Social Inclusion
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7737
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.7737

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Open Access Journal

Policy Silences and Poverty in Ireland: An Argument for Inclusive Approaches

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Submitted: 26 October 2023 **Accepted:** 18 January 2024 **Published:** 8 February 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "Accomplices to Social Exclusion? Analyzing Institutional Processes of Silencing" edited by Ulrike M. Vieten (Queen's University Belfast) and Emily Mitchell-Bajic (Arden University), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/si.i413

Abstract

Policy documents shape and inform policy but they are not neutral objects. Policy documents can also silence through the exclusion and omission of discrete knowledges transmitted through testimony and lived experience. Even where steps are taken to ensure inclusion, policies can be underpinned by a policy making process that also potentially omits and silences through a narrow conception of how to include the voices of those directly affected by policy in the policy making process. This article will address the phenomenon of "policy silences" in the following ways: Firstly, by taking inspiration from Bacchi's (2009) policy analysis framework—which asks of policy documents "what is the problem represented to be?" (the WPR approach)—and focusing on question no. 4 of the WPR framework—which asks, in part, "where are the silences?"—the Irish policy document *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025* will be briefly reviewed. Following this, the approach taken in a creative, arts-based, participatory research project which included, mapping, photography and walking interviews as a means of exploring the lived experiences and hidden geographies of poverty will be presented as a way of demonstrating inclusive research practice and as a means of tacitly problematizing and further critiquing an anaemic understanding of inclusion which potentially creates "policy silences." Finally, an argument for forms of inclusion that go beyond current practices to include, in creative ways, the voices of those directly affected by policy in the policy making process will be put forth.

Keywords

Ireland; policy; policy silences; poverty; social inclusion

1. Introduction: What Is the Problem Represented to Be?

Policy silences have been variously referred to in the literature as enablers of "myth-making" in the context of competing values (Yanow, 1992), as instances of omissions that create barriers (Lavoie, 2013), and as "non-decisions" that, in effect, operate as policy choices (Dean, 2022). Silence in and of itself may also be referred to as an active form of policy. Bacchi's (2009) policy analysis framework (hereafter shortened to the WPR approach) asks: "What's the problem represented to be?" It offers a useful tool for analysis that can be operationalised to uncover policy silences. Fundamentally, the WPR approach suggests that policies contain implicit representations of the "problems" they purport to address. For the purposes of this article, this suggests that problem representations that policies and policy proposals in the area of poverty contain require critical scrutiny to help uncover how poverty is understood and presented within these policies, and to explore how this understanding shapes the way these policies are actioned to tackle poverty. Alongside what policies "say and do," identifying silences or absences within policies is also key to the WPR approach, as noted by Flynn and Whelan (2023, p. 5) who suggest that "this is because if policy documents, as a vehicle for discourse 'form the objects of which speak,' absence becomes as important as presence."

Moreover, the WPR approach encapsulates the normative nature of social policy as a social science that is concerned with change for the better and therefore potentially rooted in a strong concern for social justice:

> A WPR approach has an explicitly normative agenda. It presumes that some problem representations benefit the members of some groups at the expense of others. It also takes the side of those who are harmed. The goal is to intervene to challenge problem representations that have these deleterious effects and to suggest that issues could be thought about in ways that might avoid at least some of these effects. (Bacchi, 2009, p. 44)

The WPR approach provides six questions to guide the analysis process. Bacchi (2009) suggests that although these questions should always be kept in mind, not all of them necessarily need to be answered. The six questions proposed in the WPR approach are as follows:

1. What is the "problem" represented to be in a specific policy or policies?
2. What presuppositions and assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem"?
3. How has this representation of the "problem" come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in the representation of the "problem"? Where are the silences? Can the "problem" be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the "problem"?
6. How/where is this representation of the "problem" produced, disseminated, and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted, and replaced?

This contribution is particularly concerned with question no. 4 of Bacchi's (2009) model to illuminate the absence of testimony based on lived experiences as a form of silence arising from an absence of creative forms of inclusion in contemporary poverty policy in Ireland.

