WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE

Edited by

Paula Mayock &
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Editors

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Foreword

In the 30 years or so since the publication of Sophie Watson and Helen Austerberry's *Housing and Homelessness: A Feminist Perspective* much has changed, but progress has been intermittent, often painfully slow and much remains the same. While reductionist interpretations still find occasional outlet, conceptually the depiction of homelessness has moved on to embrace its complexity as a 'process' rather than a 'condition', and the diverse composition of homeless populations are now more widely recognized. Homelessness is today identified as a major component of social exclusion and marginalization by most European countries and national homelessness 'strategies' proliferate, though some are more purposeful than others and all are invariably under-resourced. In recent years, the antipoverty programmes of the EU Commission have explicitly recognized homelessness as a priority: in 2013, as part of its Social Investment Package, the Commission published a 'guidance' document for Member States—*Confronting Homelessness in the European Union*—urging 'concerted action' and 'preventative measures'. Yet, apparently hidebound by subsidiarity and competency rules, the Commission continues to resist repeated resolutions from the European Parliament for an EU-wide homelessness 'strategy' directive. Policy developments, of which the shift from 'housing-ready' to 'housing-led' is the latest and perhaps most notable example, reflect a recognition of homeless people's agency and a concession to some control over their own lives—though

the process here, as elsewhere, is uneven with entrenched practices and convictions contributing too frequently to institutional and conceptual sclerosis: homeless people are still too often herded into overcrowded, badly serviced shelters, criminalized and incarcerated.

Beginning with Watson and Austerberry, over the past three decades, hegemonic male tropes with regard to homelessness have been challenged and modified (though not dislodged) by a growing recognition of gender as a critical determinant of homelessness. An increasing appreciation of the social origins of homelessness—specifically with regard to the role of patriarchal social relations, the sexual division of labour and the role of the traditional dyadic family model in marginalizing women in housing markets characterized by dwindling stocks of accessible and affordable accommodation—has taken root among researchers, policymakers and practitioners; it is now generally conceded that in the gendered terrain of homelessness women comprise a significant component, are disadvantaged relative to men, have gender-specific needs and that their advancement requires parity of treatment and opportunity as well as empowerment. Yet, as the caveat—'not dislodged'—noted above regarding hegemonic male tropes implies, much needs to be done. Too frequently, with notable exceptions, gender today is merely imbricated—'layered on'—rather than integrated and assimilated in homelessness research, policymaking and practice: 'recognition and appreciation' of female homelessness fall short of 'explication and incorporation'; as a consequence, homeless women too often still remain invisible.

In recognition of these and other issues, the Women's Homelessness in Europe Network (WHEN) was established in 2012. Alarmed by the 'weakness' and 'incompleteness' of the evidence base and by the lack of international comparative work, the Network's members set themselves the task of promoting policy and academic research to facilitate the development of effective strategies for the prevention and reduction of homelessness among women. The present publication is a product of their endeavours.

Women's Homelessness in Europe provides a robust assessment of the 'state of knowledge' on women's homelessness in Europe, extends that knowledge base and identifies key areas of prospective research. With appropriate acknowledgement of extant work, the contributors set about nuancing interpretations, challenging myths, debunking shibboleths

and exposing embedded restrictive practices and attitudes which serve to obscure and mask not just our understanding of the dynamics of women's homelessness in Europe but sometimes its very presence. An examination of the characteristics of homeless women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries challenges the notion that contemporary women's homelessness marks a break with the past—it was as 'pervasive, hidden and disregarded' then as much as now; the interrelationships between housing and welfare systems, apparently robust when general (that is, predominantly male) homelessness is under consideration, are demonstrated to be less influential when gender comes into play. Of more importance are prevailing cultural constructs and images of women and their positions in society—images which are encoded in local and national enumeration systems. Data on homelessness rarely takes account of women and, even when it does, undercounts and fails to distinguish their diversity; statistical recording of homelessness embodies cultural norms and perpetuates attitudes which format deficient government policies and popular understanding.

