

scottish justice matters

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POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND JUSTICE



editorial

REGULAR READERS of *SJM* will recognise that the complex relationships between inequalities and criminal justice are a recurring theme. This edition focuses more specifically on the complex connections between *poverty* and crime, looking at victimisation as well as offending. Our thanks to guest editors, Professors Lesley McAra and Susan McVie from Edinburgh University and Maggie Mellon, a policy activist and former social worker, who draw from their latest research, and practice experience to bring us new and urgent insights on this topic.

In their editorial (see pages 2-3) they argue that:

- ❖ they voices of people in poverty are silenced
- ❖ the justice system entrenches people in poverty and exacerbates crime and
- ❖ crime and victimisation are concentrated in deprived neighbourhoods.

Poverty is indeed, 'justice denied'. They make recommendations that, they argue, would be transformative, not least that we should stop making criminal justice the default response to poverty and focus the attention of the law and of government on redistribution rather than retribution.

Christiaens echoes this theme in relation to Belgium, where young offenders, many suffering from poverty, report feelings of not being listened to and argues that stigma contributes to the reproduction of poverty.

Much of our 'back half' also echoes this. Places as well as people can be stigmatised, none more so perhaps than the East End of Glasgow, the subject of Mooney and his colleagues' contribution which critically explores the promised 'legacy' of the Commonwealth games.

In an extract from the Justice Secretary Michael Matheson's recent APEX lecture, the importance of tackling social inequality to tackle crime is underlined. He outlines steps towards a fairer justice system emphasising the need to reduce the prison population and enhance the role of community sentencing. In Take 5, politicians were asked about the link, outlined in a separate account by Dore of an important Shelter report, between reoffending and homelessness, and all agreed that steps to tackle this vital issue should be encouraged.

Poverty and related issues have also been found to affect women in custody and McConnell and Carnie outline some of the thinking behind current SPS approaches to women's prisons particularly in relation to what they see as being the rehabilitative potential of small community custody units. In our interview, international penal reformer Baroness Vivien Stern gives her responses to Scotland's approach to women in the justice system.

In an important article Kath Murray, whose research critical of the use of stop and search has attracted considerable attention, asks important questions about the reactions to and role of research critical of criminal justice agencies in Scotland. In our statistics analysis space, Skott argues that although homicides in Scotland are at a record low, we need to be able to understand these better in the overall context of violence. Staying with serious crime, our diary feature describes the work of a Circle of Support and Accountability volunteer, supporting and monitoring sex offenders in the community.

Finally, inequalities, crime and justice are major themes of a recently published collection of articles *Crime, Justice and Society in Scotland*, edited by us along with Gerry Mooney. We explain what we were attempting to do in that book and some of the editorial decisions made.

Hazel Croall and Mary Munro

Catch up with recent *SJM* blogs all on /sjm-blog/:

Cyrus Tata on *Sentencing and the Allure of Imprisonment*

Kath Murray on *Policing, postcodes and poverty: stop and search and class*

Alec Spencer on *Turning off the tap: policy and practice for women in criminal justice in Scotland*

Genevieve Lennon on *Devolving the British Transport Police: unanswered questions*



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Our next issue out will be out in March 2016 and focus on *Reimagining Punishment in Scotland*. Bill Munro and Margaret Malloch of Stirling University will take the idea of criminal justice back to fundamentals and ask some critical questions about why and how we punish people who commit crime.

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Scottish Justice Matters is a publication of the Scottish Consortium of Crime and Criminal Justice (SCCCJ). The Consortium is an alliance of organisations and individuals committed to better criminal justice policies. It works to stimulate well informed debate and to promote discussion and analysis of new ideas. It seeks a rational, humane, constructive and rights-based approach to questions of justice and crime in Scotland.

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Poverty, Territorial Stigmatisation and Social Insecurities as Social Harms

THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES AND THE EAST END OF GLASGOW

Gerry Mooney, Vikki McCall and Kirsteen Paton

THIS SJM includes articles that focus the interrelationships between different dimensions of poverty and criminal justice, not least with patterns of offending, convictions and victimisation. This is of course a hotly contested and long debated area of social inquiry and goes to the heart of competing approaches and perspectives as well as to conflicting political values. As others have highlighted in this issue, ongoing welfare 'reforms' and the impact of various 'austerity' measures as implemented by the current and previous UK Governments, has had hugely negative impacts on the numbers in or close to poverty in the UK today, and in the proportion of the population who are experiencing, in some form of another, social and economic insecurities and increasing vulnerability and precariousness.

The inequalities that characterise the working life of a large proportion of Scottish society (that is low income, poor quality work, as well as low and decreasing expectations that work could be fulfilling) exists alongside working patterns that are disruptive of family and other areas of life. These impact on individuals in different and interrelated ways. Health, both physical and psychological, can be undermined, as is a sense of well-being. The stresses of these are fed by and in turn fuel feelings of marginalisation, alienation and self-deprecation. In turn we can appreciate the connections that this has with patterns of crime. Low income and poor quality work is associated with personal debt, while exclusion from dominant and valorised forms of consumption may also trigger crime and exacerbate victimisation. Patterns of exclusion and feelings of insecurity are major factors in crime: they can be exacerbated by victimisation and may affect the propensity to commit crimes of 'necessity' and property crimes related to consumption.