Question no. 4 is, in fact, made up of three questions. For this contribution, the question "where are the silences?" is of particular relevance, though all components of question no. 4 are of interest. In Section 2,

the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020–2025* (hereafter *The Roadmap*) is briefly introduced and scrutinised using the WPR approach with a particular focus on the question "where are the silences?" Following this, and once the suggested silences in the policy document have been elucidated, Section 3 will introduce a piece of participatory research conducted in partnership with All Together in Dignity Ireland (hereafter ATD Ireland) to demonstrate good practice in the context of meaningful inclusion while also explicating the potential for rich and deep insight that creative forms of inclusion can engender by documenting one theme. The article finishes with a brief discussion.

2. Poverty Policy in Ireland: *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020–2025*

The Roadmap (Government of Ireland, 2020) is the policy document that currently sets the policy agenda in the Irish context and the context of poverty. It is underpinned by current EU and international policies. Among these policies are the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. *The Roadmap* was chosen for review in this instance for two reasons. First, it represents the centrepiece in the context of Irish policy in the area of poverty and social inclusion. Second, it has at its core much to recommend it as a progressive and inclusive policy. However, this has meant that, as a policy set to run until 2025, it has arguably received little critical scrutiny even though it is arguably failing to deliver in key respects. For example, *The Roadmap* maintains the key aim of reducing consistent poverty in Ireland to below 2%. However, the latest available statistics show us that consistent poverty and all other measured forms of poverty (the at-risk-of-poverty rate and enforced deprivation rate) are on the rise (Central Statistics Office, n.d.). Moreover, the policy indicates an ambition to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in the world, yet social exclusion arguably continues to characterise the lives of many socially disadvantaged people in Ireland in myriad ways (Whelan, 2023a, 2023b; Whelan & Greene, 2023). With this in mind, questions around how *The Roadmap* sets out to "do" inclusion appear to be apt for examination. In a broader sense, according to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, poverty is considered to be for the entire world, developing and developed" (United Nations, 2016, p. 35). Eradicating poverty is a core policy commitment at the international level and the eradication of poverty in all its forms represents SDG no. 1. In the Irish context, *The Roadmap* emphasises the positive role that policy can and should play in people's lives and moves toward the language of social inclusion:

> Social inclusion is achieved when people have access to sufficient income, resources and services to enable them to play an active part in their communities and participate in activities that are considered the norm for people in society generally. (Government of Ireland, 2020, p. 11)

With this framework as the core of the policy, the ambitions, goals, and targets of *The Roadmap* suggest an expanded approach that encompasses a move away from the traditional income poverty focus and towards building social inclusion. In doing so, it targets specific measures and goals to capture progress across areas like housing, healthcare, childcare, and social integration. In terms of actioning and informing this approach, *The Roadmap* is complemented by a process of inclusionary practice. In this respect, as a live document, the policy itself represents a starting point and is underpinned by the Social Inclusion Forum, a national annual event scheduled to run over the lifetime of the policy. The forum is preceded each year by a mixture of online and in-person themed workshops the outcomes of which are fed into the event and can include testimonies based on lived experience. People with lived experience of various issues connected to social exclusion can and do attend and give testimony at the event itself. The forum is hosted by Community Work

Ireland and the European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland and offers a space for various stakeholders and those with lived experience to come together with officials and ministers from relevant government departments—including the Minister for Social Protection—to listen, discuss, and think about issues of poverty and social exclusion. Arising from the forum, a report is issued that covers what was addressed and details action points concerning what more needs to be done (for an overview of the most recent forum see Department of Social Protection, 2023).

On the surface, this appears to be a stellar example of inclusionary practice in policy-making and, in many respects, it is. There are clear and deliberate efforts here to include multiple voices and perspectives and a process of hearing issues along with the potential to action responses is also built in. However, the critique at the core of this article suggests that inclusion arguably can and should take many forms and modes of expression and while participation in online and in-person workshops coupled with the opportunity to either be represented at or attend the Social Inclusion Forum offers the prospect of inclusion for some, these will not be processes that appeal to everyone. In this respect, the precise nature of inclusion is something that needs to be problematised and, again, this is the crux of the critique offered here. Including voices via online consultation processes or through regular meetings with the community and voluntary sectors is fine; however, these steps, when taken alone, arguably make for a decidedly anaemic practice of inclusion that allows for few creative methods of including those with lived experience. An important aspect of this point is that by expecting people with lived experience of poverty to participate exclusively through the ways described in *The Roadmap*, there is a very real danger of exclusion. The policy-making arena is not an equal space and not everyone who policy-makers might wish to include has the agency to articulate their experiences or simply "add their voice." In this respect, more creative modes of inclusion must be considered.

