

## Seminar 6: Housing Instability and Evictions (Room: TBD) - Chair: Nóra Teller, HU

**Bart Put, Emma Hens, & Inge Pasteels, BE:** Lacunae in the Prevention of Evictions in the Flemish Private Rental Market: The Perspective of Social Service Providers

In 2020, approximately 10.000 households were threatened with legal eviction in Flanders, a region with almost 6.8 million inhabitants in the north of Belgium. Detailed, accurate and up-to-date data on evictions are hard to come by (Verstraete et al., 2018), but an earlier study found that 80% of all legal eviction procedures are initiated by private landlords (Meys & Hermans, 2014). Although a number of support systems to prevent or 'humanize' tenant evictions are in place, little is known about the experiences of social service providers in their dealings with evictions and eviction risks in the private rental market in particular. The main goal of this study is to identify both lacunae and factors of success in eviction prevention actions by social service providers in the private rental sector specifically. To this end, 36 in-depth interviews and 2 focus group discussions were held with relevant social service workers. Preliminary analyses of the conversation transcripts learn that gaps in preventive practices emerge at multiple points in the process leading up to the eviction of tenants. They are related to five factors in particular: limitations in the institutionally defined (time and role) framework for interventions, limitations in the deployment of outreach work, norms of professional secrecy, difficulties in the positioning between landlord and tenant, and limitations in the knowledge and use of existing policy instruments and support by other, more specialized social services. We conclude by emphasizing that, although sufficient supply of affordable housing remains key to eviction prevention in general, there is still much to be gained by optimizing secondary prevention strategies as well. Crucial ingredients are the extension of the framework for (outreaching) intervention possibilities, the establishment of publicly more visible housing mediation and support services, and the generalization of knowledge about effective eviction prevention chains in relevant sectors.



*Dr. Bart Put is a sociologist and researcher affiliated to PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Belgium). He has carried out research on family transitions and housing, rent issues in the private rental sector, processes of eviction and social work during COVID-19. His scholarly work has previously been published in international peer-reviewed housing and social work journals.*

*Emma Hens is an educational scientist, social worker and researcher affiliated to PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Belgium). Her current research activities are focused on the quality of data sources on local rental markets and private landlords' experiences with vulnerable tenants.*

*Dr. Inge Pasteels is a sociologist, statistician, and currently Head of Research of the PXL People & Society Research Centre of Expertise. Her area of expertise covers family sociology topics such as high conflict divorce and repartnering mechanisms, housing transitions of adaptive and flexible families, alongside rent issues in the private rental sector and social work intervention strategies more generally. Her work has previously been published in peer-reviewed journals centering on demography, family sociology, housing and social work.*

**Miroslava Hlinčíková, SK:** Families without Stable Homes in Continuous Change. How Does the Welfare State Approach Families During Uncertain Times in Slovakia?

In Slovakia, the most endangered by inadequate housing are households with children, especially single-parent households and households with three or more children. Even though both national and local social policies in Slovakia prioritise family protection, the current housing policy reflects a general discourse on housing based on the principles of temporal/transitional housing, merit, and personal responsibility. It generally results in public housing policies in Slovakia having such entry conditions that they are unaffordable for homeless people or those with low incomes. This system, therefore, does not end homelessness but maintains a certain status quo - it offers limited survival options but not dignified living. Within the paper, based on the results of qualitative research in three cities in Slovakia, I will examine the options families have if they lose housing or are at risk of losing it. The research is based on interviews with various actors - representatives of cities and offices, providers of social services, and clients or tenants in public housing and temporary accommodation. I am interested in how the public social system is set up in practice and how it can respond to the problems of individual families.



*Miroslava Hlinčíková, PhD. works as a researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Science. She has been a member of various research teams and has cooperated as an analyst with NGOs. She works for Amnesty International on the research Right to Housing in Slovakia. She is the author and co-author of several monographs and studies on minority issues in urban environments. In addition to her research work, she has been a member of the municipal Housing Committee in Trnava, Slovakia, and has actively initiated discussions about the Housing First model.*