Urban neighbourhoods and far-right spatial strategies: displacement, infrastructure, and civic life

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Abstract

This article examines key dynamics of the neighbourhood scale significant to the study of far-right politics in the Global North, highlighting the importance of critical urban research for antifascist horizons. Drawing from research in Spain and the UK, it identifies three core themes that thread far-right politics through urban neighbourhoods. First, far-right actors increasingly use neighbourhoods as hubs of civic engagement, challenging the assumption that local social capital and citizenship practices always reduce prejudice. Second, gentrification and displacement of working-class communities highlight the role of dispersal from neighbourhoods (or the threat thereof) in generating both classed and cultural anxieties about loss on which the far-right prey. Third, neighbourhood-scale infrastructures function as points where locally-specific struggles over meaning and value take place, through which both far-right and antifascist narratives of place and belonging can emerge. Rather than thinking of far-right neighbourhood politics as simply downscaling political processes taking place at national, regional, or global levels, we expose how everyday socio-political experiences at the neighbourhood scale play a central role in shaping patterns of far-right support at multiple scales. We conclude by calling for greater attention to the neighbourhood scale in our understandings of how opportunity structures for both far-right and anti-fascist politics operate in urban life.

Introduction

Recent years have seen a proliferation of far-right political actors and movements worldwide, resulting in widespread mainstreaming and normalization of far-right politics (e.g. Mudde, 2019; Traverso, 2019; Masood & Nisar, 2020; Kinvall, 2018). Yet, scholarly interest in

the far-right has principally focussed on national or transnational scales, often overlooking everyday spaces of socio-political reproduction (Author 1, 2021). Scholars have begun to make important contributions which challenge this omission, drawing attention to the material and symbolic spaces where far-right politics take place, and emphasizing how they draw on locally-specific narratives of place, belonging, and autochthony (e.g. Luger, 2022; Nettelbladt, 2023). Critical Urban Studies have also contributed to these debates addressing the urban and local conditions of contemporary far-right populism through a focus on the urban processes and patterns of inequality that become politicized by the far-right, as well as social, political and cultural urban-rural divides often mobilized by far-right actors (Förtner et al, 2019; Kipfer & Saberi, 2016; Rickardsson, 2021).

While this work has highlighted the potential of the local scale in the analysis of far-right politics, the specific role of neighbourhood spaces remains underexplored. This paper seeks to foster debate on how a neighbourhood-centered approach and insights from Urban Studies can contribute to understanding and addressing the material conditions that have fueled the rise of the far-right. This intervention, rather than an in-depth empirical study, aims to open new analytical horizons and outline potential research pathways. Provincialized urban neighbourhoods (especially but not only working-class ones) have long been recognised as being at risk of exclusionary attitudes, but this is implicitly understood as a top-down consequence of far-right resurgence (trans)nationally. Rather, as we shall see, emerging articulations of far-right mobilizations 'from below' and their use of neighbourhoods as locally-specific sources of political meaning problematize such analyses, denoting the importance of engaging with neighbourhood spaces as central to far-right mobilizations and generative of political positions and feelings. In this direction, this paper aims to open dialogues amongst critical literature in Urban Studies and Geography to re-centre urban neighbourhoods as increasingly important sites of far-right activity. In concluding, we propose that urban scholars are well placed to make important contributions to neighbourhood-based anti-fascisms.

The far-right is a broad and heterogeneous umbrella that encompasses multiple actors (Álvarez-Benavides & Toscano, 2021), through which the articulations of the far-right are historically and geographically specific (Author 1 & Medina García, 2024). This means that

addressing and defining the phenomenon uniformly is difficult and potentially unhelpful. Such heterogeneity has led to extensive debates about the definition, naming, and categorisation of terms such as 'far-right', 'radical right' or 'fascism', including their diverse tactics and spheres of action. While such categorizations can be analytically instrumental and are intended to avoid generalizations, this paper has deliberately adopted a broad lens on this ideological family. Particularly, the mounting academic and activist evidence of dynamic flow and interspersion of 'mainstream' and 'extreme' has become a central characteristic of this ideological phenomenon (e.g. 12 Rules for What, 2021; Froio, 2018), meaning that static definitions and partitions are not often analytically useful for understanding their real-life expression. We therefore understand the far-right as a broad movement that incorporates values linked to ultraconservatism, militarism, extreme masculinity, nativism, white supremacy and ultranationalism, but which also has internal inconsistencies and divergences (e.g. concerning climate change, their relation to neoliberalism, or participation in democratic politics). While we acknowledge this broad perspective risks obscuring distinctions between far-right actors, it allows us to capture intricate relationships and interactions among these groups, highlighting their feedback dynamics and avoiding bounded categorizations. Hence, throughout the discussion we engage with actors across the broad spectrum of the far-right, which offers a heterogeneous and multi-situated view that acknowledges its multiple articulations, contradictions, and alliances.

The neighbourhood is itself a disputed concept, with multiple meanings that vary across geographical contexts, and which range from the administrative division of urban territories – in direct relationship with state and institutional powers – to the neighbourhood as the lived space of the community. We prefer to think of the neighbourhood as a socially-produced scale of lived experience and practice with certain distinctive qualities and affects/effects, rather than a discrete, nested scale defined by (and for) the state. This places people and their lives and struggles at the centre of what makes neighbourhoods politically important, even if their boundaries and character are contested by those invested in them. From this perspective, neighbourhood spaces play a central role in the formation and maintenance of urban political and social identities (Varela, 1997), often redrawing geographical imaginaries and framing conflicts at other scales. The neighbourhood allows for spatially distinct practices to contribute to the production of meaning and ontological

security, insofar as it territorialises certain moral orders linked to popular and spatially symbolised phenomena (Limón López, 2023).

Many studies have foregrounded the emancipatory potential of progressive neighbourhood politics in shaping alternative political identities and projects of belonging (e.g. Limón López; 2015; Porras-Sánchez & Donati, 2021). Within the framework of Critical Geography, the local scale has often been theorized as a more progressive and radical space, challenging transnational spatialities of capital (Katz, 2001; Smith, 1992). However, everyday antagonisms spatialized through neighbourhoods have become increasingly prominent in far-right spatial strategies (e.g. Author 1, 2021), a shift which has hitherto received little scholarly attention. This demands challenging the 'local trap' (Purcell, 2006), or the assumption that the local scale is inherently more progressive, by emphasizing its conflicted and non-linear character. The local scale is a site of contestation where progressive politics come into tension with the forces of capital, as well as with authoritarian and antidemocratic politics. In this line of argument, this paper discusses examples and vignettes from local interventions by far-right actors in two Western European contexts: a UK-wide study of far-right citizenship and community voluntarism, and the interventions of the far-right party Vox and other groups in different neighbourhoods in Spain. Rather than a deep investigation into individual case studies, this paper draws common threads across contexts to develop a framework for understanding how neighbourhoods become sites of contention for far-right actors, movements, and parties; thus, empirical breadth is prioritised over depth. We do not address these as 'bounded' or 'static' case-studies as classic urban comparative approaches, but as contexts inviting reflection when put into conversation. According to Hart (2018), this form of 'relational comparison' is useful for understanding the resurgence of far-right politics and racism across different geographies in the neoliberal era, as it highlights shared global processes driving this resurgence and the interconnectedness and divergences shaping far-right's localized strategies. Although these are by no means the only cases, both the UK and Spain are contexts with increasing levels of far-right political activity at the local and neighbourhood scales.

