



This is a repository copy of *Local governance under austerity : hybrid organisations and hybrid officers.*

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/156465/>

Version: Published Version

Article:

Pill, M. orcid.org/0000-0002-9434-1425 and Guarneros-Meza, V. (2018) Local governance under austerity : hybrid organisations and hybrid officers. *Policy & Politics*, 46 (3). pp. 409-425. ISSN 0305-5736

<https://doi.org/10.1332/030557317x14895966143481>

Reuse

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial (CC BY-NC) licence. This licence allows you to remix, tweak, and build upon this work non-commercially, and any new works must also acknowledge the authors and be non-commercial. You don't have to license any derivative works on the same terms. More information and the full terms of the licence here:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>



This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits adaptation, alteration, reproduction and distribution for non-commercial use, without further permission provided the original work is attributed. The derivative works do not need to be licensed on the same terms

article

Local governance under austerity: hybrid organisations and hybrid officers

Madeleine Pill, madeleine.pill@sydney.edu.au
University of Sydney, NSW Australia

Valeria Guarneros-Meza, valeria.guarneros@dmu.ac.uk
De Montfort University, UK

Using the case of Cardiff, Wales, we argue that the hybridisation of local governance forms is exacerbated by the downscaling and offloading of austerity politics. Conceptualising hybridity as a process which operates across governmental scales, at the organisational and at the individual level helps understand the growing complexities of local governance under austerity and the tensions which arise in seeking to assemble locally appropriate ideas and practices. Conceptualising hybridity as practice, we consider how 'hybrid officers' at the frontline experience austerity, their situated agency, and the implications for higher levels of governance.

key words third sector • partnership • situated agency • practice

To cite this article: Pill, M. and Guarneros-Meza, V. (2018) Local governance under austerity: hybrid organisations and hybrid officers, *Policy & Politics*, vol 46, no 3, 409–25, DOI: 10.1332/030557317X14895966143481

Introduction

Debates about local governance consider whether relations within partnership arrangements are co-optative or contain potential for transformative action (Blanco, 2015). Hybridity in terms of combinations of actors and institutions has long been a feature of local governance. We argue that attention to hybridity as a process and practice is particularly insightful in understanding the complexity of local governance under austerity. It encapsulates austerity's multi-scalarity; provides an understanding of the effects on organisations; and enables insight into both the cognition and action of individuals 'at the frontline'. We focus on the experiences of 'hybrid officers' located within third-public sector organisations hybridised as a result of local governance transformations exacerbated by austerity politics.

Illustrated by the case of Cardiff, the capital city of Wales (population 346,000), we first explain how hybridity as process is encouraged by austerity politics given its processes of downscaling and offloading. We then explore hybridity as practice, with a focus on hybrid officers at the neighbourhood scale where austerity is biting due to the 'local government liveability services' disproportionately subject to public funding cuts (APSE, 2016). How are hybrid officers at the frontline experiencing austerity? How do their values affect practice as captured in their situated agency? What are the implications for higher levels of governance? Using a hybridity approach fine grains understanding of the complexities of local governance under austerity, underlining the need for new ways of working at the neighbourhood level (while highly interwoven with local and national scales), bringing insights regarding how values affect practice at the frontline, and heightening the need for bureaucratic change at the local level.

Hybridity and local governance under austerity

An extensive literature analyses the rise of partnerships between government, the private and third (voluntary and community) sectors in order to make, manage and deliver public policy (for example, Skelcher and Sullivan, 2002; Newman and Clarke, 2009). Partnership management structures and processes have been widely adopted at the local level. Current and former examples in the UK include Welsh Local Service Boards (LSBs) (now called Public Service Boards) and English Local Strategic Partnerships. Thus, hybridity as descriptor, meaning the 'combinations of actors, interests, institutions, and processes' is a feature of local governance (Gross, 2016, 6). Local partnership arrangements sponsored by and enacted under the guidance of the local state (often relying on a network manager) can be regarded as 'hybrids' (Skelcher et al, 2013, 3). Focusing attention on hybridity as process and practice (as well as descriptor) aids understanding of the increasingly complex local partnership arrangements which emerge when there are 'contentious local resource disputes' (Ansell and Gash, 2009) such as those generated under austerity.

An intertwined governance literature considers how local level governance is changing and the relative balance between network and hierarchical modes of coordination (Stoker, 2004; 2011; Davies, 2007). A fundamental tension lies between two perceptions of network governance and its inclusivity of partners, summarised by Blanco (2015) as the 'networks/neoliberalism dualism'. The first perceives it as overcoming bureaucratic rigidities by enabling capacity to address complex problems as well as enhancing democratic legitimacy. The second sees it as reflecting the dominance of governmental and economic elites, into which third sector partners are co-opted to compensate for the decline in the state's welfare function. UK neighbourhood-targeted initiatives since the 1990s have provided rich territory for empirical study of partnership arrangements within local governance (Foley and Martin, 2000; Beatty et al, 2010), including analysis of power relations between partners which has revealed the dominance of the state (Whitehead, 2003; Davies, 2007). Following Skelcher et al (2013), we argue that hybridity as an analytical approach refines understanding of tensions and power conflicts in local partnership arrangements. It enables insight into actors' situated agency, that is, the extent to which their ability to set and pursue their individual or societal goals and interests is influenced, but not determined, by structures and 'internalised understandings and frameworks as well as external actions' (Evans, 2002, 248, in Sullivan et al, 2012). In other words, practice is reasoned and 'different

identities, beliefs and values come to play a role in explanations of particular ways of doing things' (Freeman et al, 2011, 131). Hybridity also problematizes boundaries, seeing them as capable of being transgressed by politicians, public managers but also third sector partners and citizens when crossing sectoral and organisational boundaries to assemble ideas and conduct practices (Williams, 2011). Hybridity as process and practice acknowledges how plural logics (or rationalities, which provide material and symbolic elements) and actor identities are at play at both organisational and individual levels. In this sense hybridity combines theories on the organisational management of local partnerships with those of situated agency. We argue, however, that hybridity also captures a third characteristic, scalarity (multiple tiers of action), which is intensified by the effects of austerity's downscaling and offloading processes.

