Standard Article

EUROPEAN URBAN AND REGIONAL STUDIES

European Urban and Regional Studies
1–15

DOI: 10.1177/09697764251386774
journals.sagepub.com/home/eur


Violence reduction in a changing European urban context: Frontline practitioner's understanding of the roots of violence, and why it matters for policy and prevention

Elizabeth A Cook
City St George's, University of London, UK

Sarah Jankowitz
Queen's University of Belfast, UK

Rowland Atkinson
University of Sheffield, UK

Abstract

Violence continues to be a concern for policymakers and communities, notably so in urban contexts in which socio-demographic change, retrenched social support and evolving forms of exclusion affect its distribution and intensity. Drawing from a comparative qualitative study in European cities, we analyse the narratives and explanations offered by key stakeholders, civic and policy actors working at the interface of violence prevention and urban communities. Informed by scholarship on street-level bureaucracy and local knowledge, we find in their accounts key operating theories that connect the risk of violence with austerity conditions and their erosion of vital social and institutional fabrics, thereby worsening localised violence in these 'ordinary' cities. We conclude that there is a significant disconnect between the subtle and informed accounts of local, civic actors and the drift to further disinvestment in cities and social institutions being delivered by central political institutions. Local practitioners understand violence to be linked to these macro-economic conditions and social inequalities that sit outside their jurisdiction, but which ultimately present major challenges to the fabric of local urban life and risks to particular communities.

Keywords

Cities, Europe, frontline workers, inequality, social cohesion, violence

Introduction

Violence in European cities has been subject to periodic assessments, arguably a focal subject at times of its spectacular eruption (Body-Gendrot, 2013).

Corresponding author:
Elizabeth A Cook, Violence and Society Centre, City St George's, University of London, Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB, UK.
Email: elizabeth.cook@city.ac.uk

However, significant political and social scientific work has been directed at forms of violence that sit within, and are in many ways generated by, the everyday qualities of urban contexts. This includes assessments of 'gang' (Van Gemert et al., 2008) and male violence in depressed urban contexts (Ellis, 2017; Mohammed and Oualhaci, 2021), violence in edge of city and abandoned zones (Briggs and Gamero, 2017), and mainstream concerns with urban security and surveillance (Stefanizzi and Verdolini, 2019). The complexity of urban violence and variability of city life itself notwithstanding, general assessments of the nature of violence and its genesis in European urban settings continue to be advanced (Feltran, 2020; Hoelscher and Nussio, 2015; Pavoni and Tulumello, 2020). European cities display important, broadly shared, characteristics, including the retention of social insurance systems, relatively robust (if challenged) levels of social cohesion (Cassiers and Kesteloot, 2012) and moderated spatial and social inequalities (Tammaru et al., 2014). These elements form a recognisable urban context, though clearly it is important not to overstress similarities or to downplay important distinctions from one European urban setting to another.

What many urban sociologists, criminologists and geographers recognise as the primary wellspring of forces generating violence – social, health and economic inequalities – have grown rapidly over the past decade (Currie, 2009). While many European cities experience relatively low levels of violence, the caveat to this is that many sub-areas and specific communities experience considerable variations in the form and intensity of such violence (Dikeç, 2017). A number of factors have been linked to relatively low levels of 'ordinary' violence in similarly ordinary city settings in the European context. These include the relatively integrated and cohesive nature of its urban community formations (Cassiers and Kesteloot, 2012), more tolerable levels of urban inequality (Savage, 2021) and effective (if weakening, in many cases) forms of welfare and housing provision. However, these conditions have been exacerbated in many national-urban contexts and, moving on from the pandemic into the future, the question exercising many is how these conditions may change and potentially generate new forms of localised violence. We must also note that while our focus here is on violence and its local, structural influences, we should recognise that factors emanating from outside city settings may influence patterns of violence within them. For example, transnational expansion of global illicit markets and organised criminal networks also affect changes in violence within European cities (De Vries and Guild, 2019) as well as international developments in the political economy of crime control (Eski and Sergi, 2024). These factors may also affect perceptions of violence within cities.

In this context, we present findings from a comparative, qualitative study that investigated how key stakeholders, who are involved in responses to violence at the municipal level, perceive its cause and overall nature. We draw from scholarship on frontline interactions between government and citizens, stemming from Lipsky's (1980) key text on *Street-Level Bureaucracy*. As in other contexts of public administration, violence reduction efforts are regularly enacted at the municipal level (Body-Gendrot, 2013), though the perceived policy and practice levers that local actors consider capable of reducing or mitigating urban violence may be located both within urban locales and a national level. The accounts of key support workers, practitioners and local policymakers are important because they represent essential intermediaries in processes of policy implementation, transfer and reform. The perspectives of practitioners provide insight into how social problems are constructed and under what conditions, which groups are most affected by these conditions, how solutions to such problems should be delivered in city settings (and delivered more effectively) and who should be assigned responsibility for generating effective responses. Analysing these accounts within a frame of street-level practices and knowledge therefore speaks directly to issues of accountability and governance in violence reduction efforts.

Our work sought to investigate perceptions of violence and violence reduction at a municipal level in two non-capital European cities: Sheffield (UK) and Malmö (Sweden). These cities were viewed as emblematic examples of the kind of social, economic and political conditions experienced by many other European cities of modest economic position and typical population size: both cities have seen significant housing and social

change, including the accommodation of recent migrants, notable inequalities between neighbourhoods and the presence of social-spatial segregation, while retaining a range of state supports in the areas of housing and social support. Through semi-structured interviews with key local practitioners working in these urban centres, the question we address here is: *How is 'urban violence' constructed in practitioner accounts and what kind of causal factors do they identify as being centrally important in their local context?*

The structure of this article is as follows. First, we present an overview of the existing literature on urban violence and its connection to a range of explanatory contextual factors including income, housing, racial, gender and class-based inequalities, and social conflicts in the European urban context. We anchor this discussion within scholarship on frontline government–citizen interactions, commonly organised under the label of 'street-level bureaucracy' though often captured in other processes such as 'government-in-action' (Hupe et al., 2015) or local knowledge (Durose, 2009). Second, we outline our methodological approach, detailing our research design and providing profiles of the two case study cities used in this article. Making international comparisons on violent crime rates by country, still less by city, are difficult due to a lack of standardisation of measurement. However, to provide an indication as to general conditions of violent crime by municipality, rather than for comparison, we consult open-access databases from the municipal councils. Third, we outline our substantive findings which are presented around three key themes that emerged from analysis: constructions of urban violence by civic actors; perceptions of the underlying conditions and forces generative of violence; and, finally, how these framings translated into the implementation of (or barriers to) responses to urban violence. We argue that the accounts of frontline actors at a municipal level provide an insight into how certain acts (or groups) are considered violent (identification), who is likely to be most affected and/or targeted (risk assessment), and where the responsibility might lie for both policymaking and implementation (response).

