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## Editorial

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The *European Journal of Homelessness* seeks to stimulate debate on homelessness and housing exclusion at European level and to facilitate the development of a stronger evidential base for policy development and innovation. The first volume of this journal dealt with quality and standards in homeless services and housing for marginal groups, with the second volume focusing on the effectiveness of homeless policies and services. When reflecting on the issues covered in the first two volumes, it was evident that a concept discussed and debated, albeit not always explicitly so, in the papers was that of governance. It was also clear that the delivery of services and the frameworks deployed to enhance both quality and effectiveness required a greater discussion in terms of the instruments and agencies involved. Thus, the third edition of the journal is devoted to the theme of governance and homelessness.

The term 'governance' generally refers to emerging methods of governing where the boundaries between and within the public, private and not-for profit sectors have blurred, and discussions often highlight the importance of multi-level government structures such as the European Union for the spread of new modes of governance. 'Governance' is routinely used to describe a range of phenomena and, as a consequence, authors can be somewhat promiscuous in their use of the word. In the area of homelessness, a number of recent articles utilise 'governance' in distinct ways. For example, Arapoglou (2004a and 2004b) employs a critical discourse analysis to understand the construction of homelessness in Greece and therefore the range of possible policy responses. In this case 'governance' is almost synonymous with the 'management of the homeless'. Phelan and Norris (2008), however, refer to 'governance' as a shift from one form of governing homelessness (a fragmented voluntary sector providing disparate services) to incorporation into the neoliberal corporatist homeless agency. These examples highlight the movable nature of the term and its widespread usage. Indeed, some commentators contend that its conceptual vagueness is the secret of its success.

It is often asserted that new forms of governance are emerging in response to the crisis of the welfare state in Europe, with centralised, hierarchical command structures being replaced by more deliberative horizontal modes of policy formulation and service delivery. New modes of deliberative policy making may be evolving, but not necessarily in relation to the alleged crisis in welfare states. It is a reasonably robust finding in the comparative welfare regime literature that rather than

'racing to the bottom' with declining social expenditures, most EU member states increased spending over the past two decades and that 'rather than following the neo-liberal path towards an Americanization of the welfare state, countries in general appear to have increased their distance from the US on a number of central dimensions' (Starke et al., 2008, p.996). 'Governance' is associated with change (Rhodes, 1997; Daly, 2003) and novelty, such as a change in the meaning of government or a new process of governing, a changed condition of ordered rule or the new method by which society is governed, but the drivers of this change are multifarious rather than driven solely by a neoliberal agenda.

Interpretations and definitions of 'governance' abound in the social science literature. Rhodes (1997) offers six interpretations, van Kersbergen and van Waarden (2004) nine, but in the interests of economy, the four interpretations outlined by Klijn (2008, pp.507–508) are highlighted here:

1. Governance as *good governance* or as corporate governance. In this view, governance refers to the principles of a properly functioning public administration. Such an administration is characterized by the fair treatment of citizens and an unambiguous organization that adheres to the basic principles of the rule of law. The emphasis here is on the operation of government, rather than the manner in which it is organized.<sup>1</sup>
2. Governance as *new public management*, as improving performance and accountability or as market governance. Based on this definition, the role of governments should be to steer rather than to row. The focus of government should be to set goals, and not on the implementation process. Policy implementation is best left to other organizations or separate public agencies, which can be held accountable through the use of clear performance indicators and other market mechanisms.
3. Governance as *multilevel governance* or inter-governmental relations. This literature stresses that networks are needed to address all aspects of the problems encountered because these problems tend to cross the boundaries of public organizations and their hierarchical levels. This literature focuses on specific types of networks in which public actors from various levels have prominent positions.
4. Governance as *network governance* (self-steering or non-self-steering). Governance takes place within networks of public and non-public actors, and the interaction between these groups makes processes complex and difficult to manage. Consequently, different steering and management strategies are

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<sup>1</sup> 'Good governance' in the EU context can be found in the European Commission's White Paper on European Governance (2001).

required compared to more classical approaches. The focus here is on the complex interaction process and negotiation in a network of governmental organizations and other organizations, both private and not-for-profit.

While definitional clarity is a prerequisite for social scientific research, we did not attempt to limit the contributors to the journal to one particular strand of the governance debate. Rather, we empathised with the approach taken by Bevir (2009, p.29), who argues that rather than seeking a singular feature ‘we would do well to look instead for a series of family resemblances between its various uses’. Thus, the papers in this volume utilise the concept of governance in an eclectic and flexible manner and the editorial team encouraged the contributors to reflect on the concept in light of the subject under discussion. Nonetheless, the majority of the contributions employ the concept within the framework outlined by Klijn.

