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## The Complexities of Local Austerity Governance: Hybridity as Practice

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<b>Abstract:</b>	Using the case of Cardiff, Wales, this paper argues that the hybridisation of local governance forms is exacerbated by the downscaling and downloading of austerity politics (Peck, 2012). Conceptualising hybridity as practice (Skelcher and Smith, 2015), the paper considers how 'hybrid officers' in third sector organisations experience austerity, their situated agency, and whether hybridisation constitutes incorporation into austerity processes or contains potential for transformative actions to cope with or overcome austerity. Analysis makes the tensions clear in mediating the changing assemblage of ideologies within the 'landscape of antagonism' (Newman, 2014a) and points to an ongoing research agenda.
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## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary debates about local governance focus on relations within governance networks, or the ‘web of relationships between government, business and civil society actors’ (Klijn, 2008: 511). One relatively unexplored dimension is the hybridity of local governance forms which comprise a mixture of governance modes and cultures (Skelcher et al, 2013: 2). The hybridity approach problematises boundaries, seeing them as capable of being transgressed by politicians, public managers and citizens when crossing or spanning across sectoral and organisational boundaries to assemble ideas and conduct practices. Whilst the public administration literature typically defines hybrid organisations in terms of a public-private mix which ‘perform tasks that are inherently public’ (Kickert, 2001: 136), Skelcher (2008) argues that to locate hybrids at some point on a public-private continuum misplaces their role in state-civil society relationships. He asserts that hybrids are perceived as valuable in public policy because of the ways in which they are assumed to improve the performance (in terms of outcomes, costs or democracy) of governmental bodies. This belief is reflected in the widespread adoption of collaborative management processes that alter public policy relationships by bringing public managers, business and third sector organisations (TSOs) and citizens together to shape and oversee the delivery of public policy at the city and neighbourhood levels (Skelcher, 2012: 13). The development of such hybrid local governance forms as instruments for improving societal coordination often relies on the skills and resources of ‘network managers’ whose roles tend to be sponsored by and enacted under the guidance of the local state. The resultant hybrid governance forms are legitimated, mediated and steered by the state but influenced by other actors (Skelcher et al, 2013: 3). Current and former examples of such governance forms in the UK include Welsh Local Service Boards (LSBs, now called Public Service Boards) and English Local Strategic Partnerships.

In this article we consider the situated agency of ‘hybrid officers’ within the under-researched realm of hybridity which results from local governance transformations which have been exacerbated by the devolution and downloading of austerity politics. Such hybridity as practice in the governance of a city merits attention as it is concentrated in the processes where state and non-state actors interact. Illustrated by the case of Cardiff, Wales, we first argue that hybridisation is encouraged by austerity politics given its processes of downscaling and downloading. We then explain hybridity as practice, followed by our research design and methodology before examining our findings, which consider how ‘hybrid officers’ experience practice under austerity, which leads to the question of whether hybridisation constitutes the co-option of TSOs and their hybrid officers by the local state apparatus, or whether it contains potential for transformative actions to cope with or overcome austerity given such officers’ situated agency. This is followed by a discussion including an agenda for further research, before concluding remarks.

### *Why is hybridity encouraged by austerity?*

The advent of austerity (referring to public spending cuts and deficit reduction measures) has encouraged the hybridisation of local governance forms and of TSOs. This is because of the processes of decentralisation/ devolution and downloading deployed in the politics of austerity. Peck (2012) used these two concepts in analysing austerity in American cities, but his analysis alludes to repeated patterns beyond the US. For Peck, decentralisation or fiscal devolution is manifested in the increasing autonomy of American federalism. Devolution has cascaded down from the federal to the state level, and then to the city and neighbourhood level. Such ‘scalar dumping’ (Peck, 2012) of fiscal discipline has prompted local