Violence and the European urban context

Violence in urban contexts is often related to disparate and complex causes located in wider social, economic and political forces (Body-Gendrot, 2013; Currie, 2009). Of course, European cities present highly variable experiences and geographies of violence, with varying forms and intensities (Pavoni and Tulumello, 2020). Factors often attributed to such problems in a European context include areas of concentrated poverty, lack of opportunity, material inequalities linked to precarious labour markets and state divestment in housing and social conditions more broadly (Dikeç, 2017; Wacquant, 2009). Also seen as important are cultures around youth masculinity that have become 'harder' (Brookman et al., 2011) in many settings as a result of the rising precarity and meaninglessness of work for distinct groups (Ellis, 2017). More recently, there have been efforts to consider how rapid demographic change in sub-areas, combined with social exclusion, inform such explanations and framings of urban violence.

The economic conditions of many cities and their regions have seen significant challenges and reduced opportunities in a growing market of precarious labour (Beugelsdijk et al., 2022) in which working-class and minority ethnic groups face declining social prospects. Rising inequality resulting from financial crises and the retrenchment of social supports from austerity urbanism and welfare cuts (Davies and Blanco, 2017; Peck, 2012) can also be identified as key forces adding strains to the kind of social conditions in local areas which are generative of interpersonal violence (Mayblin et al., 2020). Many violence-reduction programmes in contemporary European cities are based on understandings tied to individual conduct and risks, as a problem of risk management or one framed in terms of the presence of suspect communities in distinct positions in the housing-neighbourhood ecosystem of the city. In this sense, when viewed through the lens of national and city policymaking, measures to address urban violence have tended to overlook the complexity of forces shaping the experience and prevalence of urban violence (Atkinson and Millington, 2018).

Like other areas of state policy, as Wacquant (2009) has observed, the state tends to offer two distinctive modes of response to problems, offering benevolence (the provision of public housing, forms of income support, certain social services) but also more aggressive, even destructive responses (Lea, 2002) via overwhelming and discriminatory police responses and practices, the demolition of 'criminogenic' housing, anti-gang policies, and exclusionary planning and housing policies. These overlapping, contradictory responses show how the complexity of city life and its formal governance respond to multiple aspects of violence and its links to excluded and more deprived groups and places. In terms of questions of politics and class, urban violence often appears therefore to be met in many urban contexts with more or less anti-sociological modes of thinking – tending to reject the social, economic and political foundations of such violence.

The question of what makes urban violence specifically 'urban' in formation or subtle causation has been addressed by Pavoni and Tulumello (2020: 49–50):

> On the one hand, the urban in urban violence has been self-evidently referred to a given, bounded and static place: the city. In other words, the urban is for the most part intended as a secondary adjective, referring to the place (the container) in which instances of violence would occur, rather than as a spatial process constitutive to urban violence. This presupposition has led to either using urban violence as a simple (and redundant) shorthand for violence in the city, and/or crystallising the urban as a sort of a-historical condition, naturally conducive to violence, which is accordingly described via the extensive use of (reductive) statistics (e.g. murder rates).

In this sense, urban violence raises questions about what specific local, contextual or generically 'urban' processes or patterns give rise to violence. This is a complex challenge and one that tends not to be foregrounded in urban community studies or others on interpersonal violence where background contexts and conditions are often ignored. Cities do not simply cause violence, but are complex systems of concentration and dispersion of structures, processes and interactions between unequal groups and institutions that may have the combined effect of generating propensities towards or away from violence. Moser (2004) has argued that the concept of urban violence has tended to elude the search for a compact definition and, as Pavoni and Tulumello (2020) have shown, has a complex relation to the urban context. Our use of the term violence here acknowledges the role of social and spatial change and the resulting dynamics surrounding and underpinning it in urban settings.

We acknowledge the complexity of defining urban violence which takes on essentially two already contested concepts that in many ways adds further difficulty to pinning down a clear definition. In this article, we are primarily interested in the question of interpersonal violence in urban contexts, for example, forms of violence occurring within family/partner relationships or the community (as defined by, for example, Dahlberg and Krug, 2002). This could include forms of violence such as assault, homicide, domestic and/or sexual violence and abuse. This is a focused definition of urban violence that broadly brackets off the concerns of some analysts to bring in political and symbolic forms, such as the symbolic violence of gentrification, the social damage of urban restructuring and community displacement, the socially and spatially stratified harms of food deserts, or indeed the harms of austerity. These are significant and often subtle issues of violence and harm that warrant enquiry but fall outside the strict focus of this study.

Local knowledge and street-level practice in violence reduction

This article is primarily focused on violence as part of the everyday life of localities within cities, the communities and neighbourhoods that make up this context. Aside from the human loss and damage generated by violence in cities, its effects can also be expressed in wider patterns of insecurity, mistrust and fear which pervade the lives of many citizens.

Rather than treat the spatial and urban contexts as 'background', our focus is on localised and ultimately micro-social acts and processes within the wider city settings that they occur. This situates urban contexts as containers for social systems stratified by class, gender, income and race and power relations (Atkinson and Millington, 2018). It is important in this sense to remember, as Taylor (1997) has argued, that urban 'localities matter' and that the

effects of violence on different places manifest in clearly demarcated ways. In this context, how local civic actors understand such structural shifts and changes are key to understanding how effective responses and solutions may be generated.

