

More Than You Know: Lived Expertise and Future-Building at the Margins

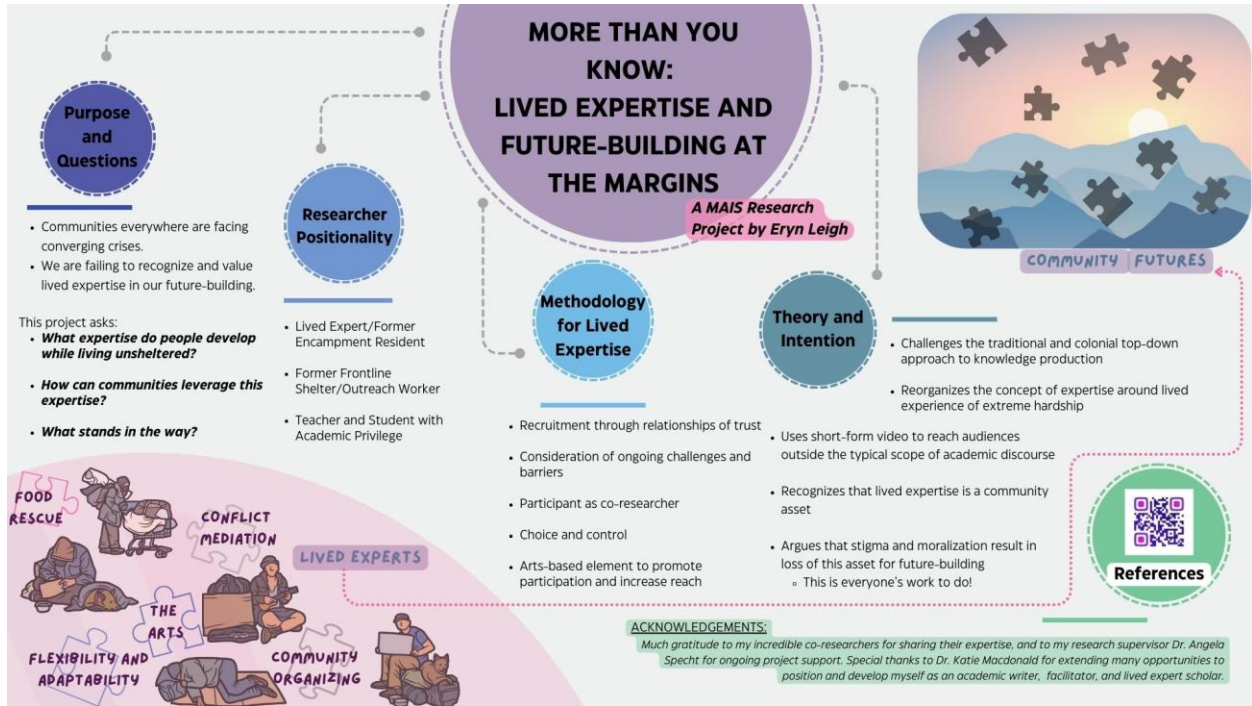
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Abstract

Unsheltered Canadians have weathered hardships and navigated crises that most of us could not imagine. In doing so, they have developed expertise in numerous areas such as housing, practical survival, resource sharing, conflict mediation, food security, and community leadership. The expert knowledge and skills acquired in encampments represent valuable assets to communities in a changing world, working to build resilient and sustainable futures. These community assets are denied to all of us by the ongoing stigma and moralization of people without housing. This study engaged several co-researchers who live or have lived in encampments. Using narrative analysis of semi-structured interviews, the project aimed to uncover the expertise people have developed in unsheltered settlements, as well as explore any opportunities for community growth and resilience that are missed through exclusion - or gained through inclusion - of these lived experts. Findings were artistically represented in video form, with guidance and direction of co-researchers. Positioning participants as co-researchers was a deliberate methodological choice to support a shift in thinking about expertise. This work employed a decolonizing approach, challenging the dominant settler colonial worldview which values and prioritizes expertise gained through formal training, higher education, or professional experience. Lived expert co-researchers had full control over how involved they wished to be in the research process, if and how they wished to be named or credited, and to what extent their work would be shared publicly. This poster highlights the project's theoretical underpinning and its unique methodologies, crafted to honour and centre lived expertise.

Keywords: Housing, lived expertise, community, encampments, stigma

Poster



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