1 governments to promote soft budget measures to offload the responsibility passed down from  
2 upper tiers of government in the absence of institutional capacity to deal with the financial  
3 challenges of austerity. Soft-measure tactics include the development of a leaner local state  
4 through service rationalisation and workforce downsizing, privatisation of public assets, the  
5 contracting out of services, and management by audit. Peck defines downloading as the  
6 handing down of risk management and budget crisis to local authorities and to other non-state  
7 actors such as TSOs. These twin processes encourage hybridity between the local state and  
8 non-state organisations as local services are rationalised and reshaped. The manifestation of  
9 these processes in hybrid forms of local governance and the hybridisation of TSOs can be  
10 illustrated in the case of Cardiff, the capital city of Wales and the tenth largest city in the UK  
11 (population 346,000, 2011 Census).  
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14 Although the meanings of devolution and downloading have particularities in the Welsh and  
15 British context, the application of these concepts is appropriate to the Cardiff case as it  
16 illuminates how austerity encourages hybridity. Powers devolved to Wales with the creation  
17 of the Welsh Assembly Government in 1999 have been mainly limited to public service  
18 provision. In fiscal terms Wales is weak, lacking the independent tax raising powers it would  
19 need to counter the 'scalar dumping' (Peck, 2012) of London-imposed budget decisions. The  
20 2008-9 recession was extreme by UK standards, with the largest contraction in GDP since the  
21 second world war. The Coalition Government elected in 2010 prescribed austerity to  
22 eradicate the ensuing current account deficit. With a majority Conservative government  
23 elected in 2015, austerity is set to continue until at least 2019. Austerity thus far has meant  
24 severe and geographically iniquitous cuts in wages, benefits and public services with more to  
25 come (Beatty and Fothergill, 2014). Wales was initially provided relative protection from  
26 austerity measures due to the time lag in English cuts feeding through the formula used to set  
27 Wales' funding in London. However, with the 2014/15 Welsh Government budget, a director  
28 of a local think tank warned 'it's time to put away the manicure scissors and reach for the  
29 scythe' (Winckler, 2013). Financial allocations to local authorities were 'by far the worst  
30 settlement since devolution' with severe budget cuts of over 5% in real terms for 2014/15,  
31 rising to 9% by 2015/16 (Henry, 2013). Budget cuts of some £100 million were sought in the  
32 following three years by Cardiff Council. Welsh Government ministers blamed the UK  
33 government for these cuts.  
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40 Similar to Dicks' analysis of regeneration policy, wherein Welsh Government's intervention  
41 was characterised as being 'rescaled to the local level via appeals to the community yet  
42 steered centrally' and recast into a problem of 'risk management and financial accountability'  
43 (2014: 959-60), processes of decentralisation and downloading to the local and  
44 neighbourhood levels are steered centrally by both the Cardiff Partnership and Welsh  
45 Government. The Cardiff Partnership, led by Cardiff Council, is the city's Local Service  
46 Board (LSB). LSBs were created by Welsh Government in 2007 in the expectation that these  
47 partnership hybrid governance forms would 'provide the joined-up leadership required to  
48 help overcome recurrent and difficult problems that can only be tackled through collaboration  
49 and partnership' (Welsh Government, 2007). The partnerships comprise public service  
50 leaders and representatives of the third sector plus a senior official from Welsh Government,  
51 which has had a clear 'soft steer' in determining how local government organises  
52 collaborative and partnership working (Martin and Guarneros-Meza, 2013). The Cardiff  
53 Partnership's city-wide strategy is presented as one which enables accountability and  
54 manages risk by ensuring that each partner co-ordinates resources around seven objectives  
55 claimed to be the ones 'that matter most to the people of Cardiff' (Cardiff Council, 2010).  
56 The approach provides a 'needs assessment and priority areas' enabling development of  
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1 specifications for services in light of the outcomes sought, seen as ‘particularly important in  
2 this current economic climate as the evidence-based approach will allow greater targeting and  
3 prioritisation of reduced resources in the areas which need them most’ (Welsh Government,  
4 2010: 3).  
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6 Downloading to the sub-local, neighbourhood level is evident in two approaches also steered  
7 by the Cardiff Partnership and Welsh Government. The city is sub-divided into six  
8 ‘Neighbourhood Partnership’ areas, each with a multi-agency team drawn from the police,  
9 fire service, local schools and health clinics, and latterly TSO officers. Teams consider local  
10 intelligence to solve localised problems such as crime, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour  
11 or dog fouling and latterly also seek to co-ordinate with the efforts of TSOs and informal  
12 community groups. Neighbourhood teams could initially access pooled budgets from  
13 statutory partners, but these funds were significantly reduced given the budget cuts of 2014-  
14 15, and abandoned in 2015-16. The other approach is Communities First (CF), a Welsh  
15 Government programme which established partnerships in Wales' most deprived  
16 neighbourhoods. Initially launched in 2001, in 2011 it was relaunched to target, fewer, larger  
17 ‘clusters’ of 10-15,000 people, of which Cardiff has four. Cardiff Council contracted  
18 community-based TSOs to manage these clusters, and in so doing has been innovative in  
19 aligning the CF programme and its managing TSOs with the city's form of hybrid governance  
20 and its downloading austerity measures. For example, the 'hybrid officers' within the CF-  
21 managing TSOs are now included in the Neighbourhood Partnerships, cast as a mechanism to  
22 co-ordinate state and non-state activities at sub-local level.  
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27 Thus through the Cardiff Partnership, overseen and mediated by a network manager  
28 employed by the city council, Cardiff's local state actors have sought to rationalise and  
29 reorganise public services, finding a systematic way to maintain lean operational systems  
30 through collaborative procurement, outsourcing or commissioning services from TSOs  
31 (which are thus hybridised), along with the coordination of city-wide programmes alongside  
32 the neighbourhood-level initiatives managed by or in which TSO hybrid organisations are  
33 enmeshed. Thus spending cuts and risk are downloaded to sub-local, neighbourhood levels  
34 and to non-state organisations. During the first phase of fieldwork (explained below), the  
35 network manager explained that the structure 'enabled us to have the foundations to respond'  
36 to austerity, with its use of the neighbourhood level enabling efficiencies as 'we can actually  
37 see who is doing what in a neighbourhood... it has shone the light about the duplication, the  
38 lack of coordination'. A council cabinet member explained the value of the approach 'in  
39 terms of saving money and getting better outcomes, collaboration between other partner  
40 organisations'.  
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46 Legitimacy for such hybrid forms of governance derives from the legacies invoked  
47 (Lowndes, 2005). After devolution in 1999 the Welsh First Minister spoke of the ‘clear red  
48 water’ between Wales and England (Morgan, 2002). This ‘red’ (leftist) tint acknowledged  
49 the strong legacy of Welsh welfarism, an important component of the identity of Welsh state  
50 actors such as politicians and government officials reflected in policies such as universal free  
51 prescriptions. But the Welsh political elite combined this acknowledgment of the past with  
52 introduction of a discourse of collaboration to distinguish it from Westminster. Herein  
53 collaboration comprised that between national and local government; and across the public,  
54 private and third/ community sectors - the 'three thirds' model (Bristow et al., 2008) as  
55 encapsulated in the structuring of LSBs. Under austerity, the premise was that ‘the budget  
56 shortfall will undoubtedly change the way we are shaped and operate’ (Cardiff Council,  
57 2013). The discourse of partnership and collaboration which helped to enhance Welsh state-  
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1 building after devolution has been particularly useful in promoting the downloading of risk  
2 and budget cuts. During first phase fieldwork, political discourse emphasised how practices  
3 and institutions needed to change and how 2014 was a transitional phase, with 'stays of  
4 execution' on services, while responsibility shifted from public service provision, to public  
5 and community co-production of services, or to community self-provisioning. Thus the  
6 Cardiff Partnership steered by the city council exemplifies the role played by local  
7 government of aligning projects with different ideological temporalities (Newman, 2014a).  
8 The Partnership combines the ideological temporalities of welfare (pre-devolution),  
9 collaboration (post-devolution) and of co-production/ self-provisioning (arising from the  
10 decentralisation and downloading of austerity).  
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### 12 ***Local practices and the situated agency of hybrid officers***