If we now turn our attention back towards question no. 4 in Bacchi's (2009) WPR approach, what is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the "problem" be thought about differently?

We can begin to answer this question in the following way: Real experiences of poverty are left potentially unproblematic due to a limited conceptualisation of inclusion. This may mean that important voices remain unheard and therefore unseen or silenced. This feeds into "policy silences" in that only those who can take part in the policy process in very specific ways are included. The problem could be thought about more holistically by including diverse forms of inclusion that value multiple ways of knowing.

Bacchi (2009) acknowledges that some "problems" appear difficult to eradicate due to how these are represented. By focusing on question no. 4 of the WPR approach, it can be suggested that to address and shape the future to reduce and eradicate poverty, the approach must continue to be inclusive of all involved in poverty-related work, from policy-makers to non-governmental organisations. Furthermore, the approach must continue to include the first-hand experiences of the poor, since their voices provide a better picture of the hidden dimensions of poverty that help tackle poverty and promote social inclusion. In addition to this, however, inclusion needs to be approached in creative ways and this can include things like art, photography, and film as ways of addressing policy silences and informing policy. Pobal (2023), in their guide to creative modes of inclusion in the context of community engagement and local planning and decision-making, offers the following suggestions for engaging non-policy actors in the process:

- Get people talking and moving;
- Use humour; use art;
- Break into small groups;
- Food is a great way to get people talking informally either before or during an event;
- Make the most of venues, time slots, and facilitators that are familiar to those taking part. This can help put people at ease—a friendly space and approach can help make people feel welcome.

These general suggestions from Pobal (2023) offer a good starting point and ground simple but creative ways of including multiple perspectives. In Section 3, details of a research project that was conducted in partnership with ATD Ireland, and which fostered multiple modes of inclusion, are offered as one way of demonstrating what creative forms of inclusion might look like. The purpose of detailing the study and subsequently offering an overview of some findings is not to comment directly on *The Roadmap*; rather, the purpose is to provide an example of good practice in the context of inclusion while also showing how creative techniques can open up new possibilities for the inclusion of voices in ways that offer rich insights.

3. An Overview of the Research

Ethical approval to conduct this research was granted by the Social Work and Social Policy Research Ethics Committee at Trinity College Dublin. The research documented in the remainder of the article was conducted using arts-based creative methods that included mapping, walking, and photography. Supplementary material for this article, including a full research report, a 10-minute animated short, and a full gallery of maps and photographs, can be accessed on the project website (https://sites.google.com/view/povertytalks).

Following O'Neill and Roberts's (2020) "walking interview biographical method," the research was designed around shared walking as an arts-based, biographical method for conducting research that accesses the lived realities and cultures of individuals and groups, through sensory, spatial, embodied, and affective aspects of lives/lived experiences. The creative application of walking as a biographical method extends critical biographical sociology; it is a deeply engaged, relational way of attuning that evokes knowing and understanding through empathetic and embodied learning, and supports biographical research and critical analysis to explore a sense of our past, present, future and their interconnections, social conditions, social relations, social landscape, and their relevance, as well the participatory and policy-orientated possibilities of biographical research.

The research involved a series of 10 walks with 11 participants, two of whom took part as a couple. Participants were recruited through ATD Ireland exclusively and all of the participants were and remain community activists or friends of ATD Ireland. Almost all of the participants have had significant experiences of income-related poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion. All of the participants agreed and indeed wished to have their first names used in whatever publications arose from the project. The names of those who took part are as follows: Andrew, Jimmy and Christina (who took part as a couple), Gavin, Long, Ann Marie, Kye, Philip, Paul, Terence, and Lorraine.

