

COVID-19: temporary and structural factors in housing policy

Welcome to the first issue of 2024. Three of our four articles in this issue cover COVID-19. The pandemic has spawned a renewed interest in the role of housing in health, both physical and mental. This attention has brought to the fore of scholarship new issues (e.g. the role of COVID-19 policies on experiences of housing and home) as well as debates as to the way in which housing is planned for and provided (e.g. consideration of outdoor spaces at home, discussions over housing density and suitability).

Kuhlmann et al. (2023) take a novel approach to exploring the impact of COVID-19 on rental dwellings, by focussing on small private rental owners. Their research explores the impact of the pandemic on rental businesses operating across diverse socio-economic contexts in Minneapolis, USA. As has become clear from studies across COVID-19, the supposed 'great leveller' more frequently impacted more precarious households (e.g. Parker and Leviten-Reid, 2022; Darlington-Pollock et al., 2020). Kuhlmann et al's article shows how stark this is for lower rental priced households, and the stress of those owning lower cost private rental dwellings, than households with higher rental prices. Their research highlights the need for nuanced discussion surrounding COVID-19 based housing policy interventions that needed to reflect the existing structures of housing provision they were responding to.

Lima (2023) picks up this point and explores how the variety of pandemic housing policies from across OECD countries, were layered onto existing housing inequalities and structural inadequacies of housing systems. Lima's review shows how different governments' housing policy responded swiftly and decisively to COVID-19 across emergency accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, to protecting renters and home owners. However, the temporary nature of many of these policies failed to address the long-term structural inadequacies of affordable housing provision and so highlight the temporal limitations of governments' commitments to accessible affordable housing through COVID-19.

Grainger's (2023) exploration of how a technological 'fix' to allocate homeless households housing against the backdrop of spiking homelessness through COVID-19. The article throws light on how the Built-for -Zero approach was implemented by housing professionals through the pandemic, and to return to Lima's point, how untested policies and responses to the pandemic didn't always take account of the long-term implications or permanent social justice, despite influxes of cash from government. Grainger's analysis chimes with much of the critical technological urbanism literature, new fault lines emerge to exacerbate precarity where policy implementation is devolved to algorithmic housing intervention.

Despite the rise of technological intermediaries (for example online property listing websites), human agents continue to play a major role in facilitating and shaping housing transaction outcomes. Kim and Carswell (2023) contribute a Research Note on the perennial role of agents' use of expert knowledge, but unevenly applied as effort in the matching

process depending upon market circumstances. Their theoretical model gives a new model to explore why agents may be less motivated to apply their knowledge in market downturns when contrasted to boom conditions.

At the start of 2024 we welcomed four new Associate Editors to the journal. Our open call to join the editorial team produced a stellar international response, revealing the breadth and experience of those keen to support the publication of leading housing scholarship. Dr Michael Gawrys' scholarship focuses on adolescent, alternative and single-family housing, and frequently considers housing finance implications (e.g. Gawrys and Carswell, 2020). Michael will be well known to many in the Housing Education and Research Association (HERA - the owners of this journal) and brings a wealth of professional experience to the role, he will be leading on our Book Reviews. Dr Charlotte van der Lijn is a spatial data scientist and will strengthen our editorial expertise in this area. Charlotte has published on geotagging and Twitter (now X) and will be leading our growth in social media as a journal. Please do keep an eye on our social media accounts over the next few months and contribute to the discussions there. Dr Garrett Grainger is an urban sociologist, who has written extensively on homelessness (e.g. Grainger, 2022) and is the author of one of our articles in this issue. Garrett has taken on joint responsibility for a new section of the journal, Provocations. Dr Helen Taylor will also be responsible for this new section. Helen has published on a wide range of housing issue, including Rawlsian housing justice (Taylor, 2020) and brings experience of chairing the *Housing Studies Association* and leading debates on housing education in the UK. Please do contact the new Associate Editors directly if you would like to discuss any aspect of their purview.

The journal will soon announce a Special Issue on the theme of housing education. We recognise the journal's strong connection with one of HERA's core aims as well as the dire need for housing education globally to address systemic housing injustice through the imagination of new housing policy and practice. The Editorial Team will introduce several new Special Issue themes over the coming year, but all are welcome to contribute ideas and consider editing a Special Issue. Please contact Tom or Richard to discuss ideas.

References

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