Austerity and (spatial) rights

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Austerity and (spatial) rights

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EDITORIAL

After years of prolonged austerity tendencies with diversified impacts on the everyday life, austerity politics, policies and discourses have been 'normalized' in many contexts as an inevitable approach to social and spatial welfare. Progressively, austerity has been presented as 'the only way' to govern under mutated socio-economic conditions and multiple interrelated (global) crisis with related economic stagnation, migration flows and conflicts. In this context, critical studies of austerity have been on the rise and attempted to strength our knowledge on the austerity impact on cities and urbanism (Peck 2011); on how austerity is managed and resisted locally (Davis and Blanco 2017, see the collective report on a comparative study on Austerity Governance held by the Center of Urban Austerity, 2017); on its effect on specific vulnerable groups (Lanen 2017); and on what we have learned and/or is emerging from the contexts that are attempting to resist it (Arampazi 2017; Flesher Fominaya, C. Hayes G, 2017).

This issue of lo Squaderno aims at contributing to this debate with a collection of reflections which intercept such questions. The presented papers allow us to reframe (and confirm) some of most common assumptions in the understanding of austerity: that is mainly related to draconian cuts on public spending, that is a shock and fast doctrine and that is impacting the already most vulnerable categories.

According with Hayes, the papers well show how the studies of austerity do not see it only as a fiscal retrenchment, or as social cutbacks in welfare policies, but rather as set of interplaying, interlinked and overlapping regimes of recurrent institutionalized practices and normative assumptions, which occur at different governing scale and are fiscal, ideological, political, and civic in character (Hayes, 2017 and in this issue). Moreover, a close look at austerity also prove that it does not necessarily imply cuts on public expenditure, but is also based on a 'shifting away' of resources from social and spatial welfare toward other, more 'valuable', collective priorities such as police and security policy (Tulumello, 2018 and in this issue).

Moreover, alongside the cases in which austerity has been a 'shock events' and a 'violent practice of urbanism', the authors engage with different austerity styles, more subtle forms of austerity governance, focusing on discourses and technologies, tracing its permanence, "its low-intensity characters as a long-term governmental strategy" (Tulumello) and assume different lenses to explore it such as urban security policy in the USA (ibidem), the genealogy on the 1970's fiscal crisis and its implication on current fiscal crisis management (Vicari), the implementation of participatory processes as technology that reinforce, rather than diminish, power relations under austerity climate (Falanga).

The specific focus on the people mostly impacted by austerity on the contrary confirm who is paying the cost of this governing strategy. There is little doubt that austerity is impacting mostly the young generation because it contracts spatial rights as well as the space for hope and self-development (as for the youth in post Celtic Tiger and austerity Ireland, in Landen's paper), the disadvantaged children who need special care as well as elderly people (at the intersection with class, race and gender, in Petzold & Duveneck's paper). Other contributes also point out how ethnic minorities and urban poor are hardly coping with economic dispossession, marginalization and disenfranchisement that come together with austerity measures (Falanga and Davis).

The authors also present a variety of geographies of municipal austerity, presenting several geographical focuses that are intentionally outside the main metropolitan areas, choosing small-medium municipalities which are considered to be severely impacted by austerity or that are experiencing fiscal crisis (such as Messina in Italy, Memphis in the USA and Leicester in the UK; but also, Portugal, Greece and Ireland as peripheral regions in the Euro zones). Moreover, the papers offer critical engagement with austerity at its interplay with the politics of (spatial) justice. Koutrolikou (in this issue) identify specific injustices related to the violence of austerity driven policies and their repercussions, examining the material and spatial impact that austerity doctrine and policies

had in the case of Athens. The nexus between austerity and justice is questioned also by Petzold & Duveneck who argued that a (normalized) austerity in Germany -presented as the way to guarantee socio-spatial and intergeneration justice – is (re-)producing social, spatial and intergenerational injustice and amplifying existing patterns injustice.

The papers also underline the challenges and limits of social movements against austerity. Practices of resistances, local reaction and movements that challenge the cultural hegemony of austerity are facing growing challenges. Even if in some local contexts have been the terrain in which citizens have expressed resistance, trough practices of mutualism and solidarity or by enhancing new municipalism their results and reach are still limited. Davis describes the tactics and strategies of austerity governance in Leicester, UK, as an "'austerian realism', a technique of spatial governance that has been capable of containing and limiting resistance" (in this issue). Also, participatory budgeting at the municipal scale, implemented during austerity climate in a country with a long tradition of civic engagement such as Portugal, "has not been capable to meaningful counteract austerity" (Falanga). On the contrary Falanga argue how the participatory technology has provided a discursive legitimation for austerity and for the formation of a "conceptual and practical distance from poor and powerless citizens, as well as from grassroots groups" (in this issue). Then, while Davis is hoping for new form of social municipalism and the re-municipalisation of local services as a possible alternative in the UK, Saitta presented the limit of an experience of social municipalism that sought to refuse the public debt in the southern Italian city of Messina. He concludes saying that what refusing the debt means in terms of local governance is still unclear. How an act of refusing-to-pay can be collectively accepted and translated into a new form of governance capable to reframe the existing urban regimes and to boost intergenerational solidarity it remains an open question.

It finally emerges how austerity is most of all a political project that brake solidarity and boost individualization; that stress the individual responsibility rather than collective dimension of many aspect of work and civic life (in Hayes); that reduces (spatial) rights and space for hope for future generations. For this reason, anti-austerity practices can only demand for new inter-cultural, inter-generational, inter-class practices of solidarity in the coming future.

<div align="right">S. A. & C. M.</div>

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Regimes and Spaces of Austerity: Inside the British University

Graeme Hayes

I am an academic working in a British university, and I am currently on strike. Alongside many of my colleagues - administrators, librarians, lecturers, graduate students - in the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU), I am taking industrial action in order to persuade Universities UK (UUK, the body which officially represents Britain's universities) to commit to meaningful negotiations over the reforms they seek to impose on our pensions scheme (known as the Universities Superannuation Scheme, USS)[1]. According to the calculations made by UCU, UUK's reforms to USS will result in the average member of the scheme losing about £10,000 per year in retirement; younger colleagues stand to lose far more than older colleagues[2].

The dispute carries numerous hallmarks of the wider political dynamics of the last decade, including repeated instances of large employers, from British Steel to BHS, revealing that their private pension schemes are carrying hitherto unrevealed deficits, or have been emptied out. In the case of USS, the declaration that the pensions scheme carries a deficit of somewhere between £5bn and £7bn has been used by UUK as justification for closing the current scheme, which is based on defined benefits (DB), and open a new scheme, based on defined contributions (DC)[3].

This change has serious and significant consequences which go far beyond salary losses. Under a defined benefits (DB) scheme, members are guaranteed a pension (in effect, a salary) from the moment they retire until they die. However, under a defined contributions (DC) scheme, members build up a retirement fund. This fund does not provide a guaranteed pension; rather, the amount in the fund depends on the fund's performance on the stock market, which depends on how fund managers manage the fund. Whereas a DB scheme therefore promises employees a secure income in retirement, a DC scheme can potentially produce higher returns, but does so at the cost of creating risk for the individual member.

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1 Only those universities established before 1992 enroll their academic and senior administrative employees in USS. Universities established after 1992 - mainly, those that were known as Polytechnics - enroll their employees in TPS, the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Unlike USS, TPS is underwritten by the state, and is not affected by UUK's reforms.

2 UCU, 'Overhaul of university pensions could leave staff £200,000 worse off in retirement', 30 November 2017, https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/9093/Overhaul-of-university-pensions-could-leave-staff-200000-worse-off-in-retirement

3 UUK, 'Open letter from UUK to USS scheme members over pensions dispute', 22 February 2018, http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/uuk-open-letter-uss-members-pensions-dispute.aspx

The USS situation is, however, based on an extraordinary assumption: the projected £7bn deficit only exists where it is assumed that all UK universities in the scheme collapse at the same time, and there are - effectively - no members continuing to pay money into the scheme. For a private company, which could go bust (such as, recently, the construction company Carillion), the scenario may be considered reasonable; for the entire university sector, the scenario is wildly improbable. USS's own accounts show that the scheme's income currently outstrips its payments, and is projected to do so for at least the next forty years. The refrain from UUK, echoed by university managers, that 'there is no money' is a familiar one in the time of austerity; it exploits a common sense discourse - public debt must be paid back, and we must all make a sacrifice to do so - to mask the causes and processes of debt creation, the rationalities that guide these causes and processes, and the (publicly invisible) transfers and trade-offs that are central to the distribution and imposition of financial obligations. In this case, the pensions deficit is therefore an *invention* produced by specific, power-laden risk calculation practices; the rationality is that of individual *rather than collective risk and obligation*; and the proposed change from DB to DC is a *political act of individualisation* which is consequent on this invention and this rationality. Understanding it therefore requires context.

Regimes of Austerity

At the beginning of last year, Cristina Flesher Fominaya and I edited a special issue of the journal Social Movement Studies on Anti-Austerity Movements in Europe, featuring a series of articles based on fieldwork and other empirical analyses of the collective points of resistance to austerity in different European contexts (Flesher Fominaya and Hayes 2017). My contribution was to identify what I called the multiple *regimes* of austerity. I argued that rather than seeing austerity as a series of policies of fiscal retrenchment, we should see it as the overlaying of four particular and interlinked regimes of recurrent institutionalized practices and normative assumptions, which are fiscal, ideological, political, and civic in character. The first regime concerns economic policies; the second concerns the crisis of social democracy, and

The refrain echoed by university managers, that 'there is no money' is a familiar one in the time of austerity; it exploits a common sense discourse to mask the causes and processes of debt creation.

what may constitute a legitimate left politics; the third concerns the relationship between formal democracy and democratic participation; and the fourth concerns the privatization of public space, and the evacuation of resistant social representation from these spaces. As such, austerity as a material project of neo-liberal governance cannot be dissociated from the ongoing processes of democratic enclosure that characterise the European political and ideational space (Hayes 2017).

The goal was to enable a clearer understanding of both the socio-political economies and imaginaries of austerity and the multiple movement responses to it. Here, the potential of social movement action is to identify and reveal the processes of exclusion and enclosure that austerity produces, and enable the development of alternative imaginaries of action and association. The transformative potential of anti-austerity mobilizations accordingly lies in their capacity to develop an alternative moral economy grounded in new forms of solidarity and sociability, whether in workplaces or in civic squares.

What does this look like at the level of the current dispute over pensions in UK universities? Higher education in the UK is a specific site of the material practices of neoliberal governance, a space within which its own overlapping regimes unfold and develop (Holmwood 2011, Amsler and Bolsmann 2012, Lorenz 2012). The UK has a highly marketised higher education sector, characterised by tuition fees of £9250 per year (paid back at variable rates by students subsequent to their university studies), by inter-university competition over student recruitment and income generation, and by high levels of surveillance (what Lorenz terms a 'culture of permanent mistrust', p.609). Surveillance includes performance monitoring and management, and particularly, the use of multiple metrics in order to structure student and staff behaviours. These metrics include student evaluations for each course, an annual national student satisfaction survey for each programme, and large-scale, pluri-annual, government-driven evaluations of teaching practice (TEF) and research production (REF). The rationale for these processes is that they provide transparency and accountability, providing comparable information and enhancing rational decision making (by students, by university managers), and so raising standards. Their effect is to produce a change in the nature of higher education, from a collective public good to a divisible private one.

Austerity, in some ways, has not affected the university sector in the UK as it has affected other parts of the public sector: university finances are, broadly, booming, particularly for the larger, more powerful, established institutions. At the same time, however, university administrative and academic staff have been subject to pay freezes and below-inflation pay rises, whilst salary inequalities have become more profound, with university leaders earning sums widely considered excessive[4]. Most crucially, from 2012, large amounts of future debt was transferred onto students. Here, the funding system is perhaps less important as an economic model than a socio-normative one: a university education is increasingly communicated and understood as an individual investment in order to acquire employability skills (whose acquisition is a key metric for university league tables). The critical and collective character of the university as a public institution is increasingly erased. UK university courses are now subject to consumer protection law; at open days, we are legally obliged to inform students how much below or above the mean average our students earn after graduation; my own University is currently marketing itself with the slogan 'Study here. Earn more.'.

The pensions dispute must be seen in this framework of the extension of neoliberal governance practices. Beyond reducing future risk, UUK's decision to move from DB to DC effectively accomplishes two tasks. First, all universities in the scheme currently act as a mutual safety net: if one university defaults, its liabilities are transferred to the other universities, ensuring that its employees are covered and their pensions secured. Second, under a DB scheme, the employer carries the risk: the employee's return is guaranteed. Both of these safety nets are removed by the proposed DC scheme. In other words, changing DB to DC is an act of demutualisation, followed by an act of risk transfer, from the institution to the individual.

It is perhaps not immediately obvious, given the structural damage to the mobility and competitiveness of the UK university sector that Brexit will surely cause, why UUK is seeking to downgrade pension provision to its employees on the basis of a fantasy default scenario. As many have pointed out, the likely consequence is to make working in these universities

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4 For an egregious recent example, see 'Vice-Chancellor suggests he deserves salary of £360,000 as he has to oversee huge staff redundancies', *Daily Telegraph*, 21 February 2018, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2018/02/21/vice-chancellor-suggests-deserves-salary-360000-has-oversee/

less attractive[5], at a time when recruiting highly mobile specialists is both more difficult and more important for the UK's 'knowledge economy'. Yet it is also highly consistent with the marketisation of the sector under the logics of austerity's overlapping regimes. As Bhambra notes, alongside collective bargaining, the USS scheme is one of the last remaining collective aspects of the public university system in the UK; once completed, demutualisation and risk transfer make it feasible for individual institutions to defect from the public system, setting them free to charge students a level of fees uncontrolled by a government cap. The pensions reforms, therefore, are really designed to facilitate privatisation[6].

