Rethinking values for housing governance

What are the values underlying housing governance? Values under housing policy change across time and place. In the 1950s modernisation was the key word, housing was targeted at the modern man and his family. Le Corbusier was a key person here and housing policy reflected his way of thinking: this resulted in slum clearing and modern building, high rise building targeted at the modern man/family. In the period after that (structuralism) the needs of real people came into the picture. In developing countries informal solutions were more and more recognised and even accommodated by key institutions such as the Worldbank. In North Western Europe housing became part of welfare states, in the literature often called the wobbly pillar under the welfare state. After all, housing is traditionally mainly provided by the market, and social housing and housing subsidies are alternative ways of provision that encourage adequate housing in liveable neighbourhoods.

Since the 1990s neoliberalism is all around the globe and also had huge impact on housing policies. Key in this thinking is that people are rational and competition is efficient. Making housing work was replaced by making markets work. Making markets work, means reconsidering housing arrangements that disturb markets. The policy towards informal housing is: demolish or formalise. The policy towards housing welfare arrangements is welfare economic thinking: the market is leading and social housing is about compensating for market failures. None of the mentioned approaches has succeeded in solving housing problems. This leads to the question what is next in housing policy/governance? How does housing relate to urban development, welfare and a CO_2 neutral society?

Projects concerning new concepts/values underlying housing governance and their impact in practice are very welcome. Candidates with for example a background in housing, urbanism, planning or policy sciences are welcome. Please contact prof. Marja Elsinga (m.g.elsinga@tudelft.nl) for more information.