

19th SEPTEMBER, FRIDAY

9h30 – 10h50

SEMINAR SESSION 2 - Participants will be asked to select one of these 6 parallel seminars

Seminar 12: Women and Homelessness II (Room: X) - Chair: Lars Benjaminsen, UK

Dóra Welker, Hyojin Seo, BE/NL: Gendered Homelessness in Europe

Women's homelessness has long been underestimated due to restrictive definitions, incomplete data collection, and entrenched gender biases in research. While previous studies have focused on 'visible' homelessness, such as rough sleeping, emerging evidence using broader definitions suggests that women's experiences of homelessness are more widespread than previously assumed. As data collection has improved, the gender gap in homelessness prevalence has continuously narrowed, as well.

This study draws on retrospective housing difficulty data from the 2023 wave of the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) to provide a more nuanced understanding of the scale, nature, and gendered dimensions of homelessness. Our findings indicate that lifetime experiences of homelessness are more widespread than conventional estimates suggest, particularly among women. While the overall prevalence of homelessness among women is similar to that of men, important differences emerge when disaggregating by ETHOS categories. Gendered pathways into and out of homelessness, as well as the role of poverty, further highlight the distinct experiences of women facing housing exclusion.

We see women's homelessness as not a matter of invisibility but rather a methodological challenge, and while we acknowledge the limitations of the EU-SILC dataset, we argue that leveraging retrospective survey data from a broad population sample can strengthen the evidence base for gender-sensitive policy interventions.



Dóra Welker is a Project Officer at FEANTSA, working on the Equal House project analysing the scale and dynamics of housing inequality across European countries. She completed her PhD in Urban Studies at Heriot Watt University's Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (United Kingdom) with a research focus on gender-based violence and homelessness.



Hyojin Seo is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Sociology, Tilburg University, working for the EqualHouse project. She has a PhD in Social Policy from the University of Kent, UK. Her expertise lies in gendered precariousness experiences in the labour market and the role of institutional contexts (e.g., social policy, norm) surrounding them. Methodologically, she has expertise in quantitative methods (e.g., Latent Class Analysis, Multilevel Modelling) and survey design, as well as cross-national comparison across Europe and East Asia.

Méabh Savage, Boróka Fehér, Dalma Fabian, IE/HU/BE: Exploring Homeless Women's Experiences of Safety Using Their 'Visual Voices'- An Introduction to and Preliminary Findings From Participatory Action Research in 7 European Countries

There is an absence of women's collective voices and experiences in European research on homelessness. This is because definitions, conceptualizations and methodologies used in research frequently reflect male centric norms (Bretherton 2017). This invisibilises women's voices and lived experiences and hence the possibility of collectivising their voices. Women's invisibility can negate the potentially transformative effect that research can have in producing more socially just policy and practice responses, in particular more gender responsive services for women. The absence of women's voices from research can prolong their experiences of homelessness and the depth of traumas they often experience (Savage 2022).

In light of the invisibility of women's collective voices, this presentation will discuss the work of a European transnational project, Women's Voices, which involves the work of the South East Technological University (Waterford, Ireland) in partnership with homeless service providers from several European countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, and Slovenia), a grassroots organization from Portugal (created by and for homeless women) and FEANTSA. Using an action research methodology, underpinned by critical feminist and participatory principles, the project aims to co-produce qualitative data on women's safety (captured as photographs and words, or visual voices), through a series of workshops facilitated at local service level (14 services), with women users and staff working there. This presentation will introduce examples of collective themes, and those emerging at local service level, relating to women's safety, co-produced by them in the workshops. The methodology used in this project can serve as a good practice example of co-production in transformative research, in particular, how to involve women who are using services in collecting data that has a direct influence on the services they (wish to) receive.



Méabh Savage works as a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Social Care and Early Childhood in the South East Technological University in Waterford. She has professional experience of working in the areas of women's homelessness and domestic abuse. Her research interests focus specifically on issues relating to care and social justice among people who experience intersectional inequalities, particularly homeless mothers/women/families, women experiencing domestic abuse and asylum seeker and refugee mothers living in direct provision. Méabh is very interested in participatory and emancipatory research methodologies which can produce transformative socially-just outcomes. Méabh holds a PhD in Equality Studies.



Boróka Fehér has worked with homeless people in Hungary since 1999. She is a policy officer of the Policy Department of the Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy (BMSZKI), the homeless service provider of the City of Budapest, and an associate professor at the Institute of Social Work and Deaconry of Károli Gáspár University. Her field of special interest is the support and services available for homeless women, their contact with their children, empowering and participative ways of working. She is a member of FEANTSA Women. She holds a PhD in Social Work and Social Policy.



Dalma Fabian is a Policy Officer at FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. She specialises in women's homelessness and coordinates FEANTSA WOMEN, a community of practice bringing together professionals dedicated to ending homelessness among women. She holds an MA in Human Rights Law.