Towards a Political Economy of Social Infrastructure: Contesting "Anti-Social Infrastructures" in London

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Abstract: In this paper, we develop a situated and intersectional urban political economy approach to social infrastructure. This approach contrasts with a growing body of liberal urban geography, which offers an optimistic account of how shared spaces afford encounter and social connection. We present four arguments about why such outcomes cannot be assumed, which are informed by a case of contested redevelopment in the London borough of Haringey. First, social infrastructures express power relations, enacting distinct visions of "the social", that are at times premised on the denigration of other forms of collective life as anti-social. Second, elite social infrastructures are increasingly central to speculative urban development, serving to procure consent for, and valorise, investment. Third, other social infrastructures are essential networks of social reproduction and survival, especially for diverse working-class communities: demolition and displacement mean infrastructural disruption. Finally, unequal political economies of social infrastructure are a realm of structural antagonism over urban citizenship (un) making.

Keywords: social infrastructure, social reproduction, citizenship, Haringey, HDV

Introduction

In 2018, a diverse grassroots coalition of tenants, traders, and other activists rewrote the script of urban development and gentrification in London. After an intense struggle, Haringey Council abandoned its divisive plan to form a joint venture with a private developer, known as the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV). Although joint ventures have been a common feature of urban development in London for at least 40 years, the scale of the HDV was unprecedented. Defeating the plans was a major victory for local campaigners against corporate-municipal accumulation by dispossession that would have undermined their valued social infrastructures—the council estates and networks of mutual support built on and around them, which formed the relational scaffold for the campaign itself. The council leadership promoted the HDV as an investment in the social

infrastructure of a deprived area suffering from austerity. However, the financial investment would have come from Lendlease, a controversial global real estate developer, and effectively privatised £2 billion of local state-owned land for speculative development. The HDV therefore risked diverse working-class configurations of sociality, social reproduction, and survival.

Drawing on empirical research conducted with campaigners from the StopHDV coalition, in this paper we present the "battle for Haringey" as a *critical case* for conceptualising social infrastructure as a contested terrain of meaning, value, and provisioning. In doing so, we make two contributions to the emerging literature on social infrastructure. First, we develop a grounded critique of what we term "civic-liberal" conceptualisations of social infrastructure. Inspired by Eric Klinenberg's (2018:5) work on the "physical conditions that determine whether social capital develops", this lively seam of urban geographical research analyses the places and spaces in which people gather, encounter one another, and connect (Campbell et al. 2022; DeVerteuil et al. 2022; Yarker 2021). Across this scholarship, social infrastructure is viewed as the underlying networks and systems that support different forms of social life and generate a "social surplus" of trust, resilience, and civic capacity (Amin 2008). Whilst acknowledging that distinct uses of these spaces may come into competition, academic and policy advocates of social infrastructure promote an optimistic and pragmatic politics of provisioning centred on the importance of well-maintained places for different activities, open to all, and expressing a democratic "ethos of citizens as equals in shared space" (Latham and Layton 2019:8). This approach is valuable in its advocacy for the robust provision and support of diverse social spaces.

Through our empirical research and engagement with critical, feminist, and Southern literatures, however, we find that the civic-liberal approach does not sufficiently attend to power relations and structural antagonisms, which differentially and unevenly shape how, for whom, and to what ends social infrastructures are assembled and maintained. Developing this critique, we present the case for situated and intersectional urban political economy approaches that learn from and with diverse working-class struggles. In doing so, we make four arguments about social infrastructure, which we define as ambivalent, uneven, and contested configurations of places, people, and practices that differentially afford sociality, social reproduction, and survival. Although broad, this interpretation encompasses the diverse ways in which sociality and social reproduction are achieved across formal and informal spaces and labour (Power et al. 2022).

First, social infrastructures express power relations across vectors of differentiation and enact distinct visions of "the social", including those premised on the negation of certain forms of collective life as "anti-social". Instead of presuming the civic virtues of social infrastructures, we attend to how social infrastructures are produced through (and reproduce) socio-spatial inequalities. In Haringey, the local state and developers drew on racially stigmatising and architecturally deterministic discourses to denigrate the design and social lives of council estates as "anti-social" infrastructures, (re)producing criminal and unproductive populations. These attacks on social infrastructure were "a prime strategy towards urban economic restructuring" (Luke and Kaika 2019:579).

Second, social infrastructures are increasingly central to speculative urban (re) development, serving as a means to procure consent for, and valorise, investment. Our case study shows how new homes, retail, and leisure spaces were designed to attract wealthier and whiter residents at the expense of the area's existing diverse working class. As part of local government's speculative "real estate turn" (Penny 2022; Shatkin 2017), certain social infrastructures are destroyed and others produced through logics of social differentiation. These legitimise classed and racialised dispossession, valorise capital accumulation for municipal and corporate actors, and realise local state-led ambitions to remake urban citizenship.

Third, more than spaces for sociality, social infrastructures are essential networks of social reproduction and survival, especially for diverse working-class communities. Displacement thus engenders infrastructural disruption. As feminist and critical urban scholars have shown, informal infrastructures of mutual support sustain those unable to afford market-based options or who face barriers to exclusionary and depleted public provision (Hall 2020; McFarlane and Silver 2017; Simone 2004). Black geographies and postcolonial analyses of urban transformation point to the relevance of social infrastructures not only in cities lacking state-provided infrastructure, but also to underserved and minoritised populations in the global North (Elliott-Cooper et al. 2020). The need to maintain these vital infrastructures of social reproduction catalysed resistance to the HDV.

Finally, unequal political economies of social infrastructure are a realm of structural antagonism over who cities and infrastructures are for (Berlant 2016). Here we combine ideas of infrastructure as an expression of competing ideas of citizenship (Lemanski 2020), with work on how people interact to function themselves as infrastructures (Simone 2004). Citizenship and connection to place can be maintained through dynamic social infrastructures of self-defence. However, that requires ongoing, unevenly distributed labour, which may be unsustainable. The StopHDV coalition networked people and resources to successfully defend social infrastructures against demolition, though its afterlives are ambivalent.