Resistant Spaces?

Given this situation, what are the sites of resistance within the university? First, let me repeat: I am on strike, and the strike is currently scheduled to last for fourteen working days in total, from 22 February to 16 March. This is unprecedented in my working life. It is also remarkable in that, in terms of the foreclosures of democratic space operated under austerity, UCU's industrial action could only be legal if 50% of union members voted, under the terms of the Trade Union Act 2016. UCU decided to hedge its risk, organising local ballots in each university rather than a simple national ballot, enabling it to conduct local strikes even if the national vote did not meet the 50% threshold. In the end, turnout did not meet the threshold in only seven out of 68 institutions; at my university, turnout was a remarkable 68%. Nationally, 88% of members voted for industrial action, and 93% for action short of a strike[7]. Rather than an exams boycott - often used in the past, and which tends to separate academics from administrators and information specialists - strike action in this case means doing no work for our employers (and consequently forgoing all pay for each strike day). To repeat: this form and scale of action is unprecedented in my working life.

Second, a consequence of the individualisation of higher education is a loss of student radicalism, as students are inevitably invested in the production of neo-liberal subjectivity. One piece of advice given to students during the dispute is that they write to University managers to demand a refund on their fees for every class missed because of industrial action; this may be effective in the short-term to create leverage, but it surely reproduces rather then resists the positioning of students as consumers. Yet students appear, for the moment at least, overwhelmingly sympathetic to the strike, and (if not necessarily being disruptive) have demonstrated in solidarity with academics and administrators at numerous universities, as they hold pickets, rallies, teach-ins and teach-outs.

Third, at the time of writing, there is a strong sense that the strike is working tactically: UUK has been forced back to negotiations with UCU over its 'non-negotiable' position. Perhaps more importantly, the strike is symbolically significant in ways that go beyond the local micro-solidarities developed through collective action within specific places. Though nominally still a public system (British universities have charity status, and do not have shareholders), the structural positioning of universities as individualised competitive institutions

5 Professors warn of recruitment 'disaster' over USS changes', *Times Higher Education*, 18 January 2018, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/professors-warn-recruitment-disaster-over-uss-changes
6 Gurminder K Bhambra, 'In Defence of the Public University: The USS Strike in Context',
Discover Society, 23 February 2018, https://discoversociety.org/2018/02/23/in-defence-of-the-public-university-the-uss-strike-in-context/
7 'USS Industrial Action Ballot: Final Report', 19 January 2018, https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9091/USS-ballot-results---ranked-summary-table/pdf/uss_ballotresults_summaryranked_jan18.pdf

- competing with each other for funding, for students, for distinction, for research power - is increasingly naturalised discursively and operationally, and is ingrained in the everyday function of the university and the academics and administrators who carry out their tasks within it. Equally, the capacity of strike action to produce systemic challenge is highly circumscribed in the UK, as a result of legislation prohibiting secondary picketing and 'political' strikes.

Yet the local nature of each strike has - perhaps paradoxically - enabled the sense of the (re)creation of higher education as an interlinked, collegiate, public system. Social media - particularly twitter, but also the numerous blogs written by striking - has enabled the consolidation of ties between strikers at different universities, and the active reinforcement of solidarities, particularly in the face of the punitive sanctions threatened by individual universities against their striking staff. As one influential critical blog on UK Higher education system puts it, perhaps the most conspicuous gain from the strike 'is that there has been a mass recognition of the value of solidarity, together with the sheer joy of strikers finding they do indeed belong to a community'[8]. More widely, the strike and its solidarities are a further step towards debate not just on fair pensions, but on the very nature of the university[9].

Finally, as noted above, the processes of demutualisation and risk transfer are part of the aggressive enforcement of market governance within the particular sites and spaces of the contemporary public university. Here, austerity's regimes intersect: this is not simply a fiscal question, concerning the nature of deficit and the technical management of a large fund, but a democratic question, concerning not just the continued existence of welfarist safety nets, but the potential for creating collective and resistant ideological, political, and civic spaces. As such, it is a touchstone for the contemporary social democratic left. Under the conditions of the ideological austerity which they helped to produce, social democrats in the UK were cheerleaders for these processes; tuition fees and neo-liberal management instruments were championed and extended by the New Labour governments of Blair and Brown, before the explicit policies of fiscal austerity were implemented. Post New Labour, these champions remain influential, arguing (for example) that the inequalities of higher education are essentially a problem not of indebtedness but of cartelisation, and as such are a consequence of the incomplete marketisation of the university system; in this discourse, excessively paid university leaders are characterised as a kind of gentry class standing in the way of liberalisation[10]. Nonetheless, the current Labour leadership under Jeremy Corbyn has supported the strike, with the Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell joining teach-ins[11], and Labour has promised to end the tuition fee system once elected. Of course, there is much more to the pushback against austerity than the reform of parts of its fiscal regime, not least the widespread complicity of academics with the techniques of surveillance imposed upon them. But it is nonetheless here - in struggles within and against the multiple, specific, physical, and normative spaces created by austerity - that the prospects of building an alternative to the normalised conditions of austerity lie.

8 Academic Irregularities, 'Frozen, but Solid: #USSstrikes 2018', 1 March 2018, https://academicirregularities. wordpress.com/2018/03/01/frozen-but-solid-ussstrikes-2018/
9 See the Campaign for the Public University, https://publicuniversity.org.uk/
10 'Andrew Adonis: A One-man Tuition Fee Twitter Storm', The Guardian, 8 August 2017, https://www. theguardian.com/education/2017/aug/08/andrew-adonis-twitter-tuition-fees-university-vice-chancellors
11 'Labour's John McDonnell tells striking lecturers in Scotland: Campaigns against cuts will bring UK Government down', CommonSpace, 23 February 2018, https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/12391/labours-john-mcdonnell-tells-striking-lecturers-scotland-campaigns-against-cuts-will

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"And who was left to deal with it? The police": reflecting on permanent, low-intensity austerity in Memphis

Simone Tulumello

You know, our jails are probably our biggest mental health facilities. [...] In the 60s and 70s [...] we shut down state hospitals all over the country, the state hospitals for the mental ill. [...] The idea was that we would replace the state hospitals with a comprehensive network of community mental health centers. Well, what we did was we shut down hospitals but never provided that kind of funding community mental health centers needed. So, the mental ill became the homeless, they became any number of things. And who was left to deal with it? The police and the correction system were said: "Solve this problem."

[Interviewer] Which of course you eventually don't solve through police.

You don't solve it[1]

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This interview excerpt encapsulates two ideas I will elaborate in this essay. First, while austerity is often conceptualized as a sort of acute "response" to any number of crises, more often economic ones, there are places were austerity is a permanent, if low-intensity, reality. Memphis is one such place. Second, while austerity is often equaled to state roll-back, I believe it is rather a multiform—variegated, as Neil Brenner and colleagues (2010) would put it—process by which state action is restructured and geared to pursue specific political goals. Austerity as a (long-term) governmental strategy is particularly evident in Memphis.

Memphis, a middle-sized city at the south-western corner of the US state of Tennessee, is one of those places that have remained at the "borderlands" of urban theorization (Baptista, 2013; Tulumello, 2017). Not only is Memphis understudied, but its experience, and more generally those of southern US cities, allow to add some nuances to our understanding of current patterns and trends of urbanization. The South of the USA, because of its historical "under-development" (when compared to other US regions), has long been considered a peripheral and marginal region, the "backward", "persistent", "dumb" South[2]. However, a few works have recently discussed how the South of the USA in general, and Memphis in particular, are rather places at the core of globalization and neoliberalization (Rushing, 2009; Lloyd, 2012). Indeed, the case of urban security—in American English, public safety—policymaking shows how profoundly have globalization and neoliberalization impacted local policy and politics (Tulumello, 2017; 2018). It is through the lenses of the case of urban security policy that I shall reflect on permanent, low-intensity austerity in Memphis—and

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1 Excerpt from an interview with a retired professor of criminology and former consultant of Memphis Police Department, March 2016, Memphis.
2 The way rhetorical labels attached to some Western regions resonate with those historically used for the so-called "Third World" is a topic that would deserve much discussion.

beyond. With low-intensity austerity I refer to something quite different from the shock "austerity urbanism" depicted by Jeremy Peck (2012). Peck's most important contribution to understanding austerity is, in my opinion, his ability to conceptualize it as a "long established trait of neoliberal governance" (ibidem, 626), indeed a permanent one. However, Peck's analysis rests on a number of cases—the quintessential example being Detroit, Michigan—where austerity's face has been that of an "extreme economy" (ibidem), made up of dramatic, and sudden, local government capacity roll-back. While there are many such cases around the urban USA, one can hardly consider Peck's austerity urbanism the new normal, the geography of municipal austerity being quite complex in space and time (see, e.g., Lobao and Adua, 2011; Donald et al., 2014). The case of Memphis exemplifies a different pattern of urban austerity, one which not only seems to me to be more diffused than Peck's extreme economy, but is also useful to think the deep nature of austerity. In what follows, I shall discuss two dimensions useful to capture Memphis-style austerity, its movements of resource shifting and its multi-scalar embeddedness within the US institutional arrangements.

If one takes a superficial look at city budgets, they would probably not consider austerity a much useful concept to analyze policymaking in Memphis. Indeed, Memphis city budget has not been shrinking in time. During the last decade or so, for instance, despite some up-and-downs, the city budget remained overall stable; and even the post-financial-crisis drop has been recovered (Tulumello, 2018). A more careful analysis, however, shows that there are two budget items that have been constantly growing, police and fire services, while all the others, including urban and social policy, have been shrinking. I have elsewhere suggested that it is at the intersection of national political transformations, global neoliberalisation trends and multi-scalar institutional relations that these shifts should be understood (Tulumello, 2017). The central place that "safety" has historically had in the US political discourse is well-known (e.g. Kahan 2011). In particular, the end of the New Deal Consensus has brought about a progressive shift of national political cultures away from welfare and toward crime control (Garland, 2001; Simon, 2007). This has walked hand in hand with the affirmation of neoliberal ideas and the ensuing transformation of policymaking. In line with the contradictory nature of neoliberal governmentalities, this has meant a double movement in the field of public safety: in line with ideas about personal responsibility and "empowerment", the emergence of prevention partnerships and the expectation that citizens would take responsibility for their own protection; and, at the same time, a repressive turn—based on racial, gender and class divides—especially evident in the making of mass incarceration.

Inevitably, the transformations in the field of public safety have impacted more widely the way public policy is conceptualized and implemented, particularly in places, such as the South of the USA, where conservative political traditions and particularly turbulent neoliberal transformations have coexisted. Add to this the historically high levels of violent crime in the USA (when compared to the rest of the Western world), especially in big cities—in Memphis the murder rate is some ten- or fifteen-fold that of any average European city. "There's never a scenario—an activist told me in an interview—where [police] are not asking for more money. Ever." That those requests are often met is not very surprising in a context where public safety is the central political argument and violent crime is especially problematic, hence the pressure over local policymakers to act quickly and through measures expected to have direct impact over crime. But the political dimension does not tell all of the story and the uniqueness of the US institutional system, where local authorities have almost exclusive competence over urban security, differently from virtually everywhere in Europe, plays an important role.

There are 18,000 criminal police departments in the USA—for comparison, in Italy there are four criminal police forces, plus numerous local police departments with no criminal police competence. Police power and public safety, in the USA, are competence of states, which virtually everywhere delegate them to local authorities, municipalities and counties. Besides the obvious matters of inefficiency—there are 18,000 police chiefs, for one, and thousands of "departments" with one or two employees—, this safety localism also means increased spatial injustice among places. In a country where crime, poverty and social problems are deeply correlated in space, impacting especially "inner", minority-majority cities[3], the least affluent polities are also those where there is more pressure to shift resources toward police[4]. It is therefore at the local level, and due to the coupling of policing and social policy in local authorities, that the political environment above discussed effects policymaking directly. If safety is expected to be delivered by local policymakers, the "obvious" consequence is shifting resources away from social and urban policy, and toward police; which however means cutting on prevention and delegating it to organizations whose skill is repression, as the quotation that opens this essay sums up. As such, in places like Memphis, austerity is not simply

The transformations in the field of public safety have impacted more widely the way public policy is conceptualized and implemented, particularly in places.

the effect of cuts from the top-down, but a more complex process linked with US localism and stemming from both vertical and horizontal relations.

With regard to vertical relations, things are more complex than the simple downloading of austerity. For instance, during the last few decades, at the same time as the federal government was cutting on social programs and grants—and associating the latter systematically with police enforcement (Hinton, 2016)—, it was indirectly funding police departments through both grants and donations of military equipment. Police departments across the country, including in small towns, are nowadays military, much more than criminal, forces, as made evident, for instance, by the way the deployment of SWAT teams has become ordinary, for instance to make arrests or search houses. Horizontal relations possibly play an even more important role here, on many levels. First, historical "white flight", itself justified through rhetorical discourses about crime and safety, has restructured tax bases by bringing the bulk of fiscal capacity away from cities at the center of metropolitan areas—cities that keep providing services, white-collar jobs and infrastructures necessary to entire metros. Memphis has in time expanded its area in order not to lose population, with the result that it is nowadays one of the least dense cities in a country of extremely spread-out cities—its surface is slightly bigger than the land surface of New York, which hosts thirteen times Memphis' population. Second, in a policy environment that boosts city-city competition for the attraction of investments and corporate jobs (see Kantor, 2016), economic growth is itself often based on giving up tax collection through incentives and the like—in Memphis, mostly through the PILOT, Payment In Lieu Of Taxes, program[5]. Add to this the necessity, in

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3 In Europe, the spatial correlation of social problems and crime is not everywhere evident and, for instance, in Southern European countries, it is basically not existent.