4. Mapping, Walking, and Photography

Participants were asked to "make a map" of a walk they would like to take ideally incorporating a route they saw as meaningful to them in the context of experiences of poverty. Each "mapper" had situational authority, meaning they could choose where to go before and during the walks; maps did not have to be followed strictly or exclusively. Walks could be vigorous or gentle to foster participation from people of all walking abilities. While it should be noted that walking is not a method that will suit everybody, walks were intended to be less about covering distance and more about being in space (O'Neill & Roberts, 2020). All of the walks took place in various parts of Dublin city (see Figures 1–4). Specifically, three of the walks (with Andrew, Gavin, and Kye) took place on the south side of the city centre in the Dublin 2 area, taking in Grafton Street, St. Stephen's Green, Merrion Square, Nassau Street, Pearse Street, and the environs surrounding Trinity College Dublin. Two more walks took place in Ballymun (with Long and Anne Marie) in Dublin 9. Five further walks (with Jimmy and Christina, Paul, Philip, Terence, and Lorraine) took place in the north inner city and city centre area crossing in and around Dublin 1 and including areas as diverse as the North Quays, Talbot Street, O'Connell Street, Mountjoy Square, Portland Row, Granby Row, Dorset Street, and Sheriff Street up towards Eastwall. For clarity, Dublin is divided into 24 postal districts (although there is no D19) with the even-numbered postal districts (including D6W) being generally on the south side of the River Liffey and odd-numbered districts being on the north side of the River Liffey. The exception to this is the area including and surrounding Phoenix Park, which, while on the north side of the Liffey, forms part of the Dublin 8 district (all areas mentioned can be viewed by conducting a simple search in Google Maps and selecting "Streetview"). During the walks, the researcher entered into a conversational interview with the participants about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings about poverty. The interviews were structured only through the use of occasional prompts and did not follow a dedicated interview schedule. The researcher took part as an active conversant. The walk route and landmarks encountered also often stimulated conversation, interpretation, and insight leading to questions from the researcher and specific observations on the part of participants.

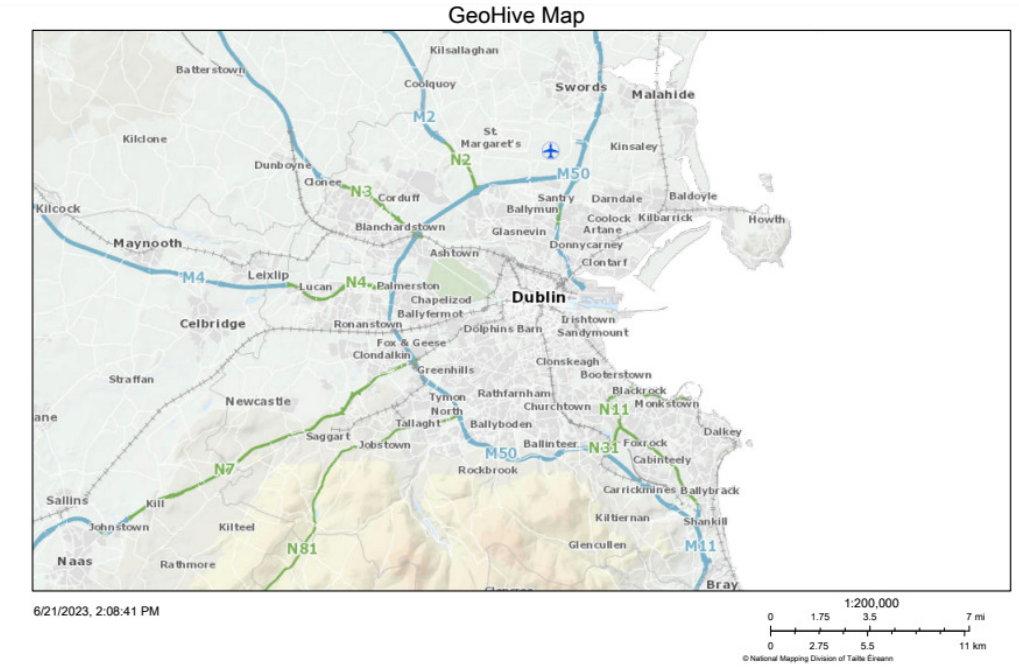

Figure 1. A map of Dublin city and the greater Dublin area.

Figure 2. Dublin 2 and the surrounding areas.

Figure 3. Ballymun and the surrounding areas.

Figure 4. The north inner city and city centre area.

5. Analysis

The analysis and coding process of the transcribed walking interviews made use of NVivo 12 and was inspired by interpretive phenomenological analysis techniques and, in particular, by the concept of a "double hermeneutic" (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 53, emphasis added) which suggests that the researcher:

> Is trying to get close to the participant's personal world…but…cannot do this directly or completely. Access depends on, and is complicated by, the researcher's own conceptions; indeed, these are required in order to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity. Thus, a two-stage interpretation process, or a *double hermeneutic*, is involved. The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world.

