

## Seminar 23: Barriers to Services for the Homeless (Room: 02.13)

Chair: Kjell Larsson, SE

### **Tove Samzelius, SE: Precarity and Vulnerability among Homeless Single-Parent Families in Sweden: A Critical Perspective on Policy and Practice**



Tove Samzelius is a Senior Lecturer in social work at the University of Malmö. Her critical work on family homelessness and poverty in Sweden has received national attention and she is often invited to comment on these topics in the public arena. Prior to entering academia, Tove worked in civil society organisations in the UK and Sweden. She has many years of experience of advocacy, research, management, and the design of services for and with diverse families facing poverty and hardship.

Within the confines of the receding Swedish welfare state, family homelessness and poverty are on the rise among one-parent families, in particular those headed by a single migrant mother. This development follows a trend that is noticeable across advanced welfare states, where female-headed households are facing an increased risk of being locked into vicious circles of low-paid work, inadequate income protection schemes, and poor housing options.

Drawing on the findings from a PhD research project that traced the experiences of precariously housed single migrant mothers in greater Stockholm over time, this paper offers a critical perspective on current restrictive policies and practices that seek to impose “discipline” on mothers in poverty. It suggests that the intersection of weak safety net programmes for homeless families and disciplining measures imposed through the social assistance scheme, risk exacerbating precarity and vulnerability rather than offer support or solutions. As a result, it is argued that there is an urgent need to reassess and re-imagine social work practice with vulnerable and precariously housed families in Sweden from both an ethical and political perspective.

### **Laure-lise Robben, Rik Peeters, Arjan Widlak, & Koen Hermans, BE/NL: Burdens on the Gateway to the State: The Construction of Administrative Burdens in the Registration of People Experiencing Homelessness in Belgium and the Netherlands**



Laure-lise Robben is a Phd student, researching homelessness trajectories and non-take-up of social rights (TRAHOME-project) at LUCAS, KU Leuven, Belgium.

Koen Hermans is an Associate Professor Social Work at the Centre for Sociological Research of the University of Leuven, and project leader at LUCAS, Centre for Care Research & Consultancy, in Belgium. Rik Peeters is Professor of public administration at the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) in Mexico City. Arjan Widlak is director and researcher at the Kafkabriga Foundation in the Netherlands.

Population registries are the gateway to the state. Being recognised as a resident or citizen is often a precondition for access to public services, benefits, and rights. Despite clear formal rules and procedures, people eligible for registration may still face administrative burdens in obtaining access. In this article, we study the case of the municipal registration of people who experience homelessness in Belgium and the Netherlands – a group that typically suffers from administrative vulnerability. Using data from 61 interviews with social workers and civil servants, we find that burdens are constructed at the municipal level to inhibit homeless people’s access to registration. Conflicting goals and ambiguity in the governance of registration systems and costly local welfare services push municipal policy makers and street-level bureaucrats towards strategic behaviour. By analysing these discretionary administrative practices as an institutional problem we contribute to a broader understanding of the construction of administrative burdens.