

# **THIS IS ENGLAND: CLASS, CULTURE, AND ETHNICITY ACROSS NON-METROPOLITAN SPACES**

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## Abbreviations

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BME	Black Minority Ethnic
BS	Bata Society
BSA	British Sociological Association
CHCF	Chafford Hundred Community Forum
CTC	Community Top Club
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
ETCA	East Thurrock Community Association
LHG	Local History Group
PCT	Primary Care Trust
SBC	Small Business Club
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
TG	Thurrock Gazette
TRP	Tilbury Riverside Project
TRUST	Thurrock Racial Unity Support Taskgroup
TTGDC	Thames Gateway Development Corporation

## Abstract

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This thesis is an empirical study of Thurrock, Essex. The research explored the settlement of Black-British Nigerians within the area and the response by the white majority. The research consisted of an extensive ethnographic enquiry that included a content analysis of local media, qualitative interviews and observations. The methodology re-introduced and embraced *value* as it provided a sociological analysis of political normativity; particularly in definitions and judgements of racism. The methodology vindicated qualitative technique as a pragmatic strategy to explore issues under the radar of public knowledge.

The main findings were that white interviewees responded to the new community with a defensive retort of English Identity. The construction of this identity was used to critique social capital theory and its role in community renewal discourse embodied in public policy. English identity was an attempt to use racial and ethnic discourses of commonality to fuse conventional narratives of land and people. The ascendant aspirations of Englishness were used to criticise political and academic vindications of white working class voices opposed to multi-culturalism.

Ultimately, the study is a rebuttal of Dench *et al's* (2006) study of 'The New East'. Using Thurrock as a local example the research argues that public policy should avoid the 'community solidarity' model espoused by Dench *et al* when promoting community renewal. The conclusions of Dench *et al* are argued to be based upon an invalid conceptualisation of social class and are antithetical to wider inclusive and re-distributive politics. The study concludes by arguing that community renewal should reflect the multiplicity and fluidity of English places and people by enforcing a double bind of responsibility between the State and community. It is argued that a more sincere and pragmatic approach to public/private relations is required if Englishness is to be detached from a racial and colonial past.

## Introduction

### **The beginning of the end**

The research for this thesis took place in Thurrock, Essex. This is a unitary authority on the boundaries of greater London. The area has recently seen a visible increase in the residency of Black British people of African descent. Concomitantly, Thurrock has also seen a visible rise in support for far right nationalist politics amongst its established and largely white demographic.

Tilbury Town was historically the most important area in Thurrock. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century it provided leadership in political administration and public service. The economic role of Tilbury was felt at a regional, national, and global level as Tilbury Docks were pre-eminent in the administration of Empire and the logistics central to the industrial expansion of Britain (Willmott 1970). The World's End public house in Tilbury was an iconic monument to the shift in local pride experienced within what was hitherto a politically and economically powerful region. The pub was the first permanent building in Tilbury Riverside (Norman 1969). Its name was a welcome sign to seafarers travelling through the Thames Estuary from the Empire and beyond. Tilbury Docks created a multi-cultural South East as it was the direct point of entry for migrants, including the Chinese, and the Commonwealth Caribbeans. The international engagement of Tilbury's heritage was registered in its spatial iconography as the road names and civic locations took their cues from global and cosmopolitan influences. In the contemporary era the significance of the World's End had been reversed. It now signified the world's end for localism. It had become the threshold between local land and the wider cosmopolitan world, which was no longer embraced but defended against.

It was in this depleted and retired social, economic and political context that the study explored the presence of the new community. This took a unique look at community; its identity, construction, heritage, and renewal as sets of assumptions of commonality. The research sought to understand the various contestations of land and people emergent at the local level and to question their relevance to the political



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questions surrounding English Identity. The research studied the impact of migration and ethnicity to question majority and minority distinctions as discourses of commonality. Much current and classic work on these subjects reinforced these distinctions, thus failing to grapple with the heterogeneity of what is labelled 'majority'. Consequently, the study provides a multi-faceted view of community as heterogeneous interests that intersect majority and minority groups. The conclusions emphasise the resourcefulness of multiplicity and fluidity for meaningfully inclusive community renewal. It is argued that this has powerful ramifications upon the way English identity is imagined at a normative and political level. The introduction discusses English identity and cultural diversity within contemporary theorisations of 'community' in new modern times. The discussion establishes the sociological importance of the 'English Question' as a warrant for the research upon which the thesis' relevance to community renewal is introduced. This consists of a brief introduction to the literature review which explains the discourses of commonality inherent within community renewal. The methods chapter is introduced as a warrant for the use of local space as a reference for the research questions. The introduction continues to briefly explain how the data analysis made the theoretical concerns meaningful. This questioned the vulnerability of the white working classes in relation to globalisation, cosmopolitanism, and trans-national migration. The conclusion asks whether this should spark political sympathy or the 'beginning of the end' for multi-cultural public policy in the UK.

### **A *neo* world order**

This thesis is not about *community*. This rather counter-intuitive statement is premised upon the observation that *community* is an assumption of commonality applied to aggregates of individuals. Assumptions of commonality are not whimsical descriptions of society made using the broadest of brushstrokes, but represent conflictual power relations embedded in local environments. The term community is an active call to arms to inspire a political 'people' to react in solidarity, as a united political entity. Consequently, community and governance are inextricably linked as a singular means to address multitudes of individuals as a mobilisable audience. They are future orientated concepts that gather efficacy from historically established norms within discourses of commonality. It is in this way that the study addresses community renewal and the 'English Question' as

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synonymous social and political phenomena due to reliance on similar discourses of commonality. This thesis is about these assumptions of commonality and the identities of the interests who use them to invent the future of localism as a representation of an historical imagination of commonality.

Seen from a perspective that emphasises community as constructed from the assumptions of commonality rather than actual commonality, community was a continually relevant means for human subjects to consolidate their identities and interests within the research locale. This was despite the theoretical insistence that community was moribund and required the development of social capital if it was to be rekindled – community was ubiquitous in Thurrock, but mostly as a reaction against globalisation and cosmopolitanism. Ulrich Beck imagines community as an obliterated socio-scape, destroyed by the twin processes of globalisation and cosmopolitanism. Beck theorises the demise of social life structured by the certainties of social class and nation as the economic effects of individualisation and risk. His cultural theory of *new modernity* is a global risk society where assumptions of commonality are impossible to make and non-functional to social mobility (Beck 1992; 2002). The cultural features of the conditions of new modernity are largely reputed to emerge from cosmopolitanism and its individual ethics of reflexive cultural openness (Hannerz 1990). The questions of local and national identity are non-existent as the old certainties of class and localism are gone in favour of individualism supposedly available to everyone and which transcend the solid boundaries of the Nation-State and community (Beck 2000).

Giddens characterises this *late-modernity* as an ambivalent juggernaut under the control of abstract economic and political systems rather than the individuals and societies who experience global and cosmopolitan realities (Giddens 1990). However, the question of common experience is not one fully theorised and assessed by these authors. The common experience of these vast non-local forces has been characterised by a rupture in the meanings and ethics of ‘land and people’. Within the territory administered by Britain as England, rupture was reflected as a re-imagination, re-activation, and re-configuration of English identity and its relevance to land and people. This is central to Bauman’s characterisation of *liquid modernity* where individualisation is a fate not a choice for the disposed vagabonds of globalisation. Identity is a surrogate process for individuals who are denied the humane benefits and elemental security of ‘community’. For Bauman, the

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inexorable reproach of neo-liberal economics and flexible human rights defined at the level of the individual have shattered any basis of collective human rights rooted to concerns of social justice.

The zeitgeist for Bauman derives from fear of the liquid modern social environment and a desire to comfort and identify with similar and significant others. Community exists as the common experience of fear, which prompts the re-discovery of roots as people cower from the *inhumane* effects of globalisation. In Bauman's schema community is a refuge for the damned and as such provides the basis to generate new forms of social democracy against the excesses of individualism and cosmopolitan globalisation (Bauman 2001). This rather romantic portrait of community as a force for social justice neglects to theorise the value differences within manifestations of local community born from 'glocal processes'. The local is therefore the *trenches* in which wider social processes are fought over. In this way community is ubiquitous as an arena for progressive social action and an embodiment of the trendy 'think global, act local mantra'. There is a failure to sociologically theorise why some community identifications express renewed calls for nationalist solidarity, strengthened immigration controls, and refusals of foreign economic investments. These too are community identifications that advocate localism as the most legitimate forum of political advocacy. These construct divisive boundaries, not just around the local, but around the profile of the people that can claim legitimate ownership of social space. Fused ideologies of land and people have powerful ramifications for sociology's prognosis of the state and future of the social world. Renewed calls for national solidarity promote renewed calls within sociology to re-theorise *value*, *relativism*, and links with normative political theory. It is in a *neo-modern* political context, emergent from the naïve relativism of post-modernism that the thesis explores the 'English Question' and public policy directed towards community renewal.

For many Left-Wing and Liberal commentators national identity is anathema to a commitment to universal values. Such an identity has almost always been characterised as a dilution of the nationalism embodied by Nazi Germany in the 1930s. It is an awareness of the racial connotations of an English identity that has led to its suppression under the universalism of Britishness by liberalism and social democracy since the end of WWII (Kumar 2003). Within this historical political context English identity is merely the *neo-modern* cultural manifestation of

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white post-colonial identity. This is something reinforced by the emergence of political community as a dialogue between localism and globalism; as migration, cultural difference, and foreign investment challenge conventional narratives of belonging to land and people. The community emergent from such glocal relations is not the bastion of social democracy as championed by figures such as Bauman. It is instead the re-drawing of social boundaries based upon historical ethnic and racial relations.

This re-definition of belonging is inherent within the ‘silenced majority’ discourse on English identity. These are claims made at the popular level, but are now also becoming part of academic discourse with political commentators such as Goodhart (2008) and social studies such as ‘The New East End’ By Dench *et al* (2006). These are Left-Wing voices who present arguments about community solidarity to give voice to a common disgruntled white working class. They both share Bauman’s romanticisation of localism based upon assumptions of commonality drawn from discursive constructions of a stoical working class spirit of resistance. Goodhart in particular redraws the debate on diversity and citizenship by promoting a *progressive nationalism* that provides preferential treatment to long serving citizens within a two-tier system of rights (Goodhart 2008). Dench *et al* (2006) make similar conclusions on the basis of the claims of inequality made by white people at the expense of the Bangladeshi community in East London. These academic expressions of the ‘silent majority’ are an attempt to relinquish the concept of community from cultural minorities in order to empower white English people in a new modernity where their former source of collective voice, social class, has been removed by individualisation. The progressive nationalist prognosis translates the economic concept of social class into a collective cultural identity to describe white experience in a *neo-modern* political context.

Its political manifestation is an attempt to compete with cultural minorities within the same discourses of commonality used in multi-cultural governance. It is argued that community is a synonym in public policy to label the non-white population of the UK, by something other than phenotypical difference (Alleyne 2002; Ray and Reed 2005). The putative beholders of community have been shifted from the original white working classes of yesteryear to the new minority communities of cultural diversity (Hoggett 1997). This shift has symbolically re-imagined the relations between white English people and the British State as there is

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no explicit concept to describe them as a political community. Consequently, 'white' community is governed in respect to different discourses, which include proxies of social class, such as deprivation, poverty, social exclusion, and more recently community renewal and social capital. Public policy has failed to communicate a successful liberal strategy to manage diversity and to generate an inclusive concept of community as something other than a polite and conventionally English embarrassment of the racial undercurrent to political identity in the UK. Instead of providing an honest public policy that treats all people as equal by using the same criteria, racialised concepts are continually used to discuss minorities with non-racial concepts fixed to the majority. This has created confusion within local areas as white people attempt to reclaim an unproblematic *ordinariness* in relation to political community. The fact that these manifestations of white identity are not responsibly dealt with by public policy has sparked a torrent of claims to English identity as a voice for a supposedly 'silenced majority'. Contradictorily community renewal discourse precipitates this as the legitimate voice for white people, whilst attempting to conform to wider liberal multi-cultural goals.

This is magnified as national identity is more often than not concerned with the problematic status of cultural minorities and not the essential heterogeneity of British society as a whole. Within discourses of national identity and multi-cultural public policy the status of whites is not presented as beholding any element of problem, nor is there discursive space to question the essentialism of white experience. Whites are assumed to be homogeneous by reference to majority society. The 2001 riots in Bradford, Burnley, and Oldham sparked an interest in the cohesiveness of localities containing significant South Asian populations (Amin 2003). These examples reveal how local concerns of difference, multi-culturalism, and trans-national migration have sparked local protest as resentment of cultural minorities (Burnett 2004). The Cattle Report concluded by suggesting that South Asian populations had nurtured a community that was isolationist and exclusive to its own cultural and religious affiliations. The authors argued that this caused a decline in a sense of shared local ownership of the area had contributed to mistrust and mal-communication between the majority 'white' community and the South Asian community (Cattle, *et al* 2001; 2006). A lack of commitment to British civic life by the South Asian population was identified as a negative facet of multi-culturalism and argued that this should be remedied by an appeal to common values.

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Political commentary neglected to cite the values and actions of the majority population that prompted the initial isolation of the Muslim community (Amin 2003; Burnett 2004). The political response failed to identify nationalist expression in the disturbances; it was itself isolationist, exclusive, and racist. The continued presence of the BNP in the area was an explicit identifier of racial prejudice and resentment towards non-whites (Renton 2004). The content of this involvement was the extreme political manifestation of the ethnic and racial discourses of commonality banally displayed amongst the white working classes. This was a decidedly glocal outcome of the very global trends putatively seen to contribute to cosmopolitanism. The response reinforced minorities as pathological in respect to an ill-defined and unaccounted 'majority'.

It is the state of the white working classes that *community renewal* is promoted by public policy. In this way, English identity as a political manifestation of community remains silent and obscured by officialdom. This is unfortunate as it neglects to expose the racial and ethnic assumptions underlying local manifestations of community. It also makes the 'English Question' as a political claim for national voice redundant as in a sense it is already culturally addressed, but its name is forsaken due to the confusion over the boundaries between Britishness and English identity. The claims to national identity expressed at the outset of community initiatives by public policy reference vague notions of Britishness. However, the promotion of community renewal within local areas ironically reinforces a sense of English identity as a local solidarity antagonistic to the very public policy responsible for its own social manifestation. This is because community renewal provides no nominal national or political label to describe its target population. In a context where public policy addressed to cultural minorities has explicit mention of ethno-national and political labels, white people imagine that they have no voice or identity. This confusion over political identity generates the space for racist expressions of belonging as land and people are re-imagined with little direction and leadership. Consequently, an English identity based upon such hearsay fails to identify its own hitherto exclusivity and power as the initial reason why it was free from the constraints that would imagine its political citizenship as a matter of cultural condition in the post-war period.

The awkwardness of English identity within civic discourse comes from its un-reflexive relationship to its historical racial underbelly. But, what if English

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identity were up anchored from this racial bedrock? Would a purely political English identity be palatable to a *cosmopolitan* ethics of belonging, by sharing its universalism across archaic and imaginary racial and cultural divides? This thesis offers a sociological means to envision how an English identity could be premised upon place, not race as it uncovers the multiplicity of voices across local spaces in Thurrock. Taken individually these voices reveal the arbitrariness of majority/minority distinctions in respect of the crosscutting interests between racially marked and unmarked citizens. The sociological directive in this project highlights the necessity to overcome the constraints of Britain's colonial and racial history; not by simple disavowal, emotional and psychological sequestration, or the forgiveness of the colonised and subordinate, but by a brave act of self-reflexivity on behalf of whites as a mature consideration and acceptance of social reality. The new social reality is one where the former power bases of white English identity are no longer profitable in an age of multiplicity and fluidity. A new identity of renewal would not repackage the past, but relinquish itself from the past and envisage a new future as a pragmatic response to present conditions. Part of this process is the acceptance of multiple claims over narratives of land and people, due to the social and economic mobility of non-white people outside metropolitan boroughs.

This thesis establishes the sociological relevance of the 'English Question' by embedding it within a heterogeneous context of *community renewal*. The sociological input is a regulative mechanism that questions the validity of assumptions of commonality and the interests of those that reproduce them in social and political discourse. As a sociological text the thesis asks whether the ethno-racial model of English identity really is England. Or are assumptions of commonality a convenient sequestration of social reality as a reflection of a deeper lack of self-esteem and self-confidence on behalf of a white majority who lack the technologies of self to embrace diversity and heterogeneity as a part of *ordinary society*.

### **This is England**

The literature review is composed of a continuum of academic issues that serve as sensitising devices for the data analysis. The discussion links a variety of discourses that include ethnicity, nationalism, whiteness, and working class community. The literature review uses Putnam's concept of social capital as a forum to discuss these

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discourses as intrinsic to considerations of community renewal (Cattell & Evans 1999). Social capital is regarded as a panacea of modern ills and has taken centre stage in public policy addressed at deprived neighbourhoods and the prospect of their revival. The theory highlights the central role played by active citizenship and civic participation on behalf of residents (Skidmore & Craig 2005). The literature review assesses social capital by exploring the ethnic and nationalist assumptions of belonging existing behind conventional narratives of land and people. The 'English Question' is framed as a claim to ethnic and racial commonality that shares many features of social capital. By highlighting the racially divisive undercurrent to this claim, and citing the recent study by Dench *et al* (2006) the literature review presents the case that social capital is detrimental to civil society, more so than previously believed. The literature review establishes a basis to judge claims made upon English ethnic ascendancy as essentially 'racist' due to their reduction of commonality to white experience. This counters the trend in sociological and political theorising that reconciles such claims as class based narratives (Pathak 2007).

The methods chapter establishes Thurrock as a spatial frame of reference for these theoretical interests. It argues that the ethnographic framework was a pragmatic way to research these issues in an academically unexplored 'community'. The main empirical research question defined from the theoretical interests addressed how super-diversity had affected community renewal in Thurrock. The sub-questions sought to understand the racial dimensions to this issue by asking how local belonging was informed by discourses of whiteness. This was extended to include a spatial dimension in that the study tackled the issue of diversity outside the metropolis. This was a response to calls by academics and policy makers to spatialise studies of ethnicity and multi-culturalism to different urban, rural, and suburban contexts (Bonnett 1997). This became a question of assessing whether the upward geographic social mobility of the new community was evidence of a changing ethnic landscape of British society. The representation of diversity in areas not formerly associated with diversity has recently gained interest with researchers interested in the expression of cultural difference in presumed homogenous spaces (Garland and Chakraborti 2006).

This was a significant observation in that the established white residents of Thurrock were mostly migrants themselves; the outcome of the so-called 'white



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flight' from the inner city of London in the latter part of the last century (Back 1996). The surrounding areas of London were known as the 'white highlands' (Hoggett 1997). Ray and Reed identified these spaces as an English idyll and a mythical 'white space' (Ray and Reed 2005). Palmer shows with reference to the writing of H.J. Massingham that the rural landscape is symbolically rich with theological reflections of Englishness; the southern rural English landscape is a 'divine Englishness' (Palmer 2002). Consequently, the presence of minorities outside the metropolis reflected concern at the spread and dissolution of national and communal unity across the UK. Diversity was no longer an issue confined to the metropolis, but of the national society. The symbolic association of the non-metropolitan as white, pure, and above all else English, presented Thurrock as a timely example to research the realities of the 'English Question'. As an area undergoing a transition in the construction of links between land and people it was a target for renewed forms of community governance.

The data analysis is divided into two sections that reflect the two research strands; the content analysis of local press and the 'live' ethnography. These explore the means by which the discourses of commonality discussed in the literature review manifested within the research field. Part one deals exclusively with the content analysis of Thurrock's main local newspaper. This cultural and symbolic analysis presents the newspaper's coverage as the most publicly knowable representation of community in Thurrock. It was delivered to every home and public building in Thurrock and encompassed local news which covered a range of issues from regeneration, schooling, health, entertainment, and human interest. The analysis draws together the seemingly divergent narrative strands to argue that the paper presented a uni-dimensional image of Thurrock community and its immediate interests premised on the discourses of community. In the first instance it promoted a 'marginal' view of Thurrock in relation to globalisation and cosmopolitanism. The paper reports on stories of relations with non-local interests to consolidate the voice of Thurrock as vulnerable from globalising processes. Secondly, it fixed Thurrock's population as a white experience consisting of innocent and decent common people. This was represented through the paper's obsession with charitable activities and personal local history, the objects of which delineated the racial boundaries of localism. The third section analysed the representation of internal fractures as a lament to the declining virtue of whiteness. This was evident when crime, social

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deprivation, and the BNP were discussed. The analysis revealed local voice to be an expression of white English frustration at the encroachment of the global on local landscapes and was promoted as a strategy of community renewal to the locally dispossessed white working class.

Part two is a social and spatial analysis built around the ethnographic fieldwork, which consisted of interviews and observations in and around Thurrock during 2006. The analysis is organised as a trilogy, whereby each chapter introduces a basic social/spatial fact that underlines narratives used by respondents to account for social change. The first chapter highlights respondents' attachment to place registered by narratives of local heritage. The chapter shows that the acceptance of racist myth was symptomatic of a change in Thurrock's functional geography. This occurred due to a shift from a Thurrock as an industrial centre to a Thurrock as a dormitory region. In this new environment the contestation of space occurred via the private ownership of house and home. This was a terrain marked by respondents as a point of conflict with the new community. The result was two divergent experiences of local community. The established and new communities held different conceptions of localism in regards to the non-local with no common intermediary to integrate the two.

The second chapter of the ethnography expresses the response by the established residents to the spatial turnover of population presented by migration. This was a racialised process that led respondents to reinforce localism based upon white experience of hardship and uncertainty. It was narratives of ethnic uncertainty that made meaningful respondents' opinions of young people. This chapter looks at the differences in the perception of anomic young adulthood as an outcome of uncertainty over ethnic future. The chapter uses perceptions of young adulthood to establish the common interests of white community as regeneration and renewal of local identity. It is with reference to differences in the perceptions of young people that the analysis explores the shortcomings and potentialities of social capital. This chapter shows how, via concerns over young adulthood, community renewal excluded the efforts and presence of the new community; who were seen to possess ulterior sets of interests to white residents. The analysis argues that concepts of normality and majority interest were central to the new community. The analysis concludes by highlighting the similarities of the interests between all groups and the desire on behalf of the new community to inhabit Thurrock too as common

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‘ordinary’ citizens with a permanent claim over narratives of local land and people. This chapter argues that the barrier to integration was not the values of the new community, but the means of exclusion often subconsciously conjured by the white majority via ethnic and racial discourses of commonality.

The final chapter concludes the themes of the ethnography by analysing the structural relations between the State and community, which has altered public and private boundaries. It was within this altered structural environment that white people signified their vulnerability to which political claims to English identity were summoned using narratives of social class. They further argued that their vulnerability was meaningful by expressing a loss of self-reliance and self-determination; something that the post-war Welfare State putatively protected. In the present day, whites signified this by explaining that their ‘skills’ held no transferable currency when appealing to governing structures. This chapter shows the limitations of social capital to community renewal by arguing that the solidification of identity around localism was a more regular form of capital than given credit by Putnam’s theory (Putnam 2000). In many instances it became a regressive form of social capital administered by opinionated figures to close social ranks. It is argued that the emergence of a progressive form of localism was the recognition of multiple interests and the active stretching of the discourses of commonality beyond racial and ethnic boundaries. The chapter argues that this was not an organic outcome, but emergent from structural relationships administered by inspirational interlocutors within the community. These strategically placed individuals became conduits between community groups and the State, allowing social capital to flow across different interests. In this, certain groups were realistic about what they could and could not achieve in renewal and regeneration, they saw their interests as one of many enmeshed with others. This bolstered personal confidence in the groups and inspired interests which served a pragmatic vision of public good in the form of the social, economic, and environmental regeneration of Thurrock.

The thesis re-assesses community renewal in regards to the ‘English Question’ and working class claims of privilege, notably whether these are racist. Central to this is a re-consideration of the merits of social capital in light of super-diversity. The study highlights the inescapable reality of heterogeneity in presumed homogenous spaces such as Thurrock, Essex. In a new cultural landscape exclusive

## INTRODUCTION

and ethnic notions of belonging had little regenerative value as they were premised upon ascended claims of citizenship that continued to marginalise those seen as extraneous to conventions of land and people. Localism was negative as it attempted to fix a racial and ethnic solidarity against globalisation, cosmopolitanism, and trans-nationalism. The thesis shows that all three of these non-local processes could enable the regeneration and renewal requested by all sections of the locality. However, as examples in the research prove, this was only possible when community groups were active in their engagement with structural governance and in stretching commonality. The thesis concludes by arguing that progressive social capital should be at the heart of any potential discussion of English identity. The example of Thurrock reveals diversity and difference to be something not distant, but relative and close to home. Thusly narratives of land and people should be open to the realities of multiplicity and fluidity of people and interests if community renewal is a desired strategy of governance. The research is a testament to the essential pluralism of English society against the normative claims to the exclusivity and commonality of its white long serving citizens.

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## Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter addresses the sociological dimensions of the ‘English Question’ as the discourses used to imagine community. Central to the imagination of community are the problems associated with identifying English people and the meanings given to the land administered as, England. These two problems are discussed in relation to community renewal, particularly to whether initiatives to renew community inadvertently reinforce English identity as an ethnocentric ideal that fuses national identity with white identity. The literature review is structured to identify the problems associated with the production and imagination of commonality by social capital theory and community renewal; as opposed to providing a sociological theory to explain community as an empirical entity *sui generis*. Through this, four discourses are identified as significant for a sociological exploration of the ‘English Question’. These are the problems of social capital, ethnicity, nationalism, and whiteness. The discourses are problematic in the extent to which they are the basis for collective assumptions of commonality that underscore the imagination of community. Taken together these discourses reveal community renewal and English identity as mutually re-enforcing social and political issues that warrant the empirical research.

This chapter argues that social capital reinforces traditional narratives of community that are antithetical to the goals of civic association as a culturally inclusive ideal. This is foremost a theoretical issue because social capital devotes too much moral authority to the private sphere. The chapter continues this critique arguing that social capital promotes national-ethnic solidarity despite the insistence upon the civic merits of democratic pluralism. The chapter explains that ethnic and national forms of community are synonymous with social capital because they share central conceptual features. This is problematic because power relations and national identity are neglected as precipitators of inequality in social capital theory and in its application via community renewal. Therefore, social capital reproduces inequalities as cultural groups with greater power relations to authority command

higher returns on their civic involvement. The discussion illustrates that English and white identities possess greater social and political power than the voices of cultural minorities. An inequality that is problematic because public policy attempts to renew white community in a wider political environment of multi-culturalism and cultural inclusivity. The literature review considers working class racism in the context of community renewal to argue that public policy requires reflexivity to the discourses of social capital, ethnicity, nationalism, and whiteness if it is to fulfil the wider political aims of cultural inclusivity.

Critically engaging with the findings of Dench *et al* (2006) the review contests that public policy should promote community solidarity to empower white working class groups. Their conclusions justify resentment as narratives of social class, not instances of racism. The chapter uses this study to illustrate the progenitor of racism as the power relationship latent between English identity and white identity; identified in the problems of social capital. The conclusion highlights the direction of the research, which seeks to undermine the fusion of whiteness and English identity by re-evaluating narratives of land and people in light of super-diversity and heterogeneity. Consequently the sociological importance of the research questions is established as aiding the generation of public policy directed towards inclusive visions of community renewal.

### **The problem of social capital**

The problem of social capital for a sociological consideration of English identity is its complicity with traditional narratives of belonging un-wittingly embodied in the community renewal discourse. This arises from social capital's confused function and definition in regards to nationalism and liberalism via State regulation and community governance. This confusion is notably the case with policy usages aimed at community renewal in deprived white working class areas, where social capital manifests as the anti-thesis of civil society. The re-activated claim to English identity called by the white working classes reproduces cultural power relations and is further antithetical to a tolerant multi-cultural society. This is an outcome of the theoretical flaw where social capital bestows civil society with moral authority, neglecting the State's role in managing diversity and maintaining citizenship claims from multiple interests.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual function and definition of social capital is noted as obscure; it is both cause and effect of civic participation and therefore tautological (Savage 2005). There is a conflation of the individual with the wider social system when describing its origins and the physics of its storage and accumulation; therefore it is invalid as a marketable resource (Anthias 2007). Putnam describes social capital as the resources produced through networks of trust and reciprocity, which results in civic association as a collective good (Putnam 2000). It is a 'social glue' arising from civic involvement and mutual social relations (Cattell 2004). The concept can be reduced to functionalist sociability, which emphasises harmony via consensual social integration. Law and Mooney have argued that for this reason social capital is used as a *deus ex machina* of the modern world. Social capital highlights the 'positive' side of *gemeinschaft* communal organisation, without tackling the pressing issue of communal decline at the hands of neo-liberal economic policy (Law and Mooney 2006). Due to its analogy with fiscal capital the purpose of social capital is more illustrative than a steadfast definition. The idea is that by engaging and associating with others around a common cause, social capital is produced that can be exchanged for economic capital at a later date. Putnam argues for the fiscal analogy because of two functional aspects of sociability; firstly the psychological and emotional advantages putatively derived from integration, and secondly because of the networks fostered between people support small scale economic development (Putnam 2000). This is a similar philosophy to the promotion of entrepreneurialism and self-employment to remedy the unemployment of the 1980s, in light of a desire to cut welfare spending (Gamble 1988). However, social capital posits a collective and communal form of action as opposed to asocial individualism (Amin 2005; Anthias 2007).

Since the 1997 Labour victory, community renewal has been promoted via social policy to tackle poverty and deprivation within local community (Amin 2005; Law and Mooney 2006). The New Labour government has sought a communitarian market solution to replace the market individualism of the Conservative governments in order to promote economic prosperity (Anthias 2007; Skidmore and Craig 2005). In this era, 'community' has taken a magical form and has become a strategy of local governance and regeneration, the central means to achieving this has been via the concept of 'social capital' (Hallberg and Lund 2005). Putnam's work has been a major influence on policy due to its emphasis on 'civic

involvement' and 'community governance'. Amin (2005), Law and Mooney (2006) have all argued that its attraction is due to the fact that it shifts the responsibility of local governance to the community itself. Community is a draft resource to counter a fiscal crisis in the public sector. Consequently, voluntary and charitable organisations are contracted to deliver services deemed economically unviable for the public sector to provide. The political aim is to use active citizenship to promote economic prosperity. This replenishes stocks of social capital and improves general mental and moral well being through contribution and activity within the civil society. In attempting to control spiralling economic deprivation and the 'ghettoisation' of locality, public policy has identified a lack of social capital as the chief causal factor of community decline. Amin argues that this can be reduced to notions of 'good' and 'bad' community. It is pre-supposed that certain forms of mutual support or civic association are un-desirable due to their 'agonistic' form, such as the Anti-War coalition, trade unions, and other voices of the marginalised (Amin 2005). Mooney and Fyfe argue that a community protest in Glasgow over the closure of public services revealed active citizenship, but one that was actively shunned by government (Mooney and Fyfe 2006). Superficially social capital is a noble ideal that posits community governance by the local community; few would argue that this is undesirable. However, underlying its surface are contradictions between liberalism and nationalism that lend themselves to the preservation of national and ethnic solidarity. These contradictions undermine the over-arching need for community renewal.

These contradictions are most visible in Putnam's ambivalence to the difference between informal and formal associations (Putnam 2000). This has ramifications for solidarity and the status of independent community. He claims that any kind of sociability is good for society; he discusses monthly bridge clubs and Sunday picnics in the same tone as the League of Women Voters. His discussion is ethno-centric in undermining sensitive issues of cultural difference, norms of social behaviour, and the purpose of positive rights. As far back as Whyte's 'Street Corner Society' (1981 [1954]), it has been remarked that sociability is a culturally defined form of organisation and what is for some a nuisance, for others is the essence of their social life. For de Tocqueville, civil society is an 'independent eye on society' as it balances equality and liberty by providing a buffer between excesses of the State and individual (Keane 1998). However, for Putnam it is a medium for



bringing people together for common purpose and solidarity. Despite this there is no discussion as to what defines 'common' purpose and to whom the 'common' is allotted. In Putnam's usage 'civic engagement' contains no overarching moral direction and he cannot validate the legitimacy of solidarity. The substantive nature of civic involvement is relative, so there is no qualitative or quantitative difference between formal or informal networks. Therefore, team bowling, campaigning for a road crossing outside a school, or campaigning for the repatriation of non-whites are all equal and virtuous forms of social involvement and solidarity.

However, for Putnam social capital is consistently a social good and examples where it leads to illiberalism are cast aside as pathological nuances formed from deviant personality. They are not viewed as outcomes of power relations, market competition, or solidarity. This is the case with his dealing of racism in Southern American states. The fact that the above may be integrally related to social capital and that as a concept it can work equally for 'good' or 'bad' are not understood. The most cited aspect of Putnam's work to defend against criticism is his consideration of social capital's pathologies. Here, Putnam emphasises that there are two types of social capital, bonding and bridging and that the former can lead to insularity and social exclusion. He doesn't elaborate upon what structural conditions determine the moral direction of social capital towards illiberal social attitudes. He pays no attention to social capital as a manifestation of ethnic or national solidarity. Putnam simply claims that bonding capital is better for democracy than no social capital; an aluminium magic wand as opposed to a golden wand to generate a better society (Putnam 2000).

The relative normativity of social capital is a problem that emerges from Putnam's definition of liberalism, he defines as equitable with tolerance of social difference, e.g. of women in public positions, the teaching of homosexuality in schools, and the undesirability of racial division. He doesn't present any norms to govern tolerance or how universal principles can be institutionalised to mediate attitudes and opinions. The measures he uses are based upon opinion polls, not of people's actual behaviour: the fact that people claim tolerance doesn't mean that they act tolerant. From this point of view social capital and the networks from which it is derived may merely exist as a cover for unexpressed exclusive views. More to the point is the issue of universality, this is important when considering definitions of racism. Tolerance is relative and not necessarily attuned to the

elimination of racism. Putnam's assumption is that the liberal and tolerant individual comes into being when socially integrated and comes to possess complete reality congruent knowledge after this integration; he doesn't account for the possibility of social knowledge existent from social structure and the power relations it may embody (Archer 1995). This is a problem for communication across fields of cultural difference where competing standards related to contested concepts are commonplace. 'Race', racism, and ethnicity are pressing examples, as a lack of standardised concepts and equal relations of communication leads to unrealistic portrayals of 'otherness', which deter the possibility of alleviating social distinction, discrimination, and disadvantage (Said 2003 [1978]; Solomos 2003). At best this manifests as 'colour-blind' attitudes that give a façade of equal treatment on the basis of individual capacities, but result in the neglect of structured disadvantage and discrimination (Lassiter 2004). Putnam undermines the role the State plays in setting the field for equal civic participation and the re-distribution of power.

The Race Relations Act 1976 and its 2000 Amendment Act are British examples of State-sponsored efforts to enforce equal opportunities and interaction, which have no legitimacy according to the tenets of social capital theory. In the US, Putnam claims that the KKK is illiberal and that their organisation is exclusive and antithetical to 'good' social capital. He fails to state what principles effectively exclude them from democracy and how these are different from less explicit and encoded versions within the mainstream. A more pressing example is Holocaust denial, which is illegal in the UK. The reasons for its illegality relate to the clear representation of history that seeks to overcome centuries of Anti-Semitic mistrust of the Jewish diaspora (Alexander 2006). Presumably, Putnam would agree that the denial of the Holocaust is an unsavoury opinion to hold, but it would not be social capital and its humane benefits that would make him agree. It would be the external influence of law and the social stigma attached to promoting denial in the face of a universally accepted event, which is structured and policed by Human Rights law. Issues regarding racism, the representation of social/cultural groups, and relative histories are sensitive areas of public debate. Putnam is correct to suggest that civil society plays an inordinately positive role in allowing discussion and providing 'space' for the expression of minority representation. Unlike de Tocqueville, Putnam fails to appreciate the role of legislation ensuring equality of opportunity as

a contested terrain in and of itself, but a legislation that the State sanctions to the ends of a functioning civil society. Consequently, Putnam is essentially caught in a dilemma where ontology is inadvertently mistaken as a reliable epistemology as he ascribes moral authority solely to civil society.

Putnam fails to explore the issue of Human Rights legislation from extra-national political institutions, which promote liberal values despite their resistance from 'cohesive societies'. He assumes that people are automatically liberal when 'high' on social capital, which gives them a propensity to develop an epistemological world view without the need for education or institutional regulation. Putnam uses the ideal of bridging capital to assume that if people have civic dealings with 'others' they will generate positive knowledge of difference and become reflexive of their stereotypical predispositions (Putnam 2000). His view of social capital leading to harmony supposes that individuals will spontaneously judge other people on the basis of an abstract concept of universal humanity. This is guilty of promoting 'colour-blind' attitudes to difference and disadvantage (Lassiter 2004). He doesn't engage with the argument that suggests universality is derived from positions of advantage or how the consent of less powerful groups is attained (Kumar 2003). The positive role that legislation and public bodies play in promoting 'universalism' is that they standardise meanings that have some prior civic and rational negotiation. This is why 'coloured' people are referred to in the UK as 'Black and Minority Ethnic Peoples'. The term 'Black' is a suggestion from a positive representation of 'Blackness' in terms of a pride that over-rides racial derogation (Gilroy 1987). The 'minority ethnic peoples' addition is a reworked version of 'ethnic minority', the suggestion is that it is not only non-white migrants who are 'ethnic', but that ethnicity is a continuum stretching across global populations (Bonnett 2000a/b; Modood *et al* 1997; Omi and Winant 1994). If the meanings of 'race' and ethnicity are left to the private sphere of civil society they are more likely to lead to contextual and confusing misrepresentations that do little to challenge bigotry and undermine non-racial conceptions of land and people.

Social capital as a panacea for community renewal prohibits a serious discussion of the role national solidarity plays in preventing liberal attitudes and/or civil society to prosper. This is especially the case when social capital is used at a policy level to drive renewal, regeneration, and social cohesion. The literature review highlights that the confusion over liberalism and nationalism renders social

capital an invalid tool to undermine ethnic and racial narratives of land and people. In conceptual terms this is because too much moral authority is attributed to the private sphere. This undermines the potentially positive role of regulation to legislate the 'universalism' upon which civil society can emerge as a community of communities (Parekh 2000). There is no consideration of power relations between cultural groups and with the State. Ironically, in policy terms the concept is equally invalid in achieving these ends as it promotes community renewal in solidaristic ways, but similarly neglects the latent ethnic and racial assumptions to belonging. The next section furthers this discussion by arguing fully that social capital is synonymous with ethnic solidarity.

### **The problem of ethnicity**

Ethnicity is a discourse of community that reflects cultural resilience across generational time and space. It is a resource that can appreciate for future redemption and should therefore be conceptualised as central to social capital. The primordialism associated with ethnic solidarity creates immutable social divisions, which cannot accordingly be transcended by choice, rationality, or enlightenment. However, ethnic solidarity is problematic for the politics of civil society if it manifests as claims for rights over other ethnic groups, rather than as collective calls for equality. In this way, power relations between ethnic groups further reveal the shortcomings of social capital as a strategy for community renewal. This is argued in regards to the racialisation of ethnicity formed from minority relations to a white majority. The chapter argues these relations to be the basis of racism. This latter point identifies racism within the establishment of English identity as an outcome of primordial constructions in narratives of land and people.

There are broadly speaking, two means by which ethnicity is defined in the current literature. Both these approaches reference the non-primordial character of ethnic groups, but differ in their credibility as nominal labels for cultural groups (Cole 2003; Modood *et al* 2002). The first expresses ethnicity as a form of status group, the second builds upon post-structuralist and post-colonial theories emphasising the socially constructed nature of difference (Hall 1997). A concurrent issue is whether ethnicity should be counted on the basis of self-identification or as an external measurement imposed across the population as in the census designs of 1991 and 2001. It is argued by Smith that self-selection is an ethical treatment of

difference as it allows an individual to opt out of ethnic categorisation and prevents such grouping being used by the State for discriminatory purposes (Smith 2002). However, this misses the point that Modood *et al* (2002) make in using an objective set of criteria to establish ethnic categories. Their purpose is to measure inequality and disadvantage, not quantify ethnic association and solidarity. However, their definition of ethnicity in Weberian status terms marks them out as conceptually very similar (Anthias 2001; Cole 2003).

Modood *et al* (1997) define ethnicity as “...a community whose heritage offers important characteristics in common between its members and which makes them distinct from other communities” (Modood *et al*, 1997: P13). The elements of difference are explicit cues such as physical appearance, cultural and religious affiliation, and more importantly family heritage. The researchers argue that these are empty categories that gain substance in particular national contexts. They argue that the concept needs to be flexible to identify “*ethnic boundaries in any particular society*” (Modood 1997: P13). Smith argues that this description is in itself a version of Weberian status groups. He continues by criticising Modood *et al* for using a ‘racist’ view of ethnicity based on phenotypical attributes and genealogy. Smith describes ethnicity as a status group that includes a common culture and should be used to avoid racialising (Smith 2002). Smith argues that family heritage has no real connection to group identity and concludes that cultural affiliation is a present centred narrative orientation to heritage. What is paramount is not whether groups possess heritage, but that individual members believe they do. He concludes by claiming that a status group is the social estimation of a group, moreover than the group’s perception of its own identity. Ethnic group status comes into being as a subset of this category as felt by its members. E.g. Chinese (as per census classification) is a status group, consisting of Cantonese and Mandarin speaking ethnic groups (Smith 2002).

Both these arguments are similar in that ethnicity unites a group of people around an essence of commonality disparate from the wider society, hence defining them minority status. In Modood *et al*’s (1997) research this illustrates the inequality and disadvantage of minorities in Britain. However, Smith’s argument surrounding status groups serves no further purpose than to disaggregate people on a cultural basis. This seems pointless if there is no identifiable reason why such differences should be made meaningful by research. If it is accepted, as both authors

do, that ethnic identification are imaginary then there is no real reason to emphasise difference unless there are wider claims being made of discrimination and difference of opportunity. An important facet of the ethnicity discourse is that the fundamental defining characteristic of social groups is a matter of primordial attributes, such as a concern with 'home', authenticity, and therefore land and people (Anthias 1998a). Regardless of the relative connotations Modood *et al* attribute to ethnicity they fail to locate the construction of these groups both as classified groups and as an ontological experience in social, political, and economic terms. The way in which ethnicity is classified as either the imagining or expression of actual family heritage naturalises social groups against the artifice of contemporary social institutions, such as the State and political economy (Modood *et al* 1997). Ironically, status group arguments, although more flexible than primordial theories, reduce ethnicity to immutable natural qualities and fail to challenge the historical contingencies of their construction. They inadvertently prioritise ethnicity as a more meaningful social entity than individuals, social classes, or choice based communities. This is because the 'ethnic' individual is seen to opt out of a cultural community, not opt into one. Consequently, 'ethnicity' is conceptualised as the discursive property of minority groups whose relations with the majority is not conceptually furthered.

It is with reference to ascription by the majority that ethnicity is viewed to be a racialised phenomenon that has its roots in the demise of scientific racism (Banton 1987). There is a steady literature on the terms that social science should adopt in talking about 'race' and ethnicity without re-producing the phenomenon said to be socially constructed. Ethnicity has risen as a means by which difficulties relating to talking about 'Black' or 'non-white' people have been rectified. Ethnicity is produced by the majority society's definition of racial others. Smith claims that the term 'ethnicity' if related directly to physical appearance is racist. In fact any identification of physical difference related to social grouping should, in his schema be seen as racist (Smith 2002). His argument stems from a concern that ethnic or racial classificatory schemas are authoritarian in tone and are thus implicated in social control. He claims that it is far more ethical to refer to cultural groups based upon self-identification. If these classifications mark certain physical characteristics as meaningful over others it reflects concerns of power relations. This has some substance in regards the 'Mixed-Race' categories of the 2001 UK census. The

concern of this schema is with the hybridity of the white category and not that of non-white forms of ethnic association e.g. there is no 'Black-British/Bangladeshi-Asian' Mixed-Race category (Goldberg 2002). The lack of elaboration of 'white' categories problematises the status of minority groups in the cultural hierarchy of the UK. This is argued by Omi and Winant as they stress that the politics of power enable legal classifications to construct 'race' as meaningful categories of an otherwise banal continuum (Omi and Winant 1994). Smith doesn't address how officialdom should view self-identification expressed in racial terms, such as explicit Black identity formed for positive reasons of self-pride related to urban social movements (Gilroy 1987). Smith's schema fails to take into account the politicised nature of 'race' as a lived experience and the concept of status group remains too abstract to deal with not only the conceptualisation of difference, but the power politics attached to it within society at large. A key dimension of this is the political and economic ascription of individuals to racial and ethnic groups incurring historical disadvantage.

Miles' conception of *racialisation* presents a de-constructivist Marxist analysis of 'race' and ethnicity in contemporary UK society (Miles 1989). This perspective emphasises that membership of racial and ethnic groups comes ingrained in the symbolic structure of colonialism, imperialism, and orientalism. It extends the themes of Franz Fanon, namely that the 'black man' is a self-image internalised by the subjects of colonialism as a hegemonic reflection of the self/other dichotomy institutionalised by colonial white authority (Fanon 1986). This is the topic of Said's 'Orientalism', whereby texts written about the Orient created a re-presentation of the subject with reference to Western norms of rationality (Said 2003). 'Race' and ethnicity are subjects of signifying practices which produce difference as a cultural artefact (Hall 1997; Murji 2002). Miles argues that the process of racialisation is an ideological process of societal division, furthermore '...the concept of racialisation refers to those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differential social collectivities' (Miles 1989: P75). Miles goes further than seeing racialisation as merely a signifying process to one integrally linked to the expansion of capitalism and class relations. He claims that those represented as the 'other' were generated during the material production of European industrialisation of which colonialism

was an active force. He argues that colonialism is not just a discourse of global cultural and racial dominance, but a class ideology that defines the 'other' in labouring terms as well as biological ones.

The construction of ethnic groups is not a simple process of self-identification with family heritage or national classification, but a historical and political process of racialised class relations. The requirement for labour in the UK during the 1940s and 1950s is argued to be the point at which colonial subjects were incorporated into the British class system as a new manual class of labourers (Miles 1989). For Miles, racialisation is an entirely economic phenomenon, unlike authors such as Omi and Winant, and Goldberg who cite political institutions and science as the originating factor of conceptions of 'race' (Murji 2002; Omi and Winant 1994; Goldberg 2002). The problem with the economic reduction of 'race' is the very opposite of the ethnological reduction of ethnicity. In that the latter has no formal referent and it makes a study of racism and disadvantage extremely difficult to attend. This undermines a sociological investigation of claims to belonging based upon narratives of land and people. The symbolic, political, and normative aspects of these narratives provide no substance to judge inequality of difference, or to understand underlying power structures.

