"People gotta understand how politics works": political parties, the local state, and urban regeneration in Haringey, London

Anil D Sindhwani

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Abstract:
Local governance in the United Kingdom is undergoing significant transition. Simultaneously, large scale urban regeneration has become a norm in British cities. Led by local states, regeneration continues unabated even amidst strong resistance by impacted communities. At its core, then, this research sets out to understand how and why such schemes can continue. It does so by mapping out a case study of the London Borough of Haringey and its deep entanglements with the ruling political faction: the Labour Party. To do so, the research links together Bruff's (2014) articulation of authoritarian neoliberalism, critical perspectives on the Labour Party, and contemporary theory of the *local state*, drawing chiefly on Ormerod (2021). This linkage stresses the importance of dominant political parties, particularly in one-party local states (like Haringey) that characterise much of British local governance. Focusing in on the *local state* also not only highlights its relevance to contemporary urban development, but also its dependence on—and entanglements with—political parties.

The analysis also considers resistance to the state. I explore three relevant case studies: two regeneration schemes (High Road West and the Haringey Development Vehicle) and one historical example of a group of council estate tenants organising for better conditions on their estate (Broadwater Farm). Resistance is explored through the lens of acts of citizenship as coined by Isin (2008) and its development as accommodative acts (Jakimów 2022). Accommodative acts were necessary for Broadwater Farm residents because of Thatcher's illiberal and managerial governance.

In sum, the project argues for the following. First, in cases of dominance of a state by one party, I contend scholars must expand their view of the state to include that party—into what I call a 'state-party nexus.' Relegating the party risks overlooking who *actually* governs. Second, scholars should pay greater attention to quiet activism, especially as states increasingly utilise illiberal and authoritarian forms of governance. Among a significant and international crises of democracy, scholars must think of new ways to defend and understand it. This project thus adds to such voices and calls for new and radical ways of ensuring (local) governance works for all.

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Geography
Durham University
2025

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Chapter 1

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Statement of Copyright:

Acknowledgements:

First, a huge thanks to everyone in Tottenham and Haringey who participated in this research. I continue to be stunned by all the hard work you do—and that somehow you still had the energy and time to give to me, an American far from home who was curious about your corner of London. You all have done so much to make Haringey a better place to live—and I know you will continue to do so for years to come.

I am especially grateful for my supervisors: Professor Joe Painter, Professor Helen F Wilson, and Dr Sam Nowak: you always kept me in check, guided me with care, and helped me adjust to a new country and a new discipline. Our conservations have made me a better scholar and a better geographer.

To the Department of Geography at Durham, I am also grateful for the support throughout many years of teaching, learning, researching, community-building, and working. I also appreciative of the Economic and Social Research Council through the Northern Ireland and North East Doctoral Training Partnership (NINE-DTP). Thank you for supporting my fieldwork, conference travels (thank you Jo!), and my UKRI policy internship.

Many thanks too to the School (now Department) of Geography at Queen Mary, University of London for being a 'home away from home' during my data collection phase.

A huge thank you to the various friends who have been emotional and intellectual supporters over this journey: in no particular order, Danielė Balsytė Sofía Negri, Elena Garova, Shruti Arora, Melissa Slep, Michael Siebert, Fraser Curry (and Ellie Horne), Natasha Sharma, Livvy O'Hagan, Sean Harding, Glyn Robbins, Rimsha Durrani, Jenni Boddy, Aakash Patel, Estelle Broyer, Avery Larkin, Pradnya Narkhede, Alex Davis, and others.

Thank you also to my family: Dad, Momomji, and Arvind. Sorry for moving so far away but thank you, thank you for all the support since the beginning. Where would I be without you?

Chapter 1: Introduction

The frigid, morning London air filled my lungs as I stepped out of the Wood Green tube station. I had crossed the city that morning for a protest—the council housing[1] maintenance and repair workers of the London Borough of Haringey[2] were on strike. Their union alleged long-standing low pay, poor management and treatment, and the use of strike-breakers. I was there in solidarity, but I also suspected I might be able to make some connections and gather data for my doctoral work.

While the protest itself was not lively, the informal chats with workers were illuminating: there was widespread anger against the Labour-led council—specifically, at councillors[3] and upper management—for what were perceived to be strike-breaking tactics. Allegedly, council management and political leaders were intentionally delaying dispute-related pay deductions so that striking staff lost wages over the period. Union leaders also alleged the council was using external contractors as strike breakers. "That's management," one said. Another told me, with the help of expletives, the council's unwillingness to resolve the strike action was hurting council residents. Additionally, some were confused about how the council's stated aims to redevelop, and later sell, some of its property would impact their work prospects. All were disappointed that a council led by a self-professed radical and democratic socialist party—one that I was, at the time, a member of—would engage in anti-union activity. After several hours in the cold, we decamped to a local Irish pub to drink some Guinness before lunch; it helped ease the ninety-minute journey home and gave me time to reflect and scribble some notes.

[1] Council and social tenancies are two related, but different, forms of public housing in the United Kingdom. Social tenants include not only council tenants, but also those who rent from a housing charity or association as well as the council. Council tenants rent from the council only. Council tenants have strong security of tenure and low rent rates while non-council, social tenants exist along a gradation of security and rent rates (Shelter England, n.d.).

[2] Haringey is one of thirty-two different London boroughs. A borough is a London-specific subdivision of local government, which are generally called 'local authorities.'

[3] Politicians elected to be members of a council.

Haringey Council's[4] conflict with its workers opened my eyes to both the multiple, overlapping themes and the messiness of governing that drive this doctoral project. The repair and maintenance workers highlighted the relationship(s) between the council and its leading party (Labour) as a source of frustration. These conversations led me to believe that this frustration—among housing workers *and* tenants—was long-standing, with a deep history. It also highlighted the contradictory and complex ways the local state engaged in housing its population: it was a landlord, a service provider, a territory over which politicians fought, and a manager. These disparate roles aggravated problems as much as it solved them. Casual references to the council's professional staff and councillors indicated the importance of personal relationships across all actors. I had known that Haringey Council was interested in redeveloping many of its properties, particularly a widely publicised (but failed) attempt in 2017. Yet, I had not deeply thought about how these relationships would matter in all parts of the council's work. I wanted to know how the relationship between the state and the party can be better understood—especially at the local level, where one-party states are common. I also thought about how activism might succeed in this case: how can activists shift states that have so many institutional responsibilities and leverages? What strategies can change the individual-state relationship that do not resort to spectacles of resistance that risk significant retribution? As I thought more about the striking workers and the trajectory of housing in the borough, Haringey became the perfect case study to investigate how the local state and the local party sometimes work together and sometimes work against each other. This borough, with its complex history, thus opened up new paths for me to better understand contemporary council housing and capitalism.

†††

This doctoral thesis incorporating publications, at its core, seeks to understand how British local governments continue large-scale urban redevelopment schemes despite strong local opposition. The projects of interest typically aim to redevelop large numbers of council housing, which has been an

[4] The lowest level of the British state.

integral part of British life since its inception at the end of the 19th century. However, council housing has gone through several significant stages over its history, with it now mostly relegated to a tenancy of last resort for many of the country's most marginalised (Watt 2021b). Even then, it remains under threat from old problems (like Right to Buy[5] and underinvestment) and new concerns (such as financialisation and speculation). As it circulates in discourse and is established through policy, council housing remains a salient element of the British state, frequently surfacing in news and political commentary. As social housing is under the purview of local councils, its debates often reflect a locality's politics. As my personal experience with public housing in New York City revealed, municipalities that are historically represented by one party[6] have particularly fractious and factional politics, often dominated by interpersonal relationships and petty disagreements rather than either a drive to improve a community or simply win more votes than the opposing party. Social housing in New York was undergoing rapid transition, and my experience sparked an interest in the connection between the local state and the local party; in a city where one party ruled, all disagreement and contestation was funnelled through it.

Taking the case of a comparably situated set of moments in the London Borough of Haringey, this research plots out the contested and complicated relationships between the party, the local state, and associated resistance. I develop three moments of interest in empirical chapters (5-7), but all three have council housing as a core element. Two are about fights over its future in Haringey, while its condition and status as influenced by scales of politics feature prominently in the third case. These three examples reflect the complex ways that local politics and the local state work together to stifle dissent—but also how this collaboration is not always determinative.

This research was an in-depth empirical and ethnographic study, investigating the relationships that made up the local party, the local state, and associated resistance. Adding to a set of disparate literatures that stretch from

[5] A policy that allows council housing tenants the right to purchase their home at a discount. See Chapter 2 for more detail.
[6] In New York, the Democratic Party.

critical state theory (Jessop 2010; Painter 2006), politics (Bruff and Tansel 2021), and geography (Ormerod 2021), the thesis insists on a relational and open conception of the state, treating it not as a distinct and reified object but rather as a relation. Using critical perspectives on the Labour Party (Cockburn 1980; Gilbert 2023; Miliband 1973), I also argue that political scholars must pay more attention to the way the party significantly shapes policymaking—especially in states that are traditionally one-party strongholds. However, against typical descriptions of the party as institutions that foreclose dissent, I contend that the inherent relationality of the state and the party mean that avenues of resistance always exist (Copus 2004, 2015, 2023). Drawing from citizenship studies (Isin 2008; Jakimów 2022), this research similarly touches on how *actually existing* resistance to authoritarianism and neoliberalism can succeed, even when outright dissent is impossible because of illiberal or authoritarian repression. In an era of a global crisis of democracy, this thesis thus speaks to the importance of the local scale—in particular, thinking through how to ensure local governance works for everyone.

1.1 Aims and Research Questions:

Through an in-depth empirical study of local governance as expressed through housing in Haringey, this work has three main aims:

(1) Understand the relationship between the local state and political parties, and their accompanying functions and internal contestations; and
(2) investigate the deep inter-relationship(s) between urban, neoliberal political economy and party politics; and,
(3) examine how marginalised groups of citizens successfully resist neoliberal and authoritarian governance.

The thesis' aims are threaded throughout the empirical chapters, with each chapter placing different emphasis on each aim. In line with these aims, I also ask three questions:

(1) How do local politicians understand the relationship between housing type and citizenship? How might geographers theorise this relationship?
(2) How does the locals state and local party respond to dissent? How are these responses structured by the relationships between state and party?

(3) Do local political parties work together with the local state to perpetuate authoritarian neoliberalism and, if so, how?

Throughout this work, I propose a framework of a multiscalar 'state-party nexus,' which positions the party as an equal player to the state, especially in cases of long-standing one-party rule, like in Haringey. Second, I argue that scholarship of neoliberalism must place more emphasis on the role of political parties. Third, I will assert new understandings of activism that treat quieter forms thereof as equally transformative.

I next provide an overview of the work's structure, briefly summarising each subsequent chapter before discussing the context and background of Haringey (Section 1.3) and the thesis's case studies (Section 1.4).

1.2 Thesis Structure:

Before describing the overall structure of this work, it is important to acknowledge that this thesis incorporates four distinct papers submitted to scholarly journals (Sindhwani 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d). Three papers correspond to each of the empirical chapters (Chapters 5, 6, and 7), while the fourth paper (Sindhwani 2025c) expands on the complicated temporality of researching the Broadwater Youth Association (Chapter 5). As such, the text of Chapters 5, 6, and 7 have been edited to ensure coherence and to avoid repetition. Each of these three empirical papers can stand alone, so their theoretical framing does not directly follow from the theoretical framework in Chapter 3, as will be seen in Sections 6.2.2 and 7.1. Some portions of the fourth paper (Sindhwani 2025c) have been quoted in the methodology section (Chapter 4) to provide additional reflections on my research process. This paper, however, is not substantially incorporated into the thesis.

1.2.1 Chapter 2: A Brief History of Council Housing in the UK:

This chapter provides a short review of council housing in the United Kingdom. In addition to tracking historical shifts in the provision of public housing from 1945 to the present day, the chapter evaluates how council-provided dwellings moved from a core plank of the British welfare state to a residualised tenure of last-resort (Forrest and Murie 1983). Specifically, Chapter 2 recounts the

policy's early days: its birth and then importance as part of the post-war settlement. It considers council housing's historical importance, before explaining how it was markedly privatised in the decades since 1980 through policies like Right-to-Buy and large-scale voluntary transfers. Chapter 2 explains how council estates became stigmatised territory, laying the grounds for later revanchism and residualisation. It then moves to recounting shifts in the provision of public homes after the 2008 global financial crisis. Here, I consider the rise of regeneration: an umbrella term that expresses how council estates are currently the target of large-scale redevelopment schemes. My review of regeneration emphasises its pernicious effects—viewed through the Foucauldian lens of 'making live' and 'letting die'—and its ongoing resistance. Given demographic shifts in council housing tenants, Chapter 2 concludes with an assessment of race and ethnicity in council housing. This assessment describes the current state of council housing for racialised groups, the history of racism in public housing provision, and finally how race/ism continues to structure contemporary council housing—especially after the Grenfell tragedy of 2017.

1.2.2 Chapter 3: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework:

This portion constitutes the conceptual framework and a critical review of the literature used in this thesis. These varying bodies of literature have informed the research, drawing on a range of disciplines and perspectives. It begins by considering the state in general, discussing scholarship that stresses the state's relational character—that is, its embeddedness with society (Jessop 2010; Painter 2006). I then zoom into the *local* state, considering how this scale means that certain relations between actors are different: for instance, local councils are a key site of welfare delivery (Copus 2004, 2015, 2023; D. J. Wilson and Game 2011). I next consider how local political parties (the Labour Party specifically) play a significant role in the functioning of the state (Cockburn 1980; Ormerod 2021). I then review debates on the authoritarian character of neoliberalism, its history, and types (Bruff 2014; Bruff and Tansel 2021; S. Hall 1985; Tansel 2017). I then link this theory to the urban scale, stressing the importance that the local and urban has to authoritarian neoliberalism (Lees 2024; Luger and Dürr 2025;

Painter 1991; Piletić 2022). I finally link together authoritarian neoliberalism and political parties, stressing the need for scholarship to attend to the way formal politics structures and is structured by the actions of the state. This chapter concludes with a review of conceptions of citizenship, which help explain the activism of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association (Chapter 5). I primarily draw on the 'acts of citizenship' theory to understand this accommodative activism (Isin 2008; Jakimów 2022). The dialogue between disparate scholarship(s) permitted me to better comprehend the complex inter-relations between the political, scalar, and activist dynamics that defined state-party relations in these case examples.

1.2.3 Chapter 4: Methodological Approach:

I describe and discuss the methodological approach used in this investigation here. The approach relies on a combination of various methods like archival work, interviews, ethnography, and walking. Mixing methods is not used here to triangulate, where a scholar uses multiple methods to cross-reference findings about a particularly defined object. Rather, it is used to build a collage or a patchwork picture (C. Freeman 2020). I therefore argue in this chapter *for* collage. Likewise, the methods chapter argues for a hybrid approach, one that does not follow linear ideas of how research develops but rather one that charts the branching and looping lines that knit together to become a research project (Watkins 2020). Such an approach also necessitates a good awareness of one's situated knowledge(s) (Haraway 1988). This chapter also reflects on my positionality as a researcher and former bureaucrat, as well as reviews the processes of data collection, analysis, and ethical approval that occurred in different places in the research.

1.2.4 Chapter 5: Working on the Farm: Acts of Citizenship and Accommodative Resistance

In this chapter, I address the first Research Question on social citizenship and activism through an analysis of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association. I also briefly touch on Research Question 2. Through an evaluation of the Youth Association's endeavours, I explore how activism during authoritarianism can still

succeed, even if it is ultimately accommodative instead of actively opposing the state. Chapter 5 permits us to understand the ways that activism and struggle can still flourish and change political subjectivities even when spectacular resistance is outlawed or dangerous. It also sheds light on the Broadwater Farm Youth Association and the 1985 uprising, both of which have been thus far understudied. The chapter concludes with reflecting on new ways of thinking about activism—ways that attend to the quieter forms of organising that extract change (e.g., Pottinger 2017; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar 2019).

1.2.5 Chapter 6: "Personal Connections and Personal Alliances": Leveraging Local Electoral Politics for Power

This chapter constitutes an analysis of the StopHDV campaign's electoral strategy to cancel the Haringey Development Vehicle. It responds to Research Questions 2 and 3 regarding the interrelations between the local state and the local party through an investigation of the internal politics of the Labour Party before and after the Haringey Development Vehicle's cancellation. Chapter 6 considers the 'state takeover' strategy of the StopHDV campaign to complicate extant perspectives of the state as *always* a vehicle to maintain existing capitalist accumulation. It also emphasises the role of political parties in policy development and implementation. The chapter finally adds to literature on councillors as policymakers and political representatives—there by insisting that scholars consider how the state actually governs.

1.2.6 Chapter 7: Local Parties, Authoritarian Neoliberalism, and Urban Change in Tottenham, London:

Here, I consider ongoing regeneration in Tottenham by scrutinising the High Road West (HRW) redevelopment scheme. It also answers Research Questions 2 and 3, which speak to the interconnections between the local Labour Party and local state. Here, these interconnections are examined through the HRW case. Through an exploration of the scheme, its context, related discourses, and consultation processes, the chapter considers how the Labour Party's structures work with the local state to foreclose dissent to the scheme. The chapter

enables me to interpret how political parties play a key role in the perpetuation of authoritarian neoliberal practices, thereby reinforcing the importance of local struggles to understanding the persistence of neoliberal policy.

1.2.7 Chapter 8: Conclusion:

Finally, this chapter synthesises the research's main findings. It highlights the theoretical and empirical contributions made across the thesis. First, I have argued for a framework of a multiscalar 'state-party nexus,' to better attend to how the state and the party fit together. Second, it discusses the importance of placing greater emphasis on political parties in scholarship on contemporary neoliberalism. Lastly, the thesis has asserted new activist frameworks that consider quieter forms of direct action that are still transformative. Responding to global, contemporary crises of democracy, this section concludes with a call for scholarship to be reoriented towards studies of the local state *actually governs* and responds to activism—rather than treating the local scale as a merely a container for national dynamics.

Having reviewed the thesis structure, I shift to providing an abbreviated background for the London Borough of Haringey. This overview offers context of the region, a short history of its politics, and a more sustained analysis of the 2011 uprising that began in Tottenham.

1.3 Context and Background of the London Borough of Haringey:

Founded in 1965 as part of the reorganisation of Greater London,[7] Haringey has always had two starkly contrasting sides, split by National Rail's East Coast Main Line. The west side of Haringey (including wards[8] like Muswell Hill and Highgate) has historically been a destination for wealthier Londoners with professional careers. These neighbourhoods retain strong local identities and have a political history that has tended to be more moderate. Historically, it has elected

[7] Greater London refers to the urban administrative area commonly referred to as the city of London. This is different than the City of London, which is a separate entity and has a longer, more complex history.

[8] The lowest unit for electoral geography for boroughs in England. They are also used, as they are here, for statistical division.

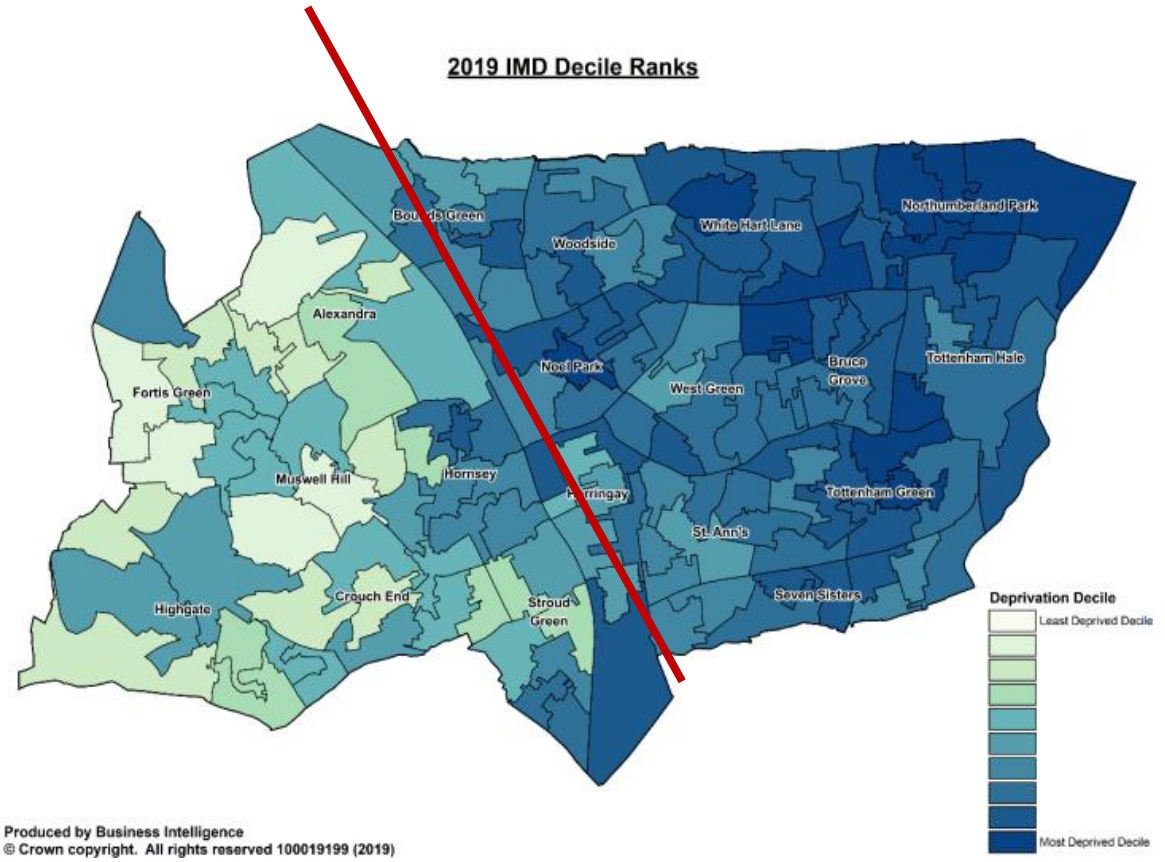


Figure 1 - Rates of Deprivation across Haringey (Haringey Borough Council 2024a). East/west dividing line in red.

councillors from the Conservative Party, and later, the Liberal Democrats. Conversely, the borough's east side (covering neighbourhoods like Seven Sisters and Wood Green) has traditionally been more radical and working class (Dillon and Fanning 2011). The east side, where both Tottenham and the Broadwater estate are located, has been a historic light industrial and manufacturing centre, with easy access to the River Lea and train services to central London (O'Sullivan 1991). Concurrently, the Labour Party has established a stronghold over the eastern half, with few non-Labour elected officials taking office since the creation of Haringey (Dillon and Fanning 2011). The east side of the borough is intensely deprived: more than half of the neighbourhoods in the east are in the top 20 percent areas of deprivation in UK, while the western half has few deprived neighbourhoods at all (Figure 1). Historically driven by the decline of manufacturing in the UK, inter-generational poverty has increased in the eastern

half over the last four decades. As a result, Haringey is the fourth most deprived borough in London (Haringey Borough Council 2024a).

Haringey is one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in London and has also been a destination for migrants from across the world. Haringey residents speak over 180 different languages and two in three are from minoritised ethnic (or Other White[9]) groups (Haringey Borough Council 2024a). Tottenham is often described as 'super-diverse,' (Vertovec 2007) with denizens hailing from Afro-Caribbean, Irish, Greek and Turkish Cypriot, Somali, Kurdish, Chinese, and Eastern European communities; indeed, Tottenham is a candidate for the most diverse neighbourhood in Europe (Elster 2020; Visser 2020). In Northumberland Park ward, where much of this thesis's fieldwork was conducted, 36.5 percent of the population claimed Black or African as an ethnic group, and West Green ward (the site of Broadwater Farm estate) was split 50.7 percent white, 49.3 percent not white (Office for National Statistics 2022). As explored in Chapter 2 and throughout this thesis, the relationships between minoritised ethnic groups in the UK and council housing are deep. Deprivation and ethnic minorities are also statistically related, and as such Haringey's eastern wards suffer from multiple forms of oppression.

Housing in Haringey has tended to reflect this division. Much of the east's cramped Victorian housing stock reflects its origins as a working-class area. The western half conversely tends to have larger homes in less dense, leafier suburbs (Dillon and Fanning 2011). Housing prices similarly demonstrate this disparity, with average prices in the east frequently less than half of that in the west; in 2014, prices differences between the two halves were as high as £1 million (GVA 2014). The division extends to current housing tenure,[10] with far more council tenants in eastern wards than in western ones (Figure 2) while the west has far more homeowners than the does the east (Figure 3). Not only does the east have more council *tenants* but it has large council *estates* as well—both Broadwater Farm and Northumberland Park estates, for instance, have around 1,000

[9] An ethnic classification that describes people who identify as white persons who are not of English, Welsh, Scottish, Roma, Irish or Irish Traveller ethnicities

[10] The legal status that determines how a household occupies a dwelling, classifying whether they own or rent the accommodation—and from whom they rent (private landlord or council).

dwellings each ('EstateWatch', n.d.). The number of social tenants in Haringey has been decreasing over time, falling from 29 percent of residents in 2016 to 22 percent in 2020 (Haringey Borough Council 2024a). The number of households on the waiting list is high, at around 13,000 households. Accordingly, wait-times are long—Haringey has the second longest waiting time for two- and three-bedrooms, for instance, at nearly eight years on average in 2023 (Centre for London 2023).

Haringey is consequently a borough of contrasts—with significant concentrations of wealth in one part and concentrations of deprivation in another. The area's politics are equally one of contrasts. The next segment thus reviews local politics in the borough, with a focus on the Labour Party.

1.3.1 Local Politics in Haringey—a Short History

As aforementioned, Haringey is dominated by the Labour Party, the more conservative elements of the borough's western portion notwithstanding. Indeed, except for one three-year period (1968-1971) when Conservatives led the council, Labour has held power in Haringey since its creation in 1965—although not always completely. The Conservatives often made a small, healthy opposition but became less relevant in Haringey in the 1990s. While the Liberal Democrats have made inroads in the borough since the 2002 election—and winning a plurality of votes in 2006—Labour has held on, increasing its majority in 2010 and 2014. Thus, the political history of the borough is chiefly reflected by changes and contestation in the Labour Party (Dillon and Fanning 2011). This subsection primarily considers the changes in Labour over the last five decades, starting from 1978.

Labour took back control of Haringey in 1971 after a national backlash against the then-Labour government. From 1971 to 1979, the council engaged in a policy of enlargement; that is, it consciously attempted to increase its role as a mediator between the working class in Haringey and the national state. The 1978 election saw a new left faction come to prominence within Haringey's Labour Party and group of councillors (O'Sullivan 1991). This faction included a new collection of white radicals as well as Black and minoritised ethnic politicians who would go on to be influential in Haringey, like future council Leader and Tottenham MP

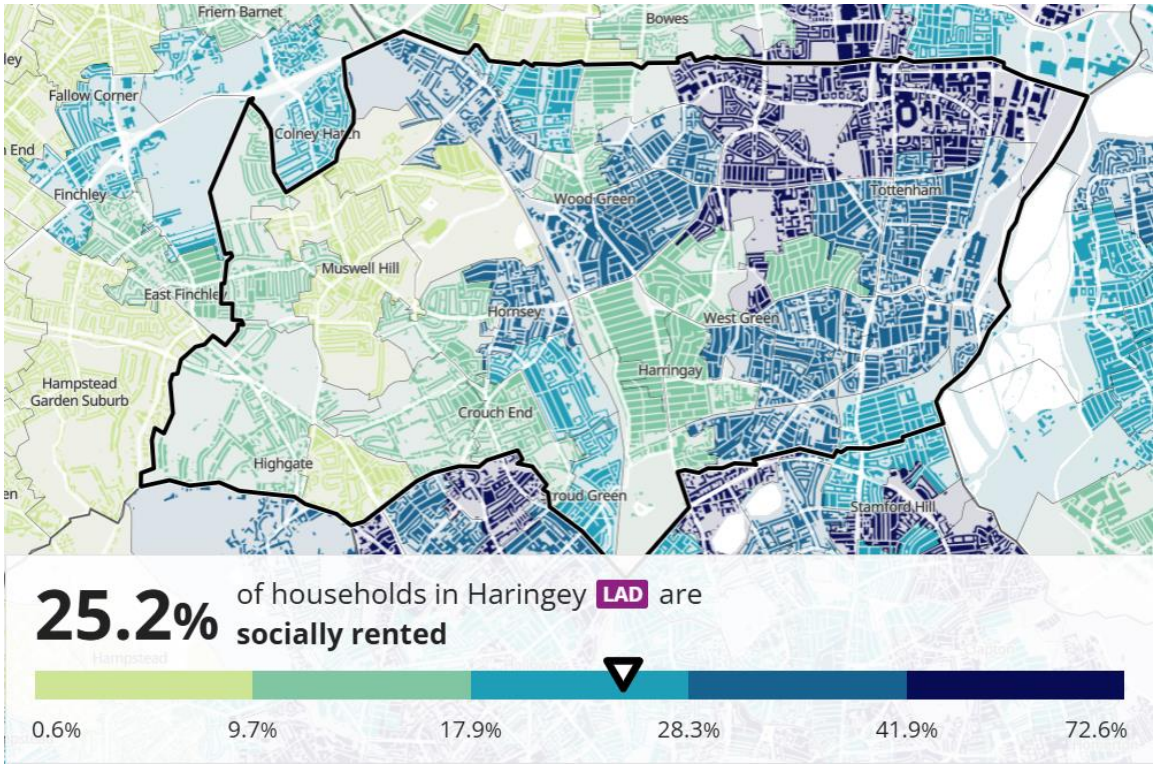
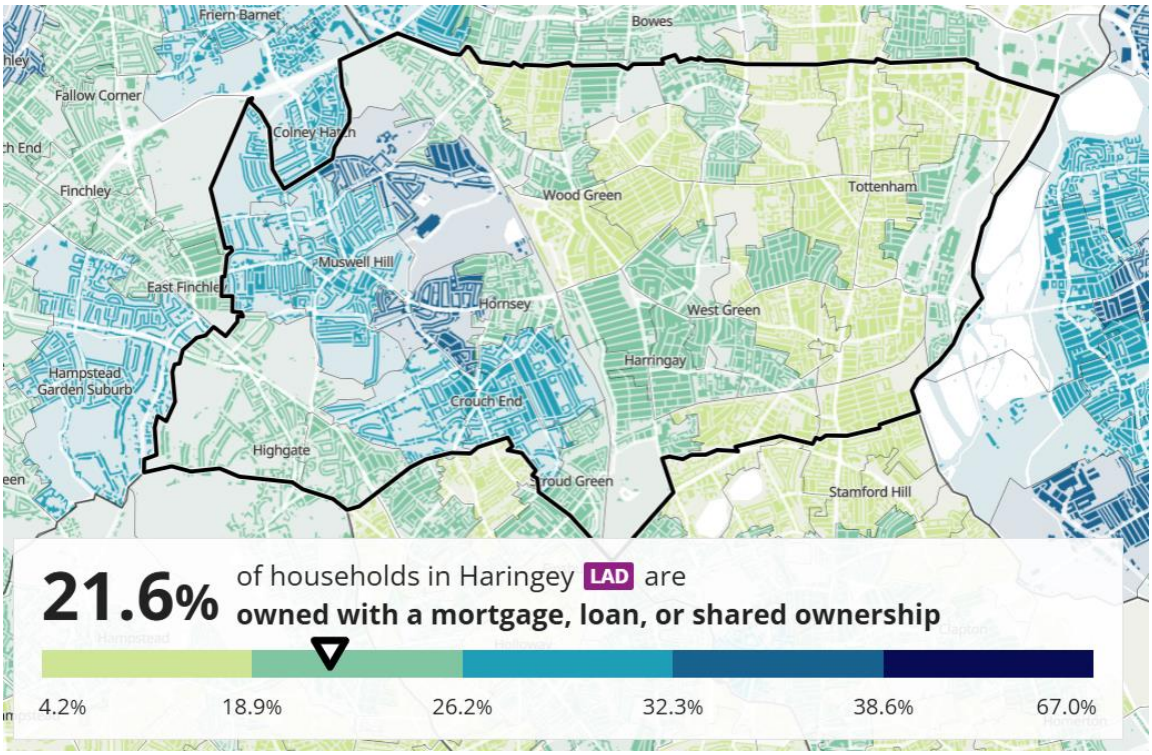


Figure 2 - Density of social renting in Haringey. (Office of National Statistics, 2021 Census Data).



Bernie Grant.[11] Many of this cohort were deeply tied to the New Left of the 1970s reflecting a certain spirit of radicality at the time (Onapa 2021).

Simultaneously, issues of race and racism became more important in Haringey, with the council altering its institutional structures to include more minoritised ethnic representation. The politics of race and employment dominated the 1970s in Haringey, with the council attempting to manage demographic shifts that changed the employment opportunities and structures of the borough (Dillon and Fanning 2011). For instance, Haringey was one of the first local authorities to hire an Ethnic Minorities Officer and to establish an Ethnic Minorities Joint Consultative Committee, with the aim of helping these groups enter formal employment (O'Sullivan 1991). In council housing, ethnicity held similar importance—the council actively worked to increase access to housing and repair services to minoritised ethnic groups by decentralising provision to

Figure 3 - Density of homeownership in Haringey (Office of National Statistics, 2021 Census Data)

Figure 4 - Broadwater Farm Estate (Karakusevic Carson Architects, 2019). Tangmere block in black.Figure 5 - Density of homeownership in Haringey (Office of National Statistics, 2021 Census Data)

neighbourhoods and estates. In 1985, Bernie Grant became Leader of Haringey Council after internal divisions over the rate-capping rebellion.[12] While Grant's political style was more radical than that of his predecessor, George Meehan (Onapa 2021), Grant's leadership was one of continuity. He ensured many of the beneficial policies towards racialised minorities continued with council decentralisation a priority (Dillon and Fanning 2011).

The Broadwater Farm (BF) uprising of 1985 (Chapter 5) upended a façade of measured progress. Racial unrest had long been a factor of life in Haringey though this had mostly escaped the council's attention. I develop this thread in detail below (Section 1.4.1), but it is important to acknowledge that the fascist National Front had built a strong presence in Haringey in the few preceding years.

[11] Grant was the first Black leader of a local authority in the UK and would eventually become one of the first Black MPs since the 19th century. Also elected in this batch is former Leader of the Labour Party, MP Jeremy Corbyn.

[12] A failed attempt by left-wing councils to force Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government to change rules that restricted the spending powers of councils (Wetherell 2025).

Not only did National Front members stand for council elections in 1978, but the party also attempted a large march through Haringey. Although this march was subsequently stopped by an ideologically wide coalition of residents and politicians, it revealed an underlying morass of racialised and far-right politics in the borough (Savage 2022). The Broadwater Farm uprising was one of many in 1980s, with this decade an inflection point in race relations in the United Kingdom (Elliott-Cooper 2021; Wetherell 2025). The story of the BF uprising is told in more detail in Section 1.3.1 below and Chapter 5.

The Grant-led council responded to the BF uprising by funnelling more resources to council estates. However, Grant became MP for Tottenham in 1987, with Toby Harris[13] becoming Leader until 1999. Important questions during Harris's leadership included dealing with overspending by the Grant-led council and the finances associated with taking back Alexandra Palace[14] from the Greater London Council[15] in the 1980s (Dillon and Fanning 2011). Harris stepped down in 2000, with George Meehan returning to leadership. In addition to, and partially because of, national changes in the Labour Pary, Haringey's orientation towards housing and development simultaneously shifted. As Labour tracked to the right during New Labour,[16] the council (and the party) became more interested in neoliberal approaches to governance. Urban regeneration using private capital became a priority for the council from the mid-1990s onwards, as a response to deprivation throughout the borough's eastern wards, such as Tottenham and Wood Green (Dillon and Fanning 2013). As local authority budgets shrank throughout the early 2000s, Haringey Council then experienced two moments of political crises with the murders of Peter Connelly (also known as Baby P) and Victoria Climbié, two children who had repeated contact with the council's social services. The services failed to intervene in cases of extreme child abuse that led to the deaths of both (*BBC News* 2013). These scandals forced Meehan to permanently resign in 2008. Claire Kober, who was the Labour Group's[17] whip,

[13] Now Lord Harris of Haringey.
[14] A large sports and entertainment venue sitting between Wood Green and Muswell Hill.
[15] The name for the London-wide local government unit from 1965 to 1986. Replaced by the Greater London Authority in 2000.
[16] The ministries of Tony Blair (1997-2007) and Gordon Brown (2007-2010)
[17] The collection of Haringey's Labour councillors

was subsequently elected leader. She firmly represented the Blairite, neoliberal wing of the party, leading the council until 2018 (D. Byrne 2018). Chapters 6 and 7 begin at the tail end of Kober's leadership, focusing on shifts within the party from 2015 to 2023, when this research began.

Between 2018 to 2021, Haringey's council was dominated by an avowedly leftist group, who sought to implement a radical agenda in line with then-Leader of the Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message. Detractors and supporters alike called this council the country's first "Corbyn Council" (Chakelian 2019). I expand on this period in Chapter 6. The balance of the council again shifted in 2021, with Peray Ahmet becoming Haringey Council's leader after several councillors were blocked from standing (Weir 2023). Activists I spoke to labelled Ahmet's leadership as a return to the New Labour legacy of the early 2000s. Indeed, this period has seen continued use of financialised regeneration to achieve council housing construction targets (*Tottenham and Wood Green Independent* 2021). This is expanded on in Chapter 7. The rise of Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party, Keir Starmer[18] has strengthened this rightward shift. Critics accuses his supporters of expelling disloyal members from the party, with the goal of creating a compliant membership (Gilbert 2023; Holden 2025; Weir 2023). Starmer's ongoing support for the genocide in Gaza led three councillors to leave the party and form an Independent Socialist Alliance. One councillor similarly resigned (Cracknell 2025). After the Green Party won this seat—its first in Haringey—the four councillors banded together to form a new Green Socialist Alliance. One Independent Socialist has since joined the Greens (*Morning Star* 2024; Steen 2025). As of writing, ongoing cleavages within the Labour Party due to Starmer's failings on the genocide in Gaza and rightward lurch threaten to bring further internal division (E. Webber 2025).

The history of local politics in Haringey, then, is chiefly that of the Labour Party. As this truncated review demonstrates, the party's internal shifts—from the rise and fall of the New Left to the lasting impact of Blairite logics—have significant impact on local life in the borough. This historical summary reveals the

[18] Leader of the Labour Party from 2020 and Prime Minister from 2024

importance of the party and its relationship to the state. I build on this fact across the subsequent empirical chapters. I next discuss the 2011 riots, an event that ultimately sharpened the hard edge of neoliberal political economy in Haringey.

1.3.2 The 2011 Uprising:

Mark Duggan, a Tottenham resident, was murdered in August 2011 by the police after a car chase through the southeastern part of the borough. Police officers were attempting to arrest Duggan for possessing a handgun and for potentially planning a retaliatory attack. Officers allege that Duggan fired on them first, and that they killed Duggan in defence. Duggan allegedly had connections with organised crime in London—but these are not clear (Simon Harding 2014). Indeed, the testimony of the police has been cast in doubt (Forensic Architecture 2021). Campaigners subsequently protested the killing at the Tottenham Police Station, which soon escalated when the police took no further action. Eventually, it ballooned into an extensive crisis of national disorder over the subsequent four days. Thousands of young people across the country took part in rioting across England, with significant looting and property damaging occurring in Tottenham (Lewis et al. 2011). Reactions across the political spectrum tended to emphasise the supposedly consumerist (Bauman 2011), mindless (C. Cooper 2012; Murer 2015), and depolitical (Žižek 2011) outlook of the rioters. The then-Prime Minister, David Cameron (2011),[19] called the uprising "criminality, pure and simple." Several government-commissioned reports reflected these discourses, finding that underlying social problems did matter but ultimately the uprising was the fault of consumerism and greed—rather than social ills (Levett 2012; RCVP 2012). I discuss one report, *It Took Another Riot*, the product of a taskforce set up by the then-Mayor of London, Boris Johnson,[20] in detail in Section 1.3.2. These reactions tapped into underlying assumptions about the relationship between consumerism, worklessness, the 'undeserving poor' (Katz [1989] 2013; Tyler 2013), and long-standing punitive social policy. This discourse—which was already heavily racialised—constituted "broad brush strokes" that "were applied

[19] Conservative Prime Minister from 2010 to 2016.
[20] Mayor of London from 2008 to 2016; Conservative Prime Minister from 2019 to 2022.

to portray all of Tottenham's young people with the same negative representations, reducing them to a single social category" of criminal (Elster 2020, 1389). Discourses about consumerism and criminality work to obfuscate the true meaning of the 2011 uprising, framing it as driven by greed rather than true, politically related grievances. As I develop below and in Chapter 6, such framing supported plans to gentrify and reshape Tottenham in the post-riot era.

The discourses of criminality and subsequent harsh legal response underestimated the political nature of the riot. That is because few, if any, commentators and politicians actually spoke to someone involved in the uprisings; the perspectives of those involved were left out. Since 2011, there have been various attempts at discovering underlying causes of the uprisings through direct engagement with riot participants (Lewis et al. 2011; Newburn et al. 2015; Treadwell et al. 2013). These have generally found widespread anger among participants about racist overpolicing—but also about austerity, worklessness, and the end of the education maintenance grant. These reasons are deeply political and reflect the violent nature of austerity. Although such post hoc accounts have sometimes been dismissed on epistemological grounds, they offer important windows into understanding *why* a riot took place, as well as into the mindset of those involved. Stott et al. (2017), for instance, challenge further discourses that claim that the riot in Tottenham was politically motivated (i.e., in response to Duggan's killing) but that later uprisings were simply driven by consumerism. Thus, the uprisings were rooted in legitimate grievances about the state of the country, rather than pure consumerism.

Policy responses were stringent. 3,102 individuals were arrested in the subsequent three months, with two-thirds arrested in the first week after the revolt. A total of 88 percent of arrestees were male; 29 percent are of White European appearance while 56 percent were of Black ethnic appearance. The average age was 23. Although dominant discourses depicted participants as the 'usual suspects,' 29 percent of arrestees were first time offenders (Stanko and Dawson 2013). I emphasise these demographics to draw attention to a history of overpolicing both across the country and in Tottenham specifically. Keir Starmer, who was Director of Public Prosecutions at the time, pushed for a tough

combination of a weaker threshold to pursue prosecutions and longer sentences. Some of these sentences bordered on extremely disproportionate, with one man imprisoned for six months for stealing a few bottles of water (Newkey-Burden 2024).

In addition to punishment meted out through the justice system, the uprising spawned a set of policies designed to transform sites of the uprising. As Enright (2017) claims, the 2011 uprising was deeply related to urban projects in the run up to the 2012 Olympics held in Stratford, London (see also Humphry 2020; Watt 2021b). Though the siting and development of Olympic infrastructure was not a direct reply to the 2011 uprising (as it was already decided before 2011), the urban restructuring associated with it spawned new processes of securitisation and segregation throughout London (Boykoff and Fussey 2014). The response for Tottenham was large-scale urban regeneration. As described in Section 1.4.2., this would culminate in the Haringey Development Vehicle, one of the main cases of this thesis.

1.4 Case Studies:

Here, I provide an overview of thesis's case studies: the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, the Haringey Development Vehicle, and High Road West. The latter two are regeneration schemes while the first is a now defunct pressure group founded on the eponymous estate. This portion not only provides context and background for each, but also conceptually ties the three case studies together in the final subsection.

1.4.1 Broadwater Farm Estate and Youth Association:

My first case study is the Broadwater Farm (BF) Estate, which was opened in 1973 after five years of construction. Built by Haringey Council, BF was part of an ongoing slum clearance programs and high targets for new council homes (up to 1,000 a year) that characterised the 1960s (Yelling 2000). Home to over 1,000 households and 3,000 people, BF's brutalist architecture has been described as a "depressing," bleak "concrete barracks" (Williams 1994, 10). As seen in Figure 4, there are a few high-rises, some lower-rise blocks, and a ziggurat shaped building

Figure 6 - Broadwater Farm Estate (Karakusevic Carson Architects, 2019). Tangmere block in black.

called Tangmere (in black square). The estate was built on poorly drained, former allotments next to an area of brick, terraced homes that typify outer London (though the estate did include some terraced homes). As such, BF was built on stilts with raised decks for access to dwellings. The ground floors were reserved for parking. Initially, blocks were connected to each other with walkways, though these will be later removed after the 1985 uprising as detailed in Chapter 5. The estate's stark design (Figure 5) discursively and metaphorically positioned it as Other from its surroundings. Severs (2010) writes, not only was the estate behind a *cordon sanitaire* of turf, but also its closed nature distanced it from the surrounding homes. The estate saw significant problems very soon after it opened: initial construction was poor, and leaks and pests were common. Common too was a fear of crime, considering the ground floors were often poorly lit. The estate was also cut off from the wider community, with no shops and minimal, infrequent bus services (Gifford 1986). Due its quickly established reputation as an undesirable place to live, residents offered a place to live on BF began turning it down, with

more than half declining to move to the estate in 1976 (Severs 2010). The Council subsequently moved many formerly homeless and unwaged families to BWF (up to 75 percent of new lettings in 1975) through the 1970s, most of whom were from minoritised ethnicities and/or were recent migrants to the UK. White residents became increasingly hostile to minoritised ethnic inhabitants as more were 'warehoused' there (Dillon and Fanning 2011, 43). The estate subsequently became racialised and stigmatised, even though longstanding white tenants controlled the Tenants' Association (Levidow 1987; Slater 2018b; Wacquant et al. 2014). Severs, describing a report on the estate's conditions and population from 1973, states that it combines

> matters of morality (unmarried mothers), crime (gangs, assaults, etc.), dangers to the 'respectable' (the elderly), and the evil influence on the young, and associating all of these with a building/spatial form (high rise). It adds to this the novelty of racism… (Severs 2010, 479).

As this excerpt reveals, social ills are both moralised and implied to be the fault of the built environment (C. Johnston and Mooney 2007). It is in this milieu of institutional neglect, racism, stigmatisation that the 1985 uprising erupted. Residents contested the oppressive milieu, chiefly through the Broadwater Farm Youth Association (BFYA), which was a multiethnic group led by Mrs Dolly Kiffin. I discuss their activities in depth in Chapter 5.

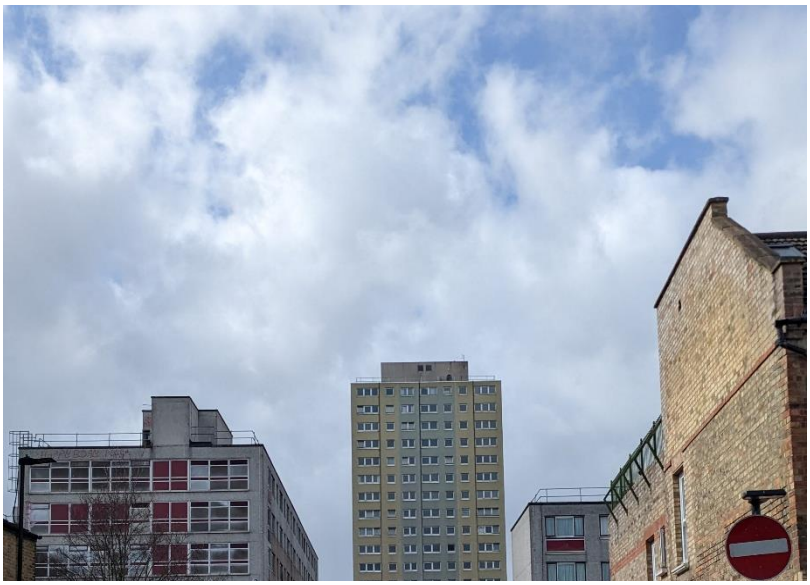


Figure 9 - Broadwater Farm Estate, taken by author. The estate is in the background while a typical, brick terraced home is in foreground on right.

The BF uprising was sparked by the police-involved death of Mrs Cynthia Jarrett, a Black Haringey resident. Protests against racist policing spiralled out of control, with Broadwater Farm estate becoming the epicentre of rioting in Haringey. Violence continued for several days and one police officer, PC Keith Blakelock, was killed. The police subsequently arrested a group of innocent young men, further perpetuating a heavy police presence in Tottenham. These men, two of whom are Black and one white, were called the Tottenham Three; they were wrongly convicted in 1987 (Moore 2015). Their sentences were later overturned on appeal in 1991. Another man was charged with PC Blakelock's death but again he was cleared of wrongdoing (*BBC News* 2015). 1985's uprising in Broadwater Farm

continues to circulate in discourses of race, policing, and housing (Perera 2019a; Elliott-Cooper 2018).