It is therefore important to anchor our analysis in literature that addresses the practices, pressures and knowledge that frontline workers and practitioners hold in responding to urban violence. There is a sizable body of literature that looks at the intersection of government and policy implementation through the work and perspectives of public service actors. Since Lipsky's coining of *Street Level Bureaucracy* in 1980, much work has been done on developing and applying the concept within other public policy disciplines (Chang and Brewer, 2023): including public administration (Durose, 2009), urban studies (Laws and Forester, 2015), and social care and welfare (Ellis, 2011). This scholarship speaks to the role and influence of public/civil servants in implementing public policy and as pivotal to the interface between government policy makers and citizens.

While there was much emphasis on discretion as a core part of street-level bureaucracy, we employ this literature to better understand how public policy efforts are engaged with from the 'bottom-up'. This literature can offer insight into how frontline actors navigate conflict between public policy constructions of the root causes of violence and their *own* knowledge of barriers to reducing violence. Thinking about frontline actor accounts within the context of this literature facilitates an analysis of how practitioners negotiate obstacles to change in their everyday work, as well as wider issues of trust, community building and cooperation (Durose, 2009), opportunities for innovation, improvisation and conflict (Laws and Forester, 2015). As Hupe et al. (2015: 11) suggest, these approaches also recognise that policy efforts to social problems (such as violence) are 'multilayered' and potentially in need for a 'horizontal' analysis of policy implementation.

The study

The findings presented here draw on data gathered as part of a larger, multi-site comparative study on European urban settings of roughly similar population sizes and similar social, ethnic and socio-spatial divisions. The analysis is based on material gathered in two urban centres: Sheffield (UK) and Malmö (Sweden). These cities were selected to compare and contrast experiences of contemporary urban violence between cities that can be labelled as ordinary, normal or newly settled cities. More significant similarities emerged than anticipated, however, in terms of the overarching inequalities seen by our participants as underpinning and explaining violence, which they related variably to identity and social change, political institutions and access to socio-economic resources. Both cities do not report high rates of violence, though each experience (as we shall see) violence that varies by district and is linked to a series of social divisions seen by participants to undermine urban peace and cohesion.

Through a comparative case study approach to these two cities, our aim was to discuss with key, municipal practitioners their understanding of violence as something variably real or misrepresented in 'ordinary' European cities (Robinson, 2008). By 'ordinary', we describe cities in which everyday life operates in relatively low violence, but forms of urban change (migration, inequality and relative forms of income-based segregation via private and public housing systems) provide the kind of common context in which the reality and debates surrounding urban violence are currently occurring.

Methods

Setting out to understand the patterns and consequences of violence as well as how violence is 'emplaced' in these cities, we conducted a total of 48 interviews with key local stakeholders sitting variably across policy, policing and civil society sectors across four cities including: Sheffield (UK), Malmö (Sweden), Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Belfast (Northern Ireland). The analysis presented here is based on a subset of 23 interviews from Sheffield and Malmö to enable a focus on cities with similar experiences of recent social change. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken, providing space for participants to discuss what they viewed as the most critical forms of violence in their city, what a less violent version of their city would look like and the perceived obstacles to achieving this. Participants were purposively sampled to

identify those whose work directly or indirectly engaged in activities that responded to and aimed to prevent urban violence as well as promote cohesion and build peace. We identified participants through website searches and local policy literature, supplemented by snowball sampling to access a wider network of participants. This included social workers, individuals representing migrant and refugee support organisations, domestic violence organisations, youth organisations, grassroots conflict transformation and peacebuilding centres as well as local police services, including community police and senior officers, and municipal agencies including city council officials, community safety leads and community relations councils. The central aim was to offer a qualitative study of these issues, building useful forms of explanation from in-depth yet 'local' analyses that could be used to say something capable of being related to similar urban experiences in the European context more broadly.

Case study 1: Sheffield, England

Sheffield, located in the North of England, was renowned for the strength of its iron and steel industries in previous decades. As of 2021, the city had a population total of 556,521 (Sheffield City Council, 2022a: 5) with a high number of people in the 20-24 age group due to the two universities in the city (Sheffield City Council, 2022b: n.p). The 2021 Census reported that 74.5 per cent of the population identified as White British, 9.6 per cent as Asian, 4.6 per cent as Black, 3.5 per cent as Mixed and 4.6 per cent as White non-British (Sheffield City Council, 2022b: n.p). The city presents with stark socio-economic inequalities and class divisions following four decades of deindustrialisation. These divisions are reflected spatially, with the most affluent wards clustered in the southwest of the city, and the most deprived wards in the northeast (Sheffield Fairness Commission, 2012). Therefore, while there has been economic change in certain parts of Sheffield (such as the development of commercial/retail centres), it has been, as Ferrazzi (2022: 108) writes 'by no means a sustainable and inclusive growth' across the city.

Violence and violence prevention in Sheffield. Sheffield is typically regarded as a safe and 'low crime place to live' (Sheffield City Partnership Board, 2018: 8). While the general crime (129.7 per 1000 population) and violent crime and sexual offence rates (39.6 per 1000 population) in Sheffield are slightly above England's national average (97.4 and 33.9 per 1000 population, respectively) (Sheffield City Council, 2024), Sheffield continually reports at the low end of England's 'Core Cities' with regard to forms of violent crime (Sheffield City Partnership Board, 2018). The State of Sheffield 2018 report stated that crime and anti-social behaviour is increasing, though not as rapidly as other cities, and the uneven distribution of different forms of violent crime by ward areas. In particular, this report stations this debate within a broader discussion on community cohesion and the challenges that economic and demographic change, such as migration, pose to a strong sense of identity and community (Sheffield City Partnership Board, 2018: 59).

Within this context, local policy responses have been operated through multi-agency Community Safety Partnership arrangements. In Sheffield, this was constituted in the form of the Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership Board (now Safer Sheffield Partnership) bringing together police, the city council, probation and others, while drawing upon the expertise of voluntary sector organisations, and the domestic abuse board, and drug and alcohol board. In 2018, the partnership prioritised four priorities including: gangs and youth violence, modern slavery and human trafficking, hate crime against vulnerable groups, and domestic abuse and violence against women and girls – which, taken together, seem to be indicative of a push towards improving community safety and cohesion (Ferrazzi, 2022; Sheffield Safety and Sustainable Communities Partnership, 2018). The launch of Sheffield City Council's Community Cohesion Charter in 2018 solidified this approach, again, with the organising principle that social cohesion can help in 'preventing escalation towards scapegoating vulnerable people, hate crime, and antisocial behaviour' (Greenwood, 2018: 19). Threads of this focus on community cohesion can also be seen in the more recent launch of Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) across the United Kingdom by the Home Office (including the South

Yorkshire VRU) based on a public health approach to violence. These launched shortly after the completion of data collection but are mentioned here to show the local policy development on violence prevention.