Building hybridity as an analytical tool

The partnership working literature has been enriched by consideration of the situated agency of those 'at the frontline'. Lipsky's (1980) concept of 'street-level bureaucrats' is seminal. He identified such officers' contribution to policy-making through their daily working practices and behaviour. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) argue that frontline officers are driven by morality rather than rule-following, based on values held by their profession, peers, cultural background and citizens' views. Thus both accounts hinge on the degree of discretionary power of street-level bureaucrats. Lipsky's analysis is framed by how their perverse or corrupt interests distort policy implementation. Maynard-Moody and Musheno highlight the benefits for the system and citizens deriving from the bureaucrats' creativity to overcome institutional barriers and develop new practices. But these theses do not capture transitions in 'eras of local governing' (Stoker, 2011) and the rise of partnership arrangements. Lipsky's street-level bureaucrat is working in a hierarchical state process. And while Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) contrast their citizen-influenced 'citizen agent' with what they term Lipsky's 'state agent', in both accounts the agent is directly employed by the state.

Durose (2011) proposes that the role of frontline officers is as 'civic entrepreneurs' due to the ways in which they engage the community to build relationships, capacity and skills and to reconcile different agendas. This is an important refinement. Lipsky's assumptions – that government has sole responsibility for service provision, that the implementation gap is between the top and bottom of one institution, and that there is a hierarchical relationship between them – no longer hold true under the partnership paradigm. The broader notion of entrepreneurship captures the blurring of boundaries inherent in partnership arrangements. It relates to boundary spanning or Crouch's (2005) 'institutional entrepreneurs' who 'will try to borrow and adapt components from a variety of [governance institutions] in a kind of institutional bricolage to produce new combinations' (p 154).

Skelcher and Smith's (2015) emphasis on the individual's role in their study of third sector organisations (TSOs) providing public services makes a vital contribution in linking the organisational and individual dimensions of hybridity. They explain that the tensions which arise due to the multiple roles of a hybrid organisation also play out at the individual level. As hybrid organisations incorporate plural institutional logics (comprising both material practices and symbolic constructions, thus operating as ideologies or discourses encompassing sets of ideas and norms), hybrid officers within these organisations 'confront multiple identities' (p 434). They thus describe

the hybridisation process as one in which plural logics and actor identities are at play both at an organisational and individual level (p 444). Skelcher et al (2013) argue that hybridity as an analytical tool recognises the adaptability of actors to create contextually appropriate assemblages in particular places. Hybrid actors can ‘mediate the relationship of big ideas about governance and the specifics of their urban and policy spaces’ (Skelcher et al, 2013, 14). The ‘big ideas’ refer to ideologies drawing from neoliberal or democratic discourses. Thus, hybrid officers are ‘situated agents’, a product of the particular structural characteristics of their contexts, yet capable of independent action through their skills, experience and expertise. Similar to Lipsky’s argument, these actions are mediated through framing and sensemaking processes rooted in beliefs and values (Sullivan et al, 2012, 58). Skelcher and Smith (2015) explain how hybrid officers’ agency can be explored through: the terminology adopted by individuals; the ability of individuals to resolve tensions that arise from different ideologies; and their creativity to circumvent those tensions by developing innovative arrangements and activities. Taking a hybridity approach at the individual level enables us to move beyond the narrow understanding of co-option associated with the neoliberal interpretation of network governance to explore how cognition affects practice.

These analyses, however, predate the greater responsibility passed down to communities due to austerity measures. The advent of austerity (public spending cuts and deficit reduction measures) has accelerated the hybridisation of local governance forms and of TSOs. This is because of the processes of downscaling and offloading deployed in the politics of austerity. Peck (2012) used these two concepts in analysing austerity in American cities. Decentralisation or fiscal devolution has cascaded down from the federal to state level, and then to the city and neighbourhood level (downscaling). Such ‘scalar dumping’ of fiscal discipline has prompted local governments to promote measures to offload the responsibility passed down from upper tiers of government in the absence of institutional capacity to deal with the financial challenges of austerity. Tactics include the development of a leaner local state through service rationalisation and workforce downsizing, privatisation of public assets, contracting out of services, and management by audit. Peck defines offloading as the handing down of risk management and budget crisis to local authorities and other non-state actors such as TSOs. These twin processes encourage hybridity between the local state and non-state organisations as local services are rationalised and reshaped. As will be demonstrated in the Cardiff case, the analysis alludes to repeated patterns beyond the US. It demonstrates that austerity, as a cycle of economic, political and governance change, has prompted the institutional transitions in which hybridity as process is manifested.

Hybridity as process and practice

We argue, therefore, that hybridity has three dimensions as an analytical tool. The first is at a scalar level, referring to processes which work across multiple levels of government. Sellers and Kwak’s (2011) multi-scalar analysis points to the need to recognize hybridity in the ‘national infrastructures of local governance’, meaning the combinations of ‘national infrastructure’, ‘local agency’, and their scalar positioning in terms of the locus of decision making. Policy determination may be at the national level but implementation at the local (and neighbourhood) level may be led by ‘civic

actors'. Such processes are heightened by the scalar dumping of austerity with public spending cuts and responsibilities cascading downwards and outwards.

