

# Deconstructing Homelessness: People, Place and Policy

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# A Little Context & Presentation Overview

- Social and Cultural Geographer
- Interest in social justice
  - Working with migrant communities
  - Geographies of opportunity
  - Geographies of education
- Community engaged research
- Research action-ability
  - Policy impact?
- Sensitive to scale:
  - Local, regional and national contexts
- Project Overview
  - Context
  - Aims and Objectives
  - Research Questions
- Literature Review
- Methodology
  - Participants
- Tentative Findings:
  - People
  - Place
  - Policy

# Project Overview

- Engages a multi-stakeholder approach:
  - contemporary national policy
  - mediated non-profit (or NGO) campaign perspectives
  - community and social worker experiences
  - Voice of the homeless person
- Project aims to make a significant contribution to Irish policy interventions on homelessness (and its associated legislation and action plans) in addition to challenging societal perceptions of the homeless experience.



# Project Aims and Objectives

- Review existing national policy in Ireland to consider a typology of homelessness prioritised as part of recent policy interventions.
- Examine how the prioritisation of certain types of homelessness is represented and maintained through the media campaigns.
- Explore the experiences of community and social workers engaging homeless communities in Ireland.
- Record and analyse the homeless experience as it exists in Ireland today, focusing on the local level and considering the influence of place in the life-stories of those currently labelled homeless.
- Coalesce the multiple stakeholder perspectives to challenge linear and narrow perceptions of what it means to be homeless in Ireland. **This aims centrally to communicate the need for a more nuanced understanding of homelessness as a lived experience.**

