'THIS IS NOT ME, THIS IS NOT MY LIFE'

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF EVERYDAY REALITIES OF HOMELESS MIGRANTS IN DUBLIN

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- The profile of the homeless population across Europe has changed in the last decade with a significant increase in migrants experiencing homelessness.[1,2,3]

Member State	Increase in family homelessness	Increase in women's homelessness	Increase in homelessness amongst immigrants	Increase in youth homelessness	"New entrants" as a result of the crisis	Other
Austria	-	X	-	X	-	-
Belgium	-	X	X	-	-	-
Czech Republic	X	-	-	-	-	-
Denmark	-	-	-	X	-	-
Finland	X	X	X	X	-	-
France	X	-	X	X	-	-
Germany	X	X	X	X	-	-
Greece	X	-	X	-	X	-
Hungary	-	-	-	-	-	X
Ireland		X	X	X	-	
Italy			X		X	
Lithuania	-	-	-	-	-	X
Luxembourg	-	-	X	X	-	-
Netherlands	-	X	X	X	-	-
Poland	-	-	-	-	-	X
Romania	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	-	X	X	-	X	-
Slovenia	X	-	X			
Spain	-	X	X	X	X	
Sweden		X	X			
UK		X	X	X	-	
Total number of Member States reporting	**6**	**10**	**14**	**10**	**4**	**3**

European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) (2012)
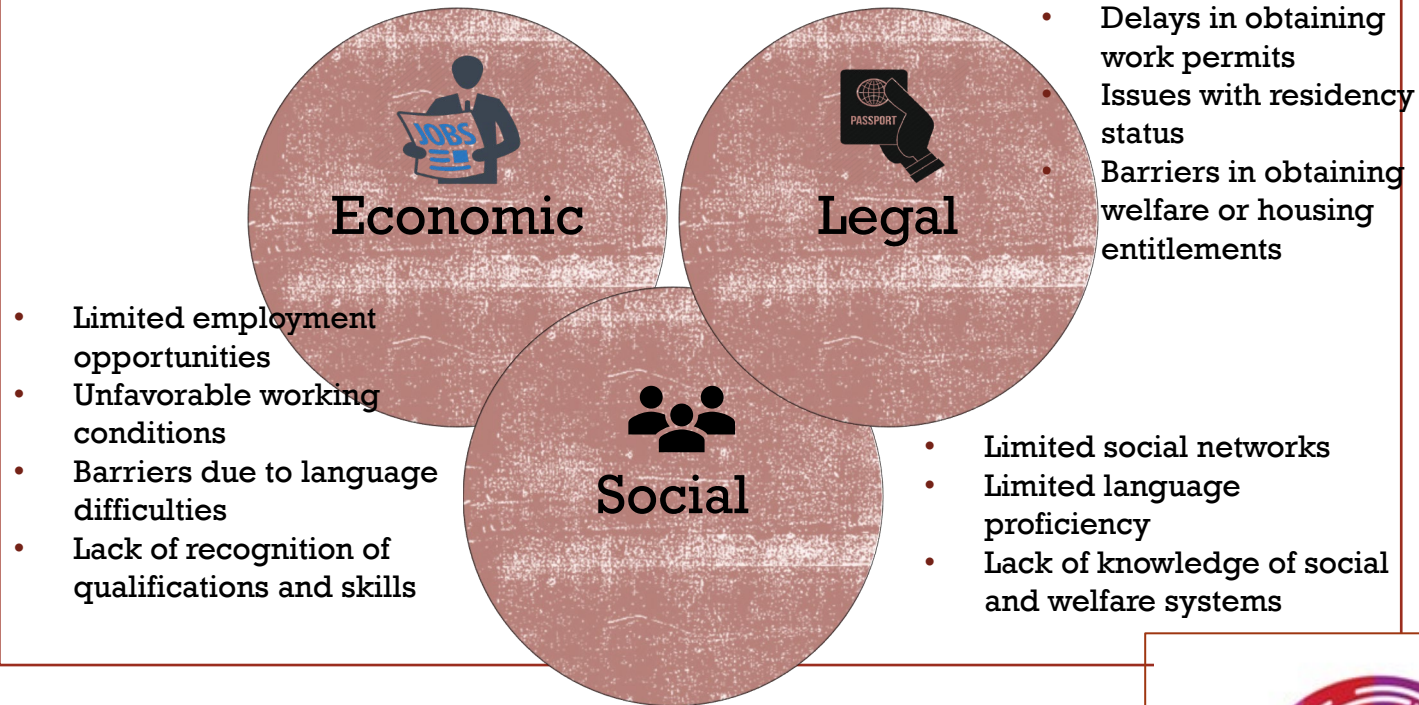
Research background

