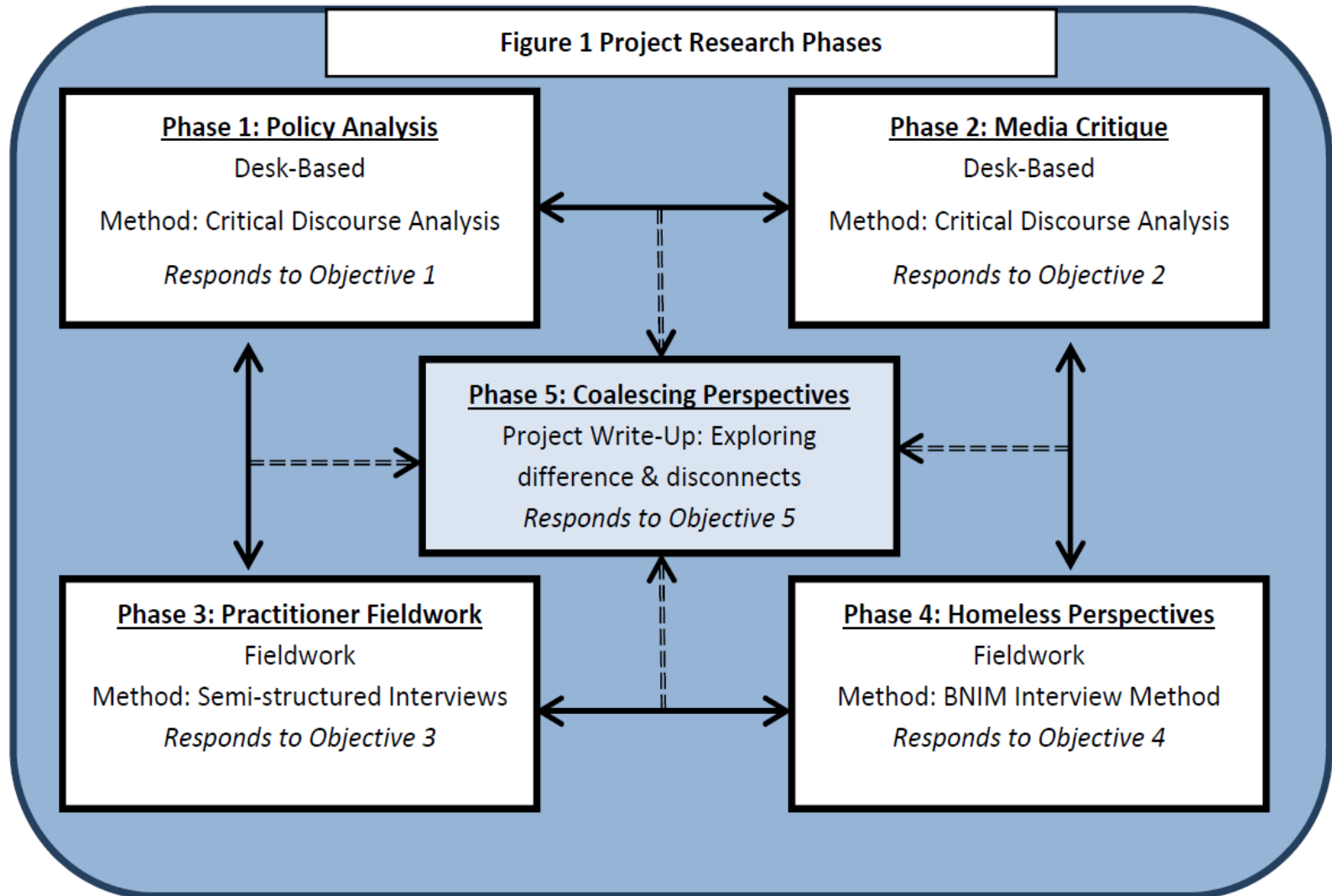
Email: Kathy.reilly@nuigalway.ie
@krgeography



Presentation Outline

- Deconstructing Homelessness: Project Context
- Homelessness in Ireland
 - State Policy
 - Regional influence?
 - The Numbers: Who Counts?
- Findings: The West Region
 - Limitations of a regional approach
 - People
 - Policy
 - Place

Deconstructing Homelessness: Finding a Place for Geography?



The Irish State and Homelessness

2.—A person shall be regarded by a housing authority as being homeless for the purposes of this Act if—

(a) there is no accommodation available which, in the opinion of the authority, **he**, together with any other person who normally resides with **him** or who might reasonably be expected to reside with **him**, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or

(b) **he** is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution, and is so living because **he** has no accommodation of the kind referred to in *paragraph (a)*, and **he** is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources.

