

The hotelisation of the housing crisis: Experiences of family homelessness in Dublin hotels

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Introduction

Often assumed to be politically neutral sites, hotels are increasingly entering public consciousness in relation to housing and housing crises. The unprecedented rise of 'sharing economy' models such as Airbnb has reshaped understandings of what constitutes a hotel. Housing is routinely taken out of longer-term rental markets and into the tourist accommodation industry, reducing the amount of stock available for private renters. Meanwhile, increasing homelessness in many cities across Europe and North America, including family homelessness, has led to hotels increasingly being used as emergency accommodation. More than a year on from the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower in West London, 42 out of the 208 households displaced by the fire remained living in hotels as of June 2018 (BBC, 2018). Alongside this, the repurposing of hotels as *de facto* detention centres for asylum seekers has become increasingly common in countries such as the UK, Ireland and Canada (Dawson, 2014; Gibson, 2010). The increasing appearance of hotels in housing crises has also been examined in popular culture, with the 2017 film *The Florida Project* exploring the lives of impoverished families living in a motel in the shadow of Disneyworld.

And yet the increasingly intertwined relationship between hotels and housing crises has remained under-researched and under-analysed in academia and housing policy. This paper seeks to remedy this oversight. To do so, we draw on research in Dublin in 2017-18 commissioned by Dublin City Council, but independently conducted, and involving 16 formerly homeless families, all of whom had spent months, and in some cases several years, living in hotels and bed and breakfasts in lieu of more suitable accommodation. Residents shared with us their experiences of living in hotel rooms for prolonged periods of time, and the varying impacts this had on their sense of self, well-being, and belonging.

Dublin, one of the cities hardest hit by the global financial crash of 2007/8, has in recent years been represented as having recovered economically. This has been evidenced through rising property prices and an increasingly prominent tech industry. However, as

Kitchin and colleagues have noted, rising house prices should not be understood as indicative of recovery, but rather another phase of crisis led by a fast-disappearing social housing stock, astronomical market rents and a deeply insecure private-rented sector that foregrounds the conditions for social inequality and rising rates of homelessness (Kitchin et al, 2017). This has been exacerbated by Dublin's increasing popularity as an Airbnb destination further pressuring its limited housing stock. From November 2016-2017, approximately 499,000 Airbnb guests, in 7,500 properties, stayed in a city whose permanent population stands at just over 500,000 (Airbnb, 2018).

Increasing house prices and reduction in available stock has in part led to rising levels of homelessness. The legal definition of homelessness in Ireland, according to the 1988 Housing Act incorporates both rough sleepers and people living in interim accommodation. The number of people legally classed as homeless in the country almost tripled between 2014 and 2018, from 3,258 to 9,891 (Focus Ireland, 2019). The situation is particularly dire in Dublin, where in October 2018, there were 850 families, with 1,926 children, living in hotel accommodation (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2018a). A perfect storm of an insecure, expensive private rented sector in high demand and decreasing social housing stock has led to Dublin City Council increasingly turning to hotels to provide emergency accommodation for people presenting as homeless. Whilst the 1988 Act does not impose a legal duty on local authorities to house homeless people, it does imply a responsibility to either do so through existing housing stock, through funding voluntary bodies, such as hotels, to provide emergency accommodation (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, nd).

Ireland's use of hotels to house vulnerable people has been particularly controversial since the introduction of direct provision policy for asylum seekers. Implemented in 2000 on a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment, the national system of direct provision houses people seeking asylum in specific, hotel-like, accommodation centres, with a weekly allowance of €19.10 per week per adult (€9.60 per week per child). During this time, asylum seekers are not allowed access to any other forms of welfare provision, nor allowed to have any form of employment. Supposedly an emergency measure whilst asylum applications are processed, it is commonplace for people to be left living in this state of suspension for many years, even decades. This has prompted media commentators to refer to residents as stuck in "Hotel Limbo" (Farmilo, 2018). Asylum

seekers' lives are ones led in a perpetual state of limbo in Ireland, a bureaucratic purgatory in which they are excluded from engaging in Irish society (Thornton, 2014). The devastating impact of life suspended in hotels is one that we explore throughout this paper in relation to homeless families.

Conceptually, the paper traces existing geographical and social science literature that engages with the political implications of hotels. We consider the ways in which the roles of hotels and housing have become increasingly blurred, particularly in relation to the rise of Airbnb and what Lee (2016) terms the 'hotelisation' of housing.

