

I·SPHERE

Housing strategies of homeless migrants

**A comparative study of Central Americans in
Massachusetts and Eastern Europeans in Scotland**

Regina Serpa, PhD Candidate

2nd PhD Seminar, York

16 March 2016

Summary

1. Hypothesis
2. Research Questions
3. Methods
4. Initial Findings
5. Questions

1.1 Hypothesis

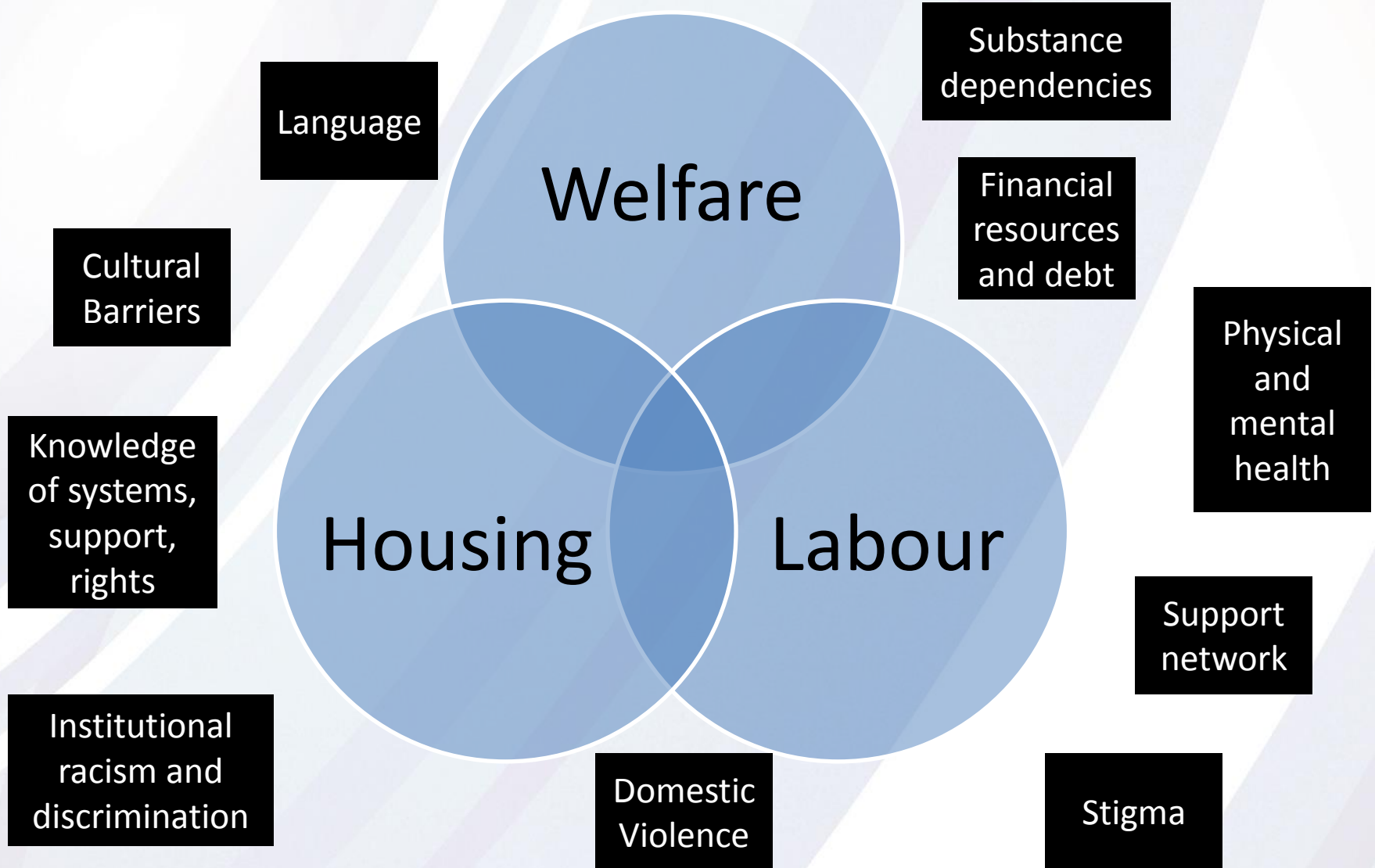
Subsistent Homelessness

'Subsistence homelessness'- forgoing housing in order to achieve other necessities

'Shelter poverty'- forgoing necessities in order to keep a roof over your head

- What degree of choice do people have?
- Are homeless migrants de-prioritizing housing?
- Is homelessness a survival strategy?
- What is 'having a home' being sacrificed for?