At the time of writing, there have been far-right mobilizations and riots on the streets of up to 40 cities and towns across England, fuelled by racist and anti-immigrant hoaxes about

the murderer of three white girls. In several places, protesters attacked hotels housing asylum seekers; elsewhere, they set up impromptu checkpoints that allowed only white people to pass unimpeded. Only a few months earlier, thousands of people rioted at the Socialist Party headquarters in Ferraz (Madrid) over the negotiation of an amnesty pact concerning the Catalan conflict, leading to several weeks of far-right activity and violence in the streets. Both these UK and Spanish developments show forms of organization 'from below' in which the everyday fascistization of society is dialectically related to the presence of formalised far-right politics: organised far-right activists formed the backbone of both, nominally 'spontaneous', uprisings. Prevailing media and institutional responses to these episodes were also analogous, with hegemonic discourses framing them as 'exceptional' forms of 'violent extremism', even though those taking part in the protests were representative of the heterogeneous spectrum that constitutes the social basis of the far-right. Despite their similarities, this social spectrum reveals significant differences in the examples above and their national contexts. In particular, spatial differences driving processes of urbanization and sub-urbanization within Spanish and British articulations of neoliberalism shape urban narratives and strategies by far-right actors. For example,hile Spain exemplifies far-right parties adopting a neoliberal drift—often engaging in a 'contradictory embrace' (Davidson & Saull, 2017)—class-based appeals to a highly racialised white working class are particularly prominent in British far-right politics. These synergies and discrepancies set a productive ground for our 'relational comparison' of far-right urban geographies and their diverse spatial practices.

Methodologically, the paper puts into conversation different data from research that the two authors have developed in recent years. Author 1's work focuses on neighbourhood-scale political strategies of the Spanish far-right party Vox, including (i) an in-depth analysis of the party's campaigns and public discourses since 2019 in different neighbourhoods and local politics; (ii) a "netnography" (Álvarez-Benavides, 2018) following far-right mobilizations and neighbourhood actions in social networks during this period; and (iii) militant research, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews conducted with neighbours participating in anti-fascist movements and local responses to the far-right between 2019 and 2021 in the Hortaleza and Vallecas neighbourhoods in Madrid. Author 2's material principally draws from a project concerning far-right relationships to charity and voluntarism since 2019, including interviews with charity sector officials, community activists, and an online

qualitative-quantitative survey of right-wing nationalists in the UK (n=406). This paper results from a shared discussion across this heterogeneous material. Data was not specifically produced in the context of a shared project; rather, the aim is to generate new lines of investigation which demand further elaboration and development.

The argument proceeds as follows: The first section builds a conceptual framework to understand the interplay between urban political economy, everyday social and political life, and the far-right, identifying key dynamics that have created pathways for far-right intervention at neighbourhood level. Then, the three remaining sections draw on examples from the UK and Spain to develop and empirically illustrate these ideas, pinpointing three key neighbourhood-scale dynamics that we consider crucial for the study of the resurgent far-right in the Global North: civic life, gentrification and displacement, and infrastructure.

Neighbourhood Political Economies and Far-Right Pathways

In this first section, we build an analytical framework for understanding the role of neighbourhoods in the political ascendancy and appeal of the far-right, rooted in existing research on urban development, conflict, and change. Urban studies already offers a range of insights into opportunity structures and development pathways that are relevant to understanding these neighbourhood dynamics, yet these tools need to be mobilised for a deeper engagement with how political attitudes and action interface with these urban processes. Within this literature, a focus on the interface of urban political economy and everyday social life highlights the neighbourhood scale as warranting closer attention.

Competitive cities and neighbourhood culture (wars)

Urban competitiveness has played a central role in the neoliberal reshaping of cities over the last 30-40 years, during which entrepreneurial strategies and policies have been adopted by cities to attract investment, promote economic growth, and increase competitiveness in a globalised economy (Harvey, 1989; Sgambati and Gargiulo, 2022). Through this, carefully-circumscribed neoliberal interpretations of innovativeness, cosmopolitanism, and outward connectedness have become markers of this competitive urbanism. Economic specialisation caused by the competitiveness agenda has also led to a

narrowing and flexibilisation of labour markets towards prioritising highly-paid, mobile professionals (e.g. Rodríguez-Pose and Lee, 2020), usually at the expense of other, often lower-paid workforces already present. While this tension is recognised in academic literature and policy, solutions tend to be framed around notions of 'social cohesion', a theme we pick up below, which generally side-steps matters of social and distributive justice (Eizaguirre et al., 2012).

Competitive urbanisms have drawn many cities into cycles of aggressive regeneration and place branding to attract the 'right' labour force and present an attractive environment for investment (Masuda and Bookman, 2018). One effect of this has been the earmarking by the local state and real estate capital of specific neighbourhoods for often rapid and intensified processes of gentrification. This either displaces members of longstanding communities who can no longer afford to live in the area, or places them in increasingly economically vulnerable circumstances. Gentrification is more than an economic process, underpinned by symbolic struggles linked to the production of meaning and cultural space (Bourdieu, 2012). This means that both displaced and remaining members of communities affected by gentrification can experience high levels of social isolation and cultural dislocation (e.g. Shaw and Hagemans, 2015; Versey, 2018), which are important pathways towards the far-right, as discussed later.

Hegemonic notions of what makes a city or neighbourhood 'great', or worthy of investment (e.g. McCann, 2004; Masuda and Bookman, 2018), therefore produce certain neighbourhoods and their populations (and sometimes entire regions) as the 'other' to neoliberal urbanism, systemically not part of this vision, even though it requires their labour to operate and maintain its infrastructure and support elite workforces' lifestyles (Coe, 2013; May et al., 2007). This production of "places that don't matter" (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018) can create "neighbourhood melancholia" (Frank, 2021) that can become embedded in peripheralised neighbourhoods' cultures and affects.

Although the far-right is by no means entirely working class, and the urban working class is generally less white than wealthier groups, the far-right has nonetheless deployed narratives of peripheralisation and socioeconomic exclusion effectively in its narratives of place and belonging to establish footholds in (sometimes traditionally left-leaning) urban

neighbourhoods (Author 1, 2021; Förtner et al., 2020; Nettelbladt, 2023). Gentrification of working-class neighbourhoods and the influx of a mobile, cosmopolitan middle class creates vulnerabilities that can feed far-right narratives by an association of mobility with cultural and economic threat, and the depletion or fragmentation of social, material and emotional support networks. In contrast, the far-right attempt to assert a certain cultural habitus linked to (nominally working class) whiteness as an antidote to the cosmopolitan globalism of middle classes and elites, which strengthens the appeal of right-populist impulses. Mullis (2021: 140) demonstrates how areas undergoing gentrification can exhibit greater far-right support due to fear of displacement through eviction or rent increases, and a sense of increased competition for affordable housing in the context of wider-scale immigration trends. It is not helpful, therefore, that well-entrenched classist myths stemming from the liberal centre repeatedly position the far-right as somehow a natural outgrowth of white working-class stupidity (Bangstad et al., 2019; Mondon and Winter, 2019); a problem not of sociospatial injustices but of assumed pathological flaws inherent in the specific combination of whiteness and working-class subjectivity.