However, as Solomos and Back (1999) argue 'race' although a social construction, still needs to be a category of social research, due to its relationship with inequality, exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage. The reality of racism within society is in relation to differential access to status and as such underscores the legitimacy of claims of belonging. The recognition of institutional racism via the Lawrence Enquiry revealed that racism is central when studying minorities, as opposed to a neutral conception of 'ethnicity' (Solomos 2003). This revealed racism to be underscored by power relations between minority and majority populations. Ethnicity as a racialised category is further complicit with other fields of social division, such as class and gender. To understand the variable effects of racialisation in regards power and other social divisions, recent scholarship has questioned the centrality of ethnicity to sociological explanation. Anthias argues that individuals are positioned within inter-sectional racialised, classed, and gendered subject spaces. This expresses the multi-faceted nature of constraint felt by living in racialised ontological spaces. Due to the complexity of inter-sectionality there is no homogenous or singular experience of 'ethnic group' membership. Characterising



difference within society based upon ethnic classifications hides the individuality of experience and the power relations that contribute to their classificatory and controlling mechanisms. In this respect Anthias argues that ethnicity should be seen as an ‘ethnos’, which is an ontological domain that produces bonds and solidarities of collective origins and belongings. Anthias is sceptical as to its applicability as a sole basis for claims on rights, but forthright that it leads to a study of marginalisation and inequality (Anthias 1998b).

Anthias is keen to point to the way in which this is not only a symbolic construction of historical trajectory and purpose of a common culture, but one which is integrally linked to fields that produce difference in relation to class and gender. Anthias highlights that the domain of racialised ethnos constructs unitary categories that function to exclude and disadvantage (Anthias 1998b). A key component of this is the tendency for ethnos to create constraining gender roles, due to its putative naturalism. This raises the question that men benefit most from ethnic self-identification. Cole argues that the same can be said for class and power. In that, self-identification is not an individual act of democracy, but a process generated from powerful interests within and between groups to create solidarity (Cole 2003). Werbner (2005) shows how gender was central to the self-identification of culture for Pakistani women. She argues that an affiliation with culture in the UK was primarily directed by women and resisted by men for reasons of economic rationality. Herbert (2008) shows how codes for religious conduct in Leicester were often the result of male domination. Her research revealed how the loss of occupational status of East African Asian men, upon arrival in the UK, precipitated a reappraisal of religious value used for dominance over the women with whom they interacted as kin. Collective ‘we’ identities as constructions of commonality mask internal power structures and constrain and limit the choices open to individuals.

This discussion highlights the problems associated with analysing ‘race’ and ethnicity as collective phenomena. Firstly, there is no singular experience of ethnicity and its basis as a causal variable of social trends is insecure. Secondly, material reference points are difficult to define, when defined using cultural or bogus racial categories generalised value judgments are vindicated. If they are not defined, ethnicity is a system of symbolic meaning where racism and differentiation have no material substance and are dubious identifiers of disadvantage and division.

As there would be no sociological reason why ethnicity should be studied as meaningful over other phenotypical or life-style differences; racism and difference would have no meaning. Theorists such as Paul Gilroy have argued that it may be time to abandon the concept of 'race' as its mythical status has become common knowledge amongst social scientists (Gilroy 1998). Gilroy sees 'race' as a symbolic construction that can be undone by seeking new ways to talk about humanity and the facets of its division. Diaspora and migration studies have recommended that theorising should also move beyond ethnicity and instead look at trans-national flows of people who possess multiple global cultural sites. As Anthias has noted these are often synonymous with linking trans-national populations to concepts that bind individuals to collective representations and meanings of home and authenticity (Anthias 1998a). Werbner claims culture should not be essentialised but seen in translocational terms, meaning that ethnicity gets a local nuance due to the situational context of cultural expression (Werbner 2005). These avenues of exploration are certainly attractive but miss the problem when addressing issues of racism. The problem of 'race' and ethnicity is not to be remedied by the deconstruction and re-interpretation of its imagined status. It is remedied by the deconstruction of the problems *associated* with social outcomes such as claims to rights based upon the primordialism of 'race' and ethnicity. It is these that reproduce racism, disadvantage, and stigma. Therefore the explanative potential of ethnicity within sociological research emerges not from a sole concentration upon minority experience, but majority identity and its role in the production of racism and unequal social and political relations.

Researching 'race' and ethnicity in this way allows for an exploration of it as a lived domain with a heterogeneous appeal to inter-sectionality, spanning majority and minority groups. Furthermore, it questions the legitimacy of collective categories and identities that signify cultural exceptionalism, such as the English identity. This is because, even by self-selective criteria, ethnic identity is constraining upon internal difference, and promotes division and exclusivity between groups. This is exacerbated by the promotion of social capital for community renewal within white working class neighbourhoods. In that social capital legitimises the political right of a collectivity to exist as an ethnic entity, not to express that its members experience a stratified and homogenising experience of discrimination and disadvantage. The problem is that the means by which a

collective communal identity and purpose are defined is by cultural imagining not democratic processes. In relation to discrimination and inequality this is potentially destructive, as criteria of exclusion/inclusion may not necessarily reflect the conditions of such differentiation. This is the case with the ‘community cohesion’ prognosis to the 2001 urban riots in the UK. It was the ‘culture’ and relationship of minorities to the wider society that was seen to be related to the disturbances, not the processes by which they were made minorities. This process is the significance attached to culture as a meaningful form of division by the majority society.

Ethnicity as solely a minority issue is further delimited due to the phenomena dubbed by Vertovec as ‘super-diversity’. Vertovec argues that diversity within the UK has blossomed since the early 1990s. He argues that the increase in country of origin along with diverse needs of new migrants has meant that the concepts such as ethnicity, ethnic group, and community are no longer valid tools to understand the diversification of diversity. Vertovec emphasises that there are too many migrational trajectories and interactions to warrant the continued use of ethnicity as a fixed core theme in research, as it no longer holds as the most influential factor contributing to division and difference. He shows that new forms of migration from the Middle East and Eastern Europe have changed migration in the UK as previously this was characterised by Commonwealth migration and Britain’s colonial past. Legislation of current migration has created different legal statuses with varied rights and entitlements that impact on the experience of diversity for migrants. He cites differing age and gender profiles of migrants, patterns of spatial distribution, and differing responses by service providers and residents as being key aspects in the study of super-diversity.

Vertovec refreshingly in light of ‘social captalesque’ theorising, refuses to see this as a problem for social order, cohesion or nationality, instead he refers to it as a problem for social research and public policy. A major factor of this problem is conceptual clarity to not only research, but in communicating complexity to policy-makers where there is a need for new efforts of information gathering to inform public policy. Although, Vertovec is correct to highlight the complexities of migration and its ramifications on concepts of culture, ethnicity, and difference he does pose the issue as relative to the diverse peripheral of UK society and the homogenous ‘majority’. This fails to note that public policy needs to manage diversity, not as an adjunct to a homogenous national society, but as integral to the

constitution of national society. This continues a tradition in the theorisation of difference and community, namely that it is not the problem of difference *per se*, but its problem status in relation to the national polity. This emphasises that due to the emergence of super-diversity on the margins of society, traditional diversity has become part of the majority, something which is met with caution by those ethnically classified as the ‘owners’ of the polity, namely white English people (Vertovec 2007).

The problem of ethnicity is that it is hard to operationalise as sociologically meaningful due to its emphasis upon solidarity and collective claims of commonality. Therefore phenomena related to the manifestation of ethnicity need to be explored, such as racism or experiences of marginalisation. The conclusion is that ethnicity despite being promoted by self-identification is a constraining force upon individuals due to power relations between minorities and majorities. It is majority society that makes ethnicity meaningful as a social and cultural divide particularly as it is a racialised concept in the UK. The use of social capital within community renewal reinforces cultural community with narratives of land and people that position minorities at the fringe of national society. This is manifest in renewed citizenship rights targeted towards cultural minorities, these fail to establish the ethnic and cultural specificity of the majority and national culture. The next section explores the relationship of ethnicity to nationalism as this evaluates the inequality of cultural difference. The discussion of English identity reveals that power underscores majority and minority relations. This furthers the sociological aims of the literature review by concluding that the elucidation of power relations between groups operates to bind narratives of land and people and presents a dilemma between nationalism and liberalism within public policy.

### **The problem of nationalism**

Nationalism as a discourse of commonality is problematic for community renewal as it provides narrative clarity to notions of land and people. Power relations are central in nationalism’s role as the ethnicity of the majority. An inherent problem in the application of social capital within public policy is the dilemma between nationalism and liberalism (Shukra *et al* 2004). Implicit in reports such as Cantle is an assumption regarding the boundedness of South Asian communities in areas of low social cohesion (Cantle 2001). This is seen as detrimental to the over-arching

social ‘good’ putatively created via citizenship and community renewal. In defining the South Asian community as a minority or separate cultural entity, the discourse on social cohesion overlooks the presumptive nature of group bondedness within the ‘normal’ majority of society (Burnett 2004). Furthermore, the conditions of this majority remain unreferenced, presuming defacto integration around a shared culture that crosses class, gender, and spatial lines. Public policy represents ‘inclusion’ as citizenship and British identity, without reflection upon the imagined aspects of nation and community. Consequently, community renewal neglects to note that English identity is the embodiment of national/local community.

Claims for national inclusivity based upon rights often fail to reflect upon the ethnic basis of their own cultural specifics (Kumar 2003). They simply *masquerade* as a ‘universal’ ideal. Without a politics of diversity within the structure of the State, nationalism is the appropriation of the State apparatus by a *particular* ethnic group, thus making it sovereign and citizenship is therefore culturally specific. Connor argues that the State is distinct from a nation, as the latter is related to an ethnicity and the former is an administrative body (Connor 1978). Gellner defines nationalism as the force which pre-empts the consolidation of a nation (Gellner 1983). In this vein a discussion of multi-culturalism in the UK takes place with regards to English identity made dominant by the sovereignty of the Monarch. Consequently, the application of multi-culturalism at national and local levels is dependent upon the historical, political, and economic nuance of the particular State apparatus (Watson 2000). This is difficult and controversial terrain for community politics in the UK. Especially when attempting to articulate English identity as an inclusive ideal that transcends conventions of land and people.

The relationship of nation and individuals/groups is articulated around notions of primordial/cultural and civic ties (Geertz 1963; Kumar 2003). Cultural or primordial ties are those elements of solidarity that echo the discourse of ethnicity. These being a shared sense of language, religion, tradition, heritage, blood ties, race, destiny etc, they are the elements that according to Geertz are cultural ‘givens’. An experience of these ‘givens’ is followed from a natural or spiritual sense of identity, as recognition of commonality (Geertz 1963). Kumar argues that the cultural nation represents the nation-state proper. The State arises from a national experience of common heritage. This presents culture as an objective fact, primordial in essence and relative to blood ties. The nation-state is a community of fate, not of choice

(Kumar 2003). The ethno-centricity of the German nation-state is a putative example of this as it is expressed as *ius sanguinis*, whereby a German, is ‘German’ irrespective of holding citizenship in another State (Watson 2000). Conversely, the civic nation is a top-down political community and is derived from a common political and unifying history; France is an example of this type of Nation (Kumar 2003; Winter 2007).

It is recognized that civic politics remain culturally inherited despite attempts to transcend culturalism. Its prescriptive nature generates cultural norms that reflect its unique historical development. For example, norms of liberty and democracy developed in France due to particular historical circumstances of revolution (Nairn 1988). They are not ‘universal’, but simply assume their freedom from the constraint of ascription as a universal ideal relevant to all humanity. Kumar emphasises that shared memories of particular and regional aspects of history lead nations towards ideas of uniqueness and moral superiority. Civic nationalism still remains a moral community based upon cultural memories, in this respect it is something that works when ethnic homogeneity is omni-present within a territory as it equates to a *sense* of universalism (Kumar 2003). Geertz argues in reference to emergent States, that their political process is to keep claims to identity (the cultural nation) from diverging from issues of progress (civic nation), as a primordial nation is unpopular in post-war discourses on International Relations (Geertz 1963). He claims that the ‘alien’ civil order threatens the cultural autonomy of primordial ties. Colls’ discussion of the spiritual nature of English identity further addresses cultures’ distaste for the ‘alien’ civic nation. For Smith, this represents the crisis of dual legitimation whereby nationalism is a divine authority that challenges the secular State (Smith 1981).

However, the culture that consolidates these primordial ties is socially constructed and as such represents a *sense* of the shared. It has become an accepted ‘truth’ amongst political and social theorists that the nation is an ideological entity with little authentic origins. Consequently, it is not a social entity which reflects natural human groups and boundaries, but the result of modernity and non-traditional forms of governance (Giddens 1985). Hobsbawm famously identified the nation as invented tradition resulting from the competition of elites (Hobsbawm 1983). Gellner identifies nationalism not as the self-consciousness of a nation, but its own invention (Gellner 1983). Underscoring much of the cultural memories and

non-rational phenomena associated with nationalism is a shared *sense* of community, or what Anderson has called an ‘imagined community’. It is argued that the bonds between people represented in terms of the nation are a constructed phenomena held together by a common language, print capitalism, and synchronicity. They are imagined as individual members will never know all who are subsumed under the ægis of the nation. In this way, nationalism is an anthropological term not a discreet political ideology. An important aspect of this imagined community is that nationalism dreams of its own freedom and separation from others. Anderson argues that nations view nationalism as universal, but particular in its manifestations of divine destiny. He argues that it is the style of distinction that should be the object of study. Important to these particularities are the imagined cultural roots of the Nation and its use of contemporary literary culture, notably print media and the novel to apprehend time: Nationalism is the formal institutionalisation of an ‘ethnicity’ (Anderson 1991).

The cultural roots of a nation are important to establish the naturalism of its manifestation away from the artifice of the civic polity (Gellner 1983). Visions of antiquity create the subjective element of nationalism. Anderson argues that nationalism is a medium of culture that is concerned by death and immortality, in this it functions as a modern appendage to the religious community of Latin speakers and the dynastic realms of absolutist rule. He argues that the enlightenment revealed suffering to be arbitrary, in this vacuum nationalism spread to give meaning to life and death. He points to cenotaphs as being an embodiment of the cultural memory of death as sacrifice for the larger entity of nation or vertical comradeship. In addition, he cites the importance of newspapers as a medium in which time is apprehended and as memory gives rise to a temporal sense of imagined community, news provides a spatial context. This serves to establish the commonality of language and borders, inviting the reader to view events as simultaneous, enabling them to ‘think’ the nation. This connection of intimacy as ‘private prayer’ bonds the individuals of the imagined community as a unit that moves synchronically through calendrical time. The advent of print media has allowed individuals to view themselves as connected in ways impossible during antiquity. Anderson further explains that via the private prayer of newspaper reading, fact is transformed into fiction biased towards the self image of the imagined community. This is heightened by the relationship of print media and

market capitalism. In this, nationalism is an expression of the popular and vernacular via private interests, in a quasi-autonomous relationship to the State (Anderson 1991).

The anthropological nature of nationalism is further explained by Deutsch as the manifestation of a 'people'. The term 'people' is a *naturalistic* and *neutral* expression of citizenry. He argues that large communities or nations are made of persons linked by complimentary habits, memories, and facilities of communications. The sharing of this 'information' generates what become referred to as a 'people'. He concludes by arguing that this process is a competition, whereby individuals align with groups in order to strive for power. He notes that when the State is claimed by a people, it becomes sovereign – or in other words a nation (Deutsch 1966). This position is shared by Billig with his notion of 'banal nationalism'. Billig claims that debate surrounding nationalism signifies it as the domain of extremists on the periphery of political community (Billig 1995). This is conducted by the referencing of far-right politics as removed from ordinary political concerns. However, Billig argues that nationalism is rife amongst the ordinary political community and as such, banal. It is first and foremost banal in established States, such as the UK as the nation has confidence in its own historical continuity: there is no immediate and formidable threat to the UK (or at least when he was writing!)

Nationalism remains latent to be called upon in times of crisis; such has been the case with the 'English Question'. National identity is an endemic condition that enables the reproduction of States by ideological habits of thinking and social practices that remain in the background of social interaction. The use of collective pronouns is an explicit communicative example. Billig gives others including the display of flags, but talks more about political discourse and the already made point regarding the discursive formation of the 'people'. In this way, he continues an analysis of newspaper reports and the use of pronouns and homeland rhetoric to construct assumptions about a nation's place in the world. He argues that newspaper headlines reinforce banal nationalism by homogenising an experience or event to a particular notion of 'people' as a universal audience. However, banal nationalism is in a sense, a version of social interactionist theory, whereby reality exists as a stock of background common knowledge and symbolic meanings instantiated in communication (Berger 1971). Billig fails to identify what substance of these



knowledges generates particularity to a nation, or in Anderson's terms he fails to understand the particular style of imagination (Billig 1995). This is important because it is through the imagining of particularity that boundaries are constructed used to police inclusion and the vertical comradeship (Anderson 1991).

To explain the relevance of nationalism to a critique of social capital English identity will be used as an example that fuses ethnicity and nationalism as an anthropological social process to construct a majority community. English identity when considered as an ethnicity has powerful ramifications for exclusionary practices that will be addressed in relation to the sovereignty of Monarchy. The opening observation in Kumar's (2003) 'The Making of English National Identity' states the oddness with which to say 'English Nationalism'. In line with contemporary thinking surrounding the recent origins of nationalism, Kumar highlights that one of the pressing aspects of English nationalism is its contradictory relationship with British national identity. He argues that from 1707 English identity was a latent and un-expressed force existing behind Britishness; an identity which embraced the regions and the world via Imperialism. Kumar claims that this identity was constructed via contrast with other colonialist European powers and the putative backwardness of the colonies. There was little expression of English identity as attention was turned away from 'ethnic' identification and was geared towards the more powerful one represented on the world stage by Britishness. He argues that there was a moment of Englishness towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as fractures emerged within the British Empire. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century English identity gained ascendancy as there was no patriotic emotion attached to British identity, due to its distance from an essence of 'people' and community. It was first and foremost a united administration of multiple persons English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish. The English were the most populous and powerful people within this Union and in due course English identity became synonymous with British identity. As a result British identity represented for the regions the ascent of Southern England, or particularly the Home Counties. This colonisation of the Union by the English prompted the rise of national identity in the regions as a counter-hegemonic force. Scottish and Welsh nationalism are relatively speaking a rise of the subaltern (Kumar 2003).

The dissolution of Union is one of the chief factors in the clarion call for a reflection on English national identity (Perryman 2008). There are two further cited

contemporary issues that have ruptured the tacit nature of English identity and spurred it to self-reflexivity; these are the development of a European polity and multi-cultural public policy in the light of migration (Condor *et al* 2006; Heath *et al* forthcoming). These factors have seen English identity turn from its benevolent and outward looking posture to an embattled and defended terrain of cultural appropriation by 'Middle England'. As British identity no longer serves as the locus of strength for the English, much is being done to re-imagine the primordialism of its cultural roots, existing underneath the State (McCrone 2006). This imagines English identity to be an entity outside the State, something enacted in the pub not in parliament (Colls 2002). As such it is private, inward looking and reflects an interest in the sovereignty of the ordinary. Kumar is keen to describe these reflections as a view of English identity from the outside in, he describes recent attempts to capture the essence of English heritage, culture and people as a means to resurrect nationalism, not a re-positioning amongst contemporary political relations. These are works by authors such as Jeremy Paxman, Simon Heffer, and Roger Scruton, whereby English identity is imagined as cultural observations of 'Englishness' (Kumar 2003; McCrone 2006).

Englishness is reflected back on itself as cultural and personal traits, and social memories. In addressing the imagining of English identity, Kumar identifies it as a cultural not political posture. As a conclusion Kumar is reticent in suggesting that English identity has, due to its cultural status, a legitimacy in tandem with other regional nationalisms, although it needs refining to recent political changes (Kumar 2003). This takes English claims of national identity perhaps too seriously, by over-emphasising its victim status. This misses the importance of the English ownership of State sovereignty via the Monarchy, who remains the Queen of England. It also fails to relate English identity to a position of privilege in the ownership of 'land and people' discourses (Palmer 2002). Both these observations are integral to a debate about multi-culturalism and community renewal (Garland and Chakraborti 2006).

The cultural conditions of English identity are best illustrated by Colls' expose on its emergence as a means of building the homeland (Colls 2002). Colls is similar to Kumar in the sense that he sees English identity as a domestic identity in relation to an externally orientated British one. English domesticity is softer and represents the true spirit of the 'people' that shares an intimacy with the land,

*“England is the soft landscape that men love”* (Colls 2002: P204). The garden and climate metaphors re-create the primordialism of English identity as the soil underneath the State. Colls argues that a sense of security, nature, and liberty were embodied in the English fascination with gardens, something rekindled in the garden City planning designs of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Colls 2002; Crow and Allen 1994). The climate metaphor relates the weather in England to the supposed temperate national character, Colls argues that England’s geography was seen in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as a natural situation that determined the best people, moderate and normal unlike peoples from more extreme and unpredictable climates. The land was always experienced as local and not distant as the British State was viewed from the vantage point of local community. This created a sense of authenticity that defended the soft yolk of English identity from the landless masses who occupied the urban districts. The urban and suburban developments of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century were argued to embody a spiritual and material crisis of English identity. Urban areas represented industrial blight that perverted nature; the suburbs were seen as spaces of rootless mediocrity lacking soul and substance. English identity, through Colls’ analysis was always a reactionary effort to attribute social decay to cosmopolitanism and industrial free market capitalism.

The enemies of England were the rootless masses who had no legitimate right of ownership of the ‘land’. The English land question, according to Colls, identified the problems as rootlessness, division, betrayal of the land, and the loss of the folk. The industrial revolution and land enclosures, as a pre-empting procedure of modern capitalism, had destroyed the ‘folk’ and replaced them with modern citizens and workers. Colls, identifies efforts to re-imagine English identity as journeys to rediscover its latency in localism. This is a belief that true English identity is a survival of culture hidden under the grime of the ‘civilising processes’. This vernacularism was seen, in amongst other things 20<sup>th</sup> Century anthropological community studies, as more enduring than the institutions that ruled over it. Colls argues that ‘folkness’ supplied a core component of nationalist meaning. This reconstituted the relationship between the elite State and the mass population, as they represented the elemental and primordial. He identifies several properties of this folk ownership as vernacular language, craftsmen [sic] as people who work with the real England, buildings and gardens, home cooking transmitted by oral instruction, and dance as a ubiquitous knowledge free from the artifice of

standardised teaching. Finally, the English village - the authentic homeland built from English blood and sweat separate from central State urban planning – where land and people were united. In Colls’ analysis the current tribulation of English identity is a rupture of the bonds between land and people; his prognosis is that it needs a new means of imagining itself as an authentic spirit of the ‘people’ (Colls 2002).

This position is also taken by Kumar, in that English identity is a legitimate political identity, which has suffered a humbling experience due to a loss of political dominance. This dominance has an ‘embarrassing’ past that overshadows its more progressive and benevolent domestic and international efforts (Kumar 2003, Nairn 1988). Their prognosis is one that asks English identity to re-articulate itself in relation to contemporary political change, but gives no practical advice as to what ‘the English’ should do to achieve these ends or tells us the identity of the English people and community. Although, very insightful in uncovering the spiritual basis of English identity and making the observation that it derives from narratives of land and people, Colls’ analysis fails to explore the power dynamics of English identity in regards its vertical comradeship and its relations with minorities. English identity has a preferential position over claims to sovereignty. This is perhaps made more concrete given the acceptance accorded to Royalty. The acceptance of Monarchy by UK citizens is seen in nearly all academic debates surrounding citizenship and, apparently popular discourse (Billig 1992). A debate around the Monarchy as a political institution derived from tradition is essential for any discussion of multi-culturalism and community renewal in the UK, particularly as the failings of multi-culturalism are demonstrated with reference to minority solidarity and exceptionalism. This discussion will now frame English identity as a powerful ethnic identity that represents exceptionalism with reference to a continued claim over the State by the majority.

The position of the English within the British national polity is one of ascended exceptionalism, due to the ease in which British identity was appropriated (Kumar 2003). However, it is with reference to the Crown that the English remain the dominant force in the UK. The reason is that the Crown is not simply a symbol of Statehood, but is ingrained into the very political fabric of Britain. It cannot be removed without toppling the institutions of law, government, and constitution. Nairn has argued that the Crown is profoundly adverse to democracy and that the

tribal-folklore surrounding it serves to generate a taboo that keeps the Crown and white middle class males in control of national political discourse (Nairn 1988). Its authority wrests the State away from citizens as it has a non-inclusive conception of popular interest. However, the Monarchy is integrally related to an ethnically defined sense of national community and as such provides the totem at the centre of the imagined community. Its totemic status gives it a spiritual authority, representing decency and goodness against neo-barbarianism. Nairn argues that the ethnic form of English nationalism arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to arrest modernity as the common will and culture of the nation turned from a liberal and humanistic outlook to a 'mature' conservatism.

It was at this point that the ethnic and civic political national entities were merged and English identity assumed ascendancy over the political administration of Empire, at home and abroad. In doing so, Nairn argues that the Crown became a symbol of belonging, which subsumed class and gender differences because it embodied discourses on decency and goodness. These are naturalistic qualities that without reflection appear to transcend 'the social' (Elias 2000). It also created a taboo around 'race' and colour, which was defended by an 'empiricist' demeanour resistant to reflexive and abstract considerations of identity. Much like criticism of the Monarchy as an institution, the illustration of the ethnic essence of Monarchy prompted 'identity-rage'. Nairn explains the unease with which ethnicity is spoken within an English context. This represents the anti-racist truism that racism is a majority problem. In conclusion Nairn argues that the Monarchy disavows its own relationship to nationalism and ethnicity, this is a problem when considering the future of multi-culturalism in the UK as it means the establishment refuses to accept its own particularity, let alone the inclusion of difference as an equal (Nairn 1988).

Social inclusion and community renewal when related to a constitutional Monarchy such as the UK appears a perverted politic. The appeals to citizenship made by public policy are in themselves well meaning efforts to generate solidarity and renewal (Cantle 2001; Lawton *et al* 2000). However, they avoid the fact that the foundations of such a common good are highly uneven and cannot be levelled by any constitutional means. In this way, minority ethnic communities will always remain peripheral to national solidarity. Although, many established minorities are equal in law, the cultural demarcations of various populations are far from an acceptance of multi-cultural difference, but value loaded distinctions that prize the

normality of white English peoples. In this way, English identity is a racialised nationalism and as such counts towards a logical exclusion of its non-white others from the category of citizens proper. This creates multi-culturalism simply as a population management strategy (Barry 2001). The phrase ‘saris, steel bands and samosas’ was used in reference to multi-culturalist education practices in the 1970s and 1980s; it generates the ‘ethnic’ as honorary British, but not emotively English (Troyna 1990). English identity incorporates difference at the bottom of its vertical comradeship (Anderson 1991). However, this is at odds with public policy initiative at a local level within metropolitan areas notably in regards multi-culturalism. As Hewitt observed, multi-culturalism is viewed by whites as an assault upon their status of belonging, which they see as ingrained in the nation (Hewitt 2005; 2006). Similar conclusions are drawn by Dench *et al*, where white backlash is narrated in reference to a threat to the ownership of the polity at the local level by white working class interests (Dench *et al* 2006). Anti-Racism was a more vitriolic attack on the centred nature of white experience and position in relations of racial domination. However, its practice led to a blame culture and characterised all whites as complicit in racism, which generated a fierce backlash (Bonnett 2000a; Hewitt 2005).

The failure of multi-culturalism is that it attempted to change the position of minority culture within the majority simply by awareness strategy and nominal changes reflecting politeness or different conceptions of cultural relations. The idea of community renewal and citizenship are no exception from this trend (Back *et al* 2002; Shukra *et al* 2004). Burnett argues that citizenship discourse criminalises minorities and enforces their servitude to authority, but fails to ask the same commitment to citizenship from the majority, who are assumed to always be in allegiance to the Queen (Burnett 2004). As Back *et al* argue citizenship discourses amount to policies of assimilation as too much emphasis is placed upon multi-culturalism as a force for social dissolution (Back *et al* 2002; Shukra *et al* 2004). They argue that a struggle between liberalism and nationalism has characterised New Labour’s response to multi-culturalism. On the one hand public policy champions equal opportunities via the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. On the other debate on migration and social inclusion is curtailed by defining a zone of moderation that respects ‘decency’ and other values of national solidarity. In their words, Britain via New Labour “...cannot mourn its imperial ghosts, nor can it

*embrace a democratic and truly multi-cultural future.*" (Back *et al* 2002:P453) The paradox of current public policy represents the logical incoherence of nationalism and liberalism in civic life. It also confuses politico-cultural debates about difference with analysis of disadvantage and material inequality. It has been argued by Winter that it is a mistake to view ethnicity as outmoded by modern nationality. She identifies nation-states to exist as ideal types, ranging from civil to ethnic; the former is related to society the latter to community. The problem for liberalism, she claims, is not the cultural persuasion of minorities or the social rifts presumed by their presence within national boundaries, but neglect on behalf of those who already possess power over the State to recognize their ethnic particularity and to share authority amongst those classified as excluded (Winter 2007). This is a suggestion that will surely precipitate 'identity-rage' for the white English (Dyer 2000)!

The central means by which the Monarch serves as an exclusionary symbol of English identity is due to its racially inherited status. Despite, the adoption of multi-culturalist or anti-racist policies at national and local levels, there are extremely limited possibilities for the Monarchy to be possessed by an individual outside the aristocratic caste. This effectively excludes Statehood from the majority of the population in the UK. The essence of English identity is white racial identity embodied in the Royal Family. For this reason Royalty is not simply the post-modern celebrity identity phenomena as discussed by Billig (Billig 1992). Its racial status makes it a dubious inclusion into a civic multi-cultural polity as by its very definition Royalty holds ascendancy over other groups; therefore inequality is inherent in the promotion of an English identity. The status of the Monarch as a vanguard for White English interests produces immutable boundaries and reinforces vertical comradeship. Nationalism generates ownership of the land for a majority ethnic common people. It is the power relations between cultural groups that fuse narratives of land and people. It is on this basis that conventional constructions of English identity are necessarily about white ascendancy. The next section explores the relationship between English identity and white identity to further the sociological aims of the chapter to undermine the conventional narratives of land and people.

## **The problem of whiteness**

White identity as a discourse of racial commonality is central to the power of English identity. This is a relationship that requires de-coupling if land and people are to be re-imagined as an inclusive ideal. Whiteness is difficult to define and operationalise, but recent scholarly debate has opened up the presumed normality of white experience and cast particularity upon the position of whites in western society (Hartman 2004; Murji 2002). Scholars of White Studies view white experience and dominance as racialised and not a definitive normative centre of morality. In a debate with White Studies pioneer David Roediger, Kaufmann argues that the subject matter of White Studies is misplaced and, anthropologically speaking, it studies dominant ethnicities. He argues that White Studies neglects temporal and spatial relativity and assumes a Pan-Atlanticist model of whiteness (Kaufmann 2006). Although, this neglect is referenced within the literature, it is a point in need of specific attention (Roediger 2006, Bonnett 2000; 2008). This is important when one considers the particular historical socio-political development of nations, especially the UK and England (Elias and Dunning 1986).

A problem with cultural theories such as whiteness is that they undermine the peculiarities of State development that give rise to alternative forms of social organisation. These altered forms of organisation play important roles in defining power relations between divided social groups and structure relations with the administrative State (Elias 1996 [1989]). A notable problem with the homogenised and Pan-Atlanticist perspective on whiteness that is still latent in more recent works such as Ware and Back's 'Out of Whiteness' (2002), is a failure to analyse the exceptionalism of the English case study. Key to this is the inclusion of the power position of Royalty in relation to the State and a white English vertical comradeship. The non-democratic nature of Monarchism reveals a peculiar manifestation of white identity and nationalism, which doesn't openly represent itself as a universal norm, unlike other western liberal democracies like France and the US (Billig 1992, 1997; Nairn 1988).

Whiteness has been defined in a number of ways since Du Bois first made academic observations on white supremacy (Winddance-Twine and Gallagher 2008). It has been defined as an absent cultural marker (Dyer 1996; 2000) or as a nation moreover than a race (Hartman 2004). The third wave of White Studies



builds upon Ruth Frankenberg's study of white women in the US. Frankenberg defines Whiteness as a location of structural advantage from which white people judge others using a set of unmarked and unnamed cultural practices (Frankenberg 1993). Twine characterises these third wave studies as a means to analyse racial identity construction in order to reveal the strategies used to maintain and destabilize white identity and advantage (Winddance-Twine 2004). In doing so they highlight the fluidity of whiteness as they reveal it to be a historically and geographically located identity embedded in class and gender relations. This latter emphasis builds upon Frankenberg's concerns to understand the racialising processes of middle class white feminists. These means of racialising occurred through the women in unspoken quantities. Frankenberg uses her ethnographic accounts to explain how white women racialised the social world in ways that they were unaware. In this she shows that racism was not external to an anti-racist white self (Frankenberg 1993).

This analysis is furthered by Bonnett (2000a) and Hewitt (2005), as they show that much anti-racist work uses the same conceptualisations of 'race' used by racial ideology, albeit with a value negation. This views white identity as a fixed category that reinforces racial essentialism. More importantly, it constructs white identity as altruistic and the moral centre of anti-racism. Both authors identify a tendency for anti-racist practitioners to position themselves outside racial identity relations and aligned with universal humanity. Without a serious engagement of the processes that sustain whiteness Bonnett argues that an anti-racist project is doomed to failure as it victimises Black people and fails to see normativity as a relative set of values that can be attributed to all social groups, not just moralistic white people (Bonnett 1998; 2000a). Byrne builds her study of mothers in London upon similar de-constructions of whiteness. She argues that whiteness is similar to gender in respect of it being a performative identity that serves to re-produce divisive social relations. The problem is that white people are not aware that their world perspective and their performance of norms are structured in racial terms, because race issues are not pressing concerns in their immediate lives (Byrne 2006). This reinforces the truism of White Studies as expressed by Dyer that it is an invisible identity, present by its absence (Dyer 1997). He gives an example of conversational normality in story telling, where the Black person is racially marked, the white

person is referenced by un-comparable criteria, such as gender or class and is as such normalised (Dyer 2000; Murji 2002).

It is whiteness' relationship to 'empirical' normality that further aligns it with English identity. This particularity serves to breakdown the homogeneity of Pan-Atlanticist perceptions of whiteness. It also shows the relationship between 'race' and nation (Hartman 2004; Winddance-Twine 1996; 2004). Winddance-Twine argues whiteness exists as a 'comfort zone' often embedded within suburban contexts. 'Race' issues that require white people to think of their lives as racialised and divisive beyond their intention are a 'reality disruption' for white subjects (Byrne 2006; Winddance-Twine 1996; Bonnett 1997; Phoenix 1997). Twine adds that a latent power of whiteness is its embodiment of individualism. In this way, self-identity is an individual triumph over communal identities that are often racialised. This lack of commitment to community, easily available to white identity reinforces 'Black' community as a pathological and oppressed collective in relation to the privilege of white individual normalcy. The social ramification is that white people can disavow social issues and remain indifferent to racial issues, or as Bonnett argues have an easier access to universal claims to morality (Winddance-Twine 1996; Bonnett 2000a).

In her study of the impact of migration into Leicester, Herbert reveals the disruption to the white version of the normal landscape. This was expressed as a reactionary re-construction of neighbourhood identity by white respondents (Herbert 2008). This was synonymous with the narratives of loss and confusion expressed as a national disruption in the face of multi-culturalism (Alibah-Brown 2000). What was being expressed in sentiments of 'national loss' was related to the pressure on whites to be reflexive of their self-identity as racialised (Bonnett 2000a, Ware and Back 2002; Cohen 1997; Winddance-Twine 2004). As Cohen explains whiteness hides behind the Nation to discredit its relationship to racism. In his study of a school in Docklands, East London he shows how conceptions of Black teachers as illegitimate revealed that whiteness and English identity were fused in popular racist sentiments. The oxymoronic perception of a Black teacher became for white people grappling with identity, a device to make claims of difference that played upon the 'empirical' normality of nation (Cohen 1997).

It is well documented that Black identity has arisen from a concern with civil rights and struggle against the effects of colonialism and slavery. In this, Black

identity is a reflection of a subaltern status, which is granted legitimacy in its empirical case for social justice (Savage 2005). The expression of white English identity has a very different moral status (Condor *et al* 2006). As Hewitt has stated the use of the term whiteness in White Studies is counter-intuitive, because it is far from a celebration or recalibration of white identity (Hewitt 2006). The potential for a re-assertion of whiteness is limited if not impossible due to its historical relationship with colonial imperialism and present day advantage (Ware and Back 2002). It is in this way synonymous with institutional racism, defined as: "*The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in processes; attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.*" (Quoted from Parekh 2000). This statement vilifies the political constitution of the UK as The Crown represents a failure to provide full liberal and democratic participation to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin.

Although, many local services are astute to the needs of different groups and acts of law such as that above do go some way in addressing issues of equality (Vertovec 2007; Back, *et al* 2002; Shukra *et al* 2004). There is still little legitimacy in claims that white identity has a victim status and should be treated with political exceptionalism, as mentioned in the discussion of Monarchy in the guise of English identity it already possesses a unique and ascended exceptionalism. The claims to victim status and the use of analogies of minority position are persistent respondent testimonies in studies of white working class male identities (Weis *et al* 1997, Cohen 1997, Herbert 2008, Hewitt 2006, Savage *et al* 2001). There is, however, no evidence to suggest such claims should be accepted as just and as such white identity and English identity should not be accorded a stake in a multi-cultural project as if they were equal to other claims to justice.

The merging of white identity and English identity in relation to the promotion of rights accounts for what is referred to as the *new cultural racism* (Solomos 2003). This term identifies racism as a process which has survived beyond the discredited notion of biological inferiority (Miles 1989). In this, discrimination is premised upon a defence of cultural exclusivity of which 'decency' and civilised tags attached to English identity are used to define outsiders

and enemies from within (Nairn 1988). Solomos and Back have argued that the language of nation hides the racial narratives that naturalise belonging (Solomos and Back 1999). Consequently, racism can be seen as existing within and beyond the public institutions of the current legal definition (Solomos 2003). Racism needs to be conceptualised with reference to its local and contextual manifestations, such as the defence of white ascendancy over national belonging and resources, if it is to be sociologically meaningful (Cohen 1997; Hewitt 2005; Solomos and Back 1999). In this, racism connects local forms of exclusivity with wider national discourses of commonality. The study of whiteness shifts the focus of racism from the 'victims' to the perpetrators, which de-constructs the behaviour of the majority and holds them to ethical account. The purpose of White Studies is not to embrace white identity, but to deconstruct its normality in social discourse showing its racial dimensions and to challenge the advantaged state white experience gains from a defacto position of 'ordinariness', as opposed to the visible difference attributed to non-white and non-national citizens (Cohen 1997).

Therefore, quotidian expressions of a local/national community, like English identity are illegitimate when considered as unique claims upon resources or recognition. This is because they have a dual relation to historic forms of domination and authority; white imperialism defines outsiders and hides behind English identity as a regional expression of authority via the Monarchy. Consequently, claims to justice made by people underscored by these discourses of commonality should be treated as racist and divisive, because they fail to recognise their defacto advantage and exceptional status premised on racial and national ascendancy. Claims to justice, rights, and recognition cannot be made twice without becoming reactionary. This is particularly important in relation to considerations of social capital as an agent of community renewal. The tendency for people to think collectively in national/ethno-centric ways is not the most functional for the maintenance of a plural democracy (Anthias 2007).

The boundaries surrounding such common identities are permeable due to their socially generated origins; they do not reflect natural groups, simply representations of natural groups. The boundaries between ethnic and national identities are not a sound basis for political claims to recognition as they involve arbitrary inclusions/exclusions and as such have no relationship to equality (Barry 2001). The claims to recognition of former colonial subjects or ancestors of slavery

are made not in respect to ethnic recognition, but are claims to civic recognition by peoples who have as a result of racialisation been cast from the net of universal humanity (Banton 1987). Their ethnic solidarity is a transitory factor that loses its currency and sociological meaning when the claim to rights is accepted. The discussion of English identity and whiteness has shown the exclusionary nature of majority community and that the social capital generated from ascendancy is the means by which majority community not only creates division, but derogates minority groups. The basis of common identity in this respect runs contradictory to the claims that social capital enhances political and civil life, as by the very nature of national-ethnic definitions, boundaries are constructed which seek to permanently exclude in order to retain ascendancy over cultural minorities. The claims to victim status made by advocates of English identity are unfounded as the English have not lost any rights due to the waning of their influence over British identity; what they have had to share is ascendancy over the ability to accord rights to 'others'.

The status of English identity in regards the power of white identity creates a problem for the efficacy of bridging capital. This is Putnam's solution to the exclusivity of bonding capital (Putnam 2000). Bridging capital is an outward and progressive form of social capital reputed to generate multi-cultural liberalism. However, it fails to conceptualise the uneven foundations upon which collective identities are constructed. This is not a problem for advocates such as Lin, who like Putnam do not view history as meaningful to contemporary inequalities (Lin 2001). This is a particular problem for English identity as it has a stigmatised past to bridge from, a past that needs resolving if it is to bridge with a sincere degree of equality. A major factor of this process is the need for a self-reflexive English identity to abandon and de-centre white normality and experience as the embodiment of universalism. If a plural and liberal English identity is sought then it must either position itself as a particle in the 'community of communities', or represent multiplicity in and of itself (Parekh 2000; Hewitt 2005). This means emasculating the racial grip over institutional authority – separating English identity from white identity. As even Putnam agrees reflexivity is a difficult process to initiate, which individuals will not necessarily view as immediately rational, or overwhelmingly desirable (Putnam 2000). To coin Nairn's Freudian view of the taboo surrounding monarchical criticism, white people need to overcome the 'identity-rage' and denial with which they respond to criticism of their racial ascendancy over authority

(Nairn 1988). Or as Winter argues the majority have to accept that they are a majority and re-distribute it to the minorities in order for pluralism to operate democratically (Winter 2007).

English identity draws upon its status as a racial community with an exceptional linkage to State authority and legitimation. It characterises Kaufmann's notion of a dominant ethnicity, or as Connor and Gellner describes a 'nation' (Kaufmann 2006; Connor 1978; Gellner 1983). This ascendancy of power is coupled with an historic connection to racial advantage derived from colonialism and imperialist practice (Gilroy 1987; Murji 2002). Although, such practices are outlawed and are no longer legally identifiable, their structures still persist and the uneven power status between 'whites' and former colonial subjects has yet to be rebalanced. Gilroy claims that the analysis of 'race' in the contemporary era reflects the glare of colonial history and that it is time to abandon the concept (Gilroy 1998). However, racial abandonment misses the point that racism is a signifier of unequal power relations persistently ingrained into the governing institutions of western societies. English identity is one such regional nuance to white identity and authority. The racist and divisive outcomes of 'race' within narratives of land and people warrants continued sociological attention. This chapter promotes a necessity to *talk* about 'race' in order to dismantle white normality and power as the progenitors of racism. This is made against the claims of the New Abolishment Project that suggest White Studies should instead seek to *disavow* whiteness by talking around it (Ware and Back 2002).

Despite white experience occupying central ground in majority/minority social relations, white people are not homogenous and do not all share equal relations of racial domination. Social class and gender are variables that affect the efficacy of whiteness, much as they do ethnicity in general (Winddance-Twine and Gallagher 2008). Frankenberg highlights how gendered relations change the power that can be called upon in relation to whiteness (Frankenberg 1993). Weis *et al* (1997), Hewitt (2005), and Cohen's (1997) research all show that the 'wages of whiteness' available are different based upon social class: the returns made from racial alliance are not evenly distributed. Bonnett assesses the nature in which the British working class was absorbed into the category of whiteness (Bonnett 1998). This, he argues, occurred at the end of WWII with the construction of the Welfare State. This placed the British white working class in an ascendant position within

colonial and national hierarchies. The system of contributions enshrined in the Welfare State gave the white working class a stake in the national-colonial project and is constantly referred to in racist contexts (Cohen 1997; Hewitt 2005; Bonnett 1998; Dench *et al* 2006). The differential access to the ‘wages of whiteness’ marks the influence of social class latent to racial and ethnic divisions. This is important because an emphasis upon class based social justice underscores racial claims for belonging. The problem is that an emphasis upon social class explains the existence of racism in terms of economic competition and justifies racism’s manifestation based upon working class solidarity. This is because social class is regarded as more affective of the working classes than it is upon other economic groups. The cultural and racial basis to class identity is obscured as the economic status of whites prefaces arguments about racism. Ultimately, social class is viewed as more legitimately common to whites than to cultural minorities.

Contemporary studies of social class do not theorise the relationship between class, and racial and ethnic social processes; particularly to theorise working class racism. The current canon of British social class analysis, although aware of this, obscures the whiteness of working class culture over a direct expression of class relations. This is true of qualitative studies of social class associated with Skeggs (1997; 2005), Reay (2005), Savage, *et al* (2001), Charlesworth (2000) to name a few. The basis of much of this analysis comes from the influence of Bourdieu, where social class is considered as an aspect of life-style in a hierarchical set of related structures formed via cultural distinction (Bourdieu 1997). In this, social class does have economic depth, but is marked in the social and cultural habitus – it shares more with Weberian notions of status groups than it does Marxian notions of productive relations (Savage 2000). Social classes are for these authors made and unmade as processes of cultural distinction. What this precludes is that class is imagined around nation and ethnicity, moreover than relations of political economic production common to all, but experienced differently, by cultural groups. This is explicit in research that assesses class identity in reference to ‘ordinariness’ (Payne and Grew 2005; Savage 2005). Ordinariness embodies the notion that people in the UK see themselves as occupying a position of cultural mediocrity representing ‘common people’, rather than an extreme of either end of the scale. What is interesting is that people from a variety of occupational backgrounds centre their experience in these class ambivalent ways.

This is used to signify the dearth of class identities as much as their re-imagining (Savage 2000). However, it reveals more about the cultural affiliations of white people and the way social class is inadvertently synonymous with white experience in research practice. Research views social class as a common identity for the white majority, as ethnicity or 'race' is regarded as the common identity to address cultural minorities. White Studies is an important sociological tool because it critically explores the usage of these disparate categories in comparative analysis. This has ramifications on contemporary arguments within class analysis pertaining to the legitimacy of working class resentment and claims to rights. The claims made within class analysis un-wittingly reinforce the conventional narratives of land and people, as they unfairly compare groups by reference to different discourses of commonality.

A particular example of this inappropriate comparative analysis is Dench *et al*'s re-study of the East End of London (Dench *et al* 2006). It was a large scale ethnographic community study of the Bethnal Green area originally studied by Young and Willmott for their 1957 study 'Family and Kinship in East London'. The re-study attempted to show that the fractures in community ownership and autonomy of the 'old working class community' were caused by the State's response to Commonwealth migration. The study explored the class dynamic of East London in reference to three social groups, the old working class, the urban educated elite, and the Bangladeshis. Underwriting the analysis was the legitimization of white people as classed national citizens due to their historic presence and role in national affairs, particularly WWII. The Bangladeshi contingent was regarded only in immigrant status and was not analysed in class terms; they were at the bottom of the vertical comradeship. Within the instances where social mobility was discussed it was viewed as a deviant act of individualism against the moral good of ethnic and national commonality. Moreover, the analysis concluded by lamenting the decline of communitarian values and blamed a 'culture of entitlements' for eroding white community and, rather illogically contributing to the deprived state of the Bangladeshis. The study argued that need based welfare payments were counter-productive to communal solidarity and denigrated the sacredness of the private sphere and were not conducive to social justice.