The second dimension of hybridity is at an organisational level. The public administration literature defines hybrid organisations in terms of a public-private mix which 'perform tasks that are inherently public' (Kickert, 2001, 136). But hybridity is not just a matter of managing new, complex organisational arrangements. It is also a process underlain by interactions between organisational and individual interpretations of broader logics and ideologies. The organisations which form the focus of our research have been hybridised (combining the third and public sectors) due to the downscaling and offloading strictures of austerity. They are therefore 'complex organisational assemblages' which condense different political projects such as governmental strategies to shift service provision to civil society (Newman and Clarke, 2009). They are located 'at the margins [between] the public sector... and the more informal and trust-based climate that one knows from "community based" organisations' (Schultz and von Stein, 2007, 6 in Newman and Clarke, 2009, 92) which have grown organically from the grassroots and are not subject to government regulation such as via contracts. Skelcher and Smith (2015) describe this in terms of the 'plural institutional logics' of hybrid organisations and explain the resultant tensions between servicing government's requirements and sustaining a social mission.

The final dimension of hybridity is that of the individual, hybrid actor. Our focus is on the practices of 'hybrid officers' working at the frontline in neighbourhood-based hybrid organisations. These officers contrast with previous conceptualisations of frontline workers explained above. They work for hybrid, not public sector, organisations, and thus definitively have two roles. One is working for a community-based TSO, the other is to deliver a publicly-funded programme which the organisation has been contracted to manage. Threaded through both these roles is the quest to represent and engage their communities, perhaps to enrol them in service co-production and even self-provisioning of formerly public services under the downscaling and offloading strictures of austerity.

The Cardiff partnership

Taking account of the dimensions of hybridity and applying the concepts of downscaling and offloading to the case of Cardiff illuminates how austerity encourages hybridity and the growing complexities of local governance under austerity.

A total of 29 semi-structured interviews were conducted in two phases (15 in spring 2014 and 14 in spring 2015). In total 23 respondents were interviewed: a Welsh government assembly member; a senior Welsh government officer; four city councillors; three senior city government officers, including the city council's network manager; ten TSO representatives; and four citizen activists. Six respondents (two councillors, the network manager, two TSO officers and a citizen activist) were interviewed in both phases to illuminate the progress and effects of austerity measures in the city.

In order to pin down perceptions and practices, an embedded case focusing on 'community and social needs' (CSN) was developed (Yin, 2009, 46). Services which meet CSN have been the immediate target of public service retrenchment, including: the maintenance and management of leisure or community centres; play and youth service provision; maintenance of parks, sports grounds and streets; and food provision.

These are services traditionally provided by, but not statutorily required of, the local council and which tend to demand partnership working across council departments and other service providers. The austerity context has prompted managers to develop processes of service integration to streamline resources. CSN services can also be self-provided, but such voluntary action tends to be affected by changes in the implementation and management of service provision by public providers, for example commissioning and co-production between the council, TSOs and community groups. People access many of these services at the neighbourhood level.

The analysis focuses on how frontline hybrid officers are experiencing austerity and how their values affect practice as captured in their situated agency. To explore these questions all transcribed interview data were coded according to a frame, seeking evidence of the characteristics of the actions and processes identified as associated with individual hybrid officers (derived from Skelcher and Smith, 2015). Analysis focused on those respondents determined to be hybrid officers: that is, five officers from three (of the four) TSOs now managing a national programme formerly managed by council staff, along with the city council's network manager.

Hybridity across scales

The role of multiple levels of government is clear. Powers devolved to Wales in 1999 with the creation of the Welsh Assembly government are mainly limited to public service provision. In fiscal terms Wales is weak, lacking the independent tax raising powers it would need to counter the scalar dumping of London-imposed budget decisions. The 2008–09 recession was extreme by UK standards, with the largest GDP contraction since the second world war. The Coalition government elected in 2010 prescribed austerity to eradicate the ensuing current account deficit. With a majority Conservative government elected in 2015, austerity is set to continue until at least 2019. Austerity thus far has meant severe cuts in wages, benefits and public services (Beatty and Fothergill, 2014). Wales was initially provided relative protection due to the time lag in English cuts feeding through the formula used to set Wales' funding in London. But for 2014/15, financial allocations to local authorities were 'by far the worst settlement since devolution' with cuts of over 5 per cent in real terms, rising to 9 per cent by 2015/16 (Henry, 2013). Budget cuts of some £100 million were sought in the following three years by Cardiff Council. Welsh government ministers blamed the UK government for these cuts.

The Cardiff Partnership, led by Cardiff Council, is the city's Local Service Board (LSB). LSBs were created by the Welsh government in 2007 to 'provide the joined-up leadership required to help overcome recurrent and difficult problems that can only be tackled through collaboration and partnership' (Welsh Government, 2007). The partnerships comprise public service leaders and third sector representatives plus a senior Welsh government official. The Cardiff Partnership's city-wide strategy is presented as one which enables accountability and manages risk by ensuring that each partner coordinates resources around seven objectives claimed to be the ones 'that matter most to the people of Cardiff' (Cardiff Council, 2010).

Offloading to the neighbourhood level is evident in two approaches steered by the Cardiff Partnership and Welsh government. The city is sub-divided into six 'Neighbourhood Partnership' areas, each with a multi-agency team drawn from the police, fire service, local schools and health clinics, and latterly TSO officers.