Central to discussion of our findings are the ways in which hotels' intended or traditional functions become disrupted when housing homeless families. We do so through a discussion of 'breaks'. Whilst hotels tend to signify restorative breaks from the stresses and routines of day-to-day life, homeless families experience this break as a rupturing of their ability to perform everyday tasks and establish domestic or familial life. The paper explores these ruptures in three ways. Firstly, we consider the ways in which hotels are marketed as spaces where social reproductive work can be put on hold. The paper argues that the ways in which these conveniences, such as not having to cook for yourself, are experienced as disruptive for parents left unable to cook for their children. Secondly, we consider guests' access to spas, gyms and other health and well-being amenities in comparison to homeless families who are confined to their rooms. This has, as we go on to show, devastating physical and mental health implications. Thirdly, the ways in which hotel management and marketing prioritise respectful, high-quality customer service as key to their success is contrasted with the stigmatisation and shame that is accorded to hotel's homeless families.

The paper concludes by arguing for greater attention to be paid to the highly political role hotels play in housing and homelessness crises. In Dublin particularly, family homelessness has become a chronic social condition. We argue the city's growing dependence on the hotel industry to house vulnerable people is emblematic of a broken housing system, in which private industry continues to profit from society's most precarious. Alongside this, we argue that the disruption, ill health, and stigmatisation experienced in hotels by our participants highlights the ways in which homeless people are delegitimised as lacking in social value. We argue that this is illustrative of neoliberal

social constructions that connote poverty and vulnerability with economic, and therefore social, failure on the part of the individual.

Conceptualising the Hotel in Geographical Literature

Hotels have long had an important role in constructing social and cultural imaginaries of place, and structuring and maintaining the power relations within those places. In the nineteenth century, the rise of the luxury hotel in Europe and the USA was welcomed by local government authorities as “demonstrations of local economic and cultural vitality” (McNeill, 2008: 384). In the US context, luxury hotels became emblematic of economic development and freedom—mainstays of the American Dream (Berger, 2011). For declining European empires, grand ‘oriental’ hotels such as Raffles in Singapore and the Taj Mahal in Mumbai signified continued imperial cultural and economic influence in Asia (Denby, 1998).

As hotels became more accessible in the latter half of the twentieth century after the emergence of budget chain and motel accommodation, the economic and cultural symbolism of hotels shifted, bound up in narratives of cosmopolitanism. Particularly in cities, high-end hotels sold their guests an urban cosmopolitan fantasy, an airbrushed imagining of the city outside (Katz 1999). This shift was reflected in the architectural design of hotels in the 1980s and 1990s. An “aesthetics of strangeness” became commonplace, with brutalist and other modernist styles instilling a sense of feeling “out-of-place” in surroundings that strived to be both comfortable and exciting, domestic and out-of-the-ordinary (McNeill, 2008).

More recently, this out-of-place-ness has been considered in relation to the ways in which hotels’ cultural and architectural otherness can exclude and isolate as much as they can excite and inspire. Davidson (2018) highlights the ways in which hotels’ position as exceptional and out-of-place can be ‘politically activated’ in the context of asylum seeker detainment. He highlights the use of hotels by states, and particularly airport hotels, as points of interception to detain and render invisible those deemed to be legally or politically problematic.

The geopolitical significance of hotels has also been examined in recent years. In her analysis of the role of hotel bars in shaping Southern Rhodesian racial politics in the mid-twentieth century, Craggs (2012) argues that due to their unique placement as both public and private, domestic and commercial, hotels often constitute key sites through which politics is enacted and performed. In the context of 1950s Harare, Craggs traces how inclusionary racial policies in hotel bars helped to construct a broader narrative of the liberal white European at a time when British imperialism was being challenged and dismantled. Equally, well-known hotels that retained exclusionary policies were targeted in national and international media as emblems of outmoded colonialism. Craggs notes that: "Hospitality, and hotel spaces in which it was offered and withheld, were then, central to many of the most high-profile battles over race relations in Southern Rhodesia" (2012: 221).

In their agenda-setting piece, Fregonese and Ramadan (2015) further develop thinking on the geopolitical function of hotel spaces. They explore five such functions: hotels as state apparatuses of power and architectural performances of wealth and influence; as targets of terrorism; as nodal points of communication and the construction of journalist warfare narratives; as key places of refuge for those displaced by conflict; and as sites of peacebuilding due to their perceived neutrality.

As this scholarship highlights, the hotel serves as a point of political disruption in an array of contexts. And yet, what remains largely missing from this growing conversation is the role of hotels in more seemingly mundane, everyday forms of socio-politics. More specifically, discussion of the social, economic and political significance of hotels has remained side-lined in one of the key social issues faced by many Western nations: ongoing crises of housing and homelessness.