Irish Legislation

Housing (Misc. Provisions) 2009

Childcare Act 1991

Housing Act 1988

Health Act 1953

Sample Irish Policies

Rebuilding Ireland (2016)

Housing First (2018 – 2021)

NQSF (May 2019)

Action Plan (2014)

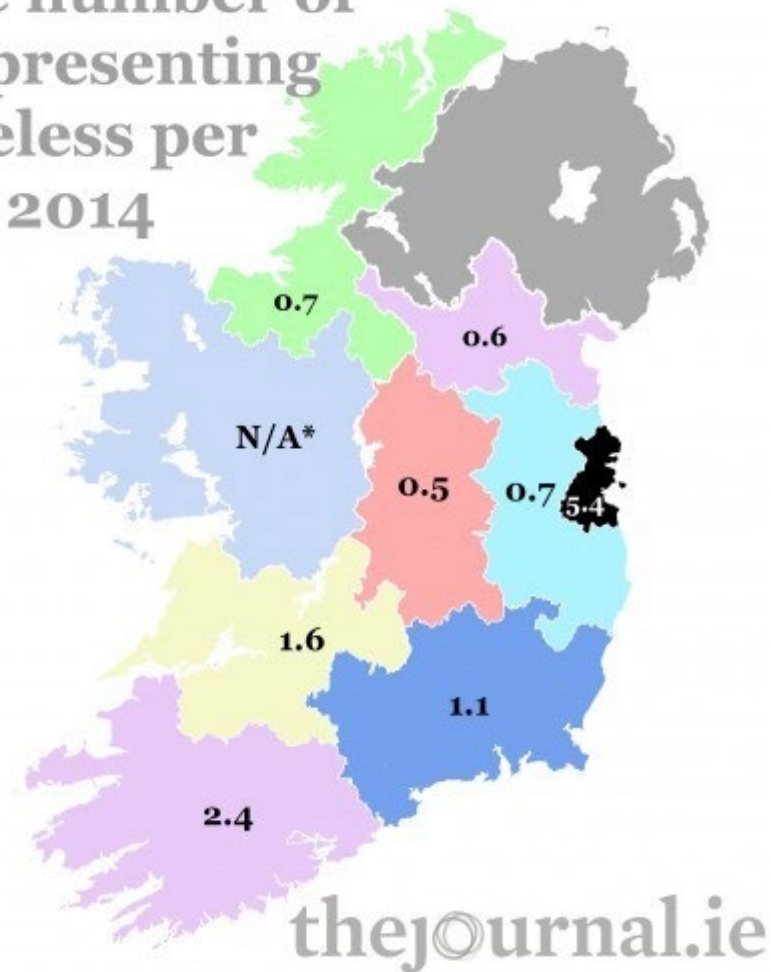
Regional Influence

<u>Dublin</u>	4300	<u>North-West</u>	
		Donegal	22
<u>Mid-East</u>		Leitrim	1
Kildare	175	Sligo	31
Meath	97		
Wicklow	34	<u>South-East</u>	
		Carlow	22
<u>Midlands</u>		Kilkenny	60
Laois	24	Tipperary	32
Longford	11	Waterford	108
Offaly	49	Wexford	41
Westmeath	35		
		<u>South-West</u>	
<u>Mid-West</u>		Cork	422
Clare	73	Kerry	153
Limerick	270		
		<u>West</u>	
<u>North-East</u>		Galway	302
Louth	180	Mayo	40
Monaghan	1	Roscommon	8
Cavan	6		

Source:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/statistics>

Average number of people presenting as homeless per day, Q2 2014



Source: www.Journal.ie (2014)

Homelessness Context by Region

Year / Region	Mar16	Mar17	Mar18	Mar19	Increase by Region
West	139	199	280	348	150%
North-East	73	113	60	173	137%
South-West	239	349	402	534	124%
Midlands	55	83	95	116	111%
Mid-West	212	318	361	347	64%
Dublin	2750	3299	4107	4315	57%
Mid-East	202	226	319	283	40%
North-West	40	41	59	55	38%
South-East	259	281	352	313	21%

Percentage Increase in Adult Homelessness by Region

Figures from: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/statistics>

Since 2016 PASS* figures report:

- Every region experienced an increase in homelessness
- West Region experienced the greatest percentage increase
- **Challenges a Dublin-centred narrative of homelessness**

*Pathway Accommodation and Support System

PASS: Who Counts?