Teams consider local intelligence to solve localised problems such as crime, anti-social behaviour and littering and also seek to coordinate with the efforts of TSOs and informal community groups. Teams could initially access pooled budgets from statutory partners, but funds were cut in 2015/16.

The other approach is Communities First (CF), a Welsh government programme which established partnerships in Wales' most deprived neighbourhoods. Initially launched in 2001, in 2011 it was relaunched to target, fewer, larger 'clusters' of 10–15,000 people, of which Cardiff has four. Crucially, Cardiff Council contracted existing, community-based TSOs to manage these clusters, which were thus hybridised as third–public sector organisations. Contracting TSOs to manage the CF clusters downloaded risk and offloaded staff costs (in its first iteration, the programme was staffed by council employees). In so doing the council was innovative in aligning the CF programme and its managing TSOs with the Cardiff Partnership and its offloading austerity measures. For example, the hybrid officers within the CF-managing TSOs are now included in the Neighbourhood Partnerships, cast as a mechanism to coordinate state and non-state activities at neighbourhood level. Both neighbourhood approaches are overseen by the council's network manager.

Hybridity of organisations and individuals

As highlighted above in explaining the scalar, local and neighbourhood manifested results of downscaling and offloading processes, the TSOs examined have been hybridised. As organisations, they are hybrid (third–public sector) due to being contracted to manage the CF clusters. But they are also confronting hybridity as process and practice. They are enmeshed in the Cardiff Partnership and its downloading processes of outsourcing to or commissioning services from non-state actors as well as its seeking of co-production and self-provisioning at the neighbourhood scale. But such 'state logics' are accompanied by the 'community logics' of the neighbourhoods in which they are embedded. Thus, these hybrid organisations offer a capacity for localised responses emerging from the day-to-day practices of their individual hybrid officers as they try to navigate this complex terrain. Hybrid officers are responsible for implementing the (national) CF programme, are engaged in the (city-wide) network strategy overseen by the Cardiff Partnership, but are employed by and located within TSOs serving specific neighbourhoods.

Our findings on the individual dimension of hybridity are structured by the coding frame, namely hybrid officers': language and values; ability to reconcile conflicting ideologies; ability to adapt processes; and ability to create solutions and innovate (including informal arrangements as opposed to state-led initiatives).

Language and values

The language used by hybrid officers revealed the tensions they experience between 'state logics' and the 'TSO/community logics' they personally deeply value. Their terminology revealed a set of shared values around the importance of community, empowerment, participation and inclusivity. One officer talked of the value of 'localised action and what you can do with it', another explained that 'people should be regarded as equals'. These values reflect the ethos of the CF programme, described by Welsh Government (2015) as 'our community-focused tackling poverty programme'. But

the officers expressed their values as individuals, and importantly linked these to their practices. One stated that if you don't have 'the heart to do it, then it shows'. Another explained that: 'To do this sort of job, to be able to bring people together to have a joint vested goal in improving deep-rooted social challenges, you've got to have leaders who actually lead by example, who are there, who are doing that.'

The officers linked their individual values to those of their TSO in terms of its operations separate from or predating the organisations being contracted to manage the CF programme. Two stressed their TSOs have always been rooted in their communities, 'it has always had a community focus...embedded in the core community'. But the officers shared a pragmatic, reconciliatory outlook regarding the relationship between the TSO's work and that of the programme:

We look at CF as something that's part of a process, part of a timeline of how things are changing. It's not something that's going to solve everything... neither is it something that we should be not finding a way to work with. So we work with it, we'll take on board the restrictions.

It was therefore clear that the tensions which arise between servicing government's requirements (the 'restrictions') and sustaining the TSO's original social mission play out at the organisational level. But these tensions also play out at the individual level with hybrid officers confronting multiple identities. The hybrid officers referred to their wearing 'two hats' to deal with the 'self-work' of reconciling autonomous organisational arrangements with the organisational rationale brought by the CF programme. One hat can be regarded as 'state logics', the other TSO or community logics. Such bifurcation was also described temporally, with one officer commenting 'I've been the [CF] cluster manager by day and by night I'm running [the TSO] and developing it as an organisation'. In this dialogue it was evident that the officers sought to balance legitimacy with the state with their core practices and identity of maintaining their TSO mission and serving their communities. An officer commented: 'I think for our organisation, most of us are from third sector backgrounds and we work for, really, a Welsh Government programme [CF]... We can still work in that third sector way... very bottom-up. Everything that comes to us from communities we try to be adaptable to.'

Another affirmed the division between state and community logics, but pragmatically emphasised the perceived overlap:

'[CF] is different from working in a TSO in that it has more structure and is more corporate, but it is a journey in which we are working together... what is driving everyone is the outcomes of the programme and [to] do it well for the community but also for the funders.'

The downloading of austerity has encouraged hybridity, with one officer explaining that austerity has 'pushed [the] council and us to work closer together'. Officers realised the importance of an engagement within, rather than outside or against, the formal system of the CF programme and its broader enmeshment within the Cardiff Partnership. While social dissent was recognised as a response to austerity measures, the role of the TSO was seen as distinct as 'there may be some things that need to be shouted about, but I don't think [the TSO] would be that organisation promoting

protest'. Such a 'realistic' stance of alignment may indicate that TSOs have become incorporated into the institutions and practices of the Cardiff Partnership given their reliance on grants and contracts. One commented 'we'd always advocate that we work within systems [run by Cardiff Council]...We always take a fairly pragmatic, you've got to work, you've got to get on'. Such enmeshment and dependence was presented by officers of two TSOs as enabling opportunity for their staff to gain new skills and knowledge:

'I think for us, the dependence on grants and commissions has been very useful because actually, there's strength in structure and that guidance with the policy and the procedure side of things is very strong and it puts us in a good position really, professionally, to go forward for further things.'