13 Austerity has heightened debates about local governance and the small-scale initiatives which  
14 Newman (2014b) argues are not paid due attention in 'broadbrush' accounts of neoliberalism.  
15 Blanco et al (2014) call 'for the study of local practices, in ways that recognise the multiple  
16 logics at play in different conjunctures, and the spaces such ambiguities and 'messiness' open  
17 up for different forms of situated agency' (p3129). Agency is the ability to set and pursue  
18 one's own individual or societal goals and interests. It is situated as it is influenced, but not  
19 determined, by structures and 'internalised understandings and frameworks as well as  
20 external actions' (Evans 2002: 248, in Sullivan et al, 2012).  
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22 Skelcher et al (2013) seek to conceptualise hybridity in a way that does enable insight into the  
23 particularities of local governance and the scope for situated agency. They draw on Crouch's  
24 (2005) work regarding 'institutional entrepreneurs', key actors who 'will try to borrow and  
25 adapt components from a variety of [governance institutions] in a kind of institutional  
26 bricolage to produce new combinations' (Crouch, 2005: 154). These actors can include  
27 'network managers' operating across organisational boundaries to build new institutions.  
28 Such problematisation of boundaries alludes to the 'boundary spanners' invoked by public  
29 management scholars, defined as those who 'have a dedicated job role or responsibility to  
30 work in a multi-agency and multi-sectoral environment and to engage in boundary-spanning  
31 activities, processes and practices' (Williams, 2011: 27). Key actors can also include  
32 community activists (such as the 'everyday makers' described by Bang, 2005). Our focus is  
33 on what we term 'hybrid officers', in particular the officers working in TSO hybrid  
34 organisations managing Cardiff's CF clusters.  
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36 Underpinning notions of hybridisation and bricolage is recognition that local adaptation can  
37 enable the creation of contextually appropriate assemblages in particular places.  
38 Hybridity is 'not just a matter of new, complex organisational forms' but involves assembling  
39 different forms of power from the state, communities and citizens in 'uneasy alignments'  
40 (Newman and Clarke, 2009: 91). Thus the TSOs enmeshed in hybrid local governance  
41 structures need to be adaptable and multi-purpose, playing multiple roles (ibid: 92). This  
42 creates sites of strain and tension as these TSOs are 'situated at the margins of the public  
43 sector, and at the same time mirroring the more informal and trust-based climate that one  
44 knows from 'community based' organisations' (Schultz and von Stein, 2007: 6 in Newman  
45 and Clarke, 2009: 92) which have grown organically from the 'grassroots' and are not subject  
46 to government regulation such as via contracts. Therefore these hybrid organisations are  
47 'complex assemblages' (ibid: 94) which condense different political projects such as  
48 governmental strategies to shift services from state to market, and the turn to civil society as a  
49 resource for government, as exemplified in the co-production and self-provisioning sought in  
50 Cardiff under austerity. Based on Newman's work (2005; with Clarke, 2009; 2014), Skelcher  
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1 et al (2013) argue that hybridity recognises the resistance and adaptability of actors to create  
2 appropriate assemblies. As Jeffares (2008, in Skelcher et al, 2013: 14) explains, hybridity  
3 arises 'from the agency of actors as they mediate the relationship of big ideas about  
4 governance and the specifics of their urban and policy spaces'. The 'big ideas' refer to  
5 ideologies drawing from neoliberal or democratic discourses. Hybridity, therefore, can be  
6 understood as a process that takes place in a site of contestation or space of institutional  
7 transition - or within Newman's (2014a) 'landscapes of antagonism' which arise from cycles  
8 of economic, political and governance change accentuated by austerity.  
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10 The TSOs examined in this research have become hybridised as they are enmeshed in  
11 Cardiff's hybrid governance form, the Cardiff Partnership, and its downloading measures of  
12 outsourcing to or commissioning services from non-state actors and its seeking of co-  
13 production and self-provisioning at the sub-local, neighbourhood scale. The TSOs are  
14 operating in a specific (and changing) temporal and contextual urban setting and need to be  
15 adaptable to the changes wrought by the downscaling and downloading of austerity.  
16 Crucially, these hybrid forms offer a capacity for localised responses emerging from the day-  
17 to-day practices of their 'hybrid officers' as they try to navigate this complex terrain. The  
18 practices of these hybrid officers merit attention as they are concentrated in the processes  
19 where state and non-state actors interact. Specifically, how do hybrid officers experience  
20 practice under austerity? To what extent does this reveal their situated agency? Indeed, are  
21 there any indicators of the potential for transformative actions to overcome austerity?  
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27 Skelcher and Smith's (2015) emphasis on the role of the individual in their study of TSOs  
28 providing public services makes a vital contribution to this under-researched realm. They  
29 explain that the tensions which arise between servicing government's requirements and  
30 sustaining a TSO's social mission play out at the individual as well as organisational level.  
31 Thus a hybrid organisation is not just 'an organisation comprising multiple features of the  
32 market/ hierarchy/ network or state/ business/ community triptychs' but one that 'incorporates  
33 plural institutional logics and where, as a result, organisational members confront multiple  
34 identities' (p434). They therefore posit that hybridisation is a process in which plural logics  
35 and actor identities are at play both at an organisational and individual level (p444). They  
36 argue that through an emphasis on agency it is possible to explain how hybridity arises  
37 through procedures and activities involving, for example: the terminology adopted by  
38 individuals; the ability of individuals to resolve tensions that arise from different ideologies;  
39 and their creativity to circumvent those tensions by developing innovative arrangements and  
40 activities. Therefore to consider how hybrid officers experience practice under austerity, we  
41 focus on their language and values; their ability to reconcile conflicting ideologies; their  
42 ability to adapt processes; and their ability to create solutions and innovate (including  
43 informal arrangements as opposed to state-led initiatives). This analysis then enables us to  
44 consider the situated agency of hybrid officers, and any indicators therein of the potential for  
45 transformative actions to cope with or overcome austerity.  
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## 51 **DATA COLLECTION**