The substantive coverage and analyses of salient dimensions of women's homelessness—domestic violence, health, family homelessness, chronic homelessness and homeless migrant women—bring to the fore commonly ignored complexities of women's homelessness and unacknowledged gender-specific needs. Without losing sight of their shared gender experience, these chapters humanize homeless women in revealing their diversity of circumstance and the reality of their all too frequent shoddy treatment, thereby exposing the gender-based inequalities that endure across Europe. The coherence of these analyses is aided by the adoption of an 'intersectionality approach'—a methodological and conceptual perspective which, paraphrasing the editors, recognizes that the problems faced by homeless women are compounded (intersected) by inequalities based, for example, on class, race and ethnicity, and also by the broader institutional structures that serve to reinforce women's subordinate position. Intersectionality recognizes that inequities are rarely if ever the result of single, distinct factors. Rather, they are the outcome of intersections of different social identities, power relations and experiences which create different patterns of vulnerability to homelessness; these patterns of vulnerability in turn should determine the support that individuals receive and define effective interventions.

As a marker of where we are at and as a platform for moving forward, this book succeeds admirably. At a time when homelessness, including women's homelessness, is rising alarmingly in a Europe in thrall to neoliberal politics and economic austerity, the challenges identified here for further research are stark: the development and adoption of refined typologies and effective enumeration methodologies to capture the scope and diversity of homelessness among women; comparative primary research to reveal subjectivities of the lived experiences of homeless women together with analyses linking women's homelessness with the broader structures of power and inequality to reveal the dynamics of the journey into, through and out of homelessness; contesting the prevailing cultural images of patriarchal male hegemony and refuting the growing medicalization and criminalization of the homeless condition; and, we might add, the development of an introspective awareness of the challenges thrown up by the 'trans' and 'inter' of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexed social and corporeal identities to prevailing notions of gender as 'female/male binary'. As this volume so strikingly demonstrates, there is indeed much to be done.

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Notes on the Contributors

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Isabel Baptista is Senior Researcher at CESIS—Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social—with 20 years' research experience in poverty and social exclusion, and particular expertise in homelessness. She has also extensive research experience in the area of domestic violence. She represents Portugal in the European Observatory on Homelessness under the auspices of FEANTSA[1] and is a member of the editorial team of the *European Journal of Homelessness*. She is also a member of the European Social Policy Network (ESPN). She participated in the inter-agency team which prepared the first National Homelessness Strategy in Portugal, approved in 2009. She has coordinated and participated in several research projects—at the local, national and European level—on the topic of domestic violence. She has also worked extensively with service provid-

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[1] FEANTSA—European Federation of National Organisations Working (in English); Fédération Européenne des Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri (in French).

ers and local authorities in the implementation and assessment of local strategies to fight domestic violence.

Lars Benjaminsen is a researcher at the Danish National Centre for Social Research and is, since 2006, a member of the European Observatory on Homelessness under the auspices of FEANTSA. He is a sociologist and completed his PhD at the Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen. Dr. Benjaminsen's research fields are social exclusion and interventions for socially marginalized people. He has conducted five national counts of homelessness in Denmark and took part in the evaluation of the Danish national homelessness strategy. He is the author of the intervention manuals for the second stage of the Danish homelessness programme, a national study of the addiction treatment system, a study of material and social deprivation among poor people, and a study of the family background of socially marginalized people in Denmark.

Joanne Bretherton is a homelessness scholar based at the University of York. Internationally, she co-directs WHEN and was a visiting fellow in homelessness at Nagoya Chukyo University, Japan. She has published widely on homelessness law, Housing First, social enterprises and homelessness, employment services and education for homeless people and Sanctuary Schemes for women, whose homelessness is linked to domestic violence. She has directed research for several major homelessness charities in the UK and Ireland, the Scottish Government, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and co-directed research for the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and UK central government departments.

Susanne Gerull was born 1962 in Berlin and is a trained social worker. She has been working with homeless people and people threatened by evictions for 15 years in two social welfare offices in Berlin, Germany. Since the conferral of her doctorate (a dissertation about the prevention of homelessness) at the Free University of Berlin, she has been working as a social scientist on a freelance basis for five years. Since 2008, she has been Professor for Social Work at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin with a focus on poverty, unemployment, homelessness and low-threshold social work. She is a member of WHEN.

Maša Filipovič Hrast is a researcher and Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. Her research topics are social policy, housing policy and social inclusion issues. The emphasis of her research is on position of vulnerable groups, their living and housing situations and their inclusion in society. She is a member of the sociology department and lectures at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She has been involved in several international and national research projects linked to housing and homelessness.