This has so far been articulated best in academic work exploring the impact of Airbnb and other 'sharing economy' accommodation models. This has been acutely felt by residents of cities that are both popular with tourists and have high demand for and limited supply of housing, such as Dublin, Berlin and Los Angeles (Crommelin et al, 2018; Lee, 2016; Schäfer and Braun, 2016). In cities such as these, landlords are increasingly likely to rent out their properties as Airbnb accommodation rather than more long-term rentals due to the higher financial return of the former. This has led to increased pressures on housing markets, whereby the growth of Airbnb and other short-term lets often leads to a

decrease in residential housing stock and subsequent house price increases. As Lee notes in his analysis of the impact of increasing Airbnb rentals in Los Angeles, this 'hotelisation' of housing stock 'decreases the supply of housing and spurs displacement, gentrification, and segregation' (Lee, 2016: 230). Lee argues that in L.A, Airbnb is having a transformative effect on both the city's tourist industry and its housing market, bringing 'an increasing number of the forty-five million tourists who visit...each year into direct competition with renters, distorting the housing market' (ibid: 234). As Airbnb pushes rental prices upwards in already gentrifying neighbourhoods, original gentrifiers move to other parts of the city, which in turn inevitably become neighbourhoods attractive to tourists. This causes something of a chain reaction whereby tourists and their Airbnb hosts follow gentrifiers around the city, leaving in their wake a trail of displaced lower-income residents. One of the reasons that this 'hotelisation' of housing stock has occurred with such speed across so many major cities is that the Airbnb model appeals to both tourists and landlords: for tourists, providing accommodation rates often lower than hotels, and for landlords, providing higher rental rates than long-term tenants. The result is what Guttentag (2013) has termed a 'disruptive innovation', whereby both the hotel/tourist accommodation and housing industries are reconstituted through new strategies focused on the optimum financialisation of both.

In parallel to this rising 'hotelisation' of housing stock, hotels themselves are increasingly taking on the role of emergency accommodation providers in Western cities, both as a consequence of rising rates of homelessness and, relatedly, in lieu of adequate and affordable housing stock. Ironically, as tourist accommodation becomes increasingly geared towards a more 'home-like' experience, harnessing the appeal of holidaying in a house or apartment rather than a hotel room, the closest thing to 'home' for many homeless families evicted from the private rented sector increasingly refers to life in hotel rooms.

This paper's engagement with the experiences of homeless families is also important to consider in relation to literature regarding geographies of homelessness. Much of this scholarship has highlighted the ways in which legislation and policy regularly criminalises and excludes homeless people from public space. This manifests in a variety of ways, from laws in the US that criminalise activities often associated with street homelessness, such as sleeping in public spaces or panhandling (Mitchell, 1997), to

“hostile architecture” such as curved benches and spiked underpasses that reduce the amount of viable public space for homeless people to settle or rest (Petty, 2016). Public infrastructure is increasingly celebrated for ‘designing out’ what are deemed to be anti-social behaviours. In reference to public benches in Camden, west London, Mould highlights that they have been “specifically designed to deter rough sleeping by having ridged and sloped surfaces...[and were] awarded the UK Design Council’s award for “best practice for reducing crime” in 2011.’ (2019: 1). Down to the minutiae of bench design, homeless bodies are excluded and repelled in the name of public safety through the design of public space and infrastructure.

However, the ways in which homeless people not classified as rough sleepers, those living in insecure, inappropriate accommodation, are rejected and designed out of societal structures, remains underexplored in comparison. As this paper will in part address, the exclusion of homeless people from spaces to which they are deemed not to belong, or are understood to disrupt with their presence, can also occur within the very spaces in which they are housed. The hotel is a clear example of this, providing emergency accommodation for homeless people, whilst simultaneously excluding them in a multitude of ways. As we highlight in the empirical sections of the paper, this exclusion is manifest in a variety of ways. It can be explicit and enacted by the staff of a particular hotel, for example by forcing homeless residents to use a separate door to other guests. Exclusion can also be enacted more implicitly through homeless families’ needs being in direct contrast to the functionality and architecture of the hotel. For example, the perceived convenience and luxury of not having to cook when staying in a hotel is reconstituted as shameful when a homeless single mother is forced to feed their young children in the hotel restaurant.