52 This paper reports research conducted in Cardiff in two phases (spring/ summer 2014; and  
53 spring 2015). The study was part of the Transgob (<http://transgob.net/>) project, funded by the  
54 Spanish government's Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, to consider the impact of  
55 economic crisis on forms of urban governance in Spain in contrast with those in the UK.  
56 The project comprised six city cases: Cardiff and Leicester (UK); and Barcelona, Lleida,  
57 Madrid and San Sebastian (Spain).  
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1 The Cardiff fieldwork comprised a total of 29 semi-structured interviews. Fifteen were  
2 conducted in the first phase in 2014, comprising four initial exploratory interviews and 11  
3 focused on the policy area of 'community social needs' (explained below). Fourteen were  
4 conducted in the second phase in 2015. In total across both research phases 23 respondents  
5 were interviewed, comprising: a Welsh government assembly member; a senior Welsh  
6 government officer; four city councillors; three senior city government officers, including the  
7 city's network manager; ten TSO representatives; and four citizen activists. Six respondents  
8 (two councillors, the council's network manager, two TSO officers and a citizen activist)  
9 were interviewed in both phases to illuminate the progress and effects of austerity measures  
10 in the city. In terms of 'hybrid officers', five officers from three (of the four) TSOs managing  
11 CF clusters were interviewed, plus the city's network manager.  
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14 This paper re-reads the interview and documentary data to answer the questions posed. All  
15 transcribed interview data were coded according to a coding frame seeking evidence of the  
16 characteristics of the actions and processes identified as associated with individual hybrid  
17 officers (deriving from Skelcher and Smith, 2015) as explained above. Following coding,  
18 analysis focused on those respondents determined to be hybrid officers: ie. those working in  
19 the hybrid TSOs, and the network manager. But, importantly, the coding revealed these  
20 characteristics as being evident in the case of other respondents (as explained in the  
21 discussion section).  
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25 In addition, in the second phase of interviews across all the case study cities, the Q-  
26 methodology (Jeffares and Skelcher, 2011) was used for some interviews. This method seeks  
27 to determine subjectivities (perspectives) about a topic. It was conducted by preparing a set  
28 of 48 statements derived from the research's first phase interviews in the six case cities.  
29 Respondents sorted these statements according to the degree to which they agreed or  
30 disagreed with these, and were encouraged to deliberate and explain the ordering that they  
31 selected. In Cardiff, a total of seven Q-method interviews were conducted, two with hybrid  
32 officers of TSOs. Transcription of these deliberations was included in the coding analysis, an  
33 innovative use of qualitative data gathered as a by-product of the Q-method.  
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### 38 ***Community Social Needs***

39 In order to pin down the perceptions and practices of local state actors and citizens playing a  
40 role in Cardiff's hybrid governance, an embedded case focusing on 'community and social  
41 needs' (CSN) was chosen (Yin, 2009: 46). Services which meet CSN have been the  
42 immediate target of public service retrenchment alongside the need to achieve cost  
43 efficiencies within the austerity discourse. Examples of CSN services are: the maintenance  
44 and management of leisure or community centres; play and youth service provision;  
45 maintenance of parks, sports grounds and streets; public safety; and food provision. The term  
46 CSN has a two-fold meaning. Firstly, it encompasses those services that have been  
47 traditionally provided by the local council (or other public sector agencies), but are generally  
48 considered to be of secondary importance when compared to services such as housing or  
49 education, as they are 'non-statutory' (ie. the council is not statutorily required to provide  
50 these). These services also tend to demand strong 'joined-up' government across council  
51 departments and other service providers. The austerity context has prompted managers to  
52 develop processes of service integration to streamline resources. Secondly, CSN services can  
53 be self-provided using the skills and resources of community members/ citizens. While such  
54 self-provision can derive from the informal, voluntary action of community groups, it tends  
55 to be highly affected by changes in the implementation and management of service provision  
56 by statutory providers, for example commissioning and co-production between the council,  
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1 TSOs and community groups. The policy area is insightful in part as it exemplifies Peck's  
2 (2012) contention that the soft-measure austerity tactics adopted by government not only  
3 target constituencies lacking in power, typically the poor and marginalised, but can also  
4 extend into middle-class terrain through the curtailment of community facilities. The policy  
5 area also plays out at the sub-local, neighbourhood level as it is at this level that people  
6 access many of these services.