This is an important point and one that should be borne in mind concerning the theme reported further on in that while participants were given the opportunity to reflect on the content of the various themes, ultimately what is presented represents the researcher's interpretation of how the research participants interpret their own world.

6. An Inclusive and Participatory Approach

The research had participatory principles at its core and drew from ATD Ireland's (2022) toolkit for conducting participatory research as a source of guidance. In particular, the concept of merged or the merging of knowledge underpins what is presented in this report. In terms of process, this has taken the

following form: Consultation from the outset; collaboration and ongoing opportunities for participant input throughout; and due consideration given to ownership and control of what is produced (ATD Ireland, 2022).

Working in partnership in this way meant that the research was designed in consultation with ATD Ireland at the outset and that opportunities to review and reflect on the research process and the various research outputs were continually made available to ATD Ireland as research partners and to the research participants as co-producers of the work. In practical terms, this meant meeting in person to discuss and review progress while providing opportunities for feedback on drafts of various outputs including the contents of this article which will have been seen and read by the research participants and therefore partly reflects their thoughts.

7. Applying Creative Methods to Foster Inclusion

7.1. Why Walking

In the first instance, as part of the codesign of the project walking was suggested by the research participants as an alternative to traditional qualitative interviews and was universally endorsed by the researcher, the research partners, and the participants. The possibilities of walking as a way of capturing meaning and as a vehicle through which a discussion on poverty and social inclusion could take place was immediately apparent. This is particularly true given that the research participants were offered the opportunity to choose where they would like to walk and so had an immediate ownership of how they would like to frame their thoughts and contribution. In this respect, walking can offer a frame for experience and can help conjure memories that may echo in a landscape while not appearing on any maps.

Many of the research participants understood the prospect of space being inhabited by ghosts, echoes, and potentials instinctively so that, for example, Andrew, carefully curated his walk to make deliberate and conscious observations on poverty and policy which he threaded through his own story. Walking through Grafton Street (an affluent shopping street) Andrew was able to illustrate contrasts and divides as he saw them, later passing Dáil Éireann, the Irish parliament, Andrew made direct connections between experiences of poverty, his own and those of others, with what he saw as failures of government policy. Kye took the opportunity of walking to tell the story of two people whom he loved and to whom he was close, taking in several landmarks in a journey that marked those same people's progression across the city, a city in which they struggled for survival, a city etched with pain that does not show on a map. Joy does not show on maps either. Jimmy and Christina took part as a couple and used the opportunity of being in space to tell the story of how they met, supported one another, became a couple, and later married. Their story revolved around a place, The Granby Centre, which is run by the Salvation Army and opened in Dublin in 1994. Poverty and hardship have been a feature of Jimmy and Christina's story, it has also been part of what brought them together. There are many more examples that demonstrate how walking lent depth and meaning to the interview process from across the dataset. Bearing this out, Kinney (2017, p. 2) notes that:

> In the participatory walking interview the route chosen by the participant to walk is not necessarily representative of a route the participant normally follows, nor does it represent the participants' usual routines or habits. The researcher accompanies the participant on a walk around a geographical location that the participant has selected which is related to the topic being investigated….The purpose of this

> format is to enable the researcher to access the participants' attitudes and knowledge about a specific geographical area.

This additional layer of access that came through being in space and walking along together was a strong feature of the walks that underpin the theme that is presented further on and many insights that arguably would not have been possible in the context of a traditional interview emerged throughout the walks through connections with sound, visuals, the built environment, and the relevance of landmarks. It can also be noted that walking while conducting an interview undoubtedly had an equalising effect and did much to address the power imbalances that can sometimes characterise the traditional interview and this again speaks to the potential that exists in creative modes of inclusion. In this respect, Kinney (2017, p. 3) further notes that:

> Walking alongside a participant is regarded as an inclusive process compared with the traditional sit-down interview because it is viewed more as a partnership, thus reducing power imbalances. It allows participants to feel more comfortable with the research because it is being conducted in a geographical location that they are familiar with.

This latter point about inclusion is important and ultimately foreshadows aspects of the discussion that concludes this article, and which suggests fostering conceptualisations of inclusion for policy making.

7.2. Mapping and Photography

In their photo essay with Faye, O'Neill and McHugh (2017, p. 207) note that "using walking methods, sociologically, alongside arts-based…interventions (in this case photography), participatory collaborations between the arts and social research might make a significant contribution to better knowledge and understanding."