The confusion as to the class and ethnic status of the established community served to legitimise white claims of unfair treatment at the hands of multi-cultural



public policy. The emphasis upon national solidarity hid the ethno-racist sentiments underneath resentment and hostility. The authors argue that multi-cultural public policy characterised the concerns of whites as racist; a charge vehemently denied by the authors as ‘non-racial’ reference points were used in making claims e.g. economics relations. The claims made on behalf of the white community were set in terms of access to rights based upon contribution; this prized whites in service delivery and neglected the unfulfilled needs of those worse off than them, notably those of minority status. However, Dench *et al* systematically failed to delve into the claims of unfairness made by whites and reinforced a view that collectively, the Bangladeshi community were deprived and dependent upon benefit and that the stoical white community were in relative need of subsidy, but were discriminated against by need based criteria.

Furthermore the authors suggest that whites were more entitled due to their national contribution being viewed as of more moral worth. The authors neglected that the basis for justifying the claims made by whites were made upon exclusionary foundations. The main claim was that via their effort during WWII white communities in the East End were more deserving, simply because their contribution to the Nation was explicit in social memory. This paid no respect to the Black and Asian people who actively and willingly fought to defend the British Empire in WWII. Dench *et al* criticise claims that citizenship and full rights were deserved by Commonwealth citizens, because they claim these groups made a lesser or zero contribution to the nation. The evidence in the study highlighted the exact opposite. It claimed that up until WWII the white working class were insular, private, and distanced from the nation; secondly that the labour of South Asian migrants was an invisible force in the post-war British economy. Clearly, the evidence suggested that both groups deserved equal rights by their own contribution based criteria! The conclusions of the study apportion social justice on racial and ethnic terms, which were obscured by labelling white people in stoical terms of class commonality.

These discourses, with their origins in war effort were used to mark white working people as stoical contributors to national solidarity via taxation and National Insurance. It was explicitly through these contributions that the authors justified the resentment expressed towards the Bangladeshis and multi-cultural public policy, by whites. The study concluded by emphasising a need to de-establish

needs based social policy and multi-culturalism, these conclusions allure to an ethnically and racially divided society with English white people in an ascendant position to cultural minorities. The assumed sustained and greater valued contribution to the nation by whites was argued to be the basis of social justice. The study was unaware of the divisiveness of its moral prescription as it was promoting a two-tier rights system based upon a legitimisation of the arbitrary and unproven claims made by a historically and politically naïve section of urban society. These were presented as legitimate in regards their appeal to authentic local Londoners, which the remote and face-less State undermined. It was clear within the study that Dench *et al* viewed the loss expressed in white resentment as lamentable (Dench *et al* 2006). The authors characterised white working class resentment as a de-establishment of social justice by public policy. Therefore, an equalisation of cultural groups was regarded in Dench *et al*'s analysis as detrimental to national society, including the Bangladeshi community. Unwittingly, this conclusion reveals that whites had not lost any rights, but had lost the power to accord rights to other groups. The wages of whiteness available to the white working class had not risen in line with political and cultural inflation. This led whites to fortify the racial conventions of land and people with English identity.

The resentment expressed by the white working class was therefore divisive and conveniently racist due to its related power structures of ascendancy. It was not the basis for social democracy as Dench *et al* would prefer (Dench *et al* 2006). The criterion for rights seemed innocuous and universal, but was premised upon a notion of vertical comradeship, which created a 'glass-ceiling' for those characterised as cultural 'others' outside the white majority. The community solidarity model promoted by Dench *et al* and the social capital model promoted by community renewal discourse within public policy are identical. They both emphasise the natural predicament of community as a social good embodied by the primordialism of local solidarity, rather than promote egalitarian principles of a plural and democratic flavour.

The problem of social capital and ideas of national solidarity permit the continued ascendancy of groups most visibly marked 'English', as latent relations of power and authority are neglected within community renewal. Claims to English identity are in effect withdrawals of social capital funds held by nationalism, which structures the relative value of social capital held by cultural minorities as of lesser

worth. These inconsistencies are problems if public policy and the research that supports it are directed towards inclusive community renewal. The racial/ethnic basis of belonging that lurks behind national attachment makes inclusive renewal an impossible goal. It serves to delineate essentialist boundaries and to promote normality as a white English essence, of which cultural minorities can only wave at from the touchlines. Solomos, *et al* (2002) have argued that public policy shares much in common with traditional diversity policy orchestrated as assimilation. The social capital model, from this perspective, is something far more divisive in that it delimits even a token gesture of fluidity between the established and outsiders. Ironically, the pugnacious conclusions of Dench *et al* (2006) have already been instantiated at a public policy level.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the discussions of social capital, ethnicity, nationalism, and whiteness as discourses problematic to community renewal and English identity. This discussion began with a consideration of social capital, a concept central to the renewal of political community. It was argued that the contradictions between the promotion of solidarity and liberal civic outcomes were limitations on the usefulness of social capital to community renewal. The discussion of ethnicity highlighted the difficulties associated with the operationalisation of the concept as a discourse of commonality attributed to cultural minorities. A problem was identified that without attachment to studies of inequality or disadvantage ethnicity is sociologically meaningless. A further problem involved the non-deliberation of majority/minority distinctions within the discourse on ethnicity. It was concluded that ethnicity is a concept present across majority/minority social divisions and is not only common to cultural minorities. It was noted that ethnicity research should therefore attend to issues of heterogeneity, multiplicity, and super-diversity inherent within an 'England after Britain', if ethnicity is to hold any explanatory potential to division, disadvantage, and inequality (Perryman 2008).

Nationalism was then discussed in regards ethnic power relations that sustain imagined boundaries between majority/minority distinctions within narratives of land and people. These narratives fuse a particular ethnic group to a particular geographic territory. National identity is considered as the foundation of disparate power relations between ethnic and racial groups. English identity was

discussed as an empirical example of power differences due to the exclusivity provided by Monarchy. The goals of community renewal, if they are to extend to cultural inclusivity, should seek to address this institutional exclusivity. It was argued that a sociological consideration of this problem would deconstruct the relationship between English identity and white experience.

The presentation of White Studies revealed the current progress of such a project within academic discourse. This chapter contributed to White Studies, by stressing the analytical need to reflect English identity as a regional nuance to a global whiteness. This geo-political nuance is signalled in the literature, but remains sociologically unexplored. The section concluded by stating that whiteness and English identity provide a basis of power to whites as racially unmarked individuals with privileged access to conventional authority. This relationship provides these unmarked identities a different moral status in regards claims to rights and recognition.

This observation was used to assess English identity formation as a manifestation of racial resentment. Dench *et al's* (2006) research was cited in order to explain the confusion emergent from the un-comparative operationalisation of class and ethnicity. This operationalisation provided a voice to justify the disenfranchisement of the majority white working classes with public policy. The chapter argued that due to the conceptual confusion of class and ethnicity this vocal justification was unwarranted. The claims of the white majority were racially motivated claims over national belonging and were not indicative of 'class injury'. This is an important conclusion because it serves as the warrant to research community renewal and English identity within Thurrock as identical phenomena. Central to this ethnographic investigation was the manifestation of public policy and community identity at a local level. The analysis positions the four discourses of community as social capital, ethnicity, nationalism, and whiteness to examine the basis of localism. This provides contextual and empirical insights on the narratives of land and people. In doing so, the analysis assesses their justification within a wider politics of diversity, multiplicity, and fluidity.

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## Methods

### Introduction

This chapter explores the basic conceptual components of ‘community’ as used by community studies. The tacit assumption in classic community studies is community’s conceptual position in relation to wider social and political relations. Despite variant references to class or locale, community studies have always defined community as ‘human togetherness’ within the private sphere of social life. The virtue of community is seen as manifest from its autonomy from civic and political structures. Consequently, community is researched as an assumption of commonality between individuals with similar social profiles. This chapter highlights the methodological aspects of community as a local language of commonality that narrates fixed connections between land and people. Within the fusion of land and people, discourses of ethnic, racial, and national commonality are researched as sociologically meaningful.

The chapter argues that an ethnographic framework was a fitting pragmatic strategy to explore community as a private local domain of identity synonymous with national identity. Thurrock was a superlative example to explore narratives of land and people in reference to English identity due to its hidden super-diversity amongst a dominant white majority. The sampling strategies for interviews were ad-hoc and are justified by the lack of quantified population lists prior to the investigation. This was argued to be a practical outcome of the politically privatised nature of community in general. An emphasis upon the public and private boundaries within the research field is used to explain the extent to which structure was used within interview scenarios. The ethical discussion revolves around the political dimension of community research and racism. This reveals the author’s personal involvement in the project and the locality of Thurrock. These are further explored by the discussion on lyric, narrative, and analysis. These analytic methods are used to re-assert qualitative and ethnographic value as a responsible and

enlightening tool of social and political investigation when studying social phenomena that exist under the public radar.

### **Searching for community**

This section identifies the origins of community research as an emphasis upon community as a natural human condition. In this way, community studies were complicit in re-enforcing conventional narratives of land and people around discourses of commonality. It concludes with a redefinition of community around multiplicity and diversity in order to open up conventions of local identity. Community is, as has been much debated, notoriously difficult to define (Pahl 2005). In addition, it lacks predictability and is incompatible with quantitative work by being virtually impossible to operationalise (Bell and Newby 1971). As a result community studies have been characterized as ‘idiosyncratic’ and ‘novelesque’ (Crow and Allan 1994; Stacey 1969). Community studies have largely devoted attention towards qualitative detail to capture and textually recreate the lived conditions of ‘human togetherness’. Furthermore, the study of the private and domestic realms was essential for community study, epitomised by Young and Willmott’s (1957) ‘Family and Kinship in East London’. In these examples community was regarded as a natural occurrence of human life and identity autonomous of ‘artificial’ social, economic, and political institutions. Consequently, community studies attempted to frame its subject matter as a private social space located structurally outside the national polity. The moral implication was that community was a naturalistic survival strategy for aggregates of individuals against state intervention.

It was in this era that community studies declined as its empirical credibility and operational viability fell under methodological and epistemological scrutiny. This was due to a tacit assumption that ‘community’ was synonymous with locality and occupational clusterings remote from the national polity. This tradition of studies became celebrated in sometimes crude Marxist ways as an authentic expression of folk struggle against the faceless monolith of corporate capitalist expansion. Of particular note here is Dennis *et al*’s (1969) ‘Coal is our life’; or Hill’s (1976) ‘The Dockers’. The latter was a study of industrial relations and community in the South East. ‘Human togetherness’ was illustrated as a regional solidarity of occupationally stratified dockers against the liberalisation of the

London Port Authority in respect of containerisation. This focus on an ‘occupational’ community contingently rooted to a diffuse definition of area exposed the elasticity of ‘community’. It became stretched out of recognition as social class increasingly became an over-riding variable of community research (Pahl 2005). Community studies began to focus on a spatially non-discriminate and abstract concept of social class, as opposed to Stacey’s description of a local social system (Stacey 1969). A wider concern was that the social world was undergoing a transformation in the flows of people, capital, and governance and that remote folk solidarities were being re-structured by modernising forces (Alleyne 2002). Within this new imagining of social systems, division within community become a salient feature of study, in terms of gender, ethnicity, and life-style (Crow and Allen 1994).

Internal divisions within the communities studied were often cited, but not rendered as of sociological significance; thus they seldom fell under the gaze of sociological critique. Social class was often a signifier of schism and conflict; however, it gave iconic status to masculine work attitudes and culture. Much of the original fascination with working class culture and identity was a naïve adoration of ‘folkness’ in the face of poverty and deprivation (Colls 2002). Works such as ‘Coal is our Life’ (Dennis *et al* 1969), ‘The Dockers’ (Hill 1976) and ‘Family and Kinship in East London’ (Young and Willmott 1957) encapsulated a sincerity attributed to solidaristic forms of working class identity without such a questioning of the identity of their necessary ‘others’, i.e. capitalist employers, white collar managers and administrators, or deviant members within working class community. In these studies, class and gender identity were essentialised to ‘class-based’ kinship ties of solidarity. The re-study of East London by Dench *et al*, revealed the contingency of earlier depictions of working class ‘folk’ identity as it showed the matriarchal heroes of the original study were elders harbouring racist views (Dench *et al* 2006). Analogous to feminist criticisms many classic studies can be regarded with hindsight as accounts of white identity as much as they were of class identity. Community studies presented uni-dimensional accounts of local areas that failed to appreciate ‘community’ as a fought over terrain and not an essential possession of one type of persons based upon collective assumptions of their immediate and common social profile (Crow and Allan 1994; Hoggett 1997).

Thus community was an exclusive category that moralised solidarity and neglected deviant experience and individual choice. Those included into a sense of

community were simply those whose identities conformed to the roles prescribed by discourses of commonality. Studies were often astute to this process of boundary demarcation, Frankenberg in discussing ‘strangers’ is a good example (Frankenberg 1957). Despite this, many studies of working class culture seemed to reflect an authenticity of community based upon the determinism of social location. In Hills’ ‘The Dockers’ the encroaching liberalisation of docking practices was a process that endangered working class identity, as such their authenticity was under threat (Hills 1976). Community studies was in search of *authentic* human togetherness in the private spheres of social life, which were putatively beneath or antagonistic to the State polity and capitalist economy (Colls 2002). This imbued certain identities with the power of community, whilst removing its possibility from others who did not fit a naturalistic portrayal of what it meant to be *human*.

Suttles (1972) argues that community studies are plagued with ‘folk models’ of community that embody a modern distaste for ‘the modern’. In this, they romanticise affective naturalness as a non-bureaucratic and institutional basis to local community. Suttles argues that community is an active construction of local individuals, and local and national institutions. Beyond the superficial sheen of an archetypical local community are regional and national planning agencies, local government, and a host of other impersonal and depersonalised bureaucracies and institutions. From this perspective community is anything but natural and underlines the point that community life may not emerge from voluntarism or affective human bonds (Bauman 2001). Cockburn highlights further the administrative and managerial function attached to local community by the framework of local government. The institutional contingencies existing beneath the seemingly innocuous concept of community reveal a blurring between the public and private spheres of social life. Local governance dilutes the authenticity attached to community as a remote social entity and thus ruptures the essentialism community identity is imbued (Cockburn 1977). Consequently, community is not a natural product of humanity, but a politically and economically mediated affair governed by institutions.

More recent community studies express a reflexive approach by showing how community is actively constructed in the face of difference. Wallman’s study of Battersea shows how the locals’ identification of place marked newcomers out as different and was something which reinforced commonality (Wallman 1986). For



Back (1996), community is a putative and reflexive concept opposed to primordial natural togetherness. This raises the issue of individual choice in the adoption of collective identities as potentially meaningful. The emphasis on individual choice suggests community is a *sense* of shared characteristics, which involves specific interests such as religion, ethnicity, attachment to local geography, or non-work leisure activities (Willmott 1989). This is a response to societal changes and changes in the legacy of determinism in social science (Pahl 1989). Shared interests stretch beyond the face-to-face; the increasingly globalised nature of society means that community as a territorially or occupationally fixed category has waned in favour of communities of interest (Pakulski and Waters 1996). This reflects Giddens' argument that political engagement by citizens has shifted from emancipatory politics to life-politics. In this, Giddens expresses the idea that individuals have far more choice in the identifications that they use to construct meaningful biographic life projects (Giddens 1991).

Community relates to conscious forms of solidarity, as an outcome of choice not definitively locality or determined by social profile. Consequently, emancipation from material concerns has removed the necessity to interact with neighbours in a solidaristic way. Rather than a generic state of human togetherness, community is transient and individuals' identification with it is orientated by consciousness of interest. From a sociological perspective community is a domain of multiple and diverse social profiles that provide fluidity between land and people. Consequently, this thesis defines community as a contested local domain with multiple meanings and uses of the landscape by a plurality of social interests. The emphasis on diversity, multiplicity, and fluidity aids an understanding of the mechanisms of regeneration and renewal. It breaks down the assumptions of homogeneity within the majority and explores the connected interests in regeneration and renewal that span boundaries of minority and majority interests.

### **Why Thurrock?**

In order to avoid the homogenising features of 'community' this study refers to 'Community Study' as a spatial research framework. It has been operationalised as a means to incorporate a multitude of social variables, including social class and ethnicity. Consequently, community is merely a shorthand phrase to discuss the demographic of Thurrock. Thurrock was not chosen at random, but because unitary

## METHODS

status provided a spatial frame of reference characterised by concise administrative boundaries. There was a subsequent ease to define the locality, which was a difficulty in classic community studies (Willmott 1989). It included a convenient example of social, economic, and cultural variation; it was observation of this as indicative of social change that sparked interest in the area and the initial research questions. In statistical terms Thurrock was an unremarkable example of a homogeneously white working class satellite of Greater London. However, previous research conducted in the area suggested that there were heightened feelings of racial tension towards an increasingly visible diversity. Upon greater inspection the area contained a diverse economy consisting of agriculture, manufacturing, logistics, construction, quarrying, hospitality, and retail. These industries were confined to certain wards within Thurrock and it was from this that seven wards were identified as of sociological interest. This was a similar process used by Cashmore to assess spatial differences in racial attitudes across the Birmingham conurbation (Cashmore 1988).

The initial wards of interest were Orsett, Ockendon, Tilbury, East Tilbury, Corringham, Chafford Hundred, and Grays. These covered different aspects of Thurrock's social and economic make-up. These were used to explore whether the conventional understanding of Thurrock as a 'white highland', was being challenged by an as yet unaccounted shift in ethnic residency. Ultimately, Thurrock was chosen to highlight how 'ethnicity' was increasingly becoming a normal aspect of the non-metropolitan landscape. This posed interesting questions regarding social cohesion, and regional identity, especially its relationship to English identity and community renewal. It provided an illuminating example as to the spatial issues related to multi-culturalism, and shattered myths that such cultural questions were concerns only for cosmopolitanism, not localism. The ethnographic experience of Thurrock contradicted the canonical status of official demographic statistics as competing cultural forms remained invisible from the centralised public scrutiny of the 2001 UK Census (Appendix). Touring Grays Town Centre and the High Street in Tilbury revealed Thurrock to be a hotbed of super-diversity, which appeared superimposed upon a stereotypical vision of a post-industrial landscape on the cusp of regeneration under the guise of the Thames Gateway Development Plan.

The terms 'established' and 'new community' are used throughout the analysis to disaggregate Thurrock's demographic via geographic mobility patterns,

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and secondarily 'ethnicity'. These drew upon Elias and Scotson's terms 'established and outsiders', where differentiation was based upon length of local settlement not initial cultural or racial markers (Elias and Scotson 1969). Shared cultural interests and networks were not assumed from the basis of respondents' social profile, but were validated by the respondents' espousal of specific interests. From this perspective, 'community' was not assumed to be in existence based upon foreknowledge of demographic trends; it was inferred by reference to individually recognized 'interests'. As noted above, communities of interest related to factors such as ethnicity, religion, lifestyle etc; which are represented in the literature as active choices. The usage of interest within this research built upon this observation and was operationalised thusly: as a defining example of peoples' private lives that in some way prescribed future social action and identity and was experienced by the subject as related to their social, cultural, temporal and spatial 'survival'. Interest was fundamental to social relations and was the foundation upon which claims to community were premised. It was a definition of a respondent's interest in relation to the local area that the research allocated individuals to wider demographic trends and claims on community. This enabled the classification of the new community as first and foremost interested in entrepreneurial social and economic regeneration; more than ethnic solidarity and cultural preservation.

Issues of culture and ethnicity were largely secondary to social interest as the new community consisted of a super-diverse variety of social profiles; including Polish, Romanian, Ghanaian, Malaysian, and migrants from other parts of the UK who themselves possessed a diverse array of cultural backgrounds. It was a limitation that it was mostly British-Nigerian residents in this latter category that were researched. The boundaries of inclusion between new and established sections of the community were locally negotiated processes that revolved around a dichotomy of localism/cosmopolitanism. It was an awareness of this distinction as a class narrative that respondents vindicated otherwise racist sentiments. To conclude, community was not a static apriori entity, it was something that was expressed across the research as an aspiration held by a multiplicity of competing, contradictory, and sometimes co-operative interests. In all settings it was a consolidation of particular claims of ownership over local narratives of land and people; thus an attempt to gain hegemonic ascendancy over the definition of the general with reference to the interests of a particular. Consequently, Thurrock was a

valid example to reveal the synonymous nature of localism and English identity, in light of the challenges from super-diversity.

### **Why Ethnography?**

Ethnography is the conventional medium of community studies due to its roots in the Anthropological tradition and the Chicago School studies (Winlow 2003). Ethnography is a demeanour of research more than a method in itself and is usually seen as the polar opposite of positivism (O' Connell Davidson and Layder 1994). This basis as a hermeneutic philosophy of social science presents ethnography as a demeanour suited towards questions of culture and intersubjectivity (Creswell 2003; Pole and Lampard 2002). Willis argues that ethnography is a valid method of study as it performs a mimesis of social life, which he argues is akin to art (Willis 2000). Ethnography is advocated by authors such as Wolcott (1995), Agar (1996), and Frankenberg (1957) as a technique of societal immersion for knowledge generation. This immersion shifts the emphasis from 'objectivity' and changes the researcher's role within the field. Gold (1958) claims there is a continuum of research roles in ethnography characterised by four ideal types ranging from complete participant to complete observer. Within these field relationships objectivity and scientific distance is replaced by an emphasis upon *verstehen*. It is this respect for the subjective experience of research participants that vindicates ethnographic method against claims of bias (O' Connell Davidson and Layder 1994). However, like community studies the credibility of ethnography has declined due to its impartiality and neglect of scientific techniques of statistical analysis based upon random sampling (Crow 2000).

Despite such criticisms, ethnographers continue to add important discoveries to the canon of sociological knowledge. This occurs most vividly in studies of illegality or taboo; examples are Hobbs' 'Doing the Business' (1988), or Winlow's study of doormen in 'Bad Fellas' (2003). The validity of these ethnographies emerges from their penetration of hidden and private spaces, more than their hermeneutic claims. Studies such as Hey's (1997) 'The Company She Keeps', Hockey's (1986) 'Squaddies' or Holdaway's (1983) 'Inside the British Police' are valuable insights into aspects of social life that exist below the radar of public knowledge and scrutiny. The subject matter of each is so intensely shielded by privacy that ethnography is a sensitive strategy to uncover and make it visible.

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Ethnography was a pragmatic option rather than one purely devoted to a creative illustration of social nuance. It is in this capacity that ethnography provided a framework to make social discovery (O' Connell Davidson and Layder 1994). This was useful as the 2001 UK Census provided only a cursory representation of the proportion and diversity of the population in Thurrock. Ethnography was a pragmatic solution to address the research questions. The concerns of residents about migration and the new community were invisible at the public level of demographic statistics. The super-diversity of Thurrock's BME population was something discovered purely by the ethnographic framework. The Census classifications may well continue to miss many of these identities due to the complex and nuanced nature of their construction. For example the 'British-Nigerian' respondents referred to themselves as Nigerian to self-define against other stigmatised 'Black' groups. They were all British born and would therefore share the same census classification as those they felt little affiliation. The thesis shows that they felt more affiliation with economic aspects of their lives, sharing more in common with members of the established white community. This further complicated ethnic classification as a reliable indicator of community and solidarity.

### Departures

Ethnography was an advantageous strategy to deploy in this scenario where very few academic or official sources existed to premise the study and to select a research sample. The fact that the subject matter was rooted almost exclusively within the private sphere meant that access to respondents and to the culture of the area was an *ad-hoc* process whereby conventional sampling strategies were unviable. The lack of foreknowledge available positioned the research on the cutting edge of community studies addressing multiplicity, fluidity, and diversity within white majority areas. To uncover this hitherto unknown space the ethnographic framework consisted of a content analysis of local press and investigative interviews and observations. These were conducted in individual and group settings with a variety of figures central and periphery to the civic life and regeneration of Thurrock.

The content analysis of the local press was conducted to define a representation of the local community. A similar strategy was used by Garland to define the re-presentation of Englishness in national media during the Football

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World Cup 2002 (Garland 2004). The content analysis provided a cultural framework of the majority from which to commence the ethnography. The narratives recollected across the content analysis were useful as they revealed the common means by which Thurrock was experienced as an 'imagined community'. Central to this analysis was the construction of local relations with the global, and the 'soft' interior of the imagined community. In addition, the analysis highlights those elements of Thurrock's social life that were sequestered or viewed from an awkward position of white cultural authority. This served to draw definitive boundaries against cosmopolitanism and within, in relation to low cultural expectations of the post-industrial working classes. It therefore provided the most immediately available image of where, who, and what community in Thurrock consisted.

The *Thurrock Gazette* (hereby referred to as TG) was used as it was the most widely read and available cultural representation of Thurrock and had, as its front page proudly claimed, been serving the community since 1884. Its use was further vindicated as a reference point by respondents within the ethnography. Its editorial offices were located in Grays, the administrative centre of Thurrock. For these reasons TG was identified as the most common representation of Thurrock. The content analysis was conducted on each weekly issue from 11/03/05 to 22/9/06. This sample period covered more than a full year to include all holiday seasons, national and local holidays and celebrations, and a few important issues relevant to the overall analysis, such as local elections and campaigns. The analysis included every story, excluding notices and advertisements; these were coded using Nvivo 7. The analysis chapters are a faithful reflection of this coding practice as the overall narrative of the chapter is a model developed from this summative analysis. This practice is based upon Grounded Theory as conceived by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The analysis is a firm exploration of the publicised content and as such uses this as a proxy to talk about the lived social domain of Thurrock and its constituents. The relationship between the 'text' and material social organisation were important considerations for the 'live' ethnography. The divergences and continuities between cultural texts and the lived social world were substantively explored in relation to the discourses of commonality identified in the literature review. The discourses revealed the construction of the TG's particularism as a universal. The 'live' ethnography positions the TG's voice of localism within a

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plurality of claims over community interests, further instantiating the TG's imaginary construction of Thurrock's common people. This revealed the fluidity of the social world against the fixed narrative of land and people represented by the free media as a cultural text.

The interviews were drawn from three sources; with members of local associations/businesses; with serving councillors, and thirdly with *ad-hoc* individuals. Local groups were used to explore social capital and civic involvement. There was a methodological remit to this practice in that local groups were the gateway from the public to the private domain. Their officially recognized status legitimized their private interest of which the research delved further. Groups were chosen from a list of community organisations publicly available through Thurrock Council. These were not chosen at random, but on the basis that they reflected community interest and organisation within the wards quoted above. Furthermore the chosen organisations were relative to the theoretical interests of the research. The purpose and function of the groups was a reflection of various aspects of community identity. The most pertinent aspects were: renewal, regeneration, heritage, community organisation and advocacy. These aspects of community identity allowed the research to explore the theoretically implicit interests of class, ethnicity, and spatiality. Out of the initial ten groups, only four were forthcoming with support for the research. The only community forum contactable was CHCF. Further groups were contacted at the *2006 Orsett Show*. This was a public event where the groups promoted their activities. It created a face-to-face means to introduce the research and the interviews and contacts gained contributed a major component of the research, providing access to four groups and several individual respondents. There were eight groups interviewed in total. These were, TRP, CHCF, ETCA, CTC, SBC, LHG, BS, and TRUST. Within these groups interviewees were chosen with respect to their role, i.e. the chair, secretary, or other notable position within the groups' administration. Further interviews were conducted with lay members upon recommendation by the latter respondents.

The groups most cautious of the research were difficult to establish trust relationships, their concerns as to the integrity of the research reflected the analysis in relation to social capital. ETCA were extremely sceptical, it took two formal letters and three telephone calls to secure access to their association. The first 12 minutes of the initial interview with Les and Mary consisted of them establishing

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whether or not the research would be used by the ‘government’, and to whose interests it represented. They were informed that the research was a community study of social life in Thurrock, funded by the ESRC. CTC were bemused as to the request for them to participate. Instead, trust was built by empowering the group themselves to have significance within Thurrock’s civic society. Members took their participation in CTC for granted and attached no immodest labels to their civic endeavour. Overall, they were honoured at the recognition, but suspicious of the motives of research. Much of the suspicion from groups and private individuals was expressed as a disdain for research, which was an outcome of government planning strategy, or whistle-blowing journalism. It was noted in a number of interviews that the researcher may be a reporter in disguise. Their perception of research was confined by discourses arranged by tabloid journalism. There was a distrust of research in general at SBC, due to their experiences with TTGDC. CHCF was more forthcoming and enjoyed the opportunity to be involved. Their involvement was short-lived as the chair of the forum stepped down and no further contact could be arranged. In tandem with the analysis of progressive social capital TRP were overwhelmingly forthcoming and took every opportunity to introduce the research to their members and associate interests. It was through one of their key members that access was granted to further aspects of social and civic life within Tilbury, of which much is used in the analysis.

The councillors were chosen on the basis of the ward they represented, position within the council, or their interest in the research. They were all forthcoming with information and interest in the project. They were the easiest ‘group’ with which trust was built and required no incentive to participate. Many groups and associations required ‘moral persuasion’ as to the benefit of contribution to stocks of public knowledge. Interviewing councillors provided an administrative dimension to the interests espoused by private groups. This was an innovative strategy that questioned the theoretical assumptions of social capital and widened the scope of interests within Thurrock. It did this by showing the relationship between public and private sectors via individual councillors. There were three from the serving administration, two from the opposition, and one independent. They held interests in planning, culture & business, the PCT, entrepreneurialism, education, social services, and minority communities. In addition, interviews were conducted with local Labour Party officials and local government officials working



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in the planning department. These were analysed in the same category as councillors, i.e. as authority interests, because they occupied positions of institutional power and influence.

The interviews with private individuals represented the ‘deepest’ phase of the ethnography. These were the most *ad-hoc* and difficult to attain. Where possible respondents were approached through a public front, such as a business, but due to the exclusionary status of many in the new community it was a case of turning everyday interactions into a directed aspect of the research practice. This included the use of hair salons, and local services; or striking conversations up in public places such as Grays and Tilbury town train stations, Civic Square in Tilbury, the public lending library, and on public transport. Ironically, these respondents were overwhelmingly positive and receptive to the research. All seemed to appreciate the ‘human touch’. Yomi commented that the odd and cautious behaviour of white Tilbury residents was contrasted by the friendly face-to-face interview scenario he accidentally found himself in due to missing his train to Fenchurch St. Syd, another Nigerian respondent remarked how odd but illuminating it was for two strangers to sit together on the bench at Tilbury Station. These interviews, although almost all were under fifteen minutes, allowed for respondents to orientate their comments and opinions as part of the lived environment. This was the case with the three interviews conducted at Civic Square, Tilbury. Ken, Jean, and Michelle all used observable physical sites to ground their narratives of loss. In these often accidental locations respondents were empowered to express their private fears and frustrations.

This was an ‘outreach’ strategy and as learned in interviews with Hajra from TRUST and Kellie at SureStart, was not unreliable. Both agencies used this *ad-hoc* face-to-face approach in order to extend their services to those classified as ‘hard to reach’. In association with this strategy several African businesses were approached. These were salons, IT and computer businesses, convenience stores and markets, and a car wash. Interviews were conducted with employers, employees, and clients as they continued their everyday business. The use of their services was a sound strategy to establish trust and reciprocity. These provided illuminating insights and observations into the way social life was conducted by the new community. It served as a valuable contextualising addition to their vocal narratives. They also

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provided first hand experience that countered the myths associated with gendered Black identity and their mythical exclusionary practises against whites.

Much like the initial decision to employ an ethnographic framework, the structure of the interviews was a pragmatic outcome of the social role and location of the respondent. The overall style of interviewing was qualitative and conformed to Burgess's strategy of 'conversations with a purpose' (Burgess 1991). These are open-ended exchanges with the respondents where the degree of structure was controlled by the thematic purpose of the interview (Pole and Lampard 2002). In practice the interviews relied on conversations about a pre-generated list of topics. Due often to a lack of time restraint interviewees were encouraged to extend, describe, and digress as much as they felt necessary. The interviews relied less on specific questions and direction by the interviewer and more upon what the respondents felt important to their role, interest, or issue under discussion. The interviews with councillors contained the most pre-determined structure as often participation was guaranteed only after a list of questions/issues was supplied. Due to their roles and responsibilities being aspects of public knowledge there was an established body of foreknowledge to question individual councillors. This stock of foreknowledge upon which interview structure was premised declined with respect to the distance of the respondent from public structures. The interviews with groups meant that much time was spent assessing the groups' function and remit. These were the longest interviews, regularly extending to several hours as key respondents established a body of essential foreknowledge upon which further research could be substantiated. The extreme end of this scale was the interviews with private individuals in accidental locations. These exchanges contained little structure, there were few definitive questions. Instead, respondents were engaged in discussions that explored diffuse and existential aspects of their lives and spatial awareness. It was through these that the discourses of commonality were observed.

The issues raised in interviews were often informed by stories and comments observed in the TG. This triangulated data from all aspects of the ethnographic framework. It had the advantage of providing legitimacy when discussing local issues and theoretical interests with respondents. The TG content provided foreknowledge that was hitherto unavailable to the research. Several respondents, especially Clive and Mary were suspicious of the 'cosmopolitanesque' character of social research. Knowledge, such as housing developments, local

groups, and ‘popular sentiment’ allowed theoretical and academic interests to be communicated via locally known references. This allowed the development of trust and reciprocity and was a key strategy that opened up the respondents’ private worlds.

All of the interviewees provided verbal and written consent and all have been represented with pseudonyms. In total there were 72 separate respondents recorded over 6 months, across 42 individual sessions. Only 58 of these respondents have been represented in the analysis, for practical reasons of readability and transparency. The salient themes throughout the ethnography are those that were expressed by majorities of people within the research, unless otherwise specified. For instance Brian and Kitty are referred to most in relation to CTC. This was because they were the most vocal and articulate and secondly, because the other respondents largely mimicked Brian’s narratives. Kitty’s stories were represented for their uniqueness and as a counter-narrative to certain claims by Brian. The interviews and quotes used were by no means easily generalisable due to their often unique and *ad-hoc* manifestation. The ethnography overall went a considerable way into penetrating these invisible, unknown, or neglected spaces. Indeed non-replicability was the ethnographic framework’s strength not its methodological undoing.

### **Ethical considerations**

*“...Doing some research eh? At last one of us is going to say something. Help us get these gypos and wogs out, instead of all the ‘research’ you hear about that keeps ‘em coming in, in the first place...” (Darren – A White Male Interviewee)*

As reflected in a myriad of other studies on whiteness, the issue involved some serious considerations of ethics, as value judgements had to be made about the legitimacy of expression (Hewitt 2006). Ethical issues arose over the course of the ethnography in relation to the basis of solidarity with respondents. The above quote was made in 2004 by a middle aged white male who worked in key accounts for a major credit provider. Its expression within the context of my previous research project based upon working class masculinities in Thurrock signalled the beginning of an intellectual journey of whiteness, self-identity, and solidarity. In Becker’s terms *whose side was I on?* (Becker 1967) This was not something that was easily

and readily available to argue to respondents or immediate from the outset of the investigation. The problem with quotidian racism was that white people automatically expected its reciprocation by other white people; the research process was no exception. This reinforced the notion that narratives of land and people were immutably racial in essence.

Racism as defined by Back is any ideas about social groups that can be reduced to immutable racial boundaries of derogation (Back 1996). Whilst this is a definitive description it can be interpreted as diffuse when applied to instances of social interaction. For example, it doesn't address whether certain 'racist' ideas are more deleterious than others, their relationship to human experience, or why racism should be considered immoral in the first instance. This research adds to this description by highlighting that racism is particularly deleterious when attached to claim to rights. The above quote is racist as it is claiming for the removal of ethnic others in favour of the ethnic group of the claimant. Further to this is the added dimension that it is a clarion call for other 'like' people to forge solidarity on the issue. It is unique in that its claim is for the research to provide advocacy and a body of vanguard knowledge against what could broadly be described as 'cosmopolitanism'. It was a political call for racist action that demanded a sincere non-rhetorical answer on behalf of academic research.

In most instances the research challenged the demands of ethnic and racial solidarity and misinformation. This rarely seemed to affect respondents' judgment, but it ensured that the research conformed to standards of anti-racism established by the ESRC and BSA; and that respondents knew that I would not validate their claims. The interviews at ETCA were particularly confrontational. When asked about whether I agreed with their views I used the example of living in Leicester to argue that I had an acceptance of diversity due to my lived circumstances. This was similar to a lesser degree in CTC interviews. It was agreed by respondents that I could not understand their predicament because I did not live in the area or was not familiar with the place. I was born and raised in Grays and Tilbury, I left when I was 24 to study Sociology; I returned in 2006, the social change was stark as was the shift in my emotional attachment to the place and the people. The irony was that Mary at ETCA was not originally local, I was for want of a better description more 'local', but due to my movement away from the area and into Sociology I had lost my claim to be at one with the 'land and people'. I was therefore on the side of a

cosmopolitan anti-racist ethic and throughout the research shared more with the interests of the new community and those that promoted an open response to the regeneration of a land that when I left in 2000 was in a state of destitution and its people in need of renewal.

### **The lyrics of story-telling**

It was this interest in regeneration and renewal via an anti-racist de-construction of land and people that vindicated the lyrical style of the written presentation of data. The analysis is presented in a way that sincerely represents the respondents' narratives, but refuses to become embroiled in their 'logic' of racist dogma. This was further reinforced by the fact that the respondents on most accounts failed to provide evidence to arrest their claims. Thusly, respondent narratives of change and the current state of the area were simply stories that expressed hitherto non-reflexive dimensions of their existence, non-related to the phenomena of their woes. The central issue underlying all racist resentment was a feeling of the loss of ownership. It was, as much recent sociological work shows, underscored by class processes. However, for reasons that will be fully argued in the conclusion, social class has been de-centred in the analysis. Recent studies of working class culture have often overlooked the way their data expresses cultural concerns of whiteness and English identity. This is particularly notable as observations seen to be associated with social class are unique to white people. Social class as envisioned by the classical canon is not a cultural concept, but an economic form of measurement and categorisation of social relationships (Crompton 1998). It is a common concept not unique to what is effectively being dealt with as a specific cultural group. Although highly articulate and informative, recent studies of social class by authors such as Skeggs erect sympathy for white working class culture that inadvertently neglects to theorise its relationship to whiteness and English identity (Skeggs 1997; 2005). Recent political commentary on diversity makes similar statements that mistakenly attribute commonality only to white groups under a general rubric of economics. The use of lyric was a strategic means to avoid apportioning sympathy to the 'plight' of racist respondents merely because they express subordination and exploitation via stoical class narratives.

Abbott argues extensively that lyric should replace narrative in sociological writing. He describes this as a writing style that is engaged in the location and

moment of social life. Central to this activity is an emotional stance to sociological writing where the author is conscious of self and represents the phenomena under study as they themselves experienced it. This is in contradiction to the narrative writer who seeks to re-tell what was observed and to explain it in ‘scientific’ terms as a sequence of variables. He argues that in lyrical sociology there is no real causal story, but a need to wax lyrical about how individuals experience chance, intention, and meaning within the social world (Abbott 2007). The analysis uses lyric for similar purposes which enables the text to convey the *sense* of each interview or encounter. An explicit example is in the way inanimate objects are described as meaningful in relation to respondent narratives. Lyric is further used to convey how location was experienced as part of the ethnographic framework. Many of the observations have been presented in lyrical terms, because their expression as meaningful in any other way fails to convey their relationship to the interviews. This was notably the case with observations around conduct in public places. Ultimately, lyric has been used to pursue the immediacy of encounters to the analysis. The alternative means of representation would be to numerically represent instances, but this would obscure the fact that the research was based upon *ad-hoc* scenarios. Due to the aforementioned practical reasons the research wasn’t based upon a quantitatively reliable sampling strategy; therefore to represent data numerically, would simply be an insincere approach to engage the reader.

However, it would be foolish to disregard narrative altogether as respondents constructed their discourses of social change in a narrative order. They used conventional aspects of narrative such as a chronological succession of events that implied change in present circumstances. Within this they made use of kernel and satellite events and actions to structure the meaning of their narratives on social change. For example, Kitty used the ‘prefabs’ as the kernel of her narrative, but this included satellite components such as the lack of sanitation or the ‘backwardness’ of locals, to provide illustration that she saw change as a social good. Franzosi argues that narrative is important in sociological writing not necessarily because it provides a cause and effect chain of logic, but because it can reveal how individual instances/actions/narratives are enmeshed within wider social relations (Franzosi 1998). The analysis uses lyric to represent the narratives constructed by respondents so as not to endorse their world perspective, but to locate it within wider social relations. Consequently, the presentation of data extends these particular encounters

to a general perspective on community renewal and identity presented in the final chapter of the ethnography

Despite Abbott's argument to the contrary the analysis is written mostly in the third person and in the past tense to reinforce the fact that it was constructed from a solid analytical framework. This was developed using Glaser and Strauss' Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). It was via this contextualisation of the data in space and time that allowed it to move from the particular to the general. The advantage of using Grounded Theory for this activity was that it enabled relationships between concepts and coding devices that were not *ad-hoc* or convenient. In this, it brought elements and relationships to the surface that was at first glance indeterminate, insignificant, or invisible. It was through this process that the concept of 'interest' emerged. On initial inspection of the field notes this was simply remarked upon as 'group activity', and played no explanative role in the wider analysis. When the concept of interest was produced and applied to these instances a relationship emerged that led to the observation of two types of social capital: regressive and progressive. Each chapter is presented as a reflection of the coding model developed, in that each paragraph deals with a specific concept or attribute there of. They are ordered sequentially not to create a cause and effect or linear temporal narrative, but to highlight the complicity of a multitude of often unrelated issues to a wider sociological argument regarding the 'English Question' and community renewal.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that classic community studies have been complicit in the proliferation of conventional narratives of land and people. This occurred via its collective use of the concept of community to talk un-reflexively about a majority of people with naturalistic overtones of human togetherness. It was argued that contemporary living has challenged this orthodoxy and highlights choice and reflexivity in examples of community and solidarity. It was argued that community was premised upon interest and not fatalistically determined via social profile. The research questions were aimed at breaking apart conventional narratives of land and people. They were explored by using community as a spatial frame of reference. This included the consideration of community as a contested not fixed terrain, containing multiple voices and fluid usages of the land. Thurrock was argued to

provide a superlative example to apply this strategy to these research questions. This was because it was a Unitary Authority with fixed administrative boundaries. It was an archetypal spatial reflection of the white majority, which was being challenged by growing super-diversity invisible from public knowledge.

It was argued that an ethnographic framework was employed to study community in Thurrock as a pragmatic response to the private and unknown nature of the subject matter. Qualitative methods have been appraised in relation to their application to this practical dilemma; thusly their hermeneutic outcome is pragmatic moreover than *ars gratia artis*. The subjective elements of the fieldwork inevitably explored the private domains of respondents' attitudes and narratives and in many instances this delved into racial territory. It was argued that lyric helped sideline the logic of respondents' narratives whilst retaining subjective depth and analytical clarity. The use of lyric in the presentation of data provided an honest reflection of the *ad-hoc* research process than would numerical validation. The appeals to generalisability made via particular instances were warranted upon the use of grounded theory, which provided the analysis with a solid conceptual framework. Ultimately, the chapter re-appraises the use of qualitative ingenuity in light of previous criticisms levelled at community studies; in that the study transgressed the boundaries of public knowledge, allowing sociological discovery and insight into unknown private worlds and to generalise these findings to wider debates on national identity and community.



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## **An English Wonderland: The Cultural & Symbolic Level**

This chapter is based upon the content analysis of the Thurrock Gazette (hereafter referred to as the TG). As the paper was directed towards a target local audience it revealed the cultural and symbolic level of local identity and its relationship to English identity. Therefore the TG was the closest approximation of the majority identity as its circulation figure was estimated at around 55,000 as noted on its front page. The analysis sought to discover the cultural attributes of local identity and to assess the degree of openness it displayed to diversity and difference. The chapter is presented as a trilogy that reflects the TG's construction of localism from three related angles. These cover the spatial, temporal, and moral attributes of local identity as well as its origins as a response to globalisation and its use as a device of internal discipline. Within the analysis of the TG's construction of localism the chapter builds upon the discussion in the literature review to establish the discourses of commonality as nationalism and white experience. Overall, the chapter argues that English identity was the political expression of localism embodied as a fusion of land and people. The free press was an important consideration as it imagined the temporal and spatial attributes to local identity as fixed thus prescribing the discourses of commonality across Thurrock (Anderson 1991). The research explored whether the TG reinforced conventional narratives of land and people to dispute fluidity and multiplicity in order to consolidate a singular voice for the local. This was an attempt by a private interest to renew and re-enchant white working class community with English identity.

## ***Part I: Where We Are***

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The spatial context of Thurrock identity envisioned by the TG was located at the margins of globalisation and non-local governance. This was established by reports centred on the EU and regeneration. Localism emerged as a glocal response to these political and economic factors. Therefore localism was indicative of the fusion of land and people common to English identity. The efforts by the TG to solidify a local response were 'conservative' in comparison to the left-libertarian doctrines of glocalisation seen elsewhere in the Anti-Globalisation literature (Albrow 1997; Kingsnorth 2008; Roudometof 2005). The section argues that the TG's localism was prefaced by a concern with vulnerability. This is a human condition that reflects dependency on others. It is argued that trust, solidarity, and co-operation are emergent from such a condition (Misztal 2008). However, it is argued herein that vulnerability underscored claims on national identity explicitly as the claims represented choices in political advocacy. It was the construction of localism as vulnerable that prompted the TG to align its interests with Royalty and the Armed Forces, as opposed to Human Rights law or progressive politics. This alignment acted as a vanguard to empower localism as an English identity against the foreign and the alien as opposed to an inclusive renewal of community.

### **Fortress England**

On April 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 the TG printed a story claiming Coalhouse Fort, East Tilbury would be relocated further downstream of the Thames Estuary. The Fort was a historic monument to Thurrock's strategic position on the Thames. It was a symbol of national defence that had been used for military manoeuvres since the Victorian era. The story claimed that a new EU directive regarding the sight line of ships meant that the Fort was now too close to the river's edge. The move prompted outcry from local history groups and the story continued pessimistically claiming the very essence of Thurrock's heritage was being uprooted, physically, by extraneous dominant political and economic forces. One of the final examples of Thurrock's continuous existence through industrial/modern times was to feel the touch of contemporary tides in extra-national political governance. The relocation would be a juncture in this historical legacy as the newly placed Coalhouse Fort would realign the relationship between

Thurrock and the wider world. It would be an in-authentic monument signifying ‘interference’ rather than legitimate local history. The report accused the EU of the theft of local memory and illustrated a generic resentment towards extraneous political and economic realities.