## 7 8 **FINDINGS** 9

10 Our findings regarding how hybrid officers experience practice under austerity are structured  
11 by the coding frame headings (adapted from Skelcher and Smith, 2015), namely their:  
12 language and values; ability to reconcile conflicting ideologies; ability to adapt processes;  
13 and ability to create solutions and innovate.  
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### 16 *Language and Values* 17

18 The language used by hybrid officers revealed the tensions they experience between 'state  
19 logics' and the 'TSO/ community logics' they personally deeply value. The terminology used  
20 by the hybrid officers revealed a set of shared values around the importance of notions of  
21 community, empowerment, participation and inclusivity. One officer talked of the value of  
22 'localised action and what you can do with it', another explained that 'people should be  
23 regarded as equals'. These values reflect the ethos of the CF programme, described by Welsh  
24 Government (2015) as 'our community-focused tackling poverty programme'. But the  
25 officers expressed their values as individuals as well as in terms of the programme they were  
26 engaged in managing, and importantly linked these values to their practices. One stated that if  
27 you don't have 'the heart to do it, then it shows'. Another explained that:  
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30 'To do this sort of job, to be able to bring people together to have a joint vested goal  
31 in improving deep-rooted social challenges, you've got to have leaders who actually  
32 lead by example, who are there, who are doing that'.  
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35 The officers linked their individual values to those of the TSO in terms of its operations  
36 separate from or predating the organisations being contracted to manage the CF programme.  
37 Two stressed that their TSOs have always been rooted in their communities, 'it has always  
38 had a community focus... embedded in the core community'. But the TSO hybrid officers  
39 shared a pragmatic, reconciliatory outlook regarding the relationship between the TSO's  
40 work and that of the programme:  
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42 'We look at CF as something that's part of a process, part of a timeline of how things  
43 are changing. It's not something that's going to solve everything... neither is it  
44 something that we should be not finding a way to work with. So we work with it,  
45 we'll take on board the restrictions'.  
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48 It was therefore clear that the tensions which arise between servicing government's  
49 requirements (the 'restrictions' in the quote above) and sustaining the TSO's original social  
50 mission play out at the organisational level. But these tensions, as Skelcher and Smith  
51 explain, also play out at the individual level with hybrid officers confronting 'multiple  
52 identities' (2015: 434). The hybrid officers referred to their wearing 'two hats' to deal with  
53 the 'self-work' of reconciling organic or autonomous organisational arrangements with the  
54 organisational rationale brought in by the CF programme. One hat can be regarded as 'state  
55 logics', the other TSO or community logics. Such bifurcation was also described temporally,  
56 with one officer commenting 'I've been the [CF] cluster manager by day and by night I'm  
57 running [the TSO] and developing it as an organisation'. In this dialogue it was evident that  
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1 the officers sought to balance legitimacy with the state with their core practices and identity  
2 of maintaining their TSO mission and serving their communities, another officer  
3 commenting:

4 'I think for our organisation, most of us are from third sector backgrounds and we  
5 work for, really, a Welsh Government programme [CF]... We can still work in that  
6 third sector way... very bottom-up. Everything that comes to us from communities we  
7 try to be adaptable to'.  
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10 Another affirmed the division between state and community logics, but pragmatically  
11 emphasised the perceived overlap:

12 '[CF] is different from working in a TSO in that it has more structure and is more  
13 corporate, but it is a journey in which we are working together... what is driving  
14 everyone is the outcomes of the programme and [to] do it well for the community but  
15 also for the funders'.  
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18 The downloading of austerity has encouraged hybridity, with one officer explaining that  
19 austerity has 'pushed [the] council and us to work closer together'. Officers realised the  
20 importance of an engagement within, rather than outside or against, the formal governance  
21 system required by the CF programme and its broader enmeshment within the Cardiff  
22 Partnership. Whilst social dissent was recognised as a response to austerity measures, the  
23 role of the TSO was seen as distinct as 'there may be some things that need to be shouted  
24 about, but I don't think [the TSO] would be that organisation promoting protest'. Such a  
25 'realistic' stance of alignment may indicate that TSOs, prompted by the narrative on  
26 collaboration, have become incorporated into the institutions and practices of the formal  
27 governance system, given their reliance on grants and contracts. One commented 'we'd  
28 always advocate that we work within systems [run by Cardiff Council]... We always take a  
29 fairly pragmatic, you've got to work, you've got to get on'. Such enmeshment and  
30 dependence was presented by officers of two TSOs as enabling opportunity for their staff to  
31 gain new skills and knowledge:  
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33 'I think for us, the dependence on grants and commissions has been very useful  
34 because actually, there's strength in structure and that guidance with the policy and  
35 the procedure side of things is very strong and it puts us in a good position really,  
36 professionally, to go forward for further things'.  
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41 But another TSO officer reiterated the challenge of navigating the 'uneasy alignments'  
42 (Newman and Clarke, 2009) in deciding which course of action to embark upon, and how this  
43 plays out at an individual and organisational level:  
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45 'You've got to know when to shout, to kick, to scream, when to stand back... you've  
46 got to be constantly alert about how you move through these things, whilst  
47 maintaining your principles. And that's not an easy thing to do, or learn how to do,  
48 either individually or organisationally'.  
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### 51 ***Reconciliation of ideologies***