The unevenness of 'hype' exhibited across urban areas and city-regions in competitive neoliberal urbanism creates pockets of affluence that are often pushed closely up against communities devalued in this framing. This places greater emphasis on housing and other infrastructures of neighbourhood life. Housing market levels and change have been shown to influence the level of support for populism (Adler and Ansell, 2019), as neighbourhoods with low or declining real estate value are airbrushed out of the master narrative of their city and their residents become more prepared to take political risks. That these places become wary of outsiders – both incoming professionals and migrants from elsewhere – is unsurprising. This process is not inevitable, however, and dispossession is not necessarily an indicator of far-right sympathies (Crulli and Pinto, 2023), but when combined with other factors discussed throughout this paper, it can be.

Social cohesion: neighbourliness, responsibility, inequality

The so-called 'neighbourhood effect' has endured as a source of interest in the study and explanation of political attitudes, identifying how long-term political cultures emerge

through everyday localised interactions that are observable ethnographically (e.g. Waquant and Wilson, 1989) and/or measurable electorally (e.g. Jonston et al., 2004). Crucially, these contextual effects exceed or contradict what could be explained by structural factors alone. While political subjectivities, especially on the far-right, have become more mediated by global online networks, their development continues to operate in a close relationship with place (e.g. Luger, 2024). This suggests a persistence of political traditions in certain places over time, even in contexts where a prolonged (right-)populist surge nationally has profoundly disrupted voting patterns (e.g. Crulli and Pinto, 2023).

Populism-inflected policy agendas have likewise increasingly turned towards protectionism and localisation in response to the effects of global mobilities of capital and labour. For example, in the UK, following real and perceived failures in New Labour's multiculturalism agenda (Kim, 2011), alongside a catastrophic financial crash, successive Conservative-led governments from 2010 to 2024 enacted two interlinked processes. First, they placed integration into a narrow (and implicitly white, English) interpretation of Britishness as a central principle of migration management, alongside a so-called 'hostile environment' designed to undermine pull factors for those considering migration to the UK (e.g. Burrell and Schweyher, 2019). Second, they localised governance and public fiscal responsibilities to councils, subcontracted third sector providers, and community and voluntary sector organisations (Williams et al., 2014). These are part of wider neoliberal and austere 'responsibilisation' agendas which place responsibility for individual and collective wellbeing on the shoulders of a very unevenly resourced and often poorly equipped local citizenry (Dagdeviren et al., 2019). Not only have austerity's dynamics had evidently negative outcomes for many – especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, specifically at the neighbourhood scale (Hastings et al., 2017) – but responsibilisation and localisation have also allowed central government to evade responsibility. As we discuss later, these rescaled landscapes of governance and the re-centring of local civil society have also created opportunities for far-right actors to embed themselves in neighbourhood spaces of civic life.

Studies such as Mendez et al. (2021) suggest that feelings and activities associated with social cohesion have also become markers of privilege, affording more affluent groups, who are less likely to undertake precarious employment and more able to invest time and

resources into social activities, greater opportunities for creating relatively healthy and inclusive neighbourhoods. While poorer groups are just as neighbourly as wealthier ones, their attachment to place can be lower (Bailey et al., 2012). In turn, the restructuring of urban life under austerity has tended to reduce neighbourhood capacity to respond inclusively to intensified atmospheres of scarcity and social fragmentation, especially in working class areas that supposedly 'don't matter'. Urban planning models in the neoliberal city have a strong tendency towards individualization, the creation of urban borders, and the elimination or privatisation of public space, accentuating other processes of isolation, marginalization, and disconnection in communities. The spread of the 'block model' and the expansion of fragmentary urbanism breaks with the idea of the neighbourhood as a shared identity and everyday practice that allows the formation of diverse solidarities and alternative politics of belonging (Author 1, 2021), and often (re)produces classed and racialized segregation patterns. Moreover, self-employment and precarious work have grown dramatically in many European countries since the 2008 financial crisis (Gutiérrez-Barbarrusa, 2017), further fragmenting and isolating individuals from others working and living near them and undermining collective bonds and solidarities across difference (e.g. labour unions).

There is growing evidence that loneliness and social isolation – themselves among the outcomes of declining and unevenly-distributed neighbourhood-level social resources – are strong indicators of both an erosion of trust in community per se (Kearns et al., 2015) and greater tendency towards far-right views (e.g. Bolet, 2021). The latter has been confirmed among social psychologists, who have regularly found isolation to be a central factor in the individual lives of those holding far-right views (Kinnvall and Capelos, 2021; Vergani et al., 2020). However, such psychological studies are focused principally on the most extreme end of the right-wing political spectrum, and often imprecisely conflate religious fundamentalism and fascism. Importantly, high levels of local-scale cohesion can actually lead to better electoral outcomes for far-right parties in certain circumstances (e.g. Stockemer and Lamontagne, 2014), and individuals who are well-embedded in civil society are just as likely to vote for far-right parties as others (Rydgren, 2009). As such, there are conflicting accounts of the role of local social cohesion in far-right attitudes, especially where far-right tendencies have become embedded in communities with well-developed civic life.

In the remaining sections, drawing on cases from research in Spain and the UK, we illustrate three distinct but intersecting dimensions of urban neighbourhoods that develop a richer understanding of the emergence and solidification of the far-right in cities of the Global North. Following this, we identify key themes and modes of engagement with the far-right in urban studies that take the neighbourhood seriously. In doing so, we point towards an antifascist lens on the discipline in this period of growing urban conflict.

The Neighbourhood as a Civic Space

This section engages with the neighbourhood as a key space of civic life and political engagement that is being increasingly exploited by far-right actors, often driving their success at other scales. The 'neighbourhood effect' has resulted in a significant upsurge in the importance of neighbourhoods as both political subjects themselves as well as political spaces. In contrast to the neoliberal city shaped by individualist and post-democratic logics (Rancière, 1999; Karaliotas, 2021), neighbourhoods have become spaces of participation and collective claims-making, central to expressions of citizenship and civic virtue (Castells, 1987; Limón López, 2023). While there are many examples of progressive neighbourhood-based civil society movements (e.g. García-Lamarca, 2017; Limón López 2015), the re-centring of the civic realm in austere neoliberal narratives has also created opportunities for far-right actors to embed themselves in neighbourhood spaces of civic life. For instance, neighborhoods have played a significant role in youth far-right political socialization and civic engagement in cases like Hogar Social Madrid, which combined grassroots initiatives with a social program to support Spanish families after the 2008 financial crisis, drawing inspiration from Italy's 'Occupazione No Conformi' and groups like Casa Pound. Through empirical examples, we put forward a threefold argument: (i) neighbourhood-based mobilisations are crucial for understanding the significant growth of far-right grassroots movements in the 10-15 years; (ii) the strategies and tactics deployed by the far-right in neighbourhood spaces mark a shift from 'violent' to 'civic' territorialities, often reappropriating forms of protest that are characteristic of progressive social movements, and which adapt to the specific circumstances of the neighbourhoods where they are staged; and (iii) the strategy of the far-right is closely linked to the re-signification of the everyday and the 'cultural war' over key left-wing concepts

related to everyday community and social reproduction. All of this, we argue, turns the neighbourhood into a civic space of far-right protest and citizenship claims-making that has a direct impact on the processes of forming political identities and meanings associated with place.