A few weeks later a letter was printed claiming the report bogus. The letter pointed out that the EU had no such policy. In support of this the letter noted the original publication date of April 1<sup>st</sup>. The fact that this report was an *April Fools* joke, did not invalidate the ‘outrage’. The report deployed and attempted to fortify English identity against the pervasiveness of globalisation. In doing so, it signalled the observation that English identity was made explicit when the nation appeared under threat (Billig 1995; Kumar 2003). The site was as Palmer describes, a ‘golden space’ that venerated nationalism and as such it was a physical flagging of the function the locality occupied in respect of a historical national order (Palmer 2002). The use of humour was a cathartic strategy that revealed the tender points of national consciousness; it reflected vulnerability in the face of globalisation.

Further reports regarding glocal consequences revealed fear, anxiety, and loss of control as Thurrock residents were imagined as local folk on the fringes of a globalised world order. Insecurities were reinforced with reports detailing the proposed Superport, which was to be built on land currently used by an oil refinery at Shell Haven. Reports regarding the planning stages of this development were common-place in the TG, but they contained little substantive news. They signified that the area’s future was at the mercy of non-local forces, and that there was no local voice in the planning. Sentiments gesturing to a lack of local voice and agency were common. The following quotes from a spokesperson of a non-descript conservationist concern reflect the resignation prevalent within the TG’s reporting of the affair, “*We are very disappointed but not surprised we believe that the decision was approved in-house a long time ago, despite all the delays*”. The spokesperson further added sentiments of loss and fear with, “*Thurrock has to recognise it will be open to all sorts of development now. In a decade the borough will become the new East End*”, when asked about the impact upon the community itself he finished with a popular comment, “*I think in time I will be looking to move on*”. The TG coverage used these views to reinforce a passive resignation to development and regeneration, which reflected fear and anxiety, rather than debate as to the probable benefits. The TG was selective in using these kinds of spurious organisations for quotations as a means to

articulate the helplessness felt in the face of globalisation. Quotes from credible origins especially local authorities were sceptically presented as lacking authenticity and sincerity. This was reflective of the hostility to political administration the TG attempted to subvert when it defined the population in local and folk terms.

A fusion of land and people was a particular focus that created a sense of belonging. English identity was a ‘closed’ ethnic group due to putative ties of blood and soil. Emotion was a way in which this bond manifested in reports and was regarded as a capacity signifying authenticity; said to be lacking in the wheels of governance. Coverage pertaining to plans regarding the erection of mobile telephone masts was used to make this explicit. Reports conjured a relationship between the anti-mobile telephone mast protest and the peasants’ revolt of 1381, which was said to have started in the same village. A particular headline was explicit: “*Villagers’ Revolt*”. The residents’ concern was legitimised through their use of heritage and conservation, ideals related to land usage resistant to change and development. This was contrasted with a similar report on the protest to erect a telephone mast on a busy round-a-bout in North Grays; the location was between three primary schools. The coverage was in relation to unwarranted fears over the health of children and as such was about the threat of technology to the future generations. These examples exposed localism as a legitimate response to globalisation. This was articulated via concerns relating to childhood security or social change, which sought by their very nature to threaten a bond between land and people. It was notable that both these masts were already vetoed by the local council before any protest took place; the construction of this magical bond of land and people was something constructed *a posteriori* by the TG.

These reports were a means to secure solidarity in the face of globalisation. They failed to give voice to any suggestion that development and regeneration could contribute to the social, economic, and environmental regeneration of Thurrock. Instead they over-emphasised fear, anxiety, and loss that referenced regeneration as a means by which the pathologies of metropolitan living would invade the local area. This was apparent in reports of the Thamesgate Regeneration Project, which was represented in reference to the preservation of green belt. This project would provide much needed infra-structure and regeneration to East Tilbury, an area in decline since the closure of the Bata shoe factory. Although, there was much local support for the project, the TG emphasised the local voice of protest at the development as a localism

antithetical to modernity. As with the spokesperson quoted above a narrative was generated that referenced the South East becoming swallowed up by Greater London and with it the evils of immigration and crime would arrive. Phrases such as “*becoming the East End*” were encoded references to the multi-culturalism and cosmopolitanism of the area that 40 years ago was home to the white working classes who now lived in these parts of Essex (Back 1996, Dench *et al* 2006). The fear generated in the TG sympathised with this sentiment as it reflected the belonging embodied in a synthesis of land and people.

Overall, globalisation was seen as an entirely exterior economic and political force with no human or emotional attributes. The local people were the holders of emotion and this was displayed in reference to a concern with ‘authenticity’, which was represented as lacking voice on a wider nation public stage. The TG’s reporting attempted to create a platform for the common people to express their injuries of global social, economic, and political development. It created one voice to express vulnerability in regards globalisation. The TG imagined the position of Thurrock people on the edges of despair being pushed further and further from their sense of self and place.

### **A warm welcome**

A local link to nationalism was imagined to counteract the marginality felt by globalisation and cosmopolitanism. This occurred when non-local interests gestured to local sentimentality with acts of benevolence. The endorsement of larger powerful interests, particularly those of Royalty and the charitable endeavours of national companies integrated folk feeling with an imagined national community. The charitable sponsorship of the *Orsett in Bloom* organisation by the locally loathed *Cory Environmental* exemplified this endorsement. One example of a story heralded the generosity of *Cory Environmental* as they were proudly reported to have “*stepped in*” with £25,000 for the landscape of an old church garden in Orsett. The company were obliged under the Landfill Tax regulations to award money via their own trust to promote community renewal. The report sequestered this regulation and lauded the company by emphasising the plight of the *Orsett Churches Centre*. It presented the donation as a spontaneous action of philanthropy. Orsett was a small village to the North of Essex; its history was steeped in agriculture and landed aristocracy. It was the most affluent, professional and middle class of all wards in Thurrock, where the

sanctity of ruralism, environmentalism, and the virtuousness of charity were reinforced. These were attributes strongly linked to English identity and were reflective of powerful social relations and national historical cultural constructs (Colls 2002, Kumar 2003, Palmer 2002).

The representation of relations to Royalty and the Armed Forces further revealed benevolence and provided cultural recognition for Thurrock. It was with these endorsements that Thurrock's relationship to the nation was imagined and fixed. This presented English identity as an ethnicity with a privileged access to power unattainable for other ethnicities. It allowed for a powerful sense of solidarity for the TG to imagine political institutions and local community. The affiliation with Royalty legitimised the illiberal status of the TG's localism and re-imagined the politics of a multi-cultural Britain. This link made English identity a mono-cultural and closed entity. This was unlike Kumar's suggestion that it could exist alongside a plethora of other cultural identifications (Kumar 2003). The TG represented the authority of Royalty as superior to institutions of democracy and multi-cultural citizenship. Far from being an effort to distance English identity from British identity this was an effort to reclaim Britain, for the English.

This affiliation was legitimated in a report centred upon a man whose father died whilst they were both watching the 2006 FA cup final. After hearing of the incident, Prince Charles spent "*over ten minutes*" consoling the man and as a result, was late for presenting the trophy. The sentiments expressed by the grieving man illustrated the comfort in which recognition by Royalty could imbue. The report concluded with the man claiming: "*it gave me real strength while I was trying to come to terms with my father's death.*" Another form of recognition was a report regarding a young man from Tilbury who received an award from the Prince's Trust. It was explained that he suffered from ADHD, was a low achiever at school and via the help of the Prince's Trust had gained life direction, "*I wasn't going anywhere in my life. I wanted to do something, but couldn't. Now with the help of the Prince's Trust help I have done a forklift training course so I can go and get a job.*" Tilbury was the most socially and economically deprived ward in Thurrock, it also contained the highest levels of unemployment and lowest academic achievement amongst young men (Appendix). There was considerable derision of Tilbury and its inhabitants elsewhere in the TG in relation to crime and disorder. The juxtaposition of this young man's recognition by the Prince's Trust with such derision revealed the way Royalty

was presented as a ‘saviour’ and ‘vanguard’ for people with a sense of virtue performed from personal responsibility. This recognition reminded readers of the hegemonic solidarity required to become a *valued* member of localism. This recognition signified the ethnic and racial discourses of community.

The MBE awards were an obvious example of Royal recognition and were used to reflect virtuosity bound to land and people. This was embodied in the headline: “*Queen’s birthday honours for three stalwarts of the borough’s community*”. All three of these people were heralded as having their commitment to the area recognised by the Queen; one was a war veteran, one a head-teacher at a successful school, the other was a woman praised for her general volunteering and work with St John’s Ambulance services. However, the praise upon these locals was contrasted with the omission of the MBE awarded to a local labour councillor of Asian origin who had been living in the area for over 30 years and in all this time had been involved heavily in local education and local politics. It was notable that it was only in the council sponsored advertisement that this accolade was celebrated. It could, conceivably, be his Asian origins or his standing as a councillor that contributed to the lack of recognition in the main pages of the TG. An omission in relation to either of these reflected the TG’s construction of ‘virtuosity’, which excluded individuals viewed as in-authentic by not being of ‘blood or soil’, which included politicians and recent migrants. The values of inclusion were somewhat inflexible on the discourses of commonality.

The recognition stemming from the Armed Forces was more than symbolic it revealed them as a ‘vanguard’ for localism on the international stage. This was a powerful affiliation as it connected the present state of localism with past Imperial military glory. One report centred on the decision of the Royal Anglian Regiment to exercise their freedom of the borough to march through the streets of Grays. The language in the report referred to the civilian attendees as “*flag wavers’ in salute of the soldiers*”. It concluded with a comment from the Conservative mayor: “*it gave us a chance to say a thank-you to the troops representing all the country’s armed forces who put their lives on the line for us on a daily basis*”. There were four colour images to support this story of just over two hundred words. Another report carried the headline “*Campaign medal for Mark*”. The story purported to be about a Thurrock soldier with the Chelmsford branch of the Territorial Army, who was awarded a medal for serving in Basra, Iraq. However, the story continued with no comments

from the soldier or any further details of his commendation. It simply re-iterated the situation in Iraq for the Royal Anglian Regiment. The story was accompanied by coverage of Remembrance Day. It appeared that however tenuous the link with Thurrock and international armed conflict the paper reported the stories from a pro-war position, which congratulated the role of the Armed Forces as a national vanguard for localism; and not the stated aims and objectives of those conflicts by the UK and US governments, however tenuous they might be! The ideological character of this affiliation was decidedly imperialist. Set against globalisation and cosmopolitanism it was a claim on power for local identity, in order to heal the exposure of local vulnerability.

The TG reports endorsed certain non-local interests when they putatively benefited localism. Notions of benevolence, recognition and vanguard status were represented as local benefits influencing decisions to endorse outside interests. Charity endeavours softened concerns to otherwise 'rejected' forms of industry and commerce. However jaded and cynical these efforts may have been, the TG overwhelmingly and for probably good reason, represented them as benevolent and spontaneous. Secondly, local relations with Royalty and the Armed Forces were endorsed by the TG's reporting and were used to connect localism with national solidarity. Similar incursions by elected politicians were not treated with nowhere near the degree of reverence and submissiveness to State power and authority (an example was Ruth Kelly MP's visit to Thurrock Adult College, where much of the report derided her confidence in the integrity of CRB checks of new teachers). Indeed, this was a central component of Colls' (2002) argument that English identity has always set itself apart from the creature of administrative politics. A social relationship was constructed around the role of Royalty and the Armed Forces as a vanguard and saviour of localism. This was a symbolically constructed ethnicity consisting of common people that functioned to empower a sense of place and identity felt to be marginalised in a global world. It was a closed and illiberal solidarity, due to the way in which authority was bestowed upon traditional institutions. Royalty and the Armed Forces promoted an imperialistic local defensiveness against cosmopolitan social and political interests.



## From the heart

Narratives of offering via the presentation of ‘war tribute’ represented localism as an authentic claim on national solidarity. These manifested emotionally in regards sensations of individual or collective pride about the sacrifice of locals during war time. This echoed the arguments of Bonnett (1998), and Dench *et al* (2006), whereby the Royal recognition of East Enders during the final phases of WWII included the working classes into a sense of Imperial Britishness; Bonnett extended this to explain their inclusion into a colonial construction of a single white race. A double page spread devoted to Remembrance Day was a vivid reminder of how tributes to armed conflict created a bond between localism and the imagined national community. A poignant element of these tributes was that they occurred simultaneously throughout the country with a two-minute silence at the sound of the Last Post. The report emphasised this locally by referring to the synchronous tributes held in five separate towns across the borough. The connection between locality and nation was manifest in the recital of the dead; the report was an ode to this ‘offering’ and ‘sacrifice’ of local blood. A quote from a councillor articulated these feelings: *“The annual memorials ensure we always remember the brave men and women of our armed forces who have given their lives for our country.”*

The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Somme reported pilgrimages to the battlefield itself, this was symbolic of the ‘authenticity’ embodied in the act of remembrance. There were two stories regarding this in the 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2006 edition. The first reported the pilgrimage made by the local MP and the editor of the TG, the other was about a group of college students who went on the pilgrimage. The pair laid a wreath at the site on behalf of the Royal British legion in Grays, adjacent to the graves of two men from Essex. The spirit of local connections to the nation was explicit in the editor’s quote: *“Men of Essex who fell far from home, but who are not forgotten rings true across their home county.”* The tension between localism and political administration in regards authenticity was explicit in the editor’s quote about a serving member of the government who made a speech: *“Sadly our political leaders continue to fail us. Among much that was memorable, we also suffered the indignity of seeing the Minister for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain – in my opinion as shallow, shameless and unprincipled, self-serving a politician as they come – stumbling and stuttering his way through reading the exhortation.”* The quote went on to refer to him as an “apologist

*supporter of appeasement on those bloodstained fields, among men he clearly has little in common with.*" These sentiments epitomised a distain for political institutions of government. The tone of the quote, which was common throughout the TG, showed the figures involved in the administrative institutions of the British State to be alien from the blood of the people. Instead the allegiance of localism was posted by the TG to Royalty and the Armed Forces, due to their vanguard role.

These acts of civic remembrance and their representation in the TG were not simply political or cultural narratives of past events for use in the present (Misztal 2003). They were synchronous rituals that functioned to bind land and people in much the same way as the 'cenotaph' did for Anderson's account of the imagined community (Anderson 1991). As such social memory was a form of social integration described as the historical origins of a contemporary local identity. Local remembrance emerged as a local consent to State sponsored remembrance and in doing so made inclusive claims upon the nation with reference to human sacrifice. In these instances land and people were fused into a single entity of English localism. In this there were two related processes; firstly, they generated narratives of attachment to historic event. This legitimised the active role played by the locality as it fostered a share in the ownership of national myth and symbolism. Legitimacy was further served by first hand testimonies of local elders. Secondly, it showed reproduction and attempted to bequeath this ownership across generations by emphasising social memory to youngsters as part of their civic socialisation. This was revealed in the quote by one of the students present on the pilgrimage: *"The day was a really valuable and moving experience for the students...about the importance of our never forgetting this terrible conflict and all the lost lives of the young men from Essex and elsewhere."* Meanwhile, back in Thurrock, members of the local community were busy re-enacting *The Battle of the Somme* at Tilbury Fort. A following edition reported on the event and highlighted the way in which children were socialised into this collective social memory: *"There was even a chance for children to get involved with activities, including taking part in military drills on the parade ground."*

The TG represented remembrance as a ritual that bolstered solidarity via the racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. As such it was an active claim to national solidarity and was a means to fuse a conception of *these* people and *their* land. It achieved this by emphasising local sacrifice of life and personal testimony. Remembrance signalled the active role social memory played in reproducing bonds

between land and people on an inter-generational level, by inculcating in youngsters an ideologically Anglophile conception of 20<sup>th</sup> Century World History. The promotion of remembrance by youth was a ritual to congeal putative historical blood ties and to secure solidarity for the future; one that would continue the historic relationship of land and people against the encroaching realities of globalisation and cosmopolitanism.

## **Conclusion**

The first section has established the spatial and political context from which the TG forged local identity. The meaning of localism was fermented as a response to the rupture caused by globalisation. It was argued that localism was underpinned by a subjective cultural powerlessness in its relations with globalisation, cosmopolitanism, and trans-national migration. The representation of localism as ‘vulnerable’ within these political and social relations prompted the requirement to solidify the links between land and people via the ethnic and racial discourses of commonality explored in the literature review. The TG was a textual account of this as an ongoing, unfinished, and contested program for local solidarity. The TG gave a nationalist edge to localism by promoting Royalty and the Armed Forces as vanguard authority figures. This was an effort to align with non-cosmopolitan and non-bureaucratic institutions of authority as a counterforce against New Labour, the EU, and other forms of non-local governance. The analysis of war tribute and Royalty made localism a synonym for an often unspoken English political identity. The section concluded by arguing that the establishment of a defiant localism was the best descriptor of the English political community due to its rebuttal of non-local governance. The analysis argued that these were embodied in local feelings that the land upon which locals dwelt was under threat from non-local others. This was the sentiment embodied within the ritual of war memorial as a local political lambaste at contemporary political relations with the cosmopolitan.

## ***Part II: Who We Are***

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This section uses instances of social memory and virtue to illustrate the essence and contours of localism as bound to discourses of the commonality of white experience. Social memory and virtue as two narratives of identity served to fix a temporal and moral centre of localism to white experience. This provided the soft interior of local identity in respect of the spatial context argued previously. The particularity of whiteness' cultural heritage was obscured by its representation as familiar and intimate with the land. The analysis of personal testimony to construct social memory and the presentation of charity to signify virtue illustrates the contingent nature of representations of common people. The TG made no explicit comment that locals were definitively 'white'. The absence of any reflection on the racial and cultural specificity of common experience revealed the contours of local identity as the domain occupied by white people since WWII. The analytical focus on whiteness reveals the internal conditions of local identity to be concerned with the presentation of virtue to negate the stigmatised history of white identity as a form of colonial dominance. It was the erosion of virtue that signified outrage within the pages of the TG. This section concludes by arguing that the erosion of virtue reflects the spatial context of local identity as it reproduces the contemporary world as unfamiliar to local eyes.

### **A good heart these days is hard to find**

The analysis of local heritage reveals individual, family, and communal histories to be fundamental to narratives of land and people. Whiteness provides the racial boundaries of localism established via the use of personal testimony. Individual history was emphasised through devices such as triumphant wedding anniversaries, local centurions, and life through WWII. These testimonies reflected whiteness as they were presumed to be the solidaristic voices of a local past told through the ordeals of community elders. These stories of the cultural heritage of white experience were told as universal tales. The tales of hardship, bravery, endurance, and sacrifice brought the past to the present. They emphasised concerns of valour and virtuosity via their service to the locality, nation, and to the institution of the family.

Stories regarding life through WWII were inaugurated as part of triumphant wedding anniversaries, particularly when they coincided with the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of WWII. The stories created a symbiotic relationship between love and war with both narrative and headline: “*Getting on with it!*”, “*Love last over the years*”, and “*Bombers couldn’t dent Tony’s love*”, were all examples of how the family was represented as a force for social struggle against outside interference. Through these stories ‘strength’ emerged as a persistent theme in two ways. The first was obviously concerned with strength through war time scenarios; the second was through the life-course with an emphasis upon the nuclear and extended family. The stories often concluded with personal answers to the clichéd question: “*what is the secret of success?*” Answers were predominantly about the support and trust of family networks and relations, such as: “*The support of a happy family and it always has been, happy.*” However, a few noted more intimate qualities of solidarity such as similar interests, loyalty and “*give and take*”. These were personal memories of the particularity of white history and the institutions of its survival.

The reports made a concerted effort to reinforce the virtuosity of family ties by flagging the occupations and life trajectories of offspring and siblings as significant; this aided the presentation of these cases as examples of local integrity. They made reference to the attendance of family relations at the celebratory event marking the anniversary. Family ties and history were used to make assumptions about the historical nature of locals, firstly that locals were ‘blood’ related to those that endured the times preceding them, secondly because the emphasis upon struggle was reduced to the perseverance of family values. In this they provided familiar examples of achievement related and rooted in the area, itself seen as something virtuous. The result of this was that they were stalwarts and the paper underwrote the process as being causally linked to the virtuous notion of marriage and family ties; something that elsewhere in the reporting was viewed in decline. These provided authenticity, by establishing the individual memories of endurance and struggle as a collective representation of local solidarity. The reports naturally sequestered the particularity of these memories of a white experience of post war survival.

Racial and ethnic particularity was obscured as memories were represented as familiar and intimate with the local space. Familiarity and solidarity was achieved by emphasising local experience in a regular feature within the weekly letters page. This section was entitled *Down Memory Lane*; the memories consolidated collective

memory. The lane was meant to be any lane – it was a subjective signpost to conjure in the reader their own past and to imagine it having a place within the collective heritage of the area (or one culturally similar). In this, particular and personal experience was conterminous with a universal norm of an innocent past in the form of ‘halcyon days’. Its position in regards the letters page was important as it distanced editorial subjectivity from the process of vindicating social memory. These memories highlighted contemporary loss next to the pride associated with the former appeal of Thurrock. This was a discovery similar to the ‘bricks and mortar’ of memory discovered by Blokland in her study of the changing suburbs of Rotterdam in The Netherlands; an area with a striking similarity, socially, economically, and culturally to Thurrock. She describes how banal aspects of the physical lived environment were cues for people to talk about loss and the moral state of the present (Blokland 2001).

The feature revealed aspects of society presumed historically universal and concluded lost. The most noticeable examples were photos of buildings that have been demolished and local parades of shops, now presumed defunct due to larger non-local superstores. Examples were an old castle that used to reside in Aveley, and that famed institution in the development of English identity, an old public house in Shell Haven. The more noteworthy were those buildings that had noticeably suffered from changing industrial and commercial function. There were two examples of Tilbury Docks, one showed a bustling overhead view of the main jetty and the Cruise Terminal at the height of use in the 1930s; the other went even further back and showed a portrait of the pre-modern origins of Tilbury Docks. The cruise terminal was now a large empty hangar of ghostly reminders to its former social vibrancy. The docks have largely been automated and machine operated since becoming the UK’s first containerised port in the late 1960s (Hill 1976). The small write up on these photos expressed this loss of purpose to not only these buildings, but their centrality to Thurrock. Their international importance was reflected by their role of greeting home argonauts of the British Empire. Local loss was further represented by photos and memories that lamented the arrival of non-local superstores or in the words of one informant “*before the out of towners took over*”. Examples of this were vividly recollected in reference to the shops in Lampitts Hill in Fobbing, the King’s Parade in Stanford-le-Hope, and Grays town centre c1900. The latter showed a bustling *fin de siècle* town centre before its colonisation by non-local high street vendors and subsequent commercial destruction by the arrival of the Lakeside Shopping Centre

and rising unemployment. This was noted as a turning point for the civic nature of Grays, which was now locally lambasted in the TG for being home to budget purchase outlets.

The feature on Grays Beach swimming pool illustrated memories of civic pride, which were seen to have perished. This area of the Thames had been for many decades unsuitable for bathing due to industrial pollution from shipping and the surrounding chemical processing plants. The photo showed an artificial pool, created by retaining the ebbing tide, as enjoyed by youngsters and their guardians alike. The attached comments referenced the now out-moded form of leisure and the insurrection of State sponsored swimming pools. This was further revealed by a photo showing the commemorative stone placed at Blackshots Swimming Pool being cut to size and inspected by the then town mayor. This piece registered the civic pride ordained in the Blackshots complex that in addition housed Civic Hall. The article endorsed the role civic buildings played in fostering what is desired in the current era by community renewal. This civic pride was a defining narrative of many included memories. There were numerous photographs composed of teams representing different clubs and associations. These ranged from the obvious such as sporting teams, to the obscure with the *Thurrock Society of Model and Experimental Engineers' Society* portrait.

Fond memories of naively carefree times were presented to solidify the innocence of local identity. The photos and numerous memories of the first local bus and coach services readily provided reminders. The solidaristic and communally entitled *our bus service* owned by the convivially remembered *Mr. Benjamin*, was a vessel for many a reported memory of frivolity. One commentator amusingly recalled that the bus driver used to routinely leave people waiting at the bus stop while he diverted the bus along a longer route! The coach services ran by two local concerns, now in the hands of nationwide ownership, used to ferry people to popular seaside resorts for family holidays. The local figure *Joker Jones* (pseudonym) was mentioned in these reports for his eccentric and sexually suggestive behaviour towards young women whilst checking bus tickets. These were fondly remembered examples from a bygone era when an 'odd fellow' who provided ticket inspection was a trusted member of the community. Finally, the pieces brought the past to life by emphasising tradition and those aspects of history still in operation today, i.e. the photo of the 1939 Thurrock Carnival; featuring young men 'blacked-up' and dressed as what were credited as "*Zulus*".

There were several anonymous communal wedding portraits, with people dressed in what were referenced as their “*Sunday best*”, and untraceable funeral processions. One of the central commandments of the *Down Memory Lane* feature was that the photos must be in or related to Thurrock. However, these were two examples of photos that were not empirically validated as being taken in Thurrock, or indeed consisting of Thurrock people. Their inclusion was meaningful as they provided poignant images of social institutions, which elsewhere in the TG coverage were lauded for their virtuous appeal; here they floated as spectral privations to the shifting tides of social and cultural change. They were a reminder to Thurrock’s resident population that such institutions, no matter how vague their connection to the communal past, were stable universal foundations of a fully functional and operable sense of community and belonging, which in the eyes of the TG was forsaken.

Apart from the obvious examples of religious festivals, tradition and continuity with the past was sparse, due to the (unacknowledged) fast changing population demographic of Thurrock. These memories were constructed histories that appeared, via the comments, to create feelings of solidarity, control, and continuity amongst Thurrock’s white residents. However, they were more than just an elaboration of social memory, but were a self-identifying practice of communicating across the divisions of social space. They were a swansong to outsiders who lacked such an intimately exclusive relationship to localism. The narrative of this communiqué was not a consciously xenophobic or defensive solidarity, but a claim on innocence and virtue. The narrative of *Down Memory Lane* linked these memories to the identity of local people as the ‘good guys’ in a mortal struggle against the colonising forces of globalisation. The white experience embodied in these memories was a racial discourse of commonality fused with the land of English localism.

### **Hearts of gold**

The prevalence of reports based around charity signified an emphasis on the virtue of white people. Charity was by far the most coded item in all the analysis, around 1 in 4 TG articles pertained to charity. In-depth analysis of these articles revealed the way in which the TG constructed this virtue from communal sympathy directed towards ‘vulnerable’ subjects, such as cancer patients and children. It was a common-sensical notion that charity automatically conferred on an individual the status of goodness, which included sympathetic and selfless qualities; reflected by the oft-cited phrase



*“Big-Hearted”* accorded to varieties of charitable endeavours, large, small, outstanding, or insignificant. This descriptor was used when the fundraising activity went beyond the regular actions of an individual, either as physically or socially ‘risky’ activities; or included banal donations to charities that showed no substantial endeavour undertaken by the beneficiary. Social risk was prevalent in the reporting of fundraising activities, which shared the description as gestures of the ‘big-hearted’. Social norms were transgressed by two managers of a large superstore who *“swallowed their pride and donned pink for a pedal powered-charity (sic) ride”*; the transgression was reported thusly: *“...cheered on by co-workers who had turned out to witness their big-hearted bosses’ embarrassment”*. It was not only the active beneficiary that earned the accolade of having a big-heart; generic donations of small amounts were represented in the same virtuous tones. Despite the obvious differences in the fund-raising activity the act of charity was always accorded as exceptional and virtuous. The term big-hearted was a signifier of this accolade and was used throughout further reports of charity endeavours.

It was incorrect to assume that Thurrock people were naturally charitable. Many articles obscured the scale of charitable endeavour as they reported the same event across a series of editions. The analysis was best served by looking at the various benefactors as this revealed the contours of white identity. Analytical delineation between adult and child concerns revealed ‘sympathy’ to be an emotion rarely extended beyond the confines of the white ethnic group. These were relative to constructions of vulnerable people such as children and cancer patients within the white category. They were the most vulnerable because their survival was regarded as at the hands of the sympathy of the able. Charity was a means to protect these vulnerable elements of white ethnicity. Charity was not a universal ideal equally distributed across the neediest sections of the global population: Charity started and ended at home, it was self-referential to localism as a synonym for white community.

Charity was important to represent a sense of justice for sick children. These sentiments were expressed in articles relating to the charity for children administered by the British Broadcasting Corporation. This was particularly salient as the charity was focussed annually on a single day, representing as it were a national day of celebration to the plight of children. The TG’s reporting of this celebration was reflective of an emphasis upon adult identity and not the beneficiaries of charity. The reports never drew the readers’ attention to the identity of the imperilled children or

any other information relating to the event and its remit. The cause was a taken-for-granted assumption derived from the command that discourses on childhood possess culturally, which the reader was repeatedly reminded consisted of “*worthy causes*”. The emphasis in all the reports centred on the activities and personalities of the beneficiaries. In this, virtue was constructed via a personal willingness to humble oneself from prior cultural constraints of social behaviour. The charitable activities undertaken conformed to what Goffman referred to as ‘role distance’ (Goffman 1990 [1967]). It was this ‘festival of self-relief’ that was being lauded to illustrate the virtue of localism, not the very serious subject of childhood misfortunes of poverty, disease, and abuse.

When the benefactor was identified as a local institution joviality remained in the reporting. This was present in the report of an elderly woman, twice referred to as ‘big-hearted’, who baked one hundred puddings to sell in aid of a local paediatric hospice. The article was littered with convivial descriptions of the baking process and her generous nature was celebrated by emphasising the effort she had made, with phrases such as “*up to her armpits*”, and “*slaving over one hundred [x]mas puddings*”. These reports were common and shared much with the above national celebration in that they furthered the personal humility illustrated above and expressed the local community as virtuous. There were many reports that exemplified a generic support of paediatric hospitals or children’s charity, without any reference to personal involvement in the institutions’ practice. This was not to suggest that such support was insincere and derived from self-promotion, but that reporting of the issue distanced the fundraising from the very real and tragic consequences of childhood suffering. The TG made continued efforts to promote the personalities of the beneficiaries whilst sequestering the objects of their charitable efforts. It appeared that this reinforced the virtue attributed to locals; rather than providing valuable public service information regarding the benefactor cause.

These examples revealed the virtue of local people with reference to charity and anonymous children. Fundraising events where the benefactors were named provided individual cases of the local community’s vulnerable citizens. In the case of paediatric hospitals the connections were more intimate as the beneficiary had often benefited from the work carried out by the hospital, either personally or via a close relation. Examples referenced children whose future survival was uncertain or fatal. It was the immediacy of an individual suffering child that set these charity reports apart

from others. In these reports there was no jovial or convivial prose. The most moving reports were in reference to the fulfilment of dying 'wishes' and dreams of children imperilled by disease and disorder. These featured young children who had been given the opportunity to visit theme parks in the US or an established toy shop in London as a result of being terminally ill. These features included information about the disorder/disease, the child's quality of life and that of parents, relatives and friends. This was information used to express the uniquely sensitive aspects of childhood suffering. It was absent from other similar reports and for most generic reports on charity fundraising. These stories were central sources of sympathy; they created a lived expression of the meaning implied in more jovial accounts of fundraising. The intimate portrayals gave a sense of identity to the imperilled or ameliorative institutions otherwise absent in the remainder of the TG's coverage of charity fundraisers. These individual children were central to local community, because they were represented by an emotional appeal to 'our' children. It was the proximity of these examples to common local experience that the TG reinforced the contours of localism, because the very concept of childhood was one reduced to local boundaries. As a point of comparison it was not a concept extended to reflect sympathy to imperilled children in, for instance South-East Asia, or Sub-Saharan Africa.

The persistence of references to charity fused local identity with virtue as local people were seen to be motivated by sympathy. This related localism to white experience as it was white people and white vulnerability that was at the moral centre of the charity reports. The charitable activities rarely bridged social and cultural divides and remained relative to the immediate dominant cultural group. This accounted for the dearth of charity aimed at issues regarded as exterior to local interests, such as poverty in the developing world, inner city deprivation, homelessness, or forms of illness not associated with white cultural normalcy such as HIV/AIDS. The illustration of charity aimed at children revealed how children were used to reflect the fragile edges of localism. Consequently, they demonstrated solidarity around whiteness by reference to the divisions within the particular group; such as age and illness. The sympathy and virtue accorded to vulnerable subjects was relative to white experience as the TG saw white experience as the universal representation of localism. Charity was therefore regarded as a mechanism of communal solidarity. Constructions of virtue did not exist in solipsism; elsewhere in

the TG the bastion forces of evil, denigration, and disgust were present. Localism solidified by virtue was deployed not purely for purposes of self-knowledge and the rebuttal of the non-local, but as a defence against the corrosion of decency from within and was expressed via ‘outrage’.

### **Cold hearts**

The discussion of charity highlighted that virtue emerged from apparently selfless and giving behaviour regardless of its empirical manifestation. However, this came with a doppelganger that invited repugnance due to the perception of insensitivity, callousness, and ‘evil’. Charity endeavour was the locus of virtue, but so too were random acts of ‘kindness’ that presented examples of decency. One small notice signalled this respect, which would normally have belonged in the classified ads section, but was instead presented as news. It was simply an advertisement for a free stair-lift, which was being given away by a woman from Hertfordshire whose recently deceased mother had lived in Thurrock. This was a matter of convenience for the woman, but the TG made news of the notice and included the descriptor “*kind-hearted*”. Another similar story was present in a report about a local organisation giving away a wheelchair.

The explicit examples of the decay and destruction of virtue were crimes against the ‘vulnerable’, constructed as innocent subjects dependent upon the sympathy of the able. Crimes committed against charity concerns, children, the elderly, and animals were ready reminders. The theft of money or possessions from charities was always referred to as “*disgust*”, and those involved were referred to as “*scum*”. However, it was not always clear from the report that the crime deliberately targeted a charitable concern. An example showing the opposition between disgust and decency was in the reporting of the theft of money raised by an Armed Forces charity. The “*cold-hearts*” of the “*callous thieves*” were negated against the “*caring big-hearts*” of the *Thurrock Lions Club*, who replaced the stolen money from their own coffers. Similar narratives ran through reports of crimes against the elderly and animals, one edition featured a story about a firm of solicitors who had been accused of pilfering from clients’ wills, they were similarly described as lacking emotional warmth. An example of outrage appeared as a front-page headline: “*Help us find thugs who killed Kit Kat*”, the story was about a child’s cat that was found hanged in a local wood. The story contrasted the innocence of the pet and child with the

pathological nature of the “*sick crime*” carried out by “*the scum of the earth*”, with an emphasis by the mother that expressed her gratitude that her child was not present when she found the cat.

The most obvious example of outrage negated against decency was the issue of paedophilia. This was an obvious issue given the widespread media coverage in the national tabloid press over recent years. The TG used much the same popular discourses when reporting on issues of sexual assaults against minors, and investigations and convictions for child abuse or child pornography. The headline “*police hunt pervert*” appeared several times in relation to alleged sexual assaults by men described as having “*funny staring eyes*”. These stories echoed sentiments of the unknown and lacked a sense of social trust as the perpetrators were framed as strangers. This image of strangers living amongst the familiar community was a ready reminder to the insecurities of community in the contemporary era. This point was further illustrated with the naivety expressed in the *Down Memory Lane* feature, when the bus and coach companies were referenced. The point of those references were that they were memories of familiarity and odd fellows, such as *Joker Jones* were accepted parts of the community and no suspicion was vented or expressed towards his lewd conduct. The people convicted of sex acts against children reported in the TG were similar ‘loner’ figures who provided un-skilled manual services in public arenas. Stories reporting perverse, deviant and illegal sexual activity involving minors were regular in the TG. They frequently included figures that had no relation to Thurrock itself, but surrounding boroughs. The stories’ news potential came from a sensationalist and morbid fascination with deviant sexual cases and highlighted a sensibility to concepts of ‘evil’. The proximity of ‘evil’ became salient to bolster solidarity and to express what Dench *et al* describe as common feelings of harm or injustice (Dench *et al* 2006). They argue that white English people regularly expressed their solidarity in terms of fraternally shared and imagined feelings of pain and suffering at the hands of external figures; in the case of Dench *et al*’s research this was Bangladeshi migrants, here it was sexual predators. The sentiment was one of making a collective claim to share grief and suffering, which says ‘we, too, have been touched by evil.’

## Conclusion

This section has illustrated how white experience was depicted as the universal form of localism. This was analysed in reference to social memory and charity. Absent from the TG's presentation of heritage and virtue was the area's long standing relationship to globalisation and trans-nationalism. There were no photos of the HMS Windrush docked at Tilbury Docks and likewise no corroborating statements from the passengers, remembering their first sight of England in *Down Memory Lane*. It was images specific to white experience that were depicted due to their 'familiarity'. These were either harsh aspects of history such as war, austerity, and social change, or virtuous institutions such as family and sociability. Harshness was presented as external and constraining forces to which the solidarity of locals was a gallant response fostered by institutions such as the family, civic pride, and sociability. Consequently, white experience was represented as innocent and local identity was expressed as virtuous in respect of the divisions reflected in the spatial context of localism.

The section has argued that such a pre-occupation with charity obscured the real issues underlying charity as the benefactors were of secondary importance in the reports' narratives. The instances where the identity of the benefactor was central revealed the same issues of local identity. Named benefactors were represented as individual proxies of a collective ownership of local children. The reports on charity revealed local identity as essentially white, because the issues they addressed such as breast cancer or sick children were not apportioned society wide, but reflected concerns proximate to the interests of localism. Consequently, charity was not in aid of *Children in Need*, but whites in need...of identity! The TG reporting reflected charity as starting and ending at home. It was central to constructions of white identity as essentially virtuous and not stigmatised by its global and historical dominance. The section concluded by referencing the loss of familiarity registered in instances where virtue was regarded as eroded. The section argued that 'outrage' was a response to a world increasingly seen as strange and unfamiliar. It is with this issue that the analysis concludes in the next section to define English identity as the ascension from a natural reservoir of white experience. English identity was an effort to re-establish familiarity and the moral centrality of the local for white people.

### ***Part III: What We Are***

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This section builds upon the previous analysis of the white foundations of localism. English identity was deployed locally as an ideology to distinguish a hierarchical social order of whiteness. This was drawn from geographical narratives of rural landscapes where localism and the link between land and people were strongest. Orsett village was a constant reference point to discuss a lived innocence that was elsewhere a distant memory. Rural villages were represented as places that best served English identity. Urban areas were represented as lacking moral fibre, due to the absence of civic zeal contained in rural areas like Orsett. In this way, morality was a geographically distributed social resource that enabled value judgments to be made about the urban landscape and its residents. The section argues that this internal differentiation was a means by which the TG reinforced English identity as an aspiration to local white people. It was an offer to save their innocence from ‘social decay’ and the indecent nationalism of the BNP. The TG represented an active effort to consolidate a universal white identity as an empowered articulation of belonging. Ultimately, English identity was an incomplete process that struggled with competing forms of national identity to generate a racial and ethnic communal solidarity with which the global and cosmopolitan world could be fought. The section shows that this effort excluded the new community and failed to generate a solidarity that transformed conventional wisdom regarding the racial elements of social inclusion via narratives of land and people.

#### **Where the heart is**

The constituent wards of Thurrock were diverse in regards their social and economic profiles. Stark differences between rural and urban areas were represented in the TG to articulate the formulation of English identity. Consequently, the differences in the micro political geography were a language of social class premised upon English identity. The defacto virtue of the countryside and ruralism was established by sites such as Orsett, Horndon-on-the-Hill, and Fobbing. Reports centred on these places reinforced a fixed ethnic fusion of land and people. They were the archetypal landscapes of English localism. This was done by emphasising the historical features of the villages. To note, much of Orsett’s heritage was the result of ersatz re-

production, many of the authentic looking buildings were constructed well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and its agricultural industry had been absent for the last 30-40 years (Benton 1991). However, its fusion of land and people with respect to an agricultural and aristocratic history gave it a command over representations of authenticity and heritage. In the previous section it was noted that virtue was embodied by social memory and charity. However, when the TG talked of an area as a collectivity, it reproduced assumptions based upon stereotypes of (un)civil behaviour. Reports attempted to remind readers of the innocence of ruralism, which cast difference with the decadence of urban areas blighted by social problems. Citizens of rural areas were referenced as “*villagers*” or “*village folk*”, whilst those of neighbouring urban areas were referred to as “*residents*”.

The TG presented a social distinction within the borough. This division was reminiscent of Colls’ observation that English identity was at its heart a folk identity made local by rooting a social group to the land; the landless were seen as soulless and something non-English. In Colls’ analysis urban dwellers and cosmopolitans were damned from being considered English, due to their alienation from the land (Colls 2002). However, the TG promoted the values of the rooted English to the ‘landless mob’ of the urban areas; reflected in their lauding of Orsett’s civic culture. Orsett was referenced primarily in regards the celebration of its horticultural society and the annual *Orsett Show*. The visitors to the *Orsett Show* were conflated with the villagers when described *in toto* as “*craft lovers*”. The folk simplicity and spontaneity of authentic crafts and pastimes were described next to the shadow of the invasive ephemera of modern living such as mobile telephones, urban youth, and traffic. The reports surrendered to the tranquil simplicity of folk fayre with introductions such as, “*switch off your mobile...forget the hoodies on the corner of your own street, forget the traffic jams...and enjoy a day of authentic village fayre at the Orsett Show*”.

The promotion of Orsett’s agricultural heritage spoke to the urban plight of areas where levels of anti-social behaviour were ascendant. Horticulturalism, environmentalism, and local community initiative were promoted as the panacea to modern living. There was a fusion between the virtues of civic participation and the English garden ideal to which Orsett was typical. Several reports praised efforts by the *Orsett in Bloom* steering committee to help foster a similar project in South Ockendon; an area economically and socially oppositional to Orsett (Appendix). Sth Ockendon was originally an agricultural village and since WWII it had become a



large town built around light manufacturing, haulage, and logistics, and included a new ‘dormitory’ estate for London commuters. It was, due to relatively low house prices also attractive to the new community. The efforts by *Orsett in Bloom* became symbolic as they were credited with providing a sense of pride to the community. The nature of the involvement re-awakened the memory of Sth Ockendon as a humble village existing in a pre-war, pre-modern state. Regeneration was something that was presumed to emerge from the adoption of English identity and a return to the fabled past represented by the civic culture of Orsett.

This was a powerful political message when set within the spatial context of localism established in part one. The promotion of Orsett as living English memory and virtue against the flow of globalisation served as an example to the surrounding areas. The moral overtones when talking about ruralism and horticulture across the borough echoed the sentiments that Orsett spirit should be exported and appropriated by ‘problem’ constituencies. The fusing of land and people that occurred with reports about Orsett showed it to be the land where the hearth of Englishness still burnt bright. Its rural and folk fayre provided aspirations to the surrounding areas. They were a superficially inclusive ideal that presented themselves as sets of innocuous values, but at their heart were untenable for others. The rural aims of the exportation of the *Orsett in Bloom* ethos were, in reality, unattainable for areas that had few green spaces not part of existing thoroughfare or intersected by main roads. The expectation that local people from impoverished areas would commit themselves to the kind of work that they viewed to be the responsibility of the local authority was also questionable. Regardless of the practical problems faced, the TG continued to promote the values they associated with Orsett. In this, Orsett became an ideological landscape used to signify a localised expression of English identity in hierarchical terms. A notable example used to promote this was the celebration of the opening of the *Orsett Show* and *Horndon Fayre*, by a local figure who was quoted as a “*local boy made good*”. The man was from an impoverished area, but through toil and struggle enamoured himself in the agricultural way of life, thus becoming a toast to the positive influence of English identity.

### **The fallen angels of English identity**

The Orsett ideoscape was an imaginary construction of landscape that sought a hegemonic dominance over other geographies and in doing so characterised the virtue

of residents. It was with this ideoscape in mind that the TG fortified a defence from within the local against the global and cosmopolitan. Orsett and the examples it gave provided the ‘survival in culture’ that the TG tried to excavate from other ‘white’ areas like Sth Ockendon. It was offered as an example of the ‘heartland’, quite simply it was where and how English identity reputedly lived. English identity appeared as an offering to the generic white local population. It was a form of ascension to consolidate the racially invisible white identity of locals. English identity could be earned via consent to the hegemony of the Orsett ideoscape. It was in this regard that people and areas associated with anti-social behaviour were seen not simply as outsiders, but people fallen from the mantle of English identity. Reports about anti-social behaviour highlighted how values intrinsic to the Orsett ideoscape influenced the reporting of the harsher side of the urban malaise and the problematic aspects of the white working classes in general.

Reports about road traffic incidents were one of the most frequently coded news items, coming close second to charity. In January, 2006 there was an incident involving a head on collision in Tilbury that generated national attention and due to the nature of the case sparked local controversy and highly charged emotion. It revealed the way in which the TG reinforced Tilbury as a stigmatised area epitomizing the anti-thesis of the Orsett ideoscape. The incident concerned a young woman who while driving a stolen car, apparently under the influence of drugs or alcohol, collided head-on with another vehicle. Controversy emerged as the car’s occupants, the driver’s two primary school age children and two teenage family friends were killed as they were flung from the car upon impact. The editions of the TG for the succeeding two weeks were overwhelmed with features about the grieving family and friends. These were typical of national tabloid reports there was nothing unusual about them. However, they did reveal the way in which stigmatisation was used at a local level. There were continued references to the ‘lack of remorse’ by the driver and of putative claims of drug addiction and criminality. There were unreferenced quotes used to describe her motherly behaviour preceding the incident as dysfunctional and untoward. To exacerbate the example the woman had set there was reference to the father who was serving a custodial sentence for armed robbery and dangerous driving.

A few editions later the funeral for the deceased was reported and positioned the family as an example of ‘fallen angels’. There was no doubt that the local reaction

to the incident was one of shock and that the reputation of the woman had been severely tarnished. There was front page coverage and a double page spread in the centre of the edition, it made for awkward and emotional reading. There were continued references to the anguish of random locals and the family of the deceased teenagers, there was no reference to the grief shared by the driver and the father of the two youngest deceased. There was an extended report of the list of convictions along with coverage of their journeys back to their respective prisons from the funeral. The lack of comment from either was interpreted by the TG as ‘a lack of remorse’. It excluded the parents from being considered as a family. Instead they became pariahs from family and community and were held up as an example of the decadent ills of the drug and criminal culture putatively ingrained within the social structure of Tilbury. The reporting constructed guilt from social profile.