The Broadwater Farm estate is presently in a state of transition. In 2019, Haringey Borough Council commissioned a suite of firms to begin a process of regenerating the area. Tangmere block (the ziggurat) has already been demolished, and other buildings will be coming down in the next few years. Construction is planned to continue until 2031 ('Let's Talk about Broadwater Farm Estate', n.d.). The longer term impacts of this regeneration scheme are still yet to be seen but a total of 300 to 350 new homes are slated for the estate (Karakusevic Carson Architects 2019). The estate has thus undergone significant and rapid change since its construction five decades ago. It remains one of Haringey's largest and most recognisable estates. Thus, the Association's activities offer an illustration through which I can explore the resistance of marginalised groups of citizens under Thatcher's authoritarian governance.

1.4.2 Haringey Development Vehicle:

As considered in Section 1.3.2, the 2011 uprising was a turning point for the borough and the country at large. Haringey Borough Council's response was the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV), my second case study. Its initial proponents—the council and then-Mayor of London Boris Johnson's independent panel on Tottenham, which was meant to advise on policy options after the riot (Levett 2012)—argued that the Vehicle was necessary to revitalise an underinvested neighbourhood through regeneration. Yet, Horton and Penny (2024) contend that, in fact, the HDV was a tool of urban revanchism (N. Smith 2005), intended to punish the neighbourhood for its acts of resistance against overpolicing, austerity, and the British state. As such, this section tells the Vehicle's structure and political history as well as recounts the links between revanchism and the 2011 uprising.

The Haringey Development Vehicle was a proposed £2 billion public-private partnership between Haringey Council and a developer (eventually LendLease[21]). It was designed as a special purpose vehicle, a legal entity created to fulfil a specific and temporary objective. Vehicles are increasingly becoming tools that local councils use to develop and regenerate their housing and commercial properties (J. Beswick and Penny 2018; Christophers 2019b). Thus, the Council intended to transfer these publicly held lands to the Vehicle, initially starting with its offices, commercial portfolio, and some housing estates like Northumberland Park. These initial sites were chosen for their potential to deliver increased rent. Wood Green, in the west of Haringey, was the Council's first choice for regeneration based on its expected connectivity to central London after Crossrail 2's completion[22] and extensive public holdings that are adjacent to other commercially profitable sites like the Wood Green shopping centre (Turnberry Real Estate et al. 2015, 20). Over time, this collection would grow, as the Vehicle continued to redevelop Haringey, eventually including Northumberland Park. As seen in Figure 6, the HDV's private partner would contribute its resources and expertise in development to the scheme. Both partners would equally share profit and control (Turnberry Real Estate et al. 2015). Although HDV supporters contended this arrangement would allow the Council to have an effective veto, campaigners saw it differently. They maintained that this equal split in decision-making meant the Council had the most to lose:

> if the council and Lendlease could not agree on a substantive issue – for example, if Lendlease pushed to lower the amount of social or affordable housing being offered – a so-called deadlock event would occur, and project documents stated that the HDV would be wound up. (Horton and Penny 2024, 68)

[21] LendLease is an Australian multinational real estate and construction company that has undertaken large regeneration projects across the world. In London, LendLease is redeveloping Elephant and Castle, one of the longest and most destructive schemes in the city (Flynn 2016).
[22] A planned—but now indefinitely suspended—high-capacity rail line that would have connected this part of Haringey directly with central London (Crossrail 2, n.d.).

Winding up the scheme would be economically and politically damaging, not to mention incur significant costs to the council. From the start, then, the structure was designed to take advantage of London's speculative housing market, no matter the cost (Chu and He 2022). Council documents state that "the Council owns a substantial and diverse property portfolio," but much of it "suffer[s] from: Being in areas of deprivation; Low land values; [and] Underperformance" (Turnberry Real Estate et al. 2015, 4). As Horton and Penny (2024) posit, the HDV was intended to build thousands of new homes and commercial properties, which would bring in higher tax receipts and increase property values. New businesses would also create new jobs—forming a virtuous (but vicious for current residents; Watt 2021b) cycle of growth. As depicted by Horton and Penny (2024), the scheme was devised by the then-Leader of the Council, Claire Kober, and property consultants—with marginal input from the rest of the party. There was even less engagement with residents: even the Council's own consultants agreed. Even against a widespread campaign against the scheme—and various organs within and without the Labour Party calling for a halt—Kober and her allies progressed with the Vehicle (Chakrabortty 2017). In all, the Vehicle was a wholesale capitulation of democratic decision-making and a ceding of publicly own assets to the hands of capital (D. Byrne 2018).

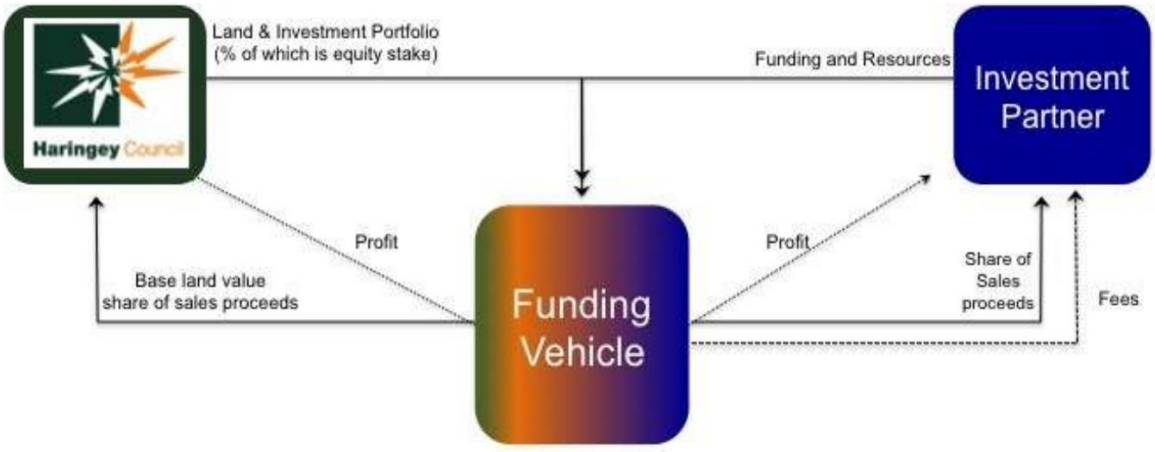


Figure 12 - Haringey Development Vehicle's proposed structure (Turnberry Real Estate et al. 2015, 46

The Vehicle did not spring from nowhere. It was the culmination of those aforementioned discourses that framed Tottenham—and eastern Haringey by

extension—as areas of disrepute that needed fundamental reshaping. In effect, the Vehicle was a revanchist scheme to remove the stain of the riot (Perera 2019a, 2019b). The London Mayor's report, *It Took Another Riot*, tapped into those discourses across ten policy recommendations. These ranged from "measures to tackle population churn and overcrowding" (the result of low rent for working class residents) to "Form an independent governance structure" (intended to coordinate various regeneration schemes that were deemed too difficult for the council to handle) (Levett 2012, 12–13). In terms of council housing, the report repeated rhetoric that tied certain forms of built environments associated with public housing to crime and other social ills—and explicitly argued for its demolition. Indeed, one recommendation was that "funding should not be tied to the creation of additional social housing," revealing the report's intent to justify large-scale development of new private homes in Tottenham (Levett 2012, 38). The proposed independent governance structure, while perhaps intended to bring coordination and improvements to Tottenham, lacks clear democratic accountability; for example, nothing is said about how Haringey Council or third sector organisations can 'check' the activities of this new structure (Levett 2012). This is why scholars have argued that the Haringey Development Vehicle was not designed to solve the underlying problems that caused the 2011 uprising. Rather, it was meant to move "problem people" (C. Johnston and Mooney 2007) somewhere else (Horton and Penny 2024; Perera 2019a).

The Vehicle was stopped by a coalition of community organisers, members of the leftwing, Corbyn-aligned Labour pressure group Momentum, and activists and councillors of all stripes, under the banner of StopHDV (Chakrabortty 2018; Dignan 2021). The nature and inclusivity of this campaign is contested; its success is not. Existing literature on the campaign frames it as community-led resistance, ultimately existing outside of—but interacting with and through—contemporary infighting in the Labour Party (D. Byrne 2018; Horton and Penny 2024). As I assert in Chapter 6, such frames underplay the relationship between the party and the state. I thus use the HDV case to argue for retheorising the scalar relationships between the local state, local political parties, and neoliberalism.

1.4.3 High Road West:

Despite the cancellation of the Vehicle, regeneration continues in Haringey. My third case study is High Road West (HRW), a smaller but ongoing redevelopment scheme in Tottenham. Introduced in 2012, HRW would take 15 years to complete, cost around £1 billion, and develop 2,600 homes (Allin 2022; Bloomfield 2017). The scheme will demolish the 297-home Love Lane estate, which is mostly social housing, displacing around 1,000 people—though Haringey Council has committed to providing 40 percent social housing with at least 500 new council dwellings—a overall net gain in social homes (Haringey Borough Council 2023). After it became known that that estate would be demolished, residents began leaving Love Lane. As the entire regeneration process would take over a decade—and instead of leaving many homes empty—Haringey Council moved residents to Love Lane to fulfil its temporary accommodation needs.[23] By 2021, temporary residents comprised 75 percent of the estate's population (Hill 2021). As seen in Figure 7, the scheme is concentrated in a compact collection of parcels near Tottenham Hotspur Football Club's (THFC) new stadium, which was announced in 2010 and completed in 2019 (Allin 2023a). In the council's (2013b) eyes, this scheme is intended to take advantage of regeneration attached to the THFC stadium rebuild (Panton and Walters 2018). Due to its placement between the White Hart Lane rail station and the stadium, the scheme will include a large 'walkway' from one to the other, lined with shops. In addition to demolishing the Love Lane estate and associated dwellings, HRW will likewise redevelop several shops on the main road and the Peacock Industrial estate, a collection of light industrial businesses. Another key moment was the 2021 balloting process. From 2018, most regeneration schemes in London[24] require a ballot of impacted

[23] Per the Housing Act 1996, Councils are required to provide assistance to most individuals registered as homeless.

[24] All councils that use Greater London Authority funding for a regeneration scheme that requires the demolition of social homes and the subsequent construction of 150 or more homes of any tenure (Greater London Authority, n.d.).

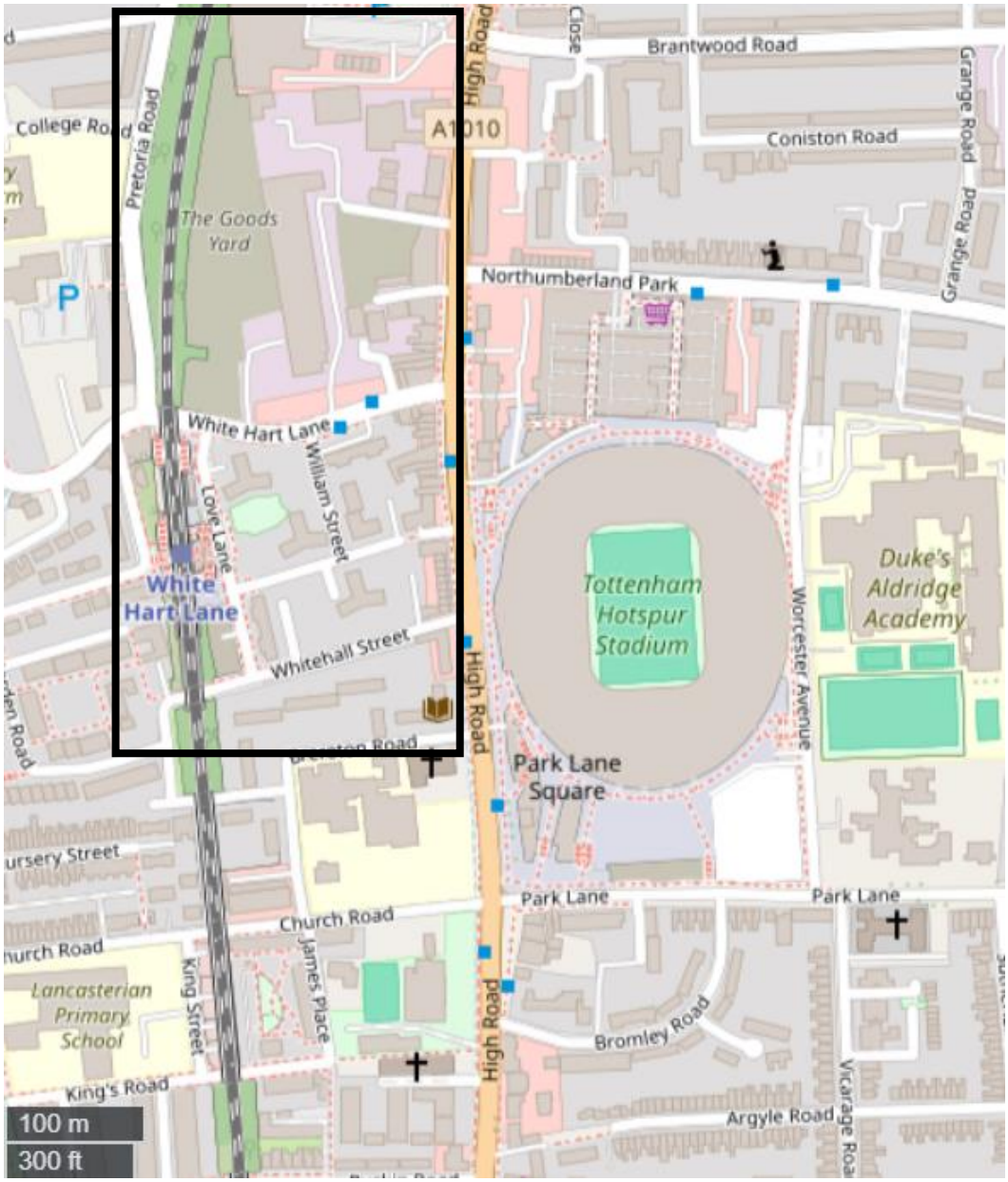


Figure 15 - Approximate High Road West regeneration area in black. Made by author using Open Streets Map

residents. Balloting on Love Lane began in 2021 but quickly became a fraught process. Activists claimed that the Council had pressured residents to vote yes and had cheated by having staff handle ballot papers. The Council, conversely, alleged that campaigners were the ones pressuring residents (Hill 2021). Damian Tissier (2021), the Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Advisor[25] for Love Lane Estate, stated that Haringey Council had not done enough consultation with residents

[25] An impartial advisor who assists tenants experiencing regeneration

before the ballot occurred, heightening an already controversial process. The outcome was in support of the scheme with 56 percent voting to demolish the estate, with a 70 percent turnout (Hill 2021). The properties to be demolished are currently under a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO),[26] which was granted in 2024 (Toms 2024). HRW's first phase has already started, with construction of 61 new council homes starting in 2024 (Marsh 2023).

Unlike the HDV, High Road West is a far more standard regeneration scheme. There is no separate special purpose vehicle for HRW, and decision-making is not as imbalanced as in the HDV (Haringey Borough Council 2023). While Haringey Council considered combining the two regeneration schemes, the decision was taken to separate them based on timelines and funding issues (Turnberry Real Estate et al. 2015). Moreover, this scheme had significantly more consultation with residents than did the HDV. By my count, impacted residents have had at least five different consultations since 2013. Not all residents were consulted each time. In spring 2017, for illustration, the Council only consulted secure council tenants regarding future housing, pursuant to its legal obligation as a landlord (Haringey Borough Council 2024b). Chapter 7 considers the 2013 and 2014 consultations in detail, which also engaged with traders on the Peacock Industrial Estate.

Yet these differences do not make the scheme any less contested. Housing activists and impacted traders have been resisting HRW across several domains. One group, called Temporary Accommodation Group Love Lane (TAG) had long demanded full, permanent tenancies from the council for the estate's temporary residents. Though Council documents indicate that such tenancies would be guaranteed, TAG campaigned against the demolition on the basis of not having a legally binding guarantee (Hill 2021). Other campaigners, concerned about the depletion of council stock and regeneration broadly, opposed the scheme. They claimed that Haringey Council had intentionally let the estate's condition deteriorate and the scheme was designed to socially cleanse Tottenham—repeating rhetoric about the HDV (Allin 2023b). Local traders also opposed High

[26] When a council can forcibly purchase a property at fair market value to redevelop the property. There is a legal process through which the order can be contested and granted.

Road West, arguing that it would dispossess them of their businesses (many of which they own outright) and be incredibly disruptive (Toms 2024). Unlike with the Vehicle, however, this resistance is far quieter: there is no community-wide opposition to High Road West, and the scheme is overwhelmingly supported by the Council's Labour Group. As such, High Road West is ongoing. Its longer-term impacts are still yet to be seen—but its value as a case study is both in its comparison with the Haringey Development Vehicle and as a regeneration scheme that is openly contested.

1.4.4 Tying the Case Studies Together:

On first glance, the HDV and HRW case studies are quite different from my investigation into the Broadwater Farm Youth Association. The former two consider regeneration schemes, their development and sustainment through the Labour Party, and organised resistance against them. BFYA, however, concentrates on a group of activists who fought Haringey Council for more resources and attention. This section consequently elucidates some of the important overlaps between the three illustrations.

First, all three examples consider activism against and during illiberalism or authoritarian governance (Bruff 2014). As is suggested throughout the thesis, major policy changes were implemented with little democratic accountability and significant pressure (if not coercion) from the council. This stands in sharp contrast to the atmosphere of solidarity I experienced in the opening vignette at the beginning of Chapter 1. Contemporary urban development in London often progresses with little in the way of material engagement with residents, even though councils are legally required to consult communities (Ball 2004; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019; Watt 2021b). This does not imply outright authoritarianism—rather, it reflects a set of governance practices that foreclose proper democratic engagement, with the aim of ensuring regeneration succeeds. Estate balloting, for instance, hardly rejects a regeneration scheme (with the first 'no' vote only happening two years after balloting began; Brady 2020), even though regeneration often appears to be incredibly unpopular and destructive (Watt 2021b). Alongside others (e.g., Lees and Hubbard 2022; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019), my scholarship

indicates that these ballot processes are imbalanced, with councils retaining significant advantages over advocates. For example, councils often misrepresent their findings on reports or apply heavy pressure on residents to convince them to vote for a demolition. Consultation processes similarly continue for years, fatiguing residents who often already contend with various interlocking forms of oppression (Davidson et al. 2013). Such dynamics work to wear down resistance and silence opposition to regeneration. The Broadwater Farm Youth Association experienced similarly illiberal governance—but of the kind that was far more violent. Thatcherism was associated with racialised policing that stifled Black radical activism (S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019; Perera 2019a) with the goal of managing political economic shifts such that capital accumulation could continue even during a time of militant labour resistance (Gamble 1989). Authoritarian neoliberalism threads through each case, albeit with varying intensities. Section 3.3. discusses this theory in more detail.

Resistance, too, surfaces across the empirical cases. BFYA is a prominent example of struggle but one that *accommodates* the state rather than fights it at every turn. Mirroring, but ultimately different from other forms of everyday resistance, the Association's accommodative resistance (Jakimów 2017) is explored more in-depth in Chapter 5. Their activism is also considered through the lens of citizenship and political subjectivity (Isin 2008), highlighting how accommodation does not rid their work of radicality; rather, it emphasises its radical nature. The HDV case is another instance of resistance but this time it involves a state *takeover* as opposed to accommodation. The state—here, Haringey Council—is turned back on itself and used to execute revolutionary change. Campaigners fashioned this 'state revolutionary' (Paccoud 2019) through typical forms of opposition like marches as well as working through the structures of the Labour Party. Chapter 6 outlines this resistance in more detail. For High Road West, resistance is a far less visible thread. Though housing activists have waged a campaign against the scheme, they are unable to stop it. As such, Chapter 7 considers how and why this opposition has failed whilst the opposition to the HDV succeeded.

Finally, a core overlap is the state. The state is everywhere in the three cases: a target, a collaborator, a regulator, and a constrainer. Specifically, the *local* state is one of my main objects of inquiry. The Broadwater Farm Youth Association had an ambivalent relationship with Haringey Council, frequently collaborating with and working against it. The local state shaped both regeneration schemes: it planned, justified, supports, and funds them. As I explain in Chapter 3, the state should not be treated as a discrete entity; rather, it is embedded in wider set of social relations that mean it is unstable (Jessop 2010, 2016). My analysis of HRW and HDV thus leans into consider the intersections between the local state and its main political party (here, Labour).

The main threads of the state, activism, and illiberalism tie together the three case studies—beyond the simple fact of geography. The research analyses how these threads fit together across the examples, stressing how they mutually reinforce each other.

† † †

To sum up, this research offers a nuanced assessment of the scalar intersections between the Labour Party and the local state in Haringey, London. By doing so, it adds to wider discussions on the relational state and contemporary forms of capitalist accumulation. The research provides important insights for scholarship, policy initiatives, and political debates aimed at more equitable urban transformation in the UK. In the next chapter, I turn to the literature review and framework used in this work.

Chapter 2: A Brief History of Council Housing

Given the importance of council housing (and, later, its regeneration) to this investigation, it is important to provide a brief history and background of council housing policy from 1979 to the present day. In this section, I provide a review of council housing's progression from popular, supported tenancy to residualised safety net (Forrest and Murie 1983). This evaluation considers important threads in council housing policy like right-to-buy, stigmatisation, regeneration, and other forms of privatisation. It also reflects on the importance of racial and ethnic status to council housing.

The country's first council or public homes were built on the Boundary Estate in Bethnal Green, London in 1900. Although the model of homes owned by councils and let to tenants had been practiced before, the Boundary Estate marked the start of a permanent fixture of British life (Boughton 2019; Ravetz 2003). The aftermath of the First World War provided an impetus for councils to start building 'Homes for Heroes'—the veterans of the war—given the perceived poor physical and health conditions of recruits from cities. From 1911 to 1938, the national proportion of council stock increased to about 10 per cent. This share increased after the Second World War during the administration of Clement Attlee[27] with councils constructing between 125,000 and 147,000 new homes per year from 1945 to 1951—for a total of around a million new dwellings, 85 per cent of which were council-owned (Boughton 2019; Ravetz 2003). Simultaneously, the government engaged in significant slum clearances, demolishing rundown Victorian and Georgian terraced homes throughout the country. Tenants of these dwellings were relocated to high rise blocks in city centres or suburban estates located on the outskirts. In some circumstances, tenants were relocated to new towns built in the image of American suburbs. Although such new dwellings were often larger, better equipped, more spaced out, and more modern, their location in suburbia often made them ill replacements for the high-density homes they replaced (Wetherell 2025; Yelling 2000). Yet, building continued apace.

[27] Labour Prime Minister from 1945 to 1951.

By 1970, nearly one-in-three Britons lived in a council home where they paid rent to their local council and had security in their tenure (Jones and Murie 2008). Noteworthy is the broad political support for council housing at this time, making it part of what some scholars call the post-war consensus or settlement between Labour and the Conservatives (Dutton 1997). While the existence and influence of this settlement is up for debate (Kerr 2005), council homes were a significant area of overlap: the portion of public housing in fact increased during the ministries of Winston Churchill[28] and successors, rising from 18 to 27 percent between 1950 and 1960 (A. Davies 2013). For example, 1954 remains a highpoint in council home construction with 220,000 new dwellings built that year (Malpass 2004, 216). It is tempting to view such high numbers as a victory for a strong and popular welfare state, as is often implied by critical housing scholars (e.g., Hodkinson and Robbins 2013). While these years do reflect a strong commitment to building public homes, Malpass (2003, 2004; see also A. Davies 2013) conversely argues that the policy's underlying logic was shaped far more by political and economic forces than ideological concerns. The government's approach did not attempt to challenge commodified, market logics but rather attempted to fill urgent material needs brought on by the Second World War, which had demolished hundreds of thousands of homes and displaced millions. The construction market was similarly in shambles and so there was little private capacity to respond to a high demand for new homes. Indeed, both Labour and Conservative governments were rhetorically open to homeownership from the 1950s (A. Davies 2013) and tried to grow the private market beginning in the 1960s (Malpass 2004). As such, when the Conservatives returned to power in 1951, the government began eliminating rent controls and siphoning resources away from construction of publicly owned dwellings. Yet, as Malpass (2004) points out, maintaining existing and constructing new public homes remained an important element of the welfare state into the 1970s—at least for the white working class. As I develop below in Section 2.1, the benefits primarily accrued to white Britons, leaving out large swaths of the population.

[28] Conservative Prime Minister from 1941 to 1945 and 1951 to 1955.

Having started the 1950s as a generally *decommodifying* force, then, the British state reversed course and has since become a chief facilitator in the *recommodification* of housing after Margaret Thatcher[29] became Prime Minister in 1979 (Gamble 1989; Ronald 2008). Thatcher's government aggressively pursued privatisation and the formation of a "property owning democracy" through the Right-to-Buy (RTB) scheme: the one-off sale of council homes to their tenants at a discounted rate, with little in the way of replacement of sold homes (Gamble 1989, 29). Although frequently associated with Thatcher, the idea did not begin with her leadership. As early as 1946, senior Conservative leaders espoused a belief in a 'property owning democracy,' linking it back to the party's right-wing ideological heritage. Yet political and economic considerations of the post-war era (a weak housing construction market and the perceived popularity of council homes, among others), meant that converting public homes to private ownership was not feasible. After the British economy recovered into the 1960s, it became easier for Conservatives to imagine—and argue for—a right to buy for council tenants. It was the local scale that initially experimented with selling council homes to tenants. Conservative-led Birmingham City Council, as an illustration, sold around 2,500 homes to tenants in 1967. Once the sales were successful, the right-to-buy became a Conservative policy. Labour was initially interested in private ownership in the 1950s as aforementioned, but this reversed in the late 1960s due to worries about reduced public housing stock. As such, the concept of the 'property owning democracy,' was always in the background of housing policy from 1945 to 1979 (A. Davies 2013). Thatcher popularised the policy and it became law in 1980, thereby fundamentally changing the state of British housing.

RTB was incredibly successful in achieving the goal of expanding property ownership. Between 1980 and 2025, over 2 million homes have been sold via RTB (MHCLG 2025). The rate of homeownership reached above 65 per cent in the late 2000s, though the portion has fallen slightly in the last two decades (Jones and Murie 2008). Within two decades of the policy's start, over 30 per cent of tenants had exercised their right to buy their property at a discount of up to 50 per cent of

[29] Conservative Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990.

the market value (A. Davies 2013). Right-to-buy is therefore one of the largest and most effective privatisation schemes in the United Kingdom (Wetherell 2020). Successive governments have continued with RTB, although with significant modifications. New Labour decreased the maximum discount available for RTB in the 2000s, causing sales to fall nearly 90 percent. Conversely, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition elected in 2010[30] increased the discount, precipitating a fivefold spike in sales (Stephens and Stephenson 2016). Tenants who were transferred into housing associations retained their right to buy (Jones and Murie 2008), but new housing association tenants were not immediately granted this right. The Cameron-led government[31] promised to extend RTB to such tenants but ultimately agreed to a voluntary process. Now, housing association tenants have a 'right to acquire,' which allows them to purchase their home (Stephens and Stephenson 2016). The right-to-buy policy has thus historically been a cross-party and rarely contested endeavour (Hodkinson and Robbins 2013; Jones and Murie 2008). Indeed, despite repeated calls to end the policy altogether, the current Labour government during the period of research has been content to tinker on its edges rather than commit to abolishing the practice (Seddon 2025). Beyond the transfer of public property directly to private hands, right-to-buy has also fed into the private renting sector: nearly 40 percent of homes bought under the policy have ended up as private rentals (Diner and Wright 2024). RTB has therefore solidified homeownership as desired tenure among the British population (McKee et al. 2020), thus ensuring its democracy relies on property ownership (Ronald 2008).

Right-to-Buy was not the only policy supporting a privatisation agenda. Large-scale voluntary transfers (LSVTs) are a process by which a council can legally transfer ownership of an estate to separate entity (typically a charity). These charities, called Housing Associations (HAs), are non-profit entities and so are not subject to the same rules that restrict a council's ability to borrow funds to pay for upkeep of dwellings (Clare et al. 2022). Like with RTB, stock-transfers

[30] Led by David Cameron (Conservative; Prime Minister) and Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrat; Deputy Prime Minister), which lasted from 2010 to 2015.
[31] Lasting from 2015-2016.

began as a local experiment in rural areas that then became a national approach in the late 1980s. Labour-run councils were initially wary of the transfers due to fears of privatisation—but were enticed with funds flowing from central government (Smyth 2013). Positioned as a way of reducing government expenditure without compromising tenants' quality of life, LSVTs were soon taken up by New Labour as pathway to 'modernising' and 'reforming' social housing (Daly et al. 2005; Malpass and Mullins 2002). By 2008, more than 1.3 million homes had been transferred to HAs, becoming a greater share of the overall social housing stock in the UK than council housing (Pawson and Smith 2009). By transferring stock out of the hands of the local council, LSVTs are a form of demunicipalisation that, in effect, removes democratic accountability and oversight. As Smyth (2013) finds, both the transfer process itself and the new form of governance are non-democratic and lean towards managerial governance by elites and experts. Like regeneration, LSVTs are contested. Separately, as HAs are not bound by public spending rules, they play a fundamental role in financial and speculative processes in contemporary British housing provision (Clare et al. 2022). In this way, HAs are yet another tool in a privatisation agenda that continues to decrease the prominence of council housing in the UK. Across these different policies, then, council housing has become residualised (Forrest and Murie 1983): it is so marginal that very few Britons acquire a council home. Indeed, as of 2021, only about 17 percent of the population in England and Wales rent from a council or a housing association (Office for National Statistics 2023).

Beginning in the 1970s, council housing began to be the target of a territorial stigmatisation that denigrated the council estate as spaces of disrepute, crime, and social ills that must be destroyed (C. Johnston and Mooney 2007; Slater 2018b). Territorial stigma refers to the marriage of symbolic power (from Bourdieu) and stigma (from Goffman), turning *place* into a "distinctive anchor of social discredit" (Wacquant et al. 2014, 1272). That is, the mere association between an individual and their address can bring about a stigmatisation like that of physical disability or racism. Disreputable places are not a new phenomenon, but Wacquant et al. (2014) argue that their contemporary form is different in a few ways. They have been given new terms that circulate in national discourse as

places of disrepute (e.g. the 'sink estate' in the UK; Slater 2018b). Stigmatised areas are similarly positioned as places of social disorganisation and are deeply racialised. Lastly, they elicit retribution from the state, a revanchist approach that punishes and polices an estate's residents simply because they live there (Atkinson 2006; N. Smith 2005). Council tenants specifically have been impacted by territorial stigmatisation, recast as an underclass who are locked out of mainstream society through the label of the 'chav' (Hayward and Yar 2006). The 'chav' is primarily rooted in portrayals of white, working-class residents of council housing (Adams and Raisborough 2011; Strong 2014; Tyler 2008). Bennett (2013, 160; see also K. Hamilton 2012) reveals how the public constructs the label of 'chav' through association with certain consumption habits, which reinforces the neoliberal suggestion that poverty "is the fault of those who are simply 'choice incompetent.'" The 'chav' is also portrayed as an apolitical subject, further masking the intensely political processes that denigrate the category (Strong 2014). Lastly, the 'chav' is understood as the 'undeserving poor' (Katz [1989] 2013; Tyler 2013), whose consumption habits and (lack of) morals render them 'not worth' receiving state support. This underclass is tied to social housing, sometimes explicitly (Flint 2003; C. Johnston and Mooney 2007; Watt 2008) and sometimes implicitly through the 'chav' label. The term, while likely of Romani origin, has sometimes jokingly defined as "Council Housed and Violent," heightening the undeserving-ness of this class (Tyler 2013, 162). Representations of social housing are replete with references to 'chavs' (Bennett 2013; McKenzie 2013; Nayak and Kehily 2014; Tyler 2008; Strong 2014). Beyond simply being where 'chavs' live, social housing has been conceptualised as "actively *antisocial* space" that both produces and represents this underclass (Tyler 2013, 160). Specifically, neoliberal changes in the political economy of council housing have meant that it has, in addition to being racialised (Section 2.1), become deeply associated with a value-less, problem, and undeserving class (Katz [1989] 2013; McKenzie 2013; Tyler 2013). Crucially, social housing is expressed as antisocial space in popular media, reinforcing associations with 'chavs' (Slater 2018b; C. Johnston and Mooney 2007). Studies on the representations of council estates in news media is overwhelmingly negative, with emphasis on crime, worklessness, benefits-cheating, racial

tensions, and poor conditions (Haynes et al. 2013; Kearns et al. 2013; B. Thomson 2018; Watt 2008). One study of portrayals of council estates in theatre productions found that

> mainstream theatrical productions set on council estates are consistently presented in a brutal style which suggests a gritty urban 'realism', where the estate serves as the catalyst for dramatic tension. In such representations residents are often portrayed as passive actors in a fatalistic narrative. (K. Beswick 2011, 426)

Depictions in television are no better, with classic 'poverty porn' shows reinforcing similar discourses of council homes (K. Beswick 2019; Gilligan 2013). Investigations into popular shows like *Benefits Street* emphasise how such shows denigrate working class people and spaces—with clear links to stigmatisation of such groups and places (Denedo and Ejiogu 2022; Strong 2014; Wacquant et al. 2014). Social housing and the 'underclass' are therefore excluded in equal measure (C. Johnston and Mooney 2007; Katz [1989] 2013; Watt 2008), generating a stigma that has come to define social housing estates and their tenants (Slater 2018b). This stigma, which is attached to both estates and their supposed 'chav' residents, elicits punishment from the state and wider society (Atkinson 2006; Paton 2018; N. Smith 2005). Thus, in addition to privatisation, council estates have been residualised by polices that stigmatise (and respond to the stigmatisation of) them.

The election of the coalition government in 2010 ushered in the next stage: the 'Big Society' agenda, a program that sought to devolve state functions to communities and volunteers, and simultaneously cutting welfare spending (Kisby 2010). Telegraphed as a response to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, this austerity is in fact a particular phase in long-term neoliberal restructuring of the state and economy (Peck 2014). In policy terms, it demanded a significant shrinking and reshaping of the British welfare state, the functions of which were meant to be taken up by the voluntary sector (Hamnett 2014; Manzi 2015). Its biggest impact was a sharp decrease in funding to local councils—as much as 60 per cent for some localities and programs (Gray and Barford 2018). Lavery (2015) estimates that austerity led to the cutting of over half a million public sector jobs (around 11%), with some regions losing nearly one-in-five public sector workers.

Such cuts represent not only decreased support for those in need, but also the cumulative loss of decades of institutional knowledge. Broader welfare restructuring in turn reshaped policy, significantly constraining upkeep of existing social housing and new construction. One change is exemplified by MacLeod's (2018) analysis of the 2017 Grenfell fire (discussed in more detail in Section 2.1), which reveals a complex, interlocking, and overlapping web of contractors, subcontractors, public-private partnerships, and related groups that have come to define how social housing is delivered in contemporary Britain (see also Raco and Savini 2019). Another change is in the kinds of tenancies supported by government funding, with an increase in funds for shorter, more expensive versions of traditional council tenancies. Funds for traditional council tenancies concomitantly decreased (Mulliner and Maliene 2013). Support for constructing new affordable homes also fell by 60 per cent. Councils responded in a few ways. One is to artificially reduce demand for council homes by restricting waiting lists. Another was to raise rents for the highest income earners (Stephens and Stephenson 2016). The Big Society program thus brought about restructuring in council housing that continued to residualised it (Forrest and Murie 1983).

In terms of relevance to this thesis, austerity's most important impact is the continuing use of 'regeneration.' Broadly conceived as "spatially targeted investment in, and revitalisation of, physically deteriorating," economically underinvested, and "socially deprived" regions, regeneration has mostly (but not always) involved replacement of council estates with mixed-tenure estates through the use of private money (Watt 2021b, 1). The concept is not new, dating back at least to Thatcher's premiership, continuing under New Labour and into the present. One historical example is the remaking of the Liverpool docks, which were significantly reshaped by a public-private partnership after the 1981 Toxteth riot (Wetherell 2025). Another is London's Docklands, a regeneration project that also started in 1981 under Thatcher. The Docklands project saw the conversion of London's shipping heartland into a second financial centre, mostly filled with white-collar offices and associated retail offerings. The scheme did see new homes built—but these homes were far more expensive than the homes they replaced, raising the possibility of state-led gentrification (Brownill 1999). Again, the

Docklands regeneration was achieved with a public-private partnership that transferred urban planning powers to central government, thereby diminishing local democracy (Pile 1995). A more recent example is the Heygate Estate in south London, which began regeneration in the late 1990s and continues to today. Over three decades of redevelopment, this estate has seen significant resistance and displacement, high vacancy, legal challenges, and so on (Lees and Ferreri 2016).

I identify a confluence of factors that have rendered regeneration as the 'only option' for local governments: budgetary squeezes from austerity (Gray and Barford 2018), the creep of financial speculation (Fields 2023; Goldman 2011) and aforementioned territorial stigmatisation (Wacquant et al. 2014), and most importantly dominant neoliberal logics (Hodkinson 2011). Budgetary cuts mean that councils have very little resources to pay for upkeep or new construction. Simultaneously, existing council estates—often situated in desirable or 'up-and-coming' locations—are areas of 'rent gaps' (N. Smith 1987). That is, they are neighbourhoods where extractable rent is presently below potential levels, meaning future profit is possible. Developers attempt to capture this rent through acquiring and redeveloping the area to suit the demands of wealthier groups. This process is not autonomous; it requires state intervention to prepare the grounds for accumulation. Intervention takes the form of regeneration schemes with many examples in London targeting highly desirable areas (e.g., Elephant and Castle; Lees and Ferreri 2016). As Slater (2018a) argues, rent gaps require the active production of territorial stigma to ensure the gaps persist. Regeneration is then positioned as a tool to not only fix a 'problem place' full of 'problem people' (C. Johnston and Mooney 2007) or the undeserving poor (Katz [1989] 2013), but also to attract more private capital (Kallin and Slater 2014). When it comes time to fill the rent gap, the state then engages in preparing the neighbourhood for capital accumulation through state-led evictions (Paton and Cooper 2016) and gentrification (Can et al. 2024) achieved through regeneration schemes. The rise of a speculative urbanism (Fields 2023; Goldman 2011) or speculative city (Chu and He 2022) has been an equally powerful driver in regeneration, with speculators (who are big holders of assets and capital) betting on profit that will flow from higher rents and the rising value of land than could be collected from

council tenants. Recognising the immense profit of speculative urbanism, councils themselves have become interested in exploiting such opportunities. J. Beswick and Penny (2018) describe a new 'financialised municipal entrepreneurialism' taking hold in the UK. Councils have been turning to special purpose vehicles,[32] which can function as private developers and are wholly owned by the council (see also Penny 2022). Although some vehicles do build council housing, a significant portion of their builds are private. Such vehicles thus allow councils to profit from redevelopment without necessarily taking on significant risk. In these ways, regeneration is an ongoing but unstable practice that characterises council housing today.

Thus, although regeneration has existed before, it has recently become a policy 'common sense' for local authorities that were pressured into relying on private financing (Hodkinson 2011). Some view regeneration as positive, bringing new investment to deprived areas and moving residents to superior surroundings (e.g., Bond et al. 2012). On the other hand, critics of regeneration like Dillon and Fanning (2015, 193) view it as "state-led" gentrification "promoted by local authorities." For this faction, regeneration almost always leads to displacement and a marked change in a neighbourhood's character. Council tenants are typically the targets of regeneration, but they are not alone. Temporary residents[33] can be frequently moved around, and homeowners who have purchased their property via RTB are increasingly equally being displaced by regeneration (Elliott-Cooper et al. 2020). The impacts of the rise of regeneration are still being evaluated but scholars have already highlighted severe detrimental outcomes that primarily flow from displacement. The intentional destruction of whole areas has been understood as a form of trauma and violence inflicted on those that are forced to move (Fullilove 2016; Pain 2019; Pull and Richard 2021). Beyond the trauma of being severed from one's community, the physical act of being displaced is arduous. Tenants might be moved far from their existing social networks, places of employment, and institutions of social reproduction (Gillespie et al. 2021; Lees

[32] See Section 1.4.2 for more detail on SPVs.
[33] Those who are temporarily housed as part of a council's obligation to support its unhoused population.

and White 2020). Whole neighbourhoods are likewise stigmatised in media (Kallin and Slater 2014; Slater 2018b). Those who can remain suffer, too: they experience an 'in-situ' displacement as the pre-existing community is destroyed (Watt 2021a). Regeneration is thus a core element of the state of council housing today.

While Dillon and Fanning (2015) believe that state-led gentrification represents a continuation with the past, Gillespie et al. (2021) claim that said national shifts represent a localised form of austerity politics: in their formulation, austerity is translated to the local through a process of "letting die," drawing on Foucault ([1976] 2003)'s thought. For Foucault ([1976] 2003), one of the defining qualities of modern states is biopower—the ability to control large populations and its associated technologies. Pre-modern states, lacking modern technology, were defined by their ability to either *make die* (through violence) or *let live*. Modern states, however, have gained the right to *make live* and *let die* through new forms of governing apparatus: public health, welfare, philanthropy, etc (Nadesan 2010). In the realm of council housing, Gillespie et al.'s (2021) argue that "letting die" encapsulates a withdrawal of state support for economically unproductive populations. "Letting die" not only deliberately produces populations as unproductive, but also constitutes them as undeserving of social support. In other words, council tenants are treated as the 'undeserving poor,' who are not 'worth' supporting (Katz [1989] 2013; Tyler 2013) In this case, "letting die" functions via displacement from social housing, which subsequently severs a displaced person's connections to their community, employment, and support network (Fullilove 2016; Pain 2019; Pull and Richard 2021). Gillespie et al. (2021, 1717) link "letting die" via displacement to 2010's welfare restructuring that have "residualise[d] social housing" in the UK, both through reductions in spending and the decentralisation of power that was the centrepiece of the 'Big Society' program. Social homes have thus been residualised into a tenure of last resort for those who have no other options in the housing market: the 'undeserving poor' (Katz [1989] 2013; Tyler 2013). As I explain throughout this chapter, this population is composed of stigmatised, othered groups: minority ethnic communities, disabled individuals, unhoused families, the working class, and so on. Regeneration targets these groups, not only exacerbating their existing social oppressions, but also

because of the stigmatisation in the first instance. Hence, contemporary regeneration—with all its harmful effects—might be better understood as a contemporary and ongoing form of letting die.

Regeneration is a contested phenomenon. As early as the first modern regeneration schemes in the 1980s, local communities have resisted attempts to remake the city in the service of capital. The decrease in local democracy associated with the Docklands project, for instance, meant that activists rallied for better representation to both the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (where the Docklands sits) and the regeneration special purpose vehicle. Though these communities did not always try to halt the scheme in its entirety, their resistance shifted the regeneration process significantly (Pile 1995). Likewise, regeneration in Liverpool was resisted—but this time one of the driving opposition factions was the city's radically leftist council (Taaffe and Mulhearn 1988; Wetherell 2025). Elsewhere in London, campaigners and impacted residents have continued to organise against regeneration over the last four decades, with famous examples including the Heygate Estate, starting in the 1990s (Lees and Ferreri 2016); Focus E15, a group of mothers who opposed regeneration in 2010s east London (Greer Murphy 2017); and the campaigns studied in this dissertation in 2020s north London. Although the specifics of each illustration differ, the rhetoric and logics of resistance are analogous: activists overwhelmingly articulate resistance to displacement, gentrification, and the sense of urban trauma. The state of council housing in the UK is thus in flux. Although councils across the country are pressing ahead with various regeneration schemes, activists are pushing back. With a present and intensifying housing crisis (Heslop and Ormerod 2020), greater attention from across the political spectrum has been given to building new council homes (Delahunty 2025). Although council housing has been residualised, the future remains open.

2.1 Race and Ethnicity[34] in Council Housing:

Before concluding, I briefly evaluate the relationships between immigration, race and ethnicity, and council housing. Council housing is intertwined with British histories of race, migration, and empire. Substantial scholarship has revealed how British imperial policies have shaped urban political economy—especially in London—as well as the quality and spatial characteristics of housing (Danewid 2020; Elliott-Cooper 2021; Gilroy 2002). Moreover, my investigation considers housing with a high proportion of Black and minority ethnic tenants (Haringey Borough Council 2024a). As such, this research cannot be explored without considering how imperialism, colonialism, and racism have influenced urban development in the United Kingdom.

Ethnic minorities are heterogeneously represented within social housing, with Black residents overrepresented while some Asian groups (e.g., Indians) are underrepresented. Yet the residualisation of social housing over the last decade has impacted groups unevenly, with Bangladeshi residents for example being harshly affected. These families are often pushed into overcrowded and dangerous living conditions as a result (Shankley and Finney 2020). Council housing's residualisation has led to an overrepresentation of minoritised ethnic groups in London's council homes. Gleeson (2022) finds that over half of Black households and nearly half of Bangladeshi families, for instance, live in social housing. Black families were similarly most likely to shift from private renting to social housing, reflecting economic pressures. Moreover, Black and Asian families are more likely to live in substandard and overcrowded social homes, and to pay the most proportion of income on rent (Gleeson 2022). The governance of social housing estates is likewise racialised, with heavy policing of Black youth and subcultures (Atkinson 2006; Perera 2019a). Policing goes hand in hand with stigmatisation, which itself is a process steeped in racial othering and punishment (Slater 2016; Wacquant et al. 2014). The targets of these moves are overwhelmingly Black

[34] I utilise both terms interchangeably to emphasise the interrelation of the two concepts and to foreground the legacies of colonialism and imperialism in the contemporary United Kingdom (Gilroy 2002; S. Hall 2021).

Londoners. As territorially stigmatised places, then, council estates see significant social problems and pervasive racial discrimination.

Discrimination is also a long-standing historical reality. In the 1960s, for instance, councils housed only around 1 percent of Asian and Black households, a gross under-representation. This colour bar was enforced by both a set of explicit policies and implicit management tactics. Some councils like Willesden, London accepted Black and Asian applications onto the waiting list but intentionally declined to let to them. Other councils gave white families priority on waiting lists, ensuring they would be selected before ethnic minority applicants (Hilliard 2025). Council staff also expressed fear that moving ethnic minorities to white estates would incite violence against the newcomers, and so would use their power to disperse and reduce their number (Ginsburg 1988). Indeed, as Jeffers and Hoggett (1995) found, housing managers intentionally balanced the material housing needs of minoritised ethnic groups against fears of racist violence—to the detriment of those racialised minorities. Even policies that were not explicitly racist in effect kept minoritised ethnic groups out of public housing, forming an institutionally racist system (Ginsburg 1988). Councils, for example, frequently imposed time restrictions to join the waitlist: new applicants sometimes had to show residency in a region for at least five years, which many new migrants could not meet. Since waiting lists were already long, hardly any migrant families were successful (Hilliard 2025). Thus, council housing was yet another site of ongoing institutional racism in the UK's past.

Eventually, the government passed several race relations acts throughout the 1960s and 1970s, aiming to mitigate housing discrimination. When racialised minorities were finally granted council flats, however, the homes were typically in high-rise buildings in high-density estates, poorly located and connected, aesthetically ugly, and in adequate condition. That is, minoritised ethnic groups were routinely granted undesirable homes. Wetherell (2020) argues that this methodical sorting—coupled with the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act of 1977[35]—played an integral part of what would become council housing residualisation

[35] This law required local authorities house groups previously deemed unfit for council housing like the homeless or the physically ill.

(Gillespie et al. 2021). Considering the undesirability of such dwellings, the technical problems with shared spaces in high-rises, and an unwillingness of banks to provide mortgages to minoritised ethnic groups, the right-to-buy for minoritised ethnic tenants was difficult to exercise. Furthermore, for such tenants who actually were able to buy their council flats, ongoing regeneration is now targeting their estates—meaning that this group is now being dispossessed at a high rate (Elliott-Cooper et al. 2020). For Wetherell (2020), this is a British form of redlining: the systematic financial discrimination of areas of racialised minorities. Although redlining is a uniquely American form of housing discrimination that does not neatly map on to the British case (see Rothstein 2017), the scholarship is clear that such discrimination is a primary driver for the overrepresentation of minoritised ethnics groups in council housing (Gleeson 2022; Shankley and Finney 2020). As such, racism has produced discourses of the 'undeserving poor' (Katz [1989] 2013), and 'problem people' and 'problem places' (C. Johnston and Mooney 2007) that continue to depict council homes as places of disrepute. As discussed above with the 'chav,' these discourses intersect with those of class, thus continually reinforce existing ethnically discriminatory practices and territorial stigma (Wacquant et al. 2014).