4 It is worth reminding that most US metropolitan areas are made up of a central, majority-minority, relatively poor city, while affluent classes tend to reside in suburbs, which are in most cases independent municipalities. The cases of big cities like New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, where geographic patterns of wealth and poverty are more complex, are quite exceptional in this context.

5 Possibly better than the numerous available academic texts, an episode of John Oliver's Last Week Tonight

order to attract those very investments and jobs, to "sell" the cities as safe: I have elsewhere discussed (Tulumello, 2018) how the geography of security policymaking in Memphis is twofold, and can be summed up as "policing the racialized poor and reassuring the wealthy".

At this intersection, austerity becomes at the same time an inevitability and a political project. It is inevitable because it is mainly implemented by governmental authorities, the local ones, which have formal autonomy, but are put in a position in which alternatives to the status quo, when they are sought, are almost (politically, institutionally and socially) untenable. But places like Memphis also show with particular evidence the face of austerity as a political project. The permanent, low-intensity austerity characteristic of such places is powerfully capable—in my opinion even more than Peck's catastrophe urbanism—of structurally restructuring politics, policy and polity in the long term, in that it progressively forecloses the possibility for political alternatives at the local level. Whether the experiences of places like Memphis constitute a vision of a possible future for places where austerity is more recent (for instance where it is more constitutively linked to the recent global recession) is, in my opinion, a topic that deserves much discussion, for instance by way of comparative urban studies among places, like the South of the USA, that have been marginalized by dominant explanations of neoliberalism and austerity so far.

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sums up the contradictions of this system: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bI19RoR7Ic.

Genealogia della crisi fiscale urbana

Pietro Vicari

What was being tested in New York?

La notte del 17 ottobre 1975 Abraham Beame, sindaco di New York, si trovò nella condizione di dover dichiarare bancarotta: i conti della amministrazione municipale erano in rosso, i tagli prescritti dall'EFCB[1] non erano stati sufficienti a dare ossigeno al bilanco e il governo federale non sembrava intenzionato a sostenere la città. L'amministrazione repubblicana della casa bianca puntò il dito contro i sindacati e il sistema di welfare costruito nei vent'anni precedenti, il Daily News titolò "Ford to the city: drop dead", e Donald Rumsfeld, allora capo di gabinetto, accusò "La città ha provato a mantenere inalterato il suo esteso Welfare State nonostante la recessione, il declino industriale e la fuga della classe media" (Cingolani, 2015).

Dopo un estenunante trattativa il governo federale stanziò un prestito di 2,3 miliardi di dollari necessari per evitare il fallimento e allo stesso tempo impose tagli draconiani, inaugurando una stagione di austerità e di apertura della finanza municipale al mercato dei titoli finanziari: il significato di questa svolta è stato sintetizzato da Donna Demac & Philip Mattera (1977) nel prevalere degli interessi dei possessori di rendita sugli abitanti della città.

Ciò portò al consolidarsi di un regime urbano in cui prevalevano delle forti asimmetrie di potere particolarmente evidenti nella perdita di potere contrattuale delle organizzazioni sindacali dei lavoratori dell'amministrazione (Demac & Mattera, 1977). Tale squilibrio di potere nei rapporti tra gruppi urbani non si concretizzò solo nell'abbassamento della spesa pubblica e di conseguenze nell'erogazione dei servizi pubblici urbani, ma anche in un importante cambio di rotta nelle priorità della spessa stessa: gli investimenti furono destinati all'apertura di nuovi mercati urbani (su tutti il turismo) a vantaggio della minoranza ricca della popolazione (Krugman, 2012).

Il caso delle politiche fiscali di New York negli anni Settanta è considerato emblematico di come le pratiche di neoliberismo hanno cominciato ha funzionare e ad essere esportate anche in altri contesti (Harvey 2007) così come il prototipo delle politiche di austerità urbana (Mahler, 2017); per questo la crisi fiscale di New York può essere interpretata come uno dei punti di rottura tra lo stato fiscale — in cui la spesa pubblica era garantita dalle prelievo fiscale e serviva tanto a sostenere il mercato quanto svolgeva una funzione redistributiva - e la formazione della nozione di stato debitore — in cui la spesa pubblica è sostenuta in larga parte dall'indebitamento delle amministrazioni ed è finalizzata prioritariamente a sostenere la crescita economica (Streeck, 2013).

Pietro Vicari studia geografia presso il dipartimento di Geografia e Scienze Territoriale dell'Università di Torino. Si è recentemente occupato di crisi fiscale degli enti locali, tra le recenti pubblicazioni "Roma: ancora un'eccezione" con Alberto Violante in *Roma in Transizione* a cura di Coppola A e Pungiano G., Planum Publisher, 2018

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1 *Emergency Financial Control Board*, agenzia governativa creata per scongiurare la bancarotta della città .

Superato, con lo shock della crisi, un modello di accumulazione in cui l'aumento della domanda di beni di carattere sociale fruibili collettivamente grazie al finanziamento pubblico aveva contribuito anche all'aumento del consumo privato, in una dinamica in cui la spesa delle amministrazioni locali aveva pertanto finanziato sia l'espansione del servizi urbani sia l'espansione del mercato, in modo simile a quanto descritto da O'connor (1977) per il bilancio dello stato, si aprì una fase caratterizzata dalla scarsità di risorse a disposizione delle amministrazioni locali a cui molte città fecero fronte emettendo titoli finanziari municipali.

Tale ciclo ha –in ultima istanza- consentito alla crisi urbana di "guadagnare tempo" senza però che venissero affrontate le ragioni strutturali della sua formazione. Il mercato dei titoli municipali ha seguito un andamento del tutto simile al ciclo descritto da Minski (Minsky, H. P., & Kaufman, H. 2008). Per rappresentare gli andamenti del mercato finanziario: a una prima fase di entusiasmo legata al successo di strumenti che hanno consentito di disporre di una liquidità immediata, è seguita una fase speculativa in cui per poter continuare a sostenere gli oneri del debito contratto si è stati costretti a ricorrere all'emissione di nuovi titoli o al mercato secondario delle obbligazioni e, infine, un momento di crollo del valore dei titoli in cui la bolla è esplosa con il risultato che decine di amministrazioni locali sono state costrette a dichiarare la bancarotta (Kirkpatrick 2016).

> *La mancata soluzione dei problemi fiscali sul fronte delle entrate fu alla base di una nuova stagione di indebitamento degli enti locali: il bail out del 1977*

Paradossalmente questo sistema che era stato imposto per sanare l'insostenibile spesa pubblica del modello Keynesiano ha finito per dimostrarsi economicamente insostenibile, perchè il livello di indebitamento non è stato sostenuto da livelli crescità sufficentemente alti (Gallino, 2015). Nonostante questo la risposta è stata la formulazione di nuove politiche di austerity e nuovi processi di mercatizzazione dei servizi.

La crisi fiscale urbana in Italia

In Italia la crisi fiscale urbana segue una dinamica cronologica molto simile: una crisi nella seconda metà degli anni '70, seguita da una lunga fase di accumulazione di debito, culminata con una nuova crisi negli anni post 2008. Tale sincronia, che conferma il rapporto tra crisi fiscale urbana e le dinamiche economiche globali, è stata proposta anche dal Wall Street Journal quando nel 2013, a pochi mesi dalla bancarotta di Detroit, l'amministrazione comunale di Roma fu costretta dal forte indebitamento a una lunga contrattazione con il governo centrale per ottenere le risorse necessarie alla chiusura del bilanco. Per paragonare il contesto anglosassone a quello italiano però è necessario prestare attenzione ad alcune differenze significative dei due sistemi di welfare nonché al peso della finanza locale nei due paesi.

La prima differenza è deducibile dai dati forniti dall'OECD sul grado di autonomia fiscale dei governi locali. In Italia solo il 15,9% dell'imposizione viene prelevato dagli enti locali (11,7% dalle regioni e 4,2% dai comuni) mentre negli Stati Uniti il 36,8% delle imposte sono locali (il 20,9% dagli stati federali e il restante 15,9% alle amministrazioni municipali) (Sacchi, A., & Salotti, S. 2014). Questo fa sì che le città abbiano ridotte capacità autonome di investimento ma che paradossalmente anche i ritorni fiscali degli investimenti siano a vantaggio della fiscalità centrale[2]. Inoltre il ricorso ai derivati è quasi nullo nei bilanci degli enti locali

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2 Tra il 2001 e il 2005, negli anni della crescita l'IVA versata nel Comune di Roma aumentò del 37%, senza che la città ne avesse un vero beneficio. Fonte: Diprtimento delle Finanze- Direzione studi e ricerche economico-fiscali.

Italiani. Non si determina quindi una spiccata dipendenza delle singole città dall'andamento del mercato finanziario con le relative conseguenze all'esplosione della bolla finanziaria. Dal punto di vista normativo negli Stati Uniti il ricorso alla bancarotta è largamente diffuso, in Italia, invece, la normativa è stata riscritta nel senso della responsabilità fiscale assoluta nel 2011: le amministrazioni che evidanziano una situazione cronica di sofferenza finanziaria sono tenute a dichiare il "dissesto" concordando con la corte dei conti un piano di rientro. Tale procedura impone, tra le altre misure, l'aumento al massimo delle aliquote delle imposte comunali, il blocco delle assunzioni e, in caso di riconosciuta responsabilità politica, l'ineleggibilità dei sindaci in carica. Per l'insostenibilità politica della gestione della crisi fiscale per le grandi città infatti ha fatto sì che la sola Alessandria durante la crisi, abbia dichiarato dissesto finanziario tra i capoluoghi di provincia. Gli altri comuni hanno comunque avuto accesso ad un fondo circolare di pre-dissesto o direttamente alla negoziazione col governo centrale.

Dagli anni '70 a oggi

Nel 1976 il debito degli enti locali italiani raggiunse quota 26.000 miliardi tanto che il quotidinao "la Repubblica" l' 8 settembre dello stesso anno titola "L'innarrestabile crack dei comuni italiani". Questa crisi era frutto, anche, della sostituzione delle imposte locali di consumo con l'IVA nel 1973, che aveva privato i comuni di una entrata cospicua. In attesa di una più generale riforma della finanza locale il finanziamento degli enti locali doveva essere assicurato da trasferimenti ancorati al gettito dei tributi soppressi. "Di fatto i trasferimeti non tennero il passo con l'inflazione e con lo sviluppo della domanda di servizi locali, e vi fu un massicio ricorso all'indebitamento, anche per finanziare le spese correnti" (Piemonte, I. R. E. S., Irpet & Irer, 2010).

Lo sviluppo della domanda di servizi sociali si espresse anche elettoralmente nella vittoria di amministrazioni locali i cui programmi prevedevano importanti investimenti sociali, condizione che determinò una disomogeneità tra il governo centrale guidato dalla democrazia cristiana e le amministrazioni locali guidate dalle così dette "giunte rosse", elemento che cositui una fonte di difficoltà ulteriore nell'affrontare il tema della ripartizione delle risorse finanziarie tra le varie scale del governo.

Questo tipo di interpretazione si alimentò attraverso un "uso ideologico della crisi urbana" (Ceccarelli 1978): la Democrazia Cristiana enfatizzò le responsabilità delle amministrazioni locali mentre il P.C.I. puntò l'indice sulle ineffcenze delle pregresse esperienze amministrative. Da questa competizione scaturirono politiche concentrate sulla ristrutturazione della spesa con l'obbiettivo di risolvere - attraverso una più rigida regolamentazione- le "cause endogene al funzionamento dell'amministrazione" che procuravano il disavanzo (Magnaghi 1976).

Si introdusse così un regime di austerità che doveva garantire " una corretta gestione aziendale dell'amministrazione" (Magnaghi 1976). Tale visione si accompagno alla convinzione che l'efficenza nell'erogazione dei servizi pubbilci passasse per la loro aziendalizzazione

La mancata soluzione dei problemi fiscali sul fronte delle entrate fu alla base di una nuova stagione di indebitamento degli enti locali: il bail out del 1977 era stata una misura estemporanea a cui non aveva corrisposto l'attribuzione delle risorse necessarie alle amministrazioni comunali, così che lo Stato alla fine degli anni '80 si vide comunque reimpegnato ad intervenire. A titolo esemplificativo possiamo citare le 336 dichiarazioni di dissesto finanzia-

rio tra il 1989 (anno d'introduzione della procedura) e il 1993[3].

Dagli anni '90 l'evoluzione del quadro normativo nella direzione della responsabilizzazione finanziaria dei comuni, la spinta progressiva verso un federalismo fiscale basato sull'utilizzo delle proprie risorse e l'introduzione del Patto di Stabilità Interno in ossequio ai parametri di Maastricht hanno finito per provocare da un lato la diminuzione dei trasferimenti, dall'altra obblighi di spesa sempre più severi.

Tale condizione ha lasciato una ridottissima capacità di manovra agli enti locali, anche là dove il rapporto tra il prelievo fiscale e la spesa, così come definito dal nuovo assetto federale, risultava positivo.

Dal 2011 gli obblighi finanziari imposti agli enti locali sono stati ulteriormente inaspriti dagli effetti sulla scala locale del Fiscal Compact. In questo contesto l' austerità fiscale viene riproposta come cura necessaria, nuovamente senza che a questo corrisponda una ridefinizione del quadro di attribuzione delle risorse. Questo ha determinato "una ripresa del numero e della gravità delle situazioni locali caratterizzate da difficoltà finanziaria" (De Toni, A. 2017) esemplificabile con le 111 nuove dichiarazioni di dissesto tra il 2011 e il 2014.

