

**The Pursuit of Legitimacy Power**  
**and its Manifestations in Political History**

**Proposed Title – 'Seeking continuity in a period of**  
**change: resisting industrial decline and post-industrial**  
**regeneration'**

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Britain is familiar with resistance to industrial decline, most famously the 1984-5 Miners' Strike. Recently, scholars like Alice Mah have explored the extension of resistance to regeneration projects in areas ravaged by socio-economic and industrial decline. This paper examines such resistance via a case study of St. Helens, near Liverpool, an industrial town once home to extensive mining and glass industries, and currently undergoing its own process of regeneration.

The paper explores three points. Firstly, to what extent is resistance to industrial decline (e.g. colliery closures) or post-industrial regeneration (e.g. new housing developments, the reconversion of former industrial sites) legitimate? More importantly, why do those resisting think it is legitimate: what allows them to justify and defend with logic their position? As well as protecting jobs, it is about protecting ideas of community and identity, seeking a certain continuity amidst economic, social, and political change.

Secondly, how does such localised resistance impinge on central governments' ability to retain their own legitimacy? Localised resistance can spread over a wider area, whether as further acts of resistance or just expressions of solidarity (e.g. from other industries or the wider community). This can force the authorities into policy decisions or u-turns to strengthen their legitimacy, but which may ultimately further undermine it, for instance Margaret Thatcher's unpopular limits on strike action.

Hence our final point: to what extent does localised resistance to industrial decline and/or post-industrial regeneration projects demonstrate the importance for governments (central and local) to construct policy in tighter cooperation with their electorate, i.e. the 'governed' upon whose consent, according to John Locke, a government's legitimacy rests? Legitimacy needs not only to be won in elections, but maintained through policies that serve the interests of both the government and the governed.