Another TSO officer, however, reiterated the challenge of navigating these uneasy alignments in deciding which course of action to embark upon, and how this plays out at an individual and organisational level: 'You've got to know when to shout, to kick, to scream, when to stand back...you've got to be constantly alert about how you move through these things, whilst maintaining your principles. And that's not an easy thing to do, or learn how to do, either individually or organisationally.'

Reconciliation of ideologies

Hybrid officer language made clear the tensions they experience in mediating the changing assemblage of ideologies espoused under 'state logics' with TSO and individual logics, and the implications for practice. The tensions were best expressed in officer opinions about the downloading strategies of co-production and self-provisioning for CSN. The legacy values of Welsh welfarism were invoked in interpretations of co-production. An officer illustrated the distinction in the intent and realisation of the shift away from public service provision, and in so doing referenced Aneurin Bevan (Welsh post-war UK Minister for Health, who led development of the National Health Service), regarded as synonymous with welfarism: 'Co-production at its best is this Bevanite, socialist tool for driving equality...and giving people power, a voice. At its worst it's an easy way into coercing citizens into filling the gap...just allowing the state to roll back and leave citizens to it...a tool for inequality.'

TSO officers were concerned about how their 'community logics' would be reflected in developing co-production processes such as those sought via the Neighbourhood Partnerships, one commenting 'how on earth do you include local people in this sort of process?' But it was also clear that austerity has inculcated notions of the 'new reality' among hybrid officers, another commenting 'we thought, OK, where's the new world, how do we adjust to this?'. Another stressed the perceived inevitability of change as 'there's no finances to deliver some of these things...we need to look at how we can partnership deliver between communities and public institutions'. Officers' ability to reconcile ideologies to form 'appropriate assemblies' was indicated. For example, cuts to street cleansing services were not contested, with an officer justifying the need to develop self-provisioning in terms of 'is it the job of the state to do every little thing?', and that 'there is some work that can be done on making people more responsible'.

Ability to adapt processes

Contracting TSOs to manage the CF clusters enmeshes TSOs in broader governance arrangements. But is there evidence of the officers' entrepreneurial ability to adapt the processes entailed to 'produce new combinations' (Crouch, 2005)? The council's network manager explained the arrangement as: 'Mean[ing] [CF] clusters are going to carry on doing what they want without the confines of a big political organisation [the council] but they have the support from a big organisation in the assistance of process and audits which are not their strong points.'

This interpretation understates the tensions faced by hybrid officers in reconciling the TSO's core or community logics with state logic compliance as explored above. Hybrid officers explained the managerial imperative of having to 'set up all the systems, HR, finance, governance' to manage the CF clusters and meet programme monitoring requirements. The requirements were seen as an opportunity to develop processes of benefit to the TSO, one explaining 'we have separation of activities' referring to a division between the TSO's 'core' work and that of managing the cluster, but 'not of processes because in terms of finance and HR processes, we want the same thing'. There was some limited evidence of adaptation of CF processes to reconcile community and state logics, such as tailoring monitoring to 'avoid formality...we just put a sticky chart with smiley faces'. But significant adaptation of programme requirements such as monitoring was not evident.

TSO hybrid officers did perceive scope to influence the processes of the Cardiff Partnership. One observed that the decision to contract TSOs to manage the CF programme did download risk while enabling the council to retain 'some element of control'. But the officer explained that this was combined with 'a vision', aided by the fact that the network manager was also 'driv[ing] a lot of the council thinking around policy, around co-production, around the Neighbourhood Partnership approach'. In commenting 'I make them all work together. You use the contracts and finance levers to force people to do it if they don't want to', the network manager made clear that the downloading strategy is steered. But the network manager was obviously well-regarded by hybrid officers and seen as a gatekeeper to the broader activities of the Cardiff Partnership. Officers' (self-perceived) ability to adapt processes was most evident in language about service commissioning, seen as providing opportunities to the TSO and its community, as explained by one officer:

'[For the TSO] it's a definite opportunity, commissioning, tendering for local services, we can be really savvy about that, and we will be, with a community-grounded approach in a way that's going to work for [the TSO] and not over-commit ourselves, in a way that's going to try and lock income, pull income into this community.'

Another explained their TSO's adaptation to downloading measures not only in terms of being commissioned but in becoming 'a point of influence' on broader commissioning processes (in this case for elder services):

'It's not just about what you do to survive, it's about...how do you influence what they [Cardiff Council] are going to be commissioning?...you're giving them a whole load of information and evidence about what's needed...then

that's going to become part of their whole ideology and thinking about what they should be commissioning.'

Hybrid officer self-perceived efficacy in adapting by becoming influencers on the processes of the Cardiff Partnership can, however, also be interpreted as evidence of their incorporation within the Partnership's austerity processes of downscaling and offloading.

Creating solutions/innovation

Thus far it is clear that hybrid officers' experience of practice under austerity is riven with the tensions of navigating between and attempting to reconcile state and TSO/community logics. As was the case regarding hybrid officers' (self-perceived) scope to influence processes, language was around the potentialities rather than actualities of effecting innovation, though one concrete example was revealed in practice (below). The changes wrought under austerity were seen as an opportunity, if accompanied by flexibility and creativity on the part of the council and other agencies. Here again the need to reconcile state and TSO logics was stressed, illustrated in the following: 'Key things as an organisation...being financially sustainable, but being well-governed, well-managed, effective, credible, valued, respected...we have that structure and then we can be creative, we can go off and be wild community workers.'