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Cecilia Hansen Löfstrand is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology and Work Science, University of Gothenburg. Her research concerns the welfare state and how organizations and individuals are governed and policed. More specifically, her research interests include housing and homelessness, victimization and support work, as well as the demand for, and provision of, public and private sector policing services. She conducts research on the establishment and governance of quasi-markets for homeless accommodation and policing services in Sweden, with the purpose of exploring the quest for organizational legitimacy among companies in these quasi-markets.

Paula Mayock is an Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. Her research focuses primarily on the lives and experiences of marginalized youth and adult populations, covering areas such as homelessness, drug use and drug problems. Paula is a National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) INVEST Post-Doctoral Fellow (2006–2007) and an Irish Research Council (IRC) Research Fellow (2009–2010). She is the founder and co-director of WHEN and the author of numerous articles, book chapters and research reports. Paula is also Assistant Editor to the international journal *Addiction.*

Magdalena Mostowska is a researcher and an academic teacher at the University of Warsaw in Poland. Her research has focused on issues of homelessness and migration, including intra-EU migrants in rough sleeping situations in large European cities, their survival strategies, social networks, changing institutional context, regulations in the public space and interactions with services. She is also interested in the qualitative research methods and their ethical implications, ethnographic methods, biographical interviewing and discourse analysis. She has started a research project that aims to examine the dynamics of women's homelessness in Poland.

Eoin O'Sullivan is Professor in Social Policy, Head of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin and Fellow of Trinity College. His research explores comparative dimensions of homelessness, and the history of the institutionalization of marginal populations in twentieth century Ireland. He is lead editor of the *European Journal of Homelessness* and a member of the European Observatory on Homelessness.

Nicholas Pleace has been researching homelessness at the University of York since the mid-1990s. Since 2010 Nicholas has been part of the core research team for the European Observatory on Homelessness, operating under the auspices of FEANTSA. He is on the Editorial Committee for the *European Journal of Homelessness*. Nicholas led the international review of the Finnish national homelessness strategy in 2014–2015 and is the author of the *Housing First Guide Europe.* Nicholas has published and presented very widely on homelessness and worked with the UK central and national governments, DIHAL (French Government), OECD, the European Commission, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and UK homelessness charities. His previous publications include *Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe: Lessons from Research* (2010).

Deborah Quilgars is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Housing Policy with 25 years of housing research experience. She has undertaken extensive research on homelessness and housing-related support for vulnerable and marginalized households and has directed projects on provision for women fleeing domestic violence for the Department of Communities and Local Government, England and the Greater London Authority. Deborah has undertaken considerable work at the European level, on the topics of home ownership, housing provision for vulnerable groups and homelessness. Deborah represented the UK in the European Observatory on Homelessness and is a member of WHEN.

Sarah Sheridan is a social researcher dedicated to the topic of homelessness and housing instability. Her PhD research was a qualitative longitudinal study of women experiencing homelessness in Ireland, during which time she was based in the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. Prior to this, she worked as researcher on a biographical study of homeless women and contributed to the design, fieldwork, analysis and dissemination of the research. She has a particular interest in how homelessness and housing instability interacts with other issues such as domestic violence, criminal justice contact and migration, and she has co-authored several articles related to these topics. Her methodological interests include qualitative methods, biographical interviewing, ethnography and qualitative longitudinal research. Sarah is currently Research Officer at Focus Ireland, a voluntary organization that supports and advocates for those individuals experiencing homelessness.

Linda van den Dries has a Masters in Child Psychology and holds a PhD from Leiden University. Her PhD thesis examined the development of former foster and former orphanage children adopted from China. She works as a Senior Researcher at Impuls—the Netherlands Centre for Social Care Research at the Radboud University Medical Centre. Her research focuses on socially vulnerable people and their service needs.

Bente van Hulst studied psychology at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. She passed her Master's degree with merit in 2012. From 2012 until 2014 she was involved in several studies of homelessness at Impuls—the Netherlands Centre for Social Care Research at the Radboud University Medical Centre, in Nijmegen. She has also volunteered as a Dutch teacher for foreigners and currently teaches at Fontys Nursing School in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

Tessa van Loenen holds a Masters in health sciences with a specialization in policy and the organization of health care. After completing her Masters, she started her PhD research at the Scientific Institute for Quality of Healthcare (IQ healthcare) at the Radboud University Medical Center, Nijmegen, in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM). Her PhD thesis (2016) focuses on the organization of primary care in Europe and how this relates to avoidable hospitalizations and emergency department utilization. Tessa works as a scientific researcher at Impuls, the Netherlands Centre of Social Care Research at Radboud University Medical Centre, in Nijmegen, on several projects targeting care for socially vulnerable people.