These reports were sensationalist due to the subject matter, but they showed how easily it was for someone in this social position to have their actions interpreted in a negative light. This negativity drew upon already established narratives surrounding the ‘criminal’ nature of Tilbury, something furthered by the specialist crime reporting in the TG. The *no-go zone* was the spiritual anti-thesis of the Orsett ideoscape. The TG established a number of places that existed as these *no-go zones*, Stanford-le-Hope town centre, Grays town centre, Sth Ockendon’s Derwent Parade, Chafford Hundred, and Tilbury. In one edition, the TG presented a provocative double page spread lambasting Chafford Hundred, entitled “*Chav Rule in Chafford Hundred*”. There were a number of stories regarding anti-social behaviour in this area, identified as “*Chavord Hundred*”. The aforementioned article was supposedly based upon a report by a local councillor, who in a later edition claimed the paper misrepresented her comments. It claimed Chafford was over run by anti-social youth and was a *no-go zone* for adults. The report referenced an armed robbery at the local supermarket and the manslaughter of a young man who was out celebrating his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. There was a considerable amount of TG coverage of both these issues and typically they identified the *area* as a problem, not the individuals or the instances from which the criminal activity emerged. For instance, the perpetrators of the robbery were from outside Thurrock and targeted the store because of lax security. The report over-emphasised these isolated instances to magnify the problem of crime and private sub-urban living, against the Orsett ideoscape.

To appendage this report the editor filed his own ‘undercover’ report to show how the urban environment was worse in the *no-go zone* of Tilbury. The editor visited Tilbury Town train station, which he argued was a centre for anti-social disturbances and a Mecca for troublesome youth. He encountered none. The report included some un-credited remarks putatively made by locals claiming that the station was a *no-go zone* after 19.30 and that there was an atmosphere of fear and intimidation lurking in the air. The editor’s comments revisited this theme when explaining the lack of any other newsworthy events. This area of Tilbury consisted of mostly small scale commercial buildings and in the evenings it was reasonably desolate. The station was not in use between late evening and early morning and there was little need for security staff during this time. There was very little reported violent crime in this area. According to the local police in another TG report, most reports of violent crime were of a domestic nature. The report went on to describe an ‘interview’ with a member of the railway staff who refused to answer the editor’s questions surrounding security of the station. The woman was then accused by the TG of perpetuating anti-social behaviour and worse, accused of allowing rape to be carried out on the premises!

These reports fuelled the fear of crime associated with urban areas. In the following edition there was a plethora of letters from people living outside the aforementioned areas who supported the TG’s previous reports. However, there were letters from the areas’ councillors, lambasting the editor for irresponsible journalism and highlighted the TG’s inflammatory position, which neglected the many good natured aspects of these areas. The editor included a rejoinder to these comments standing by his original position. To substantiate his argument he entered into a tirade against local policing units and local councillors claiming them to be non-representative of ‘local voices’ and more interested in matters of political correctness than community policing and security. The next week’s edition was littered with incredulous and un-credited accounts of teenage drinking and drug dealing, this time in nearby Stanford-le-Hope. Again the police and local councillors were lambasted for their apparent ignorance of this issue. The reports used isolated instances from over six months to create an image of Stanford-le-Hope as a *no-go zone*. These were followed up in the letters pages: a tactic to generate editorial legitimacy. Along with the above riposte from the editor were a number of adjunctive letters, claiming similar in other town centres.

These stories generated criminal landscapes, which created a moral division between law abiding people and those offset from such moral values. This insight came to fruition in a letter submitted by someone referred to only as 'Frank', this letter invited a similar tit-for-tat barrage of local opinion in the ensuing editions. Like the original letter many were inflammatory and socially divisive, but were printed under the auspices of 'free speech' and the legitimacy of local voice. Frank's letter was a reactionary rant against what he saw as declining standards in young people's moral worth. He used all the most identifiable stereotypes, such as teenage single mothers with naval piercings, unemployed young men, and gang culture. His letter fused people of low social and economic standing with the land from which he saw them emerge, i.e. urban centres such as Grays and Tilbury. Frank and many of his supporters used the same metaphor to create this fusion as the rise of what they referred to as "*98p, 99p and £1 stores*". It was explicitly mentioned by Frank that these stores actively encouraged "*gang/knife culture*", a malaise which he viewed an outcome of the decadent and undeserving poor.

The TG published a number of reports on the closure of a renowned retail outlet, remarking that its replacement would be a discount store. These letters used this development of the local economy to talk about a land of budget purchases that were suited to the kinds of stereotypical characters spoken of above. In this vein they lamented the loss of a noble traditional and authentic model of community and identity; a loss which they saw was a reflection of the decline of morality of the young urban working classes. The TG printed these letters as it viewed them as extreme, but legitimate examples of the localism it promoted against the tide of globalisation and cosmopolitanism. They were also the extreme end of the TG's editorial content, which had underlying assumptions about the morality of the urban working classes, their failures and the state of whiteness. The TG was equally reactionary in casting a shadow over economic disadvantage and the social and cultural consequences. It was against this urban 'moral decay' that the Orsett ideoscape promoted English identity as the saviour of a politically directionless white experience.

### **Outside English identity**

In addition to crime and anti-social behaviour there lurked a larger 'virus' from which English identity was in competition. The proliferation of far right candidates for local elections and racist propaganda in the area was alarming and showed no signs of

waning; as two BNP councillors were elected within three years (Appendix). Racism and national identity were regular topics on the letters page and averaged one letter per week over the sampled period. The exploration of these revealed what the TG viewed as legitimate topics within a national discourse over multi-culturalism and identity. This political debate consisted of the claim that English identity was related to a sense of local marginality and its relations to national identity were about reassertion of imperial dominance, not multi-culturalism.

These issues were demonstrated with a front page headline that claimed “*Don’t Fly the Flag*”, it reported on a student at *Palmers 6<sup>th</sup> Form College* who was apparently told he could not display the St George’s Cross during the 2006 World Cup. The TG promoted the student’s cause by highlighting his comments about a need to bolster national identity as a defence against ‘political correctness’, which was claimed to cause segregation. These comments used England and Britain interchangeably when referring to The Nation. These views were sensitively dealt with by a local Labour councillor of Asian origin, who made the reasoned point that this kind of ‘flag waving’ was about football rather than bigotry, and censorship worked only towards the ends of extremists. The following week it emerged that there was no such ban on the use of the St George’s Cross. In an interview with the Principal the report claimed that “*Palmers takes a liberal approach to dress code and freedom of nationalist expressions*”, it went onto re-iterate a tolerant and multi-cultural attitude, which was dismissed by the editorial comment. The TG had invented the issue to make a point about English identity as a silenced majority by cosmopolitan and multi-cultural public policy.

The issue was petty, but revealed the cynicism of multi-culturalism that localism was constructed against. The editor was so ardently opposed to multi-culturalism that he claimed its divisive aspects existed even when there was clear evidence to the contrary. One of the main problems was that there was a well referenced confusion over how to embrace or characterise national identity. In regards national sports such as football, England was a legitimate source of solidarity, whereas in terms of political identity it was marred by the colonial past of the British Empire. The promotion of multi-cultural public policy means that it is not unreasonable to suggest that white Britons would also want to express themselves in these ways (Heath et al *forthcoming*). These were views represented in the TG letters page and reflected the point at which local opinion became complicit with organised

and explicit racism. One such letter argued that the local area was swamped by “*cultures not acceptable to the majority*”, and that it was forbidden for the majority to express a white ethnic and racial solidarity. This theme was recurrent; its most divisive form was represented by an anonymous letter arguing that the Thurrock Asian Association was offensive as it defined itself in terms of one specific group. The letter was highly ignorant of the positive community role the association played in promoting diversity and tolerance. This was explicit when the writer claimed that he was happy to be in a state of ignorance of other groups and he longed for an “*English Association*”.

The TG’s response to the BNP was to illustrate the vulnerability of white people due to their inability to empower themselves through accepted notions of national solidarity. The localism provided a viable opportunity for the BNP to thrive. The editor took an openly anti-extremist stance, whilst at the same time accepting the legitimacy of BNP arguments and their right to stand in free elections. This was obvious with the editorial decision to print a letter from a BNP sympathiser threatening a race war due to the presence of the new community. The letter reproduced what is later discussed as the ‘Africans for Essex’ myth and was an attempt to legitimise forced repatriation and BNP policy via narratives of overstretched hospitality and the loss of English political dominance. A later edition carried a major focus on the unveiling of the BNP’s election manifesto at a working man’s club in Grays. The report faithfully reproduced several inflammatory comments that criminalised the new community.

However, the editor made a front page personal appeal to the Thurrock electorate not to vote for the BNP at the 2005 local elections. The tone of the piece was overbearing and unnecessarily vulgar in its condemnation of the BNP as ‘indecent’. It contained no discrediting of BNP policy, election mandate, or general politics. It did however provide a platform for the editor to garner support for the Conservative Party, of which he was an active member. This was reflective of the competition between nationalist groups to provide a vanguard for white people. The report alluded to two groups of people that the electorate should consider as official choice in democracy. One group who possessed the mild mannered and reasonable authenticity embodied in the Orsett ideoscape, and another who embodied little more than spin, empty promises, and a lack of integrity. This was an encoded message that Thurrock was best served by Conservatives and that Labour was the enemy of

localism due to their complicity in the bureaucratic ideal of ‘political correctness’. These were a reflection of the power relations evident in the spatial context of localism.

The following front page quote from the editor made lucid the TG’s conservative stance on politics and civic values, which this analysis has endeavoured to explore in all its nuance and scope. *“And if you think this writer is a wishy-washy, pinko-trendy looney-lefty, think again. I want to see capital punishment restored. I want to see more prisons built to house wrong-doers and sentences in our courts that offer a real deterrent. I want to see an end to the scrounging, self centred, socially disregarding culture that we’ve created over the last 30 years.”* The editor’s online blog offered similar authoritarian comments surrounding capital punishment and the BNP. All of which served to promote conservatism as the legitimate image of local solidarity to which Thurrock should aspire. It was in this way that the TG endorsed English identity as the legitimate candidate to consolidate white experience. The TG thus became a central institutional means by which community renewal was articulated and administered as something, decidedly, English.

### **No man’s land**

The reporting in the TG did not endorse ‘racist’ opinion, but it was ill-informed, irresponsible, and ethnocentric in its portrayal of localism. The reporting of the BNP was defended by a discourse on the freedom of speech. It provided no political counter-point of BNP policy it simply presented their voice as an indecent form of legitimate social commentary. The BNP were made visible within the locality for self-referential reasons that reinforced a vulnerability of white morality in the contemporary era. This was instead of focussing on the new community as the true vulnerable objects of far right political organisation and propaganda. Explicit reports about racism were used to highlight their detriment to mild mannered English identity and the innocence of white experience portrayed elsewhere in the TG and registered in part two of the analysis. Racism was not reported as an issue of social justice, which one would expect to find in official discourse on racism.

Overall, issues regarding minority ethnic groups were sparse in the TG. This was not intentionally racist, but emerged from the ethnocentrism of the construction of localism as a fixed fusion of land and people. There was a lack of knowledge surrounding the identity and nature of Thurrock’s diverse new community. A vivid



reminder to the white discourses of community was the absence of Black churches in the seasonal supplement editions at Easter and Xmas. There were seven established Pentecostal and Evangelical churches in Thurrock that served a predominantly African congregation; none were represented as playing a role in ecclesiastical life in Thurrock. The absence of this local culture reinforced local identity as consisting of familiar faces and places. The local manifestation of the new community proved the opposite, which was that land and people were not fused, but open to unfamiliar diversity and multiplicity.

The TG did make an attempt to provide coverage of events organised by local groups involved in diversity and cultural awareness. However, these were relegated to the *Entertainments and Activities* section towards the rear of the paper. This detracted from the aims and objectives of events such as *Black History Month* and local initiatives by Thurrock Asian Association, and TRUST. This relegation further removed a minority experience of Thurrock from the dominant experience that the TG finely wove with its intimate and emotive reporting of local tragedy, joviality, celebration, and despair. Reports of minority events were sparse on substantial details and often included unintentional racial images with quotes such as “*Children were banging the drums for multi-culturalism*”, or making references to “*coloured people*” of a “*different creed*”. These revealed a basic understanding of the components of diversity and a lack of knowledge on contemporary discourse about such social and cultural phenomena. Indeed, this was the role of ‘political correctness’ to which the TG actively reacted without ever showing a realistic alternative to represent diversity.

Additionally, the TG revealed an intimate relationship with the white reader, as celebrations such as *Orsett Show* or the *Orsett in Bloom* open day spoke explicitly about the emotional involvement the local people have with the event. This fused land and people at the expense of the new community. The intimacy was personalised by mentioning individuals by name and revealing their addresses. It used familiarity to establish localism as English and emergent from white experience. Familiarity was absent in reports of minority affairs which left much to the imagination over the identity and intentions of the people involved. This gave space for the perpetuation of derogatory myth explicitly seen in a report where residents were reported as vetoing a planning decision by a Black church through unsubstantiated fears it was a front for illegal immigrants and the importation of so-called “*bush meat*”. Consequently, the

TG reinforced the alien status of minority groups in relation to local identity, thus fuelling local uncertainty and myth around the new community.

## **Conclusion**

This section has concluded the analysis of the TG's representation of local identity by stressing the internal fractures that promote English identity as a remedial device for a wider white experience. It established that the moral authority of this English identity was drawn from archetypal landscapes of ruralism, which provided a proximate fusion of narratives of land and people. The Orsett ideoscape drawn from these narratives was a device to judge the morality of urban areas, which appeared as strange local environments characterised as *no-go zones*. English identity was a form of virtue that the TG represented as an offering of ascension to urban residents. This was a political identity that the TG saw as a saviour of their otherwise banal whiteness, whose innocence was vulnerable to the influence of the malignant nationalism of the BNP. Despite the TG's rhetoric it legitimised the BNP by entering into competition with them to provide a vanguard for the white locals. The concern over the rise of the BNP was not about the security and safety of minority groups, but the moral virtue and innocence of the white locals. For the TG, racism was most harmful to whites due to their imagination that minority concerns were neither of 'blood nor soil'. Overall, the TG presented an ethnocentric portrayal of local community that saw minority persons as strange faceless people on the fringes of the intimate and familiar icons of English identity, to which the Orsett ideoscape was the closest geographic approximation.

### ***An English Wonderland Concluded***

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The content analysis presents the TG as the dominant cultural and symbolic representation of local community in Thurrock. This has established a frame of reference to reveal the imagination of majority culture as 'normal' by reference to the racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. In doing this the TG imagined the location, identity, and tribulation of white English identity to the neglect of multiplicity and fluidity. The chapter began by illustrating the spatial context of local identity emergent from the vulnerability prompted by globalisation and cosmopolitanism. Localism was a singular voice broadcast by the TG as a counterforce to defend this condition from exploitation by the non-local. In generating a singular voice of localism the TG universalised white experience to the exclusion of non-traditional forms of experience and identity.

The second section revealed how white experience was imagined to be the well-spring from which English localism arose. The analysis of memory and charity showed that white experience was registered as an essential virtue and innocence. The universality emerged from their appearance as 'familiar'. Localism imagined in this way functioned to reinforce familiarity against outrage spurred by the contemporary social environment. The final section explored the means by which an image of English identity was offered to the white population as a political vanguard. It was revealed via narratives of crime and disorder that this served as a cultural form of discipline. The wider conversation of the TG's interest was with the BNP as it fought to fix narratives of land and people across a similar terrain of right wing nationalist discourses. The lack of intimacy and the ethnocentric presentation of non-white stories was a manifestation of the marginalisation of interests subversive to conventional narratives of land and people.

The TG was an important cultural text as it was distributed free of charge to every home in Thurrock. Its pervasiveness reinforced discursive formations of majority culture and provided an iron cage for wider debate on community and identity as it fixed the meaning and parameters of debate within the racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. It was thusly a mirror through which Thurrock was guided to imagine its identity. The Orsett ideoscape provided the 'English Wonderland' ready to be appropriated by the rank and file of the white population. As

such, the TG promoted English identity as a moral identity for community renewal. The power of the TG was registered as its ability to sequester local diversity and to narrow localism to an ethnocentric narrative to create a united English front to combat the contemporary tides of cosmopolitanism, globalisation, and trans-national migration.

## Through the Looking Glass: The Spatial and Social Levels

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## Places: From Oak to Ashes

### Introduction

The ethnography begins with an exploration of the subjective constructions of place central to ethnic and racial discourses of commonality. The uncertainty surrounding the ‘English Question’ reflected industrial decline, which represented a rupture in the meanings of local land. The chapter opens by revealing respondents’ subjective constructions of place as ultimately emergent from a practical relationship to the locality. The use and meaning of the land was contested as respondents with different imagined heritages represented themselves as *the* universal Thurrock. This identification was observed to homogenise the majority experience of the land. The chapter explores these as three dominant narratives; rural, industrial, and civic. It argues that these narratives signified a shift in the function that the local played in relation to the non-local.

It was a shift in the functional geography of Thurrock that resulted in the decline of civil society. It was not the result of people’s willingness to withdraw from civic life due to a lowering of moral standards (Putnam 2000). This is a commonplace assumption in the literature on social capital and community renewal that is disputed in this ethnography. The functional geography had ruptured white respondents’ narratives of belonging embodied in the usage of local land. This was registered as ‘communal decline’ to which conventions of land and people were re-asserted as directed by the discourses of commonality explored in the literature review. This chapter illustrates how the re-identification of English identity occurred spatially at the level of house and home. This drew upon the authenticity of local heritage and manifested as a multiplicity with each individual interest claiming to represent a universal voice, often in ignorance of other equal claims. The chapter argues that spatial politics were central to white English claims to sequester the realities of super-diversity and the new community. The chapter provides the spatial context for the remainder of the ethnography to explore the discourses of commonality in regards community renewal.

## Narratives of belonging to land

Locals identified with Thurrock in practical terms, but their narratives transmogrified this practicality with reference to heritage and history. People spoke of their life in Thurrock as a result of decisions to settle due to house prices, work situation, or as a tranquil comparison to inner city living. However, the established respondents persisted to chastise newcomers to the area for lacking emotive reasons for moving to Thurrock. This identified a value distinction between the established and the new community. The relocation stories told by the established white residents were however identical in every case to the stories of newcomers. The established residents failed to perceive this similarity and instead articulated their annoyance of the new community around a racist myth propagated by the BNP. This myth claimed that Black-Africans received money from local authorities in Greater London to relocate to Thurrock. It was an empirical manifestation of the importance of spatial ownership to local identity and the research revealed its impact on a local area that was desperately in need of more active integration amongst its diverse populations.

The lack of integration meant that residents had an imagined perception of their ownership of place amongst a multiplicity of claims. The ethnography delved into respondents' spatial awareness of Thurrock. Locals used known physical structures as shared symbols of demarcation. Local landmarks such as the old village green in Sth Ockendon delineated the village past from the new Sth Ockendon. In Tilbury, imagined spaces were enforced by local nuances of naming, such as Raphael Avenue. In one meeting with a Tilbury focus group, a newcomer to the area was asked where he lived. He answered by saying that he lived on Raphael Avenue, there was a mass of laughter as he was corrected by the established locals; they refer to it as 'Rayfawl'. This localised pronunciation helped establish the boundaries of exclusion.

The meanings of place names established a subjective definition of Thurrock for respondents. Clive, a business consultant from Grays opened our interview by confronting my credibility in understanding the local area, his question was thus:

*“Do you know where the name Thurrock comes from? It comes from Thor Oak, Thur-rock you see? And that is why my logo and the logo of Thurrock Council is an Oak Tree. We have this because it's better than where the name Grays really comes*

*from, do you know the old cement works? Well when they moved here the grey dust from the works fell all over Grays and this is how it got its name."*

These stories were according to historical research inaccurate. The name Thurrock came from the old English word *Thurruc*, which meant the bottom part of a ship. The name Grays was a namesake and came from a landowner named John Gray; it is short for John Gray's land (Benton 1991). Narratives of place were deployed as a means to critique the present, of which Clive's description was eerily illustrative. The construction of place identity was a temporal and spatial battlefield typified by narratives of heritage and belonging and structured by discourses of commonality.

### **The rural narrative**

The *Orsett Show* was held every September on the recreational fields surrounding Orsett Village. It provided an archetypal vision of the rural narrative to changes in the functional geography of Thurrock. These fields were once Orchards and farmland owned by the local aristocrat *Colonel Whitmore*. The show allowed the legacy of agriculture to continue beyond its demise in the latter part of the last Century. The show was populated by local organisations involved in heritage and conservation. The main features were mock cattle markets, dressage, and rituals surrounding hunting with dogs. In addition, the show was well attended by local engineering enthusiasts and renowned manufacturers of agricultural machinery. As a result the stalls, stands, demonstrations, and events observed in September 2006 were a smorgasbord of rural English localism. The show was a spectacle of the Orsett ideoscape represented in the *Thurrock Gazette*. This was explicit in the discussion with Maude, a retired caterer from the local college and organiser for the show. She articulated the relevance of the show in relation to the increased urbanisation of Thurrock.

*"With this Thames Gateway thing that's going on, they're taking away the countryside in Thurrock, the Orsett Show is about the rural and the countryside. I mean where Lakeside is now that used to be the cement pits and I used to literally walk across there to Aveley with groceries and stuff..."*



She continued to articulate the importance of the Orsett Show to the agricultural past of Thurrock.

*“It’s a tradition really. It’s the biggest show there is, in the area. Well, it’s the only show in this area and it is very well supported. It started with the Batchford Cottage, where they used to have competitions growing vegetables and things, they used to have the tractors ploughing up the fields and that was a competition. They were all local farmers. They had the Batchford prize, it was a community sort of thing, they all sort of worked together. So the Orsett Show is about them...”*

This, like other narratives of heritage and tradition steeped in land usage were highly personal. As such they were one particular story amongst many; however, they were represented by respondents as *the* essential heritage of Thurrock and masked the existence of other conflicting histories. Maude concluded that the *Orsett Show* kept the agricultural spirit alive by a celebration of memory; this was without reference to the wider contestation of memory in Thurrock, which in actual fact was fairly evenly represented amongst the stalls at the *Orsett Show*. This was noticed by Sharon, a young woman who was an environmental worker with Tilbury power station and a member of Tilbury Riverside Project, a local conservationist group. Sharon described Thurrock as *“a strange place – lots of open spaces and lots of industry”*. She continued to identify the multitude of interests represented by the stalls surrounding her, including Coalhouse Fort, Bata Shoe Company, and Tilbury Docks.

The significance of rural heritage was pervasive in the interviews conducted in Sth Ockendon. This example revealed the primordial nature of the rural idyll, as Sth Ockendon had not been a centre of agriculture for over fifty years. Despite this, the legacy of farming and its social and economic infrastructure remained hidden beneath the ‘grime’ of suburbanisation. A process that reputedly begun with the construction of the prefabricated houses for migrants from the East End soon after WWII. This process continued into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with the construction of the Belhus estate, which was now one of the most deprived wards in Thurrock (Appendix).

CTC was a community day club on the Derwent Parade in Sth Ockendon where several interviews were conducted. It was well known in the area as it was the only community organisation in Sth Ockendon and was situated on the busy high street. During these interviews 90 year old Kitty was a constant reference point to a time before Sth Ockendon became a fully fledged town in the 1950s. Her stories were unique, but had a striking similarity to the anxieties of inner city living described by later respondents within the new community. Kitty explained that her mother had moved her family in the 1920s from London to Sth Ockendon as her siblings were acutely un-well. Her mother was keen for her children to be brought up in a clean environment in the countryside, away from the dirt, grime, and disease of the metropolis. Kitty's story was a real life example of the spiritual crisis of the city experienced by socially ascendant people at the turn of the century, as identified by Colls (Colls 2002).

Via anecdotes about the lack of sanitation and utility services, Kitty described the moment when the histories of Orsett and Ockendon were de-coupled. It was, she said, when the East Enders arrived and the 'prefabs' were constructed. Although Kitty remained non-judgemental about this development she explained that the farming community of villagers reviled the development. This was because the farmland was bought by the local authority for use as temporary homes for the East Enders. These people were regarded as 'strange folk' with unfathomable life-styles, and eating rituals.

*"Well the Ockendon village was where Ockendon people used to go, but the other ones, the prefab people they used to come up sometimes. There wasn't a fight or anything, but the only thing was it was difficult to understand their way of living or the way they did things; like the way they speak, the way they have their meals...what the difference really was, was that the village people weren't so educated, you know."*

She expanded on this point by highlighting the cultural differences; the locals were shocked that the East Enders would eat at different times of the day and wear work clothes to visit the shops or the public houses. *"We used to say 'these people ain't it funny? They go to the shops with their pinny on!'"* Without regret Kitty concluded

that “*when the houses were built the village was gone*”...And the village was gone; however, Brian a 55 yr old former youth worker and volunteer for the probation service, still talked as though Sth Ockendon was a village island amongst apple orchards. “*If you go out of Ockendon for a mile in any direction its rural, its all fields*”. This was only true of the northern end of Ockendon, which bordered on the borough of Havering. The remainder was flanked by Chafford Hundred, Stifford Clays, Lakeside Retail Park, and more ominously the M25 London Orbital. All these features were the anti-thesis of rural living. Brian’s narrative rooted in sentimentalism for the past sequestered this geographical reality.

Carol, a 48 yr old woman involved in running the raffle at the community club made the following comment about life in Ockendon with the expansion of houses. “*That was it then, you could hear cars whizzing up the road and all of a sudden a crash and mrrrrrr (the sound of brakes).*” Although this was reminiscent of a stereotypical dystopian vision of a bereft urban environment at night, its negation with the innocence and conviviality used to remember a rural past revealed the personalised way in which people represented the change in lived environment. Gone was Kitty’s pre-war world where Ockendon’s windmill stood proud on their town postcards; the same windmill where on one Empire Day Kitty’s future husband first winked at her as they jointly hung the village banner.

Ever reticent about the present, Brian lamented:

*“I’d like to see it turned back to how it was...I don’t call it progress, I call it retrograde...the people on the ghetto over there, Thurrock Council chuck all of the problem families in there and we’ve got a problem in Sth Ockendon because of that. That was mainly for the people from the East End of London, people that had been bombed out.”*

Brian had lived and worked in Sth Ockendon all his life and remembered the building of the prefabs and their occupation by the East Enders with the above solidaristic fondness. As with Kitty, he didn’t resent the building of the prefabs as for a time they added to the area, as shops and much needed services were provided. It was when the prefabs were demolished and the permanent homes built that the respondents in Sth Ockendon agreed change occurred drastically. “*It’s all been*

*knocked down and they have built a shopping complex on it [its] all gone now, its flats now...Everything that's good about this place has gone.*" All the respondents in Sth Ockendon agreed that the prefabs had not ruptured the sense of community and its rural roots, but added a favourable dimension. Carol excitedly described these days in reference to the "*good old Chelsea estate*". In these memories the arrival of the East Enders was a time of shared joy.

It was as Brian literally described with no hint of irony "*Ah the good old days!*" Interestingly the memories failed to identify the locus of this solidarity in industrial work and labour politics, because the East Enders were largely unionised car workers for Fords, Dagenham. When asked why, how, and what had disappeared the respondents defaulted to a lament for the rural village idyll, which disappeared long before the arrival of the East Enders. Brian took the lead by listing a range of commercial traders in the village along with detailed descriptions of their owners and locations. These included the pub, the blacksmith, the newsagents, the garage, the sweet shops, grocers, the butchers, and the fish shop at the back of the garage.

*"Now bearing in mind these were the only shops if you wanted anything else you had to go to Grays or Upminster, you could get anything here really. We've got nothing here now. This has died of death this place. You used to be able to get anything in these shops here, not now it's died of death. It's killed our community."*

This narrative of decline gained ascendancy due to its relation to the feelings of self-sustenance and autonomy from the non-local. The arrival of the East Enders bolstered this solidarity in self-sufficiency. It was the loss of this self-definition that characterised the way the respondents spoke of 'real and drastic' change, with the building of the Belhus Estate. Even though Carol had lived on the estate as her parents were East Enders she saw the place as a stigmatised area. She used vivid imagery of late night noise, crime, and decay in her descriptions coupled with talk of "*strangers coming in nowadays; they look straight through you, you don't know who they are.*" Kitty explained that at the time of its construction it was meant to be part of Ockendon and Aveley, but was ultimately disowned by both surrounding areas and became a ward in itself, "*Nobody wanted it!*" she claimed. What was a significant

turning point was that the local area never, in their minds consented to this transformation of place. The present feelings in Sth Ockendon and other areas was still reeling from the belittling impact of alienation from control of the land and its usage. The importance of rural narratives were a means by which people articulated a sense of ownership of the land, as its imagined naturalism pre-supposed this symbiosis of land and people. The respondents added that this was what England is about. Kitty claimed that the rural was what made her feel “*inside completely English*”.

### **The industrial narrative**

The reliance on the rural discourse in Ockendon was contrasted with the industrial heritage attached to Tilbury. The similarity was that social change embodied the outcome of shifting functional geographies. This section explores the industrial narratives of heritage and loss in reference to Tilbury Docks. Tilbury Town developed as part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century industrial process. This development gave Tilbury a stigmatised identity to outsiders, particularly with people from Grays and Ockendon. Fred, a redundant worker from Shell Haven, explained that opportunities to work in the docks came from being an accepted part of the social network. “*Well to get a job in the docks you had to know someone or through the family, so you got exclusion there...*” This solidarity was frequently regarded with suspicion and resentment by non Tilbury respondents. Clive, a business consultant from Grays made the following statement about the industrial and social character of Tilbury.

*“Well Sth Ockendon was built after the war for mostly Ford workers it was originally a tiny village, but Tilbury always had its own village atmosphere and they were a protective community of their own ‘we’re from Tilbury, you have to listen to us’. They didn’t want to be included and the docks were important to their strength and identity.”*

Tilbury was often referred to in detrimental, derogatory, and problematic ways by respondents. Eko, a Conservative councillor for Chafford Hundred referred to it as a sink area with debt as the prime cause of poverty. Karel, an Independent Socialist councillor for Tilbury explained that the heritage of the travelling community and

their seemingly un-social rituals of living and animal husbandry contributed to derogatory stereotypes. It was regarded as a local *no-go zone*, Jane a children's entertainer from East Tilbury claimed that "*it was not the end of the world, but that you could see it from here!*" Mike, a self-employed building contractor from East Tilbury characterised Tilbury and its local influence as follows,

*"...and what has seemed to spread from out of Tilbury is all the unsavoury elements of society, because they have been left to fester. I have been to houses in Tilbury and there are places you go two doors down and they have cardboard over the windows. You don't know whether it is like that because they can't afford to get it fixed or because they think 'well if you fix it, it will only be broken again quickly'. It's cheaper to leave the board in place and it becomes an unattractive area to live and work in..."*

He later described Tilbury children as "*having the arse hanging out of their trousers*". Sara, a respondent from Ockendon drew an internal distinction in her views of Tilbury and its people.

*"I go around Tilbury daily and it's a generational thing. The old people are the ones who had jobs and the young ones, the new ones are the ones that don't have jobs and have given the place a reputation. There is a great big divide in Tilbury and you come across a population that is hidden. They have lived in their houses for 40 or 50 years, beautiful houses, more so than the ones I have been to in Orsett. This is because they had jobs..."*

This portrait of Tilbury was in light of the ethnographic work conducted a fair assessment. The division within Tilbury based around prior work situation was played out, and was recognised by Tilbury stalwarts as a divide between 'Old Tilbury people' and the 'new people', these were a conflated group of others consisting of the young and recent communities arriving from East London and other parts of Thurrock. However, what these observations failed to appreciate was that the solidarity and apparent inwardness of Tilbury was a response to what Tilbury people experienced as

‘Tilbury Pride’. Tommy, a retired police officer and co-ordinator of the Tilbury Riverside Project articulated a riposte.

*“You see the first thing when you look at our area people say about Tilbury is that it is a shit-hole. Tilbury is one of the most unemployed places and it has got its problems, but every town has its problems, Colchester’s got it, but they’re too big, London’s got it, but when it comes to Tilbury it is so tiny and the bad always comes out and the bad press comes out. You know when the skinheads were going you had it in The Sun.”*

He continued to explain the industrial heritage of Tilbury; an explanation that established the locus of Tilbury pride.

*“Tilbury has had its own industrial revolution and that is the one thing that everyone has missed out. The industrial revolution was caused by the change in infra-structure and the modernisation of labour, containerisation, electrification of the railways, and Dartford Tunnel. That’s what changed Tilbury people; because Tilbury was a main terminus for everything...The MP wanted Tilbury to become the capital town of Thurrock other than Grays. It was the biggest town in the world. All the phone numbers in Thurrock originally were Tilbury numbers.”*

The industrial heritage of Tilbury was important to every respondent who was born, raised, lived, and worked in Tilbury, because it gave the place a national and global importance. It was noted by Tommy and by Mike that Tilbury was an area analogous to mining communities of the North. The industrial heritage was remembered for providing occupations and manual skills, but also for providing the Cruise Terminal. This amounted to what Moira, a former clerical worker at Cargill, described as *“the gateway to the world”*. The strategic positioning of Tilbury at the mouth of the River Thames allowed for a continuation of this localised national pride. Tommy spoke passionately about how the industrial heritage and its national

importance had been undermined by national heritage organisations and local government answerable to central government not the local community. When asked about the relevance of Tilbury Docks to the rest of the world he winked and exclaimed “*I’m going away to the Empire my boy!*” It was significant that it was the Cruise Terminal in Tilbury where the HMS Windrush docked, bringing the first generation of Commonwealth citizens to the UK from the Caribbean. Tony, a local race relations co-ordinator remarked with humour that at the time Caribbean people were eager to leave Tilbury for London, but 50 years later they were returning due to plentiful investment opportunities in relatively decent and affordable housing.

The “*loss of infrastructure*” as Tommy described it had meant that Tilbury had lost the basis of its centrality in national and global relations, the locus of Tilbury pride. As Ockendon saw itself alienated from its rural past with increased suburbanisation, Tilbury’s alienation came as the town became geographically and economically orphaned from the Nation. Tommy highlighted that the decline of the rail network had meant that direct transport to and from London was limited for local people, he further identified that there were only two roads leaving Tilbury, none of which had pedestrian pathways. Ken and Jean who were a retired couple living in Tilbury lamented the decline of transport networks. This was their major narrative of loss for Tilbury. They claimed that the buses used to run on Sundays and weeknights. This allowed them to visit and mix with people outside Tilbury and to use leisure facilities in nearby Grays and Blackshots. These points were mentioned by everyone interviewed in Tilbury, notably by both the local councillors, as a problem for the current community and future regeneration. Sara mentioned this as an explanation to continued economic stagnation in Tilbury. Tommy noted that the lack of large employers using local labour meant that the local money supply had dwindled. The decline of Tilbury’s central role had resulted in economic stagnation. Karel claimed that this was what made black and grey market employment and benefit usage a rational option for the largely non-skilled adult population of Tilbury.

The story of Tilbury was one of isolation by the withdrawal of economic links to national and global interests. Not a self-imposed isolation by a readily constructed insular and parochial people. ‘Inwardness’ was characterised by Tommy and his co-workers as a very lamentable sense of shame.



*“Every person in Tilbury has got his own pride of the town. It doesn’t matter where you go what you do, you walk about with your head held up and all of us here are doing it because of our pride for the town and our upbringing here. That’s why we started all of this (TRP), the kids have a shame...but the pride is still in them.”*

The industrial heritage was a reminder to the present as to what made Tilbury an important centre, or ‘gateway to the world’. This function was what empowered Tilbury people in relation to other Thurrock people. Their inability to demand political attention as Clive remarked was a source of humiliation for these people, who had a hitherto sense of control and ownership central to the power of the Nation.

### **The civic narrative**

In some instances the civic narrative was distinct, but in most cases it was superimposed on the functional heritage of industry and agriculture. The civic narrative identified the familiarity and sociability of past times and provided the substance to claims of the ‘golden age’ of local community. The analysis so far has explained that the area had changed not as a result of a character change in the people, but as an outcome of the changes in the functional geography. The civic narrative explicitly revealed the pathologies of contemporary urban developments. A particular example of the civic narrative occurred in the interview with Clive. He represented the 1950s as a thriving time for Thurrock. However, his main concern was that the area changed from a middle class one with high educational standards to an industrial working class area. He characterised this as a shift in mood by local government. He claimed that after the 1970s Thurrock was known regionally as the *“Red Socialist Republic of Thurrock”*. Clive continued to explain that the closure of exclusive schools and the shift to comprehensivisation *“tore the heart out of Thurrock.”* Further, he claimed that the area did not have anything to offer and local aspirations were left unfulfilled.

Clive used developments in local education policy to discuss a shift in class power and relations, of which he identified grammar schooling as the forsaken heart. Prior to comprehensivisation the local grammar school, *Palmers Endowed School for Boys* had according to Clive, provided the *“upper echelons of governance in Thurrock for 200 years.”* He explained that a governing middle class of business owners

educated in the public school had constituted the civil society of Thurrock. He identified many local families who were owners of local department stores, small retailers, and senior management in local government and politics. For Clive, Thurrock changed when the local government became left wing and these people moved out to more exclusive places, such as Brentwood, Ingatestone, and Billericay. The shop owners in particular moved because the middle class demand for their services was overshadowed by the expanded industrial workforce. He used the example of the replacement of an exclusive department store by a budget purchase outlet. The heritage of Thurrock was for Clive, middle class public virtue. He acknowledged that the catalyst was a change in the economic function of the area as a whole. Clive's lament was that exclusive society and its virtues could not prosper in this altered terrain.

For other respondents the civic narrative was a synonym for familiarity, equal standards, and inclusivity. In Tilbury for instance, the dock workers' union provided a working class solidarity that doubled as the town's civic order. Janice, Betty and Diane, three respondents from Tilbury explained that it was a town run by the unions and this generated mutual support via the protection of employment. Janice began, *"it was run by the unions and people really looked after their jobs and that...the unions did look after their workers until the containers came in..."* Betty continued,

*"Once the containers came in the docks wasn't how we knew the docks. This was a working class town. It was always bustling with people everywhere. The station well that was big then, because of the terminal, there was always trains coming in. The toot (TGWU) was where everyone always went because that was the union, you see."*

Diane continued by remarking *"There used to be lots of clubs like football teams and boxing clubs. Clubs weren't just for going in and having a drink, they had other things too. There was always sports stuff attached to the social clubs..."* In an earlier interview Tommy had already mentioned the central role of boxing clubs in his youth. He proudly used the cliché that *"Charles Mercer (the trainer) was like a second father to me."* He lamented the loss of this ritual institution of young manhood with a wry smile. In every interview in every area the civic spaces were recounted

with reference to a governing institution – not to a stereotypical vision of a lost friendly society. Whether it was Clive remarking about the public virtue of the exclusive echelons, Tommy’s history of young men and boxing, or Brian’s recollection of Jazz and Dance Halls in Ockendon and Grays; all emphasised that loss occurred as a result of the dissolution of familiar institutions. These institutions were sites that governed regularity of social conduct in the various domains of activity in Thurrock.

The result was that people remembered the social life of the past as a rigid life-world governed by institutions. When these institutions were removed and their physical sites went through a ‘make-over’ of function the social world began to appear unfamiliar. This was how respondents referred to the withdrawal of local services such as hospitals, fire stations, and public houses. Ken and Jean both claimed that this had removed the character from Tilbury. Jean commented that they didn’t patronise any of the Pubs now as they didn’t feel they were familiar. Local public houses had become owned by nationwide chains. Jean claimed that *The Ship* public house known infamously in the South East was now a Post Office. *“That’s owned by the darkies now, we don’t go there though. They’ve got flats upstairs but whether they’ve got any of them in there I don’t know.”* She was using the Asian run Post Office as a reference point to talk about illegal immigration. This shows the salience of immigration in conversations about the change of functional geography.

A technique employed by respondents in order to reinforce this familiarity was to personalise and anthropomorphosise local institutions. If respondents were talking about discipline at Bata, it was *Mr. Shayler*; if they were talking about day trips to Southend-on-Sea it was *Mr Harris’* coaches and *ol’ joker Jones*. Respondents in Ockendon and Tilbury often recounted stories of door-to-door delivery services by local butchers, bakers, grocers and the like with reference to their family name. These examples revealed the immediately personal nature of commercial services in these areas. Although it wasn’t uncommon for people from Tilbury and Ockendon to claim, sincerely, that their front door was always left open, it was the ability to anthropomorphosise institutions or commercial services that bolstered people’s feelings of trust. These were not person to person feelings of mutual trust, but were feelings mediated by the holdings of institutional frameworks. The personal and immediate economic relations made Thurrock seem to have had a more social and civic character. Although each area was fairly distinct and everybody did not know

everybody else; common institutions allowed for the *possibility* for people to know each other should the need arise. Consequently, institutions created confidence in the continuation of conformity. Local space was personal and intimately known, the unknown was not a problem, because a fixed economic geography and institutions established confident and unmovable identities.

### **Childhood's end**

This section explains the consequences of post-industrialisation upon the land once the public arena had been subjected to the free market; a market that desired an increase in private housing stock. As the functional geography changed familiar institutions had no pragmatic necessity to exist; market forces obliterated localised commercial services. In the same way the restructuring of Social Services in the name of fiscal efficiency led to the dissolution of front-line services. The closure of Tilbury Fire Station and Orsett Hospital were both readily identifiable examples. These occurred towards the final decade of the last century, a time that was registered by all respondents as the defining line between 'then and now'. The shift in function had led to a more privatised social domain and it was here that narratives of fear were evident. Tommy's characterisation of Tilbury's civic heritage as a "*council town*" was a poignant reminder.

The stories told by middle to retirement aged people about crime and youth were not necessarily outcomes of aged relations as conventionally viewed, but related to the transformation of spatial function. Ken claimed that he would not go out at night times due to youths congregating by Tilbury Town rail station. He cross referenced this with the images of the bustling commuterscape of yesteryear. The fear was not because anything had occurred to his person, but because of the uncertainty now associated with a familiar institution in use for altered and alien purposes to his own perception. Train stations and their usage by unfamiliar people or for unfamiliar purposes were a commonplace cause for concern with respondents. The train stations in Tilbury and East Tilbury were associated as places where locals would see Black people. It appeared that for many this was the only public domain in which they met members of the new community on a tenuously equal footing. Rose, a Nigerian Labour councillor admitted that many in the new community feared Tilbury station as it had become the site for racial abuse by youths. An overarching concern for people when discussing the train stations was indeed the problem of youths using them for

congregation. Derek, an employee at East Tilbury station commented that he found the new community peculiar, but the youth were abhorrent he commented, *“I’ll be glad when I’m dead, because I will not have to put up with it anymore. It’ll be someone else’s problem. Let them deal with it!”*

Jean expanded on her fear of Tilbury Town with a direct racial element,

*“Well I can remember before there was never a bit of trouble...I’m not saying all of them, but a lot of them, you see it on the telly don’t you, start a lot of trouble don’t they? You start to worry, don’t you?”*

It was clear that Jean lacked essential day to day references to imagine the new community in pragmatic and non-pathological ways. Television media and its often distorted reflection of racial differences filled her knowledge vacuum. She continued, *“I mean they came along, before we used to have them in the hospitals (she had worked there for a while). There was only a few of them, but you knew who they were because you worked with them.”*

Institutions created a common reference point for people to identify with social and cultural others. The fear mentioned by Ken and Jean emanated from the absence of the institutional security behind confrontations with particular ‘others’. The phrase *“its all flats now”* was a common statement amongst interviewees to describe the fate of their familiar public past, especially in Ockendon and Tilbury. It was noted by all the councillors interviewed that private house building had increased in the area. It was clear to see that the altered terrain of Thurrock had produced a seemingly less social place as public spaces were subsumed by privatised clusters of apartment style homes. Brian likened this development to the construction of Lakeside Retail Park and the large supermarkets,

*“Everything that we had that was a real community has gone. Ain’t even got a bank, our nearest bank is at Lakeside. You try getting there at [Xmas], you can’t. All the shops and services have gone in Ockendon and it’s because of the big supermarkets that are out of town.”*

Respondents failed to see this shift from public to private, choosing instead to see it simply as the desecration of their known environment by a shadowy organisation with suspicious motives, known only as “*They*”. This pronoun was used by respondents to express what respondents experienced as the ‘overlords’. The overlords were an acknowledgement of government. ‘They’ were often conflated with the BME community as it became the sole context for discussing the new community. This was significant when in Tilbury and Ockendon conversations emerged about the levelling of disused local churches and the erection of apartment complexes. The following conversation reveals the confusion over public and private ownership in reference to the overlords. “*We had an incident where they desecrated a churchyard...*” [Interviewer] “*Was it vandalised?*” Brian continued,

*“No, it was nothing like that, they bulldozed a churchyard. There was a church there, but it’s not used anymore, but there are graves there, they sold it and there are people alive now that have got relatives that are buried there. They just bulldozed it.”*

Earlier in the interview Brian highlighted that ‘They’, meant the council, specifically an Asian councillor.

In a later interview with David, a Conservative councillor, it was stated that a main problem for Thurrock Council was that the issues residents contacted them about were not council issues. Inadvertently he referenced the above issue and stated that the land was always in private hands. Unless there had been a breach of planning regulation the council were powerless to prevent such development. However, in the minds of citizens who were socialised in Welfare State Britain, the ownership of such land was automatically assumed to be public; because of its hitherto familiarity. The same mistake in perception was repeated throughout the research; and usually always in reference to the new community and immigration. Michelle, an unemployed woman from Tilbury made the following statement,

*“Since the Patels have come over to this country...we’ve had nothing, but blacks, blacks, blacks coming in and as I said when these flats go up over here, they’ll get ‘em. They even*

*knocked down a church, yep the Methodist church and that's been up for donkey's years. But as I said I want the Old Tilbury how we used to have it years ago..."*

The often confusing nature of the public and private ownership of space added to the diffused sense of social knowledge possessed by most of the respondents. There were few examples of people perceiving beyond this urban chaos, those who did were mainly educated professionals and long serving councillors – people with more cosmopolitan style interests. Ron, the Chair of TRP made a convincing case to suggest that the renewal of the two forts footpath would be a significant gain for the former public spirit of Tilbury and would bolster a community feeling across all sections of Tilbury's diverse population. This, he claimed would be because the pathway stretched four miles and there were ten land ownership disputes with different and often vague private interests. Victory would expose this quagmire and render the environment and its ownership as once more, simple, and locally controlled.

### **An Englishman's home...**

The meta-functional change in Thurrock had been a shift from local community based upon economic function to one based on a dormitory for commuters. The latter was non-conducive to public community as the most immediate reference point of ownership was the personal and private space of home. Housing, because of its symbolic associations with home, roots, and cultural ownership, and as a reflection of material status was the axis upon which narratives of belonging were articulated. It was a realisation of this that spurred previously non-racist people to make accelerated claims to ownership and rights over non-white peoples. Housing and immigration were subjects always mentioned in the same breath.