Although place-based strategies are far from new (Author 2, 2022; Pinto and Pries, 2019), far-right forms of protest, direct action, and community intervention have been characterised by a shift from their eminently violent forms of territorial control during the second half of the Twentieth century to seemingly 'civic' political engagement, where local and neighbourhood scales become central spaces for political mobilization and everyday political socialization. Often, the electoral success of the far-right and the normalization of their claims has been preceded by a reorganization of these groups at a quotidian level and their exploitation of situated inequalities. This shift towards civic activism has arguably been rooted in an intellectual tradition dating back to the 1970s, in which figures in the French *nouvelle droite* developed what can be broadly termed a 'right-wing Gramscianism' to promote cultural and civic expressions of identity that were conducive to far-right agendas (Casadio, 2014). Spatially, this 'right-wing Gramscianism' has often materialized in the reconfiguration of scalar hierarchies and the creation of 'common senses' through the intervention in people's everyday realities. While this has had decidedly varied expressions and levels of success, one dimension of this intellectual lineage in the last 10-15 years has been a revaluing of civic life as a site of far-right action in multiple European states (e.g. Greskovits, 2020; Kim, 2023; Rhodes, 2009). Although it is not easy to ascertain whether this shift is always an honest attempt at grassroots community development, rather than a cynical rebranding exercise, this strategy of 'facelifting' seeks to renew its aesthetics, symbols, and actions through a shift from a strictly delineated binary of violence versus electoralism, to models of exemplary citizenship, while also using local civic spaces and symbols as sites of struggle over meaning.

In the UK, civic actions and attitudes have become a central aspect of far-right activities over the last 5 years. A 2021-22 survey (n=406) conducted by Author 2 identified that the level of volunteering in local community projects is broadly comparable between the far-right (0.66 instances of volunteering per respondent) and their centre-right counterparts

(0.50 instances of volunteering per respondent). Although there is a significant margin of error in these figures, this indicates that far-right activists are often active and engaged citizens, supporting mainstream community initiatives, from animal sanctuaries and hospices to schools and churches. Far-right activists have also taken aim at charities – such as the UK's largest military veterans' charity, the Royal British Legion (RBL) – for actions that allegedly undermine the civic values of British identity. RBL headquarters have shifted towards a representation of veterans as ethnically and sexually diverse, leading to important local spaces of civic significance – namely, RBL's 460 community-based veterans' clubs, which often act as important social infrastructure for communities – becoming sites of contestation over what it means to be authentically British. In another case, in the aftermath of Black Lives Matter protests and the toppling of Bristol's statue of slave trader and philanthropist Edward Colston in 2020, far-right so-called "statue defenders" have periodically mobilised vigilante groups to defend controversial symbols of civic heritage against anti-racist and anti-fascist demonstrations. This ultraconservative vigilantism represents the defence of a civic order that has allegedly been 'lost' or is under threat, enfolded with a melancholic nostalgia for the stability and certainty of (white) neighbourhood life in times gone by. Far-right and hard-right survey respondents explained how nationalism drove their civic values, such as "[d]efending the country's past and not trying to dismantle it" and "putting the needs of your country, your soil, your people first". Ultimately, "the only future where we can [be] safe, strong and free is through the unabashed support of the British nation."

The electoral strategy of Vox in Spain links closely to these civic sentiments. Very often, Vox has sought to build its success partly through place-based mobilizations and intervening in neighbourhood and local movements. One example is the creation of a satellite association called 'Mi Barrio Seguro' (My Safe Neighbourhood) in Catalonia, which took part in demonstrations against insecurity linked to migration and crime, 'incivism' and the squatting of buildings, aiming to make political demands across different neighbourhoods: from participating in marches against crime in Raval, to mobilizing against a reception centre for migrant minors in Nou Barris, or demanding the closure of a drug treatment centre in la Mina. Advancing some of the arguments from the following section, these actions are also illustrative of the agency of far-right actors in driving processes of neighbourhood cleansing and gentrification.

The centrality of the neighbourhood was particularly salient in Vox's campaign for the 2023 municipal and regional elections, under the rubric "Take care of what belongs to you: the Nation begins in your neighborhood"[1] (Author 1 and Medina García, 2024). In words of Vox's former General Secretary, Javier Ortega Smith, "local politics are the basis, the genesis of the political community that forms the Nation". This campaign drew on the construction and exploitation of important spatial antagonisms. The threefold articulation of the family, the neighbourhood and the nation as primary, original, and natural elements of the political community was counterposed against 'globalism' and the 'autonomous communities' – the constitutional name given to the different administrative regions conforming the Spanish state – as artificial and corrupt entities. Rooted in the persistence of many elements of National Catholicism from the ideology of Franco's dictatorship, this articulation sought to resolve the territorial conflicts historically central to Spanish politics by situating the neighbourhood as the natural intermediary space between the family and the nation. Furthermore, the meaning of 'taking care of your neighbourhood' varied across different geographical contexts. Neighbourhood-based interventions activated different repertories and discursive elements depending on the local situation: while immigration, unemployment, and lack of access to social housing have been key nodes of Vox's discourses in working-class urban neighbourhoods like Tetuán or Hortaleza (Madrid), their mobilizations in Barrio de Salamanca – the neighbourhood with the highest per capita income in Madrid – have focused rather on the threat of national rupture posed by Catalan independence, the advance of what they call 'gender ideology', or the 'problem' of squatting. In this way, Domann & Nuissl (2022: 22) have analysed how "new right-wing narratives are framed for local political issues and how these frames coincide with local interpretation schemes". They contend – and we agree – that new right-wing agitation at the local level is not just a discursive process of downscaling of narratives operating on a national level. Rather, it is a process of interaction in specific ways with local schemes of interpretation, often linked to articulations of class, race, or gender. In this regard, the few existing studies on far-right local mobilizations privilege working-class areas, forgetting that the far-right is also organized in wealthy neighbourhoods, particularly in the case of parties like Vox that share links to the alt-right or neoliberal far-right and present

[1] Own translation from Spanish 'Cuida lo tuyo: la patria empieza en tu barrio'

a clear neoliberal drift. Vox's spatial strategy allowed the party to mobilize support across radically different geographical and demographic contexts.

This civic neighbourhood-focused strategy of the far-right is strongly linked to the resignification of the everyday, the local, and popular culture. In their electoral campaigns, Vox re-appropriates and re-signifies key left-wing concepts such as 'barrio' (neighbourhood) and care, both of which are central to left-wing politics and organising, and which have been placed on the political agenda by strong feminist and progressive movements over recent decades. The far-right is thereby waging a "cultural war" in Gramscian terms over the meaning of the community and key questions of social reproduction. While tradition and homogeneity are both presented as characteristics of the authentic local community against inclusive and progressive interpretations of 'barrio', 'care' symbolizes the family and a narrowly-defined Christian morality that intersects with an overt anti-feminist agenda. Under this perspective, everyday spaces gain fundamental relevance as primary sites for the production of meaning and the reproduction of cultural practices. Indeed, the far-right turn towards the local community and the appeal to "take care of what belongs to you" has a clear identitarian dimension that aims to hegemonize an exclusionary notion of local traditions, the authenticity of place, and its connections with the national identity, which must be defended against the threats posed by otherness, immigration, and globalism (Author 1 and Medina García, 2024).