Undoubtedly the photography that formed part of this project added an additional and wholly relevant texture and form of data which has had the effect of also lending additional understanding. So, for example, Paul who photographed Aldborough House (see Figure 5) saw the abandoned and decaying spectre of this landmark in north inner-city Dublin as symbolic of the abandonment and decay of this part of the city in general. Paul also sees the potential asset to the area that Aldborough House could be and sees this as analogous to the potential of the area itself if the right supports and policies were there to help realise it. Revisiting Paul's photographs in the context of his testimony lent a visual component that deepened the insights offered by Paul. Philip's photograph of the gate of Mountjoy prison (see Figure 6) tells a story of the history of the city that has been woven into myth and literature (and the auld triangle, went jingle, jangle) while also telling part of his own story, the prison being a place where Philip spent many years of his life. There are many more examples from across the collection of images that make real and tangible connections with the experiences of the photographers, and these add depth and nuance to the experiences and observations recounted in the walking interviews demonstrating that modes of inclusion can be creative while still being impactful with clear implications for policy.

Figure 5. Aldborough House, 27–28 Portland Row, Dublin 1.

Figure 6. An entrance to Mountjoy Prison is painted with a piece of art that references Brendan Behan's *The Auld Triangle*.

8. A Theme From the Research

Finally, to give a sense of the kinds of deep and nuanced insights that can emerge from inclusive and creative research, a theme from the findings is elucidated. What follows is one of many themes constructed by the researcher in collaboration with the research participants. Nonetheless, it consolidates the value of using creative forms of inclusion while also demonstrating the policy-orientated possibilities.

8.1. Territorial Stigma and Socioeconomic Discrimination

If poverty can be characterised, in part, as a lack of options leading to social exclusion and potentially to a range of other social problems, there are also aspects of what it means to be poor, to be impoverished, and to come from socioeconomically deprived communities that can further exacerbate an already diminished sense of self or sense of community. ATD Ireland have long campaigned toward the censure and eradication of socioeconomic discrimination, which they describe in the following terms:

> Socio-economic discrimination can occur in many forms and can be experienced both individually and collectively. It is often felt within public services, such as in healthcare, housing and accommodation, when seeking employment, education, social welfare or with the police. Those with a lived experience also report everyday incidences of discrimination as a result of their accent, clothing, haircut, address, employment status, etc. People report not being able to get a taxi to their home, being followed around in stores or being refused service in a restaurant. The stigma and shame that results from discrimination has huge effects on mental health and wellbeing. In addition, it can also enormously restrict a person's life and opportunities. (ATD Ireland, 2023)

Much of what ATD Ireland describes here will be recognisable from the data that follows. However, there is testimony within the data that demonstrates ATD Ireland's description in even starker terms. In this respect, ATD Ireland's description also denotes the importance of place by noting that socioeconomic discrimination can be felt collectively or can lead to differential treatment such as not being able to get a taxi home. This speaks to the territorial stigma which Meade (2021, pp. 191–192), describes as "a phenomenon that both expresses and normalizes the othering and the negative construction, representation, and government of certain geographical communities and places."

Meade's (2021) observation is instructive in that it moves the focus beyond an understanding of territorial stigma that is purely about the "stigmatised territories" to suggest that the stigma attached to places does not emerge in a vacuum and that stigmatisation of place is not a neutral act. Rather, people and places are othered "somehow" and perhaps even by desig; moreover, this practice is normalised through representation and governance. Under the next number of headings, territorial stigma and socioeconomic discrimination are explored starting with territorial stigma before moving on to socioeconomic discrimination to show how the stigma associated with a place can manifest beyond the geographical boundaries of those places.

8.2. Territory

Many of the research participants were able to draw very direct links between place or territory and the limitations that can arise through associations with stigmatised territories. In the following excerpt, Long talks about the stigma of place and what this can mean for young people who come from Ballymun where Long lives:

> Many young people, many, they grow up, they will go to other country, will go to the cities, other places, to build a new life, because the Ballymun, the reputation, generation to generation, is bad and, you know, difficult to change the people's thoughts….When you live in Ballymun, they think not much future, young people.