Case study 2: Malmö, Sweden

Malmö, the third largest city in Sweden, has similarly been recovering from the economic collapse of its shipbuilding industry and transitioning to its new self-ascribed identity as a 'city of knowledge'. Throughout this transition, Malmö has struggled with tensions relating to demographic change and (both mainstream and social) media attention surrounding violence and exclusion in areas with high concentrations of ethnic minority groups. As of December 2024, Malmö had a total population of 365,644 and is the fastest growing large city in Sweden (Malmö Stad, n.d.). The population demographic of Malmö is considerably younger than Sweden's average, with Malmö Stad (n.d.) reporting that roughly half of its residents are under the age of 35 (47%), and that the age group of 20–25 has seen the greatest influx in migration patterns. In addition, it is estimated that individuals from 187 different countries live in Malmö currently, with roughly 1 in 3 residents having been born in another country (Malmö Stad, n.d.).

Violence and violence prevention in Malmö. Within a national context, there has been increasing focus on the use of guns and hand grenades across Sweden (Sturup et al., 2019) with Khoshnood and Gerell (2019) observing a notable increase in gun-related violence between 2011 and 2015 in Malmö specifically. Therefore, while many types of other violent crime may be *decreasing*, violence using guns and explosives are on the *increase*, with an association to young males involved in criminal networks and milieu (Sturup et al., 2020). As Danell and Jarl (2024) note, the discourse attached to this violence has become highly politicised, with the focus on organised crime networks and 'gangs' driving feelings of insecurity, fear of crime and positioned as symbolising a threat to Swedish democratic values. As part of this politically charged debate, multiculturalism and immigration policies have become central talking points in Sweden, where the principle of universalism prevents the tailoring of policies to address specific needs or inequalities facing ethnic minority groups.

The introduction of local violence prevention policies such as the Group Violence Intervention, also known as "Sluta Skjut" or Ceasefire Malmö (Ivert and Mellgren, 2021), represent key problem-based, deterrent initiatives targeting street-based networks involved in violence and speak directly to the political and media focus on organised gangs. However, there are numerous other initiatives targeting other levels of prevention including Communities That Care (focusing on improving living conditions for children and risk/protective factors for violence) and the Business Improvement District (BID) (such as BID Sofielund) which proposes partnerships between property owners in 'vulnerable areas' (known by police as *utsatt område*) to improve safety and cohesion at a neighbourhood level.

A comparative analysis of Malmö and Sheffield in this respect highlights how core themes of cohesion, insecurity and marginality materialise and play out across different urban regional contexts. However, a comparison such as this *also* offers insight into how street-level municipal workers problematise violence and what they perceive to be possible as they respond within conditions of economic decline and demographic change. This interpretivist epistemological approach places value on frontline practitioner's accounts, acknowledging that their understandings of urban violence (and how to respond) are embedded within specific social, political and cultural contexts.

Findings

Constructions of urban violence in civic and policy discourses

Popular understanding of urban violence sits somewhere between representation and reality (Body-Gendrot, 2011), and this possibility was frequently reflected in the variation among interviewees' views about the prevalence, forms and severity of violence within each city and the disconnect with 'top-down' policy discourse (Hupe et al., 2015). The interviews examined how civic and policy actors constructed urban violence: which forms of violence they

considered most critical in their city, the root causes they attributed to this violence to and the responses they see as being most effective in addressing those causes and their 'symptoms'. Positionality is central here as perspectives will always be in part reflections of how each actor is situated and engages with the problem of urban violence, what institutional contexts, policies and trainings they operate from within, and the communities that they interact with and to what end. Nevertheless, common to both case studies was the sense that significant disparities exist in experiences of violence and safety within each city:

> So, you can say, overall, I think this is a peaceful city and I think yeah, do you know what, I've got children and I enjoy living in this city, this is a nice city because I'm over there in a leafy suburb. That's not everybody's experience. And that's when I think you get a poetical steer on Sheffield's a nice place to live, for some people. For some people, it's really not. For some people, it's really not a nice place to be, in fact it's very scary, very dangerous and there are very limited opportunities to get out of it. (SHF11 Civic)

When asked what types of violence were most critical in their city, many initially pointed to what Ellis (2019) has called 'higher harm': in the first instance, participants perceived direct, physical violence, such as organised crime and robbery, as being key priorities for prevention in their communities:

> . . . the shootings of course, because people die from that . . . And it also makes other people in the city scared and it influences people's behaviour, 'how should I travel round in the city?' 'Can I go out in the city whenever I want to?' and so on. So, it influences all people living in the city more or less. But also using these bangers and these explosive things, that is also a problem because the same reason, it could be someone . . . there hasn't been anyone who has died yet but there is some people who have been injured. And yeah, it will make you afraid maybe to walk around on the streets . . . (MAL01 Police)

It is interesting that police participants commented first and foremost on acts of physical violence, echoing previous analyses on the increases of gun violence and explosives in Malmö, particularly among young males (Sturup et al., 2020). Similar perspectives were offered from police officers in Sheffield, who commented on incidents of anti-social behaviour as indicative of more severe and escalating forms of violent crime. Unpacking this, discussions turned towards forms of violence that may be less visible and more 'subtle' in public discourses, yet just as pervasive in their impacts on the real and perceived sense of safety among local communities. Interviewees in both cities described how anti-social behaviour, hate crime, intimidation, forced labour and exploitation impact the social fabric of their cities and that we shouldn't 'underestimate the impact of these low level issues in terms of our communities' (SHF06 Police).

