

BOOK REVIEW ▪

Loss of Homes and Evictions Across Europe: A Comparative Legal and Policy Examination edited by Padraic Kenna, Sergio Nasarre-Aznar, Peter Sparkes, Christopher U. Schmid; Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018

Reviewed by: Nirmal Goswami, Professor, Political Science, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Texas, USA*

This work by Kenna, et. al. does an excellent job of analyzing a difficult phenomenon—evictions from homes. Eleven substantive and analytical pieces explain circumstances of home evictions in Belgium; France; Germany; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Netherlands; Poland; Slovenia; Spain, and the United Kingdom. All of the countries examined were part of the European Union at the time of the research.

The book is prefaced with explanations about how the tragic phenomenon of “eviction” is defined, described, approached, and what the general circumstances of European evictions are. Essays are strengthened by quantitative data, references to other relevant research, and substantial explanatory footnotes. Several of the pieces use tables, which are clear and easy to decipher. All essays are organized around relatively brief, multiple parts, and end with well-written “conclusion” sections. It is important to note that the book is a *snapshot*. This is because of one primary factor: the book specifically covers a five-year period between 2010-2015/16. Some caution is perhaps justified about making broad conclusions about European evictions from this research because it is not longitudinally substantive.

Further, the scope of the book’s pan-European/European Union approach may hide potential problems with the analytical framework. The countries covered differ significantly; this is especially so around factors relating to economics, demographics, and urban scale. For example, the economies and demographics of Germany, France, and the United Kingdom are markedly different from those of Slovenia, Poland, and Hungary. Further, the book primarily focuses on the affordability/scarcity of urban housing. Therefore, to compare urban housing circumstances of, for example, Germany with that of Slovenia might be misleading. In addition, because the book’s emphases are on actual evictions over a five-year period, it does not cover those who may have been homeless prior to that five-year period. How extensive might that demographic group be? In addition, rural evictions are not covered.

A major strength of the book is the excellent treatment of legalities that affect eviction procedures and the presence/absence of mandated social support services for those who have been evicted. This strength is perhaps understandable given that several of the contributors are law specialists and the book’s subtitle underlines its focus on the legal envelope that surrounds evictions. The book’s most significant strength could be the general solidity of the examination of each country’s eviction landscape. The quality of the book’s pan-European analytical approach is not necessarily its primary strength, but most definitely is its strong secondary contribution.

Overall, the book offers commendable and excellent insights into the nuances of contemporary homelessness and evictions within the European Union.

* Nirmal.Goswami@tamuk.edu