Judith Wolf is Professor of Social Care at Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen. She is head of Impuls—the Netherlands Center for Social Care Research at Radboud University Medical Centre, director of the Academic Collaborative Centre for Shelters and Recovery and director of the Academic Collaborative Centre for Public Mental Health. Judith Wolf has more than 30 years' experience in designing and conducting both academic and applied research on socially vulnerable populations (including homeless people and abused women) and on the social and health care services needed by these groups. She was principal investigator of several large-scale, multi-site research projects in the Netherlands; a homeless cohort study in the four largest cities in the Netherlands (2010–2014), two randomized controlled trials on the effects of critical time intervention in women's shelters and low threshold facilities for the homeless (2009–2013), and a study in five municipalities on predictors of tenant evictions for rent arrears and profiles of high risk households for eviction (2010–2014).

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Introduction

Joanne Bretherton and Paula Mayock

The Growing Visibility of the 'Unaccommodated Woman'

Homelessness is the greatest manifestation of poverty and injustice in the economically developed world. A 2015 review of the state of housing exclusion in Europe reported that while evidence was variable, signs of increased homelessness were present almost everywhere, with only some Scandinavian countries reporting low levels or falling rates (Domergue et al. 2015). Another recent comparative European study has added to existing evidence about the interrelationships between poverty and housing insecurity, while investigating the links between homelessness and eviction. Kenna et al. (2016) found the link between evictions and

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homelessness to be clearly related to the availability of support and resources, namely personal, social and financial, as well as available options for rapid rehousing. Inadequate welfare protection systems can exacerbate this predicament, particularly for vulnerable people, and for those with weak or no functional family ties (Kenna et al. 2016).

Historically, there has been recognition that women's experiences of homelessness differ from those of men and that there can be an important gender dimension to the problem of homelessness (Edgar and Doherty 2001; Watson and Austerberry 1986). However, there is a paucity of research on women's homelessness throughout Europe and the literature has only recently begun to include women's experiences (Baptista 2010; Mayock and Sheridan 2012; Moss and Singh 2015). While the 'invisibility' of homeless women, within both popular and academic portrayals of homelessness, has been recognized for some time (May et al. 2007; Wardhaugh 1999; Watson 1999) very little robust research has specifically focused on women. Women's homelessness, according to Wardhaugh (1999), has remained largely invisible because of the particular stigma attached to the 'unaccommodated woman'. This stigma centres on perceptions of displacement from an acceptable role as a woman within European and Western cultural norms. A woman who is not a wife, mother or carer, regardless of her other characteristics, represents a form of deviance, even if she may be simultaneously viewed as a victim and in need (Wardhaugh 1999; see Chap. 3, this volume). Homeless women therefore 'disappear' into the institutional spaces of homeless hostels and frequently rely on precarious arrangements with acquaintances, friends or family to keep a roof over their head (Pleace et al. 2008; Shinn et al. 1998); preferring to hide themselves from public view, they only rarely move into the public spaces of street homelessness (Wardhaugh 1999).

Women's homelessness encompasses other extreme forms of poverty, particularly child poverty, largely because much of what we talk about when we discuss women's homelessness is lone female parents with dependent children. Edgar and Doherty (2001) provided an important contribution to the enhancement of an understanding of the characteristics and experiences of women facing homelessness in Europe, adopting a country by country approach. This work broke new ground in that it was the first book to specifically examine female homelessness across

Europe. It highlighted how the gender dimensions of homelessness were neglected throughout Europe, particularly the experiences of women facing homelessness. As homeless women were less visible than men sleeping rough or using emergency accommodation, they were simply assumed to be a minor social problem, rather than actually being investigated.

The Need to Build a European Evidence Base on Women's Homelessness

This collection aims to build upon earlier research, adopting a comparative pan-European approach. The goal of the volume is to make a critical contribution in terms of assessing and extending the knowledge base on women's homelessness. This book is the result of the first international collaboration between leading homelessness researchers who have cooperated through the work of the Women's Homelessness in Europe Network (WHEN) to produce a comparative analysis of women's homelessness across Europe. WHEN, which was founded in 2012 (www.womenshomelessness.org) and currently has a membership of 16 academics from 12 European countries, was established to enhance understanding of issues at the core of women's homelessness and foster international collaborative research on gender dimensions of homelessness.[1]

European policy debates about homelessness, particularly in more recent years, are more likely to acknowledge that homelessness among women is a distinct and separate issue. An increased interest in women's homelessness is evident in national and pan-European responses to homelessness. The European Parliament resolution of 14 April 2016, on meeting the antipoverty target in light of increasing household costs, directly addressed the issue of homelessness among women. The resolution called on the need for more research in this field and on action to be taken by the European Commission, the European Institute for Gender Inequality and its Member States:

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[1] WHEN is co-directed by the editors of this collection, Paula Mayock (Trinity College, Dublin) and Joanne Bretherton (University of York).