Housing was the focal point and the conflicts over employment argued to be central to working class racism were non-existent in the interviews (Phizacklea 1980). When racist sentiments were expressed they derived first from a concern over house and home. House and home was where the ownership of nation was contested. This was apparent in discussions about the construction of new flats on the site of the old Methodist Church. *"I suppose they'll put more Indians in there."* All the flats mentioned were private; however, Beryl's image of migrants restricted her from

conceptualising them in non-parasitic terms. There was a persistent inability in all but a few of the white respondents to accept that non-white residents had legitimately bought or rented their home. The process of privatisation in housing, known as the ‘right to buy’ policy and the increase in private developments had made housing a fought over terrain. Mickey, a member of TRP referred to it as the “*biggest crime ever committed*” and it was agreed by many of the public figures interviewed to be the locus of social division in terms of class and ethnicity. It had individualised the contestation of space as a claim of national belonging based upon house and home.

The major academic and political criticism of ‘right to buy’ is that it diminished the stock of social housing and heightened competition for placement (Dench *et al* 2006). To allocate scarce resources local authorities use means testing and needs assessment. In conversations about this practice white respondents always held their claims or those of other whites in higher esteem than those of disadvantaged minorities. Michelle’s rant about her council house was an example. She claimed that Thurrock Council was going to relocate her as she was living on her own in a three bedroom house. These houses were meant to be allocated to families not individuals. However, Michelle was aggrieved by this as it had been her family home for two generations. Michelle’s point of conjecture was “*the woman down the road who is on her own in one of the same houses.*” Michelle continued “*If you’re black you get it and we get nothing.*” Other claims were that conditions cited by minorities to claim more points in assessments were fabricated. Beryl claimed that “*they’re always the ones that are conveniently homeless. There is always someone else who has priority.*” These reactions to housing policy stemmed from the fact that many white residents could not afford to buy in the private sector. The reactions to BME home ownership represented a sense of disbelief, rather than outright resentment. This was fuelled by their characterisation of the new community as “*cheats*”.

White respondents had accelerated feelings of belonging and due to narratives of heritage the racial basis was obscured. Due to their economic displacement the established local community had largely not been able to empower itself by private home ownership. The residents of Chafford Hundred, a private housing estate built in the late 1980s, commented that the original population of Thurrock harboured jealousy towards Chafford. Garry, a community leader in Chafford explained that the area had a stigmatised label of being for “*people who think that are a bit posh.*” He noted that there was a tendency for people to over emphasise the anti-social behaviour



of young people at Chafford rail station. He cited a double page spread in the Thurrock Gazette as an example. Tony, a local race relations worker claimed that:

*“The success of Chafford is overlooked by local media and people’s views in general. There are many newcomers to the area living in Chafford who are BME, because there is no territorial “this is ours” community there has been little racism or hostility.” It is a success. Tilbury is the opposite end of the spectrum.”*

Most other people including those from Chafford spoke of the place in lifeless tones. Eko said that *“because Chafford is new there is no rooted community. If you come here in the day time, everyone is at work – it’s a ‘dead city’, if you like”*. Chafford Hundred was the geographic manifestation of the pragmatic nature of peoples’ presence in Thurrock. Thurrock was simply about housing stock – there was no other attraction and not one respondent could name any other tangible pull factor. It was as Clive pointed out, *“a very ‘Gray’ place”*. However, the lack of rooted community meant there were no accelerated claims of spatial ownership within Chafford Hundred. There was however a contestation from outside, as Chafford Hundred was viewed as a heritage site poached from localism by BME and non-local professionals.

The established community had not accepted the house purchases in the private sector by the new community as legitimate. The ubiquity of the ‘Africans for Essex’ myth was startling as it showed how easy it was to convince otherwise rational people to inadvertently sponsor spite, hatred, and mistrust. The myth was started in a leaflet distributed throughout the South East by the BNP, although they never advertised it as such. It claimed that Barking and Dagenham Borough Council was offering African people up to £50,000 to move to Thurrock. It was entirely fabricated; according to Margaret Hodge MP there was a failed scheme to buy people out of their right to buy in order to secure the supply of social housing. Only nine payments were made to people of African origin and averaged out at £16,000, significantly less than the value of their home that they had sacrificed. The effect of this myth had been to stigmatise every Black resident in Thurrock, despite their highly professional and aspirant social profile. Countering this myth proved an impossible task within the

research, despite cultural racism being easy to subvert using polemic and practical observation. The respondents could simply not accept that Black people were able to afford what they themselves could not without resorting to crime or preferential treatment by the State.

The myth emerged in many different contexts and more often than not any explicit racial label was removed to distance the claim from stereotypical racism. Irene, a clerical worker from Grays stated:

*“I think it is the manner in which they have been brought into the area and it’s the method whereby London are paying them 30K and that’s now going to be increased to 50K to relocate in the sticks. So the locals take affront to that, they don’t come in because they’re working hard, they’re not coming in for good jobs, they’re coming here because London wants them out and they arrive in this area.”*

Like other respondents Irene failed to provide credible references to these accusations and passively accepted the statement’s validity. Rose, a Tilbury Labour councillor highlighted the fiscal impossibility for cash strapped metropolitan authorities to make such a gesture. Tony noted the impossibility given his estimation that the BME population in Thurrock was nearing 10%. Karel, and Bob an organiser for the local Labour Party both separately stated it was the work of the BNP and the effect was exactly what they had intended. The only truth in people’s reference to the ‘African for Essex’ myth was that the migration had happened very quickly. The residual information in these mythical statements was that the new community had acted pragmatically within a system that wants rid of them from the East End. The reason in respondents’ minds was the 2012 Olympic Games. Brian made this particularly explicit,

*“...the people that are moving in now are the people that have been turfed out of their houses because Tony Blair, the big wig prat! He’s chucked them all out of their houses because he wants to build a bleeding great sports stadium, what the bloody hell are we going to do when the Olympics is over? So they’re*

*all chucked out of their houses, every flipping house that comes vacant down here is taken up by one of those people.”*

In Grays and Ockendon the ‘Africans for Essex’ myth was concluded with a description of Thurrock as a dumping ground for London’s ‘unwanted African’ citizens. Local community was seen to have endured the worst outcome from the 2012 Olympics and the arrival of the new community. Brian concluded, “*What does Thurrock mean?*” [Interviewer] “*Oh I don’t know errr, Thor Oak?*” he responded, “*Don’t be stupid – Thurrock is the bottom part of the ship, what’s in the bottom of a ship? What’s it called come on?*” [Interviewer] “*Errr I don’t know!*” Brian continued the inquisition, “*In the bottom of the ship? Bilge, Right! Now, what is all around Thurrock? Everybody’s rubbish from London, ‘Crap Deluxe’.*” *It’s all around us. Thank you Thurrock Council wonga again! See what ever way you look at it, it all comes back to money. It drives me to despair thinking about what this poxy council has done to us!*” [Finally he ran out of breath!] The reduction of Thurrock to discourses of waste and shit was popular amongst respondents. It reflected the wider view of the South East as subordinate to Greater London; or as ‘the arsehole of Great Britain’, a phrase popularised by Pahl’s study of the Isle of Sheppey, a stones throw down the Thames from Thurrock (Pahl 1984).

### **A tale of two Thurrocks**

The narratives of heritage and their application to the present situation obscured the multifarious nature of Thurrock’s social and economic history. The arrival of the new community was nothing new in the history of Thurrock; a history in which migration was central. Long before the Windrush docked at Tilbury, the area was an attraction for migrant workers across the UK. There were work opportunities for people in quarrying, construction, agriculture, engineering, and lastly docking. The completion of the docks in the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw migrants enter the UK from the Empire and beyond. Notably, the Chinese seafarers who remained in the South East from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; settling finally in Limehouse. Since Commonwealth migration the area has been exposed to international migrants at regular intervals. Unfortunately, the most famous responses to this have been characterised by racist violence by local skinhead organisations. Eko attempted to describe the area in relation to a heritage of migration.

*“Well the society is so embedded that you cannot just streamline, draw a line today and say ‘no. Someone like me might be clear cut, but there are loads of inter-marriages, inter-links; businesses, children. I’m second generation as some people would call it, now that people who are fourth, fifth, sixth generation down the line, where do you draw the line? You can’t really. Immigration or emigration as the case maybe happens across the world and Thurrock is part of this.”*

He concluded by stating explicitly that *“immigration is the heritage of the UK”*.

Hajra, a local women’s race relations worker was keen to highlight that BME, particularly South Asian people had been integral to the local construction, rail, and textile industries. Despite this, BME people have never constituted an explicit section of Thurrock community. Gurdip, a local Asian Labour councillor described the diversity of pre-2001 Thurrock to have revolved mostly around South Asians involved in retail and restaurant businesses. The arrival of the new community meant that the heritage of migration had Gurdip claimed *“come home to roost”*. Councillors and race relation workers alike claimed the total proportion of BME, including Eastern Europeans to be currently in the region of 10%, double the figure at 2001 (Appendix). These respondents were keen to counter the ‘African for Essex’ myth. The stories of migration told by Eko, Tony, Rose and Hajra were themselves drawn from practical concerns of relatively lower house prices in Thurrock compared to East London. The only difference between newcomers’ stories and that of Kitty for instance, was 80 years.

The migration had encouraged a transformation in the usage of space and the meanings of place that people used to characterise areas within Thurrock. White respondents were keen to point out that areas like Grays town centre were now over-run with *“Blacks”* and shops catering for diverse cultural requirements. Terry, a forklift truck driver from Chafford Hundred made this observation by invoking an image of white exclusion; he claimed that along with a friend he played a game called *“spot the white man”*, when they drove through Grays town centre. He was one of four white respondents who re-told the *“no whites allowed”* myth. This myth was told in exactly the same way by four non-related whites. It goes like this: The orator claims that his friend was in a rush and needed to get his head shaved. He entered one

of the six African hair salons in Grays (referred to once as “*one of them coon places*”, the rest of the time it was simply called “*one of them ethnic ones*”) and, in a very reasonable tone pleaded with the barber for a haircut. He was then asked to leave by what was described as a “*big fuck off black geezer*” who pointed to a sign in the salon window saying “**No Whites Allowed**”. As part of the observational research five of the six salons in Grays were visited; none had such an exclusionary policy, all made an interested fuss at the novelty of custom by a white person. They were all very forthcoming to provide details for the research upon learning of it too. Overall, they were confused as to why white people did not tend to use their services; they were proud of their abilities in hair and beauty for men and women. They claimed it was regular for white people to stand outside and to look into their salon. One barber claimed that on a few occasions white men would enter the salon, mutter something under their breath and leave.

The Black respondents shared confusion over the apparently strange behaviour of white people. They spoke about white people to suggest that whites were often mentally ill. Yemi, an independent trader in Grays High Street expressed similar sentiments. He ran a small market stall in a very exposed area of Grays town centre. I asked him whether he had experienced anything occurring to him or others in Grays that he viewed to be racist. He said that he had had people causing trouble, but that he saw it as an individual phenomenon and in that way he didn’t see it was racially motivated. He did recount two stories of racist attacks on his friends. During this conversation a group of white people walked past his stall. There was an older woman, a teenage boy, and a child in a push chair. They wore all the token features of stereotypical impoverished white families. We both turned to look at these people due to the sound of Yemi’s ‘A-board’ falling to the floor, as the teenage boy had altered his course to collide with the display. Yemi apologised and went round to pick it up and as he did the boy turned round and muttered something inaudible, his facial expression clearly signified that it was not an apology.

Several weeks were spent conducting interviews and observations in Grays town centre. It became common to notice young white people battle for space when negotiating head-on encounters with BME people in pedestrian areas. These situations are commonplace on all pavements and between all people. However, in Grays they became the axis of a tense symbolic struggle for the priority over public space. A battle of wills emerged over who would back down first to let the other pass. A

noticeable incident was when a young couple wearing clothes emblazoned with St George's Crosses and a pushchair sporting the same motif barged past an elderly Asian man. After clearing him the couple turned their heads and made what had become an all too familiar inaudible gesture of defiance. The Black respondents found it very difficult to pinpoint any instance where they knew a type of behaviour was racist. Their characterisation of the whites mentioned above was that they were strange and probably 'mental'. Yomi, an IT communications professional from Tilbury shared these observations of the behaviour of whites, he commented that:

*"They are very odd and I don't want to say it, but very inward to themselves. I try to say hello to the people along my street, they look away, you know, as if they haven't seen me, but they must have done...they twitch their curtains and I think that they are wondering what I am doing walking around...I'm just on my phone, or I am walking back from the station..."*

These instances of interaction between the old and the new communities revealed muted expressions of mistrust and intolerance. Although, none were explicitly racist and could all be characterised as banal misunderstandings, they revealed a sense that white people, when dealing face-to-face with Black people have none of the confident swagger and narrative vindication that they confessed to in interviews. Even though none of the white respondents were observed in these above scenarios, they often made statements about how they had "*mouthed off*" to a Black person over something that they related to decency and good manners. These occurred mostly in conversations about using public transport or queuing in shops. Terry had mentioned that he had "*chucked it in one of 'ems face*" when he claimed that they pushed in front of him in a queue. This was probably a statement of masculinity for my sake, rather than being anywhere near the truth! As I am white, respondents felt more able to express such frustration in the interview. Ultimately they knew that intolerance was a public wrong and that its public expression would need to be complimented with a great deal of foolhardy courage, of which most white people lacked. The result was cowardly muted murmurings of dissent aimed at the ground not to the eyes of their new neighbours. To other whites such as I they were valorised

stories of defiance against invaders aimed at bolstering a racial solidarity against the usurpation of land and people presented by the new community.

Overall, the new community did not experience Thurrock as an intolerable place to live. Stories of aggravation were not regarded as fatalistically pervasive or as a social ill, as mentioned they were often regarded as individual idiocy. Only Tony represented whites as institutionally racist. He was explicit to characterise this as an outcome of the loss of industry so as to avoid reducing whites to racist demons. Yemi characterised living in Thurrock as a more relaxed lifestyle. Eko and Yomi also made this point; all three highlighted the nuisance of inner city living. Yomi claimed that he had witnessed a stabbing at a takeaway restaurant in East London. His astonishment at this incident was a factor in his decision to move to Tilbury. This experience of Tilbury as tranquil contrasted greatly with the criminalised perception of white local respondents. Isata, a female salon proprietor claimed that there were problems in North London involving drug dealing and constant police involvement. She moved to Thurrock to escape ‘crime’ and to allow her children to grow up away from such influences as drugs and gang culture.

Consistent across the interviews with respondents in the new community was a concern to express Grays and Thurrock as a thriving environment, because of what local whites referred to as the “*influx*”. This was generated mostly by the local cultural economy prompted by the establishment of key services, such as food provision, hair and beauty services, and Black churches. These were all seen as exclusive by whites, a cause for concern for non-white respondents. Rose, along with owners of beauty salons explained that Black people needed these places, because white people lack the knowledge to treat African hair. Rose revealed the centrality of hair and beauty to self-identity and socialising within Black community.

*“...For example I am an African woman and you’ll see me and the next day I’ll have different hair, because that’s what we do and hair salons are important because that is where you talk about what’s going on, it’s a place where you get a captive audience there, you know?”*

Ida, a Malaysian shop worker in one of the three supermarkets that catered for diverse culinary requirements in Grays explained that without these shops people

would need to commute to Upton Park. Rita, a Nigerian customer added that Grays was a convenient location for people all over the South East and was less expensive to travel to than East London. All respondents within the new community agreed with this logic. In regards the diversity presented by the shops and takeaways, Ida described Grays town centre as possessing a *“lot of energy”*. Eko made a similar gesture to highlight the vibrancy added to the otherwise grey monotony of Grays, *“Without this, it is a fairly unremarkable area.”*

Although none of these services were exclusive they did attract more Black users by virtue of their immediate market. Eko and Rose were keen to maintain that more was needed to show the wider population that they were welcome to use these services. For the new community it was the specificity of white services that were exclusive, the use of these would have meant that they would have to conform to white standards, such as bland food and non-descript hairstyles. It was clear to see that the new community required the provision of services directed toward their ‘heritage’ as Eko saw it, but that they complimented the overall culture of the area, rather than generating divisiveness. Isata was desperate to have more white clientele as she was afraid that due to a rise in the amount of similar salons the market would be flooded. What was clear from interviews and observations was that there were two distinct experiences of Thurrock. Due to a lack of integrating institutions or common goals both inadvertently failed to capitalise on each other. The shift in the functional geography of Thurrock had brought to an end the world familiar to local whites. However, it had created a domain where new community could flourish. Lanre, an IT professional claimed that if the white population remained in an inward state they would lose their country to new communities who in her opinion had a more future orientated sense of responsibility. Although all Black respondents felt comfortable in Thurrock and desired more interaction with whites they maintained continuous networks and relations with London. This was, as Yemi and Lanre expressed because of church or for social reasons. Yomi and Cliff a local barber explained that nightlife in London was still very important to them despite living in Thurrock. This was common for all the younger Black respondents. Eko finally commented that he liked living in Thurrock. It was well connected to London, but just on the right side of the M25 to escape the hustle and bustle of the Metropolis.

When asked about the expansion of Greater London and the result of this upon Thurrock, white respondents were negative. For them it appeared as another assault



on local identity and autonomy. In this they turned away from this Metropolitan invitation epitomised by Terry's comment "*Livingstone can stick his Greater London up his arse.*" For the whites it was the local and the ashes of their 'heritage' that they wanted to re-ignite. The reality was that regeneration was already well underway and the new community were an integral and active component. This feature was missed by all but three of the white respondents. The rest continued to debase the new community and its social entrepreneurialism as exclusive, self-serving, and most of all not in keeping with the area and its proud heritage(s). For the respondents it was not the area and its functional geography that had changed; the stock and character of the people that had been altered. Consequently, there emerged from people's narratives a categoric distinction between cosmopolitans and locals, central to this were claims of belonging to the land. It was here that many respondents found their most plausible and primordial sense of bonding social capital.

## Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the cultural response to globalisation. The local form of globalisation was the dormitory estate ideal as a functional replacement for a rural and industrial economy. The cultural response was a re-imagination of local identification with the land. This occurred as narratives on heritage; rural, industrial, and civic. The rural narrative showed the strength of association between ruralism and conventional English identity. This was explicit in the imagined local self-sufficiency of agriculture. The industrial narrative saw the strength of identity in labour solidarity. This was most vivid in illustrations of Tilbury Pride that expressed the functional role the local played in the strength of the Nation. The civic narrative concentrated on the familiarity and social capital emergent from stable institutions. It was argued that the change in the functional geography viewed in the previous narratives led to the destruction of this familiar landscape, and thus the familiar culture it established. It was the political and economic restructuring inherent in globalisation that led to the demise of Thurrock's familiar communal past. It was argued that the glocal effects were a privatised and individualised local experience. This was used to criticise the causal logic of social capital theory's role in community renewal discourse.

This was criticised by reference to the decline of familiar institutions governing social conduct and integration. This was an era of radical reform in the public and private domains. The local experience of these reforms was two-fold.

Firstly, locals were alienated from local government and the public sphere. This was underscored by hostility to New Labour and the New Left in general. This fostered a local suspicion of local authorities as they were viewed to be in covert alliance with the new community. This suspicion became a trench in which claims of ownership over place were fought. Secondly, relations between the public and private in regard ownership of resources especially place, had been individualised and left to the whims of the free market. This was manifest in the rise of home ownership. The contestation of the territorial nation was individualised to one's own home, not the civic sphere. It was within the private individualisation of territorial claims and shifting relations with the public sphere that narratives of the new community emerged. The reduction of civic life to the individual ownership of bricks and mortar had created an un-enchanted Thurrock, bleak, grey, and epitomised by Chafford Hundred. Conspiracy theories were an attractive means to add colour and meaning to this non-descript environment.

The arrival of the new community within an already fragmented and contested environment generated a vastly unfamiliar cultural landscape. This caught locals unaware due to its stark and swift manifestation. The 'racist' comments and attitudes of white respondents was a manifestation of their confusion over identity and action within this new environment where the centrality of white experience was being challenged. The arrival of the new community was a rational market led process. There were no institutions governing integration because due to the uncertainty and rupture of the functional geographic change there was no identifiable community within which to integrate. The established residents were forced to reflect upon their identity and relationship to the local land. As a consequence two socio-scapes of Thurrock emerged representing multiple claims over local identity and the ownership of space. For the new community it was thriving and looked outward to regional and international interests. To the established it was paranoid with conspiracy and regressive in its identifications with the non-local. It was within this geographic context of desolation that community renewal and the discourses of commonality were meaningful. The succeeding chapters explore these aspects of community as premised upon the spatial context established within this chapter.

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## People: The Plastic Crowd

### Introduction

The change in Thurrock's functional geography was accompanied by a turnover of population. Migration to the area represented a spatial turnover of population, which included a super-diverse stock of people unfamiliar to the area. This chapter explores how discourses of commonality generated a homogenous view of local people. Homogeneity was imagined around supposedly common interests and situations of white experience. The chapter argues that the sympathy accorded white youth was a negation of the resentment accorded to the new community and signified racial and ethnic boundaries. This was a boundary further maintained by white groups' conceptions of inclusivity. The chapter explores these boundaries in relation to familiarity and ordinariness of white interests, which marked the new community as unfamiliar and antagonistic. The chapter compares the responses to the reality of super-diversity made by different groups across Thurrock. This is used to assess the relationship between groups' interest in community renewal and integration; providing the empirical field of the constructions of common people relevant to the 'land' in question.

### Original sin

It was a truism throughout the research that there was no immediately identifiable common situation that united aggregates of Thurrock residents. The narratives of the past served to imagine common situation or interest through which local community was experienced. The traditional institutions made social life common and familiar to all who engaged with them. Through such simple examples as *Mr. Holt's* handwriting lessons at *St Chads Secondary School* Tilbury, a community and its members were imagined. For many, the immediately imagined community provided the essence of all Thurrock, whereas some pointed to the multifarious nature of Thurrock community. For the respondents industrial, civic, and rural narratives created images of common situation and solidarity that defined white experience. These had their

origins in working class stoicism and hardship. Donna commented that “*life on the marshes*” in Tilbury through to West Thurrock was a hard life and that communal realisation of this generated feelings of solidarity. Dorothy clarified this point in reference to Tilbury, “*Even though it was a rough and tumble place, and we wasn’t rich or anything, but we were all working...then they started selling the houses.*” Many of the stories of hardship in times past appeared to reinstate a sense of working class dignity.

A yearning for dignity was apparent when Brian was asked about the effect of out of town supermarkets on the local area,

*“Yes they do! [Affect community] It affects the area because the camaraderie and the friendship all goes, because you don’t meet people anymore, you don’t go down the shops, you don’t go down the road to go shopping; now you go in your car and well you don’t talk to people in your stupid car. The art of conversation is now dead!”*

Clive’s story regarding the closure of exclusive department stores in Grays town centre paid a similar tribute to the loss of dignity in contemporary consumerism. He was not alone in adding that commuter style living had eroded the sacred heart of local community. At the heart of what Clive described as “*social community*” was a lifestyle of “*working and living locally*”. Overall, a common situation was the well-spring of *gemeinschaft* and as such included solidarity that dignified and humanised social and economic life. Common situation was the progenitor of a bonding social capital that would congeal as local English identity.

However, there were a few instances mentioned where common situation expanded its borders and included citizens beyond the immediate scope of the imagined community. In these examples, dignity of others was preserved by the accordance of sympathy. This was apparent in all conversations about the ‘prefabs’ in Chadwell-St-Mary and Sth Ockendon. They were accepted largely because of sympathy for their wartime sacrifice to the Nation; as East Enders were bombed out of their homes. A further example was the way in which regional differences were cast aside to help the victims of the 1956 floods. Moira of the Local History Group explained:

*“It has been a close knit community, I’m remembering back to 1953 [sic], I think with the floods when Tilbury was flooded and immediately almost all of Thurrock, Grays, they all sort of got up the next morning and going down there and setting up places for people to evacuate from Tilbury, because not many people could stay in their houses. And there was all sorts of school halls and church halls and public houses were you know, commandeered...But, you know, I can remember a youth group in Grays and Nth Stifford went round knocking on people’s doors saying, ‘We’ve got some big family and we couldn’t put them anywhere else and have we got some food’, and ‘oh yes I’ll have a look in my cupboards’, because it is an East Ender mentality round here, because a lot of the people come from the East End.”*

When asked whether she envisioned this camaraderie happening in the present she gave an immediate affirmation. Moira claimed that even though many people did not know each other it would only take one thing like the flood to affect everyone and they would be forced to pull together.

In the present, due to the altered functional geography of Thurrock common situations were not readily identifiable. However, common interests were imagined to exist and were often used to marshal the remaining and fragmented white population into a coherent social unit. ‘Original people’ were imagined as a common people to demarcate local social boundaries and identities. While describing the local residents’ relationship to the Labour Party many described people as Labour voters, “...*but not labour people anymore.*” This alluded to a narrowing of common interests and the abandonment of a socialist solidarity. Some were explicit to mention that this shift had aligned the common interests with those espoused by the BNP. Karel, as an Independent Socialist councillor from Tilbury explained that due to the system of voting most of her voters had also voted for the BNP; in many cases as their first choice. She was aghast at her vote being cast in the same breath as one for a neo-fascist organisation. Joyce at CTC articulated this fusion of common interest with racist politics thusly, “*Yes but its different now, it’s all these illegal ones that you’re getting coming down. Oh what do they call them? The errr...asylum refugees? The*

*ones that are being given the hand-outs for the houses.*” Brian rationalised the presence of the new community as follows,

*“...the coloured young couple that have moved into [gives the address] it is unbelievable, don’t get me wrong they’re lovely people we get on alright with them and they’re very friendly and the rest of it, but they’re like fish out of water. They’re like fish out of water, because of our community. We’ve got a rural community, as I said if you go out of Sth Ockendon in any direction you’re in the country.”*

The new community were simply defined as adding to unfamiliarity,

*“So you are getting an influx of people that nobody knows. It’s causing problems in the community because the people don’t know one another; they don’t want to know them. It’s not been a steady grow, it has been...BASH! Nothing against them, but you can’t get to grips with them, because there’s so many in one hit.”*

Despite this Brian still claimed with pride that there was more community in Ockendon because there was less schism *caused* by the presence of the new community.

These examples reveal how narrow the established residents defined their own interests. The boundaries around them were immovable and racial in essence. This was revealed in a discussion with Dorothy, a former Labour councillor for Tilbury about the election of a Black councillor in Tilbury. It should be noted that she was not typically or intentionally racist; she had no resentment towards the new community, she actively argued against people’s incorrect perceptions in regards needs assessment and she worked with TRUST in order to facilitate greater integration in Tilbury and across Thurrock. Her argument showed how banal defences of working class community interests become racialised and analogous to the interests of the BNP.

*“Councillors should be living and working in the area that they serve, it’s as simple as that, this turned against Labour and they lost two safe seats, because of the selection process. I mean Rose is a Black African councillor who lives in Ockendon. And at the end of the day she doesn’t know Tilbury, she turned up and I’ve got no problem, it’s not a colour issue, but if she lived in Tilbury: Fine! Everybody wanted a Tilbury person to stand again. If she lived in Tilbury that would not be a problem, but how can someone live in Ockendon represent Tilbury?”*

In an interview with Rose she commented that when canvassing for support in Tilbury she had been repeatedly chastised on the racial grounds that she could not speak on behalf of Tilbury people. Her defence was that there were many Africans in Tilbury and they too were part of the electorate. She urged voters to take her seriously and she used examples of local planning disputes to bridge the concerns of all Tilbury residents. She was elected in 2006 with just over a third of the votes; she now shares the constituency with a female BNP councillor, elected in 2008.

This same dilemma was voiced in Sth Ockendon in regards a local Asian councillor. Respondents were asked about whether councillors representing the area were from Ockendon. Brian spoke highly of one particular male Labour councillor, a man with a similar social profile to himself, *“I guarantee you he’ll bend heaven and hell to try and get it sorted for you, he is our kind of man.”* The only example given to support this was that they once saw him pruning a hedge on a piece of common ground! When asked about the Asian councillor Brian stated the following: *“Well when you think that he is an Indian what the bloody hell does he know about our needs? I can’t remember his name off the top of my head it’s a peculiar name. Why is he on our council?”* Les at the ETCA gave the following account when dealing with an Asian social services officer, he was talking more generally about discrimination against whites by ‘Them’:

*“...It’s just total discrimination. Little Story: I went away for nearly six years and I didn’t have a job when I came back here because I’d left the firm. Went to Grays job centre and there is*

*an Indian lady standing behind the counter with a little ruby in her hair and a sari on telling me that even though I'd worked here for fifteen years, I'd paid all my taxes. I've paid all my national insurance and everything else that I wasn't entitled to anything for six months. I had to wait six months before I could get anything. But, I thought that is really sad, especially...coming...from...YOU!"*

Sympathy for residents outside the conceptions of commonality was withheld as respondents felt the government were involved in a clandestine pact with BME. All instances of discussions about such people culminated in expressed feelings that they had more rights than white people; due to a presumed affection and heightened attention of the State. The sympathy of common people was only reserved for those who would remain largely subordinate to the beneficiary. The socially ascendant status of the new community meant that sympathy for them as newcomers was sparse. The 'Africans for Essex' myth helped explain this for respondents by rationalising the new community's 'call to power' in ways that discredited the aspirations of BME. Instead of viewing Thurrock as a success story of upward social mobility, many saw Thurrock as an example of national decay; as whites saw themselves pushed further away from administrative institutions. The following example from Les registers the threat to English sovereignty that respondents felt in regards BME.

*"There was a program on the other day about this new idea that Blair has got about Britishness. There was an Arab type bloke and an Englishman. And the Englishman said it was a good idea, but all the coon wanted to talk about was Islam – "We should be teaching this in schools", why? I'm a Christian! I don't want to know about Islam. That isn't Britishness at all. That was all the coon was spouting about all the time and this is what they want. They want to take over and this government is helping them. They can get anything – our own can't. It's a fact now that in Thurrock you have to bid for a house. If you want a council house it is a fact that you have to put yourself on the list and you'll find out for yourself if you go*



*on the list, if you happen to be an ethnic you've got points in front of the white person who has lived in the area all their life. The lottery grant! A lot of them we can't touch, because they're designated, yes you guessed it for the ethnics. Now that is wrong...This isn't my country anymore. It doesn't belong to me anymore, that is how I feel. I really honestly feel like that. You know the best thing that should've happened to this country? Enoch Powell should have been Prime Minister, because he wouldn't have let...ANY...OF...THEM...IN!"*

Les concluded with *"We were fighting on the wrong side during the war..."*

This betrayal of wartime effort was harsh and was not typical of respondents; what it showed was the logical limits of the desperation that respondents felt about the future of Thurrock. The ETCA was a club littered with nationalist and right wing ephemera. This fortified the remnants of white English ethnic identity against 'cosmopolitanism'. These comments reduced common interest to racial and ethnic boundaries and acted as a cage through which local identity was imagined and debated as a white experience. As a consequence it was the constraint of this narrative that tarnished Dorothy's claim that Rose could not legitimately represent Tilbury as unfortunately racial.

### **The kids are all alright**

Locals expressed their common interests via a sense of loss in traditional authority and the future direction of young white people. Feelings towards younger generations sealed white people in the cage of localism. The narratives about the lack of future for *their* young were socially acceptable ways to lament the stagnation of their own ethnic group. Dench *et al* (2006) have viewed white peoples' negative associations of migrant community as a fear over the future of their own children. They claim that older respondents with no dependent offspring were less likely to exhibit racist attitudes due to a lack of worry for significant others. This research found little basis for this distinction, but still found that fears over the future of progeny were related, in part to peoples' fear of the continuity of their kin and community. A distinction between common people and cosmopolitan interests made this become an inadvertently racial fear; because at its roots commonality signified the white English

population established prior to Post-WWII migration. Young people were significant as they represented the resource that would restock and renew white community at a corporeal level. Consequently, fears over the ability of local community to generate a racially white and culturally English turnover of population conflicted with spatial turnovers of stock prompted by migration. Migration transcended narratives of land and people by shattering the racial and ethnic discourses of commonality and challenged community renewal as whites perceived it. It was in this respect that white respondents' lament for the institutions of their own childhood were meaningful.

This was significant when respondents were talking about social order. When talking about discipline at Bata, Joan claimed that paternal community was missing in the lives of young people. Rather than pathologising youth as a negation of elders' own innocence, respondents actually and counter-intuitively shed sympathy towards young people. The young in Thurrock were the object of community sympathy in much the same way as the East Enders or the flood victims were in the 1950s. This was because, without institutions of governance the young were viewed as helpless and vulnerable. This was particularly acute in discussions over boxing clubs, competitive sports, and apprenticeships. Fred remembered back to a past before an imagined banning of competitive sports by so called 'political correctness'. He claimed that community leadership had suffered because young people were not given the chance to become winners; something of a precursor to civic leadership in Fred's eyes. Tommy made a similar point with boxing clubs: they served to civilise the violent tendencies of young men, making them responsible community (or as in Tilbury, union) leaders.

Apprenticeships were spoken of as a means to critique present day educational policy and what respondents felt as interference from the State. It was expressed that the age limit of 18 on young men entering apprenticeships interfered with a destiny of locally based work. This meant that young men in Tilbury either went into further education or straight to the dole queue. In this way, the residents of Tilbury held often jaded views of education. Although they all saw value in education some were concerned that the new Gateway College on the very outskirts of their local territory would steal their children's future. Ron, the chair of TRP was a supporter of education policy, but he felt that it should bring immediate benefit to the community and local area. He explained that his work with TRP had come out of an initiative to get young men into employment by providing basic skills and equipment. This was mostly for

manual labour as this was the type of work young men in Tilbury saw as their most applicable. One of the aims of TRP was to re-develop a plot of land, which they did using training schemes for similar young people. The group claimed that the rewards were many as the employability of the volunteers was enhanced as was the self-confidence of Tilbury's young unskilled men and women. Ultimately, they were enamoured collectively as physical efforts took ownership of the land and the future of Tilbury people.

Karel sat on the board of the Gateway College and was keen to promote the school as an extension of this activity. As a councillor and governor she was fighting to instil a 'community education' ethos in the school. She was positive that this ethos would be a principal means to accelerate the aspirations of young men and women of all backgrounds in Tilbury. Her main point of contention was that centralised education policy did not take into account regional difference and localised inequality. She claimed that literacy rates were very low in Tilbury and age banding and standardised tests were not adequate to allow staff to deal with individual cases. This meant that less basic parts of the curriculum remained incomprehensible to students who lagged behind their peers. Overall, the ethos of community education was well received in Tilbury as it gave respondents a feeling of control over their young and the local future. The Gateway College allowed equal access to this ends based upon gender and ethnicity, which may not have been possible if 'community good' was left to ad-hoc definitions by self-elected spokespersons of the community. It returned an institution of governance to the coming of age of young men and women in Tilbury. The community ethos empowered young people to develop themselves and by default their common surroundings. This served to appease the criticisms that education policy had stolen the resources the young offer the locality. This resource was no longer distributed to cosmopolitan-esque white collar occupations located in metropolitan areas, but was distributed as community renewal.

The opinions found outside Tilbury were less focussed towards a realistic future for young people and instead were more damning of the young in general. They saw the 'anti-social' aspects of young people as a result of malignant play. They were less interested in harmonising concerns with skills development and community education. Instead, they were committed to re-establishing gendered leisure pursuits as a way to govern the young people. Brian was a defender of organisations such as the Scouts and Boys' Brigade or dancing troupes for girls. He also made very little

distinction between different age groups; choosing to label young people collectively as children or kids. The fact that he identified a children's playground as one of the only facilities for the 'kids' did little more than infantilise the young people he accused of being "*out of control*" due to boredom.

Spare time was the narrative used in interviews where young people were seen as a constant nuisance. Ironically, respondents saw the cause as government regulation and contemporary policing. Their concern was that discipline and punishment had been removed from the private and domestic arena and was now subject to State regulation. Stan, a regular member of ETCA stated that the young people who caused a nuisance were simply bored. He claimed that they had been made docile by entertainment such as computer games and cable television. He continued to say that 'kids' had lost the ability to make their own fun. This argument was ironic next to his description of young peoples' evening behaviour around the local subway – from his vivid description it sounded an ingenious although criminal use of the urban environment! To warrant his argument he recalled a time when a neighbouring parent was asked to remove a swing he had fixed to a tree on a piece of common land. This became a medium to vent anger over health and safety regulation.

*"One of the parents went and put one of them rope swings up for the kids on [name of road], but if you put a rope swing up now and the kids fell off of it you'll be liable. It's a stupid world we live in, it really is! The government has bought in so many rules and regulations that have got to be abided by that, honest to God; I think that is what's wrong with the whole community everywhere now."*

The interviewees in ETCA all seemed to be concerned that the institution missing in young peoples' lives was traditional parenting. They blamed the encroachment of government on working mothers and cosmopolitanism. Underneath these suggestions was a generic disappointment with young people and economically active women. This suggested that locals with these social profiles had failed to uphold the common interests of the white English brethren.

These examples of attitudes to young people revealed different ways in which common interests were imagined as an expression of community destiny and

inevitably renewal. In Tilbury there was a tendency due to the Gateway College and community activities to see what was described by many as a “*bright future*”. In interviews in other parts of Thurrock respondents spoke of the young people in regards discipline and community governmentality. This response appeared to be less empowering and overwhelmingly parochial. There was no real concern with the development of occupational futures for the young people as a common interest. The cited ‘anti-social’ behaviour was regarded as malignant and to be cured only by recourse to traditional forms of discipline, including corporeal punishment. They tended to talk of young people in infantile terms and made no reference to young in the new community. It was a fact stated by TRUST that these young people were, against all stereotypes, excelling in education in relation to established groups. This factor was well recognised by the members of TRP. It appeared that the ethos developed in Gateway allowed for a plural view of the Tilbury’s future by incorporating a strong commitment to a ‘community education’ that encompassed equality of opportunity. In sociological terms Gateway was investing social capital by building bridges to encourage integration towards a cosmopolitan set of common local interests. TRP and Gateway College both saw these common interests explicitly stated by Ron as “*social, economic, and environmental regeneration for the citizens of Tilbury*”. It was a role model that provided leadership in values and attitudes and legitimised the local as an open social system of multiple claims over land and people.

Common interests were articulated less positively in areas like Ockendon and Corringham where community groups had a more constrained image of the local social system. This was bonded and sealed ultimately by racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. This was the case in Tilbury too as with Dorothy’s argument; however, the main community group (TRP) did not endorse this publicly and did not act in accordance with such essentialism of land and people. In conclusion, common interests were seen to be in relation to the state of young people and concern that the future of community was in their hands. There was more worrying concern in places without revitalised institutions and groups to socialise young people into adulthood. TRP was very keen to make adults from the young people, a goal shared by the Gateway College and it was in this that they saw a common future. Although, this was not consistently inclusive the institutional governance ensured that it was a primary objective. It was from this that members were able to counter racist and exclusive views within the community. The totality of racialised narratives of belonging

espoused in other areas was suggestive of a lack of leadership at an institutional level, rather than a definition of individual character. In this, common interests were constructed from private negotiations between individuals with no overarching governance to ensure a sense of 'democratic citizenship'. In all situations, young people were the objects of community interest, because they embodied the community's future fate as renewal, stagnation, or colonisation.

### **A vision for Thurrock**

The interests represented across Thurrock were inextricably linked to community renewal. The TRP group saw regeneration as a socially transformative process. It wasn't consensual, but there was a heightened acceptance that the new community were active players in regeneration. In a discussion about a waning sense of Tilbury pride Kathy claimed that "*...it will come back what with the influx.*" There was a tacit agreement that entrepreneurialism was needed should regeneration occur as a democratic local process. Karel was one of the many who alluded to the professional and entrepreneurial status of the new community. The economy that had been set up as a result had transformed the townscape of Tilbury from a derelict lifeless environment to a thriving and social place. Rose highlighted that many in the new community had purchased private buildings that were previously in states of disrepair; the council had agreements that these would be returned to acceptable states upon purchase. This meant that many old and decrepit landmarks had been demolished and new buildings had been erected in their place. These were mostly private residences as Eko explained that the demand for housing in Tilbury far outstripped the supply offered in the public sector. The old Methodist church, *the toot*, and the *Stella Maris* had been levelled and replaced by modern apartments catering for contemporary professional living. Also gone were the old cafés, which were replaced by continental style cafés serving more than the traditional English breakfast and cups of tea. The retail outlets and market stalls too now held names un-associated with England. Nigerian, Ghanaian, and a plethora of Eastern European names were sported on signage once emblazoned with the likes of '*J. Smith & Sons etc...*' Four months were spent travelling through Tilbury and using these services. Aside from the supermarkets; the cafés, car valet services, and convenience stores were used by what appeared to be a vast array of the local population – young, old, male, female, and

from all cultural backgrounds. Yet still the street scenes were similar to Grays town centre where silent confrontations for space were a regular occurrence.

Karel claimed that the active role played by the new community in Thurrock had upset many local people. Many claimed that it had happened particularly fast and had caught the established community unawares. Tony reasoned that the sudden volume of 'Black faces' had been a shock to the residents who were used to occupying the central ground in national and local imaginings of common people. New community interests were historically at the periphery of common vision, relegated to the Metropolis or as a subordinate local interest to white experience. As Rita triumphantly exclaimed whilst food shopping in Grays town centre "...*the Nigerians are everywhere!*" This distorted the social reality associated with majority and minority distinctions based upon the commonality of white experience.

For those dealing everyday with the new community an even greater sense of diversity was experienced akin to Vertovec's super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). Ida was keen to point to the selection of food available in her shop. It catered for migrants from a vast array of backgrounds. Hajra was keen to highlight the heterogeneity of the super-diverse new community in Thurrock. She noted that the affluence and social ascendancy of the British-Nigerians should not be used to characterise all in the new community. The Sikh community was still largely in a position of relative social exclusion, due to language difficulties. In addition, there were further differences in relation to age and gender. Hajra's mission at TRUST was to provide services to empower women of different ages as a means to supersede cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries. She had a vision of cultural harmony that was shared by her group. They had resisted attempts by local authorities to divide the groups along ethno-religious and nationalist lines. One of her members likened such a plan to the partitioning of the Indian Sub-Continent. Hajra's group all shared a situation much different to the economically empowered African women.

All the British-Nigerian respondents were active 'entrepreneurs' and spoke openly about their willingness to work long and hard. It was common for respondents to work full-time in addition to administering their own fledgling business or be studying on business/IT related post-graduate or diploma programmes. John, a young man who was opening a recording studio whilst managing his father's car valet business and studying for a diploma in business management commented that he wanted a *Mercedes Benz* and a house in Orsett. Lanre, a woman in her late twenties

was juggling a full-time job in the City with her own business, and a teenage son shared similar aspirations. Tony noted that these people were characteristic of the new community. They moved to Thurrock because they desired upward social mobility, which was best represented geographically by moving to 'white' areas. Many respondents cited this as a reason for their resentment by local whites. Clive reinforced the rationale of the new community to be one of risk: They stand to make more and lose less from taking risks in business and property development. He typified them as willing to defer gratification to make this more realistic.

On a few occasions this entrepreneurial zeal manifested itself as resentment towards the established white community. Eko, Lanre, and John were all unimpressed with the established community and what appeared to be its lack of vision, aspiration and effort. The latter two respondents saw whites as lazy and content with idleness. The new community claimed idleness made whites see themselves as superior to low level jobs. John said that he was more willing to wash cars and perform low status jobs than whites, because he was aspirant of more opportunities. He couldn't understand why the established population seemed unwilling to take low skilled opportunities, which were in abundance. He described white 'idleness' as a precocious attitude to employment opportunities given to the realities of the skill base of local unemployed whites. Lanre said that complacency on behalf of whites would lose whites their country. Rose rationalised these views by referring to the fact that the new community held such high aspirations because they had been hitherto prevented from enjoying equality of economic opportunity. Rose and Tony agreed that this prior generational lack of opportunity in education and the labour market was a key factor for British-Nigerian parents to encourage their children at school. Social mobility was therefore a central interest in developing themselves and the new community in Thurrock. Eko extended by arguing that many established residents in Thurrock had ceased to see their interests served by the educational success of young people. His main problem with Thurrock was that there were not enough schools like Gateway College. He claimed schools were desperately needed to upgrade the skills deficit of the established community.

Rose cited a need for greater education to break down the prejudice which she saw as preventing the established community from appreciating the regeneration that the new community had initiated. She claimed that there was a knowledge vacuum surrounding the new community filled with myth, mistrust, and racism. Foremost was



a concern that despite resentment white people still saw the new community as ‘poor’ and limited by an abstract imagination of cultural determinism. During interviews at ETCA it became apparent that the members represented Black people in colonial and racist ways. The respondents thought Black people unable to act as modern, rational economic and social citizens. Les claimed with the agreement of Stan that Black people did not want to integrate because they were essentially “*tribal animals*”. He claimed that he knew this due to living in Sth Africa! These kinds of racism were absent in all other interviews, but the suggestion that aspiration and entrepreneurialism were unattainable to Black people was tacit in the acceptance of the ‘Africans for Essex’ myth. John made note of this stereotype when talking about racial aggravation from customers. He claimed that he treated racist complaints as complaints about the delivery of his service. He said he just smiled at racist customers and responded with “...*thank you, please come again!*” As he never experienced any physical harassment he found the encounters highly amusing; like Yemi he saw white racists as ‘idiots’. He concluded by saying that white customers could not comprehend that he had an identity unrelated to the low status job of washing cars. It was at this moment that he told me about his extra-curricula activities, which he used to explain that it was he who had social power. This appeared consistent across the British-Nigerian respondents; economic aspirations empowered them against the racial idiocy of disgruntled local white people.

Clive noted that what people saw as negative features of the new community were simply relative cultural differences. He claimed that many white colleagues and clients described British-Nigerians as ‘difficult’. He used an example of time-keeping. He remarked with amusement that British-Nigerians were often late to seminars. This was to the annoyance of white people who found the behaviour rude. Clive claimed that the British-Nigerians could not comprehend why this would be considered rude and found it amusing that white people should take time-keeping so serious. The example shows the minutiae of ways in which the new community were seen to exist outside the norm of Thurrock’s common people. Eko made this clearer by saying that it was an inability to accept Black people into the fold of English identity. He claimed that this was a reason why he had joined the Conservative Party. He saw national identity as important for social cohesion and was insistent that Black identity was and should be included. This featured largely in his reasons to relocate to Thurrock.

*“What attracted me to the Conservative Party was the things they still hold true like having this nationalism, this cultural thing. I know its quite ironic for me, because ‘you can’t really say that!’ but I can. You know, I still think that Britain, England needs to have its own identity yes you accept that there are inputs of foreigners coming in every time...I still think there are things that need to hold true. I still think that the traditional British culture, whatever that may be, you know, should still hold true...a bit more. This holds true for me and Black or an international spread will always be part of this...no matter what some of my not so close colleagues would...really, really think!”*

Like all the British-Nigerian respondents Eko was adamant that individual hard work and aspirations should be behind social mobility and success. Although, he knew that the Conservative Party used him in a token fashion for community legitimacy he stood defiant in claiming it wasn’t necessary.

