Governing austerity, structural violence and the “cumulative incapacitation of the state”

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The Cost of the Cuts: The impact on local government and poorer communities  (with Nick Bailey, Glen Bramley and Maria Gannon)

- Analysis of budget cuts at the national level
- Four case studies of the impact of austerity on councils.
- Quantitative analysis of budgetary info on ‘savings’ 2011-2016
  - ‘Savings’ assessed according to who uses what kind of services
- Qualitative analysis of impacts on poor people and places
  - Service users - parents living in more or less disadvantaged neighbourhoods
  - Staff from voluntary organisations providing local services
  - Strategic officers within the case studies
  - Front-line council staff
Per Capita Expenditure Profile by deprivation bands for English All-Purpose Local Authorities 2010/11 – 2014/15

The spending differential between disadvantaged and better off councils is in sharp decline

- 2010: 45% difference between most and least deprived
- 2014: 17% difference
- Dismantling of the ‘spatial strategy of equality’
“Structural violence … describes… social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way. The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people”

Farmer, 2006: 1686
Governing austerity and structural violence

• Dismantling the ‘spatial strategy of equality’
  – Between cities
  – Within cities - dismantling of neighbourhood governance. “We knew what was going on in the estate…where the real issues were…” (Neighbourhood Services Provider)

• Individualisation and stigmatisation of need

• Responsibilisation of civil society:
  – adult care achieved thru things “available in the person’s own life and neighbourhood” (NCC, 2012; appendix 2)
  – The Council “will require individuals to take personal responsibility for supporting their neighbourhoods, with the council focusing on those services which only the council can do” (NCC, 2012; p.25)

• Disinvestment in ‘capacity building’ – ‘we’re living on borrowed time’ (Senior officer, council 1)
Three injuries caused by structural violence

- **Unmet needs** “I had do a (safeguarding) referral about our own council, about the social care team because they weren’t meeting the needs of the tenant” (Neighbourhood services provider)

- **Front line workers become ‘shock absorbers’** “having to be part of the process that feeds … restructure options upwards to senior managers weighs heavily on my mind… I am tired, tearful and unhappy and am struggling to lead a normal active life.” (Library service provider)

- **The isolation (incarceration?) the poor** “I only go out once a day now. I’ve stopped taking the baby out.” (Disadvantaged service user)
Daring to look forward…

- A deep and long process of residualisation underway – the “cumulative incapacitation of the state” (Peck, 2012)
  - Stigmatisation of ‘need’ and reciprocal effect of undermining the capacity to address it

- Can the way we govern austerity stop it being down loaded onto the marginalised?

- What can we do to slow down the hardening the social hierarchy?

- How can we begin to rebuild a politics of redistribution?
References and selected project publications