INTRODUCTION

The inequality question is back and is here to stay. This, in sum, is the thrust of this book that gathers 18 chapters by French and British academics exploring the many facets of inequality in the United Kingdom in 2017 and more particularly the changing face of inequality since the Great Recession of 2008.

Indeed, the end of the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010s saw the issue of inequality return to the fore in Britain, both in the academic and political worlds. Twelve years after the election of the New Labour government, the publication of *The Spirit Level* in 2009, the polemical book by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009), reminded Britons how divided the United Kingdom remained. A few months later, in January 2010, the National Equity Panel report (the Hills report), commissioned by the Labour government, also contributed to reviving the debate on inequality, from a more traditional income and wealth perspective this time.

Still in 2010, the Equality Act, by imposing on public bodies a Public Sector Equality Duty, namely the duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relationships between different people when carrying out their activities, implied a return to a more interventionist approach in the social field. Finally, the election of Ed Miliband as Labour leader in 2010 was perceived as a challenge to the dominant consensus in the political sphere and its toleration of inequality.

This renewed focus on inequalities also suggested a break with post-1994 New Labour policies and a return to a more traditional social agenda. The changed Labour stance had been formulated a few weeks before in a piece in the New Statesman by the leader-to-be: 'We, politicians and the public, have to decide what kind of society we want to live in, and whether the difficult task of greater equality is worth the candle. It is – and it is at the very heart of why we need to move on from New Labour. During our years in power, we didn't do enough to stop the gap between rich and poor getting wider. If you really believe in a society where there is social mobility, where we look after each

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other, where we build social solidarity, then the gap matters' (Ed Miliband, 2010).

The slowly shifting ground of British politics did not fail to impact on the Conservative party. In the 2015 general election, the party positioned itself as the party of equality as the party manifesto made it clear (Conservative Party manifesto, 2015, p. 8) and as David Cameron, the then PM, argued in a *Guardian* article later in October 2015 (David Cameron, 2015).

Despite a majority of voters choosing not to support the Labour party in 2015, the inequality issue did not go away. Since then, a number of developments in Britain have contributed to keeping the question at the forefront of British politics. Abroad, for instance, the publication of *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* by Thomas Piketty in 2013 and its English translation in 2014 kept the debate alive. At home, in June 2016, the Brexit referendum outcome also helped to keep inequality high up the political agenda by drawing attention to working-class discontent. The dominant 'leave' vote in traditional working-class areas led the new Prime Minister Theresa May to appoint a cross-government review to assess the scale of inequality in public services and address what she termed 'injustices' in August 2016, and, at the Davos summit in January 2017, to speak against growing inequalities fuelled by globalisation. The sensitivity of British politicians to the issue reflects the high percentage of British voters expressing their dislike of growing economic inequalities but paradoxically also contrasts with the limited support for more redistributive policies (as explained by E. Shaw in this volume).

The influence of the inequality issue on the Labour party has been even more radical. Following Ed Miliband's resignation as Labour party leader after the 2015 General Election, Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader in 2015, and re-elected in 2016. To the left of the Labour party, he was elected on a platform that reflected, so he argued, his conviction that people 'are fed up with the injustice and inequality' of Britain (Rowena Mason, *The Guardian*, 12/09/2015).

Two years later, the 2017 General Election confirmed this rhetorical shift. The Conservative party manifesto promised to fight social division, injustice, unfairness and inequality (Conservative Party manifesto, 2017, p. 9) with a number of measures, including ending the 'triple lock' on pensions after 2020 and replacing it with a less generous 'double lock' (p. 64). This was intended to diminish inter-generational income inequalities between working-age households and retired people. The manifesto also included a promise to increase the National Living Wage to 60% of median income by 2020, a measure which would benefit low-paid workers. It also claimed that a Conservative government would fight the 'burning injustices' of the gender pay gap, the race gap, the mental health gap and the disability gap, while aiming at reducing domestic violence and homelessness (pp. 55–58). For its part, the Labour party manifesto of 2017 put the fight against inequalities and poverty at its core, as reflected in its title, *For the Many not the Few*. It criticised the previous

Conservative – and Conservative-Liberal Democrat – governments that attempted to 'balance the books on the backs of the poorest' and 'slashed social security over the last seven years, leaving more people in poverty, subject to a punitive sanctions regime, and reliant on food banks' (Labour Party Manifesto, 2017, p. 56).