- Since the expansion of the EU in 2004 and 2007, growing evidence of A10 citizens accessing homeless services in the Western and Northern European states has been reported. [4,5]

- Ireland

  Census 2016 ➡ 14.1% of homeless migrants

  Census 2016 = 849 homeless migrants [6]

  53%

  Census 2012 = 553 homeless migrants [7]

- Despite an increase in migrant homelessness a small number of studies investigated this social issue.

Research background

Migrant homeless pathways[8,9,10]

Economic

- Limited employment opportunities
- Unfavorable working conditions
- Barriers due to language difficulties
- Lack of recognition of qualifications and skills

Legal

- Delays in obtaining work permits
- Issues with residency status
- Barriers in obtaining welfare or housing entitlements

Social

- Limited social networks
- Limited language proficiency
- Lack of knowledge of social and welfare systems

Migrant homeless identities
Theory of self-categorization[11,12]

Acknowledges the relationship between how we see ourselves as individuals and as a part of a social group, and how that image determines the interactions in everyday reality.

Research background

Present research

Aim of the research

To explore the experiences that impact migrants' journeys 'into' and 'through' homelessness, as well as to examine migrant homeless identity(s).

Research questions

1. What do the lived experiences of homeless migrants look like?

2. How do homeless migrants perceive themselves and the world around them?

Present research

Methodology

- Ethnographic approach

- August 2019- March 2020, Dublin, Ireland

- Dual role: volunteer/researcher

Locations:
1. Day drop-in/advocacy homeless service
2. Primary health care homeless service
3. Several street locations

The main focus during the ethnographic fieldwork was on the participants of the CEE origin.

Results

90 hours of fieldwork

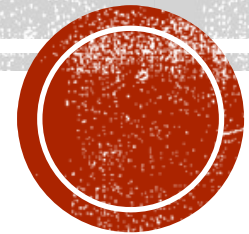Study sample incudes **54** people originating from the CEE countries

1. **Demographic profile of the participants**

2. **Homeless pathways**
   o   *Entering homelessness*
   o   *Managing homelessness*

3. **Migrant homeless identities**
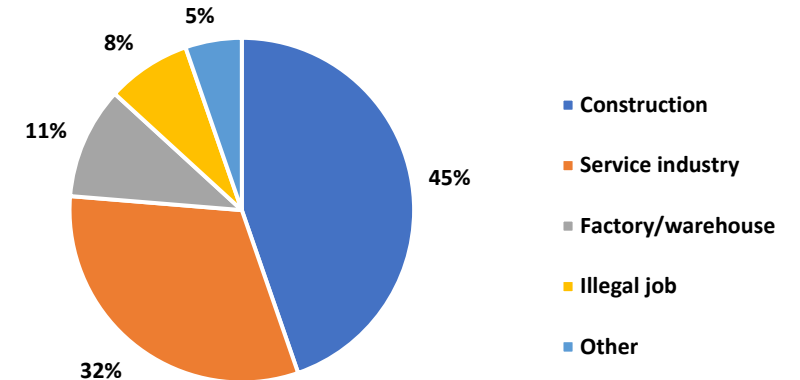   o   *'Homeless self'*
   o   *'Real self'*

Results

1. Demographic profile of the participants

	% (n)
Gender	
Male	88.9 (n=48)
Female	11.1 (n=6)
Age range	
20-29	18.5 (n=10)
30-39	42.6 (n=23)
40-49	29.6 (n=16)
≥50	9.3 (n=5)
Nationality	
Lithuania	25.9 (n=14)
Poland	22.2 (n=12)
Latvia	14.8 (n=8)
Romania	14.8 (n=8)