[The European Parliament] *Calls on the Commission, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), and the Member States to undertake research into female homelessness and its causes and drivers, as the phenomenon is captured inadequately in current data; notes that gender-specific elements that ought to be taken into account include gender-based economic dependency, temporary housing, or avoidance of social services.* (European Parliament 2016, Key Recommendation 39)

FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations working with homeless people, has called for the specific needs of homeless women at risk of domestic and gender-based violence to be integrated into strategic responses to gender-based violence, noting that:

Women who are homeless have a number of severe, interrelated and exceptionally complex problems which contribute to their homelessness and make recovery a challenge. The experience of homelessness can carry different implications across the gender spectrum. This is why homelessness strategies must explicitly make room for women's homelessness. There is already a considerable body of existing evidence around gender perspectives on homelessness and how they can critically influence policy and help to ensure that services work appropriately and effectively to meet the needs of homeless women. (FEANTSA 2015, p. 5)

Echoing these calls for greater and explicit attention to women's homelessness, a recent review of the Finnish homelessness strategy, which is increasingly regarded as setting the standard for a coordinated and comprehensive strategy for preventing homelessness, concluded:

Homelessness among women is clearly an issue in Finland, women are represented in the homeless and long-term homeless populations and experiencing all the potentially harmful effects of homelessness. Ensuring that this social problem is accurately mapped and understood, which may mean using specific methodologies for understanding women's homelessness and also ensuring that homelessness services exist that cater effectively for women's needs, lies at the heart of ensuring that this dimension of homelessness is fully addressed. (Pleace et al. 2015, pp. 70–71)

The exact extent of women's homelessness across Europe is not known but there are almost universal reports of relative increases in the proportion of women using homelessness services and living rough. The

degree to which there is undercounting of homeless women living in precarious, inadequate and sometimes unsafe temporary arrangements with acquaintances, friends and relatives is only beginning to become apparent as homelessness research starts to look in more detail at women's experiences.

Available data, while showing upward trends, are primarily based on the most visible forms of homelessness—that is, individuals who are rough sleeping and those residing in homelessness hostel accommodation. Variations in definition and in measurement techniques produce marked differences in levels, which may be generated by methodological inconsistencies and shortfalls, alongside any substantive differences in the number or demographics of those who are homeless. A 2014 review of the extent and quality of statistical knowledge on homelessness across 15 EU Member States reported that 12 per cent to 38 per cent of homelessness was being experienced by women, but again raised serious questions about the quality and comparability of current data (Busch-Geertsema et al. 2014). Challenges exist, but the indications are clearly that women's homelessness—even when enumeration is restricted to metrics that fail to account for hidden or concealed homelessness and has other flaws related to an over-reliance on point-in-time methodology—is rising across Europe (Baptista et al. 2012; Busch-Geertsema et al. 2014).

The task of improving data is part of the bigger set of challenges that this book seeks to explore. Addressing the inadequacies of the enumeration of homeless women is the point at which new and better research needs to start in gaining a fuller understanding of this social problem. As the contributions to this book demonstrate, women are under-represented in homelessness statistics and the gender dimensions of homelessness are generally under-researched. Homeless women are often not separately enumerated, including the numbers of women present in concealed households (Pleace and Bretherton 2013). As discussed throughout this collection, women's homelessness is typified by this 'concealment' and that is a challenge for effective enumeration and social scientific research. This volume highlights the gaps in evidence and methodological challenges that need to be addressed, and the need to recognize this social problem and seek to better understand it could hardly be clearer.

About the Book

This book does not aim to provide a comprehensive guide to each and every country in Europe on the topic of women's homelessness. Rather, it is an edited collection that attempts to resolve the limitations of country-specific accounts of women's homelessness by providing a collection that is grounded in comparative analyses that are conversant with the available empirical research. The collection examines the nature and meaning of women's homelessness, relying on a multidisciplinary, comparative approach, and examines several of its most significant dimensions, including: domestic violence, motherhood, family homelessness, health, long-term (recurrent and sustained) homelessness, and the specific situations and experiences of migrant women.