Research Methods

This paper is based on research conducted in 2017-18 with 16 formerly homeless families¹. The project explored participants' journeys into homelessness, and their experiences of life in two new social housing developments built by Dublin City Council in the north of the city². All the families interviewed had become homeless as a consequence of eviction from the private rented sector, family breakdown, or a combination of the two³, and had spent significant periods of time living in hotel accommodation. The type of hotel accommodation varied, from small bed and breakfasts to large chain hotels, city centre locations to the outskirts of Dublin. However, it should be noted that all of the hotel accommodation discussed in this paper also functioned as hotels for privately paying guests: none were used solely as emergency accommodation.

To enable more focused discussion, this paper engages with the stories of seven participants, although it should be noted that themes that emerged were commonplace across many of the interviews (Nowicki et al, 2018). The below table provides an (anonymised) overview of participants discussed in this paper: their household composition, length of time spent living in hotel accommodation, and type of hotel(s) lived in:

Participant pseudonym	Household composition	Approximate length of time living in hotel accommodation	Type of hotel accommodation
Florence	Single parent	1 year	Range of B&Bs
Nina	Single parent	6 months	Large hotel, outskirts

¹ With the assistance of Dublin City Council, we recruited residents through posting letters and door-knocking. For their time, residents were given shopping vouchers. All names and identifying details have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants.

² For more information on these housing schemes, see (Nowicki et al, 2018).

³ This is in line with the city-wide picture. Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) data shows that 48 percent of families presenting as homeless in the final quarter of 2017 stated inability to access accommodation in the private rented sector as the primary reason for their homelessness, and 49 percent stated family or relationship breakdown (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2018b).

Niamh	Single parent	2 years	Chain hotel, Dublin outskirts
Ciara	Single parent	8 months	Range of B&Bs and chain hotels, both central and outskirts of Dublin
Una	Couple with young children	18 months	Large central hotel, holiday apartment
James	Couple with young children	4 months	Two large hotels, one central, one in outskirts
Sharon	Single parent	6 months	Large hotel, outskirts

Convenience/Disruption

Hotels are often marketed in relation to their convenience, in terms of location, availability of amenities, and so on, that enable guests to suspend their everyday routines:

“Take advantage of easy access to public transport and the Aircoach shuttle bus which stops directly outside the hotel. The hotel is walking distance to Dublin’s shopping district and you will find great restaurants, bars, clubs and the theatre all nearby.”

(Brochure, Clayton Hotel, Burlington Road, Dublin)

For homeless families living in hotels, however, this suspension of day-to-day routine is experienced as intensely disruptive. Whilst tourists and other commercial guests enjoy the benefits of room service and a hotel that may have been chosen for its convenient location close to the city centre or transport hubs, homeless families living in hotels for months, and in some cases years, at a time, are left unable to cook, do their laundry or take their children to school without having to take time-consuming journeys to expensive laundrettes, or schools far from where they are staying:

"We didn't have a laundry [washing machine] ...The owner... he had a washing machine and a cooker but he didn't let us [use them]. So we suffered...for six months."

(Nina, research participant)

After fleeing her violent marriage, Florence and her four children lived in various hotels and B&Bs for a year. Florence's housing precarity was compounded by her immigration status. Her visa was linked to her husband's, which meant that, as she had left the marriage, she and her children were not initially eligible for local authority housing or other welfare support. This led to her spending many months paying for hotel accommodation, alongside food and transport costs for her and her children, using her wages as a healthcare assistant. She recalls her time spent living in hotels:

"We used €100 a day because we didn't have any facilities to cook. So using fast foods, take-away foods all the time...with five of us, it was very tough...even if I'm to get [paid] €800 in a fortnight it was mainly for food and transportation because my kids, they were taking two buses to school"

Many participants spoke of the challenging consequences of not being able to cook, in terms of high costs, health implications due to lack of nutrition, and reduced family social time. For many of the families we spoke with, most of whom had already experienced the trauma of eviction or family breakdown (often both), the inability to conduct an activity so intrinsically associated with domestic routine was one of the most significant ways in which their everyday lives were ruptured through the space of the hotel.