Towards an Urban Political Economy of Social Infrastructure

Within a wider "infrastructural turn" across the social sciences (Graham and Marvin 2001; Silver 2015), the concept of "social infrastructure" has gained traction in recent years as a way of thinking through relationships between infrastructures and the social lives they enable. Yet whilst the term proliferates in academic and policy texts, the conceptual and political implications of coupling "social" with "infrastructure" are not self-evident and are still to be fully theorised. In this section we start by appraising what we call a "civic-liberal" approach to social infrastructure, which emphasises the importance of social connections produced through social spaces and facilities. Then, building on critical, feminist, and Southern literatures we develop a political economy approach to social infrastructure. As well as affording opportunities for connection, we argue that social

infrastructures are integral to the production of differentiated inequalities across processes of accumulation by dispossession, urban citizenship (un)making, social reproduction and survival.

The Civic-Liberal Approach to Social Infrastructure

> London's social infrastructure is one of its great assets. From bumping into friends and neighbours in the park and café, to visiting a local nail salon, recycling unwanted furniture on a Facebook group, using the library to find information, or getting help from a community support network, social infrastructure plays an important role in supporting and enriching the lives of Londoners. (Mayor of London 2021:15)

Focusing on urban contexts in the global North, recent research in a broadly civic-liberal tradition has examined social infrastructures as the "background structures and systems of cities that can encourage sociality" (Layton and Latham 2022:758). In several interventions, Alan Latham and Jack Layton, for example, define social infrastructure as the "networks of spaces, facilities, institutions, and groups that create affordances for social connection" and support social life (Latham and Layton 2019:3). These include a variety of public and private spaces such as corner-shops, hair salons, community centres, and skateparks. In addition to their core functions, such spaces are said to be capable of generating a "social surplus" of trust, integration, and resilience (Campbell et al. 2022; Klinenberg 2018; Latham and Layton 2019; Mayor of London 2021; Yarker 2021).

These civic-liberal formulations are characterised by a broadly positive account of social infrastructure as a self-evident good. Klinenberg (2018:5) argues that "[w]hen social infrastructure is robust, it fosters contact, mutual support, and collaboration among friends and neighbours; when degraded, it inhibits social activity, leaving families and individuals to fend for themselves". In an age of apparent fragmentation, social infrastructures bring people together across difference "to create a safer, healthier, and more harmonious city" (Mayor of London 2021). As well as promoting integration, social infrastructures can also be "an important resource for the economically or socially marginalised" (Latham and Layton 2019:7), providing a "safe space" (DeVerteuil et al. 2022:672). Latham and Layton (2019) call attention to Elijah Anderson's (2011) ethnography of "racial segregation in Philadelphia ... [which] examined the way certain commercial spaces become havens of trust and agreeable sociality for working-class black men". Such social infrastructures may contribute to political cohesion, serving as "essential tools for civic engagement in unequal societies" (Klinenberg 2018, cited in DeVerteuil et al. 2022:672), through which minoritised groups organise to make themselves heard in the wider public sphere.

Conflict over "the social" is recognised in terms of competing uses of social infrastructures. In a case study of Finsbury Park in Haringey, Layton and Latham (2022:765) argue that the park supports different registers of social life, such as co-presence, sociability, care, kinaesthetic practices, the carnivalesque,

and civic engagement. The authors use this typology to show how different groups come into conflict when vying for space and time for activities in a context of funding cuts. With austerity policies risking the park's "slow spoiling" (Penny 2019), Haringey Council's "innovative" response—to commercialise the carnivalesque through fee-charging festivals—is shown to disrupt some registers of social life, namely peaceful co-presence, whilst cross-subsidising investment in others, through renovated basketball courts for kinaesthetic practices. Accommodating to the logic of "austerity realism" (Davies 2021), the authors are sympathetic to the "contested commercialisation" (Smith 2021) of parks, concluding: "If we want to help make better social infrastructures in our cities ... we should not let the perfect be the enemy of the good" (Layton and Latham 2022:770).

The civic-liberal approach makes a strong case for recognising the value of everyday shared places, especially the social surplus that flows from an abundance and diversity of social infrastructure. At a time when these spaces are under threat across urban contexts, that is valuable. However, this approach is also limited in three ways. First, in presupposing the civic virtues of social infrastructure, it presents "a social world unbound by structural antagonism" (Berlant 2016:396) and underestimates the extent to which infrastructures are "embedded instruments of power, dominance, and (attempted) social control" (Graham and Marvin 2001:1). Second, it is largely silent on the ways in which social infrastructures are increasingly integral to speculative urban redevelopment processes and governmental agendas of citizenship making and unmaking (Lemanski 2020). Finally, as Sarah Marie Hall (2020) has noted, in privileging physical spaces and emphasising sociality and conviviality, the civic-liberal approach elides the labour, relations, and stakes of social reproduction and survival.

Beyond Sociality: Splintered, Differentiated, and "Anti-Social" Infrastructures

Our approach to social infrastructure is informed by insights from critical literatures on infrastructure, which scrutinise the political economy of infrastructural governance, financing, and uneven provisioning. Such accounts are referenced by social infrastructure studies from a civic-liberal perspective (DeVerteuil et al. 2022; Latham and Layton 2022), but their implications have been undertheorised. Social infrastructures may foster forms of sociality that enrich urban life. But they are also "implicated in wider patterns of power" and can "involve processes of urban appropriation and transformation that diminish or cut against" other forms of sociality (Middleton and Samanani 2022:780, 782). These concerns risk being overlooked by a politics of provisioning focused only on the presence, quantity, and upkeep of social infrastructures, in which diversity is approached in terms of spaces for different activities, accessible "*regardless* of age, race, class, sexuality, or gender" (Latham and Layton 2019:8, emphasis added).

From a critical political economy approach, infrastructure is *produced by, and produces, socio-spatial inequalities*. Recognising power disparities, this perspective questions how and for whom infrastructure is designed, financed, and governed, and who decides these matters (Siemiatycki et al. 2020). Urban and regional

restructuring can lead to the "fragmentation of the social and material fabric of cities", producing splintered and differentiated infrastructures that run counter to integration and cohesion (Graham and Marvin 2001:33). In this regard, social infrastructures are by no means exceptional. In London, for example, new private housing developments provide social infrastructure such as swimming pools and communal gardens, but selectively: in what amounts to micro-segregation, "affordable housing" tenants are often barred from such facilities.