Long is very clear here. He sees a significant association between Ballymun as a place and what people can expect in their lives. Coming from Ballymun means coming from a place that has a negative reputation, something which Long suggests is immutable. Therefore, if people from Ballymun want to "build a new life" the only viable option is to leave, to leave the place and the stigma associated with it, to go to somewhere new so that they can effectively be from somewhere new and have a new address. Long is interpreting the effect of his surroundings here by focusing on what he has observed over a long period of living in Ballymun. However, for others, interpretations were located in both observation and personal biography. Gavin for example, who grew up in Darndale Dublin 17, has strong convictions about how Darndale as an area has been let down by the state through poor governance and a lack of basic infrastructure coupled with strong feelings about the effects that negative representations of places like Darndale can have for those who live there: "There was no infrastructure, there was no jobs, any, like you couldn't even apply for a job cause soon as they knew you were from Darndale like they wouldn't employ you."

Gavin's words here demonstrate that the conditions that exist in a deprived community coupled with how that community is generally perceived work together and can have profound consequences for community members. Gavin offers deep insight through his testimony on the stigmatising and discriminating effects that can accumulate beyond the geographically bounded regions of a community or area. In doing so, he draws attention to a moral dimension, in this case, the moral economy of representation:

> Now we're all unique individuals, we're all unique human beings, like none of us have the same fingerprint do you know what I mean, like none of us think the same, we're all unique, but because we're all in a community we're all tarnished with the same brush…and then you have like the media, who want to slander us, who want to come along with their articles and just keep slandering and slandering the community….I inherited the stigma of that community straight off the bat. Straight off the bat, I inherited the whole stigma [and] everything that came along with it.

This powerful testimony from Gavin captures the essence of what it means to be stigmatised through an association with place; to be denied your individuality, your uniqueness because of your address, to be represented in a way that feels slanderous, that tarnishes. For Gavin, there is no rational or moral argument to be had here. Being born into or otherwise living in an impoverished, disadvantaged, or potentially stigmatised area is not an immoral act, yet it can come with an unwanted inheritance which, sadly, can determine much. That same unwanted inheritance can be mobile and can attach to persons beyond the geographic boundaries of the community, ultimately manifesting in socioeconomic discrimination.

8.3. Habitus

French sociologist and anthropologist, Pierre Bourdieu used the concept of "habitus" as a way to begin to understand how social conditions can reproduce themselves and this is an instructive concept in the context of socioeconomic discrimination. Loic Wacquant, collaborator and friend of Bourdieu, describes habitus as being "the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them" (Wacquant, 2005, p. 316).

In considering what shapes habitus, Bourdieu (1984, p. 170) notes that:

> Habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these.

In simple terms, where you come from, both in the geographical sense and with respect to your social class, is important; it helps to shape you and is often reflected in how you dress, talk, walk, and generally present yourself to the world. Habitus is particularly recognisable through the plain fact that people from different communities, even where those communities are not spatially located very far apart, talk differently in terms of accent and phraseology, perhaps dress differently, perhaps even walk differently, consume differently, and so on. Habitus can also be reflected onto persons in the context of how they are perceived and treated, particularly when they venture beyond the geographically bounded confines of their community. In the following excerpt, Lorraine talks about feeling as though she was being treated differently in the workplace because of her accent:

> I do feel I was treated differently and it made me even, when I started going in, trying to change the way I spoke and—which is something that I just refuse to do now because this is the way I speak, I don't know any other way, you know what I mean?

Lorraine's testimony here captures an important texture of socioeconomic discrimination. In the past, she has felt that she was treated differently because of her accent or the words she used. She is also very conscious that this kind of discrimination is much more likely to occur "outside of the area," that is, outside of her immediate community. She clearly recognises these circumstances as circumstances in which discrimination is taking place as she tries to temper how she is received by adjusting her accent before finally refusing to do so. In this act of reclamation, Lorraine shifts the burden of discrimination away from herself and locates it in those who would treat her differently in the first place: "This is the way I speak, I don't know any other way"; with this statement, Lorraine seems to be asking why should anyone be treated differently because of that.

Gavin is also able to look outward and shift the moral responsibility for socioeconomic discrimination away from himself. In the first instance, Gavin talks about being perceived differently because of his appearance and how he presents himself:

> I'm walking up Grafton street, like, the clothing I choose to wear, like, people can just take it, "oh tracksuit, tracksuit, tracksuit," and then you're sort of, you're looked upon as if you're from a completely different class, based off your image….You can walk into that Starbucks over there, yeah, and just the way I'm dressed, just the way I talk, people are going to look at you. And it's always people from the upper class. And you do get that and it can be blatant sometimes and all it can be is a looking you up and down by the eyes? That's still discriminating. That's just, like, "who are you?"