Nel processo di indebitamento dei comuni metropolitani, un ruolo preminente è stato svolto dalle aziende municipali di servizi urbani: per esempio la condizione finanziaria delle aziende di trasporto pubblico locale a Roma, Torino e Napoli confermano l'ipotesi che la condizione di crisi possa essere legata al processo di aziendalizzazione dei servizi che al contrario avrebbe dovuto garantire efficienza economica.

Conclusioni

La storia comparata della crisi fiscale urbana in Italia e negli Stati Uniti ne evidenzia le cause e le implicazioni sistemiche: il momento di crisi della finanza locale corrisponde all'incapacità di governo del territorio nei passaggi di fase e si traduce, sul terreno politico, in un conflitto tra scale di governo per la distribuzione delle risorse.

In quest'ottica appaiono comprensibili le difficoltà nella gestione politica della crisi fiscale urbana in Italia.

Il tentativo di affrontare tale contigenza attraverso un'ulteriore irrigidimento della normativa attraverso cui il governo nazionale aveva sperato di circoscrivere la crisi non è riuscito nello scopo. Allo stesso tempo, il tentativo di avviare una nuova stagione di riformismo urbano, eludendo il tema delle risorse disponibili, sta trovando nei vincoli della finanza locale un limite materiale di costruzione più grosso di quanto previsto.

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3 Bisogna tenere in considerazione che la normativa allora vigente non comportava pressochè nessuna conseguenza per gli enti che dichiaravano dissesto, comè stato notato questo ha prodotto una de-responsabilizzazione delle amministrazioni locali che ha finito per amplificare il fenomeno.

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Managing Austerity:
Insights into Spatial Governance from an English City

Jonathan Davies

The research discussed below is part of an eight case international study looking at how austerity is governed and resisted, conducted in Athens, Baltimore, Barcelona, Dublin, Leicester, Melbourne (Dandenong), Montreal and Nantes. A report summarising each of the case studies is available in English, French, Greek and Spanish and can be downloaded at http://cura.our.dmu.ac.uk/category/austerity- governance/ (Davies, 2017). The city of Leicester is the subject of this brief comment.

British cities, especially those with the greatest concentrations of poverty and deprivation have been hit hard by austerity and inter-linked restructurings of the local state (Hastings et al, 2017). Leicester is among the worst affected by UK government austerity cuts, leading to an estimated reduction in budgets for non- statutory services of 63% between 2010 and 2020. The city, with a population of some 342,000 people is located in central England. Municipal politics are dominated by the Labour Party, which has held the office of Executive Mayor since it was first established in 2011. Leicester is notable for its branding as a multi-cultural city, with some 50% of its population from minority ethnic backgrounds.

In the context of austerity and neoliberalisation, it is also notable for its income poverty. In 2014, it was reported to have the lowest average household income of any city in the country[1]. Yet, even this statistic fails to capture the extent of deprivation. A recent study discovered that thousands of apparel workers in the area earn less than 50% of the national minimum wage (many of them Asian women). Employers at the boundaries of formality and informality achieve this scandalous wage level by under-reporting working hours (Hammer, 2015). Hence, sweatshop practices are rife, but not recorded in official statistics.

European readers will already know that British cities have been among the least vociferous in challenging austerity. The urban revolt has been fleeting and never sustained in the way that we have seen, in different ways, in cities like Athens and Barcelona. A key focus of our case study in Leicester has been to try and explain how austerity has been normalised and rendered governable, and why the urban resistance has been muted.

In brief, we argue that the roots of austerity governance lie in four inter- related processes converging over a 20-year period from the early 1970s, linked to the rolling crises of Fordism. The first three were experienced widely in British cities: industrial retrenchment, the decisive defeat of militant trade unionism and the defeat of municipal socialism and subsequent adoption of "realism" and developmental logics by Labour local authorities under Thatcherite

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discipline and control (Davies, 2004). The fourth factor, the embrace of multi-culturalism marked out Leicester as a pioneer. Multi-culturalism is significant as an austerity governance strategy, in part because of its celebration of entrepreneurial self-sufficiency, for example among Asian and Polish groups and in part because of the spatial segmentation of different groups – discussed further below.

We suggest that this four-way convergence was decisive in Leicester. Institutional rules and practices established during this period of struggle remain inscribed in the tactics and strategies of austerity governance in Leicester today. The consequence has been that local state actors, most of whom believe austerity to be very damaging, have sought to manage it pragmatically. As a councillor put it, "there are political colleagues who would say we've sold out – it's not like that … drama and conflict aren't in the best interests of the city". We call this approach "austerian realism".

The remainder of the paper focuses on austerian realism as a technique of spatial governance, containing and limiting resistance in the city. We find Gramsci's theory of hegemony helpful in understanding the processes at work. Gramsci (1971: 52) observed of the struggle to construct an alternative hegemony:

> … the history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to (at least provisional stages of) unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups; it therefore can only be demonstrated when an historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success.

The spatial governance of austerity in Leicester is a good example of how the "activity of ruling groups" interrupted resistance, cultivating what Brenner and Elden (2009) called territory effects. Like the UK as a whole, anti-austerity protests in Leicester have been vibrant, but not consolidated into a sustained movement. Protests have won marginal gains, but austerity has been delivered mostly without the expected "howls of protest" (Councillor).

Two examples illustrate the ways in which resistance has been pre-empted and contained. First, Leicester prides itself on welcoming ethnic minority migrant groups into the city. At the same time, however, the population is residentially segmented, with working class white areas concentrated in the West, minority ethnic groups East and North East of the centre. A participant in one of our focus groups observed: "some areas are totally mono culture … they can be … incredibly white. But actually, as a city, we're not at all. But where they're incredibly white, there's a fracture arising, you know".

Some of our more critical respondents linked the lack of organised resistance to these residential patterns. Talking about the relative lack of anti-austerity protests in the city, a respondent observed that "one of the benefits of Leicester being so diverse in terms of the various communities, it helps in it not happening". Relatedly, "there is a possibility that because of the nature of the different communities in the city with the difference in terms of the way that they address what's happening to them economically, that you don't see the whole explosion. You might see an explosion of one particular group". This reference to the way different ethnic groups cope with economic dispossession gestured to stereotypes about Asian entrepreneurialism and working class white alienation. A voluntary sector respondent captured this idea in commenting that Asian communities "have looked after themselves very much better than say, the white community who have … sort of run by different rules".

In other words, the combination of the official politics of multiculturalism and patterns of residency contributed to ensuring that the multicultural experience of dispossession among African, Asian and white British working class people has not, for the most part, been experi-

enced in the form of inter-cultural solidarity.

In the second example, our research revealed how spatial austerity governance contained resistance when it did arise in a significant form. One of Leicester's approaches to managing and mitigating austerity has been to making efficiency savings by merging and integrating services. For example, the city's programme for "Transforming Neighbourhood Services" (TNS) sought to preserve facilities in new multi-service hubs, notably by moving libraries into community centres.

In delivering TNS, Leicester City Council proceeded carefully, dividing the city into six programme areas. The reasoning given by local officials was very striking. Said one, "... what we learned was that we didn't want to do the whole thing in one go.... because that seemed to generate concern, protest, anger all over the place and it took a long time for people to even accept what had happened". One of final areas did generate significant resistance, to the proposed closure of the local library. This inter-cultural campaign was well organised, linking angry citizens from different ethnic backgrounds to strong political support from local Members of Parliament and ward councillors. We observed the crucial public meeting of over 300 residents. At this meeting, the logics of "austerian realism" were vocalized repeatedly by council officials. For example, "we have to accept the world is changing ... We try to be as inclusive as possible ... But the reality is, we don't have the budget, I am not going to hide

the reality, and I cannot explain any more clearly today the reality of the situation".

The roots of austerity governance lie in (four) inter-related processes converging over a 20-year period from the early 1970s, linked to the rolling crises of Fordism.

People responded angrily to these repeated invocations of "reality". One speaker said they "know about Central Government and understand that". What "disappoints him is listening and seeing how the Councillor is acting today, he seems more like a Chief Executive than a Labour Councillor". The meeting applauded thunderously (contemporaneous notes). Shortly afterwards, LCC reversed the proposed closure, marking a clear victory for the campaign. But, asked why similar protests had not been seen elsewhere in Leicester, a campaigner made an astutely Lefebvrian point.

> Well, I think we hear about things at different times. So ...the different libraries were closed before ours was and we didn't know it was gonna come to us. So I think in an ideal world yes, we would all stand together. But the reality is services are not cut in one swoop, because then you would have the whole city up in arms against you if you were the Council.

This comment precisely captured the spatio-temporal logic for salami-slicing

the programme into six areas explained by the officials. The staggering of the programme meant that changes in more compliant areas had already been accomplished. Any lessons drawn by activists in other areas were learned too late. The containment of protest thus created territory effects: socio-spatial distancing consolidated austerian realism.

Four conclusions follow. First, we can see that austerity in Leicester has been challenged in significant ways, with the resistance forging empowered displays of inter-cultural unity. Secondly, nevertheless, unity is "interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups" notably, for current purposes, through the management of space. There are important considerations here for local activists seeking to link neighbourhoods and different ethnic groups in a way that achieves sustained spatial centrality. Third, although many other factors have contributed to limiting urban resistance to austerity in the UK, the tactics of local state actors, who

otherwise detested austerity, have been significant in securing a relatively frictionless and de- politicized intensification of urban neoliberalisation.

Fourth, and finally, these findings pose a challenge for the left wing leadership of the UK Labour Party, which gained immensely in confidence and prestige after the June 2017 General Election. Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, recently declared that he wants to resurrect the politics of municipal socialism including, for example, the re-municipalisation of local services. To assist in this process, Labour is taking measures to restore the political spirit of councillors demoralised and exhausted by nearly a decade of delivering austerity. Our study of Leicester is a cautionary note. "Austerian realism" is deeply embedded in the culture of the local state, and shifting it in another direction could be a significant challenge, even when doing so is entirely legal and constitutional.

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Austerity and Socio-Spatial (In)justices in Athens

Penny Koutrolikou

Austerity and socio-spatial (in)justices

Almost a decade ago, in a brief article / interview about his latest book, Ed Soja responded to the questions of "Why justice?" and "Why now?" by highlighting the increasing significance of a spatial perspective in issues of justice. From different, yet complementary perspectives, justice theories have also started to explore the inter-relations of geography with (in)justice and rights (for example Carmalt, 2017).

In some ways, this might be anticipated since the past decade has been marked by multifaceted notions of crises with critical spatial attributes; of the well-known economic / financial crisis, but also of political crisis (highlighted by the resurgence of far-right parties) and more recently of a 'refugee crisis'. All these crises have been primarily dealt with restrictive, even punitive directives for crisis-management. Prominently so, this has been the case of the crisis-management of the 2008 financial crisis which legitimized and mainstreamed a doctrine of austerity that underscored not only fiscal and debt restructuring policies, but also moral politics of blame and un-deservingness.

According to I.M. Young, injustice "should be defined primarily through the notions of oppression and domination" and further distinguishes what she terms as the five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. Following a similar line of thought we may further identify specific injustices related to austerity driven policies and their repercussions. These include (not exclusively)

Increased poverty as injustice and as violation of rights.

Injustices associated with decrease or denial of access to welfare, aggravating the risk of social exclusion.

Spatial injustices including evictions, homelessness, neighbourhood deprivation but also impacting on the right to housing, on access to resources (such as water, electricity, heating) and on the right to city as a whole.

Injustices of discrimination exacerbating racist, xenophobic, homophobic and in general attacks and discriminations towards any Other defined as 'threat' and/or as a negative stereotype.

"Violence of austerity" (Cooper and Whyte, 2017) since repressive mechanisms and practices become necessary for imposing austerity to an unwilling population.

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All of these — and possibly more — forms of injustices can be identified when examining the impact that austerity doctrine and policies had in the case of Athens, Greece.

Austerity driven injustices

Throughout these years Greece has been trapped in the maelstrom of these inter-related, conjunctural crises, becoming almost synonymous with austerity in the European (and not only) public discourse. Europe's 'black sheep' who "violated rules, lied and live a luxurious life beyond its means" — as it was argued — had to be disciplined and punished in order to adhere to the rules and regulations imposed. The punishment — albeit presented as the remedy at the time — was austerity driven structural adjustments that run through the public as well as the private sector and goods. As in many forms of punishment, the 'perpetrator' shouldn't solely suffer but its punishment and suffering should become a spectacle that would function as a counter-example for. Yet, as with most tactics of punishment, austerity is not just a technique but a dogma entailing categorizations of 'good' and 'bad' behaviours, definitions of development and 'best' policy paradigms and relying not only on technocracy but also on ideology since it aimed to establish specific hegemonies. Public discourse, both nationally and internationally, was a crucial means for achieving this (Koutrolikou, 2016).

> *The spatial aspects of austerity driven restructuring went beyond the individual / household level.*
>
> *As the repayment of debt was deemed to be the supreme public good, other public goods and assets were used for the former's fulfilment.*

Yet, its repercussions were much more embedded than ideology. Rather, the repercussions of austerity were crucially embedded in the everyday realities and practices of people living in Greece — and particularly in its large urban centres. In the period 2010-2013 unemployment rose to 27% while actual salaries were reduced by 21% (Robolis, 2014). A 2015 Eurostat report 22.1% of the population lives in poverty, 21.5% is at risk of poverty while 17,2% live in a household which faces the risk of unemployment (Press Project, 2015). A UN report (Bohoslavsky, 2015) warned about the possible violations of social and economic as well as human rights that the imposed austerity might induce, while also warning of the danger of a rising far-right while, at the same time, Oxfam was also warning about the adverse repercussions of austerity upon rights — not only in Greece but in most countries where austerity has been imposed.