Rose was more lucid on the issue of tokenism and positive discrimination. The new community wanted integration, but did not want any form of exceptionalism. She claimed like many others that the new community just wanted to better themselves and get on with their lives like common people. It was unfortunate that many of the Black businesses were pseudo exclusive due to the nature of their immediate patronage, but she was hopeful that this would change as it seemed to have done in London and other areas. She was frank however that the established community and its common sensical normality were considerably more exclusive. The list of approved tenders used by the council to fulfil contracts was an example. These were all established local businesses and were used on the basis of trust and reciprocity. As the new community businesses still existed outside this social system of familiarity and commonality, an equality of opportunity was still beyond their reach. Rose concluded as did Tony that the interests of the new community were strictly in a “*level playing field*” that would allow them to become part of the rank and file stock of Thurrock’s common people. Aspirations within the new community were a reflection of respect for what ‘white’ community had achieved in suburban living. They wanted to participate in this on an equal footing and to share their resources with

those who were already established. Many British-Nigerian respondents saw the established community as taking ordinariness for granted.

### **The power of equality**

Respondents at ETCA totally renounced any notion of ethnic integration. Most other respondents embraced integration due to a tacit assumption that it was a universal 'good'. However, social and cultural integration was still lacking across Thurrock despite peoples' 'good will'. The problem had multiple roots, but the central one was that the established community lacked the linguistic and conceptual devices to include the new community into the discourses of commonality. Commonality was referenced by whites as conceptions of 'everyone'. In addition, whites failed to apply their evaluative social knowledge evenly across the population. This led to a form of tolerance and integration of a vernacular and non-codified form. It was in this way that there were no constant rules to marshal the bridging of social divides that undermined racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. This led CTC in particular to talk about integration in assimilationist terms. This meant that the new community were only spoken about in terms that expressed 'non-ordinariness' and non-compliance with familiar and common values. Consequently, verbal efforts by respondents to be inclusive became further examples of bonding social capital, not bridging capital.

During interviews with organisations respondents were asked about the social profile of their membership and users; explicit references to the new community were deliberately withheld until later in the discussion. These discussions showed the boundaries of the respondents' conceptions of 'everyone'; with discourses of common people occupying the central ground. Barry, the curator of Coalhouse Fort claimed that the restoration of the site was essential to Thurrock's heritage and local identity. When asked about the profile of the general user group, Barry responded with "*Oh we get everyone come here, everyone from all over, everywhere really; Ockendon, Aveley, even as far as Southend and Rochford.*" It was clear that for Barry areas outside East Tilbury were considered far a field. His reference for 'everyone' when pressed for more detail was simply local scout groups, groups for the elderly, or the disabled. After this elucidation Barry was asked whether Thurrock's new community had shown an interest in the fort. He sequestered the suggestion by reverting back to an unrelated conversation about stone masonry.

This response occurred in a number of discussions. It wasn't as though the respondents actively disregarded the suggestion or inference; it was as if they lacked the linguistic structure to articulate discourses of commonality as applicable to the new community. The responses were swift, denoting that there was no mental process at work to calculate a 'politically correct' or socially acceptable response. It was extremely noticeable in a conversation with Kellie, a support worker at the SureStart centre in Tilbury. She was astute at profiling the target group in Tilbury with reference to poverty indicators. She went on to suggest that many of the traditional means to target potential users was increasingly becoming moribund. She suggested that this was due to all the new people coming in and she was promotional of Tilbury as a "*great mix of everyone*". Upon further enquiry she described these people as emanating from Ockendon, Aveley, Southend etc, but made no reference to the new community. When asked directly whether the new community were part of the user groups or how outreach workers would target them and by what criteria needs assessment would be made, she immediately switched to a different conversation entirely!

It appeared that upon elucidation 'everyone' only included the common dimensions of difference within the white English category. These included variables such as age, gender, class, disability, and area, but not ethnicity. This response to questions of inclusion predominated over superficial statements about integration that demanded assimilation from ethnic others. Far from a strategy of social inclusivity the 'everyone' narratives were actually a means to bond local community around racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. The most vivid example to these ends was found in interviews at ETCA where 'everybody' was explicitly the 'white English'. From the outset the steering committee and members of ETCA were keen to promote their association as inclusive. Inclusivity was established by statements such as "*we take from all walks of life*" and that the association was not an affiliate to any political organisation. Their initial example was that the Conservative leader of the council was a member, but that that didn't make them a Conservative Club. When further pressed about membership Mary and Les claimed that they had members "*from all over the place*." Similar to Barry at Coalhouse Fort this turned out to be mostly within the South East; Benfleet was the furthest, which was ten miles away towards Southend-on-Sea. However, Les qualified the club's extensive membership by claiming that there was a sense of universality about the club, "*I think this club would go down well*

*anywhere to be honest. With the same sort of membership. I mean we're nothing special, I mean you've seen the décor – it's basic, but it is the people that make it.*" Mary concluded, *"Well the club's not the bricks and mortar it's about what's inside of it."* This suggestion was further apparent when asked about summer fetes and fundraising activities – *"You name it, we do it!"* Les claimed again with a sense of conviction that they covered every possible interest within the community of East Thurrock and beyond. Mary and Les both gave a long list of activities and entertainment, all of which were disturbingly parochial and narrow, these included; pigeon racing, angling, darts, Morris dancing, a mini-railway, and a Hurdy Gurdy Organ. Mary added that this year they were to be hosting a jazz ensemble that would play such 1920s dancehall classics as *"I'm forever blowing bubbles"*!

They were keen to illustrate that the club had a darts team consisting of local people affected by Down's syndrome. People who were patronisingly, but sympathetically referred to as the *"handicapped"*. Les and Mary highlighted that they rented a room for an art group for elderly citizens. To conclude, Les iterated that they had *"a great mix of people from the unemployed up to the professionals; we've got two people here who are very close to being millionaires!"* The discussion turned to the question of any collectively held interests that might have straddled such a cross section of British society. From this moment quotidian racism was frequent and the nationalist ephemera in the club became animate with malignancy.

*"We could open up our membership, like we did when the refineries shut down before; we could open up to the Influx, but that would upset our membership, they wouldn't like it. It is their club and they wouldn't want these people coming in and being noisy and dirty. It's like one big happy family up here, it really is."*

After much talk about the inclusivity of diversity the shutters were brought down at the issue of 'race' and immigration. This was the most explicit description of such exclusion, but it existed too in Ockendon and elsewhere as a background set of seemingly immovable common assumptions about land and people. This was the empirical manifestation of the discourses of ethnic and racial commonality as divisive.

The only group who familiarised the new community was TRP. Members were aware that the new community would be a permanent fixture in Thurrock's social profile and that due to their status this would be an asset, particularly beneficial towards the ends of TRP. Members realised that to fulfil these ends it was in their interest to incorporate new members without recourse to bonded ethnic association. It was achieving inclusivity that TRP hit a stumbling block. Unlike other groups TRP held a conscious desire to integrate Tilbury; what was missing was any medium of communication. It appeared that bridging networks could not be constructed by collective intent alone. With caution Ron exclaimed that it was a "*difficult elephant to chew [sic]*" TRP had had a meeting with TRUST, but it appeared to have resulted in very little action. Dorothy had initiated this contact and it had led her to organise a multi-cultural lunch, which was attended as part of the research. Although fairly well attended by older Tilbury citizens it failed to generate any lasting bonds as its main medium of integration was exotic cuisine. The feedback from people at the event appeared to reflect integration as a part time voluntary activity conveniently conducted by trying someone else's food for an afternoon. Eko had claimed that similar events were held in Aveley by local Black churches. This was reported in the entertainment section of the TG with the headline "*children bang the drums for multi-culturalism*". There was a problem in Thurrock whereby the new community were more often than not portrayed as an 'exotic other', rather than an integral and common aspect of the area.

Rose's constant references to food and entertainment as a means of integration reinforced a white fascination with Black identity as a cultural artefact. Many of the myths and stereotypes espoused in interviews with whites were fuelled by fascinations coloured by all the trappings of popular culture. The "*no whites allowed*" myth gained its efficacy from images of ultra-masculine Black identity drawn from American popular culture. These stereotypes portrayed Black men as a sexual and moral threat to whiteness. From the ethnographic research the British-Nigerian men were very modest in their social demeanour and most, despite having a large stature, were 'effeminate' and very un-threatening. Karel commented that racism was about a lack of personal interaction. She noted that the racism displayed by her constituents was easily tackled due to its abstract nature. She claimed that to many people 'race', racism, and ethnicity were conditions abstracted from the local interests. This impersonal relationship led to what she referred to as "*blank statements*". A problem

for Thurrock was that this trans-national migration was increasingly becoming part of the lived social fabric of the local area. Aside from un-substantiated gossip and recourse to derogatory images, local whites were unable to reconcile the presence of the new community with their hitherto un-reflexive condition of ‘ordinariness’ associated with their fixed narratives of land and people.

Ron was very pragmatic about the situation, but was also frustrated at the lack of strategy to manage integration. Betty had approached one of the Black churches, but little had transpired and she was unable to make a second effort as the church had moved to an undisclosed location, “*It takes two to tango*” was a common phrase. Sharon reasoned that TRP had been overall successful in its goals because it was steered by people like Ron and Tommy who had considerable local knowledge and experience; they also had very strong links with the council. This factor was absent from the new community and it left them at a disadvantage in civic interaction. Ron’s frustration was that for all the TRP’s knowledge and experience they had none that prepared them to overcome the highly uneven and unknown terrain of ‘race-relations’ in Thurrock’s new civil context. Ron concluded by saying that he didn’t expect the new community to “*knock on our door and say ‘hello, we’re here!’*”, as he claimed other Tilbury residents felt about the issue. His statement about the need for “*two to tango*” meant firmly that the established residents must make the first move and invite the newcomers into the fold. Integration required that whites first de-centre their ordinariness and open up the boundaries of commonality.

This was reinforced by Hajra; she claimed that although many in the new community did not feel actively excluded, they were unfamiliar with the cultural demeanour of English identity. She gave an example of a local park ranger she invited to her group to talk about the local park gardens. She said that it was stalled at the first hurdle: her groups did not know how to walk through the parks and to enjoy the flower gardens. The park ranger was stunned when he had to describe how one should walk through a garden – something that was second nature to him. Hajra concluded that banal aspects of demeanour and conduct were the parts of English culture that couldn’t be learnt in English lessons. Hajra’s groups represented an extreme form of non-familiarity, but Tony agreed it was still present in the British-Nigerian people. Their ascendancy made it less problematic for everyday social life, but Tony continued to describe British-Nigerians as having many “*psychological identity issues*” with being a “*Black person in a white area.*” He claimed that this generated

feelings of conformity in the British-Nigerians that led them to see liberal entrepreneurialism as a meaningful life strategy. Karel framed this division sensitively by explaining that there was very little difference in the personal values between the new and the established common people. It was an elucidation of common interests straddled across cultural divides that she used to successfully counter racist myths from constituents – including the ‘Africans for Essex’ myth.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the way locals were imagined as common people with contrasting interests to the new community. For many respondents, interests were reduced to racial and ethnic boundaries, which fit the mould carved by the spatial narrative of land illustrated in the previous chapter. The examples of racist resentment revealed that sympathy was central in solidifying interests around white experience. The respondents imagined that ‘political correctness’ was a weapon used by the State to ensure that whites accepted the reality of super-diversity via the allocation of sympathy. The white respondents made this assumption because they had an inability to regard the new community as anything other than subordinate to the social status of whites. The white respondents saw the ascendant status of the new community as illegitimate and the result of trickery on behalf of British-Nigerians. The whites therefore regarded it a contradiction to allocate sympathy. This was the logic that underscored racist resentment.

The white respondents saw the interests of the new community as conflictual with their own, which was the renewal of a local identity based upon racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. Whites felt that this commonality was undermined by the State and cosmopolitan values of integration and equality. The white respondents saw renewal as a means to consolidate a local identity not to incorporate the realities of a super-diverse population. This concern sparked their pre-occupation with the anti-social status of young people. White narratives of young people reflected the racial and ethnic boundaries of localism as young people were regarded as the future survival of white ethnic continuity. Sympathy was directed towards the young as a response to their imagined relations with multi-cultural values. Respondents imagined social, economic, and political loss to be embodied in the structural position of youth. The various responses to the position of youth in society typified respondents’ direction of interests in regards renewal and regeneration in general. Groups that



emphasised leisure and recreation to the remediation of young people's lives typically held inward community interests about the reactivation of original local identity. In contrast TRP emphasised work, skills, and adulthood transition as responsible for the position of young people in society. This expressed the direction of the group's interests in general which were outward and socially encompassing of the new community.

All interests with white respondents reflected desires of community renewal and were shaped in response to the reality of super-diversity, whether they accepted its legitimacy or not. The interests of the new community were directed too towards regeneration. This was felt as antagonistic to 'local' interests by the white respondents. The presence of the new community had ruptured the normalcy with which white identity could command the centre of local identity. It signified that diversity not homogeneity was the narrative of common belonging, simply because the new community had taken an active role in regenerating local spaces. Localism was in effect observed as a shared domain, but was discursively unavailable as an explicit source of identity for the new community due to the discourses of commonality used by whites. For TRP this was an opportunity to extend their socially transformative interests towards the social, economic, and environmental regeneration of Thurrock. For groups with less defined interests it led towards efforts to reconsolidate a lost identity based upon racial and ethnic assumptions of commonality. These differences in outlook will be assessed in the final section as they have ramifications for the validity of social capital in its role in community renewal and the 'English Question'.

To conclude, this chapter has revealed the strategies underpinning the normalcy that connects local identities to white experience. The strength of this connection lay in feelings of familiarity and commonality generated by respondents' social acumen, which was structured by racial and ethnic discourses. The new community existed outside such familiarity and were therefore outside conventional definitions of land and people. English identity was not something with which the new community actively felt aligned. Thusly, the interests and regeneration prompted by the new community were disregarded as nuisance by most white respondents. Despite this the new community wanted recognition of their own interests by inclusion in the norm of 'ordinariness' and conceptions of common people. They did not want tokenism or preferential treatment based upon assumptions of racial

disadvantage. Respondents in the new community saw themselves as un-needing of such strategies, because they felt successful and entrepreneurial in their own individual endeavours. Their interests and values were overlapping with the white groups of who renounced the presence of the new community. This renunciation generated divisive solidarity between the established community and the new community, which inhibited joint efforts of regeneration. A stalwart defence of fixed associations of land and people led many whites to exclude the potentially rewarding patronage of fluidity and multiplicity of which the new community had ultimately contributed and shared as common.

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## Structures: The World's End..?

### Introduction

This chapter concludes the analysis of the ethnography and the themes central to understanding the manifestation of community in Thurrock. This has looked at the construction of community as narratives that bind land and people via racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. The previous two chapters have addressed the spatial and demographic contexts of localism. This chapter explores the wider economic and political structures within which localism was embedded. It is shown that the structures governing community renewal were experienced by respondents as an illegitimate control of local destiny that failed to accord value to the lay knowledge of local skills and identity. In doing so the chapter argues that the economic defence of localism used by white English identity obscured the divisive origins of white claims of resentment. The white defence of localism occurred via the appropriation of class based narratives to apprehend the skills deficit of the white English in respect of the new community. The chapter then argues that English identity was the form of social capital mustered by white English to compete for opportunities in an age of globalisation, cosmopolitanism, and trans-national migration. It is argued that their claims to greater legitimacy based upon localism were a means to articulate their situation as an 'inequality'. This was vindicated by referring to the white cultural group as 'vulnerable' in regard a relatively free labour market. White claims against minorities were pitched in tones suggesting vulnerability to re-claim the protection of the State.

The chapter argues that white claims to vulnerability were inadvertently fuelled by community renewal. This is noted to be the case due to the theoretical flaws within the social capital discourse on community renewal, which neglect to theorise the role of interest in the generation of social capital. The chapter concludes by illustrating the difference 'interest' makes upon the direction of associational efforts. This is theorised as two divergent forms of social capital, regressive and progressive. The former was observed to have insular consequences, whereas the

latter actively re-imagined the links between land and people as it transgressed the racial and ethnic discourses of commonality.

### **Fortress England (Reprise)**

This section argues that localism in the ethnography was not a consistent reflection of class solidarity as Dench *et al* and others have suggested (Dench *et al* 2006). It was reflective of racial and ethnic claims over resources and recognition by the State. Consequently, there was little evidence to suggest communal solidarity was akin to a revitalised democracy. Localism was an attempt to claim ascendancy, due to a dearth of skills on behalf of the white English over the new community. Central to this claim was that status competition with ethnic others had made white English people subject to 'vulnerability'. It was with feelings of vulnerability that white English people registered an 'inequality' against the new community *articulated* by narratives of class solidarity.

The industrial, civic, and rural narratives on heritage signalled a time when locals felt autonomous from government; in this, local services emerged that generated feelings of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. This was also recognition of the national role played by Thurrock's economic function. In all areas there was much talk about the deleterious effects of major supermarkets on local economies. These reflected concerns about the reliance of the local on the non-local for general subsistence. Respondents in Ockendon and Corringham agreed that the government should intervene to regulate market forces. Although, respondents had made no official protest to government, they perceived the lack of action as abandonment. This was a common feeling when respondents discussed the New Labour government and fuelled anti-governmentality more generally. Terry from Chafford Hundred went on:

*"They're absolute pricks, they fuck everything up then you get all these stealth taxes come at you, they're sky high and what do we get? An Olympic bloody stadium! I'm 16 stone for fucks sake! Why would I want that?"*

The quote reveals the sense with which respondents equated abandonment of their interests with the provision of cosmopolitan interests.

Respondents from TRP, CTC, and SBC gave verbatim stories about global economic shift as something aided by New Labour. Respondents in Ockendon and Corringham took this more personally than TRP respondents, but all related economic shift to supermarkets and a decline in the value of local skills. Brian rationalised the loss of industry thusly,

*“Do you know where it’s all going? China! It’s all going overseas and its thanks to our government that our country is declining, because if they were to look to their own country and tried to look after their own people and looking after our own traditional industries; there’s no engineering, there’s no clothing made, a lot of our food and wheat and vegetables is all imported now. I won’t buy this foreign stuff from [the supermarkets]. You go round here anywhere and look at the fields they are all...dying weeds!”*

Tommy took the lead in TRP discussions of economic shift and the putative role of government less abrasively, but was equally bitter at the abandonment of Labour. When asked directly about peoples’ support for Labour in Tilbury, Tommy simply said *“Don’t go there!”* This was followed by a roar of sardonic laughter. TRP members didn’t explicitly blame Labour for the decline of industry; they spoke about this as a higher economic process of globalisation. To finish his lecture at CTC, Brian concluded that local people had a multitude of practical skills drawn from their commonsense that he viewed useful to industry, he personalised this dynamism accordingly *“I tell you what, you name anything and I can tell you, I’ll almost be able to do it. People round here they can do loads of things, no one wants them to nowadays though so they rot...”*

This attitude of self-capability was expressed in Clive’s business group meetings. These respondents saw themselves as ‘talented’, ‘skilled’, and ‘educated’. These claims were however, devoid of any external and official validation by qualification, certification, or accreditation. In the discussions surrounding work opportunities provided by the 2012 Olympics, respondents felt that their above mentioned attributes were not recognized by the authorities managing contract tenders. Jane kept repeating the line *“We have the skills, when they award contracts*

*why go elsewhere when it is already here?"* Although substantively different, the claims shared a similar sense of local pride in ability coupled with a lack of recognition and abandonment by 'authority'. This had a profound impact on the emotional psychology of the respondents. The problem was that these respondents were dismissive of any form of accreditation of their 'abilities'. Respondents assumed that contracts should be awarded on trust alone neglecting the fact that to enter into a competition with equal chance they would have to possess evidence to fortify their claims. The claims made were suggestive of the falsehood that localism automatically conferred rights and privilege. Any form of regulated access to tender for contracts was seen as "*stupid council rules*" and un-necessary regulation to prevent what Mike continued to describe as "*Joe Blogs from getting anything out of them.*" He added:

*"...To get [these contracts] you need to qualify to show that you are up for it. In order to qualify there is a 400 page poxy document that Ken Livingstone came out with...You need a professional legal team. You are talking about a 400 page document, but 300 pages of that is the discrimination act!"*

The problem was that local people experienced regulation designed to protect rights as exclusionary. The group complained that minimum turnover figures were unfair, preventing access to compete for opportunities. David, the council portfolio holder for Culture and Business explained this further:

*"It's a sad fact, but it's true, these contracts require experience to make them successful. Smaller businesses might have the commitment, but how can they be relied on if there is no way we can judge their usefulness? At the end of the day its tax payers' money we spend and they're the ones that have the final say when we want them to vote for us."*

From the perspective of the respondents this was an issue of legitimacy; something that underwrote a general suspicion of education, politics, and government for local identity. In SBC the tendering of contracts was viewed as a faceless and bureaucratic process, through which the respondents struggled to convert their

localism into opportunities. Karel highlighted the suspicion felt by others on the Council,

*“Thurrock people, but especially in places like Tilbury, are very suspicious of educated people – they think they are against them. In Tilbury, they are very wary of anything to do with Social Services because they think they are going to steal their kids from them.”*

Clive made a similar suggestion to SBC, *“the problem with planners and their academics doing their studies is that they don’t know your job.”* These anti-governmental sentiments were found nowhere more strongly than in the ubiquitous dissent against the TTGDC. Phrases such as *“these people are not real people”*, or *“They don’t even live in the area”* were commonplace and conjured the opposition drawn surrounding the putative legitimacy of localism and the illegitimate albeit powerful cosmopolitan overlords.

The TTGDC was a strategic planning corporation set up by what was then the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The central function of the corporation was to work as a partnership between government and industry to regenerate Thurrock as part of the larger Thames Gateway project. The corporation acted as the strategic development control authority and has relieved Thurrock Council of its planning powers for developments over 10 hectares. The TTGDC could then prioritise development for large-scale industry and house building. Their remit was to ensure community renewal by promoting the strategic aspects of the local economy and functional geography; referred to as the ‘Regeneration Framework’ and ‘Spatial Plan for Thurrock.’ Despite having numerous consultation exercises within the community, local dissent was plentiful and was particularly explicit in the ethnography. In most of the interviews, the TTGDC was held up as a villainous organisation of local change and urban development. Donna explained that the TTGDC had fostered social change that led to the erosion of the stoical and virtuous *“life on the marshes”*. Rural spirit was a form of resistance to the bureaucratic planning of the TTGDC.

The TTGDC were, according to respondents, responsible for transforming Thurrock into a dormitory. Colin, TRP’s secretary described the corporation as a *“dirty word”* in the area. Antipathy was coupled with a sense of resignation that was

apparent when residents were asked whether they had involved themselves in the consultation exercises. Mike took the lead in the SBC meetings on the subject by claiming that local people had been “*left in the dark about the ‘vision for Thurrock’*”. Only two other people, one of which was Clive, knew what he meant. Similar suggestions were made at ETCA when asked the same questions. Derek claimed that there had been no direct consultation over the Thamesgate Development for East Tilbury and that it was inconsequential because the decision had been made and that it had been conducted in secret

*“...The railway procurement officer came down and he showed us a big booklet he had and it was the plans for East Tilbury for the next 15 years and no-one at East Tilbury knew what was going to happen. But, all the big supermarkets had put their bids in for their plots and it was all cut and dried, but then they have all these meetings and it don’t mean nothing. They’re just going through the motions.”*

Many respondents had attended some of the consultations. In all they claimed to have been confrontational with the planning committees. Respondents had stressed the complaint that there was little consultation over the construction of local infrastructure, such as roads, rail links, schools, and hospitals. The strategic plans were merely for new houses. Gary, the chair of the CHCF complained that the TTGDC did not take the ward differences in Thurrock seriously. The TTGDC homogenised the borough and failed to see that the needs of Chafford were different to the needs of Tilbury or Ockendon. All respondents including David responsible for Culture and Business saw this as a problem and the TTGDC’s neglect of infrastructure provision was the basis of claims that the corporation lacked local legitimacy. This was expressed in Mike’s claim that “*they don’t live here how do they know what we need?*” It was ironic that this was what community consultation intended to achieve. Unfortunately, the corporation did not have control over developments by the NHS, the Highways Agency, or the ‘market’, which was used to determine levels of need and service provision. This was the central contradiction in respondents’ experience of government. At once respondents yearned for autonomy



and self-sufficiency, but on the other hand expected post-war style central planning and market regulation to secure their renewal.

For the serving Conservative councillors and Conservative aligned respondents such as Clive, the TTGDC represented the powerful remnants of what Clive described as the *“Socialist group of the old Thurrock Council.”* This was untrue, the force of conviction emanated from the public sector background of the career profiles of all four members of the corporation’s ‘executive team’. This political opposition was seen by conservative councillors as a basis for claims that the corporation was politically illegitimate and merely an executive branch of the New Labour government. As a point of conjecture, Karel was also sceptical of the legitimacy of the corporation despite serving on the board of directors and being a left-winger. She was keener to work within this structure to deliver what she could for her constituents. Gary complained that the Conservative members of the board didn’t take their role seriously and were not willing to work within the structure out of defiance of New Labour. Eko hinted at this, but remained silent on the issue for partisan reasons. He, like lay respondents, claimed that it was simply not conducive to local democracy.

The over-arching concern with legitimacy was that the corporation due to its non-local organisation was ill-equipped to understand the needs of local residents. Pete explained legitimacy issues were a consistent finding across all consultation exercises. He claimed the problem was residents’ lack of institutional knowledge and an inability to perceive that the interests of the corporation had to include all residents. He reasoned that *“if every person who complained got what they wanted they would each have bus stops on their driveways, doctor’s surgeries in their garages, a primary school in their living room, and a rail link to their neighbour’s house.”* ‘Cosmopolitanesque’ respondents commented that a problem in Thurrock was that people possessed little knowledge of the way institutions operated and that planning was something often annoyingly so, spread across different government departments and organisations within the public and private sectors. Karel’s response as a councillor criticised local and central government for leading people to believe they had an infinite power of choice, when on most issues they had very little due to finite resources and no practical means to accommodate and deliver choice.

The respondents’ emphasis on legitimacy was according to those with exclusive access to the council and corporation a ‘red herring’. A more articulate

criticism of the corporation was that it stymied local business and regeneration in favour of large-scale economic investment. For respondents of the new community this was a cause for concern because they felt a cultural and discriminatory barrier in proving their enterprise was a valid aspect of regeneration. Tony and Rose commented that much recognition went to traditional aspects of the local economy, such as those in manual labour, but not the new cultural economy. Isata explained that there was no recognition of her salon from the local government. She felt that the business development strategies of the Council failed to appreciate the nature of her business and to help market her business outside its immediate clientele. It was at the mercy of a fiercely competitive market. Lanre explained that the lack of recognition for her economic endeavours was rife in Thurrock and went beyond recognition by local authorities. She wanted to join *The Rotary Club* so that she could network herself amongst other leading local figures and entrepreneurs. She explained that her membership was refused on the basis of her business interests; she levelled that it was a racially and sexually motivated rejection.

Clive was keen to point out that Thurrock Council's use of *Vertex*, a public sector outsourcing contractor, was a similar betrayal of local business more generally. Clive and Mike agreed that *Vertex* discouraged local democracy because it prevented Thurrock Council from using or promoting local business because of an interest in 'political correctness'. It was claimed that they could no longer positively discriminate in favour of local business; something that Rose claimed hitherto disadvantaged the new and less established businesses. *Vertex* was often referenced as a form of 'shadow government'. Brian claimed that the decision to outsource the front of house services by Thurrock Council was because "*they don't think community, they think money*". This view was exercised along with a list of incredulous claims, such as favouring minorities and the arson of a local haulier's depot! Eko was the councillor responsible for managing the partnership. He, like Karel, although not politically aligned, agreed it did deliver far greater value for money. David claimed that it saved valuable council time as they now only dealt with issues that were directly council business. It became easier to disregard people's un-warranted complaints and issues against the council due to misconceptions over the remit of the public sector.

The discussions surrounding the aforementioned organisational interests revealed them to be structures through which local respondents felt their destiny was

being unfairly controlled. When asked what each group would do if they were the director of for instance the TTGDC, they all said unequivocally that they would bring back legitimacy and accountability. All but TRP agreed that regeneration should be firmly in the hands of local people. Other groups commented that renewal and regeneration was best served by local leadership, justified by the notion of the defacto legitimacy of 'localism'. Ron at TRP was far more sober, *"We can't expect to change these macro developments, and we can do what we can here because it is our immediate interest to do so..."* Structural arrangements and partnerships were as Karel claimed in the best position to coordinate the diversity of interests in Thurrock. Each of the associations as did many of the individual respondents represented *their* interests as the defining interest of Thurrock; although this was less so for TRP. The difficulty was communicating this effectively and sensitively to local residents. This would have de-centred their own specific interest equally in relation to a plurality of others. The problem was that respondents were egocentric in their world views; something which could never be entirely satisfied. The economic and social interests in Thurrock were based upon a spirit of self-sufficiency and lay knowledge, which had no currency as cultural capital to outside interests. Simple and innocuous ideas such as manual and physical labour were the structural foundations of respondents' material social worlds. This construction of social reality legitimated localism. This was oppositional to bureaucracy and planning embodied within institutions of governance. Brian was succinct in demanding that the board of directors on the TTGDC *"...should be sent to work on the ground not sitting behind their bloody desks writing plans all day..."*

Localism and its lay assumptions were felt to be unrewarded by large-scale regeneration and rejection by the wider economic world was felt across Thurrock. In all groups, conversations about large-scale industrial relocation spoke about large companies as relegating local people to non-skilled positions due to the employment of non-local specialist labour. This led to discussions about the overall benefits of the Thames Gateway. Nigel at SBC lambasted, *"It'll be the same as when they were building Lakeside, they'll bring all their own managers and foremen and we'll just end up sweeping up behind them."* Overall, the respondents showed a great deal of bravado and defiance in their ranting against all they viewed as their nemeses. However, underneath this brash confrontational exterior was the emotional and psychological damage inflicted by a rejection from the Nation's core workforce and

affection. Eko concluded the interview by claiming that Thurrock was in dire need of more secondary schools. The area's population possessed little skills valuable to new employers. This statement was shared by Karel, she concluded:

*“People on the whole in Tilbury don't dream anymore and this is the problem. Everything is all word of mouth and this world is drying up. My greatest achievement in office is getting the Gateway College, because it's lifting those dreams and the aspirations of the young in Thurrock not just in Tilbury because it is attracting people from across the area.”*

The skills deficit of the area's young became the more sober topic of discussion after excitable ranting claims about local legitimacy and the TTGDC had gone into remission. It was clear from discussions that skills were a form of cultural capital whose relative value was awarded via accreditation. The skills seen to be held by locals had value to 'localism', but were not the currency required by outside interests. This generated an immutable barrier to the transference of cultural capital into social capital. The defence of localism in this instance was counter-productive to their own renewal.

Localism was a form of bonded social capital that was consolidated in the absence of any other means to compete with the new community. Central to the interests of localism was a claim of unfair treatment by the State. White English people used their domination of local identity to signify an ascended claim to rights and recognition in the absence of exchangeable skills and knowledge. They desired their vulnerability protected and sheltered from the 'free market'. At the world's end these respondents felt abandoned by the comfort blanket of the Post-War State and represented New Labour as the entity responsible for allowing alien forces to exhaust their 'community' entirely, by removing the claims on authority formerly held by whiteness. The interviews expressed resentment towards the State as respondents imagined it now protected the vulnerability of other people, not 'their own'. To the respondents in Thurrock the exposure and apparent exploitation of their vulnerability to the globalised world and the free market was a marker of inequality and injustice. The requirement to learn new skills meant whites needed to compete for opportunities with a wider range of people and interests. Ultimately, it was a reminder that localism

was accountable to different and seemingly alien sources of authority. The skills with which white respondents were familiar as valuable in the market place were now an antiquated currency. The established community's search for value had shifted from their stock of locally negotiated skills relevant to the market, to their ethnic and racial legitimacy relevant to the idea of the English Nation. It was in this way that narratives of class solidarity were transposed upon a localism that obscured the white hegemony over English Identity. These respondents were attempting to re-assert the discourses of commonality to reposition white community as ascendant to the new community.

### **Clover over Dover**

This section illustrates how the white English generated social capital as they re-asserted their dominance over narratives of land and people. This reassertion generated divisive forms of social capital that prohibited the revitalisation of democracy. However, this section argues that it was not social capital *per se* that was responsible, but the 'interests' of community associations. This suggestion builds upon the observations made in the previous chapter regarding attitudes to young people. The section explores the communal ramifications of interest by analysing the differences between groups in respect of their proliferation of exclusive narratives of land and people.

In all meetings and events visited complaints were made about the difficulty of getting people involved. However, all were well attended and were observed by the research to be 'successful' by this very criterion. In each area there were only a few prominent associations. Such as CTC in Ockendon, in Corringham there were a number of other associations, but none with the geographic reach of ETCA. Due to the closure of the Thurrock Chamber of Commerce there was only one applicable to the self-employed and small businesses, this was Clive's SBC. In Tilbury, the members of TRP were involved in several smaller associations, such as the Tilbury Band, and the Residents' Association. In addition, each ward had a community forum. These were a means by which local residents could be consulted and could hold the council to account. They had proven to be highly popular with residents across Thurrock and respondents from all groups were active in the forums except those at ETCA, who showed no knowledge of their existence. All the councillors interviewed agreed the forums had revitalised democracy and decision making on small-scale

issues. Karel was more pragmatic and claimed that there was still more the council could do to empower these groups.

Residents were however under no illusion that the forums increased their bargaining power. In CTC they agreed that the forum was effective because it allowed them to let off steam at the councillors. Janice claimed that it was through one such session that the attendees decided to organise a community strategy to combat litter in Ockendon. The strategy's success was reflective of the latent power of community leadership, to which the council sponsored forum had given a greater sense of organisation. Brian argued that:

*"...Well we organised that clean up because the council were too bloody tight to pay for it themselves. The Labour councillor was up for it and he did come down and helped us out trimming the hedges on one of the days...the Conservative woman said she would, but I don't think anyone saw her there..."*

It was initiatives such as this that David, as a councillor was sceptical whether they would continue without government sponsorship, due to resentment.

In Tilbury, Dorothy and Tommy agreed that the forums were a good way of consolidating local opinion to make a collective stance over small-scale issues. Although, TRP had had little success they were organising support for greater footbridge connections across the railway so that non-driving residents could have easier access to surrounding areas of Thurrock. Local councillors such as David and Karel were positive that this campaign would be successful. Although they pointed out that the problem was the lack of record proving who owned the land affected, pushing it beyond the council's powers to enact the community's proposals. Dorothy and Greg both raised the point that the councillors did not regularly attend meetings and that councillors did so when it was of strategic importance to their political or administrative career. Council involvement was further criticised for not promoting cross-forum interaction. The respondents of each forum had little or no knowledge of other forum business. Jane's comments about TRP in the East Tilbury forum were an example of how a lack of cross-forum communication led to the proliferation of falsehood. She claimed with others that the money provided to TRP had been misused

and pilfered. Garry was far more pragmatic; he claimed that cross-forum involvement would be good because areas could establish their different needs and interests in addition to collective ones.

Overall, the forums revealed a burgeoning desire on behalf of Thurrock residents to participate in civic life and local politics. However, their 'success' was hampered by two limitations. Firstly, that the economic interest of localism in regards regeneration and renewal was confused with cultural politics. This emerged in recollections of forum business as confrontational between 'us' as a construction of common people, and 'them' as BME people or government and related agencies. Secondly, that the State and its personnel were not consistent in promoting and supporting community organisations. It was in this respect that the State had the opportunity to provide a broader model of leadership that could foster a sense of multiplicity of particular interests. In practical terms this was required should the council have eradicated the ascending presence of the BNP, a culture of increasingly far right English nationalism and the debilitating parochialism associated with the economic obscuration of cultural politics.

The local identity had become shared with the rhetoric espoused by the BNP as it adopted narratives of class to questions of ethnic competition; thus blurring the boundaries between economics and cultural politics. There was no one set of coherent symbols or codes of conduct for people to identify as an English identity. There were only ideas which *alluded* to English identity by using localism as a common frame of reference as it bonded land and people: a non-reflexively natural suggestion of identity that was structured by the racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. English identity was not an image or representation, but a manifestation of localism and its ownership by white people. It was in this respect undiluted, but immobilised social capital. Its power was a cage for debate and discussion over identity and politics. The 'English Question' was a curse to a progressively functioning democracy because its answer was a dead end absolute. English identity was not an active claim to revitalise political institutions and democracy as devolved national identities emerged. Instead it was a claim of re-recognition and an articulation of what it meant to be white in a globalised world.

The central issues coalescing around these claims were not essentially 'working class claims' either, as argued by scholars, intellectuals, and respondents alike (Goodhart 2008). They were ersatz claims to disadvantage and inequality.

Instead of providing a host of empirically verifiable data signalling inequalities of access and outcomes in housing, health, education, employment, or political representation as generations of minorities had argued; white English claimants used a patchwork of stereotypical, ill-conceived and mythical tales of unfair treatment to characterise their woes. These included the withdrawal of public services, the destruction of the publicly owned landscape, and the 'Africans for Essex' myth; all of which were the outcome of the free market and the organisational restructuring of the functional geography of Thurrock. These were social and economic processes unfortunate for the people involved, but there was no conspiracy at work that dictated white destiny at the new community's whims. However, white tales of inequality were couched within the generic conventions of claims to rights and recognition familiar to class based politics, and were expressed as if they were actually minority inequality concerns. Upon questioning, the validity of evidence soon dispersed, but the respondents' faith in their claims remained un-faltering. This was because the sentiment behind the claims reflected an abandonment of the State that once protected and loved them; this removal of a parental shield had exposed white people to an inherent state of vulnerability that they had not felt since before the inauguration of the Welfare State. Localism was a request of protection against the cultural, political, and economic threat of what was imagined as 'globalisation' and 'cosmopolitanism'.

Not every respondent in the study held even unconsciously racist or divisive views and it would be unwarranted to claim that Thurrock residents *in toto* were racist hatemongers! What the study does highlight was the pervasiveness with which a tendency to perceive the social world in racist ways existed. The question of English identity did not hold one singular answer to which all white people adhered; it merely controlled the parameters of debate by virtue of asking such a powerful question of identity and politics in the first instance. The ethnic and racial discourses of commonality were revealed to be generic conventions through which community renewal was akin to the narratives of land and people. As a consequence local community or localism was interchangeable with national identity. The pervasiveness of this convention was what steered otherwise reasonable debate into racial territory. The problem was that examples like the 'Africans for Essex' myth provided economic 'credence' to the claims of local white people. The interests of English identity and whiteness were combined in the local context. The response to the presence of Black people within the new community had fortified English identity as a white island with



reference to economics not cultural politics. The immediacy of this fortification was reinforced by mythical claims of disadvantage. Localism or interchangeably, the 'English Question' was a clarion call to whites which signalled common economic interests around which they should bond. This interest was central to every association studied apart from TRP where it was significantly muted. The interviews conducted in more private scenarios were instances where quotidian racism and divisive opinions were salient and politically charged. Consequently, localism provided a means to socialise, communicate, and act with 'like-minded' people. The singular voice generated from such social capital consisted of cultural politics defended by the seemingly stoical and ethnically neutral economic discourse of social class. It was in fact a re-assertion of white privilege over national citizenship.

This trend was subverted by the interests of TRP. The key difference between TRP and other groups was the characteristics of associational interests, their personalities, and relations with interests elsewhere characterised as cosmopolitan. The interests of CTC and ETCA were primarily orientated around leisure and entertainment; the substance of which prompted constructions of white English culture. TRP and to a slightly lesser extent SBC and CHCF held interests that actively re-imagined narratives of land and people. The analysis of TRP reveals how cosmopolitan class solidarity was built that enabled Tilbury and its renewal to be imagined as an inclusive ideal that worked co-operatively within the community and with other interests. The importance of State investment in renewal directed by community associations showed that social capital when left to its own devices, was a neutered resource. The example of TRP enforces an ideal of community renewal as a two way process between public and private interests.

TRP's two forts pathway project was a means by which the land and people of Tilbury was re-imagined as a local space available to a multiplicity of users, including the new community and tourists on day visits to Thurrock via the Cruise Terminal at Tilbury Docks. TRP were keen to market Tilbury's heritage, not to self referential ends of remembering Tilbury pride, but to offer something of value to non-local consumption in aid of community renewal. This activity saw TRP imagine a joint role with the new community in resurrecting a physical plot of common land and to bolster the occupational and social skills of Tilbury's dispossessed. The defining point was that TRP were directed by solidaristic action to transform their circumstances and those of Thurrock in general. TRP were active in stretching the boundaries of

commonality beyond the ethnic and racial discourses to include the new community. The groups such as CTC and ETCA possessed no such desire; only one to consolidate their identity and its social boundary, in this they were socially inert. The members of ETCA had a vivid awareness of their social boundary and it was why they were more open and comfortable talking in racist ways. Mary concluded when discussing the Superport and the changing cultural character of Thurrock, *"We...absolutely...loathe...it! And that is what all our members say too, I'm just repeating what they say, in here, day in day out."* Sharon at TRP claimed that a major stumbling block for TRP had been the lack of commitment from groups in other areas directed towards transformation. There was simply a lack of interest in finding common interests for many groups.

For TRP, links with other groups, interests, and individuals were necessary for their long-term survival. Members all showed awareness to a need to be constantly engaged with others to inspire their own personal commitments as well as the success of collective initiatives. Tommy spoke passionately about his desire to convert the two forts pathway into a tourist attraction. In achieving what was collectively described by the remainder of TRP as *"Tommy's Dream"*, he was aware that recognition by external agencies was essential. This included the AA, English Heritage, and most importantly Thurrock Council and TTGDC. Ron consolidated this position, *"It's about working between these interests, as a... 'partnership' that's the word. Although, I think we are a thorn in their side some of the time, to be honest."* Discussions about increasing membership were secondary to talk about funding difficulties during TRP meetings. Through community initiatives such as the organisation of the Xmas lights for Tilbury, TRP were proud to announce that their accounts were in credit. However, this was a temporary situation and had emerged from a long period of debt, to which the group were afraid of a return should they fail to secure larger and consistent sources of funding. Ron explained the inordinately complex system of funding from which TRP emerged. This was bound to another two schemes part funded by SRB money. When these schemes were run down after three years TRP emerged and became a registered charity, *"We now have to beg, borrow, and steal, just to keep this place running... We have to have a presence here during office hours in order to show that we are a serious concern...the running of the office takes most of our money."* David criticised the decision making and funding powers of the council,

*“It’s sad because you see a lot of work go into these things. SureStart is another example. The government set them up and then after 3 years they cut the funding. Just like that! There’s nothing we can do to help them or replace the services. We can’t even offer them match funding, which would help a lot I think.”*

TRP’s attitude was highly entrepreneurial in this environment; they were ready to pounce upon opportunities that arose from private sector funding, including money from the Lottery Fund. The recruitment of Sharon who worked also for Tilbury Power Station was their most proud example of this partnership strategy. It was symbolic to the co-operative and transformational character of their relationship with non-local and cosmopolitan interests.

Recognition by the local government was an important aim of SBC, but the character of their relationship with non-local interests was confrontational and defensive as opposed to co-operative and transformational. The group aimed to operate as a lobbying body for local business to deal with the TTGDC and Thurrock Council. The members of SBC invested faith in Clive to *“fight tooth and nail”* to secure them recognition in competitions for contract tendering. A problem emerged as the group failed to integrate themselves into the competitive mechanisms established by government and the market to award contracts. This was reflected in Clive’s insistence that the optimum way to approach such ‘structures’ was to *“continually make a nuisance of yourself, by reminding them they need to use ‘real people’ to do these jobs.”* Given that none of the businesses he represented gained anything was a result of the unnecessarily confrontational attitude taken by Clive. More productive strategies may have been to inform and enable members on the requirements to qualify for funding; or provide a robust case to argue why local interests should be positively discriminated when funding was awarded. The justification of ‘real people; real interests’ used by Clive was not one that guaranteed competency or signified a true need and desert for his clients. It was unfortunate for those involved, but the success of these groups was something ultimately honoured by government and the establishment of productive relationships with its agencies and other non-local interests.

The ethnography revealed that social capital was an important resource, but only in relation to certain directed interests. The interests of CTC and ETCA were primarily leisure orientated. These community groups provided instances of organised sociability. The identity and social capital to emerge from such association provided little as a resource for the regeneration of Thurrock. Social capital conducted the opposite as the communal identity became swathed by defensive exclusivity and intolerance of outsiders. This was in stark contrast to the recommendations of Putnam that claim informal and formal associations provide the same degrees of social capital. This ethnography has revealed that interests characterised by leisure were defensive and typified the 'dark side of social capital' (Putnam 2000). TRP and SBC provided examples where social capital could have been described as bridging between interests. Putnam and others claim that this is the 'gold standard' of social capital upon which a liberal and plural society should be constructed. However, there was considerable difference between both groups in regards the success of their interests. This was primarily due to the character of their relations with bridged interests, notably with the State. For SBC relations were confrontational and defended the archetypical notions of localism. TRP, however, provided a form of bridged social capital that encompassed the local as a place with multiple interested parties, not the possession of a particular interest signalled by racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. TRP's interests were co-operative across the new and established communities and the character of their relationships was transformative. In this TRP's members welcomed renewal as the transformation of their own local identity, function, and purpose.

### **The Redux**

It was evident that the strength, vitality, and impact of TRP was built upon a double bind between public investment and inspirational private individuals within local community. Consequently, social capital was not a renewable, self-sustaining source of energy emergent from ad-hoc socialisation: It required investment, recognition, and promotion by official interests as well as concerted direction by inspirational proponents in the community. It was actively stated in SBC that "*bridges are formed when given the facilities*". However, Peter's claim was only one side of this 'structural process', there needed to be willingness for individuals to bridge, especially with the State. This was required should groups represent their particular

interests within a wider strategy of community renewal. The rejection of such relations in the narratives of localism was counter-intuitive to this pluralistic logic. This was exposed when associations were analysed with reference to the influence of key personnel.

Two sub-divisions of social capital were identified in relation to associational interest, as progressive and regressive. The delineating aspect of these was their degree of conduciveness to bridge interests. Progressive social capital was manifest in the activities and interests of Tommy, Ron, Hajra, and Karel whose contribution to social capital revealed a desire to transform narratives of land and people. They actively bridged interests to the ends of regeneration and renewal by embracing the transformation of local identity and the extension of commonality. Tommy and Ron were aware that TRP's interests in the *"economic, social, and environmental regeneration of Tilbury"* were held by all people who had an interest in the area. It was awareness of the fluidity of interests across different groups of people that directed their public activities as 'partnerships' in an attempt to include all aspects of Tilbury's community; including the new community, the economically deprived, local government, national planning and heritage bodies, and large and medium sized industry. These were elements that other groups often saw as the anti-thesis of localism. TRP's efforts to bring a multitude of interests together to transform the land and people of Tilbury made non-local interests locally useful and accountable, due to a co-operative attitude.

