All in this together? Interrogating U.K. 'austerity' through gender lenses

Posted on Wednesday 21st November 2012

In response to the global financial crisis, on 20 October 2010, U.K Chancellor George Osborne unveiled a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), announcing deep, wide-ranging cuts in public expenditure. The Coalition Government defended the austerity drive as a necessary, prudent, realistic and 'fair' response to a crisis in which the most vulnerable and 'future generations' would be 'protected' and in which the British people were 'all in this together'. Detractors claimed that it hailed a litany of changes which collectively signalled the demise of public services, the growth of unemployment, growing poverty, further economic and social polarisation, the end of the welfare state and an important shift in state-civil society relations.

The U.K austerity measures entail significant gendered impacts. For example, in social reproduction and care work, especially in relation to single-headed households which are over-represented among the poorest households in the U.K. Job losses, pay freezes, underemployment, threatened cutbacks on flexible working and maternity pay and leave for those who remain in work, cuts in public expenditure, in social services and investment in human capital all tend to affect women more than men, because women still largely shoulder the responsibility for the care and well-being of families. At the same time, cuts in funding to government agencies and NGOs have an adverse impact on vital specialist social support services to vulnerable people; victims of domestic violence being one prominent example. Furthermore, the measures will undoubtedly have 'knock-on' effects with regard to social and political participation as women particularly become more 'time poor' as well as resource poor.

In April, 2012, the Gender and Feminist Theory Group hosted a Symposium on the financial crisis and the UK Coalition Government responses. This provided a space for participants- academics, policymakers, third sector organizations and advocates- to interrogate the crisis and responses through gender lenses. Viewed thus, do claims the British people are 'all in this together' and that responses to the crisis have been 'necessary', 'prudent' and 'fair' stand up to critical scrutiny?

Participants included:

- Anna Bird (Fawcett Society)
- Maureen Connolly (Birmingham Violence against Women Board)
- Scarlet Harris (TUC)
- Ruth Lister (Labour Peer / Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, Loughborough University)
- Holly Taylor (Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid)
- Sylvia Walby (Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Lancaster)

A copy of the report "**All in this together? Interrogating UK 'Austerity through gender lenses (PDF) (/Documents/college-social-sciences/government-society/polsis/research/all-in-it-together.pdf)** " is available for download here. You can also view a copy of the document on the Gender in Global Governance Net-Work: **http://genderinglobalgovernancenet-work.net/events/all-in-this-together-interrogating-u-k-austerity/ (http://genderinglobalgovernancenet-work.net/events/all-in-this-together-interrogating-u-k-austerity/)** where you are afforded the opportunity to comment on the report.

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