The journal is divided into four sections. The first comprises six peer-reviewed articles dealing with comparative dimensions of homelessness and governance in Europe. Four shorter policy evaluation pieces make up section two and provide country-specific case studies. In the third section, six think pieces cover topics ranging from user participation in homeless services as good governance to the governance of public policy at EU level in relation to the Open Method of Co-ordination and homelessness. The fourth and final section contains reviews of several recent books and reports.

## Peer-Reviewed Articles

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Benjaminsen, Dyb and O’Sullivan explore the governance of homelessness at the macro level by describing and comparing experiences from two distinct welfare regimes – liberal and social democratic – in devising and implementing strategic plans to reduce homelessness. A number of European countries have recently adopted national strategies to reduce homelessness and the paper discusses the degree to which convergence or divergence in approaches can be observed. In particular, it examines how the general context of national housing and other social policies influence homeless policies (e.g. how structural conditions and goals and means set out in national policies interact). Their analysis suggests that policy interventions in relation to defining and specifying those deemed to be homeless cannot be read in a linear fashion from welfare regime type. This may in part reflect the marginality or ‘awkwardness’ of homelessness within the conventional measures used to ascertain welfare regimes. It may also indicate that cultural attitudes to homelessness, in particular certain perceptions of homeless people, may be reflected in public policies and strategies.

Baptista takes us into the heart of the policy-making process by providing an insider's perspective on the drafting of the first Portuguese homeless strategy, focusing on the interplay between the emergence and operation of specific governance arrangements and the potential for new policy-making mechanisms in the homelessness arena. Rather than presenting a detailed description of the contents of the strategy, the paper focuses on the processes underpinning its drafting: identification of probable key-drivers, the emergence of the initiative, the main actors involved and their respective roles, the actual dynamics of the collaborative process and the challenges faced. Portugal's first homeless strategy represents a breakthrough in the Southern European approach to tackling homelessness and Baptista argues that the insight into governance issues and policy change gained through the drafting of this strategy, along with other lessons learned, can provide an opportunity for other countries to reflect on and analyse their processes of framing and implementing new policy instruments.

Loison-Leruste and Quilgars provide a comparative account of the only two European jurisdictions – England (and the rest of the UK) and France – that have introduced a right to housing that is enforceable through the courts. Their paper investigates whether such a right to housing increases homeless people's access to appropriate accommodation and outlines the difficulties in accessing social housing in both countries before describing how a right to housing is operated within this context. The differing, but in both cases complex, governance arrangements for implementing this right to housing are reviewed. They conclude that a right to housing does have the potential to ensure that the accommodation needs of the most marginalised households receive greater priority. However, implementation challenges, including take-up issues, fragmented governance arrangements, competing social goals such as social diversity, and an overall lack of housing may significantly restrict the impact of this right to housing.

Filipovič Hrast, Somogyi and Teller provide an insight into the governance of homeless services provision in two post-socialist countries – Hungary and Slovenia – focusing especially on the emerging roles of NGOs in service delivery. They note that with the advent of multi-tier governance in Hungary, an abundance of stakeholders have emerged within the homeless sector, while state-level regulation, financing and programming have been slower to catch up and adjust to the new service delivery structures. The Slovenian case reveals quite a different picture, with a more modest role being played by NGOs in this sector. The paper concludes that formerly similar Central and Eastern European countries have diverged in their development of homelessness provision, and that this development is closely linked to how decentralisation has occurred, how NGOs are represented in service provision and the size of these countries and their homeless populations.

Benjaminsen and Busch-Geertsema compare the dilemmas and consequences that labour market reforms (including social benefit system reforms and activation policies) may have on homelessness and those at risk of homelessness in Denmark and Germany. They argue that recent reforms have involved changes and reductions in social benefits which negatively affect the ability of socially marginal groups to find affordable housing and may thus increase the risk of homelessness. They note that homelessness in these countries mainly arises as a consequence of extreme marginalisation and severe vulnerabilities and disabilities rather than from a general housing problem, although barriers to accessing the housing market can impact heavily on the exclusion of marginalised groups from regular housing. Though homeless people are to a large extent excluded from the labour market, they are highly susceptible to changes in labour market policies due to their general dependence on public transfer benefits and the conditions placed on receiving them. Increased emphasis on workfare elements and reforms of social benefit systems run the risk of increasing social exclusion for those individuals with the weakest chances on the labour market.

Finally, in a novel and persuasive manner, Bosch Meda argues that urban planning can play a very important role in preventing and solving the problem of homelessness. Appropriate urban renewal and regeneration plans are, the paper suggests, crucial to guarantee decent housing for all, to plan the range of services needed for the homeless and, above all, to integrate housing and urban policies by means of inclusionary zoning rather than exclusionary strategies. Bosch Meda concludes that improving the urban social mix can facilitate inclusionary housing with considerable potential in the current social, political and economic context in Europe.

