

18th SEPTEMBER, THURSDAY

16h00 – 17h30	SEMINAR SESSION 1 - Participants will be asked to select one of these 6 parallel seminars
Seminar 5: Women and Homelessness I (Room: X) - Chair: Nóra Teller, HU	
García-Cid Alba, Itziar Gandarias, Paula Torres, ES: From Residential Spaces to Safe Housing: An Analysis of Low-Threshold Accommodation Models for Women in Situations of Social Exclusion	
<p>Access to housing is a universal right and a crucial element in ensuring dignity and autonomy. However, for women in situations of social exclusion—particularly those affected by homelessness, gender-based violence, addiction, and mental health issues—traditional residential care models often impose restrictive conditions, limiting privacy and autonomy while reinforcing stigma. This research examines the implementation of low-threshold accommodation services for women promoted by the Inclusion Service of the Bizkaia Provincial Council. Specifically, it analyzes the experiences of four entities in the city of Bilbao (Spain) that have carried out a one-year pilot program. Using a qualitative approach, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with women residing in these accommodations, as well as focus groups with professionals from the social sector. This methodological design ensures a comprehensive understanding of how low-threshold housing services address women's needs and perceptions of safety and protection. The study seeks to identify key differentiating elements between low-threshold housing models and conventional residential care. Furthermore, it examines women's perceptions of safe and protective spaces, emphasizing the importance of housing as a starting point—rather than a final objective—in their recovery process. This approach challenges patriarchal frameworks that dictate residential integration through high-intensity intervention models, advocating instead for flexible, community-based solutions that foster empowerment, harm reduction, and security. By addressing structural barriers to safe housing access, this research contributes to a broader reflection on the adequacy of existing residential services and the need for alternative models tailored to women's diverse needs. The findings will inform policymakers and social service providers on improving accommodation programs, ultimately promoting autonomy and long-term social inclusion for women in vulnerable situations.</p>	
<div>  <p>Itziar Gandarias and Alba García-Cid (photo), PhD in Social Psychology, are both Associate Professors at the University of Deusto. They specialize in homelessness, gender, and social exclusion, doing research on hidden homelessness, gendered violence, and feminist perspectives in social intervention.</p> <p>Paula Torres is a research technician at the team, specialized in social intervention. The authors are part of the project <i>From Residential Spaces to Safe Housing</i>. Also, they are doing research in the <i>Prevention of Gender-Based Violence through the Theory and Practice of Feminist Self-Defense</i> project, among others national and international studies on vulnerable populations and community intervention.</p> </div>	
Raluca Budian, Ignasi Martin, ES: Sub-letting and Trapped: On the Lived Experience of Women Sharing Accommodations	
<p>Our research aims to provide a critical examination of how housing insecurity and processes of home unmaking can intensify existing structural vulnerabilities. This builds and adds to recent work that sees vulnerability as a structural condition rather than some sort of inherent fragility. To explore these issues, we adopt a social-symbolic perspective (Lawrence and Phillips, 2019), to examine the lived experience of women within the homes they inhabit along three dimensions, namely, the discursive, material, and relational dimensions. To empirically study this, we draw on our analysis of 50 life-stories of women sub-letting rooms in the Barcelona Province, in Spain. Like in many other countries globally, the number of people living in shared accommodation is on the rise in Spain. While sharing may be seen as cool and emancipatory when chosen, those who end up sub-letting and sharing accommodation because they have no other option, have far more negative experiences. Often, they feel their capacity to shape their lives</p>	

has been taken from them. They feel trapped in a place that is experienced not as a site of refuge or sanctuary, but as a place of insecurity and fear.

This study offers a human and intimate perspective on a phenomenon that, although often invisible, defines the realities of thousands of women facing economic and social vulnerability. In a world where affordable housing remains an ever-growing challenge, many women are forced to share spaces through sub-letting arrangements. These experiences not only impact their access to a dignified home but also highlight complex dynamics: gender inequality, job insecurity, and the tension between personal autonomy and economic dependency. Therefore, this research serves as an invitation to rethink the role of social housing, not merely as shelter, but as a space for dignity, safety, and empowerment.



Raluca Cosmina Budian is Associate Director and Researcher at the Decent Housing Observatory Postdoctoral Researcher at the Esade Institute for Social Innovation. Her research focuses on social anthropology, housing policies, homelessness, and vulnerability. She has conducted ethnographic studies on migrant and homeless populations, analyzing the barriers to accessing housing and the impact of administrative and social conditions on their trajectories. Her research also includes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and marginalized communities, the situation of Roma populations, and participatory methodologies in international cooperation. Her expertise includes qualitative research methodologies (life histories, ethnographic interviews, NVivo analysis) and applied social research, with a particular interest in how structural inequalities affect access to housing and urban inclusion.

Associate Director and Researcher at the Decent Housing Observatory Postdoctoral Researcher at the Esade Institute for Social Innovation.



Ignasi Martí Lanuza is Professor in the Department of Social Sciences, Director of the Institute for Social Innovation and Director of the Decent Housing Observatory at Esade. He has extensive interdisciplinary experience, including, for example, publications in organization studies sociology, gender studies and applied ethics on how individuals with limited resources collective mobilized to fight exclusion, with a recent focus on housing precariousness. His expertise lies in qualitative projects, ranging from in-depth qualitative case (in contexts like rural Bangladesh and India), and ethnographic studies (in villas in Argentina and in neighborhoods in the Barcelona province). Beyond this, he has also worked with and advised policy makers (at regional and municipal level) and Third Sector Organizations.