

## 19<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, FRIDAY

11h30 – 12h50

**SEMINAR SESSION 3 - Participants will be asked to select one of these 6 parallel seminars**

### **Seminar 18: Criminalisation of Homelessness (Room: X) - Chair: Freek Spinnewijn, BE**

#### **Merete Kempainen, FI: Pursuing the Right to the City: Case Study Folkets Park - Impact Assessment**

This paper focuses on the impact of the redevelopment of Folkets Park in Copenhagen, examining how public spaces with strategies for accessibility affect public opinion and attitudes towards people experiencing homelessness. The research explores the relationship between the built environment, inclusive design, co-existence, and social sustainability. Folkets Park was chosen as the case study due to its redesign efforts aimed at improving safety and inclusivity. The renovation process, which began after a violent crime took place in the park in 2012, aimed to make the space more welcoming and safer for all users, including marginalized groups like the people experiencing homelessness. This study delves into how the park's redesign influenced the interactions between park users and the broader community, particularly in terms of fostering coexistence and addressing social exclusion. The study was conducted using ethnographic methods, including interviews and surveys, to gather qualitative data on the experiences and attitudes of park users. Observations were also made through various tools, such as stationary activity mapping, to understand better how people use the space and interact with each other. The combination of these methods provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in Folkets Park and sheds light on the role of public space in promoting social sustainability. While safety and perceived inclusivity were key factors in the park's redesign, the study highlights the complexities of creating spaces that truly foster social integration. Through a closer examination of the park's social life and its impact on both regular visitors and homeless individuals, the research contributes to the broader discourse on homelessness and public space in urban settings.

*Merete Kempainen is an architect specializing in urban planning, a doctoral researcher at Aalto University, and a project worker and researcher in the VALUE project. Her research focuses on the built environment's impact on social sustainability, particularly examining power dynamics in public spaces from the perspective of marginalized communities. Kempainen aims to protect and develop sustainable, resilient, and democratic urban environments.*

#### **Jan Weckwerth, DE: Disentangling Urban Strategies to Dispel, Remove and Repress People Experiencing Homelessness in the Context of Commodification and Re-Regulation of Public Space**

Hegemonic neoliberalism has been widely acknowledged as a major driver of the housing crisis in Europe. The deregulation and commodification of the housing market, alongside the withdrawal of the state as a housing provider, have led to a substantial shortage of affordable housing. However, neoliberalism manifests not only in a retreat of state institutions, but also in an intensified regulatory grip on individuals who do not conform to market rationalities. This is particularly evident in the restructuring of urban public spaces: For decades, inner-city areas have been increasingly designed to maintain a 'clean' and 'undisturbed' environment for middle-class consumption and entertainment. This process disproportionately affects social groups who rely on public space beyond consumption – especially people experiencing street homelessness, for whom, in a "coincidence of places" (Tosi 2007), the most lucrative locations are precisely those where they are most perceived as disruptions. The study focuses on the effects of recent macro-level developments in urban policy and urban planning for rough sleepers. In addition to coercive measures driven by the blurring of illegal and undesirable behavior, more nuanced displacement mechanisms have emerged through the (re)design of public space. That includes, for example, the increasing disconnection from informal access to urban infrastructures. Additionally, the controversially debated hostile architecture is now becoming more intertwined with (seemingly individual) creative urban revitalization strategies. In reference to Wehrheim's (2002) notion of "exclusion through aestheticization", this phenomenon can be described as the aestheticization of exclusion. The presentation seeks to theoretically connect the commodification and social control of urban public space under neoliberal conditions with their dire consequences for the everyday lives of people experiencing homelessness (and other marginalized groups). It offers a typology of – more or less coercive – measures, illustrated with photographs and interview excerpts from a research project on homelessness in German cities.



**Jan Weckwerth** is a postdoctoral scholar at the Georg-August-University Göttingen, Germany. He received his Ph.D. from the Alpen-Adria-University of Klagenfurt, Austria. His research interests include social inequality, in particular class and lifestyle analyses, as well as urban sociology, housing and homelessness, the sociology of professions, and the sociology of culture and film.