Work on the uneven economies and financialisation of infrastructure explains how social infrastructures may be subject to processes of creative destruction *geared towards valorising financialised urban redevelopment*. Across London, existing council estates and their local economies have been torn down to make way for homes, retail and leisure spaces designed to attract whiter, wealthier populations (Watt 2021). These dynamics have intensified as austerity has led to a scaling back of public social infrastructures (Power and Hall 2018). Although private finance has long played a role in infrastructural provisioning, logics of capital accumulation and the influence of financial investors are increasingly prominent in the governance of social infrastructures (Ashton et al. 2012; Furlong 2020; Horton 2021). This is not to presume that state funding guarantees socially just outcomes, but to recognise that a reliance on private finance makes differentiated and exclusionary infrastructures more likely.

Further, we draw on (post)colonial readings of infrastructure and urban restructuring, to highlight how the production and use of social infrastructures are *racialised*. Different forms of infrastructure have long been integral to territorial expansion and governmental control. Examples include the extension of, and exclusions from, colonial and postcolonial railways (Mrázek 2002) and water systems (Kooy and Bakker 2008). Such dynamics are echoed in postcolonial perspectives on ongoing urban transformation in cities in the global North. As Danewid (2020:292) has argued, drawing on Aimé Césaire, modern approaches to urban renewal and the administration of working-class neighbourhoods in the imperial metropole are built on "colonial forms of urban housing policy and city planning" that were first enacted in colonial cities. Theories of gentrification have also been revised through postcolonial literatures and Black geographies (Bledsoe and Wright 2019). Of particular relevance here is the influential urban policy discourse of promoting "social mixing" as a justification for the redevelopment of working-class residential areas (Kipfer and Petrunia 2009). Despite the integrationist rhetoric, the political economy of change tends towards racialised dispossession and displacement (Addie and Fraser 2019).

However, unequal political economies of social infrastructure are never without antagonism: they are *a contested terrain of citizenship making and unmaking*—a realm of dispute over who cities and infrastructures are for. This is so because "practices and perceptions of citizenship acts and identities are embedded in public infrastructure as a representation of the state at the local scale" (Lemanski 2020:602). Lemanski shows how, in South Africa, people have adapted public housing to help accommodate rural-urban migrants, expressing a particular—and officially unsanctioned—understanding of "infrastructural citizenship".

Differentiated experiences of infrastructures give rise to "intersectional claims-making to urban citizenship, recognition, and belonging" (Sultana 2020:1407).

Building on this attention to practices of infrastructure, we recognise that social infrastructures are *dependent on labour*. Whereas the civic-liberal approach focuses on spaces for sociality, feminist readings view social infrastructure as akin to other forms of collective provision, a kind of public good like transport or utilities. They point out that spaces affording encounter—playgrounds, day centres, libraries— must be brought to life by the (gendered and otherwise unevenly distributed) labour of those producing them and reproducing the services and connections that they enable (Hall 2020; Strauss 2020). Where formal spaces and services do not reach, social relationships and unpaid labour can create networks of distribution and communication (Tonkiss 2015), or "infrastructures of social reproduction" (Ruddick et al. 2018). Here we also draw on AbdouMaliq Simone's (2004) notion of "people as infrastructure": diverse, often provisional, and at times antagonistic interactions can functionally substitute for the absence of state-provided infrastructures. These interactions are dynamic expressions of agency but are constrained by an "inheritance of resourced realities" (Simone 2021:1343) that should not be idealised, and are often conflictual. In short, the stakes of social infrastructure are survival as well as connection, but the social is fragmented and segmented.

Based on these insights, we propose an intersectional political economy approach to social infrastructure. At the heart of this approach is a concern with how social infrastructures are produced through, embedded in, and generative of socio-spatial inequalities including power relations across class, race, and gender. This goes beyond a politics of provisioning understood as competing interests over how social infrastructure should be used. It asks critical questions about who controls the processes through which social infrastructures are produced and governed, and whose sociality and survival are privileged or at risk. To give a fuller account of the politics of social infrastructure, we need to recognise the multiple meanings, values, and forms of social infrastructure that are constituted by and constitutive of relations of structural antagonism, capital accumulation, and governmental agendas of citizenship making and unmaking.

Case and Methods

This paper explores social infrastructure through the case of the thwarted redevelopment of Tottenham. Situated in the eastern half of the London Borough of Haringey, Tottenham is a diverse working-class area. Almost 80% of its residents are from BAME groups (Haringey Council 2015a); in recent decades the longer standing Afro-Caribbean population has been joined by Somali, Kurdish, and Eastern European migrants (Visser 2020). The area is known for Black culture and activism: Haringey Council was among the first in London to be led by a Black person, Bernie Grant (following John Archer's election as Mayor of Battersea in 1913). Grant, who moved to Tottenham in 1963 from then-British Guiana, founded the Black Trade Unionists Solidarity Movement, was a leading organiser of Black representation and anti-racism within the Labour Party, and was one of the first four

Black Members of Parliament, elected in 1987 to represent Tottenham. That same year, Haringey Black Action and Positive Images organised the "Smash the Backlash" march, one of the first Black LGBT marches, against racism and anti-queer bigotry.

For decades, Tottenham has also been an impoverished area, including some of the UK's most deprived places, marked by racialised over-policing, territorial stigmatisation, and social unrest. Notably, Tottenham has been the site of two major urban uprisings following the deaths of local Black residents, Cynthia Jarrett, who died in contested circumstances during a police raid on her home in 1985, and Mark Duggan, who was shot dead by police in 2011. Without collapsing these events into one another, the uprisings that followed expressed deep grievances held by Tottenham's youth about aggressive and discriminatory policing, a lack of economic opportunities, poor housing conditions, and recent gentrification with the threat of displacement (Dillon and Fanning 2015; LSE and The Guardian 2012).

Following the 2011 uprisings, the right-leaning Labour council leadership worked closely with developer and landowner interests on a plan to transform Tottenham and other neighbourhoods, mostly in the deprived east of the borough. The council leadership proposed to redevelop £2bn worth of public land, demolishing existing council estates and affordable commercial space that are home to diverse working-class communities and livelihoods. These would be replaced with more private housing and an "upgraded" retail offer for a wealthier, higher rate-paying, and less restive population.