91% (n=33) had not experienced homelessness prior to their arrival to Ireland

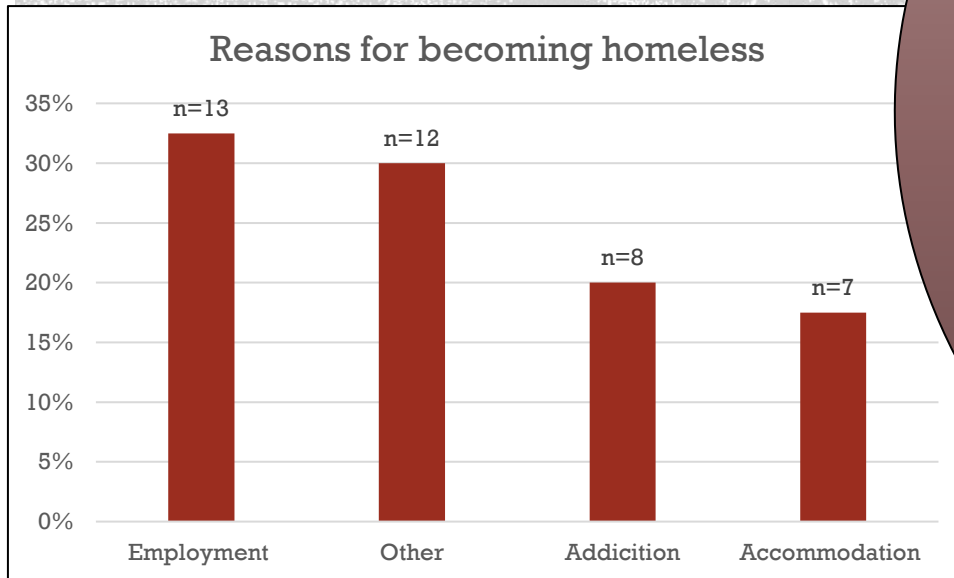### Areas of employment (in Ireland) prior to homelessness

- Construction — 45%
- Service industry — 32%
- Factory/warehouse — 11%
- Illegal job — 8%
- Other — 5%

Results

2. Homeless pathways
Entering homelessness
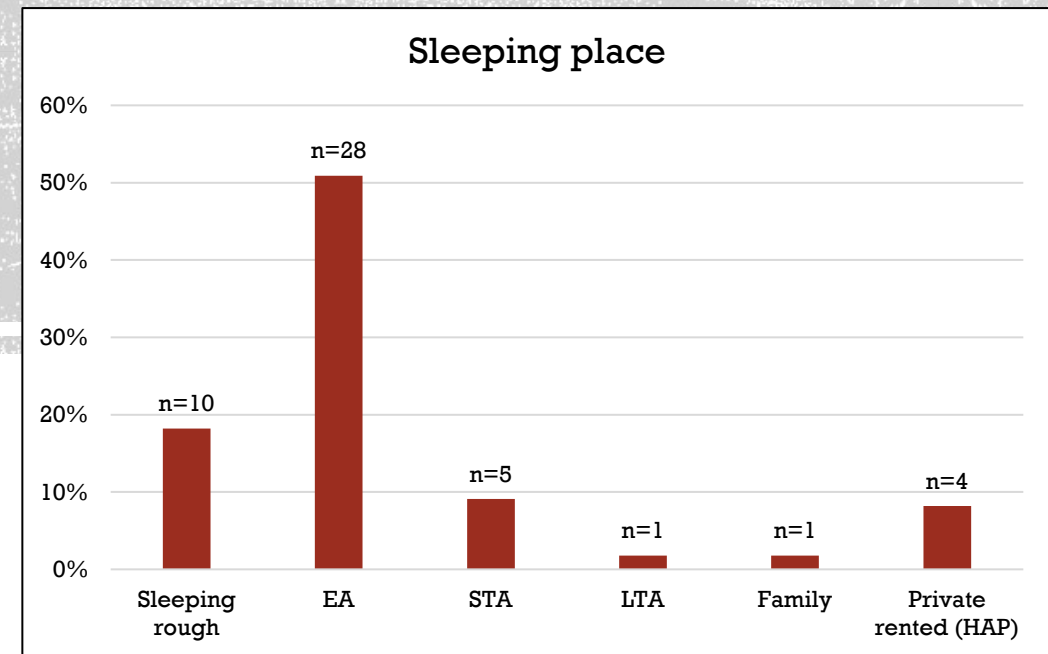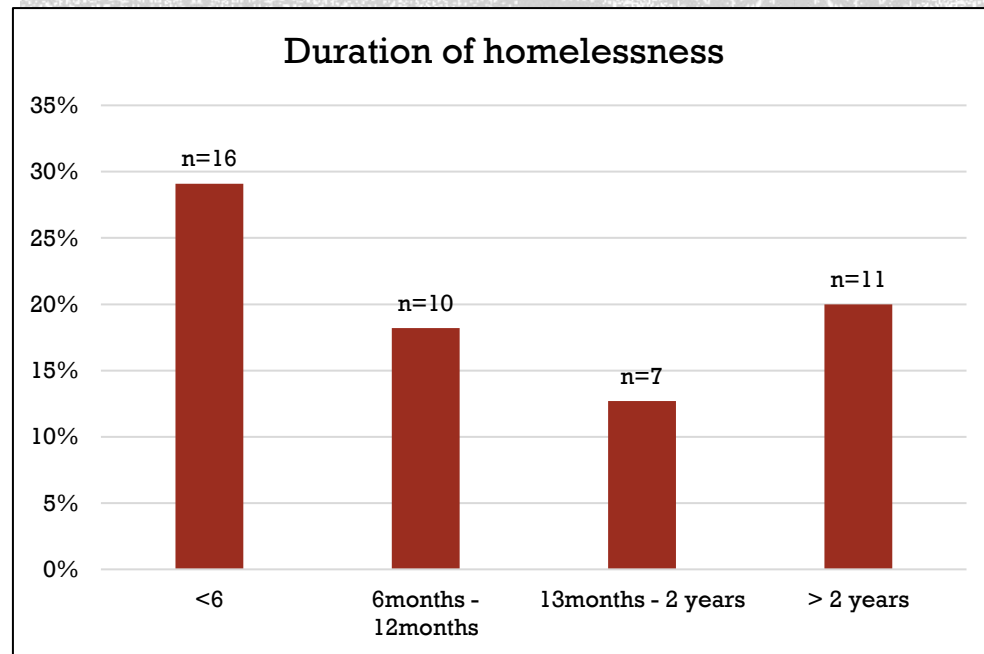
Reasons for becoming homeless