The revival of the inequality issue since the late 2000s stands in sharp contrast to the political agenda and mood that dominated the two previous decades. Back then, a key feature of the 1980s and 1990s Conservative governments was their hostility to state intervention in the economic sphere and their reluctance to take into account the issue of inequality in the social domain. Far from leading to legislative intervention, economic inequalities were extolled as incentives to social mobility and enterprise. As for social inequalities, they moved down the political agenda and were often defined as the outcome of different abilities between individuals, if not pathological flaws. These beliefs translated into various social and economic policies, including the reduction of the top rate of income tax from 60% to 40% in the 1988 budget and the shift away from direct taxation to indirect taxation (Giles & Johnson, 1994, p. 2). These changes benefited the high-income groups at the expense of the low-income groups, so that on average the bottom decile of the population lost 2.9% of net income in the decade 1985–1995 while the top decile saw its average net income increase by 5.8% (p. 15). Consequently, the Conservative years, from 1979 until 1997, saw widening inequalities.

After coming to power in 1997, the Labour party did not fundamentally challenge this model and adopted an ambiguous position. Although the Labour years of government were characterised by a strong social exclusion agenda, as well as many redistributive policies (Child Trust Fund, Working Family Tax Credit etc.) and attention to some forms of inequality (health, housing, education, gender pay gap), the Labour party seemed to be more sensitive to Robert Putnam's theories (Putnam, 1995) in favour of greater social capital in deprived communities than to calls for greater equality. In an attempt to distance itself from previous Labour governments, New Labour underlined that inequalities did not matter as much as poverty and social exclusion (Hopkin & Variego, 2010). Its leader, Tony Blair, refused to say whether he thought it was right for the gap between rich and poor to get bigger (Blair, 2001). When New Labour was interested in equality, it was more interested in equality of opportunity than outcome (Orton & Rowlingson, 2007).

The emphasis placed on inequalities since the late 2000s seems to point to a change in the political rhetoric in Britain. The issue of social exclusion, at the centre of the New Labour programme and of academic thinking in the 2000s, is no longer at the top of the political agenda. The criticisms levelled at the concept of social exclusion – encouraging a simplistic vision of British society divided between included and excluded citizens and ignoring the differences among the included – seem to have won the day. A discursive shift from exclusion to inequality has taken place. This shift has brought politicians in line with

public opinion. Indeed, during the 20 years prior to the 2008 Great Recession, a large majority of British people (between 72% and 87%) already expressed their hostility to growing levels of economic inequality (Orton & Rowlingson, 2007).

Consequently, following Ruth Levitas' model of three discourses of social exclusion (Levitas, 2005), we believe that a fourth one characterises the post-2008 years. In addition to the three dominant discourses since 1979 (a redistributionist discourse, a moral underclass discourse and a social integrationist discourse) must be added an egalitarian one that increasingly emphasises the detrimental consequences of economic inequalities on the state of the nation, the degree of social cohesion in Britain and the well-being of the individual. Whether this discourse has found its way into government policies is explored at length in this book.

In the last decade, the rise of the inequality question at a UK but also global level has led to the publication of countless books and reports at home and abroad that broke with previous publications addressing social exclusion and poverty (Gordon, 2006). These publications tend to focus either on the causes or consequences of inequalities, in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Focusing on the relationship between causes and consequences, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) argued in their seminal book that economic inequality is strongly correlated with the prevalence of a range of social and health problems (such as teenage pregnancies, crime, imprisonment and mental illness) in a group of 23 rich nations. These problems occur less frequently in more equal countries, and more often in more unequal countries. According to their analysis, the prevalence of these problems is linked to the level of inequality rather than to average living standards in a given society. Focusing on the root causes of inequality, they argue that the drivers of inequality are political orientations rather than market forces. In particular the switch to neo-liberal, New Right policies from the 1980s in a number of English-speaking countries, including the United Kingdom, has led to rising inequalities. They emphasise a paradox – neo-liberals, who tend to favour a 'small State' paradigm, view inequalities as either inevitable or good, while the evidence shows that more unequal countries, such as the United Kingdom, actually need 'bigger' government than more equal countries in order to mitigate the negative social consequences of inequality.