These forms of violence complicate how urban violence is constructed more broadly by civic and policy actors, in particular the distinctions between responses to more public, exceptional violence, and the 'private' forms of violence that take place in the everyday. In this respect, it is important to state that domestic violence and abuse was largely absent, or at least downplayed, in discussions. Returning to the positionality of some participants, this is perhaps important to consider in relation to connotations of what 'urban' and 'public space' represents, and the low rates of disclosure of domestic violence and abuse from victim/survivors to police. Indeed, those that did identify domestic violence as an issue, tended to separate this from 'urban' violence: 'The issues we get mainly within our communities in terms of violence tends to be more domestic-related than urban violence' (SHF06 Police). One interviewee in Malmö connected questions of private and public violence with the way that certain issues tended to attract more media and political attention, and that gendered violence is less present in such arenas:

> . . . I think that partner violence is probably a huge problem in Malmö, as well as in many other cities and countries around the world, but that's nothing that you hear about and maybe not that . . . it's not discussed that much either. But it's probably a huge problem. But for a couple of years now I think the shootings have been the main topics of media attention and, also, for political debates. (MAL06-07 Civic)

The absence of this more 'private' violence in the data suggests a particular representation of 'urban' that separates domestic violence and abuse from 'urban violence' (Cook and Walklate, 2022), despite the prevalence of this issue across spatial and income

divides in the city. There is an important intervention to be made here from the perspective of street-level bureaucracy scholarship that speaks to the often gendered (and as will be shown shortly, racialised) notions of 'urban' violence that appear at policy level and how frontline actors engage with these assumptions from street level.

Characterising urban violence

In discussions about underlying causes and manifestations of urban violence, many of our interviewees drew a connection between policies of austerity and disinvestment in the most structurally disadvantaged communities, tensions surrounding 'cohesion', and the marginalisation of migrant communities and young people as key to understanding urban violence. Participants described how these conditions reinforce inequalities and exacerbate feelings of fear about certain groups, perceptions of certain areas as 'dangerous' and ultimately fracture social relations between communities based on perceptions of difference.

Revisiting the 'tale of two cities' theme (Taylor, 1997), many interviewees described poverty and socioeconomic deprivation as key markers of the divide in feelings of safety in both Sheffield and Malmö:

> I think Sheffield has an issue in terms of its poverty and the way it is divided into two halves. And one half of the city really does have a problem hugely with poverty and the poverty that we have there has an impact on gang violence and young people just causing antisocial behaviour and that level of problems. (SHF09 Civic)

> Malmö in many ways is a divided city. On one side we're very successful and rich. I mean the companies that choose Malmö as a headquarter, international companies, is quite impressive. The cultural scene in Malmö, both with music and restaurants and theatres, is quite impressive for the size of the city. But then you have the integration problem, the crime, the extreme violence problem . . . (MAL09 Policy)

Participants largely pointed to disinvestment in communities as a core factor in the types of violence they see as most critical in their cities. The resulting high levels of inequality and deprivation, they argued, undermined social cohesion and exacerbated divisions among communities, reinforcing the sense of isolation within marginalised groups. Moreover, this urban marginality was reflected in terms of how certain areas in the cities were navigated according to perceptions of safety and risk by many citizens.

Austerity urbanism and disinvestment

While the nature of urban transformation differed in the two cities, participants from both identified patterns of disinvestment in socially and economically marginalised areas that they connected with issues of violence and insecurity they encounter in their work. Sheffield's massive losses of central government funding were seen as a key issue. As mentioned previously, Sheffield has had to manage a period of deindustrialisation and decline in the steel industry compounded by the effects of the financial crises in 2008, exit from the European Union and a sustained campaign of austerity policies by the Conservative government. Sheffield City Council reported that, after 14 years of government cuts, it has had to deliver savings of over £483 million, with the added impact of inflation and increased demand; translating to having 26 per cent less to spend per household compared to 2010/11 (Sheffield City Council, 2024: 2). This resonates with what many commentators have described as 'austerity urbanism' in which cuts due to fiscal restraint at the national scale are applied most forcefully to the poorest communities (Davies and Blanco, 2017). A range of key actors discussed the kinds of isolation these forces generated for many communities that were increasingly stripped of core services. One participant in Sheffield described the withdrawal of resources from programmes that had been making a positive impact:

> And they don't have money to be able to go and do other things that would be considered to take them off the streets in a positive way. So, the lack of resources I think has had a major impact and has left communities to go in on themselves. (SHF09 Civic)

Some participants were explicit about the political economy of austerity measures in the United Kingdom, recognising that cities like Sheffield were shouldering the burden of ideological economic decisions:

> . . . part of the austerity problem is lack of statutory services on the ground but it's also poverty, it's also

> people looking for who's to blame you know, as we talked about before. So, I think there's a whole system around that. And then you can go on to say well why have we got this austerity? It's a political choice, I'm fairly sure it's a political choice you know, it's not an economic determinism which we choose as our economic system. (SHF01 Civic)

Compounding the impacts of disinvestment in communities and community programmes, police participants in Sheffield described the direct impacts of austerity policies on how proactively police are able to engage with communities:

> In Sheffield I think we have something like over 120 different nationalities, 130 different languages spoken. So, it's key to get into communities and understand communities. We've lost a little bit of that transition over the last few years with the austerity measures that have been brought up by the government which has drawn us away from the community. (SHF03 Police)

In Malmö, this apparent divestment from working-class communities also aligned with political decision-making, though here, rather than an explicit policy of austerity, participants attributed these decisions to a post-industrial shift towards becoming a 'dynamic knowledge centre.'[1] In contrast to Sheffield, Malmö has experienced significant investment leading to the construction of major new public spaces as part of this new knowledge centre, attracting high-earning groups to the city, while simultaneously disinvesting in other parts of the city (Carmona et al., 2019):

> It was hard to change course for the city from an industrial working-class society to a more cultural knowledge-based society . . . But they did it quite well. But we still struggle with two different aspects of Malmö. We have one that is very innovative and making big progress and then we have the other picture where people are not involved in the society. (MAL12 Civic)

Carmona et al. (2019: 246) referred to this in their analysis of the construction of Malmö Live, symbolising 'part of the city's attempts to re-position itself economically', but also indicating a shift *away* from prioritising collective approaches to public spaces and benefits. In both cities, participants linked politically driven economic disinvestment with the exclusion of already marginalised communities. Applying the lens of street-level bureaucracy, the push towards austerity urbanism also has implications for frontline practitioners themselves: namely, pressure to 'do more with less' (Hupe and Buffat, 2014) and the dilemmas that these actors face when asked to produce solutions beyond their reach.

