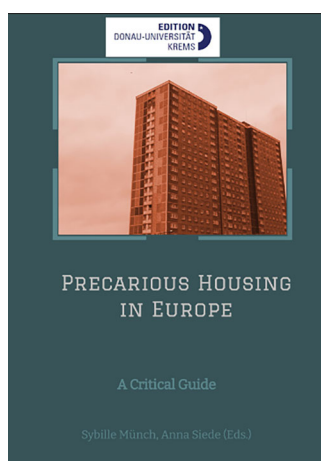


# Münch, Sybille; Siede, Anna (eds.) (2022): Precarious Housing in Europe: A Critical Guide.

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Precarious housing is being increasingly researched and debated in a wide European context, including a focus on states with a strong welfare tradition, where housing, social security, health and education have long been societal pillars (Listerborn 2023). New forms of precarious housing are emerging, such as ‘pop-up social housing’ (Harris/Nowicki/Brickell 2019), ‘property guardianship’ (Ferreri/Dawson/Vasudevan 2017) and ‘chaotic housing pathways’ (Hochstenbach/Boterman 2015), which includes different kinds of temporary housing, commonly on the sublet market. Increasing homelessness and new forms of precarious


housing appear where people with limited economic resources have less housing options. According to Bolt and Darling (2022: 14), in 2020 the estimated number of homeless people in the EU had increased by 70% in the last ten years, meaning that about 700,000 homeless people were currently sleeping rough or living in emergency or temporary accommodation across the European Union.

Housing precariousness is structured through neoliberal housing markets, labour markets, welfare regimes, family structures, racialisation and more (Pendall/Theodos/Franks 2012; Beer/Bentley/Baker et al. 2016). It is thus related to housing inequality, where some groups of society are more exposed to poor housing conditions than others. Precariousness is a social position where people are at greater risk of experiencing situations where they feel vulnerable, exposed, excluded and neglected, which may affect their health, social relations and job opportunities. The volume “Precarious Housing in Europe: A Critical Guide”, edited by Sybille Münch and Anna Siede, takes on this complex, broad and urgent issue.

Precarious housing is a global phenomenon but is expressed locally, with political, economic and social specificities. Housing markets are, on the one hand, highly path dependent and, on the other hand, part of global financial trends. The global-local nexus is illustrated in the collection of literature, data and cases presented in this book. The geographical limitation is Europe, and its scientific contribution is probably somewhat limited to this spatial context. The volume opens with the EU charter’s definition of a right to housing and how the European housing market deviates from this in regard to the number of homeless people in Europe. Precarious housing also includes people living in unsuitable, insecure, unaffordable or unsafe housing. This online, open-access critical guide is accompanied by e-modules, pod-cast series, databases and more to support teaching and communication with different stakeholders engaged

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in housing issues and is the outcome of an EU Erasmus+ Programme called “PusH – Precarious Housing in Europe” (2019 to 2022). PUSH is also the title of a documentary by Fredrik Gertten from 2019 with Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, which focuses on unaffordable housing and the role of global financialised corporate landlords, like Blackstone. Like the documentary, this guide raises the question of who cities are for.

The critical guide covers debates on the causes and symptoms of the interconnection between precarious subjects and precarious housing, and presents ideas for possible solutions with the purpose of improving overall understanding of the housing situation. This guide is meant to aid teaching, learning and self-study across disciplines in higher education. Housing precariousness is framed in contexts of labour conditions, migration and discrimination, as well as the increased marketisation of housing, which is driving insecure tenures, eviction and gentrification. In seven chapters, manifestations of underlying structures of precarious housing and related experiences by different groups are outlined with data covering the EU and the UK, illustrating differences within Europe. Initially, the discussion focuses on the concept of precarious housing and structural changes in economic and housing policies, which have led to a shortage of affordable housing in general. In the following chapter, the consequences of a lack of affordable housing, eviction and displacement processes are examined, with in-depth analysis on the role of migration. One chapter is devoted to informal housing conditions in Europe, with an emphasis on Roma communities, and one chapter focuses on homelessness and how different states respond to the emerging numbers of homeless populations. In the final chapter, a collection of policy responses and solutions are presented, covering a wide range of strategies to handle the situation of precarious housing.

One challenge the book faces is reaching the right end-users. There is a risk that it may simply ‘talk to the choir’, while it really should be read by politicians and policymakers. Teachers and students in higher education are of course an important target group, and are catered for with a helpful pedagogical approach, the Key Points and Start Thinking at the beginning of each chapter and the e-modules.

In a very beneficial way, the book presents a structural analysis of the housing market, linking this to the labour market, financialisation and migration to understand how precarious housing is formed and experienced in different parts of Europe. The edited volume is an impressive research overview of different related fields connected to housing, combined with data and concrete cases described

in embedded text boxes. It serves as a state-of-the-art compilation, but also adds new dimensions seldom presented in housing overviews in a European context. The final chapter is devoted to solutions and responses and provides hope for alternative paths. It is exemplarily concrete and extensive, including both structural and more bottom-up approaches. The editors and the partaking authors display a strong commitment to finding new and more inclusive ways to think about home and housing than we generally see today.

#### Full reference of reviewed title:

Münch, S.; Siede, A. (eds.) (2022): *Precarious Housing in Europe: A Critical Guide*. Krems. <https://doi.org/10.48341/n0qk-fd13>

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