For his part, Dorling (2012, 2015) argues that there are five tenets of injustice in rich societies – elitism is efficient; exclusion is necessary; prejudice is natural; greed is good; and despair is inevitable – which are held by a majority of the powerful in rich developed nations and underpin dominant discourses on inequalities. Contrasting these 'new' social evils with the old Giants of Evil of William Beveridge – Want, Idleness, Ignorance, Disease and Squalor – which have largely been vanquished in rich societies, Dorling argues that exclusion through (lack of) work grew from the 1980s onwards at the bottom of the social scale, and that as inequalities grew, so did consumerism. More and more

people found themselves either excluded or at risk of exclusion from an increasingly consumerist societal norm and often resorted to debt to 'keep up' with the rest of society, thus inadvertently contributing to the credit issues that helped to fuel the financial crisis of 2007–2008. This 'age of greed' did not become seriously challenged until after the crisis which exposed some of the fundamental economic and financial imbalances that exist in many rich countries.

In his influential book, *Capital in the Twenty-First century* (2013), Thomas Piketty argues that rising inequalities in the developed world over the last 30 or so years are linked to the different growth ratios of capital (or investment) as opposed to earned income. Based on extensive international data, he argues that in contemporary rich countries, income derived from capital grows faster than income derived from earnings (salaries etc.), partly because of low rates of economic growth in post-industrial societies. This favours the top 10% and in particular the top 1%. This matters because this group is able to influence the political and social order to their advantage, to a degree that is disproportionate to their actual numbers (see chapter by Nicholas Sowels in this volume). The question of the top 1% was addressed in the same year by Joseph Stiglitz who argued that the current high levels of inequality were not inevitable (Stiglitz, 2013). Highlighting the three main reasons for the current situation internationally, he pleaded in favour of less austerity and a reform of economic and political systems.

Danny Dorling explored the topic further and also focused on the 1% (Dorling, 2014) arguing that the income from all sources of the top 1% has been rising faster than that of the other 99% of the population, in the United Kingdom and in other rich countries, and that this growth was unaffected by the 2008 Great Recession. According to him, the spiralling-off of the top 1% has serious consequences for the rest of the population. In countries where inequalities between the 1% and the rest are highest, such as the United Kingdom, this correlates strongly with a host of social problems, from higher rates of poverty, lower overall educational attainment and higher rates of mental illness. In other words, societies with the highest differential between the top 1% and the rest inflict a heavy penalty on the vast majority.

The year 2015 was marked by a flurry of publications on inequality including *Inequality: What Can Be Done?* (Atkinson, 2015) and *the Globalization of Inequality* (Bourguignon, 2015). Both books charted the development of inequality over the long term, highlighting the paradox of decreasing inequality between countries and growing inequality within countries, while exploring the causes of this predicament and putting forward proposals for action. A further book by Andrew Sayer (2015) sought to debunk the myth of the rich as talented entrepreneurs, to highlight the unfair mechanisms used by them to make and increase their wealth and to refer to the environmental dangers involved.

Other authors emphasise the link between inequalities and poverty. In their 2015 book, Lansley and Mack analyse the perception and measurement of poverty and its impact on the lives of individuals and families. Based on data from

a large-scale survey completed in 2012 and from previous surveys carried out in 1983, 1990 and 1999, they define the concept of 'deprivation poverty'. This characterises most individuals or families who miss three or more basic necessities, as defined by the general public. Lansley and Mack highlight the growth of this group and of the numbers of people living on the margins of poverty since the early 1990s. Furthermore, they emphasise the intrinsic links between inequality and poverty, arguing that poor people have seen their income stagnate or fall over the last 30 years, while the rest of society – and especially those at the top of the income range – have become richer. They argue that growing inequality and poverty are major political issues, which the Labour government (1997–2010) and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition (2010–2015) tried to tackle differently, but both were ultimately unsuccessful because they failed to address the root causes –the UK economic model itself.