To pursue this agenda in the absence of state funding, the council leadership sought to monetise the rising value of their land as part of a wider "real estate turn" (Shatkin 2017) in which local governments seek to offset funding cuts and pursue their objectives through speculative real estate investments (Penny 2022). Rather than initiate a fire-sale privatisation of local state land, the council chose to combine their assets with private sector expertise and access to debt finance. To attract private investment and development expertise, a joint venture vehicle was designed based on a 50/50 equity agreement. This venture was named the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV; see Figure 1) and the developer selected was global real estate company Lendlease—infamous in London for their role in the social cleansing of the Heygate Estate in Elephant and Castle (Lees and Ferreri 2016).

Developed without tenant, trade union, or community knowledge, let alone input, the scale and significance of these plans were met with alarm by local civil society. To scrutinise and challenge the proposals, a diverse grassroots coalition including tenants, residents, housing activists, trade unionists, political party members, and local traders formed the StopHDV campaign in 2017. They collaborated with concerned local councillors from the Labour Party and Liberal Democrat opposition, while housing campaigns from beyond Haringey offered insights and solidarity. Collectively, they built a case against the HDV and broad popular opposition to the plans. The campaign succeeded thanks to the combination of scrutiny and challenges by backbench councillors; community organising and public protest; and a legal case that bought time for Labour Party members to
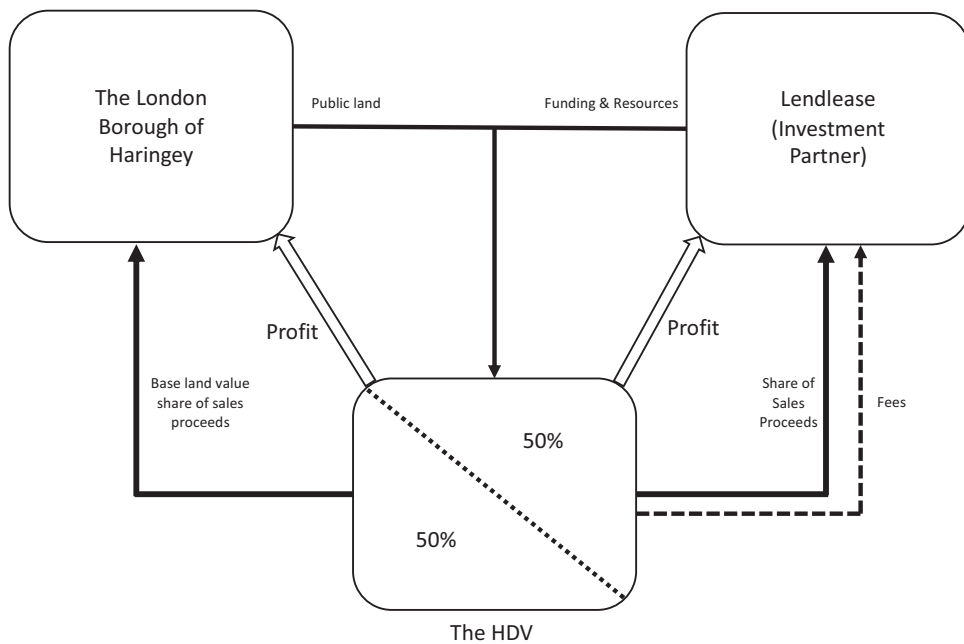
Figure 1: Structure of the Haringey Development Vehicle, as proposed in the 2015 Business Case (source: authors, based on Haringey Council 2015b:46)

deselect candidates who were in favour of the HDV before local elections. Under this pressure, key advocates of the HDV in the council leadership quit and the new executive scrapped the plans in mid-2018.

The research that informs this paper was initiated at the invitation of three campaigners who played prominent roles in StopHDV. With their support we conducted 18 in-depth interviews with people who participated in the campaign, reflecting critically on the rationales, strategies, and efficacy of the mobilisation. Interviewees included tenants, trade unionists, traders, councillors, and local organisers and activists, all of whom are long-term residents in the borough. Participants gave informed consent and, in recognition of their time, were offered vouchers of a value exceeding the London Living Wage (Warnock et al. 2022). We also collated relevant official records and policy documents that set out the arguments for the HDV, and reviewed media coverage and social media content. The data was analysed thematically.

Interviewees did not romanticise Tottenham's existing social infrastructures—which have long been subject to managed decline. Nor was the infrastructure of the campaign itself entirely without internal tensions or exclusions. However, whereas StopHDV was represented in much of the media as a partisan and factional attack on the council's right-leaning, Progress-allied Labour leadership by the leftist organising group Momentum, our research finds that the campaign was a genuinely grassroots and broadly-based coalition of people with a range of political affiliations, and none, developed outside of Momentum. Although this research cannot present a comprehensive or necessarily representative view of the

local social infrastructures, we are confident that it portrays a grounded and diverse set of perspectives.

Anti-Social Infrastructures: Stigmatising Discourses of Denigration and Displacement

The 2011 riot precipitates all of this. The riot gave a lot of powerful people a lever to manipulate, take over, or colonise, the housing market in Tottenham. (Councillor)

Following the 2011 urban uprisings in Tottenham, policymakers denigrated and stigmatised the area's diverse working-class communities, spaces, and places—including public and low-rental housing—as "anti-social infrastructures" generative of a failed urban citizenship in need of spatial "de-concentration".

The executive leadership of Haringey Council, under pressure from then-Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, chose to work closely with a network of developers and landowners to formulate a long-term plan to transform Tottenham. This plan was devised by two taskforces, both of which were overwhelmingly made up of private sector actors, and was articulated in two policy documents: *A Plan for Tottenham* (London Borough of Haringey [LBH] 2012) and *It Took Another Riot* (Mayor of London's Independent Panel on Tottenham [IPT] 2012). Taken together, these reports amount to an agenda for a reactionary racial and spatial project of displacement and dispossession.

In the aftermath of the uprisings a concerted effort was made across mainstream media and political discourse to define the disorder as pathological, rather than political (Tyler 2013). Drawing on a well-worn notion of the underclass and its attendant stigmatising language, those involved were dismissed as "mindless" criminals, a "dysfunctional base", and a "feral underclass ... [that] needs to be diminished" (Tyler 2013:27). In the post-riot clean up, some volunteers wore self-made t-shirts proclaiming that "looters are scum". According to our interviewees, local governing figures in Haringey described Tottenham as a "basket case" and dismissed opponents of the later regeneration plans as wanting to "keep Tottenham shit".