Overall, this section has outlined different ways in which the neighbourhood has become a space for far-right mobilizations and struggles over the meaning of authentic civic life. This is not unique to Western Europe, and there are similar examples elsewhere, such as the 'Civic Circles' movement in Hungary, where civic and cultural organisations became localised social foundations for populist-right electoral success (Greskovits, 2020). Amidst state retreat under austerity, far-right activists have also taken opportunities to embed themselves into neighbourhood civil society as individual 'good citizens', with and without the involvement of political parties. The remaining sections draw attention to material processes and spaces that become enfolded into, and expressions of, this civic imaginary.

Displacement and Loss

This section traces the links between processes of urban entrepreneurialism in the neoliberalization of cities and the growth of support for the far-right, exploring how some of its driving factors are closely linked to the material and symbolic transformation of neighbourhood spaces. Engaging with the debates raised in the theoretical section, we put forward evidence supporting the following arguments: (i) Gentrification, neoliberal urban planning and austerity urbanism have contributed to the transformation of neighbourhoods into spaces of uncertainty, isolation and insecurity; (ii) these feelings have been exploited by the far-right in a cultural battle for authenticity in the community, framed in nativist and exclusionary terms; and (iii) although most of the literature focuses on working-class areas and residents, gentrification and urban entrepreneurialism has also been fostered by a neoliberal far-right.

Through interlinked processes of privatisation of public spaces and housing, gentrification, touristification, the erosion of popular traditions and cultures, and securitisation, urban entrepreneurialism has contributed heavily to the exacerbation of social inequalities, the displacement of marginalised communities, and substantial changes in the cultural and social fabric of neighbourhoods (see Smith, 2005; Albet & Benach, 2017). These conditions make the neighbourhood a fertile ground for the spread of exclusionary ideas by the far-right. According to Mullis (2021), gentrification, post-democratic urban policies, and austerity urbanism are three key interrelated processes that shape urban contexts where the far-right proliferates. Exacerbated by housing financialization and global migration in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 so-called 'refugee crisis', these processes constitute urban landscapes of exclusion and uncertainty mobilized by the far-right, articulated with racist and parochialist imaginaries.

The increasing centrality that housing matters are gaining in the agenda and discourses of the global far-right is a direct response to previous transformations. In the UK, access to housing – especially for military veterans and 'deserving natives' – has long been a mainstay of far-right narratives. Recent protests against the housing of asylum seekers in empty hotels and decommissioned barracks has, as we discuss below, been linked to neighbourhood-based campaigns driven by nativist appeals to house 'our own' first. Within this, the figure of the homeless veteran has loomed large. In one example of many, a banner

at one such protest in 2021 proclaimed, “Soldiers on the streets – immigrants in hotels?” to articulate a hierarchy of deservedness and sense of injustice. This can have popular resonance, even though very few *British* veterans are homeless; as one interviewee from a housing charity noted, “there are veterans in the [UK’s homeless population], but they're from the Red Army!” The figure of the homeless veteran, therefore, is more a discursive technique than a statement of fact. Nonetheless, some of the strongest electoral campaigns by UK far-right parties have been concerned with housing in East London in the 1980s and ‘90s, as housing market liberalisation and major redevelopments swept huge numbers of renters into precarious housing situations. The British National Party’s (BNP) first local politician was elected in 1993 in London’s Millwall ward, close to the major redevelopment of Canary Wharf, London’s new financial district built in 1991 on former industrial and working-class housing areas. Here, a sense of invasion from both global elites and incoming waves of South Asian migrants created a perfect storm for capitalising on widespread feelings of loss and decline at a granular, neighbourhood scale.

Similar dynamics operate in the present, where, compared to the centre-right, Author 2’s survey highlights the more urban character of the British far-right, as well as a higher likelihood of them living in rented housing. This suggests they may be more exposed to the effects of both neoliberal urban competitiveness and displacement through gentrification. In an interview, a policy officer at a national housing charity noted that “we see it all the time. Whenever there's a… BNP manifesto or [those] kind of things at election time, [it] always covers homelessness.” This same organisation found a quote from one of its reports being used to support the far-right United Kingdom Independence Party’s (UKIP) housing policy and was regularly contacted by other far-right organisations for similar purposes. Community activist interviewees in London’s peripheries noted how local strategic planning policy earmarked their neighbourhoods for gentrification, generating much the kinds of anxieties that far-right actors prey on. One mentioned, “there seemed to be a mindset amongst the great and the good that ‘we will change the way [this neighbourhood] is’” to become more attractive to an affluent labour force. A community-led regeneration scheme to challenge this social cleansing in the same neighbourhood quickly gained attention from local UKIP activists, which required swift rebuttal: “we suddenly thought ‘oh fuck, if UKIP want to get involved in this, we’re saying something wrong here’”. The scheme’s initial emphasis on earmarking

places for ‘local people’ was too exposed to far-right nativist sentiments, leading to a more careful and inclusive revision of how ‘local people’ were defined in the initiative.

Linking housing scarcity to migration is a recurring theme in how the far-right responds to gentrification. In the preamble of the 2023 general elections, Vox filled working-class Madrilenian neighbourhoods with banners showing a picture of a social housing allocation document with Arabic names on it, claiming that “Madrid residents spend 57% of their salaries on rent, which is constantly rising, but the subsidies always go to the same people”. In a context of competition for access to affordable housing, Vox claimed that migrants were taking the available subsidies before entitled citizens who should have more rights following a nativist ‘Spanish go first’ rationale. This discourse, designed to appeal to the Spanish white working classes in suburban areas, exploits the narrative of being ‘left behind’ by inclusive multicultural social agendas. However, Vox’s claims over public housing contradict their electoral program, which defends the interests of the property-owning class and proposes the liberalization of land and deregulation of the rental market as solutions to the housing crisis. For instance, the party has spoken out against the 2022 draft bill on the ‘Right to Housing’, arguing that it contains interventionist measures in the rental market, such as price controls (Cristina Esteban, Vox spokesperson on the Transport, Mobility, and Urban Agenda Committee, April 2023). Indeed, far-right narratives around housing in many places have long been inflected with contradictory appeals to defend and expand social housing for ‘native’ use, pursual of entrepreneurial petit bourgeois property speculation, and a denigration of an allegedly undeserving white underclass characterised by criminality, welfare dependency and underemployment. These politics evidence how despite the apparent ideological contradictions between neoliberalism and far-right ideologies, these political movements often converge in practice, mutually reinforcing the conditions for each other's advancement (Davidson & Saull, 2017; Dardot & Laval, 2019). This convergence is crystallized in the far-right's 'neoliberal drift' and the neoliberal 'authoritarian shift' globally – a trend that, while gaining prominence with the rise of Trumpism, the American alt-right, Bolsonaro, Milei, or Vox – has roots dating back to the very inception of neoliberalism. In Chile, during the Pinochet regime (1973–1990), right-wing authoritarian governance strategically employed neoliberal policies to reshape urban systems, consolidate control over resources, and enable private accumulation (Navarrete Hernández, 2019). These policies concentrated wealth and

urban resources in private hands, aligning with the goals of the right-wing authoritarian state, which used urban policy as a tool for social control and 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 1989).