Disproportionate effects on minoritised ethnic groups do not stop here, however. Lukes et al. (2019) outline both a system of regressive laws that disadvantage contemporary migrants (frequently racialised minorities) but also the incorrect application of those laws across multiple scales. Landlords often illegally refuse migrants homes, for instance, meaning that the council ends up housing such groups. Asylum seekers similarly suffer from a lack of social housing supply, meaning they are often housed in temporary, inadequate, or unsafe and inappropriate housing. This housing is dispersed into communities, meaning that individual asylum seekers are often placed in areas without existing support networks, that had little experience accommodating diverse newcomers, and were already deprived. Simultaneously, where asylum seekers are eventually able to access social homes, there has been some strain on such homes—largely stemming from a combination of high rents in the private sector and general poverty (Brown et al. 2024). While these policies are not specifically about council homes (as

asylum seekers cannot access social homes until after their claims are successful), they reflect systematic racialised biases within the system. The local scale matters here, too, with some councils refusing to house asylum seekers (*BBC News* 2021). The residualisation of council housing not only directly impacts ethnic minorities, but also has been a driver of wider institutional racism in housing policy (Robinson 2025). More relevantly, regeneration and state-led gentrification often target areas with higher rates of ethnic minority residents, as such places are depicted as deprived (Shankley and Finney 2020). Indeed, race and state-led gentrification go hand-in-hand in contemporary London. The disproportionate impact of regeneration on minoritised ethnic Londoners is intertwined with continuing processes of capitalist accumulation—insofar as racism and capitalism are interdependent (Lees and Hubbard 2022; Penny and Horton 2024). Scholars have found similar links between racism and police violence in council housing (Perera 2019a, 2019b). As racialised and stigmatised spaces (Slater 2016, 2018b; Wacquant et al. 2014), council homes are frequent targets for state-led evictions and violence (Fullilove 2016; Paton and Cooper 2016). The 2017 Grenfell tragedy revealed other layers of racialised marginalisation. The disaster involved a preventable fire in a council tower block in London, in which 72 residents were victims of 'social murder' (MacLeod 2018; Madden 2017). Writing after the tragedy and amidst ongoing activism for justice for the victims, Danewid (2020, 292) argues for the centrality of race to not only the Grenfell deaths, but also an acknowledgement of the "racial and imperial political economy that produces some people and places as 'surplus.'" As MacLeod (2018) additionally argues, Grenfell especially was caught in a "local political economy of contempt," in which the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (the relevant London Borough) effectively treated Grenfell residents as second-class. That is, beneath the rubble of the soon-to-be destroyed Grenfell Tower is the fact that race was a driving force of the socio-political context that allowed the preventable fire to cause social murder. Council homes thus continue to perpetuate racist policies and discourses that let Londoners of colour die (Gillespie et al. 2021)—literally (in the case of Grenfell) and metaphorically (in the sense of stigmatisation and marginalisation).

Indeed, race has equally been an integral thread in the politics of council housing. For instance, racialised minorities in council homes have historically been a politicised object in far-right discourses in Britain. The far-right have frequently blamed migrants for creating housing shortages (Robbins 2010, 2014, 2020), with many falsely claiming that councils give preferential treatment to ethnic minorities (Stroud 2022). Again, this is historical, with far-right groups spreading this narrative as early as the 1970s (Pile 1995). Even where there is so-called positive discourse about migrants, it often obscures "the existence of structural racism and [instead confines] its existence to 'Broken Britain,' a place populated by a morally degenerate and racist 'white working class'" (Bates 2017, 133). In this vein, contemporary far-right party Reform UK have proposed to change housing allocation laws to prioritise domestic-born nationals (Housing Today 2024). The equally far-right UK Independence Party (2026) likewise has called for mass deportation of migrants, often justified by the false claim that migrants are 'taking' council homes from native-born Britons. Indeed, the UK has witnessed a shift from concerns about migration, asylum, and small boats carrying irregular migrants from France to a more general populist ethno-nationalism that places Islamophobia and racism at the core of its message (Anderson and Secor 2025; A. Bonnett and Hopkins 2025). As Danewid (2020) contends, the residualisation of council housing cannot be understood without attending to race. As such, the ethnic minority experience is intertwined with the history of British social housing, especially as it has become residualised over the last decades.

2.2 Conclusion:

This section has provided a short overview of council housing in the UK. It began with a historical review, focusing on the beginnings of council housing as initially homes for veterans before the destruction of two world wars generated a housing need far beyond what could be met by the private market. The state stepped in, building millions of publicly owned dwellings. Consequently, significant portions of the British housing market were effectively decommodified. After decades of public provision, the status quo changed in the 1980s, when the state engaged in mass privatisation of council homes through policies like the

Right-to-Buy and Large-Scale Voluntary Transfers. Now, public dwellings are residualised as a tenure of last resort, which this section considers through the lenses of Foucauldian biopolitics and territorial stigmatisation. Stigmatisation classified council homes and their residents as the undeserving poor, preparing these inner-city regions for gentrification and later state-led redevelopment. This section then evaluated contemporary council housing, focusing on regeneration schemes that redevelop estates through displacement, demolition, and rebuilding. Regeneration is overwhelmingly a detrimental process, breaking up and harming communities. However, it has become a neoliberal 'common sense' due to austerity pressures and central state-led initiatives. Resistance to regeneration is long-standing. Finally, I discuss the relevance of race and ethnicity, emphasising how the histories of racism are intertwined with that of council housing. The 2017 Grenfell fire highlighted the ways social housing provision has been used to uphold structural racism; has historically been politicised by far-right movements; and a tool to warehouse and disperse ethnically minoritised populations.

Chapter 3: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction:

This chapter is a critical review of the theoretical and empirical research with which my thesis is in a dialogue. The review links together the conceptual literatures of the state and the party, authoritarian neoliberalism (AN), and citizenship. The first section considers the local state and the local party. As one of the thesis's motivations is to argue for the importance of political parties in the maintenance of local authoritarian neoliberalism, this review links sets the conceptual groundwork for later linking together AN and theories of the local state. I draw on critical perspectives on the capitalist state (Jessop 2010; Miliband 1983) that primarily rely on a relational (Poulantzas [1978] 2014) and state-effect (T. Mitchell 1991; Painter 2006) approach. The same is true for the urban scale: the state here (i.e., Haringey Borough) is relational and capitalist (N. Brenner 2009; Painter 1991). Yet, the local state is not simply a miniature version of the national one (James 2009; Ormerod 2017, 2021; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019). As such, the review here considers the local state as a particular object of research, leveraging scholarship on councils and councillors (Cockburn 1980; Copus 2004; D. J. Wilson and Game 2011). My review of local political parties relies on critical perspectives of the Labour Party, which argue that the party is interested in narrow parliamentarianism rather than real material change (Cockburn 1980; Gilbert 2023; Miliband 1973). I connect the party and the state, introducing the idea of the state-party nexus before discussing authoritarian neoliberalism.

The second portion introduces authoritarian neoliberalism as theoretical approach to modern governance (Bruff 2014; Tansel 2017), its conceptual development (Davey and Koch 2021; Da Costa Vieira 2023), and its use within urban and geographical studies (Can et al. 2024; Di Giovanni 2017; Ergenc and Yuksekkaya 2024; Fearn 2024; Özatağan et al. 2025). I also link AN to previous debates about Thatcherism that echo contemporary discussions of AN (K. Bonnett et al. 1984; S. Hall 1985; M. D. J. Ryan 2019). As this thesis is concerned with developing understandings of *local* authoritarian neoliberalism, it is important to

understand AN's conceptual progression, its internal plurality, and its relevance to historical forms of neoliberalism.

The third and final section of this review discusses citizenship. The section recounts how neoliberalism has changed citizenship over the last decades (K. Mitchell 2003; Sparke 2006; Zhang 2018): there has been an increasing emphasis on building an active citizenry (Kim 2010; Maschette 2023). I conclude this portion by analysing the 'acts of citizenship' theory (Isin 2008), its accommodative form (Jakimów 2022), and its criticism (Brandzel 2022). Given the type of activism I studied, theories of citizenship were the most appropriate frame through which the activism could be understood. Lastly, as my research considers resistance to AN, this evaluation here connects citizenship to contemporary illiberalism, with the aim of exploring how resistance can be transformative even during periods of authoritarianism.

3.2 The Local State and the Local Party:

3.2.1 Local State:

The local state—instead of the state more generally—is the primary focus here. I begin with an overview of state theory and then shift to clarifying the local. Critical perspectives position the state as a *capitalist* state—that is, as chiefly concerned with the maintenance of capitalist relations (Miliband 1983; Poulantzas 1969). The precise nature of the capitalist state is still the subject of debate, but the field has generally converged on a relational perspective of the state that seeks to resolve capitalist crises in collaboration with non-state institutions (Jessop 2010). This approach critiques the reification of the state as a concrete entity that is distinct from society itself, sitting above society and maintaining it. As Jessop (2010, 1) asserts, it is impossible to effectively "describe or explain the state apparatus, state projects, and state power" without discussing the various ways the state 'works' in connection with society. This is because the state is necessarily socially embedded; the boundaries between state and society are porous, ever-shifting, and subject to contestation, and multi-scalar (Painter 2006). Instead, this approach supports instead a more structural view of the state—as a form of social relation. That is, the state is better understood as a "a relationship of forces, or

more precisely the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions" (Poulantzas [1978] 2014, 128). As the state is relational, it is also unstable and constantly shifting. Its priorities, design, constitution, effects, and relations with other elements within its wider context mean there are two key dimensions to attend to. First, identifying state-effects is an important task to understand the state relation; second, moments of crisis do not destroy the state but lead to its reorganisation (Jessop 2010). The critique of a reified and unified state is compelling, in that it more accurately describes how the state works to govern populations. That is, the relational perspective better captures the inter-relations between the formal state and its associated non-state, non-market institutions like charities, political parties, and trade unions. This thesis draws thus from a relational approach that echoes that of Poulantzas ([1978] 2014), Jessop (2010, 2016), and the London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (LEWRG; [1980] 2021), as well as from the British regulation school (Mark Goodwin and Painter 1996; Hillier et al. 2022; Painter 2011).

The relational understanding of the state is strongly influenced by the regulation approach. Developing out of the *régulation* school,[36] a 1970s French Marxist strand of political economy, the regulation approach aims to explain the interrelations between social, political, and economic trends—with an emphasis on how the relations structure and are structured by capitalism. There are two fundamental concepts in the regulation approach: the *mode of regulation* and the *accumulation regime*. The former refers to a collection of institutions, social norms, and ideas that governs the relationships between firms, capital, labour, and the state. The latter is the (somewhat) stable pattern of important economic factors—the forms of production; the distribution of income from wages, profits, rents, and taxes; the relationships between capitalist and non-capitalist production; and management of risk. The two are institutionally bonded and work to reduce the impact of capitalism's natural tendency for crisis (R. Brenner and Glick 1991). In the United Kingdom, critical geographers have built on the regulation approach by highlighting the geographical—foregrounding the need to attend to place,

[36] From the French for regularisation of social processes rather than just laws and norms established by a state.

space, and scale in discussions of regulation and state-relation (Mark Goodwin and Painter 1996; M Goodwin et al. 1993; Painter 1991). Similarly, theorists like Painter (2006, 2010) and T. Mitchell (1991) have asserted for a reframing of the state as a collection of effects that arise from a set of social practices. This 'state-effect' approach seeks to avoid the substituting of state-as-entity with state-as-structure, while maintaining a relational focus. Painter (2006, 2010) subsequently argues for an emphasis on the state practices that engender a particular effect. In particular, through an analysis of anti-social behaviour policy in the United Kingdom, Painter (2006) calls attention to state prosaics: the mundane, everyday collection of effects that constitute what scholars tend to reify as 'the state.' The state can therefore be reinterpreted as a mechanism for policy delivery (state-effect) and as composed of relationships between individuals and groups (social relation). State capacity is thus "is only dependent on the modes of representation and social bases of support that operate through the state as an institutional ensemble" (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019, 324). In this ensemble, the party is a political organisation that mediates between the state and civil society by organising the social base of the state. Parties also translate policies into platforms, reducing the complexity of politics. As democratic systems require some nominal form of representation through a parliamentary system, parties are also important for determining the state's overall direction (Jessop 2016). Thus, the relational approach means paying attention to the complex intersections between the state, society, and the individual actors therein.

As a scale of the state, the local state (like the London Borough of Haringey) is thus relational and capitalist (N. Brenner 2009; Painter 1991). For example, Goodwin and Painter (1996) describe a historical shift from local *government* to *governance*, in that then-new forms of the local state arising at the end of the Fordist[37] accumulation regime reflect a new mode of regulation. Key to this argument is spatial distribution: there is an attempt to understand the uneven development at the end of the Fordist period. The local state is likewise not merely

[37] Fordism refers to the period of stable economic growth from 1945 to 1975, in which Global North economies were sustained by a combination of assembly-line mass production and new mass consumption (Painter 2011).

a component of either mode of regulation or accumulation regime. Rather, its unique position as simultaneously a provider of non-profitable services (e.g., some welfare) and a planner (e.g., in land-use) mean the local state occupies a complex position (Painter 1991)

However, the local state in the United Kingdom is not simply a 'scaled down' version of the national scale, with similar state-effect and state-relations that pull toward reinforcing capitalist relations. Governance practices and processes are not equivalent across scales (Cockburn 1980; Copus 2004; 2015; LEWRG [1980] 2021). Local governments like Haringey have their own particular structures, politics, and incentives that mean analyses of the national state cannot easily be translated to the local scale (James 2009; Ormerod 2017, 2021; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019). Haringey Borough oversees policing anti-social behaviour, for example, the same described by Painter (2006), while the national state does not. This is especially true for neoliberalism's role in state and urban transformation (Peck et al. 2009; D. Wilson 2004). Wilson and Game's (2011) expansive book highlights the significant unique elements of the local state—chief among these is its role in service provision, which I discuss in Chapters 6 and 7. Paired with service provision is the 'closeness' of the local state to the public. Scholars of policy implementation have called this the 'street-level bureaucrat,' (Lipsky 2010) a term that encompasses a range of professions like teacher, police officer, and in my case, councillor (Copus 2004, 2015, 2023). Street-level bureaucrats are engaged in a balancing of policy implementation and creation through their use of discretion, which exploits the gap between what is written in legislation and what actually happens (Lipsky 2010). My discussion of street-level bureaucrats and service provision is not to introduce new concepts that I later discuss in the empirical sections. Instead, it is to emphasise how the local state differs from its national counterpart: one of Lipsky's (2010) central arguments is that the street-level bureaucrat is a defining feature of local governance. Another aspect is the role of the *local* political party (Chapters 6 and 7), which exerts pressure on the local state in ways that differ from their national counterparts. An emphasis on the local party (in this work, Haringey Labour) is one of this thesis's core contributions, as it remains significantly undertheorised. Similarly, the bureaucratic structures of

the local state—that differ from the relational structures discussed above—often work to narrow spaces of acceptable dissent (Cockburn 1980; Ormerod 2017, 2021; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019). I expand on this below, further explaining how local political parties have an outsized influence on the local state.

3.2.2 Local Political Parties in Government:

The relationship between local political parties (like Haringey Labour) and the local state in the UK is relatively understudied. This thesis then goes some way in ensuring scholarship of the state "see[s] the more subtle, quieter registers of power" that characterises governance (Ormerod 2021, 2). The literature review here starts with an overview of literature on politics in local government—specifically considering councillors—and heavily draws on Copus's (2004, 2015, 2023) extensive oeuvre on councillors. As both leaders in their local parties and members of the local state, councillors play a fundamental role in a community's political landscape.

Studies of British councillors are many, but a significant portion of this literature overlooks the intimate relations between the councillor and their political party. For instance, scholars have considered various typologies of meetings that councillors undertake (R. Freeman 2020), their workload (Kettlewell and Philips 2014; McGarvey and Stewart 2018; Thrasher et al. 2015), and the types of roles a councillor takes throughout their political journey (Copus 2023; Rao et al. 1994; Rao 1998). Likewise, scholars have indicated there is a crisis in local government—partially because councillors seem unable to adequately respond to persistent social problems (Laffin and Diamond 2024; Richardson 2012). Yet the literature tends to flatten party differences or otherwise minimise their importance. Trasher et al. (2015), for instance, explores how councillors invest their time considering an individual's characteristics, path in their party, and so on. Although a welcome assessment, the paper does not differentiate between different parties (and their structures) nor explore how said entities influence councillor behaviour. As such, I turn to case studies of councillors as political agents, utilising the work of Copus (2004, 2015, 2023).

Copus's (2004) in-depth study on councillors and local politics reveals a messy, interlocking, and scalar party system. Concentrations of power are not static, shifting with the political-economic winds. *Party groups* (a bloc of councillors from one political party), the balance of the council, and even the relationships of individual politicians can influence the landscape of political power. Due to the multi-scalar nature of parties, there is often a divergence between the interests of national leaders and local members with the ongoing genocide in Gaza as an example. One illustration is the constituents of Tottenham MP and Deputy Prime Minister, David Lammy, who insist that he no longer represents their views (Osuh and Mohdin 2025). However, the structural power of party leadership means that there can be pressure on local membership and leaders to conform to the will of national leadership—strong resistance notwithstanding (Gilbert 2023; J. Scott and Wills 2017). For instance, Copus (2023, 119) outlines four dynamics that ensure councillors follow their national leadership: party rules that outline "expectations of loyalty" and related sanctions for failure; the need to maintain national political rivalries at the local scale; the need to maintain and build relationships with municipal membership; and continuing to back the national party to garner support in advance of elections. Moreover, as indicated by my interviewees from across both Haringey Labour and Liberal Democrats, councillors learn that the best way to develop their political careers is by currying favour with national leadership. Asymmetrical power thus means councillors have significant incentives to "place the loyalty demands of the party, the requirements of party discipline and the policy decisions of the party above the views of the local citizens" (Copus 2015, 37). This is because the party "is not merely a vehicle through which political objectives are achieved" but, for such *party people*, it fulfils a variety of social, political, career, and personal functions. Therefore, "disloyalty to the party comes with considerable consequences" (Copus 2015, 37). Similarly, political party meetings are often poorly attended, attracting the most invested and/or well-connected members of the party. This 'sampling bias' means that councillors often mistake the views of these members as the views of the wider membership. The *party person* thus puts the needs of the party—and particularly, the national party—above the demands

of their constituents. *Party groups* can likewise exercise powerful influence over members through methods that are not limited to disciplinary procedures. *Party groups* are often tight knit collections of friends and colleagues (who sometimes enter romantic relationships with each other), and so publicly disagreeing with the party can have both career and personal consequences (Copus 2004). Yet, like all councillors, *party people* are not robotic; they are semi-free actors who must balance competing interests like that of different party scales, existing relationships with residents, and so on. Thus, it cannot be assumed that a policy or political outcome is assured simply because it is the priority of the party leader or the party group.

Although the combination of structural and personal pressures is often powerful, it equally cannot be assumed that said structures determine outcomes. Copus (2004, 2015, 2023) terms this tension a "crisis of representation," in which councillors must manage the contradictory demands of their constituents and those of the party. Such crises managed in different ways depending on a councillor's position within the party and the council, their relationships with constituents, and so on. I highlight this concept to stress the myriad tensions that councillors must respond to. Next, I discuss the 'state-party nexus', that is, the connection(s) between the party and the state.

3.2.3 State-Party Nexus and the Labour Party:

More formally, the state-party nexus refers to the interdependence of the local state and the local party that exists within one-party local states. The party in question is the Labour Party, which has been the ruling party in Haringey for all but three years since Haringey's conception in 1965. This means that Labour has outsized influence on the Council's policy direction (Dillon and Fanning 2011). As such, I provide a history of the debates on the Party. These debates—rooted in Ralph Miliband's (1973) study of the national Labour Party—were taken up by scholars like Cockburn (1980) and Wainwright (1987, 2022), and later Ormerod (2017, 2021) and Gilbert (2021a, 2021b, 2023). They speak to the Labour Party's particular lineage as a political broad church. This coalitional nature has meant that the Party has always existed in tension between radical and reformist

perspectives (Cockburn 1980; Gilbert 2021b, 2023; Wainwright 1987; B. Ward 2022). The review here starts with Cockburn (1980, 87), who asserts that the Labour Party utilises democratic engagement as a "mechanism on which management of class struggle" could rely—that is, the capitalist state depends on political parties to funnel dissent through electoral politics instead of direct action. In effect, Cockburn (1980) contends such funnelling defangs opposition and forecloses radical change. Yet, as my findings in Chapters 6 and 7 indicate, the unstable nature of the nexus means that scholars should not presume foreclosure always happens. Thus, in this subsection, I put Copus (2004, 2015, 2023), Cockburn (1980), and Ormerod (2017, 2021; and MacLeod 2019) in dialogue with each other to emphasise the relevance of the state-party nexus. I also discuss the nexus's multiscalarity, drawing out the importance of scale to the nexus.

The Labour Party in Detail:

Before diving into the critical perspectives on Labour, it is worth providing an overview of the party structure. The party's lowest level is the branch (or ward). They typically correspond to the electoral boundaries for councillors (also wards). Above branches are Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), coterminous with parliamentary electoral districts of the same name. CLPs are grouped together under Regional Boards, with Wales and Scotland having their own executives. London has its own Regional Board. These comprise representatives from lower tiers. The Labour Party's direction is governed by a combination of the following: the National Executive Committee (NEC), the Parliamentary Party Labour (PLP), and the National Policy Forum (NPF). The NEC includes Members of Parliament (MPs), representatives from affiliated organisations, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Party, and representatives selected by councillors and other sitting MPs. The PLP is the group of Labour MPs (UNITE Politics 2015). PLP members tend to prioritise electability rather than ideological purity and have tended to pull the Labour Party to the right (Crines et al. 2018; Gilbert 2021b). Reforms in the Party from the 1980s to the late 1990s have centralised decision-making, with leadership prioritising winning back political power at the expense of party activists (who tend to be more radical) (J. Scott and Wills 2017). While there have

been some efforts to democratise power, especially during former Leader Jeremy Corbyn's tenure (B. Ward 2022), current Leader Keir Starmer's leadership has seen a continuation of centralisation. Starmer has been accused of expelling dissident activists and blocking more radical members from running for seats to shore up the party's electability (Gilbert 2021a, 2023; Holden 2025; Weir 2023).

Critical perspectives of the Labour Party frequently refer to Ralph Miliband's (1973) view of the party as a 'parliamentary socialist' one (in his book, *Parliamentary Socialism*): the party as a whole stresses formal electoral and institutional theories of change, thereby bracketing out other (i.e., radical and/or revolutionary) politics. The parliamentary socialist view is a broad one; it chiefly refers to manoeuvres at the highest level of the party (Newman 2018). Yet parliamentary socialism does not describe merely a failure of the party's (often right-wing) leaders. Rather, even the Labour Left itself sees parliament as the only acceptable vehicle for action. Hobsbawm (1961) explains that the Labour Left uncritically accepts "the assumption that the basic tasks of the labour movement is *in practice* modest reform rather than ambitious social change," asserting that even the majority of the Labour membership fall afoul of this assumption. Rising from a collection of socialist organisations, co-operatives, trade unions, and social reformers, the Labour Party has admittedly always existed with strong internal tensions with respect to the focus of the party's overall strategy. As Wainwright (1987, 2022) describes, this has often meant that Labour party officials prioritise attacking the party's radical wing over other objectives—a trend that has continued through Corbyn's rise and fall as Leader (Gilbert 2021b).

Research on local Labour Parties has found similar dynamics. Ormerod's (2017, 2021) exploration of Gateshead, Tyneside and Cockburn's (1980) study of the London Borough of Lambeth reveal how the structures of the Labour Party (both nationally and locally) function to narrow spaces of dissent to the party, bracketing out other forms of radical and revolutionary politics. One illustration is in resistance to urban development, which political actors often describe as illegitimate, unless it occurs through the structures of the Labour Party. For instance, Ormerod (2017, 2021) found that Labour politicians labelled residents organising against regeneration as *political*—while labelling the state's

community engagement as *non-political*. Such positioning works at two levels. First, it subsequently positions backing for regeneration (which was likely inflated by the council; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019) as representative of the Gateshead community as whole—even though disagreeing residents by definition were members of the community—and thus as *beyond* politics. Second, because Gateshead is similarly a Labour stronghold, it functionally requires politics to happen through the party. That is, any resistance to decisions made by the party is depicted as *too politically charged* and therefore outside the bounds of proper channels (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019). Progressing comparably, Cockburn (1980) considers Lambeth (another Labour stronghold) under managerial reforms in the 1970s, which she contends undermined democratic accountability and the radicality of some local government found in the 1960s. Across both works, Labour-run councils are frequently selective, closed off, and unresponsive. Councillors are portrayed as uninterested in the will of their nominal constituents or even other ordinary members of the party. Instead, like their national counterpart, Labour councils tend to prioritise formal and electoral processes as the only way to achieve political change—thereby narrowing spaces for disagreement (Copus 2004, 2015, 2023). This line of thinking tends to accentuate the importance of party *structure* as one of those narrowing mechanisms. Beholden to a small subset of the wider electorate, working within a mindset of parliamentary socialism, hemmed in by the formal and informal rules of a scaled party (J. Scott and Wills 2017), and staffed with reformists, local party leadership naturally focus on formal processes to implement social reform rather than revolutionary change. This thinking therefore positions local parliamentary socialism as an inherent, intractable problem with the Labour Party.

However, this interpretation criticised as an unnecessary pessimistic viewpoint, with R. Miliband's contemporaries viewing his text as a call to abandon the party altogether (Newman 2018). Indeed, Hobsbawm (1961) asserts that *Parliamentary Socialism* is a call to revamp Labour, recognising that although it falls short of its stated democratic socialist goals, the party still plays an important role in British politics. This line of argumentation reflects Gilbert's (2021a) pithy claim that the Labour Party is *not* "a football team that you support, but might

stop supporting"; instead, the Party itself is *instead* "the very pitch upon which the game is played." That is, we should not assume that the rules and structures of the Party are necessarily determinative. Put differently, the Party's "structure, form and organisational shape provide a *theatre*" in which politics occurs (Copus 2004, 77). Since the Labour Party comprises a vast assortment of liberal to leftist organisations with varying political interests, it would be a mistake to believe the party necessarily moves in one direction (Gilbert 2021a). Instead, it is more accurate to describe Labour as a collection of jostling political interests who push and pull in a wide range of directions.

This is equally true at the local level, given councillors' embeddedness into local activist and political structures, as well as the power that paid council staff have (Copus 2023). As Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate, party politics and the interpersonal relations springing from parties significantly impact policy development. However, activist inclusion in the council (that is, as councillors) can ultimately be depoliticising: ideological adherence can often be "surrendered to expert officers and consultants" (Ormerod 2021, 8). Nevertheless, this relation is shaky: the very act of depoliticising local decision-making is itself a contestable political act. Indeed, the depoliticising of resident associations that existed outside of the Labour Party worked to reinforce the idea that the only acceptable form of politics was through electoral processes (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019).

The State-Party Nexus in Detail:

Before finally moving to discussing the relationship between the local scales and authoritarian neoliberalism, I link this aside regarding the Labour Party back to the (multiscalar) state-party nexus. Jessop (2016, 76) writes, an analysis of the "party form… would encompass all aspects of state," indicating the interrelatedness of both state and party. Since local states that are dominated by one party rely on that party for direction, the state's entire political life revolves the party. As evidenced across a wide range and timeframe of research, one-party local governments funnel what is seen as acceptable politics through the party, bracketing out other spaces of contestation (Cockburn 1980; Green [1981] 2013; Ormerod 2017, 2021; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019). In Haringey, the council's

policy direction has historically come from within the local Labour Party. Indeed, as Dillon and Fanning (2011) recount, factional disputes within the party have meant varying policy outcomes. At the highest level of policymaking, struggles over local party leadership cause changes in policy direction. One instance is Bernie Grant's rise to leader in 1985. During his leadership, issues of racial equality increased in relevance. As such, the way the state has interacted with Haringey's racialised minorities reflected the state-party nexus as I described in Section 1.3.1. During times of more radical leadership (1970s to 1990s), more assistance and funding was funnelled to community groups who assisted racialised minorities (Dillon and Fanning 2011). During New Labour, Haringey's focus shifted to regeneration and displacement of ethnic minority groups; the dominance of the Labour Party mean that it was apathetic to consultation outside of the party (Dillon and Fanning 2013). This shift was multiscalar: it was the result of changes at the local level (in that Haringey Council itself became more right-wing) and at the national scale (with New Labour's regeneration programs). As such, the state and the party are intimately enmeshed—i.e., a state-party nexus—even though they are ostensibly separate. The heuristic of the nexus is not meant to prioritise the party as an equal partner to the state in all cases or scales (Jessop 2016). Rather, it is intended to underline the particular salience the party has at the local scale. This research therefore critiques viewpoints that overlook internal party contestation, instead emphasising the importance of how such contestation impacts policy outcomes.

Having considered the local state and the local party—combined in what I call a state-party nexus, one that is multiscalar—I now shift to detailing authoritarian neoliberalism.

3.3 Authoritarian Neoliberalism:

As a core problem of the thesis is to understand local authoritarian neoliberalism and its relationship to party politics, I review the literature on AN, historically contextualise it, and then examine how it works at the local scale. Authoritarian neoliberalism was chosen as it provides an analysis of neoliberal political economy that highlights the fluidity of the state; the compatibility of illiberal governance

and market-led economics; and the widespread impacts of neoliberal logics on various cultural and social elements. More specifically, AN speaks directly to how states can continue unpopular projects, even when significant portions of the population are in opposition. As is explored below, AN's focus on legitimation, coercion, and policing help explain how states succeed despite popular resistance.

As originally conceptualised by Bruff (2014), authoritarian neoliberalism refers to a shift in governmental approaches since the 2008 global financial crisis. Before examining AN, it is worth defining neoliberalism. Bruff (2014) sees it as both the uprooting of the market from the state *and* a shift in purpose of non-market institutions from amelioration to support of accumulation. Neoliberalism does not disassemble but rather "thrives upon the institutional infrastructure of the state" that is reformed in service of capital (Tansel 2017, 6). This shift has not been without pushback: as Tansel (2017, 13) writes, "political parties that have stood at the forefront of neoliberal restructuring over the last three to four decades faced a continuous haemorrhaging of their voter base" that has been coupled with a rise in far right, fascist governments. The 2008 crisis spawned years of anti-globalist and anti-capitalist resistance (Graeber 2014). However, in spite of claims of its death (Peck 2010), neoliberalism remains a powerful force (Bayliss et al. 2024). It also reflects the dominant political-economic approaches that undergird regeneration in Haringey (discussed in Chapters 1, 2, 6, and 7) (Hodkinson 2011; Watt 2021b). Bruff (2014) thus sets out to understand the specific mechanisms through which neoliberalism can sustain itself despite popular, anti-neoliberal resistance movements.

Authoritarian neoliberalism is Bruff's (2014) answer. It marks a turn in governance practices "*toward* constitutional and legal mechanisms" and thus a "move *away* from seeking consent" for the hegemonic project of neoliberalism (Bruff 2014, 116). That is, AN describes the state's reaction to capitalist crunches, in particular the 2008 global financial crisis and its subsequent austerity. As Tansel (2017, 15–16) further explains, authoritarian neoliberalism "operates through a pre-emptive discipline which simultaneously insulates neoliberal policies through a set of administrative, legal and coercive mechanisms and limits the spaces of popular resistance," and is simultaneously characterised by a

"significant escalation in the state's propensity to employ coercion and legal/extra-legal intimidation." As such, AN is understood as a reactive shift in governmental approaches away from consent and towards coercion coupled with insulation.

It is important to note that coercion is not just an increasing reliance on police powers (though it remains a hallmark of modern neoliberalism as seen in the example of ongoing oppression of pro-Palestine activism; Reilly 2025) It also means an *en*trenchment of state control of individual liberties and spheres of social life despite popular depictions of neoliberalism as merely the downsizing of the state (Davey and Koch 2021; Wacquant 2009). State entrenchment is also found in the 'roll-out' neoliberalism described by Peck and Tickell (2002): as economic neoliberalism has become policy 'common sense,' the frontiers of policymaking have shifted to the 'social'—crime, immigration, policing, urban welfare, and so on. The sharp edge of neoliberalism hits not only the economic, but also the social. AN also involves legitimation processes, in which neoliberal states continuously attempt to transform denizens into eager neoliberal subjects—with the goal of preparing new fertile ground for accumulation and preemptively quieting dissent (Kurt-Özman and Tasan-Kok 2025; J. Ward and Da Costa Vieira 2024). Although legitimation processes might seem in conflict with the coercive practices of authoritarianism, Da Costa Vieira (2023) argues that coercion and the manufacturing of consent are not mutually exclusive and have been historically related, dating back to the origins of neoliberalism in the mid-20th century. Indeed, legitimation functions as a *complementary approach* to coercion: a nation's population will unevenly support neoliberal political economy. Ultimately, these twinned processes highlight the often contradictory and complicated processes of neoliberal world-building. This occurs mostly through moral, political, and cultural discourses and functions as a reinforcement of the neoliberal mindset.

It is also linked to theories of depoliticisation, which generally captures moments when the state offloads responsibility for political and economic policy onto external experts, thereby obfuscating the contestability of policymaking and implementation (Burnham 2001; Flinders 2008; Strange 2014). Often but not always, depoliticisation is a process "whereby state managers may seek to place at one remove the politically contested character of governing and in so doing

paradoxically enhance political control" (Burnham 2014, 189). Depoliticisation does not remove politics. Rather, "the arena or process through which decisions are taken is altered (i.e. the form of politics changes or the issue is subject to an altered governance structure)" (Flinders and Buller 2006, 296). New Labour's economic policy reflects a shift from discretion-based to rules-based management, which offloaded responsibility away from the government of the day onto allegedly non-political bodies like 'quangos'[38] set up by New Labour (Flinders 2008). Depoliticisation thus resonates with the insulating strand of AN, as it equally mirrors one of neoliberalism's core processes: the de-democratisation of political economy (Kiely 2017). Moments of crisis exacerbate these processes, as governments look to simultaneously centralise and depoliticise policymaking in response (Nardis 2025). Nonetheless, the relationship between depoliticisation and its counterpart is contested. As Diamond (2015) demonstrates in an examination of public service delivery during the Blair government, politicisation and its counterpart exist in a dialectical relationship. Consequently, while depoliticisation seems like a powerful and unstoppable process, its internal contradictions are exploitable and render contingent the depoliticisation process. AN is therefore a frame that describes two ongoing governance practices that sustain neoliberal political economy: insulation and coercion.

Authoritarian neoliberalism sits within a lineage of different conceptual frames that have tried to understand modern economic restructuring and its effects (e.g., Mark Goodwin and Painter 1996; S. Hall 1985; Peck and Tickell 2002; Poulantzas [1978] 2014; Wacquant 2009). The particular utility of AN is in its emphasis on both the *authoritarian* quality of neoliberalism—in particular, its connection to theories of depoliticisation—and its explanation of how unpopular neoliberal schemes persist even against significant resistance. Many studies of neoliberalism have explored its authoritarian bent (e.g., Peck and Theodore 2019), but AN's description of coercion *and* insulation more accurately describe how non-market institutions now frequently engage in upholding neoliberalism. Additionally, the conceptual framing of authoritarian neoliberalism emphasises

[38] Quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations

two key contradictions: first, neoliberalism's internal complexity and inconsistencies, in that neoliberalism is not a monolithic or complete process; second, how ostensibly conflicting approaches (like legitimation and coercion) in fact complement each other.

Simultaneously, as is discussed throughout this thesis, surprisingly little is said about how the innerworkings of political parties assist in maintaining neoliberal political economy. Although theories of pluralism do consider a party's internal contestation (e.g., Dahl [1961] 2005; Stone 1989), the link between such contestation and neoliberalism is infrequently made. Where this connection is evaluated, the analysis tends to primarily represent political parties as unified and uniform, and concentrate on the national scale (Altınörs and Akçay 2022; Özden et al. 2017; J. Ward and Ward 2023). Consequently, this thesis argues for both scaled understandings of AN as well as reinterpreting political parties as a key non-market institution that is mobilised in service of neoliberal capitalism.

3.3.1 Histories and Types of Authoritarian Neoliberalism:

Since its conception, AN has been used to examine a diverse range of nations, both contemporary and historical. Here, I contextualise authoritarian neoliberalism in the UK during the Thatcher years and its current iteration. Debates around Thatcherism's use of authoritarian approaches is a long standing feature of British political scholarship (K. Bonnett et al. 1984; S. Hall 1985; Poulantzas [1978] 2014). Yet, AN's original formulation ignores this period, which saw other significant authoritarian moments like Pinochet's Chile (Peck and Theodore 2019). Thus, M. D. J. Ryan critiques AN by arguing that Margaret Thatcher's government made extensive use of authoritarian neoliberal approaches during her tenure from 1979 to 1990: for instance,

> …under Thatcher's government, many decisions which were previously made by cabinet bypassed this arena. Her sidelining of cabinet was institutionally supported, and had the effect of taking power out of the hands of elected ministers, granting it instead to an inner circle of unelected advisers. (M. D. J. Ryan 2019, 124)

The shifting of decision-making power away from democratically chosen officials to handpicked party loyalists is a salient moment of insulation. Similarly, Thatcher's use of centralised development corporations indicates a governance style that bypasses local consent altogether (Pile 1995; Wetherell 2025). Her government also engaged in initiatives to restrict the independence of public service departments, locking in austerity without a truly democratic process (M. D. J. Ryan 2019). Insulation is a helpful thread to track, as it demonstrates Thatcherism's innate illiberalism—that is, a resistance to democratic oversight. On the other hand, Thatcher's breaking of the miners' strike in 1985 is an authoritarian move of the coercive kind, in that it enrolled "legal mechanisms in legitimizing" the clearly "violent state actions" of the police (M. D. J. Ryan 2019, 126). Likewise, the rise of 'law-and-order' politics, as captured by Stuart Hall and collaborators ([1978] 2019), reflected the Thatcher government's problematising of dissent as threats to public order—rather than as expressions of democratic engagement. In turn, the government began to rely heavily on police powers to discipline unruly populations. Gamble (1989, 107) writes, Thatcher's government "did not neglect to strengthen the capacity of the state to repress disorder," as uprisings in the 1980s and the Troubles[39] "helped justify a big increase in the range of police equipment and changes in police training." Her government also ensured that police were given new investigative, arrest, interrogation, and crowd-management powers—and it continued to "arm itself to repress violent protest [and] breaches of public order" (Gamble 1989, 117). Policing during Thatcherism (and since; Elliott-Cooper 2021) was explicitly racial and often exercised through everyday procedures that amount to a deep oppression (S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019). The cumulative effect is that the Thatcher years were "defined by both violence, and legal foreclosure of protest" (M. D. J. Ryan 2019, 126). Indeed, Gamble's (1989) description of 'free economy, strong state' comprehensively echoes the government approach of Thatcher. Authoritarian neoliberalism was not confined to Conservative governments either. As discussed above, New Labour engaged in significant insulation and depoliticisation of economic policy and public service

[39] An ethno-nationalist and sectarian conflict in the North of Ireland that lasted for about three decades from the late 1960s to 1998.

delivery (Burnham 2001, 2014; Diamond 2015; Flinders 2008; Strange 2014). Authoritarian neoliberalism is thus not new. Instead, it is a reshaping of an existing nexus of authoritarianism and neoliberalism throughout British history since the 1970s. Recognising AN's historical range does not overstretch the concept. Rather, it highlights the interdependence between neoliberalism and authoritarianism; the complex, contradictory, and variegated nature of neoliberal political economy; and the contingency of the state.

Just as neoliberalism exists in many different forms and across historical periods (Peck and Theodore 2019), authoritarian neoliberalism is multifaceted (Bruff and Tansel 2021; Tansel 2017). Gallo (2022) provides a typology: 'rule by the experts, the people, the leader.' That is, AN as deployed by technocrats, populism, and an autocrat. These types are not fixed; each case holds elements of the other. For the purposes of this thesis, I chiefly consider technocratic forms of AN. The UK is not a traditional authoritarian state and, though there has been a rise in nationalism post-Brexit (Anderson and Secor 2025; A. Bonnett and Hopkins 2025), it has not yet fallen into out-and-out nationalist populism. Rather, my thesis speaks to British urban planning during an era of technocratic approaches to urban development (Raco and Savini 2019). Although Gallo (2022) conceives of expert technocrats as agents attached to international institutions like the European Union, town planning in Britain is rife with both traditional council technocrat planners (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019) and private, external consultants who function very much like technocrats (Wargent et al. 2020). Furthermore, as I discuss below and in subsequent chapters (6, 7), the multi-scalar nature of AN (Piletić 2022) mean that technocratic AN has purchase when used to analyse local urban transformation. While the framework of planning in the UK is unstable (Fearn 2024, 2025), the three case studies in this document reflect a technocratic and insulated approach.

Scholars overwhelmingly see authoritarian neoliberalism as a national project (cf. Can et al. 2024; Jenss 2019; Piletić 2022). Bruff's (2014, 122) original formulation cited the German *Schuldenbremse* ('debt brake') and the UK's Office for Budget Responsibility as examples: both "subordinate the state to constitutional and legal rules that are deemed necessary for prosperity to be

achieved" that simultaneously narrow spaces for popular dissent. Both equally ensure austerity continues, thereby ensuring the state remains a servant of capital. Further developments in the theory—although welcome—continue a nation-state view of AN. Recent books on AN review a wide range of cases of authoritarian neoliberalism (e.g., Italy, Morocco, Jordan, etc.) but typically do so at the level of the nation state (Bruff and Tansel 2021; Tansel 2017). Significant scholarship is on Türkiye, but again a majority examines Erdoğan's AKP party or his government's authoritarian streak (e.g., Altınörs and Akçay 2022; Kaygusuz 2018; Özden et al. 2017; Tansel 2019; Yesil 2016). The same is true when AN is applied to the UK. One example is Fearn's (2024) review of British national planning reforms proposed in 2022. These sought to centralise planning while also removing public deliberation through the use of algorithmic decision-making processes. These reforms were defeated, but they represent a concerted attempt to separate the state from public pressure. However, the work chiefly considers on political manoeuvres within the national Conservative Party and a national policy framework (see also J. Ward and Ward 2023).

Yet, as critics of methodological nationalism insist, it is erroneous to privilege the national scale as the most relevant or impactful (Beck 2007; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2009; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Rejecting methodological nationalism is especially important when treating the state as relational, as is explored in Section 3.3.2 below. In critiquing a grand narrative of the state, Painter (2006) suggests attending to the prosaicness of the state—the everyday and the ordinary—to better capture the diversity of the state across its various scales.

3.3.2 Urban Authoritarian Neoliberalism:

As discussed in the Introduction (Chapter 1), one of my thesis's main theoretical contributions is to understandings of AN at the local scale. Interrogating AN at the local scale is especially important because the illiberal practices that bolster contemporary processes of capital accumulation work through and occur at local scales, as regulation school theorists have historically argued (Hillier et al. 2022; Painter 1991). For instance, Goodwin and Painter

(1996) describe a then-new set of local processes that sought to manage the contradictions of the economy in the dying stages of Fordism. Processes included an increasing reliance on private and charitable service provision coupled with a hyper-localisation. Indeed, the urban scale has always been an important place and space for the upholding of accumulation processes (Painter 2011). These threads echo the revanchist city: the neoliberal urbanism of the 1990s necessarily relied on new urban policy designed to punish, and extract revenge on, marginalised groups by exiling them from the city (MacLeod 2002; N. Smith 2005).

Scholars of neoliberal urbanism have thus made significant contributions in considering how urban spaces anchor authoritarian urban approaches—illustrations are as diverse as Belgrade, Glasgow, Kigali, San Francisco, and Jakarta (Luger and Dürr 2025; MacLeod 2002; Piletić 2022; N. Smith 2005). Illiberal moves translate into a variety of governmental approaches and outcomes imposed at the local scale, which are far too numerous to capture here. Nevertheless, I identify a few relevant strands that encapsulate the most important dynamics at play (increasing insulation through centralisation and a sharpening of coercive governance). I close this section by explicating some research gaps that my thesis fills, namely that of the role of the political party.

First is a "sharpening of coercion" in contemporary urbanism (Can et al. 2024, 690). As urban scholars have long argued, modern forms of urban development go hand-in-hand with violent displacement through (state-led) urban regeneration and renewal (Fullilove 2016; Pain 2019; Pull and Richard 2021), gentrification (Elliott-Cooper et al. 2020) and eviction (Baker 2020; Paton and Cooper 2016). In this literature we find echoes of the revanchist city (MacLeod 2002; N. Smith 2005) as well as accumulation by dispossession, which contends that economic growth is increasingly achieved not by free exchange but through a forceful appropriation of capital from smaller holders of capital by larger holders (Harvey 2012). Examples include but are not limited to privatisation of nationalised industries, rent extraction, and the continual enclosure of public land (Christophers 2018, 2019a). Violent dispossession happens at the urban scale too, as Can and Fanton (2024) demonstrate in Istanbul and São Paulo. Both cities have seen commodification of space, privatisation of the commons, and the

displacement of thousands—done in the service of capital accumulation and urban transformation. In parts of São Paulo, the Brazilian military supported the private sector in achieving dispossession. Istanbul has seen urban renewal projects that reshape the city in favour of capital. Regardless of the case the aim is the same: to displace working class residents in pursuit of accumulation (Hodkinson and Essen 2015; V. Cooper and Paton 2021). In this research's case study area (Haringey), scholars have framed Haringey Development Vehicle is a revanchist response to the 2011 uprising, intended to fundamentally reshape the fabric of the area (see Chapter 6) (Horton and Penny 2024; Perera 2019a, 2019b). I build on this through a deep exploration of the connections and relationships between the local state and the local party in their deployment of localised illiberal neoliberalism.

Second is insulation through centralisation. National governments have centralised planning powers, removing spaces for democratic dissent. The UK government's recent update to the National Planning Policy Framework is allegedly designed to "accelerate development and economic growth through 'modern' supply-side planning reforms"—i.e., continue to bolster capitalist accumulation (Fearn 2025, 301). The update will allow the government to bypass local authorities, "with public participation increasingly seen as a problem" for the central state to resolve—rather than a democratic right or necessity (Fearn 2025, 314). Large-scale infrastructure projects in India—like inter-city and -national highways—are similarly achieved by central, public-private organs with equally predictable results (Bathla 2025). As I consider in Chapters 6 and 7, this theoretical thread overlooks the importance of political parties to processes of centralisation and insulation, which is a core contention of this thesis.

As I argue throughout my thesis, the national-centric approach is under-developed: it not only treats the local scale as merely a territory in which AN plays out, but it also tends to understand neoliberalism as a bipartisan effort. Di Giovanni's (2017) study of Istanbul is an illuminating model of the approach's oversights. The work tracks the rise of undemocratic planning practices through the lenses of coercion and branding. Nonetheless, Di Giovanni (2017, p. 111) treats Istanbul as a container of these national dynamics: the work "fram[es] the governance of the AKP over Istanbul's city-making" since 2001 as authoritarian

neoliberalism, thereby both situating Erdoğan's national government as the driving engine of AN and relegating Istanbul's internal politics to the margins—instead focusing mostly on AKP as a national party. My research critiques this conceptual framing by drawing attention to the power of local political parties. Far from being just a container for national authoritarian mechanisms, the local scale itself is instead productive of—and reactive to—competing forces that maintain and resist authoritarian practices (Luger and Dürr 2025). That is, the local scale is both a space *through* which, and a place *in* which, AN is exercised. It is also the site of reworking of relations across scale, with the national, regional, and local competing against the organising of unruly populations (Piletić 2022). As Jenss (2019) finds in Oaxaca, Mexico, multiple state scales engaged in coercion and isolation to prop up accumulation in the city. National austerity programs pushed subnational (state) and municipal governments to follow suit, cutting their budgets severely. The Oaxacan municipal government turned to reshaping its urban fabric to find the right spatial fix in the form of tourism (Yrigoy 2014), which is then propped up by the national government. Simultaneously, "austerity and policing discipline those that deviate from or dissent with urban renewal policies," with dissent often being quelled by national police brought in from elsewhere (Jenss 2019, 311) Attending to the scaled nature of AN translates into a better understanding of how the "urban scale has remained central to the (re)assertion of state power" in contemporary politics (Piletić 2022, 287). It also helps shed more light on the particular processes that uphold a given form of capitalist relation (Hillier et al. 2022; Painter 2011). As is explored throughout this thesis, AN is thus pervasive and so remains an important dimension of urban transformation to consider. AN's entanglement with political parties is equally important, given the interdependence of the state and the party as discussed in Section 3.2.

Now, I move to discussing theories of citizenship and their importance to understanding activism and resistance to illiberal governance.

3.4 Citizenship:

Having assessed the state-party nexus and its role in the maintenance and contestation of neoliberal logics, I now move to discussing theories of citizenship.

Citizenship is an useful frame through which authoritarian neoliberalism's reliance on cultural and moral legitimation processes can be understood (Kurt-Özman and Tasan-Kok 2025; J. Ward and Da Costa Vieira 2024). As discussed in Section 3.3, legitimation processes can go hand-in-hand with coercive practices of authoritarianism. Da Costa Vieira (2023) for instance demonstrates how Thatcher-era propaganda intended to justify anti-labour policies actually complemented the coercive policies of the era, in that it manufactured consent for destructive policies. This seemingly conflicting approach thus emphasises neoliberalism's internal instability and contradictions. Citizenship can subsequently help explain resistance to AN—like the work of the BFYA, which is analysed in Chapter 5—as it provides a framework to interrogate the grounds and impacts of such resistance. This section therefore discusses how questions of legitimation, activism, and authoritarian neoliberalism fit together.

