

Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice –
2009 – Volume 18, Issue 2, pp. 1–4
URN:NBN:NL:UI:10-1-100062

ISSN: 1876-8830

URL: <http://www.journalsi.org>

Publisher: Igitur, Utrecht Publishing & Archiving
Services in cooperation with Utrecht University of
Applied Sciences, Faculty of Society and Law

Copyright: this work has been published under a
Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No
Derivative Works 3.0 Netherlands License

SABRINA KEINEMANS
KEES FORTUIN

EDITORIAL

In this second issue in 2009 of the *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, we continue our publications on a number of special themes. Exactly one year ago, in June 2008, the journal published a special issue on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in social interventions. In our editorial, we used the term “digi-interventionism” and we presented a range of manifestations of digi-interventionism, together with an overview of relevant research on this topic. That issue (and subsequent issues) contained a number of articles which discussed the usefulness of ICT in the domain of social interventions. In June 2008, we also formulated a number of follow-up themes that we hoped to address in the pages of this journal. One of these themes was the “digital divide”. This second issue of 2009 contains an article that is devoted to the information gap that has accompanied the growth of ICT use in our modern society. Authors Deborah West and David Heath present a tool that can be used to analyse the complex causes and effects of differences in Internet usage by citizens, the *Framework for Inquiry into the Technological Divide*. Interestingly, West and Heath do not refer to a digital divide – a division between those who have access to the Internet and those who do not – but rather a “technological divide”. The latter concept is used to analyse social inequalities, which are related to the use of information and communication technology. Expressing the concept in this way leaves more room to consider the various aspects of inclusion and exclusion associated with the increasing ICT usage. The framework that West and Heath present also focuses on various aspects related to this gap,

EDITORIAL

which they briefly explain in their article. The framework is intended to give direction to research, policy and implementation practices that will contribute to closing the technology gap. West and Heath present a case study to show how the framework can be applied in a research project. The article discusses the application of this framework in a study that looked into the presence of a technology gap in the care given to people with dementia by professionals and caregivers.

This issue also contains a new article by Jacqueline de Savornin Lohman in the series "Urban and Community Development". De Savornin Lohman addresses the phenomenon of intervention teams, which are now being deployed throughout the Netherlands after their introduction in the city of Rotterdam. What sets the intervention teams apart is, among other things, that (a) various organizations work together in partnership to (b) make house calls in order to (c) carry out enforcement and control activities in various domains¹, usually combined with the intention to offer help and support. The article *Interventieteams: werken op het snijvlak van rechtstaat en maatschappelijke urgentie* (Intervention teams: the cutting edge of the constitutional state and societal urgency) is a critical reflection on the legitimacy of this approach. The deployment of intervention teams who interfere in the everyday lives of citizens, even in the privacy of their own homes and without their express consent, can be experienced as intrusive and a violation of privacy. From an administrative point of view, the deployment of intervention teams is considered to be legitimate, but this legitimacy may be questionable from a legal perspective, according to De Savornin Lohman. She outlines how this discrepancy can exist and considers the question of how intervention teams can continue to be deployed without clashing with legal principles. To this end she presents the concept of a "context-oriented approach".

De Savornin Lohman's contribution to this issue illustrates that intervening in the daily lives of citizens can create tensions that threaten the legitimacy of the interventions. The contribution by Lizet van Donkersgoed deals at great length with the fact that the contact between citizens and social workers – partly as a result of the due observance of the law – can be fraught with moments of tension. Van Donkersgoed reflects on the actions of public professionals when faced with moral dilemmas. These are dilemmas in which "the good" is at stake and which arise through enforcing the law. Such issues arise in those areas where professionals are free to exercise their discretion. After all, complex situations where a general rule cannot simply be applied demand that the professionals exercise their powers of interpretation. Exploratory qualitative research shows that, in order to solve moral dilemmas, professionals in some public organisations try to find tailor-made solutions. However, this sometimes leads to a more or less denying of the discretionary space at hand, or to the creation of more rules in an effort to close the discretionary space. The

question is, are these approaches effective? The answer may very well turn out to be negative. Van Donkersgoed claims that there is always discretionary space available to the professional when enforcing rules. Professionals should be given support and assistance in dealing with moral questions and the dilemmas that they sometimes find themselves confronted with.

In the last article in this second issue of 2009, Judith Metz gives a comprehensive and very readable history of social activation. Metz's historiography tries to explain the origins of the Social Support Act's (Wmo) plea to civil society, and how this appeal relates to welfare policy and the allocation of responsibility for the welfare of society. The historiography shows how the involvement of citizens and their relationship to the general welfare of Dutch society has evolved. It also gives insight into the changes in the distribution of responsibilities for social welfare between citizens, government and social relationships. The literature that is devoted to social activation is limited in scope. This article therefore sheds light on a little-known side of the history of social welfare.

The book section in this issue contains several reviews. Corry Verstoep discusses *Van Richmond naar Reid. Bronnen en ontwikkeling van taakgerichte hulpverlening in het maatschappelijk werk* (From Richmond to Reid. Sources and development of mission-oriented assistance in social services). Gert Schout discusses *Outreached werken. Handboek voor de eerste lijn* (Outreach work. Manual for primary care). Kitty van Elst and Karin Runia discuss *Is het te doen? Over ethiek en methodiek van de presentiebeoefenaar in het boek Een theorie van de presentie van A. Baart*. (Can it be done? About Ethics and methods of professional attendance in the book A Theory of the presence of A. Baart). Finally, Ton Notten wrote an article entitled *Zorgen om het onderwijs: tussen uitval en integratie* (Concerns about education: between dropouts and integration), discussing: *De stand van educatief Nederland 2009* (The state of education in the Netherlands in 2009); *Verdeeld verleden, gedeelde toekomst? Bijdragen aan het debat over integratie* (Divided past, shared future? Contributions to the debate on integration); *Vertrouwen in de school. Over de uitval van 'overbelaste' jongeren* (Confidence in the school. On the dropout rate of 'stressed out' young people).

In *Nieuws uit het Hoger Sociaal Agogisch Onderwijs* (News from higher social education), we return to the theme of ICT and social interventions. Jan Steyaert responds to the new online, open-access edition of the Journal of Social Intervention. He both criticizes and congratulates the magazine on taking this step.

Sabrina Keinemans, managing editor

Kees Fortuin, editor

NOTE

- 1 For an example, see the website of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment http://home.szw.nl/index.cfm?menu_item_id=13755&hoofdmenu_item_id=13825&rubriek_item=391841&rubriek_id=391817&set_id=982&doctype_id=6&link_id=120254, where an intervention team is defined as "a grouping of several organizations that are engaged in enforcement and control in the fields of taxes, social security, the labour market and in other areas".