Although seemingly banal, the minutiae of everyday tasks, and their disruption, can both reflect and challenge wider socio-political narratives. For example, Harker (2012) has explored the ways in which Palestinians reconcile and resist displacement and occupation through everyday familial acts. Since the war of 1948 the majority of Palestinian people have lived in 'homelands' that are not their own, in states where they have no formal political representation. Harker contends that under these circumstances, the family becomes an important point of resistance to oppression and precarity. Familial

practices, such as getting married and celebrating religious holidays, are an important means of protection from the impact of violence and displacement. It is through these everyday encroachments of the ordinary that political redress is sought through resistance on the ground, the continuation of the everyday phenomena of “getting by” as the ultimate display of survival of and resistance to precarity (Bayat, 2010; Harker, 2012). For homeless families, living in hotel accommodation is particularly problematic as they are in many ways denied these small acts of resilience through “getting by”. Issues such as not being able to cook, extended and costly journeys to school, work, and the launderette described by Nina and Florence, these experiences disrupt families’ ability to construct or maintain a sense of domesticity or familial routine.

This is not to say that participants did not find their own ways of circumventing these restrictions in order to re-establish a sense of homeliness and dignity in their everyday surroundings. As we explore in other work (Nowicki et al, 2018), some participants themselves did their utmost to disrupt the function of the hotel space by imprinting their own tastes onto their hotel rooms and flouting the rules, in a way that could be easily hidden; by for example using rice cookers in their rooms to make family meals.

Niamh and her young daughter lived in hotel rooms over a two-year period before eventually being housed. Determined to make the experience as positive as possible, Niamh bought patterned duvet sets in order to make the room feel more homely:

“You make it your own...we had our room, I had my double bed, she had a single bed. So we had our own duvet covers or pillows... we had everything the way we wanted it...it was actually like a bedroom. You were allowed visitors at some stage, and when my friends used to come up they were like ‘Oh my God, this looks like a bedroom, it doesn’t look like a hotel room!’”

Like Harker’s recounting of Palestinian families’ holiday celebrations and other family rituals, Niamh’s simple act of putting on bedsheets that were not standard-issue from the hotel constituted its own rupturing and resistive performance. The determination to strive for a sense of home, even in emotionally destructive and precarious situations,

reflects the importance of the banal and everyday in continued resistance against marginalisation and the maintenance of dignity and sense of self.

However, despite such efforts to counter these restrictions, hotel life continues to rupture everyday domestic routines and tasks for families, rather than providing the restorative break so regularly offered in hotel marketing and advertising. These ruptures experienced by homeless families are deeply class-ridden and socio-political, a reminder that they are understood as not belonging in such spaces. There is also little-to-no motivation for hoteliers to alter their facilities or regulations to better incorporate homeless families. To make hotel life more convenient for homeless residents would constitute an acknowledgement by the hotel industry itself that increasingly their political and social role is shifting in a way that is largely seen as unpalatable in marketing terms. Indeed, while continuing to profit from homelessness via local authority payments⁴, some hotels are simultaneously seeking to combat the perceived negative press associated with accepting homeless guests. One central Dublin hotel evicted its 14 homeless residents in February 2018. A spokesperson for the hotel management commented that the decision had been made to help “facilitate the refurbishment of the bedrooms” (Nugent, 2018). For homeless families, then, hotels are experienced as disruptive, a rupturing, rather than restorative, break from the everyday routines and rituals that help to ground familial life and identity.

Well-being/Illness

Spas and treatment centres are a common feature of hotels, establishing a narrative of hotels as restorative sites for both physical and mental health. This assumed relationship between hotels and well-being has gone so far as to feature in public health scholarship. Zygourakis and colleagues use the hotel industry as a frame of reference for improving patient services. They argue that lessons can be learned from hotels’ focus on customer experience and individually-tailored care in order to improve patient comfort and well-

⁴ It has been reported that in 2017, Dublin City Council spent €97.48 million on emergency accommodation (Deegan, 2018). This is exemplary of one of the processes that underpins contemporary housing crises, whereby local authorities often have reduced willingness and capacity to invest in social housing, instead spending income on accommodation that enriches private sector landlords.

being in hospitals. The authors, in the US context of privatised medical care, also highlight the financial, as well as health, implications of hospital care that mimics hotel service: that the better the patient/customer experience, the more positive the feedback, and the more appealing the hospital becomes to potential patients (Zygourakis et al, 2014).