It has long been acknowledged that the experience of poverty also has negative impacts in other ways, not least on self-esteem and on a sense of personal or individual worth. This is compounded too by the locations in which those experiencing disadvantage often live; places that are not only places of disadvantage, deprivation and poverty, but which have long been subject to negative imagery, demonisation and stigmatisation.

Glasgow has long held an unrivalled position as containing the most disadvantaged and impoverished areas in the country. One such place, the East End of Glasgow, was the focus of our small scale research project during 2014 *Beyond Stigma: Exploring Everyday lives in the East End of Glasgow and the Commonwealth Games (CWG), 2014*.

In talking to users throughout the Games periods, some of which who were homeless, the million pound Velodrome across the road was something that people just simply could not connect to

The East End has suffered from a negative reputation (see Gray and Mooney, 2011; Mooney, 2009) and framed as a largely deprived, dysfunctional, disadvantaged and derelict area, populated by welfare dependent, workless and recalcitrant people who lack aspirations, a sense of personal responsibility and who are characterised by a greater propensity to anti-social and violent behaviours. The voices of those living in the East End have been missing. The *Beyond Stigma* project was conducted to capture those voices and create a counter narrative more embedded in the everyday experiences of those who live and work there. The context of the study, the Commonwealth Games, was used to give a platform and window to exploring these experiences. This was an interesting process to capture as we could compare these experiences to the claims that the 2014 CWG would improve the life chances of people in the East End. The Games process promised that the long-term 'legacy' would lead to the 'regeneration' of those parts of Glasgow left behind by what has long been viewed as the successful place-marketing and regeneration of other parts of the city over recent decades (Mooney, McCall and Paton, 2015).



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The East End typifies the kinds of locales depicted by sociologist Loic Wacquant (2008). Suffering from increased marginality, in his terms, 'advanced marginality' and, against much of the rhetoric of 'roll-back' neoliberalism, the state is 'rolling-out' in ever more ways in such locales, managing, regulating, controlling, reshaping and socially re-engineering places and the populations that reside in them. In other words there is a paradox: against the rhetoric of a rolling back of the state, in places such as the East End of Glasgow, the state has become ever more interventionist in the day to day lives of residents and who are considered to be problematic in some form or another.

In our research (Mooney, McCall and Paton, 2015) a number of residents in the East End kept diaries between May to September 2014 to record their experiences of the Games and how it impacted on their lives. We also captured views from various focus groups conducted over the period. There was, as might be expected, sharply contrasting views of the Games and their impact, both immediate and in the longer term. Some welcomed the Games as offering a chance for new investment in the East End and an opportunity to resist and reverse stigmatisation and negative misrepresentations of the people in the area. For others, however, the Games served only to fuel their sense of insecurity, alienation and marginalisation. The heavy securitisation of the event was seen as largely unnecessary by residents. Indeed, this was felt to only initiate fear, panic and anxiety on the part of many of the residents living near to the athletes' village in the East End. One respondent from the Parkhead area commented in his diary:

Driving through Parkhead Cross on my way to 12 o'clock Mass. Lots of activity. Helicopter in the Sky, counted 5 Police cars at the Cross – quite scary really.

Another noted:

They assume that if you are from Parkhead you take drugs. Target everyone in Parkhead . . . One morning I got up in the games there were something like 20 police in my street.

While others highlighted disruptions to daily routines:

[. . .] all the way up from the Borders there have been signs on the motorway telling us to leave extra time for our journeys and to plan ahead. Once I actually got into my street there was a big sign telling me the street will be closed on 31st July, so I won't get my car in or out at all on that day. This panicked me as I have no idea how I am going to get my son to nursery or myself to work on this day.

The feeling of increased surveillance amidst a growing sense that the local area and people were being controlled also increased feelings of insecurity and anxiety among many of the tenants. A key legacy of the 2014 CWG is, therefore, a widespread though not entirely held view that the 'Games' were not for the 'likes of East End people', and that the investment in the Games infrastructure should have been spent instead in addressing some of the areas many social needs. Alongside the CWG, Glasgow was experiencing a significant increase in the number of people using food banks. At the time, there were five foodbanks within walking distance of the Games. In talking to users throughout the Games periods, some of which who were homeless, the million pound Velodrome across the road was something that people just simply could



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not connect to. It was described as inhabiting a different world to the one they were living. While this is not to suggest a direct link between both events, nonetheless it does contribute to the view that the Games soaked up scarce financial resources better spent elsewhere.

The task for us as criminologists, researchers and observers is to subject these developments to much more critical analysis and explanation. Widening our criminological gaze to grasp the ways in which the social harms of stigmatisation, marginality and manufactured social insecurities are impacting on working class communities across Scotland should be an absolute must if we are to have a much richer understanding of the ways in which poverty and deprivation come to be linked in different ways with aspects of criminal justice, offending and punishment.

The research project from which this paper emerges was funded by the *OpenSpace Research Centre*, The Open University, <http://www.open.ac.uk/researchcentres/osrc/>

Further short pieces from this project have been published at the Open University's *OpenLearn* site at: <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/profiles/gcm8>

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