The official policy response was less frenzied in tone, but its proposals nevertheless drew on, circulated, and sought to normalise pathologising and territorially stigmatising discourses (see Wacquant et al. 2014) about the people and places they governed. Both of the key reports ignored the underlying structural and institutional injustices that fomented the uprisings, including institutional police racism, racially uneven poverty and inequality, budget cuts to welfare and public services, especially to youth centres, and gentrification and displacement pressures (LSE and The Guardian 2012). Instead, council estates were said to have "layouts that contribute to cultures of poverty and low aspiration" (IPT 2012:12), a "localism, often isolated from the wider community, [that] provides the context for challenging behaviour" and "designs [that] created the ideal conditions for crime" (IPT 2012:47). Both reports cited architecturally determinist analysis by Space Syntax, a University College London consultancy spin-off, which mapped the

occurrence of disturbances to show their proximity to large post-war housing estates. In the summary of their preliminary findings, Space Syntax (2011) wrote that the "spatial layout of these housing estates has an effect on social patterns, often leading to social malaise and antisocial behaviour".

Across both policy reports, council estates were repeatedly (mis)characterised through a common set of "place myths" that underpin arguments in favour of bulldozing people's homes and communities (Watt 2021). These include that council estates are spaces of concentrated poverty and social exclusion, derelict spaces of crumbling mono-tenure properties, "rough" and dangerous spaces, and devalued spaces marked by a lack of care, community, and capacity:

> Failed housing estates should be redeveloped. Mono-tenure developments could be mixed, and failed tenures could be better blended, bringing social change and inclusive diversity. (IPT 2012:14)

> Bringing forward this change means establishing Northumberland Park as a desirable place to live and work. New residential development will focus on promoting home ownership to create a better balance of housing in the area. (LBH 2012:16)

Further underlining the denigration of council housing and tenants, it was stated that where "Areas of Tottenham have over 50% of their occupants in social housing—the tenure mix needs altering, so new social housing should only be provided to replace existing units" (IPT 2012:43).

The other housing "problem" identified was that of high population churn, which was racialised and linked directly to migrant "others arriving from all over the world" (IPT 2012:23). The cause of this "problem" was not located in a lack of tenant rights or the insecurity of London's private rented sector, which is amongst the most precarious in Europe. Rather, the issue was said to be caused by:

> low rents [that] attract transient populations ... This leads to less respect for the local environment, to disruption of schooling, to poor healthcare continuity and ultimately to higher levels of crime—all of which, in turn, depress rents, thereby perpetuating the cycle. (IPT 2012:18)

Perhaps unsurprisingly given this framing, the expansion of social housing, and secure council tenancies, is not considered as a potential solution. Instead, solving the racialised problem of population churn, was to "be achieved by wider prosperity in the area" (IPT 2012:20) and home ownership for a wealthier population to come—the "top quintile of earners", as the Council's chief executive put it in a public meeting.

This myth-making disregards evidence readily available to the reports' authors about the diverse relations of social reproduction and connection that are supported by the borough's council estates and their surrounding neighbourhoods. In 2014, Northumberland Park ward, for example, was made up of 49% social tenants, 26% private rental tenants, and 24% owner occupiers.[1] In a consultative survey conducted on the same estate, residents said that "There is a strong community spirit

and this should be preserved" (LBH 2017a:10). The GLA's Strategic Housing Market Assessment shows that London's housing need is overwhelmingly for social housing, not for homeownership. And Haringey Council's own Equalities Impact Assessment acknowledged that Black households would be less likely to benefit from "affordable home ownership" than white households. Rather than promising to make housing genuinely affordable to local people, the Council's Head of Regeneration suggested that the solution was to "address their incomes"—ignoring "systematic racial economic disadvantage" (Eddo-Lodge 2018:59), including income and wealth disparities that are so critical to home ownership.

In the aftermath of urban unrest animated at least in part by concerns about gentrification and displacement in the borough, Haringey Council initiated a revanchist racial project to remake Tottenham for a whiter middle and investor class, at the expense of its existing diverse working-class population. As one campaigner put it:

> After the riots the view [amongst those in positions of power] was that this could not be happening again. The people who caused the riots were seen as too expensive to maintain, from the council's perspective. So, the council felt the whole area needed to be regenerated—or as the campaign would say, social cleansing—by changing the kind of people who live in Tottenham.

Across both reports we discern a dominant frame of values that marginalised and misrecognised the importance of lower-rent and social housing. The reports denied the role that social housing and council estates play as social infrastructures—underlying systems and structures of social reproduction and survival, of both formal and informal collective provisioning, and of diverse working-class sociality and solidarity. Instead, local state policy narratives discursively framed council housing as anti-social infrastructure that produces welfare dependency, ill-health, criminality, and any number of other markers of failed urban citizenship that need to be deconcentrated through "more high-quality housing and home ownership" (LBH 2012:8). In this way, diverse working-class social infrastructures were made "available for appropriation" through racialising discourses that position "certain populations [as] being unable to adequately occupy or administer space" (Bledsoe and Wright 2019:15).

Speculative Infrastructures of Social Cleansing

> It was social engineering, to make Tottenham a trendy place to be, but how that would have benefited the local people I have no idea. (Campaigner)

The production of speculative infrastructures of social cleansing was core to the HDV. This included new housing for sale and for private rent, which would increase the local state's council tax base. It also entailed the transformation of local high streets and shopping centres, such as Tottenham High Road and Seven Sisters market, which were earmarked in investor-oriented promotional material as

"Areas of Change": new high street brand shops and "no-nonsense" policing would offer an improved public realm (Figure 2), plus increased local business tax revenues. In this section, following Lemanski (2020), we argue that a form of social infrastructural citizenship was evident in the plans that underpinned the HDV, with the local state planning for its idealised urban citizenry through the denigration and destruction, and valorisation and provision, of different forms of social infrastructure for different kinds of people.