The book asks critical questions about the current state of knowledge on the lives and situations of homeless women throughout Europe. There are discussions of the methodological traditions within the existing literature and the images used in discourses on homeless women. The book explores the extent to which these images and discourses reflect the reality of the lives of homeless women and how women's homelessness is 'managed' strategically by governments and by policy communities across Europe.

Comparative research at a European level allows new insights into how wider socio-political, economic and cultural contexts impact on women's homelessness. Different cultural attitudes to female roles, variations in opportunities, economic conditions, education and welfare systems all potentially influence the extent to which the experience of homelessness can be differentiated by gender. Perhaps most importantly, 'comparative analyses can make visible taken-for-granted assumptions and underlying ideologies; reveal the arbitrariness of particular categorisations and concepts; and suggest new innovative solutions' (Salway et al. 2011, p. 2).

There are also challenges associated with cross-national comparison, irrespective of the topic or 'problem' chosen for detailed analysis. In relation to homelessness specifically, European countries subscribe to different definitions and the measurement of homelessness is notoriously fraught (Busch-Geertsema 2010). Nonetheless, such empirical challenges present opportunities as well as risks. The limitations in current data also reflect broader ambivalences and/or a failure on the part of academic

and policy communities to engage with the multitude of pressing issues facing some of the most marginalized women in societies across Europe. This collection embraces this challenge and, in so doing, aims to promote critical, social and scientific cross-national perspectives on several key dimensions of women's homelessness. Throughout Europe the experiences and circumstances of women have received far less attention within homelessness research compared to those of men, and this book represents an attempt to correct that situation.

The bulk of the evidence presented in this book is based on research conducted in countries from across the EU. European research and data on women's homelessness are, however, often limited and, for this reason, the authors also draw upon knowledge and evidence from further afield, particularly from the extensive evidence bank available in the USA. Inevitably, the scope and depth of research into any given area differs between countries and this volume is no exception. The nature and extent of homelessness research also varies at a European level: some countries, such as the UK, Ireland, Denmark and France, conduct relatively high levels of homelessness research, whereas data and research from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe is more limited. While there have been recent improvements, for example, in the enumeration of homelessness in Italy, Poland and Spain, this is often at quite a basic level which means that research on specific aspects of homelessness, including women's experiences, is still emergent. Some countries, such as Germany, tend to explore homelessness and collect data at a regional or municipal level, reflecting the policy level at which homelessness is responded to, whereas the coordinated national strategies in countries like Denmark, Finland, Ireland and the UK tend to have dedicated data collection and far more extensive bodies of research evidence.

This book is separated into two parts. Part One, *Historical Legacies, Cultural Images and Welfare States*, provides the reader with a contextual framework for understanding contemporary women's homelessness across the EU. It begins with a historical analysis of the portrayal of homeless women. In Chap. 2, O'Sullivan argues that women were homeless in large numbers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but were rendered invisible as they largely utilized a range of female-only services that were usually not formally designated as services for the homeless. The chapter's

conclusion presents lessons from the past that resonate with the present, in that how we define homelessness remains contested and measuring homelessness by only counting those individuals residing in homelessness facilities results in an 'emaciated and partial understanding of homelessness' (p. 17). In Chap. 3, Hansen Löfstrand and Quilgars consider how ideas about gender and homelessness impact on homelessness policies and services, and thus the situations of homeless women across Europe. Here, the power of culturally specific definitions and images of homelessness is argued as being significant. Access to homelessness accommodation and exits out of homelessness appear to be conditional upon the perceived conduct of women in many European countries.

The final chapter of this part explores the relationships between European welfare systems and women's experiences of homelessness. Chapter 4 opens by considering how previous research has maintained that welfare systems broadly determine the nature and extent of homelessness. However, Bretherton et al. argue that this earlier research is based on limited evidence and has neglected to examine gender. The role that welfare systems play in women's homelessness is complex. For instance, welfare states can support a woman with children, effectively 'protecting' her from homelessness, but they may also remove children from homeless women and deliver highly variable supports to those lone women who are homeless. Further, welfare systems also reinforce wider patterns of cultural and political bias centred around gender.