Hybrid officers saw themselves as entrepreneurial, 'it's looking at when opportunities arise...it's getting in there, it's changing officers' thought processes'. The block to their creating appropriate assemblies was seen as the council, other public agencies, and the broader governance structure of the Cardiff Partnership. One officer commented that 'the third sector are always much more creative than local authorities'. Another explained that the Neighbourhood Partnership in which they were engaged 'hasn't got to the stage where it can be creative because it's locked up in the council or LSB'.

In stressing the need for change to the regulatory, systematic and formal processes to allow the flexibility and informality needed to circumvent tensions and enable creativity, hybrid officers did understand that their counterparts also understood the need:

'If you're a budget holder or a commissioner within the council looking at new ways of doing things, looking at how to deal with a black hole such as they're facing – you know, you're aware that you have to innovate. You're aware that there has to be great nimbleness, much more lean approach, unlocking and unleashing local assets.'

Co-production was a realm in which scope for creativity was identified. The hybrid officer of the TSO regarded as the exemplar for such activities gave two examples at different stages on a continuum between joint community-council service provision and the community self-provisioning ideally sought under austerity. The first example was gaining council agreement for community volunteers to work alongside staff in running a new 'community hub' (combining the local library, housing office and other services). The second was school holiday activity provision for children and young people, now largely self-provisioned by community groups. The same hybrid officer was also working with community groups to help them take over community

assets, such as community centres, being transferred from council ownership. The officer explained that the process: ‘Involves setting up that group, constituting it, becoming a charity...a heck of a lot of work...it’s been a waiting process, it had to go to [Cardiff Council] cabinet...for the community that’s really frustrating, some of these processes are so drawn out.’

Thus community asset transfer is a realm identified by hybrid officers in which the practices needed to engender innovation on the part of the council such as lighter regulation and higher tolerance of risk are not yet evident, though asset transfer is an extremely relevant tool to enable community self-provisioning for CSN.

The most significant practice example of creativity and innovation was a TSO’s introduction, in partnership with a specialist TSO, of timebanking. Timebanking is a form of co-production wherein, under a ‘one hour equals one hour’ principle, people can spend ‘timecredits’ earned in volunteering on activities, such as swimming, which are underpinned by statutory partners. Spend options are augmented by ‘community spend opportunities’, or self-provisioned activities, as these develop. By its adherents, timebanking is seen as able to support the transition to community self-provisioning for CSN, but alongside public sector provision. The specialist TSO in this realm stressed that such a ‘currency for the age of austerity’ is a ‘way of making public services more responsive, more effective, more citizen-centred’ and not ‘a way of replacing frontline services’. As austerity continues to bite, this distinction is likely to become increasingly hard to maintain. Timebanking can be readily critiqued as part of the responsabilisation of poor communities as public services retrench under austerity (Gregory, 2014). But the scope for the CF-managing TSO implementing this approach to engender systemic change was recognised by other TSOs, ‘they’re a small organisation...but they punch very much above their weight...they’ve made themselves strategically quite a big player’.

Discussion

Local governance

Cardiff illustrates the growing complexities of local governance under austerity. Through the Cardiff Partnership, overseen and mediated by a network manager, Cardiff’s local state actors have sought to rationalise and reorganise public services, finding a systematic way to maintain lean operational systems through procurement, outsourcing or contracting services from TSOs (which are thus hybridised), along with the coordination of city-wide programmes alongside the neighbourhood-level initiatives managed by or in which TSO hybrid organisations are enmeshed. Thus spending cuts and risk are downloaded to the neighbourhood level and to TSOs. During first phase fieldwork, the network manager explained that the Cardiff Partnership ‘enabled us to have the foundations to respond’ to austerity, with its use of the neighbourhood level enabling efficiencies as ‘we can actually see who is doing what in a neighbourhood...it has shone the light about the duplication, the lack of coordination’. A council cabinet member explained its value ‘in terms of saving money and getting better outcomes, collaboration between other partner organisations’.

Legitimacy for such partnership governance arrangements derives from the legacies invoked (Lowndes, 2005). After devolution in 1999 the Welsh First Minister spoke of the ‘clear red water’ between Wales and England (Morgan, 2002). This ‘red’ (leftist)

tint acknowledged the strong legacy of Welsh welfarism. But the Welsh political elite combined this with a discourse of collaboration to distinguish it from Westminster. Herein collaboration comprised that between national and local government; and across the public, private and third/community sectors – the ‘three thirds’ model (Bristow et al, 2008) as encapsulated in the structuring of LSBs. Under austerity, the premise was that ‘the budget shortfall will undoubtedly change the way we are shaped and operate’ (Cardiff Council, 2013). The discourse of collaboration which helped to enhance Welsh state-building after devolution has been particularly useful in promoting the offloading of risk and budget cuts. During first phase fieldwork, political discourse emphasised how practices and institutions needed to change and how 2014 was a transitional phase, with ‘stays of execution’ on services, while responsibility shifted from public service provision, to public and community co-production of services or community self-provisioning. Thus the Cardiff Partnership steered by the city council exemplifies the role played by local government of aligning local projects with different political ideologies prevalent at different times (Newman, 2014). The Partnership seeks justification by combining ideologies of welfare (associated with a pre-devolution Wales, and particularly harking to the Bevanite post-war era); collaboration (developed post-devolution); and latterly of co-production/self-provisioning (due to austerity). In turn, the hybrid organisations created are complex assemblages of plural institutional logics which result in tensions at the organisational and at the individual level.