As a fundamental and socio-legal concept, citizenship cuts through various scales, spaces, and dynamics of the state. As a legal marker of membership in a nation state, for instance, it determines what rights and obligations individuals have vis-à-vis the state (Brubaker 2002). Of chief interest to this thesis is *social citizenship*, the right to access a state's welfare system (Marshall 1950). However, having the legal status is not enough to have full rights, as the capacity to exercise one's rights is contingent on differing state scales. A citizen's spaces for direct political action are for instance different than a non-citizen's—and, as is expressed in Chapter 5, different *types* of citizens have different capacities for direct action. Research into neoliberal citizenship has reflected how citizenship (and, importantly, social citizenship's associated welfare rights) has become uneven, with certain subclasses increasing in their capacities and rights (Joppke 2021; Maestri 2017; Sparke 2006). As strong social citizenship is one of the conditions for democracy, the erosion of the welfare state is bound up with the shift to authoritarian neoliberalism. As Somers (2022) argues, because market logic requires a compliant citizenry, proponents of neoliberalism have actively worked to delink social citizenship and political rights, reducing both. Even in traditionally authoritarian states like China, uneven citizenship statuses work to bolster existing regimes of accumulation, as Zhang (2018) finds in research on

rural-to-urban internal migrants. These two examples indicate the interdependence of AN, moral and cultural discourses, and the rights and obligations of citizens living in illiberal times. As will be analysed in Section 3.4.2 using Isin's (2008) acts of citizenship framework, citizenship is never static. Beyond being a simple entry point to understanding how AN works at the national scale, citizenship studies allows me to further explore the multiscalar nature of contemporary illiberalism.

Moreover, as I explore in Chapter 5 with an examination of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association (BFYA), the angle of citizenship also allows me to interpret activism in contemporary times. Citizenship is frequently a space *through which* claims to both improved conditions and transformed political subjectivities can be advanced. In addition to reviewing conceptions of citizenship and its changes over time, this section also considers the acts of citizenship concept (Isin 2008) as a helpful framework to interpret the particular claims and discourses of the BFYA, much of which was oriented towards recognition from the state (Chapter 5). The section ends with a discussion of critique of the theories of acts before concluding.

3.4.1 What is citizenship? How has it changed?

Following Marshall's (1950) classical description of citizenship as a status that guarantees access to three types of rights (civil, political, and social), modern scholarship has split citizenship in four core components: membership, legal status, rights, and participation. A resident can be included in some but not all, and a 'full citizen' is wholly included (Stokke 2017). Brubaker's (2002) classic book on citizenship speaks to *membership*: citizens are those assumed to be members of a defined, bounded, and stable nation state. Although, in practice, membership is not deployed equally, it is a foundation for *legal status.* Associated with status and membership is the set of *rights* that follows, which range from voting to access to welfare. Stokke (2017) notes that rights are unstable, with constantly shifting boundaries. As I develop in the subsequent subsections, the politics of rights is often one of contestation and conflict. Finally, a sibling to rights is *participation*, which may also be understood as *obligations.* Participation in the nation-state

need not be restricted to politics: participation in one's localised community is also increasingly seen as important to understand citizenship (Stokke 2017). As I contend throughout this thesis, what is considered appropriate or genuine participation often hinges on *who* is in power (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019). In the British post-war era, full citizenship was a "status position that mitigate[d] the negative effects of economic class" because of the security provided by the welfare systems (that is, the *social* citizenship) that were institutionalised by the post-war settlement (Turner 2001, 190). However, as Joppke (2021, 182; see also Sparke 2006) writes, this status position has been "hollow[ed]-out" by the "inequalities of global capitalism, the tying of recompensing rewards to individual desert and performance, and the evaporation" of expectations—how?

Neoliberalism has significantly changed citizenship in the Global North. Authoritarian neoliberalism in the UK (Section 3.3), for instance, has meant significant restrictions on rights to protest (Selmini and Di Ronco 2023) and the proscription of non-violent direct action groups like Palestine Action (Reilly 2025). Such limitations on forms of political speech are meaningful restrictions on both political and civil rights. After the COVID pandemic, austerity continues. The breadth of social citizenship established in the post-war settlement—still limbering on even after decades of austerity—is ever shrinking. Recent moves to implement welfare austerity (F. Ryan 2025) have only exacerbated the sharp edge of citizenship. Now, contemporary citizens are meant to be 'active,' with the effect of casting passive denizens out of the fold. I contrast this idea of citizenry with 'activist' citizens in Section 3.4.2.

Active citizenship is broadly understood as being active in civic engagement, volunteering, neighbourhood associations, and politics (Kim 2010). The Thatcher and Major governments of the 1980s and 90s 'rediscovered' (Brehony 1992; Maschette 2023) the idea of active citizenship with the goal of fostering new entrepreneurial values in local communities. strengthening engagement of the citizenry through volunteering, and decreasing perceived dependency on the state (Bee and Pachi 2014; Kearns 1995; Kim 2010). The case study of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association (Chapter 5) occurs during this timeframe, in which active

citizenship was promoted by the national government (Da Costa Vieira 2023) in ways that did not correspond to BFYA's activism.

Active citizenship did not end with election of New Labour, who shifted the underpinnings of social citizenship to stress an "equality of lifelong opportunity and social inclusion. This meant that the redistribution of opportunities through education and other forms of investment in human capital in order to achieve greater *future* prosperity" instead of a redistribution of existing capital, now (Lister 2012, 125, see also 2005; J. S. Davies 2012). David Cameron's 'Big Society' offered little change in state conceptions of the citizen either (Espiet-Kilty 2016; Kisby 2010). Active citizenship remains a key element of British citizenship even as the Big Society faded away (Bee 2017; Bee and Guerrina 2014; Bee and Pachi 2014). Its institutionalisation after decades of promotion is best captured by rhetoric around an active citizenry during the COVID-19 pandemic, using health workers as exemplars (Andreouli and Brice 2022). The active citizen remains an important part of social policy in the United Kingdom. As reviewed below, the binary also plays continues to play an important role in the expectations of citizens, and thus who counts as citizen or not.

Across these two (and other) categories, then, British citizenship and its relevant social protections are becoming a privilege to be earned rather than a right (Andreouli and Dashtipour 2014; F. Webber 2022). The transformation from (a broadly) full citizenship that derives from community membership to a conditional model has consequently created groups of citizens who lack full access to fundamental welfare programs like social housing (Stokke 2017).

Before discussing one of my thesis's central theories—acts of citizenship (Isin 2008)—it is important to link authoritarian neoliberalism and citizenship. Davey and Koch (2021) offer a helpful guide here by linking the disciplining arm of AN to citizenship. Recall that AN involves insulation and coercion (Bruff 2014). Coercion is not just about increasingly violent police (though that is a longstanding feature of neoliberalism; S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019). Instead, AN is also about the further expansion of the state's control over the social sphere, that is, how neoliberalism maintains power over social reproductive functions. Sarah Marie Hall (2019b) calls this 'everyday austerity.' Individual life progression, too, is not

insulated from AN—"in austere times questions are therefore raised about how people's lives play out alongside imagined life-courses, aspirations, and expectations, of the spaces, times, and social relations in which they situate their lives" (S. M. Hall 2019a, 488). In the urban realm, everyday austerity displaces working class people, severing their connections from relations of kinship and care (Gillespie et al. 2021; N. Smith 2005). Davey and Koch (2021, 46) refer to the link with AN as a "top-down expansion of legal coercion into many working class people's daily lives." Such an expansion is encapsulated by the

> omnipresence of state and state-like officials, or what people amorphously framed as "Them." "They" included local officials, such as social workers and the police; public bodies, including the Department of Work and Pensions; and private actors to whom the government outsourced responsibilities, such as housing associations and bailiffs. (Davey and Koch 2021, 48)

Surveillance, oversight, intrusion, and "privation and punitiveness" are all everyday expressions of an authoritarian neoliberalism that seeks to control the working class in the pursuit of profitability and accumulation. It is also telling that private contractors are equally omnipresent as are state officials (Davey and Koch 2021, 50). Although AN applies widely, its intensity necessarily varies, with certain groups bearing the brunt of its punitiveness. Simultaneously, as I have reviewed above, it relies on discourses of stigma to justify punitive welfare regimes. As a mode of governance, then, AN not only especially oppresses the working class but also works to sustain certain discourses as necessary for capital accumulation (Da Costa Vieira 2023; Kurt-Özman and Tasan-Kok 2025).

3.4.2 How to obtain full citizenship? Acts of Citizenship Theory

How groups attain full citizenship is still unclear. Full citizenship is understood as inclusion across the categories of membership, legal status, rights, and participation (Stokke 2017). Scholarship has long bifurcated citizenship between formal citizenship (granted by legal status) and substantive citizenship (full inclusion across the other three categories mentioned above) (Brubaker 2002; Roy and Neveu 2023; Stewart 1995). Studies of substantive citizenship typically emphasise an individual's habitus, the "internalized or embodied ways of thought

and conduct" that goes into the 'stuff' of citizenship (Isin 2008, 17). This literature assumes these two aspects of citizenship are detachable, which various thinkers have critiqued through a focus on scale, politics, bordering, and gender (Andrijasevic 2013; Guillaume 2014; Lister 2007; Nyers 2018; Roy and Neveu 2023). As is shown in Chapter 5, citizenship is necessarily uneven based on an individual's position. The scene and script of citizenship are already set in these analyses, with groups merely (re-)acting them out (Artero and Ambrosini 2022; Isin 2017). In other words, this perspective leaves out the *processual* element of citizenship—the "importance of mobilisation, contestation and claims to rights to the ways in which citizenship is negotiated on the ground" (Andrijasevic 2013, 50).

One solution is to shift the lens towards citizenship-related activity that "constitute[s] actors who claim and assert rights and obligations, [and] enact themselves " as citizens (Isin 2008, 39). That is, it is a process of differentiation and defining through which a group claims entrance into the category of 'citizen.' These are 'acts of citizenship,' and inform this thesis's research on the Broadwater Farm Youth Association (Chapter 5). Acts are more than the "routinized social actions," or scripts, of citizenship. Indeed, acts "*stand in contrast to habitus and other concepts that emphasize the relatively enduring disposition*" of citizenship as they "break routines, understandings, and practices." Typical scripts of citizenship like "voting, taxpaying and enlisting may make a difference under certain conditions" but they are not *inherently* different: they are expected from (active) citizens. To engage in an act of citizenship is to "enact the unexpected and unpredictable" and different (Isin 2009, 379–80). In sum, acts of citizenship occur when "individuals and groups articulate a claim to political subjectivity through assuming the very rights they are seen to lack" (Darling 2014, 82). As I detail in Chapter 5, acts of citizenship is a framework that helps explain how activism can transform political subjectivities.

Isin (2009, 371) identifies three relevant aspects to identify what constitutes an act of citizenship. First, the qualities of an act only arise after the fact. What matters is that acts permit actors to "constitute themselves as those with 'the right to claim rights.'" The intended results of an act of citizenship—equality, freedom, recognition, and so on—are less important than its single quality as a rupture.

This is why acts that fail at their stated goals (Andrijasevic 2013; Pontrandolfo 2018) or are unintentional (Morrison 2008) are still acts, as the relevant point is the transformation to full citizen. Acts that have unintended consequences are still acts, too, even if they result in regressive outcomes (Mantu and Guild 2013). Acts are a diverse category, and thus Isin (2008, 2009, 2017) insists scholars attend to this difference through an open approach that does not ascribe qualities to an act but rather stresses its transformative power.

Second, an act of citizenship is about the formation of "actors that become answerable to justice against injustice" (Isin 2008, 39). The formation of the subject of citizen rather than stranger or Other is at the core of this theory (Nyers 2008). What does this subject look like? A subject's key quality is its answerability: the citizenship actor acts in such a way that it *demands* a response (Nielsen 2012). Nielsen (2008, 268) explains, answerability implies that an "actor is responsible for [the act]"—but it is deeper than that: the "answerability of the act… lies in its capacity to evoke a response." But whose response is evoked through an answerable act? Typically, this is understood as a specific polity: the city, the nation, or some other scale of the state (e.g., Barbero 2012; Earle 2012; Jacobson 2022; Janoschka 2015; Nyers 2008). In Chapter 5, the response evoked is from the London Borough of Haringey. Yet this is not necessarily the case. Isin's (2008) formulation relies on a double answerability—an answerability to not only that polity but also the philosophical Other. Although a vague definition, Hsu (2008) elaborates by drawing attention to the notion of universality. "Two-sided answerability can be interpreted to mean that no political representative or representation can satisfy the actual experience of every citizen," as there is an emphasis "on being answerable to both [the] universal and particular demands" within a particular act (Hsu 2008, 260). That is, acts hold a demand for both individual policy responses *and* a reworking of an existing ethical code that defines the polity's relationship with the implicated actors—i.e., an answerability "to justice against injustice" (Isin 2008, 39). This also means that acts need not be "revolutionary in nature and effect" as long as such acts constitute an answerable subject (Darling 2014, 88; Jakimów 2022; Saeidi 2010).

Third, as indicated throughout the literature, acts are not always rooted in the law or legal routes. For one, acts categorically must break the law (Barbero 2012; Castañeda 2013; Hsu 2008; Jacobson 2022) or at the very least call it into question (Darling 2014; Fierro 2020; Jakimów 2022; Pontrandolfo 2018) because of their nature as a force that makes a rupture in a given script. Though citizenship is more than just a category created by a legal framework, it is often the law that circumscribes citizenship-as-process, as evidenced by work on citizenship in authoritarian contexts. Jakimów's (2017, 2022) work on China is an illustrative case. Jakimów (2017, 2022) finds that acts of citizenship under illiberal states manifest as what initially appear to be not acts, like activists organising 'Know-Your-Rights' trainings for migrants in Chinese cities. However, the authoritarian legal structure means that even typical citizenship scripts can be transformative, something Jakimów (2017, 2022) calls an "accommodative act" (see also Saeidi 2010). The case of the BFYA is replete with examples of acts that call racist legal frameworks into question. I build on this in the next subsection. Moreover, those who engage in acts need not be *a priori* recognised as legal subjects. Indeed, many works on acts focus on migratory politics, considering the activism of undocumented immigrants and their effects (Barbero 2012; Darling 2014; Depraetere and Oosterlynck 2017; Nyers 2008) or potentially unlawful activism that assists unauthorised migrants (Castañeda 2013; Jakimów 2017; Walters 2008). The principle extends to subjects that are still legal residents but do not have full citizenship like the Roma and Sinti people in Europe (Aradau et al. 2013; Maestri 2017; Pontrandolfo 2018). Instead, acts must at least have significant impact on law that "*misrecognizes them"* (Isin 2009, 382).

The literature describes a wide variety of activity as acts of citizenship. Acts as diverse as protests and demonstrations like sit-ins and marches (Andrijasevic 2013; Earle 2012; Hsu 2008; Fierro 2020; Isin 2009; Nyers 2008) and building occupations (Barbero 2012; Jacobson 2022); creative pursuits through various forms of media (Hughes and Forman 2017; Ní Mhurchú 2016; Stavinoha 2019); social networking online (Johns 2014; Song 2022); and eviction prevention (Janoschka 2015) among others. All of these acts are practices "of making citizens or citizenship"—including those that aim to "redefine, decentre or even refuse

citizenship"—which go beyond simply being disruptive, and actually approach citizenship as processual (Fortier 2016, 1039). The activism explored in Chapter 5 emphasises practices of making citizens under a context of managerial and authoritarian governance. This definition, although expansive, can account for the diversity of acts that "actualize a rupture in the given" inherent to acts of citizenship (Isin 2009, 380). Yet, these depictions of acts overwhelmingly position them as an oppositional or collective struggle, through which an actor demands answerability to justice. This is why the literature typically focuses on an oppositional form of politics—protests, demonstrates, sit-ins and so on. Even investigations of everyday acts of citizenship (e.g., Stavinoha 2019; Neveu 2019) therefore accentuate their oppositional nature. Nonetheless, an oppositional framework overlooks the quieter ways that activism can remain transformative even when it is not explicitly confrontational. The next section discusses 'resistance through accommodation' and connects it the acts of citizenship concept.

Accommodative Resistance:

Depictions of activism typically portray it as confrontational and oppositional. However, Darling (2014, 74) reminds us it is vital to attend to the "less striking" methods of extracting change as to understand how the subject formation of citizenship acts can be "explored without recourse to a revolutionary framing." Namely, how can scholars account for all the forms of political activism that *do* generate new subjects without simply assuming that *all* non-oppositional forms are habitus, not acts (Squire 2017)? I turn to Saeidi's (2010) analysis of female relatives of martyrs in Iran to describe how to analyse what Jakimów (2022, 509) calls "resistance through accommodation." The activism of this group is replete with subtle moves to "initiate debates regarding democratic reform, and in effect also underscore the national right to self-determination in public domains," thereby aiming to create a new subject of themselves. One such move is a young woman's desire to be martyr like her father:

> she proves to be an 'activist citizen,' desperately seeking to create the just world her father dreamt of… She therefore endorses a noble death as a peoples' entitlement against present and past injustices, and identifies the

> body as a medium through which she can exert claims to autonomy for a variety of interrelated ethical pursuits. (Saeidi 2010, 117)

This outspoken desire variously upholds and challenges a range of expectations of the woman's subject status. As such, Saeidi's (2010, 114) "analysis reveals that women's acts of citizenship facilitate their distinct claims on autonomy," and therefore work to form a new subjectivity—even when such acts comply with state directives. This reflects a covert "utilisation of the state- or market-defined language and channels" that enables defiance (Jakimów 2017, 916). Thus, a sly use of state-sanctioned habitus can, in fact, be used to cause a rupture over the longer term. This is what Jakimów (2022, 509) terms "resistance through accommodation." Accommodative resistance is collectively still a citizenship act, as it still causes a transformation in subjectivity. I build on accommodative acts in Chapter 5, with an evaluation of such acts under Thatcherism.

Acts of Citizenship and the Active Citizen:

Before reviewing some criticism of the theory of acts and concluding, I briefly return to the idea of the active citizen. Considering that active citizens are meant to be politically participating, it may initially appear that active citizens are engaging in acts. Nonetheless, Isin (2008, 39) emphasises a difference between actors who "enact themselves as activist citizens" and active citizens. Active citizens are those who "act out already written scripts," whereas activist citizens "engage in writing scripts and creating the scene" (Isin 2009, 381). The difference is rooted in the definition of acts as ruptures—to act is to rupture, to be active is to repeat a script. As discussed above, the state depicts the active citizen as those who "actively engage in prescribed forms of public activity" (Neveu 2019, 87). This is contrasted by the activist citizen, who Neveu (2019, 88) highlights as "inventing new sites and types of citizenship" due to their rupturing nature. Put differently, the active citizen writes to their representatives to demand regularisation for unauthorised migrants; the activist citizen is the unauthorised migrant who stages sit-ins to *forcibly acquire* those documents (Barbero 2012). This distinction is crucial as active citizens are not engaged in acts; they already have the substance of citizenship. Activist citizens have *not yet* won (some or all of) that

substance and are struggling to obtain it. As is explored in Chapter 5, the Broadwater Farm Youth Association—while technically a formally organised and state-recognised entity—was able to write new citizenship scripts.

Even though the activist/active binary is valuable, it raises a significant question: are groups locked into their respective categories? Scholarship has not satisfactorily answered this question (e.g., Fagan and Sircar 2017; Papa and Milioni 2013). I however argue that the answer is no. As citizenship involves habitus that is formed over time *and* a formal legal status, it follows that citizenship is contingent: neither habitus nor legal status is mutable (Isin 2008). Moreover, as citizenship and its subsidiary categories are sites of struggle, subject positions (e.g., outsiders or aliens) are "neither static nor impermeable," especially given new cross-border lived experience(s) (Isin 2017, 504–5). Moreover, as reviewed earlier, research on social citizenship has shown that welfare rights derived from citizenship have fluctuated across space and time (Somers 2022). In other words, a withdrawal of these certain rights therefore destabilises citizenship from full to partial: some individuals lose rights while others did not. To regain lost rights, a partial citizen must shift from active to activist and engage in acts. The active/activist binary is thus a helpful heuristic—but the categories should not be understood as fixed.

Critique of Acts of Citizenship:

The acts of citizenship approach is not without criticism. For one, acts themselves are difficult to delineate. Although an act's subject transformation is a clearly defined rule, in practice this is difficult to determine (Darling 2017). As discussed above and elaborated in Chapter 5, political activism is contingent on context, and scholars situated in the Global North should not assume acts are consistent cross-geographically. Brandzel (2022) and Fortier (2016) rightly point out that many studies that claim to describe an act of citizenship do so thinly, with many merely describing habitus or a ripple in the script—rather than a clear break. Finally, the theory of acts hazards reifying the violence inherent in the bordering processes implied by citizenship (Brandzel 2016; Nyers 2018). As Tyler writes (2010, 66), citizenship "feeds from the power of sovereignty to erect and

maintain borders—borders that it cannot ultimately fully control. Citizenship cannot be thought outside of sovereignty and control." Thus, to work on acts of citizenship, while seemingly critical and progressive, is to "consistently mold and remold citizenship, to claim to find one more type, or authorize one more manifestation of citizenship, is to continue to build another rampart on behalf of violent regimes and institutions" (Brandzel 2022, 399). Put another way, to valorise certain elements of a violent system is to potentially reinforce it.

However, thorns aside, the conceptualisation of acts remains a powerful approach to unpacking citizenship and its development. First, its emphasis on process already rethinks citizenship at its core by doing away with simple binaries of status and substance to focus on a more holistic view (Brandzel 2022; Darling 2017; Isin 2017). A subtle but powerful shift, a processual standpoint better captures not only the lived experience of citizenship but also the wider context of how claims to/from citizenship play out. More importantly, the theory of acts stresses the "contingencies, ambiguities, and contestations of citizenship, as opposed to the certainties, assuredness, and formalities of legal approaches." It is this openness that allows acts to be "attuned to how citizenship is simultaneously a means of governance and exclusionary rule, and also an important identity through which progressive struggles get enacted and performed" (Nyers 2015, 33–34). Second, in a more grounded sense, acts deals with the actually existing context of bordering regimes that have a vested interest in maintaining violent structures—but without necessarily reinforcing citizenship's perceived value. That is, scholars can acknowledge that obtaining full citizenship brings benefits to a group without falling into the trap described by Brandzel (2016, 2022).

Therefore, citizenship, constantly contested and unstable, is a wide term that contains four main subsets: membership, rights, participation, and legal status. Of interest here is rights, which is further separated into social, civil, and political rights. Nevertheless, neoliberalism has refigured the definition of 'citizen' in crucial ways: now, good citizens are supposed to consume and act in certain, prescribed manners. Those who do not meet expectations are excluded. Excluded citizens, as considered below, are prevented from obtaining full citizenship as they are stigmatised, punished, and barred from achieving true social citizenship. One

explanation of how groups actually obtain the label 'citizen' is Isin (2008, 2009, 2017)'s concept of 'acts of citizenship.' He theorises that groups act in ways that rupture a given order that culminate in their transformation from non-citizen to citizen, ultimately generating new social scripts through their rupturing.

3.5 Conclusion:

This chapter has presented and discussed different bodies of literature to think through authoritarian neoliberalism; the local state and the local party; and theories of citizenship. The chapter started by considering the state, emphasising its relational character. Using regulation school debates about the state, I turned to critically analysing its role in the maintenance of capitalist relations. Given the importance of the local in the maintenance of neoliberalism, it was also important to then consider the local state—in the UK, the council. Although councils have been examined extensively, less is known about how political parties influence the work of councils and councillors. My research intervenes here. Returning to the political party, I assessed how local parties work with the local state to reproduce authoritarian neoliberal logics, which I then concretised using critical perspectives of the Labour Party. In Section 3.2.3, I have called this relation the 'state-party nexus' to underline the tightness of connection, which I further examine in Chapter 6. Leveraging research from political science on hegemonic parties, I finally combined these threads to build background on spaces of contestation in local political parties and illiberal logics.

From there, I turned to examining contemporary modes of governance, with an emphasis on analysing state actions amidst resistance to neoliberal political economy. Considering how the state engages in insulation and oppression allowed me to not only historically contextualise my research, but also to start thinking about illiberalism's geography: that is, the relevance of the urban scale in processes of governance. A motivation of my research is to continue to develop scaled understandings of authoritarian neoliberalism, demonstrating how the local scale is key to neoliberalism's continuing success. This review has revealed the dearth of research on the importance of party politics. Thus, one of this thesis's

contentions is that scholars must pay more attention to the relationship between parties and authoritarian neoliberalism.

Next, I assessed theories of citizenship. I began by exploring how citizenship is related to AN, demonstrating their mutual dependence. The review then considered citizenship's makeup and conceptual development. I link new modes of citizenship (i.e., active citizenship) back to authoritarian neoliberalism, demonstrating citizenship's usefulness in interpreting the moral and cultural discourses of contemporary illiberalism. I conclude with discussing the acts of citizenship, which posits that full inclusion in citizenship is achieved through groups acting *as if* they were full citizens. Often, acts are spectacular forms of resistance like protests and sit-ins. I highlight new research that troubles this perspective by emphasising the quieter forms of resistance, termed resistance by accommodation.

Through the articulation of literatures from various fields and theories, this chapter has constructed a framework for the analysis of my three cases in Haringey, London. Specifically, by drawing together elements from theories of the local state, parties, authoritarian neoliberalism, and citizenship I have developed a conceptual frame for this thesis. This framework allows me to examine how the local state and the local party stifle dissent; how this relation—while strong—is not all powerful and remains open to contestation; and how groups living in illiberal times might be able to effectively resist. The next chapter outlines the methodology employed in my research. It also reflects on the research's political and ethical dimensions. I subsequently present the three empirical chapters, which concretise this literature—illustrating how those insights break new ground in understandings of the state and resistance.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This section lays out the methodological approach to the research. It covers the groundwork of the range of methods I employed and the making of this document. I describe in detail each of the utilised methods, explicating the kinds of data each method attempted to address. I then demonstrate how the methods fit together in Section 4.1.6, recognising the gaps, overlaps, and fragments of data inherent in qualitative research. I outline how I mixed the methods while also attending to the multiplicity of place and research. I next lay out my analytical approach, which straddled all four methods. This subsection further links together each of the methods. I conclude with a discussion of research ethics—both institutional and in my presentation of findings—as well as my positionality as a researcher and an in/outsider.

The intentionally wide-ranging character of my methodological approach arises from a recognition that housing is an affectively and emotionally charged subject, so its meaning to individuals is varied. Simultaneously, housing is a politically charged object, circulating in various spheres and ideologies (Nowicki 2023). It also comes from an acknowledgement that my interests themselves were broad, covering housing, activism, politics, etc. Combining a disparate set of methods meant attending to the fragments (McFarlane 2018), gaps and subsequent collage (C. Freeman 2020), and hybridity (Watkins 2020) inherent in social science research. Woven through this section is also a process of unlearning my own biases as a former state actor. Learning to trust the instincts and viewpoints of a diverse set of actors was as much as an inquiry into my own development as it was of this thesis's three case studies (Herbert 2000). As Haraway (1988) reminds us, knowledge is not neutral. By approaching inquiry with flexibility and openness, I worked to ensure that the produced knowledge reflects its situatedness but also to draw attention to the very politics that undergird the research.

4.1 Methods:

4.1.1 Casting the Net:

My PhD proposal began as a look into the Haringey Development Vehicle and claims to citizenship within the StopHDV movement. I intended to uncover how such claims were made, understood, and responded to by a wide range of actors (including but not limited to councillors, activists, lay residents, and council staff). As part of my graduate studies, I completed a master's degree. I used the master's dissertation as a case study (Cousin 2005), in which I conducted a document analysis of two core documents of the Vehicle. This exercise was intended to pull out key themes, actors, and interests that were associated with the Vehicle—as well as guide the doctoral research.

It was during this brief study that I stumbled upon the Broadwater Farm Youth Association. The estate's historical significance as both a site of Black resistance to policing (Elliott-Cooper 2021) and as a "sink estate" (Slater 2018b) sparked my curiosity. Its striking architecture and historical import suggested the estate held onto important stories. It is a space and place unlike any other in Haringey. Preliminary desk research led me to the Association. As Lorimer (2010, 257) observes, diving into the archive can spark a "yearning to pay a visit in person to *that* place" of research, something I felt. When I came to Tottenham for the first time, I realised I needed to visit the estate. The initial walking visit of Broadwater Farm inspired many questions: Why are all the (few) shops closed? Why is it hemmed in by a park on one side and two schools on the other? Why are there no ground floor flats—but no way of walking between block's upper floors? What is the story of all the huge, beautiful murals? Although such curiosity is a sensation that is not new to researchers (e.g., Nassar 2018), I call attention to its significance in contrast to more rigid methods like triangulation (see Section 4.2), which tend to focus in rather than broaden out. As such, the embodied experience of the estate's scale was important to developing my interest in Broadwater Farm. This visit prompted me to "shift my frame of research in an ad hoc way," as the BFYA was initially meant to be a short aside (C. Freeman 2020, 333).

Having conducted this initial research, I then began a period of "casting [the] net," with the aim of making connections with activists, (past and current)

councillors, and other community leaders (Crang and Cook 2007). I contacted several academics and journalists who had done similar work in Haringey, with the aim of having informal conversations and developing a list of contacts. Having built these seeds for my later snowballing (Parker et al. 2020), I committed to spending three months at the start of my field research to familiarising myself with Tottenham (August to December 2024). On the suggestion of one contact, I began contributing at a foodbank based in Northumberland Park. Though this started as a way of meeting new contacts and integrating myself into the area, I continued to volunteer between once and twice a week for the research year (August 2024-2025). Through this experience, I built a deeper knowledge of Tottenham's daily flows of life—and developed strong connections with activists. These connections then reinforced and legitimised my presence in the area (Jordan and Moser 2020). Importantly, I discovered that the Haringey Development Vehicle had receded in the minds of activists. Although the risk of regeneration continues, this specific scheme became less relevant. As such, though my research frame would eventually shift after a first round of interviews—comparably to Cordelia Freeman's (2020) experience—this 'casting the net' was vital to, and necessary for, the shape of the research (Crang and Cook 2007). The following sections built on these first impressions of Haringey, and so the remaining methods explain my approach from this point on.

4.1.2 Document Analysis:

I conducted a systematic investigation of key documents across both the Haringey Development Vehicle and High Road West schemes as a starting point for this research and as following on from my master's research. This method aimed to uncover the political and economic logics of regeneration, reveal the evidentiary base for the two schemes, and see Tottenham through the eyes of the state (J. C. Scott 2020). These documents spoke specifically to Research Questions 2 and 3, with a focus on Haringey Borough and its specific policies. I read 31 documents from both schemes by critically reading them (see Appendix A for a complete list), attempting to uncover both the literal meaning of the texts but also the hidden and implied meaning across the two schemes of interest (Dittmer

2010). This entailed selecting the documents from Haringey Council's website and search engines, using key words like "Haringey Development Vehicle." I then read them from start to finish twice: once to check their relevance and second to code. When documents referred to each other, I noted this down and made sure to cross-check the two documents to identify their relationship. This was then noted in NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (Welsh 2002). Critical reading is akin to Foucault's genealogy, in that it seeks to understand the development and settlement of particular ideas (Garland 2014). This is especially true as the HDV was cancelled, so it was important to see the scheme through the state's eyes as a speculative (in both the financial and future-looking senses), incomplete, and contested policy.

Document analysis was invaluable in constructing how the state saw Tottenham, its role in development, and the types of populations to 'make live' or 'let die' (Gillespie et al. 2021; see also Chapter 2). Building this viewpoint was equally important because it was impossible to interview certain state actors. Council staff and executives declined to be interviews and/or referred me to Council-produced documents that were posted online (see Appendix D). Textual analysis therefore became the only way in which I could interrogate the state's multiple perspectives and answer Research Questions 2 and 3. While some texts were produced by Haringey Council, external consultants contributed to a large proportion of the corpus. This power relationship reinforced the emphasis given to economic development and reflected "a systematic power structure at play in the creation of expert knowledge" about stigmatised neighbourhoods (Ormerod 2017, 100; see also MacLeod 2018). It also implied a lack of awareness of different forms of community in Tottenham, which are not reflected in official documents. The divergence between official and unofficial knowledges heightened the partial and situated nature of all knowledge (Haraway 1988), especially that found within the state's documentation (J. C. Scott 2020).

There are some drawbacks of the method. The analysis of text (broadly understood; Dittmer 2010) is necessarily political and subjective. As with Ormerod (2017, 2021) my previous professional experience working in municipal government meant that I sometimes was unable to see past or through the state-

produced language and logics held within the documents. For example, I sometimes struggled to critically examine the forms of consultation described by the Council. I initially accepted, on face, that these consultations had in fact meant that community members were adequately informed. Multiple reads were therefore needed to maintain a critical outlook (Aitken 2008). Significant time, too, had lapsed between the creation of the texts and the current state of the scheme. The impact was felt mostly in interviews, but the availability of documents suffered. Some were mentioned yet lost or linked incorrectly. Many were partially redacted in the name of financial and commercial reasons as experienced by Ormerod (2017, 2021) and Raco (2016). The situatedness of these documents aside (Haraway 1988), the method was an important component in uncovering the local state's perspective of Tottenham, the regeneration schemes in question, and activists opposing them.

4.1.3 Archives:

Archives comprised a significant portion of the data used here, primarily used to answer Research Questions 1 and 2, as well as to examine how marginalised citizens resist authoritarian governance (Aim 1). The historical nature of the Broadwater Farm case meant a heavy reliance on archives as a source of data. As they are contemporary, the HDV and HRW chapters depend more on document analysis, which is discussed in the above subsection. The archival method seeks to open windows into the past, building a historical picture of past geographies. It allows for contextualisation of other data as well as is a source of new, undiscovered empirics (Beckingham and Hodder 2022; Roche 2005). However, as constructed places, archives are not neutral (Mbembe 2002), which I attend to at the end of this subsection.

The Broadwater Farm chapter used primary documents from 1979 to 1995 across four different archives in London, UK: the Bishopsgate Institute, the George Padmore Institute, the Black Cultural Archives, and the archives of Haringey Borough Council held in the Bruce Castle Museum. The first two archives primarily hold papers from Black leaders and communities in London. The Bishopsgate Institute's archives focus on documenting both activists and

changemakers as well as the mundane aspects of historical everyday life. Finally, the last archive chiefly holds Haringey Council's records. The scattered nature of the archive meant I thus ended up taking a tour of some of the influential Black neighbourhoods in the city: Brixton, Tottenham, Finsbury Park. As I discuss below in City Walking, visits to these places informed the frame of the research, tugging it to include elements like the history/ies of Black migration to the UK and the politics of diaspora (Gilroy 2002; S. Hall 2021). Each visit to a new library and neighbourhood opened new lines of thought, and were generative in their own way.

Relevant papers included correspondence between activists and politicians; newspaper articles; publications from the Council's staff (including its public relations team) and councillors; and the Youth Association's own productions like pamphlets and newsletters. In all, I collected 43 documents across the four archives (not counting repeats). Some of these texts were personal notes and pictures, which both complicated the notion of an objective archive (Ashmore et al. 2012) and foregrounded the intimate and local nature of the organisation. I supplemented this corpus with news articles from the 1980s and 1990s (accessed via Durham University Library's portal), the Broadwater Farm Inquiry Report into the 1985 riot (commonly called the Gifford Report; 1986) Mrs Kiffin's biography (Williams 1994)—which she commissioned—and the Lost Blocks Collective's[40] interview with Clasford Stirling (2022), another BFYA founder. As such, I was able to build a comprehensive, but necessarily incomplete, picture of the Association's activities.

The *place* of the archive became just as important as the *contents* of the archive, too (Mbembe 2002). For example, Haringey Borough's repository raised questions of state-held archives, the ways in which they can be "carefully crafted by those in power" to represent a specific version of history (Siener and Varsanyi 2022, 551). The judgement of past state archivists deciding what BFYA material to include or not echoed over time: archivists "occupy [a] strategic position in the production of an instituting imaginary," thereby structuring what direction(s) and thread(s) I was able to follow (Mbembe 2002, 26). Moreover, the state of the

[40] A group of current BF young residents: https://www.youtube.com/@beyondtheboxcic

archives themselves structured my work (Nassar 2018). Some archives were well-funded and -staffed, with generous visiting hours. Others had fewer resources. As Hyacinth (2019) reveals, British Black archives are often insecure due to little funding, space, staff, and awareness of their holdings. While archivists are typically experts, precarity often means a reliance on volunteer staff who may have less familiarity with the subject. Legal restrictions, too, structured this inquiry. For instance, Bernie Grant's letters are inaccessible because not enough time has lapsed since his passing. These documents were fragments of a wider story (McFarlane 2018), pieces that are disconnected—not from a complete archive (an impossibility) but rather a variegated understanding of BFYA in the minds of its many participants, opponents, and beneficiaries. As such, archives only tell one part of the story (Lorimer 2010). For my study of Broadwater Farm, I thus ensured to build on my archive using interviews as I discuss below.

4.1.4 Interviews:

Formal interviews with participants were a crucial method that both provided new data and contextualised information gleaned from other methods. Interviews were used to answer all research questions, especially to understand how decisions were made, contested, and implemented (Kuus 2021). This method was chosen because it allowed me to collect and establish the wide range of perspectives and experiences that encompass the local Labour Party, Haringey Council, and regeneration in Tottenham. This is because interviews reveal participants' "imagined meanings of their activities, their self-concepts, their fantasies about themselves (and about others)" (Lamont and Swidler 2014, 159). Moreover, this method allowed me to better probe how the relationships within the party and across the party-state nexus influenced policy development. Interviews were informed by document analysis and the archive. New participants were found through my scoping and immersion period, and City Wandering. This section refers only to formal, planned interviews.

A total of twenty-four in-depth interviews with twenty-six key informants were conducted. Interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour (Table 1). Two interviews were paired, meaning I interviewed two participants

simultaneously. Participants were selected based on their status as councillors, activists, and/or community leaders. Initial contact for some was made via an email that outlined the research, its goals and aims, and expected outcomes. For the BFYA case, I contacted interviewees based on their connections to either Broadwater Farm or relevant notable players. For two BFYA informants, I visited them on the estate to build an initial relationship before returning for formal interviews later. I interviewed both councillors and activists for the HDV and HRW case studies. Councillors were either from the Labour Party or the Liberal Democrats,[41] and initially contacted through email. Interviews with councillors were akin to 'elite interviews,' and thus had power dynamics that differed from traditional interviews (Kuus 2021). I discuss this more in detail below.

I met some activists at a local foodbank in Haringey, and others were suggested to me by foodbank volunteers. After a first handful of interviews, I used snowball sampling to contact other participants, based on the existing personal and political connections of those I interviewed in the early stages (Parker et al. 2020). I identified some gatekeepers within Haringey's staff and directly emailed them, too, upon the recommendation of some councillors.

Table 1 – Interviewees by Number and Type

Category	*Interviews*	*In-Person*	*Online*
Former Councillor[42]	8	2	6
Current Councillor[43]	7	3	4
Labour	7	3	2
Liberal Democrat			2
HRW/HDV Activist	7	6	1
BFYA Activist	2	2	
Haringey Staff	2		2
Total Interviews:	26	13	13

[41] I contacted the local Conservative Party several times but did not hear back.
[42] All former councillors who were interviewed were Labour councillors during their tenure.
[43] Party correct at time of interview. See Section 1.3.1 for more information.

Interviews were held at a range of locations or online. As it was important to build trust, informants had control over our interview location. Interviews with activists mostly took place at cafes or community centres and I often spoke to councillors online. One interview happened at a participant's home. Ensuring sufficient preparation is critical to ensuring a successful interview, especially deciding the interview location (Elwood and Martin 2000; Valentine 2005). Preparation was particularly important for elite interviews, as understanding the organisational and political background was important for placing the data in context (Kuus 2021). Some informants were initially reticent because of the recording but over time, they became more at ease. I also made notes during and after the interviews, so I could capture both the body language and unspoken communication, as well as asides after the recording stopped.

Conversations were semi-structured: I started with set questions but allowed the interview to meander and for participants to lead as they wished (Roulston and Choi 2018). Three interview guides were created, corresponding to each empirical example. Later, when interviewees overlapped between the HDV and HRW cases, I designed the guide to cover both. Our conversations began broadly and then became more focused. I designed a list of fifteen questions, grouped by topic, that covered areas of interest. The list was live: as I moved through interviews, the salience of certain topics shifted. For example, responses to acts of/claims to citizenship became less important to the research because participants could not remember any. Although this is interesting data on its own, the emptiness of their responses prompted me to shift (C. Freeman 2020). Similarly, interviews did not always proceed identically—flexibility, openness, and adaptability meant our conversations were more "a dialogue rather than an interrogation." It also allowed for space for participants to push the dialogue into unplanned territory, making for "a far more wide-ranging discussion" than a structured interview would allow (Valentine 2005, 111). Semi-structured interviews meant interviewees—and their opinions—were respected, even though I was not always able to build rapport with interviewees in-person.

Online interviews had their own unique challenges and benefits. Post-COVID, there is significant literature on online interviews (de Villiers et al. 2021;

Self 2021). Whilst the shift to online research means that there is significant potential for innovative ways of conducting qualitative inquiry (Keen et al. 2022), my use of online interviews was intended to substitute for the face-to-face interview. Use of Zoom and Teams was primarily for ease of access. Online tools allowed for interviews during the working day and without the need to pre-determine a meeting place. Participants could be interviewed from the comfort of their homes, granting me more access to a wider pool—especially as several individuals had permanently moved away from London (Saarijärvi and Bratt 2021). As participants could chose the setting, they were able to feel safe and comfortable to discuss potentially unsafe or confidential material (Self 2021). However, technological problems sometimes hampered my ability to see the nonverbal cues and communication of my participants. Though no interview needed to be rescheduled due to technical problems, there were many awkward silences and moments that put distance between myself and the participant (Salmons 2014). The ability to conduct interviews via Zoom and Teams allowed for easier access to a wider range of participants.

Throughout this process, I made sure to attend to power relations between myself and the interviewee, recognising that power is fluid and negotiable rather than fixed and unidirectional (Kuus 2021; Merriam et al. 2001; K. E. Smith 2006). First, I ensured to treat councillors, activists, and unaligned residents with the same set ethics and codes of conducts. That is, I did not attempt to unnecessarily flatter or build rapport with councillors (who might be considered 'elites'), so as to ensure flatter relationships with participants (K. E. Smith 2006). Recognising that powerful interviewees are still vulnerable, I made sure to emphasise participant anonymity (as participants knew each other well) through vague language in interviews (Kuus 2021). Most of my participants were white and some identified as working class (see more in Positionality, below). The use of snowballing and gatekeepers I met at the foodbank meant less-complicated power relations with interviewees as I was already validated for (Roulston and Choi 2018). Volunteering is not ethically neutral and can complicate power relations further (Goerisch 2017; Jordan and Moser 2020), something I expand in Section 4.3 on Research Ethics. I found that my institutional positionality and the presence of a

recorder meant councillors often felt reticent to fully reveal their opinions and views (Lancaster 2016). While this is an understandable limitation, the use of online interviews meant that recording continued even after the formal questions ended. This period was when some of the most helpful data was uncovered, something that would be lost without the use of online interviews. Moreover, my own positionality as an outsider—reviewed in more detail below—afforded me significant distance from the granular organising occurring in Haringey. In effect, I became a safe space for councillors who had felt unheard for years and wanted to reflect on their experiences in power. However, my past and current involvement in housing activism meant some organisers I interviewed assumed I agreed with them uncritically. Such assumptions were not helped by my being introduced by a gatekeeper (Merriam et al. 2001). One similar concern with interviews is their performative nature. Crang and Cook (2007, 70) remind us that the stories told in interviews are "often not simply made up on the spur of the moment. Many will have been told, retold and refined on a number of occasions, in a number of places and with a number of different audiences." With some of the activists, I felt that their stories were rehearsed and had been told to many other researchers before me. As such, I endeavoured to probe where possible but also made sure to respect the vast, lived experience that I could only get a glimpse of through the interview.

Although snowballing was a helpful approach in generating relevant contacts, I quickly realised the network I tapped into was constrained. That is, snowballing is a "network-based convenience form of sampling," and so I was entirely dependent on the personal contacts of the "initial seeds" (Parker et al. 2020). Since I started with primarily activists I met volunteering, my sample was constrained within these networks. Councillors I directly contacted were also overwhelmingly from the StopHDV campaign or were already avowedly leftist—and thus more open to criticising the Haringey Council administration. The recognition of this network was itself helpful data: it reinforced the importance of personal relationships to understanding the governance of Haringey. Yet it also meant I needed to expand my research horizons. Using multiple methods as a collage assisted in developing a more wholistic view (C. Freeman 2020; Roulston

and Choi 2018). Simultaneously, some state actors declined to be interviewed (see Appendix D), even with an accompanying introduction from a councillor. Their perspectives were thus considered using Document Analysis (Section 4.1.2).

I found it striking that I was able to interview organisers that were in the archive, something that opened up questions about temporality and the passage of time. Nearly four decades on, these organisers have become elders in the community—more relaxed and perhaps imperturbable:

> They started out telling me about their current work in the community, their struggles with the local council, and opinions on contemporary national politics. But, as our conversation swerved into discussing the BFYA, they became animated, recalling how the association started as a radical group trying to make their estate better. The affect of the room intensified… The memories of a visit from Princess Diana; the 1985 uprising and its effects, like the subsequent police occupation (Elliott-Cooper 2021) and regeneration funds; and the BFYA's auto-regeneration of the estate (Chapter 5) were all not only pieces of data for analysis, but also "assemblages of narration," affects, materials, and political moves (Koro-Ljungberg and Hendricks 2020, 1198). Returning to the archive complicated this assemblage. For one, the interviews troubled the clean narrative of the archive. In historical work, activism is often treated as sequential and linear. The interviews revealed it as contingent and precarious, hinging on the goodwill of those in power—and yet, all the more radical (Chapter 5)… My participants had different ethnic and class backgrounds, played different roles in BFYA, and experience the past of their work differently. I noticed one participant in particular recounted their BFYA engagement with an ease that implied these were "tried and tested stories" that they had been telling and re-telling for decades (Bornat and Bytheway 2012, 297). Though subtle details likely differed across each iteration, such retellings were important rhythms in this participant's life. (Sindhwani 2025c, 21)

The formal interview process has ended but I have tried to maintain contact with my interviewees—both out of a logistical and ethical commitment. Recognising that this method "only scratch[es] the surface of an interviewee's life," my analysis (as discussed below) makes use of multiple methods and this longer term contact to represent the complexities of activism in Haringey (Crang and Cook 2007, 73).

4.1.5 City Walking and Walking Methods:

I selected walking methods for a handful of reasons. It allows scholars "to develop local literacy, an embodied understanding of the scales and rhythms of an urban context that frame the data we collect" (Pierce and Lawhon 2015, 656). Specifically, recognising that urban transformation and activism cannot be understood abstractly, I used walking methods to immerse myself in the social and infrastructural world of Haringey. Walking methods were not only used to gain deep familiarity with the study area, but also to build an understanding of ongoing impacts of urban regeneration in Tottenham (targeting Aim 2). As Youatt (2022) notes, walking is inherently tied up with questions of power, agency, law, and corporeality. Who can walk where—and indeed, who *must* walk—is deeply political: it troubles borders, power structures, and even the nation state itself. Recognising the importance of moving through an urban area to urban regeneration, authoritarian neoliberalism, and politics, I took over 40 pages of single-spaced field notes and captured over 170 pictures as I walked through my study sites. In this section, I discuss city walking and walking methods that were one part of my multi-method approach.

What I call 'city walking' is based on Houston's (2011) "Ethnography of the City." As part of her participant observation, Houston (2011, 37) describes a process of "wander[ing] streets and soak[ing] in local neighborhood landscapes" to fully absorb the researcher in the "daily flows of life" in a new city. This form of inquiry is related to, but is ultimately different from, participant observation—which seeks to plunge a researcher into a new community. Data is then later analysed after a period of immersion has completed (Crang and Cook 2007). Instead, city walking is more akin to a mix between participant observation and the types of walking methods explored by Mason et al (2023).

