



Luleå, Sweden,  
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# Anchoring Forward the Grand Challenge of Eradicating Homelessness

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## Abstract:

The keynote presents an activity-theoretical analysis of the homelessness strategy developed and implemented in Finland since 2008. A perspective is outlined aimed at broadening the horizon of current understandings of learning and agency needed in the pursuit of social innovations to face this grand challenge of our time. Grand challenges are wicked problems that require travelling across typical divides between sectors. There is growing concern globally about the novel facets of homelessness linked to a chronic lack of affordable housing in many affluent cities. The Finnish strategy is a multi-actor social innovation of the kind crucially needed to foster equity in our societies. The analysis explains the way in which this innovation came into being and has to a great extent managed to overcome short-sided sectoral divides related to the housing industry and housing services, toward integrated modes of work within heterogeneous coalitions of actors and organizations.

The learning and agency which made this innovation and its pursuit possible are characterized as a dynamic anchoring process similar to the navigation procedure called "warping." This is a special mode of anchoring consisting in throwing the anchor and, once it has settled on the ground, pulling it for moving the vessel toward the desired direction. The development of the Finnish homeless strategy is similar as a process of step-by-step material grounding accomplished with the help of agreements and enabling actions which gained momentum over a decade and allowed movement out of the imprisoning and paralyzing confines of individual sectors. Eventually these agreements activated knowledge and actions transcending sector-specific modes of work toward novel but at the same time grounded perspectives.

## Bio

**Annalisa Sannino** is Professor in the Faculty of Education at University of Tampere, Finland. She holds visiting professorships at Rhodes University, South Africa and at **University West, Trollhättan, Sweden**. In her current work she aims at reconstructing processes of learning and agency over the ten-year national strategy to eradicate homelessness in Finland. Her work focuses also on the critical role scholarship on learning and organizing can play to support transformative agency for equity and sustainability. Her research toolkit combines resources from cultural-historical activity theory, pragmatic analyses of discourse and the methodology of formative interventions.



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She completed her PhD in Psychology in 2000 at the University of Nancy, France and worked as post-doctoral Fulbright scholar in the Department of Communication at the University of California San Diego in 2002-2003. From 2001 to 2008 she held a full-time researcher position in the Department of Education at the University of Salerno, Italy. From 2008 to 2017 she worked at the Center for Research on Activity, Development and Learning (CRADLE) at University of Helsinki, Finland.

Beside the authoring of a number of journal articles, she has served as the leading editor of several special issues and edited volumes.