

Seminar 8: Homelessness and Displacement (Room: 00.08)

Chair: **Mike Allen, IE**

Veera Niemi, FI: A state-led Displacement Process Revealing Secrets of Successful Rehousing after Homelessness – but too Late



Veera Niemi is a researcher and final year PhD candidate of social work in University of Turku, Finland. She works in a Finnish research consortium Fighting segregation and homelessness among the most vulnerable through housing social work (SEGRA), in cooperation with University of Tampere, University of Turku, and the Y-Foundation (2021-2023). Niemi's research focuses on analysing longitudinal housing and service pathways of the homeless through longitudinal administrative register data. Niemi is also interested in building bridges between theory and practice in social work, and has years of work experience also in practice social work and as a university teacher.

In this mixed-methods case study we analyse a state-led displacement process in Finland. An area of affordable social rental housing was to be renovated and partly rebuilt due to urban development, and about 200 residents were displaced during 2020-2021. The case was a typical gentrification process in which the development affected the housing costs, and so the earlier residents were replaced by wealthier ones.

Our quantitative data describes the previous housing pathways of the residents and demonstrates that long-term and repeated homelessness had been common among the residents. It also shows where the residents moved after the displacement, and the mortality rate and relapses into homelessness during the following year. An interesting finding was that many of the residents with very long periods of previous homelessness had, however, been living in the area for very long continuous periods.

Our qualitative data consists of interviews of 18 displaced residents with homelessness background. Analysing the residents' own experiences, we deepen the understanding of why long-term continuous living in the area was possible (or sometimes a necessity) for them. The analysis sheds light to positive factors either related to the area or reflecting a history of homelessness, negative factors forcing people to stay, and also factors discussing the possibility of the continuity of housing during such urban renewal processes. The study contributes to theoretical discussions on state-led-displacement and gentrification, and urban development affecting housing and homelessness pathways. (Co-authors: Kirsi Juhila, Päivikki Kuoppakangas, Jenni Mäki and Riikka Perälä).

Eva Swyngedouw, BE: Forced Nomadism. The Consequences of Evictions for the Housing Precariat in Brussels



Eva Swyngedouw is a Visiting Professor at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and a Research Associate at the Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research, Vrije Universiteit Brussel. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Chicago. Currently, her research focuses on the prevalence and consequences of evictions for the housing precariat in Brussels.

To this day, many cities struggle with a severe lack of affordable housing, massive shortages of social housing, and rising homelessness rates. Evictions can be considered extreme cases of housing deprivation, poverty, and social exclusion. Because of their excessiveness, they can shed light on the workings of the current welfare state and its market excesses. Evictions have also become a major problem in Brussels due to the housing crisis and the lack of affordable and quality housing. They are symptoms of a housing market in crisis, and have serious economic, social and mental consequences for those affected. In many cases, it leads to unstable housing trajectories and even



17th European Research Conference

14th and 15th September, 2023



Venue: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

homelessness. One in three people who got evicted still do not have a stable housing situation three months after the eviction. Based on 25 interviews with institutional actors working in the field of housing and 25 biographical interviews with people who were evicted, we argue, in this regard, that renters who have been evicted in the past are forced to lead nomadic lives due to an inattentive and ineffective state, a shortage of the necessary social services, and a lack of tenant rights in the legal system.