In her ethnographic accounts of ordinary high streets, Suzanne Hall (2011) paints a rich picture of the economic and social value of high streets for diverse working-class communities. In these "apparently messy or banal linear strips activated by migrants", "sharing and experimentation [take place] across gender, racial and ethnic groupings" and form a kind of "everyday urban infrastructure common to London life" (Hall 2015:855, 859). The low-cost and often migrant-run convenience stores, markets, take-aways, hair and beauty shops along Tottenham High Road and in Seven Sisters are undoubtedly such places, affording opportunities for diverse working-class sociality, mutual support, and survival (Taylor 2020). Functioning as "areas of social life that are racially and culturally specific" (Reynolds 2013:491), and providing access to "forms of exchange and interaction other than retail" (Hall 2011:2573), they are a valued and valuable social infrastructure.
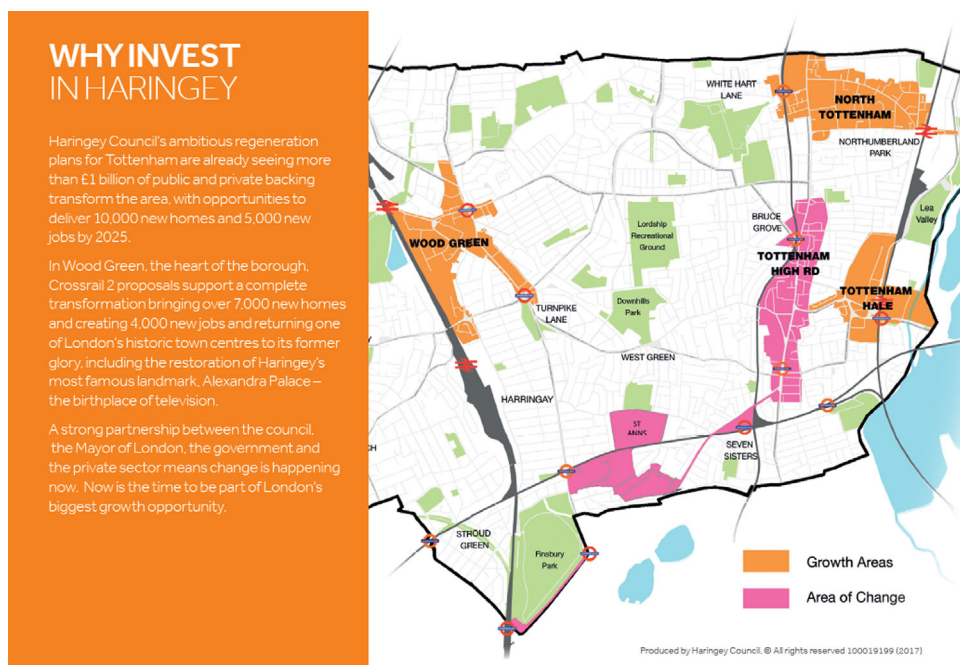

Figure 2: Prospectus for the real estate investor fair, MIPIM (source: LBH 2017b:6–7; reproduced here with permission from Regeneration and Economic Development, Haringey Council) [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

To valorise the planned speculative investments of finance and real estate capital, the local state sought to destroy and replace these social infrastructures with others organised around the consumption practices and aesthetic preferences of professional "creative" middle classes. A key policy recommendation was to transform the economic base of the area, by repositioning Tottenham within London's division of affluent consumption. The council was looking to "shift poor people out over time and regenerate the area with new people who had more money to spend, that would attract more businesses, so more business rates and council tax", according to the secretary of the community branch of Unite union in Haringey. The IPT report proposed remaking the area into a destination for middle-class work and play—a "shopping 'draw'" (IPT 2012:42) with "more shops that function as 'soft' business infrastructure, such as coffee shops where people meet" (IPT 2012:46) and a public realm that is cleaner, more attractive, and safer for an imagined new urban citizenry. This agenda of commercial gentrification and displacement was reproduced throughout Haringey Council's report, which anticipated that "lower quality outlets will be replaced by high quality businesses that make a positive contribution to the area" (LBH 2012:34). The area's culturally and economically distinctive shops (Figure 3) would be erased, with the public realm and recreational and commercial space of Seven Sisters in Tottenham fully reimagined. In the council's visualisation of the redeveloped site, the market was levelled to make way for a glassy mall, housing thinly disguised imitations of major chains (HCBC Bank, "Pasta Express" and "Coste Café").[2] This corporate "aesthetic infrastructure of gentrification" (Summers 2019:4) was necessary to valorise speculative redevelopment.

Strikingly, given that it was produced in response to urban unrest catalysed by police violence and institutional racism, Haringey Council's report emphasised the importance of a stronger and more interventionist police presence to make Tottenham attractive for high-earning professionals. Whereas the official inquiry into the 1981 Brixton riots had acknowledged that discriminatory policing had triggered the uprising and called for change, after the 2011 uprising, the government insisted that "the majority of those involved were motivated by nothing more than greed" and dismissed "poverty, race and the challenging economy" as "excuses" (DCLG 2013:15). Similarly, Haringey's *Plan for Tottenham* showed no regard for community concerns around policing. The council endorsed "a strong enforcement approach that tackles quality of life issues and delivers visual improvements … [to make] the High Road … a more pleasant and appealing place for residents and visitors" (LBH 2012:37). Later, in language redolent of broken windows policing rhetoric, a "highly visible police presence" is promised, "taking a no-nonsense approach to issues that impact on people's quality of life. This will ensure that businesses and new residents have the confidence to invest and become stakeholders in Tottenham's future" (LBH 2012:42).

Across both reports, the local state conceived of and planned for the arrival of a certain class of urban dweller through the provision of infrastructure (Lemanski 2020). Substituting black and migrant social infrastructures with those geared to the creative class would have meant the "marginalisation of [existing] modes of life and the building of different social relations that are recognised and

Figure 3: Seven Sisters in 2023 (source: authors) [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

legitimated in revitalising neighbourhoods" (Addie and Fraser 2019:1377). At stake therefore was not the presence or absence of social infrastructure, but the displacement and replacement of social infrastructures for different urban populations. Had the HDV been successfully implemented, social infrastructure in the form of a newly designed public realm with parklets, open space, cafes, restaurants, and soft business infrastructure would have been funded by, and provided to valorise, speculative real estate investment. For those with the means, this would have afforded opportunities for social connection and sociality. For others, specifically those well served by the area's existing low-income retail offer and relatively affordable commercial and light industrial space, it would likely have been encountered as alienating and anti-social—as an infrastructure of phenomenological displacement and "of power, dominance and (attempted) social control" (Graham and Marvin 2001:1). The politics of social infrastructure provisioning in this case exceeded the management of different uses of the same social infrastructure between more-or-less equal groups (Layton and Latham 2022). Rather, it expressed an antagonism structured by profound inequalities, including over who has the power to set the frame of values determining what kinds of social infrastructure, and whose sociality and survival, is provided for or destroyed. In other words, social infrastructures can function as a significant tool of state-led gentrification and social cleansing.