Although far-right discourses rarely target gentrification directly, its consequences provide fertile ground for the spread of far-right attitudes and sentiments. Vox's neighbourhood action and populist propaganda has also focused on the protection of the neighbourhood's local businesses against the big commercial surfaces and large supermarkets. As part of their 'Take care of what belongs to you' campaign, Vox's candidates walked around working-class areas in Madrid, stopping in traditional markets, pubs, and other local shops, spatializing in them the idea of what an authentic neighbourhood should be, and appealing to sentiments of 'community loss' and 'cultural backlash'. Likewise, the UK's neofascist Patriotic Alternative and Homeland parties routinely target similar public spaces in provincial cities and towns for publicity stunts and outreach. Anticipating the argument developed in the next section, these social infrastructures and urban landscapes anchor in place both a sense of common identity and shared local space of mutual encounter. In a study relating the closure of British community pubs to patterns of support for UKIP, Bolet (2021) links the disappearance of community pubs to isolation, social degradation, and increased support for the far-right "by contributing to loss of community and cultural identity" (Bolet, 2021: 1656). The shrinking pool of popular spaces of encounter has thus disrupted community ties upon which neighbourhood-based forms of affect and identification are articulated. In Spain, the touristification of urban housing and the advance of platforms like Airbnb has been another way in which social cleansing, cultural loss and 'cosmopolitanism' become intertwined through gentrification processes in specific neighbourhoods. Within its housing programme, Vox advocates for a homogenization of tourism regulation to preserve the 'traditional hotel model' and achieve a degree of harmony between tourists and neighbours so 'neighbourhoods don't become a theme park' (2023 Vox General Elections Programme).

Vox's nativist discourses have also been articulated with gentrification through mobilizing ideas of insecurity and crime in connection to the 'migrant other'. Mullis (2021) recounts how gentrification's relation to far-right support varies across neighbourhoods. Feelings of being 'left behind' – which are fertile ground for the far-right when they meet

racialized, classed, and gendered patterns of prejudice – can be triggered by the pressure of displacement experienced by working-class residents in neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, or by fears of an influx of less privileged people being pushed out of other areas of the city. Crime and insecurity are narratives that have often been successfully mobilised by the far-right in such contexts, promoting cultures of control and policing that particularly target 'undesired' migrant communities. Under the slogan 'Protect Madrid, Vote Safe', Vox urged working-class residents in Madrid to vote against Latin gangs, drugs, and insecurity as the main problems in their neighbourhoods. Üblacker and Lukas (2023: 1) have addressed this relationship between gentrification and policing, evidencing how "local control habitus shapes neighbourhoods while being shaped through neighbourhood-specific demands for social control" that originate both "from the supply (business people) and the demand (new residents)". Here, the role of the state in promoting gentrification is salient, not only through the deregulation of real estate markets but also through a turn to authoritarian policing as a path towards fascisticization (Poulantzas, 1974). In gentrified neighbourhoods like Lavapiés in Madrid – once the city's activist and migrant hub – police presence has become normalised, often demanded by incoming residents and businesses who complain of drug problems and insecurity in the area. These narratives have been exploited by the far-right, with Rocío Monasterio (Head of Vox Madrid) visiting the neighbourhood on various occasions.

Most studies on urban aspects of far-right politics focus on far-right support patterns in working-class areas, overlooking far-right neoliberals and the 'alt-right' as agents of urban gentrification. This omission is significant in nations like the US, Latin America, and Spain, where the articulation of authoritarianism and neoliberalism is historically linked to big business and, in the Americas, founding national myths of free enterprise. In Spain, ties between gentrification, the affluent classes, and the far-right are robust due to Francoist legacies and the interplay of real estate ownership, rent economies, and social status (Gonick, 2020). Understanding the nature of the gentrifying subject, both as an investor and consumer, is imperative. Contrary to the UK, which has among the strictest anti-squatting laws in Europe, in Spain, one of the discursive axes of the far-right in recent years has been the question of squatting, enfolded with nativist discourses on the right to private property and the right to housing. Indeed, in Author 1's research, squatting has been the main smokescreen concealing a grand alliance between big property capital and the far-right. As a result of the wave of

evictions amidst the 2008 crisis and the state-driven sale of these properties to global corporate landlords and speculators, squatting became a strategy of leftist movements like the PAH (Platform of Affected by Mortgage) as a way of reclaiming the right to a home (García-Lamarca, 2017).

Facing such resistances and other housing struggles, the advance of gentrification and the purchase of entire neighbourhoods by investment funds has been facilitated by the emergence of groups such as *Desokupa*, directly linked to the far-right. *Desokupa* is a business founded in 2016 that advertises itself as 'the best eviction company to quickly remove problematic tenants from a property'. Amongst its main clients are investment funds like Mk Premium, Univness or Korsal Project, as well as companies and major shareholders in the real estate sector. Led by overtly neo-Nazi militants – some of them with political murder convictions such as Ernesto Navas or members of Stop Islamization Europe like Jivko Ivanov – *Desokupa* embodies the privatization and paramilitarisation of eviction. They have closely collaborated with home insurance companies and police, offering their services free of charge to advise the local police, and have led campaigns promoting reactionary policies on housing and forced evictions that are making dangerous progress on the legal and policy fronts. Echoed by the media, *Desokupa* has played a key role in the mainstreaming of extreme right-wing alarmist views on the housing problem, through a discourse that defends the interests of the propertied class, cloaked in words that claim to support the efforts of the middle and working classes to pay their rents against the classed and racialized 'squatting scum'. Through these discourses, far-right actors have managed to shift the meaning of housing in the political agenda and public opinion, now seen more through the lens of property rights rather than as a fundamental right. Increasingly, and in direct contrast to UK far-right discourse, the gentrifying subject is no longer the cultural middle class that embraced multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, but an affluent class that has adopted some of the discourses of the far-right and can afford to live, buy, and let in upgraded and renovated neighbourhoods and newly constructed 'gated communities', and refuse all signs of multiculturality. If we relate *Desokupa* with other Spanish far-right organizations such as *Hogar Social* – as well as elsewhere, such as Italy's Casa Pound – which use squatting tactics to support national homeless families, there are clear contradictions in the ways the far-right operates regarding class matters. Indeed, housing has been a ground where the far-right has exploited both

working-class anxieties and upper classes' interests and property rights, showing their ambivalent and opportunistic character. Yet, what is common to all these strategies is the clear distinction between the 'worthy' and 'unworthy' of the right to housing, constituted through discourses of national pride and racial hierarchies.