This assumed positive relationship between the hotel industry and well-being is reflected in the excerpt below from a Dublin hotel brochure. The brochure assures guests it will enable them to ‘forget the stress and bustle of the city’, providing a liminal space, an in-between where the stresses of urban life can be paused in order to boost one’s well-being:

“Our mission is to enrich the lives of our customers with beauty and well-being. Our experienced cosmetic and beauty experts offer you their undivided care and attention, enabling you to forget the stress and bustle of the city in a relaxed ambience, concentrating on nothing but your health and well-being”

(Brochure, The Spa at the Bonnington Hotel, Dublin)

Pritchard and Morgan (2006) have explored this relationship between hotel spaces, well-being and liminality, examining the ways in which hotels can act as sites of emergency transgression, transition and subversion for tourists. They argue that hotels present opportunities for their guests for adventures and encounters that “puncture the otherwise mundane predictability of everyday life” (Pritchard & Morgan, 2006, p.762). However, this puncturing of the everyday was experienced as a rupturing, rather than restorative, break from routine for homeless families. As opposed to the bliss and excitement of “pressing pause” on day-to-day life, the liminality of families’ lives in many ways had a severely detrimental impact on both their physical and mental health and well-being:

“The government now is creating the mentally ill people of the future. All them kids now that are going through homelessness... it’s going to really affect them, they’re going to be like ‘God we lived in a hotel”

(Ciara, research participant)

Una and Ciara had both lived in various Dublin hotels with their toddlers for long periods of time. When asked what the impact of living in hotel accommodation had been on their families, both Una and Ciara brought up their children's stunted development. Their children had struggled to develop speech at the expected age, and Una's child had also not learned to crawl or walk, despite being over a year old. Una was told by a specialist medical team that this developmental delay was likely due to the limited space in the hotel room the family of three shared:

"He has to see the early intervention team, because he can't climb or walk stairs and he was kind of a rigid baby. They're [the specialists] convinced now that it's down to where we lived, because he hadn't got access to like move around, to crawl, he never crawled...he had no space at all like."

Ciara also talked about the impact on her child of spending months in a hotel room. Her daughter's speech hadn't developed since moving into the hotel, despite her being over two years old and having reached all her development targets at the time they had been made homeless. Similarly to Una's son's medical assessment, a behavioural specialist suggested that this could be a consequence of the trauma of homelessness limiting her ability to hit the usual development targets:

"She hit all her milestones, doing fine, a healthy baby, perfect. Then in February we moved into the hotel and about a month later I realised she hadn't spoken...her health struggled big time. She's only starting to speak now, she's three at the end of next month."

These early experiences of homelessness clearly have long-term traumatic implications for young children, whose physical and emotional development are at risk of being stunted due to inadequate housing conditions.

Life in hotels also negatively impacted adults' mental health and inhibited their capacity to plan for the future. For Ciara, the eight months spent living in various hotel rooms with her three young children was a period during which she lacked the energy, time and confidence to consider her future beyond worrying about where she and her family would move to next. Prior to becoming homeless Ciara had managed her own beauty salon for many years, having to give up work to take full-time care of her son, who has severe learning and behavioural difficulties. Shortly after her second daughter was born, Ciara was evicted from her private rented accommodation after her landlord raised the rent beyond what she could pay, leaving her and her young family homeless. The subsequent months spent living in hotels left Ciara exhausted: *'because I was so depressed, and I had nothing, all my focus was on getting a house, getting a house'*.

Whilst the liminality offered by hotels suggests escape from the ordinary routine as a means of improving people's health and well-being, for Una, Ciara and their children, the in-betweenness of hotel living was experienced as destructive; and the longer the pause, the greater the negative impact on health and well-being. This was evident both in terms of the toddlers' arrested development, and their own emotional inability to focus beyond their immediate housing circumstances. This is reflected in sociological research on the experiences of homeless families living in hotels in Atlanta and the ways in which hotel rooms left residents feeling constricted and suspended, limbo-like, in their environment. Residents consistently referred to life in hotels as a 'trap', describing their rooms as 'confining', 'crowded', 'closed in' and a 'box' (Wingate-Lewis et al, 2010: 21). The in-betweenness of the hotel, then, clearly has an opposing set of temporal implications and experiences dependent on whether someone is a commercial guest or homeless resident.

These distinctions in the experiences, meanings and impacts of liminality and breaks from routine can be understood through neoliberal narratives of social class. Whilst hotels market themselves in part on the basis that they contribute to people's well-being through providing a luxurious pause from the day-to-day, such liminality simultaneously enacts forms of physical and emotional violence upon working-class, immigrant, and other vulnerable bodies. The hotel demarcates those within its walls based on their socio-economic background and perceived social value. Privately paying clients are understood as 'guests', whose well-being is fundamental to the continued financial success of the hotel. Vulnerable homeless residents, on the other hand, are framed as sources of shame

rather than a paying guest whose satisfaction is paramount for a hotels' profitability. This helps to legitimise the ways in which homeless families' physical and mental health is left to deteriorate in this ongoing state of liminality.

