



LAIDLAW UNDERGRADUATE LEADERSHIP AND RESEARCH PROGRAMME
SUBMISSION – 2021 COHORT

Name	<i>Tom Hegarty</i>
Programme	<i>Political Science & Geography</i>
Year of Study	<i>2nd Year</i>
Research Project Title	<i>No Sense of Home: A Holistic Study into the Primary Causes of Homelessness in Ireland & the Policy Approaches Taken to Tackle Them.</i>

Research Project Proposal (1000 words max.)
<p><u>Research Project Title:</u> No Sense of Home: A Holistic Study into the Primary Causes of Homelessness in Ireland & the Policy Approaches Taken to Tackle Them.</p> <p><u>Research Project Summary (1000 words)</u></p> <p><u>Research Question:</u> There are numerous causes of homelessness and as a result, a holistic approach is needed to address systemic underlying causes. This project aims to identify the causes of homelessness in Dublin and what is being done to address these causes. It will then look at the measures in place to support individuals once they become homeless and will note the different groups involved in the provision of these services. Finally, it will look at the differing pathways out of homelessness and how they are benchmarked. Once this data is collected the differing provisions of these services both geographically and financially will be collated and compared to international best practice. The objectives will be achieved through a detailed review of existing policy and government documents, as well as interviews with key stakeholders in service provision. This research will allow us to gain an understanding of Ireland’s approach to dealing with the homelessness crisis & gauge its efficacy.</p> <p><u>Detailed Explanation</u></p> <p>Cloke, May & Johnson (2011) claim that urban systems mirror the people in them and highlight how homelessness is a prime example of urban policy and politics wilfully marginalising the visibly poor. This research project aims to explore the reality of the actions taken by policymakers in remedying homelessness and assess the results of these actions.</p>



Waldron (2019) underpins this inequality through an analysis of different subgroups of homeless and their rate of movement through homeless services. This study recognises the overreliance on emergency accommodation in Ireland and the need for targeted intervention and re-directing resources from emergency accommodation toward custom tailored intervention services. Waldron gives comprehensive classifications to different homeless sub-groups and their respective stay times in accommodation. This research project aims to utilise these subgroups and add the step of identifying the intervention needed to aid them and how much emphasis is placed on that in our current system.

The controlling of the homeless population through the idea of a “service dependent ghetto” is defined by Dear & Wolch (1994). Institutional support is given to these people from lower socio-economic backgrounds with these services being focused in certain areas, such as the Liberties & Tallaght. This represents a strategy of containment where power is imposed through the organisation and disciplining of space. In Ireland it manifests through the mass provision of short-term emergency accommodation which regularly houses individuals for years of their lives as a result of the lack of funding put into rehabilitation, counselling and social housing services. This is done because it is more cost effective to place these individuals in cramped accommodation as opposed to fund preventative homelessness initiatives. This is seen through the €200 million spent on emergency accommodation in 2020 and 8,737 people living in emergency accommodation in Focus Ireland’s last report.

The Irish approach to homelessness is weighted on the side of reactionary measures, such as the provision of emergency accommodation, which can quickly institutionalise individuals. This project will inquire into this, analysing where intervention should be made, in what ways & by which groups.

Literature Review

The insufficiencies of cross-disciplinary literature surrounding the causes of homelessness and policy intervention in Ireland is clear. Macleod (2002) notes a general priority in increasing surveillance over the movements of homeless people and increasing the prohibition of both prime and interstitial space. This work lacks acknowledgement of the different sub-groups of homeless as outlined by Richard Waldron (2019), whose analysis emphasises the need for multiple tailored intervention methods to cater to the variety of subgroups.

This research project will build on the work of scholars such as Cloke, May and Johnson in addressing inadequate methods of tackling homelessness. It will combine their geographical perspective with work provided by R.Hearne (2015) on Irish housing policy’s strong neoliberalism. Utilising Waldron’s analysis of different homeless subgroups, this project will give a novel holistic analysis of homelessness. Also placing this project beside the earlier works of Eoin O’Sullivan (2011) who discussed the process of exiting homelessness through social policy.

This research project’s comprehensive approach will bring together the findings of these works. Taking account of preventative measures, service provision and pathways out of homelessness allowing for a holistic view, once compared to Irish policy. The perspective from various disciplines is not seen in previous literature based in Dublin and will allow for an over-arching view of homelessness, utilising different disciplines to answer questions posed by others. This will be used to accurately note the differing methods and times of intervention needed to tackle varying subgroups of homelessness.



Methodology

1. The first stage of my Laidlaw research project will concern gathering information regarding the causes of homelessness and the steps taken in addressing this. Following this a spatial and financial analysis will be given to the provision of emergency intervention services. Finally, the primary pathways out of homelessness in Ireland will be identified. This analysis would involve a detailed review of existing literature, policy & government documents relating to Dublin. This information is widely publicly available and would consist of desk-work research.
2. The second stage of research will consist of gathering information on how different institutions approach homelessness. This would involve researching into differing institutional policies relating to homelessness such as those of Focus Ireland or Home Again. Following this, qualitative face-to-face (or zoom) interviews with members of differing organisations & also the key stakeholders in service provision will be organised to compare policy to real life practice, utilising my supervisors' network of contacts.

This project will be multi-disciplinary, lending from the fields of Geography, Politics, Social Policy and Housing Studies. While benefiting from in person interactions, this project could be completed remotely with much of my resources being accessible online and the planned interviews being facilitated through online means.

Throughout this I will be meeting with my supervisor every 2 weeks for guidance. Additionally, he is open to other meetings pertaining to the project if I am struggling and or need help with accessing documents or his network.

Impacts & Relevance

Homelessness is one of the largest problems faced worldwide, yet there is a severe lack of comprehensive information available to the average individual person about it. Working with homelessness for over 5 years, I've become aware of the prejudices a homeless person faces. It is common for people to claim that all homeless are drug addicts or that if they simply put in an effort, they could get out a home.

This research project will provide a look at the diversity of causes of homelessness and will highlight the inadequacies in our system for both preventing and getting people out of homelessness. The international comparative, brought in through my 2nd summer will further display the possibility of bringing our homeless rates to a decline, showing that it has been done elsewhere.

The lack of a holistic breakdown of homelessness in Ireland isolates key pieces of information from each other. By bringing them together, like pieces of a jigsaw, this project will provide a whole picture.