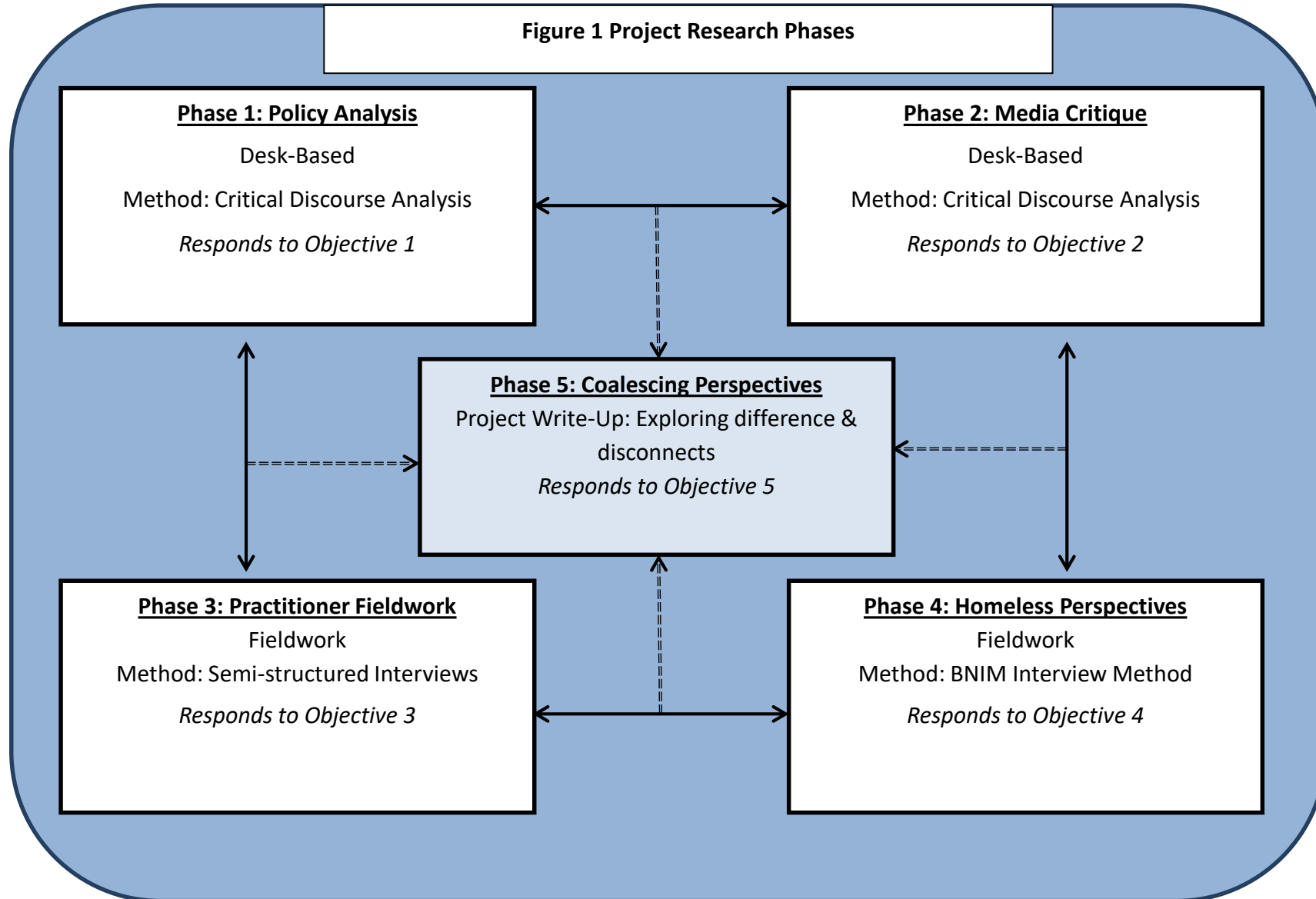
# Project Research Questions

- Within contemporary national policy what 'type' of homelessness is prioritised?
- Within the media campaigns of NGOs working in the homeless sector, how is the homeless person represented?
- What are the challenges facing community and social workers engaging homeless communities in Ireland?
- Being mindful of the different homeless typologies (as indicated in FEANTSA's ETHOS framework), how is homelessness experienced in contemporary Ireland?
- What differences, disconnects and inconsistencies emerge throughout the discourse of stakeholders? By extension how can project findings be harnessed to challenge narrow perceptions of what it means to be homeless?

# Project Methodology

- Qualitative project engaging multiple stakeholder perspectives
- **Desk-based:**
  - Policy analysis
  - Media campaigns
- **Fieldwork:**
  - Four case-study sites: Galway, Limerick, Cork and Dublin
  - Challenge Dublin-centred narratives of homelessness
  - 24 interviews with community and social workers (across four sites)
  - 16 interviews with homeless people (across four sites)

# Project Methodology



# Tentative Findings: People and Place

- **Social Capital:**

- Importance of the local network
- Importance of the local network's relationship with the national context

- **Timing issues:**

- Challenging the relationship between NGO sector and state bodies
- Bureaucracy and getting things 'over the line'

- Frustrations with the state **definition** of homeless

- Questions relating to who counts?

- Frustration with the **lack of capacity** both in terms of beds and support services (in the context of a homeless crisis)



# Tentative Findings: People and Place

- **'A place of my own'**
  - Depictions of home beyond bricks and mortar
  - Tied to ideas of belonging
  - Tied to issues of safety
  - Visibility and invisibility
  - One person has many experiences of what it means to be homeless in Ireland today

# Tentative Findings: Policy

- **Policy:**

- Reporting of homeless figures
  - Who counts? Who gets counted?
- Guidelines for communicating homeless issues
- Link to European level policy – how do we compare?

- **Media Policy?**

- Recognise the important impact of how homeless issues and experiences are communicated (e.g. online and TV)
- Consider the type of homeless experience prioritised as part of awareness and donation campaigns
- Do we need an alternative mediation? One that reflects the complexity of what it means to be homeless in Ireland today?

# Next Steps

- Complete fieldwork
  - Homeless community and interview transcription
- Consolidate analysis of the various data collected
- Policy report drawing together key findings to a series of recommendations
- Continued feedback and dissemination
- Policy Recommendation Report launch: late 2018
  - Anyone interested in attending or receiving a copy of the results can contact me at: [Kathy.reilly@nuigalway.ie](mailto:Kathy.reilly@nuigalway.ie)