2.1 Research Question: Causation



Immigration Route & Legal Status (UK)

Border Control

- Do you need Leave to Remain but do not have it?
- Do you have Leave to Remain but do not have resource to public funds?
- Do you have temporary admission?

Right to Reside

- Working or looking for work
- Studying
- Economically self sufficient
- Retired

Habitual Residency

- In UK for an 'appreciable period of time'?
- 'Settled intention to live in the UK'?

Housing and Economic Strategies

Limited Value

- Wages/work
- Public Assistance/ subsidy
- Charity/ donations
- Illicit activity/ begging
- Informal support
- Personal resources

Maximise Value

- Overcrowding/ doubling up
- Hot-bedding
- Illegal housing
- Substandard housing
- Emergency shelter
- Rough sleeping

2.3 Research Question: Response

Roles of the State

- Human Rights State should intervene to ensure a basic standard of living is protected for all persons regardless of legal status
- Citizenship Intervention conditional upon meeting social obligations (i.e. duty to protect dependent on legal status)
- Utilitarian Minimize costs and maximize benefits in both case number and expenditure
- Paternalism State should protect people from consequence of poor decision making

3.1 Methodology

- Comparative research
- Case studies
- Participant Observation
- Key informant interviews
- Life story interviews

Key Informant Interviews			
Level	UK	US	N
National	6	6	12
State	5	13	18
Local	-	10	10
Total	11	29	40

Life Story Interviews	
Nationality	N
Roma	7
Romanian	3
Polish	5
Total Scotland	15
Dominican Republic	8
Haitian	3
Guatemala	1
Puerto Rico	1
Namibia	1
Ethiopia	1
Total Massachusetts	15

Sampling & Participants Observation

Edinburgh

- Vendors of a Street Newspaper
 - 7 Roma
 - 2 Romanian
- Homeless drop-in centre
 - 5 Polish
 - 1 Romanian

Massachusetts

- Emergency family shelter (Lowell)
 - 3 Haitian, 2 Dominican, 2 African
- Emergency family shelter (Boston)
 - 3 Dominican
- Wet shelter (Lawrence)
 - 2 Dominican, 1 Puerto Rican
- Housing advice centre
 - 1 Guatemalan, 1 Dominican

Interpreting & Translating



idealist

Edinburgh

- Romanian
 - 2 Interpreters
 - 4 Translators
- Polish
 - 1 Interpreter
 - 2 Translators

Massachusetts

- Spanish
 - 2 Interpreters
 - 5 Translators
- (plus 2 Interpreters for Portuguese and Haitian Creole)

16 stipends of language services cost = \$2,500

Life Story Interviews- Themes

Migration

- Life before migration
- Push/Pull factors
- Expectations v. The actual

Home

- Housing experiences
- Ontological security
- What makes a home?

Strategies

- How is choice constrained
- Trade-offs, priorities, values
- Migration goals

Responsibility

- Who/what should act? How?

The Future

- Optimism and vision

4.1 Findings

Immigration/ legal status determines...

Choice

I want to live the American Dream, to own my own home, and a car. To one day have stability, to move out of shelter. I am...applying for Permanent Residence

'Dora' 30(f)
Dominican Republic

Strategy

Right now I am sleeping in the park. I make little money as a kitchen porter... I need to save money for a deposit on a flat

'Zibi' 22(m)
Poland

Preference

There are 10 of us in this 2br flat... Yes I could move out, but it is better to be with family, not some stranger I do not know