Respect/Stigma

As well as leisure facilities, hotels also commonly function as sites of commercial and corporate activity, with larger hotels often providing conference and meeting rooms. Hotels that provide these corporate services often feature them heavily in their marketing strategies, highlighting the importance of corporate client satisfaction in determining a hotel's success (Chen and Chen, 2014):

"There is no better way to bring the office together than to host a corporate event. Discover our restaurant for corporate dinner options or our bar for corporate events... Whatever you choose, our team of chefs will tailor a menu to your desire and our dedicated restaurant or bar staff will take great care of your guests."

(Clayton Hotel, Cardiff Lane, Dublin)

In contrast to these promises of professional care and respect, for many of our participants, life in hotels meant being stripped of their dignity. "Shame" was a recurrent word used by participants to describe their situation. Feelings of shame were produced both through the explicit stigmatisation of homeless families in hotel settings, and internalised by participants themselves who felt compelled to hide their housing circumstances where possible in order to avoid judgement.

Sharon recalled that when she was first moved into hotel accommodation, she would take breakfast to her room so that she and her two young children would be more comfortable, able to share a family meal in relative privacy. However, after a while she was told by the hotel management, without explanation, that she was no longer allowed to do this. She

and her children were left with no choice but to eat in the hotel dining room every morning, which exacerbated her existing anxiety:

"I suffer from anxiety and depression, just over the last few years, and I can't be in like rooms full of people...I feel... like I will literally start to sweat."

She recalled a particularly difficult encounter where she had sat down for breakfast in the hotel dining room, playing a TV show on her phone to occupy her youngest daughter whilst she ate. The dining room was filled with professional-looking people, and Sharon was approached by another guest who told her to stop playing the TV programme as it was distracting their business meeting. She described feeling "like a nuisance", and that the incident exacerbated the feeling that she did not belong in the hotel or with the people using the dining room, whom she perceived to be judging her. This furthered the sense of shame she felt at living in a hotel and feeling that her homeless status was obvious to other guests as she did not 'belong' in the business-like environment.

James was certain the poor treatment he and his family had received while staying in a large, well-known Dublin hotel had been because they were homeless. This went as far as being forced to use a separate door from other guests. James recounts the humiliation he felt at being told to use a different entrance to 'normal' guests:

"We weren't even allowed to use the main door. There was an old door, the old door that everyone used to go in years ago, it's a big huge black door, that's the door we had to go in. Yeah, how degrading was that? Yeah, the homeless door, that's what it was, the homeless door."

(James, research participant)

'Poor doors' have been documented as increasingly commonplace in mixed-tenure residential developments in cities with high-value housing such as London and New York City whereby social tenants' entrances are separated from those used by private tenants

and owner-occupiers (Osborne, 2014; Navarro, 2014). James' experience appears to show the adoption of similar segregation techniques within the hotel industry, whereby a persons' entry point to a building is determined by their perceived socio-economic value. Those deemed less deserving of their position in new-build residential blocks, or well-known hotels, are physically segregated from those who are "supposed" to be there. In James' experience of having to use a 'homeless door', his is a body to be hidden away for fear of its negative impact on the hotel's image. In Sharon's case, her and her children's eating habits were regulated, the implication being that they could not be trusted to have their meals unsupervised, presumably for fear of causing damage to the hotel room. Both stories highlight the ways in which working-class bodies are demarcated and othered within hotel-spaces, their corporeal presence representing sources of shame to be regulated by hotel staff and privately paying guests.

Even when residents recounted being treated with respect by hotel staff, a wider sense of shame and fear of stigmatisation prevailed. While she and her children were living in hotels, Ciara lost touch with many of her friends and removed her social media presence, as she did not want anyone to learn about her circumstances. She would lie to people at her weekly exercise class about where she lived, doing her best to conceal her situation from those around her:

"I used to be mortified, I deleted my Facebook page when I was made homeless because I was just so ashamed...people don't know me anymore, my friends, I don't socialise with anybody...Nobody in my pole class knew I was homeless, nobody knew anything. They'd be like "Where are you from" and I'd be like "What do I say this week? What did I tell them last week, did I say Sutton, did I say Castleknock, did I just say Coolock or Donaghmede?"

Ciara's withdrawal from her social circle, and her lying to those she saw on a regular basis highlights the ways in which homeless people internalise stigmatising assumptions made about them. For Ciara, the hotel represented her perceived failings as a mother, a perception that she acknowledged was often made about homeless parents, and in particular young mothers. Although not directly perpetuated by hotel staff, the hotel

stood as a source of shame, the non-home of its architecture, and her position within it as an unwanted inhabitant, rather than desired guest, a daily reminder to Ciara of her inability to provide a home for herself and her family. Here the hotel acts a space through which stigma is compounded and reinforced, whereby homeless families' status as socially othered is evidenced by their out-of-place presence in the hotel.

