Housing Poverty and Income Poverty in England and the Netherlands

Public Lecture by:
Prof. Mark Stephens
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March 15, 2012 (Thursday) 6:30 - 7:30 pm
Room 820, 8/F, Knowles Building, HKU

Mark Stephens is a Professor in Urban Economics at the University of Glasgow, and will be taking up a post in the Institute of Housing, Urban and Real Estate Research at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, in May. He is a member of the Co-ordination Committee of the European Network for Housing Research and a co-ordinator of its Working Group on Comparative Housing Policy. He led the European Union’s Study on Housing Exclusion (2010) and was Academic Adviser to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s Housing Market Taskforce (2011). He was Lead Panel Member of the UK Government’s Expert Panel on Housing and Surveys Analysis, and has been a consultant for OECD, UN-Habitat and UN-ECE. He was founding editor of the European (now International) Journal of Housing Policy and is an Editor of Urban Studies. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2007 and an Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences in 2011.

Professor Mark Stephens examines whether the distributional consequences of contrasting welfare systems are enhanced, replicated or countered by housing systems in England and the Netherlands. We adopt the monetised concepts of ‘net housing income’ and ‘net housing resources’, which are commensurable with disposable income and income-based measures of poverty. We find that both housing systems exert a poverty-reducing impact compared to disposable income alone. The absolute reduction is greatest in England suggesting that its housing system counters the high levels of income poverty produced by the welfare system, although the comparative levels of poverty between the two countries remain unchanged suggesting that the distribution of disposable income is replicated in housing. However, our synthetic concept of ‘housing poverty’ reveals that the poverty-reducing impact of housing income/resources arises because by themselves they are distributed far less equally than is disposable income so creating a much higher rate of ‘housing poverty’. Crucially, ‘housing poverty’ occurs predominantly among those who are not income poor. This allows welfare and housing systems to combine to reduce poverty in an act of progressive dissonance, suggesting a hitherto unexpectedly high degree of independence between the two.

ALL ARE WELCOME!