'Alin' 56(m)
Romania

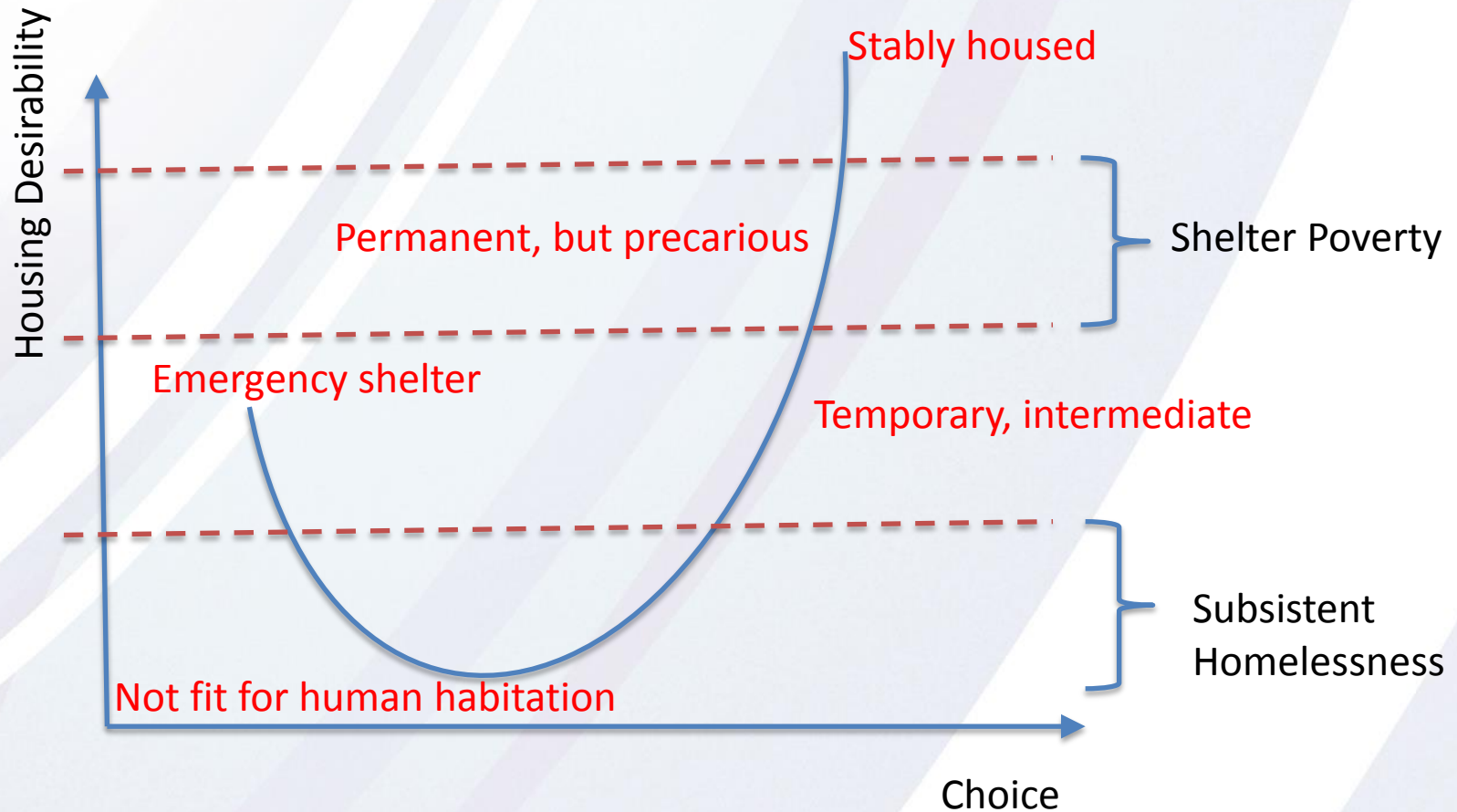
4.2 Findings

Subsistent Homelessness 'J' Curve



4.3 Findings

Subsistent Homelessness



Questions...

1. What is the role for state intervention in the case of subsistent homelessness?
2. Housing is one piece of the economic strategy of migrants. Is migrant homelessness less of an issue for housing and more indicative of failed immigration and labour policies?

Thank you!

Regina Serpa

Heriot-Watt University

rsc30@hw.ac.uk