## Policy Evaluation

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The first paper in this section builds on the journal's previous reviews of national homeless strategies in Scotland (vol. 1) and Ireland (vol. 2). On 21 May 2007 the Finnish Ministry of the Environment established an expert group to draft an action programme to reduce long-term homelessness. Early in 2008 a government decision was taken to reduce long-term homelessness by developing more effective preventive measures with the objective of halving long-term homelessness by 2011. Tainio and Fredriksson provide an account of the processes that led to the realisation of this ambitious target and the policy lessons from this for other jurisdictions.

Wygnańska presents an overview of processes that have recently been taking place to establish a national homeless strategy in Poland. Although the Department of Social Welfare and Integration officially initiated the process of drafting a national strategy on homelessness in mid-2008, the process was subsequently suspended

as it had not followed legal procedures for establishing long-term governmental programmes. Wygnańska offers a rich account of the policy-making environment in Poland and the complexity of putting homelessness centre stage.

De Decker provides an analysis of social rental agencies in Belgium. These non-profit organisations rent dwellings on the private rental market that they then sublet to poor households, often formerly homeless. First established by labour migrants at the end of the 1970s as a response to discrimination, the housing crisis of the 1980s encouraged a further expansion when welfare services working with homeless people took the initiative to avoid the repeated return of former homeless persons to the services when they could not find regular housing. In terms of new modes of governance, De Decker concludes that 'government definitely rules over governance' suggesting that 'new' policies very often become locked in past policies and the institutional structures set up to implement them.

The final paper in this section presents findings from the evaluation of three English pilot programmes designed to support people living with complex health and social needs who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Cameron outlines how the programmes were established to demonstrate the policy links between housing support services and health and social care services by encouraging the development of joined-up services. However, the process of working across organisational boundaries is rarely as straightforward as policy implies and poses considerable challenges in relation to the governance of homeless services. These challenges include ensuring the accountability of joined-up services, creating appropriate mechanisms for involving people who use services in governance arrangements and developing systems to monitor the impact of joined-up services.

## Think Pieces

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Volumes 1 and 2 of this journal included articles on the policing of homelessness and we maintain this focus here with a comparative account of the governance of 'skid row' areas in Edinburgh and San Francisco. Huey argues that each of the sites studied embodies different elements of exclusion, inclusion and coercive inclusion. Her work reveals that there has been no singular uniform move towards increased exclusivity as a consequence of a rise of US-style neoliberalism. This thesis chimes with Flint's exploration of specific governance mechanisms being used in the UK and their relationship to mechanisms of eviction and homelessness status. He argues that family intervention projects and housing benefit sanctions should be seen as rationales and techniques of governance comprising a complex combination of conditionality, coercion and support. As a consequence, they require a more nuanced debate about inclusionary and exclusionary trends in citizenship and the

state regulation of marginal households, which focuses on the microphysics of power and accounts for the agency of governed subjects.

Inclusionary trends are the subject of Anker's paper, which outlines the emergence in Denmark in 2001 of a national organisation of homeless people (SAND). This organisation has gained a formal platform of participation and has been recognised by the state as a serious organisation with legitimacy to participate and to seek to influence local and national policies on homelessness. Moreover, SAND provides homeless people in hostels with an opportunity to raise demands and concerns directly to the social workers. The case also pinpoints some of the ongoing challenges of this form of organisation. Lack of stability and continuity among the participants challenges the democratic ambitions of forming a truly representative organisation. Anker argues that the structural weaknesses of user organisations of homeless people (limited resources and temporarity) means that they need support from external actors (state or others). Reflecting on SAND and drawing on his experience working in the NGO sector at national and EU levels, Allen provides a sceptical, but nonetheless sympathetic, overview of user participation and organisational governance. He argues that since most people who become homeless escape from it after a short time, the resultant organisations may not in fact be representative of people who are experiencing homelessness and may lead to the advocacy of responses that do not reflect the full range of experiences.

Turning to the supranational level, Spinnewijn provides a critique of the Open Method of Coordination as a policy tool for effective interventions in the area of homelessness and housing exclusion. Seeking to provoke debate, he offers some suggestions on how to develop the Inclusion OMC further to exploit fully its potential impact on the fight against homelessness. In a response to Spinnewijn's paper, Frazer argues that a stronger overall Social OMC would be more effective and certainly better for the long-term struggle to combat poverty and social exclusion in the EU.

## Conclusion

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Our thanks go to all the contributors for ensuring that Volume 3 of the *European Journal of Homelessness* maintains the high standards set in the first two volumes. Collectively, the papers provide an important basis for reflection and debate on the complex issues of governance and homelessness at the macro, meso and micro levels. The diverse and stimulating application and interpretation of the concept of governance across a range of countries and domains of homelessness will hopefully allow different audiences, including policy makers, academics and practitioners, to utilise these papers to enhance practice and policy.

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