Karel was explicit about these capacities. She characterised her position in local government as a radical reformer of local governance and resource allocation. For Karel, her ability to *"change power structures from the inside"* was an outcome of leaving the Labour Party to stand as an independent councillor. This she claimed enabled her to work between different interests, i.e. the Conservative administration, her constituents, central government, and local services. Her example to the success of this was the rising health profile of Tilbury people, the Gateway College, and proposals for a new health and leisure complex in Tilbury. She concluded,

*"That's what I do, I sow little seeds, like with the health centre, and people pick up on them. You see, the way I do business is that I build relationships with people, I'm quite an approachable person and I am a very empowering person too."*

*You have to be an advocate for your community, but your community guidance role should be separate from your personal beliefs. You're there to govern for the many so you've got to separate your personal from the role. Councillors should have interests all across their constituents, so that they can deliver services that benefit all citizens."*

Karel was forthright that regeneration and community renewal had been aided by working between multiple interests. In the respect that she occupied a more powerful position, Karel was able to exhibit a great deal of agency in the construction of bridges through which social capital could flow. Her enabling attitude was shared by others, notably TRP, but due to their peripheral relationship to structures of power was unable to generate the level of return exhibited by Karel. Despite this handicap TRP still worked towards the transformation of localism with an eye towards the multiplicity of interest. A key to the successes of TRP and Karel's community role was their *inspirational* character. Their emphasis upon social transformation empowered people to share their 'vision' as common and to actively involve themselves in renewal. Multiplicity ultimately aided the dispersal of this inspiration across a wide cross-section of Thurrock's community.

Regressive capital was related to the congealed interests represented by efforts to preserve localism at the expense of social and cultural transformation and regeneration. This could be seen with the examples of Clive, Brian, Les and Mary. These people were figureheads of various communities in Thurrock. Many of the comments they made were in group settings and they used their personalities to legitimate their opinions; they were in this respect *influential* in defining the local and prescribing social identity. The interests expounded by Brian, Les, and Mary coincided with the interests of the BNP; a coincidence that was denied in CTC and ambivalent in ETCA. Influential figures also echoed the 'voice' prescribed to Thurrock by the editor of the TG. The interest was simply the removal of the present condition in favour of a narrow, exclusive, and ego-centric vision of the past. This was by no means a plural ideal that accepted multiple claims over the ownership of land and people or extended commonality. It was therefore a form of social bonding that had no basis from which to bridge. The construction of bridging networks transposed upon bonded social capital legitimated the essentialism of localism rather

than transforming land and people for socially integrative purposes. Such efforts would have been logically inconsistent with localism's generic claims to legitimacy and ascendancy over other groups.

Clive employed similar un-cooperative strategies, but did emphasise a need to bridge. His ethos was that common people shared a greater claim on resources by virtue of embodying localism. These were claims based on un-warranted 'opinion' surrounding the 'realness' of localism. It contained no inherent reason for the acceptance of the claim as legitimate. The stalwart commitment to localism was a refusal to be held to account over how such interests were defined and to whom they represented. The examples of regressive social capital show the public and private spheres of social life to be antagonistic and conflictual based upon the essence of their definitions. Regressive capital was the denial of the necessity of plural governance. Consequently, community and democracy were revitalised when there was a shared bond of responsibility between public and private interests. This responsibility operated to secure the foundations of multiplicity and fluidity to avoid regressive and divisive social capital.

A double bind of responsibility existed when there was a partnership between public services and community. In this, individuals perceived social change as not necessarily a malign process and worked co-operatively to engineer community renewal. However, this worked only when the State delivered and enabled change in culturally sensitive and socially responsible ways. Karel commented that this had occurred in Thurrock in relation to the settlement of the travelling communities, but had yet to occur to empower white locals to foster shared interests with the new community. There was no set of checks and balances to ensure that renewal was democratic and inclusive by making 'communities' integral to the planning process. There was no effective community integration strategy by Thurrock Council, TTGDC or any other partners in regeneration and renewal. It had been left to the market and community to negotiate the meaning of community renewal within the private sphere. This had profound ramifications on the consolidation of social capital as the 'community' was a fought over terrain of local ownership with little effective and reliable leadership.

There was no shared responsibility to construct the bridges through which social capital could flow across diverse social and cultural interests. There was little investment by the State in encouraging groups such as TRP and little encouragement

to develop further community groups along similar lines. The funding of TRP was whimsical and failed to reward good practice in promoting and achieving their aims in co-ordination with an inclusive vision of community renewal. It was observed that when this double bind of responsibility was co-ordinated effectively, social capital became a *fluid* resource that flowed through the locality promoting constructive links between multiple interests. Social capital was most useful to community renewal when it was enabled to flow. This was, however, only noticeable in a few instances in relation to the gains of TRP. When treated as a static resource it led to exclusivity and retraction from plural and liberal society. However, the double bind of responsibility revealed that the State played a central role that allowed the proliferation of regressive social capital over progressive forms due mostly to issues of funding and a lack of 'good' governance and leadership on issues of integration.

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that due to a skills deficit whites saw themselves as unequal to the new community. This lack of skills to trade for opportunities had forced many whites to use localism as a means to reassert racial and ethnic discourses of commonality to attain ascendancy over the new community. The discussion regarding the local response to the TTGDC and other organisations of regeneration and renewal signalled the structures through which whites saw their destiny controlled and their racial power denounced. They looked to localism as a means to restore feelings of legitimacy. The requirement to accumulate post-industrial and non-lay skills was a threat to the autonomy, legitimacy, and self sufficiency of localism. The retort was to feel abandoned by the State and to characterise white experience as vulnerable in a free market. Whites used localism via narratives of economic and social class in order to argue their vulnerable and unequal status in regards the new community. This was a lament unreferenced by empirical examples of discrimination, disadvantage, and inequality.

Within these claims of inequality social capital emerged in community associations that was akin to the racial localism of the BNP. Both interests used economic narratives to substantiate claims within cultural politics. Localism was therefore social capital: A local emergence of English identity. The chapter has argued that the class narratives used to claim unequal status for localism were ersatz and illegitimate. The naturalism attributed to the above construction of localism created a



social acumen that was guided by the often unacknowledged racial and ethnic principles of commonality. TRP was an example of the subversion of such racial normalcy. The chapter argued that the difference in the interest of the groups studied was a better illustration as to the potential benefits of social capital than simple ideas of sociability expressed within the literature and community renewal. This was explored with reference to the construction of two different states of social capital: Progressive and Regressive. The latter was characterised as a preservation of localised conventions of land and people; orchestrated by *influential* characters who directed the association's interests to self identifying practices of leisure and entertainment. This type of capital made integration and bridging an illogical exercise, furthermore they were antagonistic in their relations with the State.

The former progressive capital emerged from interests readily committed to the transformation of conventions of land and people. These groups possessed *inspirational* key members who encouraged co-operative relations across multiple interests, cosmopolitan and local. In doing so they characterised a progressive capital as it was ready to flow amongst these interests rather than congeal as with the example of regressive capital. Community power was dependent upon a double bind of responsibility between the State and community associations. To enable community renewal, social capital was required to become a fluid resource. This required investment and good governance by the State. Interdependently, the bind also required inspirational and motivated activities orchestrated by community association towards the social, economic, and environmental regeneration of land and people in English regional locales like Thurrock, Essex.

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## Conclusion: Class & Ethnicity across a Diverse Landscape

### Introduction

The research consisted of two strands, the content analysis and the ethnography. This conclusion draws the central claims of these together to form a coherent argument about the localised nature of English identity and its relationship to community renewal. The discussion illustrates this argument by assessing the overall merits of social capital as a resource for community renewal. In this way the research assesses the usefulness of Putnam's conception of social capital notably whether or not the formality of association has a bearing upon the capacities of social capital to generate inclusivity (Putnam 2000). This assessment identifies the importance of 'interest' to the degree to which social capital became a resource to further community renewal. This posed two types of social capital, regressive and progressive. The study used the example of TRP to argue that via the adoption of transformative and co-operative interests, community renewal had the potential to provide leadership and example to subvert the ethnic and racial discourses of commonality inherent to localism. Social capital was a resource of regeneration when it was prompted to flow between multiple interests by a double bind of responsibility between the State and community associations. The thesis argues that this was dependent upon the restructuring of social capital theory, to a) accept that the State is a major investor in social capital and b) that only formal associations with clearly defined interests in community renewal are progenitors of resourceful social capital.

The thesis concludes by highlighting the need for community renewal in the changed environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It argues that ethnic and racial discourses of commonality remain inherent within the governing structures of local community life. Ultimately the thesis is structured to re-identify 'structure' as a force behind the scenes of the immediately apparent aspects of communal social life; aspects which this thesis has explored as the ethnic and racial discourses of commonality. In the study, it was not ethnicity *par se* that created unequal difference and competition

between the new and established community, but the relationship of ethnicity to power structures embodied in white experience and the Nation. This built upon Modood's characterisation of ethnicity research that seeks to not just quantify ethnic association, but to signal wider social, political and economic inequalities (Modood 1997; 2002). However, the study identified the emergence of racism as a result of the confusion of class and nation within public policy and community discourse; unintentionally fuelled by community renewal. It is identified that sociological study should aim to avoid re-enforcing exclusive identities and instead push the boundaries of public knowledge as a reminder of the fluidity of community life within England. Consequently, sociological study is a tool to stretch the boundaries of the common beyond the immediate racial and ethnic identifications inherent within conventional narratives of land and people. This uses Vertovec's agenda for the research of super-diversity, as the research contributes to the public understanding of difference and in doing so offers new insight for public policy on community renewal and diversity (Vertovec 2007).

### **Is this England?**

The Thurrock Gazette provided the dominant cultural vision of community within Thurrock. As a consequence it reinforced the normality of majority white culture as centred on the commonality of white experience. The TG served as a monolithic text set against the fluidity and multiple cultural forms occupying Thurrock's lived landscape. As a monolith the TG subsumed the multiplicity of voices within Thurrock under a vertical comradeship, where English identity was the sovereign aspiration for white people. It was in this way that the TG imagined the local community as a microcosm of the nation (Anderson 1991). Cultural others were allocated pre-defined positions of exotic marginality structured by the ethnic and racial discourses of commonality. The new community were not imagined to share the same common interests as white people. Therefore their relationship with English identity was viewed as subordinate to the TG's localism. This vertical comradeship served to structure debate over belonging and culture. It pre-empted the narrative seriousness with which the TG responded to the claims of the BNP. This monolith of vertical comradeship was reinforced by an essence of familiarity. Issues relative to the new community were in comparison diffusively dealt with in impersonal tones. This was most explicit as racism was dealt with by the TG as a problem solely for the morality,

decency, and innocence of white people; not the safety and future integration of the new community. Consequently, explicit racism was seen to erode white morality and to distance whites from the vanguard of English identity; a politically conservative example of Bonnet's observations on Anti-Racism and white universalism (Bonnett 2000a). This signified the wider use of English identity as a morality directed at the urban and impoverished sections of Thurrock society and reflected Colls' observations on late 19<sup>th</sup> Century conservative English identity (Colls 2002). English identity was an ideological prescription to what the TG saw as moral decline and 'social decay' amongst the white working class.

The importance of the TG and its construction of localism was that it was a central text of community renewal. It was a singular ethnocentric vision of localism that sequestered the realities of super-diversity. This was constructed on three related bases. Firstly, the TG fortified localism against the non-local. Local land was regarded as threatened by cosmopolitanism, globalisation, and trans-national migration. The active choice of the TG to align local interests with Royalty and the Armed Forces was a riposte to liberalism and the multi-cultural State. The second base of localism was the white population of Thurrock. The references to familiarity and normalcy centred white experience as the universal representation of common people. The third base of localism was the prescription of English identity as moral governance to fuse white people with the local land. Local identity was a clarion call to socially un-engaged whites to defend their land against external threat. These three bases to localism presented ethnocentrism as a device that existed below the threshold of explicit mention. In order to fortify narratives of land and people with English identity and white experience the TG rarely needed to utter these words. It was a manifestation of the sequestered nature of whiteness inherent to Western culture (Dyer 1996; 2000). It operated via the normalcy and familiarity of ethnic and racial discourses of commonality. In political discourse England "*...is a nation that dare not speak its name*" (McCrone 2006: P267). However, the TG analysis showed that the reason for the apparent lack of explicit voice was due not to 'political correctness', but because it was easier and more convenient to obscure the political basis of local identity. Consequently, the TG represented English identity and white experience by its absence. English identity was ubiquitous due to its presumptive association with majority culture.

The live ethnography performed a critique of the TG's monolith of local identity simply by asking whether it really was a true reflection of England. The ethnography viewed community not as a monolith, but as a multiplicity of interests. Community was therefore not the empirical or theoretical problem that is often represented in the literature (Crow and Allen 1994). The ethnographic research framework was an essential tool to gain access to the non-conventional voices within the locality. The research presented the voices labelled as the new community within a public knowledge vacuum. This enabled the research to present a broader representation of the multiplicity of interests in Thurrock than that of the TG. This was due to the research being unbridled by conventions of normality and familiarity. Localism in the ethnography emerged from narratives of land, people, and the structures of governance. It was through these narratives that multiple interests were fluid despite the efforts to isolate and solidify interests into definitive cultural entities; either as English localism or stereotypes of the racialised new community. To conclude, the conventional and exclusive narratives of land and people analysed in the ethnography were interchangeable with the ethnic and racial discourses of commonality explored in the literature review. Consequently, English identity and community renewal were synonymous with localism. This trinity of synonyms for community was broken only when the conceptual flaws of social capital theory were recognised in observations. The example of TRP showed that 'renewal' was a reality only when this mutually re-enforcing trinity was overcome. Devoid of progressive social capital, renewal was a self-defeating strategy of defensiveness that failed to capitalise on shifting markets and opportunities.

The narratives of land, people, and structures of governance were each superimposed upon three basic facts of contemporary social change, which had ruptured the fusion of land and people and prompted the search for an authentic local identity. These facts were changes in the economic function of Thurrock as a regional space, a spatial turnover of population represented by migration, and shifts in the nature of governance in the public/private domains.

The change in economic function led to narratives of belonging and place identity represented by heritage. These reflected particular rural, industrial, and civic histories in different wards – each presumed their defacto universality as a representation of Thurrock. These heritages narrated change in reference to past economic function and the present day decline of the public ownership of space. This

decline was reflected in laments for familiarity in regards the social, economic, and political landscape and its institutions. Fearful responses to the contemporary urban environments were the ultimate outcome of these narrations of social change. It was within this environment that new post-industrial landscapes had emerged that centred on house and home, rather than occupational life and civic sociability. Consequently, issues regarding housing were the chief domain for the contestation of belonging. It was within this privatised domain that the ‘Africans for Essex’ myth became meaningful to respondents as an explanation for social change, notably the shift in Thurrock’s functional geography. There were no public institutions or frameworks to bridge Thurrock’s multiplicity and the ethnography tracked the construction of two aggregate social spheres of community life: the established and the new community. This revealed the distinction made by Elias and Scotson in regards class differences in communal solidarity to be meaningful in respect to ethnicity (Elias and Scotson 1965). A differentiated environment generated a fertile ground for stereotypical judgments, racism and simple misunderstanding as the established possessed no direction in their social interaction with the new community. This was an outcome of the unfamiliar nature of the new community before the eyes of the common vision inherent to the socio-sphere of the established. There were two social experiences of Thurrock with no common public vision of integration or future.

Within the change of functional geography was a spatial turnover of population. This was most visible to respondents as a racial migration. The response was to re-imagine the commonality of white experience. This was achieved with reference to narratives of hardship and working class virtue. These narratives shared much with the representation of heritage and charity in the TG. However, within the ethnography class based narratives were the terrain where the interests of localism merged with the interests of the BNP. The focus on imagined economics reinforced the BNP’s reduction of racial prejudice to economic considerations of ‘over-stretched hospitality’. In the ethnography, class narratives were a jaded effort to *de-racialise* claims of belonging embodied in the conventional portrayal of land and people. A common ethnic situation was expressed via sympathy to white youth and reflected divergent interests that respondents held in regards community renewal. Consequently, the analysis herein does not apologise for racism simply by referencing class solidarity; something which is a major feature of Dench *et al* (Dench *et al* 2006).

The respondents who imagined the situation of young whites as a reflection of malignant leisure pursuits caused by the loss of traditional authority held ill-fated, insular, and exclusive views of community. This was a form of bonding social capital structured by ethnic and racial discourses of commonality. The respondents who characterised young peoples' situation to be a concern over skills, education, and work held an inclusive and negotiated community identity that reflected openness and active links with the non-local and structures of governance. The over-arching precipitator of these two divergent forms of localism was the presence or absence of revitalised institutions and the direct investment in community by local and non-local government spearheaded by inspirational personnel. This was the case with the Gateway College in Tilbury, where the main community association despite emerging from the most impoverished circumstances, were the most 'cosmopolitan' in their localism. In areas such as Ockendon there were no such revitalised institutions to direct young adulthood so there was an increase of worry in regards young people. This manifested as a concern over the temporal survival of the white ethnic group, rather than represent young people as a culturally inclusive aggregate of individuals transgressing the racial and ethnic boundaries of commonality.

The issue of age and generation offers further avenues of study to extend the thesis' focus on community renewal. The theoretical concerns of the conducted research were strictly class, ethnicity, and spatiality; these were fore fronted as more sociologically explanative than age and generation, which were researched as discourses voiced by community 'elders' rather than as distinct social categories or identities. However, the analysis does reveal that age and generation were important markers of social and cultural change and future research would address this centrally as questions of rupture, continuity, or adaptation. It would be in this respect that age and generation would reveal insights into the possibility of hybrid identities emergent from inclusivity and interaction in the future (Back 1996). The idea that localism will change as a result of intergenerational or cohort ageing is of course impossible to answer until it occurs!

The ethnography showed localism to be essentially a shared domain, but in respondents' narratives it was continually contested as the regenerative efforts of the new community were sequestered under the imagined common situations of the established white community. For the whites the presence of the new community was a rupture of their social reality experienced as a distinction between majority and

minority peoples. Consequently, whites almost always treated the subject of the new community outside the boundaries of ordinariness and commonality; something observed by Herbert to have occurred in Leicester in the 1960s (Herbert 2008). Individual efforts to imagine an inclusive social domain failed to provide a framework to incorporate interests related to ethnicity. This was largely due to the lack of institutional leadership to generate links between Thurrock's diversity of interests. Community efforts of integration failed to attack this ordinariness and instead reinforced the new community as exotic or stigmatised cultural objects outside the boundaries of commonality. These were labels that all lay respondents of the new community were eager to avoid. The new community considered themselves permanent inhabitants of the locality and thus presented an alternative vision of land and people. Their relationship to local belonging was ultimately embodied in their entrepreneurial activity not the endorsement of the State as whites believed.

The shift in the structures of governance further revealed the racialisation of localism as whites saw themselves as unequal with the new community in regards the status of skills, knowledge, and opportunities. The established respondents viewed their manual skills as fixed to their own sense of localism, enforcing a perspective on skills as culturally owned not fluid and the outcome of education. This essentialisation of skill allotted white collar skills to non-local interests. The established community imagined inequity as their manual and traditionally inherited skills were devalued in the tenure for contracts and opportunities. Exclusion fuelled the consolidation of localism as bonded social capital. This was represented most clearly with respect to the TTGDC as they conducted regeneration with little recourse to a legitimate joint project that respondents felt respected localism. White claims of belonging were efforts to re-empower themselves within regenerative efforts of governing institutions. Exclusive localism was a form of community renewal inadvertently sanctioned by the State, because community renewal was not defined in relation to any particular type of interests and did little to capitalise on the multiplicity of Thurrock's social milieu.

It was argued that Thurrock contained a great deal of social capital, but the revitalising capacities of the theory were non-manifest. This observation signalled the central importance of 'interest' to considerations of social capital as a resource to fuel meaningful and integrated community renewal. This conclusion built upon the observations made regarding ethnic future and young people. Interests that were directed towards leisure and entertainment were exclusive interests that reinforced



conventional narratives of land and people. Regressive interests were oppositional to interests that centred on social, economic, and environmental regeneration. The latter progressive interests saw leisure and entertainment as peripheral to skills and educational development. They were outgoing and transformative interests that generated re-imagined narratives of land and people directed toward common future, this was a culturally and socially inclusive ideal. Formal associations with directed interests were a productive and useful definition of social capital.

Contrary to social capital theory this research discovered that there was a functional difference between informal and formal associations and the social capital they precipitated. These were observed as regressive and progressive stocks of social capital. However, the research concluded that social capital was only useful to community renewal when it was enabled to flow between multiple interests. This decreased the problematic status of the discourses of commonality within community renewal as a more directed definition of social capital was employed. In this way, bridging capital was not simply extra-associational networks, but was the active transference and re-distribution of skills, knowledge, and resources. Importantly, this included bridges with the State at local and non-local levels; an aspect of social capital that is neglected in its application and promotion by public policy notably in the Demos report on community organisation (Skidmore and Craig 2005). It was argued that community renewal was most productive of renewal when accompanied by a double bind of responsibility between the State and community. This bind consisted of an interested government that invested in inspirational community interests, which re-imagined land and people as a reflection of multiple, diverse, and fluid interests: fluid social capital was reliant upon State-sponsored re-distribution. This benefited renewal and regeneration as it was the only strategy that maximised available resources and skills, and generated more opportunities by capitalising on the spatial turnover of population. The research showed that despite the economic claims made by white respondents, Thurrock's true economic interests lay *across* ethnicity and were not reducible to ethnic and racial discourses of communal belonging.

## **A new England**

The thesis opened with a local analogy of social change and its consequence on the confidence of local community. The academic discussion began in this vein as community renewal was theorised as a governmental response to the impact of

globalisation on white working class community. In regards community, globalisation is a social, political, and economic process that has re-configured relations between the local and global (Albrow 1997). Within much academic literature social transformation has occurred to subvert the former certainties of class and nation. Authors such as Beck (2000, 2002), Bauman (2001), and Giddens (1990, 1991) claim that societies are now reproduced at the level of the individual social unit, thus circumventing structural determinism. Commensurate with their prognoses of the zeitgeist is the claim that individual outcome is the result of choice within a risk society. These analyses regard social life as a constant unmade and unfolding outcome of choice in past individual action. Structure is a moribund sociological concept due to its apparent empirical dissolution. Despite such a seemingly Neo-Liberal regard for social life none of these authors actively justifies inequality. Rather they counter-intuitively suggest that structural inequality remains at the basis of individual capacities to display free choice. This is illogical given the primary position of risk, uncertainty, and individualisation within their social philosophies.

This thesis argues that the stage for communal social life remains set by structural constraints analogous with the changing relations of globalisation. The thesis discusses issues of community in such a way as to suggest that the empirical manifestation of an ethnic imagination masks the sub-reality of structures upon which community remains dependent. Taken as a text of glocalisation the ethnography reveals a revitalised axis around which progressive commonality can emerge via the acceptance of different interests within an extended vision of the common. These are reflective of transformative and co-operative social relations, rather than antagonistic oppositions based upon conventions of social acumen inherent within traditional politics and the racial and ethnic discourses of commonality. As an ethos of social action within the local environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the thesis relinquishes questions of local identity from the clutches of racial and ethnic essentialism. It poses that an English identity should emerge not from discursive conventions of traditional thinking in regards majority/minority distinctions, but as a confident expression of commonality built upon multiplicity and fluidity. This defines 'interest' as the key ingredient of inclusivity and belonging not fixed to conventions of land and people. The thesis argues that a social awareness of 'interest' as a fluid resource existing across conventional cultural divides leads to far greater opportunities of renewal and regeneration for the many than would defensive solidarities rigidly based upon

heritage and tradition. Ultimately, the thesis unpacks white experience and suggests that its future lays in the reconfiguration of a political identity commensurate with difference. This is a strategy that requires the explicit identification of white experience within academic and public discourse and a subsequent removal from the centre stage of normality.

Despite the rejection of class based narratives to justify the predicament of white experience, this thesis does not reject the existence of social class as a structural precipitator of communal social life. The ethnography revealed the traces of social class to be ubiquitous and hidden behind the relationships with the State, and the established and new communities. Class was a relationship common to all respondents managed by governing structures in regards the allocation of resources significant to community renewal. It was in this way that re-distributive justice was essential to fluid capital via the double bind of responsibility. However, the impact of social class on the lived environment of Thurrock was divergent from the narratives of class as used by local whites to characterise ethnic competition. 'Community renewal' benefited whites more than it did the new community. This was because of the dominant position of whites over national imaginings of common people as discussed in the literature review. Community renewal was not a perfectly elaborated scheme directed to the conscious concerns and requirements of local whites as it was meant to reflect a wider political concern with cultural inclusion. Community renewal at its heart was a politically neutral means for public policy to address the material requirements of the white population, without actively excluding cultural others. From the perspective of local whites, public policy initiative disseminated an illogical mixture of identity based on the one hand by nation and citizenship and on the other, the social class of common people. Ultimately, whites failed to notice that community renewal was an offering (no matter how paltry) of State subsidy to white 'impoverished' community. The new community was in all instances entirely at the whims of the free market; their social, cultural, and economic entrepreneurship was completely self-reliant and at a greater risk of failure to that of whites' economic activity.

The competition regarded as ethnic by respondents was indeed an outcome of social class, but one entirely oppositional to the claims made by whites within the community: whites still had a sacred bond with the State, only it was not announced as an explicit racial identification to the rest of the community by public policy.

Therefore the claims made of unfair treatment at the hands of ‘political correctness’ were false and failed to reflect the true economic inequalities that existed between communities constructed around ethnicity. The new community was politically and economically at a disadvantage, but worked harder to sustain themselves within an unregulated economic environment at the extreme fringes of the private sector. The whites merely wanted their advantage made explicit so as to make infantile gestures of status ascendancy to counter their humiliation at the hands of the new community’s work ethic and their presence within new conceptions of land and people. Ironical to the civic demands of social capital, community renewal inadvertently fostered this psychological condition of white experience. An experience that located any means necessary to draw value distinctions between a white self and racial others. The ‘Africans for Essex’ myth in particular, was promulgated not out of a universal concern of injustice, but because whites wanted to find evidence to devalue and dismiss the new community. Class narratives were a perversion of class based citizenship rights and re-distributive politics as they masked a white desire to continue as a social, cultural, and political universal experience of English land and people.

This conclusion highlights the centrality of the problems identified within the literature review to the integrative success of community renewal public policy. The ethnography discusses these problems of national identity, ethnicity, and racism explicitly to expose their presence within public policy and sociological theory as discourses of commonality. They remain problematic to sociological theory as similar assumptions to that of public policy are manifest in the way in which concepts are apportioned to groups based upon divergent cultural criteria. Hence studies of white urban groups occur via social class and studies of racially marked groups are conceptualised within the confines of ethnicity. These conceptual usages reinforce majority/minority distinctions and are made in silent reference to nationalism. This is because the causal logic of ‘culture’ has a reversed effect on the analysis of each group. For instance the conclusions of Dench *et al* (2006) are invalid because of such conceptual confusion. They claim that the political situation of Bangladeshi community is caused by their cultural difference. The opposite is claimed of whites where cultural disposition is not conceived as causal, but outcome of political situation in regards multi-cultural public policy. This fails to regard racially marked communities to be determined by anything other than cultural difference and gives white groups primacy over national identity and modern values of citizenship. This is

unreasonable given that the communities under study were all British citizens as the new community were in this thesis. As a logical conclusion it permanently excludes non-white and non-conventionally English persons from conceptions of commonality. As cultural minorities are prevented from transgressing the boundaries placed around the common by a majority who are disavowing their majority status with claims to inequality and vulnerability argued in relation to 'imaginary economics'.

In addition, recent conceptualisations of social class as a cultural identity share dangerous ground with divisive politics. Studies such as Skeggs (1997), Charlesworth (2000), Savage *et al* (2001), although insightful draw the same distinctions used to justify and make common white experience. This is a position made apparent in political discourse too, by figures such as David Goodhart who claims the feelings of white working class need to be reflected in public policy and the operations of the Welfare State (O'Donnell 2008; Pathak 2007). The result is a conceptualisation of a two tier system of citizenship similar to that argued by Dench *et al* (2006). As referenced throughout the thesis the confusion over liberalism and nationalism within these calls for communal solidarity reveal a logical inconsistency damaging to cultural relations and simply reinforce rule by an ill-conceived majority. It should be a cautionary note to the sociology of social class that the structural and political relationship of class and culture needs to be re-theorised to reflect class as a common concept, rather than the disavowal of racial and ethnic centrality or white experience.

The class based discourse on citizenship as above is all too often confused with left-wing re-distributive conceptions of social justice. The two tier system promoted by Dench *et al* (2006) and Goodhart (2008) reinforce economic inequalities. In that they are premised upon the mistaken authenticity of working class voice. It is mistaken because these voices assume that, based upon the conventions of land and people, cultural minorities are always indebted to the State and have (or will pay) less of the Net Total of taxation per person. To justify their divisive prescription of citizenship the authors conclude that the State should prioritise services and resources to those who have invested more in the State (i.e. as taxpayers). Under the current system of taxation it is often wealthy interests that pay more in taxation than the unemployed whites whose voice the authors use to legitimise their argument! This is not a re-distributive politics by any stretch of the imagination; it is simply an argument for a white English centric common identity; which uses *working classness* as its cultural reference point.

This thesis has subverted conventional logic on class and nation by regarding ethnicity as a cultural interface with the structural economic and political world. This avoids the reduction of 'race' to economics as was the case with classic Marxist/materialist analyses, as the reference is racist outcomes in the socio-scape of local communal life. This applied ethnicity across groups to include majority experience and identity so there was no difference in the direction of causal logic. Consequently, the ethnographic analysis identified an empirical basis to discount normative claims of white inequality and vulnerability. The analysis does not deny the existence of social class, but revealed its cynical use for identity politics expressive of racial angst. On a local scale the normative claims of white inequality and vulnerability were unproductive to 'community renewal' and regeneration, because the social world consisted of an altered social environment where the longevity and prosperity of exclusive identities were questionable. Therefore racially and ethnically exclusive identities were counter-productive to local renewal. If economic and social prosperity is desired then identities must be porous and reflect the empirical nature of diversity.

On a global scale, trans-nationalism reflects changes in the global order and presents a questioning of white centrality and its power base as a racial overlord. Consequently, a stolid defiance of white identity continues to be a malignant communal identity; as it is an active refusal to accept the challenge to these traditional power structures and to accept itself as an equal amongst equal others. Therefore community renewal should not reflect sympathy towards white English claims of vulnerability, but should instead attempt to re-invigorate and re-empower white experience as inter-dependent with the realities of cultural minorities. This would position white experience as a banal marker of skin tone, not of neo-colonial racial dominance. Such a de-centring of white experience would make English identity available across the super-diverse population of England. Central to this strategy is the structural identification of ethnic, racial, and national discourses of community and belonging. Without such a discussion the renewal of political community will occur un-reflexively and will continue the observed trend of constructing questions of English identity solely as an exercise to re-invent white experience in a global, cosmopolitan, and trans-national age. Consequently, the thesis brings the concerns of White Studies into discussion with civic politics (Ware and Back 2002).

The ethnographic framework was a highly valid methodology as it allowed the research to transgress the boundaries of public knowledge of diversity, commonality, and majority/minority identities. The research therefore provided a sociological alternative to normative theory based upon opinion polls that reflect conventional narratives of land and people (Pathak 2007). The research is a ‘public sociology’ as its discoveries and perspective functions to the ends of generating a more informed public discourse on community and identity. Ultimately, the research identifies the possibility for commonality to be built upon multiplicity and fluidity, which is a controversial claim to liberal-communitarians who aspire to a common culture of national inclusivity modelled upon the values of an unreferenced majority (O’Donnell 2007). The research further endorses *value* as meaningful within social science in order to critique normativity in narratives of land and people present in academic and public discourse. Rather than retreat to a perch of empirical objectivity, the research has actively incorporated *value* with the researcher’s discretionary assessment of human behaviour and the social environment. It was the outcomes of human social behaviour that the research *assessed* rather than *measured*; a task that can be achieved only by reference to *values*. The thesis champions norms of integration, diversity, and fluidity not fundamentally as a commitment to a political mantra of cosmopolitanism, but as an outcome of economic and social pragmatism. It was on this basis that value differences between social interests were seen to make a difference to the ends of community renewal.

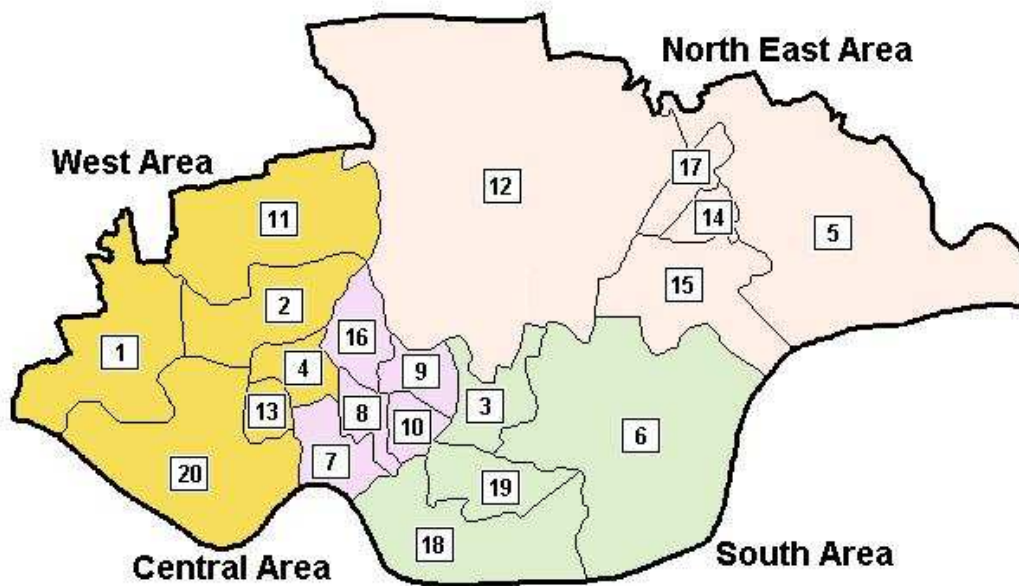
The pragmatism of this suggestion rescues the thesis from a void of relativism. The thesis, its methods, analysis, and conclusions are a direct reference to a *neo-modern* enterprise in social, political, and cultural theorising. As a zeitgeist this reflects upon the naivety of strict objective value in the old modernism and the rash relativistic response by post-modernism. The reflected image reveals a 21<sup>st</sup> Century self; sober, mature, and responsible to the fragilities of human existence in the new modernity. The ‘English Question’ is paramount to the neo-modern social environment not because it congeals ethnic and racial identity against vapidness, but because it could be re-articulated to accept and embrace the common experiences of vulnerability and uncertainty that exist across the diverse landscape of the North East Atlantic Archipelago and its English mainland. It is furthermore paramount as it asks individuals and communities to accept that the State has legitimacy in redistribution and social support. The double bind of responsibility is conceptualised to police

public/private relations as practical and meaningful; of which common citizenship should be the outcome. The question is not one answered by the imagination of common identity, but the identification of the pragmatics of social life within these shores as a multiple and fluid socio-scape; because when one awakes from the ideological dream of white Englishness, this is what England really is...

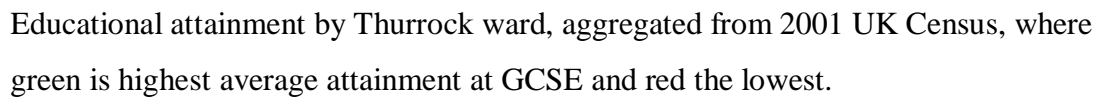


## Appendix

### Thurrock Ward Boundaries



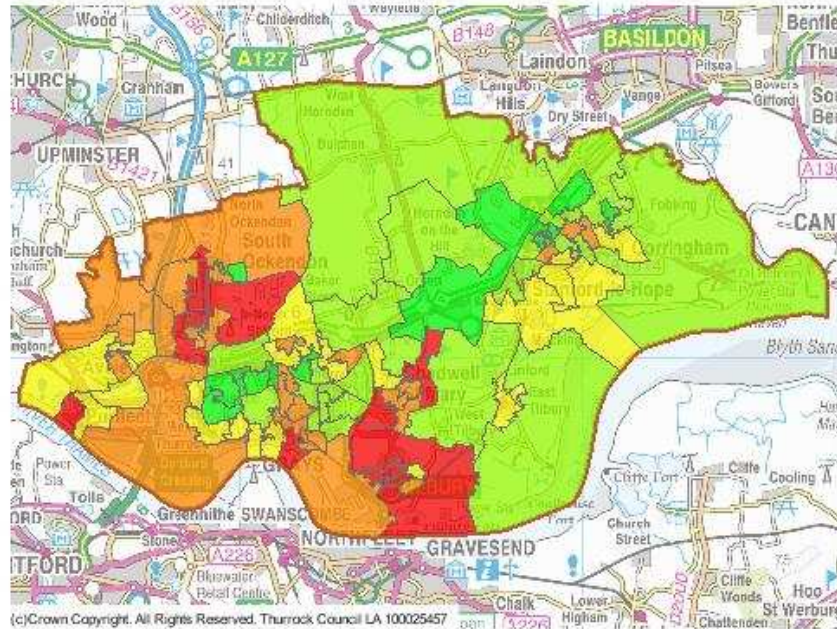
1. Aveley & Uplands
2. Belhus
3. Chadwell St Mary
4. Chafford & North Stifford
5. Corringham & Fobbing
6. East Tilbury
7. Grays Riverside
8. Grays Thurrock
9. Little Thurrock Blackshots
10. Little Thurrock Rectory
11. Ockendon
12. Orsett
13. Sth Chafford
14. Stanford East & Corringham Town
15. Stanford-le-Hope West
16. Stifford Clays
17. The Homesteads
18. Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park
19. Tilbury St Chads
20. West Thurrock & South Stifford



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## Employment by Ward

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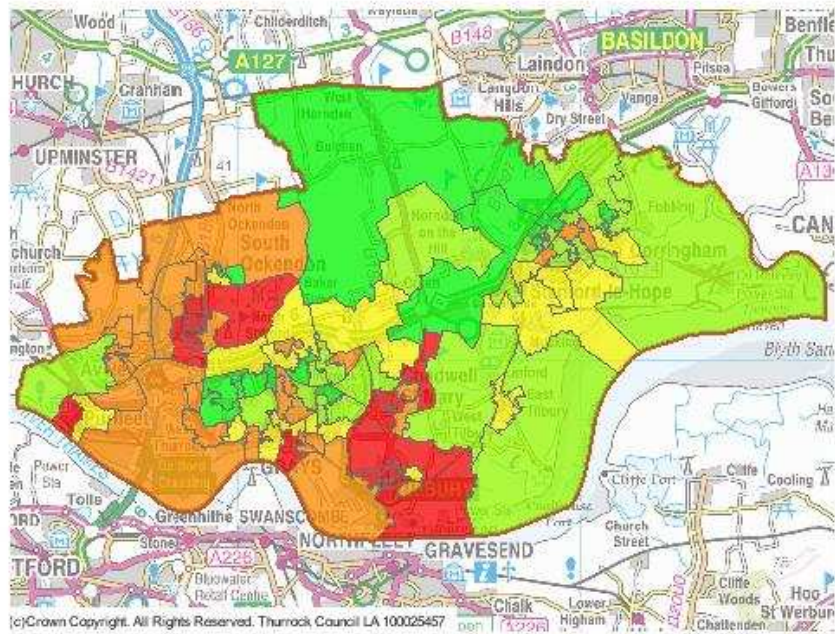


Employment situation by Thurrock wards taken from UK 2001 Census aggregate figures on employment of work age population. Green lowest unemployment, red represents the lowest employment figures.

**Source: GIS Thurrock Council (2008).**

## Income by Ward

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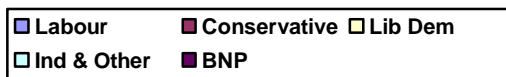
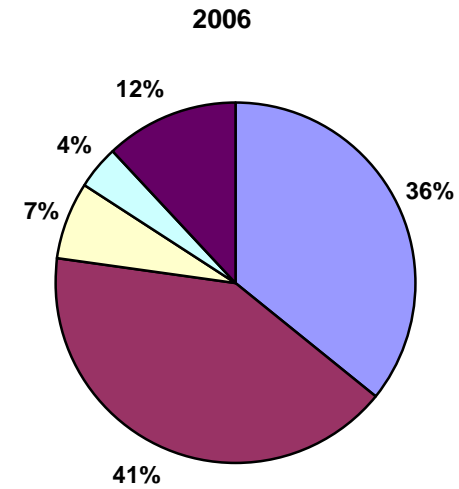
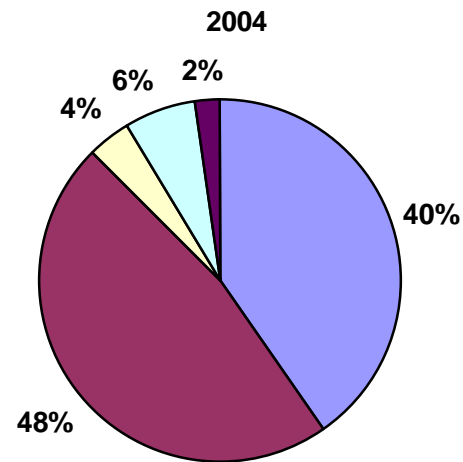


Income by Thurrock ward taken from 2001 UK Census aggregate data. Dark green represents highest income and red, lowest.

**Source: GIS Thurrock Council (2008).**

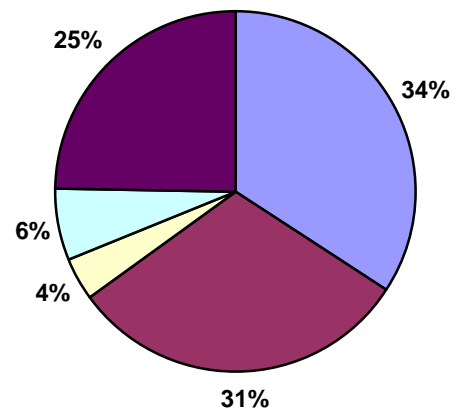
## Local Ward Election Results by Party 2004-08

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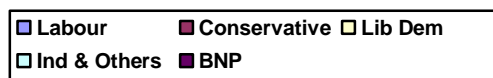
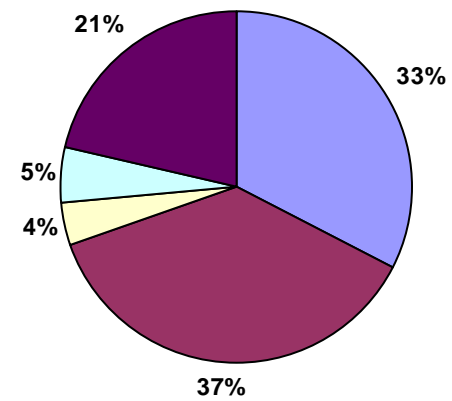


## APPENDIX

2007



2008



### Comparison of Ethnicity at 2001 (Thurrock/England)

Thurrock			England		
Ethnicity	Population	Percentage	Ethnicity	Population	Percentage
White	136399	95.3%	White	44775440	91.12%
Mixed-Race	1317	0.92%	Mixed-Race	643373	1.3%
British-Asian	2851	1.99%	British-Asian	2248289	4.57%
Black-British	1653	1.5%	Black-British	1132508	2.3%
South East Asian	551	0.38%	South East Asian	220681	0.44%
Other	345	0.24%	Other	214619	0.43%
<b>TOTAL</b>	143116	100%	<b>TOTAL</b>	49234910	100%

Source: 2001 UK Census, CASWEB.



## List of Respondents

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Associated Area</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Gurdip Bains	Grays Thurrock	Labour councillor for Grays Thurrock/Thurrock Asian Association
Maude Webb	Chadwell St Mary/Orsett	Orsett Show Organiser
Sharon Squelch	Tilbury	TRP/Tilbury Power Station
Kitty Froslin	Sth Ockendon	CTC
Brian Denabonney	Sth Ockendon	CTC
Joyce Simms	Sth Ockendon	CTC
Fred Weston	Thurrock Park	SBC
Eko Olubede	Purfleet/Chafford Hundred/Grays	Conservative Party councillor for Chafford Sth
Karel Lenard	Tilbury/Blackshots	Independent Socialist councillor for Tilbury Riverside/Head of Thurrock PCT
Jane Self	East Tilbury	SBC
Mike Tasseltyne	East Tilbury	SBC
Sara Leigh	Purfleet/Tilbury	SBC
Tommy Toomey	Tilbury	TRP
Moira Toogood	Grays	LHG
Tony Agbaje	East Tilbury/Grays	TRUST
Ken O' Shea	Tilbury	Unaffiliated
Jean O' Shea	Tilbury	Unaffiliated
Janice Bateson	Tilbury	TRP
Betty Royal	Tilbury	TRP
Diane Garwood	Tilbury	TRP
Irene Herbert	Grays	Unaffiliated
Rose Alele	Tilbury/Grays	Labour Party councillor for Tilbury Riverside
Les Bradford	Corringham & Stanford	ETCA
Derek Statham	East Tilbury	Unaffiliated
Syd Akinuoye	Tilbury	Unaffiliated
Yomi Fabiyi	Tilbury	Unaffiliated
Darren Hadock	Corringham & Stanford	Unaffiliated
David Thomas	Chafford Hundred/Grays	Conservative councillor for Purfleet (Portfolio holder for business & culture)
Michelle Dowman	Tilbury	Unaffiliated
Ron Seale	Tilbury	Chair of TRP
Beryl Batty	Tilbury	Unaffiliated
Mickey Malt	Tilbury	TRP
Garry Croft	Chafford Hundred	Chair of CHCF



# APPENDIX

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Associated Area</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Clive Loveday	Grays	Director of SBC
Bob Bevan	Corringham & Stanford	Local Labour Party organiser
Hajra Zakaria	Grays/Tilbury	TRUST
Terry Clifton	Chafford Hundred/Grays	CHCF
Yemi Bisiri	Grays/Sth Ockendon	Retailer
Isata Abdulai	Grays	Salon Proprietor
Ida Nerina	Grays	Retailer
Rita Dominic	Grays/Chafford Hundred	Unaffiliated
Lanre Alubede	Grays/Tilbury	SBC
Cliff Razor	Grays	Salon Proprietor
Donna Fox	Grays/Orsett/Sth Ockendon	LHG
Dorothy Colton	Tilbury	TRP
Joan Shayler	East Tilbury	BS
Stan Mallon	Corringham & Stanford	ETCA
Kathy Turner	Tilbury	TRP
John Kufuor	Tilbury	Car Wash owner
Barry Williamson	East Tilbury	LHG/Coalhouse Fort
Kellie Marie-Day	Tilbury	SureStart
Mary McDonnellelolly	Corringham & Stanford	ETCA
Colin Popshed	Tilbury	TRP
Pete Marshall	Grays Thurrock	Thurrock Council Planning Dept
Nigel Harman	Grays	SBC
Peter Pyper	Purfleet	SBC

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