Deprivation, 'cohesion' and scapegoating

Compounded by austerity policies, interviewees described how significant social inequality within the cities tended to drive stronger forms of scapegoating and othering that perpetuated pre-existing tensions and undermined cohesion within marginalised communities. In Sheffield, for example, deprivation has become more polarised since the start of austerity policies: between 2015 and 2019, 106 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) moved Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) decile with 46 becoming *more* deprived and 60 becoming *less* deprived (Sheffield City Council, 2019). Notions of increasing insecurities and competition in urban environments have been identified previously, particularly in relation to urban riots and protest (Dikeç, 2017). One community worker in Sheffield said that over this period they had witnessed 'an increase in racism, stimulated by austerity' (SHF01 Civic). He outlined the relationship between deprivation, cohesion and the scapegoating of 'diversity':

> . . . one of the things, one of the key principles in the Cohesion Strategic Framework is that cohesion's not undermined by diversity, it's undermined by deprivation. So, deprivation's a massive barrier and that can be social deprivation, people feeling they don't have a place in society in their community, it can be economic deprivation, experiencing poverty and they're seeing why they're poor rather than you know . . . it's the underlying cause isn't it? If we understand the economics of capitalism or whatever you want to frame it, then we might understand why people are poor. It's not 'the foreigners' who are making you poorer. (SHF01 Civic)

Some attributed the resulting xenophobia and racism to individual processes of scapegoating other marginalised communities perceived to be receiving greater support:

> Well, there's always hostility towards people who are seen to be different. And I think in a city, well parts of the city where people are feeling more besieged themselves in terms of you know, the social and economic situation, if they see other people around them that they perceive to be getting more benefits than them that creates tensions. (SHF04 Civic)

Social problems that emerge from such disinvestment were seen to be instrumentalised by some groups in ways that reinforced more regressive political ideologies around multiculturalism, immigration and class. This is also reflective of Tilly's (1998) relational view of inequality, characterised by people drawing boundaried categories between themselves and others which are then institutionalised through different processes and practices, such as exploitation or 'opportunity hoarding'. In Malmö, tensions around violence and immigration were often discussed in relation to policies of multiculturalism, with right-wing parties framing violence and disorder in the city as an example of 'multicultural system collapse' (MAL06-07 Civic). Others went further, noting the deeply racialised perceptions of citizenship and nationality that underpin patterns of exclusion, highlighting assumptions of Swedish citizens as white and blonde and describing non-white offenders as not 'looking' Swedish (MAL11 Police).

Urban marginality, fear and racism

Many interviewees, primarily those working with community-based organisations, connected the issues of urban marginality and racism explored above with the backdrop of fear and insecurity that characterises communities' experiences with and perceptions of urban violence. These themes relate to recent work in European cities around gang formation and the injection of new 'energy' into forms of violence related to the international drug trade and the exclusion of new, local migrants (Eski and Sergi, 2024). Perceptions on these issues were spaced unevenly across the city with some pointing to migration patterns as a factor shaping tensions in different parts of the city. Others described how associations that developed between particular neighbourhood and social groups, such as young people and issues of anti-social behaviour, were seen to generate impressions of powerlessness or a lack of security among residents of those areas (SHF11 Civic). These reported fears, again whether based on perception or reality, constrained behaviour:

> There were issues with women saying that they felt that they had to go out in groups and not being able to walk alone in certain areas. And certain specific parts of Sheffield they felt were no-go areas . . . I think sort of the idea that they couldn't go on their own was more to do with their own personal safety . . . that 'I can't go out because I feel that I'll be robbed' as well if there's no street lighting. So, I know to avoid that particular road, or I know to avoid that particular area of Sheffield. (SHF09 Civic)

Areas where this sense of fear, insecurity and unrest persist are often labelled as dangerous or 'problematic' and statutory responses to those areas reinforce their isolation. Whereas policing actors in Sheffield described a community-oriented approach, one interviewee in Malmö described state responses to 'problem' areas as militaristic:

> Then we're talking about war. That's how war works. If you put in military no-go zones . . . then you see these people like we are in a war. Like Sweden is in war with these communities. And that's a big problem, that's a very big problem and that's very different because when I was growing up it was the same area that we're talking about now. They see us like immigrants or they see us like problematic. No-go zone areas or like we are saying to the Swedish people 'you shouldn't go to this area, it's dangerous for you to go to these areas'. And if you have a language that starts to talk about this area like this, then the steps to military action against these areas are very short . . . (MAL04 Civic)

Parker and Madureira (2016: 595) analyse this preoccupation with stigmatised areas within political and media spheres, giving the example of Rosengård in Malmö, where reports have 'tended to accentuate an ethnic dimension but often failed to see causes related to the labour market, housing market and media itself'. In contrast to the more individualistic explanations of tension, voluntary sector participants in particular recognised the structural forces which animate the resilience and privilege felt by more affluent, white communities who are more insulated

from the violence (or fear/threat of violence) experienced by marginalised communities:

> The white, middle-class Swedish-originated feels unsafe sometimes but they have a resilience in their group because they are never targeted in those kind of extreme violence situations. Then we have the other people with different backgrounds and socio-economically challenged areas, where the overall feeling of safety is very . . . is lacking . . . (MAL12 Civic)

This proximity becomes important when understanding the issues that enter public discourse. Some argued that it is only when the violence 'normally' contained within structurally disadvantaged areas of the city moved 'towards the centre or towards areas where the rich and powerful live, then it becomes a very big issue' (MAL13 Civic). Some participants were very aware of the privileged position they occupied, particularly voluntary sector participants, commenting on the stigmatised nature of certain areas of the city and their separation from this. Notably, responses to this spill-over of violence seem more concerned with containing such violence through law enforcement than addressing the underlying causes of the violence which were identified by many interviewees: 'it's all talk about more police, more surveillance, militarising these areas, using water guns' (MAL13 Civic). Some participants in Malmö added to this by expressing concern that some political figures had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo of urban disorder as it reinforced ideological challenges to policies supporting 'multiculturalism':