Succinctly understood, walking as a method is "a self-conscious, reflective project of wandering around to better understand an area's physical context, social context, and the spatial practices of its residents" (Pierce and Lawhon 2015, 656). It encompasses more than just movement—walking methods include observation and casual interaction with city residents. It thus includes, and extends, participant observation to include embodied and affective dimensions missed from

stationary research done from afar. As a method, walking has been explored across disciplines and within geography from transport and mobility studies to urban geography (Middleton 2011). In urban geography, Pierce and Lawhon (2015) call attention to the walking that urban scholars *already do* in their participant observation and ethnographic research. Yet, political geographers have thus far undertheorised walking as a method as Mason et al. (2023) explains. The few existing interventions considering identity and nationalism (O. Mason 2021) or genocide remembrance (Riding 2020). While there are some papers that conduct a political geography of walking in an urban setting (A. Mitchell and Kelly 2011; Sidaway 2009), few use it to interrogate urban transformation in a major city like London. Therefore, my use of walking methods balanced between urban and political geographies.

I walked through three distinct regions of Haringey: Broadwater Farm Estate, Northumberland Park, and the 'order lands' of High Road West. I briefly discuss Broadwater Farm before jointly reviewing Northumberland Park (NP) and HRW. Walking all three invoked what Chiles (2021) calls "site time": a dense situating of the process, thinking, and making involved in construction. This was especially so at Broadwater Farm—given its complicated history. My walks of the estate accentuated the temporalities involved in the unique case of the BFYA as my interest here was in seeking out any vestiges of the Association's work. The physical structure of the Broadwater Farm estate became something of an interlocutor in its own right through walking it. For instance, two of the estate's blocks have recently been demolished so that the council can regenerate the estate (*Haringey Community Press* 2024) and, as is discussed in Chapter 5, BYFA was instrumental in refashioning the layout of the estate. The former was obvious when I walked the estate the first time, while the latter only came to my attention when I was listening to the 2022 interview with Clasford Stirling. The former is ostensibly forward-looking as the council's aim is to regenerate the estate. Yet the now-demolished blocks held important memories that are now kept in the archives, or more likely, only in the minds of the estate's elders. Tangmere block, for example, is where the BFYA was first housed (Gifford 1986). It is the site of so much activism, sorrow, frustration, and joy that characterised BFYA (Williams

1994). Such rich data was only accessible through physically moving through the space and keenly observing its built environment.

Northumberland Park was one of the estates slated to be demolished under the Development Vehicle and is also the location of my weekly foodbank volunteering. While the ward (see Figure 8) contains more than just council property, my walks almost entirely focused on the council estates within the ward, which comprises nearly 1,000 homes ('EstateWatch', n.d.). As I was visiting NP weekly for months, no one route defined my walks. Although iteration is one sensible way to approach walking methods (Pierce and Lawhon 2015), I struggled to repeat routes. Walks necessarily meander (Youatt 2022) but often I found myself unable to observe anything particularly 'new' throughout attempted iterations. My notes at NP were very detailed, though, taking up around 20 percent of the overall notes. The High Road West order lands (Appendix B) refers to the area in Tottenham that is subject to the Council's Compulsory Purchase Order (Chapter 7). It is a roughly 1-kilometre square region bounded by Brereton

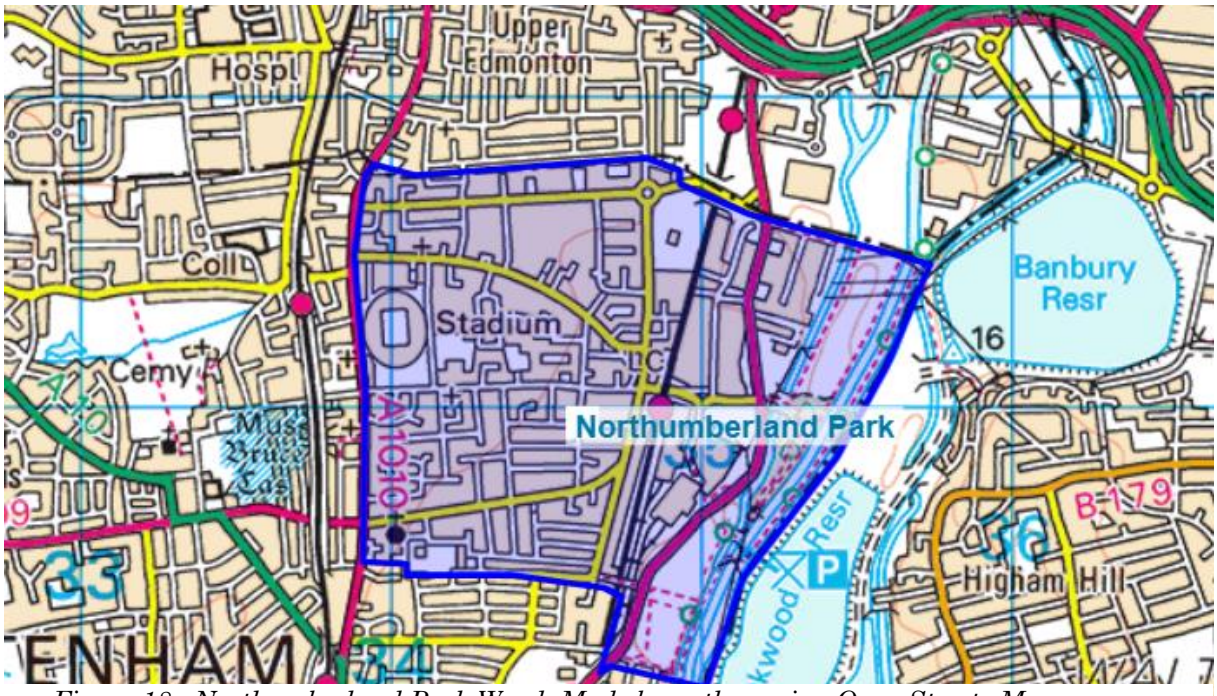


Figure 18 - Northumberland Park Ward. Made by author using Open Streets Map.

Figure 19 - Broadwater Farm Youth Association newspaper (1983). Mrs Dolly Kiffin is bottom row, second from right.

Figure 20 - Broadwater Farm Youth Association newspaper (1983). Mrs Dolly Kiffin is bottom row, second from right.Figure 21 - Northumberland Park Ward. Made by author using Open Streets Map.

Road, the rail line, White Hart Lane, and the High Road. Its significance lies in what it contains—the 300 homes of the Love Lane estate. I walked this region over one day in January 2024, taking three-to-four pages of single-spaced notes. These notes mostly concentrated on the current aesthetics of the estate, its architecture, and what 'signs of life' there were. Two examples are below. The first is from the beginning of my order lands walk.

> "I walk past some council buildings. There's a bit of trash on the ground—someone left some bags—but otherwise everything looks as normal. Yes, it's a bit outdated but it's not aesthetically ugly or anything. As I've seen elsewhere, there are some doors with Ring bells on them. I saw two Lime bikes strewn on the floor but again this is just typical London. I'll say, it's a relatively well kept-up street considering what one normally hears. As I kept walking down, I noticed a large sign about ASB[44] right before the street turns left—see picture. Some rubbish again, but again typical big city."

The next snippet is from about 30 minutes later:

> "I go left back onto Whitehall Street to head towards White Hart Lane station, passing by the Whitehall Mews site. They've put a temporary shelter there for construction workers and there are two vans parked in there with big stickers that say "K9 Security", leading me to think the council are feeling nervous about something. I walk the parcel of the old pub that used to be here. Looks ugly—trash everywhere, hasn't been cleaned. I see a third CPO[45] notice, again fixed to a lamp on the corner of Love Lane and Whitehall Street. I turn left on to Love Lane, to go past the Overground station. The pub site is still empty but has a van like the Whitehall Mews site. I'm again curious—what are they worried about?"

The particular emphasis here was both on generating new questions to ask in interviews and follow in document analysis but also to consider Love Lane's flows, boundaries, and connections (Pierce and Lawhon 2015). For instance, I took note of where the order lands were clearly demarcated and where they were not:

> "I make a right onto Whitehall Street and quickly see another CPO notice. I've been here before as it's adjacent to Whitehall Mews. I make a left onto Tenderton Road, and cut a right into the courtyard on my right. The left building is not CPO'd while the right one is. I don't really get why one is getting CPO'd and the other isn't especially because they don't look all that

[44] Anti-social behaviour
[45] Compulsory purchase order. See Section 1.4.3 and Chapter 7.

> different in terms of aesthetics, quality, or anything interesting. The three other sides of the courtyard are 100% not the same as the CPO'd side but I can't make out the difference. Obviously, I feel bad for the people who are going to be living right next to construction site. I walk through the courtyard and then turn right to go towards Whitehall Mews, which I'm not going to discuss again here. I noticed that the CPO documents list a community centre here but I didn't really see one. Then I saw a guy smoking at its entrance and saw it was there just tucked in there."

An emphasis on borders, belonging, and populations 'let die' (Gillespie et al. 2021) came out in this particular walk (O. Mason et al. 2023). These focuses were inspired by the kinds of discourses present in Document Analysis, emphasising the multimethod nature of my project. Although using walking methods was often physically and mentally exhausting (O. Mason et al. 2023), its value was in situating the built environment, the place and space. It provided a window into fully immersing myself in the "world-views and ways of life of actual people in the contexts of their everyday lived experiences" in Tottenham and Haringey (Crang and Cook 2007, 37).

4.1.6 Mixing the Methods:

Scholars have long known that multi- and mixed-methods inquiry is a complicated endeavour, with many pitfalls. I utilised C. Freeman's (2020) framework of 'collage' and Watkins's (2020) notion of hybrid fieldwork to help guide me through this process. Collage builds on triangulation, a long-standing multiple methods approach that suggests fixing one point and metaphorically rotating around it through the use of different data (Moran-Ellis et al. 2006). Collage differs from triangulation across two axes. First, collage uses a relatively expansive frame. Second, collage is open to spontaneity and a moving set of focuses. That is, collage means a diverse approach to data collection, rummaging around for relevant information across disparate sources. Each source illuminates successive parts of a wide area of interest, with sources potentially sparingly or never overlapping. Moreover, the relation(s) between each source provide a richer understanding than just through one method or narrow topic alone (C. Freeman 2020). Such a fragmentary nature of collage is generative: different fragments of data are "potentials that can be put to different uses and given distinct meanings"

both by the researcher's acts and the relations between each fragment that becomes the collage (McFarlane 2018, 1015). But fragments are more than constituent elements of a collage; they themselves speak to a politics of becoming that helps trouble defined characterisations and categories. Recognising this potentiality enabled me to rethink the archive and the interview in the BFYA case—that is, to not just *compare* the past and the present but also to weave them together to emphasise the persistence of social problems and the inability of the liberal state to solve them (J. C. Scott 2020). Collage follows in this lineage by allowing for a shifting research frame that both follows the available material and is informed by the scholar's own self-reflection. Günel et al. (2020)'s concept of "patchwork ethnography," like collage, also draws attention to the gaps in data: hints at a bigger story; references to people who are unfindable, etc. For instance, many former Haringey councillors are unreachable: I struggled to get in contact with Liberal Democrat councillors or any of those who were on the more conservative, Kober-led wing of the party. While they are still alive, the furore over the HDV has meant that they seem reluctant to be interviewed. This meant acknowledging the gap, and still substituting their narratives through use of newspaper articles and council documents. Former Broadwater Farm leaders have passed away or have moved back to their countries of birth. These absences are data that are of equal importance to the presences (Hodder 2017): as an illustration, I was told by one interviewee that Mrs Dolly Kiffin had returned to Jamaica. This return raises questions about race, ethnicity, migration, and empire (Gilroy 2002; S. Hall 2021). More materially, it meant I had to rely on the fragments that she left behind in the archive and her biography (Williams 1994). Finding the biography was its own difficult hunt: very few printed copies exist, and I could not find any that were digitised. One is held by an historian based at the University of Liverpool, who suggested I take a trip to the Haringey Borough archives (Jessica White, 'Dolly Kiffin Book'). I was luckily able to scan a copy there. This search highlighted the collagic nature of my investigation—rummaging around and using what was available, instead of being able to triangulate or rotate around a specific object of inquiry.

Absences can often spark the reuse of existing methods to answer old problems in innovative ways. McFarlane (2018, 1011) reminds us that fragments are "caught in a relation of presence and absence." Even fragments *intended to be* fragments—here, various documents that refer to events in the past—hint at a wider, imagined, whole of activism that cannot be fully understood. Finally, collage's attentiveness to the social construction of knowledge emphasises the researcher's positionality, thereby recognising their situatedness (Haraway 1988). Collage thus remains open to the messiness of inquiry, the fumbling about during data collection, the cutting, pasting, and recutting of it during fieldwork. As a form of analysis, collage "forces us to think and work in a non-linear way" by requiring "juxtaposition and the interplay of fragments that may never have been pieced together" in the first instance (C. Freeman 2020, 336).

Collage was not the only methodological approach used here. Recognising the overlaps between research areas and the spatial nature of my inquiry—as evidenced by the geographically small area of interest—I turned to what Watkins (2020, 9) calls hybridity. It is a melding of "places (field) and methods (work)." Hybridity expands a long tradition of methodological pluralism (DeLyser and Sui 2014) and critical self-reflection by engaging the *place* of the field as an "active participant" in inquiry (Watkins 2020, 10). Engagement happens through an iterative piecing-together of a range of methods, a smooth shifting between different fields (archives, landscapes, etc.), and a distinctly non-linear analytical process. It also occurs by "following" where the threads go, "walking with" collaborators, and the blending place and method (Watkins 2020). In doing so, it (like collage) remains sensitive to "uncertainties, challenges, and opportunities to expedite self-reflexive, situated, and flexible research designs" that are both "liberating and messy" (Watkins 2020, 11). Hybridity finally assists in re-imagining the category of "field" itself. DeLyser and Starrs's (2001) edited special issue was the culmination of decades of postcolonial, feminist, and (non-)representational theorising of the assumed objective and detached nature of fieldwork. No longer should scholars understand the field as spectacular, externalised, disconnected, masculinist, and physical space. However, this work is still in progress (McSweeney and WinklerPrins 2020). As such, rethinking extant

notions of the field through hybridity is a necessity—it helps academics account for the varied spaces that constitute the field and acknowledge the field's social construction (Yusoff 2007).

The implications for this thesis were many, especially as my inquiry was structured by institutional restrictions and timelines. For one, research ethics has historically been criticised as positivist and stringent, not allowing for the flexibility inherent in social science research (Haggerty 2004). A holistic research approach might have likewise allowed for more time to integrate myself into Tottenham—but my ability to do so was limited by the expectation of one year of fieldwork that is built into funding guidelines. Thus, my use of multiple methods through hybridity and collage were intended to compensate for some of these restrictions.

Hybrid and collage have significant overlap. They both speak to qualitative inquiry's inherent chaos, both in the mechanics of inquiry as well as ethics of researching with/on the human and more-than-human. These two approaches work in tandem; indeed, they rely on each other. An open, reflexive, and methodologically flexible approach must treat its field as an active participant, both as an ethical imperative and as a technique of maintaining that openness. Simultaneously, melding method and place can only be done by recognising the multiplicity and thus the intractability of both. Only by remaining open to, and comfortable with, the gaps, overlaps, and fragments of research can this be done. This blending of hybrid and collage reflects the kinds of inquiry I engaged in during my research.

4.2 Analysis:

In keeping with a flexible and open approach to data collection—and because of the variety of methods employed—I used thematic analysis throughout the research process. Succinctly, Thematic Analysis (TA) is a method or tool for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning that emerge across a dataset (Clarke and Braun 2017). My approach to TA broadly followed Attride-Stirling (2001)'s recommendations to build upwards, fashioning a hierarchy of themes ranging from basic to global topics. Transcripts and documents were read and

coded twice, with some read a third time where I judged them to be of more importance. I used a combination of deductive and inductive coding. I began with commonalities across texts while paying attention to the minute differences between each, building towards a common set of hierarchical themes (Proudfoot 2023). Text fragments were not put in closed codes; instead, quotes were organised around wider themes. In this occasion, codes were fragments *qua* fragments, meant to be generative in relation to a set of snippets of interviews. That is, they were worked together to peer through the stories told by interviewees to understand deeper layers of meaning (McFarlane 2018). The set of themes necessarily grew throughout the research, especially because I iterated my analysis. Themes, instead of codes, allowed for a more holistic and flexible approach. It also meant I read the fragments in context, making sure to take in as much of the detail as possible. I coded text using NVivo, which was provided by Durham University. This software was chosen as I had existing familiarity with it. Computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software like NVivo, which allowed for easier review of the data for a few reasons (Welsh 2002). First, it made data management simpler. Second, CAQDAS allows for search across multiple documents, making comparison easier. Finally, building a hierarchy of themes was made easier using software—allowing for more comprehensive and quick analysis.

For archival documents, I took photos with my mobile phone and transcribed useful documents with the assistance of NVivo's open optical character recognition (OCR) software. As documents were all uploaded online and downloadable, analysis was much easier. When some documents were not searchable, I again used NVivo OCR. In-person interviews were recorded on my mobile phone and then transcribed using Microsoft Word's internal transcription service. Online interviews were recorded, and the software (either Zoom or Teams) provided its own transcription service, which I used. Outputs across all three data sources were then checked for grammar and spelling errors when necessary. I treated each class of text as one group: that is, I did not generate separate codebooks for classes of documents but rather one larger codebook in which codes had various densities depending on the type of document. Initial codes were open:

the focus was on starting to find patterns of meaning. Later iterations had wider and wider themes before several global themes emerged. Simultaneously, I had a few key themes to start with, which mostly concentrated on acts of citizenship (and their reception), illiberal practices, and social housing stigma, among others. Coding was done until I reached saturation, following Braun and Clarke's (2021) suggestion of not aiming for a specific target but rather staying in tune with the constructivist nature of knowledge generation (instead of empiricist-oriented notions of data 'discovery').

In keeping with my aforementioned approaches of collage and hybridity, analysis proceeded in *dialogue with* the data as opposed *on* the data. The best way of explaining this difference is through an example from my paper on temporality in researching Broadwater Farm. This excerpt considered overhead walkways between buildings on the estate, as discussed in Chapter 5:

> As aforementioned, BYFA walkways surfaced in multiple, overlapping data sources. Interpreting its significance was only possible through the bouncing between those different sources, not as an exercise in triangulation but in collage. The site time of the walkways (see Section 4.1.5, City Walking and Walking Methods; Chiles, 2021) extended out in many different archives, parts of the estate, and moments in my interviews. The BYFA's destruction of the walkways as part of an authoritarian crackdown to a Black uprising evoked contradictions and queries around the nature of political activism, radical politics, and the nature of racial oppression in Britain (Elliott-Cooper 2021). Considering the nested-time of Broadwater Farm thus tuned my analysis to the variegated experiences embedded in my field's physical landscape and the temporal contractions that comprise the field (Sindhwani 2025c, 16).

This sort of open analysis was present throughout the research process and across the three empirical examples. Even when iterating through codes, I ensured to keep the global themes in mind, with the aim of building a wide research frame.

4.3 Research Ethics

The research followed the Economic Social and Research Council's code of ethics and went through ethical review at Durham University's Department of Geography. Participants signed a consent form, which laid out their consent to be interviewed, their data (interview recording and transcripts) to be stored securely,

and their right to withdraw from the research at any time (Philo and Laurier 2021). While noting that confidentiality can never be absolutely guaranteed, the following measures were taken to ensure as much confidentiality for respondents as possible: I ensured that all participants were anonymised to their title.[46] Where necessary, I refer indirectly to interviewees' titles as some participants hold positions in relevant committees. Anonymity was an important element of this research given the political sensitivities of both High Road West and the Haringey Development Vehicle. Some of the richest findings were also some of the more politically confidential, so anonymity was a necessity. In Chapter 6 on the HDV, I deployed composite characters to further preserve anonymity (Willis 2019). By combining interviewees into composite characters, I was able to discuss delicate topics while minimising the risks to any of my participants. By mixing different perspectives and backgrounds, composite narratives provide a careful balance of detail and anonymity. As many of my participants were familiar with each other—and because councillors are public figures—simply suppressing personal details and changing names was unlikely to ensure anonymity (O. Johnston 2024). Elite interviews have unique risks because of both the particular perspectives of the interviewees and the responsibilities of the researcher in ensuring anonymity. At best, an anonymity breach would be awkward and embarrassing; at worst, a councillor could be compromised (Kuus 2021). Additional benefits drew me to this approach. Composite characters better situate the experiences of interviewees within the contexts of their work. In some uses of composite narratives, scholars demonstrate the commonalities between disparate groups; others reveal how pathways can, over time, change the outcomes in given context (O. Johnston 2024).

However, Arjomand (2022) problematises this approach, noting that composites ultimately amount to fiction, and so require clearly demonstrated adherence to the tenets of good research. For example, Arjomand (2022, 448) contends many works that use composite narratives or characters tend to appear to use the "positivist armor of the Expert" without acknowledging the inherent subjectivity of fashioning a composite—these works argue that the author "can

[46] Councillor or Activist

responsibly shoulder the burden of complex data analysis and avoid misrepresentation because of their deep understanding of the subject matter." While there are other positivist critiques of composite narratives, proponents of the approach indicate that a programmatic approach to establishing composite characters and a clear audit trail are necessary for research reliability (O. Johnston 2024; Willis 2019). Section 6.3 explicates the specific approach in more detail.

I explained my positionality as a researcher to interviewees and other volunteers I met at the foodbank. I also maintained contact with all participants during the writing stage so that they remained familiar with the research. Interviews generally had a debriefing period, in which participants could vent or sound off about their personal experiences in a private manner (H. F. Wilson and Darling 2021). One participant explicitly expressed relief in having this space, stating they felt ostracised at the council because of their own marginalised positionality. Finally, I sent interviewees a draft of relevant outcomes before submission to journals for comments—both to allow for edits of their quotes and to ensure that they would not be identifiable by their peers.

Wary of repeating damage-centred frameworks—and the role of the researcher in (re)producing these frameworks—I endeavoured to maintain an openness and honesty about my intentions (Tuck 2009). Tied with this was an emphasis on my positionality (considered more below) and reflexivity (Rose 1997). Reflexivity is a core part of ethical research in that it "examine[s] how one embodies particular identities that may shift and change over time and space" (Sanyal 2021, 63). That is, it is a process of reflecting on how my knowledge is and has been situated by the background(s) I have existed in. It is also a call to be continuously aware of the ethical problems in research. As such—and in line with field hybridity—I committed to activists that I would 'give back' in some way in addition to the ongoing volunteering at a foodbank (Swartz 2011). Volunteering was also a good way reciprocating and giving back. Given the foodbank's emphasis on mutual aid, volunteering in that context meant "providing independent, grassroots aid with compassion, empathy, and a radical sociality" that countered the bureaucratised and impersonal services provided by the state (Jordan and

Moser 2020, 570). Volunteering, however, is not an ethically neutral act. As Goerisch (2017) explains, it can often conflict with the very ethic of reciprocity that underpins the impulse to volunteer in the first place. However, as I was welcomed and indeed encouraged by other activists, I felt volunteering was a good way to ethically 'give back.' As decided by my participants, this meant leafletting with activists to raise awareness of fire safety, offering to help build a website and repository for archival data, and spending more time at different foodbanks in Tottenham. These attempts did not always succeed but the experience of 'giving back' was a core part of "an ethics of power" that "demands that researchers seek ways to 'give back' to the precarious populations they study" (Swerts 2021, 103).

4.4 Positionality:

As in all knowledge production, the researcher occupies multiple identities and positions. I was a researcher, an activist, and a former housing professional. My own characteristics of race, gender, age, economic and social class, and nationality overlapped, contradicted, and intersected with those professional identities. Moreover, as a non-Londoner, questions of belonging were a relevant (but sometimes awkward) consideration (Visser 2020). This complicated web of identity and position influence how I understood the data and my project (S. N. Hesse-Biber 2014). It also meant an incessant negotiation between me and participants throughout the various stages of research. Acknowledging the situated nature of knowledge does not discount its validity or objectivity (Sandra Harding 1993); rather, this section is an attempt at explicating and locating *how* the knowledge in this project is situated (Haraway 1988). I consider my position as a researcher and the status of being an insider and an outsider (Humphrey 2007).

4.4.1 As a researcher:

I found that my status as a doctoral researcher was often unclear to others. Participants sometimes assumed the project was for an undergraduate dissertation and were unwilling to fully engage. Others—having rightly felt over-researched—presumed I approached this project through an extractivist lens and declined to engage with me. Such concerns reflect the privilege, distance, and

confusion associated with being a professional researcher (Tuck 2009). On one hand, it is basically impossible for scholars to be fully immersed in research (Rose 1997). On the other hand, this distance is a privilege that can only come with being a professional social researcher. As feminist scholars remind us, it is only through continually attention to this privilege that coherent, strong research can occur (S. N. Hesse-Biber 2014).

Being an external researcher also allowed me to navigate spaces in ways that some of my participants could not. For example, some relationships between activists and politicians had become contentious, leading to a breakdown in communication. My perceived distance meant I was able to navigate these difficult relationships while still being able to offer a critical perspective. One activist even told me he wanted "someone like you" to do a deep-dive on Haringey Council, in service of his anti-regeneration agenda. Lastly, it meant that, in some ways, I 'owed' my participants to acknowledge all these privileges throughout the research and writing process.

4.4.2 Insider and Outsider:

Having been involved with public housing transformation in New York, I had to carefully balance my positionality as a researcher with these past experiences as a state actor—as well as maintain my critical edge as an activist-researcher. Some interviewees expressed initial confusion as to why an American was interested in regeneration in London. After explaining my interests, background, and experience with housing regeneration in New York to participants, I was able to establish a familiarity that went beyond the basics. This awareness of the innerworkings of regeneration helped me integrate myself with activists who had long soured on politicians. 'Insider' knowledge of regeneration and local municipal politics (albeit from a different angle in a different city) meant I had a good basis to understand the politics of Haringey. Councillors could sense that I was experienced, which helped reduced 'elite delusion' during interviews (Mason-Bish 2019). Partially because I engaged in housing activism elsewhere, being an 'insider' with StopHDV and housing justice activists in Haringey was somewhat easy (Humphrey 2007). Taken together, this granted me a form of

'insider' status (Bukamal, 2022) because of this past experience. However, I sometimes felt that certain activists were giving me a script: a rehearsed story that hardly differed from what I could glean from online sources. This was just another element of reflexivity and positionality we both had to negotiate as the research continued.

Conversely, my 'outsider' status had its own impact on the research. For one, I could sense that activist saw my position as an 'outsider' (and a researcher) as something they could utilise to further their fight against gentrification (Merriam et al. 2001). Similarly, I found that StopHDV-aligned councillors, too, felt more comfortable being completely open with me—partially because of my political perspective but I also believe it was because I had little knowledge of the existing personal relationships between participants. That is, I was a true 'outsider.' Moreover, my time spent at the foodbank—and willingness to admit I was an 'outsider' and knew little about London's politics—opened doors for me that an 'insider' may have been unable to open because of preexisting biases. Thus, my position as a non-Londoner intersected with my previous experiences, forging a "space between" being an 'insider' and an 'outsider' (Dwyer and Buckle 2009).

4.5 Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have illustrated and reflected on the complexities of researching politically sensitive topics. I explained how I used four different methods and three related case studies to explore my research aims and questions. The diversity of methods used allowed me to better grasp the dynamics of authoritarian neoliberalism, local state practices, and local political party manoeuvring. I also recounted how shifts in the methodological approach were a product of the fieldwork's dynamic nature. Together, I discussed how this fluidity, openness, and ability to shift were aligned with a more open and expansive approach to mixed methods research. This style of methodology better reflected the multiplicity of importances that housing holds; it also gave the work even greater political and conceptual strength. In these ways, the methodology and case I used were appropriate for the research at hand. I also described the ethical and positional

considerations that undergirded my research approach, and how I approached these concerns.

The next chapter recounts my analysis of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association. It reveals how their activism, occurring in a time of intense authoritarian neoliberalism (1979-1990), retained a radical character even as it worked in cooperation with Haringey Council.

Chapter 5: Working on the Farm: Acts of Citizenship and Accommodative Resistance[47]

5.1 Introduction:

Reviled as soon as it opened in 1973, the Broadwater Farm housing estate (BF) in Haringey, north London, has endured all forms of defamation and disrepute. Connected to two brutal instances of racist police violence in 1985 and 2011, the estate looms over the surrounding neighbourhood's brick terraced housing. In the barracks, however, were always signs of life. Many decades before me, one of my interviewees (KI.4) came to investigate for their journalism job. KI.4, who is white, relayed that they were initially anxious as they had heard of BF's reputation as a mugging hotspot. I too heard those stories: a quick internet search reveals many articles about crime. While my critical goggles meant I was sceptical of the reputation, I will admit that I too was anxious. After some digging, we both found a story of a "community looking after itself and fighting for justice for young people," instead of the lawless concrete wasteland we had been led to expect (KI.4, interview, 27 Nov. 2023). This community was represented by one powerhouse group: the Broadwater Farm Youth Association (BFYA). Founded in the early 1980s and led by residents, the Youth Association reflected a community under neoliberal authoritarianism (Bruff 2014) that was organising for more resources and attention from the local state. This chapter takes the BFYA's activism (for example providing educational opportunities that the state could not) as a reference point to explore questions of citizenship acts, resistance by accommodation, and authoritarian neoliberalism. This chapter consequently builds on existing literature on citizenship acts across three dimensions: one, grounding accommodative acts in a historical perspective to assert that the theory of acts must consider those that occur under authoritarian neoliberal regimes; two, extending citizenship acts to consider undertheorised forms of quieter housing and place-based activism. Third and finally, I conclude by thinking through how

[47] Another version of this chapter has been published in the *Citizenship Studies* journal (Sindhwani 2025d). The paper version has been edited to ensure coherence with the rest of the thesis and to avoid repetition.

accommodative resistance fits with other underappreciated forms of activism (Askins 2014; D. G. Martin et al. 2007; Pottinger 2017; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar 2019) as well as opens new spaces for further research.

The chapter begins with an overview of BFYA, laying out their activities and accomplishments. I next discuss data and methods. Then, I analyse BFYA's work through the theories of acts of citizenship, (Isin 2008), accommodative resistance (which, in this chapter, I term 'auto-regeneration') (Jakimów 2022), and authoritarian neoliberalism (Bruff 2014). I illustrate the transformative potential of accommodative resistance in reshaping political subjectivities. I argue that BFYA served as a platform where local community organizers could redefine their relationship to the state to become full citizens through accommodative forms of citizenship. Although these actions may initially appear as compliance with the state, they in fact represent a form of everyday resistance to the authoritarianism inherent in Thatcher's neoliberalism (S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019). Throughout this chapter, I contend that, in moments and spaces of authoritarianism, citizenship studies scholars should attend to the ways that quieter forms of activism—those that appear to be accommodative or cooperative—can contribute to transformative change. I also assert the importance of understanding how oppressed groups can effectively turn existing authoritarian frameworks back on themselves to achieve a fundamental change in their relationship with the various scales of the state.

5.2 The Broadwater Farm Youth Association: A Brief History

Labour-led Haringey Council built Broadwater Farm estate between 1968 and 1973 at a time of significant change: in addition to new waves of migration and ongoing racist oppression (Elliott-Cooper 2021), the UK government was engaging in national slum clearance programs. After BF was built, Haringey Council began moving minoritised ethnic groups to the estate, with the estate's white residents vocally becoming unhappy at their presence. BFYA leader Clasford Stirling (2022) recalls an atmosphere of "racism, police [oppression], and poor services from the council with your flat" as the norm on BF in the 1970s. Indeed, white neighbours of the estate vocalised "displeasure that Black people were being housed" so close to them on what they called "*Black*water Farm," dating back to at least 1974 (KI.1,

interview, 15 Nov. 2023), even though the Gifford report (1986, 23) found that only 42% of residents were Afro-Caribbean or had said ancestry.[48] Moreover, the estate's Tenants' Association was dominated by racist white residents, some of whom were members of the fascist National Front (Levidow 1987). Black tenants were likewise not permitted to "go to the social club" on the estate (KI.3, interview, 27 Nov. 2023). Furthermore, the estate lacked necessary services: there were few shops on the estate and no transport. As an illustrative example of the estate's poor reputation, KI.1 (interview, 15 Nov. 2023) recounted that a café owner was invited to open a shop on the estate but declined due to a racist fear of the estate. Jefferson (2012) notes Broadwater Farm estate was classified as a 'symbolic location' and therefore targeted by the police, who had adopted a law-and-order attitude. Such disrepute reflects the territorial stigma that has become associated with council housing estates across the United Kingdom (Slater 2018b; Wacquant et al. 2014). Due to a rising fear about mugging (reflecting the moral panic of the day; S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019) on the estate, the white-led Tenants' Association invited police to establish a permanent presence in 1981 (Levidow 1987). This was all part of the stigmatisation of the estate. KI.3 remarked that he "couldn't give proof of a Broadwater Farm address" for banking. He continued, "I had to use my dad's address and other people's address 'cause they just didn't trust people over here." The Gifford report confirmed the stigmatisation, noting that "residents in the nearby terraced streets… disliked the reality [of the estate]" and that "a negative and condemnatory view has also been expressed… [which] has come from sections of the press." The report goes on to list a variety of stigmatising and negative portrayals of the state in the press, which it argues constituted an

> …unjust labelling from outside, from the press and neighbouring residents. The labelling became attached not just to the buildings but also to the people, as if they too were undesirable. Residents on the estate had severe problems with hire purchase or TV hire facilities, or obtaining goods from catalogues… There was even a kind of social ostracism… (Gifford 1986, 20).

It is in this milieu, and seriously afraid of "heightened aggression" from the police,

[48] I use 'Black' or its variants to primarily describe both British-born and foreign-born individuals with Afro-Caribbean heritage.

concerned residents like Mrs Dolly Kiffin (who would end up being BFYA's main leader) set up the Broadwater Farm Youth Association with the goal of providing community facilities for the young people on the estate in the absence of Council-run youth services (Williams 1994, 17). The founders put it as simply "giving the young people something to do" (Staff Reporter 1985). BFYA also aimed to replace the white-led Tenants' Association, which it did in the early 1980s.

BFYA started small and barely funded. With only a handful of organisers, the organisation began with meetings in Kiffin's flat about "how [BF residents] want to live, how we want things to change, and how we're not getting help from the Council" (KI.3, interview, 27 Nov. 2023). Kiffin (who had migrated to the UK from Jamaica) and other leaders soon realised that one potential way of reducing crime on the estate was to provide cheap food for young people out of their own pockets, based on the belief that youths engaged in crime because they were hungry. This was BFYA's first activity. The BFYA quickly ran out of space, and they decided to take over a disused shop in the estate's Tangmere block. KI.3 (Interview, 27 Nov. 2023) recalls filling the space with games and a pool table. Eventually, BFYA was able to convince Council officers for permanent access to the shop. Providing meals to the estate's young people led to the Association offering food to the estate's older population, which snowballed into a 'meals on wheels' service. As BFYA grew in numbers, so did its remit: they added a nursery in 1982 and a woman's centre in 1984, and held regular gatherings and outings for tenants (Williams 1994). After wrangling with Haringey Council, the Association was able to acquire some funds and a new Youth Centre to house activities like classes on sewing, photography, Black history, and computer use, among other programs (KI.4, interview, 27 Nov. 2023). The results on the estate were impressive. Crime significantly declined in the years leading up to the 1985 uprising, with the Gifford Report (1986, 49) noting that the Youth Association provided "activities for unemployed young men and a sense of purpose in the community generally." The report quoted Stafford Scott, another BFYA leader, who said that the Association "'rekindled community spirit'" across the estate. The success was marked by a visit from Princess Diana in 1985 (Gifford 1986).

The uprising of 1985 brought the estate into public consciousness. This uprising—one of many in the 1980s—were backlashes to racism, in particular abuse and violence by the police. They were widespread throughout the country—occurring across London and in cities like Birmingham, Liverpool, and Luton (Elliott-Cooper 2021). The police reaction to the uprising was severe. Platt (1986) reports a practice of widespread detention of Black residents, with inhabitants likening the reaction to a military occupation. Elliott-Cooper (2021, 45) writes that the occupation lasted several months and involved hundreds of officers, concluding that it amounted to "violence and harassment reminiscent of colonial policies," reflecting broader police activities during Thatcher's premiership (Jefferson 2012). White tenants petitioned to maintain this occupation (Kavanagh 1985). One Haringey council staff member (KI.5, interview, 27 Jan. 2024) recalls that "caretakers would be constantly on call" because police were frequently breaking into flats. Newspapers used the unrest as a pretext for continuing the territorial stigmatisation of the estate and its residents—which was already very intense as I describe above—with the Gifford Report (1986, 124–25) calling coverage "sorry reading" and "racist."

On the other hand, the government responded to the riot with grants for estate improvements. Nearly £1 million was assigned for estate refurbishment, including building workshops for BFYA's off-shoot arm (the Broadwater Farm Co-op Ltd.) and other businesses, and for new parks on the estate (Eastham 1987). For its part, the Council did two things. First, it created a Building Design Services team for the estate in 1987, locating architects and staff on-site. The integration meant both more responsive service and a strong consultative culture with the Association (Nicola 1993). Second, the Council pledged £3 million to build a new community centre, and the community had a significant role in its design and competition. Haringey Council undertook a comprehensive consultation and contracted with the Co-Op to complete some of the construction (Haringey Borough Council 1989). The Co-Op also developed some of the estate's new parks (BFYA 1988). BFYA was likewise able to get some of its members hired by outside contractors and as estate staff (Levidow 1987). A raft of positive press

accompanied these initiatives, with many noting a decrease in crime and a real "turn around" for the estate (e.g., Eastham 1987; Boumelha 1998).

BFYA's advocacy continued for several more years after the riot. We know that the Council's leader, Bernie Grant (who became Labour MP for Tottenham in 1987) continued to help the BFYA. He (to Harris 1993) communicated with the Council's new Leader, Toby Harris, to advocate on behalf of BFYA at least once. There was brief discussion of BF becoming self-managed (Murray 1994) though I have not been successful in tracing it to conclusion. The government allocated a further £33 million in the early 1990s for more refurbishment, which included security measures like staffed concierges. The Co-Op was responsible for some of the work. Haringey Council moved the Building Design Services from the estate in 1995 and other services were moved a year later (Frimpong-Manson to Messenger 1996). From 1996 onwards, the archive is spare. Stirling (2022), who became sports activities lead for the Youth Centre, continues his work today. However, it seems that the BFYA ceased to function around this time. Broadwater Farm continues to surface in media, though, most notably in relation to the 2011 Tottenham uprising, as a "crime hotspot" (Elliott-Cooper 2021), and a stigmatised territory (Wacquant et al. 2014). The BFYA is thus an excellent illustration to explore how activist subjects can, even during times of illiberalism, become full citizens *through* their acts.

5.3 Data and Methods:

This chapter deployed interviews and archival sources to examine how a group without full citizenship was able to utilise accommodative resistance (Section 3.4.2) to demand inclusion as full citizens. As I discuss in Section 4.1.3, I examined primary documents from 1979 to 1995 across four different archives in London, UK, as well as Mrs Kiffin's biography. I also conducted four in-depth, semi-structured interviews with five key informants, who all are personally connected to either Broadwater Farm or relevant important players (e.g., Bernie Grant). As I (2025c) have described elsewhere, temporal gaps between archive and interview raised issues of memory, nostalgia, and recall. These were not treated as problems to solve but rather as reflections of the affectively charged—and ultimately

successful—activism of the Association. Both archives and interview transcripts were coded inductively and deductively. I started with codes on acts of citizenship (e.g., "habitus", "expected subject action", and "unexpected") and then developing ones for authoritarian neoliberalism ("not being heard", "police action", "local state", and "national state"). The same set of codes were used for both types of data. Interviewees are anonymised and quoted directly where possible, and individuals mentioned in archival sources are named because such data is publicly accessible. Overall, this combination of sources allows me to tell the BFYA's story and examine their advocacy as accommodative resistance understood as a particular act of citizenship during a period of authoritarian neoliberalism.

5.4 Acts of Citizenship Today; Authoritarian Neoliberalism Yesterday

Here, I provide a brief summary of the theoretical frameworks used in this chapter. In addition to reiterating the core elements of authoritarian neoliberalism and acts of citizenship, I explain how the frameworks map on to the case study at hand.

5.4.1 Citizenship beyond Status:

Following on from other scholars who looked to push past traditional conceptions of citizenship (Roy and Neveu 2023), Isin (2008) coined the "acts of citizenship" theory, which has been to effectively theorise a range of *actions* rather than *statuses*. Actions for instance include protests (Barbero 2012) and resistance to housing displacement (Bernhardt and Schwiertz 2025; Jacobson 2022), among others. Understood as decisive actions that suddenly transform subjects (or actors) into citizens through a break in the status quo, acts of citizenship are different from practices or habitus. Indeed, they expand notions of citizenship by treating it as a process rather than a status bestowed on subjects. The literature on acts of citizenship typically portrays acts of citizenship as acts of oppositional or collective struggle, through which actors become answerable subjects. Yet, Darling (2014, 74) draws attention to "less striking" methods of extracting change as to understand how activism "might be explored without recourse to a revolutionary framing." In this vein, in a work on China, Jakimów (2022, 510) notes that current

thinking on acts is constrained by an emphasis on the oppositional. Notably, this emphasis is not an intrinsic characteristic of acts but rather stems from "'heroistic' reading[s]" of Isin's theory (Roy and Neveu 2023, 394). In line with other feminist perspectives on underappreciated forms of activism (D. G. Martin et al. 2007; Pottinger 2017; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar 2019), Jakimów (2022, 510) argues that the theory should be expanded to include acts that are "accommodative towards the authority." Accommodation is not co-option by the powerful; rather, it is a covert "utilisation of the state- or market-defined language and channels" that enables defiance, which often takes the form of cooperating with, or filling in for, the state (Jakimów 2017, 916). In this setting, accommodation is necessary because confrontational acts risk significant penalties. Jakimów (2022, 509) considers acts that "work with [existing] actors and systems to exert long-term change," termed as "resistance through accommodation." Jakimów (2017, 2022) identifies one illustration that exploits existing laws: activists educating migrant labourers and also representing them in court. Thus, "state-designated channels such as law or state language can become sites of citizenship contestation," even when outright dissent is prohibited (Jakimów 2017, 929). Though a helpful frame for understanding undertheorised forms of activism, the accommodative approach has only been applied to overtly authoritarian regimes. This work thus utilises the concept of authoritarian neoliberalism to argue for placing citizenship acts in regimes that appear to be democratic but are in fact illiberal at their core.

5.4.2 Authoritarian Neoliberalism:

Bruff (2014) argues that modern neoliberalism (which still persists; Bayliss et al. 2024) is inherently authoritarian, calling it "authoritarian neoliberalism" (AN). It is defined as a movement in state policy away from seeking consent for the hegemonic project of neoliberalism towards legal instruments that induce passivity. Such instruments include both insulating the state from political dissent and an increasing reliance on violent police powers. Bruff (2014, 120) notes that AN also involves moral politics: "the coupling of moralizing rhetoric about capitalism" to insulated and de-political decision-making practices (Da Costa Vieira 2023; J. Ward and Da Costa Vieira 2024). These then appear as

justifications for punishing stigmatised peoples and territories (Wacquant et al. 2014). AN is thus pervasive and has been imposed on the intimate and/or domestic spaces of Britain's most marginalised communities (Davey and Koch 2021). Although some perspectives position authoritarian neoliberalism as a purely national process, other scholars have argued for a scalar view that captures how the urban scale is productive and supportive of AN (Piletić 2022). However, as is explored in the next section, the various scales of the state do not always move in the same direction; the interstices of decision making can be exploited in pursuit of change.

AN is also not a new phenomenon: scholars have argued that Thatcher and her government utilised AN's methods (M. D. J. Ryan 2019), which was encapsulated by their emphasis on 'law and order' and racialised politics (S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019). Policing during Thatcherism (and now; Elliott-Cooper 2021) was explicitly racial, focusing on young Black men, and was often exercised through procedures that amount to everyday oppression (Davey and Koch 2021). Extensive literature on Thatcherism also has revealed the extensive moralising rhetoric attached to free market capitalism during her ministry (e.g., Da Costa Vieira 2023; Gamble 1989; S. Hall 1985; S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019). AN has been a core part of British political life and therefore relevant to understanding citizenship-making and -claiming. Nevertheless, literature on acts of citizenship currently privileges an idea of activist citizenship rooted in a Global North conception of democracy: an organised, collective struggle that engages in oppositional resistance (Pottinger 2017). Conceptions of citizenships acts therefore remain constrained.

I follow Jakimów's (2022) suggestion by turning to accommodative resistance during a time of authoritarian neoliberalism in London. Using the example of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, I demonstrate the potential of accommodative resistance to transform subjects into citizens. The overarching claim here is that BFYA was a space through which local community organisers were able to become full citizens through accommodative acts of citizenship. These acts, while ostensibly not radical, form an everyday resistance to the authoritarianism present in Thatcherism (S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019).

Before moving to analysis, it is important to differentiate between acts of citizenship that—while neither spectacles nor confrontational—are still oppositional, and those that are accommodating. One illustration is Pontrandolfo's (2018) examination of how Romani families negotiations with a local Italian government surface as citizenship acts. Here, negotiation was predicated on accommodation—Romani families sent "the children to [Italian] schools and [had] them vaccinated," undermining how decisionmakers "imagined" them (Pontrandolfo 2018, 92). This is in contrast with other acts of citizenship: the Romani have historically had to avoid institutions rather than collaborating with them, which is not confrontational but still has an oppositional form in its refusal of the state. Differentiation is important as activism is necessarily multifaceted and may include both accommodating and oppositional acts. These are not my focus here but do represent another avenue to explore acts of citizenship.

5.5 Resistance in the time of Authoritarian Neoliberalism:

Here, I explain how BFYA's activities are accommodative resistance during a period of authoritarian neoliberalism. I begin by setting the scene, focusing on how the historical context reflects a localised form of neoliberal authoritarianism. I next delineate some of the Association's specific organising tactics that "work[ed] with [existing] actors and systems to exert long-term change" rather than confrontational ones (Jakimów 2022, 509). Emphasising accommodative forms of resistance allows me to trace how, at the micro-level, BFYA produced answerable subjects and full citizens. My emphasis does not ignore the importance of confrontation; rather, the intent is to highlight the strategic value of accommodative resistance.

5.5.1 Authoritarian Neoliberalism during Thatcher:

As aforementioned, Thatcherism was tightly bound up with authoritarianism, and thus political advocacy during this time period was constrained by police coercion and insulation (S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019). Elliott-Cooper (2021) reminds us that to be Black in Britain is to always suffer authoritarianism, whether it is explicitly racist police violence or colonialist logics

that insulate(d) the state from dissent. Broadwater Farm was no different: as a stigmatised territory (Wacquant et al. 2014), it was routinely the subject of a local form of authoritarian neoliberalism. For one, as described by K.3 and K.4, the estate experienced heightened policing designed to punish the residents (see also Gifford 1986; Jefferson 2012). This was true even before the post-1985 uprising media frenzy that stigmatised BF as a "hellish place of criminal activity and racial hatred" towards white inhabitants, with racist and moralising language (Gifford 1986, 124). The Gifford report (1986, 125) writes the following:

> The racist theme which appears in some of the reports which we have quoted - White people being hated and terrorised by Black - was reinforced by headlines about "hyenas", "butchers", and "monsters". It became personalised in a particularly unpleasant way around Councillor Bernie Grant. A report in the Sun of 9th October, under the headline "DON'T CALL ME BARMY BERNIE", describes Councillor Grant as "peeling a banana and juggling with an orange". An unnamed Labour councillor is quoted in the report as saying that: "Bernie Grant is like the leader of a Black tribe - always looking for battles and shaking his spear. He sees all Whites as his enemy." This kind of reporting had nothing to do with criticism of Councillor Grant's statements… The crude images of Councillor Grant as being a madman from the jungle were inexcusable, and they were to continue for months.

The stigmatisation of BF became an element in national discourse, as the repeated references in the Gifford report (1986) attest to. The post-riot occupation is a flagrant example of police violence (KI.5, interview, 27 Jan. 2024) that both white inhabitants and local Tory politicians supported (Kavanagh 1985; Platt 1986). AN is not just restricted to 1985, even with the increase in race-related uprisings in other cities (Elliott-Cooper 2021). The Broadwater Farm Defense Campaign (Elliott-Cooper 2021), a police oversight and community defense group, demonstrates ongoing AN in Tottenham and across the UK. My emphasis on race is not to erase the inclusive, multiracial politics of BFYA (discussed below). Instead, race matters because powerful institutions (like media organs and state actors) racialised the estate, the Association, and crime (S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019). In turn, the estate was further stigmatised, punished, and isolated (Wacquant et al. 2014). Indeed, KI.4—who is white—remembers a time the BFYA were threatened:

> We used to get hate mail for working in a black community. Letters with razor blades, sizes, cassette with a message saying "We know who you are. We know where you live." My car used to get burgled and the only thing that was taken from my briefcase was contacts and addresses… so it was just information gathering…. we were seen as a direct threat. Because we're getting organised, you know, and getting things done.