Hybrid officers under austerity

A focus on Cardiff’s hybrid officers, specifically those working in TSOs contracted by and enmeshed within the Cardiff Partnership, provides an opportunity to examine individual experiences of state and non-state interactions. These interactions have been heightened by the downscaling and offloading processes of austerity and associated expectations of service co-production and self-provisioning. The analysis returns to the questions posed regarding: hybrid officers’ experience of austerity; their situated agency; and the implications for higher levels of governance.

Our findings reveal that the hybrid officers’ experience of practice under austerity is characterised by tension as they attempt to reconcile state logics with the TSO/community logics which they personally deeply value. Our analysis makes clear that these officers do seek to sustain their core practices and identity (serving their communities, tackling deprivation) in a balance with retaining legitimacy with the state (such as by meeting the managerial requirements of the CF programme).

It is too early to make a concerted judgement regarding the officers’ situated agency in terms of their creativity to circumvent the tensions of this balancing act through the entrepreneurial adaptation of processes and development of innovative arrangements to form appropriate local assemblies. But the mix of practices uncovered, for example regarding service commissioning and co-production, do more than merely confirm hybrid officer ability to reconcile ideologies and adapt accordingly.

A pessimistic reading would place hybrid officers as part and parcel of the processes of downloading characterising austerity, with they and their TSOs becoming incorporated within the managerial processes of austerity governance. Under this interpretation, austerity has resulted in hybrid officers ‘disaffected consent’ (Gilbert, 2015) as they are resigned to participate in a consensus they cannot disturb. But our

analysis shows that while hybrid officers, constrained by mediating between state and TSO logics, are not engaged in protest contesting austerity, they are engaged in deliberation and some are creating change at an organisational and community level (for example, via timebanking schemes) which may hold potential for higher level impact (particularly if championed by the city's network manager). Thus indications of hybrid officer agency are evident in their own language and to some extent in their practices to meet CSN, though their 'institutional entrepreneurship' (Crouch, 2005) has yet to be realised. An unabashedly optimistic reading would be that these practices indicate the potential for transformative actions to create a locally-contingent assemblage of processes and practices.

Certainly, austerity as an imperative has heightened the potential role of hybrid officers. The dynamism of hybridity as practice points to a more complex, and perhaps more optimistic, interpretation than that of the co-option and incorporation of TSOs into the downloading processes of austerity. And at minimum, the refinement brought by considering individual practice enables monitoring of patterns of incorporation under austerity, and the tensions in reconciling the multiple logics which ensue.

Implications for higher levels of governance

The necessity of bringing non-state actors into local governance processes is heightened under austerity, including seeking to enrol citizens in self-provision of services at the neighbourhood scale. But in so doing local government cannot expect to retain the level of control it held previously as a direct service deliverer. A focus on hybrid officers has revealed signs of increasing space within the messiness and complexity of local governance under austerity to challenge government regulation (with the example of community asset transfers). But it also highlights the unsuitability of current standard operating procedures and the need for greater risk-taking. To what extent local government will respond (and be able to do so given the role of Welsh government) is as yet unclear. The quest for relaxed regulation co-exists with continuing expectations of governmental control.

Our analysis also has implications for recruitment by local governance partners. The network manager acts as a gatekeeper for hybrid officers seeking to innovate (for example, regarding timebanking). Hybrid officers need counterparts who can support their situated agency in their TSOs and communities, and aid in transferring learnings from one neighbourhood to another, or upscale city-wide. While our analysis focused on five hybrid officers, coding of interview data identified three further respondents who shared their characteristics: the network manager, a Neighbourhood Partnership team manager employed by a local statutory service provider, and an officer in a specialist, practice-specific TSO. All were pragmatic, optimistic, opportunistic and adaptable – indeed, entrepreneurial. This aligns with public management scholarship which seeks to specify the capabilities and competencies of entrepreneurs or 'boundary spanners' (Crouch, 2005; Durose, 2011; Williams, 2011).

Conclusion

Austerity has heightened the imperative to promote implementation of Cardiff's local governance structure, the Cardiff Partnership, so that local government can share risk and responsibility not only with other public organisations (such as the

police and health) but also with TSOs and community groups at the neighbourhood level. Hybrid officer language made clear the tensions they experience in mediating the changing assemblage of ideologies espoused under ‘state logics’ with TSO and community logics. Our emphasis on hybrid officers portrays the ensuing struggle in the promotion of localised projects that require facilitation and cross-sectoral interdependence, with increasing emphasis on community self-reliance. While hybrid officers stressed the clear separation they maintained between the CF programme and the activities carried out by the TSO, some did evidence situated agency in their capacity to take opportunities to innovate, for example by seeking to challenge the formality and regulation of the Cardiff Partnership in the case of community asset transfers. This indicates the potential of hybrid officers in periods of austerity. It also points to the need for change at the local government level, and in turn at higher levels. To conclude, a senior Welsh government officer expressed the hope, in light of the challenges posed by austerity, that:

‘government will learn...to get behind what works and what emerges out of communities, instead of feeling it has to make it all happen itself. [It has to] recognise that the cheapest and best way to achieve real things is to spot what people are doing for themselves and support them.’

The case of Cardiff illustrates how the ‘devolution, decentralisation and downloading’ which characterise ‘austerity urbanism’ (Peck, 2012) encourages hybridisation in the three dimensions explored: scalar, organisational and individual. These findings are of much broader relevance given the widespread manifestation of hybridity (Skelcher et al, 2013) and the shared challenges of fiscal austerity – which have affected European cities, and chronically characterise service provision in other world regions such as Latin America. But the findings also reinforce the need for study of local practices ‘in ways that recognise the multiple logics at play in different conjunctures’ (Blanco et al, 2014, 3129), providing insight beyond the dualism of empowerment or incorporation.