Infrastructures as sites of struggle

Infrastructure, as an "architecture of circulation" (Larkin, 2013) facilitates the distribution of not only material and social resources, but also emotions, beliefs, and desires (e.g. Lindberg, 2022). In this sense, of being both "things and relations between things" (Ibid: 329), infrastructure is a point of convergence between the many overlapping systems that constitute urban life, structure its inclusions and exclusions, and make places un/liveable. Indeed, infrastructure is also one way in which urban neighbourhoods come into being. Scholars have therefore paid growing attention to the politics embedded in it, especially in urban contexts (e.g. Lemanski, 2019). Infrastructure is also a focal point of struggle over neighbourhood-scale resources, their meaning, and access to them. In the starkest terms, more 'hard' infrastructures of road and rail provision in neighbourhoods can impede opportunities for meaningful encounters between different resident groups (Wickes et al 2019). In a broader sense, the meaning and value of infrastructure can form a foundational element of neighbourhood identity and sense of place. Amidst a far-right revaluing of the local, and austerity's 'production of scarcity' (Tellmann, 2015), neighbourhood infrastructures become obvious points of attack.

The work of infrastructure maintenance and repair is often largely invisible, and can become politicised when disrupted. In one example, Kenny Smith, the leader of the British neofascist party Homeland, has claimed that when serving as a community councillor, he diverted funds earmarked for a multicultural festival into renovating a local park. It is unclear where, when, or if this incident took place, but it highlights the political significance of the repair and maintenance of social infrastructures supposedly left to rot by cosmopolitan liberals and leftists: he argues that "[e]very one of us [neo-fascists] has the ability to make a positive impact in our neighbourhood" (Smith, 2023: n.p.). Similarly, one of the most successful electoral periods for the BNP, the early 2000s, was partly brought into being by

local activism focused on a range of mundane infrastructural dimensions of neighbourhood life. This campaign, labelled “Helping Hands”, focused on specific neighbourhoods in cities and towns identified by the party as fertile recruiting grounds, included street cleanliness activities such as litter-picking and graffiti removal, alongside visible financial support for valued social infrastructures such as gardens and sport clubs (Rhodes, 2009). This focus on the preservation of community infrastructures is shared by Vox’s “Take care of what belongs to you” campaign, where caring included, for example, “protecting our parks from migrant gangs” (Jorge Buxadé, Vice President of Political Action of Vox, February 2023).

Amidst the increased internalisation of border regimes, shifting from the borders themselves to the spaces of everyday life within them, considerable UK far-right attention has been paid to localised infrastructures of border and migration management. The UK government’s repurposing of hotels and decommissioned military barracks for housing asylum seekers has become a central point of far-right activism, both as symbols of national decline and as visible concentrations of undocumented migrants. The position of these buildings, often located in peripheralised urban and periurban neighbourhoods, has made locally-specific contentions more common, and has given far-right groups greater exposure in local communities. For example, in February 2023, after discovering that the Suites Hotel in the deprived ward of Knowsley, Merseyside, was being used to house asylum-seekers, far-right agitators from the group Britain First successfully engaged with locals. The circulation of an unsubstantiated video allegedly showing one of the hotel’s male residents inappropriately propositioning a 15 year-old girl, led to at least 200 (mostly local) people protesting nearby, leading to significant clashes with police (Merrifield, 2023). Around this time, several asylum seekers housed at the hotel were also physically attacked (Jackson, 2023). The narrative of protecting white women and girls against sexually predacious migrant men is a common trope of far-right and anti-immigrant discourses (e.g. Blee, 2020; Fangen and Lichtenberg, 2021), and this narrative was deployed extensively in this neighbourhood and others with similar migration facilities.

Elsewhere, the Stradley Park Hotel in Llanelli, South Wales, was subject to a far more sustained, pre-emptive, and community-focused campaign against government proposals for housing 240 asylum seekers. Early campaigns against the proposals, which were already

tinged with problematic NIMBYism, emphasised the loss of 94 jobs in the post-industrial town and concerns about the added strain on already-stretched and underfunded local infrastructures (e.g. healthcare, public transport). However, far-right activists were able to incorporate supposed safety risks of migrant men into the campaign, as an expression of broader threats posed by immigration *per se* (Crosby Medlicott, 2023). The locally specific economic conditions in such campaigns are distinctive: both Knowsley and Llanelli are provincialised working-class towns that suffered heavily at the hands of 1980s neoliberalisation and more recent austerity policies. In this sense, the far-right used pre-existing concern about disrepair and underfunding of local infrastructures as a conduit to pursue anti-immigrant narratives about strengthening national-scale border infrastructures.

Although many far-right activists from elsewhere visited and contributed to the campaign in Llanelli, including a large biker gang that ram-raided the hotel compound, they were successful in supporting the development of a stable local campaign group. This group established a protest camp outside the hotel, organised demonstrations and a petition, and arguably contributed to the announcement in late 2023 that the government were phasing out the use of hotels and barracks in this way. This establishment of a local support base and leadership was hailed across the right-wing spectrum as a success story, and as inspiration for other protest camps and community campaigns against asylum seeker accommodation across the UK. A range of electoral and extraparliamentary far-right parties – including Patriotic Alternative, Homeland, and UKIP – have also seen the benefits of Llanelli-style community campaigning for the articulation of their ideologies and have been actively targeting and organising among other local campaigns in the same vein. Although this far-right reorientation towards (hyper)local and neighbourhood infrastructures is not always well received by other campaigners (e.g. Duggan, 2023), there is a clear scalar trajectory towards local campaigning that often centres around the pressures placed on scarce and declining social and material infrastructures in specific neighbourhoods and locales.

The articulation of far-right politics around local infrastructures of support for migrants has also been a constant in Spain, especially around the centres for the reception of MENAS (migrant minors). These have been spaces of mobilization by Vox and other far-right actors in several neighbourhoods across the country as spaces in which the degradation of

the neighbourhood and the 'waste' of public funds are discursively materialised. Only weeks after the Spanish national elections in November 2019 – when Vox became the third national political force – an explosive device was found at the door of one of these centres in Hortaleza (Madrid), where Vox had been orchestrating numerous demonstrations prior to the elections.

Another significant emerging example of far-right interest in infrastructure is the acceleration of green infrastructure and low-carbon initiatives, such as so-called 15-minute neighbourhoods. According to Rodríguez-Pose and Bartalucci (2023), at a regional scale, there is evidence that suggests economic vulnerability to green transition shows a risk of uniting climate-scepticism with broader 'left behind' narratives of place. We contend that this is not only a matter for regions but also localities, placing green infrastructure – especially, but not only, transport – at the centre of emerging socio-ecological conflicts at the neighbourhood scale. Green urban projects are in many respects a new front line in urban branding and competitiveness, where middle class and elite lifestyles intersect with authoritarian state securitisation to produce sanitised recreational and employment environments for urban dwellers who are financially capable of, and culturally comfortable with, accessing such spaces (Goossens et al., 2020; Krarup, 2022). Thus, in a context where city branding is a project of promoting certain kinds of neighbourhoods to certain kinds of people, the embedding of green urbanism into competitive urban governance has become an explicit site of contention for the far right.

