

Well-being and Capabilities; evaluating housing policies and programs

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2 main approaches

1. Economic

- cba and now utility and well-being

2. Political

- Through the lens of political philosophy
- Social justice, rights, liberty etc

3. Fusion?

- Well-being and capabilities

Well-being work

- Paper in 2010 on application of concept to housing policy (Policy and Politics)
- Work on homelessness with Julie Christian employing and measuring the concept (2011, 2012)
- Work with Chris Foye on application to tenure and house moves eg Urban Studies paper 2017
- State of the art paper 2017 (HTS)
- Conclusion: useful concept but needs supplementation

Problems with well-being

- Trade-offs ie distributional impacts
- Status differences (how can they be judged? Inequality?)
- Adaptation (importance of context and settling for what one has)

- Therefore, importance of moral and political judgements
- Integration with capabilities approach

Capabilities approach

- the effective opportunities that people have to lead the lives they have reason to value – their capabilities
- Emphasis on effective functionings of the individual
- Affordances – what does a house afford an individual
- Equality defined in terms of capabilities or affordances, therefore positive discrimination
- But which affordances?
- Nussbaum (basic universal capabilities) limited?
- Sen (discursive process to define priorities)

Well-being in the Capabilities Approach

- Problem with Sen's approach is that;
 - lack of information on what capabilities people value
 - difficult to rank or weight different capabilities - when capabilities conflict (e.g. right to bigger house vs right to green space) or when we need to decide which capabilities to prioritise, then we need a way of ranking or weighting different capabilities.
- Subjective well-being evidence can be used as a secondary 'information space' to specify and weight capabilities (Binder, 2014)

3 Uses of Sen's capabilities approach in housing

- Individual housing organisation
- A particular housing consumption 'group' eg disability
- National housing policy

Individual housing organisation

- Discursive process with tenants and stakeholders
- Research on what makes people happy (and their tenants)
- Define priorities and important capabilities
- Evaluate their policies and programs on this basis

Housing consumer group

- Capabilities (affordances) for people with particular vulnerabilities
- Example of people with health problems
- Process of identification of key capabilities through discussion
- Research on impacts on well-being
- Values of justice and equality in this context

National Policy

- Discursive process?
- Housing regimes give political and normative framework for evaluating policies.
- Example, what capabilities would a social democratic regime encapsulate and be evaluated by.

Conclusion

- Well-being useful – particularly in its focus on the housing consumer
- Identifies some key elements of housing
- But problems of utilitarian tradition of lack of political/moral dimension
- Capabilities – vague but can make up for the drawbacks of well-being
- More work needed on spelling out the approach in housing