

Temptations and traps of recognition

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Abstract

The notion of “social recognition” [anerkendelse] plays a central role in war veterans’ expressions of dissatisfaction and their claims for more attention and support, as well as in various stakeholders’ labelling and legitimization of initiatives targeting veterans and their families. The fact that “social recognition” has emerged as a dominant term does not imply, however, that there is consensus about its meaning, nor that its manifestation in different practices is experienced and interpreted in the same way by everyone. Moreover, since “social recognition” is seen as inherently positive, there is little critical reflection on the ramifications of its use for veterans, and for the relationship between veterans and the surrounding society. In my presentation, I give a brief introduction to “social recognition” as a theoretical concept, before sharing some reflections on what we can learn from Danish attempts to grant war veterans social recognition.