> the biggest segregation in Malmö today is the political . . . we have a big segregation because they don't know how the people works. We don't have segregation empowerment in these communities, we have segregation on political, on interacting with the people . . . As soon as we start segregation now in Sweden if you say segregation everybody connects that word to immigrants. (MAL04 Civic)

The issue of segregation in this context therefore refers not only to socio-economic and racial segregation, but to *political engagement*: some groups were understood to have the power to take action and others were effectively excluded from this field of action. This has been evidenced in previous research showing the polarising effects of economic crises on segregation and concentrated poverty, hitting those hardest who are already in vulnerable positions in the labour market (see Andersson and Hedman, 2016, for an analysis of Malmö). Amplified by conditions of economic decline, these accounts also show the underlying themes of distrust and disillusionment that create challenges for frontline actors in how they work (Laws and Forester, 2015). Again, these issues speak to a disconnect between the policy tools laid out at a national level and what is possible in different localities.

Conclusion

Drawing from qualitative research in two changing European urban centres, we have identified the key operating theories, ideas and observations circulating among civic actors tasked with tackling urban violence. Their commentaries build a cumulative picture that is in many ways at odds with the main thrust of many of the policies, political discussions, policing priorities and resource cuts evident in many cities across Europe in recent years. The strongest shared conclusion is that urban violence cannot be tackled where these deeper conditions, influences and a lack of resources remain unaddressed. In this sense, our work resonates with the findings of other researchers in both urban studies and criminology that have witnessed an enormous erosion of social conditions in many city contexts. This analysis also connects with scholarship on street-level bureaucracy and local knowledge, specifically in relation to trust and conflict and how frontline actors struggle against increasingly hostile political discourses.

The diagnosis offered by key actors is fairly clear. However, the question of how to respond is muddier. We know that the subtle social geographies and mobilities of more and less affluent citizens shape exposure to risk and that this also translates into varying commitments to address problems. There is clearly a political economy to urban violence, the core economic and social conditions that undergird urban life and which drive forms of social humiliation, lack of participation, the absence of meaningful education and other social investments. These factors have been shaped and curtailed by more than a decade of austerity that itself

layered pressures onto urban settings generated by much long-standing inequalities. The prospect of these denied opportunities and continued apathy also raise further questions about the generational impacts of unresolved tensions for a younger generation who are left to deal with increasing hostilities. Some have pointed towards the potential of these tensions as tinderboxes for latent violence, only exacerbated by broader drivers of migration and climate change that will continue to shape socially fractious conditions within many urban centres in Europe.

At stake in these debates are questions regarding not only how to address the roots of urban violence, but to whom and at what level responsibility for responses should be directed. As the effects of social and economic crisis are often passed from state to local levels (Peck, 2012), including those that emerged during the pandemic, there is a risk that further burdens are being placed on local actors to produce solutions for problems beyond their reach. The substantial interdependence of these structural factors seems likely to confound the effectiveness of interventions around urban violence amid questions of whose responsibility and remit they might fall under. The accounts presented here underline the importance of three policy measures in particular:

1. Support and invest in long-term collaborative partnerships and policy initiatives which take account of the spatial discrepancies within cities.
2. Encourage connections between civic and state authorities which could help to relieve these frustrations, rebalance power relations and provide accountability in top-down approaches to cities experiencing destructive social, political and economic change.
3. To increase trust in political institutions, policies must also tackle the scarcity of investment in public services, while encouraging better representation of marginalised communities in decision-making processes.

However, policy commitments must also be coupled with action to provide safe, free and equally accessible spaces across the city, especially as the social geographies and mobilities within European urban centres continue to change in years to come.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was generously funded by the Max Batley Peace Studies Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme. In addition, Elizabeth Cook's time to produce the written output was supported by the UKRI Medical Research Council - UKPRP Consortium Award (MR/V049879/1).

ORCID iDs

Elizabeth A Cook https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7608-8702

Rowland Atkinson https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9801-9380

Note

1. 'The Story of Malmö', Malmö Stad https://malmo.se/Welcome-to-Malmo/The-story-of-Malmo.html.

References

Andersson R and Hedman L (2016) Economic decline and residential segregation: A Swedish study with focus on Malmö. *Urban Geography* 37(5): 748–768.

Atkinson R and Millington G (2018) *Urban Criminology: The City, Disorder, Harm and Social Control*. Routledge.

Beugelsdijk S, van Herk H and Maseland R (2022) The nature of societal conflict in Europe; an archetypal analysis of the postmodern cosmopolitan, rural traditionalist and urban precariat. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 60(6): 1701–1722.

Body-Gendrot S (2011) *The Social Control of Cities? A Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Body-Gendrot S (2013) Violence in the city: challenges of global governance. In: Stiglitz J and Kaldor M (eds) *The Quest for Security: Protection without Protectionism and the Challenge of Global Governance*. New York: Colombia University Press.

Briggs D and Gamero RM (2017) *Dead-End Lives: Drugs and Violence in the City Shadows*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Brookman F, Bennett T, Hochstetler A and Copes H (2011) The 'code of the street' and the generation of street violence in the UK. *European Journal of Criminology* 8(1): 17–31.

Cook EA and Walklate S (2022) Gendered objects and gendered spaces: The invisibilities of 'knife'crime. *Current Sociology* 70(1): 61–76.

Carmona M, Hanssen GS, Lamm B, Nyland K, Saglie I-G and Tietjen A (2019) Public space in an age of austerity. *Urban Design International* 24(4): 241–259.

Cassiers T and Kesteloot C (2012) Socio-spatial inequalities and social cohesion in European cities. *Urban Studies* 49(9): 1909–1924.

Chang A and Brewer G (2023) Street-Level bureaucracy in public administration: a systematic literature review'. *Public Management Review* 25(11): 2191–2211.

Currie E (2009) *The Roots of Danger: Violent Crime in Global Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dahlberg LL and Krug EG (2002) Violence: A global public health problem. In: Krug E, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, et al. (eds) *World Report on Violence and Health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Danell J-AB and Jarl J (2024) What is the problem represented to be in the Swedish police authority: a policy analysis. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 18: xx–xx.