Against the Infrastructural Disruption of Displacement

Confronting the stigmatisation of working-class housing as anti-social, many in the area took up the defence of their homes and neighbourhoods: these were infrastructures of social reproduction and social life for otherwise marginalised

diverse working-class communities facing poverty and discrimination (Gillespie and Hardy 2021). The coalition against the HDV exemplified how social infrastructures are differentiated—made by and for different groups in unequal societies—and can be in antagonistic relation with each other (Berlant 2016). In place of state-funded infrastructures, mutual support can generate sociality and a "social surplus". We must also be alert to tensions within these relations and the way in which relying on "people as infrastructure" can simultaneously deplete the capacities of marginalised groups who take on these responsibilities (Hall 2020; Simone 2004). While remaining cognisant of those costs, we show how social infrastructures worked against material deprivation, challenged housing insecurity, supported local economies, and fostered solidaristic social connection.

In Tottenham, social infrastructures—both formal and informal—helped to shield people from material deprivation, making life survivable and, more than that, liveable (Butler 2012). Faced with the managed decline of council estates as maintenance budgets went unspent and austerity eroded redistributive interventions, campaigners resisted the HDV's plans to demolish social housing and move people out of the area. For example, despite the negation of local services and relationships by advocates of the HDV, one tenant and local organiser commented:

> Community can be lifesaving. It is wrong to think that you can literally just take people and move them as if they don't have any connections. You've got no money, the housing is really poor, but our neighbours are really friendly and the kids like playing together. It is little things like that which make things bearable. Yes—it is the GP, the alcohol services, the community centres, or the healthcare staff that visit you at home when you are very vulnerable. That relationship and rapport that you have with those people, it sustains you in life. So just to rubbish that is really fundamentally wrong.

Participants in StopHDV rejected the stigmatisation of Tottenham, including through a community play, "Up on the High Road", which celebrated everyday lives in Tottenham and speculated on the damaging impacts of the HDV (Figure 4). The performance "was about challenging the idea that there isn't really a community here, that it is just a load of anti-social people, people with ASBOs, people who are marginalised … and so there is no problem with knocking everything down".

Campaigners also defended the infrastructure of council housing, which offers protection to tenants from unaffordable market-based housing and insecure private tenancies, and provides, at least notionally, some mechanisms for democratic accountability, if not control. It also provides opportunities for people to live among others with shared cultures and experiences, which were unlikely to be available had they been rehoused elsewhere:

> If you looked at the estates that were involved, it's poor people, people from minority groups who were going to be hugely affected. We didn't want people to be relocated somewhere where they're going to be the only minority and not near their communities.

Figure 4: Audience at a performance of "Up on the High Road" (source: The Tottenham Theatre, Facebook post, 25 November 2017[3]; reproduced here with permission from Lynda Brennan) [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Moreover, in the surrounding local economies, people forged livelihoods, reproduced cultures, and provided the goods and services that the diverse community desired:

> Tottenham is a unique place across the world. This is one of the most diverse areas in one of the most diverse cities. It is full of culture, it is unique ... This is why the StopHDV campaign linked up with the Latin market [at Seven Sisters, then under threat of demolition from another planned redevelopment].

And social infrastructures also offered spaces and activities for social connection. In Tottenham, local tenants, residents, and housing campaigners created a group on one of the estates slated for demolition, called Northumberland Park Decides. The group hosted regular events, including:

> a food and social programme, one day a week. It was a kind of open-door session that was open to anyone to relax, chat, have tea and coffee, and have some food. It was a way of addressing social isolation and help people new to the area, especially newly arrived migrants, connect with others locally.

Overall, opposition to the HDV was a matter of survival and social reproduction for Tottenham's working-class communities, especially racialised minorities. A previous public inquiry into the redevelopment of the Aylesbury Estate in South London noted the disproportionate impact of council housing relocations on BAME groups (Hubbard and Lees 2018). Similarly, one aspect of the legal challenge to the HDV centred on equality grounds, arguing poorer, Black tenants and leaseholders were "going to suffer most through losing their houses and their place of living" (see also Elliott-Cooper et al. 2020; Iafrati 2021). Even if some people were

eventually able to return to the redeveloped area, they would have found it transformed by the provision of much more expensive housing and retail space geared to wealthier consumers. As research on other regeneration projects has found, working-class Londoners returning have to navigate "unfamiliar and capricious social, physical and political landscapes superimposed on the collapsed infrastructure of their old estate" (Wallace 2020:681). Contrary to the promised social mix, critical scholarship points to displacement and division as a consequence of disrupted social infrastructures (Addie and Fraser 2019; Kipfer and Petrunia 2009).

Social Infrastructures of Community Defence

> The essence of the campaign was about building community, not just houses. (Campaigner)

To defend their social infrastructures, the StopHDV coalition mobilised, expanded, and created connections and organisations. Collectively, these formed a social infrastructure of campaigning to generate and circulate *information, resources, and solidarity* across a range of spaces. While political opportunities and resources have long been of interest to theorists of social movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977), it is useful to understand how groups can network together these elements of a campaign into an effective infrastructure.

Information about the HDV was gathered by housing campaigners and several critical backbench councillors—including Labour councillors to the left of the leadership and a handful of Liberal Democrats—who dissented from the executive's vision of social change via speculative development. One key local group was long-established Haringey Defend Council Housing, whose members regularly keep track of local government reports and planning processes. Within the usual glut of dense policy detail, they were the first to identify "sweeping statements about redeveloping all the main estates in Tottenham" and emerging plans to roll them "all into one big company: the HDV". They quickly forged a counternarrative of "state-led gentrification" and "social cleansing" in response. To spread the word, they helped set up Northumberland Park Decides. Hosting regular meetings in a space provided by a church, the group drew in a diverse mix of people through social media, local papers, door knocking, and several rounds of mass leafletting of homes. This helped to address the dearth of clear information in official communications about the HDV. In 2017, a dedicated StopHDV campaign was founded, opposing the council's intended massive demunicipalisation of housing and land as a "£2 billion gamble". Housing campaigners also brought the plans to the attention of elected councillors, who turned their scrutiny on the leadership. These actors connected with housing networks across London and beyond to understand how similar redevelopments had played out elsewhere (Watt 2021).