Piotr arrived in Ireland only a few days ago, on Sunday. Prior to his arrival, he was working for a year in Belgium, and he was promised a job here. He decided to come, however when he arrived a man who promised him a job was not answering his phone. Piotr ended up sleeping on the street for the first two days, on the third day he went to a Garda station and registered as homeless, and then he was able to call a freephone and get a bed for the night. 'It's okay for now, to have a bed for the night, shower and food...but this is not what I want...I need a job, normal life. I didn't expect that this will happen. I trusted that guy'(*Piotr, 50*)

Results

2. Homeless pathways
Managing homelessness

Duration of homelessness

(Bar chart: <6 n=16 ≈29%, 6months - 12months n=10 ≈18%, 13months - 2 years n=7 ≈13%, > 2 years n=11 20%)

Sleeping place

(Bar chart: Sleeping rough n=10 ≈18%, EA n=28 ≈51%, STA n=5 ≈9%, LTA n=1 ≈2%, Family n=1 ≈2%, Private rented (HAP) n=4 ≈9%)

EA = emergency accommodation accessed by calling a free phone
STA = supported temporary accommodation
LTA = long term homeless accommodation
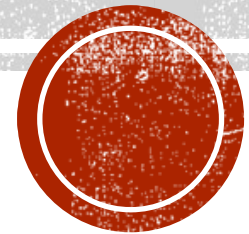
Results

2. Homeless pathways

Managing homelessness

-Everyday lived experiences-

1. Accessing services

2. Acquisition and consumption of alcohol and substances

3. Socialization

Results

2. Homeless pathways

1. Accessing services

Overall positive attitudes while accessing food and accommodation services

Anna didn't complain, and she was happy how people were treating her in X[*homeless shelter*], how she got food, how it was warm, and how everything was much better than being on the street. *(FN, 1.10.2019.)*

'…they do cleaning, breakfast, dinner, the staff are okay, they are okay with me, very respectful to everybody. These are good things' *(Christian, 46)*

