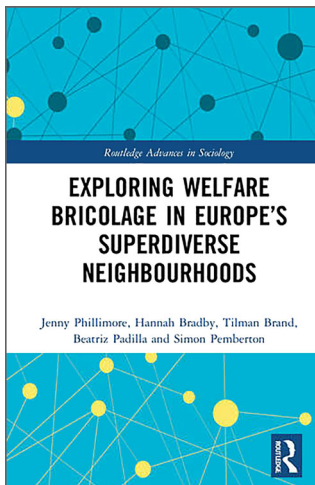


# Phillimore, Jenny; Bradby, Hannah; Brand, Tilman; Padilla, Beatriz; Pemberton, Simon (2021): Exploring Welfare Bricolage in Europe's Superdiverse Neighbourhoods

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Diversity in our societies, in cities and especially in specific neighbourhoods is accelerating with the overlapping and multiplication of old and new migration fluxes, with diverging demographic developments, processes of individualisation, new identities and community formations. But welfare systems, created for a population conceived as homogenous, lack accessibility, amplify inequalities and are

considered largely inadequate to meet the needs of a superdiverse society. The book “Exploring Welfare Bricolage in Europe's Superdiverse Neighbourhoods” aims to contribute to a better understanding of current welfare provision in the context of superdiversity. Therefore, it develops a conceptual framework of “bricolage” to explore welfare and, more particularly, health services through users, their practices and the experiences that link different actors within and across welfare ecosystems. The research behind the book follows a comparative, place-based and mixed-methods approach, analysing bricolage configurations in eight superdiverse European neighbourhoods.

The book contributes mainly to two strands of research. On the one hand, the authors position their research within the study of welfare provision and welfare systems. They base their research on the study of welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990) and – as an emerging field – the local expressions of the same. But they also criticise the neglect of race, ethnicity and other social categories. Hence, the internationalist and intersectionalist approach of Critical Social Policy as conceptualized by Williams (1989) serves as an appropriate framework for them to analyse welfare provision in the context of superdiversity. The latter can be considered a second strand of research upon which the book builds. Superdiversity refers to the increased and unprecedented speed, scale and spread of diversity (Meissner/Vertovec 2015) that is characteristic of many socio-spatial settings worldwide. The “era of superdiversity” (p. 87), as the authors call it, can be seen as a context for the transformation and challenges of current welfare provision. But its complexity and multiplicity also require a new approach in researching welfare services. The authors build on contributions from urban and migration studies and follow a neighbourhood approach (cf. Wessendorf 2014), taking into ac-

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count the overall local population, local service provision and spatial aspects.

The concept of “welfare bricolage” aims to bring welfare and superdiversity as two strands of research together. Based on more ontological conceptions of “bricolage” by Levi-Strauss (1962) and Derrida (1967), the authors appropriate the term to grasp “how welfare services are put together” (p. 60). By taking the superdiverse neighbourhood and its residents as a starting point, the concept seeks to analyse “what people actually do when trying to access welfare” (p. 2). Residents and providers become “bricoleurs” of welfare, connecting and mobilizing resources within and across welfare ecosystems. This includes the “mixed economy of welfare” with public, private and third sector actors concerned with health, but it also goes beyond the “silo” of health. It crosses national and physical boundaries by including transnational and virtual health resources. The research follows a comparative and place-based approach by analysing bricolage configurations in eight superdiverse neighbourhoods located in Bremen (Germany), Birmingham (United Kingdom), Uppsala (Sweden) and Porto (Portugal). The neighbourhoods are located within four distinct welfare (and differing immigration) regimes. The study follows a mixed-methods design including ethnography, interviews and community research as well as a household survey. The authors categorise different bricolage types and identify key factors influencing bricolage practices. Besides, they describe how providers adapt to a superdiversifying population by becoming bricoleurs themselves, which shows their discretionary power – in enabling and disabling communication, treatment and wellbeing. The authors argue that the “politics of bricolage” can only be understood against the backdrop of austerity and restructuring as well as (legal) stratification, racism and (other) ongoing social and health injustices. But only by turning to its users, can one move forward to a “radically responsive healthcare system” (p. 57) – as would be necessary to serve a society undergoing superdiversification.

The book offers a comprehensive overview of how welfare and superdiversity (do not) meet. The neighbourhood approach chosen for the study makes visible a variety of categories “that matter”, such as migration status and ethnicity but also gender and age, and sheds light on their intersec-

tions. This spatial perspective might also offer new stimuli for spatial and urban research. By combining ethnographic observations and interview extracts with statistical surveys, it offers a varied insight into peoples’ practices – and problems – in seeking healthcare as well as various strategies that healthcare providers follow and invent to respond to diversifying populations. The book also tries to give some directions for future policy action. However, against the background of all the structural injustices – created and emphasised through welfare and immigration regimes – it seems a little too well-behaved to finish the book by recommending capacity building for providers. Lastly, it is always risky to introduce a new concept to explain and operationalize a paradigm shift – in this case towards (superdiversifying) users within welfare studies. The origin and ontological foundations of “bricolage” are only briefly introduced in this book and similar approaches within the study of (urban) assemblages and (social) infrastructures are not discussed. But despite these points, the concept of “welfare bricolage” inspires us to rethink (local) welfare provision through the lens of its users and their practices – also beyond the area of health.

#### Full reference of reviewed title:

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