However, these incidents should not be understood as solely the result of individual prejudice on the part of hotel staff, guests or friends. Rather, they indicate what Tyler has referred to as a "neoliberal commonsense" that not only accepts, but incentivises, the construction and entrenchment of social inequality through the stigmatisation of groups that do not fit neoliberal ideals (Tyler, 2013). In Ireland and other traditionally welfare-centric nations, increased cuts to welfare provision have, particularly in the past decade, been legitimated through a particular production of stigma regarding welfare recipients which assigns blame for the existence of homelessness and poverty to the victims themselves, rather than to wider socio-economic events such as recession and austerity (Jensen and Tyler, 2015). In short, the only way for governments and powerful institutions to justify the horrifying rise in homelessness across many wealthy cities and nations is to produce a commonsense that blames the homeless as architects of their own situation. Such narratives are enabled through decades of neoliberalism's positioning as a normative condition, rather than a particular ideology. As Tyler and Slater (2018) note, to think of stigmatisation as the product of individual prejudice is in many ways to miss the point. They argue that in order to analyse, and challenge, its role in productions of power, stigmatisation must be understood as constructed by, and in the interests of, institutions and states. To connect this to the political significance of hotels, Sharon's, James' and Ciara's experiences of stigmatisation and shame are indicative of the role of hotels in the continuation of these neoliberal agendas. Whilst the work of geopolitical scholars discussed earlier in the paper elucidate the varying roles of hotels on the world stage, the encounters described above reveal the ways in which hotels are also inscribed with a socio-political power that both maintains and exacerbates figurations of the poor and vulnerable as 'out-of-place' within normative constructions of society.

Conclusions

This paper has explored the socio-political significance of hotels in the context of housing crisis. We began by discussing existing geographical and social science literature that explores the geopolitical significance of hotels, and the sharing economy's role in the 'hotelisation' of housing. The paper extended these arguments, highlighting the political significance of hotels in everyday socio-political contexts. We explored this through considering the ways in which the assumed functions of hotels as sites of convenience, positive well-being, and professionalism and respect, are juxtaposed with the experiences of homeless residents. Convenience becomes disruptive, well-being gives way to illness, and respect is replaced with stigma. We argue that the rupturing of everyday life for homeless families placed in hotels, which are clearly inadequate and inappropriate as housing provision, is emblematic of the social disparities embedded within neoliberal conceptions of human value.

The paper also highlights the importance of engaging in research that brings to the fore the lived experiences of homelessness and life in hotel accommodation. Amidst ongoing negative narratives of homeless people as irresponsible, engagement with the stories of homeless and formerly homeless people themselves remains largely absent from public discourse (Nowicki et al, 2018).

Increased reliance on hotels in the provision of emergency accommodation is a consequence of decades of neoliberal intervention in housing markets. Rises in homelessness across many, ostensibly wealthy, cities such as Dublin are reflective of the swathes of people left unable to secure homes for themselves and their families in a socio-political climate that understands the function of housing, and its inhabitants, to be a source of profitability and economic productivity above and beyond a drive to provide secure homes. The increased role of hotels as emergency accommodation providers are a stark outcome of neoliberal agendas that do not consider the value of spaces or people beyond the extent to which they can be monetised. Indeed, hotels are content to profit from public money by absorbing homeless people whom local authorities are unable to house in more appropriate settings. And yet, this absorption does not extend to these new hotel residents as they find themselves othered and regulated, the hotel a constant source

of disruption to their everyday domestic routines, their health, and their sense of self. However, as we have argued in previous work, whilst local governments can work more closely with hotel management to improve the treatment of homeless families, the only long-term, truly adequate solution lies in increasing the construction of genuinely affordable social housing (Nowicki et al, 2018).

To conclude, in this paper we have argued that there are significant socio-political implications relating to how hotels are being deployed in the housing crisis. The ways in which, for homeless families, life in hotels ruptures and disrupts the everyday routines most of take us for granted, further highlights political decision-making that continues both to devalue some of its most vulnerable citizens, and legitimise the violence and trauma inflicted upon them. Unless there is genuine political commitment in Ireland and other market-oriented nations to address and challenge housing injustice, life in hotels will continue to rupture and irreconcilably damage the lives of vulnerable working-class families.

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