52 The Cardiff Partnership in which the TSOs are enmeshed gains legitimacy from aligning the  
53 different ideological temporalities (Newman, 2014a) of welfare, collaboration and (under  
54 austerity) of co-production and self-provisioning. At TSO level, hybrid officer discourse  
55 made clear the tensions they experience in mediating the changing assemblage of ideologies  
56 espoused under 'state logics' with TSO and individual logics, and the implications for  
57 practice. The tensions were best expressed in officer discourse about the downloading  
58 strategies of co-production and self-provisioning for CSN. The legacy values of welfarism  
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1 and collaboration were invoked in interpretations of co-production, as illustrated by the  
2 distinction made by a hybrid officer (of a specialist TSO) in the intent and realisation of the  
3 shift away from public service provision:

4 'Co-production at its best is this Bevanite<sup>i</sup>, socialist tool for driving equality... and  
5 giving people power, a voice. At its worst it's an easy way into coercing citizens into  
6 filling the gap... just allowing the state to roll back and leave citizens to it... a tool for  
7 inequality'.  
8

9  
10 TSO officers were concerned about how their 'community logics' would be reflected in  
11 developing co-production processes such as those sought via the Neighbourhood  
12 Partnerships, one commenting 'how on earth do you include local people in this sort of  
13 process?' But it was also clear that austerity has inculcated notions of the 'new reality'  
14 amongst hybrid officers, another commenting 'we thought OK, where's the new world, how  
15 do we adjust to this'. Another officer stressed the perceived inevitability of change as  
16 'there's no finances to deliver some of these things... we need to look at how we can  
17 partnership deliver between communities and public institutions'. Hybrid officers' ability to  
18 reconcile ideologies to form 'appropriate assemblies' (Skelcher et al., 2013) was indicated.  
19 For example cuts to street cleansing services were not contested, with an officer justifying the  
20 need to develop self-provisioning in terms of 'is it the job of the state to do every little  
21 thing?', and that 'there is some work that can be done on making people more responsible'.  
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### 25 *Ability to adapt processes*

26 Contracting the hybrid TSOs to manage the CF clusters is a downloading of risk (in its first  
27 iteration, CF programme staff were council employees) which enmeshes TSOs in broader  
28 hybrid governance arrangements, justified through invoking ideologies of partnership and  
29 collaboration. But is there evidence of the officers' entrepreneurial ability to adapt the  
30 processes entailed to 'produce new combinations' (Crouch, 2005)? The council's network  
31 manager explained the arrangement as:  
32

33  
34 'Mean[ing] [CF] clusters are going to carry on doing what they want without the  
35 confines of a big political organisation [the council] but they have the support from a  
36 big organisation in the assistance of process and audits which are not their strong  
37 points'.  
38  
39

40 This interpretation downplays the tensions faced by hybrid officers in reconciling the TSO's  
41 core or community logics with state logic compliance as explored above. Hybrid officers  
42 explained the managerial imperative of having to 'set up all the systems, HR, finance,  
43 governance' to manage the CF clusters and meet programme monitoring requirements. The  
44 requirements were seen as an opportunity to develop processes of benefit to the TSO, one  
45 explaining 'we have separation of activities' referring to a division between the TSO's 'core'  
46 work and that of managing the cluster, but 'not of processes because in terms of finance and  
47 HR processes, we want the same thing'. There was some limited evidence of adaptation of  
48 CF processes to reconcile community and state logics, such as tailoring monitoring to 'avoid  
49 formality... we just put a sticky chart with smiley faces'. But significant adaptation of  
50 programme requirements such as monitoring was not evident.  
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53

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

8 ' [For the TSO] it's a definite opportunity, commissioning, tendering for local services,  
9 we can be really savvy about that, and we will be, with a community-grounded  
10 approach in a way that's going to work for [the TSO] and not over-commit ourselves,  
11 in a way that's going to try and lock income, pull income into this community'.  
12  
13

14 Another explained their TSO's adaptation to downloading measures not only in terms of  
15 being commissioned but in becoming 'a point of influence' on broader commissioning  
16 processes (in this case for elder services):  
17

18 'It's not just about what you do to survive, it's about... how do you influence what  
19 they [Cardiff Council] are going to be commissioning?... you're giving them a whole  
20 load of information and evidence about what's needed... then that's going to become  
21 part of their whole ideology and thinking about what they should be commissioning'.  
22  
23

24 But hybrid officer self-perceived efficacy in adapting by becoming influencers on the  
25 processes of the Cardiff Partnership can also be interpreted as evidence of their incorporation  
26 within the Partnership's austerity processes of downloading and downscaling.  
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28