- State representative: Local Authorities
 - Regional leads
 - Report numbers accessing homelessness services
 - By gender, age, individual/family status, type of accommodation accessed
- Does not include:
 - ‘Hidden homeless’ (squatters, couch-surfers & insecure)
 - Women and children living in domestic violence refuges
 - Asylum seekers living in Direct Provision centres
 - ‘Rough sleepers’

A Focus on the West Region

- Three counties (4 local authorities)
 - Galway City, Galway County, Mayo & Roscommon County
- Nuance within the West Region
- Regional service provision (governance)
 - West Region Homelessness Action Plan (2020 – 2022)
 - Localised plans (each local authority)

Year / Region	Mar16	Mar17	Mar18	Mar19	% Increase by County
Galway	127	185	259	309	143%
Mayo	5	6	21	32	540%
Roscommon	7	8	0	7	*
Total	139	199	280	348	150%

Percentage Increase in Adult
Homelessness by County

Figures from:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/statistics>

Homelessness in the West Region

	Male	Female	Total
March 2016	98	41	139
March 2017	133	66	199
March 2018	169	111	280
March 2019	206	142	348
% Increase	110%	246%	150%

Percentage Increase in Adult Homelessness by Gender

Figures from:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/statistics>

Percentage Increase in Adult Homelessness by Age
Figures from:
<https://www.housing.gov.ie/statistics>

	18 – 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65+	Total Adults
March 2016	10	75	50	4	139
March 2017	31	96	70	2	199
March 2018	42	155	73	10	280
March 2019	47	190	99	12	348
% Increase	370%	153%	98%	200%	150%

Homelessness in the West Region

	Total Families	Total Adults	(of which) Single Parent Families	Total Dependents
March 2016	17	22	12	47
March 2017	21	28	14	55
March 2018	82	125	39	218
March 2019	85	117	53	213
% Increase	400%	432%	342%	353%

Percentage Increase in Family Homelessness
 Figures from: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/statistics>

PEA: Private Emergency Accommodation
 STA: Supported Temporary Accommodation
 TEA: Temporary Emergency Accommodation

	PEA	STA	TEA	Other
March 2016	39	104	0	0
March 2017	70	115	22	5
March 2018	127	126	26	4
March 2019	215	127	0	6
% Increase	451%	22%	0%	-

Percentage Increase in Adults Accessing Emergency Accommodation Type since 2016
 Figures from: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/statistics>

Limitations of a Regional Approach

- Reflections on the West Region Action Plan
 - Frustration of service providers – ‘firefighting’
‘We don’t have time to come together as an umbrella and take a helicopter view of it (homelessness), look at the overall, the future planning, and prevention’
(Sinead, LA representative, West Region)
- Embedding silo thinking?
 - Within and across the regions
‘It’s very different in every LA, like Dublin have a separate homeless team, ... other Las would have varying numbers of homeless people and varying set-ups. There’s no joined up thinking on what is the best way... each LA is autonomous and this is the way this LA is choosing at this time... there’s not likely to be any major change.’
(Maeve, LA representative, West Region)

Limitations of a Regional Approach

- Competing for funding:

‘That’s the cake, the Directors divide the cake and they are going to divide it roughly the same as last year... there is nothing new in it for new services’

(Niamh, LA representative, West Region)

- Legislating for action

- LA service provision structures differ
- Type of homeless experience prioritised? (e.g. allocations)
- Ambiguity across new policy directions (e.g. Housing First)
- Diverse needs of service users

Limitations of a Regional Approach

- Presumes 'active' and homogenous service provision networks are in place
 - Diverse service stakeholders across the region
 - Pressure on voluntary sector
- Timelines are different between the regions
 - Action plans are at different stages

'We say in housing, housing is never boring, we get everything but I suppose the frustration of that is we don't have time... we just put a band aid on everything'
(Martin, LA representative, West Region)

Impact of the State?

- Understanding and priorities beyond the capital?(sheer volume)
 - Is there an opportunity to ‘stem the tide’?
- Problems with new policy directions
 - Lack of funding for training
- The politics of ‘the count’?
 - Narrow state definitions – silencing peoples’ experiences
 - Impact on capacity to deliver services at local level
- Voice of the homeless person?

Questions?

Email: [Kathy.reilly@nuigalwayie](mailto:Kathy.reilly@nuigalway.ie)

Twitter: @krgeography