In the UK, in the aftermath of COVID-19 and various adaptations to public spaces resulting from government regulations on mobility and physical proximity, many local governments made temporary changes such as road closures and cycle lanes permanent, or used them to drive forward green urban planning agendas, such as pedestrianisation. However, following the development of political networks and alliances between far-right, climate-denialist and COVID-sceptic movements (e.g. Curley et al., 2022; Baker, 2022), green adaptations have been met with accusations of conspiracy to create increasingly authoritarian cityscapes within a New World Order (Saltmarsh, 2023). Governments' failure, or refusal, to invest properly in affordable and reliable public and active transport systems in advance of congestion charges or pedestrianisation initiatives has therefore led to backlash among a large cross-section of the population. This has opened doors for the far-right to

resurrect old COVID-sceptic networks and engage with broader pro-car and climate-denial groups.

The architectures of British COVID-sceptic networks such as White Rose,[2] which included significant far-right and white supremacist elements and drew their tactics from explicitly far-right networks (e.g. the Hundred Handers), have paved the way for place-based mobilisations against a range of green urban measures. Poor planning and consultation in city governments has aggravated wider populations and brought them into contact with these groups, alongside very low levels of investment in public transport alternatives to car use. For example, Oxford saw major mobilisations against a badly executed car use reduction initiative, bringing disparate groups and individuals with far-right connections into contact with nominally apolitical residents concerned about the impact of the scheme on their daily lives. One key conduit between mainstream and far-right tendencies was Not Our Future (NOF), a group boasting minor celebrities and right-wing commentators among its supporter base, which provided a 'respectable' political space for far-right activists to develop their networks. Thousands-strong marches through Oxford were orchestrated as a result. NOF claims that 400 volunteers distributed thousands of leaflets, and subsequently in other areas affected by green urbanisation projects across the UK; their emphasis on building support at the neighbourhood scale, while also networking nationally across similarly affected sites. Connecting UN Sustainable Development Goals to "wav[ing] goodbye to impromptu pub lunches… or spontaneous surprise visits to a sick friend" (Not Our Future, 2023: n.p.), their discourse politicises neighbourhood and city-scale transport infrastructure by using it as a bridge between shadowy global institutions and the joys of everyday urban life supposedly under threat.

Infrastructure forms a point of contention that highlights the emotional and sensory resonances, as well as material resources, that makes neighbourhoods important to people's lives, especially under the yoke of austerity urbanism's production of scarcity. Decay, closure, or malfunctioning of these crucial lifelines thereby become scars in the austere urban landscape and re-form residents' relationships to their neighbourhoods and neighbours alike in ways that the far-right have begun to capitalise on. In this context, not only are

[2] This name is, ironically, a reference to an underground antifascist group that operated in Nazi Germany.

infrastructures in public space becoming increasingly visible sites of struggle but also privatised spaces such as gyms, churches, and pubs have become increasingly significant hyperlocal social infrastructures where social and political life is mediated and political subjectivities are developed (e.g. Bolet, 2021; Luger, 2022). The classed and racialised effects of this retreat into commercial and private spaces form relations of implicit or explicit exclusion by the production of a particular habitus that conveniently privileges middle class and white individuals.

Conclusions: from far-right neighbourhoods to antifascist urban studies

This paper has placed the neighbourhood at the centre of the studyof the far-right in the Global North, foregrounding three key neighbourhood dynamics that are central to understanding its growth and enduring support. Our intervention moves beyond current engagements with the relationships between urban dynamics and far-right politics to focus on the neighbourhood scale as a space of experience, mobilization, socialisation, and production of political subjectivity. Rather than a top-down understanding of far-right politics, where neighbourhoods are a mere downscaling of political processes that take place at the national, regional, and international levels, examples from research in Spain and the UK indicate that everyday socio-political experiences in neighbourhoods play a central role in shaping patterns of far-right support at multiple scales. While there are macro-scale political-economic and cultural processes that bear 'down' unevenly on cities and their neighbourhoods, it is evident that residents and communities exhibit agency in their negotiations of those processes.

We have advanced three main arguments. First, austere neoliberal cities have experienced a renewed focus from the far right on the neighbourhood as a civic space, and the meaning and constitution of 'good' citizenship as a locus of political contention and action. While this has been the basis for many progressive social movements (e.g. García-Lamarca, 2017), it has also become an opportunity for the far-right to make inroads into neighbourhoods and gain support. Our studies indicate that far-right actors are increasingly mobilising at the neighbourhood level, adopting civic discourses and activities that substantially differ from the violent forms of action that prevailed until the 1990s or the far-

right's electoral turn in the 2000s. Second, the ongoing transformation of cities in contemporary capitalism generates class and cultural anxieties of loss, displacement, and isolation that the far-right exploits. Lived experiences or fears of displacement, and the arrival of outsider communities competing for revalued neighbourhoods – be they migrants, a 'creative' cosmopolitan class, or wealthy investors – have become exploited by the far-right amidst structural insecurity and austerity's production of scarcity. Finally, neighbourhood infrastructures have become central to the far-right mobilization of place-based ideas about authenticity and belonging, drawing on not only infrastructures' material functions but also their social and symbolic significance.

In each of these arguments, migrants or other racialised groups do not necessarily need to be proximate to an area to have an effect; indeed, the majority of far-right votes come from areas with low levels of in-migration, highlighting how concerns about economic and cultural change or decline are significant grievances but need not become racialised. The enclosure of community spaces and networks through related processes has also fostered isolation among neighbours, breaking bonds of solidarity and mutual identification forged through everyday shared spaces and relationships – a process that is also generally independent of 'invading' others. It therefore becomes clear that although intersubjective racism remains foundational to far-right ideology, it is but one of many intersecting aspects of what can make the far right appealing (Author 2, 2019). Thus, far-right encroachment on processes of urban change is not inevitable; indeed, there are many examples of projects and campaigns that have successfully built other narratives of place and challenge exclusionary and authoritarian ones. Building on and learning from these examples – not always explicitly anti-fascist in orientation, but certainly in their effects – is a crucial aspect of future urban scholarship as the far-right continues to stabilise as an enduring presence in urban political life. A next step on this trajectory is to use urban dynamics discussed in this paper to build a framework for not only explaining far-right currents in neighbourhoods but also identifying ways urban scholarship can contribute to countering them.

On one hand, our intervention aims to open the door to future research that investigates these dynamics and identifies other relevant logics operating at the neighbourhood scale. On the other, it places the neighbourhood at the centre of anti-fascist struggle. Especially when the far-right is gaining political ground by politicising everyday spatial antagonisms, anti-fascist politics should begin its ideological struggle by organising in neighbourhoods and building inclusive grassroots infrastructures, popular knowledges, and (counter)publics that challenge the far-right's exclusionary narratives and enactments of community. Such counterpublics may or may not incorporate the 'heroic' politics of anti-fascist street movements (cf. Majewska, 2021), but occupy strategic physical and discursive space in neighbourhood-scale contentions. Overall, our analysis illustrates the importance of treating neighbourhood-scale urban problems such as gentrification, austerity urbanism, and competitive urbanism as pressing antifascist issues. Future research should not only focus on far-right neighbourhood politics but also pay attention to anti-fascist currents in neighbourhood initiatives, collaborating with them, and bringing together diverse experiences to expand collective, multi-sited understandings and solutions. This issue will be precisely the focus of a second intervention as the follow-up to this paper.

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