Besides the socio-economic aspects of austerity directives which have been well-documented, their spatial repercussions have also been significant. Small and medium enterprises have been particularly affected, resulting in increased number of shop closures in the commercial areas of Athens and Pireaus. On the household level, rising unemployment and reduction of salaries (coupled with the increased economic burden due to welfare cutbacks) also meant that numerous households were not able to repay their mortgage or rent obligations, making them vulnerable to evictions, foreclosures, homelessness or forced resettlement with elder family members. Increased taxation on housing, initially through the electricity bill, resulted in households living without electricity or further accentuating the above-mentioned risks. Although, until recently, foreclosures have been limited, the fear of losing one's home was present and even more so now when protection against foreclosures is been reduced.

Yet, the spatial aspects of austerity driven restructuring went beyond the individual / household level. As the repayment of debt was deemed to be the supreme public good, other public goods and assets were used for the former's fulfilment. Consequently, large-

scale privatizations of public assets and state-owned utilities companies were initiated (including ports, airports, water and energy provision, land for development and building stock) as were efforts to 'liberalize' planning regulations in favour of a particular model of neoliberal development. It is, thus, unsurprising that the completion of the privation of the former Hellinikon airport in Athens, has been included in the pre-requisites for the completion of the latest evaluation by the lenders (ex-Troika). As it has been renowned elsewhere, such coercive privatizations significantly jeopardize people's rights to not only to public land and resources (often for generations to come) but also to their right to water, electricity and housing.

Fighting austerity driven injustices in Athens

The bleak picture described before, does not imply that reactions and resistance to austerity in Greece was insignificant. On the legal level, debates about the constitutionalism or not of the agreed Memorandum of Understanding, of the debt and its repayment abounded, despite their unfavourable outcomes. More significantly, massive mobilizations tried to stop its enforcement while the Squares initiative further tried to imagine and practice different forms of political deliberation and decision-making (Arampatzi, 2015; Stavrides, 2012). Building on recent past experience of December 2008 and of Syntagma, an array of grassroots and political initiatives emerged either based on past ones (2008) or from the scratch – most from all the spectres of the left.

These initiatives differed in terms of their political trajectories and aims, with some focusing more on solidarity (as they were actually termed), others being rooted in anarchist/anti-authoritarian politics and practices and others being somewhere in between. A significant percentage of them focused on support of immediate/survival needs, such as soup kitchens, barter bazaars, and medical support, being rooted more in ideas of exchange and solidarity rather than charity. Several included provision of supportive course and cultural activities and others took the form of neighbourhood forums and assemblies. In the course of the recent years, some of them disbanded, others cut their ties with the recent government and continued with other people, and others went on.

Of course, numerous questions also emerged; questions regarding their lasting impact, their ability for broader structural transformations and their sustainability due to participation 'fatigue'. Related yet different questions also emerged in regards to political imaginary; questions about the preferred organizational form and scale of a polity and its potentialities for the future (be they in the forms of commons, autonomous communities, libertarian municipalism, anarchist ideals).

Despite their present situation, in diverse ways, such initiatives enacted struggles against the aforementioned injustices and, in some cases, strived for a different political imaginary. The redistributive elements of catering for basic needs and of exchange echo ideas of distributive justice and in reality acted against poverty and social exclusion. As Vaiou and Kalandides observe (2015) they also contribute to increased sociality among participants, through which relations are developed, negotiated and enhanced.

Their spatial practices, be they occupations, squats or reclaiming of public space can be considered as struggles against spatial injustices and as acts for claiming their right to the city and to participation in urban life.

As Theodossopoulos (2016) argued, they also contributed to "new forms of urban citizenship

and political imaginary" based on the experience of collective action and claim-making. Different facets of this citizenship include claims over 'new' rights (such as housing, water etc) as well as actions against discrimination and multi-level violence. And as already mentioned, different explorations about potential political imaginaries.

In the end…

The hegemony of austerity in different European cities and countries has brought forward not only the "violence of austerity" but also the diverse struggles of people against its repercussions and against its ideological and political domination. It has given prominence to new debates about rights, not only in their abstract sense but in their rootedness in social, economic and spatial relations. From another perspective, the enactments of justice from initiatives described above (if one can define them as such) more than exercising justice also reflect the practice of (social, economic, cultural and spatial) rights through their claim-making and their practice. Significantly, it has managed — even if limited and only in some cases — to challenge the cultural hegemony of austerity by illustrating the injustices (including the dangers of the rising far-right and its mainstreaming) and by mobilizing discussions about different political imaginaries. Or by "cultivating a counter-rationality" as Brawley argues (2009).

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Big boys don't crash!

L'architettura è mercato. *Questa la tesi con cui Denise Scott Brown provava, in un articolo del 1971, a dimostrare quanto fosse inconsistente l'idea di purezza etica della disciplina che i sostenitori del Movimento Moderno ancora profetizzavano.i La città di Levittown e le ambientazioni degli spot pubblicitari di sottaceti, sono chiamate in causa dalla Brown per sostenere il concetto di un mercato in grado di auto-generare architetture e di auto-produrre linguaggi formali. Alla luce della speculazione edilizia in atto in città come New York e Chicago già dai primissimi anni del Novecento, appare evidente che il principio modernista del* "form follows function" *ha ceduto il passo al* "form follows finance". *Il mercato diventa quindi produttore di immagini, in particolare nello sforzo continuo di trovare una raffigurazione di sé stesso. Una di queste icone-simulacro del modello economico, forse la più riuscita, è di natura architettonica: il grattacielo. Il* Manhattanismo *– come è stato definito a posteriori da Koolhaas - non ha origine negli studi degli architetti ma sulle pagine delle riviste destinate al grande pubblico, come* "LIFE". *Le illustrazioni vedutistiche di città verticali lasceranno poi il posto alle pellicole cinematografiche, ma concorreranno entrambi alla formazione di una base culturale a livello popolare, tradotta prima in immagine e solo in seguito in ideologia.*

"Il monumento del XX secolo è un Automonumento, *e il Grattacielo ne è l'espressione più pura". Proporzioni e forma monolitica, infatti, conferiscono una potenza simbolica ad un volume vuoto che si rende, di fatto,* "disponibile ad accogliere significati". *Significati, questi, inseriti dalle grandi* corporation *e dagli immobiliaristi promotori della sua costruzione. Così il* Pan Am Building *- che sovrasta e annulla la* Gran Central Station *- diventa negli anni Sessanta il simbolo del declino dell'industria ferroviaria in favore dell'ascesa del trasporto aereo e, più in generale, simbolo della supremazia dell'iniziativa privata sull'interesse pubblico. Il* World Trade Center *incarna*

negli anni Settanta il passaggio dal modello economico Fordista al modello Post-Fordista, come sintetizza Baudrillard: "l'effigie del sistema è così passata dall'obelisco e dalla piramide alla scheda perforata e al grafo statistico. Questo grafismo architettonico incarna un sistema che non è più concorrenziale bensì numerico e contabile, dove la concorrenza scompare per lasciar posto alle reti e al monopolio."

Si parla di icone, quindi, ma di icone vincolate alla concretezza del denaro. Per questo motivo, esistono casi in cui la potenza evocativa del grattacielo è diventata espressione delle fragilità e dei fallimenti del modello economico che rappresentava. Il MetLife Building North sarebbe dovuto essere il primo grattacielo a raggiungere i cento piani, ma la crisi finanziaria del 1929 ne bloccò la costruzione che non andò mai oltre il trentesimo. Oggi è un evidente piedistallo sovradimensionato per un oggetto mai terminato, un monumento al martedì nero. Stessa sorte, più di recente, è toccata a Torre Confinanzas a Caracas. Nata dal volere di David Brillembourg, doveva simboleggiare le ambizioni del Venezuela in pieno boom economico alla fine degli anni Ottanta, ed essere parte di un più ampio piano volto a realizzare un distretto finanziario nel centro cittadino con uno skyline che ricalcasse quello delle ricche città statunitensi. La crisi finanziaria e la morte del principale investitore ne fermarono la costruzione, lasciando una struttura incompiuta di quarantacinque piani, oggi occupata da 750 famiglie che costituiscono lo slum verticale più grande del mondo.

La verticalità e il monumentalismo non sono solo una questione dell'emisfero occidentale e l'icona-grattacielo si presta per essere esportata e replicata. Succede, allora, che l'Unione Sovietica, per mantenere il passo degli Stati Uniti, decida di costruire il proprio grattacielo dedicandolo all'ideologia comunista: il Palazzo dei Soviet. Da ambizioso edificio più grande del mondo sarà presto riconvertito in piscina più grande del mondo, non superando mai la quota delle fondamenta. Ed è

ancora di un regime comunista, ma questa volta della Corea del Nord, il grande fallimento del *Ryugyong Hotel*, una piramide scheletrica rimasta incompiuta per anni, oscurata dal partito persino sulle mappe, emblema di una grandezza solo raccontata.

Sullo sfondo di questa storiografia del grattacielo, la fine del Movimento Moderno e gli impacciati tentativi di affermarsi dell'Architettura Post-Moderna - che lo seguirà rapidamente a causa del fallimento dell'amministrazione Regan/Bush e della febbrile economia degli anni Ottanta a cui si ispirava - ma soprattutto le storie personali degli architetti, una su tutte quella di Minoru Yamasaki. Nato negli Stati Uniti da genitori giapponesi, incarna il sogno americano pagandosi gli studi inscatolando pesce in Alaska. Nel corso degli anni le sue architetture entreranno nella storia, loro malgrado, per gli atti di aggressione che subiranno. Pruitt-Igoe diventerà l'emblema della morte del Movimento Moderno, vandalizzato dai suoi abitanti prima e demolito dal governo poi. L'U.S. Military Personnel Records Center, sarà riconosciuto dalla popolazione come il simbolo del sacrificio di sangue in Vietnam e dato ripetutamente alle fiamme. Infine, le Twin Towers *di New York, abbattute da due Boeing 767 e diventate il casus belli per le contemporanee guerre al terrorismo.* vi

Seguendo le dinamiche tipiche della città di New York, oggi, sopra Ground Zero, sorge un complesso molto più grande, dal nome carico di retorica militaresca. La Freedom Tower *abbandona il monopolio dualista delle Torri Gemelle e riprende la corsa al primato. Gli Stati Uniti ritornano all'unica, storica, strategia che conoscono, essere troppo grandi per fallire.*

Marco Ornella - originariamente apparso su Sauvage (Archive Books, 2015)

Stefano Serretta

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Participatory processes for whom?

A critical look at Portugal in times of austerity

Roberto Falanga

Introduction

Citizen participation in policymaking identifies a field of studies and practice concerning the engagement of civil society in public decisions. Initiatives of citizen participation spread around the world in the second half of the XX century to engage local communities in public discussions over planning, health, education, and other policy fields. Against this backdrop, however, the participatory budget implemented by the municipality of Porto Alegre, in Brazil, is considered a milestone. Citizen participation for the deliberation on a share of the municipal budget was realised in a context of sever socioeconomic cleaves and its main purpose was to enhance redistributive policies via local administration reforms in support of the participatory budget.

An increasing number of cities in the country and abroad looked at the initiative as an effective device for democracy. While the World Social Forums in the 2000s praised its goals of social justice and state reform, soon a new global narrative emerged and embodied citizen participation within the "new governance" agenda (EU, 2001; OECD, 2001). The main result of this operation was that social justice and state reform remained on the background of participatory budgeting in favour of goals for citizenry trust towards political representatives and institutions (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2016). If, on the one hand, new governance-led citizen participation allowed private and social agents to sit around the same table for decision-making, concerns arose on power dispersion and invisibility of political and economic elites behind public decisions (Hajer, 2003).

From a critical point of view, citizen participation provided renewed legitimacy to public powers, which aimed to reduce the deliberation into the implementation of public measures, out of meaningful discussion over political agendas. Public measures were often focused on the improvement of local community life, in an attempt to depoliticise internal struggles among different groups (Miraftab, 2009). The success of the global narrative on citizen participation was paired by the massive production of official guidelines and toolkits by international and transnational agencies, reproduced by communities of decision-makers, practitioners, think tanks, and researchers in their localities. The "participation technology" often reduced methods for deliberation to collaborative brainstorming for consensus, unleashing social conflict via easy packaging of techniques (Leal, 2010).

Considering that more than one thousands participatory budgets are being run in Latin America, and in Europe over 1300 had been registered by 2012 (Sgueo, 2016), critical

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exploration on the role of participatory processes is needed, especially in contexts where the action of neoliberalism has dominated the public agenda. Focus on the massive implementation of local participatory processes in Portugal in the years of the austerity (2011-2014), aims to contribute to this topic. Towards this aim, the text describes the implementation of the austerity agenda and the dissemination of participatory processes in Portugal. Finally, the text discusses the relation between participatory processes and austerity to understand the extent to which these are reproducing neoliberal values.

Austerity in Portugal

In 2010, the disruption of the sovereign debt crisis in Portugal affected an instable banking system and worsening trends of national economy. After pressures from the European Union on the national government to adopt austerity measures, eventually rejected by the Parliament in 2011, the Prime Minister José Socrates resigned. Consequently, the three major parties in the country (Socialist, Social-Democrat, and Popular parties) signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Conditionality (MoU) with the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank, and European Commission) in March 2011. The €78 billion bailout package was provided to stabilise domestic finances and improve international competitiveness in order to regain a complete bond market access.