These books were published in parallel with a number of reports, usually based on large-scale statistical surveys, that have completed the picture of the evolution of inequality in the United Kingdom since the late 2000s.

Based on data covering the years 2006–2008, the National Equity Panel report analysed how economic outcomes varied between different groups with different characteristics and circumstances. They highlighted that the United Kingdom was a more unequal country than a generation before, and more so than many European countries, and indicated that growing inequality was a threat to common citizenship and human dignity (Hills et al., 2010, p. 2). While income and wealth inequalities had not increased much overall between 1995–1997 and 2006–2008, they had increased within all sub-groups considered (p. 294 and p. 314). Trying to draw conclusions about the likely impact of the 2008 Great Recession, they warned that the income of those relying on benefits would be affected and pointed to worrying signs in youth, disabled people and ethnic minorities employment rates (p. 317).

In a subsequent report, Hills and colleagues analysed how inequalities changed over a six-year period (2007–2013), following the Great Recession, in the United Kingdom (Hills, Cunliffe, Obolenskaya & Karagiannaki, 2015). As in the National Panel report, they focused on seven economic indicators: educational qualifications, employment, hourly wages, weekly earnings, incomes (individual and per household) and wealth. They found that the Great Recession had not affected all groups equally. The low-paid had been more affected than the higher earners, and young people in their twenties had been disproportionately affected compared to older age groups. Regional differences between the North and the South had deepened, and London had become even more unequal. These increasing inequalities were due to the impact of the recession on employment, but also to cuts in benefits and reforms of the Welfare State, which affected the low-paid and the young disproportionately compared with the rest of the population (pp. 10–11).

These findings have been confirmed by the 8th Annual Report into UK living standards by the Resolution Foundation, published in early 2017. This

suggested that the economic 'mini-boom' in Britain between 2014 and 2016, driven by falling inflation and higher rates of employment, was unlikely to last. Slowing income growth, rising inflation and deep working-age welfare cuts were likely to lead to falling standards for the bottom half of the income distribution in the period 2017–2021. This would lead to the biggest rise of inequality since the 1980s (Corlett & Clarke, 2017, pp. 4–11). The report also confirmed that regional inequalities persist, with the North-East and the West Midlands having the lowest income levels and the South-East the highest. Furthermore, they noted that inter-generational inequalities were rising – with typical pensioner incomes (after housing costs) having become higher than those of a typical working household (p. 7). They concluded that the outcome was likely to be particularly bleak for low-income families with children and for public sector workers in the future (p. 11).

To these reports could be added a report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (Belfield, Cribb, Hood & Joyce, 2014) that sought to measure how living standards, poverty and inequality had increased since the Great Recession and a major study of welfare policies and provision by the Social Policy Association. This followed up on a 2010 volume and indirectly threw light on growing inequalities in the United Kingdom by concentrating on 50 aspects of welfare over the previous 5 years (Foster, Brunton, Deeming & Haux, 2015). It provided a strong attack on the then government for having ignored the needs of the poorest sections of the community but listening to the powerful.

This 18-chapter-book complements existing publications by adding a recent contribution to the debate on inequality, focusing on the period since 2008 and seeking to assess whether the change in political rhetoric mentioned above has been translated into changes in policy and how this has affected the many facets of inequality in the United Kingdom.

Apart from a comparative chapter setting inequality in the United Kingdom in the European context, and a chapter addressing the issue of the integration of immigrants in Paris (France) and London, this book focuses exclusively on the United Kingdom – unlike books published in the last decade that approach inequality from an international perspective (Dorling, 2012, 2014, 2015; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). These publications chart the increase in inequalities around the world through quantitative methods and/or focus on globalisation processes (Atkinson, 2015; Bourguignon, 2015; Piketty, 2014; Stiglitz, 2015; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). However, they generally do not track changes in specific policy areas or analyse the response of the authorities since the 2008 crisis within the context of the evolution of the British Welfare State and the British polity. When authors have engaged with these issues (Lansley & Mack, 2015), they have not taken a public policy approach but instead have chosen to focus on the impact of inequality on the lives of individuals in the United Kingdom and have outlined alternatives. By contrast, this volume focuses both on the extent of inequalities in the United Kingdom and on policy responses.