On insulation, Dillon and Fanning (2011, 59) document a significant history of Haringey Council engaging in what they call "paternalistic municipalism." This orientation towards residents meant the Council managed participation rather than seriously taking it into consideration, especially in housing and planning. It also indicates the scalar dimension of AN—insulation occurs at the local level, too. For example, by funnelling funding towards its own community centres, the Council established "proxies to be consulted in lieu of wider engagement with communities," which replaced rather than supported genuine community consultation (Dillon and Fanning 2011, 35). Stirling (2022), BFYA leader, said that the problem with the Council is that they "believe their job is to regulate everything that happens on council estates," while BFYA co-founder Kiffin believed that the Council resisted coordination with the BFYA (Young 1992; J. L. Smith 1993). Both KI.3 and KI.4 (interview, 27 Nov. 2023) remember having trouble with Haringey Council, ranging from bureaucratic runaround to delayed reporting. As such, AN in Broadwater Farm meant two things. First, the multiple scales of the state actively suppressed BF inhabitants. BF residents were ignored by their local council and then subjected to racist policing supported by Thatcherite, moralising discourses. Second, BF denizens were pushed outside the traditional citizenship framework. As Elliott-Cooper (2021, 68; see also S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019) writes, this framework follows from Thatcherism's "myth of the well-ordered, respectable, British nuclear family" that was "central here to the wider moral economy" of the era. These threads indicate a period of authoritarian neoliberalism that constrained activism of the day. It also reflects how the local state positioned BF residents as less-than-full citizens, ignoring their concerns and shutting them out of decision-making processes. It is in this milieu that the BFYA's activism was able to succeed through accommodative resistance.

5.5.2 Resistance through Accommodation:

With the context of authoritarian neoliberalism established, I now consider those activities that are "resistance through accommodation" as laid out by Jakimów (2017, 2022). BFYA's initial conception, for instance, was to give the youth "something to do" because the local authority was failing to provide services, with the aim of reducing crime on the estate (Williams 1994). While parallel, non-state provision might be radical, it is in essence an enforcement of existing rights that are violated by the state (Jakimów 2022). The BFYA's takeover of the chip shop was done with the (tacit) approval of the estate's Housing Manager (Gifford 1986, 25). While an unorthodox approach, the takeover is another example of BFYA filling in for the state by creating a space for social mixing between residents of differing identities. This too can be seen in Platt's (1986, 7) depiction of a white pensioner's lunch club "coexist[ing] in the same room as the Youth Association's club for young people on the estate." The same is true of the nursery. Kiffin and colleagues once approached the Council's Chief Executive, about access to space for the nursery. He said to the Gifford Report,

> "They were quite determined about it. My little bit was to try and create a climate of opinion to overcome the resistance that obviously existed within the bureaucracy. It was not the normal thing to do in those days, handing over this professional institution to unpaid volunteers. I told some minor white lies like saying, well it was only a temporary thing. I knew damned well that once Dolly Kiffin got her hands on it, we would never get it back." (Gifford 1986, 27–28)

BFYA was ultimately successful in their effort. Here, the YA engaged in accommodative resistance by "seeking to enforce… existing rights, which are often routinely violated" by the state through welfare provision (Jakimów 2022, 509). This is not a protest or confrontation with Haringey Council; it is an accommodation of its failures by replacing it. As work continued post-uprising, the Association itself undertook some consultations for Haringey Council in connection with the £33 million refurbishment grant. Consultations began as early as 1983 and continued through at least 1988 for different projects like estate beautification (BFYA 1988). At the time, consultations were normally conducted with the providers (unions) rather than users (council tenants) (Dillon and

Fanning 2011), so both represents a significant break from practice and is a moment when BF tenants became (literally) answerable subjects. BF residents also started negotiations with the Council to form a housing management team so that they could manage the estate themselves, though I have not been able to trace this to conclusion (Murray 1994). While these two activities were done with the consent of the local state, consent does not itself mean that the acts are not resistance. The use of existing laws (in the case of estate self-management) and the establishment of new political practices (in the case of consultation) represent moves against "prescribed habitus and political taboos" (Jakimów 2022, 509). This is because state actors did not expect BF residents (understood as Black, young, and politically disengaged) to demand the 'right to have rights' associated with full citizens. Indeed, KI.3 (interview, 27 Nov. 2023) said,

> It was unusual for Black people to get involved in local government politics. Yes, you have the odd one dotted around. But it was unusual that Black residents got involved. It was even more strange what we [the BFYA] was doing. I never got [politically] involved until that time. I never know my dad or mom get involved, never. [I never heard] my dad and mom discuss politics… That weren't the thing in the Black community cause we were just trying to get along in England, let alone politics. So for [a] section of the Black community now getting involved was strange to a lot of people.

Yet, the above actions represent diverse forms of citizenship acts that reflect the status of citizen.

BFYA's advocacy was also about gaining more representation to the local state—that is, literally becoming answerable citizens. As aforementioned, the racist Tenants' Association initially barred Black residents, meaning Black residents had limited formal representation to the Council. BFYA provided a formalised platform for becoming literally answerable by forcing Haringey Council to acknowledge the estate's Black residents. A panel of Broadwater Farm residents, Haringey Council, and relevant agencies was set up to make decisions about the estate. The panel was led by MP Bernie Grant, and represents one of several platforms through which BF inhabitants could influence the decision-making process (Gifford 1986). The creation of a new platform mirrors my

discussion with KI.4 (interview, 27 Nov. 2023) about "set channels." They said about their engagement with the YA,

> "[activists] got to have the strength to bypass [the Council's] set channels. You know you've got to go into council meetings and shout... [the Council] couldn't keep us on the straight and narrow of their processes, their procedures: 'you know, it has to go to *this* panel.'"

This matches with another anecdote from Kiffin's biography. Williams (1994, 67) writes that BFYA and the Council were in a disagreement about building a new community centre on BF in 1989. Frustrated with an impasse, Kiffin

> hired a bus, took it to Broadwater Farm and filled it with pensioners and anyone available. They all marched in with her to the Committee room to press the case, Dolly came away with the promise that the £5 million project had the committee's backing.

Another illustration is an emergency council meeting held immediately post-1985 uprising at which Kiffin went and "objected to not having been formally invited." She continued by criticising the Council's decisions around police visits after the riot, accusing Haringey staff of "walking over the Youth Association, and not talking to them at all" (Haringey Community Relations Council 1985). In one way, these quotations reflect confrontational acts: violating accepted procedure by protesting a policy committee meeting is a forceful action to take (e.g., Barbero 2012). Yet, these illustrations display a commitment to achieving "access to rights by directly negotiating with the local authorities" (Pontrandolfo 2018, 87). Breaking the law is not as pre-requisite for negotiation, as seen elsewhere in the literature; rather, it is achieved through persistent pressuring of political leaders like Bernie Grant (Grant to Harris 1993; Grant to Kiffin 1993). In these ways, BFYA engaged in significant accommodative resistance by cooperating with, and replacing, the state—while conducting more traditional advocacy. Given the AN backdrop, accommodative resistance was often the only method to achieving change, which I elaborate on below.

5.6 The Association's Acts of Citizenship:

BFYA's activism foregrounded community-led and inclusive politics, meaning it

became a space through which residents could make accommodative acts of citizenship. These acts stand in contrast to those scripts and scenes expected by outsiders, generated by the media, and maintained by authoritarian neoliberal practices. As Elliott-Cooper (2021, 68) notes, "the Black family was framed as the antithesis of Britain's national self-image," and yet, BFYA was able to utilise accommodative resistance to become those that have the right to claim rights. I have considered BFYA's orientation to BF residents, its anti-racist activities, and finally what I call its 'auto-regeneration' of the estate. Here, 'auto-regeneration' describes a process in which an estate's denizens are the ones regenerating an estate. These illustrations reveal how BFYA's resistance by accommodation still surface as acts of citizenship at their core (Jakimów 2022). It also demonstrates how housing and place-based activism play a core role in building new subjectivities (Bernhardt and Schwiertz 2025; Jacobson 2022).

The Association persistently claimed to represent the people of the estate in relation to the state, and in doing so generated a distinct sense of a Broadwater Farm resident. Such claims abound within the archive, appearing in disparate sources like the Association's publications, such as newsletters (S. Scott 1987a; Kiffin et al. 1987), pamphlets (BFYA 1988), and their newspaper (BFYA 1983); the Gifford Report (1986); and various news media (Platt 1986; Staff Reporter 1985). At the outset, YA leaders positioned the group as inclusive: "'We didn't want a Black-run Association,' explains [Kiffin], 'but one that would look after all the communities together'" (Williams 1994, 32). KI.3 similarly says,

> We weren't a Black activist group. We were just Black people in the room, but there was also white people in the room. We were just a group, but if you look at some of the papers, we was labelled a black group (Interview, 27 Nov. 2023).

In fact, contemporary pictures in BFYA's (1983) newspaper show a multi-racial group who not only served the estate's Black youth, but also the older white residents (Figure 9). Additionally, the YA remained independent of any overarching group. For instance, Kiffin held a close association with Grant but declined to integrate herself with the Labour Party (Platt 1986), even though it was Grant's home from his early political career (KI.2, interview, 26 Jan 2024).

KI.4 (Interview, 27 Nov. 2023) also emphasised BFYA's independence from existing political parties. Kiffin insisted on being separate from the Council because of her belief that relying on the Council engendered a 'council mentality' that made people "dependent" and "resist[ed] genuine community initiative" (Williams 1994, 78). The BFYA positioned their community at the core of their work, recognising that independence from a wider political party was necessary to claim citizenship as BF residents.

BFYA's community-rooted and racially inclusive engagement is a "rupture that enables the actor (that the act creates)" to create a new citizenship-script and therefore become a citizen (Isin 2009, 379). BFYA worked to "break routines, understanding and practices" that produced an estate that was internally divided along racial lines, such as the white-dominated Tenants' Association. The very decision for Kiffin and others to come together to form the BFYA is itself an act of citizenship that constituted the estate's inhabitants as subjects with the right to claim rights: the right to be heard, consulted, and respected by Haringey Council—i.e., to become answerable subjects.

As Isin (2008, 18) writes, "to enact oneself as a citizen involves transforming oneself from a subject into a claimant," of equal rights. Unlike confrontational activism seen elsewhere in the literature, the quieter forms of activism (D. G. Martin et al. 2007; Pottinger 2017) employed by the BFYA were still able to transform its members and BF residents into claimants who had a measurable impact on an authoritarian neoliberal structure that misrecognised the estate as a 'warehouse' of the Black and poor in Tottenham (Isin 2009).

The 1985 uprising and the subsequent reactions coincide with a shift towards a more confrontational form of anti-racist politics, which may be read as typical acts of citizenship. However, the BFYA continued to accommodate and cooperate with the state instead of becoming purely oppositional. Just after the uprising, BFYA (1987) hosted a conference—which included panels by Haringey staffers—which aimed to be a "chance for Black people to have their say, and a chance for our white colleagues and comrades to learn first hand [sic] the dehumanising effects racism has had on black people." Stafford Scott, another BFYA leader, likewise penned several works that articulate a similar perspective. In one instance, he (1987a) writes about supporting a "revolution" that, "whether by coming out on the streets or lobbying the powers that be," allows people to "take positive action to redress their situation." In another, Stafford Scott (1987b) compares positive media attention on Apartheid South Africa to negative attention on Black Britons protesting against racial injustice, calling out hypocrisy in depictions of Black advocacy depending on the target. Stafford Scott's engagement morphed into the related Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, and he continues to engage in police

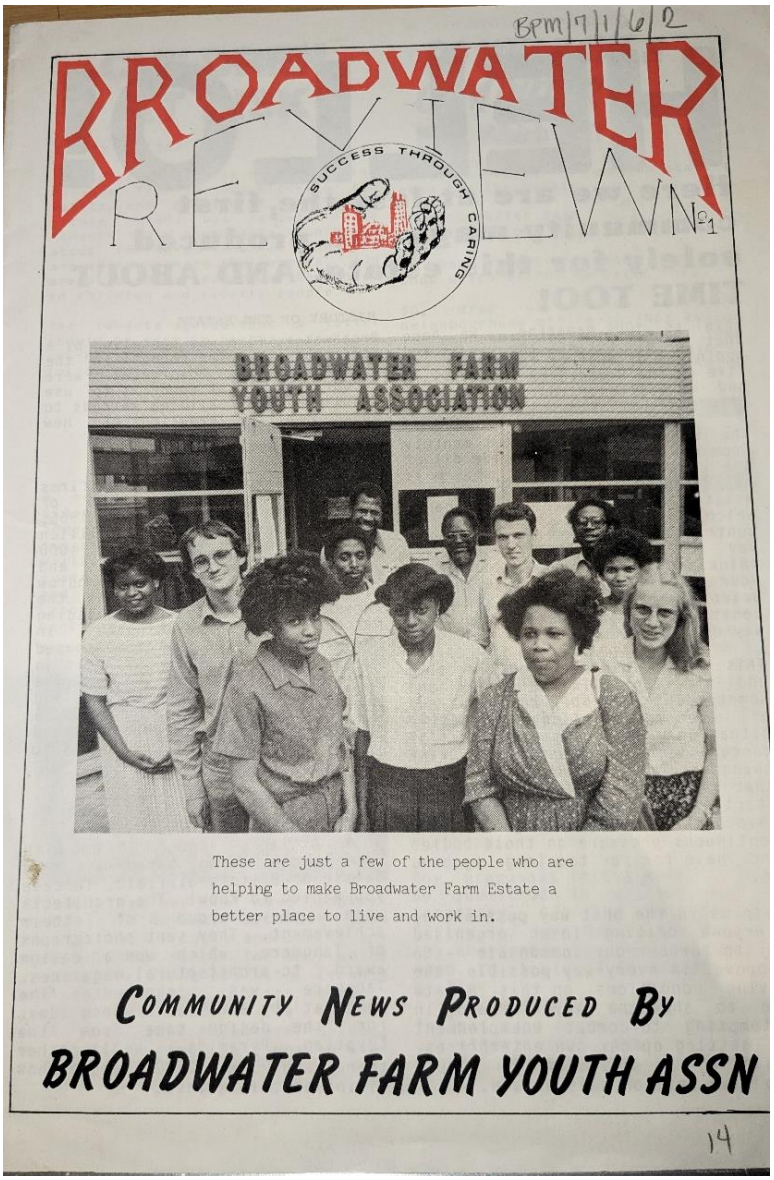


Figure 22 - Broadwater Farm Youth Association newspaper (1983). Mrs Dolly Kiffin is bottom row, second from right.

advocacy (see Elliott-Cooper 2021). Moreover, BFYA, Broadwater Farm Resident's Association,[49] and the Defense Campaign (1987) developed a joint Movement for Civil Rights and Justice that directly aimed to challenge the racist policing order (KI.4, interview, 27 Nov. 2023). The more explicit politics did not mean a decrease in collaboration with the local or national state—as noted earlier, most of BFYA's success required accommodation. Most importantly, this flexibility does not undermine the strength of their citizenship acts. Rather, it is a pragmatism that allowed BFYA to "engage in [the] writing [of] scripts and creating the scene" that is necessary to "enact[ing] themselves as citizens" in a time of AN (Isin 2009, 381).

I return to BFYA's refurbishment of the estate, something I called 'auto-regeneration.' Previous sections have discussed the work BFYA undertook, so I focus on the meanings and effects of auto-regeneration for and on the estate and BFYA. The YA was able to engage in auto-regeneration by boosting employment through their Co-Op and by lobbying contractors to hire and train local young men (KI.3/4, interview, 27 Nov. 2023). The Co-Op was responsible for the aforementioned new parks, painting of exterior structures, three big murals, and renovation of several buildings (Williams 1994). The YA's emphasis on employment was both practical and ideological. Unemployment was high (nearly 70%; Gifford 1986, 155) and the belief was that it contributed to crime (KI.3, interview, 27 Nov. 2023). BFYA also held courses to support resident entrepreneurship at a dedicated and staffed enterprise centre (Williams 1994). The Gifford (1986) report believes this effort played a part in reducing crime. Auto-regeneration also created a new social pressure that meant the work was "protected" from "graffiti" and "destruction" because inhabitants were "proud of what they've done" (KI.4, interview, 27 Nov. 2023). This effect was widespread across the estate and endured at least into the 1990s (J. L. Smith 1993). Auto-regeneration is another important citizenship act. In essence, the Co-Op is a clever use of existing laws to ensure government funds were funnelled toward BF residents, as it could bid for contracts normally only available to outside construction firms. While the funds were a consequence of the 1985 uprising, the

[49] This replaced the previous, white-led Tenants' Association

funnelling was only possible because of BFYA's use of existing law. The BFYA even flexed its muscles to "insist that [a subcontractor] used and trained local youth" for the parks project (Williams 1994, 59). Auto-regeneration reflects the "determination of residents to rely on nobody's efforts" but their own, which is a marked shift from earlier depictions of BF (Young 1992). By exerting this change in circumstance, BFYA fundamentally altered their relationship with the local state. BFYA activist Nigel Norie is quoted as saying that before the Co-Op, "the council would send in a team and dab on some fresh paint and go away again." Yet, because of high unemployment, "local people would have to just sit and watch. Anger and bitterness would be left behind…" (Young 1992). After the change, there was a clear sense that BF inhabitants were in charge of the estate's affairs (Williams 1994). Beyond becoming actors that became answerable to justice—in this case, answerable to the insulation from dissent and lack of consent from residents for projects—BF dwellers established new scripts that went against "prescribed habitus and political taboos" (Jakimów 2022, 509). We know from the archive that the Co-Op was an unanticipated move by the BFYA that Council staff did not initially believe would succeed (Williams 1994). While Isin's (2008) original formulation emphasises acts over practices (i.e., repeated actions or habitus), Jakimów (2017, 2022) contends that repeated rupturing acts across different times and spaces can snowball into a new set of citizenship expectations. The longevity of the Co-Op echoes those repeated acts that have the potential to transform existing citizenship practices. Lastly, the emphasis on auto-regeneration also lead to the development of an "enterprise culture" at BF (Williams 1994, 71). BFYA was able to support several start-up businesses, which were expected to provide over a hundred new jobs (Young 1992). References to the new businesses persist to 1998 (Boumelha 1998) but unfortunately nothing was found after that year. This, too, went against expectations. Norie is again quoted as saying "Councils cannot get used to people doing anything for themselves," which indicates BFYA breaking habitus without resorting to confrontational resistance (Young 1992).

5.7 Conclusion:

Expanding theorisations of acts to include unprivileged sides of activism is

important because acts of citizenships "produce citizens and their others." Without such expansion, scholars will miss out on the less visible ways individuals become answerable actors (Isin 2008, 37–39). While the Broadwater Farm Youth Association did not always use traditional forms of politicisation, their activities show that this did not stifle their ability to become citizens. Instead, BFYA's advocacy was effective precisely because they accommodated, cooperated with, and often replaced the local state rather than confronted it. This was not co-option; rather, BFYA extracted change by persistently using the avenues open to it, while also paving new ones. Unlike most accounts of activism that hinge on breaking the law (e.g., Barbero 2012; Jacobson 2022), the BFYA consistently exploited existing law in creative ways. All the Association's acts reshaped the state-resident relation so that BF residents could obtain full citizenship despite the state's attempts to marginalise them. During the BFYA's time, that relation was defined by an authoritarian neoliberalism that stemmed from racist policing supported by national policies and insulation brought on by the local state's lack of interest in its Black residents. AN meant that such nontraditional advocacy was necessary, and yet still successful. Thus, BFYA's work demands theorists to seriously reconsider political advocacy in our era of intensified and everyday authoritarian neoliberalism (Davey and Koch 2021). This chapter has thus not only argued for expanding the frame of accommodative acts of citizenship to consider those that occur under neoliberal authoritarian regimes, but also has further developed how housing and place-based activism fits within acts of citizenship.

I conclude by analysing how accommodation fits with other underappreciated activist forms that still generate answerable subjects despite their perceived lack of radicality. Such forms include "passive dissent" (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar 2019) and "quiet activism" (Pottinger 2017) or "quiet politics" (Askins 2014). In an age of relentless neoliberalism (Bayliss et al. 2024), activists must contend with physical and mental exhaustion (Emejulu and Bassel 2020). As exhaustion can be a type of domination, scholars must think expansively about what counts as advocacy. Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar (2019, 164) for instance argue that "flourishing may only be achieved through withdrawal" stemming from

exhaustion. Thus, withdrawal can become "a form of passive dissent" that is as much as a "site of possibility" as is confrontational political advocacy. Merging passive dissent with, say, quiet quitting allows scholars rethink the phenomenon not as diffuse dissatisfaction with labouring life—but rather as a deliberate attempt to forge a new relationship with work. In the same way, resistance by accommodation can help us reclaim the radicality of "everyday activism" first introduced by feminist scholars, understood as "everyday actions by individuals that foster new social networks or power dynamics" to better conceptualise how "small acts transform social relations in ways that have the potential to foster social change' (D. G. Martin et al. 2007, 79). Linking everyday activism(s) back to citizenships acts opens up new questions for analysing quieter advocacy (Askins 2014; Pottinger 2017) under authoritarian neoliberalism. What do forms of everyday citizenship-claiming and -making look like? Recall Darling's (2014) reminder that we must consider politicisation that does not hinge on revolution. What micro-acts become political acts (D. G. Martin et al. 2007)? How do acts of citizenship thrive in the ongoing era of neoliberal authoritarianism (Bayliss et al. 2024) as exemplified by global crackdowns on pro-Palestinian activism (e.g., Reilly 2025; Taft 2024)? Finally, what hidden routes are there for advocates to blow open structures of oppression? The case of BFYA is thus a lesson in how to effectively turn an existing oppressive framework back on itself such that those without rights becomes those with the right to claim rights.

5.8 Interviewees

All abbreviated as KI.#:

- Key Interviewee 1 – former or current politician
- Key Interviewee 2 – former or current politician
- Key Interviewee 3 – activist and leader in Broadwater Farm Youth Association
- Key Interviewee 4 – activist in Broadwater Farm Youth Association
- Key Interviewee 5 – former Haringey Borough Council staff member

Chapter 6: "Personal Connections and Personal Alliances:" Leveraging Local Electoral Politics for Power[50]

This chapter jumps forward to the present, considering the StopHDV campaign's electoral strategy to cancel the Haringey Development Vehicle. Through an interrogation of the internal politics of Haringey Labour, the chapter answers Research Questions two and three regarding the interrelations between the local state and the local party.

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Geographical research on political parties tends to privilege the regional or the national scales (Halvorsen 2020). Yet, as Ormerod (2021, 1) notes, this scholarship "can overlook the complex and on-going local political struggles, and the quieter registers of political power" within the context of long-standing one-party local states in the UK (Dillon and Fanning 2011).

Public and social housing in England is a primary function of the local state, making it a good focus for studies of state-party relations. Taking local housing development as a site of political contestation, I consider the fight over the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV), a proposed—but unrealised—large scale regeneration scheme in Haringey, London. Beyond conventional activism, anti-HDV campaigners effectively took over Haringey Council to end the scheme (Horton and Penny 2024). Using interviews and archival data, I therefore consider local councillors as both actively implicated in the governance of space and as representatives within a wider party structure (Copus 2004).

Building on research that explores the relationship(s) between local political parties, the local state, and urban regeneration/development (Ormerod 2021), I undertake a deep exploration of the HDV to challenge dominant depictions of political parties as machinery of depoliticisation (Gilbert 2023; Horton and Penny 2024; Jessop 2016). I argue that the inherently unstable nature of parties makes them vulnerable to contestation and takeover. This means treating the

[50] The text of this chapter is under review for a special issue in *Territory, Politics, Governance* (Sindhwani 2025b). It has been edited to ensure coherence with the rest of the thesis and to avoid repetition.

state and the party as relational, rather than as discrete objects. I chiefly draw on critical perspectives on the Labour Party (Cockburn 1980; Miliband 1973; Ormerod 2021), which are then complemented by Alain Badiou's concepts of the state revolutionary (Paccoud 2019) and the event of the political subject (Calcagno 2008) to think through this web of relations. Thus, this research contributes to the limited political geography literature on local state-party relationships, resist monolithic portrayals of the state-party nexus, and refocus research on the urban and neighbourhood scales by examining the role of councillors in public policy.

6.1 Background:[51]

In 2015, the London Borough of Haringey announced the Haringey Development Vehicle. The HDV was intended to redevelop large portions of Haringey's publicly held assets like housing estates and council offices (Horton and Penny 2024). The Council argued that such a large scheme was necessary to upgrade areas that historically received little investment—and especially so after the 2011 uprisings. This uprising set the stage for the HDV, which was designed to remake Tottenham "from the ground up in the interests of real estate capital, the state and a wealthier class of investors and residents," or in other words to erase the stain of the 2011 riots (Horton and Penny 2024, 1). Its architects (including government and property developers) thus used the 2011 uprisings as a cover to fundamentally change the character of the neighbourhood and to replace the pre-existing community with younger, whiter professionals.

Activists quickly began a furious campaign to halt the Vehicle in 2015. They considered various avenues, including a legal challenge, but settled on taking over the council by campaigning within the Labour Party councillor selection process. Using the 2018 local elections as a referendum on the scheme, anti-HDV campaigners were successful: of the 57 councillors for re-election, 45 were against the scheme (R. Mason 2018). However, the Labour Party lost six seats to the Liberal Democrats (Horton and Penny 2024). The geography of this election reflected historic trends in Haringey, with the eastern half of the borough

[51] See Section 1.4.2 for more detail.

traditionally a Labour stronghold while the western half has tended to favour the Liberal Democrats (Dillon and Fanning 2011). This electoral tactic has been described in media as a "takeover" of the council by the political group Momentum. Momentum and StopHDV—while both opposed to the Vehicle and shared some membership—were discrete groups with different aims. StopHDV was a local, nonpartisan alliance of community advocates. Momentum is a national, left-wing political organisation aligned with (but separate from) the Labour Party. Although the claim of a council hijacked by Momentum activists has been criticised by councillors and activists alike, this narrative remains (Dignan 2021; Horton and Penny 2024). The 'takeover' strategy was ultimately successful, with enough anti-HDV candidates winning their seats and activists convincing incumbents to flip sides. The scheme was withdrawn by the new council in summer 2018.

6.2 Understanding the State-Party Nexus:

This section offers a summary of the chapter's analytical approach. I chiefly draw on literatures of the relational state, the history of the Labour Party, and Badiou's theories of the event and the state revolutionary. The theory presented here restates portions of Chapter 3 while introducing the use of Badiou's frameworks, which are particularly useful to help interpret the HDV.

6.2.1 The State and the Party:

As indicated above, the present work takes the local state as its primary focus. I draw on the relational approach of scholars like Ormerod (2021), Jessop (2016), and the London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (LEWRG; [1980] 2021). LEWRG ([1980] 2021) described the state as both a mechanism for policy delivery and composed of relationships between individuals. The two are mutually reinforcing and intertwined. This framework reflects Jessop's (2016) strategic-relational approach, which reconceptualises the state as a site of political jostling and agonism—through which groups and individuals exercise power vis-à-vis others. However, the state itself does not unidirectionally exert power. As such, the state is embedded in, but ultimately inseverable from, the wider political-economic system (Jessop 2016; Ormerod 2021). Treating the state as a relation—

instead of as a concrete and stand-alone object—thus attends to the state's complicated nature without wholly flattening it.

I chiefly draw on Jessop's (2016) perspective of the party as political organisations that mediate between the state and civil society by organising the social base of the state. Parties also translate policies into platforms, reducing the complexity of politics. The literature often privileges the national scale, sidelining other scales (Cockburn 1980; Copus 2004, 2015; Halvorsen 2020; J. Scott and Wills 2017). The focus here, then, is on local political parties—specifically the Labour Party. It is the historic ruling party in Haringey and therefore has significant decision-making power, as described in Chapter 1 (Dillon and Fanning 2011). Copus's (2004) in-depth study on councillors and local politics reveals a messy, interlocking, and scalar party system. Loci of power fluctuate depending on the nature of the political-economic context, the party group within a council (a united bloc of councillors from one political party), and the balance of the council. The scaled nature of political parties means that there is frequently a divergence in priorities between national leaders and local members. Yet the institutional and structural power of party leaders means that there is a downward pressure on the local party to comply with the national's directives, even when there is significant opposition. This is partially because of the strictly hierarchical and tiered system of party. It is also a result of the party's governance structure that privileges parliamentary politics instead of the grassroots (Gilbert 2023; J. Scott and Wills 2017). Consequently, councillors typically prioritise the demands of the party (in particular, the national party) above those of their constituents (Copus 2004, 2015). As is demonstrated below, many interviewees highlighted the significance of these personal relationships to the failure of the HDV and other policy proposals.

Born out of a collection of socialist organisations and trade unions, the Labour Party has always sat uncomfortably as a broad coalition of social-democratic and socialist politics (Cockburn 1980; Gilbert 2023; J. Scott and Wills 2017; B. Ward 2022). Consequently, Labour-run councils are depicted as cliquish, closed, and unrepresentative of either their nominal constituents or even other members of the party. Such depictions reflect Miliband's (1973) view that the

Labour Party is primarily a parliamentary one, focused mostly on narrow politics within parliament. Local parties thus seem to be intended to legitimise electoral processes as the only way to achieve political change—thereby narrowing spaces for disagreement. Importantly, Cockburn (1980) stresses the importance of party *structure* as one of those narrowing mechanisms as it is beholden to a small subset of the wider electorate (i.e., its party members). This thinking therefore positions local parliamentary socialism as a structural problem. However, Copus (2004) draws attention to a subtle difference: the structure and rules of a party are a space through which membership engagement is formalised—but it is not the determining factor. Rather, the undetermined nature of membership (its interests, needs, focuses, and so on) mean that these structures can be used against the party as will be later explored below (LEWRG, [1980] 2021). As such, while the party and the state are intertwined—and function to shrink space for dissent—it should not be assumed that this is always the case.

6.2.2 Badiou's State Revolutionary and the Event:

To help analyse the HDV, I chiefly use two concepts from Alain Badiou's body of work: the event of the political subject and the state revolutionary. I begin with the event, which Badiou defines as "a rupture of an undecidable, general situation by a unique and singularizing intervention" (Calcagno 2008, 1054). As instances of sudden change, events are a diverse but formal category. They have "no assignable cause" and cannot be "inferred from the situation within which they erupt" (Bassett 2008, 897–98). Events matter because they invert the structure of a situation, making what is missing maximally present (Badiou 2018). Paccoud (2019, 353) identifies an event is an "invers[ing of] the hierarchy of voices," also known as the structure of appearances. Calcagno (2008, 1055) elaborates on what happens after an event: as each event "contains within itself a simultaneous decidability and undecidability of meaning," the longer term outcomes of the event are unclear. They are dependent on the sub-elements of the event and their meanings. Events are caused by subjects, which do not pre-exist the event. The subject is formal category, meaning that it can include a range of individuals and institutions: what matters is the subject's position on reconfiguring power

relations (Bassett 2008). Consequently, an event is also a "process of 'subjectivisation' whereby the human animal," is transformed into a "real subject" (Bassett 2008, 899). Badiou offers a dual notion of politics: one of management (post-politics), and one of contestation over a philosophical truth (the political) (Calcagno 2008). Badiou demonstrates how "political agency, understood as interventions, results in political subjectivity" (Calcagno 2008, 1061). Although Badiou (2018) tends to focus on monumental revolutions, Calcagno (2008) argues that smaller or failed interventions can achieve similar outcomes, whether through micro-changes or by setting the stage for a more powerful intervention. This new subjectivity is political, in that it is centred on dissensus, conflict, and a radical break from the past. Badiou's conception of the event gives some important insights. First, that an indeterminate and post-political situation can be made determinate and political through the subject's decisive acts. Second, the subject is a broad but embodied actor who is often the "mass rebel" like Spartacus—but need not be, as considered below (Badiou 2018, xliii).

The second key concept is the state revolutionary, itself a subject. They are briefly defined as an "'evental' figure" who is "working from within the state" to reconfigure existing "inequitable power relations" (Paccoud 2019, 340). The state revolutionary sees "the state neither as its objective nor as a norm" but instead as "a means to effect the reversal" of an existing power arrangement—that is, to cause an event (Paccoud 2019, 343). This reversal or event can also be at any scale, with Badiou (2018) providing the Paris Commune or Serialist music as examples. Paccoud (2019, 344) justifies connecting Badiou's philosophy and planning theory along similar lines. He writes that the planning domain "pursues goals that are at times antithetical to demands of the market and in which actions usually originate from within the state apparatus." The broad nature of the subject likewise means Badiousian theory can "accommodate features of contemporary planning situations" like "issues of governance, diffuse responsibility for change, [and] hybrid governance arrangements" like public-private partnerships (Paccoud 2019, 345). In sum, the state revolutionary is a subject who uses the state in pursuit of equality by inverting an existing power arrangement. While events are fleeting and always engender a response that seeks to drive the hierarchy of voices back

to inequality, this "historical to and fro" and "materialist dialectic" is made possible through the use of the state (Paccoud 2019, 355). This subject recognises that the state is a tool and not the goal, and works to "bracket out structural constraints through actions that carry an affirmation of equality" (Paccoud 2019, 344). The aim of using Paccoud's (2019) interpretation of Badiou is not meant to be prescriptive. Rather, I am more interested in the figure of the state revolutionary who seeks to use the state as a means to the ends of inverting a hierarchy of voices in lieu of "including all possible voices" that are jostling to clarify a pre-existing indeterminate situation (Paccoud 2019, 353).

Taken together, such frames can help think through some of the critical threads that run through the case of the HDV and its halting due to its opponents' campaign (under the name of StopHDV). This chapter identifies the hierarchy of voices present in the Labour Party before the StopHDV campaign; the council that cancelled the scheme as the state revolutionary and a subject; and, lastly, the cancellation of the scheme itself as the event. As Paccoud (2019, 340) writes, "the state revolutionary complicates the consensus/conflict dichotomy" that abounds within works on the state and politics. Here, the state itself becomes a site of conflict instead of remaining an opponent to be overcome. The state revolutionary also complicates typical views of the state—as "unified, controlling, coercive"—allowing us to appreciate the diverse actors, orientations, and relationships that constitute 'the state' (Ormerod 2021, 2). Although the state revolutionary may be able to force an inversion, it is done with "the added tension that it tries to do so from within state power." (Badiou 2018, 521). As demonstrated here, a local state 'takeover' brings new tensions, complexities, and achievements. These are just some of the tensions that the concept of the state revolutionary can help scholars understand more richly.

6.3 Data and Methods:

This chapter considers the interconnections between the local state and local political parties in Haringey, London. It draws on fourteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews and document analysis (Table 2), a subset of my overall data collection (Section 4.1.4). Interviewees are current and former councillors from

both the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. Although my interviewees are anonymised (see below), individuals mentioned in archival sources are named because such data is publicly accessible. Coding was done inductively and deductively, beginning with codes on the HDV, activism, and the Labour Party. New codes were subsequently developed for other significant threads. Overall, this combination of sources allows me to tell the story of the HDV from the perspectives of the Labour Party and the local state, and examine this relationship through the lenses of the state revolutionary and evental politics.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, I have made use of composite characters to preserve anonymity, given the politically sensitive nature of this project (Willis 2019). In the spirit of accountability, I now describe my approach in forming the composites. First, following Willis's (2019) example, I condensed my fourteen interviews into four composites along relevant categories (Appendix C). Being clear about these assumptions promotes accountability. The composites are likewise internally logically consistent. Second, I quote directly from transcripts and try to avoid reading too far into an interviewee's opinions, judgements, and motivations. While each composite includes individuals from different backgrounds and identities, their stories are presented as if each is one individual's story. A gender is consequently assigned to each composite for ease. Lastly, where possible, I cross-referenced my interviewee's claims with publicly accessible archival data. Readers can thus 'check my work' without uncovering the relevant identities.

Table 2 - Interviewees' background and experience.

Gender	8 men, 6 women
Party Affiliation	12 Labour, 2 Liberal Democrat
Time served as Councillor	Generally, between 2 and 10 years[52]
Current Status	6 former councillors and 8 current councillors
Seniority	6 have served as chairs of committees or similar roles; all are committee members

[52] Deliberately vague for anonymity

6.4 The Hierarchy of Voices and the Party:

Political parties must be understood as multi-scalar organisations whose success is contingent on a shifting power-geometry between central organs and grassroots members (Copus 2004; J. Scott and Wills 2017). The history of the relation between the local and the national Labour Party during the StopHDV campaign reflect this power-geometry. At the beginning, most resistance to the scheme occurred at Labour's grassroots level. StopHDV started at a local Momentum meeting in 2016 (Horton and Penny 2024). Momentum was founded by Jeremy Corbyn and his allies after he became Labour Party Leader in 2015, and functioned as a left-wing pressure group (B. Ward 2022). Corbyn represented the Labour left's vision for a return to an avowedly anti-neoliberal party. However, there was resistance from within the party's staff and elected politicians due to the perceived radicality of Corbyn and Momentum (Dignan 2021; Gilbert 2023; Holden 2025). Nonetheless, as John says, this radicality attracted newer members to the party: Corbyn's rise was linked to a "surge in membership" at the local level and even stated he joined the party "when Corbyn was standing" for leader. John noted that for much of the time before the StopHDV movement and Corbyn's ascension, monthly ward meetings for party members "never reached double figures… Officers were elected in meetings where there were six people and three or four of them became officers." For his own ward's office election, John noted that

> There were only six people at the meeting. Half of them belong to one family, which is the family of the long-standing councillor, whose two other family members became officers. That was a bit extreme, but that was not untypical of what was happening in a lot of the wards and so it was a very limited environment.

These members tended to be more radical than their counterparts, as noted by John, Asif, and Melissa. More importantly, these members were broadly opposed to the type of neoliberal logic(s) embedded within the HDV and the council leadership at that time (Horton and Penny 2024). A change in quantity and makeup of a ward's membership can have knock-on impacts on the councillor and their choices: lay party members are important as "the eyes and ears in the local community." This is why John says that Corbyn's celebrity "gave legs to [the

StopHDV] campaign that otherwise would have been a small community opposition, that probably wouldn't have gone very far." Melissa too explicitly linked the StopHDV campaign to a Corbyn-surge: "it represented the only real shift in politics at local level." However, this did not directly translate into widespread opposition to the HDV among the Labour group of councillors. Indeed, the council still comprised various councillors loyal to the then-Council Leader Claire Kober between 2016 and 2018, and so were seen as being pro-HDV (Barratt 2018b). Such differences were even legible to outsiders like Liliana who noticed geographic variation when she was standing as a Liberal Democrat candidate in 2018. Asif likewise contrasted party members in the western part of Haringey who "tend to be sort of like middle class homeowners" who understand social issues differently than their counterparts in the eastern part of Haringey—which has a long history of radical politics (Dillon and Fanning 2011). These new members were likewise not compliant with the existing Council leadership at the time: Asif told me that Corbyn's rise "mobilised loads and loads" of members to express their opinions in all aspects of the grassroots party's machinery—including the all-important councillor selection process. As John mentioned, Corbyn's ascension

> seemed to demonstrate that actually it was possible to change things and it was possible to do things differently, and to effectively challenge the kind of whole austerity agenda. And so [it mattered] in a place like Haringey, where the politics for better or worse has been and continues to be completely dominated by the Labour Party.

Consequently, the direction of lay membership tended to be more radical than elected Labour politicians (and political leadership). As new, more radical members became more vocal in the party structure, the overall direction of the party became unstable: the power-geometry (J. Scott and Wills 2017) between local members and local leadership began tugging in opposite directions. That is, the future of the HDV became a question of who and which faction would win control over the Council.

Such changes evince a noticeable break from the atmosphere of worry among activists caused by the HDV's announcement that marked the period from 2011 to the cancelling of the policy in 2018 (Horton and Penny 2024). This general

uptick in leftism in the party signals the start of a clarifying of the indeterminate situation that started with the 2011 uprising and the subsequent announcement of the HDV. It also represents a laying of the grounds for the state revolutionary to reverse the existing order. That is, Corbynism amplified the anti-privatisation message of the StopHDV campaign throughout the Haringey Labour Party.

The geographic and scaled diversity persisted throughout the anti-HDV campaign. An example of scaling is when Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) came out against the HDV in 2018, after 22 Haringey Labour councillors asked it to intervene (see Section 3.2.3 for more detail on the party's structure). The Committee demanded Kober pause the project in the absence of mediation (R. Mason 2018). As John notes, this led to a crisis point, in which councillors "were trying to work out how they could vote against" the HDV and not receive retaliation. The threat of an inevitable infighting scandal combined with the fact that, at the time, "the NEC was supportive of what the left was doing," which led Kober to "gave up the ghost" and resign. As such, this is a clear case of the national scale intervening at the local level. The HDV was defeated with the election of a new council in 2018, who subsequently voted in Joe Ejiofor as leader. This new council was dubbed the 'Corbyn council' for its leftist focus. His tenure only lasted three years, stepping down in 2021 (Weir 2023).

The balance of power shifted decisively against the so-called 'Corbyn council' after Keir Starmer became party leader in April 2020. In 2022, in what was another case of scaled power-geometry (Copus 2004; J. Scott and Wills 2017), the London regional party (a central organ comprising representatives from local Labour Parties) blocked former Leader Ejiofor from running as a councillor, effectively ending his political career. Weir (2023) claims this was a "stitch-up" instigated by a "cabal of local right-wingers" who wanted to "take back control of the council in 2022 by fair means or foul," and backed by Starmer. Ejiofor's successor, Peray Ahmet, is described by John as "a complete opportunist." John believed that

> [Ahmet] wanted to be leader of the Council and very definitely to keep her seat. So, the membership in her ward…. is, the left in [her ward] had been working to deselect her because she was a supporter of the HDV. And of

course, when she resigned,[53] she then tried to make herself a figurehead of people being against the HDV, and that convinced enough people that she kept her council seat.

In John's eyes, Ahmet is likewise supported "by the remainder of Claire [Kober]'s old faction," which was "the most right wing faction" at the time—rendering Ahmet the heir to the neoliberal approach, at least in John's eyes. Asif says, Ahmet has "virtually no support within [the Labour] group herself." In our conversation, Melissa said Ahmet leads a "more kind of centrist administration." Melissa, as a leftist councillor (at time of writing), also feels "so marginalised at the Council" because of Ahmet's leadership. As such, some of Haringey's Left understand the election of Ahmet as a reversion to a more right-wing leadership after Ejiofor's explicitly leftist tenure and as a shift in power back to the party's central organs. Horton and Penny (2024, 119) write "in the wake of the HDV, a transformative leftward turn in Haringey Council's political direction was never likely... indeed, the local state's elected and professional officials were, with few exceptions, the same as before." The local political scene thus appears to have remained relatively stable, without any significant break.

Returning to the national scale in the party, critics argue that Starmer's right-wing bloc has been forcing out left-wing members, with the goal of establishing a membership that is "compliant, loyal and cooperative with the leadership" (Gilbert 2023; Holden 2025). The blocking of Ejiofor is described as one example (Weir 2023). As such membership is located at the ward level, this manoeuvring echoes down the party structure (Copus 2004, 2015). For current leftist Labour members, like Melissa, this infighting has significant consequences: she says, "the left of the Labour Party has completely splintered. It doesn't exist in any like meaningful form anymore. We've had quite a few people who were blocked from running as councillors." Asif forcefully called out what he saw as Starmer and his allies "play[ing] these sort of stupid games with people trying to boot them out of the party." Our conversation about local democracy is revealing:

[53] Ahmet resigned in January 2018 before the election, in protest of the Kober administration's handling of the HDV (Barratt 2018a).

> AS: Can you talk about these interactions down at the local level of ward party?
> Asif: all of that is gone under Starmer. There's no democracy. I was talking to a lady yesterday who was chair of [a Constituency Labour Party][54] for three or four years… she's probably been a party member almost as long as I have, if not longer, and she's resigned because the Labour Party would not allow a motion to be debated about [the ongoing genocide in] Gaza.

Melissa likewise notes that "the gravitational force in politics is to agree with what the national party is saying" because "show[ing] loyalty to the party" is the only way to progress in a political career (Copus 2004, 2015). Consequently, the Labour Party seems to have decisively shifted rightward at both the national and local (Haringey) scales, which might be read as a reversal of the reversal. The StopHDV campaign can thus be read as having sparked a momentary change in the hierarchy of voices, which then reverted to a previous hierarchy. The reversion was abetted by the Party's structures that privilege formal politics and a cliquish and closed system (Cockburn 1980). Yet, as I argue in the following subsection, this is a simplistic reading: it ignores the consequential effects, the longer term impacts of both modifying the structure of appearances and inspiring future political movements (Bassett 2008).

6.5 The State Revolutionary and the StopHDV Subject:

This section moves from the party to the state, and from the general situation to the state revolutionary. I identify the state revolutionary and its various components, considering how the subject's multiplicity helped bring about the event. Whereas other research (e.g., Lipsky 2010) focuses on formal 'street-level bureaucrats' like urban planners or teachers, this chapter looks at the councillor as a comparably situated state actor—in addition to the council's professional staff, councillors are directly implicated in the carrying out of government policies, especially around local development. The structure of government in England means that the local scale has become a key site of service provision (Mark Goodwin and Painter 1996; D. J. Wilson and Game 2011). While councillors are

[54] Redacted for privacy purposes. Constituency Labour Parties are coterminous with parliamentary electoral districts of the same name, and are above wards in the Labour Party hierarchy. See Section 3.3.3 for more detail.

politicians, they are not free actors (Copus 2004, 2015). They operate within constrained environments that often lead them to simply managing service provision, instead of executing political change. Councillors also interact with the public through different fora (Copus 2004, 2015). As such, councillors occupy a mixed role between street-level and behind-the-scenes technocrat: their relationships with the state and its officers are in tension with other demands (Ormerod 2017, 2021). In this subsection, I argue that the StopHDV campaign's council takeover was tantamount to the formation of a state revolutionary, the figure that inverts a hierarchy *through,* not *against,* state power.

I identify the subject that cancelled HDV as the state revolutionary. As I explain in the next section, this subject inverted the structure that created the HDV. The abandonment of the Vehicle was driven by a collection of actors who all formed the 'StopHDV' subject. As indicated by Badiou (2018) and Calcagno (2008), the subject is a formal category that describes a group of actors who caused a structural reversal—regardless of an individual's specific stance. In this case, the subject encompassed all the activists, councillors, council staff, lawyers, politicians, consultants, and so on who caused the structural reversal. I leave the details of the event and the reversal to the next section, though below I consider two components of the subject: councillors and borough staff. Other components, like the StopHDV activists, are more thoroughly explored elsewhere (Horton and Penny 2024).

In 2012, the status quo was one of large-scale redevelopment (as exemplified by the HDV, among other cases; Watt 2021b). This changed with the 2018 election and takeover. Leaders of the Kober-led council were deeply involved with, and supported, the Vehicle. Councillor Alan Strickland, Kober's Cabinet Member for Regeneration, was, according to John, the "technical mind behind the HDV from the political side" and had "the job of trying to convince people… that actually nobody would be harmed and it would be great." Strickland vigorously defended the Vehicle and its potential in the press (Horton and Penny 2024) and, according to John, in many Labour Party meetings. The Kober-led council also narrowly voted to continue with the Vehicle after the 2018 election (Barratt 2018b). More importantly, activists and community leaders contended that the public

consultation process for the HDV was a sham, in which the aim was to procure consent for the Vehicle (Horton and Penny 2024). As such, the local state engaged in managerialism between 2012 to 2018, trying to manage rising anti-HDV opposition rather than engaging in open debate (Cockburn 1980; Ormerod 2017, 2021). This changed after the StopHDV campaign's success in 2018.

As the institutional body with control over planning policy, the Ejiofor-led council that cancelled the HDV was a crucial component of the state revolutionary. This is not to diminish the power of the StopHDV movement. Rather, the aim here is to abandon seeing the state as one whole that is unified in its support for the HDV, and to instead treat the local state more as a collection of relations with differing orientations and capacities vis-à-vis the Vehicle. Tracking these relationships allows us to unfold the StopHDV subject without minimising either the importance of intra-party politics or the role of community activists.

