We’re not in this together: social housing and austerity

HCI annual lecture 2013

by Lynsey Hanley
'Most people think they are average when asked. In most things, most are not... what is normal changes rapidly as you travel across the social topography of human identity in Britain – from the fertile crescent of advantage, where to succeed is to do nothing out of the ordinary, to the peaks of despair, where to just get by is extraordinary.'  Danny Dorling
‘Most people live in places like Harlesden or West Brom. Much of life for many people, even in the heart of the first world, still consists of waiting in a bus shelter with your shopping for a bus that never comes.’ Doreen Massey
Look-back to the early days of Chelmsley Wood and the start of new life for Birmingham's overspill. The estate was opened by the Queen in 1971.
‘Poor neighbourhoods had better facilities and less crime and vacant housing... YET

...There was no real change in levels of income inequality. Wage inequalities grew and disparities in regional economic performance persisted.’(CASE, 2013)
For children born in 1970, growing up in social housing was a major risk factor for social exclusion as an adult, much more so than for those born in 1958; whereas for children born in 1946, living in social housing wasn’t predictive of lifetime disadvantage at all. (ESRC)
‘Any discussion of the “decline of community” in Britain has to start from the profound damage, both material and spiritual, wreaked on working class communities by [David] Cameron’s predecessors, in the 1980s in particular.’ Michael Lavalette
‘On Manchester high-rise estates I had seen the sour human comedy enacted: dad pickled in alcohol, mum a nervy chain-smoking wreck, son a ‘young offender’ caught up in a spiral of petty crime, pregnant daughter banging on the doors of the nearest psychiatric unit. Ah, the 70s: what a golden age!’ Hilary Mantel
‘Education, health, infrastructure, social insurance have large economies of scale... such services embody ‘the desire for development of a progressive people’. To benefit, society needs to learn how to make commitments now, for the sake of desirable outcomes later.’ Avner Offer
‘London is now the only region of the UK capable of creating new full time private jobs.’ CRESC
‘The government needs to understand that its efforts will be fatally undermined if the basic services and infrastructure of our cities are not able to function.’ Sir Albert Bore, 2013
‘A large measure of equality, so far from being inimical to liberty, is essential to it.’
RH Tawney