The narrative adopted by the national government during the implementation of the austerity agenda was characterised by strategies of shift-blaming towards previous governments and international lenders (Ferreira and Fonseca, 2015). This strategy allowed the government to pass harsh policies, otherwise difficult to be approved in "normal" times of democracy (Cardoso and Branco, 2017). Among the worsening effects under the austerity agenda, unemployment rate rose to over 15% in the second quarter 2012 and, according to OECD (2015), especially affected young people, whose unemployment rate rose to over 42% in the first quarter of 2013. Social and economic inequality showed sever growth with 60% of the unemployment considered in long-term unemployment (Rodrigues et al., 2016).

At the local level, MoU imposed goals of rationalisation (MoU, Q3-2011: reduction of local entities to enhance service delivery, improve efficiency, and reduce costs) and efficiency (MoU, Q2-2012: reduction of management positions and administrative units by at least 15% by the end of 2012). Troika also encouraged amending the New Urban Lease Act Law 6/2006 to balance rights and obligations of property owners and

> *The shift from goals of social justice and state reform, to the recovery of citizenry trust towards political representatives and institutions was one of the most evident features of practices western democracies.*

tenants. In fact, according to EC, a large number of empty apartments in city centres were causing a substantial waste of capital as well as additional public costs and unemployment due to reduced geographical mobility of Portuguese society. The strategy for housing policies was to ease "rental control, strengthening ownership rights, simplifying judicial procedures and construction permits and modernising property taxes" (EC, 2014).

Some of the austerity measures were firmly opposed by the Constitutional Court and by national labour unions, contributing to put under a critical light both government and international lenders. Protests and strikes in 2011 and 2012 were largely supported by national corporative groups, labour unions, and political parties at the end of the left spectrum (Baumgarten, 2013). Their participation into protests, however, contributed to decrease their

perceived legitimacy as partners in political dialogue (OQD Report 2012). Economic recession and increase of poverty were aggravated by forms of growing alienation and disaffection from the political class perceived as corrupt and dishonest (De Sousa et al., 2014). As Lapavistas et al. (2012) summed up "[t]he mix of austerity and liberalisation within the eurozone has been harsh on working people but also dangerous for economy and society" (ibid., 113).

For different reasons, lenders largely criticised growing fatigue in the implementation of the austerity and the decrease of ownership showed by the national government, which peaked discontent among private actors, political parties at the opposition, and civil society. In June 2014, Portugal exited the adjustment programme, and in the parliamentary elections of October 2015, a new left-wing coalition between socialist, communist and left block parties took office. Government programme openly criticised the austerity measures, as the effects of the recession on socioeconomic conditions largely exceeded expectations.

Citizen participation in policymaking in Portugal

Before the adoption of the austerity agenda, dissemination of participatory processes in Portugal had started in the early 2000s and massively increased in the last ten years. According to available data, the country owns today the highest rate of local participatory processes when considering the ratio between number of municipalities and processes. A recent search made by the author of this text in the national observatory (www.portugalparticipa.pt/monitoring) in August 2017, retrieved an overall of 186 ongoing practices, most of them participatory budgets implemented on the municipal scale.

The first experiences of participation drew great inspiration from Porto Alegre, as in Palmela in 2002, while the implementation of the participatory budget of Lisbon in 2007/2008 promoted a new institutional design, soon becoming dominant in the country until now. Participatory budgets are commonly designed as annual processes adopting co-decisional mechanisms, thus citizens are invited to both propose and vote public measures on a share of the municipal budget. They generally address goals for the recovery of citizenry trust towards democratic institutions, which has led both left and right wing parties to embrace citizen participation in local political agendas. Grassroots groups (e.g. groups of militants and activists) are not officially invited in these arenas. In fact, the target of participatory budgets are the citizens, who are invited - via public meetings and online tools — as individuals with power to propose and vote projects. The chance to see his/her project funded and implemented rely on his/her skills to campaign and create networks of support (i.e. people voting the project).

The mobilisation of citizens on behalf of specific projects reduces the potential of participatory budgets to provide spaces of political debate. Today, participatory budgets look more like a "competition of ideas", rather than a shared practice of democracy (Dias, 2008). One of the risks behind the competition among citizens is the reinforcement of socioeconomic bias, as most disadvantaged sectors of society often lack resources to play on an equal ground (Hoppe, 2011). The increasing amount of unemployed and poor people in the years of the austerity, and their great distance from public life, raises concerns about their effective inclusion through this institutional design. Despite growing efforts to improve dissemination and accessibility to these arenas have been made by local governments, the self-organisation of networks seemed to contribute to the disenfranchisement of the most disadvantaged from participatory budgets. Furthermore, the lack of protesters, mainly militants and activists, seemingly prevented these arenas from meaningful debate on claims for social justice. Whereas the institutional design of participatory budgets did not provide formal space for

these groups to voice in, protesters also tended to use other channels than not government-led arenas, in contrast to what occurred in Spain (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2016).

Discussion and conclusions

Who needs participatory processes and, more pointedly, who needed those spaces during the years of austerity in Portugal? The Portuguese case is framed within the wider picture of citizen participation disseminating around the globe since the early 2000s. The shift from goals of social justice and state reform, to the recovery of citizenry trust towards political representatives and institutions was one of the most evident features of practices western democracies. As regards participatory budgets in Portugal, the little room for political debate in these arenas during the years of austerity is understood in light of this broader change occurred at the global level.

More pointedly, despite in some cases participatory budgets were enacted as a counter-measure to the substantive cuts on local budgets (cf. Green Paper on Local Administration Reform and Law 22/2012), their role cannot be reduced to that. Their dissemination before and after the austerity witnesses the success of these processes regardless those criti-cal years. The little impact that participatory processes had in bringing within the arenas claims of social justice during the years of austerity was due to the conceptual and practical distance operated through their institutional designs from poor and powerless citizens, as well as from grassroots groups. As such, participatory budgets did not play any meaningful counteraction to austerity as deliberation rather focused on the collection of citizens' ideas to improve community life and their implementation.

The dissemination of participatory processes in the country should be praised for providing power of decision to civil society. While so, the global promotion of processes aimed at re-covering citizenry trust towards political institutions and representatives has substituted and unleashed potentials of social conflict with goals of good governance. Further exploration of the institutional designs promoted within the historical process of transformation of citizen participation is needed to improve scholarly debate in this field of studies and practice.

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Austerity e anti-austerity: il caso di Messina "città ribelle"

Pietro Saitta

Nelle pagine che seguono guarderemo alle manifestazioni dell'*austerity* nell'ottica della periferia. Sarebbe a dirsi che osserveremo gli orizzonti aperti e chiusi da quello che è stato il modo prevalente di declinare la grande "crisi" iniziata nel 2008 a partire dalla prospettiva di una città di provincia, Messina, che è stata anche teatro di una "rivoluzione" mancata: quella promessa dal Sindaco Renato Accorinti nel corso di una campagna elettorale che nel 2013 – nel bel mezzo, per l'appunto, della crisi – lo condusse a vincere le elezioni amministrative abbracciando il tema dei "beni comuni" e quello di una gestione "sociale" del *default* che incombeva sulla città e che il candidato sindaco, paradossalmente, andava perseguendo. Nell'ottica forse ingenua e disinformata di quel tempo che precedeva l'esperienza di governo, il *default*[1], ossia il dissesto delle casse comunali, non era infatti salutato come un'apocalisse, ma come un modo di rifiutare il "debito" e individuare le responsabilità politiche che nel corso di qualche decennio avevano fatto incetta delle risorse economiche locali, gettando la città sul lastrico.

Credo che già queste poche notazioni ci consentano di sottrarre parzialmente il tema dell'*austerity* ai domini della finanza e del contenimento della spesa pubblica, così come a quello della critica politica, incentrata sul disvelamento della "pedagogia" perseguita dai promotori europei di questa modalità di governo incentrata sulla continenza così come sulla punizione delle amministrazioni poco parsimoniose, oltre che sulla produzione di un nuovo spazio sociale ripulito delle ultime vestigia beveridgiane del vecchio contratto sociale post-bellico. Nell'ottica locale da cui osserviamo la questione, insomma, l'*austerity* non appariva tanto come una chiusura, ma come un'opportunità. O, meglio, un'utopia: quella – per dirla con due ex protagonisti di questa rivoluzione urbana mancata – che consisteva nel vedere le città, anche quelle disperse e apparentemente distanti dal "centro", come "luoghi terminali

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1 Ai sensi del Titolo VIII del Testo Unico degli Enti Locali (Tuel), un ente è in dissesto se non può garantire l'assolvimento delle funzioni e dei servizi indispensabili e se esistono crediti da parte di terzi a cui non si possa fare validamente fronte. Le procedure esecutive pendenti sono estinte d'ufficio. Inoltre sino all'approvazione del rendiconto i debiti insoluti non producono più interessi né si rivalutano. Di contro l'ente non può contrarre mutui. Aliquote e tariffe di base vengono innalzate nella misura massima consentita per cinque anni. I servizi a domanda individuale (per esempio, mense scolastiche, asili etc.) devono essere erogati con proventi tariffari e contributi dell'utenza. I soggetti responsabili del dissesto diventano incandidabili per un decennio. La procedura di risanamento viene affidata sia a un organo straordinario ai fini della liquidazione, sia ai legittimi organi istituzionale dell'ente, con l'incarico di rimuovere le cause strutturali poste alla base del dissesto. Infine la dotazione organica dell'ente va rideterminata individuando le eccedenze.

dell'estrazione della ricchezza, dell'imposizione delle politiche fiscali, delle politiche sul debito e della privatizzazione dei beni pubblici [...] Possono diventare il luogo dal quale parte il rifiuto di questo modello [...] Tutto questo può, però, essere anche solo una "narrazione", condita da qualche concessione sul terreno degli spazi sociali e del diritto di tribuna a qualche movimento o rivendicazione sociale, che lasci immutati gli equilibri di potere nei territori e che rimanga dentro le compatibilità imposte dal quadro politico" (Lo Presti e Sturniolo, 2017, p. 33).

È quasi superfluo rilevare che, nel caso in questione, quest'ultima condizione è stata quella che si è realizzata. La presa del potere in quella che appariva come una città impossibile da espugnare, si è infatti rivelata una trappola per il neo-sindaco e per il "movimento di movimenti" che lo aveva sostenuto. Ossia il primo capitolo di una ritirata soltanto strategica di quel blocco sociale post-democristiano e post-missino, confluito in Forza Italia, in Alleanza Nazionale, nel Pd e in una miriade di liste minori, che per decenni, a turno e/o consociativamente, aveva governato la città assecondando clientele politiche e gli interessi di un'imprenditoria rapace che si è espressa soprattutto nel mattone e nel consumo del territorio. Infatti, dopo essersi garantita una salda e favorevole composizione assembleare, ottenuta, come alcune inchieste giudiziarie hanno dimostrato, anche attraverso pacchi di pasta e soldi, questa solida macchina da guerra reazionaria si è ritirata al momento del ballottaggio facendo vincere Accorinti insieme a quattro consiglieri. Verosimilmente nel quadro letterale di una resa dei conti che andava traducendosi se non nel dissesto, nel contenimento e nell'impossibilità di continuare a governare secondo il proprio stile ridistributivo selettivo, a questo blocco sociale non restava che mollare temporaneamente le redini [2], scommettendo a ragion veduta sulla propria capacità di ricatto in aula e, soprattutto, sul ravvedimento della controparte, nel cui staff politico non mancavano "persone di buon senso" che avrebbero dissuaso il futuro sindaco dal perseguire veramente il *default* e, dunque, accertare definitivamente quelle responsabilità penali e politiche a cui dichiarava di essere interessato (considerato che, al di là delle sanzioni penali, nel caso di un simile accertamento le vere conseguenze sarebbero consistite nell'esclusione per *legem* di alcune figure del recente passato dallo svolgimento di incarichi pubblici per almeno un decennio).

Se è arduo spiegare nei dettagli a chi è estraneo al contesto antropologico-politico locale i modi e le figure di quelle "infiltrazioni" che rendevano il blocco di potere precedente così certo degli esiti della "rivoluzione" profilantesi all'orizzonte, può essere forse sufficiente notare che l'insidia si celava nella natura plurale del movimento e delle biografie politiche che avevano accettato la sfida posta da questo militante e personaggio pubblico candidato al ruolo di primo cittadino, ampiamente conosciuto e apprezzato nella società locale, inclusa quella estesissima dei non-militanti e dei semplici cittadini. Militante pacifista sin dagli anni settanta, ambientalista e figura di primo piano di quel movimento No-Ponte che aveva mobilitato migliaia di persone all'inizio degli anni duemila, fustigatore del malcostume

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2 Francantonio Genovese incarna più che di altro queste nozioni di potere e di blocco sociale. Imprenditore, appartenente a un'influente famiglia democristiana che annovera anche un "pluri-ministro", deputato regionale e nazionale, sindaco di Messina negli anni duemila, nel 2012 diventa, con quasi 20.000 voti, anche il candidato parlamentare più votato alle primarie del Pd. Nel 2013 iniziano i suoi guai giudiziari, che lo porteranno ad essere arrestato oltre che espulso dal Pd. Transiterà allora in Forza Italia e in occasione delle elezioni regionali del 2017 darà uno straordinario segnale di potenza facendo eleggere il figlio ventunenne, che risulterà il più votato della provincia di Messina con oltre 17.000 voti. Per quanto concerne il suo impegno indiretto nel Comune di Messina in questi anni di "opposizione", basterà notare come in occasione del suo transito verso Forza Italia farà trasferire in massa quasi tutti i consiglieri del Pd in quest'altro partito.

politico e conduttore singolo di numerose battaglie cittadine che andavano dagli spazi verdi alle biblioteche comunali, buddista ecumenico dotato di stretti contatti con organizzazioni cattoliche di base e con segmenti dell'alta borghesia "illuminata" che gravitavano attorno a questo stesso mondo, e, infine, professore di educazione fisica e allenatore di atletica leggera che ha coltivato centinaia di giovani e decine di talenti sportivi cittadini, Renato Accorinti era una personaggio pubblico carismatico, dotato di vaste e variegate reti, in grado di suscitare simpatie interclassiste e di mettere d'accordo universi tra loro distantissimi come quello dei centri sociali, della borghesia moderata di sinistra e dei quartieri popolari. La medesima composizione, non a caso, che ha seguito e sostenuto la campagna elettorale con modalità autenticamente popolari e *pasionarie* che solo poche città nel corso degli ultimi decenni hanno verosimilmente avuto modo di esperire. Tali da fare parlare a ragion veduta di "aspettative messianiche" riguardanti il suo avvento (Palumbo, 2016).

