

14th European Research Conference Helsingborg, 20th September 2019

VENUE: Helsingborg Campus of the University of Lund, Sweden
Bios and Abstracts

Seminar 10: Room C217 - Homeless Policies (2)

Chair: **Nicholas Pleace, UK**



Ingrid Sahlin, SE: Moving Targets (subtitle requested)

Ingrid Sahlin is senior professor at the School of Social Work, Lund University. One of her main research interests is housing exclusion in relation to homeless policies, including social constructions of their target groups. Currently she is involved in research into local policies and practice for refugee housing in South Sweden and how these may affect local homeless policies.

Categorising homeless people and housing situations is considered necessary in science, research and national and local statistics, as well as in planning for interventions and supplying suitable accommodation. However, despite different motives and original functions, these categories tend to interact with each other and the political discourse. This paper examines and reflects on the changes of some classifications of homeless people in the Swedish context through a qualitative analysis of a survey of municipal policies and practices in the region of Skåne, located in the south of Sweden, in relation to national policies and legislation. The empirical material consists of responses to a questionnaire, policy documents and political board proceedings gathered from most of the 33 municipalities' homepages, as well as national state investigations, propositions and laws. The main question is who and what is included or excluded through varying and changing definitions and categories of homelessness and housing conditions. Such effects are not necessarily intended, but nevertheless crucial for the people involved. One example is the sharp border introduced through the municipal obligation to care for unaccompanied refugee children, as opposed to adult refugees, which sometimes means that they are evicted when they reach the age of 18. Another one is the act obliging municipalities to receive and settle certain 'newly arrived' migrants with residence permits during their 'establishment period' (supposed to last two years). After this, they risk exclusion from municipal accommodation, just like migrants who were not assigned by the Migration Board. Third, the meaning of 'own accommodation' and 'adequate housing' is clearly relative to the categorisation of the target group.

Isobel Anderson, UK: Delivering the Right to Housing? Why Scotland Still Needs an 'Ending Homelessness Action Plan'



Professor **Isobel Anderson** leads the Home, Housing and Communities research programme at the University of Stirling, where she has worked since 1994. She has personal research interests in homelessness, housing policy and inter-professional working to meet the complex needs of those who are vulnerable in the housing system. She is on the International Advisory Board of the European Journal of Homelessness.

In the early 2000s, Scotland's Homelessness Task Force developed a modernised legislative framework for homelessness which was widely regarded as world-leading in enshrining the right to housing in law. To be implemented over a ten-year period, the programme would strengthen the existing legal framework so that by the end of 2012, all homeless households would have equal priority for housing. While the key aspect of abolishing different categories of 'priority need' was largely achieved (Anderson and Serpa, 2013), early indications were that without an expanded supply of affordable housing, an unintended outcome of the strengthening of the legislation would be that some homeless households would simply spend more time in temporary accommodation (Anderson, Dyb and Finnerty, 2016). Moreover, even the modernised rights based approach to preventing and addressing homelessness in Scotland did not eradicate the most acute forms of street homelessness, often experienced by people with highly complex health and social care needs, in addition to their need for housing (Macias Balda, 2016). By 2017, the Scottish Government had constituted a new multi-agency 'Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group' to address the most pressing aspects of homelessness. This paper reviews the work of that group and the early implementation of its 2018 'Ending Homelessness



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Together' action plan. Using a policy analysis framework and drawing on the evidence base to date, the paper analyses the context in which Scotland had to embark on further homelessness policy review and assesses the potential for meaningful progress on ending homelessness over the five years from 2018-2023.



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