Furthermore, most published books study inequality at the macro or micro levels, concentrating on international and national trends as well as individual experiences of inequality. They leave aside the meso level, namely the level at which various intermediate organisations and institutions (job centres, local authorities, the NHS, devolved institutions) address and deal with the manifestations of inequality.

The main thrust of this book is that the Great Recession led to a rhetorical shift in the United Kingdom. This collection of 18 chapters assesses the extent to which the fourth 'egalitarian' discourse on social exclusion has superseded previous ones and a new political agenda has emerged as a result of this. It explores the impact of the Great Recession on the UK polity from three distinct perspectives that provide the structure of this book. First, it seeks to chart whether, and if so how, economic inequalities in the United Kingdom have evolved since the 2008 Great Recession both from a domestic and international perspective. Second, it attempts to measure how far equality is still a driving principle in a range of social and health services, and whether policies are in place to ensure that equality (of access, treatment or outcome) is a reality today in a range of welfare state sectors. Finally, it sets out to explore how the issue of inequality is addressed at the meso level in the post-2008 context and examines whether local initiatives are effective in reducing inequality, what can be learnt from them, whether devolved institutions have embraced the fight against inequality and with what results.

Part I is devoted to measuring economic inequalities from various perspectives. It opens with a chapter by Nicholas Sowels which reviews the definitions of poverty, inequality and social exclusion, in order to provide a broader overview and remind us of the polemical dimension of any definition. The chapter points to a paradox: on the face of it, income inequality has shrunk since 2008 and is back to what it was in the mid-1980s. However, the chapter shows that the picture of poverty and inequality in the United Kingdom is far more complex than suggested by the main measure of income inequality. As Sowels explains, such measures may hide a growth of inequalities and the picture since 2008 varies depending on the data used. The chapter also locates the United Kingdom among OECD countries and points to its contrasted position. It concludes by looking at the situation of different age groups and suggests that Brexit may well lead to future rises in inequality.

The next chapter by Stewart Lansley builds on these points and challenges dominant thinking. Until the 2008 Great Recession, the prevailing economic orthodoxy, accepted across the broad political spectrum, was that inequality was a necessary condition for economic health. Instead, Lansley shows that the evidence of the last four decades is that this trade-off theory – that you can have more equal or more efficient economies but not both – is incorrect. Lansley also highlights a paradox: although there is now a broad acceptance among global leaders that inequality poses significant risks for social cohesion and economic stability, there has been little or no action to match the high level

verbal critique of inequality. As a result, inequality has carried on rising within nations since 2008 and in the United Kingdom, the gap between the top and bottom has continued to widen. Lansley concludes that this is due to a downward shift in the protective role of the state since 2010 and the growing share of national income going to profits rather than to technological changes and immigration as others have suggested. For the author, income stagnation for some groups is a trend that is now common across rich countries, leading to a transformation in social structure and the emergence of 'hour-glass' societies. This undermines one of the central promises of the market experiment: that growth would make successive generations better-off.

Chapter 3 by Mark Bailoni looks at economic inequalities in the United Kingdom from a regional perspective and questions the relevance and the significance of the North–South divide in 2017, after the impact of the 2008 Great Recession. The author first reminds us of the historical and structural origins of the North–South divide and uses various official indicators to show the persistence of the gap, drawing attention to disparities at the local level. He then examines the divide from a critical geopolitics approach that focuses on the analysis of stakeholders' discourses, their perceptions and representations. Using electoral results and public opinion studies, he shows that the divide is not just socio-economic but also geopolitical. The author goes on to look at the strategies and mechanisms implemented by successive governments since the Blair years and concludes on the possibility of a regional political revival in a political context dominated by Brexit and austerity policies.

