Housing Studies Special Issue

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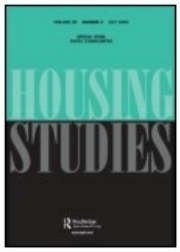

Professor David Mullins, who leads TSRC's housing research, has guest edited a special issue of Housing Studies on the theme of 'social enterprise and hybridity in housing organisations'.

This work has been co-ordinated through a Working Group of the European Network of Housing Research, with colleagues Gerard van Bortel and Darinka Czischke (Delft University of Technology).

The seven papers in the special issue include contributions from Korea, Australia, US, Netherlands and UK, including articles from TSRC researcher Simon Teasdale and Halima Sacranie, a recent PhD student with TSRC at the University of Birmingham.

This special issue was published in June 2012 and papers are **now available online (http://www.tandfonline.com/action/showAxaArticles?journalCode=chos20)**. Housing Studies is the highest ranking academic journal in the housing field.

Contributions from TSRC at the University of Birmingham include:

Exploring the meaning of social enterprise and hybridity in housing organisations

David Mullins, Darinka Czischke and Gerrard van Bortel

This editorial article explores the meaning of hybridity and social enterprise in housing organisations and introduces research evidence from four continents. They observe that: by focusing on dynamic processes of hybridisation rather than static descriptions of hybridity; by setting these processes in a broader social and political context; and by identifying underlying change mechanisms such as competing organisational logics, trade-offs can be achieved between social and commercial goals. The papers in this special issue have risen to the challenge of more critical theorisation that adds meaning to the case studies they explore. They conclude that 'it is by considering the operational tensions and limitations that have emerged in recent troubled times that the meaning of social enterprise and hybridity in housing organisations will be more clearly understood' (p.415)

Conceptualising social enterprise in housing organisations

Darinka Czischke, Vincent Gruis and David Mullins

This paper develops an empirically informed conceptual model for a study of social enterprise being applied in a depth study of housing companies in North West Europe. They find that definitions of social enterprise have varied considerably between jurisdictions, and have often been policy dependent rather than subject to more scientific definitions. Moreover, there has sometimes been a reluctance to use the term at all in relation to housing organisations - even where they are separate from government and trading for a social purpose. The paper argues that it is important to understand how competing hybrid principles are applied in organisational strategies, and develops a framework to track the ways in which hybridity shapes organisational behaviour in specific contexts.

Hybridity enacted in a large English housing association

Halima Sacranie

Halima provides insights into hybridity in different parts of a large geographically dispersed housing association in a phase of post-merger integration. She depicts a process of contestation in a large hybrid organisation between different 'institutional logics'. The first logic is a 'customer' business logic tied to the corporate and centralised culture of the dominant partner; meanwhile a competing 'community' logic is found in other parts of the organisation, including a former black and minority ethnic (BME) housing association with a community outreach programme. The paper tracks the displacement of the latter logic by the former within the BME housing association, and the shifts in resource dependencies, governance and staff changes that underpinned this transformation. This shift is most apparent in decision making on priorities for community investment for which the focus has shifted from a locally responsive community partnership approach to a corporate strategic approach that one might expect to find in large-scale private sector business.

Negotiating tensions: How do social enterprises in the homelessness field balance social and commercial considerations?

Simon Teasdale

Simon explores the tensions between social and commercial goals in work integration social enterprises in the homelessness field. He observes that the English homelessness sector has been subject to a stream of policy initiatives that have sought to promote social enterprise models as a way to re-integrate homeless people into the labour market and combat social exclusion. He shows that the supposedly complementary aims of trading and combating the social exclusion of homeless people by providing employment opportunities are often in conflict. In practice, there is a trade-off between social and commercial considerations. He concludes that 'the extent to which balancing a hybrid resource mix while simultaneously negotiating competing social and commercial logics is sustainable for any single organisation in the longer term is questionable, particularly in an environment that valorises market forces over and above social goals' (p.531)

Earlier work by Simon Teasdale exploring **social enterprises in the homeless field (http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Research/SocialEnterprise/Innovationinthehomelessfield/tabid/522/Default.aspx)** is also available as a TSRC research paper.

Earlier work by David Mullins on this topic includes TSRC working paper 16: **Housing Associations (http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Research/ServiceDeliverySD/Housing/Housingassociations/tabid/620/Default.aspx)** and Mullins D and Pawson, H. Social Housing: agents of policy or profits in disguise? Chapter 10 in Billis D **Hybrid Organisations and the Third Sector: Challenges for Practice, Theory and Policy (http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?pid=368349)**, Palgrave. pp.197-218. (ISBN -13:978-0-230-23463-5 and ISBN -13:978-0-230-23464-2.)

David Mullins is a member of the **Welfare Futures Research Group (/research/activity/social-policy/welfare-futures/index.aspx)**.

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