Riflettendo sugli esiti di questa avventura, conclusasi con una impopolarità e un'avversione pari solamente alle attese che ne avevano accompagnato l'ascesi, una lezione che possiamo ricavare è che quella capacità di raccordare "moltitudini" – generalmente vista come un fattore desiderabile e da ricercare attivamente – è in realtà la condizione indispensabile per inquinare i progetti "rivoluzionari" e depotenziarli. Soprattutto se, com'è naturale che sia per una "rivoluzione" che si svolge in realtà entro i confini abituali della democrazia, la "squadra di governo" debba riflettere quella stessa pluralità e, dunque, operare secondo i criteri di un qualsivoglia manuale Cencelli del mondo "antagonista".

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E, successivamente, una vestigia del passato politico: qualcosa, cioè, che appartiene alla fase dell'immaturità e che poco ha a che fare con il realismo, le procedure e gli aspetti tecnici della pratica di governo. Lì ove, infatti, il governo finisce gradualmente con l'ammantarsi di tecnicismi, tecnocrati, obblighi procedurali e principio di continuità dell'azione amministrativa (anche e soprattutto di quella ereditata dalle amministrazioni precedenti).

E per sostanziare queste osservazioni basti pensare a come, una volta insediatasi, questa giunta plurale in cui confluiscono qualche rappresentante moderato del "movimento", molte figure estranee alla comunità politica ma attive nella "società civile" (qualunque cosa questa sia), stagionati protagonisti del volontariato cattolico ed esperti tecnici-imprenditori (in almeno un caso non privo di un qualche conflitto di interessi, come quello che lo vede creditore del Comune per servizi d'opera prestati negli anni precedenti), prende a riformulare la lotta all'*austerity* non nei termini del rifiuto del debito, ma in quelli del Piano di riequilibrio. Ossia di una rinegoziazione del debito che permetta di salvare "capre e cavoli": ossia di co-dirigere la progressiva perdita di controllo sui servizi e i prezzi (saliti comunque al massimo consentito), mantenendo dunque una qualche minima forma di controllo sugli obiettivi dell'azione politica, ma rinunciando tuttavia a fare tabula rasa di quella struttura politica, di importanza non soltanto locale, che aveva generato la situazione presente dei conti pubblici. E, anzi, trasformando questa stessa struttura, a cui partecipavano sottosegretari e figure non esattamente marginali del potere politico nazionale, in alleati di questo processo di risanamento finanziario.

Un'operazione, peraltro, assai complessa dal punto di vista tecnico, che, in mancanza di personale politico competente tra i propri ranghi, finisce necessariamente col doversi avvalere di tecnocrati, proveniente da file non esattamente amiche: per esempio quelle di tecnici renziani, "impiegati" di società di consulenza che agiscono senza troppi misteri in nome dell'establishment piddino, impegnati a scalare gli assessorati economici delle città avversarie e commissariarle di fatto nel nome di un governo nazionale non proprio sensibile alle aspirazioni delle "città ribelli". Oppure, in una rapida successione di incarichi, conferendo i medesimi assessorati a personaggi altrettanto competenti, se non di più, ma col cuore a destra e il portafogli ovunque. Personaggi, cioè, che provenivano dalle fila del neofascismo storico o di quello più tardo in giacca e cravatta, che si erano trovati a svolgere il proprio incarico dappertutto, ma soprattutto in comuni che avevano spesso finito con l'essere sciolti e commissariati per infiltrazioni mafiose (Palumbo, 2017).

Complice un discorso mediatico mai visto precedentemente in azione e teso a una sistematica "*character assassination*", il governo di Accorinti collezionerà scivoloni notevoli in materia di servizi pubblici (come per esempio in materia di mense scolastiche, dove si arriva vicini all'esclusione dei bambini che non possono pagare i servizi; oppure in materia di nettezza urbana, con una città sommersa dai rifiuti), beni comuni (parte essenziale di una retorica della partecipazione che non si tradurrà mai in niente di significativo e nella continuità dell'abbandono o della cessione di beni pubblici a potentati locali) o emergenze (nota a livello nazionale quella relativa all'acqua, che, in ragione di uno smottamento, nel 2015 venne a mancare per circa un mese) che lo faranno precipitare nell'apprezzamento generale. Ma sono tuttavia molte di più le colpe attribuite a torto o ragione al Sindaco "anarchico", "pacifista", "scalzo" e "'nsivato" (sporco), come il discorso pubblico lo ha alternativamente definito. Colpe attribuibili per buona parte all'impossibilità di disporre di risorse minime atte a erogare servizi appena sufficienti e dell'incapacità della sua giunta di osare andando magari oltre i limiti del diritto così come aveva promesso di fare allorché si era appropriato del linguaggio della componente politica "benecomunista".

Avviandoci così alle conclusioni — e precisando di avere consapevolezza di parlare da un contesto antropologico forse più "denso" della media, attraversato da reti sociali e legami sui generis — trovo che non dovremmo stare tanto a riflettere su cosa sia l'*austerity* — un meccanismo ormai chiaro per quanto riguarda le finalità pratiche o le aspirazioni ideologiche ed "etiche" — quanto su quello che possa diventare l'*anti-austerity* nel momento in cui si realizza secondo quei principi fondati sull'ampiamento dei blocchi sociali e, soprattutto, sull'"invasione del palazzo". Ossia su un'idea di governo della crisi e della cosa pubblica che accetta di transitare attraverso i canali e gli strumenti dell'istituzione e del governo, lì ove è ormai evidente che questi non celano la salvezza, ma al massimo un tampone. Infatti, al contrario di quello che l'utopia dei beni comuni di moda solo qualche anno ci aveva indotto credere, nell'improbabilità di riuscire a forzare il diritto oltre una certa misura e unicamente per gli aspetti strutturalmente meno significativi, oltre che nella frequente dissociazione tra cariche di governo e maggioranze assembleari, il governo è più facilmente un fatto di normalizzazione che di altro. Esso resta insomma quella medesima "struttura strutturante", per dirla con Bourdieu (2003), che è sempre stato e che sempre sarà. La raffinatezza tecnico-giuridica del dispositivo politico-istituzionale — malgrado i proverbiali interstizi, strutturalmente insignificanti e dall'importanza sopravvalutata — è tale da non lasciare alcuna speranza di reale trasformazione in senso autenticamente "comune" in assenza di un lavoro politico-economico che lo preceda e che sia volto alla costituzione di un largo blocco sociale fondato sugli interessi e sulla conseguente egemonizzazione degli immaginari politici. Sino

a che questo obiettivo non sarà raggiunto, non sarà certamente nel governo e nella presa democratica del palazzo che, per delle forze autenticamente antagoniste, varrà la pena di impegnarsi con l'anima e il cuore viste all'opera nella città dello Stretto.

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Austerity beyond the budget cut: experiences of austerity urbanism by disadvantaged urban youth

Sander van Lanen

In 2008 the Celtic Tiger died. It could no longer feed on ever-increasing property prices and easy accessible credit, and thus the imagery of an ever-growing wealth-producing beast ceased to be for the population of Ireland. Already starving from the deflation of a home-grown property bubble, the international financial crisis killed it for good (O'Riain, 2014). Of course there were attempts to save or regenerate it. In 2008, the proposed budget aimed to keep economic growth going through productive borrowing aimed at stimulating the economy and attempts to protect the poor and vulnerable. However, ever since the sole focus of crisis-resolution politics has been on protecting, stimulating and restoring the economy as the vital pre-condition for jobs, prosperity and welfare. In this context, Ireland has seen a blanket bank guarantee, the establishment of 'bad bank' NAMA (National Asset Management Association), and finally the conditional bailout package from the tripartite committee of the European Committee, the International Monetary fund, and the European Central Bank, also known as the Troika (Fraser, Murphy, & Kelly, 2013).

To cope with the costs of such attempts, to 'balance the books' after using public money to secure liquidity, buy distressed property, and pay for increasing social welfare bills among skyrocketing unemployment, a regime of fierce austerity was implemented in the Republic of Ireland. The implementation of these measures was both domestically motivated and conditioned by the troika bailout package. In order to rebalance state budget and to regenerate the economy, spending on social welfare and public service provision were slashed while revenue was generated through increased direct and indirect taxes and the introduction and increase of service fees (Allen & O'Boyle, 2013). Austerity, via various avenues, infiltrated the everyday spaces of urban life in Ireland.

Poor and marginalised groups were specifically affected by austerity because of their higher dependence on state spending and public services (Peck, 2012). For example, funding for the community and voluntary sector was reduced by 35% between 2008 and 2012 (Harvey, 2012), public sector wages were cut several times, including a temporary reduction of the general minimum wage (Hardiman & Regan, 2013), and social welfare payments were lowered, most significantly for youth aged under 25. As a result, from 2008 to 2011, consistent poverty rose from 4.2% to 6.9% of the population, while in the same period people living with at least two types of enforced deprivation1 rose from 13.8% to 24.5% (Fraser et al., 2013). Recently, the amount of homeless people has more than doubled between December 2014 and December 2017 (Ireland, 2018). It is thus clear that austerity and recession resulted in declining and stagnant standards of living for large parts of the Irish population. However,

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the pre-crisis urban condition in Ireland cannot, and should not, be glamorised. Deprivation already existed and the fruits of the free market were not shared equally or equitably among the Irish population. Although general welfare levels were rising during the Celtic Tiger, there was no convergence between groups of varying levels of affluence (Haase, 2007). It is, therefore, a social and political mistake to portray the Celtic Tiger as a situation to which a return would be desirable. It is thus important to consider the developments of austerity urbanism as a way of life both quantitatively and qualitatively. Indicators of poverty clearly show its increase, both in the number of people living in poverty and the actual amount of money the poor receive. What is maybe less apparent is if, and how, there has been a qualitative shift in the urban condition. That is, has there been a change in the underlying processes that generate wealth and deprivation, to what extent do these processes differ from the Celtic Tiger, and how are these experienced by urban inhabitants living in areas of concentrated deprivation?

It has been argued that the austerity response is an attempt to recover from a crisis of neoliberalism by the implementation of even more neoliberalism (Aalbers, 2013). Ongoing privatisations, looser labour market regulations, and stricter social welfare rules – both in regard to income and conditions of eligibility – support this argument of sacrificing the power and remuneration of labour in pursuit of uninterrupted generation of profit.

> *Under austerity, stable employment, or any employment at all, further disappeared from the opportunities that Irish cities could offer such youth.*

Yes, these processes intensified under austerity, creating a harsher lived reality, but to claim a qualitative change in the production and reproduction of urban life can be questioned. The implementation of more neoliberalism implies more of the same, more intense – yes, more poverty – yes, but new processes of poverty creation – this remains to be seen.

To stop here and claim that, because no alternative to neoliberal urbanism arose, there has been no shift towards a different urban condition is, however, short-sighted. The city, and urban life, does not solely consist of the rhythms of capital accumulation, although these are very important. The experience of city life also matters (Tuan, 1977), and this is shaped by discourses, interactions, and the underpinning cultural systems of meaning making that guide the interpretation of cities and life within them (Buttimer, 1976). It is in these spheres that, at least in the case of Ireland, the contours of austerity urbanism can be identified. And indeed, it is in the experiences and stories of disadvantaged urban youth that a break can be found. Over the year 2015, I interviewed youth aged 18 to 25 from the neighbourhoods Knocknaheeny in Cork and Ballymun in Dublin, both areas of concentrated deprivation among the most disadvantaged in their respective cities. Their experiences relate to increased unfairness, related to heightened manifestations of inequality, or to higher visibility of inequality-generating policies in times of austerity compared to the previous Celtic Tiger era of relative prosperity. But these experiences also reflect changing interpretations of the city, shifting policy discourses, the delivery of various services, and transforming uses of city spaces.

In direct relation to poverty and income, one of such experiences is precarity. Although labour precarity is nothing new, its experience depends on the availability of replacement work (Benanav, 2015). Losing a job is not as devastating if you can walk straight into the next one. However, in a situation of long, protracted unemployment, the precarity-experience becomes one of uncertainty and vulnerability. This is even more the case in a context of tightened social welfare conditionality and lower social welfare rates. Conditionality, furthermore, is increasingly punitive. Welfare payments can be significantly reduced when a 'client' does

not accept work, training or does not sufficiently engage with the activation process (Dean, 1995). Such pressure means especially youth is forced to accept increasingly precarious work while, under internship schemes like JobBridge, employers can receive tax benefits or labour free-of-charge. Such reforms and transformations in the provision of social welfare and labour activation increasingly illuminates the divide between employer and employee, between the economy and personal well-being felt in the urban every-day in the context of austerity.