The campaign targeting the Labour councillor selection process was a core part of fashioning the state revolutionary. It is true that building a coalition outside the Labour party was necessary in bringing down the HDV. The "non-sectarian ethos" of the StopHDV movement "helped to bring together Liberal Democrats, Greens and people from the centre and left of the Labour Party" (Horton and Penny 2024, 88; see also Dignan 2021). Indeed, Liberal Democrats frequently undermined and/or voted against the HDV. Yet this perspective should not reduce the significance of the creation of an anti-HDV coalition within the party. As Melissa recalls, "by the time we [in the Labour Party] were selecting councillors in 2018," it became clear to campaigners that "the way to stop the HDV would have been through selecting councillors who opposed it," specifically Labour councillors, given the electoral arithmetic of Haringey. For Melissa, this was tied into a broader push for anti-austerity politics: the StopHDV campaign "was really tied up with a bigger vision as well, which was that we could actually do something really positive if we succeeded in getting a majority of left Socialist Council elected at that election." John concurred, noting activists knew that, at the time, "the existing Council, with its existing membership, was not going to go back on" the HDV. While some councillors like John explicitly stood for election to repeal the HDV and to challenge the austerity agenda of the then-Conservative government,

other councillors were not necessarily opposed to the Vehicle in the first instance. But, these councillors were eventually persuaded to change sides (Horton and Penny 2024). Melissa said, "if it could deliver better quality housing and investment, and the accountability, I wouldn't have had a problem with it." Nevertheless, for her, the lack of council oversight "was what was wrong" with the scheme—as designed, both partner and council had equal decision-making power. John however saw such changes of heart as "people jump[ing] on board out of political expediency rather than any commitment whatsoever to the actual aims of the campaign." The threat of deselection made the prospective of flipping very attractive: only 20% of pro-HDV councillors were reselected in 2018 (Aitkenhead 2018). Asif recounted that, because of the "increase in membership across the party across the different wards in Haringey" due to Corbyn's success, "it was a happy coincidence that we [StopHDV] did have a majority of ordinary members" opposed to the Vehicle. This is perhaps why Melissa stated, under Ejiofor's "leadership, [the council] was a coalition, but there was clear direction in which way [Ejiofor's] leadership was going," especially as the Vehicle's cancellation was one of the first acts (and major aims) of the new council.

The coalitional nature of the Ejiofor-led council reflected the state revolutionary's internal multiplicity. John supposed that his faction (which followed the "anti-austerity message of Corbyn") was strong, but however

> we didn't ever really in reality have a majority in Labour Group for that. So, there was a case of building alliances with other people who were vaguely on the left. And you're trying to do as much as we could in the short time that we had available.

Sometimes, these alliances succeeded. In discussing Haringey's council house building program, Asif remarked, "I think the new leadership have retained a lot of those things that we started between 2018 and '21 and one of those things was, you know, which people liked, was the emphasis around building council homes." This program began under the Ejiofor-led council and has maintained broad support within the council. Alliances failed, too: John said

> The [thing about the] Labour Party in a place like Haringey which is essentially one-party borough. It's not even a coalition, it essentially

> includes what would, in a more healthy political environment, be the opposition. So, you've got a whole section of people who become Labour Councillors in Haringey because they want to be Councillor for whatever reason and if it had been a different borough in a different part of the country, they would have been Tory Councillors,

reflecting the import of the party group within the council (Copus 2004, 2015, 2023). Failure was often a result of what John called the "small p-politics": the "personal connections, personal alliances, affinities" that guided councillors to vote one way or another. In terms of the HDV, he lamented that "longstanding [leftist] councillors ended up supporting the HDV with people very much on the centre and right of the Labour Party, with much closer connections to the private sector" because of these personal relationships. He continued:

> Ejiofor had to fight in [the] cabinet against as a minority of cabinet members, at least, including people who had been vocal supporters of the StopHDV campaign, who wanted to take a slower approach… partly as a result of the kind of small-p politics that I was talking about and they were long standing sort of animosities envy, rivalry and so on.

These kinds of relationships mattered in terms of what kinds of policies were implemented. Asif, in talking about the HDV, suggested that "people gotta understand how politics works… if the leader… comes forward with an idea and has their supporters around it… You know, they're gunna have a majority to kind of push that through." That is, there is often significant pressure put on councillors to back the Leader's priorities. Indeed, recall that rank-and-file councillors begged the party's National Executive Committee for protection from having the whip withdrawn or being expelled during the manoeuvring within the council to cancel the HDV (Watson 2018). The plea for help was a direct consequence of not only the Leader's institutional powers, but also the individual relationships between councillors (Copus 2004, 2015, 2023). John discussed his relationship with members of the Housing Scrutiny Panel during the Kober administration. He recalls "work[ing] very, very closely with [councillors] to try and give [them] the backbone necessary to oppose the HDV" instead of simply modifying it. Unfortunately, these members did not follow through with voting to end the HDV, due to personal relationships and/or pressure from pro-HDV groups (Copus 2004;

Miliband 1973). But, even in failures, the interviewees did agree that the direction was overall positive. To illustrate, Asif referred to the ongoing council house building program in Haringey as "a victory and a good thing," even though it is no longer the evental subject who is building these homes.

The relationships that make up the state thus structured the revolutionary's capacity to implement lasting change. That councillors and staff had a variety of orientations to the Vehicle reflects the state's internal instability and heterogeneity. I argue that the fashioning of the Ejiofor-led council as a component of the state revolutionary reveals two noteworthy insights. First, against depictions of the StopHDV campaign's use of an electoral approach as "a tactic of last resort," I contend that the political structures of Haringey effectively *required* a campaign that rested on party politics (Horton and Penny 2024, 118). Indeed, internal Labour politics had become a fundamental element within the StopHDV campaign, with substantial resistance to the scheme occurring *through* the party and thus the state. Second, and consequently, the role of the party is not always one of insulation from dissent. Whilst the party is often a machinery of constraint (Cockburn 1980; Ormerod 2021), the StopHDV subject indicates that the party does not have an iron grip.

Similarly, the local state—where the hierarchy of voices was mostly located—was trying to enact a neoliberal vision on the area with the help of other state scales. The HDV reflects the long-standing municipal paternalism that characterises Labour's rule in Haringey (Dillon and Fanning 2011), in which the state managed and foreclosed dissent (Cockburn 1980). More presently, both Asif and John highlighted what they saw as council staff who tacitly supported the HDV while it was still alive. John provided a few examples. When it came time for the Ejiofor-led council to formally terminate the HDV, he remembers being nervous that the council officers would recommend *not* to cancel the scheme: "[I] didn't trust the officers at all… I had good reason not to trust them." His worries were founded in that the same staff originally advised the anti-HDV slate to avoid committing on the HDV in their Labour Party election manifesto, which was understood as a lynchpin in efforts to repeal the HDV via the council. The staff's hesitancy hampered other Ejiofor-led council policy decisions. Asif instance noted

that he experienced "resistance from officers," when the council was trying to insource housing services. He said insourcing routes were "watered down and changed by officers who challenged and undermined" this process. John went as far as to say that "our own officers were sabotaging the process." Similar comments were made about the Alexandra House scandal, in which Haringey Council purchased its offices for more than twice their initial valuation (C. Thomson 2021). John argued that he "might take the view, though I'm not in a position to be able to prove it, that we got stiffed" on Alexandra House because, in his words, "a medium ranking member of staff seemed to know that this property was for sale" but declined to tell any councillors or senior staff. The building was subsequently purchased by a third party, who then sold it to the council at over twice its original valuation. Thomson (2021) does indicate staffers were aware the building was for sale and also notes that the Council's internal audit blamed inadequate bureaucratic systems. Whereas the question of fault remains in the Alexandra House case, its relevance lies in the bureaucratic system that caused this scandal. Specifically, it indicates a local state that was able to maintain the previous structure of appearances even after the council was taken over. As Ormerod (2021, 7) writes, the maintaining of the structure can often appear as a "surrendering of [power] in order to maintain the job of the state" rather than a removal of politics itself. The above cases instead suggest that council officers had grown used to a culture of acquiescence and persisted in acting along such lines. Melissa located these issues in the ingrained leeway that bureaucrats have in the borough: "Haringey always had a reputation of being a very, very officer-driven council," and Asif likewise noted there was a built-in power imbalance between council officers and council leaders: council officers "got their assistants and [the council leader] is there with like, maybe one" assistant, who might be a part-time councillor. Such imbalances signal two interrelated phenomena. First, is the council staff's situating of "local politicians as a barrier to be overcome," instead of taking the political values and manifesto of the Ejiofor-led council as guiding principles (Ormerod 2021, 7). While staff are meant to support and take directions from councillors, the aforementioned conduct indicates that councillors did not feel assisted. Instead, the pushback from staff renders the goals of the 'Corbyn council'

as unthinkable and therefore at the bottom of the hierarchy of voices. Second, the imbalance mirrors how existing organisational and power structures of the council continued to uphold a neoliberal structure of appearances that pervaded this time. The council thus remained adhered to the hierarchy, even though it formed part of the state revolutionary subject.

Such an ambiguity supports the notion that the state-party nexus, as constraining as it can be, does not have a stranglehold on policy outcomes. Instead of seeing the party-state as a determining force, its "structure, form and organisational shape provide a *theatre*" in which politics occurs (Copus 2004, 77). Such insight does not deny that the state and the party work together to stifle dissent. Rather, it reframes the Ejiofor-led council as a key inflection point in the *longue durée* of Haringey's state-party nexus: a moment in which the state became revolutionary (in Badiousian terms) *through the party* and subsequently upended the existing socio-political structure.

6.6 The Event and its afterlives:

This chapter now moves to discussing the actual abandonment of the HDV as a Badiousian event. It does so by considering the cancellation itself and the undecided situation that followed (roughly between 2018 to the present day). Remember that Paccoud (2019, 342) describes the Badiousian event as a reversal in a given power structure such that what is missing in that structure "becomes maximally existent." An inversion is not about including all possible voices—rather, it is about making powerful the unpowerful. Consequently, this section has two ambitions: first, thinking through the HDV cancellation as a Badiousian event; and second, contemplating how an evental theory accounts for the HDV's afterlives without recourse to simple state-phobia (Paccoud 2019).

Broadly speaking, the HDV's cancellation was an inversion of the urban policy structure that defined the Vehicle as the only solution to the problems posed by the 2011 uprising (Horton and Penny 2024). Following Paccoud (2019), I classify this as a Badiousian event for two reasons. First, the StopHDV subject captured the policymaking power of the state and used against its previous actions—a move I identify as a structural reversal, which was achieved through

the state and the party. Second, the abandonment of the HDV was a "bracket[ing] out [of] structural constraints through actions that carry an affirmation of equality"—i.e., it was a move "against the established hierarchies of power or wealth" (Paccoud 2019, 344). As noted by many others (e.g., D. Byrne 2018; Chakrabortty 2018; Dillon and Fanning 2011) and in Chapter 1, Haringey Council has historically privileged established and powerful voices, something that did not appear to change with the HDV. Indeed, the Kober-led council was intransigent about the policy: Horton and Penny (2024, 118) write, "council leadership had secretively pursued the redevelopment plans for years and then doggedly refused to engage with widespread community concern," a clear reflection of the rigidity of the hierarchy of voices at play. While the pro-HDV camp finally acquiesced to some changes, these were not without intense lobbying (Aitkenhead 2018). My interviewees confirmed this depiction. Melissa for instance remembers Kober and her allies pushing through the policy: "the case [for the HDV] had not been made within the Labour Party, which runs the Council, but also it hadn't been made with [the] tenants who would have been affected." Similarly, Liliana said

> If there were people who were supporting [the HDV], then they were in such a minority would have been, you know, I could have counted them on one hand, you know, and we're talking a part of like, hundreds [opposing it]... I I didn't see any public support for it… I suppose the only type of people that did seem to support it [were] fairly business oriented people that didn't really care for any kind of state or any kind of, you know, anything like that. They were quite happy to hand everything over to private developers.

In Melissa's mind, Kober was "more of a political manager" who had "came on to steady the ship" after previous council controversies,[55] rather than someone who could handle genuine resistance. Resistance within the council was likewise minimal. One reason for a compliant council is the selection process, which favours long-standing members, their familial connections, and institutional leaders rather than a truly democratic process (Cockburn 1980; Horton and Penny 2024; Ormerod 2021). The importance of these familial, personal, and romantic connections cannot be overstated. As is mentioned above (and in Section 3.2), these

[55] Melissa specified the tragic killing of two-year old Peter Connelly (also known as Baby P) in 2007. See Section 1.3.1 for more details.

connections directly influenced the way councillors voted—recall John's discussion of the councillor selection in his ward (Section 6.4). Indeed, the "small p-politics" that John mentioned hinged exactly on these relationships: for 'party □□, the work of being a councillor was inseparable from their most [56]□ These relationships were reinforced by the Labour Party's structure: its ward meetings, group of councillors, and the frequent contact that every councillor had with another. As a result, in the words of Asif, many councillors were "more keen to just kind of not really push the boat out, so to speak. You know, not ruffle the feathers and then a lot of them are just not very political," which meant it was easier for the HDV to be pushed through.

The withdrawal of the HDV thus posed a significant, if momentary, reversal in the hierarchy of voices across the state and party. At its most basic, the end of the Vehicle is the result of the state revolutionary using the powers of the state to subordinate it to the revolutionary's political will: ending the Vehicle (Badiou 2018). It also "confirm[ed] that collective grassroots power had successfully disrupted this totemic expression of the speculative city" (Horton and Penny 2024, 119). But it was more than this. In the words of John, the HDV's cancellation reflected a time "when effectively the old order was overthrown," specifically referring to Ejiofor's selection as council leader. John also noted the manifesto development process was new and transformative. He said it was a new and "truly engaging process with party members where there was a lot of negotiation." John further suggested this was "something that was actually very, very important that enabled us to defeat the HDV" as it provided a legal and political basis for voting to terminate the proposal. These party members were not the cliquish partners, family, and friends of pre-Corbyn councillors (Copus 2004, 2015, 2023). Rather, as Melissa indicates, they were both numerous and "ready to be mobilised, ready to be engaged" against the Vehicle. Lilliana equally remembered, "in 2018, all anybody wanted to talk about was the HDV, the scale of it," and the people she

[56] The discussion of such relationships is left deliberately vague throughout the work due to ethical limitations. As this chapter and thesis are publicly available, revealing intimate details might unmask them, risking significant ethical harm (Dawson 2014). I therefore leave this discussion here, focusing more on the structurally defined relationships within the Labour Party rather than the personal ones.

spoke to were generally opposed to the scheme. For Melissa, the change from Kober's leadership to Ejiofor's was total. She remarked, in the Kober era "no one [came] to the meetings, no one challenge[d]" Kober's "extreme kind of neoliberal politics." This completely changed,

> In 2015 when you got this big influx of people… The majority were left wing, so we elected branch chairs and everything. We took over the party in the sense that we… elected leadership of the party that reflected the membership of the party and then it became a much broader and more democratic thing. We were able to influence politics in the way… influence the Labour Party, who got selected [as councillor candidates].

In Melissa's mind, then, the StopHDV movement was intrinsically related to the council campaign and Corbyn's elevation. It fundamentally reworked both the party and the state's hierarchies. The reversal in the *party* is obvious: she states that it became democratic. The reversal in the *state* lies in that the Labour party has historically been the ruling party. Melissa felt that StopHDV was successful "in like shifting the Council to the left," that is, more in line with anti-HDV voices. Yet, as aforementioned, community representatives saw public consultations as a sham (Horton and Penny 2024) and Labour leaders seemed to be dismissive of newer party members (Aitkenhead 2018). Therefore, the StopHDV movement and the Vehicle's withdrawal can be read as a moment when the dismissed anti-HDV voices became powerful using the state against its previous actions. It is these voices—not those who wanted to implement the Vehicle—that became maximally existent. It is therefore no surprise that the community-led aspect of the StopHDV campaign demonstrates how the least powerful voices became the most powerful (Dignan 2021; Horton and Penny 2024).

StopHDV's short-term impacts have largely been portrayed positively while the longer-term outcomes are more mixed. My interviewees sometimes expressed despair, but there does seem to be some hope for Haringey's left. While commentators (Gilbert 2023; Holden 2025) contend that the national Labour Party has been decidedly pulled to the right, I argue that—at least in Haringey—the new reality reflects a clarification of the undecided situation that preceded the HDV's cancellation. That is, although the overall direction of the party leans more neoliberal than it did under Corbyn, the leeway for action in the borough has

narrowed because of the council takeover. For example, when I asked Melissa what the legacy of the HDV was, she remarked, "a lot of people who would like be ideological cheerleaders of privatisation are generally not a legitimate political force now in Haringey from what I can see." This contrasted with Asif's perception that Haringey always had had a "strong Blairite, right wing flank" in the council. He continued, "the whole direction of the council shifted" after the HDV was cancelled. Discussing the Liberal Democrats, Liliana suggested that her party was more radical than other parties due "to some influence from the 2018 election because a lot of the councillors that got elected that year were very much built on this kind of anti-HDV thing... the kind of people who came to the fore from that were a little bit more left-leaning because they were opposed to the HDV." Several interviewees believed that the StopHDV movement frightened other councils from executing similar policies. Asif illustrated: the HDV's withdrawal

> played a part… in changing the way councils like Southwark for example, or other Labour[-led] councils who wanted really neoliberal housing policies and redevelopment programs. It pushed them back from that [and] encourage[d] some more progressive voices and tones in their leadership (see also Horton and Penny 2024, 133).

However, regeneration in Haringey does continue, most notably with the High Road West (HRW) scheme (Chapter 7) The scheme's critics position it as a "piecemeal" version of the Vehicle that is underpinned by the same neoliberal logics. Yet, critics' belief that the HRW scheme is cancellable "had there been stronger local opposition" overlooks the enmeshed nature of urban development (Horton and Penny 2024, 132). For instance, more than one councillor reported that they were not necessarily opposed to HRW. Asif was emphatic that "the High Road West scheme is actually nothing like" the HDV both because of the "net gain" in council homes and that the Ejiofor-led council—the so-called 'Corbyn Council'—had been able to force some revisions on the plan. In discussing her own positionality as a councillor, Melissa reminded me that she could only consider objections to the scheme based on its suitability within planning terms, rather than its politics. Lastly, Melissa recounted many conversations she had with residents and party members impacted by the scheme, who "really want[ed] this

scheme to go ahead" as they believed they would benefit. The complexity surrounding the scheme is not to deny its very real potential for harm. Rather, my brief review of HRW is to insist on attending to the complex relations that make up the state (Ormerod 2021). As seen in the HDV and the HRW schemes, these relations can be used to invert a hierarchy of voices. Asif argued that councillors could be savvier than simply approving a proposal. He said,

> you don't have to like politically ally with a developer… there's ways you can play that as a more sort of complex political hand, right? You don't be like 'I'm gonna, you know, not I'm going to oppose this,' but push them while also recognising it's very difficult to make a decision that at the moment that would stop a development.

While he acknowledges the current, complex nature of council finances, Asif suggests that councillors must be shrewd in their dealings with developers and those who wish to maintain a hierarchy of voices if activist-councillors are to cause a reversal in that hierarchy.

Finally, the Ahmet-led council remains committed to two of the Ejiofor-led council's key housing policy targets: the building of new council homes and the insourcing of the previously outsourced council house management.[57] Melissa says that this "political direction… is trying to do the right things often, like failing miserably in the delivery, but like I do think, we have the right priorities." She continues, "it's an ambitious, needed agenda." Even if she disagrees with many of the national party's positions, "at least there are good things going on locally." Asif agrees: the continuing council house building program "does tell [him that] we have a majority of councillors who value social housing." This converging of views on public housing suggests a broad reworking of the existing mindset. It is not the leftward, transformative change that was promised by the StopHDV campaign, but the reworking is indicative of a new reality in Haringey. The Council seems to be in the midst of a more cautious, slower, and less arrogant urban renewal—and yet still undertaking significant regeneration elsewhere. Conversely, Asif believes that the mindset of Haringey's councillors can be "quite paternalistic" and that

[57] The process of bringing the management services back in-house began in 2021, during the Ejiofor-led administration, and was completed by the end of 2022 (Reeve 2022).

"snobbery was part of the story as well" revolving around council housing. He thinks it is a "systemic thing" due to a decline in the stature of council housing in Britain. As such, the Ahmet-led council's commitment to maintaining the building program can be read in two ways. One, as simple political opportunism; in another, the event of the 2018 election (that ushered in a stronger leftist bloc) clarified the general and undecided situation that preceded it. That is, it—for a moment—"effect[ed] the reversal of the structure" of the conditions that made the HDV a potential future (Paccoud 2019, 343). Whilst the HDV's death "created a political vacuum in Haringey that was filled by factionalism, uncertainty and ambiguity" as seen in my interviews with Asif and Melissa, the campaign's success also set the tenor of future conversations around housing (Horton and Penny 2024, 120). Liliana, discussing the Liberal Democrats, says that they are "fairly left wing group" who "attack Labour from the left" on issues like "building enough council homes, [and] aren't protecting residents." As the policy's termination was only possible by contestation within the Labour Party, StopHDV's successful strategy of influencing elections must be read as a momentary and evental reversal of the pre-existing political structure. Indeed as Horton and Penny (2024, 104) write, "with one foot in the state and the other on the streets, [StopHDV] forensically scrutinised and dramatically contested the HDV." While it is true that StopHDV was *not solely* a party-project, it is equally true that working through the existing political institution of the Labour Party was *the only way* to stop the HDV.

6.7 Conclusion:

The London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group ([1980] 2021) outline several "oppositional possibilities" that can form one part of a wider network of socialist struggle against an oppressive state. Arguing against simply defending the state as it is, they ([1980] 2021, 96) conclude, "the mass of people are aware that they are not 'our' hospitals or 'our' services. These are not our institutions but *theirs*." Namely, LEWRG ([1980] 2021) rightly identify that the state's capacity for radical change is circumscribed by both relations within and across the state.

What happens, then, when an outside force captures the state and turns it back on itself? The case of StopHDV and its related takeover of Haringey council

offers a unique perspective on the relational ensemble of the state. In this chapter, I analysed the campaign and takeover from the perspective of Badiou's theories of the event and the state revolutionary. Badiou's conception of the event is complex but can be explained simply as a reversal in the structure of voices, i.e., of decision-making and power. This does not mean taking into account all present voices in a liberal fashion. Rather it is a process through which missing voices are made "maximally existent" in a given circumstance (Paccoud 2019, 342). Events are caused by subjects, which, as a formal term, includes all manner of individuals and institutions. The state revolutionary is an evental subject that works *through the state,* using its powers to invert a structure of voices.

I have demonstrated how Badiou's conception of state revolutionary helps explain the relationship(s) between political parties and the local state through its elucidation of the category of the event and its undecided nature, as well as the emphasis placed on non-state actors who are part of the StopHDV subject. This approach thus differs from others in its expanded conception of the subject and novel interpretation of the event. I started with the murky situation that preceded the event, connecting it the Labour Party's internal multiplicity exacerbated by Jeremy Corbyn's ascension to party leader and the subsequent change in the party's makeup. I next introduced the state revolutionary: the StopHDV subject that cancelled the Vehicle. As subjects can comprise many actors, I only considered councillors and council staff. I recounted how councillors were broadly opposed to the Vehicle as well as how the relations between councillors were fundamental in understanding the Vehicle's cancellation and the StopHDV campaign. I also relayed the relationships between councillors and council staff, emphasising how state actors often prioritised manufacturing consensus rather than engaging in negotiation. I finally considered the event itself—the cancellation of the Vehicle—and its aftermath. Although any event "will call forth reaction and is ultimately short-lived" (Paccoud 2019, 355), I detailed how the HDV's withdrawal has had knock-on impacts that have had material impacts on housing development in London.

This analysis emphasised the role of political parties in policy development and implementation, adding to a growing body of literature on the significance of

political parties (Halvorsen 2020). The chapter also further expands our understandings of councillors as policymakers and political representatives, caught in relational webs that structure and are structured by their actions. This work insists that scholars consider how the state actually governs. Badiou's theories, then, assisted in tracking these webs—emphasising their contingent and ever-changing nature can be exploited to cause material change (Paccoud 2019). Long-standing local parties have mixed records on engendering material change. Parties often merely engage in managerial tactics, funnelling dissent into acceptable moulds (Horton and Penny 2024; Ormerod 2021). Haringey is no different. Indeed, expecting revolutionary change after a council takeover is naïve. However, this state-phobic perspective ignores the relations that constitute the state as well as the savvy actors who endeavour to turn the state back on itself. Among the Left's discussions about Britain's future is a rediscovered sense that the state will often fail at making material change (LEWRG, [1980] 2021). Instead of passing quick judgement on the state, my analysis is an insistence on engaging in deeper investigations of how to make the state 'work' at the local level for all (Ormerod 2021). Such a research agenda reifies neither the state nor the party as an invincible monolith but instead as just another set of relationships that can be exploited in pursuit of radical change.

Chapter 7: Local Parties, Authoritarian Neoliberalism, and Urban Change in Tottenham, London[58]

This chapter investigates ongoing regeneration in Tottenham through a case study of the High Road West (HRW) redevelopment scheme. Building on Chapter 6, it also responds to Research Questions 2 and 3.

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The last two decades of urban development have not only significantly transformed urban centres across the Global North but also have seen an increasing reliance on financial speculation. This newer form of change, speculative urban transformation, is another stage of neoliberal urban redevelopment that is oriented towards attracting capital back towards city centres. From Los Angeles to Melbourne, cities have subsequently seen large-scale regeneration, state-led gentrification, and displacement in service of new homes and businesses. However, the internal contradictions in policy have meant that houses remain unaffordable for many. As a result, states have been unable to resolve a growing housing calamity—among other crises—which cumulatively contributed to major political crises across the Global North, engendering a ratcheting up of political action and organising (Ormerod 2021).

Notwithstanding activism, state practices of marketisation, labour disciplining, privatisation, and deregulation are reinforced through new practices to quell resistance and ensure neoliberalism's persistence (Tansel 2017). These are authoritarian neoliberalism's practices of centralisation and insulation, which explain how neoliberalism is able to persist even in the face of this political resistance. (Bruff 2014; Tansel 2017). Yet, I argue that the state is not the only organ that maintains AN: political parties play a significant role in policy and are thus important to analyse (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019). As Ormerod (2021) indicates, scholars have undertheorised the relationship between the state and the party, particularly at a local level. Though there has been some work in this area

[58] The text of this chapter is currently under review at *Urban Geography* (Sindhwani 2025a). It has been edited to ensure coherence with the rest of the thesis and to avoid repetition.

(e.g., Özden et al. 2017; J. Ward and Ward 2023), more is needed to explain how local states are able to continue neoliberal policies in the face of strong opposition.

This chapter examines the question of the persistence of neoliberalism despite opposition by using authoritarian neoliberalism and theories of the local state to examine High Road West (HRW), an ongoing regeneration scheme in Haringey, London. Overlapping and persisting beyond the Haringey Development Vehicle (Chapter 6), HRW is a live project. Section 1.4.3 reviews the scheme in more detail but it is important to reiterate that, unlike the Vehicle, HRW is a typical regeneration scheme. However, upon its completion, the scheme will significantly reshape the area—not withstanding significant resistance to the scheme. As such, HRW is a pertinent illustration to examine the role of local party politics in the development and reproduction of authoritarian neoliberalism. This chapter takes the difference in reception between the two like schemes as a starting point to explore neoliberalism's persistence.

I consequently have two interrelated aims. One is to explore how the local party and the local state work together to establish a form of *local* authoritarian neoliberalism that rests on a multiscalar state-party nexus (see Section 3.2.3). The second is to explicate the role of the party-state nexus in the legitimation of large-scale urban transformation. My analysis again takes the local state—and its relationships with local political parties—as a political, variegated, and complex entity. This perspective allows me to understand political decision-making processes as contingent and multi-dimensional. The HRW case thus provides a useful illustration to extend theories of the illiberal state to include both the local scale and its relationship with urban transformation (Di Giovanni 2017).

This chapter proceeds as follows. I provide a brief review of relevant theoretical frameworks. Next, I discuss the methods involved in producing this chapter. I then present my findings on HRW's context, policy, moral and cultural discourses, and finally its community engagement. I conclude with a discussion of my findings.

7.1 Understanding urban authoritarian neoliberalism:

Before discussing the methods of this chapter, it is important to reiterate a few relevant analytical frames. First, this chapter again uses authoritarian neoliberalism to interpret HRW, but does so using an *urban* or *local* understanding of AN. This interpretation foregrounds the local scale as not only a site of neoliberal governance, but also a space through which that governance is reinforced (Can et al. 2024; Jenss 2019; Luger and Dürr 2025; Piletić 2022). That is, coercion and insulation not only occur in the *place* of the local, but are also enacted *through the space* of the local. In this chapter, urban AN is particularly important as HRW is a regeneration scheme that is owned by the Council. As is developed throughout this chapter, Haringey Council and the structures of the Labour Party work together to insulate decision-making. Here, AN is deployed *through* the local. Simultaneously, as I argue in Section 7.3.1 below, coercion appears in the form of austerity-induced speculative urban development (Goldman 2011; Horton and Penny 2024; Watt 2021b). Briefly, my claim is that those same economic circumstances which spawned the Haringey Development Vehicle effectively locked-in HRW. Second, this chapter again employs critical perspectives on the *local* state (Ormerod 2017, 2021; Painter 1991, 2006). The framework considers the state as enmeshed in local society, rather than as a separate entity. This perspective better captures the complex, inter-scalar, and neoliberalised/privatised nature of the local state (Mark Goodwin and Painter 1996; D. J. Wilson and Game 2011). Finally, as I argue across this work, existing scholarship undersells the role of political parties, especially in cases of one-party states. I have called this relationship the 'state-party nexus' (Section 3.2.3 and Chapter 6) to reflect the significance of the party to policymaking and policy-delivery. I next discuss the methods for Chapter 7.

7.2 Methods:

This chapter employs a combination of document analysis and eighteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Interviewees are organisers active in housing justice spaces in Haringey as well as current and former councillors from the Labour Party. All organisers were involved with the StopHDV campaign in some capacity

and have continued to oppose the HRW scheme. Unlike in previous chapters, interviewees are given a number and referred to using the 'they' / 'them' singular to maintain anonymity—except where otherwise agreed. This is because I rely less on testimony of councillors and politicians here: many of the councillors I interviewed for this thesis had left the council after 2021. To supplement this data, Chapter 7 relies more on state documents that are publicly available. As I discussed in Section 4.1.2, this is not a neutral undertaking; the analysis below maintains a critical eye without resorting to state phobia.

Coding was done inductively and deductively, beginning with codes on High Road West, activism, the Labour Party, and other housing struggles in Haringey. New codes were subsequently developed for other significant threads (Saldaña 2021). Most of the documents used date from the early period of the scheme, around 2013 to 2015. While HRW is live at the time of writing, and so newer documents exist, these earlier sources form the basis from which the policy has developed. Haringey Council for instance notes the 2013 consultation fed into future planning, culminating in the 2014 Masterplan produced by Arup (2014). This plan likewise retains its importance as a guiding document for the Council. As is demonstrated throughout this work, authoritarian neoliberalism is ultimately about making capital accumulation resilient. Overall, this combination of sources allows me to tell the story of the scheme from the perspectives of the Labour Party, activists, and the local state—as well as examining this relationship through the lens of authoritarian neoliberalism.

7.3 Authoritarian Neoliberalism in High Road West:

Here, my analysis seeks to explain why High Road West was able to persist even with the fall of the Haringey Development Vehicle. My aspiration is to not simply illustrate that AN has become the dominant, present mode of governance here in Haringey. Rather, I show how the twinned aspects of AN are, at the local scale, "preemptive, locking in neoliberal governance mechanisms" long after the political state of play shifts (Bruff 2014, 123). I first contextualise the scheme and its targets, aiming to understand the insulating and coercive strands that meant HRW continues. Second, I analyse the underlying moral and cultural discourses

which bolster the state's arguments for continuing HRW. Finally, I examine the Council's supposed democratic engagement with local residents to emphasise the *local* authoritarian neoliberalism within High Road West.

7.3.1 High Road West: Context and Policy

Examining HRW as a policy proposal through the framework of AN can help explain the scheme's resilience. Here, I consider the political and economic contexts of HRW, which reflect not only the "economic, financial and corporeal discipline"—but also the political discipline—inherent in authoritarian neoliberalism (Tansel 2017, 3). The scheme will take 15 years to complete, cost around £1 billion, and develop 2,600 homes (Allin 2022; Bloomfield 2017). In the process, it will demolish nearly 300 homes on the Love Lane estate, which is mostly social housing. This scheme will consequently displace around 1,000 people. High Road West scheme was designed to exploit regeneration attached to the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club stadium rebuild (Panton and Walters 2018). Section 1.4.3 provides a detailed description of the scheme.

The scheme came about in a context of austerity, one of the core economic discipliners of Haringey Council allowing HRW to continue (Chapter 2). Recall that austerity cuts have impacted all elements of local government, especially council housing delivery and upkeep. Austerity has thus only accelerated a loss in public housing, which had nearly halved by 2011. Since then, Councils have increasingly relied on private financing to build homes—including market and affordable[59] rate units through large scale estate regeneration—involving mass demolition and rebuild (Watt 2021b). The national context then was one of accumulation by dispossession (or demolition): a process by which the state facilitates dispossession of individuals from property and homes to ensure capital is accumulated by private interests through housing development schemes (Harvey 2012; Hodkinson and Essen 2015; Lees and White 2020). High Road West is thus perfect example of this new regeneration. It relies on significant private financing and expertise with the Council operating as a facilitator rather than a

[59] The affordability of these homes is disputed (Jayanetti, 2023).

direct developer, and will deliver new social, market-rate, and affordable homes. These characteristics made High Road West a neoliberal scheme: it was conversion of state capacities that used to ameliorate market forces (public homes) to a capacity that supports capital accumulation through the housing market. Its similarities to the Haringey Development Vehicle meant that activists saw it as an equivalent target, worthy of cancelling. Activist 1 said about their campaign,

> We put forward to people that were prepared to listen we some of the reasons why we think it's not a good idea. The fact that it's a social cleansing plan. The fact that the promises [made by the Council and the developer] can be broken. The fact that there are other ways to build new housing without demolishing the existing blocks and so on.

Councillors I spoke to, felt differently however, presenting several justifications for the scheme. All mentioned the net increase in council homes as one of its benefits and as one reason to defend the scheme. Councillor 2 for instance told me that, while they were new to the Council then, and "didn't really know any of the background to it. I was just hearing [that] there were a lot of flaws in the scheme…" what convinced them to support HRW was that "it's gonna deliver more social housing" to Tottenham. Councillor 3 was more critical, saying "from what I've heard, like there's like a decent amount of social housing and an increase in housing overall. Like yes, it might have been managed better," but "it's very hard… in the context of local government budgets" to oppose a scheme like High Road West. Councillor 1's response was illuminating:

> We had seen some revisions to the High Road West scheme that was also achieved within the last administration… yes it might result in the demolition of an existing estate but in fact there's going to be more council houses than we currently have… the outcome is surely a good thing that there'll be more council homes…

One of the revisions was additional funding from the London Mayor's office to directly increase the number of council homes (Wright 2021). The importance of council homes was also directly linked to the Ejiofor administration's commitment to building new public housing. This commitment was in the manifesto of Ejiofor's coalition, meaning it guided the group's activities. Councillor 4 explicitly said it "set the framework for everything that [they] did… The mindset of that

administration was 'this is our manifesto, all of it... Go ahead and deliver it all.' And that's what [they] tried to do." Although Councillor 4 insisted that the manifesto process was democratic and "the first truly engaging process with party members where there was a lot of negotiation," a particularly salient point is that this engagement was only with Labour Party members. Nonaligned residents would have no input on the commitment until *after* the scheme began. Although this is a standard process of all political parties, the fact that Haringey has historically been a Labour stronghold means that the manifesto is tantamount to deciding the policy direction of the borough as a whole. That is, the local party is the main institution through which the area is governed, reminiscent of Bader's (2011) party-based authoritarianism. Given that cancelling the HDV was a significant aim of Ejiofor's administration, Activist 1 felt that the administration deprioritised cancelling HRW, which ultimately angered some StopHDV activists. Indeed, Activist 2 and Activist 4 expressed strong disappointment with the current leadership, especially current council Leader Peray Ahmet, for whom Activist 2 campaigned. Both told me that they had been friendly with Ahmet and her team as they had been in the anti-HDV coalition. Members of Ahmet's administration claimed that they were "stuck" with the scheme, blaming previous administrations for locking in the scheme (Wright 2021). Conversely, activists insisted the Ahmet-led council had multiple opportunities to cancel the scheme but chose not to. This meant that Activists 1 and 2 left the Labour Party due to the disappointment of HRW continuing. Such outcomes are not ancillary to either the economics of austerity or the internal, relational politics of the Labour Party: in the words of Councillor 6, "people gotta understand how politics works… if the leader… comes forward with an idea and has their supporters around it… they're gonna have a majority to kind of push that through." The power of Council leadership is both structural and personal. The Leader can whip votes with the threat of suspension from the Labour Party: indeed, several anti-HDV councillors were threatened with having the whip withdrawn during the StopHDV campaign, which was only stymied by direct intervention by national party officials in 2018 (Horton and Penny 2024). Leaders can also lean on preexisting interpersonal relationships to sway undecided councillors (Ormerod 2021). One reading of the insistence on new

public housing is simple politics: the Council's commitment (via a political process only open to Labour members) to building new homes was important to electoral success. Yet a more holistic reading is that a need to build more council homes due to the extent of austerity-driven accumulation by dispossession disciplined the Council into allowing the project to continue, despite misgivings. While Councillors 1 and 3 did raise concerns, the lure of new homes was far too great. Simultaneously, the manifesto process—which was democratic and engaging for party members—meant that policy promises around new homes were locked in, isolating the policy from future dissent.

Labour Party in-fighting also helped to lock in the scheme. Gilbert (2023; see also Holden 2025) has argued that, since Keir Starmer's rise to Party Leader, his right-wing bloc has been forcing out left-wing members associated with previous Leader Jeremy Corbyn with the goal of establishing a membership that is "compliant, loyal and cooperative with the leadership." Although the purge is happening at the national scale, it has impacts on the local scale. For instance, recall that the London regional party blocked Ejiofor from running as a councillor in 2022 (Chappell 2022; Weir 2023). For current leftist Labour members, this infighting can have significant consequences: Councillor 3 said,

> the left of the Labour Party has completely splintered. It doesn't exist in any like meaningful form anymore. We've had quite a few people who were blocked from running as councillors. They were like… because they were not sort of suitable. And then alongside that you have like the fact that a lot of [the] left left the party and [are] demotivated and have like stopped being kind of active councillors.

Several members of the Ejiofor council have recently resigned or declined to run again due to this infighting—and indeed, several councillors left the party over Starmer's failings around the ongoing genocide in Gaza per Councillor 6 (see Chapter 1). Such manoeuvring directly impacted HRW's reception among lay members. Councillor 5 said,

> I think part of the problems to do with High Road West is the fact that there is no structure within Tottenham Labour Party to have the discussions and the debates that we used to have. Tottenham Labour Party was… put into

> special measures by [the] London Regional [Party], so they didn't allow meetings there.

Intra- and scalar-party fights over the future of the Labour Party have thus narrowed the spaces in which dissent is heard and respected. In other words, Labour infighting locked in poor engagement: by restricting "what is and what is not legitimate political action" to the party and marginalising external action, parties can effectively reproduce hierarchical and restrictive—that is, non-democratic—modes of political engagement (Ormerod 2021, 8). Given the inexorable relations between state and party, constrained paths of opposition mean that unpopular policies are able to proceed, as shown in the Community Engagement section below.

7.3.2 Moral and Cultural Discourses:

As part of the reaction to the 2011 uprising, High Road West was accompanied by moral and cultural discourses about Tottenham that both targeted areas slated for regeneration and tried to build a consensus for said transformation. Specifically, as I contend in this section, the intent is to ensure sufficient labour supply for local, insecure retail jobs by obliging Tottenham's racialised minority residents to work them. New retail will likely be accompanied by (state-led) gentrification and the replacement of local businesses with global chains (Watt 2021b), which the Council's documents frequently highlight as a positive from regeneration (Arup 2014). This is paired with an explicit desire to build many more new dwellings to privately rent or sell. The stated preference for retail work and global chain stores—coupled with these more expensive, private flats—presents a gentrified Tottenham as the goal, achieved by enlisting Haringey residents as willing supporters of this vision (Da Costa Vieira 2023).

Circulating in council documents and news media, the moral and cultural elements here revolve around the 2011 revolt but are rooted in longer discourses of Tottenham as a place of disrepute. As noted throughout this thesis and by Dillon and Fanning (2011), Haringey and Tottenham have circulated within the national consciousness as areas of crime, race problems, rebellions, and etc. Historically, Tottenham was a "declining industrial area… containing poorer rundown

residential neighbourhoods and a much higher proportion of social housing," on top of other associated factors of deprivation (Dillon and Fanning 2011, 17). Tottenham has previously been racialised, too, heightening the disrepute (Elster 2020; Visser 2020). Levett (2012)—which I discuss in more detail below and Section 1.3.2 and 1.4.2—lists a wide range of social problems like transient populations, low rent, overcrowding, low employment, weak retail, and high crime. Activist 1 told me that politicians often said Tottenham was "where there [is] generational exclusion from employment," a discourse that, in the activist's mind, led to blaming the population for its worklessness. Such problems meant the Tottenham traditionally experienced significant police oppression and punishment from the state. In terms of the moral dimensions of AN, discourses are tightly linked with the racialised moral panics associated with previous iterations of authoritarian politics in the UK (Bruff 2014). As aforementioned, the 2011 uprising became a national crisis with significant, coercive police response (Lewis et al. 2011). At the local scale, the reaction was a neo-colonial attempt to fundamentally reshape the area (Horton and Penny 2024). It was not only the Council's doing, either. It was aided and supported by multiple scales of the state, including the then-Mayor of London, Boris Johnson—and then fixed through the structures of the Labour Party. The official government recommendations were encapsulated in *It Took Another Riot*, which suggested a fundamental reshaping of Tottenham (Levett 2012). In the words of Activist 1, the report was a "slandering and smearing [of] Tottenham." Indeed, the report describes the area as follows:

> Overcrowded homes mean children have nowhere to do homework, and shared beds can affect their sleep and ability to concentrate during the day. Poor educational attainment affects their prospects later in life, and their aspirations too. Poor skills and prospects lead to unemployment, and to crime. Poor diets and higher levels of alcohol abuse, obesity, diabetes and smoking all reduce life expectancy and quality. (Levett 2012, 72)

As full analysis of the report is better captured else (Horton and Penny 2024), I primarily focus on three particular claims in the HRW masterplan (Arup 2014) that reflect the findings of *It Took Another Riot*: the need to solve worklessness, provide different types of retail, and build new forms of housing.

Produced by Arup (2014), the masterplan lists seven major concerns that are allegedly being addressed, of which worklessness and retail are prominent elements. For employment opportunities, Arup (2014, 5) write,

> The masterplan sets out how High Road West could become a new leisure and sports destination for north London, attracting new businesses… There will be new workspaces behind the shops on the High Road, which will allow existing businesses to expand and provide space for new start-up businesses. There will also be improvements to some existing workspaces.

Start-up businesses will be linked to providing "more help to get on the jobs ladder and support for entrepreneurs," and most of the new jobs will be either in leisure, retail, or "food and beverage outlets" instead of office jobs (Arup 2014, 6, 12). All the employment opportunities within HRW consultation documents are linked to retail or leisure-related jobs, meaning they are unlikely to be stable, high paying work (Bayliss et al. 2024). Given that such employment already characterises Tottenham, the promise of new jobs appears more related to moralising about perceived worklessness rather than improving living standards for residents.

Finally, the scheme is proposing to build thousands of new homes to replace Love Lane and to offer new supply to the area. Unlike the "high-rise towers" that they will replace, the new buildings

> …will be a mix of housing types (including houses, flats and maisonettes) and tenures to meet people's housing requirements at all stages in their lives, in particular for families. This will create a mixed and balanced community. All homes will have access to private open space – such as gardens, balconies or shared courtyards. There are a limited number of taller buildings and these will not be for families or affordable housing. (Arup 2014, 4)

The stress on mixed types is a direct response to prevalent, negative discourses about high-rise buildings with only public housing. These have circulated since 1970s, and have been repeatedly used to justify replacing social housing with unaffordable, accumulation-oriented developments (Slater 2018b; Watt 2021b). Also promised is "better support for young people to get on the housing ladder" (Arup 2014, 10), which Activist 1 stated will include shared ownership schemes that may cause more harm than good (because of hidden costs; see also Watt

2021b). That is why, in the language of the then-Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, Alan Strickland, High Road West "could really bring the area to life" as a "a place that helps every family have the best chances to fulfill their potential" (Arup 2014, 1). Again, we find moralising language about the kinds of spaces and places that are meant to be found in the new neighbourhood of High Road West—and are meant to replace the disreputable zplaces that currently exist in the neighbourhood. Specifically, Strickland's language implies that the area is presently lifeless and without community, again mirroring long-standing discourses about the 'undeserving poor', and 'problem places' and 'problem people' that have surfaced throughout this thesis (Dillon and Fanning 2015; Katz [1989] 2013; C. Johnston and Mooney 2007; Severs 2010). For each element, the Council positions not only the current state of the area as deficient, but also HRW as the *only* solution to these problems of worklessness, a lack of retail choice, and the 'wrong' mix of housing.

Although the Council maintains that they aim to minimise harm, the neoliberalism at play persists. For one, the area will be fundamentally changed, raising the prospect of in-situ displacement (Watt 2021b). Although some current council tenants are able to stay in the area because of the new council homes to be built by the scheme (Hill 2021), the neighbourhood will be markedly different (and more expensive) after the regeneration scheme is over. A shift in orientation toward leisure and retail activity—coupled with new market-rate flats—is designed to attract, and speculate on, additional capital investment (Di Giovanni 2017; Goldman 2011). The Council will compulsorily acquire property currently held by homeowners and traders, both accumulating assets by literally dispossessing its current owners (Harvey 2012; Hodkinson and Essen 2015; Lees and White 2020) and further speculating on increased property values in the area (Horton and Penny 2024). High Road West also, more importantly, contains a deliberate attempt to ensure legitimation for this project (Da Costa Vieira 2023) among Tottenham's population through the promise of new council homes in what is slated to be a "new leisure and sports destination" in London: High Road West (Arup 2014, 5). Such effects are racialised, too, emphasising the harm. Activist 1 claimed that the Council itself had produced documents, in which the new homes

> they're gonna build are not gonna be affordable to Black people… You know, disproportionately Black people[,] people of colour are gonna be excluded from having access to these homes because of their level of savings and the and the answer is for them to get jobs… in [these] new industries, in order to earn enough money to stay in the area, and this is really explicit. Yeah, this is what social cleansing looks like, and this is why social cleansing's racist as well.

As such, such circulating discourses seek to both denigrate Tottenham's present state and elevate its future gentrified state as desirable. They work to not only enlist Haringey's current residents as soldiers in building this vision, but also to justify regeneration—that will ultimately serve further capitalist accumulation at the expense of the area's existing community.

7.3.3 Community Engagement:

2013 and 2014 Consultations:

Having demonstrated how moral discourses surrounding Tottenham positioned the area as in need of regeneration, I turn to analysing how the Council attempted to solicit resident support by scrutinising the consultations for the HRW scheme. Consultations are processes in which the state engages with local communities to inform, solicit opinion, and provide updates on an ongoing development scheme. They are ostensibly the best spaces for direct democratic input. It is not my intention here to merely reinforce assertions that Haringey residents did not feel genuinely consulted (Horton and Penny 2024; Panton and Walters 2018). Rather, as in Ormerod and MacLeod (2019), my goal here is to investigate whether consultations are one of the ways in which the local state supports private capital accumulation—that is if consultations that appear to be consensual are, in fact, coercive.

I studied two consultations directly related to High Road West in 2013 and 2014 (Haringey Borough Council 2013a, 2013b) that sought input in the Masterplan (Arup 2014). The consultations ran for several months, had drop-in information sessions, and were publicised via letters, door knocking, and home visits. Targeted groups include Love Lane estate residents, residents of the wider area, and local businesses. Feedback was solicited by written forms. However, the

area was subjected to at least three more consultations between 2013 and 2021. This does not include consultations for the Haringey Development Vehicle (see Horton and Penny 2024) or those for the redevelopment of the THFC stadium (see Panton and Walters 2018).