Chapter 4 by Niall Cunningham, Fiona Devine and Helene Snee explores the inter-urban dimensions of contemporary inequality in the United Kingdom. It does so by drawing on quantitative measures of inequality from the BBC's 'Great British Class Survey' experiment of 2011–2013 and representative economic indicators of productivity. Their analysis of inequality deliberately moves away from the so-called employment aggregate approach and takes into account other determinants of life chances. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, the authors aim to demonstrate the ways in which economic inequalities are reflected and reinforced in social and cultural domains. The authors map the concentration or diffusion of economic, cultural and social capital in the United Kingdom and, through this, highlight the interplay between different forms of capital. By exploring the multiple dimensions of inequality, they argue that there is a need to reconceptualise our understanding of inequality and move beyond a mere economic conception of it.

Chapter 5 by Abigail Davis and Matt Padley focuses on the topic of the Minimum Income Standard (MIS), the income needed to have a socially acceptable standard of living. The chapter approaches the study of inequality from a living standards perspective. The authors show that one arrives at different conclusions about poverty in the United Kingdom depending on whether one uses relative poverty indicators or MIS. They remind us that the topic of living standards has risen in prominence since the 2008 Great Recession as a

result of a real terms fall in wages and of stagnant incomes and hence, since 2010, there has been a commitment by the two main parties to improve them. They argue that MIS, unlike the income threshold definition of poverty, is accepted by members of the public on the basis of what everyone should be able to have, and does not fluctuate with median incomes. Because of this it offers a much more satisfactory measure of poverty and a means of charting its evolution. Reference to MIS demonstrates that, since 2008, the proportion of all individuals with incomes insufficient to guarantee adequate living standards has risen but that the pattern of change has been uneven.

In Chapter 6, Jonathan Bradshaw and Oleksandr Movshuk supplement the study of economic inequalities and poverty in the United Kingdom by taking a broader European perspective and providing one of the rare recent studies comparing income inequality at the EU level since the Great Recession. The secondary analysis of the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) is used to examine inequality in the United Kingdom compared with other EU countries and to show how inequality has changed over the period from the start of the crisis in 2008 to 2015. As they explain, for European countries as a whole, inequality has risen quite substantially since the mid-1980s. Using a variety of official measures, they examine the effects of the Great Recession on EU countries, the impact of benefits and taxes across Europe and locate the United Kingdom on the EU spectrum. In addition, inequality within the EU is explored by categories of households and linked with social conditions. The chapter concludes with a discussion of what role the EU itself plays through its own institutions and policies (CAP, ERDF or ESF) in mitigating market inequalities. They conclude that EU policies have relatively little impact on inequality which can only be tackled effectively using national redistributive policies.

Part II of the book analyses how far equality is still a driving principle in a range of public policies and examines whether the 2008 Great Recession marks a turning point in the history of the equality agenda as well as for a number of vulnerable groups.

It opens with the only chapter devoted to a political party, the one with strong ethical commitments and whose ideology was long based on the fight for equality, the Labour party. In this chapter, Eric Shaw explores the conceptual and ideological shifts in attitudes to equality that took place after the advent of New Labour and after the election of Ed Miliband, what has prompted them and how they have been articulated in policies. Shaw explains that even though it has always been difficult to define precisely what the quest for equality entails, what guided Labour for decades was practical equality. With the advent of New Labour (1997–2010), this mission was radically redefined, and egalitarianism was superseded by the determination to uphold meritocracy and to alleviate poverty. Shaw then examines the Miliband leadership (2010–2015), highlighting the determination of Labour's then leader to address the causes of inequality, but emphasises how opposition inside and outside the party to

anything that was redolent of an anti-business ethos limited his political authority in the party leading to a disappointing 2015 manifesto. The author concludes by looking at slow progress on policy development under Corbyn and paradoxical mounting popular resistance to redistributive politics.