Davies J and Blanco I (2017) Austerity urbanism: patterns of neo-liberalisation and resistance in six cities of Spain and the UK'. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 49(7): 1517–1536.

De Vries LA and Guild E (2019) Seeking refuge in Europe: spaces of transit and the violence of migration management. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45(12): 2156–2166.

Dikeç M (2017) *Urban Rage: The Revolt of the Excluded*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Durose C (2009) Front-line workers and 'local knowledge': neighbourhood stories in contemporary UK local governance. *Public Administration* 87(1): 35–49.

Ellis A (2017) Confronting the roots of violent behavior. In: Atkinson R, MacKenzie L and Winlow S (eds) *Building Better Societies: Promoting Social Justice in a World Falling Apart*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Ellis A (2019) A De-civilizing reversal or system normal? Rising lethal violence in post-recession austerity United Kingdom. *The British Journal of Criminology* 59(4): 862–878.

Ellis K (2011) 'Street-level bureaucracy' revisited: the changing face of frontline discretion in adult social care in England. *Social Policy and Administration* 45(3): 221–244.

Eski Y and Sergi A (2024) Ethnic profiling of organised crime? A tendency of mafia-cation in the Netherlands. *Trends in Organized Crime* 27(2): 120–139.

Feltran G (2020) *Entangled City: Crime as Urban Fabric in São Paulo*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Ferrazzi D (2022) *Crime, housing tenure, and urban space: a study of Sheffield* [Unpublished]. Doctoral dissertation. Available at: https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/32478/1/Ferrazzi%2C%20Dario%2C%20reg.170151355_Post-viva%20edits.pdf

Greenwood A (2018) *Cohesion Charter Report*. Sheffield City Council. Available at: https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s32561/Cohesion%20Charter%20Report.pdf

Hoelscher K and Nussio E (2015) Understanding unlikely successes in urban violence reduction. *Urban Studies* 53(11): 2397–2416.

Hupe P and Buffat A (2014) A public service gap: capturing contexts in a comparative approach of street-level bureaucracy. *Public Management Review* 16(4): 548–569.

Hupe P, Hill M and Buffat A (2015) *Understanding Street-level Bureaucracy*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Ivert A-K and Mellgren C (2021) *Evaluation of the Implementation of Group Violence Intervention in Malmö*. Malmö: Malmö University.

Khoshnood A and Gerell M (2019) Gun and explosive violence. In: Fritz MV and Khoshnood A (eds) *Crime, Victimization and Vulnerability in Malmö*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Laws D and Forester J (2015) *Conflict, Improvisation, Governance: Street Level Practices for Urban Democracy*. London: Routledge.

Lea J (2002) *Crime and Modernity: Continuities in Left Realist Criminology*. London: Sage Publications.

Lipsky M (1980) *Street-level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Malmö Stad (n.d.) Population. Available at: https://malmo.se/Facts-and-statistics/Population.html

Mayblin L, Wake M and Kazemi M (2020) Necropolitics and the slow violence of the everyday: Asylum seeker welfare in the postcolonial present. *Sociology* 54(1): 107–123.

Mohammed M and Oualhaci A (2021) Race and youth gangs in France: denial, ambiguity, and recognition. In *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Gang Studies*. Routledge, pp. 316–327.

Moser C (2004) Urban violence and insecurity: an introductory roadmap. *Environment & Urbanization* 16(2): 3–16.

Parker P and Madureira AM (2016) Housing context and legitimacy in the transformation of a stigmatized estate: the case of Rosengård. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 31(4): 589–604.

Pavoni A and Tulumello S (2020) What is urban violence? *Progress in Human Geography* 44(1): 49–76.

Peck J (2012) Austerity urbanism: American cities under extreme economy. *City* 16(6): 626–655.

Robinson J (2008) Developing ordinary cities: city visioning processes in Durban and Johannesburg. *Environment and Planning A* 40(1): 74–87.

Savage M (2021) *The Return of Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sheffield City Council (2019) *Deprivation: Sheffield Joint Strategic Needs Assessment*. Available at: https://sheffieldcc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=d3358b124a964624ae2457535a1a60b4

Sheffield City Council (2022a) Annual Equalities Report 2001/2002. Sheffield. Available at: https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s58877/8%20-%20Equality%20Report%202021-22_24-3.pdf

Sheffield City Council (2022b) Census and Population. Available at: https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/population-in-sheffield

Sheffield City Council (2024) Local Insight profile for 'Sheffield' area. Report. 27 November. OCSI. Available at: https://sheffield.localinsight.org/#/map?report=2829

Sheffield City Partnership Board (2018) *State of Sheffield 2018*. Sheffield: Sheffield City Partnership Board.

Sheffield Fairness Commission (2012) *Making Sheffield Fairer*. Sheffield: Sheffield City Council.

Sheffield Safety and Sustainable Communities Partnership (2018) *Community Safety Partnership Plan*. Available at: https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/pollution-and-nuisance/safer-and-sustainable-communities-partnership/CSP_PLAN_201820.pdf

Stefanizzi S and Verdolini V (2019) Bordered communities: the perception of insecurity in five European cities. *Quality & Quantity* 53(3): 1165–1186.

Sturup J, Gerell M and Rostami A (2020) Explosive violence: a near-repeat study of hand grenade detonations and shootings in urban Sweden. *European Journal of Criminology* 17(5): 661–677.

Sturup J, Rostami A, Mondani H, Gerell M, Sarnecki J and Edling C (2019) Increased gun violence among young males in Sweden: a descriptive National Survey and International Comparison. *European Journal of Criminal Police and Research* 25: 365–378.

Tammaru T, Marcińczak S, Van Ham M and Musterd S (2014) *Socio-economic Segregation in European Capital Cities*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Taylor I (1997) Crime, anxiety and locality: responding to the 'condition of England' at the end of the century. *Theoretical Criminology* 1(1): 53–75.

Tilly C (1998) *Durable Inequality*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Van Gemert F, Peterson D and Lien IL (eds) (2008) *Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity*. London: Routledge.

Wacquant L (2009) *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.