Part Two of the book, *Issues, Challenges and Solutions*, focuses specifically on several of the most significant dimensions of women's homelessness. This part begins with a theme recurrent throughout this collection, that of enumeration. In Chap. 5, Pleace explores the argument that European systems for enumerating homelessness are undercounting homeless women. Furthermore, the chapter argues that since women sleeping rough stay out of sight for reasons of safety and are more likely to respond to homelessness by using 'sofa surfing' arrangements than approaching services, women are undercounted. Pleace concludes that widespread failures to recognize that gender differentiates the homeless experience have misrepresented homelessness as a largely 'male' phenomenon.

The book then turns to one of the most documented aspects of homelessness among women, the relationships between domestic violence and women's homelessness. Chapter 6 considers the role of domestic violence in women's homelessness in the European context, with a comparative focus on the UK, Ireland and Portugal. Mayock et al. start by discussing existing definitions of homelessness and domestic violence. They then examine the influence of these definitions on dominant conceptualizations of—and assumptions about—the relationship between homelessness and violence, highlighting the utility of intersectionality as a framework for exploring women's experiences of both domestic violence and homelessness and their relationship with broader structures of inequality. Existing research documenting a relationship between domestic violence and homelessness is reviewed and analysed. In the latter part of the chapter, barriers to women's access to domestic violence and homelessness services, as well as the disconnect between the two service sectors, are considered.

Research evidence from across the globe indicates that maintaining good health and accessing health services is a major challenge for homeless women. In Chap. 7, Wolf et al. examine this issue, arguing that it is an under-researched area that has received very little attention in Europe. This chapter presents an overview of the available international evidence on the health of homeless women and the issues that influence their access to health services in different national health and welfare systems. The chapter demonstrates that the effectiveness with which the healthcare needs of homeless women are met depends to a large degree on enabling factors such as the nature of national health services and their general accessibility. However, there remains a lack of relevant data and research on the specific barriers that homeless women may face in accessing healthcare.

Chapter 8 examines family homelessness in Europe, paying particular attention to women who are mothers and living in situations of homelessness, either with or without their children in their care. Here, van den Dries et al. highlight the diversity of family homelessness and the extent to which families headed by a single mother are represented within populations of homeless families in Europe. Routes into homelessness and the key characteristics and experiences of homeless mothers are discussed.

The focus then shifts to a discussion of the challenges associated with parenting within the context of homelessness and this is followed by an overview of service provision for mothers experiencing homelessness.

The current evidence base indicates that long-term and recurrent homelessness is experienced by a minority of homeless people who are characterized by high support needs. Until recently, long-term and recurrent homelessness has been seen as a highly gendered social problem, disproportionately experienced by men, with relatively little attention paid to women experiencing repeat or prolonged homelessness. In Chap. 9, Pleace et al. argue that there is growing evidence that women do experience long-term and recurrent homelessness, but in a different way from men. Women with high and complex support needs often use precarious arrangements or forms of hidden or concealed homelessness on a sustained and repeated basis. Furthermore, these women are experiencing the most damaging forms of homelessness and at higher rates than has been previously recognized.

Completing Part Two of the volume is a chapter that discusses one of the most pressing issues in Europe today, that of migration. In Chap. 10, Mostowska and Sheridan discuss homelessness among migrant women across Europe, arguing that, to date, very little empirical research has been dedicated to, or inclusive of, the experiences of migrant homeless women. The authors critically examine potential areas of intersection in the research literature on homelessness, migration and gender, allowing for a discussion that attempts to identify the multiple, interrelated processes and factors that propel migrant women into homelessness or housing instability. In light of the scarce evidence available on this group, the chapter also posits possible reasons for the apparent 'gender blindness' that exists across the homelessness and migration literature, in particular.

In the final chapter the key issues and themes arising from the contributions to the book are discussed. The book concludes by identifying possible directions for future research on women's homelessness in Europe.

This edited collection has been constructed in a format that allows each individual contribution to be read as a stand-alone chapter. Each chapter explores a definitive core issue at the heart of women's homelessness. This means that, where necessary, some overlap occurs between chapters but, equally, cross-referencing throughout the book should enable the reader

to move smoothly through the collection and access topics and issues that are of particular interest. The book marks a critical contribution in terms of assessing and extending the knowledge base on women's homelessness utilizing the knowledge and experience of Europe's leading researchers on the subject. We hope readers find this a useful addition to an important subject and are encouraged to build upon this work to further develop knowledge and understanding of women's homelessness.

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