Gavin recognises what he sees as very open and even blatant discrimination. In this next excerpt, Gavin is also unequivocal about the emotional impact that being perceived in the way he described can have. Yet, he

removes the burden from himself and even manages to empathise with those who would treat him differently: "Oh, you feel it. And do you know what it hurts but, then again, you have to realise it's not you who's the issue. If they're setting out to hurt people, they're probably hurting as well or something."

Comfortable in his own skin, Gavin is able to deflect and look outward. He feels as though he is sometimes treated differently, and this can hurt. However, he refuses to take on the burden of how he is treated and refuses to locate it within himself. Gavin is also very conscious of class and conscious of the reality that for him, being discriminated against or treated differently comes, in the main, from a different place in society and from people with a very different lived reality.

9. Discussion and Conclusion

Poverty is clearly a problem and one that runs contrary to both international and domestic ambitions, it can remain abstract when thought about only in statistical terms. The testimony gathered in the course of a series of walking interviews, examples of which are given in the previous paragraphs, makes concrete many aspects of poverty that would otherwise remain abstract, and remain "hidden in statistics" (Whelan, 2023b). The use of walking, mapping, and photography offers modes of inclusion that go beyond those commonly used in the policy-making process to offer new textures and deep insights to inform and enhance policy. The overarching goal of the research documented here has been to champion lived experience in the area of poverty as a vital component of a holistic evidence base and to tangibly demonstrate the real value of creative modes of inclusion. Approaching *The Roadmap* using the WPR approach (Bacchi, 2009)—focusing on the question "where are the silences?"—it can be suggested that the voice and testimony of those directly affected by poverty can remain unheard via an anaemic conception of inclusion and that not enough has been done in contemporary poverty policy to surface these voices. Having focused in the main here on *The Roadmap* as the dominant policy suite covering poverty in the Irish context, this is not to suggest that the policy neglects the idea of including those with lived experience and those who work with people experiencing poverty completely, but rather it is an acknowledgement that the policy-making arena is not an equal space and not everyone who policy-makers might wish to include has the agency to articulate their experiences in the ways currently being undertaken. In this respect, more creative modes of inclusion must be considered and social policies in the areas of poverty need to develop a more expansive conception of consultation and inclusion with a view to surfacing and centrally placing the voices of those directly affected by poverty in the policymaking frame. Expansive in this context therefore refers to how voices are included in ways that are creative, substantive, and meaningful. So, for example, inclusion might take the form of direct consultation, but it might also include the use of art, photography, workshops, or other creative processes that can help policy-makers connect with the lived experiences of people and people to connect their lives to policy.

While it must be acknowledged that not all research or policy initiatives are suited to such approaches, it must also be acknowledged that where they are, the rewards are potentially incalculable. Using creative methods such as walking and photography and coproducing research with participants who are afforded multiple modes of expression allows for a sense of investment and ownership on the parts of all involved. Focusing on the methods described behind the research described in this article, such approaches are not fully without risk (walking is generally riskier than sitting still, dogs may follow you and buskers may interrupt you) yet being outdoors and in space with someone while engaging in a conversation is also inherently

rewarding and a very natural setting that induces openness and informality. Walking as a method for conducting research can access the lived realities and cultures of individuals and groups through affective aspects of lives/lived experiences (O'Neill & Roberts, 2020). Moreover, maps do not always capture social geography, therefore offering a research participant "situational authority" by allowing them to curate a walk offers the possibility for connections, echoes, and observations to shape the texture of an interview and elicit rich insight. Returning to ATD Ireland's toolkit for conducting participatory research, this has meant a purposeful process that has included consultation from the outset, collaboration and ongoing opportunities for participant input throughout, and due consideration given to ownership and control of what is produced.

When and where possible then, researchers should engage in participatory research as a way of coproducing knowledge and policy-makers should use these processes to shape and enhance policy. Arts-based creative methodologies can help to make the policy-making process accessible and meaningful for participants and should be considered when safe and practicable. Alongside offering the potential for rich and meaningful connection and all-party investment in the process, inclusive policy-making processes also have emancipatory potential and offer the prospect of diffusing power imbalances.

Funding

The study that this article draws on was funded by the Irish Research Council under Strand1a of the New Foundations Grant Scheme.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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