In Chapter 8, Simon Roberts, Bruce Stafford and Katherine Hill examine the tension between the Equality Act 2010 and the welfare reforms introduced by the UK Coalition government during its term of office between 2010 and 2015. After reviewing the history of anti-discrimination legislation in the United Kingdom, the authors explore the extent to which the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) adequately assessed the equality impacts of key welfare reforms when policy was being formulated on individuals with protected characteristics. They seek to gauge any mitigating actions put in place to offset negative impacts and how the collection of evidence on equality impacts (EIA) was used when formulating policy, or could have been used to feed into future policy reform and spending decisions. They show that the impacts of the reforms were only systematically assessed by age and gender, and, where data were available, by disability and ethnicity. Little or no assessment was made for the other protected groups. The chapter highlights the gap between substantive egalitarian policy mechanisms and practice.

In Chapter 9, Alan Murie addresses housing policy in England since 2007 and changes in housing opportunities and inequalities. First, he explains that the housing policies pursued in the decades before the credit crunch had increased affordability issues and so widened housing inequalities in England and reduced the extent to which public and social rented housing moderated social and spatial inequalities. Murie goes on to show that the credit crunch and its aftermath (changes to welfare and housing benefits) speeded the established trend to greater inequality in housing. So did housing policies that relied, after 2010, on boosting the private sector and home ownership. He then examines Conservative housing policies since 2015 and the attack on housing associations. Murie argues that despite the government rhetoric developed in the 2017 Housing White Paper, the policy direction adopted since 2010 failed in its ambition to increase housing supply and home ownership and further increased social and spatial inequalities. He concludes by looking at how housing inequalities create and exacerbate other social inequalities.

In Chapter 10, Anne Beauvallet studies inequalities in education in England. She reminds us that inequalities in English schools stem from numerous factors and that the Thatcher and Major governments reshaped the education agenda in the 1980s while ignoring the issue of inequality. Then she briefly reviews the tenets of the New Labour education policies and contrasts them with Coalition and current Conservative policies. Beauvallet shows that London schools experienced major improvements unlike the rest of the country but warns about the methodological obstacles inherent to studies on the evolution of inequalities at school level. She goes on to point out that Theresa May's government seems to have adopted a different policy since July 2016, focusing on meritocracy while

pressing on with school diversification. Finally, Beauvallet argues that successive cabinets since 1997 have not implemented structural reforms designed to tackle economic inequalities thus limiting the effect of their educational reforms and underscores that too often the working class and the teaching profession have been blamed for the lack of improvements and enduring inequalities in education.

Chapter 11 by Mhairi Mackenzie, Annette Hastings, Breannon Babbel, Sarah Simpson and Graham Watt examines the issue of health inequalities in Scotland, and more specifically the concept of proportionate universalism by Michael Marmot, within the wider debate of universal versus targeted welfare provision. The analysis is drawn from a small case-study which included participants from the Scottish government, NHS Health Scotland and planning officers and practitioners within a primary care and health policy settings. The authors conclude that there are three main levels at which proportionate universalism needs to be analysed as a means of mitigating the impacts of health inequalities – at the political level, at the policy and planning level and at the practice level where individual practitioners are enabled (or not) to practice in such a way as to mitigate existing health inequalities.

In Chapter 12, Louise Dalingwater briefly reviews some of the main structural determinants of gender inequalities in the British labour market. She reminds us that the spectacular progress made since the 1970s to reduce the gender pay gap in Britain seems to have come to a halt after 2008. She goes on to look more specifically at the effects of austerity policies on women and shows that cuts to benefits and public services have affected women disproportionately. The author also focuses on a range of new policies that have been or are due to be phased in to tackle gender inequality and considers whether the new emphasis on tackling gender inequality simply represents a discursive shift or a decisive commitment from central government. Finally, some of the weaknesses to the gender equality framework to be introduced in 2018 are examined.

In Chapter 13, Rebecca Yeo considers the relationship between inequality and disability in the context of forced migration. She starts by tracing the origins of asylum and the evolution of the benefits asylum seekers are entitled to before showing that disabled migrants are a blind spot in public policy. She goes on to look at the deprivation experienced by disabled asylum seekers, drawing on the findings of a study using creative methods to highlight the issues they face. She then draws a parallel between cuts to entitlements for asylum seekers before the Great Recession and cuts affecting people with disabilities since then. She reminds us that cuts to public expenditure, in response to the recession, have affected people with disabilities particularly severely. This, she argues, can be explained by hegemonic assumptions of differences in human worth. Within the asylum population itself, inequality of treatment exists as some are deemed exceptionally worthy. This suggests that if withdrawal of entitlement is tolerated for a specific group of people, then it may be extended to a wider group.