Results

2.Homeless pathways

1. Accessing services

Negative attitudes are mostly due to
lack of safety

and

discrimination

'I was working in Ireland for 10 months, and I got into this problem with accommodation. But suddenly nobody cared, like I didn't deserve any help, I was not Irish. It's not the same as with Irish, for them is easy, they have system behind them, family, friends, they know where to go to ask for help, this is their country. Only thing I was offered from them [*social welfare office*] is to send me home! But home, where? Romania? No jobs, nothing, to die on the streets?! This is what they would like, to put me in the plastic bag, buy the cheapest plane ticket and send me home. I am nothing, I am rubbish to them'*(Constantin, 28)*

Results

2. Homeless pathways

1. **Accessing services**

Struggle to manage social systems

He gave me a paper which was a letter with a court date he was supposed to attend (after being arrested one of the nights previously that week). Since his English was not good, he could not understand anything written on the letter... I, on the other hand could speak and read English, but the way how the letter was structured it was very hard to make any sense what is he charged for, who will represent him, and even where to attend on that specific date. *(FN, 1.3.2020.)*

Results

2. Homeless pathways

2. Acquisition and consumption of alcohol and substances

Alcohol users 46.3% (n=25)

Drugs users 26.0% (n=14)

'When he was sober, he was very enthusiastic, with a clear vision of his future, and what he would like to do. But… in the past, his plans did not last for a long… once he starts to drink, he would get into this circle, of drinks-drugs-detox-soberness and drunkenness again… 'I just want to last this time, I just have to stay sober, keep away from drinking, bad company…I have to do that this time' *(Mateo, 31)*

Results

2. Homeless pathways

3. Socialization

'importance of having friends'

'Because all of us need to talk. When I have some problems, some emotions, sometimes I need to talk. Now I don't have really many people, I am talking with 2 persons. They both live in homeless hostel' (Juris, 32)

'loneliness'

'…not with every person you can talk fully open, be fully open and say everything and get some advice…this is the biggest problem for me, to be lonely…' *(Marek, 36)*

Results

2. Homeless pathways

3. Socialization

'self-protection'

'He is nice and quiet, that is all I know about him', said Martin, while explaining his accommodation situation 'I don't want to talk with him, or to know his name, we are not friends…'
(Martin, 29)

'I don't socialize that much with people. I try to keep everything to myself because, I have been to almost every country in Europe and my experience is people will try to take advantage of other people, in different ways. They will all try to be friends, but only if they have like reason why they want to be your friends'
(Lukas, 43)

Results

3. Migrant homeless identities

- 'Homeless self'

- 'Real self'

Results

3. Migrant homeless identities

'Homeless self'

*Homeless
vs
Normal*

He went to X [*homeless charity*] last week and asked for a jacket and some other stuff for himself and his friend. He said that the staff was very rude, and that they were happily giving clothes for Irish nationals, but not for him and his friend. He tried to argue with them, but they simply said there is no more clothes left. He said how awful he felt then, very small and invisible, no respect. 'That made me feel like a real homeless'*(Juris,32)*

Results

3. Migrant homeless identities

'Real self'

'Hostels are not okay, I me[an] they are okay for someone who needs place to sleep, but that is not life, it's not you. Not for me like normal life, to have a jo[b] something doing, having fam[ily] not being by myself, this close[…] life' (Igor, 40)

'It's a good country [*Ireland*] …correct…they helped me now… And I will try to do and bring back my life… Normal life' *(Christian, 46)*

'This is not me, this is not my life' *(Leonas, 32)*

Results

3. Migrant homeless identities

‘Real self’ = being employed

Stanislav took so much pride in the food he was making…He took his time preparing it, and he repeated a couple of times how important cooking is for him…He was talking about his passion for food… ‘You need to care about your food. It is an important way to express yourself…to bring you happiness’
(Stanislav, 33)

Summary and conclusions

- MALE
- 30-50 YEARS OLD
- NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS
- WITH EMPLOYMENT HISTORIES

- HOMELESS ≤ 2 YEARS
- EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION
- EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION
- SIGNIFICANT LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL AND SUPPPORT SYSTEMS

HOMELESS MIGRANTS

- WEAK SOCIAL NETWORKS
- LONELINESS
- DISTINCTION BETWEEN TWO IDENTITIES OF HOMELESSNESS
- STRONG CONNECTION WITH EMPLOYMENT

- Development of policy and service provision focused on individual needs.
- Introduction of the CE schemes specifically focused on homeless migrants.

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