### 29 *Creating solutions/ innovation*

30 Thus far it is clear that hybrid officers' experience of practice under austerity is riven with the  
31 tensions of navigating between and attempting to reconcile state and TSO/ community logics.  
32 Is there evidence of their situated agency in terms of their creativity to circumvent these  
33 tensions by developing innovative arrangements? As was the case regarding hybrid officers  
34 (self-perceived) scope to influence processes, discourse was around the potentialities rather  
35 than actualities of effecting innovation, though one concrete example was revealed in practice  
36 (below). Austerity and its downloading and downscaling measures was seen as an  
37 opportunity, if accompanied by flexibility and creativity on the part of the council and other  
38 agencies. Here again the need to reconcile state and TSO logics was stressed, illustrated in  
39 the following:  
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41

42 'Key things as an organisation... being financially sustainable, but being well-  
43 governed, well-managed, effective, credible, valued, respected... we have that  
44 structure and then we can be creative, we can go off and be wild community workers'.  
45  
46

47 Hybrid officers saw themselves as entrepreneurial and opportunistic, 'it's looking at when  
48 opportunities arise from the LA, it's getting in there, it's changing officers' thought processes'.  
49 The block to their creating appropriate assemblies was seen as the council, other public  
50 agencies, and the broader hybrid governance structure of the Cardiff Partnership. One officer  
51 commented that 'the third sector are always much more creative than local authorities'.  
52 Another explained that the Neighbourhood Partnership in which they were engaged 'hasn't  
53 got to the stage where it can be creative because it's locked up in the council or LSB'.  
54 In stressing the need for change to the regulatory, systematic and formal processes to allow  
55 the flexibility and informality needed to circumvent tensions and enable creativity, hybrid  
56 officers did understand that their counterparts also understood the need:  
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1 'If you're a budget holder or a commissioner within the council looking at new ways  
2 of doing things, looking at how to deal with a black hole such as they're facing – you  
3 know, you're aware that you have to innovate. You're aware that there has to be great  
4 nimbleness, much more lean approach, unlocking and unleashing local assets'.  
5

6 Co-production was a realm in which scope for creativity was identified. The hybrid officer of  
7 the TSO regarded as the exemplar for such activities gave two examples at different stages on  
8 a continuum between joint community-council service provision and the community self-  
9 provisioning ideally sought under austerity. The first example was gaining council agreement  
10 for community volunteers to be working alongside staff in running a new 'community hub'  
11 (combining the local library, housing office and other services). The other was school  
12 holiday activity provision for children and young people, now largely self-provisioned by  
13 community groups. The same hybrid officer was also working with community groups to  
14 help them take over community assets, such as community centres, being transferred from  
15 council ownership. The officer explained that the process:  
16

17 'Involves setting up that group, constituting it, becoming a charity... a heck of a lot of  
18 work... it's been a waiting process, it had to go to [Cardiff Council] cabinet... for the  
19 community that's really frustrating, some of these processes are so drawn out'.  
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23 Thus community asset transfer is a realm identified by hybrid officers in which the practices  
24 needed to engender innovation on the part of the council such as lighter regulation and higher  
25 tolerance of risk are not yet evident, though asset transfer is an extremely relevant tool to  
26 enable community self-provisioning for CSN.  
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29 The most significant practice example of creativity and innovation was one of the hybrid  
30 TSO's introduction, in partnership with a specialist TSO, of timebanking. Timebanking is a  
31 form of co-production wherein, under a 'one hour equals one hour' principle, people can  
32 spend 'timecredits' earned in volunteering on activities, such as swimming, which are  
33 underpinned by statutory partners. Spend options are augmented by 'community spend  
34 opportunities', or community self-provisioned activities, as these develop. By its adherents,  
35 timebanking is seen as able to support and network the transition to community self-  
36 provisioning for CSN, but alongside public sector provision. The specialist TSO in this realm  
37 stressed that such a 'currency for the age of austerity' is a 'way of making public services  
38 more responsive, more effective, more citizen-centred' and not 'a way of replacing frontline  
39 services'. As austerity continues to bite this distinction is likely to become increasingly hard  
40 to maintain. Timebanking can be readily critiqued as part of the responsabilisation of poor  
41 communities as public services retrench under austerity (Gregory, 2014). But the scope for  
42 the CF-managing TSO championing this approach to engender systemic change was  
43 recognised by other TSOs, 'they're a small organisation... but they punch very much above  
44 their weight ... they've made themselves strategically quite a big player'.  
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## 50 **DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH AGENDA**

51

52 A focus on Cardiff's hybrid officers, specifically those working in TSOs contracted by and  
53 enmeshed within the city's hybrid governance structure of the Cardiff Partnership, provides  
54 an opportunity to examine individual experiences of state and non-state interactions. These  
55 interactions have been heightened by the downloading and downscaling processes of  
56 austerity and associated expectations of co-production and self-provisioning of services.  
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1 Our findings reveal that the hybrid officers' experience of practice under austerity is  
2 characterised by tension as they attempt to reconcile state logics with the TSO/ community  
3 logics which they personally deeply value. Our analysis, conducted according to the  
4 characteristics associated with individual hybrid officers, makes clear that these officers do  
5 seek to sustain their core practices and identity (serving their communities, tackling  
6 deprivation) in a balance with retaining legitimacy with the state (such as by meeting the  
7 managerial requirements of the CF programme). It is too early to make a concerted  
8 judgement regarding the officers' situated agency in terms of their creativity to circumvent  
9 the tensions of this balancing act through the entrepreneurial adaptation of processes and  
10 development of innovative arrangements to form appropriate local assemblies.  
11