Furthermore, cultural changes during the Celtic Tiger simultaneously presented an ideal of hedonistic consumption and a constant pressure on educational and professional achievement (Tovy & Share, 2003). Disadvantaged youth already struggled to establish personal meaning as their socio-economic status clashed with the increased importance of consumption for identity. Under austerity, stable employment, or any employment at all, further disappeared from the opportunities that Irish cities could offer such youth. Such disconnect between presented ideal and lived reality was thus felt even stronger among participants. Young people – who came of age in an era that portrayed work, buying a house, and consumption as the elements assembling the 'good citizen' (McGuigan, 2016) – saw the attainment of such ideals further removed from their possibilities under austerity urbanism. If identity and meaning, created in such context, are conceptualised relationally, it illuminates the disruptive experience of the socio-economic transformations in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and how it might invoke feelings of exclusion and abandonment.

Similar transformations in the urban experience unfolded in service provision and the access to facilities. During the economic growth of the Celtic Tiger, rising revenue streams based, among others, on property taxes, provided funding possibilities for the community and voluntary sector. The development and professionalization of youth work following the Youth Work Act 2001 provided services that benefitted self-esteem, community ties and the personal and professional development of especially disadvantaged youth (Lalor, de Róiste, & Devlin, 2007). Although competitive and conditional funding mechanisms incorporated a managerial and entrepreneurial culture in social services, economic prosperity provided an expanding array of services and facilities. Thus, it could be felt, economic growth enabled at least some provision for disadvantaged parts of the population, leading to a perceived form of inclusion.

However, under austerity this dynamic drastically changed. Previously supported by economic growth, community and voluntary services were sacrificed to restore state finances. Available funding for these sectors was slashed, even in comparison to other austerity measures (Harvey, 2012). As a result, services and facilities available to youth from deprived urban neighbourhoods reduced their services and opening times or had to close completely. Simultaneously, some private facilities left such areas as disposable income fell and they thus no longer generate satisfactory profit. Such decline in available services heightened feelings of exclusion felt by youth from Knocknaheeny and Ballymun, which became deprived of opportunities of leisure and personal development (van Lanen, 2017). Public services previously made possible by economic growth were now sacrificed to assist a restarting economy, another element and clear indication experienced as the continuous privileging of the economy over social issues and well-being of the population.

Combined, such developments led to a reappraisal of scalar relations among research participants (Marston, Jones III, & Woodward, 2005). In their perception, the national scale no longer took its responsibility by providing support for the smaller scale; the local scale of

the neighbourhood. This reappraisal shows the experiential nature of the shift into austerity urbanism, as it reveals an active comparison with previous social economic contexts which contained, in the eyes of these youth, more fair scalar relationships. Such expectations, where the national scale should support the local scale, opposed official narratives where the local scale should support national economic recovery through a discourse of each doing their bit and sharing the burden. This mismatch between expected and perceived scalar responsibility affected sense of place and belonging in relation to both the local and the national scale. The shift from the Celtic Tiger to austerity, thus, affected spatial experience and the meaning that neighbourhood, city and country hold for disadvantaged urban youth.

Taking into account these lived experiences of austerity urbanism, it becomes clear that it is not a mere continuation of neoliberal urbanism. Less than a politics of crisis, crisis was the opening and beginning of a new era of politics. A politics which matches the previous period in its aims and operations, but stands apart in its justifications and intensity with which it is executed. No longer discursively and experientially able to produce wealth and benefit for all, the vulnerable recovery is not able to spread enthusiasm and feelings of potential inclusion to deprived urban neighbourhoods. For disadvantaged urban youth, it became clear that their future is increasingly foreclosed in the service of the national economy and continuation of neoliberal politics. They are not only excluded from stable work, affordable housing and vital services, their experiences are also often excluded from the Irish success story of austerity. Therefore, contemporary economic growth cannot become a Celtic Phoenix. In the context of austerity, politics became barer, lost its pretences. Now, to reflect the words of the communist manifesto, austerity urbanism faces youth with the real conditions of the neoliberal epoch.

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Austerity, (In)Justice and Space

Tino Petzold
Anika Duveneck

The normalization of austerity that we are witnessing, stabilizes and amplifies patterns of socio-spatial injustice. In the following essay, we will develop this argument and illustrate it by discussing the (urban) politics of children and youth welfare in Germany.[1]

Normalized austerity

Austerity programs often take the form of harsh social cutbacks and structural reforms, what might be called ‚shock doctrines' (Klein 2008). In Germany, austerity is often enrolled in a more subtle form of decade-long, slow roll-back neoliberalism and a resulting normalized condition of (extreme) public scarcity (Wiegand, Petzold & Belina 2016). This long-term political project has been pushed through during the course of four ‚critical junctures' (Capoccia & Kelemen 2007) – the social-democrat- led response to the crisis of Fordism (1975 - 1982), the roll-back neoliberalization during the unification of the two German states (1990 - 1995), the third-way neoliberalization of the red-green government (1999 - 2003) and the politics of the grand coalition of conservatives and social democrats (2006 - 2009). The last one brought the constitutionalization of the so-called ‚debt brake', i.e. the insertion of a wide-ranging ban of public debt into the constitutions of both the federal and the individual states (‚Bundesländer').

This long-term transformation of the funding of the German tax state (cf. Streeck & Mertens 2013) produces the normalization of austerity: A permanent condition of (extreme) public scarcity that prestructures the strategic terrain of social and political struggles. As Klingemann et al. (1994: 41) remind us: ‚Money is not all there is to policy, but there is precious little policy without it'. Therefore, the normalization of austerity is a prime way for locking in a defensive stance against claims for enhanced socio-spatial rights or the provision of (social) public infrastructures. In everyday politics, this stance takes the form of the ‚fiscalization' (Patashnik 2001: 36) of all politics, i.e. the discussion of policies not in terms of their content, how they might achieve a better and more just social condition, but mainly in terms of their financial feasibility. Under institutionalized balanced budget requirements, every political project with extra expenses needs to provide a source of revenue for funding. However, since the ‚era of easy financing' (Brownlee 1996) ended, while low tax models are the international norm nowadays and raising the debt level is not an option, this extra revenue cannot be provided. Normalized austerity and its everyday form of fiscalization are therefore an effective

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block for the enrollment of socio-spatial rights.

Austerity in the name of justice?

The normalization of austerity is often legitimized with claims for justice. As austerity proponents argue, the debt-financed 'fat' (welfare) state features three problems:

- Firstly, they problematize the 'tragedy of the fiscal commons', i.e. the over-usage of the common pool of society's financial resources (which are provided by tax payers) due to excessive claims from both the state and organized social interests – hence, austerity as a measure for enforcing tax- payers' rights and therefore a measure of *social justice*.

- Secondly, they employ spatial arguments by claiming that some places (be it local, regional, national or international scales) live at the expense of other places, thus constituting unjust spatial relationships. Austerity for the receiving places then appears as an implementation of *spatial justice*.

- Thirdly, they argue that current generations live beyond their means at the expense of the future ones, as the debt illusion hides the real costs for the provision of public services – austerity therefore is framed as a measure of intergenerational justice

Austerity proponents legitimize lean-state policies as politics in the name of justice based on these arguments. And in the same vein, they frame the normalization of austerity as a preventive measure against future injustices. In the following section we challenge this perspective and argue that (normalized) austerity (re-)produces social, spatial and *intergenerational injustice*.

In fact, state budgets are too tight for dealing appropriately with social problems like the housing question, environmental degradation, racial and gender inequalities. Quite to the contrary, as budget managers cut public services and transfers in order to balance the books, normalized austerity (re-)produces inequality:

- Normalized austerity in general features a class bias, as it mainly affects those individuals, who make their living on a social wage, i.e. who rely on public services and transfers. This class bias is further differentiated by gender and race, as well as the defensive capacities of particular social forces against roll-backs. The resulting (uneven) crisis of social reproduction for the many develops against the backdrop of growing private wealth for the few, who do not rely on state provisions and who are unwilling to finance the social wage with their taxes.

- Austerity politics are spatially targeted, both in scalar ways, i.e. 'by way of responsibility dumping and devolved discipline' (Peck 2012: 631), with municipalities and neighborhoods at the receiving end; as well as in territorial ways, i.e. by spatial politics of blaming the poor. Following Peck (2012: 629), cities 'are "home" to many of the preferred political targets of austerity programs – the "undeserving" poor, minorities and marginalized populations, public-sector unions and "bureaucratized" infrastructures. Cities are therefore where austerity bites. However, never equally.' Further, the spatiality of normalized austerity is articulated with general patterns of uneven development. It often hits the hardest those places the hardest, which are decoupled from globalized capital circuits. Relatively well-off places usually retain some financial room for maneuver, which in turn often allows them to relatively enhance their position in an interregional competitive environment. Hence, austerity stabilizes and amplifies existing patterns of 'spatial injustice' (Soja 2010).

-Finally, normalized austerity features a temporal politics of marginalization. Firstly, tight public budgets emerge against the backdrop of decades of failing-forward neoliberalization (Peck 2012), thus amplifying the social injustices already inherited from former periods. Secondly, austerity hits especially hard young and old people (in a classed, racialized and gendered intersection). Therefore, austerity does not deliver intergenerational justice, but quite the contrary: poverty for the old and disillusion for the young.

Austere injustices in German children and youth welfare

By discussing German children and youth welfare, the remainder of this article illustrates how austerity does not provide adequate solutions to social problems but rather constitutes a failing-forward crisis. The German system of youth welfare grounds on two basic pillars: Firstly, there are low-threshold services open for all young people, e.g. youth clubs, out-reach youth work, vacation programs etc. Municipalities are obliged by (federal) law to provide a general minimum standard of these services. Secondly, there are case-based services for young people in need. In this sector, not only municipalities are obliged by law to provide child-raising assistance services, but additionally individuals hold a legal claim for adequate services.

When normalized austerity rolls out, municipalities usually react by reducing the standards of low-threshold services, as those are not protected by individual legal claims. Speaking to issues of spatial injustice, these roll-backs particularly affect particularly those municipalities and neighborhoods where support structures are most urgent. As a response to these cut-backs, professionals in children and youth work declare young people as 'cases' in need of child-raising assistance, thereby trying to tap the legally better protected second sector of public funds. This way of coping with austerity fails all the affected parties. In many cases, from a professional point of view, low-threshold services were much more suitable to support young people, as they are less threatening and less stigmatizing. Services in child-raising assistance employ deep interventions into families and make them fear children and youth welfare rather than feeling supported. And as their delivery is more costly, municipalities have to spend more in the long run than what they save through cuts in low-threshold services.

In order to adapt to the costs explosion in the field of child-raising assistance, municipalities seek alternative strategies. In Hamburg for example, the state's' government tried to replace individual legal rights for child-raising assistance with a spatial approach. It proposed to introduce global budgets rather than providing funds per case (cf. State Secretaries of SPD-states 2011: 555), thereby mobilizing professionals' arguments for more adequate support. However, the ensuing protest from child and youth work professionals exposed that global budgeting under conditions of normalized austerity only erodes the standards of support services. In the end, the administrative court declared this strategy illegal (Administrative Court Hamburg 2015, 13 K1532/12).

This case illustrates how normalized austerity is failing forward. In the end, these creative budgeting tactics deliver neither lower costs nor appropriate solutions to social problems, but rather lead to the (re)production of social, spatial and intergenerational injustice. At the same time, the case of youth welfare shows the need for a progressive politics of socio-spatial justice which puts an end to unjust processes of failing forward neoliberalization. As the paper shows, the precondition for such a project is a progressive politics of taxation and spatial redistribution in order to provide the necessary funds to end austerity.

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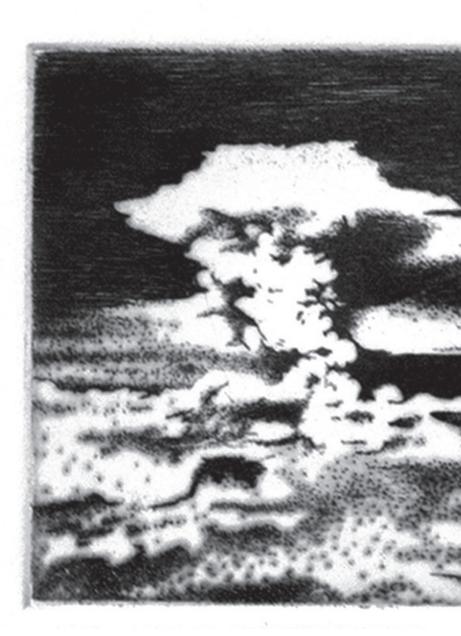
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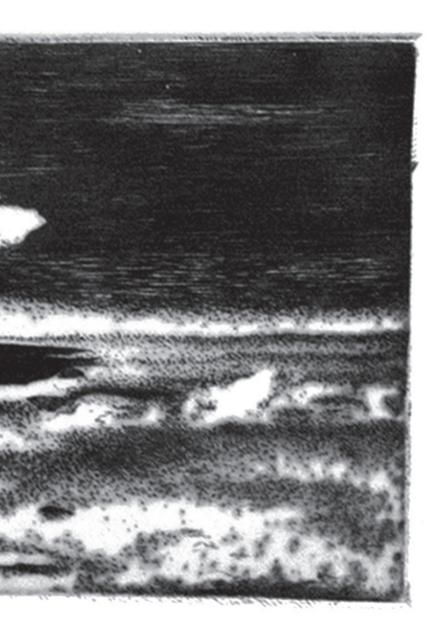
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