



Cohabitation and Family Complexity

Elizabeth Thomson

WZB Distinguished Lecture in Social Sciences

Wednesday, October, 28, 2015, 5 p.m.

Room A 300

Invitation

Introduction: **Anette Fasang**

Every affluent country has experienced substantial changes in partnership behavior – delayed and foregone marriage, increased cohabitation, increased divorce and separation, and the formation of new partnerships. Because shifts in partnership behavior often occur in the context of parenthood, they produce increasingly complex families and households where biological ties, coresidence, and legal rights and obligations do not necessarily coincide. This lecture examines the role of cohabitation itself in the formation of complex families.

Elizabeth Thomson raises the question of whether the relative ease of entry into or exit from a cohabiting partnership (in comparison to marriage) has generated a higher level of partnership turnover than would be the case if marriage were the only alternative. A particular focus is on partnership turnover among parents, the process that generates complex families and households. The analysis traces pathways to family complexity in Norway and Sweden where cohabitation has long been the norm for union entry and where first births occur more often in cohabitation than in marriage. As data permit, comparisons are made with other countries where cohabitation has not yet attained such normative status. The lecture concludes by identifying challenges presented by cohabitation and family complexity for the individuals experiencing them and for the societies in which they live.

Elizabeth Thomson is Professor Emerita of Demography, Stockholm University, and Professor of Sociology Emerita, University of Wisconsin-Madison. She directs the Linnaeus Center for Social Policy and Family Dynamics in Europe. She has conducted for example research on couple childbearing decisions, family structure and child well-being. Current projects include the relationship between education and the family life course in Europe, family structure and child well-being in Sweden, and the implications of union instability for fertility.

Anette Fasang is Professor of Microsociology at Humboldt University Berlin and Head of the WZB Project Group Demography and Inequality.

Discussant

Irene Böckmann, Research Fellow of the Research Unit Inequality and Social Policy at WZB.

To register, please reply by October 26, 2015 to: veranstaltungen@wzb.eu

The WZB provides child care during the lecture. If you are interested, please respond by October 15, 2015, indicating the number of children and their age to: veranstaltungen@wzb.eu

Berlin WZB Social Science Center
Reichpietschufer 50
D-10785 Berlin
Phone +49 (30) 25491-0
Fax +49 (30) 25491684