These consultations fed into the new Masterplan for High Road West, which the Council (2013b) says it has been developing in partnership with Arup (2014) based on feedback from previous community engagement (i.e., after the 2011 uprising). The first document starts from the assumption that there are only three possible options for the High Road West area, from least drastic (Option 1) to most (Option 3): "This booklet sets out three options that describe how we might build on what's good about the area to make it even better." All three options also have the same aims: "to create a new public space linking White Hart Lane Station, Tottenham High Road, the new Spurs stadium and new community facilities," as well as new homes in the area (Haringey Borough Council 2013b, 2, 4–5). No other possibilities are considered, nor is the rationale behind these decisions fully explained. This document thus sets up the expectation that one option going to be chosen regardless of resident input, setting clear boundaries on what is considered contestable. The traders at the Peacock Estate felt likewise: some responded to this consultation by writing

> Clearly they [the Council] were NOT listening, for at no time during the few consultations held did anyone suggest the demolition of the existing High Street shops...there were certainly no requests from the local community to replace them with a larger library/learning centre. (Haringey Borough Council 2013a, 52)

The very framing of these consultations thus reflects a "a cynical manipulation of community consultation" by constraining available options to the three proposed plans that were developed by the Council and consultants (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019, 326). That is, while Haringey Council could, for example, accurately claim that "79% of Love Lane responses agree that more types of housing should be built to meet the needs of the local community," there is little opportunity for the residents to adequately express what this means in nuanced terms (Haringey Borough Council 2013a, 31). The following 2014 consultation booklet is broadly

analogous but focuses on gathering resident input on an already-produced Masterplan that relies on the 2013 consultation. It lists six changes that are set to occur, ranging from "A new landscaped open space at Moselle Square" to "1,200 new high quality homes" (Arup 2014, 6). The consultation survey asks impacted residents and businesses neutrally, i.e., such that no reasonable respondent would disagree with the Council's proposals. One example is the following, which refers to the nearby White Hart Lane rail station: "A better and more accessible station should be provided which enhances its historic character." Only 14% were opposed (Haringey Borough Council 2013a, 34). Such a broad statement is hard to argue against or even disagree with. As Ormerod and MacLeod (2019) found, consultation surveys are misleading: they overestimate the true level of support, something that activists have alleged here, too.

The same pattern of presentation across both consultations was also true for the prospect of demolition of the Love Lane estate. The lack of clear information about it was why Damien Tissier, the Independent Tenants and Leaseholder Advisor[60] for the Love Lane estate, said "the single most important thing that people didn't seem to appreciate at the time was that estate was gonna get knocked down"—because, in his mind, the Council were not "upfront about demolition… they certainly did never ask the question" to the residents (see also Ormerod and MacLeod 2019). For instance, in the 2013 consult booklet, the Council (p. 5) says, "we would need to redevelop existing buildings" at handful of addresses. Nonetheless, it does not explicitly note that these buildings will likely be destroyed. The mock-ups throughout the document do show these structures as missing but this is not overtly noted. In its description of Options 1-3, the Council (2013b, 8, 10, 12) specifies which buildings will be redeveloped but again does not specify demolition, except to note that "ALL affected social rented housing will be replaced." This is perhaps why Haringey Council (2013a, 36) could correctly claim "that despite there being a campaign from outside the estate, which advocated renovation and not demolition of the Love Lane Estate only one Love Lane respondent raised this comment on this section of the feedback form." In using this

[60] Independent advisors who support an estate's residents and their decisions through the regeneration process

language, the Council marks a strong boundary between the 'estate' as a clear and uniform whole, and the 'outside' that is subsequently rendered as *too* political—note the use of 'campaign' in the council's document, reflecting Ormerod and MacLeod's (2019) findings in Gateshead. Only in the 2014 consultation, and after Option 3 was chosen, does the Council (2014, 28) write that to "bring the changes you've told us you want to see, a number of properties would need to be acquired and demolished…". The language here is instructive: the decision to knock down homes is linked to an apparent need to improve the area and is justified through previous consultations—effectively pinning the outcome on residents' desires, while simultaneously obfuscating the Council's internal decision-making processes that had already chose to demolish Love Lane estate.

The above illustrates how residents' choices were continuously constrained by the Council's *a priori* setting of policy boundaries. As has been demonstrated, consultations rarely let residents actually decide what is going to happen: Haringey Council's Labour leaders already decided that Love Lane was going to be regenerated as part of the post-2011 response, which as noted elsewhere was ossified by the local Labour Party's structure. Instead, residents were just deciding on the margins as opposed to the broad scope of the plan. For instance, Tissier noted that all of his work on Love Lane was "all set within the constraints of the master plan" that was decided in advance by Haringey Council, thereby narrowing the space for dissent. Indeed, Tissier said, "[politicians] always talk about the local community being one of the key stakeholders, but the power… that the local community has in these processes is absolutely zero" because the planning process relegates genuine community engagement to these consultations. He continues,

> Community engagement is always a kind of like 'this is what we [the Council] think… What do you [the resident] think?' type thing rather than actually sort of really getting in there deep and talking to local people… and saying, 'what is it that you would like to change?'

This was echoed by Councillor 1 who discussed a review of the scheme conducted by a colleague. The review involved "taking evidence" from stakeholders, and speaking to Love Lane residents, local churches, and THFC. It is telling that Councillor 1 said the chair of the review "put a pen to paper on a series of

recommendations," and so Councillor 1 would only support the scheme with "those kind of caveats." What matters is that Councillor 1 saw this institutionalised tinkering of the scheme as enough to give their backing, rather than concrete support from their constituents or local residents. Similarly, although Love Lane residents did have some say in deciding the developer partner for the estate, this was limited to only a handful of members of the estate's Residents Association (Lovell 2017). Horton and Penny (2024) likewise recount how Haringey's planning consultations for nearby developments were equally constrained. Critically, consultation and balloting processes can induce what Davidson et al. (2013) call "consultation fatigue," meaning that people who should be consulted end up exhausted and uninterested in the prospect of yet an additional round of consultation. The end result is a weakened and worn down populace who become more willing to acquiesce (Emejulu and Bassel 2020). In the case of Love Lane, Tissier recalls that the impending estate demolition caused severe distress for not only permanent residents but also the temporary residents moved to Love Lane. These marginalised residents did not have the time, space, or resources to adequately engage with the described complex consultation process. This slice of HRW consultations has accordingly illustrated how local states insulate themselves from opposition. However, these manoeuvres should also be understood as disciplining the populace—the insistence on using formal consultation methods forecloses the option of a StopHDV-style resistance (Horton and Penny 2024) that nearly all my participants are and were aligned with.

Estate Balloting:

Yet, it is true that many Love Lane residents supported the tearing down of the estate and later voted to demolish the estate. This subsection examines this secret ballot, which would allow the residents of an estate slated for regeneration the right to stop the process via a simple majority vote of residents (Lees and White 2020). In theory, residents have the final say. Instead of viewing the outcome as a true reflection of the residents' desires, however, activists identified several factors that rendered estate ballots as suspect. First, Activist 1 told me that there is an inherent "power relation between housing officers and tenants," meaning that in

practice, residents feel intimidated to vote in favour. Both Activists 1 and 2 relayed three to four tenants who felt personally intimidated: Activist 2, recounting her experience of canvassing Love Lane estate residents, said,

> we spoke to a few people who told me… "I'm old lady and I'm foreign," is what she said to me. And she said "I don't want to cause any trouble here, even though I don't want them to knock it down. Basically, I've voted yes because I'm afraid." I think she was possibly from Eastern Europe but she's obviously been here for a long time and I think this was what we picked up from a lot of people.

This is true even though the ballot is secret—emphasising the pressure residents felt. Activist 1 also recalled an older Black resident who stated he had been repeatedly asked to vote, who "felt intimidated" by council staff. Tissier (2021) confirms: the Council's campaign included "quite aggressive cold calling by phone and door-knocking" that amounted to "residents been called on three occasions per day, including Sundays, and of being visited by two/three officers on more than one occasions." Even when residents did not report feeling directly pressured to vote in favour of demolition, wider structural conditions made it difficult for residents to vote no. For instance, Activist 2 recounted the story of one mother who voted to flatten the estate:

> She was saying "I don't wanna be in this situation. I don't want my children to be in this situation… a lot of people are stuck here in limbo and [the Council are] offering us something… we feel like we're stuck here. And they are offering us [something else]." This was sort of how I felt like they were selling it to these people. It was this very hard sell: "you will wait here and languish here for twenty years and you [Love Lane residents] will be in limbo and we won't fix this place because it will still be destined for demolition."

All organisers told me that Council staff allegedly spoke with residents about the details of the new flats, down to the minutiae of flooring and kitchen design. Activist 3 was instructive: the Council was "taking advantage of people who didn't really understand the full implications but were being tempted with fantasy."

Love Lane's status as a destination for temporary residents highlights the insulation and coercion at play. Recall that many residents of the estate in 2021 were temporary residents, which had a significant effect on the outcome of the

ballot. Many temporary tenants will have moved to Love Lane long after the 2013-4 consultations, calling into question the level of voter awareness of different potential outcomes or whether there was a vote at all: one-third of residents declined to vote. It is possible that these residents did not know of the vote, which was indicated by my interviewees. However, if the Council was right about the intensity of their get-out-the-vote effort, then disengagement among the precarious population of temporary residents could be read as "a more gentle form of political non-compliance and disagreement" insofar as it is an "active rejection of consensus building" by declining to engage with the formal process of voting in the election (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019, 327). Alternatively, Tissier reported that many in this group voted for demolition because "that's [their] only chance of getting a council tenancy," arguing that the ability to obtain a permanent, cheap flat was conditioned on Love Lane's destruction. Councillor 2, for instance, said "what sprung it for [me] in the end" to support the scheme was that they had interacted with some current Love Lane tenants: "a couple of current tenants who came who were like, we really want this scheme to go ahead because we're gonna get swapped into this nicer new [estate]." Activist 2 recounted at least a handful of residents facing similar offers from the Council. Whilst being pressured to vote is a clear form of coercion, dangling the prospect of a permanent tenancy in exchange for a vote—no matter how indirect—is also a coercive act. It is equivalent to threatening deprivation of a secure tenancy should the resident vote to *not* demolish Love Lane. This was coupled with the possibility of remaining in an estate made intentionally obsolete, effectively coercing residents to vote for flattening Love Lane. Indeed, as Hill (2021) reports, this worry informed the aims of the Temporary Accommodation Group Love Lane (TAG), who demanded blinding guarantees of council tenancies for all Love Lane residents, regardless of their type of tenancy (see Section 1.3.3).

The furore continued after the ballot concluded, with multiple groups clamouring for a re-run because of the concerns of pressuring and intimidation. Activists 2 and 4 introduced motions within their local Labour Party branches demanding as such. The pressure culminated in several councillors likewise pushing for an inquiry into the election. Ultimately, however, the Council formally

accepted the results, undeterred by legitimate concerns regarding vote handling—several council staff had, against protocol, picked up and delivered residents' votes (Allin 2021). Given the power of the Council's leadership to whip votes with the threat of suspension from the Labour Party, recall Councillor 6's opinion that the leadership have significant sway over policy decisions. Indeed, several anti-HDV councillors were threatened with having the whip withdrawn during the StopHDV campaign, which was only stymied by direct intervention by Corbyn-backed national party officials (Horton and Penny 2024). Such resistance is additionally hampered by the intra, cross-scale-party politics discussed above. The Council staff's reliance on an outside consultant's approval of the ballot process likewise insulates it from dissent, shifting responsibility to a non-political entity. Such tactics are meant to ensure the Love Lane public "not just passively accept, but ideally to actively and willingly participate in, [the] neoliberal accumulation strategy" of estate regeneration (Da Costa Vieira 2023, 730). Without somehow ensuring the vote passes—i.e., manufacturing consent—then the entire HRW scheme could not proceed. The organisers I spoke to were convinced that they could have won the ballot had the council not, in the words of Activist 2, "cheated" by handling residents' ballots. Activist 4 echoed this, arguing the 'no' vote would have won had they been "left alone." While referendums are, by their nature, adversarial and rest on both sides making their case, the cases of ballot handling, pressuring, and persistent contact rise above simple persuasion. Indeed, the evidence indicates that residents felt afraid to vote against the demolition. Thus, whereas estate balloting was initially hailed as a move towards giving residents more power in estate regeneration, the process itself has had numerous problems. The evidence above demonstrates that, like consultations, the balloting process has become a system through which the local state can exercise AN's insulation and coercion.

Consultations have become what Muir (2004, 953–54) calls a hegemonic project: "the nature of participation may be contested, but its practice is not." This means that government accepts consultation as an unqualified good because it "provide[s] an arena for the management of social conflict," even when it is not particularly successful, as seen in the furore around the Love Lane ballot. Teets

(2013, 36) describes the resulting structure as "consultative authoritarianism" in which consultations have become one item within a wider toolbox of "more sophisticated and indirect tools of state control" that have the façade of democracy. Lees (2024) argues that, although originally applied to non-urban contexts, consultative authoritarianism is an increasingly useful framework for understanding speculative urban transformation in an era of widespread discontent with gentrification. What I have described is reminiscent of Penny's (2017, 1367) analysis of community consultation in nearby Lambeth: "residents and groups are encouraged to take part in 'invited' spaces of participation in which agendas are pre-determined and substantive decisions have already been made," which has only centralised decision making. Specifically, as laid out in Section 7.3.3, Haringey Council had already decided between three substantive options for Love Lane and the HRW area—it just needed to 'tick the box' of a ballot and consultation before executing this plan. I thus contend that these consultations and votes are fundamental parts of a neoliberal and consultative authoritarian approach that is designed to elicit the appearance of consent to crucial decisions about High Road West that the Council and its staff had already made.

7.4 Conclusion:

This study sought to understand examine authoritarian neoliberalism at the local scale. More specifically, I examined how the local party and the local state collaborate to ensure a local authoritarian neoliberalism using Haringey Council's High Road West (HRW) scheme as a case study. HRW, as designed, would demolish a council housing estate of 300 homes, many businesses, and continue state-led gentrification in the area by building thousands of new and mostly unaffordable residences. The scheme did not occur in a vacuum—indeed, its development was concurrent with the Haringey Development Vehicle, a similar (but larger in scale) redevelopment scheme that spawned significant pushback from residents, politicians, and activists alike. This group of opponents was able to successfully cancel the HDV (Horton and Penny 2024). However, HRW continues unabated.

High Road West was examined across three core constituent elements: first, the scheme, its targets, and its position within the local politics of Haringey; second, moral and cultural discourses that surrounded Tottenham; and third, its community engagement, which was intended to produce support for the scheme against popular opposition to regeneration. I considered the scheme's aim to build hundreds of net council homes within the wider context of austerity and the Labour Party, demonstrating that a political push for new council homes effectively locked in the financialised and speculative urban transformation (Horton and Penny 2024) demanded within HRW. The scheme's language also targeted moral and cultural discourses surrounding Tottenham, positioning the area as needed to be fundamentally reshaped after the 2011 uprising (Lewis et al. 2011). The Council then placed HRW as an answer to these supposed social problems, attempting to legitimate its policy decisions as a prerequisite to the capital accumulation of regeneration (Da Costa Vieira 2023). Next, I reviewed the community engagement of the scheme, considering two consultations (2013-4) and the estate ballot in 2021. In both, the Council's engagement failed to adequately inform residents of planned changes or take their voices into account. Consultations were misleading (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019) and the ballot was possibly fraudulent—or at least not representative of the whole community (Tissier 2021). Again, Labour infighting locked in poor engagement: by restricting "what is and what is not legitimate political action" to the party and marginalising external action, parties can effectively reproduce hierarchical and restrictive—that is, non-democratic—modes of political engagement (Ormerod 2021, 8). Therefore, "attempts to de-politicise both public engagement (through consultation and participation) and contestation (through resident opposition) are revealed as inherently political"—but more importantly, I have shown that they are practices of AN (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019, 321). Far from being a national, nonpartisan project, then, AN can be found at the local scale—perpetuated by the very political parties that ostensibly seek to politicise policy and provide a vehicle for contestation.

As noted throughout this thesis, studies of AN mechanisms have thus far undertheorised the importance of political parties and the local scale (cf. Özden et

al. 2017). Through analysing the precise mechanisms of insulation and coercion in the "specific constellation of neoliberalism and state strategies that exploit the existing gendered, racial and class-based hierarchies," I have demonstrated how the local state utilises authoritarian neoliberal practices to ensure capitalist accumulation at the local scale (Tansel 2017, 11). I have further illustrated how political parties play a key role in the perpetuation of both insulating and coercive practices, reinforcing the importance of local struggles to understanding the persistence of neoliberal policy. While parties are often valuable vehicles for political action, HRW demonstrates that, often, "political parties and the state culminate in a narrowing of local political power" (Ormerod 2021, 3). Taken together, then, the case of HRW helps to explain why and how the neoliberal mindset is able to persist amidst popular opposition. However, as neoliberalism continues to morph—and rely on authoritarian practices to survive—the future remains open. Thus, to respond to Ormerod (2021), this chapter reconceptualised the party-state nexus to reveal some of the ways that neoliberalism from above is reified as neoliberalism from below.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction:

At the core of this doctoral thesis is an attempt to understand how British local governments continue large-scale regeneration schemes in defiance of strong local opposition. This is paired with an attempt to uncover how activism can be successful during times of authoritarian neoliberalism (AN)—both contemporary and historical. This thesis additionally examines how the local state and local political parties work together to stifle dissent as well as examining how housing type fits within broader activism. I considered the two threads of activism and authoritarian neoliberalism across three case studies. My examination started with the resistance and activism of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, considering how, despite its intensity and power, authoritarian neoliberalism cannot stifle all opposition. BFYA's opposition appears in quieter forms but is still equally transformative. I then continued with analysis of authoritarian neoliberalism by focusing on the local state, considering how it intersects with local political parties. This analysis utilised two case studies, with one considering an instance of activist success (the Haringey Development Vehicle) and another considering activist failure (High Road West). Together, the cases prompted reflections on illiberalism and its various scales, the complex interrelations that compose what we call 'the state', and forms of activism that 'count.' My doctoral work brings together bodies of literature on the state, activism, and new forms of neoliberalism to understand the contemporary status of council housing in the UK and how it intersects with broader urban changes.

Throughout this thesis, I have centred the voices, experiences, and perspectives of campaigners and politicians—contemporary and historical. In doing so, I have endeavoured to represent their contradictory and conflicting views without flattening or condensing their heterogeneity. This approach allowed for a more complete understanding of the literal relations from which the local state emerges. I coupled this with a wide range of methods and types of data, which allowed me to reveal the specific mechanisms of both authoritarian neoliberalism

at the local level and its resistance. I expand on the insights and contributions in further detail in sections below.

This concluding chapter is organised as follows. Organised by theme, the next sections document the main contributions and findings of this work. The subsequent portion considers the limitations of the project, its future steps, and impact. I finish with a call to rigorously analyse two vehicles for change at a time of rising anti-democratic, authoritarian, and illiberal movements and states—the party and 'quiet' activism. I also suggest that greater attention should be paid to the local scale as a path to rebuilding and strengthening democracy globally.

8.2 Contributions and Findings:

My project has brought four important literatures into dialogue: relational perspectives of the state (Hillier et al. 2022; Jessop 2010, 2016; Painter 2006), critical views on the Labour Party (Cockburn 1980; Gilbert 2021a, 2023; Miliband 1973), authoritarian neoliberalism (Bruff 2014; Bruff and Tansel 2021; Can et al. 2024), and acts of citizenship (Isin 2008, 2009). However, I examine their intersections at a local scale—eschewing an analysis that reifies methodological nationalism (Beck 2007; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2009; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). This work concentrates on the interconnections between state, party, illiberalism, and activism in the urban realm. Thinking through how dynamics of authoritarian governance, relations between the state and the party, and the activism work at the local scale opened up new ways of thinking of the urban's role in capitalist accumulation (Can et al. 2024; Özatağan et al. 2025).

Here, I review the contributions made in terms of how a focus at the local scale reveals different interactions between state and party, forming what I term a local 'state-party nexus,' encompassing unique cases of local government rule by single parties as is seen in Haringey (cf. Copus 2004). I next demonstrate how my results fill some research gaps on authoritarian neoliberalism by arguing for the role of political parties in the maintenance of capitalist relations. Finally, this section expresses how quieter forms of activism retain their transformative power even when conducted in illiberal times.

8.2.1 For a Multiscalar State-Party Nexus:

By examining how the state and the party work together to maintain capitalist accumulation at the local scale in Chapters 5 and 6, I have argued for a framework of a multiscalar 'state-party nexus.' This nexus refers to the deep interrelations between the state and the party—which are usually treated as separate entities (cf. Copus 2004)—in case of one-party local rule as is in Haringey. Both chapters considered regeneration schemes in Tottenham, Haringey: the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) and High Road West (HRW). Chapter 6, on the HDV, scrutinised a successful resistance campaign against a large-scale, proposed regeneration scheme that would encompass the whole Borough of Haringey. This chapter, based chiefly on interviews with councillors and an analysis of documents produced by Haringey Council and its consultants, examined how a nonpartisan group of activists were able to cancel the scheme through an electoral strategy that culminated in taking over Haringey Council (Horton and Penny 2024). Chapter 7 on HRW, evaluates an ongoing regeneration scheme. Whilst much smaller than the Vehicle, High Road West will still remake a core part of Tottenham's urban fabric. My research here relied on interviews with councillors and with activists to explore the innerworkings of the Labour Party and how its leaders and structures curb dissent. In both cases, the relations between the state and the party played a significant role in the success or failure of resistance. One core contribution is thus to elevate the party in analyses of the local state, troubling conceptions of the party as just another element of the relational state (Jessop 2010; Painter 2006).

In both chapters, the structures of and relationships within the Labour Party were important factors in the outcome of the state's decisions regarding the schemes, responding to all of my Research Questions. Chapter 6 demonstrated that cancelling the HDV, for instance, was only possible *through* Labour's internal electoral processes. Although the StopHDV campaign was nonpartisan and truly rooted in community (Horton and Penny 2024), I contend that this frame is too narrow: it minimises StopHDV's successful electoral strategy. My analysis consequently here broadens the scope using Badiou's concepts of the "event" and the "state revolutionary" to argue for clear perspectives on how the state *actually*

governs, rather than relying on the assumption that the state is always and necessarily regressive and consequently stifles radicality (Badiou 2018; Bassett 2008; Paccoud 2019). This goes a long way in responding to Research Questions 2 and 3. Reflecting on HRW (Chapter 7), I found that the deep co-dependence between Haringey Council and the Labour Party means that opposition to housing development is funnelled through the party. Opposition that occurred outside of the party was thus seen as illegitimately founded—especially given widespread allegations that the Council engaged in fraudulent practices (Ormerod and MacLeod 2019; Ormerod 2021; Tissier 2021). In both cases, then, the state and the party are intimately linked. The HDV was cancelled *through* the party: activists used party structures to 'hijack' the councillor selection process, thereby building an anti-HDV majority (Copus 2004, 2015, 2023). For HRW, internal power struggles over the future of the party meant spaces for contestation were foreclosed. The party, then, is as important as the activism that influenced policy outcomes in both instances.

I consequently assert a framework of a *multiscalar state-party nexus,* which better captures the interdependence between the two in cases of local one-party rule. This framework troubles typical state-relational perspectives, which tend to subordinate the party to one part of the wider relational ensemble of the state (Jessop 2010; Painter 1991, 2006). As Jessop (2016, 76) writes, an analysis of the "party form… would encompass all aspects of state," indicating how extant interpretations of the party subordinate its importance to other elements of the state. Beyond a simple question of broadening the scope of analysis, the state-party nexus demands political geographers return to the classic question of 'who governs?' (Dahl [1961] 2005) by giving equal weight to formal party politics in governance structures (see also Halvorsen 2020). Drawing on political scholarship on the Labour Party (Cockburn 1980; Gilbert 2021a, 2023; Miliband 1973; Ormerod 2021) and of councillors (Copus 2004, 2015, 2023), I call for greater attention to how a party's internal conflicts structure contestation over policy at the local level. Multi-scalarity refers to both multiple scales of the state and the party—as well as how relations are reworked *across* sales. The local scale is surprisingly undertheorised in state-relational scholarship, a few noticeable

exceptions notwithstanding (M Goodwin et al. 1993; Mark Goodwin and Painter 1996; Painter 1991). This thesis builds on investigations into urban governance (N. Brenner 2019; Peck et al. 2009) to consequently support a return to understanding the urban state/scale not only as a territory in which national dynamics play out, but also as intertwined with and productive of neoliberal processes (Jenss 2019; Piletić 2022). There are some new, welcome analyses at this juncture (Can et al. 2024; Özatağan et al. 2025) but few consider the role of the political party. The Labour Party is equally scalar: it has a geometry (J. Scott and Wills 2017). The national scale exerts pressure on the local scale, shaping local political decision-making (Gilbert 2023). Conversely, local parties can influence both other local parties and national dynamics (Horton and Penny 2024). The multiscalar party-nexus consequently better captures the ways that different scales of governance, formal politics, and neoliberal processes intersect across space. Geographic analyses, in particular, offer a useful lens because of their attention to scale.

8.2.2 For the Political Party in Authoritarian Neoliberalism:

Following on from the multiscalar state-party nexus, both HRW and HDW cases also reveal gaps in theorisations of authoritarian neoliberalism, answering Research Questions 2 and 3. AN refers to how neoliberal states rely on a combination of insulating decision-making and forceful repression of dissent to legitimise neoliberal, capitalist accumulation (Bruff 2014; Tansel 2017). Yet, these works typically treats this form of illiberalism as a national project (e.g., Altınörs and Akçay 2022; Da Costa Vieira 2023; Fearn 2024). Instead, this research adds to other scholarship that puts forward a scalar perspective of AN, recognising how it is deployed and reinforced at the local level (Jenss 2019; Piletić 2022). Geography's attention to scale is therefore essential to more complete understandings of how neoliberalism continues to lumber on. Urban geographers have likewise become increasingly attuned to the relationships between contemporary neoliberal urbanism and authoritarianism (Can et al. 2024; Ergenc and Yuksekkaya 2024; Luger and Dürr 2025; Özatağan et al. 2025). Despite literature that acknowledges the importance of party politics to urban governance

(Ormerod 2021; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019), few connections have been established between political parties and authoritarian neoliberalism (cf. Özden et al. 2017; J. Ward and Ward 2023). Chapters 6 and 7 thus intervene at this juncture, asserting the interdependence of parties and AN.

Chapter 7 demonstrated how the Labour Party's internal struggles worked with state illiberalism to continue the High Road West regeneration scheme. As vehicles for capitalist accumulation, regeneration schemes are frequently contested by impacted local populations. However, regeneration programs infrequently fail (Horton and Penny 2024; Lees and White 2020; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019). The HRW example demonstrated how the collaboration between the party and the state was thus able to continue the scheme. The national Labour Party's internal battles over its long-term future effectively closed off spaces of debate, meaning the scheme went ahead with little in the way of consultation of, or approval from, local party members. Critical councillors and party activists have likewise been expelled from the party, indicating an insulating governance style (Gilbert 2021a, 2023; Holden 2025; Tissier 2021; Weir 2023). Spaces for debate and contestation within the Party were thus foreclosed, meaning that activist members were unable to exercise oversight and accountability (Tansel 2017). The question of scale is again relevant here, with the national level party intervening downwards to foreclose these spaces and to centralise decision-making (Ergenc and Yuksekkaya 2024; Tansel 2019). The power geometry of the Labour Party consequently had significant influence on the outcome of High Road West (J. Scott and Wills 2017). Simultaneously, the local Labour Party's commitment to building council homes locked in accumulation-oriented schemes that have historically been made necessary by a decrease in government support for public housing (Watt 2021b). The HDV case (Chapter 6)—whilst presenting a more positive picture of party politicking—equally indicates how important formal politics are to the maintenance of authoritarian neoliberalism. Although it successfully cancelled the Vehicle, Badiou's (2018; see also Paccoud 2019) state revolutionary (the so-called 'Corbyn Council' led by Joe Ejiofor and composed of leftist, anti-austerity councillors) was unable to pursue more radical change because of both the Labour Party's internal power geometry (J. Scott and Wills

2017) and extant conditions of austerity and neoliberal political economy. Indeed, this Council continued other regeneration schemes (like HRW) despite its avowedly socialist politics (Chakelian 2019). Since the HDV was proposed as a revanchist response to the 2011 uprisings that would remove the undeserving 'problem people' of Tottenham (Horton and Penny 2024; C. Johnston and Mooney 2007; Katz [1989] 2013; MacLeod 2002), it is in effect a punitive policy that would have continued the "explicit exclusion and marginalization of subordinate social groups" through an undemocratic and unaccountable public-private partnership (Bruff 2014, 116). Chapters 6 and 7, then, showed how political party structures can work to insulate decision-making from broader politicisation as well as to support punitive urban policy (Cockburn 1980; Ormerod and MacLeod 2019).

Consequently, political and urban geographers must view political party structures as a relevant mechanism for the upholding of capitalist accumulation. This is especially true as authoritarian neoliberalism is gaining traction with urban geography (e.g., Can et al. 2024; Özatağan et al. 2025). That is, whilst political parties are often seen as key spaces of contestation (Halvorsen 2020; J. Scott and Wills 2017; B. Ward 2022), they are equally often vehicles for insulation and coercion (Altınörs and Akçay 2022; Özden et al. 2017; J. Ward and Ward 2023). This is because such institutions are also frequently "the means by which [neoliberal restructuring] establishes itself" (Bruff 2014, 115). These processes, to repeat myself, are scalar. As J. Scott and Wills (2017) assert, such processes have a specific geography. Geographers can consequently contribute to similar analyses through a greater attention to geometry, scale, space, and place within the party, across the party-state nexus, and between the party and the processes of neoliberalism. Thus, to ignore the local political party, then, is to ignore an important non-market institution that serves to reinforce neoliberal processes amidst significant community opposition.

8.2.3 For New Activist Frameworks:

How, then, might campaigners resist powerful institutions bent on maintaining neoliberal processes at all costs? Chapter 5 moves backwards in time to evaluate activism under Thatcher's authoritarianism (M. D. J. Ryan 2019),

responding to Research Question 1. It considers the work of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association (BFYA), a multi-ethnic collection of the eponymous estate's residents who fought for more resources and attention from Haringey Council. Their resistance was not confrontational and directed against the state; rather, it accommodated and replaced the local state. To better capture how such campaigning remains transformative even though it is not confrontational, my analysis draws on the acts of citizenship theory (Barbero 2012; Isin 2008). The theory of acts posits that citizenship is better understood as something more akin to a *process* rather a simple legal status—groups without citizenship can obtain it through acting as subjects who have the right to claim rights. Namely, Isin (2008) indicates that acts must transform groups into answerable subjects: that is, those subjects who the state is compelled to respond to and to whom the state must justify its actions. This happens through the writing of new citizenship scripts *through* an act that forms an answerable subject. Jakimów (2017, 2022) builds on the theory of acts to assert that citizenship can be obtained through accommodating acts: those that utilise state-approved channels or rhetoric but still work to develop that answerable subject. Accommodative acts are specifically relevant to authoritarian states, in which outright dissent is often illegal and/or dangerous. Chapter 5 employs the framework of accommodative acts in exploring BFYA's activism, with the aim of troubling traditional, heroistic understanding of advocacy (Askins 2014; D. G. Martin et al. 2007; Pottinger 2017; Roy and Neveu 2023). It also utilises theories of authoritarian neoliberalism to understand how such activism can remain transformative even during illiberal times.

The Association's advocacy was both broad and smartly targeted. A significant portion thereof specifically demanded more attention from the local state. BFYA used a range of tactics including but not limited to intruding on council meetings; demanding, and winning, a regular forum composed of BF residents, council staff, and councillors; direct and frequent personal lobbying of politicians and Haringey staff members; among others. None of these manoeuvres involved direct confrontation with the state, which are typically in the form of protests and occupations (e.g., Barbero 2012; Earle 2012; Hsu 2008; Fierro 2020; Jacobson 2022; Janoschka 2015; Nyers 2008; Pontrandolfo 2018). Rather, they are

clever use of existing channels to push the state to comply. Other key illustrations reflect the Association's intelligent approach, one of which I highlighted in the chapter: 'auto-regeneration.' This refers to redevelopment schemes that involve the estate's residents directly regenerating the estate. After a large grant from central government, BFYA's sister organisation (a co-op) was awarded a contract to rebuild potions of Broadwater Farm. In this case, accommodative acts were necessary because of Thatcher-era authoritarianism. Activism—especially that by Black Britons—was heavily policed and oppressed (Elliott-Cooper 2021; S. Hall et al. [1978] 2019; Perera 2019a). Concurrently, Haringey Council was engaging in illiberal insulation that Dillon and Fanning (2011) call municipal paternalism, which meant the Council frequently declined to adequately consult the community. As such, accommodative acts were the only available pathway to extract concrete change. Collectively, BFYA's approaches were able to reshape the relationship between Broadwater Farm residents and the state: not only did residents become literally answerable subjects, but also the Association demonstrate their political acumen—thereby defying depictions of Black residents as politically detached and uninterested. Together, these organising were accommodative citizenship acts that were successful in transforming Broadwater Farm estate residents' subjectivities.

An important contribution from theorising BFYA's acts of citizenship is to trouble dominant perspectives on activism. Such perspectives are often treat organising as a masculine and heroistic endeavour, thus ignoring the quieter forms of activism (Askins 2014; D. G. Martin et al. 2007; Pottinger 2017; Roy and Neveu 2023). As evident in many works that utilise the theory of acts (e.g., Barbero 2012; Earle 2012; Hsu 2008; Fierro 2020; Jacobson 2022; Janoschka 2015; Nyers 2008; Pontrandolfo 2018), activism studies tend to focus on protests, occupations, confrontational resistance, and other actions that tend to (but do not always) break the law. Yet, acts that generate answerable subjects do not necessarily need to be "revolutionary in nature and effect" as long as the quality of answerability remains (Darling 2014, 88; see also Saeidi 2010). As such, these acts reman undertheorised: their transformative potential is passed over in favour of more confrontational activism. This thesis, then, ties together acts of citizenship, their accommodative

form, and authoritarian neoliberalism—with the goal of asserting the transformative power inherent such 'everyday' activism(s) (D. G. Martin et al. 2007) and 'passive dissent' (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar 2019). That is, such organising can remain transformative because of its orientation towards becoming answerable subjects. As Pottinger (2017, 221) describes in her study of community and 'guerilla' gardening, quiet activism(s) are "small, everyday, embodied acts, often of making or creating that can be either implicitly or explicitly political in nature"—they rework existing social, political, and economic arrangements in concrete ways (see also Askins 2014 on 'quiet politics'). Linking this viewpoint back to acts and accommodation, then, reinforces the importance of thinking expansively about what activism 'counts' and *how* it counts. That is, to maintain conceptual clarity, my emphasis here is on activism that *transforms* subjects into answerable ones (see also Roy and Neveu 2023). Thus, this thesis is a call for scholarship to broaden the scope of activism to consider quieter, accommodative, and everyday forms.

Another contribution rests in the use of authoritarian neoliberalism to interpret accommodative acts. Doing so allows me to argue for two new dimensions to the theory of acts. First, is to highlight the importance of scale to acts. Second, is to broaden its scope to consider citizenship under authoritarian neoliberalism. Citizenship acts are typically oriented towards the nation state, as it often has the legal power to fulfil activist demands (e.g., Barbero 2012; Darling 2014; Nyers 2008; Saeidi 2010). Nevertheless, the framework remains flexible enough to consider demands made to other state scales. Considering most of BFYA's acts were targeted at Haringey Council, my investigation breaks new ground by applying acts to the local scale (cf. Pontrandolfo 2018). Doing so not only recognises the methodological nationalism of the subfield (Beck 2007; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2009; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), but also serves as a call for other citizenship studies scholars to consider acts from a new angle. Similarly, coupling AN and accommodative resistance broadens the concept of acts to a new class thereof—those that happen in nominal democracies that are actually authoritarian. Although doing so does risk conceptual dilution, the case of the BFYA was one of *transforming* subjectivities, and so it remains a case of acts. The

research into the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, then, has revealed new ways of interpreting transformative activism by shifting the focus to quieter direct action amidst authoritarian neoliberalism.

8.3 Future Research:

There are a few directions that this work could expand towards. One is to continue to engage in debates arounds citizenship acts, developing conceptual understandings of acts under authoritarian neoliberalism. Considering authoritarian neoliberalism is gaining prominence in geography (e.g., Luger and Dürr 2025), additional work will be required to evaluate how resistance against AN can enlarge the space of citizenship even during ongoing attempts to shrink that space (Somers 2022). The BFYA (Chapter 5) revealed how working *with* and *against* the state can bring about transformative change through accommodative resistance. Section 8.2.3 thus lays out one potential thread of new research: a quiet politics (Askins 2014) or activism (Pottinger 2017) that is still able to meaningfully shift subject positions. Other approaches might look at the way accommodative acts of citizenship are received and understood by state or political actors (something my research initially considered), or how scholars can more holistically interpret citizenship acts.

A separate angle concerns *urban* neoliberal authoritarianism, which has already been utilised in a few works (e.g., Can et al. 2024; Özatağan et al. 2025). However, further investigations are required to more holistically capture how varying scales of the state work together (and sometimes against each other) in relation to capitalist accumulation. For instance, Bathla's (2025) interrogation of infrastructure projects in India considers infrastructure as national-populist projects but does not dig deep on how the various scales of the Indian state (and its parastatal organs) interact with each other. Given that Chapters 6 and 7 highlight the importance of scale to AN, additional research is necessary to interrogate how differing scales of the state fit together. In addition, as I have reiterated throughout this document, more scholarship on the role of political parties is necessary to understand 'actually existing' neoliberalism and its related authoritarian practices. Similarly, neoliberal authoritarian reactions to uprisings

like Tottenham's 1985 and 2011 so-called riots are under-researched. Given that urban uprisings have been linked to major regeneration schemes (Boykoff and Fussey 2014; Wetherell 2025), further investigations must be carried out to examine the ways the state exercises its policing and insulating powers *through* urban development to maintain capitalist accumulation.

Overall, my thesis furnishes a nuanced evaluation of the relationships between urban authoritarian neoliberalism, local political parties, and accompanying resistance. It challenges the methodological nationalism of AN literature, argues for the importance of the political party, and advocates for new frameworks for understanding activism during illiberal times.

8.4 The Party is Dead—Long Live the Party?

Questions currently hang over the future of the United Kingdom's two longest lasting political parties. The far-right Reform UK and the Green Party have both substantially sapped support from both the Conservative and Labour Party across the United Kingdom. Leadership in both centre-left and centre-right parties seem incapable of stemming the tide, especially as Starmer's brand of centrism is critiqued as anti-democratic (Gilbert 2021a, 2023; Holden 2025). Concurrently, the local state has come back into focus as a key player in urban governance, as regeneration and housing remain salient in political discourse. However, too often, the state and the party are framed as distinct and separate entities. As has been argued here, this approach overlooks how the two are fundamentally related. Thus, this thesis argues that the inter-connections between state and party demand rigorous conceptual, empirical, and analytical inquiry. The same is true for interpretations of resistance against authoritarianism in modern neoliberal states, which often overlooks the quieter ways groups—working with or against political parties—resist illiberalism.

To respond, then, to contemporary crises of democracy in the UK and internationally, future scholarship must speak to the importance, complexity, and contingency of the local scale. Such research should not fall into the trap of treating the local scale as simply a territory for national dynamics—rather, my work is a call to rigorously interrogate how decision-making, politics, and

resistance intersect in different ways. It is also a call for greater democracy at all levels of the party, not only to reinvigorate it—but also as a bulwark against the feelings of alienation that have fed this crisis. Finally, subsequent investigations must highlight spaces for radical new ways of ensuring housing and local governance works for all.

Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – List of Council Documents:

Below is a list of documents produced or commissioned by Haringey Borough staff that were read as part of data collection and analysis. I have separated them by case study for convenience and hyperlinked instead of providing traditional citations where the document is not cited in the body of the thesis.

Tottenham-related Documents:

- A Plan for Tottenham (2012)
- Funding and Investment Package for the Tottenham Regeneration Programme (2012)
- Tottenham Strategic Regeneration Framework (2014)
- Tottenham's Future Consultation (2014)
- Tottenham Area Action Plan Preferred Option Consultation (2015)
- Tottenham Area Action Plan (2017)
- The social value of regeneration in Tottenham (2018)

Haringey Development Vehicle:

- Haringey Development Vehicle Business Case (Turnberry Real Estate et al. 2015) and:
    - Appendix 1 – Economic Context
    - Appendix 3 - Qualitative Analysis
    - Appendix 4 - Case Studies
- Haringey Development Vehicle Cabinet Report (2015)
- Haringey Development Vehicle Business Plan: Socio-Economic Strategy (2017)
- Interim Report Governance Arrangements for Haringey Development Vehicle (2017)
- Governance Arrangements for the Haringey Development Vehicle Report by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel and response to recommendations (2017)

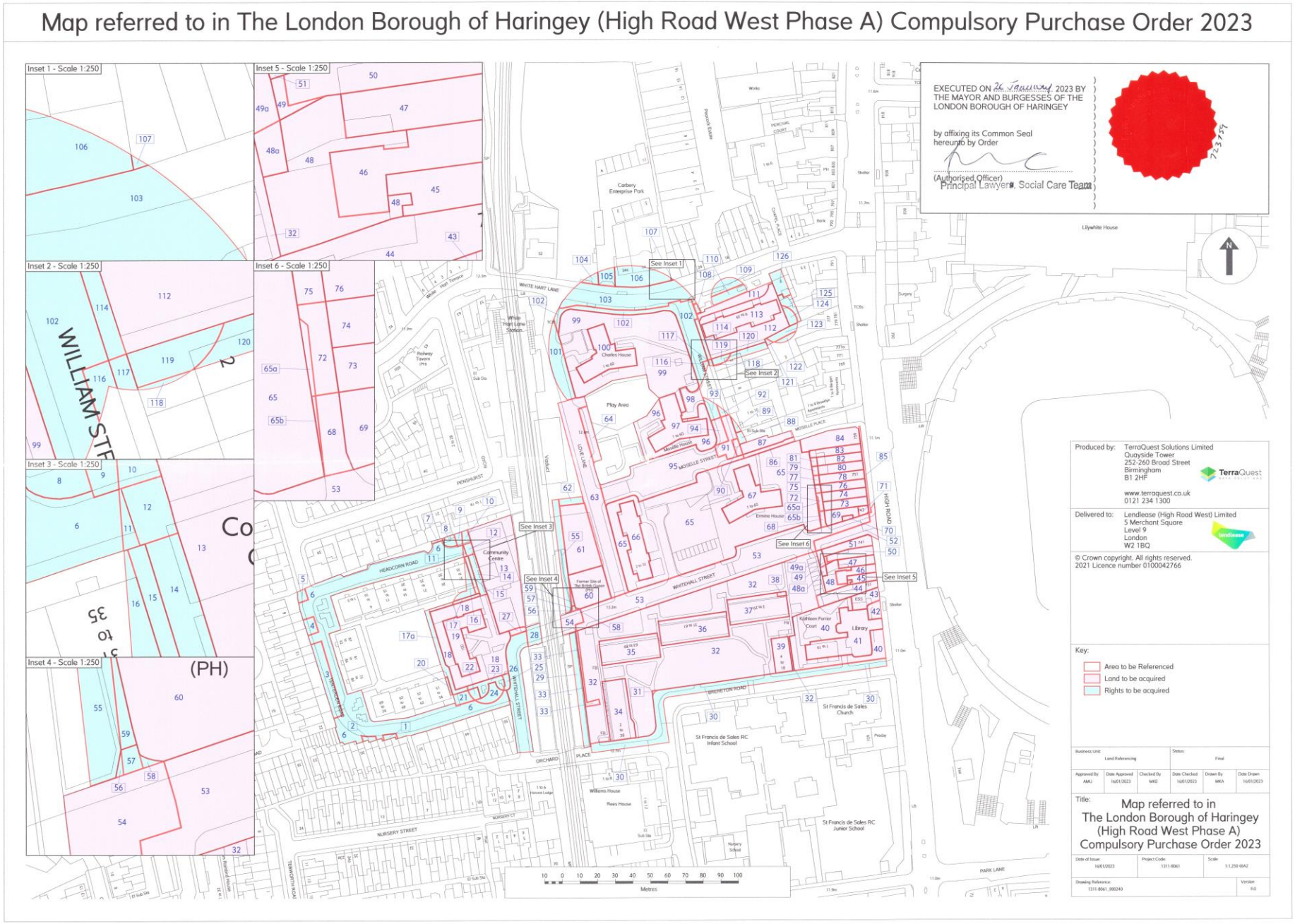
High Road West:

- High Road West: Consultation Feedback Report (Haringey Borough Council 2013a)
- High Road West: Creating a Plan for Change (Haringey Borough Council 2013b)
- High Road West Regeneration Proposals Consultation Feedback Report (2014)
- Love Lane Residents Charter (2014)
- Tottenham High Road West Masterplan Framework (2014)
- High Road West Regeneration Proposals: Masterplan Information Pack (Arup 2014)
- High Road West Business Case Report (2015)
- High Road West Regeneration Scheme – appointment of a preferred bidder and next steps (2017)
- Peacock Industrial Estate, Master Plan Consultation process – a Freedom of Information request to Haringey Borough Council (2018). Original FoI request and response by Haringey Council staff.
- High Road West Masterplan and Whitehall Mews Update – Information Booklet (2021)
- High Road West Planning Submission Exhibition (2021)
- Agenda Item – Love Lane Ballot (2021). Meeting of Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel, London Borough of Haringey.
- Scrutiny Review – High Road West (2021)
- The London Borough of Haringey (High Road West Phase A) CPO 2023 – Peter O'Brien Evidence (2023)

Miscellaneous:

- London Borough of Haringey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014)
- Haringey Strategic Housing Market Assessment: Report of Findings (2021)

9.2 Appendix B – High Road West 'Order Lands':



9.3 Appendix C – Composite Character Table:

Composite Name	**Summary**	**Number of Councillors**	**Assumptions**
Melissa	Melissa is a leftist/liberal councillor (Labour). She has some reservations with the direction of the Labour party under Keir Starmer's leadership but is still in the system. She was recently elected so is coming to grips with it.	3	These interviewees are mostly recently elected (within the past 6 years) and mostly remain involved with the Labour party. Only 1 has a leadership position. They have self-identified as being 'soft left' (Gilbert 2023)
John	John is a staunch leftist councillor (Labour) who spent some time in a position of power (e.g., chair of a committee).	4	These interviewees have a wide range of time served but are bound together by their explicitly leftist or socialist politics. Some have left the Labour party while some are no longer councillors. All have had leadership roles. They were mostly elected as part of the anti-HDV campaign.
Asif	Asif is a leftist councillor (Labour) who does not have a position of power. He remains involved with the wider debates in the Labour Party but is less involved these days.	3	These interviewees are solidly leftist but, like Melissa, have mostly remained involved with the Labour party—if from the fringes. None of them have sat as a committee chair or had a position of power. They have a range of time served.
Liliana	Liliana is a liberal councillor (Liberal Democrat) who sits on the outside of the proceedings. Yet, she still has valuable insights.	4	These interviewees overwhelmingly sit on the outside of the internal conflicts with the state and the Labour party. Very wide range of time served.

9.4 Appendix D – Email Conversations with Borough Staff:

Below are two email conversations I had with Haringey Borough staff.

From: Scott Mundy <Scott.Mundy@haringey.gov.uk>
Sent: 15 March 2024 15:47
To: SINDHWANI, ANIL <anil.sindhwani@durham.ac.uk>
Subject: RE: PhD student researching Haringey and Housing

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]
Dear Anil,

I hope you are well. Apologies for the delay in getting back to you, I returned from leave earlier in the week so have been catching up on emails.

There is a requirement for enquiries such as this to go through our Press Office. I will forward your email to them however I suggest also contacting them directly. They can be contacted at pressdesk@haringey.gov.uk (more information here: Press Office | Haringey Council).

In relation to your specific question, you may find it useful to read the Council's evidence presented at the recent public inquiry into the compulsory purchase order (CPO) for High Road West. This includes discussion at section 4 of the context of the 2011 riots.

The evidence is here: Microsoft Word - Council proof - FINAL DRAFT 06.10.23(143193023.1) (divio-media.org) and documents relating to the CPO more broadly are here: High Road West, Haringey - Gateley (gateleyhamer-pi.com)

I hope this is helpful.

Best wishes

Scott Mundy
Regeneration Manager

Haringey Council
The Grange, 32 White Hart Lane, N17 8DP

E. scott.mundy@haringey.gov.uk
Pronouns: he/him

www.haringey.gov.uk
twitter@haringeycouncil
facebook.com/haringeycouncil

Outlook

FW: PhD student researching Haringey and Housing

From Sarah Lovell <Sarah.Lovell@haringey.gov.uk>
Date Mon 2024-03-11 17:19
To SINDHWANI, ANIL <anil.sindhwani@durham.ac.uk>

You don't often get email from sarah.lovell@haringey.gov.uk. Learn why this is important

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]
Hi Anil,

Great to hear you are focusing on High Road West.

Unfortunately, given the high volumes of requests we receive, we are not allowed to take part in interviews so that we are fair to all.
The following documents should help:

- a_plan_for_tottenham.pdf (haringey.gov.uk)
- Tottenham's Future consultation report - March 2014 (haringey.gov.uk)
- tottenham-srf-final.pdf (haringey.gov.uk)
- Tottenham strategic regeneration framework – delivery plan (2017 update) (haringey.gov.uk)
- Tottenham strategic regeneration framework – delivery plan (2016 update) (haringey.gov.uk)

Also, please use our website for anything more specific - Tottenham | Haringey Council

Best of luck!
Thanks
s

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