Resources were plugged into the campaign to enable multiple tactics against the HDV. Trade unions offered social media training and meeting spaces, hundreds contributed to a crowdfunded legal challenge, and in the final phase of the

campaign, Labour Party members organised to ensure that sitting councillors for the local elections either publicly opposed the redevelopment or faced deselection in favour of candidates who would. All of this was brought together by the peopled infrastructure of the coalition—through mutual support, organising, and collective action. For many of those involved, the highlight of the campaign was the mass public demonstrations against the HDV. As one remarked, "Those sorts of events, people taking a bit of control and taking control of space, it was as if there was momentum building and we weren't going away." Affects of solidarity and collective power circulated and expanded the campaign. Sympathetic councillors also staged a series of well-attended, contentious public sessions that brought popular pressure and insurgent energies into institutional spaces.

Infrastructures of community defence are the product of agency conditioned by circumstances. In this case as in others, many of those whose homes were slated for redevelopment did not actively oppose the HDV. For some people that was a choice, either based on optimism about the council's vague promises, or fatalism about the possibility of resisting the plans. For others, the ability to participate was constrained by unevenly distributed burdens of paid and unpaid labour. Whereas "people as infrastructure" has been understood as a necessary substitute for the absence of provision, we should also be alert to the ways in which some people can be disabled from being infrastructure. With that caveat, combining Simone's (2004, 2021) understanding of people as infrastructure and Lemanski's (2020) concept of infrastructural citizenship, we can identify social infrastructures of self-defence, which work to sustain people's connection to place and their right to stay put.

These infrastructures are dynamic and need to be constantly reproduced. In the case of StopHDV, the coalition dissipated following their success, despite ongoing concerns about the persistence of speculative development logics being pursued in a more piecemeal fashion. Yet the campaign has demonstrated the collective strength of Tottenham's diverse working-class communities and has contributed to a greater valuing of existing social infrastructures, which is evident in contemporary narratives and counternarratives around council housing, social relationships, and local economies (Hasenberger and Nogueira 2022).

Conclusion

In this paper we have developed a conceptualisation of social infrastructures as dynamic and contested socio-material configurations of practices, people, and places that unevenly afford sociality, social reproduction, and survival. Drawing on the "battle for Haringey", the analysis contributes to geographical scholarship on social infrastructure by questioning the optimistic tenor of the civic-liberal approach—troubling its tendency to presume that the presence of social infrastructures produces positive social outcomes, and that the politics of provisioning unfolds as a pragmatic competition for use amongst more-or-less equal citizens in shared social space. Instead, we have shown how the meanings, values, and forms of social infrastructure are an antagonistic terrain of urban struggle shaped by social-spatial inequalities.

The case of the HDV demonstrates how diverse working-class social infrastructures can be actively denigrated by powerful local actors as "anti-social infrastructures" that are generative of failed urban citizenship. The mobilisation of these stigmatising and racialised discourses was integral to rationalising the local state's plans for comprehensive redevelopment, accumulation by dispossession, and urban citizenship (un)making. The planned destruction of these apparently anti-social infrastructures was justified within elite frames of value, and as part of local "real estate state" logics, as necessary to make space for more productive forms that would attract a wealthier and whiter class of resident, generate higher fiscal revenues, and "make a positive contribution to the area" (LBH 2012:34). Otherwise put, in order to make space for speculative infrastructures of social cleansing at a time of austerity urbanism, the vital practices, relationships, and networks of diverse working-class sociality and social reproduction were rendered expendable. The case of the HDV therefore exemplifies why scholarly accounts of the politics of provisioning must look beyond the absence or presence of social infrastructure to critically interrogate how, for whom, and with what consequences "the social" is constituted and "infrastructure" is put to use.

This paper has also argued that social infrastructures "from below" are essential networks of social reproduction and survival. Recognising this means extending our analysis from the spaces of social infrastructure to account for the people, relationships, and costs of doing the work of supporting, caring, and maintaining (Hall 2020; Strauss 2020). The StopHDV campaign was mobilised to confront the attacks on such valued infrastructures. It was made possible and effective as an infrastructure of community defence through the collective efforts of networks of activists and concerned tenants, traders, and residents. These infrastructures, however, were labour intensive and, absent more fundamental political change in decision-making and collective ownership, need to be constantly reproduced to ensure people's right to stay put. This underscores the ambivalence of people as social infrastructure (Simone 2021).

In contexts where urban futures are being depleted and delimited by austerity and the real estate turn in local state politics, there is intense struggle over the provision and preservation of social infrastructures "that maintain the distinct identities, practices, and institutions that support the social reproduction of working-class communities" (Luke and Kaika 2019:582). Movements can usefully map out the distinctive social infrastructures—places, relationships and practices of survival and social life—that they are defending against speculative development. Critical urban scholars can and should contribute to these struggles. To do so effectively, we must carefully interrogate the politics of how, and by whom, "the social" in social infrastructures is composed and contested. With this in mind, we have argued here for the importance of situated and intersectional urban political economy approaches that learn from and with diverse working-class struggles.

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Data Availability Statement

Author elects to not share data due to privacy / ethical reasons.

Endnotes

[1] Source: https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s95202/Appendix%203a%20Northumberland%20Park%20Business%20Plan%20Appendix%203avi%2003072017%20Cabinet.pdf (last accessed 9 May 2023).

[2] Haringey Council refused permission to reproduce this part of their public report, which is in the public domain and can be viewed on page 25 here: https://tinyurl.com/coste-cafe. It claims that the Council's vision is of "high quality businesses that make a positive contribution to the local area" (LBH 2012:34), with the tagline, "Proximity to central London, community leisure facilities and sites for development make this a compelling investment opportunity" (LBH 2012:25).

[3] Source: https://www.facebook.com/602142146521822/photos/pb.100069541085511.-2207520000./1461051250630903/?type=3 (last accessed 9 May 2023).

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