12  
13 A pessimistic reading would place hybrid officers as part and parcel of the processes of  
14 downloading characterising austerity, with they and their TSOs becoming incorporated  
15 within the managerial processes of austerity governance. Under this interpretation, austerity  
16 has resulted in hybrid officers 'disaffected consent' (Gilbert, 2015) as they are resigned to  
17 participate in a consensus they cannot disturb. But the mix of practices uncovered, for  
18 example regarding service commissioning and co-production, not only confirm hybrid officer  
19 ability to reconcile ideologies and adapt accordingly. An unabashedly optimistic reading  
20 would be that these practices hold indications of the potential for transformative actions to  
21 create a locally-contingent assemblage of processes and practices which show potentialities  
22 to be upscaled as institutional alternatives to austerity. An ongoing research agenda into  
23 hybrid officers' situated agency is indicated. The agenda takes inspiration from Newman's  
24 (2014b) call for criticality as well as critique, where the former refers to integrated practices  
25 of 'making visible' (protest), public debate and conversation (deliberation) and creative work  
26 (making). Our analysis shows that hybrid officers, constrained by mediating between state  
27 and TSO logics, are not engaged in protest contesting austerity, but they are engaged in some  
28 dimensions of criticality such as deliberation, and some are creatively 'making' by creating  
29 change at an organisational and community level (for example, via timebanking schemes)  
30 which may indeed hold the potential to have an impact on the institutional, city-wide hybrid  
31 governance structure level (particularly if championed by the city's network manager). Thus  
32 indications of hybrid officer agency are evident in their own discourse and to some extent in  
33 their practices to meet CSN, though their 'institutional entrepreneurship' (Crouch, 2005) has  
34 yet to be realised in terms of the creation of new local assemblages. Certainly austerity as an  
35 imperative has heightened the potential role of hybrid officers. The dynamism of hybridity as  
36 practice points to a more complex, and perhaps more optimistic, interpretation than that of the  
37 co-option and incorporation of TSOs into the downloading processes of austerity. And at  
38 minimum the refinement brought by considering individual practice enables monitoring of  
39 patterns of incorporation under austerity, and the tensions in reconciling multiple logics  
40 which ensue.  
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48 Our analytical frame was adapted from Skelcher and Smith's (2015) identification of ways in  
49 which hybridity is manifested at the level of the individual. Analysis focused initially on five  
50 hybrid officers (from three of the four TSOs managing CF clusters). But, importantly,  
51 through their practices as identified via the coding of transcribed interview data, three further  
52 hybrid officers were identified: the city council employed network manager; a  
53 Neighbourhood Partnership team manager employed by a local statutory service provider;  
54 and an officer in a specialist, practice-specific TSO. This indicates the importance of hybrid  
55 officers finding counterparts with whom to work. Such counterparts can support officers'  
56 entrepreneurial situated agency in their TSO and its communities, and aid in transferring the  
57 learnings and experiences from one sub-local area to others, or upscale city-wide.  
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1 The analysis also points to certain characteristics of hybrid officers which merit attention.  
2 All can be described as pragmatic, optimistic, opportunistic and adaptable, indeed, as  
3 entrepreneurial. Again further analysis is merited regarding the skills, qualities and values of  
4 hybrid officers. This, along with the importance of being able to develop relationships with  
5 counterparts, alludes to public management scholarship regarding the capabilities and  
6 competencies of 'boundary spanners' (Williams, 2013). All the hybrid officers showed some  
7 understanding of the different imperatives faced by different hybrid governance partners. For  
8 some this derived from direct experience given their varied prior careers, including one who  
9 had previously worked for the council, explaining this was helpful 'in terms of understanding  
10 how the council works, how council officers and councillors operate, what they want... how  
11 they think'. Another hybrid officer encapsulated the problematisation of boundaries inherent  
12 in the hybridisation approach:

13 'I'm employed by Health. I work in the Partnership Team in the council and I'm  
14 jointly funded by police, health and council [laughs]. So I've got a very strange sort  
15 of role'.  
16

17 Further research is merited regarding not only the situated agency of hybrid officers, but of  
18 the characteristics and experiences of individuals which best support their agency.  
19

## 20 CONCLUSION

21 The case of Cardiff illustrates how the 'devolution, decentralisation and downloading' which  
22 Peck (2012) describes as characterising 'urban austerity' encourages hybridisation of local  
23 governance forms and TSOs. Austerity has heightened the imperative to promote the  
24 implementation of Cardiff's hybrid governance structure, the Cardiff Partnership, so that  
25 local government can share risk and responsibility not only with other public organisations  
26 (such as the police and health) but also with TSOs and community groups at the  
27 neighbourhood level. Hybrid officer discourse made clear the tensions they experience in  
28 mediating the changing assemblage of ideologies espoused under 'state logics' with TSO and  
29 community logics within the 'landscape of antagonism' (Newman, 2014a). Our emphasis on  
30 hybrid officers portrays the ensuing struggle in the promotion of localised projects that  
31 require facilitation and cross-sectoral interdependence, with increasing emphasis on  
32 community self-reliance. While hybrid officers stressed the clear separation they maintained  
33 between the CF programme and the activities carried out by the TSO, some did evidence  
34 situated agency in their capacity to take opportunities to innovate, for example by seeing an  
35 opportunity to challenge the formality and regulation of the Cardiff Partnership model in the  
36 case of community asset transfers.  
37

38 To conclude, a senior Welsh Government officer expressed the hope that Welsh Government  
39 can adapt to be open to innovation in light of the challenges and changes posed by austerity:

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