Acknowledgement

The research was conducted as part of the Transgob project [<https://transgob.net/>] into participatory urban governance under austerity in two British and four Spanish cities, Principal Investigator Dr Ismael Blanco at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

References

- Ansell, C, Gash, A, 2009, Collaborative governance in theory and practice, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 18, 543–71
- APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence), 2016, Sustainable local government finance and liveable local areas: Can we survive to 2020?, www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/news/2016/sustainable-local-government-finance-and-liveable-local-areas-can-we-survive-to-2020/
- Beatty, C, Fothergill, S, 2014, The local and regional impact of the UK’s welfare reforms, *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 7, 1, 63–79
- Beatty, C, Foden, M, Lawless, P, Wilson, I, 2010 Area-based regeneration partnerships and the role of central government: The New Deal for Communities programme in England, *Policy & Politics* 38, 2, 235–51

- Blanco, I, 2015, Between democratic network governance and neoliberalism: A regime—theoretical analysis of collaboration in Barcelona, *Cities* 44, 123–30
- Blanco, I, Griggs, S, Sullivan, H, 2014, Situating the local in the neoliberalisation and transformation of urban governance, *Urban Studies* 51, 15, 3129–46
- Bristow, G, Entwistle, T, Hines, F, Martin, S, 2008, New spaces for inclusion? Lessons from the ‘three-thirds’ partnerships in Wales, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, 4, 903–21
- Cardiff Council, 2010, *What matters strategy*, Cardiff: Cardiff City Council
- Cardiff Council, 2013, *Choices for Cardiff: Cardiff Council budget consultation 2014/2015*, Cardiff: Cardiff City Council
- Crouch, C, 2005, *Capitalist diversity and change: Recombinant governance and institutional entrepreneurs*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Davies, JS, 2007, The limits of partnership: An exit-action strategy for local democratic inclusion, *Political Studies* 55, 779–800
- Durose, C, 2011, Revisiting Lipsky: Front-line work in UK local governance, *Political Studies* 59, 4, 978–95
- Evans, K, 2002, Taking control of their lives? Agency in young adult transitions in England and the New Germany, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 5, 3, 245–69
- Foley, P, Martin, S, 2000, A new deal for the community? Public participation in regeneration and local service delivery, *Policy & Politics* 28, 4, 479–92
- Freeman, R, Griggs, S, Boaz, A, 2011, The practice of policy making, *Evidence & Policy* 7, 2, 127–36
- Gilbert, J, 2015, Disaffected consent: That post-democratic feeling, *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture* 60, 29–41
- Gregory, L, 2014, Resilience or resistance? Time banking in the age of austerity, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 22, 2, 171–83
- Gross, JS, 2016, Hybridization and urban governance: Malleability, modality, or mind-set?, *Urban Affairs Review*, doi: 10.1177/10780874166637127
- Henry, G, 2013, Carwyn Jones: Maintaining 22 councils in Wales is ‘unsustainable’, *Wales Online*, 17 October, www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/carwyn-jones-maintaining-22-councils-6199877
- Kickert, WJM, 2001, Public management of hybrid organisations: Governance of quasi-autonomous executive agencies, *International Public Management Journal* 4, 2, 135–50
- Lipsky, M, 1980 *Street level bureaucracy: The dilemma of the individual in public services*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation
- Lowndes, V, 2005, Something old, something new, something borrowed..., *Policy Studies* 26, 3–4, 291–309
- Maynard-Moody, S, Musheno, M, 2000 State agent or citizen agent: Two narratives of discretion, *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory* 10, 2, 229–58
- Morgan, R, 2002, Clear red water, speech to the National Centre for Public Policy, Swansea, 11 December
- Newman, J, 2014, Landscapes of antagonism: Local governance, neoliberalism and austerity, *Urban Studies*, 51, 15, 3290–305
- Newman, J, Clarke, J, 2009, *Publics, politics and power: Remaking the public in public services*, London: Sage
- Peck, J, 2012, Austerity urbanism: American cities under extreme economy, *City* 16, 6, 626–55

- Sellers, JM, Kwak, S-Y, 2011, State and society in local governance: Lessons from a multilevel comparison, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, 3, 620–43
- Skelcher, C, Smith, SR, 2015, Theorizing hybridity: Institutional logics, complex organizations, and actor identities. The case of nonprofits, *Public Administration* 93, 2, 433–48
- Skelcher, C, Sullivan, H, 2002, *Working across boundaries: Collaboration in public services*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan
- Skelcher, C, Sullivan, H, Jeffares, S, 2013, *Hybrid governance in European cities*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan
- Stoker, G, 2004 *Transforming local governance: From Thatcherism to New Labour*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan
- Stoker, G, 2011 Was local governance such a good idea? A global comparative perspective, *Public Administration* 89, 1, 15–31
- Sullivan, H, Williams, P, Jeffares, S, 2012, Leadership for collaboration: Situated agency in practice, *Public Management Review* 14, 1, 41–66
- Welsh Government, 2007, *Making the connections. Local Service Boards in Wales: A prospectus for the first phase 2007–2008*, Cardiff: Welsh Government
- Welsh Government, 2015, Communities First programme, 3 December, <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitiesfirst/?lang=en>
- Whitehead, M, 2003, In the shadow of hierarchy: Meta-governance, policy reform and urban regeneration in the West Midlands, *Area* 35, 1, 6–14
- Williams, P, 2011, The life and times of the boundary spanner, *Journal of Integrated Care* 19, 3, 26–33
- Yin, RK, 2009, *Case study research: design and methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA and London: Sage