

AUSTERITY and its **ALTERNATIVES**



Austerman Hauntology

Unpacking Everyday Hauntings in Canadian Fiscal Policy

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uOttawa

Today's Agenda

- On hauntology & spectres
- Austerity in Canada
- Theoretical Framework
- Case Studies
 - On budgets
 - On news reporting
 - On public opinion
- Impediments to change & how to overcome them



Hauntology

"Hauntology' suggests that ideas can 'haunt' and act as 'spectres'; it refers to a state of disjuncture (temporal, historical) wherein "presence is replaced [...] by the figure of the ghost [...] which is neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive" (Derrida 82).



Austerity in Canada

“This trajectory has followed a cycle in which spending cuts eventually result in surpluses, to be spent on tax cuts, which lead to more deficits, and so on. Ultimately, this reduces the capacities of the government to maintain or invest in public programs or stimulate the economy during crises (Berry 2016; Dellepiane-Avellaneda 2015).”

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Theoretical Framework

“In the short paper I examine more of Derrida’s ‘hauntology’, but the important takeaway is that certain ideas can come to have a haunting quality in different contexts, being neither present nor absent, yet persistent. Austerity as a discourse and policy can be strategically useful (e.g. in appealing to groups which value it or in reducing the capacities of parts of the state or the whole state), but, like a true spectre, has grown beyond the control of those who would seek to ‘use it’.”



On Budgets

“Austerity practices and policies have a way of *following* political discussions into the everyday. Regardless of how the spectre of austerity came to loom so large over Canadian politics, it is here now, and it is difficult to distinguish between cases where political actors *need to respond to it* vs. when they choose to instrumentalize the discourse.”

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On News Reporting

“Public investment in services and infrastructure is made much more contentious when it requires deficit spending. Public opinion, like news reporting and budgets/their discussions, reveals the haunting of austerity. Any discussions of public spending must be answered with how they will affect debts and deficits.”

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Public Opinion

“Public opinion, like news reporting and budgets/their discussions, reveals the haunting of austerity. Any discussions of public spending must be answered with how they will affect debts and deficits. While the public is more accepting of non-austerity platforms, debts and deficits are consistently among the most contentious public opinion issues.”



Impediments to Change & How to Overcome Them

“Even when attempting to conceive of alternative ways of providing services, of intervening in the economy, of helping citizens, the state and all parties must constantly answer the spectre of austerity. In this way, the ‘question’ of fiscal responsibility takes on a life of its own – like a ghost or spectre would – growing beyond necessary concerns with accountability to encompassing all political discussions.”



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