Part III of the book revolves around the governance of inequality, namely the way inequality is addressed at a local level and in the other parts of the Union, following devolution, as well as abroad.

Emma Bond, in Chapter 14, explores the consequences of the Great Recession on young people's lives and employment opportunities in a town with high levels of deprivation (Lowestoft). The chapter is based on 52 interviews with unemployed young people, most of whom had been claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA). The interviews sought to identify barriers which prevented or discouraged young people from engaging with existing employment support services and considered how these may be overcome. The author highlights the difficulty for the respondents of finding and keeping a stable job as well as the consequences of being unemployed. She goes on to describe the many problems unemployed young people face that trap them in poverty and how they are perceived by the institutions that are supposed to help them. Finally, Bond examines the local responses to both their situation and their needs following the passing of the Localism Act 2011.

In Chapter 15, Markéta Seidlová and Paul Chapman explore how the city councils of Paris and London, and of some of their boroughs, help immigrants integrate into the host societies of these two cities. The authors compare and contrast the tools and measures used in both cities, making a distinction between those targeted at the immigrant population and those that focus on the host population. According to them, there are many similarities in terms of the methods and programmes used, and the main difference concerns the extent to which programmes are actively put in place. In this respect, the London borough of Lewisham is particularly active. As an employer, Lewisham has promoted a policy of non-discrimination and active recruitment of BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) employees. The authors argue that this programme could inspire the Paris city council and that conversely, Lewisham could learn from some of the measures targeted at vulnerable sub-groups of immigrants in Paris.

The last three chapters are devoted to the consequences of the devolution agenda on the inequality question. In Chapter 16, Edwige Camp-Pietrain looks at the way successive devolved Scottish governments have been attempting to address inequalities by adapting UK policies or by devising their own solutions. She shows that egalitarian policies have been a distinctive feature of all devolved Scottish governments and that promoting 'equality in opportunities' and 'reducing poverty and inequalities' have become quite consensual purposes at Holyrood beyond SNP ranks. She deals then with some of the policies aiming at tackling inequalities and underlines that from 2011 progress has stalled. The chapter also points to a tension between the SNP's emphasis on fairness, public uneasiness about higher income taxes and the powers and resources devolved to the Scottish Parliament. She concludes by looking at the links between economic inequalities and electoral behaviour before suggesting some consequences of Brexit on inequalities in Scotland.

In Chapter 17, Rhys Davies and Alison Parken consider economic inequality in Wales set within the policy and economic context. With powers in 20 devolved policy areas, the Welsh Assembly would appear well placed to interrupt the reproduction of socio-economic disparities. The authors first analyse how the Welsh labour market has responded to the economic crisis and how this has affected both inequality *within* Wales and spatial inequality that exists *across* the United Kingdom. They examine the development of equalities and anti-poverty policymaking in Wales in the wake of specific duties placed on the Welsh authorities after 2006. With no redistributive powers for the Assembly, they show that an implementation gap has opened. The chapter concludes by considering the potential for new and distinct policy levers in Wales in relation to the integration of anti-poverty, employment, economic and equality policies to address the combined impact of socio-economic inequalities in the future.

The last chapter by Valérie Peyronel deals with social inequalities in post-conflict and post-2007–2008 financial crisis Northern Ireland. Against the background of the economic boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s, and growing immigration to Northern Ireland, the author examines social inequalities related to wealth, employment and housing in order to assess how Northern Ireland has changed since 2008. She then focuses on traditional indicators of Catholic/Protestant inequalities: education employment and housing. Finally, Peyronel explores the extent to which the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, the 2006 St Andrew's Agreement and the 2014 Stormont House Agreement tackle the issue of social inequalities in the Province.

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